

FADS eat their way around Orkney



The evening sun was shining as nine FADS delegates, five Young Farmers and two canine tour mascots (Bess & Meg) docked at Stromness on Thursday 16th May, hauling the sets, costumes and props for 'Mrs G' and 'Little Grimley Presents Strictly Sex Factor On Ice'.

Margaret and Leona from Birsay Drama Group were at the ferry terminal to meet us and make sure we all got safely into our accommodation at Colin Muir's Pomona B&B, which was perfectly located in the heart of Kirkwall, around a mile from the theatre we'd be performing in on Saturday and within striking distance of several establishments offering Orkney's finest ale.

Blue skies on Friday gave us perfect sightseeing weather and we all fanned out to explore the island. Between us, we ticked off the Churchill Barriers, the Italian Chapel, Ring of Brodgar, Skara Brae and the beaches around Birsay before meeting up at the Community Hall to unload and get set up. 'Community Hall' doesn't do the place justice – it's a very well-equipped and modern building that even has showers in the dressing rooms! And it was in the Hall foyer that the Famous Birsay Catering Provision began. Linda, Margaret, Issy, Jenny and the team laid on enough home-made cakes, bere bannock and local farmhouse

cheese to sink a cast before the tech checks, then a wonderful buffet, complete with puds, pre-performance. It's a wonder any of us managed to waddle onto the stage.

We had a super turnout from the local community – welcomed to the venue by Paul on his trusty accordion and May clog dancing and playing the flute - and both FADS and SSS YFC put on a great show for the audience of around 100, which included the majority of the SCDA Scottish Final winners from Stromness Drama Club.

On the ferry



Property Bureau had very kindly sponsored a fleet of tour polo shirts, so we were well kitted up for the after-show social and partied away with the Orcadian thespians until midnight.

Next morning, some of party strode off through the drizzle to look at tractors and meet up with a few of the local Young Farmers. The remainder spent the morning rehydrating in various cafes around the seafront, then we met up for a spot of lunch to give us some energy for the afternoon shift.



Bess, Meg & friends

Orkney Theatre is an absolutely fabulous venue that's attached to Kirkwall Grammar School - lucky pupils – and, after two more rounds of cake and buffet from the Birsay DG team, we took to the stage for what were probably our best performances to date, with another 100 or so in the audience, including a few tourists!

Afterwards, we tucked into our fifth meal of the day, then headed into Kirkwall to check that the Orkney ale was as good as it had been on the previous two nights. The 'oldies' then found a quiet hotel bar, while the local YFs took SSS to Kirkwall's premier nightclub. Great fun, the only dip in enthusiasm being when we discovered on our way home that the takeaway was shut, so we couldn't have our sixth meal. Probably just as well.

We bid our farewells and, incredibly, made it onto the 9am Sunday ferry back to the mainland; pretty wiped out, a little sad it's all over for Strictly Sex Factor and Mrs G, but

related from a fabulous trip sharing great drama and good times with our friends from Birsay.

Our thanks to the following companies and organisations for their kind sponsorship and donations, without which this tour would not have been possible:

- Clyde and Central District Association of Young Farmers
- Fintry Amateur Dramatic Society
- Stirling, Strathendrick & Strathkelvin Young Farmers Club
- The Ellen Kerr Awards Scheme
- Property Bureau
- Northlink Ferries

All in all, a truly memorable and successful visit and one we very much hope to repeat next year.

Sarah Walker



The Bishop's Palace, Birsay