

# Community Newsletter

Reiss - Killimster - Sibster - Keiss - Nybster - Lyth - Ackergill - Papigoe - Staxigoe - Noss

DECEMBER 2023 ISSUE FOUR

## SINCLAIR'S BAY TRUST

Improving and developing Sinclair's Bay as a place to live, work & visit.

Web: [www.sinclairsbay.co.uk](http://www.sinclairsbay.co.uk)

E-mail: [admin@sinclairsbay.co.uk](mailto:admin@sinclairsbay.co.uk)

Find us on Facebook & Instagram



Photo credit (above): Catherine Harris

### An update from our Chair, Maysie Calder

A warm welcome everyone, I think we are all feeling the change in the season and looking forward to the festivities and time spent with family and friends in the run up to the end of the year.

This has been a fun packed year for the Trust and wanted to extend a BIG thank you to all the volunteers and participants who support our projects, we couldn't do it without you. Our board members are looking forward to some well-earned down time over the winter period but rest assured we have lots more in store for you in the new year. So go grab a brew or something stronger sit back, relax and read what we've been up to and what's to come. Till next time - take care speak soon.

### A Year in Sinclair's Bay: Community Photographs

You may have seen on our social media, as well as in the last issue of our newsletter, a project we've been working on throughout 2023: A Year in Sinclair's Bay. This project shares photos from the community every month, recording Sinclair's Bay throughout the year in community photographs. You can see all the photos shared so far this year on our website and we've selected a few to share within the pages of this newsletter. We're not quite sure yet how we're going to conclude the project and we are open to ideas - please get in touch! We've already used (with permission) one of the photos (Sinclair Girnigoe Castle by Paul Steven - pictured opposite) from the project for our new promotional banners which you'll see at future events.



Sinclair's Bay Trust Board Members are: Maysie Calder (Chair), Andrew Mackay (Treasurer), Maria Aitken (Secretary), Ian Ross, Pat Ramsay, Christina Calder & Emma Fraser. The Trust is supported for two days per week by development trust officer, Alistair Jack, employed by Caithness Voluntary Group.

# Sinclair's Bay Social Spaces



This project has been funded by:



**TOTALLY FREE OF CHARGE**



## SINCLAIR'S BAY SOCIAL SPACES

Why not come along to one of our amazing **Social Spaces** events in 2024 where you can meet up with other members of the community to chat, have a cup of tea, or just read the newspaper, then sit down together for a lovely lunch of soup and sandwiches, and its all totally **free of charge**.

### Dates For Your Diary

#### KEISS

- 17th January
- 24th January
- 31st January
- 7th February
- 14th February
- 21st February
- 28th February
- 6th March
- 13th March
- 20th March

#### ACKERGILL

- 18th January
- 25th January
- 1st February
- 8th February
- 15th February
- 22nd February
- 29th February
- 7th March
- 14th March
- 21st March

#### REISS

- 19th January
- 26th January
- 2nd February
- 9th February
- 16th February
- 23rd February
- 1st March
- 8th March
- 15th March
- 22nd March

Sessions will be run from 11am to 2pm at:

**KEISS HALL**  
ON WEDNESDAYS  
**ACKERGILL HALL**  
ON THURSDAYS  
**REISS HALL**  
ON FRIDAYS

If you can't get there why not book our free transport service on:

**07824 388894**

# All Sinclair's Bay Social Spaces sessions are free, open and welcome all in Sinclair's Bay!

This project has been funded by:



Community Resilience Fund

If you intend to come to one of our amazing Social Spaces events in 2024 look out for our new Sinclair's Bay Trust sail flag which will be flying at the door of each hall. Thank you to Paul Steven for permission to use one of his photos on our new sail flag.



Sinclair's Bay Social Spaces will run from

**17th January 2024-22nd March 2024**

11am-2pm

**Every Wednesday - Keiss Hall**  
**Every Thursday - Ackergill Hall**  
**Every Friday - Reiss & Killimster Hall**

Transport can be provided. To arrange, please contact **07824388894**

# Sinclair's Bay History & Heritage: Caithness at War Project

## CAITHNESS AT WAR

At long last the end is in sight with this project and all of the permissions and licenses required have finally been obtained to satisfy the conditions of the grant we received to enable us to deliver this project. The money has now been released from the Caithness Beatrice Community Fund and the information panels for the trail have been ordered.

Installation of the mounting posts will begin in January, with final mounting of the panels to take place in March, just prior to the planned launch of the Trail. Please look out for this event on our social media pages and on posters once we have agreed the date of the launch with our partners in this project, Wick Development Trust.

Due to scaling issues when finalising the artwork for the panels we have had to do a bit of a redesign which includes a new brown/green period correct camouflage pattern, more photographs, and we have also incorporated different pictures into the logo that relate to each panel.



## OPERATION FRESHMAN

On the 18th of November, almost 81 years to the day, we held an illustrated talk at Staxigoe Hall about Operation Freshman. Dr Bruce Tocher came all the way over from Norway to deliver the 2nd part of the Operation Freshman story which was an amazing insight into the war crimes investigations, trials and sentencing after the war of those involved in the murder of the Freshman soldiers. The talk was attended by around 40 people from across Caithness and was very well received.



Dr Bruce Tocher

## OPERATION SERVANT

Through research on all things Caithness at War, we have recently found records that confirm that 50 inert/non-live Highball bouncing bombs were dropped in Sinclair's Bay in 1942.



## Keeping Sinclair's Bay Beautiful: Village Volunteers

**KEISS:** Four weeks, five tonnes of stones, thirty metres of membrane, three hundred metal stakes, forty cardboard boxes, thirty hot drinks, five packets of biscuits, fifty bin bags and loads of blethers! Add to that, a huge dollop of community spirit and hard labour - Keiss volunteers have been busy! The end result was fantastic - some TLC for the village ahead of Christmas!

Thank you to all the volunteers and to Caithness Beatrice Community Fund who funded the improvements. We're keen to build on the fantastic work in Keiss in other villages/areas of Sinclair's Bay in 2024 by building on/establishing village volunteer subgroups of Sinclair's Bay Trust.

**STAXIGOE:** The Staxigoe Village Volunteer subgroup of Sinclair's Bay Trust recently secured £125 from the Sinclair's Bay Community Council microgrant project in Autumn which will go towards bulb planting. If you're interested in being involved in Staxigoe, Papigoe & Noss, please contact the Trust ([admin@sinclairsbay.co.uk](mailto:admin@sinclairsbay.co.uk)) or Pat Ramsay.

**REISS:** Reiss village is looking to set up a subgroup of community village volunteers early 2024. If you're keen to take part, key contacts for Reiss are Ian Ross or Jim Fraser. Keep an eye on the Sinclair's Bay Trust FB page for more details in the new year or contact the Trust ([admin@sinclairsbay.co.uk](mailto:admin@sinclairsbay.co.uk)) or speak with Ian or Jim.

**OTHER VILLAGES/AREAS:** If you're interested in setting up village volunteer subgroups in other villages/areas of Sinclair's Bay, please do get in touch with the Trust.



## A Year in Sinclair's Bay (cont.)



Photos above shared as part of our A Year in Sinclair's Bay Project. Staxigoe Harbour by Anne Campbell, heading down to Reiss Beach by Alison Hamilton, Ackergill Harbour at Sunset by Hayley Grant, Aurora over Noss & Staxigoe by Ian Nicolson, Sunset at Reiss captured by Marie Fraser, Sunrise over Sinclair's Bay captured by Gilly Begg, Calm day at Sinclair's Bay by Donna Sinclair.

## Points of Interest: Reiss Golf Course

You may have seen a rather odd-looking hut in the middle of the golf course at Reiss and wondered what it was built for, well, it was used as a terminus for a communications cable to Shetland.

In 1885 the General Post Office (GPO) used the HMTS (His Majesty's Telegraph Ship) Monarch (No. 2), the first cable ship designed specifically for the GPO, to lay a submarine cable between Sinclair's Bay and Sandwick Bay, South of Lerwick in Shetland.

At a length of 122 nautical miles, when installed, and for a good time afterwards, it was the longest communications cable in British waters. The John O'Groat Journal of 22 July 1885, published this piece regarding the laying of the cable:

"The work of laying the cable between Aberdeen and Shetland has now been completed, and is in use. It will facilitate telegraphic communication between Shetland and the northern counties, and will be a great boon to those engaged in the herring trade. The new telegraph line is erected from Aberdeen to Burghead, then it passes as a cable through the Moray and Dornoch firths to Helmsdale, and from this it is a land wire till it reaches Wick. From Wick it is carried direct by cable to Lerwick. The parts of the line under water were laid by the cable ship Monarch, the work being carried out under the superintendence of Mr Lumsden, chief engineer."

At Sinclair's Bay the cable was terminated in a cable hut located on the Reiss Golf Course links. The location was beside the course's 6th hole and was therefore called "The Cable Hole". The course was enlarged in 1907 to 18 holes and although the hut has never moved, it now sits beside the 16th hole.

Due to its potential to be a military target, during the First World War the cable landing point at Reiss Links was given a top security priority and guarded 24/7 by soldiers. During WW2 the whole bay was defended due to the risk of German invasion.



Although it's not clear when the cable was in use to, it was still active in 1945 although probably didn't survive for much longer.

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## Hallowe'en Hunt

Our hunt returned for another year this Hallowe'en. Thank you to everyone who took part and well done to our winners, Ayla & Kaia Stewart who won £5 vouchers kindly donated by The Fluffy Cloud Bookshop!



## Winter Raffle!



Thank you to everyone who purchased a raffle ticket (or two!) and/or donated prizes to our recent Winter raffle drawn on 17th November! We raised a fantastic £578 for the Trust!

## Community Council Corner

We work closely with Sinclair's Bay Community Council (SBCC). Community Councils act as the voice for their community with the council, meeting on a regular basis to identify, discuss and raise issues in their local area. Community members are always welcome to attend meetings and the community council are really keen (and really need) to have more faces around the table. Meetings take place on the second Wednesday of every month and meetings rotate around village halls in Sinclair's Bay.

Meeting dates for the first quarter of 2024 are as follows. Venues tbc, but please get in touch if you intend to come:

- 10th January 2024 - 7pm
- 14th February - 7pm
- 13th March - 7pm

To keep up to date with Sinclair's Bay Community Council please follow them on FB. If you wish to find out more or raise any matters, Sinclair's Bay CC can be contacted on [sinclairbaycc@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:sinclairbaycc@hotmail.co.uk) or Facebook messenger.

Join us!

Sinclair's Bay  
Community Council

## Sinclair's Bay Connections Project: Sinclair's Bay Creatives



Following on from our collaboration with Lyth Arts Centre in 2022 on their CAIR (Caithness Artists in Residence) project where we worked alongside local artist, Shelagh Swanson, earlier this year we were approached by a community member about starting a creative group in Sinclair's Bay. Following an initial meeting in September, Sinclair's Bay Creatives, a subgroup of Sinclair's Bay Trust was formed. We were successful in securing £125 from the recent Sinclair's Bay Community Council microgrant project which will cover hall hire initially. Refreshments have kindly been donated by Alba Sunrise B&B.

The group is an informal, social space for people to be creative. All are welcome and the sessions are free, you don't have to be "good at art", just enjoy being creative. The group meets monthly (aiming for the last Wednesday of every month from 7pm-8.30pm) and are currently meeting at Keiss Hall.

The final session for 2023 takes place on 13th December at Keiss Hall. Upcoming dates:

- Wednesday, 31st January
- Wednesday, 28th February
- Wednesday, 27th March

Bring along your own materials, but if you're new to creativity, there's plenty spare materials brought along to sessions!

The subgroup is starting to look at how to develop and grow Sinclair's Bay Creatives for the community and have put together this survey:

<https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/EMMXS2/>

Please complete it if you would be interested to be involved or to help us understand any barriers.

Sinclair's Bay Creatives is a great example of how our community can influence and steer the projects undertaken by Sinclair's Bay Trust. If you've got an idea for Sinclair's Bay that you feel the Trust can support, do get in touch!

## A Year in Sinclair's Bay (cont.)



Photos shared by our community for our project: Sunset at Ackergill by Nina Mackay, Keiss Castle by Susannah Mackay, the ice house at Keiss Harbour by Margaret Sinclair and Sunset at Papigoe by Lucy Thain.