

## PREFACE

*The Faces of Orkney: Stones, Skalds and Saints* is another in the series of publications by the Scottish Society for Northern Studies which includes the companion Shetland volume *Shetland's Northern Links: Language and History*, also edited by Doreen J. Waugh. The conference which gave rise to this Orkney volume took place in Kirkwall in July 1999 and the contribution made by local people to its organization was much appreciated. Also appreciated is the help with proofreading given to me during the editing of *The Faces of Orkney: Stones, Skalds and Saints* by Brian Smith, Archivist, Shetland, who was associate editor of the Shetland volume. Alison Finlay of Birkbeck College, University of London, has been instrumental in preparing the volume for publication and I greatly appreciate her expertise and editorial assistance.

Readers familiar with *Shetland's Northern Links: Language and History* will realise that there are similarities between the two volumes, not least the fact that both open with contributions by Professor Michael Barnes of the Department of Scandinavian Studies at University College London. Professor Barnes has published various books and articles on Scandinavian language topics, including recently: *The Runic Inscriptions of Maeshowe, Orkney* (1994), *The Runic Inscriptions of Viking Age Dublin* (co-authored by J. R. Hagland and R. I. Page, 1997), *The Norn Language of Orkney and Shetland* (1998), and *A New Introduction to Old Norse: 1. Grammar* (1999). He was for many years editor of *Saga-Book*, the journal of the Viking Society for Northern Research, and is currently a Joint Honorary Secretary of the Society. The Society for Northern Studies is very pleased to have his contribution, with its intriguing title which emphasizes the extent to which history impinges on everyday life in Orkney.

Two other contributors, Archie Bevan and Diana Whaley, also deal with forms of communication. Diana Whaley delves into the past in her chapter on skaldic eulogy, while Archie Bevan's topic is the writing of the modern Orcadian skald, George Mackay Brown, echoes of whose work have been picked up by the Shetland poet, Christine De Luca, in her poems which introduce the volume. Much of De Luca's poetry relates to her native Shetland and her contribution to this volume acts as a link between the two sets of islands. She is interested in social history as a theme in some of her poems and is committed to the use of the living dialect in her writing. Two recent collections of poems have established her as Shetland's foremost living dialect poet: *Voices and Sounds* (1995), *Wast wi da Valkyries* (1997). Archie Bevan's untiring dedication to the work of his late friend, George Mackay Brown, is well known in Orkney and his deep understanding of Mackay Brown's work is clearly evident in his chapter in this volume. Diana Whaley of the Department of English Literary and Linguistic Studies, University of Newcastle-upon-Tyne, has written widely on the Norse-

Icelandic and English literature of the Middle Ages, and on Cumbrian place-names. Her publications include *Heimskringla. An Introduction* (1991), *The Poetry of Arnórr jarlaskáld. An Edition and Study* (1998) and several articles on skalds and skaldic poetry.

Several chapters deal with aspects of the history of Orkney and it is very appropriate that the first chapter in this group should be by William P. L. Thomson, former rector of Kirkwall Grammar, whose *History of Orkney* (1987) has been revised and has reappeared as *New History of Orkney*. Also recently reprinted is *The Little General and the Rousay Crofters* (first published in 1981). Thomson, like the other historians who have contributed to this volume, has also written about Shetland and maintains a strong interest in both Orkney and Shetland. The Norwegian contributor Steinar Imsen extends that interest across the North Sea. His research over the last decade has been concentrated on communal life in Norwegian rural communities in the broadest geographical sense, including the old provinces overseas and in present-day Sweden. Publications of relevance to the present volume include: 'Public Life in Shetland and Orkney c. 1300-1550' (in *New Orkney Antiquarian Journal*, vol 1, 1999), 'King Magnus and his Liegemen's "hirdskrá"', a Portrait of the Norwegian Nobility in the 1270s' (in *Nobles and Nobility in Europe in the Middle Ages*, ed. Anne Duggan, 2000).

The work of the Orkney historians, Peter Anderson and Ray Fereday, is well known in both Orkney and Shetland. Peter Anderson is author of biographies of both the Stewart earls of Orkney and a number of articles on Orkney and Shetland history, including a survey of the history of Orkney and Shetland from 1468 to 1615 which was published in *Shetland's Northern Links: Language and History*. Fereday's recently published *The Autobiography of Samuel Laing of Papdale, 1780-1868* (2000) will allow readers to extend their acquaintance with Laing whose political ambitions are described in Fereday's chapter. Another historian who is examining Orkney papers is Sheena Wenham whose study of the Graemshall Estate reflects an interest in the lives of Orkney people which is furthered in her other publications: 'Margaret Vedder, her Household Goods and Body Clothes' (in *Review of Scottish Culture* 10, 1996-97), *A More Enterprising Spirit, The Parish and People of Holm in Eighteenth Century Orkney* (2001).

The concluding section deals with archaeology although, as the title *Faces of Orkney: Stones, Skalds and Saints* hints, 'stones' are of very great significance and could equally well have been placed at the start of the volume. There is a brief but provocative introductory paper by Anne Brundle whose help during the Kirkwall conference was particularly valuable. Professor James Graham-Campbell of University College London then sets the scene in his

chapter on the Vikings in Orkney. His publications on the Vikings in Scotland and elsewhere have contributed much to our knowledge of the topic: *The Viking-Age Gold and Silver of Scotland (AD 850-1100)* (1995), *Vikings in Scotland: an archaeological survey* (co-author, Colleen E. Batey, 1998), *The Viking World* (3<sup>rd</sup> edition 2001). We extend our warm congratulations to James Graham-Campbell on his election as a Fellow of the British Academy in 2001.

The titles of the next two chapters on archaeology by Olwyn Owen and John Hunter almost bring us full circle to the start of the volume with their hints of mysterious artefactual links and literary pursuits. Olwyn Owen's finds in Orkney have indeed been of the type to fire the imagination as she and her companion archaeologists strove against the inroads of the invasive sea to rescue important archaeological material. Olwyn Owen began her archaeological life at the Brough of Birsay in Orkney in 1976 and states that she has loved Orkney and the Vikings ever since, having worked on excavations over many years at sites in both Orkney and Shetland, as well as spending nearly two years in Sweden and Norway researching Viking art and silver hoards. Her publications reflect this deep interest in the Northern Isles and include: *Scar: a Viking boat burial on Orkney* (co-author, Magnar Dalland, 1999), *The Sea Road: a Viking Voyage through Scotland* (1999), *Kebister, Shetland: the four thousand year old story of one Shetland township* (co-author, C. E. Lowe, 1999).

John Hunter, likewise, is a well-known archaeological visitor to Orkney and the isles to the north. He has spent much time surveying and excavating in Scotland, especially in the Northern Isles, with major work on Fair Isle and in the vicinity of Scapa Flow. He has a specific interest in the Vikings and is also fascinated by early Christian archaeology which is the topic of his chapter here. Recent publications relevant to the Northern Isles are: *Fair Isle: the Archaeology of an Island Community* (1996), *A Persona for the Northern Picts* (1997). The archaeological work in progress, presented at the 1999 conference in Kirkwall by John Hunter and published in this volume, was shared by S. Buteux, L. Dingwall and C. Lowe.

It is fitting that the final chapter in the volume should be written by John Brown, a resident of Orkney who fascinated all the conference with his wide-ranging review of Orkney's geology and the conclusions that can be drawn from it. We were very pleased that he spared time from his busy life as a councillor with Orkney Islands Council to share the considerable geological knowledge which he had developed in his earlier post in the oil industry.

I should like to conclude by thanking all contributors for sharing their knowledge and love of Orkney with us, both at the time of the 1999 conference in Kirkwall and in the present volume.

*Doreen J. Waugh*