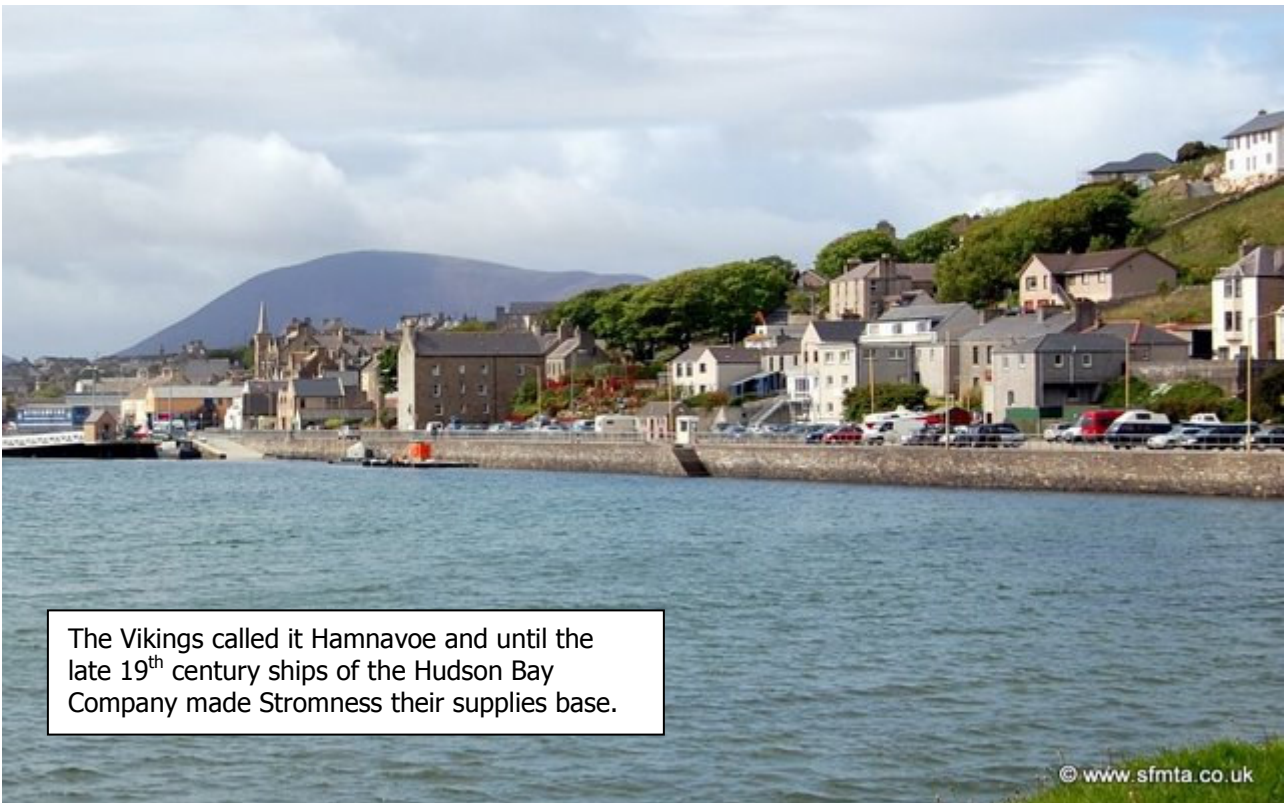


Boat comes in for Fletts



For some the most important thing about the Orkney Port of Stromness is the fact that it is the disembarking point for those who have travelled across the Pentland Firth from Scrabster in Caithness. The notoriously turbulent crossing can make Stromness extremely welcome and those arriving by sea are greeted by rows of stone-built houses hugging the shore, each with their own jetty. Stromness with its very narrow, winding main street, its wynds and closes, its fascinating shops has a unique atmosphere.

Stromness and its 2500 population are served by the butchers business of E Flett. This 133 year old business has carved out a niche for itself supplying not just the locals who negotiate those narrow streets and those glad to see dry land but also those who shop in 14 other convenience stores on the Orkney Islands.



The Vikings called it Hamnavoe and until the late 19th century ships of the Hudson Bay Company made Stromness their supplies base.



Flett's is a traditional butchers shop sourcing local beef, lamb and pork but with a sizable wholesale trade supplying fresh and cooked meat pre-packed for resale. The shop trades from 7.00am to 5pm Monday to Friday, with a 4.30pm finish on a Saturday. A lunch hour from 1.00pm closes the shop each day.

The business was founded in 1876 by Adam Flett grandfather of the E Flett after whom the business is called. Eric Flett returned from wartime army service to run the butchers being joined in 1972 in partnership by Ally Park who had been a message boy from the age of nine. Two years later David Garson was taken into the partnership. David was 24 but had worked in the business for 13 years by then! When Eric retired in the early 80's Ally and David continued. Ally retired 8 years ago and his partnership was taken on by his son John (below right).

David and his wife, Doreen start early – even before the early morning radio programmes. They are ably assisted by partner John Park and 12 other members of staff.

Orkney beef is sourced from the weekly market in Kirkwall, matured for 10 days at the Orkney Meats plant before being sent the 15 miles south west to Stromness. Fores and flanks are used straight away with the roasts and steaks left another 10 days to mature. Texel lamb is bought all year round from local farmer, Newhall Farm – Ronnie Brown.

Pork is bred and finished for the shop by Brian Kirkness (below left) who gets a fairly unique assessment of his product as he also works five half days per week boning out in the shop. Sausages, own cure bacon, black and white puddings and haggis are all made on the premises, gammons, roast beef, roast pork and ox tongues are all cooked for their impressive sliced ready to eat range.





Doreen Garson behind the counter at E Flett, Stromness.

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There are six different kinds of tasty burgers and an interesting array of sausages. Every one of the thick flanks goes into beef olives and the local speciality is Chicken Parcels with oatmeal stuffing.

All cooked meats are sliced in a specially designed clean room with a hugely efficient Berkel automatic slicer. It may have only been a Wednesday morning but Betty and Rosemary were busy opening, slicing and packing no fewer than 28 x 4lb tins of chopped pork.

Almost as many tins of boiled shoulder ham had already met with the same fate so it was no surprise that the trade justified such a state of the art machine. The packs and many more were destined for island stores where it seems that there exists a strong demand for meaty fillings.

The front shop is fitted out with an L shaped Misa refrigerated display case that gives loads of capacity. New 5 Series Avery scales are updated from the computer. Processing and manufacturing takes place across the square immediately outside the shop.

Fruit and vegetables play an important part in attracting regular visits. Freshness, colour and range strike you in a way that must attract even the most avid vegetarian to this butchers shop.



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Above Ronnie Brown's Newhall Lamb
 Right: SFMTA President visits David and Doreen
 Below: Betty and Rosemary pack 28 tins at a time.



Space restricts the opportunity to bake pastry products but David Garson has the perfect partner in Murdoch Brothers who have a supply route north from their shining new production plant in Forres.

One has to conclude that the residents of Stromness cannot possibly understand how lucky they are to have Fletts on their doorstep. Fortunately

for the rest of Orkney their distribution network allows more than just Stromness shoppers to enjoy all the tasty treats.

In May David and Doreen Garson went off to see Eric Clapton at the Royal Albert Hall in the latest of their regular excursions to experience live acts of the greatest in the music business.

Perhaps its their appreciation of bringing everything together in perfect harmony that allows them to translate that into a booming butchers business or may be its their love of golf that ensures they are constantly seeking to be better than par. Long may their shanks be tasty and their hooks be full of quality.

Whatever, when you leave to return to mainland Scotland your lasting impression has to be that there is nothing insular about butchers on Orkney. Fletts are geared up to do the business and as Eric Clapton might have said – "You look wonderful tonight."

