

NEWS RELEASE

Tuesday 14 February 2006

Orkney Homecoming to welcome hundreds back to their roots

Orkney's long-standing historical and cultural links with Canada will be further strengthened next year with the Orkney Homecoming 2007.

Preparations are currently underway for the event, which organisers hope will be even more successful than the original Homecoming in 1999 when around 250 Canadians travelled to Orkney to discover more about their roots.

Cameron Taylor, who was chief executive of Orkney Tourist Board during the 1999 Homecoming and is now chairman of Orkney Homecoming 2007, said:

"The first Homecoming in 1999 was an amazing and emotional experience for all involved, and it was always hoped that we would do this again following that success. The Treaty of Friendship between Orkney and Manitoba was drawn up as a result of 1999 and when the Orkney Islands Council Convener and Chief Executive went over to Canada last year to renew the treaty, it was decided to start planning for the second homecoming.

"We have already received a huge amount of support and encouragement from the likes of Orkney Islands Council and VisitOrkney, and with up to 300 Canadians expected to make the journey next year, I truly believe that this will be an even better event than 1999."

Since the renewal of the treaty, Orkney Islands Council Convener Stephen Hagan has invited Manitoba Minister for Culture, Heritage and Tourism Eric Robison, himself of Scottish ancestry, to Orkney next year. In addition, he and Orkney Islands Council Chief Executive Alistair Buchan have jointly signed a letter of open invitation to all North Americans of Orcadian ancestry.

Other partners involved in the planning of the Homecoming include VisitOrkney and the Great Canadian Travel Company, who helped to organise the original event.

Area Director of VisitOrkney Barbara Foulkes commented:

"I am delighted to be involved with the Orkney Homecoming 2007, which I'm positive will be another resounding success.

"Orkney's historical impact on the development of Canada goes back to the Hudson's Bay Company, and the importance of this legacy cannot be overstated. Indeed, without these intrepid Orcadians who were the mainstay of the company's workforce, we may never have had our very own Arctic explorer John Rae or discovered the true fate of Sir John Franklin's final expedition.

"While the Homecoming will be a fantastic opportunity to strengthen these ties even further, there are also economic and cultural benefits to be gained, particularly from a tourism perspective. More and more people are becoming interested in researching their family history and tracing their family tree, and Orkney Archives and the Orkney

Family History Society will play an important role in helping our visitors discover their heritage.”

The Orkney Homecoming 2007 will run from 16 to 22 May, with a programme of events expected to include tours of the islands, an evening gala, and a day in celebration of John Rae.

The Homecoming itself will also tie in with Highland 2007, a year of events to celebrate and promote Highland culture.

For further details on the Orkney Homecoming 2007, visit www.orkneyhomecoming.com. For more information on ancestral tourism, visit www.ancestralscotland.com.

Attached file: Open letter of invitation from Orkney Islands Council [council letter.pdf]

Ends

For further information, please contact:
Cameron Taylor, Seabridge
Tel: 01856 870311
Email: cameron@seabridge.org