



60 North

SHINING A NEW LIGHT ON SHETLAND LACE

Kate Davies traces the history of Shetland Lace

SHETLAND RAMBLES

A Sketching Tour

Interview with
Mairi Hedderwick

An Idyllic Retreat

Abby Faulkner falls
for Fair Isle

PLUS

Shetland Wool Week

Old Scatness

Shetland Nature Festival

Fishing in paradise

Jazz Shetland Style

A Hansel of Film

GROWING UP IN THE GARDEN OF SHETLAND

Brydon Thomason recounts
the beginnings of his love affair with
Shetland's natural environment





www.SHETLAND.org

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An Idyllic Retreat

ABBY FAULKNER FALLS FOR FAIR ISLE.

Photography by Abby Faulkner

✕✕✕ Fair Isle was on my never-ending to-do list until a close friend said, 'you must go! Its rugged beauty is magnificent and it only takes 25 minutes from mainland Shetland, making it the perfect destination for a day-trip or longer if you like.' She is a great sales woman and I could not resist her pitch. Out came the trusty rucksacks and off hubby and I went to Tingwall Airport, ready for another island adventure. Fair Isle did indeed prove to be quite magical, and the welcome on arrival quite unique.

As we alighted the 7-seater plane, a grinning ranger holding a wriggling cloth bag approached us. I was speechless. He did not say 'Abracadabra!' However, he did make us both smile from ear to ear when he reached into the bag and unveiled another visitor:

a Wryneck. The bird's head moved in a snake-like way – a charming and memorable welcome. Fair Isle is well known not only for its distinctive style of knitwear but for also being an ornithological Mecca, internationally renowned for the observation of migrant birds and where seabirds gather in great numbers to breed. Now, I should tell you, I am not a keen twitcher. However, bird watching soon turned out to be one of the highlights of my trip, in particular spending an early morning trap round with a warden from the Fair Isle Bird Observatory. This daily event is a must-do – I learnt about ringing techniques, long-term migration studies and was quite overwhelmed by the charismatic beauty of a Redstart found in one of the nine Heligoland traps.

Staying at a bird observatory may not be a non-birder's first accommodation choice, but I really cannot recommend this place highly enough. It is a newly built facility suitable for all, not just the flapping! A spacious ensuite room – breakfast, lunch and a delicious three course dinner included – is incredible value for money. There is a very social bar with a good stock of Shetland ales, a gift shop, a fantastic visitor centre stocked with plenty of self-guiding leaflets and fact-sheets, and a comfy lounge with superb views. However, what I really loved about this place was the helpful staff. Nothing was too much trouble. My requests to meet a Fair Isle knitter, an artisan who made straw-backed chairs and a trip to buy a hat from the crafts co-operative, were all met with



"SINGER SEWING
MACHINE, SPINNING
WHEEL, SHETLAND YARNS
IN JEWELLED COLOURS
AND STUNNING HAND-
FRAMED KNITS"

a smile and organized with speedy efficiency. These visits proved to be yet another highlight of our holiday.

Our first port of call was Mati Ventrillon's home studio. It is a fascinating place complete with Singer sewing machine, spinning wheel, Shetland yarns in jeweled colours and stunning hand-framed knits in various stages of completion. It was great to hear about her passion for Fair Isle, her family's journey from London to the island, their predominantly self-sufficient lifestyle and the process of applying for a home via the National Trust for Scotland, owners of the island. She also told me that an intrepid explorer, the dashing Ben Fogle, had recently ordered a woolly for an expedition. I touched Ben's blue and white Fair Isle sample displayed on Mati's wall. It was a special moment, although hubby did not seem as impressed! Gathering myself, we continued to the home of Stewart Thomson, maker of Fair Isle chairs. First we rendezvoused with our two new Aussie friends who were also staying at the observatory. One of the ladies had injured her foot prior to visiting and found it difficult to walk long distances. Observatory staff came to the rescue and ferried them to Stewart's cosy lounge where he demonstrated how he made the straw-backed chairs with locally grown Shetland oats, which give the backs their distinctive golden colour. Stewart explained that the design is based on the chair his grandfather, Jerome Wilson, made for his bride in 1908. 'Definitely an heirloom to add to my Shetland crafts wish list', I thought aloud. Sadly, I discovered it is unlikely I will ever own a Fair Isle chair. Stewart said that he had a 3-year waiting list and would not be taking any more orders and, as yet, had not found an apprentice to pass on this unique craft.

Bidding a fond farewell, we made our way to the George Waterston Memorial Centre. It is open three days a week and named after the one time owner of the island and co-founder of the original observatory in 1948. A fellow in a tweed jacket sped past us on a bicycle. He turned out to be a museum volunteer who, with his fiendishly sharp eyesight, had spotted us from his home and managed to race ahead and open the centre early. We found him sitting at the desk with the visitor guestbook at the ready and plenty of historical intelligence to share as he guided us around the museum.

"THIS IS A WONDERFUL ISLAND TO VISIT, MADE UP OF A VERY HAPPY, DIVERSE AND TALENTED COMMUNITY OF PEOPLE WHO ARE GENUINELY WILLING TO TAKE THE TIME OUT FROM THEIR HECTIC LIVES TO SHARE THEIR STORIES"

The rest of our stay was filled with lazy rambles, often past meandering puffins. The observatory van appeared every now and again, red flag flying from the window to alert visitors of rare bird sightings. As news spread we watched solitary walkers, gripping their binoculars and telescopic lenses, make energetic dashes across the landscape. Islanders working on their crofts waved to us as we passed.

Often we waved at the same people several times – there is only one (single-track) road, the island measures just 5kms long by 3kms wide, and with a population of about 70, repeat waves are guaranteed. We chatted to locals at Stackhoull Stores (the only shop) and marveled at impressive cliffs, including the spectacular Sheep Rock. We visited North and South Lighthouse – both designed by cousins of the writer Robert Louis Stevenson – and stopped for picnics in the sunshine while we watched graceful fulmars glide across the bluest of skies.

Our 3-day break seemed to pass in a halcyon haze. It is one of the few holidays I can remember where I was totally present and relaxed. Of course the consistently good weather helped. The white sands of picturesque North Haven resembled those of the Maldives, and seals, as if on cue, blew bubbles in the turquoise water as we gazed at heavenly views.

I cannot help thinking that whatever the weather, this is a wonderful island to visit, made up of a very happy, diverse and talented community of people who are genuinely willing to take the time out from their hectic lives to share their stories with visitors. Their generosity of spirit is more than enough reason to make the short trip to Fair Isle – an absolute gem of an island and one place I will, without doubt, return to very soon with binoculars and maybe, just maybe, a telescopic lens.

Further information

www.visit.shetland.org/fair-isle

FIBO Warden's Diary – a collection of stories and bird news from Fair Isle Bird Observatory:

www.fibowarden.blogspot.com

A stunning photographic book and special keepsake: Fair Isle: through the seasons is available to purchase online here.



A Bird Observatory with a view



Traditional Fair Isle chair




A Redstart found on the early morning trap round



Growing Up in the Garden of Shetland

NATURALIST AND TOUR GUIDE BRYDON THOMASON RECOUNTS THE BEGINNINGS OF HIS LOVE AFFAIR WITH SHETLAND'S NATURAL ENVIRONMENT.

 The Shetland Islands are many things to many people. A visit to such a remote and enchanting archipelago with such a rich and diverse natural heritage offers a world class visitor experience. It is rare for someone to visit and not fall for Shetland's illustrious charms.

As a born and bred Shetlander I can't recall a defining moment when I personally succumbed to these charms; a connection with and love for the environment around me was established from such an early

age that I never knew any different. As a child I was fascinated with the relationships between seasons and species, weather and wildlife, landscapes and habitats. My childhood interests (and indeed antics) all revolved around life outdoors. I grew up on a croft on Fetlar, an island renowned for its ornithological history and known locally as 'the garden of Shetland'. As a boy I spent as much time as I could working with my father on the croft or accompanying the local RSPB wardens on the island's reserves.

Another major early influence was the late Bobby Tulloch, a legendary naturalist in Shetland and beyond. Bobby was a childhood hero of mine and a huge inspiration. He too was a born and bred Shetlander (and distant cousin of mine) from the neighbouring island of Yell. Many a time Bobby would invite me along on a tour or boat trip he was leading, which was something he pioneered in the islands.

I also had an independent enthusiasm for exploring the natural world around me. Like many a young nature lover, I spent countless hours around fresh water streams and lochs, rock pools and on beaches searching for bird's nests, and perhaps my favourite of all, tracking otters. Even though 'birding' developed into what many now label 'an obsession' (especially to my wife, Vaila!), it was Shetland's otters that became my underlying passion in life. Learning how to track their movements, where and when to find them, and how to study them without revealing my presence, became my main motivation as a naturalist.

Further information

www.shetlandnature.net

www.facebook.com/shetlandnature

www.nature-shetland.co.uk

A non-commercial website and information service in association with Shetland Biological Records centre, the main hub of collecting, recording and disseminating Shetland's natural history information.



Red-throat reflection



Mother and cub on grass



Killer whales off Flugga



Flora



Celebrating the Magic

RORY TALLACK PREVIEWS THE SHETLAND NATURE FESTIVAL
WHICH MARKS ITS FIFTH BIRTHDAY THIS YEAR.

The week-long Shetland Nature Festival brings together more than 1400 locals and visitors to enjoy the incredible range of wildlife that Shetland has to offer. This year's festival is organised by Shetland Amenity Trust, Geopark Shetland, RSPB Shetland, Scottish Natural Heritage and Shetland Islands Council.

The festival runs from 7th to 15th July and offers a range of events and activities throughout the isles. The timing ensures that everyone can make the most of Shetland's natural heritage: daylight hours are plentiful, cliffs are teeming with seabirds, wildflowers are blooming, and there is a good chance of spotting whales and dolphins. Coinciding with the school holidays,

the festival also gives families the chance to get out and discover the wonders of wild Shetland.

Whether your interest is in flowers or fossils, seabirds or seals, something will be on offer to inform, entertain and excite. Based around a different area each day, the festival takes in Northmavine, Scalloway, Unst, Lerwick & Bressay, Yell, the Westside and the South Mainland. This format allows festival-goers the opportunity to attend more events with the minimum of travel.

As usual, the festival begins with the popular Noss Open Day, which includes nature walks, rock pooling and children's activities, all in the spectacular setting of the Noss National Nature Reserve. Next on

the menu are guided walks, evening talks, children's workshops and boat trips. This year's schedule also mixes new events with some of those that have been most successful in previous years, including guided walks around the stunning Eshaness coastline, and Shetland's highest point, Ronas Hill.

For those who fancy a day out with one of Shetland's experienced tour operators, the festival runs an Associate Operators Scheme, which both supports local businesses and promotes quality nature tours and activities. Members of the scheme have been quality assessed by Shetland Amenity Trust on behalf of the festival partners. Current associates are Shetland Nature, Seabirds-and-Seals and Shetland Geotours.

Simon King

This year, the Shetland Nature Festival is delighted to announce that Simon King will be Festival Patron. Simon, whose 'Shetland Diaries' hit UK television screens in 2010, has spent many months filming and working in the isles, and his positive impact on wildlife tourism is undeniable.

Simon says he is "very proud" to be involved: "Shetland has a wild magic all of its own... The Shetland Nature Festival celebrates this magic and encourages everyone to get out there, explore and enjoy the world about them." One of the festival organisers added: "We are thrilled to have Simon as our new Patron... He has had an immeasurable effect on wildlife tourism in Shetland and has taken part in four of the five festivals so far."

European Geoparks Week

Since 2010 the Shetland Nature Festival has run in partnership with Geopark Shetland's European Geoparks Week. This involves Europe's 50 Geoparks, which include the six other British members of the network. All Geoparks share common aims, working together to conserve and promote geological heritage through education and geo-tourism.

Shetland's incredibly diverse geology will come alive during the week as you journey across the isles. Uncover evidence that until 420 million years ago Shetland was part of North America. Trace Shetland's 700 million year journey from close to the South Pole, across the Equator to its present location at 60° north, Discover the remains of a mountain chain

of Himalayan proportions; a Sahara-like desert; an explosive volcano like Mount St. Helens; and the floor of an ocean as wide as the Atlantic. You can do all this without being an expert! Getting involved with the Shetland Nature Festival is a great way to start.

For the full Shetland Nature Festival schedule and details on becoming a festival member, visit www.shetlandnaturefestival.co.uk or follow Shetland Nature Festival on Facebook.

Opposite: Ronas Hill Guided Walk



Red-Throated Diver, © Malcie Smith



Noss NNR Open Day 2011, marine viewing

"SHETLAND HAS
A WILD MAGIC ALL OF
ITS OWN"



Orca, © Malcie Smith



Noss Guided Walk



"THE FESTIVAL ALSO GIVES
FAMILIES THE CHANCE TO GET
OUT AND DISCOVER THE WONDERS
OF WILD SHETLAND"



Shetland Rambles: A Sketching Tour

The new book from writer and artist Mairi Hedderwick

MISA HAY CAUGHT UP WITH MAIRI TO LEARN MORE ABOUT
HER CAREER AND RELATIONSHIP WITH SHETLAND.

You were born in Gourock, did your childhood there influence your books for children?

Very much, but not specifically on books for children. The view from my childhood home on the shores of the Firth of Clyde fixed my enduring fascination with the juxtaposition of land and sea, which always creeps into my illustration, whether for children or adults. Landscapes and seascapes are a delight to interpret and express in illustration, more so than in writing. I am an illustrator first and foremost.

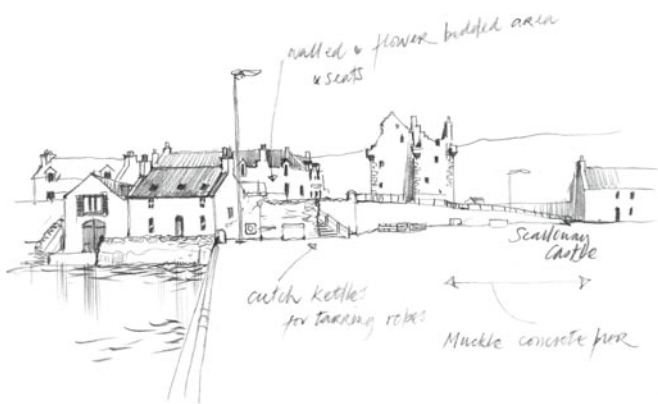
I know you took a job on the Isle of Coll. What was it like moving there?

The student job for a mother's help was advertised in the Glasgow Herald. I had holidayed on the neighbouring island of Tiree the previous year, 1958, and that was the beginning of a love affair with islands and a way of life that is sadly long gone. Then there was no electricity or deep water pier and the mail boat only came three times a week, summer and winter, weather permitting; elements of a culture that was still very strong despite the erosion of depopulation at that time.

When did you first come to Shetland and why?

I first came to Shetland in the 1980s with a team of development officers from the Highlands and Islands Development Board. It was a great job. I travelled extensively, encouraging the establishment of community cooperatives in islands that were experiencing depopulation, something I was familiar with in the Hebrides.

*Shetland Rambles: A Sketching Tour
by Mairi Hedderwick – Out now!*



What did you most like about the place?

The people. Shetlanders had much more of a 'get and go' attitude compared to West Coasters who had, in those days, a tendency to be negative when it came to change.

Can you imagine living in Shetland?

Yes. There are still wild spaces untainted by commercial tourism. And long may that last. The Hebrides are in danger of depending too much on tourism.

What inspires you to paint?

The answer to this question often disappoints. Painting has been a 'job' ever since leaving Edinburgh College of Art in 1960. I have earned a living from the skills I learned there and subsequently practised. It has never been a rewarding 'hobby'. The last thing that I would do on a Sunday afternoon is go for a walk with a sketchbook. Oh dear, disillusionment sets in for some readers. But there is nothing wrong in having a professional attitude to a talent.

I would also like, again, to emphasise that I'm an illustrator. This is a very different discipline from that of a painter. An illustrator works with the knowledge that the original artwork will go through the process of reproduction. The illustrator is dependent on the printer for the final image on the page and learns to accommodate accordingly. Reduction, enlargement and, most critical of all, the process of colour separation of the original before final full colour reproduction in the hands of the printer. Sometimes there can be painful wailings at the end result.

What does your studio look like?

This is the first time I have ever had a proper studio. Being a new built house (which I am systematically 'distressing') there is room for a sink used entirely for cleaning paintbrushes, not dishes, and a tap for filling the water jar.

This fascinates the cats who would not dare go near the kitchen sink. But free range is the order of the day for them and me in the studio. Artwork has telltale pawmarks if you look close. Clear spaces are nonexistent. How can this matter when I look out the windows on a clear day and see beyond the Treshnish Isles to Iona and the slopes of Ben More on Mull on the horizon?

What artists have influenced you, and how?

As children's illustrator and mother of young children in the 1960s I was attracted to Brian Wildsmith's innovative picture storybook art. Spot the Dog and Richard Scarry took preference for my children. Say no more.

I am attracted to representational art/illustration with an individual quirk of style and technique. Andrew Wyeth has to be the top of my list of illustrators. Essentially, because he could draw. That is my aspiration - to skillfully draw.

And when did you start writing?

I started writing after several years of illustrating for other writers. I was nudged by my editor to write and illustrate a story for the picture storybook format of 400

words and 12 double spreads. This was the standard brief for such books in the 1970s. I created the character of Katie Morag and, of course, she lived on a little island and had red hair because I had always wanted red hair as a little girl. Pure self indulgence.

You were also a teacher. How did this influence your career as an artist?

Absolutely no influence as an artist. But a tremendous influence when it came to writing. A primary teaching qualification in my mid 40s (I had been an art teacher after leaving College) was very important in heading me in the right direction when it came to writing for children.

What advice would you give to an artist just starting out?

There is no easy formula. In my case a lot of luck was involved, but I also worked very hard in the beginning, with self imposed high standards and many waste baskets filled up with crumpled up paper.

To this day, a disciplined timetable is paramount; domestic chores broached first and the rest of the working day divided up into sensible stretches of concentration.

As if...!! The wee sma' hours are familiar territory especially the night before a boat day.

But there is always a treat of some kind or another at the end of it all. Not necessarily a carrot.

Last question - are you working on any project at the moment?

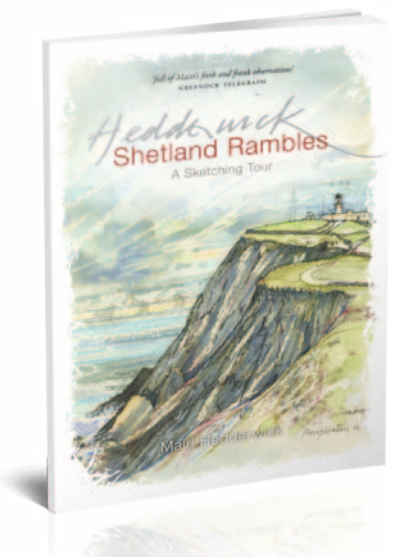
A script for the Easter concert.

Mairi Hedderwick, Shetland Rambles: A Sketching Tour Published by Birlinn, Edinburgh. £14.99

A chance conversation with a local historian at the Shetland Museum and Archives set the ground for what would become Mhairi Hedderwick's new collection of travelogue and illustration. She learned that the Victorian illustrator, John T. Reid, had recorded a walking holiday in Shetland in his journals via a mix of prose and paintings. Inspired, Hedderwick set out to trace his steps and capture the same views to see how the scenes had changed in the century that had passed. Perhaps best known as the creator of Katie Morag, the flame haired and often equally firey tempered title character of the popular children's picture book series,

Hedderwick has throughout her career demonstrated a keen understanding of place and space in Scotland's islands. This is clear in her new book, both in her characteristic watercolours and via the recollections of conversations she shared with local folk on her travels. Nostalgia becomes the big theme here as Hedderwick notes the ebbing of the old way of life under the weight of the late-20th century. The result is a tranquil presentation of Shetland old and new, in a fine volume that covers the length and breadth of the isles. It will also serve well as a bonny guide for the intrepid isles explorer.

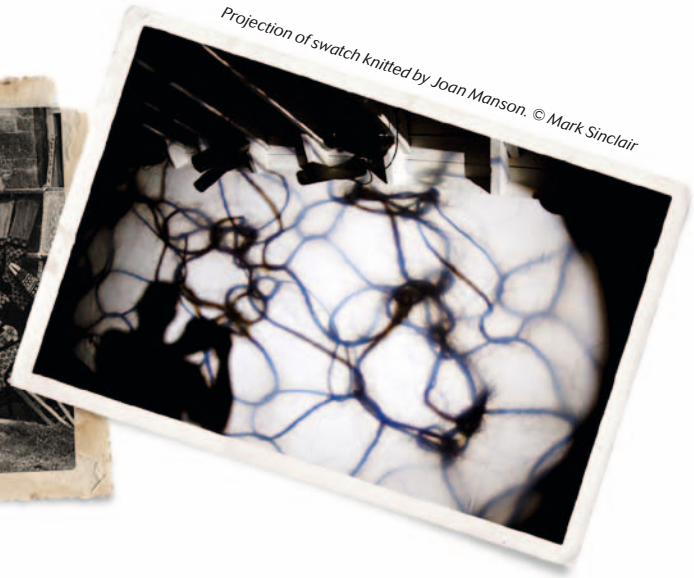
Jordan Ogg



Dressing hosiery. Photographer – J. D. Ratter



Projection of swatch knitted by Joan Manson. © Mark Sinclair



Shining a New Light on Shetland Lace

WRITER AND TEXTILE DESIGNER KATE DAVIES TRACES THE HISTORY OF SHETLAND LACE RIGHT UP TO THE PRESENT.

What could be more traditional than Shetland Lace? On hearing those two words, the first image that probably springs to a knitter's mind is a fine, white, openwork shawl, which, in construction, style, motifs, and commemorative function, might seem the very essence of 'tradition'. Over the past half-century or so, a host of books and articles have compounded our 'traditional' view of openwork knitting, celebrating the incredible beauty and complexity of the fine shawls that were produced in Shetland during the Victorian era. These accounts have improved the contemporary understanding of knitted lace immeasurably, but sometimes, in their championing of set methods, and their emphasis on tradition, their approach can rather tend toward the Victorian as well. Indeed, at their worst, such accounts may convey a sense of Shetland as an isolated, inward-looking culture where particular styles of knitting have been practised, unchanged, since time immemorial. This is, of course, far from being the case. In truth, Shetland

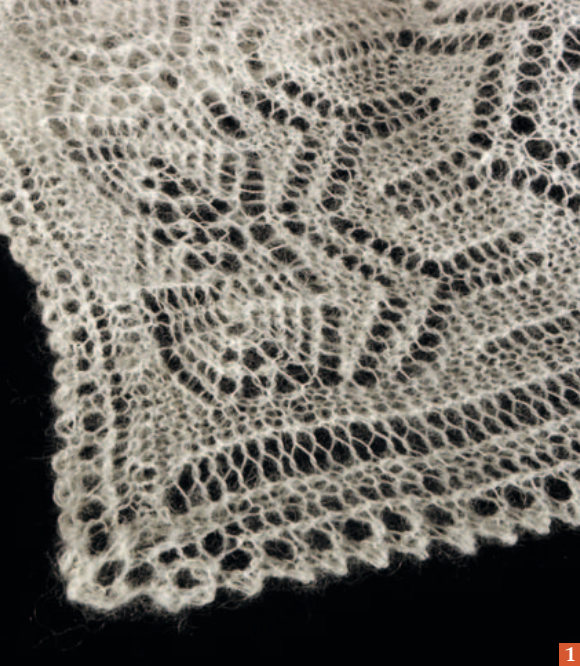
lace knitting – like many other 'traditional' textiles – has always been extremely fluid and adaptable. The fine openwork Shetland shawls and stoles that adorned the shoulders of wealthy Victorian ladies were profoundly innovative accessories, developed in response to the demands of a rapidly

"IN THE ABSENCE OF THEIR SEAFARING MENFOLK, THE WOMEN OF SHETLAND HAD TO BE EXTREMELY RESOURCEFUL"

changing market, and prey, like any other nineteenth century garment, to the fickle fortunes of fashion. Perhaps it is time to see Shetland lace in a new light.

Though one may think of Shetland as geographically remote, in the seventeenth century it was actually far better connected than most English provincial

towns. The sea brought the outside world to Shetland, and took Shetland to the world. The islands maintained strong links with Northern Europe via the Hanseatic trade, and, through seaborne commerce, Shetlanders encountered many different kinds of people and commodities. It was the thriving trade routes of the North and Baltic seas, rather than domestic British influences, that first enlivened the distinctive skills and styles of Shetland's hand knitters. In the absence of their seafaring menfolk, the women of Shetland had to be extremely resourceful. As well as working their crofts and managing their families, they rooded the soft fleece of the islands' hardy native sheep, and knitted their hand-spun yarn into small articles for sale. Several seventeenth century accounts mention women knitting caps, gloves, mittens and, most frequently, stockings, to exchange with Dutch merchants. According to one early eighteenth century Shetland landowner, these merchants frequently bought "a considerable quantity of coarse stockings, for ready money at a



tolerable price.” The sale of their hand-knitting meant that Shetland crofters might have a small stock of foreign currency with which to pay rent or buy provisions. But this important source of income was not to last. At the turn of the eighteenth century, trade restrictions were enforced by the British Government, Shetland saw far fewer Dutch and Scandinavian merchants, and the hand-knitters lost their small but lucrative export market. Several thousand pairs of Shetland socks were still sent annually to Leith, but, under competition from knitters on the British mainland, the price Shetlanders received for their hosiery was increasingly poor.

Shetland’s hand knitters found that they had to change and innovate in order to continue to profit from their craft, and, by the middle of the eighteenth century, there are several brief but tantalising references which suggest that the industry had begun to divide and specialise. On the one hand, sources make frequent mention of Shetland’s “coarse woollen hose” a pair of which would gain the knitter a few pence, or which more frequently, she might barter in Lerwick for tea or tobacco. But on the other, there are several references to “fine worked” stockings, which seem to have been produced on special commission for wealthy customers, and whose appearance marks the inception of Shetland hand-knit goods as luxury commodities. In *The Wealth of Nations* (1776), Adam Smith mentions such stockings being priced at “a guinea and upward”; while the writer of *A True and Exact Description of the Islands of Shetland* (1753) suggests that

a Shetland knitter producing extremely “fine” hose might expect to be paid “four guineas a pair.” For stockings to fetch the maker four guineas in the 1750s, the work must have been extremely “fine” (in the mid-eighteenth century sense of “fine” as “delicately wrought”) and it seems likely that Shetland’s distinctive openwork designs were beginning to be developed and incorporated into the isles’ hand-knitting at around this time. Openwork motifs had already begun to feature in the folk knitting of Scandinavia

**UNDER COMPETITION FROM
KNITTERS ON THE BRITISH
MAINLAND, THE PRICE
SHETLANDERS RECEIVED
FOR THEIR HOSIERY WAS
INCREASINGLY POOR**

and the Baltic—the Northern world to which Shetland remained importantly connected. Further references to the “extremely fine” hand-knitting of Unst at the close of the eighteenth century reveal that, while the market for coarse hose had seriously declined, Shetland openwork was beginning to find its feet in a niche luxury market.

Sharon Miller has persuasively argued that, by the end of the eighteenth century, Shetland knitters were incorporating now-familiar openwork motifs into their own

hap shawls and kerchiefs. But while the working women of Shetland were proud to wear the practical and attractive hap, this was not the case with the fashionable women of Regency Britain. In costume history, the thirty-year period from the 1790s through the 1820s is notable for its singular lack of lace. For the fashionable woman, the emphasis was on simple, neo-classical lines; fabrics tended toward the plain and sheer, and the decorative excesses of the latter half of the eighteenth century were seen as terribly outmoded. Not until the reign of Queen Victoria did lace really begin to make a comeback, and Shetland’s innovative handknitters were more than ready for this shift in trend.

By the middle of the 1830s, technical advancements, such as Samuel Fergusson’s adaptation of the jacquard loom, meant that crude, but striking-looking openwork could now be produced relatively cheaply, and in quantity. Lace suddenly became incredibly fashionable and, rather than the expensive preserve of the court and aristocracy it had been a century earlier, it trickled down the social ranks to adorn the dress of Britain’s middle classes. While traditional bobbin-lace makers suffered from the introduction of the new machines, other forms of fine handmade openwork came to be regarded as exclusive, luxury products, and were hence increasingly sought-after. These craft laces—usually made in small, and often impoverished, regional communities—began to carry their own distinctive cachet. For, in true Victorian style, a woman who wore the craft lace of Madeira, of Malta, or of



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- 1 Shetland Lace from Shetland Museum and Archives Collections. © Davy Cooper
 2 Lerwick hosiery shop D & G Kay staff members dressed in haps and knitwear, a promotional photograph taken around 1900 by photographer T. Kay.
 3 Haps pegged out to dry at Brouster, Bridge of Walls around 1900.
 4 Cairding, spinning and knitting fine lace at 10 Chromate Lane in Lerwick are Liza Sutherland, her aunt Ann Sutherland and her mother Joan Sutherland. Photographer - J. D. Ratter.
 5 Mary Kay. © Billy Fox
 6 Shetland cockleshell swatch knitted by Christine Smith. Metallic thread. © Roxane Permar
 7 Fine lace stole from the mid-nineteenth century. Reproduced courtesy of the Shetland Museum and Archives
 8 Hazel Laurenson. © Billy Fox

Limerick, not only displayed her status as a wealthy individual, capable of affording such singular hand-crafted luxuries, but might also advertise her status as a figure of charity or of sentiment, assisting the Empire's poor.

In the collections of the Shetland Museum and Archives, the earliest example of what we would now recognise as Shetland "fine" lace is a Christening shawl dated 1837. In the method of its construction, the arrangement of its patterns, and the complexity of its motifs, it suggests a refinement of skills that had been in development for several generations. Shetland fine lace did not suddenly appear in the Victorian era, fully formed like Athena from the head of Zeus, but rather drew on well-established local practice—the techniques and patterns that the islands' talented craftswomen had been devising and honing for a century or more. In the 1830s, fine shawls were already being produced as luxury heirlooms for babies, and it was merely a shift in direction for Shetland's innovative hand-knitters to capitalise on fashionable demand, and create beautiful shawls in which to wrap the women of metropolitan Britain.

By the 1840s, Shetland found itself connected to the mainland by a steamer and postal service that made communication and commerce much more efficient. Prompted by the new trend for lace, Shetland's fine openwork knitting became a thing of curiosity, and British merchants visiting the islands discovered beautiful examples of a niche product they knew they could sell to wealthy customers.

Competing stories began to circulate, (and are still repeated today) claiming this or that 1840s merchant or patron as the 'originator' of Shetland fine lace. If not prompted entirely by commercial self-interest, these narratives certainly suggest a degree of partiality. In truth, there is only one source of the innovative artistry of Shetland lace, and that is the women of Shetland. As Eliza Edmonston put it in 1856:

"The open work knitting now so attractive to... the public is an invention for

SHOPS DESCRIBING THEMSELVES AS "SHETLAND WAREHOUSES" BEGAN TO APPEAR ON LONDON'S MAYFAIR AND EDINBURGH'S FREDERICK STREET

which the Shetland females themselves deserve all the credit. From the simplest beginnings, led on and encouraged by some ladies as a pastime, it has progressed from one thing to another till it has attained its present celebrity, without the aid either of pattern book or of other instruction than the diligence and taste of the natives themselves."

Several examples of Shetland fine lace were showcased and celebrated at the Great Exhibition of 1851, and there was a sudden boom in its fashionable appeal.

Shops describing themselves as "Shetland warehouses" began to appear on London's Mayfair and Edinburgh's Frederick Street, and famous figures, like author and critic Elizabeth Rigby, were photographed wearing their fine Shetland shawls displayed prominently for the camera. The censuses for Unst (where the finest knitted lace was—and perhaps still is—produced) reveal a remarkable degree of specialisation among the knitting community, as women adapted their skills to fashion's changing demands. Early in the nineteenth century, Unst was home to just a handful of stocking knitters, but by the 1861 census, the stocking knitters had been overtaken by more than a hundred women who described "shawl knitting" as their principal occupation. And, in 1881, at the height of the trend for knitted lace, Unst's fine shawl knitters outnumbered those producing plain stockings by two to one.

Any expert knitter is, by necessity, an innovator: working with pattern means that one constantly encounters problems with construction and shaping, and is always having to devise new design solutions. With their tremendous technical ability and aesthetic sense, the lace knitters of nineteenth century Shetland were innovators par excellence; continually refining and developing their craft with a distinctive, and very shrewd, artistry. Such characteristics not only made these women superlative designers, but also meant that they were capable of responding and adapting to whatever the market threw at them. Though Shetland may have seemed



Hand made beaded shetland lace by Angela Irvine

far removed from the culture of mainland Britain, there was nothing remote about Shetland lace knitters' sense of the contemporary.

While the "traditional" view of Shetland lace is generally of fine, white openwork shawls, the collections of the Shetland Museum and Archives reveal just how varied and wide-ranging the output of the islands' nineteenth-century knitters really was. As well as many "traditional" examples of gossamer-fine lace stoles and shawls, there are also tray cloths and underclothes, spencers and bonnets, jumpers and booties, often featuring intriguing and novel methods of construction. Shetland lace was not, despite popular conception, limited to being knitted in natural white yarn, but was frequently produced in the lurid hues much favoured by the Victorians. Toward the end of the nineteenth century, as lace shawls began to fall out of favour among the fashionable, Shetland's knitters changed tack again, and began to produce the black stoles, veils and tippets that were still worn by the elderly or those in mourning. The Shetland Museum's collections reveal that, far from being a static tradition, lace knitting was actually a craft very much bound up with fashion's shifting trends. In fact, the only thing that was outmoded about Shetland's hand-knitting industry was the archaic and exploitative truck system by which women were paid for their work in commodities rather than cash.

The 1920s and 30s saw the fashionable rise of Fairisle knitting, but Shetland lace never really went away. Innovative local knitter/designers, such as Lerwick hairdresser, Ethel Henry, clearly loved the challenge of enlivening traditional lace with new techniques. She incorporated many familiar Shetland motifs into her neat, well-constructed jerseys, even combining complicated openwork with zips.

Today, many Shetland women follow in the innovative footsteps of their forebears, and, as highly skilled knitters, continue to transform the traditions of Shetland lace. In Unst, Hazel Laurenson and Minne Mouatt are spearheading a local project to recreate the patterns of some breathtakingly beautiful Victorian garments that had lain untouched since the 1880s. Meanwhile, in Lerwick, lace knitters such as Mary Kay (former teacher, and designer of patterns for *Woman's Weekly*) have lent their hands and talents to the Shetland Amenity Trust's Fine Lace Project, in which the contribution of knitters to the islands' heritage is promoted and celebrated. Hazel, Minnie and Mary are all incredible knitters with several decades of experience behind them, but they are also forward-looking women with a careful eye on the future of their craft. Perhaps the most inspiring thing about Shetland lace today is the way that these women are sharing their considerable expertise with lace knitters of a new generation, encouraging and supporting dynamic new ideas.

"THE KNITTERS DESIGNED SWATCHES, WHICH WERE THEN PROJECTED TO CREATE A BEAUTIFUL AND DRAMATIC LACY LIGHT SHOW"

One source of such ideas is designer, Angela Irvine, whose work typifies Shetland's combination of traditional practice with contemporary innovation. Like most Shetland girls, Angela grew up in a family of knitters, but her interest in fine lace was sparked when she began designing garments during her degree in textiles. Her beautiful dresses mix digitally printed silk with fine hand-knitting—a striking mingling of old methods with new technology. Angela thrives on a technical challenge, and says that getting to grips with complicated lace patterns and digital processes involves much the same thing. "I had no idea that it was so tricky to transform Shetland back-and-forth lace for working in the round," she says, "the older lace knitters were very impressed when I showed them what I'd done with my purl rows."

Much of the visual energy of Angela's work seems to spring from her mastery and transformation of traditional patterns; incorporating in-the-round shaping into a print o' the wave bodice; showcasing birds-eye lace with a ballooning sleeve; enlivening fine openwork with beaded embellishment. Angela's designs have already won several awards, and, from her studio in Whalsay, her work continues to speak both to local traditions and contemporary trends.

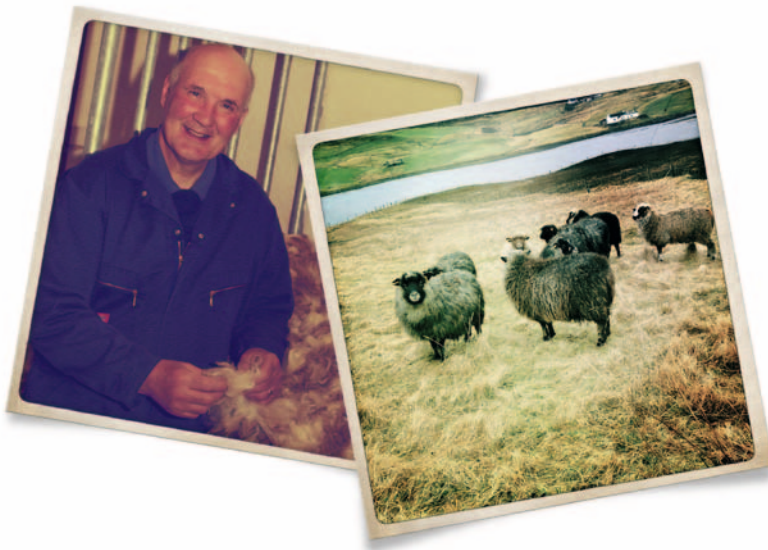
Angela is one of twenty-two women involved in an original endeavour which illustrates how collaborative and forward-looking Shetland lace knitting is today. The "Mirrie Dancers" Project (named after the dialect term for the Northern Lights) celebrates the innovatory culture of Shetland lace on an impressively large scale. Artists Nayan Kulkarni and Roxane Permar began by organising lively cross-generational "lace labs", in which knitters were challenged to think about their craft as a vehicle for the diffusion of light and shade. Experimenting with pattern, and using twine and microfilament as well as traditional laceweight yarns, the knitters designed swatches, which were then projected to create a beautiful and dramatic lacy light show. With its complex patterning and elaborate detail, Shetland fine lace seems perhaps a definitively private medium. But here, through the use of projected light, lace is opened up in an immersive and intriguing way, enabling public eyes to look at it anew. Four years in the making, the project will culminate this year with a permanent installation in Lerwick's soon to be ready new music and cinema venue, Mareel. "The building will be completely lit up with lace," says Roxane, explaining how visitors will find themselves wrapped up in illuminated knitted stitches. The talented knitters and artists involved in this exciting project will truly enable us to see Shetland lace in a new light.

Links and Further Reading

- Eliza Edmonston, Sketches and Tales of the Shetland Isles (1856)*
- Linda G Fryer, Knitting by the Fireside and on the Hillside (1995)*
- Sharon Miller, Heirloom Knitting (2002) and Shetland's Hap Shawl then and Now (2006)*
- Shetland Museum & Archives photo library*
<http://photos.shetland-museum.org.uk/>
- Mirrie Dancers, www.mirriedancers.com*
- Kate's article originally appeared as an editorial feature in the Rowan Knitting and Crochet Magazine, vol.50.*

*'Basket o flooers' swatch knitted by
Minnie Mouatt. Galway linen.
© Mark Sinclair*





SHETLAND

woolweek

8 - 14 OCTOBER 2012

JORDAN OGG REFLECTS ON SHETLAND WOOL WEEK 2011 AND PREVIEWS THIS YEAR'S EVENT, WHICH IS SHAPING UP TO BE THE BEST YET.

Photography by Jamieson & Smith and Shetland Amenity Trust and Misa Hay.

✘ If you want to experience the real essence of Shetland then forget Vikings, forget fishing and forget the fiddle - wool is where it is really at. Look close enough and you will find the stuff almost everywhere. Turn to the hills and see it in a dizzying range of natural colours on the backs and bellies of the diminutive native sheep. Or head into town and walk along Commercial Street where locals and visitors alike can be seen dressed in Fair Isle finery all year round, even during the rare balmy days of Summer.

Wool played a pivotal role in the development of Shetland's modern history. The crofting industry was founded on the native breed of sheep, and from there came knitting - a poorly paid, yet necessary form of domestic toil, usually done by women to help supplement the income of the typical

pre-oil age family. It is somewhat ironic, then, that the legacy of the isles early wool industry has gifted contemporary Shetland with an international reputation for excellence in knitting and textiles.

Developing this reputation is at the heart of Shetland Wool Week. The festival began in 2010 under the stewardship of Jamieson & Smith Shetland Woolbrokers, the Lerwick-based company that has been buying most of the isles wool clip direct from crofters for over sixty years. Jamieson & Smith got involved with the national Campaign for Wool, a five-year project spearheaded by The Prince of Wales to reinvigorate the global wool industry. From there Shetland Wool Week has grown into a collaboration between Promote Shetland, Shetland Amenity Trust and Jamieson and Smith.

Following the success of the inaugural festival, interest from other organisations soon followed. Shetland Organics, for example, got on board in 2011 by creating a pop-up shop in the grand premises of Vaila Fine Art on South Commercial Street. There, proprietor and Shetland Organics member, Dorota Rychlik, brought together several fleeces, along with knitted and felted works, all produced using organic Shetland wool from a handful of local suppliers.

That display was just one of many wool-related events and excursions that saw visitors from across the UK and as far afield as America, Japan and Germany converge for a week that covered the entire spectrum Shetland's wool industry. These events included a visit to the Shetland Museum and Archives to explore the vast collection

of historical woollen treasures in storage; a talk on how to follow a career in textiles by renowned American designer, Mary Jane Mucklestone; and an exclusive Fair Isle masterclass by expert knitter, Elizabeth Johnston.

The 2011 festival culminated in the announcement of the winners of The Real Shetland Stories competition. Up for grabs was the top prize, a Vi-Spring handcrafted bed worth £11000, complete with a mattress made entirely from Real Shetland Wool. The competition was run by Shetland Amenity Trust, Jamieson & Smith and Curtis Wool Direct, and received over 100 entries, each one a story framed around a memory of wool, sheep and textiles. 39 runner-up entries were selected to appear alongside Shetland crofter Drew Ratter's winning story, in a book to be published later this year by Shetland Heritage Publications.

Shetland Wool Week 2012 is set to continue in similar fashion, only with an even bigger programme. Again, workshops will be a key feature. Patron of the festival, Kate Davies - writer, designer and keeper of one of the web's most visited textiles blogs at www.textisles.com - will host a session on how to become a designer and publish patterns. Another writer, Susan Crawford, who is currently working on textiles book tentatively titled *Vintage Shetland*, will also run a session based around her research.

A new edition to this year's festival will be a makers market, where local knitters will demonstrate their skills and sell their work. This development is a marker of how

Shetland Wool Week is giving the isles many gifted knitters and designers a new platform to promote their craft.

Aith resident Outi Kater is a prime example. One of her designs, the 'Leaves Tam', was spotted in a Kate Davies blog post from the 2011 festival. Davies soon received a flood of enquires on the tam, which in turn led Jamieson & Smith to commission Kater to produce a knitting pattern for launch this Spring.

Kater, a native of Finland, designed the cap around the Scandinavian knitting tradition she grew up with: 'The open

WOOL PLAYED A PIVOTAL ROLE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF SHETLAND'S MODERN HISTORY

book motif in the body comes from the coastal areas and islands of the eastern Gulf of Finland, and has probably been known elsewhere in the Baltic region. Traditionally it would have been knitted in black and white, but I decided to give it a modern twist by using six colours, plus one more in the rib and the crown. The tropical reds, oranges and greens definitely turn your thoughts away from the dark northern winters.'

Being recognised as a professional designer means a great deal to Kater: 'Designing knitwear is one of the most satisfying and exciting things I have ever done. It lets me combine my interests in

ethnology, folk art, and art in general.' She also points to the importance of developing traditional crafts in a contemporary context, an ethos that is central to the idea behind Shetland Wool Week: 'Traditional crafts deserve to be preserved, and one way to do this is to renew them. It is wonderful to be able to draw inspiration from a diverse set of traditions to reflect the multicultural world in which we live.'

Another unexpected benefit to come from Wool Week 2011 was the appearance of a 19th century Fair Isle cap, bought on eBay for a mere £7.39 by Masami Yokoyama from Japan. She had attended the festival and decided to donate the cap, which was uncovered during a house move in Palmers Green in London, to the Shetland Museum and Archives. Textiles Curator with the museum, Dr Carol Christiansen, said she was delighted to receive the donation: 'I would say that this piece is now the oldest item in our knitting collection... It's really in super condition and it's just fantastic that Ms Yokoyama found it on eBay and generously donated it to us.'

With preparations now well under way for this year's festival, one could be forgiven for thinking that Shetland Wool Week 2013 has a hard act to follow. However, with more producers, designers and organisations on board than ever before, it is likely that 2013 will only lead to further discoveries, and help forge new connections within the bustling world of Shetland wool.

Find out more at www.shetlandwoolweek.com



© Linda Fox

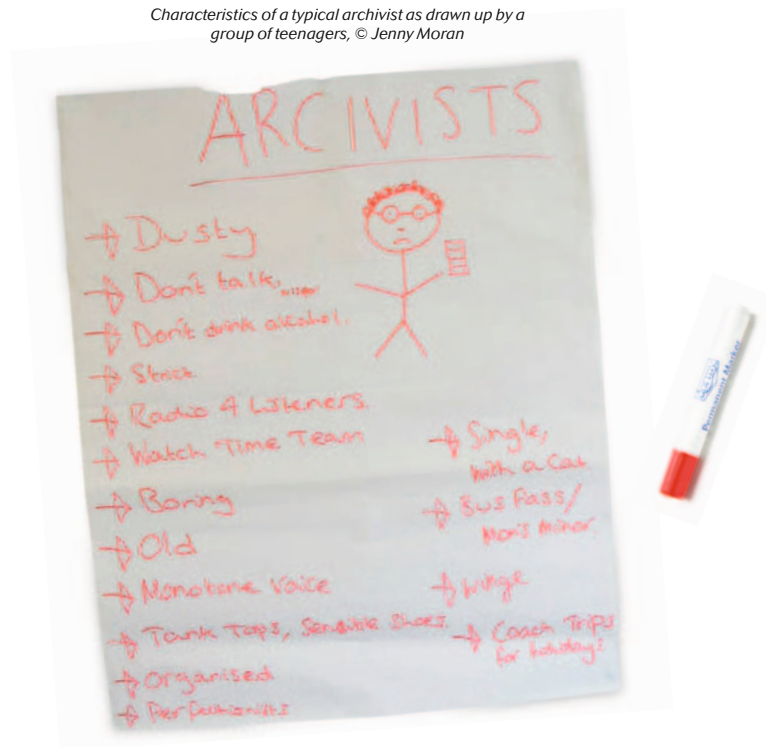


Fair Isle Cap, © Davy Cooper



Masami Yokoyama presents Dr Carol Christiansen with the cap, © Davy Cooper

Characteristics of a typical archivist as drawn up by a group of teenagers, © Jenny Moran



Preserving Shetland's History

SHETLAND MUSEUM AND ARCHIVES ASSISTANT ARCHIVIST, JOANNE WISHART, LIFTS THE LID ON A FASCINATING PLACE FOR ALL EXPLORE.



ld', 'dusty', 'strict' and 'tank-tops'. These are just some of the words a group of teenagers came up with when asked to list the characteristics of a typical archivist.

Unfortunately this image of archivists as being stuffy, sensible shoe-wearing disciplinarians is not just held by young folk. We regularly come across people who are interested in Shetland's history, but for some reason feel that archives are intimidating or only for academics. Hopefully this introduction to some of the things we do at the Shetland Museum and Archives will dispel a few of these misconceptions.

Firstly, we are not old - well not all of us! We are certainly not dusty as it is not good for the documents. We can at times

be strict but only because we are protecting unique records which are not held anywhere else in the world. And I cannot remember the last time any of us wore a tank top! The room we work in is bright with colourful artworks and many people find the quiet atmosphere relaxing rather than stifling.

On a more serious note, negative perceptions of archives can be a real problem for us, but there really is something for everyone in our collections. There are records on literature, social history, family scandals, nature, religion, poverty, tragic deaths, joyous celebrations and much more. We have court records from the 16th to 20th centuries with cases on everything, from the theft of potatoes to burglary,

bankruptcy, child murder and rape. Not to mention our oral history collection which lets you hear hundreds of Shetlanders describing their childhood, jobs, passions and tragedies. And of course, there is also the many hours of musical recordings in the Tom Anderson archive.

The Shetland Archives opened in 1976 with the remit of looking after the local council records but also collecting historical documents relating to any aspect of life in Shetland. We still look after council records but there are now many other collections in our care.

So what exactly do we do at the Archives? We root around in basements and lofts examining records that people might like to donate. We then clean,

flatten, sort and list the documents. We hold talks, events, workshop and open days to give people a chance to learn more about our collections. We answer enquiries from all around the world about Shetland and its history. This can mean sending a copy of a 18th century court case to the other side of the world, teaching a group of school children about the history of their area, visiting a bereaved family who are unsure about donating a collection their relative has spent a lifetime gathering, or helping a tourist find their ancestral home.

And where do we find the answers? From our collections of course. While council records, church minute books and taxation lists might sound a bit dull, the truth is that from these sources we can piece together information on life in Shetland. Council minutes record decisions about roads, education, housing and public spending. Then there are personal stories, such as those found in the poor relief records, which tell us about destitute families receiving help, mentally ill people being sent to asylums in mainland

Scotland and children being orphaned. The Church minutes include details on people being brought before the Kirk Session for adultery, slander, drunkenness and breaching the sacred Sabbath day. Lists of property tax can help someone trace the history of their family or find out who used to live in their house.

As well public records, we collect private donations from individuals and families with a Shetland connection. We have sixty of what we call 'gifts and deposits' collections, covering literature, poetry, agriculture, and dialect. These documents include poems on scraps of paper, 19th century love letters, hand-drawn maps of fields and minute books of the local hospitals.

The Archives catalogue is now online at www.calmview.eu/ShetlandArchive/ CalmView/

Have a look and let us know if you would like photocopies of the records you are interested in. Or if you are in Shetland we would love you to come and visit us in person.

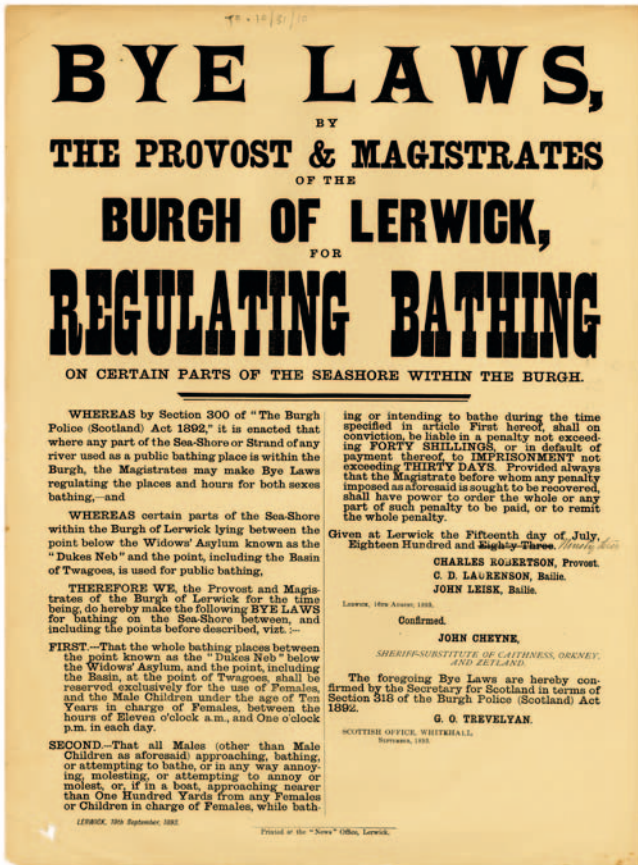
Opening times

Monday to Friday 10am - 4pm

Saturday 10am - 1pm

Some facts and figures:

- The oldest document we hold is a court record form 1490 concerning Jhone Rollok, archdeacon of Shetland.
- There are more than 700 metres of records stored in the Archives repository.
- Archives staff have catalogued 92,813 items and are adding more every day.
- The oldest documents about Shetland are from 1299 and are kept in Denmark.
- The collection of publications contains 8366 books, articles, journals and magazines relating to Shetland.
- Archivist Brian Smith has spent 36 years discovering, sorting and cataloguing thousands of records about Shetland.
- There are 1434 taped interviews with Shetlanders from all walks of life.
- The largest privately donated collection came from Lerwick draper Edwyn Seymour Reid Tait and contains 3237 items.



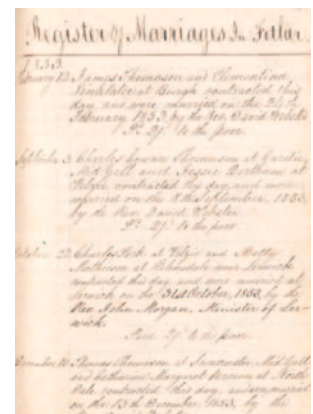
Lerwick Bye Law 1898



The Archives repository, where all the records are kept



Photograph of Jamieson family, Sandness, about 1880



Record of marriages in the island of Fetlar, 1853

The Scatness bear



Old Scatness

The Bronze Age, Picts and Vikings all in one location

ARCHAEOLOGIST VAL TURNER UNCOVERS 2000 YEARS OF SHETLAND'S HISTORY.

Two thousand years ago Shetlanders decided that it was desirable to build 13m high dry-stone towers. These towers, also known as brochs, are the crowning achievement of prehistoric people living in Northern Europe. Dating from around 400-200BC the structures represent complex architectural solutions to creating multi-storied towers within a treeless landscape. Mousa is the most complete extant example in the world.

Why broch builders created these structures is an issue hotly debated by archaeologists today. At one end of the spectrum, the buildings are seen as the prestigious houses and stores of wealthy chieftains who controlled the agricultural resources of the area; at the other, they are portrayed as the result of an aggressive act. The brochs certainly look built to withstand an attack: they are high, have double skinned walls with guard cells flanking the doorway, and are surrounded with banks and ditches. They appear to be

distributed interspersibly along the coastline and, perhaps for this reason, it is necessary to view them from the sea to really understand them. They are also constructed to a consistent plan: they do not all have exactly the same dimensions, but each was built by someone who knew what a broch looked like.

New brochs discovered

Brochs are so prominent in the landscape that people often assume we know where all the remains are. We have exact locations for about 80, but others are suggested by place names such as "brough" or "burra", both of which are derived from the Old Norse "burg" meaning "fort". Yet still others have no clear indicators in the landscape: three have been discovered as the result of proposed housing development; Toab as the result of a survey project; and Old Scatness which was found in 1975 when a new road was put through what appeared to be a natural mound. The eagle-eyed workmen realised they had

something archaeological on their hands which Tom Henderson, then curator of the Shetland Museum, recognised as a broch site. It was not possible to mount an archaeological dig at the time, so he instigated the protection of the remains and the airport road was slightly realigned to avoid the site. For the next 20 years it remained an archaeological site of unknown potential, and one that had avoided the attention of antiquarian excavators. The opportunity to excavate it was very exciting; the possibility of the broch being surrounded by a well preserved Iron Age Village never really crossed our minds.

What is Old Scatness?

Old Scatness is a Broch and an Iron Age village (the broch stands 4m high, and we have uncovered c.1400 metres sq of the village). The area was first inhabited in the Bronze Age, when people farmed on the light sandy soils. Then, sometime between 400-200BC, it became the location of one of Shetland's massive brochs. A curious

feature of the Old Scatness Broch is that it had two doorways. The northern entrance was soon blocked up but the west door had a huge triangular lintel stone above it. A group of aisled roundhouses were built around the outside of the broch and used at a similar period. They are so called because they had piers to support an upper storey or roof projecting from the walls, but with a gap between them and the outer wall. Later some of the gaps were filled, which would have made the buildings stronger. These had a similar diameter to the brochs but a single drystone wall. This means that, although they were one and a half stories high, they were never as tall as the brochs. One of them has an outhouse attached with a stone oven in it; the quantity of fish bones found nearby might be the result of processing fish oil there. Another has a stone staircase to access the mezzanine floor supported by the piers.

The roundhouse village was eventually replaced by a Pictish one, with “wheel-houses” and cellular buildings built into the remains of the earlier buildings. A wheelhouse is so called because, from the air, it has the shape of a wheel, a central fire and piers that resemble spokes. These buildings were smaller and each room between the piers could be roofed in stone in a beehive shape. There were big upright stones, orthostats, at the end of each pier but in one of the wheelhouses, the

orthostat opposite the door was missing. However, there were broken slabs on the floor and one of these, lying face down, had a bear carved on it; was this a special totem to the people who lived in the house? The buildings created from a string of “cells”, or rooms attached to one another, were small and built of large blocks set on edge, which look very different to the other buildings in the area. The broch was reused and there was a seven leafed clover-shaped building

**IT WAS VERY EXCITING;
THE POSSIBILITY OF THE
BROCH BEING SURROUNDED
BY A WELL PRESERVED
IRON AGE VILLAGE**

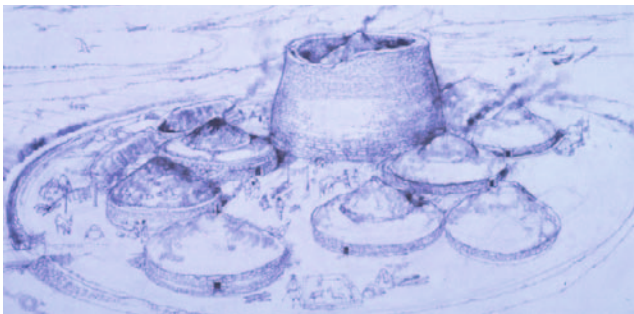
in the centre, linked to the Pictish village by a passage. Some of the village has been removed by excavation but reconstructions have been built off the site.

The excavations uncovered traces of a longhouse and suggested that the Vikings reused at least three of the Pictish buildings. The largest wheelhouse became a weaving shed, and the soapstone weights were still in the line they would have been in when weighted the warp threads of a Viking upright weaving loom. The small

wheelhouse was littered with fish and bird bones and had been used as a “skeo” to wind dry (and perhaps also to smoke) the food to help preserve it. Our knowledge of the Viking settlers and later inhabitants is more sketchy because crofting activity disturbed the ground, but there are traces of people having lived and used the area more or less constantly. The last building was still standing when excavations began in 1995 and the croft house to the south-east, the former home of Betty Mouat, was restored at the same time. (Betty Mouat became renowned for having set out to Lerwick by boat to sell her knitting and ended up drifting to Norway).

What was new about Old Scatness?

The Broch and Village at Old Scatness is unique, demonstrating how the broch style developed into the construction of huge single skinned roundhouses, and how values changed architecturally and culturally as the village became Pictish. As the project evolved and the village appeared, it became possible to reinterpret first Jarlshof, then to begin to better understand the Iron Age in Shetland, and finally it has allowed us to rethink what we knew about the Iron Age of Scotland. The excavation used cutting edge scientific techniques (it is probably the best dated Iron Age site in Northern Europe) that helped overturn current theories. We now know that brochs



Reconstruction drawing of the broch and roundhouse village in use, © Victor Ambrus



Aerial view of the site



The broch lintel



Taking samples for archaeomagnetic dating from an Iron Age hearth



Bells brae school visiting, with site guide Jane Outram



Inside the reconstruction wheelhouse



Living history with Jane Outram

are earlier than people believed: building in Shetland was underway by 400-200BC. As dates from sites in the Western Isles and Southern Scotland are later, it also demonstrates that broch building must have been invented in the north. Given the dry-stone skills required, it is not a surprise that broch building developed in a land where trees were scarce.

We have consolidated areas of the site using dry-stone workers. The site has been recorded photogrammetrically prior to consolidation, with all proposed work being documented. The consolidation is therefore entirely reversible and uses original material. An area containing authentic reconstructions has been created, informed by the archaeology, and using the skills of experienced dry-stone workers, in order to learn more about how the structures were built and functioned.

Discovering Old Scatness yourself

A visit to Old Scatness usually starts with a guided tour. Expert guides will help you to make sense of the site and will also keep you safe: there are areas of the site which are fragile and could damage both you and the archaeology should you walk on them. You can choose to have a short version if you are pushed for time or the weather is unfavourable.

You are free to wander round the reconstructions, or sit with a cup of tea and enjoy the peat fires and imagine yourself back

2000 years. We are also learning about Iron Age skills and crafts and our guides are happy to give you the opportunity to try some of these things for yourself. Sometimes we have crafts workers on site, with skills ranging from metal and jewellery working, to pottery, textiles, rope making and soapstone working - all the facets of life in Shetland 2000 years ago. They too are keen to involve you in whatever they are working on.

We also welcome booked parties. If your group would like to spend a day on site doing drama, drawing, writing or learning a specific craft, we can usually arrange this for you. We frequently work with school groups, tailoring a visit to whatever theme they are studying. In terms of tour groups, we can fit into your schedule providing you let us know your constraints.

Into the Future

The original vision of Shetland Amenity Trust at the start of the project was to break down barriers between the academic discipline of archaeology and the public. Once the extent, survival and importance of the site had begun to emerge, it became clear that the archaeology was of international importance.

It quickly became apparent that the site is not just important in terms of Shetland's, or even Scotland's, Iron Age but that it has "outstanding universal value" - the necessary criteria for inscription on UNESCO's

World Heritage list. We have been successful in applying to the UK Tentative List for World Heritage Status for "Mousa, Old Scatness and Jarlshof: the Zenith of Iron Age Shetland". Mousa is the only broch to survive near to its full height of 13m and the Pictish and Viking settlements at Jarlshof, together with the earlier village at Old Scatness, bear exceptional testimony to the Iron Age civilisation of 2000 years ago, the Picts, and the advent of the Vikings - a time of great cultural upheaval.

We also plan a new phase to focus on creating a year round, world class attraction. This will involve roofing the site to safeguard the archaeology, walkways to provide access to fragile areas, whilst also allowing us to maximise the potential for dramatic interpretation using state-of-the-art media. We plan to refine and develop the living history, further develop educational provision and strengthen links with the nearby sites of Jarlshof, Sumburgh Head and Mousa.

Contacting Us

This summer Old Scatness will be open from the end of May to the end of August, Sunday-Thursday, 10.00am to 5.00pm. To contact us in advance please phone 01595 694688 (working hours) or 01950 461869 (when the site is open) or email: info@shetlandamenity.org

We would love to welcome you on site.



Fishing in Paradise

PAUL BLOOMER'S EXPERT ADVICE ON FLY FISHING FOR BROWN TROUT IN SHETLAND

Photography by Paul Bloomer and Alec Miller.

Shetland is a wild brown trout angler's utopia'. This was the verdict of Mark Bowler, the editor of Fly Fishing and Fly Tying magazine after a recent visit to the isles.

With over 500 lochs of great variety and beauty, one of the biggest challenges facing the trout angler in Shetland is deciding where to fish. To assist, the Shetland Anglers Association, along with Promote Shetland, has compiled a guide showing 70 of the isles' best trout fishing locations. Most contain trout weighing from a few ounces up to double figures.

The brown trout season starts on March 15th. The shallower water usually fishes best earlier in the season due to light reaching the bottom of the shallows, thus fueling the aquatic ecosystem back into life after the winter slumber. Fishing in deep water is best avoided during the early season, for while this is where the majority of fish lie, it is not where most of

the actively feeding trout are likely to be found. This is down to the cool temperatures, which slows the metabolism of the trout, forcing the fish to lay near comatose on the bottom.

**"ONE OF THE
BIGGEST CHALLENGES
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ANGLER IN SHETLAND
IS DECIDING WHERE
TO FISH"**

If there is enough water to cover the trout they will feed in the shallows, provided they feel secure. It is therefore very important not to scare the fish away. Remember that trout feed more

confidently in mild and windy overcast conditions. Keep on the move and avoid casting in the same place twice. Remember too that different environments attract different creatures: muddy silty bottoms are favoured by midge and caenis; stony bottoms are home to shrimp and caddis larvae; and weed beds are a veritable trout larder with corixae, stickleback and snail.

The best early season flies ape the creatures of the shallower water, such as shrimp, cased caddis, snail, corixae and stickleback. In muddy, silty or sandy bottoms, bloodworm are also common. My favoured early season flies are often black, olive, brown, hares ear with tags or hot-spots of green, red and peach.

A team of three wet flies on a floating or intermediate line is the mainstay of most Shetland anglers. Every enthusiast has their favourite flies and a list of popular patterns is available on the Shetland Anglers Association website. My favourite



Above: Trout fishing at Spiggie Loch.
Fishing for sea trout, Sullom. Shetland Museum & Archives



cast early season has a gold bead damsel nymph on the point, a viva on the middle, and maybe a peach muddler, Kate McLaren, or clan chief on the top. At this time of year mid-day is best for fishing, as this is when the temperature is at its warmest.

If it is not exceptionally cold most lochs should be fishing well by May. This is when large numbers of midge start to hatch, particularly in mild conditions when the roving angler can make big catches. Midge begins life as a small worm that burrows in the mud, silt or sand. Also known as bloodworm, they turn into pupae and swim to the surface by the million when conditions are favourable. Here they get trapped in the surface film and become very vulnerable to the trout.

Successful buzzer fishing depends on matching the stage of the hatch with a fly that is similar in shape, size and colour to the species. For bloodworm, I favour gold bead damsel nymphs fished slowly across the bottom. Emerging midge pupae can be successfully imitated with a variety of sparsely dressed wet flies in the general colour and size of the hatching species,

such as cormorants, snatchers, bibios or pennels. Common colours are black, brown, grey, olive and bright green in hook sizes from 10-16. Buzzer pupae patterns imported from English reservoir anglers can also be very successful when fished

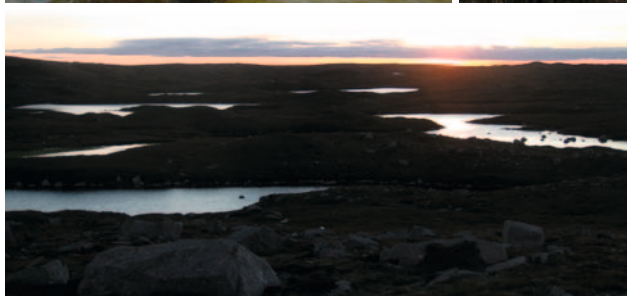
"THE SIMMER DIM WITH 19 HOURS OF DAYLIGHT AND THREE HOURS OF MYSTERIOUS AND MAGICAL GLOAMING LIGHT"

near static. If the fish are visibly rising to the midge, try suspender buzzers, hoppers and half hogs. Late May also sees hatches of pond olives; big trout like these very much, and a March brown or sparsely dressed olive dabbler on an intermediate line usually does the trick.

June is the month of the Simmer Dim with 19 hours of daylight and three hours of mysterious and magical gloaming light. Shetland turns into a fairytale land where time stands still and big trout feed fearlessly through the night. In these conditions fish can come very close to shore, so tread carefully.

At this time of year sedgehog and muddler come into their own; indeed some very successful anglers fish a sedgehog from the first to the last day of the season. As its name suggests, the Sedgehog imitates the sedge or caddis fly, which is a very important part of the trout's diet. This fly is greased up to float and pulled across the surface, imitating the hatching adult sedge. Colours range between black, claret, red, olive, green, fiery brown and peach, and it is worth experimenting until the most productive fly is discovered. Generally the darker the day or night, the darker the fly.

During mid-season in the large deeper lochs a high percentage of the trout population move offshore to feed on daphnia, a tiny plankton eating crustacean. These



creatures gather in huge blooms and the trout swim open mouthed to mop up this high protein soup. Generally, the brighter the day, the deeper the daphnia will be. This is also when boat fishing with sinking lines and mini lures comes into its own.

A great natural wonder in the summer is a heavy hatch of caenis. This is when it seems like every trout is on the move, making the lochs boil with fish. Caenis is a small white fly that hatches on calm evenings and has earned the nickname 'anglers curse' because trout can be very difficult to catch when feeding on them. My standard tactic is to employ a pearl ribbed hare's ear nymph with a prominent white marabou tail cast accurately to rising fish.

August can be a challenging month for loch fishing due to diminishing insect hatches. Keep an eye open for dung flies being blown onto the water, especially downwind of sheep or cattle. In such conditions a golden olive hopper or bumble can work wonders when dropped on the edge of a ripple.

By mid-September the fish are starting to think about spawning and begin to

shoal. They can get very aggressive and territorial, and bright flies with red and silver can provoke violent attacks. Stickle backs are also high on the menu at this time, as are daddy long legs. In October the fish will congregate around burn mouths to spawn and are best left alone to get on with it.

Enjoy your fishing in Shetlands lochs, and tight lines.

The Shetland Anglers Association

The SAA has been in existence for nearly 100 years and does invaluable work in promoting angling in Shetland. The services provided by SAA include the following:

Annual membership is £25.00 (juniors & local pensioners free). The membership permits anglers to fish the numerous lochs and burns that SAA either owns, leases or has permission from landowners to fish. Permits are available from local tackle shops, the Tourist Office and online from www.shetlandtrout.co.uk Membership includes personal and public liability insurance up to £1m.

The SAA also hires angling boats on 6 local lochs & the annual permit costing

£30.00 is available from the LHD tackle shop in Lerwick.

A regular programme of competitions is organised by the SAA and a detailed list can be downloaded from the web site.

The SAA have published a handy guide to 70 of the main lochs. The guide costs £2.00 and is available from tackle shops, the Shetland Times book shop, the Tourist Office & online from the SAA web site.

Local fishing ghillies or guides are available for hire. This is a good way for visiting anglers to get the best from their trip to Shetland. Phone 01595 696025 for details.

The SAA have a clubroom at 6 Burns Lane, Lerwick. It is open on Tuesday and Friday evenings from 8.30. The clubroom is not licensed but visitors are welcome to bring their own beer and enjoy informal chat about local fishing.

For further information:

www.shetlandtrout.co.uk
www.shetlandtrout.co.uk/information-brochure.html

*photos.shetland-museum.org.uk/
 Shetland Museum & Archives photo library*

Mountain Hare: The white fur is brilliant camouflage when snow is on the ground, but at this time of year the white fur makes them easier to spot against the heather than when they are wholly brown.



Shetland Springs into Life

SHETLAND WILDLIFE'S NATURE NOTES WITH JON DUNN

When I lived down in the south of England nothing epitomised winter's retreat and the onset of spring quite like the swelling dawn chorus of birdsong as the hedgerows and woods around my house filled with returning summer migrants and all birds' thoughts turned to the serious business of holding territory and attracting a mate. Shetland winters can be wild and, with the short hours of daylight, they can feel pretty long. In these conditions I find myself looking forward to the signs that summer is just around the corner even more than I did when I lived outside the islands. And despite the lack of hedgerows and woods, the return of a dawn chorus is still something I can eagerly anticipate.

Here in Shetland what we lack in the diversity of woodland birds we more than make up for with the range of breeding wading birds, and as the days lengthen they are increasingly easy to hear – and to see. The calls of myriad waders drift

in through my bedroom window every morning: Curlews and Whimbrels, Oystercatchers, Redshanks, Lapwings, Ringed and Golden Plovers. These birds are suddenly calling all around us and they can be seen too, either in Shetland's green 'in-by' pastures or up in the hills. Keep an

"SHETLAND WINTERS CAN BE WILD AND, WITH THE SHORT HOURS OF DAYLIGHT, THEY CAN FEEL PRETTY LONG"

eye out for birds perched on fenceposts – waders delight in using them as vantage points during the summer.

Then there is the 'drumming' of Snipe, a wonderful sound – step outside on a still evening and listen for an eerie, almost electronic noise in the sky above you – this

is the sound the birds make as they fly around their territories – a sound that is not a call, but instead is made as the wind rushes through the birds' tail feathers while they drop through the sky. What you hear is those feathers vibrating. While evening is a good time to listen for this, Snipe will do these display flights throughout the day as summer progresses, so when you hear that curious 'buzzing' overhead, look up and see if you can spot the small wader with the roller coaster flight pattern.

Whilst the birds are an obvious sign of longer days here, there are plenty of other things to look out for. Just as the sound of bees droning as they go about their business in the garden is the traditional soundtrack of a British summer's day, there are bees to look out for in Shetland too. The Shetland Bumblebee is a subspecies of the Moss Carder Bumblebee, found only in Shetland and the Western Isles. As the weather warms up, they start

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to be seen almost everywhere there are flowers. There are three other species of bumblebee found in Shetland, but the Shetland Bumblebee is a distinctive and handsome two-tone creature, with a rich, tawny orange thorax and a buttery yellow abdomen.

At this time of year I love to take a walk out in the hills to look for Mountain Hares. They are not native to Shetland, having been introduced here in the early 1900s, but are still wonderful animals to see. In the winter their fur turns white, and returns to a heathery brown for the summer; but in between they are piebald with patches of both colours. The white fur is brilliant camouflage when snow is on the ground. At this time of year this makes

"THE SHETLAND BUMBLEBEE IS A DISTINCTIVE AND HANDSOME TWO-TONE CREATURE, WITH A RICH, TAWNY ORANGE THORAX AND A BUTTERY YELLOW ABDOMEN"

them easier to spot against the heather than when they are wholly brown. Hares spend a lot of time during the day laying up in 'forms' in the heather; they don't go underground, and are happy to settle somewhere sheltered. Their faith in the power of their camouflage is touching, and with some care they can be approached reasonably closely. Having spotted a hare, use the contours of the land to shield your approach, and try to avoid breaking the skyline – their eyesight is excellent, as is their hearing, so approach from downwind if possible. Move slowly, wear muted colours, and enjoy your encounter with a marvellous mammal. Through binoculars from a respectful distance you should be able to appreciate how well-adapted they are to live in a cold climate. You will see the thick insulating fur; the long guard hairs that trap a layer of warm air around their bodies; the heavily furred ears, and the simply enormous fluffy tail that insulates their point of contact with the ground.

If you are near the coast, the returning seabirds on the cliffs are an obvious draw (and who can resist a Puffin?), but keep an

eye out for lingering winter visitors too. There may be a Great Northern Diver on the sea, resplendent in its chequerboard black and white breeding plumage, or Arctic-bound Turnstones, Sanderling or Purple Sandpipers on the beaches. As always, there is plenty to see. At this time of year Shetland is simply bursting with life.



Shetland Wildlife's top five tips for wildlife watching in April, May and June:

1. Breeding waders

Loch of Spiggie; Loch of Benston; Yell; Loch of Funzie, Fetlar; Norwick Meadows, Unst.

2. Wildflower meadows & Shetland Bumblebees

while the striking Shetland Bumblebee can be found in gardens throughout the isles, why not look for it in our myriad wildflower meadows that stretch the length and breadth of the isles. Norwick in Unst has some particularly beautiful meadows.

3. The isle of Noss

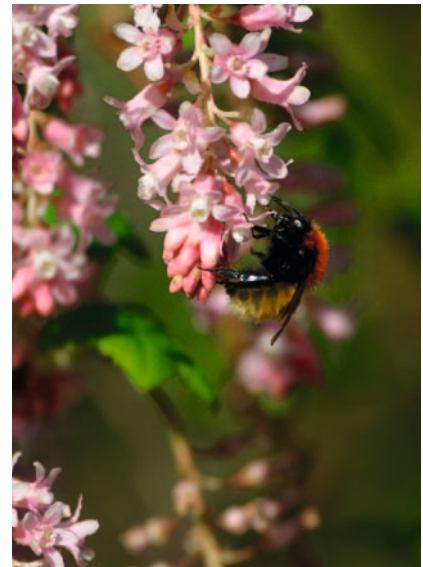
there's no better way to appreciate the sheer numbers, noise (and smell!) of a big seabird colony than to take a boat trip to the foot of the towering cliffs at Noss.

4. Mountain Hares

accessible areas of hill include the areas of North Nesting and between Voe and Gonfirth. When accessing the hill, make sure you close any gates securely behind you.

5. Arctic-bound migrant waders

try the beaches at Grutness, Scatness, Virkie, Quendale, Westing and Baltasound.



Shetland Bumblebee: a subspecies of the Moss Carder Bumblebee, found only in Shetland and the Western Isles. Photo by Photo by Hugh Harrop / Shetland Wildlife.

 To keep up to date with wildlife news and sightings as they happen, follow Shetland Wildlife on Facebook www.facebook.com/shetlandwildlife

For more information on dedicated wildlife holidays in Shetland, visit **Shetland Wildlife:**

www.shetlandwildlife.co.uk

The company has been running wildlife and birding holidays in Shetland for nearly 20 years and offers week-long fully guided trips to all corners of Shetland. As well as offering organised group holidays, Shetland Wildlife also offers a bespoke guide service for individuals and small private groups. Fully bonded with the CAA: ATOL 9151.



Sanderling: this tiny wader migrates through Shetland every spring en route to their breeding grounds in Greenland and northern central Siberia. They love sandy beaches. Photo by Hugh Harrop / Shetland Wildlife.



Care for a Cup of Tea?

ALASTAIR HAMILTON ON A HEARTY SHETLAND TRADITION

The custom of afternoon tea has been part of many British lives for at least a century and a half. However, the pressures of modern life have made it something of a luxury, as we allow ourselves less time to relax and enjoy the simple pleasures of tea and conversation. Afternoon tea has tended to become a commercial and sometimes ostentatious affair, perhaps in one of the nation's more glamorous hotels or restaurants. At a more modest level, 'cream teas' are offered the length and breadth of Britain, but they usually amount to little more than a scone, cream and jam.

The Shetland approach to afternoon teas is a world away from all of that. For one thing, it is very much focused on Sundays,

when people have time to sit back and really enjoy the experience. Our Sunday teas are run on an entirely voluntary and non-commercial basis by local communities. In addition, the range of food available outshines the somewhat predictable offerings we often find on cake-stands elsewhere.

It all started many years ago when the people involved in running the community hall in Cunningsburgh in Shetland's south mainland decided to raise funds for an extension. Like many others, they had noticed that it was hard to find a cup of tea on a Sunday, as few restaurants or cafés were open. Opening the hall for afternoon teas would fill that gap and help the hall committee towards its target. It was an

immediate success and, though the extension has long since been completed, the Cunningsburgh Hall still runs teas every summer Sunday.

This approach has been followed by dozens of other halls in Shetland. Nowadays, though, the teas may not be run just to raise funds for the hall. More often, halls take a fee for the hire of the building, along with crockery and cutlery, while the teas are provided and sold by volunteers working to raise money for any one of a wide range of charities. That way, the hall can gain income to pay the bills for maintenance, heating and insurance, while worthwhile causes can boost their income: Shetland folk have a reputation for being very much involved in charitable work and

their generosity when it comes to good causes is legendary.

Every weekend throughout the summer, you can be sure that Sunday teas will be on offer somewhere in Shetland. On any given Sunday there may well be three, four or even more halls open. Sometimes, as well as the teas, there might be a sale of work or even some music.

Because everything is baked or made by dedicated local volunteers, you can be sure that it will have been made with care, often by people who have received awards for their beautifully-risen Victoria sponge or succulent chocolate brownies at one of the isles' annual agricultural shows. The bakers may be amateurs, but only in the sense that they are doing all this work for free.

Since every baker or sandwich-maker has his or her own favourites, and because so many people are involved in preparing for each event, there is always a great variety of treats to choose from. Alongside the traditional elements, like sandwiches,

scones and cakes of every conceivable kind, you will often find Shetland specialities, especially bannocks and reestit mutton; but you might just as easily encounter empanadas or satay.

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If you live in Shetland, chances are you know all about our Sunday teas and have either enjoyed them or helped out with them, or both. If you are visiting, though, taking in at least one Sunday tea will give you a real insight into the sort of place this is, one in which folk of all generations work together for the common good and

without expecting any reward other than the satisfaction of helping the community as a whole. You will probably also feel, afterwards, that you do not need to eat for a week. One visitor commented that the whole experience was a bit like going to visit a particularly talented granny, except that there was far more choice and you did not have to feel awkward about eating a third or fourth piece of cake. One man from Germany – a nation not known for holding back when it comes to afternoon hospitality – commented that he had never encountered anything so generous, both in food and in spirit.

Shetland's Sunday teas are a unique and cherished institution that I can't recommend too highly.

Do you want to find out more about Shetland's Sunday teas?

Listen to Radio 4 broadcast:

http://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/b00mf27d/Food_Programme_Shetlands_Sunday_Teas/



Gulberwick Sunday



© Shetland Museum and Archives



Gulberwick Sunday



Jazz

Shetland Style

THE VISION THAT BECAME A REALITY – THE FIRST SHETLAND JAZZ FESTIVAL

Following two years of successfully presenting jazz in the isles, the Shetland Jazz Club embarked on a bold programme of future development. To this end, the club outlined its vision almost a year ago by submitting an ambitious programme to Creative Scotland, culminating in a large festival during 2012.

The application was successful and extra funding was received from the Shetland Islands Council's economic development section. This has allowed a diverse programme of events to be put together, with highlights including a concert by the Scottish National Jazz Orchestra playing Ellington, Basie, Kenton and Miles Davis, alongside a featured performance from Bobby Wellins of his Culloden Moor suite; a Jazz Garden Party at Busta Hotel with the Nova Scotia Jazz Band and Becc Sanderson Trio; and a performance on Olympic Torch Day of music from the five Olympic

continents, under the overall direction of saxophonist Gilad Atzmon.

"THE SCOTTISH NATIONAL JAZZ ORCHESTRA MAY BE ONLY 15 YEARS OLD, BUT ITS FOUNDER TOMMY SMITH HAS HONED IT INTO ONE OF THE SHARPEST AND HOTTEST BIG BANDS AROUND."

Ivan Hewitt, Daily Telegraph

Two projects for local musicians were also set-up as a lead into the festival. The first saw the jazz club bring distinguished pianists to Shetland to lead workshops and

rehearsals. These culminated in a gig that will be repeated at the festival. The second project was the formation of a Shetland Improvisers Orchestra. George Burt and Raymond Macdonald from the Glasgow Improvisers Orchestra, both of whom had visited Shetland many years previously, have run a series of improvisation workshops for all musicians, jazzers or not. The result is a local improvisers ensemble that will perform a special piece of music at the festival. The legacy of these two projects should result in regularly playing groups, with further potential to connect with other festivals in Europe.

Music will take place all over the islands throughout the festival. A full programme can be found on the jazz club website www.shetlandjazzclub.org, or on the Shetland Box Office site, www.shetlandboxoffice.org.



A Musical Mecca in the Heart of Lerwick

DONALD MURRAY VISITS HIGH LEVEL MUSIC TO CHAT WITH PROPRIETOR AND SHETLAND GUITAR LEGEND BRIAN NICOLSON

Step across Market Stance at the heart of Lerwick's town centre during much of the day and you are likely to enjoy an uplifting, musical experience.

The street echoes with the notes of a Shetland reel or Irish jig, a Gaelic waltz or the chorus of a Scottish ballad. For all its variety, it is a distinctive sound, unlike the anonymous rock music often piped through superstores on Britain's mainland. Climb an open, stone staircase and you will reach the source of these rhythms. They echo from the domain of long-haired, bearded shop-owner, Brian Nicholson, its delights advertised by the sign 'High Level Music' decorating the outside of the building's stone walls.

It might take a moment to see Brian behind the till. There is so much else to draw the eye – a colourful array of fiddles, African drums, guitars and CD covers adding their own rich shades to the confines of the room. Among that exotic mixture, there emerges a sound and vision that is, however, recognisably and humanly Shetland. Wearing, perhaps, a Fair Isle jersey, he stands up to welcome the newcomer to his shop.

'Can I help you?'

The visitor could just wish to make a two minute transaction, booking, perhaps, one of the guitar or fiddle lessons offered on the premises by Brian's son, Arthur or the likes of Margaret Scollay. However, if time is available and the shop quiet, it

might also be a good idea to spend a few moments talking to Brian, one of the more common sights (and sounds) in Shetland's musical life. Outside shop-hours, he is often to be found, rocking back and forth with his eyes half-closed, plucking his guitar on stage, the solid, shifting centre of one of the islands' many bands.

It was in Burravoe in Yell that he began this long 'shadow career'. Relaxing in his chair, he launches into a tale of how it all happened for him, how music – like so many in Shetland – became the core of his life.

'Dad used to sing,' he declares, 'And I started off accompanying him on guitar because he didn't like to both play guitar and sing at the same time. It was one job or another. He loved a huge variety of

songs, from country and western to Sankey hymns, and a dialect song or two. My Mam was a listener. She loved listening to the radio. Until 1968, when electricity came, that used to be run on the lead acid batteries powered up every Saturday at the local shop. Norwegian, Swedish radio, Radio Athlone when the signal came through, Gaelic radio - all their songs.'

Yet that wasn't all there was to it. Flicking back his hair, he talks about the community life which sustained that music. 'There were lots of folk like my Grandad who played fiddle and sang sea shanties he'd picked up over the years. Born in 1887, he died when I was 14. He'd been in the First World War. Dad went to the whaling, Merchant Navy. There were so many men in the place who'd fought in the Second World War. It added to that sense of history and the wider world around us back then. They'd talk about these days when they walked to the shop or wandered round the weaving sheds that were in Burrae at that time. It was little wonder that I spent a lot of my childhood reading Commando books and making Airfix models. The war still seemed to be in the air at that time.'

Asked about his ability to play the fiddle, he shakes that magnificent dark mane. 'It was an instrument I tried but could never really get a handle on it. There was no piano in the house. As a left-hander, I had problems with the bow. Besides, I had uncles on my mother's side who all played guitar. So there

was kind of a family tradition.' It was a passion that followed him after he left Yell to live in the Janet Courtney Hostel in Lerwick - a path followed by many boys throughout Shetland at that time. Even during these years, he played with bands, joining Da Fustra when he was 15 and being one of the founder members of Hom Bru in 1968 at the age of 16. There is more than a little mischief in his eyes

"LIVING IN AN OIL RIG IS JUST LIKE LIVING ON AN ISLAND. IT'S A PEERIE COMMUNITY WHERE YOU HAVE TO BOTH ABIDE BY THE RULES AND HAVE MORE THAN A LITTLE RESPECT FOR THE ELEMENTS."

when he talks of how he defied the hostel curfew to spend some time with Shetland's guitar legend, the late Peerie Willie Johnson. 'I knew there was a risk of getting into trouble. But I also knew it would be worth it!'

Adult life brought its share of restlessness. He spent an enjoyable few years working at a building site in Yell - playing at the same with contemporary rock band,

'No Sweat'. Later on, he worked for British Telecom for 17 years, followed by 5 years being employed with the local council and a similar period as an IT technician at Sullom Voe and offshore. The latter, he thought, was a similar experience to his early life in Yell.

'Living in an oil rig is just like living on an island. It's a peerie community where you have to both abide by the rules and have more than a little respect for the elements.' Throughout this time, however, Brian freely confesses: 'My interest in music followed me like a dog and would not let me be.'

There is evidence of this in his wandering. For much of the 21st century, he has spent his time playing with various bands not only in Shetland but elsewhere. He has plucked the guitar in France with Hom Bru; Colorado with New Tradition; Norway with various bands; the mainland of Scotland with both Sheila Henderson and Maggie Adamson - the latter the winner of the Glenfiddich award in 2011.

This culminated in the purchase of High Level Music in 2008. For the last few years, he has seen not only its shelves fill up with guitars, drums, even an African thumb piano, but also the fruits of his own labours, the CDs he has helped create with such groups as Swinging Fiddles and New Tradition, accompanying others in their music time and time again.

But to find all that, you'll have to climb the staircase. There's a treat or two in store for any music-lover there.





A Hansel of Film

SHETLAND ARTS EMBARK ON A DIY FILM PROJECT OF OLYMPIC PROPORTIONS

Photography by Billy Fox

Hansel: 'a gift to commemorate an inaugural occasion, the launching of a new boat, the birth of a child, a new home, new enterprise.' John J Graham - The Shetland Dictionary.

'A Hansel of Film - Shetland to Southampton and Back' is a relay of screenings of short films made by the British public as part of the London 2012 festival celebrating the 2012 Olympic Games. Having recently launched the website www.hansel2012.org, The Hansel of Film team at Shetland Arts are working hard to recruit films and volunteers to take part in the project. The website lets people get involved by submitting a film, volunteering to transport films between venues, and/or attending an event.

The relay begins on 10th June with the arrival of the Olympic Torch in Shetland as it reaches its most northerly point in the UK. The films will then be relayed between 21 UK venues by 'runners' - creative and energetic individuals who will employ whatever means they can to get the right films to the right venue on time. In total 3295 miles will be covered before the culmination of the relay in a marathon screening of over 100 short films at Shetland's annual film festival, Screenplay, between 4th and 9th September.

Screenplay curators, the acclaimed film critic Mark Kermode and film historian Linda Ruth Williams, will be very active in promoting the project across the country. Although they will not be able to

attend all the events, they will greet the runner at The Harbour Lights Cinema in Southampton at the project's half-way point, and visit some of the other participating venues in between.

Commenting on the project, Mark and Linda say they are thrilled to be involved: "We are delighted to be launching this exciting, nationally inclusive film relay, which will encompass many of the Olympic nations and regions of the UK and will spread the spirit of the London 2012 festival from Shetland to Southampton and back again. We are looking forward to involving filmmakers, cinemas and arts venues who are as enthusiastic as we are about taking movies on the road to celebrate our Olympic summer."



'A HANSEL OF FILM - SHETLAND TO SOUTHAMPTON AND BACK' IS A RELAY OF SCREENINGS OF SHORT FILMS MADE BY THE BRITISH PUBLIC AS PART OF THE LONDON 2012 FESTIVAL

The Hansel of Film website allows members of the public to submit films and get the chance to have them shown on the big screen. Hansel of Film welcomes submissions from people of all ages and walks of life. The films can be about any subject, provided they are no longer than five minutes and suitable for general viewing. There is no theme, so filmmakers are invited to use their creative freedom - drama, documentary, comedy, animation, music videos, mysteries and histories - all are welcome.

The public can also get involved by signing up to be a 'runner' on the website. They can register individually or as a representative of a team, and Shetland Arts will help meet any accommodation or expenses along the way. The closing date for submitting a film or applying to be a runner is 5pm on Friday 18th May.

Hansel Project Manager at Shetland Arts, Kathy Hubbard, says the relay will

lead to many new connections being formed: "Hansel of Film is truly a coast-to-coast project and we are looking forward to the many new friends and relationships that will be made as we visit over twenty venues and communities. This is about celebrating the creativity of the public at large, and about bringing people together to enjoy films on screens large and small around the British Isles."

Tickets for the events are free and can be booked via the Hansel of Film website.

Shetland Arts would like to thank principle funders of the Hansel of Film project, LOCOG and Creative Scotland, for their support.

About the Cultural Olympiad and London 2012 Festival

The London 2012 Cultural Olympiad is the largest cultural celebration in the history of the modern Olympic and Paralympic Movements. Spread over four years, it is designed to give everyone in

the UK a chance to be part of London 2012 and inspire creativity across all forms of culture, especially among young people.

The culmination of the Cultural Olympiad will be the London 2012 Festival, bringing leading artists from all over the world together from 21 June 2012 in this UK-wide festival - a chance for everyone to celebrate London 2012 through dance, music, theatre, the visual arts, fashion, film and digital innovation.

Principal funders of the Cultural Olympiad and London 2012 Festival are Arts Council England, Legacy Trust UK and the Olympic Lottery Distributor. BP and BT are Premier Partners of the Cultural Olympiad and the London 2012 Festival.

For more details visit:

www.london2012.com/festival or email: paul.woodmansey@london2012.com

Visit the project's official website:
<http://hansel2012.org>

**SHETLAND IS
ALIVE WITH THE SOUND
OF MUSIC. THE RHYTHM
OF THE WAVES ECHOES
ALONG OUR DESERTED
BEACHES & THE CLIFFS
RING OUT WITH A CHORUS
OF SEABIRD COLONIES.
ANCIENT HISTORICAL SITES
REVERBERATE WITH THE
FOOTSTEPS OF THE
PAST. THEN THERE'S
OUR LEGENDARY
FIDDLE SESSIONS, WHICH
OFTEN GO ON TILL THE
EARLY HOURS.**



SOUNDS GREAT.

Visit Shetland at any time of year and you'll be enchanted by the rugged beauty of the landscape. The place where Scotland meets Scandinavia and the North Sea meets the Atlantic Ocean. Whether arriving for the first time or returning you can be sure of a great welcome. To find out more or to request a FREE copy of our Shetland Pocket Guide visit www.SHETLAND.org

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SHETLAND
PRIDE OF PLACE

