

Newsletter

2024



After over a year of waiting, during February the new large boat door was finally installed at the Old Herring Factory in Stromness. The installation of the boat door meant that we could finally move a lot of the larger boats on trailers inside. Up until the installation of boat door we had only been able to move inside smaller boats which we could get through a loading bay door. In a very short time, we went from a rather empty storage space to a very full storage space. With many boats now inside at the Old Herring Factory we can progress restoration of several boats at the same time, something we have not been able to do easily previously. We are still not able to get all our boats inside at the Old Herring Factory, some remain under cover in another shed in Stromness and two of the largest boats remain outside in the Old Herring Factory compound.

We made some progress on establishing an Orkney Historic Boat Haven at the old Buoy Store in Stromness during 2024 by securing funding for a professional feasibility study of the building and project. This funding was only secured after the council had satisfied themselves that a Change of Use Planning Application would likely be approved if applied for.

Unfortunately, the week after the funding was approved a large fire on an adjacent property caused collateral damage to the old Buoy Store and the council have placed the building off-limits until the insurance situation has been cleared up and damage repaired. This has meant that our surveyors and structural engineers cannot get on-site to undertake the required building surveys.



Finished boat door

OHBS remains indebted to the property owners who continue to support us by allowing us to store our boat collection in their sheds. Without their generosity, Orkney's maritime heritage would be lost forever.

Matthew Vaughton

OHBS AGM 2024

At this year's Annual General Meeting in September the current in-post officers remained unchanged. The OHBS Chair is Michael McLaughlin, the Vice-Chair is Jimmy Clouston and the Treasurer is Harky Hutchison. Sue Paice remains Minutes Secretary and Matthew Vaughton continues looking after Membership, Media and Communications. There are currently 11 members serving as trustees of the Society.





The Old Herring Factory – The Second Year

The highlight of the year was the large boat door becoming useable in February. Even after the door itself was installed and we could open and close the door, we still had to wait for a concrete apron to be cast outside to raise the outside ground level to match that of the inside before we could move boats inside.

However, having to wait over a year for new boat door to be installed was not wasted time as we had plenty of opportunity to fix lighting issues, install additional power sockets, add RCD's as required, remove unwanted pipework, fixtures and fittings and modify furniture we required.

There are many things we still need to do to improve the facility. At the moment we have no water supply in the outside compound which makes washing down and engine running inconvenient as we have to run a very long hose through the storage area. We also lack sufficient shelving for the storage of the many artefacts we have accumulated as well as sails and rigging which has been removed from boats. We also require a separate metal working table so that we can keep metal shards away from the wood working area. In future we will also require a steam chest for heating timbers before fitting.

Longer term we would like to install a proper wood working machinery area suitable for machining up large boat boards. We envisage a good sized table saw, band saw and planer, sander etc with an adequate extraction system to remove as much hazardous dust as possible.

Outside in the compound we still have a couple of old storage tanks which we inherited. We will remove these at some point to free up more space.

While water & sewerage is free for charities we still have to pay for electricity and building insurance. This means we have to continue to raise funds wherever we can. Once the Orkney Historic Boat Haven gets off the ground we hope to be able to fund our restoration work from the proceeds of the Boat Haven.



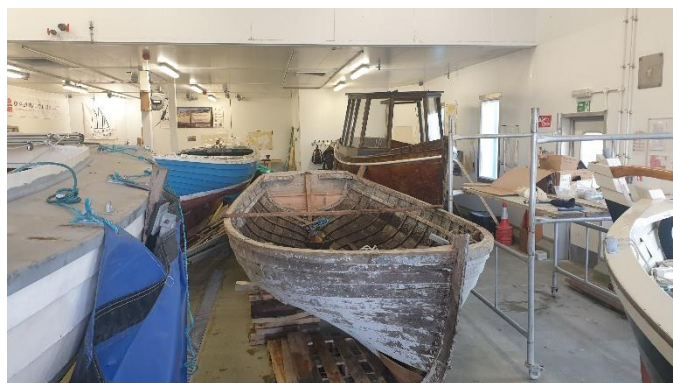
Boat Door installed but no apron 30cm drop outside



Concrete Apron laid and set, no trim yet



Before boat door usable



After boat door usable

Making Do

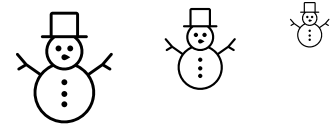
When we moved into the Old Herring Factory there were a lot of stainless-steel sink units around the outside of the main area. Some of these sink units we removed and recycled but those that were mounted on a separate base we converted for our own use. First the stainless sink top and drainer was removed then we fabricated a worktop from spare wood and fitted this to the base to make a sturdy worktable.



Finished worktable



Wonky base & sink unit



Fish Boxes

We are always on the lookout for useful storage boxes, we were fortunate to acquire a large number of collapsible fish boxes and wheeled bases from Westray during the year. These boxes are now being used to store all the bits we have removed from various boats, trailer spares and engine spares. Separate boxes are used for each group of items and all boxes are labelled.

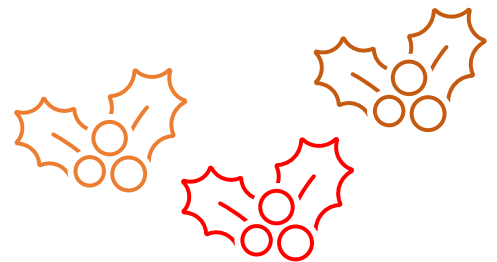


Fish boxes from Westray

The Importance of Labelling

We have lots of boats and sometimes it's hard to remember which boat is called by what name. All our boats have names and to ensure there is no confusion over which boats is being discussed all boats have a large label with their name on it. These labels may get removed during some stages of restoration, such as when painting, but the label won't be too far away and will be replaced as soon as practical.

We also have a lot of fixtures and fittings which get removed during restoration and to ensure that the right parts can be replaced on the right boat all these fixtures and fittings will also be labelled. The best labels we have found to use are garden plant labels which are tough, quick and easy to name with a black marker pen and then attach to a fitting. These labels are self-locking, robust and survive being chucked around for a year or two in a fish box.



Cingalee Update

Cingalee has been stored outside for about a year and as a result her paintwork is now a little weathered. While the damp has helped her timbers expand, not a bad thing, some further remedial work will be required to her paint work before she will be back to display standard. Her name boards had suffered being out in the weather, so these were removed, refurbished and are now stored inside ready for refitting when required. Cingalee is now back in covered storage and her paintwork will be touched up when we are ready to display her again.



Weathered name boards



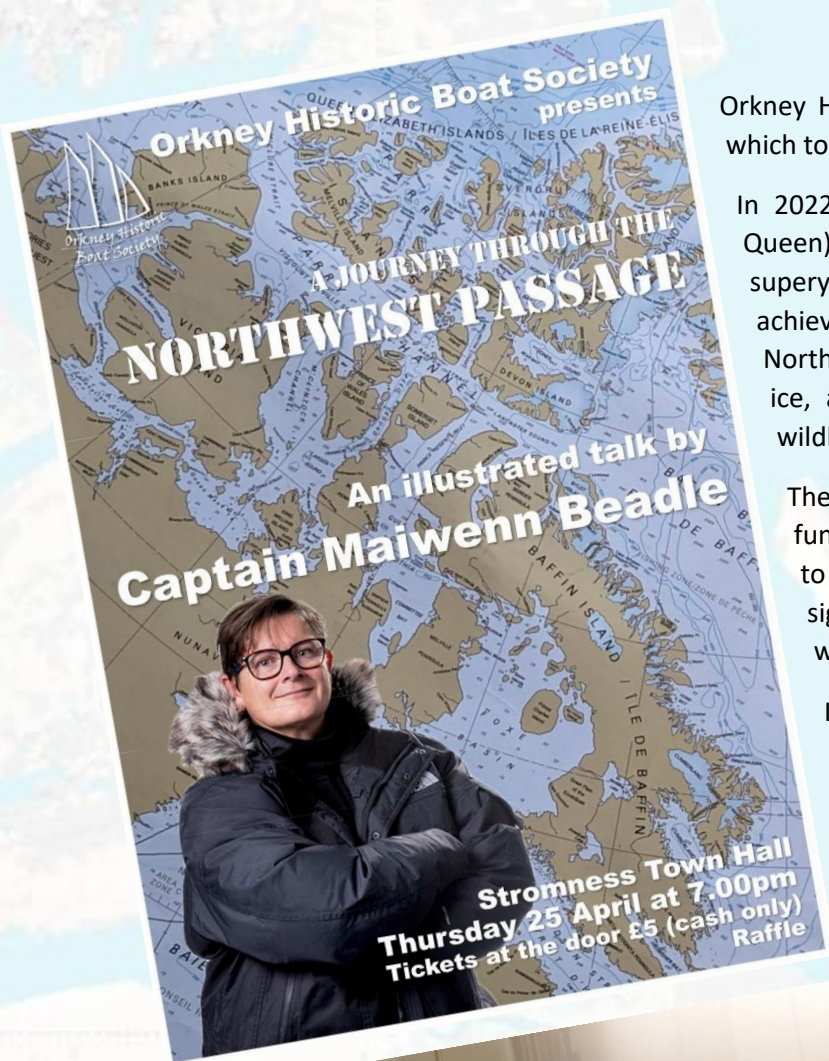
Refurbished name boards

AKL New Photographs

A couple of new photographs of the Norwegian Motor Tanker Arne Kjøde have been discovered which must have been taken before she torpedoed on the 12 November 1939. The Arne Kjøde had a very short working life having only been delivered from the German yard Deutsche Werft AG, Betrieb Finkenwärder, Hamburg to her Norwegian owners in September 1938. The first picture will be useful when we get around to restoring the AKL lifeboat in our collection as it shows the external appearance of one of the lifeboats on the quarter deck.



A Journey Through the Northwest Passage - an illustrated talk by Captain Maiwenn Beadle



Orkney Historic Boat Society was delighted to host this talk, which took place in Stromness Town Hall in April 2024.

In 2022 Captain Maiwenn Beadle (aka The Accidental Ice Queen) became the first woman to captain a non-commercial superyacht through the Northwest Passage - a notable achievement. Her talk described the trip through the Northwest Passage, including the experience of navigating in ice, as well as the fascinating and spectacular geology, wildlife and culture encountered along the way.

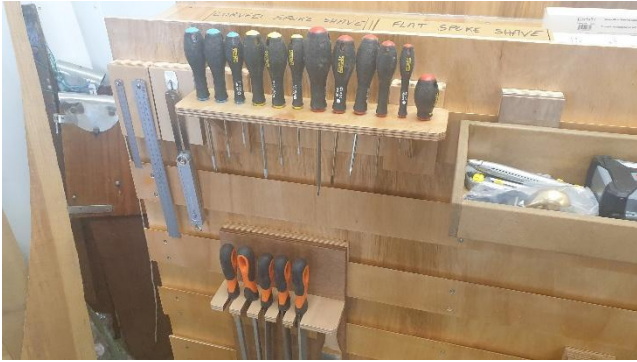
The well-attended event also served as a very welcome fundraising opportunity for Orkney Historic Boat Society to help support their work of saving and restoring significant examples of historic Orkney traditional wooden boats.

If you have a superyacht and fancy a trip through the ice find out more at www.accidentalicequeen.com



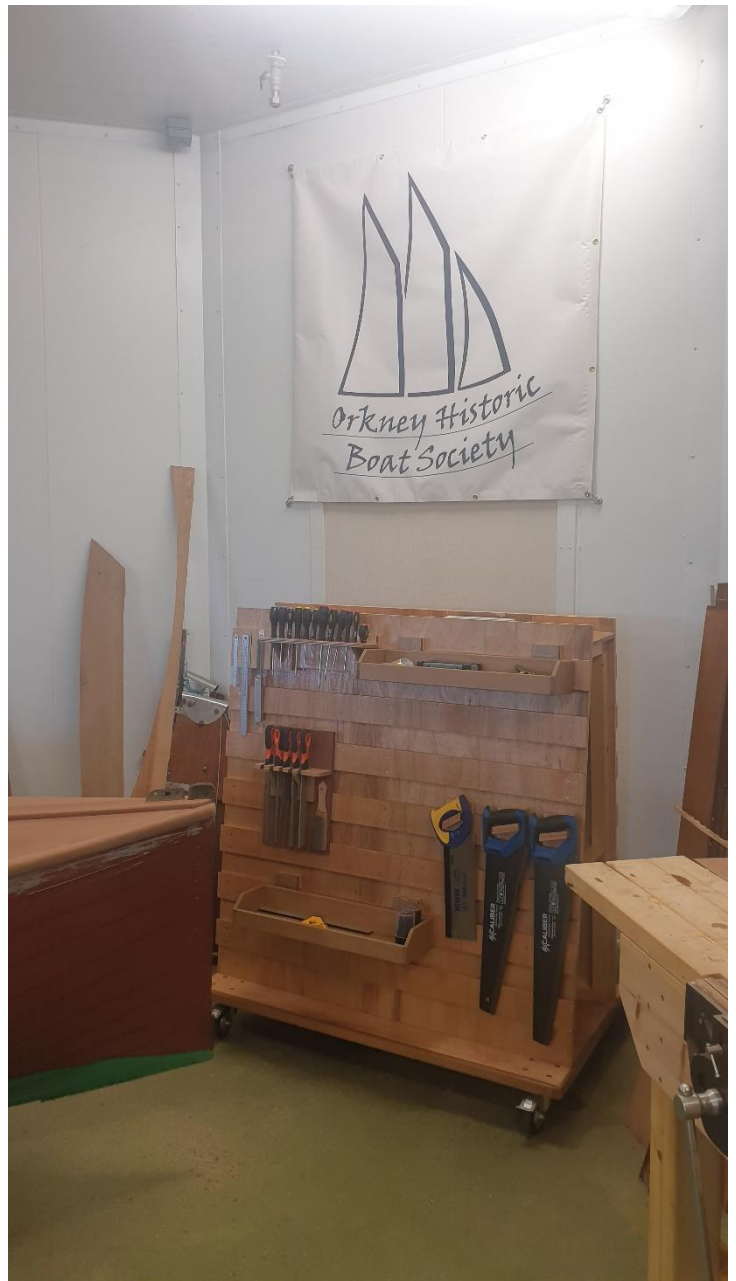
New Tool Rack

A grant from the Orkney Islands Council Culture Fund in early 2024 meant that we could buy a selection of new hand tools and build a mobile tool rack on which to store the tools. Having a tool rack means the hand tools have a permanent place to live, which makes finding them in a busy workshop a lot easier. It also means the tools tend to get returned because people now know where they live.



Work started on the build of the tool rack in April 2024 and was completed a month later. The tool rack employs the French Cleat system which means that all the shelves and other fittings can be moved around on the rack as best suits the job at hand. The rack itself is mobile being mounted on wheels.

Part of the cost of constructing the tool rack and purchasing new hand tools was met by £550 received from the Orkney Islands Council Culture Fund.



Lagertha Builders Plate

The donated yole Lagertha has finally had the builder recognised by the addition of a builder's name plate.

Rod Anderson Boyle built the yole in 2017 at the Lyme Regis Boat Building Academy. The boat was little used for the following few years being largely kept in covered storage. Rod passed away in early 2023 and his family kindly donated the boat with trailer to OHBS. Although not part of the historic fleet the boat remains in the care of OHBS.

Waterwitch

Waterwitch was 100 years old in 2023 but despite being laid up since 2019 had not had a proper engine service largely because of COVID and lack of suitable facilities.

This year we finally got around to servicing the engine and gear box. Having emptied all the stale diesel out of the fuel tank we added some fresh diesel, changed the engine coolant, changed all the engine filters and ran the engine up in the compound to ensure everything was still working properly.

The engine fired up with the first turn of the key. The batteries had been removed back in 2019 and periodically charged ever since, even so the engine was keen to start. The engine has now been 'winterised' for long term storage as we are not sure when we will next be able to run up the engine.



Spring visitors

During the spring we had some un-expected visitors in the form of some birds which decided to nest in the space above the loading bay roller door. This meant that we could not use the loading bay door for a couple of months until the young had fledged and left the nest. This wasn't a major problem as we now had the new boat door we could use instead. We have some spare door edge brushes which we will install to prevent more visitors returning next year.





Falcon moved

The square-sterned dinghy Falcon on which we had started restoration work a couple of years ago has now been moved to Ian Richardson's workshop so that some of the trickier lower boat planks which are missing can be made and fitted.

Work on Falcon stopped when we ran out of suitable wood from which we could make new planks. We took delivery of a cut larch log during 2024 which has enabled us to restart restoration work.

Once Ian (and helpers) have completed the more difficult bits of the restoration work, Falcon will be returned to the Old Herring Factory for volunteers to complete the restoration.

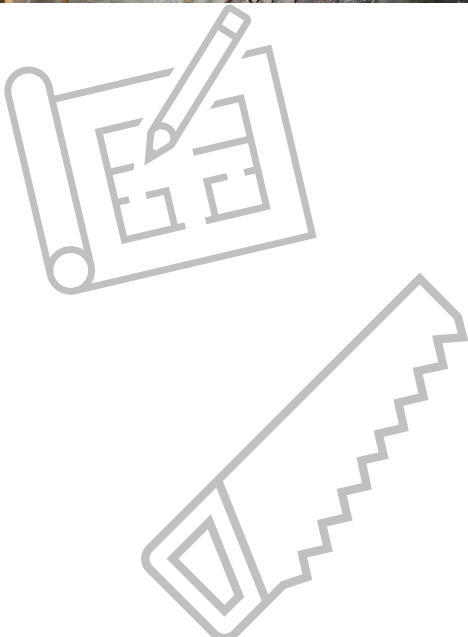


Falcon in Ian's Shed

Old Boat Builder's never retire



Although technically retired from building traditional wooden boats, Ian Richardson has started on another new yole build. This time Ian is building an elliptical stern yole. Getting the twists in the planks is a bit of a challenge as some planks go from vertical in the middle, to horizontal as they approach the stern.



It's not all about working on old boats



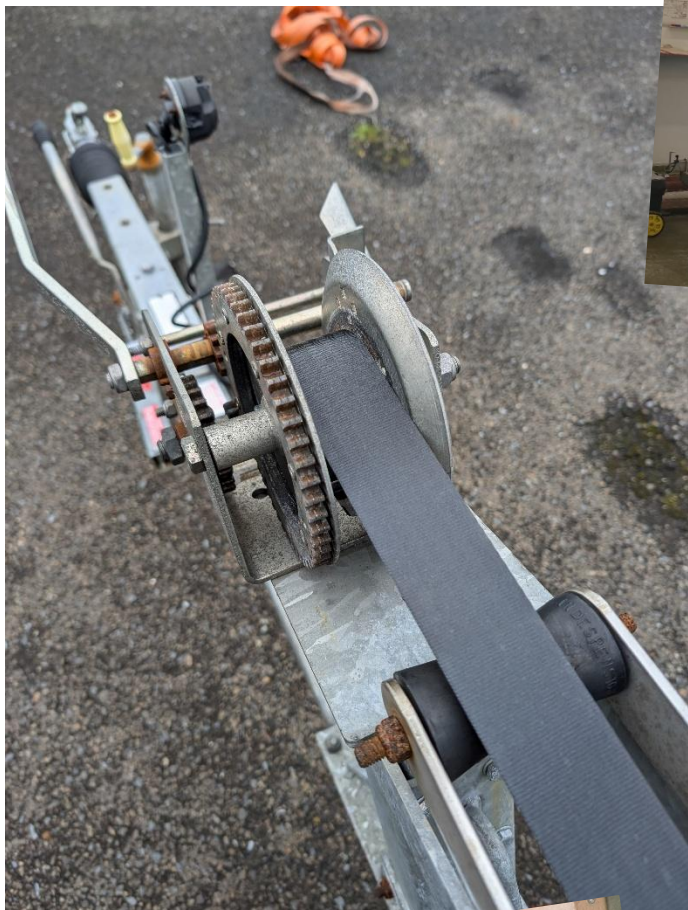
Testing Trailer Lighting Boards

When we are not working on old boats, we have preventative maintenance work to do on our collection of boat trailers and also building maintenance.

The boat trailers don't do a large amount of mileage being primarily used to move boats between locations in West Mainland, Orkney. The low mileage can mean that the moving components do not get sufficient regular exercise to keep them free. We always leave braked trailers chocked with the handbrake off but even so brakes can be an issue. Lighting boards are stored inside out of the weather but are subject to damage from roadside impacts.



One of the largest trailers



New Winch Strap being fitted

Trailer winch straps get damaged overtime and require periodic replacement. Adjustable bunks need checking to ensure that their locking bolts are still tight.

For the building we must maintain several doors including the boat roller door and a loading bay roller door. Also repair wire fencing and keep drains clear. We have several gravel areas which the weeds find attractive so weed removal is required a few times each year. Lights need changing and tools need servicing and improving.



Tool improvement



Repairing Fire Exit Handrail

Blue Door

OHBS will be back in the Blue Door in Kirkwall during February 2025. If any Orkney residents have any items which they wish to donate for the OHBS Blue Door week please contact orkneyhistoricboats@gmail.com or drop the items off at the Old Herring Factory on a Friday morning between 10:00-12:00. All the proceeds from fundraising activities such as this help cover the running costs of our storage and workshop facilities in the Old Herring Factory.

Orkney Historic Boat Society The Blue Door 4th – 8th February 2025



Tools and equipment

This year we have added to our facilities a mobile 3 Tonne lifting gantry (ex Sea Cadets, restored to working order by Harky Hutchison), a French cleat tool storage rack and tools (OIC grant of £550, constructed by Matthew Vaughton) and a Circular Saw provided by Highland Industrial Supplies at a significantly reduced purchase price.



Waterwitch held in slings under 3 tonne gantry

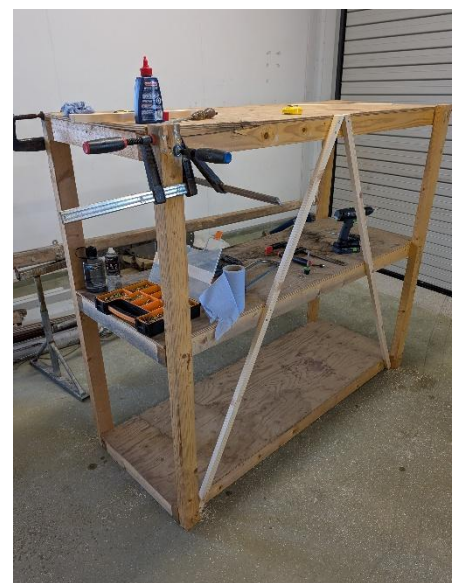
Rescued Shelves Redeployed

Some eagle-eyed volunteers spotted a set of wooden shelves by the community fireworks bonfire in Stromness in November. Rather than allow the shelves to be broken up and burnt they recovered the shelves back to the Old Herring Factory for redeployment.

After some repair glue-ups, extra screws and the addition of cross bracing the shelves are now back in use being used to store items destined for the next Blue Door event in February.

We still need a lot more shelving so if anyone has some old but robust shelving they no longer require please let us know by email to:

orkneyhistoricboats@gmail.com



Purchase of a 23 foot larch tree

With the aid of generous donations, and kind sponsorship from NorthLink Ferries and Northwards Haulage (Orkney), who between them covered transport costs from Aberdeen, we were able to purchase a cut 23' larch tree.

Larch is a straight grained, relatively knot free timber stronger and more durable than most softwoods and is relatively resistant to decay. Because of these qualities it is much used in boat building. OHBS, therefore, has need of Larch timber to use in the restoration work we undertake.

The log was purchased from Gilmour and Aitken, a Lumber Company in Alexandria, north of Glasgow.

They have supplied boat building timber to various Orcadian boatbuilders over many years. Ian Richardson, who knows the owners personally, facilitated arrangements to purchase a log suitable for our needs.

The log is 'slash' cut into boards of varying thickness at the lumber yard. Some approximately 15 - 18mm thick to be used for boat skin planking, some 32-38mm thick – used for making knees, tafts (seats), etc and one or two at 55 – 75mm thick for stems, keel's etc.



After delivery we sorted the boards by size and swept off all the lumber yard sawdust still stuck to the boards by sap, this is to aid ventilation. Light sticks (stickers) are placed between the boards to allow air to circulate freely around the boards and aid drying.

The finished stack is then covered to keep off rain and enable the timber to dry out. The timber mustn't dry out too much hence the reason for keeping it outside.

Some boards have already been used in the restoration work currently being performed on Falcon.



Norwegian History Group Visit

A Norwegian History Study Group who come regularly to Orkney visited again this summer to further their studies.

The group were all from Bringsvaer, Grimstad in the southern region of Agder, Norway and were here to study the life of Saint Rognvald Kali Kolsson who was born and brought up on the farm of Bringsverd, Fjaere. Thor Egil Erlandson, who had been corresponding about their visit, lives just next to this farm.



History group studying Saint Rognvald of Orkney

Rognvald's parents were Kolr Kalisson and Gunnhildr Erlendsdottir, the sister of Magnus Erlendsson, Earl of Orkney who was murdered on Egilsay by Haakon Paulsson. It was through his mother, Gunnhildr, that Rognvald had a claim on the Orkney earldom. In 1129 King Sigurd of Norway appointed Rognvald Earl of Orkney and Shetland and in 1137 he initiated the building of St Magnus Cathedral in honour of his uncle Magnus.

Rognvald came to be regarded as a Christian Saint and was also known as Saint Rognvald of Orkney. In August 1158 Rognvald was cut down with his company of eight men in Caithness. His body was taken to Kirkwall and buried in St Magnus Cathedral.

Two Orkney Islands were named after him, North Ronaldsay and South Ronaldsay.

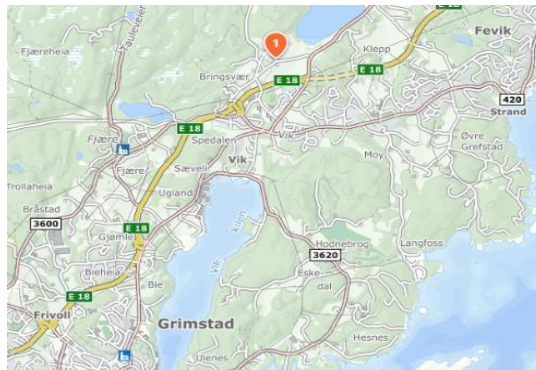
Three of the group are keen members of a local coastal team who also promote the preservation of wooden boats and local coastal culture. They focus on craft traditions and preserving and general use of traditional vessels. They came to see our boat collection and the work we do at the Old Herring Factory. They are keen to foster links between our organisations. Their organisation is "Kystlaget Terje Vigen", you can visit their website at www.kltv.no to view the restoration work they do.



Norwegian visitors examining an Orkney Yole



Grimstad is in the region of Agder, South Norway, from whence Kirkwall gets its Christmas tree annually.



Bringsvaer, Grimstad where our visitors came from.



Wood carving of Saint Rognvald in St Magnus Cathedral

Boat Work

Saga

This year work has concentrated on completing the deck restoration, gunwales and cockpit upstands. Suitable thin marine plywood had been previously ordered from Robbins Timber in the West Midlands, top quality Sapele Mahogany dressed to size was obtained locally from Ronald Thomson of A.J. Mathers workshop in Stenness.

The restoration process endeavoured to match the original build process. However, the original deck was glued and pinned with brass panel pins whereas the new deck was fixed down with glue only. This is possible because of the better-quality modern glues. The gunwales and upstands were glued and screwed with bronze screw as per the original.

Before

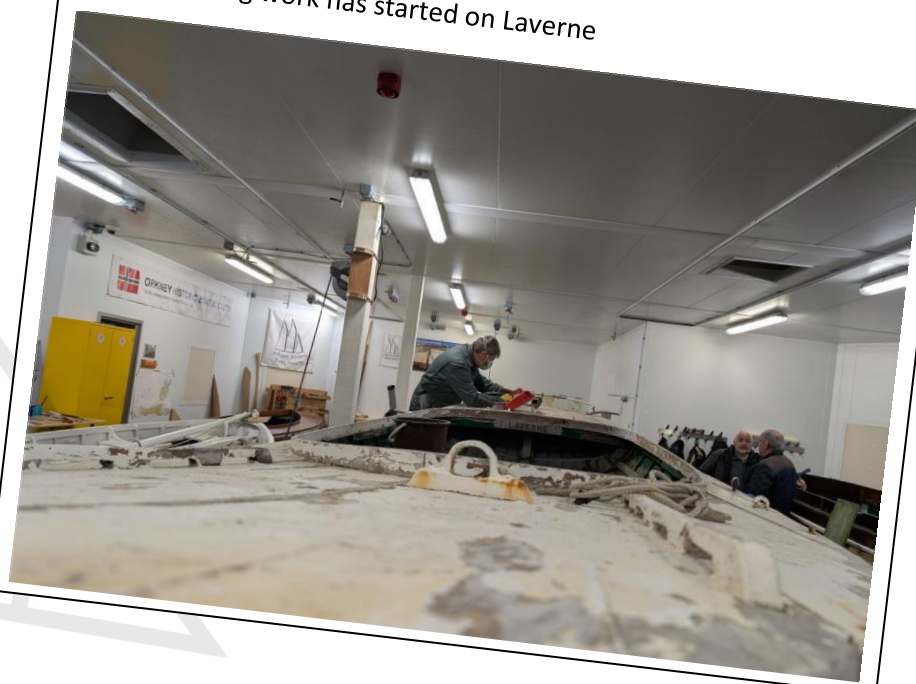


After



Laverne

Paint stripping work has started on Laverne



Nellie

The bottom of the hull and rudder have been stripped and painted.



Doris

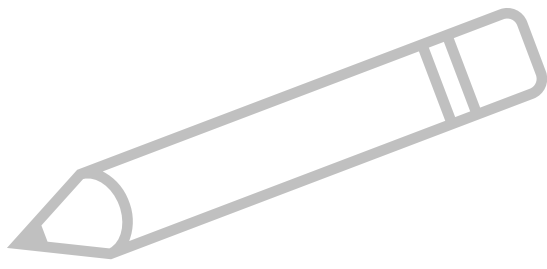
Both the inside and outside of Doris have been stripped, repaired and repainted. All previously fittings have been replaced. The deck has been cleaned and treated but remains in its intended unpainted condition.



Venture

The racing catamaran Venture was moved into the workshop mid-year and is undergoing work to strip the hull and deck. The wooden hulls are not in too bad a state of repair, so no major repair work is needed currently.





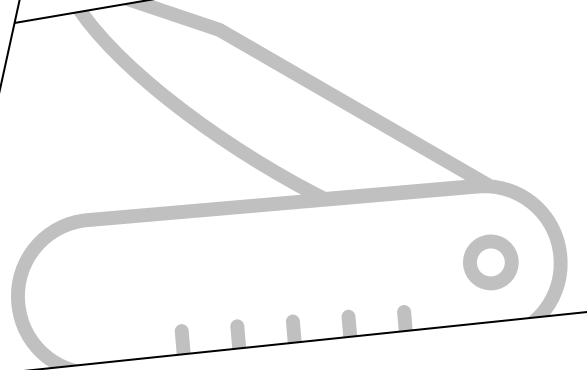
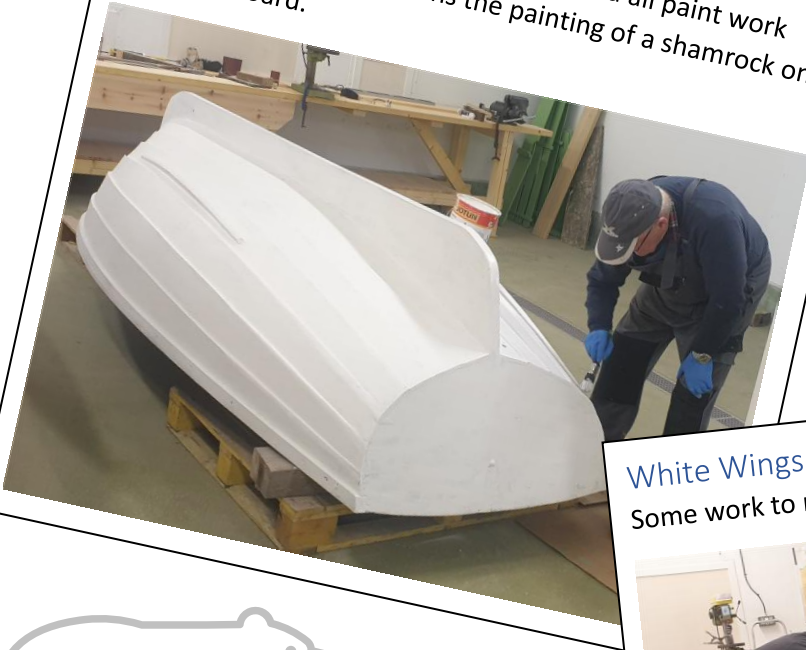
Waterwitch

Engine & gearbox serviced, run and prepared for long term storage.



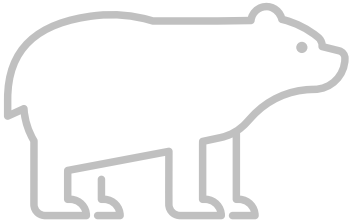
Shamrock

Repairs to Shamrock were completed and all paint work finished. There only remains the painting of a shamrock on the stern board.



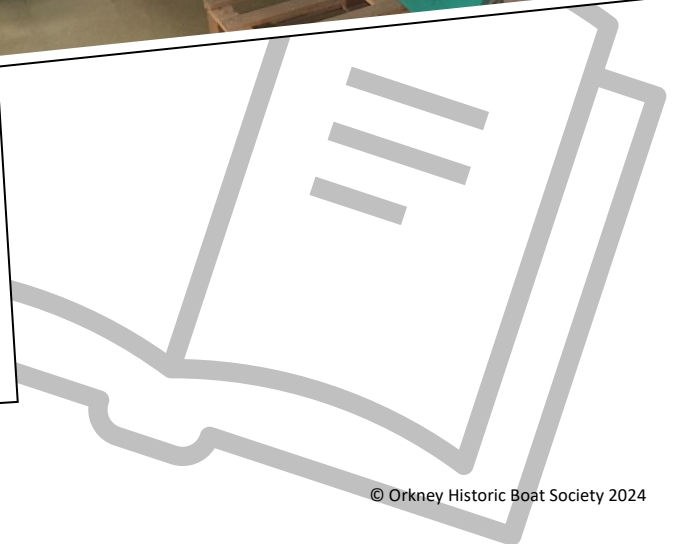
White Wings

Some work to replace missing copper roving was completed.



Falcon

Moved to Ian Richardson's shed for board replacements to be completed.



Where you can find information about OHBS

Orkney Historic Boat Society Website and Facebook page

<https://www.ohbs.net/>

<https://www.facebook.com/orkneyhistoricboatsociety/>

Previous OHBS Newsletters

<https://www.ohbs.net/ohbs-newsletters/>

OHBS volunteers Blog (weekly activities)

<https://ohbsworkgroup.blogspot.com/>

Contact: orkneyhistoricboats@gmail.com

Orkney Historic Boat Society is a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SCIO) registered with the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR) with Charity Number SC044884

Our Vision: To preserve the boating history of Orkney for future generations. Our Mission: To preserve historic boats and related traditional boat building skills and crafts. To collect preserve and communicate knowledge relating to boats built in Orkney or having contributed significantly to Orkney life and to further the education and knowledge of the public in relation to historical Orkney Boats, including establishing a boat museum and workshop.

