

CASTLETOWN HERITAGE NEWS

Winter 2006



Volume 6, Issue 2

Highland 2007 Programme of Events

During 2007 we will be taking part in the Highland Year of Culture with workshops, events and walks to highlight some of the traditional skills used within the village in past times. These events are open to the public. Some are hands-on and some are demonstrations of old skills. The timetable of events is as follows. 19-24th April- rope making and paper making; 19-20th May- drystone walling; June - guided walk around the old village workshops ; 14th July - Caithness Chair making, late Aug -Working with Lime Mortar road show; late October-Storytelling and finale. If you want further information on any of these events, please contact Muriel on 01847 821204 or drop us an email at castletown.heritage@talk21.com or visit our website www.castletownheritage.co.uk

Events Held During 2006

During 2006 we held several events. We had two guided walks, one around the airfield at Thurdistoft as part of the Scottish Archaeology Month and another around the religious sites of Castletown as part of the Highland Archaeology Fortnight. We also took part in the Scottish Doors Open Day at Castlehill. All events were well supported by the public.

The walk around RAF Castletown, to give Thurdistoft its proper title, was led by Andrew Gutteridge, who has an amazing knowledge of Caithness and the Second World War. The walk took us from the support areas such as the parachute packing shed, and transport workshops to the more front line ammunition stores, fuel stores and decontamination building where servicemen would be cleaned up after a gas attack. We then moved onto the airfield proper and visited the sites of the plane stances, runways and the maintenance hangers, before finishing at the firing range, where the aim of the planes guns was checked after work on them. The airfield was a rather bleak site with grass runways and tents as accommodation to start with. But as the years passed more modern comforts were introduced. You can read a full account of the history of RAF Castletown in the heritage booklet, 'Castletown Recalls 1939 - 1945' which is available on our website.

Our second walk of 2006 was round the sites of the churches of Castletown. Starting at the possible site of a monastery next to Orlig cemetery and the church of St Trothan, one of the earliest religious site in Castletown, we then visited the other past and present churches in Castletown. We learned how they changed allegiance many times during their times of use. A visit inside the present Church of Scotland completed the tour.

We also took part in the Scottish Doors Open Day when museums, historic buildings, houses etc throw open their doors and allow free entry for the day. We took visitors around the Castlehill building and showed what we had done so far and explained our plans for the Highland Year of Culture 2007 workshops.