

Newsletter - November 2020



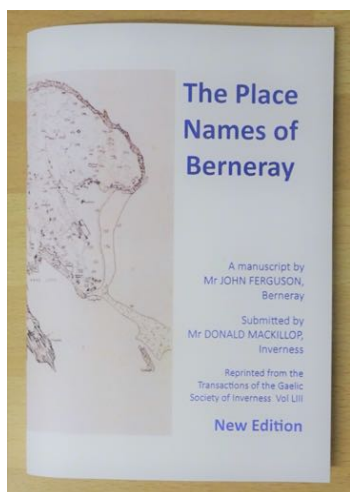
The Sound of Harris Tides

In the last newsletter there was an article about Sir Robert Moray, first President of the Royal Society, who was in Berneray in 1654 and then in 1665 wrote about the tides.

Willie J Turner adds that Martin Martin wrote about the peculiar tides in his Description of the Western Isles of Scotland published in 1703. The tides were also described in The Statistical Account of Scotland 1791.

Looking Ahead ...

A new edition of "The Place Names of Berneray" will be available next season.



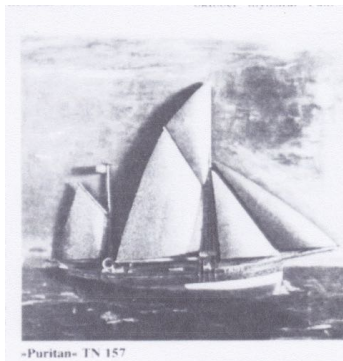
Since the last newsletter our membership has increased to 49. 22 members pay by an annual standing order and 17 members have completed gift aid forms.

For membership information please contact:

Berneray Historical Society
Nurse's Cottage
Backhill
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Isle of North Uist
HS6 5BD

www.bernerayhistorical.com
SC047024

100 years ago



-Puritan- TN 157

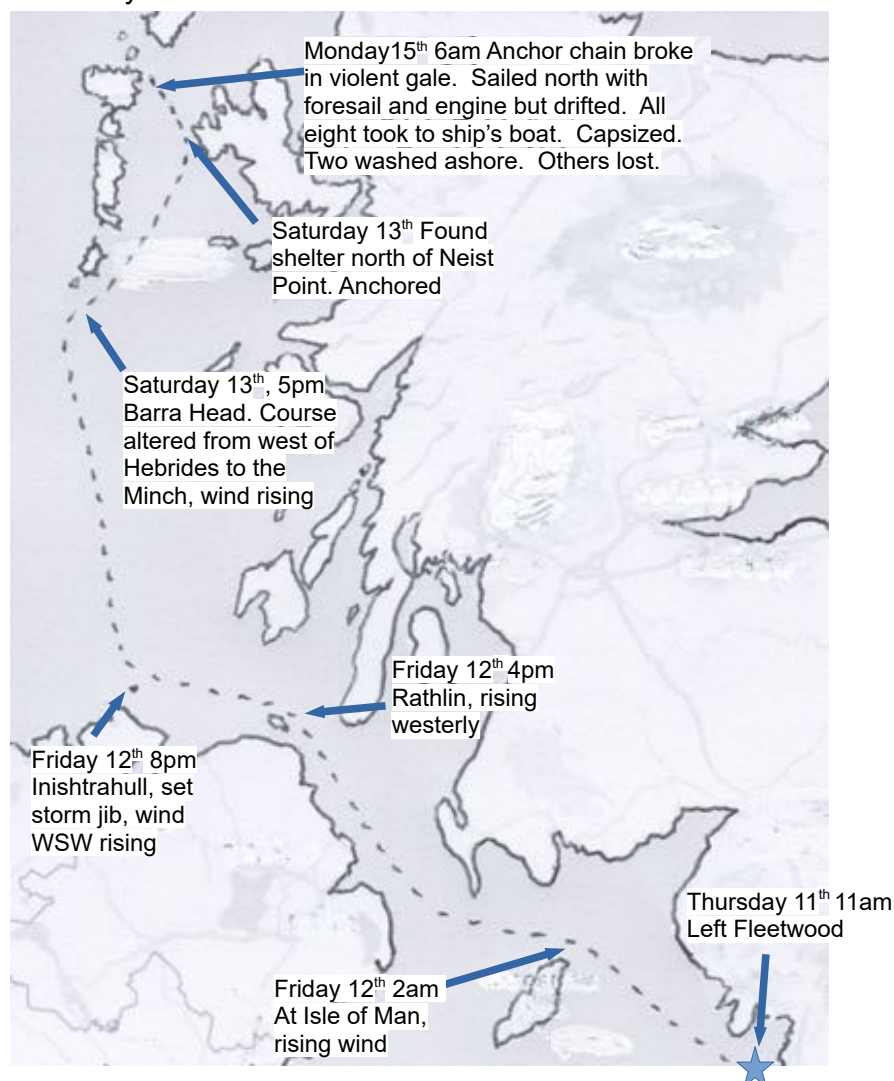
The Wreck of the Puritan

One hundred years ago, in November 1920, a terrible storm struck the Hebrides. A Faroese boat, the Puritan, was wrecked on the reef off Hermetray. Having changed course because of the storm, she was making her way home from Fleetwood in Lancashire, when disaster struck. Six men perished and only two survived the wreck.

Picture from Faroese paper, *Dimmalætting*

The Voyage of the Puritan

In October 1920, with a crew of eight, she set sail from the Faroes for Fleetwood with a cargo of salt fish. Three weeks later she arrived, took on a cargo of salt and other merchandise and set out for home on Thursday 11th November.



Two survivors were washed ashore. The Puritan foundered on the reef.

About the Puritan

The Puritan was a ketch-rigged fishing smack built in Grimsby in 1885. She was sold in Sweden in 1900 and then bought in January 1920 by a Faroese merchant. At that time the Faroe Islands were a county of Denmark.

She was carvel-built in oak, 75 ft long, 44.8 tons net. She had an engine as well as sails. During 1920 she fished in Faroese and Icelandic waters. When fishing, by long line, she had a crew of 18.

About the Crew

The 6 sailors who were lost:

Hans Pauli Olsen, 38, captain
Christian Joensen, 44
Oli Hansen, 29
Hans Pauli Danielsen, 26
Peter Guttesen, 19
Jakub Olsen, 17, the captain's son, on his first voyage

Their bodies were never found.

The 2 sailors who survived:

Sofus Jacobsen, 30
Hans Jacobsen, 26

Note

Archie Paterson can be heard speaking in Gaelic about the rescue with Ian Paterson, School of Scottish Studies.

www.tobarandualchais.co.uk

Thanks

Susanne Barding, who provided much information for this article
Oli Olsen, Faroese Navigation Academy
Adrian Wilkinson, N.E.Lincolnshire Library Service
Alison Dix, Susan Hardy, Duncan MacKinnon, Allan Turner, Sue Wilson.

The Rescue

The two Faroese men were rescued on Wednesday 17 November by four fishermen from Berneray who had set out after the storm abated to lift lobster creels in the Sound Of Harris. The men were **Ailig Beag MacDonald**, his brother **Ailig Mòr**, **Norman Macleod** and **Archie Paterson**. The MacDonald brothers and Norman MacLeod, men in their fifties, lived at Ludag, near the old school. Aged twenty, the youngest of the crew was Archie Paterson of 14 Borve, the nephew of Ailig Beag's wife.

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The Berneray men lifted creels at Opasaigh and set course for Gròdaigh. As they passed Hermetray they spotted two men waving from Cnoc a' Chombaiste, Compass Hill. The two men had survived the shipwreck and then survived two days and nights, cold and wet, on the uninhabited island. They must have been in a very poor state when they were, by great good fortune, rescued.

The men were taken back to Ludag, given warm clothes and as much food as they could eat and put to bed. They had no language in common with their rescuers. Ailig Beag sent a telegram from the Post Office, then at Baybank.

Wreck found off Hermetray by Alick Beag MacDonald. Two passengers on board. One apple only.

The telegram didn't mention that, among the timbers of the wreck, Archie Paterson found a wooden case with twelve bottles of whisky.



What Happened Next

The next day the men were fit enough to travel so they were taken by horse and cart to Lochmaddy where they spent the night before travelling to Kyle. They returned to the Faroes from Leith. The day after the rescue news of the tragedy reached Torshavn where flags were lowered to half mast. The Faroes had lost two of their finest and most enterprising skippers as well as four young and able fishermen.

Later, the four Berneray men shared a £50 reward from the King of Denmark. It's known that toys, among other merchandise, were washed up from the wreck.

A Commemoration

In his song, Oran a' Phuratan, **Hector MacKinnon** of Berneray commemorated both the loss resulting from the wreck and the generosity of the people of Berneray. The first verse is given below.

Oran a' Phuratan

An cualas mu na Lochlannaich
Nach bochd mar dh'èirich dhaibh
A thàinig gu Rìof Hearmatraigh
'S an long gun chearb a chall,
A' chuid bha beò 's a dh'fhàgar dhiubh
Bha 'n càradh duilich, fann
'S a chuid a chaidh dhan ghrunnnd aca
Bidh ionndrainn orra thall

A translation

Did you hear about the Scandinavians?
Wasn't it dreadful what happened to them
When they came to the Reef of Hermetray
And their ship, without defect, was lost?
Those who survived
Were in a sorry and weak state
And those who went to the depths
Will be missed over there in their
homeland.