

Scottish Mensa Annual Gathering

Orkney

August 28th - 31st 2009



Scottish Mensa is proud to present our annual gathering of 2009. We have a brilliant programme that will excite and interest old friends and new and showcase the best of Scottish culture, history, technology, and, of course, fun! For the first time, SMAG is heading for the islands in what is going to be one of the finest SMAGs ever. We have World Heritage sites to discover, spectacular scenery and unique historical venues spanning the Stone Age to World War II. We'll also be looking at Orkney's present and its future with events highlighting its technology and science. The islands are a centre for arts and crafts both indigenous and contemporary, which we will explore. Finally, to keep us going, we will be enjoying the very best of the food and drink for which Orkney is renowned.

Our venue this year is the award-winning Orkney Hotel. Dating from 1670, it is in the very heart of Kirkwall, only minutes from St Magnus Cathedral and within easy walk of the port. Kirkwall is only a small town, so nothing is very far away.



Orkney Hotel

40 Victoria Street
Kirkwall
Orkney
KW15 1DN
Tel: 01856 873477
Email:
info@orkneyhotel.co.uk



You can find out more
about the hotel at
www.orkneyhotel.co.uk

The nightly rates per person (including full Scottish breakfast) for this weekend are **£50.50** sharing a twin or double room, **£60.50** single and **£72.00** for single occupancy of a double room. Accommodation bookings should be made directly with the hotel. These special prices are only available for Thursday 27th August – Monday 31st August inclusive.

Note: the hotel asks that rooms should be booked by 15th July 2009 with a 20% deposit due on this date for all confirmed bookings. Their terms and conditions state that all rooms be paid in full in advance 14 days prior to arrival.

There is no parking at the hotel itself (when you see the narrow street it is in you will soon realise why!) but there are a number of car parks only a few minutes walk away, some of which are free.



Skara Brae

Booking for events is always on a first come, first served basis. However, given that many of the venues included on this year's programme can only cope with very small numbers we have repeated some of them to ensure that as many people as possible can get the chance to go to them. Pick the time slot that suits you best. We're sure that you understand why some of the events have to be subject to operational requirements – if the Lifeboat is needed for a rescue, for instance, we won't be able to visit it at the time arranged! Other events are dependent on weather and in some cases, of course, sea conditions.

Transport will largely be by minibus – event fees where transport is necessary include a small donation towards the hire and running costs. Depending on numbers, we may also use members' cars, so please do let us know if you will have a car with you and are willing to offer lifts to other delegates.

We are very grateful to long-time SMAG regular Don O'Donnell for his extremely generous sponsorship of SMAG in Orkney. His belief in the Orkney venue and his willingness to put money where his mouth was guaranteed that this event went ahead. On behalf of all those attending, thanks, Don!

FRIDAY 28TH AUGUST 2009

09:00 – 10:30

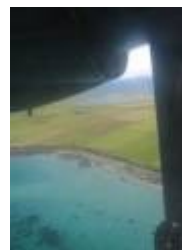
Cost: £31.00

Book your own!

Further flights possible on Monday

Papa Westray Flight

The shortest commercial flight in the world is from Westray to Papa Westray. This flight will give you an opportunity to see many of Orkney's islands from the air, enjoying the fabulous scenery. How many colours of blue and green can you spot? Did you notice any seaweed-eating sheep? You'll get a special certificate on your return. Unfortunately Loganair have changed their policy – this sightseeing flight (dep 09:30, returning 10:10) is now only available on the day, so you'll need to book it yourself. The good news is that they have added a second flight (dep 16:30 and arriving 17:10) so you might get lucky!



The event finishing time depends on how many people book for the event.

Further opportunities are offered on Sunday at 09:30 and Monday 09:30

09:30

Cost: £70

Try Dive

Those who have never dived before can have an amazing experience on their first attempt when they dive on a blockship wreck at the Churchill Barriers. It is run on a one-to-one basis with direct instructor supervision throughout, making it completely safe and personalised to you and your needs. To 'try a dive' you must be 10 years or older, reasonably fit and healthy with basic swimming ability.



09:30

Cost: £100

Guided Shore Dives at the Churchill Barrier Blockship wrecks.

When it comes to wrecks, blockships at the Churchill Barriers provide the best shore diving sites in Orkney, providing multiple points of interest. The cost includes two dives, equipment hire and basic dry suit tuition. Pre-requisite: PADI Open Water or equivalent.

Further opportunities are available on Sunday at 09:30 and Monday at 09:30

10:00 – 11:00

Cost: Free

Orkney Chairs Workshop Visit

Traditional Orkney chairs are made by hand Watch Fraser Anderson in his workshop as he weaves rope from sheaves of white oats before winding them onto a hardwood frame to make these unique chairs.

10:00 – 11:30

Cost: £5.50

St Magnus Cathedral Upper Tour

A fascinating and different view of our host town's cathedral. Not only will you see the clock mechanism and views over Kirkwall from the top of the tower but also see their 'museum' which has everything from antique stained glass to a gallows ladder. Some of the spaces you will go through are very small, so it's not an event for the claustrophobic.



This event comes highly recommended but group sizes are extremely limited so book early!

Repeated on Saturday at 10:00 and Monday at 13:30

10:00 – 12:00

Cost: £3.00

Orkney Herring Factory Visit

The herring industry was very much a part of Orkney's past – but also of its present. Orkney Herring exports all over the world. We'll get a chance to see round their factory and see how it all happens. Herring is full of Omega 3 and is touted as 'brain food' so what more appropriate visit could we find for a group of Mensans?

11:30 – 12:00

Cost: £1



St Magnus Cathedral Tour

Known as the 'Light in the North', Kirkwall's cathedral is the most northerly in the UK. It was founded in 1137 by the Viking, Earl Rognvald. A guide will take us round it, highlighting its history and its many special features.



11:30 – 13:00

Cost: £1

Ortak Factory Visit

Ortak, whose silver jewellery is inspired by Orkney's heritage and nature, is a household name. Come along and see how these beautiful pieces come into being. Their shop usually has some bargains too!



Repeated on Monday at 13:30

12:00 – 13:00

Cost: £3.75

Bishop's and Earl's Palaces

Repeated on Monday at 14:00



On our doorstep is the 12th Century Bishop's Palace and the Earl's Palace, which has been described as the finest example of Renaissance architecture in the French style in Scotland. The two buildings, which are side by side, offer a fascinating glimpse into Orkney's turbulent past.



12:00 – 13:30

Cost: £1

Orkney Cheese

A chance to see the Orkney Cheese factory and find out how that delicious product comes into being.

13:30 – 15:00

Cost: £7

Highland Park Distillery Tour

You can't come to Orkney and not enjoy a trip round the most northerly whisky distillery in the world. Established in 1798 it's also one of the oldest.



Repeated on Sunday at 15:30 and on Monday at 10:30

13:30 – 15:00

Cost: £2.50



Orkney Wine and the Italian Chapel

The Italian Chapel is one of the 'must see' places in Orkney. What Italian POWs did with a Nissan hut has to be seen to be believed. While we're out at Lamb Holm, we'll visit Orkney Wine where you can 'experience the fresh flavours of natural island goodness playing mischief on your palate.'

Repeated on Monday at 12:00



13:30 – 14:30

Cost: £5

History Walk round Kirkwall

A walking tour round Kirkwall with one of Orkney's premier guides. Find out all about the history of this fascinating town with Fran of Dragon Tours.

15.00 – 16:30

Cost: £2.50

Sheila Fleet Jewellery Workshop

This award-winning local designer takes her inspiration from Orkney's nature and heritage to produce a range of sophisticated silver, gold and enamelled jewellery. See her team of craftsmen at work.

15.00 – 16:30

Cost: £1

Orkney Archives

Repeated on Monday at 15:00



Visit the custom-built archives and discover more of Orkney's past through the medium of photographs and historical records. With more than 50,000 photographs in their collection and records dating back to the 17th century you'll find out about all sorts of aspects of Orkney life.

15.00 – 17:30

Cost: £3

European Marine Energy Centre Wave Test Site visit (Stromness)

Orkney isn't just about the past – it is very forward-looking too. Find out for yourself by visiting EMEC headquarters in Stromness. We'll then stroll up nearby Black Craig to look down at the experimental wave test facility at Billia Croo, which is ideally placed on the



western edge of the Orkney mainland, an area with one of the highest wave energy potentials in Europe, if not the world.

15.30 – 16:30

Cost: £2

The Orkney Wireless Museum

A fascinating collection of wartime and domestic radio memorabilia. Some of the items were originally classified as top secret.

Repeated Sun 15:00 and Mon 12:00



If the tour times don't suit you, then you can order an entry ticket from us at this special discounted rate and visit at a time you prefer. Just ask us for details.



18.00 – 19.00

Cost: £1

Lifeboat Visit

Island communities rely on their lifeboat. This is a chance to see round the Kirkwall lifeboat in the company of some of the volunteers who will regale you with tales of what it is like to be a key emergency service in a place like Orkney.



17.30 – 20.00

Cost: £12.50 / £15

Orkney Hotel – Eat when you like

Three course meal for £15 or you can go for the two course option at £12.50. Pre-book your meal ticket with us then arrange with the hotel restaurant to eat at a time that suits you. See booking form for the menu.

19.00 – 20.00

Cost: £6

Whisky Tasting

No SMAG would be complete without one of David Stobo's whisky tasting sessions. As a long-time member of the Malt Whisky Society, he knows what he's talking about and has selected some very special whiskies for you to try including Scapa, the other Orkney whisky.

20.00 – 21.00

Cost: Free

Icebreaker

Whether you know people already or are coming along for the first time, this is the event where you can mingle and go 'rune the room'. What do the runes say about you?

21.00 – 23.00

Cost: £10

Peat Fire Tales

An entertaining blend of Orkney lore and legend, with music and dancing. This is a chance to experience some Orcadian tradition while having fun with friends new and old.

SATURDAY 29TH AUGUST 2009

10:00 – 17:00

Cost: Free



Yesnaby Castle

West Mainland Walk

A self-guided 8 or 13 mile walk along the West Mainland coast. Start at Yesnaby Castle, with its interesting geological features then walk north to Skaill Bay, where you can pop in for a look at Skara Brae, then continue to Kitchener's Memorial (or carry on as far as Birsay). We'll provide the maps for you and can also arrange transport if you don't have your own with you. Take along a picnic.



Kitchener Memorial

10:00 – 11:30

Cost: £5.50

St Magnus Cathedral Upper Tour

Repeated Monday 13:30

Another chance to take this fascinating tour.



Ring of Brodgar



Maeshowe



Stones of Stenness



Skara Brae

10:00 – 17:30

Cost: £20.00

Neolithic Orkney Bus Tour

This must see event will show you the wonders of Neolithic Orkney and you will realise very quickly why they have been given World Heritage Site status and have a unique place in world archaeology. We'll start at the massive Ring of Brodgar, where we will get a special guided tour by the Rangers. Then, it's Maeshowe, the chambered burial cairn with Viking runic 'graffiti' added centuries later and the Stones of Stenness close by. A few miles further on you'll arrive at Skara Brae, the stone age village that was unearthed by a massive storm at the end of the 19th Century. They have a cafeteria there where you can get some lunch (or you can take a picnic if you prefer and sit on the beautiful white sands of Skaill Bay). We've arranged a special archaeological guide to accompany us throughout the afternoon to explain better what you are seeing. Also at that location is Skaill House, Orkney's biggest manor house. We'll take the north coast route back to Kirkwall, so that you can see the amazing Broch of Gurness, the best preserved broch village in Scotland, strikingly positioned beside Eynhallow Sound. Price includes entry to all the properties we'll visit.



Broch of Gurness

11:30 – 12.30
Cost: Free

Coastguard Station Visit

Island communities depend on the sea for their livelihood and their communication and transport needs. Keeping an eye on it on their behalf is the local Coastguard. Visit the local coastguard station to talk to him and his volunteers to find out the special requirements of their Orkney 'patch'.

Repeated on Sunday at 10:00 and at 15:30

13:00 – 17.00
Cost: Free

Cycle Trip to West Mainland

Led by a local member who is a cycling aficionado, this is a chance for more serious cyclists to see some of the highlights of Orkney's West Mainland.

Cycle hire is available - £6 for a standard bike (2-3 years old) or £8 for the premium variety (this year's model).



19.30 – 23.00
Cost: £22.50

Dinner and Speaker

Enjoy local delicacies before listening to Sandy Firth, stalwart of the Orkney Wireless Museum who will be entertaining us with tales of Orkney life.

Homemade Farmhouse Lentil Soup served with fresh baked bread (V)
Gateau of prawns bound in Marie Rose sauce served with peedie oatcakes
Smooth chicken liver pate with herbs & garlic served with local bere bannocks

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Breast of chicken filled with Haggis, set on a leek mash with a rich caramelised red onion gravy  
Prime Orkney roast beef served with a rich wine gravy and Yorkshire pudding  
Penne pasta with fresh spinach, gorgonzola cheese & walnuts served with crusty fresh bread (V)

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Highland Park & Orkney fudge cheesecake
Selection of luxury dairy Orkney ice cream
Traditional Cloutie Dumpling served with fresh custard

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Freshly brewed Tea or Coffee served with Orkney fudge

## **SUNDAY 30<sup>TH</sup> AUGUST 2009**

9.00 – 13.30  
Cost: £28

#### **Roving Eye Boat Trip to Scapa Flow**

This is far more than just a boat trip. Roving Eye's underwater camera means that you will get to see some historic wartime wrecks without even having to get your feet wet. In addition, the cruise will take you over to Hoy where you will get time in Lyness to visit the Scapa Flow museum which has a fount of



information about Scapa Flow during the two World Wars. As if wrecks and history aren't enough – there's a good chance of seeing wildlife such as seals on the trip.

09:30  
Cost: £70 and £100

#### **Try Dive and Accompanied Shore Dives**

A further opportunity to dive wrecks from the first and second world wars at the Churchill Barriers.

10.00 – 11.00  
Cost: Free

#### **Coastguard Station Visit**

*Repeated on Sunday at 15:30*

10.00 – 13.00  
Cost: £1

#### **Cliff top Walk to the Gloop**

An easy cliff top walk around Mull Head Local Nature Reserve, where you will be able to enjoy some of the wonderful bird and plant life for which Orkney is justifiably famous. You can choose from a 3.5 mile circular walk to the Gloop, a spectacular collapsed sea cave, or the 5.7 mile version where you will also see the Covenanter's Memorial and the remains of a small Norse chapel and settlement.

11.00 – 12.00  
Cost: Free

#### **Fisheries Protection Vessel Visit**

For centuries, Orkney was dependent on fishing. Today presents new challenges to local fishermen in the form of quotas and international legislation. Come and see round one of the vessels that is responsible for protecting the fishing waters around these islands. Please note that this event is subject to operational requirements so may have to be cancelled at the last minute.

*Repeated on Sunday at 14:00 and on Monday at 10:30*

13.00 – 14.00  
Cost: Free

#### **Coastguard Tug Visit**

Find out why the coastguard needs a tug and see round the vessel. *Repeated on Sunday at 16:30*

14.00 – 15.00  
Cost: Free

#### **Fisheries Protection Vessel Visit**

Another chance to see round this ship *Repeated on Monday at 10:30*

14.00 – 17.00  
Cost: Free



#### **Cycle trip to Churchill Barriers**

A moderate spin on the bike down to the Churchill Barriers that is suitable for anyone with basic level fitness. You'll be able to stop in for a look at the **Italian Chapel** if you haven't had a chance to see it yet. Cycle hire is available - £6 for a standard bike (2-3 years old) or £8 for the premium variety (this year's model).



14.30 – 15.30  
Cost: £2

**The Orkney Wireless Museum**

Haven't seen round this fascinating collection of antique radios and specialist wartime equipment yet?

*Repeated on Monday at 12:00*

15.30 – 16.30  
Cost: Free

**Coastguard Station Visit**

A further opportunity to see the local station and hear about the coastguard's duties and challenges.

15.30 – 17.00  
Cost: £7

**Highland Park Distillery Tour**

Another dram fine event! *Repeated on Monday at 10:30*

16.30 – 17.30  
Cost: Free

**Coastguard Tug Visit**

Missed seeing the tug earlier? Why not sign up to see it now instead?

17.30 – 20.30  
Cost: £7.50

**The Ring of Brodgar and Maeshowe**

Whether you missed the tour yesterday, or simply want to see them in a different light, this is a further chance to see these Neolithic wonders.

18.00 – 20.00  
Cost: PAYG

**Orkney Pub Crawl**

Taste some of the local beers in a variety of Kirkwall establishments.



After all, it wouldn't really be a proper SMAG without a pub crawl to experience, now would it...?

20.00 – 21.00  
Cost: £2.50



**Orkney Birds Talk**

Orkney is world famous for its birdlife. From puffins to skua, who better than Eric Meek of the RSPB to tell you all about them? Come along and enjoy the show he'll put on in the hotel.



20.30 – 21.30  
Cost: £5

**Creepy walking tour round Kirkwall**

A look at historic Kirkwall in a slightly different light. There won't be any 'ghosts' jumping out at you as you go round, but Fran of Dragon Tours has plenty spooky stories of old Kirkwall to share with you.

**MONDAY 31<sup>ST</sup> AUGUST 2009**

09:00 – 10:30  
Cost: £31

**Papa Westray Flight**



Unfortunately, we are now unable to book this on your behalf – you have to do it yourself on the day. There are two possibilities: dep 09:30, returning 10:10; dep 16:30 and arriving 17:10.

Book your own!

09:15 – 18:00  
Cost: £15



**Walk to the Old Man of Hoy**

After a ferry trip from Stromness to Moaness (Hoy), a minibus will take you to Rackwick. On the way, you can stop off and visit the Dwarfie Stane. From Rackwick the walk along the cliffs takes about 3 hours round trip to see the Old Man of Hoy. There is a much longer walk through the centre of the island, but that would be for serious walkers only.



09:30  
Cost: £70 and £100

**Try Dive and Accompanied Shore Dives with Scapa Scuba**

See Friday for details. Last chance to go diving on blockship wrecks.

10.00 – 12.00  
Cost: £3

**Orkney Fudge and Argo's Bakery**

For those with a sweet tooth, who could resist a visit to the Orkney Fudge factory? If their building work is complete by August, you will also get a chance to see round the bakery part, too, but you'll certainly find out about the products Argo's make from 'bere' or barley as well as Orkney wheat (a special variety).

10.30 – 11.30  
Cost: Free

**Fisheries Protection Vessel Visit**

A further opportunity to see round this ship.

10.30 – 12.00  
Cost: £7

**Highland Park Distillery Tour**

Last chance for that special dram at the most Northerly distillery!

11.00 – 14.00  
Cost: £30

**European Marine Energy Centre tidal site visit on Eday (boat trip)**

This is another boat trip with a difference. Not only will you get to enjoy being out on the water sailing to Eday but you will get to see the tidal test site at the Fall of Warness, to the west of the island of Eday. It was chosen for its high velocity marine currents which reach almost 4m/sec (7.8 knots) at spring tides.



Please note that this event is very number-dependent. Weather, too, plays a key part in whether or not it goes ahead.

12.00 – 13.30  
Cost: £2.50

**Orkney Wine and the Italian Chapel**

Another chance to amuse your palate with Orkney wine and have a look at the Italian Chapel.

12.00 – 13.30  
Cost: £2.50



**Lobster Hatchery Visit**

Orkney Lobster Hatchery releases over 65,000 juvenile lobsters annually, and is working to create a sustainable lobster fishery around the Orkney Isles. In 2002 the hatchery was rebuilt, and through its innovative design has become the most successful lobster hatchery in Europe.



13.30 – 15.00  
Cost: £5.50

**St Magnus Cathedral Upper Tour**

Last opportunity for a place on this fascinating tour.

13.30 – 15.00  
Cost: £1

**Ortak Factory Visit**

For those of you who missed Friday's visit round their factory.



14.00 – 15.00

Cost: £3.75

### **The Bishop's and Earl's Palaces**

One last chance to see round these interesting ruins in Kirkwall.

14.30 – 15.30

Cost: £2

### **The Orkney Wireless Museum**

An exhibition that really is the cat's whiskers!

15.00 – 18.00

Cost: £9

### **The Tomb of the Eagles**

At the tip of South Ronaldsay is Isbister Chambered Cairn, a Neolithic tomb that was discovered 51 years ago by a local farmer, whose family runs the museum. It is an informal 'museum' that is far more hands on than the likes of Historic Scotland.



In fact, getting in to the tomb itself is done on a glorified skateboard! The short walk (about a mile) along the cliff tops to the tomb affords a chance at some nature spotting as well as a look at a Bronze Age site along the way.

15.00 – 18.00

Cost: £20 and £25



### **Gaira Driving Ponies**

Gaira is situated on South Ronaldsay. It can offer small groups a carriage drive through the beautiful Orkney countryside and beside the bay (£20), or, for the more adventurous, you can actually have some driving tuition (£25). There are more options available for experienced riders. Each booking is for an hour – when not taking part there is a delicious afternoon tea option nearby...

15.00 – 16:30

Cost: £1

### **The Orkney Archives**

Another opportunity to explore Orkney's heritage.

19.30 – 22:30

Cost: £16

### **Taste of Orkney Farewell Meal**

Just in case you haven't managed to try some of Orkney's specialities already, we're going to finish off with a special 'Taste of Orkney' buffet at the West End hotel, just round the corner. We'll spend the evening there, following the good food (and drink!) with a fun quiz and a chance to mingle.

## *How To BOOK*

Please send completed booking forms (one per person), enclosing payment in full, to

**DIANE SALTER (SMAG 2008)**

**BRITISH MENSA LTD**

**ST JOHN'S HOUSE**

**ST JOHN'S SQUARE**

**WOLVERHAMPTON**

**WV1 2AH**

TELEPHONE **01924 772771**

E-MAIL [diane@mensa.org.uk](mailto:diane@mensa.org.uk)

**Closing Date : 14<sup>th</sup> August 2009**

If you have any queries regarding event bookings, please contact Diane at the above address; if you have any queries regarding your hotel booking then please contact the hotel direct; and if you have any queries regarding the events, the weekend, directions, or Orkney itself, please e-mail the organisers on [orkneysmag09@googlemail.com](mailto:orkneysmag09@googlemail.com)



### **Alternative accommodation**

Orkney is very much a tourist location so there are plenty other places to stay, too, whatever your budget from camp sites and youth hostels to B&Bs.

Alternative accommodation to that offered by the hotel can also be arranged through:

- Orkney Tourist Office ([www.visitorkney.com](http://www.visitorkney.com))
- Visit Scotland ([www.visitscotland.com](http://www.visitscotland.com))
- Note: a booking fee may apply if using the above
- The Orcadian ([www.orcadian.co.uk](http://www.orcadian.co.uk))

### **Travel**

There are multiple options for getting to Orkney depending on whether you wish to fly or arrive by ferry.

Flybe ([www.flybe.com](http://www.flybe.com)) flies direct to Kirkwall from Glasgow, Edinburgh, Aberdeen and Inverness, with connecting flights available.

[www.northlinkferries.co.uk](http://www.northlinkferries.co.uk) (car crossings from the North coast or Aberdeen)

[www.pentlandferries.co.uk](http://www.pentlandferries.co.uk) (shortest car crossing)

[www.jogferry.co.uk](http://www.jogferry.co.uk) (passengers only)

Please note – due to local bylaws, children are not allowed in the bar at any time. There is a separate area where soft drinks may be ordered.

Places on some of the tours (e.g. Orkney Herring and Orkney Fudge) are very limited, but that means that we might well have some spare seats in the minibus for those of you who just fancy a look round Stromness. Ask the organiser for details ([orkneysmag09@googlemail.com](mailto:orkneysmag09@googlemail.com)). Details will be posted on the notice board at the hotel, so do keep an eye out, if this is something that might appeal. All we'd ask is a donation towards the transport costs.

*We are so excited about having SMAG in Orkney. It's going to be downright wonderful. We hope to see you there!*