

Stephen Clackson's Letter from School Place

A report from your councillor in the month of the Coronation of His Majesty King Charles III



In late April, we experienced what seemed to be an early coo-quak, and then rain fell on the reign during the Coronation Weekend in early May. Nevertheless, it did not deter a good turnout at Sanday Community Council's event for folk to gather to watch the Coronation together live on a big screen with refreshments. I was honoured to be invited to propose the toast to His Majesty. The coronation ceremony goes back over a millennium to the crowning of King Edgar of England by Saint Dunstan, and it traces its origins back even further to Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet anointing Solomon king, as described in the first chapter of the *First Book of The Kings* in *The Bible*. I don't think King Charles III can trace his ancestry back to King Solomon, but, through his father, he is descended from Mithradates I, Shah of Persia & King of Babylon. With long practice, this country knows how to do monarchy properly, according it all the pomp, circumstance and pageantry it deserves. Who would want a slimmed-down, bland, European-style monarchy, or, perish the thought, a republic? (Not an unmitigated success when we tried it between the reigns of the previous two kings named Charles!) According to the 19th-century essayist and political journalist, Walter Bagehot, monarchy represents the dignified branch of our constitution, one to excite and preserve the reverence of the population. Moreover, our long-established, apolitical, hereditary monarchy provides stability and continuity, and it possesses a perspective that spans generations, not just the brief period until the next election. I have 2 acquaintances who attended the Coronation ceremony, our current Lord Lieutenant, and the current Norroy & Ulster King of Arms (he was a mere pursuivant when I first got to know him), and I have met and conversed with The Princess Royal (see [October 2018 issue](#)). The Royal Family touches all our lives in one way or another, and this is one of its great strengths. Long live The King! And may he be a shining inspiration to senior citizens everywhere!

At our General Meeting, those who wanted the removal of the voting rights of the three religious representatives on the Education, Leisure & Housing Committee narrowly won the day. This was a change that I did not support.

Angus Campbell, Chairman of the Ferries Communities Board, met with us about "Project Neptune", a piece of consultancy commissioned by the Scottish Government to consider future provision of ferry services, and our views will be fed back to the Transport Minister. I was also at a very informative and frank meeting with Jonathan Hinkles, Chief Executive of *Loganair*, at which we were able to pose questions and air our views about the service. (A good excuse to give my *Loganair* tie an outing!)

Other meetings I've had at School Place this month include: seminars on the paper resulting from the Orkney College Business Review Member/Officer Working Group, and meetings concerning the Orkney & Shetland Valuation Joint Board.

It's been a delight to be out and about in the Isles a bit. I was able to attend in person the AGM of the Rousay, Egilsay & Wyre Development Trust, where it was great to catch up with what is going on in those islands and to see how their Trust is tackling the challenges thrown down by the pandemic period. I have also enjoyed guided tours of Eday School and Sanday School.

Some of our community councils are still short of their full complement of members. At his coronation, The King pledged "not to be served but to serve." Will **you** step up to serve your community by standing for one of the vacant community council places? Public meetings are being held to elect additional members at Shapinsay on 8th June and at Sanday on 15th June.

The last time a king was crowned in this country (1937), people were expected to be able to do sums like this: *What is the cost of 3 cwts 3 qtrs 15 lbs, if 27 cwts 21 lbs cost £379 2s 3d and 3 farthings?* And that is without the benefit of a pocket calculator, a gadget not available back then (and a slide-rule would be of limited use in this instance). Give it a go, and I'll provide the answer next month.

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Letter from School Place is also available on-line at clackson.info

