

# Stephen Clackson's Letter from School Place

*Fulfilling since 2012 my promise to keep the folk of the North Isles updated on what I am doing.*

There has just been the first change in the ruling political party at Westminster since I became a councillor, and Larry, the 10 Downing Street cat has his 6<sup>th</sup> Prime Minister. Congratulations to Alistair Carmichael on his re-election. The result of the SNP's "de-facto referendum" on independence was unequivocal. I hope this will bring some stability to Scotland. It would be the honourable thing for the Scottish Government now to call an early election at Holyrood. (The SNP can't complain any longer that Scotland hasn't got the UK Government it voted for, although, as usual, Orkney can.) I, myself, do not belong to any political party and am truly independent.

We held our last General Meeting before the councillor recess. A few final appointments were confirmed, and I remain on the Health & Wellbeing Survey Short-Life Working Group. Because of the recent changes in chair and leadership positions at the "reshuffle", plus the election of a new councillor, it was decided that a new group photograph of us all is needed. Here is one that was taken whilst we were setting up (the arrow indicates me):



I was away with family members attending my son Wulfric's Master of Architecture graduation at Edinburgh University (see photograph below) when the seventy-seven pilot whales came ashore at Tresness on Sanday. On my return, I sat in on a couple of operational meetings to determine how best to dispose of their remains. Appreciation is due to (among others): Hayley Green (Corporate Director, Neighbourhood Services & Infrastructure) and her team at OIC, Colin and Heather Headworth, Stephen Kemp (Orkney Builders), various landowners who offered sites for burial plots, James Muir and the other Sanday farmers he co-ordinated to transport and bury the carcasses, Emma Neave-Webb (British Divers Marine Life Rescue), and Andy Wilcox (Chairman, Sanday Community Council). I witnessed members of this group metaphorically draft the definitive textbook on how to deal effectively and efficiently with a large number of beached whales. Given the likelihood of it happening again somewhere in Orkney, I have asked for mass cetacean strandings to be added to the relevant OIC risk register. The *Sanday (10<sup>th</sup> Orkney) Cubs, Scouts & Explorer Scouts Recipe Book*, published in 2011, contains a Kwakwaka'wakw whale recipe for just such eventualities. Shame we weren't able to try it out!

In my last [Letter](#) I mentioned that whilst in Lerwick in June for a meeting of the Orkney & Shetland Valuation Joint Board, a few of us took the opportunity to visit the Shetland Abattoir and speak to people involved in running it. This was followed up by a good write-up about our visit on page 13 of the 11<sup>th</sup> July issue of *The Orcadian*.

Other councillor work I've been doing during the recess includes a meeting of the Dounreay Stakeholder Group.

So far this has been a somewhat eventful recess! And so far it has also been a fairly rainy recess. (It was a mixed picture on Saint Swithin's Day, which might be grounds for optimism.) The weather has confused my bees. I had a summer solstice swarm, and for the first time in my over 2 decades of beekeeping, I've had to feed the bees in June and July. Normally at this time of year they are gathering nectar and producing honey for me.

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**Letter from School Place** is also  
available on-line at [clackson.info](http://clackson.info)



Photo credits: Kirsty Groundwater, Dunstan Clackson.

