

Orkney songs celebrated in Dounby

REVIEW

THE Big Orkney Song Project (BOSP) held its final Mainland Song Share before it heads out to the isles at the Dounby Centre last Saturday.

The project really is proving to be accessible to all and welcomed a party from the Skarva Taing Care Home as well as two very young participants of 18 months and 22 months!

As with all the events so far we were first entertained with a concert of song. The Song Shop Trio, Aimee Leonard, Emily Turton and Sarah Jane Gibbon, accompanied by Brian Cromarty started proceedings with the Brides Lament. This was a BOSP arrangement of a lovely song based on a recording in the Orkney Library and Archive of Sydney Scott from North Ronaldsay.

Brian Cromarty then took the lead, accompanied by the trio, with two songs, Sleepie Heed, a gentle and delightful lullaby written for his son, and A Ring On Her Hand which was commissioned by The Orkney Singers in 2007 for the BOSP pilot 'A Celebration of Orkney Song' weekend. The song tells the story of Margaret of Norway. Brian used a melody and accompanying line fragment from the Balfour Collection as the basis for this song, for which he wrote words and developed the melody.

Next came the second trio of the afternoon, Thora Linklater, accompanied by Aimee Leonard (voice and bodhran)



AN ORKNEY FAIRY TALE: Thora Linklater (far right), accompanied by Ali Skene on fiddle and Aimee Leonard.



ENTERTAINED WITH ORKNEY SONGS: Back row, from left: Aimee Leonard, Emily Turton, Val Johnston (Scarva Taing), Ali Skene, Thora Linklater, Sarah-Jane Gibbon, Barbara Grieve, Brian Cromarty and Angie Cooper (Scarva Taing). Front row, from left: Lizzie Flett, Alf Work, Margaret Reid and Belle Windwick.

PICTURES ALISTAIR PEEBLES

and Ali Skene on fiddle, performed An Orkney Fairy Tale.

Emily Turton the project administrator told us: "Thora has written a wealth of Orkney songs and we are delighted that they will be included in the Big Orkney Song Collection."

Next to the stage was Sarah Jane Gibbon with two George Corrigall Songs – the very moving bothy ballad Princie and Jean and Brak Him Up For Spares, a hilarious song written in the 1960's which could be said to be foretelling cloning and transplant surgery.

The concert ended as it began, with the Song Shop Trio and Brian performing a newly arranged song The Hamars o' Syra Dale. The song was chosen for the Dounby Song Share as it was originally sung by Ethel Findlater who was from the area and specifically as she wrote the tune. The words were taken from a poem printed in the Orcadian although the date of publication is still unknown. A very beautiful song but not a cheery one, it tells a very tragic story focused at the Hamars o' Syra Dale, a valley in the south east of Harray.

You can listen to the song and

others on the projects website at: www.orkneycommunities.co.uk/orkneysingers

During the break, where we were gratefully plied with tea, biscuits and Easter eggs, Barbara Grieve entertained the Skarva Taing group with an Ally Windwick song Partens in his Creel. After that, 15 people stayed to take part in a workshop where we learned the song the Hamars o' Syra Dale.

At this event a member of the public loaned a handwritten notebook with ten old orkney songs to the project, and hopefully some of the material in it will be arranged and used at future Song Shares.

The project starts its Island Hop with a trip to Shapinsay on Saturday April 18. The Song Share, from 1.30 - 4pm at the school, has been arranged around the ferry timetable making it an ideal opportunity to visit the Island for the day. Check out next week's paper for more info.

The atmosphere at these events really is very special. Everyone is welcomed and made to feel special. I'm looking forward to the next one already!

SJG