

ORKNEY

07. Papdale, Kirkwall and St. Ola

Papdale HY 456 109
Papdale Burn HY 452 109
St. Olaf's Church HY 4504 1116 NMRS no. HY41SE8.0 RCAHMS 1946, no. 400
SMR no ?
Soil Survey of Scotland Class 42 (land around the eastern side of Kirkwall)

(FIG. 07.1)

The lands of Papdale extend up the sloping ground to the east of the burgh of Kirkwall. Along with Weyland, it was one of two farms which lay immediately adjacent to the burgh in the nineteenth century. Similarly, in Kirkwall's charter of incorporation in 1486, the land and outdykes of Papdale formed the eastern boundary of the burgh (Craven 1891, 123-8). To Hossack, the name - which he spelt *Pabdale* - demonstrated 'that the monks had fixed their abode on the bank of the stream that ran past the hamlet into the Oyce [now the Peerie Sea]' (1900, 2, 394-402). *Papdels* is depicted on Blaeu's map of 1654; it is also shown on maps of 1750 (*Pabdale*), 1769 (*Papdal*), 1807 and 1822, although its position in relation to Kirkwall varies slightly (Mackenzie 1750; Anderson 1769; Arrowsmith 1807; Thomson 1822). It is likely that any 'papar' community would have been 'near the shore in the vicinity of St. Olaf's Church'; (Thomson, pers. comm.)

The ninepenny lands of *Papdaill*, with its mill, are found in a charter of feufarm by Adam, Bishop of Orkney, to John Culayne and Agnes Balfour in 1560 (Johnston and Johnston 1907-13, 121-8, no. 63). The lands appear again in the earldom rental of 1595, when they paid two barrels of butter, and in teynd - alongside Weyland and Clet - 2 meills cost, 28 poultry, and 44s silver' (*REO*, no. II, 25; Hossack 1900, 394). Both *Papdaill* and the *myll of Pabdail* were feued to John Findlison in Dundee by the bishop in 1614 (*REO*, no. II, 118; Hossack 1900, facing 117, 394). In the 'Bishoprick-Compt-Book' of 1739, the mill of *Papdeall* was linked with the lands of *North Papdaill*, held by Mr. Thomas Baikie, while Robert Baikie had *South Papdaill* and *St. Cathrinsquoy* (*REO*, no. VI, 60). Like Papdale, much of the area around Kirkwall had also belonged to the church:

'Most of the lands in the parish of St. Ola, that lye around Kirkwall, formerly made a part of the temporality of the bishoprick of Orkney, and were feued either at the Reformation, or on the prospect of the abolition of Episcopacy. Some of them also belonged to the prebendaries of St. Peter &c.

As the soil in many parts of them is good, such as have fallen into private hands have been partly enclosed and cultivated; but those that have been granted to the town, on condition it is said of their supporting St. Magnus Cathedral, and are still in the hands of the community, remain from various causes, in the same rude and uncultivated state as before, though equally susceptible of improvement. A very great proportion of them is still an undivided common, belonging jointly to the town and private gentleman, all of which almost is capable of substantial melioration; and if ever agriculture flourish here, that land will not only serve to increase the revenue of individuals, and augment the town's funds, but also furnish more ample provision for the inhabitants' (Barry 1805, 23-4).

In the Name Book, Papdale is described as a mansion house and a farmhouse (NB, Orkney, Book 12, 64) and in the twentieth century, was 'a good farm still' (Marwick 1952, 99). The present Papdale House and walled garden, with its corner tower, are in fact of eighteenth century date (Burgher 1991, 25; NMRS no. HY41SE50, HY 4569 1097). Two corn mills are shown along the burn on the OS First edition map, although one is shown in ruins by the time of the Second edition map and has subsequently been demolished (NMRS no. HY41SE60, HY 4529 1090); the other was built in 1856 and altered in 1880, but could presumably be on an earlier site (Burgher 1991, 26; NMRS no. HY41SE59, HY 4520 1096). The burn for washing and the banks for bleaching were retained as a

common right of the burgh (Hossack 1900, 394). Below the extant mill, all traces of the line of the Papdale burn are now buried under the streets of the town, but the slight widening at the junction of Bridge Street Wynd and Queen Street marks the site of the 'langstaine', a bridge formed from a single slab of flagstone, first mentioned in 1677; the burn then ran down The Hempow to the Peerie Sea (*ibid.*, 167-8). Unlike Weyland, which has a stretch of shoreline forming its northern boundary, Papdale Farm has no access to the sea - except via a loan following the line of the much later Catherine Place towards Shore Street (*ibid.*, 117-8, 412). Since what is presumed to be the oldest part of the town surrounds the lower reaches of the burn, this would seem to imply that Kirkwall's encroachment on the western part of Papdale's original area was of long-standing (Thomson 2003). Gallow Ha', in the late nineteenth century the name of a cottage located at the head of the Clay Loan, but once the place where those accused of witchcraft were burnt, lay on the lands of Papdale (*ibid.*, 402; Tudor 1883, 275; Burgher 1991, 22).

St. Olaf's Church (SMR no.1542)

It is generally accepted that Kirkwall, ON *kirkiu-vagr*, 'Church-bay', takes its name from the church of St. Olaf, built about 1035 on the north bank of the Papdale Burn (*contra* Barry 1791, 530; Anon. 1726, 147; Low 1774, 59; Barry 1805, 21; *FES*, Vol. VIII, 694; Gorrie 1869, 12; Anderson 1873, lxxxix; Craven 1891, 12, 38; Dryden 1896, 109-113; Hossack 1900, 4, 160; Mooney 1939, 75; Mooney 1947, 94-5; RCAHMS 1946, 141-2, no. 400; Marwick 1952, 96; the word 'graveyard' on the First edition map is actually printed at HY 4506 1115, probably the nearest convenient open space (NMRS no. HY41SE9)). St. Olaf's was almost certainly founded by Earl Rognvald Brusison, in honour of his foster-father, Olaf the Holy, who died in 1030 at the battle of Stiklestadt, in which Rognvald also fought (Anderson 1873, lxxxix; Hossack 1900, 4, 160). The decision of Rognvald, who ruled the earldom of Orkney alongside Thorfinn Sigurdsson, to settle at Kirkwall (Pálsson and Edwards 1978, 70), must have meant that both town and church soon rose in importance. Kirkwall with its central location commanding the narrow neck of land linking east and west Mainland, the axis around which sea routes to the northern and southern isles also operate, has never lost its pre-eminence, even if its focus is now St. Magnus cathedral. The Orkneyinga Saga also records that Thorkel, one of Thorbjorn Clerk's followers, was killed on his way to church - presumably St. Olaf's - in Kirkwall, by Thorarin Bag-Nose, a friend and retainer of Earl Rognvald (II). As Thorbjorn and his followers immediately surrounded the church, Thorarin claimed sanctuary inside, until Thorbjorn was eventually driven off by Rognvald (Hossack 1900, 9-10; OS, chap. 100, Pálsson and Edwards 1978, 207-8). Within the area of the former churchyard, a broken hogback, which had probably been re-used as a whetstone, was recovered in about 1970 and is now in The Orkney Museum. It is 10th-11th century in date, and provides the only tangible evidence of a Norse church on the site (Lang 1975, 220-1, 228; Ritchie, 2004, 17; NMRS no. HY41SE8.1, HY 450 111).

Hossack believed that the *papar* name indicated the existence of a settlement prior to the arrival of the Norse (*ibid.*, 2, 160). However, rescue excavations along Broad Street imply the focus of earlier settlement, extending from the Iron Age into the historical Pictish period, may have lain to the west of the later cathedral (Lamb, Smith and Lorimer 1987, 34). Dryden suggests the entirely Norse name for Kirkwall pre-supposes that the foundation was also of Norse origin - as the dedication to Olaf would seem to imply - but he does allow the possibility of a 'Culdee' church (1896, 111-2). In contrast, Craven believed the dedication of the church to reflect the re-founding of an earlier church following the arrival of the Norse (1891, 38, 96). Both the name of the burn, as well as the bridge crossing it, are given as St. Olaf's in 1580 (George Petrie, in a short note appended to Dryden's account (1896, 112)); this is also the case for the burn below the extant mill on the earlier editions of the OS maps (cf. Craven 1891, 38). Even so, though the

parish remained St. Ola's, the probably earlier name of Papdale for this area has remained important to the present day, albeit now restricted in area.

Urban Development

At this period, Kirkwall seems to have consisted of two streets - one facing the sea and one the Oyce - with St. Olaf's forming the southern boundary; the castle, if it existed at this time, lay on the higher ground to the south-west of the Papdale burn (Hossack 1900, 4-5; RCAHMS 1946, 162, no. 424; Gourlay and Turner 1978, 2, 7; NMRS no. HY41SW17, HY 4489 1097). Although the churchyard ran down to the Papdale Burn (Hossack 1900, 5), St. Olaf's lies on its north bank and would, therefore, seem not to have been part of the lands of Papdale. It is perhaps significant that the common lands, known as St. Catherine's Quoys, which divided Papdale from Weyland and which had also been reserved to the church prior to the incorporation of the burgh in 1486, lay immediately to the east of St. Olaf's (ibid., 412; Craven 1891, 101); these lands were transferred several times between ecclesiastical and secular authorities in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, suggesting they were of some significance (Mooney 1939, 75-7). Mooney goes as far as to propose that St. Olaf's actually formed the southern portion of St. Catherine's Quoys and that the revenue from these lands went to the support of the church (ibid., 74-5).

St. Ola's Bridge lay at the south west corner of the churchyard, so that people would not be prevented from reaching the church, even when the burn was in spate (Hossack 1900, facing 117, 167-8; RCAHMS 1946, 162-3, no. 425). Although dated 1682, it is possible, as Hossack's wording would imply, that there was an earlier bridge on this site (Gourlay and Turner conflate this bridge and the 'Lang Stean' (1978, 4); NMRS no. HY41SW7, HY 4502 1112). The district to the south west of the church is known as Mounthoolie on the modern OS maps, but this seems to be first applied to a house built in 1714 (Hossack 1900, 197).¹

Although Thorfinn Sigurdsson had founded the first bishopric of Orkney at Birsay, the translation of St. Magnus's relics from Birsay to Kirkwall around twenty years after the earl's death c. 1116, must have ensured that St. Olaf's rose in importance, just as the town itself expanded considerably (Anderson 1873, xc). St. Magnus's bones resided 'in a reliquary above the high altar' until the cathedral was ready to house them (Anderson 1873, xxxiii, lxxxix-xc; Craven 1891, 55-6; Hossack 1900, 160; Cromarty Smith 1921, 117; Mooney 1947, 95; Pálsson and Edwards 1978, 105; Cruden 1988, 86). Even though, following the completion of St. Magnus, St. Olaf's church must again have lost its pre-eminence, the parsonage of St. Ola was one of the original prebends of the cathedral. It appears as such in 1461, the cure then being a perpetual vicarage and the parson, Schir Walter Havyck, of St. Ola's acted as a witness to a disposition in 1481; however, the prebend is not mentioned alongside the remaining six prebends of the cathedral in 1539-44 (*REO*, 194; RCAHMS 1946, 142; Cowan 1967, 125). In 1544, as part of the reconstitution of the chapter of Orkney by Bishop Reid, the parsonage revenues were allocated to the bishop as canon of St. Olaf, while many of the other teinds within the parish were devoted to other prebends (Cowan 1967, 125). The church was apparently in decay by the middle of the sixteenth century, having been 'reduced to ashes by the English'; this seems to have occurred during a conflict which Jo. Ben describes as taking place 'at the city Lotus, which they call Papdale, in the year 1502' (Ben 1529, 319). This may account for Wallace's statement that the church was 'built' by Bishop Robert Reid prior to the Reformation. Although the bishop's name and arms were still visible in 1726, it is not clear to what extent reconstruction was necessary or whether it was ever completed (Anon. 1726, 147; Wallace 1693, 68; Craven 1891, 96, 143, 155; Hossack 1900, 39, 66; RCAHMS 1946, 142). The reason for Bishop Reid's investment in St. Olaf's is given by

Hossack as reflecting his desire to keep the cathedral services separate from those of the parish, particularly while work was being carried out on the cathedral (cf. Wallace 1693, 53, 68; Hossack 1900, 39, 65, 160).

Ecclesiastical development

St. Magnus, Kirkwall was not erected into a separate parish until sometime after 1560, a response to the growth in population of the burgh, as well as in the area of the parish (*FES*, Vol. VII, 220; *contra* Barry 1791, 529). However, both parishes had been reunited sometime before the end of the sixteenth century and, in spite of Bishop Reid's intentions, the population of the town clearly utilised the cathedral as their place of worship, while St. Ola's congregation came from the rural part of the parish (*FES*, Vol. VII, 220). An altar dedicated to Our Lady of Pity was founded by the burgess, John Leith, in St. Olaf's church in the early sixteenth century, its income coming from a tenement in the Midtown of Kirkwall (Clouston 1926, 32; *FES*, Vol. VIII, 694). St. Magnus also had a similar dedication and it may be this which is responsible for Hossack's identification of a chapel of Our Lady in the Laverock, immediately to the south of the Bishop's Palace; Hossack does not describe this foundation and it is possible that he is referring to the tenements that went to support either of the two altars (1900, 288, 290). There was also a chapel dedicated to St. Duthac adjacent to the burgh at Pickaquoy, on the west side of the Peerie Sea, thought to have been erected by William, third earl of Orkney and of which some stonework still remained at the end of the nineteenth century (*FES*, Vol. VII, 220; *FES*, Vol. VIII, 694; Craven 1891, 102; Clouston 1926, 33; NMRS no. HY41SW20). Although Clouston believed that there were no other chapels in the parish (1918, 235), Dryden recorded a small building which he believed to be a chapel on the north shore of the Head of Holland (1896, 105; NMRS no. HY41SE12). The burgh charter of 1486 confirmed that fairs were to be held in Kirkwall on Palm Sunday, Lammas and Martinmas (Wallace 1693, 50-1; Low 1774, 63) while Scott also says that there was a fair on St. Magnus's Day (*FES*, Vol. VII, 220). The largest and most important fair, however, appears to be that of St. Ola, held on the 3rd August and described by Scott in *The Pirate* as taking place at the foot of Wideford Hill (Gorrie 1869, 30ff). Since the cathedral was 'regarded as the proper place for interment' (Hossack 1900, 437), St. Olaf's churchyard, although it had remained in use, was employed only for the burial of criminals by the sixteenth century (Ben 1529, 316). David Watson, styled Vicar of St. Olaf's in 1615, is the last person who can now be associated with the church (*FES*, Vol. VII, 221; *contra* Tudor 1883, 229); certainly the cathedral is mentioned as the only church in the report under the commission for raising teinds in 1627 (*REO*, no. III, 34).

Later History

St. Olaf's is described as dilapidated in 1677, when the Session summoned 'Jean Covingtrie for alleged scandalous conversing with John Dunbar, a souldier, she being seen in St. Ola's Kirk with him after eight hors at night'; the three witnesses brought before the Session declared that 'they saw Jean and John ... in a private corner thereof, but knew not what they were doing there at such a tym of night' (Hossack 1900, 160-1). At this time, the church was employed as a poorhouse (*ibid.*, 161), indicating also that the churchyard had presumably gone out of use. The church was a suitable property, as the churchyard served as a large enclosed space within which the poorhouse occupants' could exercise (*ibid.*, 162). In 1726, the church was again described as ruinous, although 'the walls and gavills [gables]' still stood (Anon. 1726, 147). In 1767, the poorhouse was let as business premises, but by 1783 was virtually roofless and unusable (Hossack 1900, 162-3), although it must have been repaired as it was still being occupied in the mid nineteenth century (see below). The churchyard, which extended from the church to the burn, had also been encroached upon by this date; one of these buildings, at the

beginning of the nineteenth century known as The Shed, had at one time been an inn (Hossack 1900, 164). When the level of the St. Olaf's lane (formerly Poorhouse Close, but not Bridge Street Lane, as it is called by Dryden), immediately to the south of the church, was raised, gravestones and human bones were found (Dryden 1896, 110-1; RCAHMS 1946, 141). These burials are recorded as lying in 'cists of upright stones, not buried at full length, but in a crouching or drawn up posture' (Craven 1891, 12-3). Close to the church in 1855, a stone sculptured in relief and, although damaged, apparently showing a shield under a mitre, with the name 'Robertvs' below this, was visible; Dryden believed this to be the tombstone of Bishop Reid (1896, 111).

The church, a parallelogram measuring 35' by 18' internally, was acting as a carpenter's shop and warehouse in 1855, and a house - provided with a door into the church at the latter's south west corner - had been attached to the west end (Dryden 1896, 109-10). Only the lower courses, comprising rubble masonry with freestone dressings, of the walls remain as part of 24 Bridge Street (RCAHMS 1946, 141). In the centre of the south wall, is a heavily weathered, round arched doorway, which is ornamented with 'quatre-foiled paterae' (Dryden 1896, 111, fig. 79; RCAHMS 1946, 141, figs. 219 & 220). This was apparently taken down and rebuilt stone by stone in its present position by John Reid (Hossack 1900, 160); because the level of the wynd was raised when it was paved in the nineteenth century, a stone has been inserted just below the impost of each jamb to heighten the arch (RCAHMS 1946, 141; NMRS no. HY41SE31, HY 4505 1115). Within this building, one of the windows incorporates two sixteenth century rybats, while another has a heavy chamfer on the original part of one jamb (RCAHMS 1946, 141). A modern window inserted in the east wall masks any evidence for earlier arrangements (Dryden 1896, 111). A holy water stoup, with an ogee arch, lay to the east of the main doorway, while in the north wall, more or less opposite the stoup, was an aumbry. The latter also has an ogee arch, is hoodmoulded and flanked by finialled buttresses (Dryden 1896, 111 & fig. 79; Hossack 1900, 161; RCAHMS 1946, 141-2). A far smaller and 'inornate' aumbry lay in the south east corner of the church, but is now obscured (Dryden 1896, 111 & fig. 79; RCAHMS 1946, 141). Craven thought that, although the ogee arches of the aumbry and stoup might be much earlier in date, the surviving doorway reflected Bishop Reid's reconstruction of the church; Dryden, whilst believing that the style of all the surviving architectural elements fitted more comfortably with the fifteenth century, also attributed them to Bishop Reid (Craven 1891, 155; Dryden 1896, 111). Significantly perhaps, the only ogee arch in St. Magnus is to be found in the fragments of Bishop Tulloch's tomb (Tudor 1883, 229; Dryden 1896, 111). Prior to the construction of their new church in 1874, the remains of the post-Reformation building had been utilised by Kirkwall's Episcopal community; a hole had been cut in the floor to allow the congregation gathered in the various rooms to hear the service (Hossack 1900, 458; Burgher 1991, 27). This may account for the survival of the stoup and the aumbry, both of which are now located in the Alexander Ross-designed St. Ola's Episcopal church; the stoup has been placed in the north wall of the vestry, the aumbry in the south wall of the chancel (Craven 1891, 96; RCAHMS 1946, 141-2; NMRS no. HY41SE91, HY 4518 1062).

Preliminary Evaluation (ed.)

The unique topographical nature of this name, in which the 'papar' are associated with ON *dalr* (=valley) raises a host of unanswerable questions. Does it indicate a settlement of 'papar', as is assumed with Papil and Paplay? Possibly not, in which case we are left asking whether the connection with the fertile lands in this locality is rather one of ownership. What is different about the location of Papdale is its centrality in Orkney compared with the 'retired situations' of the Papay islands. This is the geographical and maritime heart of Orkney which became the hub of the later Norse earldom. Was it likely to have been a 'central place' in Pictish Orkney? There is a little evidence to suggest some

late Iron Age activity to the south, nearer the Cathedral, but very little compared with other 'papar' sites.

All the surviving indications (including the foundation of a church dedicated to St. Olaf) are that Papdale was important to the eleventh-century earldom, which fits in with the earldom possessions of other 'papar' places. Could this be due to the earls' confiscation/acquisition of Pictish ecclesiastical estates? (Thomson, 2001,16). Or is it due simply to the natural fact of earldom possession of the best land, some of which had previously been in the hands of the Pictish church?

OS maps:

Ordnance Survey, 1880 (1882). First edition. 1:10,560. Sheet CVIII.

Ordnance Survey, 1880 (1881). First edition. 1:2,500. Sheet CVIII.13.

Ordnance Survey, 1900 (1902). Second edition. 1:2,500. Sheet CVIII.13.

Ordnance Survey, 1991-3. 1:10000. Sheets HY41SE and HY41SW.

¹such names in Scotland appear to be of fairly recent origin (W.P.Thomson, pers. comm.)