



the Duntroon DIGGER

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Next issue: 7th April. Please send your contributions to us at duntroondigger@gmail.com by 31st March. See Duntroon Digger Dates 2026 on the last page of this issue.



The Duntroon Garage in June 1991, after Andrew and Sonya Pickles became proprietors.

The photo was included in an article published in the Oamaru Mail, 28th June, 1991. See overleaf.

DDDA MEETING

Mon 9th Feb. 7pm at Vanished World - All Welcome

A new year has dawned and the first meeting for the year of the Duntroon and District Development Association committee means we are back into harness for more work. The committee is in the process of updating the membership list.

We welcome all interested people to become members and join us in the task of promoting and developing our town and district.

We know there are many people in our community who have experience and knowledge who would be an asset to the DDDA team. If you have the time and the interest, the meetings are open to attend. Feel free to come along.

**Duntroon Wetlands
Working Bee
Sat 21st February**



**Meet at the
information kiosk 10am**

Back when Andrew and Sonya Pickles took over ownership of the Duntroon Garage

From an article published in the Oamaru Mail, 28th June, 1991



Photo captioned: 'Sonya and Andrew Pickles, the new proprietors of the Duntroon Garage.'

Multi Service Garage

Andrew, a certified mechanic, and Sonya Pickles, took over ownership from Les and Daphne McBride on June 1 this year.

Situated on State Highway 83, the garage is ideally positioned to meet the demands of the local community and passing traffic.

Apart from providing a fully serviced station with a comprehensive range of spare motor vehicle and agricultural machinery parts, mechanical repairs and light engineering work, Duntroon Garage incorporates a convenience store.

The wide variety of goods for sale include grocery items, dairy products, plants and a New Zealand Postal agency.

Sonya and Andrew are both bright young, young energetic people who offer the public friendly service and competitive prices.

The Duntroon Garage is open five and a half days a week; 7.30am-5.30pm Monday to Friday, and 8.30am-12.30 on Saturday.

Duntroon Photography Group



15th February
Ahuriri Valley
Meet at the Wrinkly Ram
10am.

Trip Around Memory Lane By Karan Lawrence

For the benefit of those few souls who are not on Facebook, I am bound to inform you that while Facebook has its negatives, there are positives to the social media platform. For instance, on January 12th some photos of the road/rail bridge over the Maerewhenua River were posted to the Oamaru Memories page by Peter John Andrew Sutton. The photos depicted a car overturned on the bridge and the removal of the car. They were excellent photos and so I messaged Peter asking permission to share them to the Duntroon North Otago page.

Peter was more than happy to have the photos shared and told me his father Ted Sutton had owned a yellow crib in Duntroon and that he, Peter, would stay there every second weekend. When the lease ended on the land, the crib was given to the Duntroon fire brigade, and they used it for training and burned it down in the 1980s.

Well, that information got me intrigued. The messages went back and forth culminating in an agreement to meet at the Flying Pig the next day as Peter was actually staying in the Waitaki Valley that very weekend.

At the Flying Pig we pored over a folder of pictures I had brought with me. Where was the crib that Peter was referring to? It was located on the corner of Livingstone Street right next door to the Duntroon School. There it was hiding in plain sight in the aerial photographs taken in the 1970's.



The 'crib' on Livingstone Street.

Peter swam in the school baths as well as in the Maerewhenua River. He recounted how there was a tree on its side, and he used to climb out onto the end of it and jump into the river.

All this reminiscing required a walk to the location of the crib. So off we went, stopping at intervals so Peter could get his bearings. There is no sign of the crib now. Not even an inclination of the building with the carport beside it. The land is now owned by Paul King. As we ambled along Livingstone Street we stopped at Paul's house and Peter told me about the big barn that used to be there. It was held up by a long rope anchored to the trees and when someone cut the rope the barn fell down.

We walked every street in Duntroon; it was a great way to spend an afternoon. We met Trevor and Mel Jones at the gateway to their new home at the old Policeman's house and were given a guided tour of the garden. That was an unexpected delight for us both.

Free Business/Services List

If you would like to be included in the list please contact us at duntroondigger@gmail.com. Please keep your entry to 2 lines maximum.

Barley: can deliver. Phone Errol Wells 0274 570 700

Flying Pig Cafe: normal hours: Mon-Fri: 7.30am-3pm Sat/Sun: 8am-3pm.
Ph 021 08620428 flyingpigcafe.co.nz

Seed/Seed Mixes: fodder beet, grass, oats and kale seed. www.duffffarming.com.
duffs@dufffarm.co.nz or call Grant 027 7379518

Te Hā o Maru, 23 Coquet St, Level 1, Ōamaru 9400. Ph. 0800 0800 07

Duntroon Mōkihi Waiora Clinic

Nau mai, haere mai! Kia mauri tau mo ōu whakaora kia ōu waia ki ōu whare

Empowering our takiwā through mobile healthcare services

Te Hā o Maru Health and Social Services are offering a free Mōkihi Waiora clinic in the Waitaki Valley for all ages, at the Duntroon Community Hall, 6 Livingstone Street, opposite Duntroon School.

We are a holistic kaupapa Māori team weaving together Rokoā (traditional Māori healing and remedies) and Nurse-led mahi with standing orders for some ailments.

The team includes our amazing Kaiarahi ā whānau (whānau navigator hauora) Anjelica Matapo, Rokoā practitioner Lavinia Moemate-Reihana and Kairuruku hauora (registered nurse) Marianne Te Tau. We offer health promotion, health screening, education, advocacy and navigation. We ensure whānau receive the support they need in waia/familiar settings as close to home as possible to help break down the barriers when accessing health care. This comprehensive approach ensures we can effectively address the diverse needs of our community.

All whānau welcome! There is something for everyone.

The clinic is a drop-in service from 10.30 am to 3.30 pm, with dates listed on the attached flyer.

We look forward to seeing you and walking alongside you as you navigate your waiora journey.

"Inā tae he manuhiri ki tō whare, watua he kōrero. Whākaona ōu manuhiri."

Welcoming each person as manuhiri, not clients, and working always with the whole whānau, not individuals.



Apply now for Meridian's Power Up Community Fund

We're proud to back local projects in the communities around our wind farms and hydro stations with our Power Up fund.

With Power Up, your community has a say on what initiatives we support and fund. Managed by a panel of locals and Meridian staff we're working together to build strong, sustainable communities. Power Up Waitaki provides grants for projects in Aoraki/ Mount Cook, Twizel, Omarama, Otematata, Kurow, Hakataramea, Duntroon, Ikawai, Papakaio, Glenavy.

How to apply

Applications are open until midnight on Sunday 26th April 2026.

For more information and to apply:

- visit meridianenergy.co.nz/community-support/fund
- email community@meridianenergy.co.nz
- call 021 733 931

Mōkihi Waiora Clinics

Duntroon



Our Rokoā (traditional Māori remedies) and Nurse-led clinics provide **FREE** Hauora services to whānau, delivered by skilled professionals. **Te Hā o Maru**

Where: Duntroon Hall , 6 Livingstone St, Duntroon

Time: 10.30am - 3.30pm

January

Thurs 29th

February

Thurs 12th

Thurs 26th

March

Thurs 12th

Thurs 26th

April

Thurs 23rd (FLU CLINIC)

May

Thurs 7th

Thurs 21st

June

Thurs 4th

Thurs 18th

July

Thurs 2nd

Thurs 30th

August

Thurs 13th

Thurs 27th

September

Thurs 10th

Thurs 24th

October

Thurs 22nd

November

Thurs 5th

Thurs 19th

December

Thurs 3rd

Thurs 17th

Everyone Welcome

No appointments needed

Phone: 0800 0800 07

Website: www.tehaomaru.co.nz

Email: info@tehaomaru.nz

 Te Hā o Maru

Historic Duntroon: The St Magnus Churches; from Orkney to Duntroon

by Anne Phillips-Vira

In this edition I'll be exploring the connections between the name St Magnus in the Orkney Islands and that of the former St Magnus Presbyterian Church, Duntroon.

As a child, I attended St Magnus Church with my mother (Alison Phillips) from the 1960s until I left home in the early 1980s. At the time the name of the church wasn't something that captured my interest. However, in 2019 on a visit to the Orkney Islands in search of my ancestry, I visited St Magnus Churchyard in Birsay where, to my delight, I found the headstones of my great great grandparents James Phillips and Janet Taylor.

What I found really striking was the recurrence of names in the Orkney churchyard that have long been associated with people who once lived in Duntroon. Names such as Johnston, Taylor, Phillips, Rowland and Corrigan were all notable.

I was aware that there was a connection between the name St Magnus in the Orkneys and St Magnus Church, Duntroon. After poring through cemetery documents and online sources, I discovered that most people in the Duntroon cemetery of Orcadian descent had parents or grandparents who were either baptised or married at St Magnus Church, Birsay. I wanted to explore that connection further. I had two main questions in mind: Who was the famous St Magnus and who were the Orkney people that lay behind the naming of the Duntroon Presbyterian Church?

At some point on my travels, I realised that the church at Birsay is not the only one on the Orkney mainland that carries the name of St Magnus. There are three in total: St Magnus Kirk, Egilsay, St Magnus Church, Birsay and St Magnus Cathedral, Kirkwall.



1: *St Magnus Kirk, Egilsay, Birsay* <https://www.orkney.com/listings/st-magnus-kirk>

2: *St Magnus Cathedral, Kirkwall* <https://www.orkney.com/listings/st-magnus-cathedral>

3: *St Magnus Church, Birsay* <https://www.orkney.com/listings/st-magnus-church>

One Viking Earl too Many

To find out more about the person behind the names of these churches, I consulted the Orkney Islands Family History Society. I received a response from Jo Jones (personal communication, December 17, 2025), a private tour guide and specialist in Orkney history, who provided the following account of the famous Orkney Island saga of St Magnus ...

Magnus Erlendsson was a Viking Earl who, together with his cousin Haakon, ruled over Orkney in the early 12th century. That was one earl too many. Haakon grew jealous of Magnus who was a popular leader. It was agreed that the pair would meet on the island of Egilsay with two ships each of unarmed men to peacefully resolve their differences.

Earl Magnus arrived as planned but Haakon didn't stick to the arrangement and turned up with eight heavily armed ships.

Magnus was captured and then in an attempt to save his cousin's soul (after his act of deceit and intent to kill), he made three suggestions - to go into exile in Scotland and be imprisoned, to go on a pilgrimage and never return to Orkney or to be maimed, blinded and locked in a dungeon on the condition that his men be left unharmed. However, both Haakon and his supporters wanted Magnus killed to remove him as a threat to their leader's authority.

Neither Haakon nor any of his supporters wanted to "do the deed" so Haakon commanded his cook, Lifolf, to kill Magnus with his axe. Magnus forgave Lifolf, gave him his cloak, knelt and prayed. Lifolf then killed him with a single blow to the skull.

After his burial at Egilsay, Magnus' mother Thora begged Haakon to return Magnus' body to the mainland where he was buried at Christ Church, Birsay. It is widely accepted, but also disputed, that the current St Magnus Church at Birsay was rebuilt in the 18th century on the site of 10th century cathedral Christ Church (Šimek, 2023) where Magnus was laid to rest.

Twenty-one years after Magnus' Christian burial, and after many reports of strange lights, beautiful fragrances and miraculous cures of sickness, Bishop William had Magnus' bones exhumed and consecrated. Sainthood was granted and Magnus' bones (relics) were later transferred to the Kirkwall Cathedral which was built in his honour in 1137.

This story was originally told in 'The Orkneyinga Saga', a document written in 1200 AD by an unknown Icelandic author, which tells of the Nordic Earls of the Orkney Islands.

Whether or not the story of St Magnus is a true portrayal of events (the accuracy of St Magnus' murder on Egilsay was disputed by forensic anthropologist Prof. Don Brothwell in 2004), it does indicate how important Earl Magnus Erlendson was (and still is) to the people of Orkney. It also provides a link between Duntroon's Orkney settlers and the Parish of Birsay.

Most of Duntroon's early Orcadians were either baptised or married at St Magnus Church, Birsay. They are as follows: James A Taylor, James B. Taylor, John Corrigall, Margaret Taylor Corrigall, Margaret Corrigall Reeves, Catherine Corrigall Sangster, Charles Leonard and Euphemia Wilson Leonard. Two other very notable Duntroon residents who married in the Parish of Birsay are Nicol Slater Muirden (of Duntroon blacksmith fame) and Lillie Jane Spence Johnston. According to the statutory registers of Scotland, they were married at Lillie's parents' house on Muse Farm, Birsay in January 1920 (National Records of Scotland, 1920).



*Inside St Magnus Church, Birsay, 2019
(Phillips, private collection)*



*St Magnus Duntroon after flood, 1980
(Phillips, private collection)*

It was my intention to reveal some interesting stories about the early people of St Magnus Church, Duntroon but that will have to wait until the next edition. However, in my search for information, I stumbled across two articles in the "Newsletter of the Orkney Family History Society" written by Ann Trewern (née Taylor) and James R. Harvey, the first of whom is a great granddaughter of John Corrigall and Margaret Ann Taylor.

There is insufficient space to include their stories in the print version of 'The Digger'. However, you will find them attached in the email version and I will be sure to post them on the notice board in the Duntroon Cemetery sexton shed. If you happen to be passing, do call in and have a read.

References

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Container for sale

20ft container for sale \$5,000 located at Georgetown. Tidy condition, very watertight.

Ph Steve 0273 203 223

Duntroon Digger Dates 2026

Dear Readers

We are providing the following table as a guideline/reminder of Digger dates for 2026.

The table below also provides a 'pre-digger' deadline date for those of you who wish to send in content such as advertisements, letters or articles. Please note that we do not advertise items for sale. We suggest that this be done on the Duntroon Facebook page.

We intend to email The Digger on the same date as publication. Hard copies will be distributed by our deliverers as soon as possible after publication.

Month	Pre-Digger Deadline	Publishing Date
February	28/01/2026	03/02/2026
April	31/03/2026	07/04/2026
June	27/05/2026	02/06/2026
August	29/07/2026	04/08/2026
October	29/09/2026	06/10/2026
December	25/11/2026	01/12/2026

Thank you for your ongoing interest in The Digger. We look forward to receiving your news items, comments and letters in the year ahead. Please send to Gill at duntroondigger@gmail.com

ST MAGNUS CHURCH DUNTROON NEW ZEALAND

By James R (Bertie) Harvey, Member No 94

In the past, when life had fewer distractions, over half of the population were regular churchgoers. Now congregations are becoming smaller and smaller with many reaching the point where they cease to be financially viable. This is happening the world over and I was sad to learn that St Magnus Presbyterian Church of Duntroon, in New Zealand was one of the churches that had been forced to close its doors.

In early July, St Magnus Church in Birsay was visited by **Rev Des Botting**, who was on something of a pilgrimage, having been minister of St Magnus Church, in the Parish of Waitaki, Duntroon from 1974 to 1982. I was interested to learn more of this church from the Rev Botting especially as some of my kin had migrated to this corner of the world many years ago.

Duntroon is a small farming town in the Waitaki District of New Zealand's South Island. The 2001 census recorded Duntroon as having a population of 120. By the 2006 census the population had declined to 114.

I learned that the first Presbyterian service in Duntroon was conducted in 1878 by a lay preacher, **Mr H L Gilbert**. In 1882 the first minister, **Rev P S Hay, M.A.**, was inducted to the charge and did the visiting of his parishioners with a horse and gig.

Duntroon then was a growing parish, and when in 1897 Kurow and Duntroon became two separate parishes, it was decided to build a church at Duntroon.

The church was designed by **C H Roberts** of Invercargill, the tender of **J Rosie** was accepted, and stonemason **Robert Gibson** was employed to build the church. Many families in the district at this time came from Orkney - I would guess that Robert Gibson was a member of one of these families, and perhaps also J Rosie - and the church was named St Magnus after St Magnus Church in Egilsay.

When St Magnus Church was built, horses were the mode of transport and meetings were often arranged for the period of the full moon, as carriage lights were not very bright.

The church has had sixteen ministers over the years with others serving the congregation for short periods during vacancies. It was closed temporarily in 1919 because of the flu epidemic, but on March 28, 2010, it closed permanently because the building was in need of extensive repairs and attendance had declined to single figures.

Some of my own relatives from Rousay settled in this area. Rousay Roots and Marwick Families in New Zealand by **Robert**,

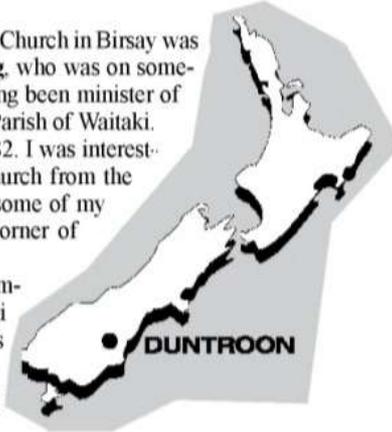


Marwick show that **Hugh Marwick** settled near Oamaru. He was, one of four brothers: **John, James, Hugh and David**, who emigrated to New Zealand. They were the sons of **John Marwick** and **Margaret Costie** from Rousay. John worked as a miller in Rousay for some time before moving to the small farm of Cuppar in Evie.

Hugh's son **John** attended Waitaki Boys High School and went on to become a distinguished geologist and palentologist, and a daughter, **Thora**, was dux of Waitaki Girls High School, and after graduating M.Sc. in New Zealand, moved to England where she gained her Ph.D. She was a research physicist, and worked, in London for the Armaments Research Department during World War II.

Hugh Marwick's eldest daughter, **Margaret**, visited Orkney in 1952 and made contact with many other relatives in Orkney including my mother.

It would be interesting if any of Hugh's descendants, or indeed anyone who has relatives in that area, could tell us more about the Orkney involvement in this St Magnus Church on the other side of the world.



ST MAGNUS CHURCH – BIRSAY, ORKNEY

stands on the site of the original Christchurch built by Earl Thorfinn, c. 1064. The site has housed a continuous place of worship for over 900 years.

After the murder of Magnus Erlendson in Egilsay, c.1116 his body was brought to Thorfinn's Christchurch for burial. Soon there were stories of 'heavenly lights and a strange fragrance' surrounding his grave. This was followed by many pilgrimages and stories of visions and miracles. Twenty years after the murder of Magnus his body was exhumed and his bones were placed in a shrine above the high altar in Christchurch.

He was officially declared a saint. A huge cathedral was built in Kirkwall to venerate the new saint and his bones were taken to the new cathedral and interred there.

St Magnus Church is open to view all year round in Birsay – a capital of the Vikings.





St Magnus Church, Birsay

MORE ORCADIAN CONNECTIONS TO ST MAGNUS CHURCH DUNTROON NEW ZEALAND



St Magnus Church, Duntroon

Ann Trewern (nee Taylor)

This article has been written in response to an article that featured in SIBS in December 2010 submitted by James R. (Bertie) Harvey, Member #94. In this article he asked for further information about any connections between Orcadians who may have settled in and around Duntroon North Otago and the naming of the Duntroon Presbyterian Church, St Magnus.



Family of James A Taylor and his wife Janet Don taken in the early 1890s

Anyone visiting Duntroon today will be struck by the solitude of the tiny township perched on a rise above the Waitaki river some thirty-six kilometres northwest of Oamaru. People who come here now are either passing through or stop because they are following the ancient limestone fossil trails, and visiting the weirdly shaped Elephant Rocks, used as a location in the Narnia films. Yet the Duntroon we see today is a larger community than when my great grandfather James Taylor, and his very close friend and second-cousin James Taylor, purchased extensive and adjoining tracts of land in the Kokoamo hills above the Waitaki Valley in 1879. Born and bred in Orkney they would have been drawn to these open, roll-

ing, relatively treeless stretches of grassland.

The connection between Birsay, Orkney and Duntroon New Zealand is a strong one for there were a number of Duntroon's first settlers who left families in Birsay in Orkney in the late 1860s and 1870s to make new lives on the other side of the world. The session records for the newly established Upper Waitaki church in December 1882 note that a moderator had been selected and the voting of elders had taken place. Among the first three elders ordained, admitted and confirmed were James A Taylor (my great grandfather) and James B Taylor.

My great grandfather arrived in Dunedin, New Zealand, from Birsay, Orkney in 1869 as an assisted passenger on the ship *Helenslee*. He was 21 years of age. One year later he still had a £4 debt owing on his fare. I am not sure when his second-cousin, James Taylor, arrived but by 1879 my great grandfather had married Janet Don and his second-cousin James Taylor had married Christina Roberston, both witnesses at James and Janet's marriage. When the two men approached the Oamaru bank for loans for land purchases it was the bank manager who renamed them James A Taylor (because he was first to walk through the bank manager's door) and James B Taylor (because he was second). These two were to keep and use these assigned initials throughout their lives and have them engraved on almost identical headstones in the Duntroon Cemetery. Both men were extremely successful sheep farmers and were to take a dominant role in the development of the Duntroon area serving together as church elders through the 1880s and on the local school committees.

Both James A and James B had family members who emigrated from Birsay and settled in the Duntroon area. James A Taylor's first-cousins, Peter (a farmer at Tokeraiki by 1880), Margaret-Ann (who arrived in Dunedin on the *Canterbury* in 1877), and James Robertson Moar Taylor all settled in the district. JRM Taylor farmed in the Duntroon area from about 1889 to 1908 and then eventually settled near Gore in Southland. Margaret-Ann Taylor married John Linay Corrigan who was born in 1850 at Langalour, Redland, in the parish of Firth and emigrated to New Zealand on the *Edward P Bouverie* in 1871.

Margaret-Ann and John Corrigan were also my great grandparents. They had a small mixed farm called 'The Willows' on the river flats below the township of Duntroon and were well known for the beautiful rose garden and excellent honey produced. Both John and Margaret-Ann Corrigan were members of the Duntroon Church. John▶

◀Corrigall's younger brother Francis who also emigrated to the area, became a very successful wheat farmer in the Hakataramea Valley west of Duntroon. James B Taylor has left a poignant memorial in the



Margaret Ann Corrigall (nee Taylor) pictured with four of her children. This photograph was taken about 1895. The youngest members pictured in each of the family photographs were to become my grandparents.

Duntroon Cemetery to his two older brothers who also came to New Zealand and predeceased him. Peter Taylor was only 26 when he was killed in a building accident in Dunedin in 1868, and Thomas settled at Tokeraiki, near the Duntroon area, but died aged 40 in 1882.

James A Taylor was born in 1848 to parents William Taylor and Mary Anderson. They farmed at Gridar, Marwick from about 1847 until after his death in 1883. His mother died after 1891. His father is commemorated on

a headstone still to be found in the St Magnus Church cemetery in Birsay.

Cousins Margaret Ann Taylor (born in 1850) and her brothers Peter and James RM Taylor (born 1863) were born to parents Peter Taylor and Catherine Moar who lived at Waird, Birsay, Orkney.

James B Taylor was born in 1850 to parents Peter Taylor and Ann Huntow who lived at Cumlaquoy. I have not yet been able to establish whether headstones exist at the Birsay church cemetery for Peter and Catherine Taylor and Peter and Ann Taylor.

It is these first families to establish themselves in the district that later influenced the renaming of the Duntroon church to reflect the connections with their homeland. There is no mention in the session records around the period that the new church was built that it was called anything other than the Duntroon Church. In 1892 both James A and James B Taylor resigned their positions as elders and communicant members of the Duntroon Church after a disagreement with the minister and from then on both attended services at Ngapara. They were not involved with the building of the new church in 1897. I have not been able to establish when the Duntroon Church also became known as St Magnus Church, Duntroon. Other Orcadians, particularly John Corrigall and his family, did remain communicant members of the Duntroon Church. His eldest daughter Catherine Corrigall later married the Rev. Alexander Sangster who was the minister of the Duntroon Church from 1915 to 1927. They continued to live in Duntroon after his retirement from the ministry during the 1930s.

These first Orcadians strongly identified with and maintained strong connections to their homeland throughout their lives. It is fitting that the local church maintained those links until its recent closure.

I would like to acknowledge the special help of John Moar, Orkney, in sorting out the Birsay Taylors. Also my aunt Joan Manson (nee Taylor) for her wonderful family stories and Jeannie Blaker (nee Kirkness) from Auckland NZ, who like myself are descendants of James A Taylor; and Heather Crow (Orkney Society, Christchurch, N.Z.) who have all helped gather the above information about the first Taylor and Corrigall settlers in North Otago and in particular Duntroon.