NOTES ON THE EARL’S BÚ (OR BORDLAND) AT ORPHIR, ORKNEY, CALLED ÖRFJARA IN THE SAGAS, AND ON THE REMAINS OF THE ROUND CHURCH THERE. BY ALFRED W. JOHNSTON, F.S.A.

In the Orkneyinga Saga it is mentioned (A.D. 1127–28) that Earl Haraldr lived at his bú in Örfjara. In 1136:—

“Earl Pall had a great yule feast, and prepared for it at his búa, which is called Örfura (Orfjara, Flateybook). . . . There were large farm-buildings (húsa-bær) there, and they stood on sloping ground, and there was a slope at the back of the houses. And when one came on the brow of the slope Órríðafjörðr was above it (i.e., on the other side, beyond); in it lies Damisey. . . . There, in Örfjara, was a large drinking hall, and there was a door near the east gable, on the southern side wall, and a splendid church stood before the hall door, and one descended from the hall to the church. But as one entered the hall a large slab was to the left, and inside many large ale-casks, and facing the out-door was a room.” The Saga goes on to relate the dispute between the two Sveinns, resulting in the slaughter of Sveinn breastrope, after which Sveinn Asleifarson was taken by his accomplices “into the room facing the out-door, and he was there pulled out through a skjá-window.” There Magnus Eyvindarson has a horse ready saddled and took him away behind the houses and on to Órríðafjörðr. Then they took ship, and Magnús brought Sveinn to Damisey.”

In order to identify the site of the Earl’s bú in, or called Örfjara, it will be instructive to compare a list of Earls’ bús and residences mentioned in the Saga, with a list of bús, bulls, or bows and bordlands of the Earldom, enumerated in the Rentals of the Earldom.

With regard to bordlands, Captain F. W. L. Thomas writes:—“The Earls of Orkney must, from an early period, have had mensal farms, and these are marked in the Old Rental as ‘bordland,’ literally table-land;
thus the Bu, Bål, N. of Orfer, where the Earls usually dwelt, was bordland." Colonel David Balfour writes:—"Bordland, N. Bord, mensa, cibus. The guest quarters of the King or Jarl, and therefore exempt from skatt." 3

We find the Earl of Orkney faring about the Islands in 1137, collecting his land rents, when he would undoubtedly have resided at his Bu and bordlands. 4

As the islands were frequently divided among several Earls at the same time in accordance with udal succession they must have had their separate headquarters, for which purpose their Bu and bordlands would probably be utilised.

Earls' Residences, 11th and 12th Centuries.
From the Orkneyinga Saga.

Earl Thorfinnr (d. 1064), after his pilgrimage to Rome, resided almost always at Byrgis-hérað, where he built Christ Church (chapter 37).

Earl Pall II. at Byrgis-hérað 1137 (chapter 60).
Earl Røgnvaldr II. at Byrgis-hérað 1155 (chapter 108).

Earl Røgnvaldr I. at Kirkju-vágr 1046 (chapter 34).

Earl Haraldr, who lived mostly in Caithness, died at his Bu in Orfjára 1127 (chapter 58).

Earl Pall II. lived at his Bu in Orfjára 1136–37 (chapter 69–71).
Earl Røgnvaldr II. at his Bu in Orfjára 1154 (chapter 103).
Earl Haraldr Maddadson in hiding at the Bu in Orfjára 1154 (chapter 103).

1 Only two Earls, Pall and Haraldr, are mentioned as dwelling at Orfjára; it is spoken of as a Bu of Earl Røgnvaldr, and Earl Haraldr Maddadson was in hiding there at that time.


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Bordlands of the Earldom landed estate, which paid no skatt.
From Rentals 1503–1595.

Netherlyking in Sandwich.
Westrey — Swartmeill, Wastbister, and Bú of Rapness.

Sanday—Gryndleith, Bú of Brugh, Halkisness, Tofts, Walls, Lopness, and Trenness.

Stronsay — Holland; and probably Clestrain and Musbuster, as they paid no skatt.

? Papa Stronsay paid no skatt, and probably bordland.

Earls' Residences, 11th and 12th Centuries.
From the Orkneyinga Saga.

Earl Rögnvaldr II. at Hreppinsnes in 1155 (chapter 107).
? Earl Rögnvaldr I. in 1036 fared first to those bús which his father Brúsa had owned (chapter 26). We are told that Earl Brúsa had the northernmost part of the islands (chapter 22).

Earl Rögnvaldr I. killed at Papey in lítlu, where he had gone for his yule malt 1046 (chapter 34).
Earl Rögnvaldr II. in 1136–38 had a bú called Knarrar-stadir (chapter 81). This is supposed to be the modern Knarston near Scalpa in St Ola. In the Rental 1503 Knarstane in St Olavis parish is described as pro rege, i.e., Kingsland, and formed part of the landed estate of the Earldom. It paid skatt, and was not bordland.

The Saga mentions the búa in Órðjara and the búa called Órðjara. The Rental of 1503 mentions the búa of Orphaír. In one instance in the Rental of 1503 the spelling Bow occurs, viz., the Bow of Burray. In the Rental 1642 Bow is used throughout. Búe is the form in Murdoch Mackenzie's Charts, 1750; and Bu' is now adopted by the Ordnance Survey. The pronunciation is uniformly bó, and appears always to have been so. The question is whether búa is derived from O.N. Ból or Bú. The Saga always uses búa, which, although a generic term, appears to have become associated with place-names in Orkney and Shetland. However, Bú, as now used in Orkney, is still a sort of generic term—it is always the Bú of such and such a place, precisely in the same way as used in the Saga. In Orkney and Shetland bó is still used, as in Iceland, for a pen for cattle. Ból as a place-name in Orkney appears in the termination bister = bólstadr. The ll in
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bull appears to be a Scottish addition. In illustration of the Scottish influence on Orkney place-names, so far as the letter l is concerned, take vágr pronounced voe in Orkney; in Scotch this becomes wave then wall, as in vágar, wawis, walls, and Kirkju-vágr, Kirkwav, Kirkwall. The true words are preserved in the folk-pronunciation Waas and Kirkwaa. In the case of Hrólfssey, the l has been absorbed in the foregoing long vowel, and we now have Rousey. In the same way as the Scotch pronounce gold goed, by a mistaken contra-analogy we occasionally find fold for fowd (i.e., foged).¹ Boll, a seed pod, becomes bow, where, as in many Scotch words, the double ll is changed into w.² And by a contra-analogy the Orkney bú becomes bull. This Icelandic bú is still in use in some Scottish place-names, meaning a house or village, e.g., the Bow of Fife, the Boo of Ballingshaw.³

The earldom landed estate in Orphir parish consisted of a compact district of three tuns, viz., Orphir, Midland, and Houton, with the rúm or farm of Orakirk. These are all described in the Rentals of 1503 and 1595 as bordlands of the old earldom, i.e., the Norse Earldom, paying no skatt. This estate was separated from the tún of Swanbister on the east by a tongue of the Common and by a large tract of rough uncultivated land, and the Fidge of Piggar, stretching from the Common down to the coast. From the name Grind (= a house near a grind or gate in the surrounding tún wall), mentioned along with Hangabak in 1503, there is presumptive evidence that the Common at one time extended down to the coast. There is also evidence that the Common behind Houton also extended along the hill top down to the coast, dividing the estate on the north-west from Peterton. We gather this from the fact that Orakirk, which is situated on the shore to the north of Houton, is quoyland, i.e., an enclosure from the Common, and the place between it and Houton is called Midquoy. That Orakirk is an old quoy is evident from its

² Jamieson’s Dictionary of Scottish Language, s.v. Bow.
³ Ibid., s.v. Boo.
pennyland valuation. The early date of this valuation is lost in antiquity. Later quoys are not so valued.

The whole estate was bounded on the north and the east by the Common, from which it was divided by a wall, and on the south by the sea. There are no walls separating the three tuns from each other, merely recognised boundaries—the burn of Too-gill between Houton and Midland, and the ridge of a brek, called Glensbrek, between Midland and Orphir. It formed an ideal estate. Midland and Houton, with the only haven in that part of the Mainland—where King Hakon moored his galley on his return from his expedition to Scotland—and Orphir, with broad lands for farming, extensive meadows, hill-pasture, peat-ground, and a good fresh-water stream,—sheltered by a range of hills on the north (including the indispensable ward or beacon hill), facing the south, and with a safe land-locked sea in front, stocked with salmon trout and other fish. Kerlin-skerry, belonging to the Bâ, used to be noted as a place for seal-hunting.

With regard to the name Orphir, as applied to the present parish of that name, we do not know when ecclesiastical parishes were formed in Orkney, nor do we know whether existing civil districts were adopted for that purpose. The Saga does not mention any ecclesiastical or civil district. Byrgis-herad does not necessarily refer to a civil district, as herad is used for any district, valley, or country, bordered by mountains, or within the same river basin.

It is noticeable in the names of parishes in Orkney that they are mainly taken from the dedications of the churches, or the names of the tuns in which the churches are situated. The parish of Orphir consists of a group of tuns, and takes its name from the tun of Orphir in which the parish church and the Bû of Orphir are situated.

The Saga merely mentions the Earl's bû in, or called Òrfjarâ, so that the name Órfjarâ is clearly that of the Homestead. The tun is the unit of Orkney topography. The original tun by enlargement, and subdivision through udal inheritance, became a group of farms. The site
of the original tún, however, remained the principal farm, the bú or head bú of the enlarged tún.

The Bú of Orphir must have been the original farm from which the tún took its name. The tún of Orphir is described in the Rental of 1503 as consisting of the bull of Orphair ninepenny land, and a group of surrounding farms called the threepenny land of Orphair.

The present Bú of Orphir is situated at the head of the Hope o’ the Bú, also called the Bay of Orphir. Between the farm buildings and the shore is the parish church and churchyard, and in the churchyard are the ruins of the Round Church of Orphir. Immediately to the north, outside the yard wall, are the foundations of extensive buildings recently excavated. The ruins and the church stand on a gentle rising ground at the foot of the south-east declivity of Midland Hill. At the east end of the site and of the ruins the ground slopes down abruptly to the stream. The Saga states that the houses stood on a slope, which may either refer to the declivity of Midland Hill or to the rising ground on which the ruins stand. The Saga description is extremely loose and brief. It takes Sveinn “away behind the houses and on to Örridafjördr,” and mentions a brekka or leiti, a slope behind the houses, from which Damsey could be seen, both of which are four and six and a half miles distant respectively.

The Rev. Alexander Pope states, in 1758, that large and deep foundations were found underground in the lands of the Bow, near the church, but that there were no local traditions as to the Earl’s Palace. Mr George Petrie states, in 1861, that the immediate neighbourhood of the Round Church abounded with numerous traces of ancient buildings believed to be the remains of the Earl’s Palace. Some years ago, the writer pointed out to the Rev. W. Caskey, incumbent of the parish, the spot where the Earl’s Bú would have stood in relation to the Round Church, in accordance with the description in the Saga. At that time there were no indications of any ruins, and the locality of

previous excavations was unknown. In 1899 the grave-digger came across foundations in the north-west corner of the churchyard, lying from west to east. As this would correspond with the south wall of the Earl's Bú, Mr Robert Flett of Bellevue, Hon. District Secretary of the Viking Club, made two excavations to the eastward in line with the supposed wall, with the result that it was again struck. In 1900 Mr Flett and the writer made a series of excavations, tracing the buildings to their eastern extremity. In 1901 they made a careful excavation at that part where the doorway would be, in accordance with the Saga description, with the result that such an opening was found (see plan, fig. 1). The wall, so far as excavated, measures about 136 feet in length. The western extremity has not been traced; it probably terminated at the west end of the churchyard, as no trace could be obtained outside. Beginning at the west end of the yard there is a continuous length of about 104 feet of dry built random-coursed wall, 4 feet thick, without footings or scarcement; this terminates eastward at the supposed doorway, opposite the church. It was not possible to excavate immediately east of this to find the other jamb of opening, owing to the present church road wall. But 6 feet 4½ inches to the east, on the other side of the road wall, was found the return wall of another building in the same frontage line. This latter building has walls 4 feet thick, but built with mortar, and therefore probably of later date. The jamb of the opening showed no signs of a door frame or fastening. In a line with the jamb of the door on its north side, and standing on end, was found part of a large flat stone 5 inches thick. The bottom of the foundation of this wall is level with that of the Round Church. In the doorway, alongside of the stone on end, and 2 feet 4 inches above the foundation level, was another flat stone 5 inches thick, lying on its side, which may have been the threshold of a door, or otherwise a portion broken off the stone on end. If it was the threshold, then the floor of the Bú must have been 2 feet 4 inches above that of the church, which would accord with the Saga statement.

1 Is this the slab mentioned in the Saga?
Fig. 1. Plan and sections, Orphir, Orkney.
that one went down from the Bū to the church. As the foundation of the cross wall to the west of the doorway is about level with the flat stone in the doorway, probably this was the floor level, and the space between the stone on end and the cross wall would be the ale-room mentioned in the Saga. If the stone on end is in its original position, then the fact that its lower portion is irregular shows that it was probably the socket underground, and is an additional proof that the flat stone in doorway was the floor level. The fact that the wall above the level of the flat stone, and above the foundation of the cross wall, has fallen down, while below it remains intact, appears to show that the lower portion was buried foundation below the floor level. All along the north or inside of this wall the stones have fallen down, and are mixed up with quantities of bones, ashes, and oyster shells. The only articles found were the two halves of the ornamented midrib of a bone comb of the Viking period, shown in fig. 2, which were lying near the first step of the apse of the Round Church; and a round handle of deerhorn or bone from the westmost excavation of the wall of the Bū.

Up till 1829 the old church road, or 'masey gate,' crossed the stream immediately to the east of the church, and then branched into two sections going round outside the north and south walls of the church-yard, so that the wall now excavated was under the north road.
The whole site is now covered with 5 feet deep of débris above the clay upon which the foundations of the church and Bu are built.

The Round Church, of which all that remains is the apse and a small part of the wall of the nave on each side (see fig. 1 and fig. 3) is undoubtedly one of those twelfth century churches built in imitation of the church of the Holy Sepulchre.

Fig. 3. Apse of the Round Church at Orphir.

With regard to the founder of the church, the Rev. Alexander Pope states, in 1758, that some thought it had been built by Earl Hákon after his return from Jerusalem, and adds that "Hákon, it seemed, chose Orphir for his seat." Dr Joseph Anderson states that Hákon "had his residence at Orphir," and that "he seems to have resided" there, and probably built the church. The late Mr B. H. Hossack, in his recent

1 Scotland in Early Christian Times, Edinburgh, 1881, p. 29, foot-note.
2 Orkneyinga Saga, Translation, p. xcv.
work, *Kirkwall in the Orkneys*, apparently founding on Dr Anderson, states that Hákon built the church. Thus the surmise of one writer becomes the fact of another. All these statements as to Hákon living in Orphir and building the church are mere inferences. We have no proof that Earl Hákon was ever even in Orphir. He may have visited Orphir, among his otherbusy, when on circuit—collecting rents and skatts. We are not told where he lived, and merely know that he died in the islands. Earl Páll was living in Orphir in 1136, when the church was first mentioned, and his father, Earl Hákon, was the first and only Earl before that time who visited Jerusalem. If Earl Hákon built the church he probably did so after his pilgrimage to Jerusalem, between a few winters after he murdered St Magnus in 1116, and c. 1123 when he died.

The Rev. Francis Liddell in 1797 suggested that the Earl's Palace stood at Oback in the tun of Tuskerbister, in Orphir parish, as answering to the Saga description.1 Oback is on the slope of the hill from which Damsey can be seen. Possibly he was misled by a tradition which says that the Earl of Caithness was slain at Oback after the battle of Summerdale in 1529.2 Mr Liddell suggests that "The ruins of an ancient tower, of a circular form, and about 180 feet in circumference," in Swanbister, was probably the residence of Sveinn breastrope, from which the place took its name "Suenobister." This ruin, however, is the remains of one of the many pre-Norse broughs in Orkney and Shetland. From measurements taken by the writer in 1879 and 1901, the internal diameter is about 30 feet, which, with the 12 feet thick dry built walls, gives a circumference of about 170 feet.

Somehow or other, after this suggestion by Mr Liddell, Sveinn got locally confused with the Earl, and in a MS. map of Swanbister, in 1847, we find the Brough marked as the "ruins of Earl Sweyn's Castle." 3 The transition from "Earl Sweyn's Castle" to "Earl's Palace" was then

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1 *O.S.A.*, vol. xix. p. 394.
3 MS. map by the late James Johnston of Oubister, Orphir, in the possession of James Johnston of Coubister, Orphir.
an easy one. Already, in 1842, the minister of the parish mentions the "Earl's Palace" at Swanbister.\(^1\) In the advertisement of the sale of the estate of Swanbister, in 1844, it is stated, as an attractive feature of the property, that it was "in ancient days the residence of the Norwegian Earls of Orkney, the remains of whose palace are yet in existence."\(^2\)

The new proprietor of the estate, buying it on that understanding, we are therefore not surprised to find Professor P. A. Munch writing in 1845–49, that the inhabitants still show the ground of the Earl's seat at Swanbister.\(^3\) As a matter of fact, this spurious tradition has never become folklore. The Brough at Swanbister is called by the inhabitants the "hillock o' Brecknay," from the name of the neighbouring farm.

There are no traditions now, no more than there were in 1758, in Mr Pope's time, as to the site of the Earl's Palace.

Professor Munch located Örfjara at Swanbister primarily because he found there a large flat tract of land which was sometimes submerged by the sea, and Örfjara, or its derivative Örfyri, he says was anciently used of a considerable extent of flat land covered at flood and dry at ebb, and in proof refers to two islands in Norway, now called Öfersö, but anciently Örfyrisøy, both land-fast during ebb. But, as will be shown later on, Örfjara, or its derivative Örfri, is solely applicable to the reef or neck of land which connects a tidal island to the mainland, and consequently the only parallel names which Professor Munch can adduce are those of two such islands. The proper designation for a low ebbing shore is ûtfíri, neuter (Cleasby fem., wrong), a long foreshore where the water recedes far and leaves shallows running out from the beach.\(^4\)

The tract of land referred to by Professor Munch is called the Fidge of Piggar, from O.N. fit = low-lying meadow beside water, which exactly describes the place. Swanbister is described in the Rental of 1503 as udal land paying skatt, and is not mentioned as having formed part of

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1 N.S.A., Orphir.
2 Advertisement in possession of the writer.
4 Dr Jón Stefánsson, at present engaged on an Icelandic-English Dictionary for the Clarendon Press.
the old Earldom landed estate. It was completely separated from the 
Earl's estate in Orphir. Professor Munch found that the site shown him, 
viz., that of the Brough, in relation to the adjoining site of a chapel, did 
not correspond with the Saga description, and there was no room for a 
chapel between the Brough and the shore, so he accordingly accepted the 
site of the chapel as that of the church mentioned in the Saga, and placed 
the palace in imagination to the north, suggesting that the Brough might 
have been one of the out-buildings.

Professor Munch says that Orphir seems in former times to have been 
the common name of the whole coast from Houton to Waulkmill, but 
quotes no authority. It has already been shown that Orphir, excluding 
the parish name, is alone applicable to the tün of that name (in which 
the Bü and Round Church are situated), the inhabitants of which are 
still spoken of by their neighbouring parishioners as the 'Orphir folk.' 
At most the name could only have included the Earl's estate of Orphir, 
Midland, and Houton, to which latter is attached a tidal island, called 
the Holm of Houton, an Örfrisey, to which we must look for the 
origin of the name. Although Professor Munch visited Orphir, and 
consulted the Rentals, he makes no mention of the Round Church, or 
the Bü of Orphir, bordlands of the old Earldom.

The Saga, before relating the murders and Sveinn's flight, appropri-
ately describes the relative position of the house and church, and the 
island of Damsey to which Sveinn fled, all of which are brought into 
the story. It says, behind the houses there was a brekka, a slope, or 
leiti, an elevation on the horizon hiding the view, from which Damsey 
could be seen,—the inference being that this elevation was on the road 
by which Sveinn fled. Professor Munch says that it could only refer 


to the Ward Hill, but that Damsey could not be seen from it, as the 
Keely-lang hills intervened. The Ward Hill is the highest hill on the 
mainland, and is a fjall, and not a mere brekka or leiti. The straight 
track from the tün of Orphir to the Bay of Firth, by which pedestrians 
still go, is through the moor, and after a long, tedious ascent the 
slak or hollow between the hills of Lyradale and Keely-lang is reached,
when the Bay of Firth (Örridadjördr) and Damsey suddenly break into
view. The complete change of scene is striking. This can only be
the elevation mentioned in the Saga, and it is part of the range of hills
which Professor Munch said prevented Damsey from being seen from
the Ward Hill. No one acquainted with the locality would ever think
of going to Firth by way of the top of the Ward Hill, or expect to get
a view of Damsey from it. The slak mentioned is the nearest point
to Orphir from which Damsey can be seen, and it is on the direct and
shortest route to Firth by which a fugitive would go.

The following remarks as to the derivation and significance of the
word Örðjara are founded mainly on a correspondence with Mr Eiríkr
Magnússon of Cambridge and Dr Jón Stefánsson:

Örðjara, derivative Örðri, Icelandic, neuter, is solely applicable to the
reef or neck of land connecting a tidal island (Örðrisey) to the main-
land. It is derived from ör = out of, a negative prefix, and fjara = (1)
low water, opposite to high water flóð, (2) foreshore, or the part of the
beach dry only at low water, and covered at high water. Örðrisey
would thus mean "out of ebb island," i.e., showing above the water-
line at ebb-tide. There is no difficulty in the way of the term Örðjara
extending from the appendage to the adjacent parts of the mainland.
The Holm of Houton must therefore be the original Örðrisey and the
adjoining land Örðjara. But how came the name to be restricted or
transferred to the present Bú and tún of Orphir, and the name Örðrisey
discarded?

There are two solutions. (1) The whole district of the Earl's estate
from Houton to Orphir may have been originally called Örðjara, and the
name afterwards restricted to the Earl's Bú; or (2) Houton, adjoining the
tidal island, may have been the original Örðjara, and the Earl's Bú first
erected there, and afterwards shifted to its present site, taking the name
with it. In either of these cases, when the name got attached to the
abode, and people no longer understood the exact meaning of Örðrisey—
which must have got lost very early in Orkney, considering that the same
took place in Iceland—the term Örðrisey became meaningless to people.
and Hólmr took its place. Órfrisey, just outside Reykjavik, has for a long time gone under the name Effersøey as though it were named after some person called Effer, which shows how utterly unconscious the Icelanders themselves became of the sense of the old name. Even this island figured for a time as Hólmr. Professor MacKinnon of Edinburgh University writes that there are nine or ten Órfriseys in the Hebrides, where the name is changed in Gaelic to Orasa, the $f$ and second $r$ being discarded—$f$ aspirated and $r$ merged in $s$. The name on the maps appears wrongly as Oronsay. There is also an island Òrfsøey at the south of Yell in Shetland. Órfriseyjar occurs in the Diplomatarium Islandicum, i. 597. In Norway, Órfrisey occurs in the middle ages, and Offersø in three places in modern Norway.

Houton is probably the Icelandic Há-tún, or high tún, which is descriptive of the place as it lies on the hill side. This name is found in many places in Iceland, but is not recorded in any Saga relating to Norway. It is a curious fact that almost all the Há-túns in Iceland are small tenements within or on the land of a manorial or main estate; and what seems tolerably certain is, that when the manorial abode was erected, Há-tún, even if it was the older abode, became the inferior house and remained so ever after.

Even Midland is not without significance. From the name of one of its farms Myre, Icelandic Myrr, a swamp, which is still descriptive of the place, it would be unsuitable for farming purposes, and Midland would be an appropriate name for this unprofitable land which divided the bá from its Há-tún or out-bá. The Norse term Medalland could only be given to a place which lay between two localities that had distinct names. Midland is mentioned as early as 1263, when King Hákon was there, so that we may be quite certain that at that time, and in 1136, Örfrjara was solely applicable to the Earl's Bá. Another important inference that may be drawn is that Midland implies a connected district of three places. This may refer to (1) the Earl's three farms, (2) the tripartition and re-naming of the original district
of Örfjara, or (3) the middle place between the original Örfjara and the shifted abode of the Earl.

It is now hoped that it has been proved that the Earl’s Bú in, or called Örfjara, mentioned in the Orkneyinga Saga, is identical with the present Bú of Orphir—which in 1503 was described as bordlands of the old Norse Earldom—and that the foundations recently excavated at the Bú of Orphir and the ruins of the Round Church are those of the Earl’s Bú and kirk, to which they answer in every particular as described in the Saga.

With regard to the preservation of the ruins of the Round Church: The east end of the present parish church, which is of the usual barn-type, stands on the western half of the site of the nave of the Round Church, the foundations of which are buried underground. It is now proposed to pull down the parish church and build a new one further west, excavating the foundations of the round nave and preserving the ruin as an ancient monument. If the ruin of the Round Church is to be preserved, something must be done soon, as the vaulted roof of the apse is in a very precarious state, owing to the action of the grass roots eating away the mortar and disintegrating the masonry.