

Stephen Clackson's Letter from School Place

A report from your councillor in the month of the 84th anniversary of the sinking of HMS Royal Oak.

I spent a couple of days in Shetland (see photo at end) attending meetings of the Orkney & Shetland Valuation Joint Board of which I am the Depute Convener. A convoluted route back had been arranged to enable me to reach Kirkwall in time to attend the UHI Orkney graduation ceremony at St Magnus' Cathedral (in my two roles of Orkney College Stakeholder Group member and OIC's UHI Foundation representative). This involved taking an overnight ferry from Lerwick to Aberdeen (it didn't call into Hatston that night), a taxi to Aberdeen Airport and then the morning flight to Kirkwall. Everything went according to plan until I arrived at Aberdeen Airport and was greeted by the notice "Kirkwall flight CANCELLED"! Together with 8 other passengers, I was taxied south along the road and the (75) miles to Dundee, and we joined the aeroplane flying up from Heathrow, and I missed the graduation ceremony, although at least I was in time to meet up with staff and graduates at the post-graduation reception. Meanwhile, the European Regional Airline Association has named Loganair *Airline of the Year for 2023*!

At the General Meeting, I proposed Cllr John Ross Scott for OIC's representative on the Board of NHS Orkney. Previously, for 8 years, he was the Board's chairman, so he had a wealth of relevant experience, and, furthermore, he currently holds no senior council position, so he would have been free to dedicate himself to this onerous and time-consuming role. He was defeated by a single vote for the position by Cllr Dr Jean Stevenson (also with NHS experience). In another item, I supported Cllr Tullock's notice of motion in support of Orkney's agriculture.

Sanday School's Room 1 pupils (P1-P4) hosted a lunch for their parents and the island's senior citizens (like me). On the menu was vegetable soup with homemade bread rolls, apple crumble with cream, and tea/coffee with chocolate fridge cake or flapjack, all made from locally-sourced ingredients where possible. It was delicious fare, with donations going to support *Mary's Meals*. Well done Room 1!



I've taken my first trip on the *Nordic Sea*. She called into Loth to take me to Eday along with other councillors (who'd boarded her in Kirkwall) for a trip to view the EMEC onshore substation and hydrogen plant at Caldale on Eday's west side. We were then treated to coffee and cake at the Eday Co-Op before heading back to Kirkwall for lunch and lectures at the Orkney Distillery. What EMEC is achieving is impressive, but it would be nice to see more identifiable benefits accruing to the hosting Eday community, and I would welcome developments here.



On the 14th October, I deputised for the Council Convener and laid a wreath at the *HMS Royal Oak* memorial at Scapa on behalf of OIC. This year, it was my turn to receive, in memory of my uncle who went down with the battleship, the White Ensign that had spent the past year attached to the wreck. This is an honour often accorded to close relatives of those who did not survive the sinking (see [Letter issue 100](#)).

Other meetings I've attended (virtually) this month include: a budget seminar, meetings of Stronsay Community Council and Stronsay Parent Council, and a Joint Isles Health & Care meeting.

Stephen

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

Photo credits: John Ross Scott & Oliver Reid.

