

# Unkans

The newsletter of the Shetland Museum and Archives  
and the Shetland heritage community

FREE

May 2008  
Issue 8

museum  
Shetland  
archives

## St. Ninian's Isle treasure returns

The original St. Ninian's Isle treasure will return to Shetland this summer, commemorating the 50th anniversary of its discovery. The silver objects, of Pictish design, will be displayed at the Shetland Museum and Archives between 4th July and 5th October. The treasure's return is part of a new partnership agreement between the National Museums of Scotland and Shetland Amenity Trust.

During the exhibition period, a number of events relating to the treasure will be held at Shetland Museum and Archives.

A conference exploring the treasure's artistic, historical

and cultural importance will take place 4-6th July, to coincide with the opening of the exhibition. The 3-day event will begin with a buffet, and public lecture by Jane Carmichael, Director of Collections at the National Museums of Scotland.

A day of lectures by historians and archaeologists will follow on Saturday, the 5th, with a visit to St. Ninian's Isle and a play by Shetland Arts on Sunday, 6th July. For a full conference programme and to book, please phone 01595 695057. Bookings must be completed by 12th June. Other events will be announced in the next issue of *Unkans*.



Archaeologists excavating at St. Ninian's Isle in the 1950s.

## What's On Guide

### May

Until 24th July: Focus Display: 'Handwriting through the ages'. Archives display case.

Until 18th Dec.: Focus Display: 'Fishermen's Mission: 100 years of service'. Upper Gallery

Until 19th: Exhibition: '7 Minutes of Explosion' by Barbara Ridland and Jeannette Sendler. Da Gadderie.

7th: Illustrated talk: 'Postcards from Port Lockroy, Antarctica', by Rachel Hazell. 7:30pm, free, drop-in.

10th: Illustrated talk: '7 Minutes of Explosion', by Barbara Ridland. 3pm, free, drop-in.

15th: Workshop: 'Going Potty', 11-11:30am, or 2-2:30pm, 3-4 years old (but with adult), free, but booking essential.

17th: Workshop: 'Getting Started: ideas for fiction come from the most unlikely places', led by Ann Cleeves, author, 2-4pm, free but booking essential.

24th May-29th June: Exhibition: 'Along the Edges', group show by Wendy Sutherland, Norman Gibson, Sam MacDonald and Ruth Brownlee. Da Gadderie.

29th: Films: 'Shetland in film: the 1950s', introduced by Brian Smith, 7-8:45pm, free, drop-in.

### June

Throughout June: Focus Display: '1913 Douglas Motorcycle'. SMAA foyer.

Throughout June: Film: 'Shetland: a few aspects, 1934-1956' by Theo Kay. Free, drop-in.

Until 20th Nov.: Focus Display: '60 Years of NHS Scotland'. Upper Gallery.

16th: Two talks: 'The Historical and archaeological evidence for the Norse "stofa" at the Biggins', by Dr. Barbara Crawford, and 'The Reconstruction of a medieval Norse stofa at Papa Stour: preserving traditional crafts, practical implementation and methods', by Atle Ove Martinussen, 2:30pm. Free, drop-in.

19th: Talk: 'John Walker and his clearances', by Wendy Gear. 7pm in the Archives

21st June-Jan. 09: Focus Display: 'The Hanseatic League'. Lower Gallery.

All events are held at the Shetland Museum and Archives, unless otherwise stated. There may be a charge for some events. For more information, phone 01595 695057 or just pop in.

## We're through!

The Shetland Museum and Archives have made it onto the shortlist for the 2008 Art Fund Prize. There is still time to



support our nomination, just follow the links from [www.shetlandmuseumandarchives.org.uk](http://www.shetlandmuseumandarchives.org.uk) Access to the site is available in the Archives, or you can pick up a comments card at reception. The Art Fund Prize will be awarded on 22nd May.

We were also one of five winning museums, from 800 nominees, at this year's Guardian Family Friendly Museum Award. This was the first time in the award's history a Scottish museum was nominated. We would like to thank all the families who nominated us. The outright winner, announced on 30th April, was the Weston Park Museum in Sheffield.

### Summer Hours

Museum opening times:

**Monday** 10am-5pm, **Tuesday-Thursday** 10am-6pm

**Friday** 10am-7pm **Saturday** 10am-5pm

**Sunday** 12pm-5pm

Archives opening times:

**Monday-Saturday** 10-4.30pm **Sunday** closed

Hay's Dock Restaurant Café opening times:

Daytime: **Monday** 10:30am-5pm, **Tuesday-Friday** 10:30am-5:30pm, **Saturday** 10:30am-5pm,

**Sunday** 12pm-5pm

Evenings: **Tuesday-Saturday** 6:30pm-11pm.

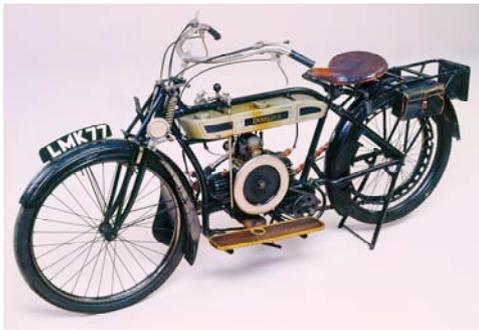
To book, phone 01595 741569

# Summer of The Victorian box

## motoring displays

Between May and July, a 1913 Douglas model R motorcycle will be displayed, on loan from the National Motor Museum, Beaulieu. It is the same model that Lerwick man, James Herculson, bought new and drove throughout Shetland and Orkney in his job as a commission agent.

During the Classic Motor Show weekend, 6-9th June, there will be a special exhibition of car mascots belonging to Edward Sutherland of Caithness. The rare and valuable collection of mascots was recently seen on the Antiques Roadshow.



## Airport case takes off

A large display case with exhibits from many of Shetland's museums will be installed at Sumburgh Airport this month. The case brings together artefacts and their stories from the collections of seven registered museums.

Participating museums are Unst Heritage Centre, Unst Boat Haven, Tangwick Haa Museum, Fetlar Interpretive Centre, the Old Haa at Burravoe, Yell, the George Waterston Memorial Centre in Fair Isle, and Shetland Museum and Archives. Registered museums are nationally recognised in maintaining best practice in museum standards, and Shetland is exceptional in having so many community museums achieve this mark.

The case contains a lively array of objects, reflecting the diversity of cultural and natural heritage throughout Shetland. The displays will be changed on an annual basis, with the hope that they will encourage locals and visitors to explore the many museums in our community.

"We think the Victorian box is splendid. When the first box went we were devastated. But when the Victorian box came, we were ecstatic! The box was a good idea because it can help people understand what the Victorians might have looked like. Some of the clothes are a bit too big but we still really like to dress up. We think you should go see the box to learn what they might have looked like and there are also pictures you can look at. WE HOPE YOU LOVE IT THE SAME AS US OR EVEN MORE!"

*Niamh Coffey, age 9 and Eilidh Blance, age 9*

*Editor's note: The idea of creating our own play kist occurred following a travelling exhibit in Da Gadderie last year, which included a Gutter Girl's kist. We have fashioned our first kist on a Victorian theme, to contrast the lifestyles of the wealthy and their servants, and encourage role play and exploration of the period.*



Sòley Inkster, Eilidh Blance, and Niamh Coffey exploring the Victorian box.

## Recent museum donations: The Robbie Young photo collection

The Museum's Photographic Archive continues to grow. The latest addition is a collection of slides taken by the late Robbie Young of Lerwick. Robbie worked for the Hydro and was well known all over Shetland. The collection reflects Robbie's interests in people, cars, stone dykes, and change in Shetland, especially Lerwick shops. His fascinating collection can be seen online at <http://photos.shetland-museum.org.uk> select 'Young, R' from the list of Photographers in Subjects.

We are grateful to Robbie's family, in particular his wife Jemima, for the donation.

## Give us a clue!



Can you tell us where this photo was taken? It came to us amongst other photos of Nesting, but we aren't certain this photo was taken there. It was snapped about 1920 and shows two men cutting wood using a pit saw. The man below is wearing goggles and a cap with brim to keep the sawdust out of his eyes. It is not possible to make out the registration number of the boat, nor do we know the names of the men. If you have any information, please contact Ian Tait at the museum.

To browse the 71,192 other images in our photographic archive, go to <http://photos.shetland-museum.org.uk/index.php> or come in and use the access points in the museum and archives.

## Recent archive donations: The Robert Manson papers

Archives staff were delighted recently to receive a collection of papers from Capt. Bob Manson. They are the personal papers of his father, Robert Manson, who signed up for the Royal Navy during the First World War – at the age of 15! Robert (on the left) and his twin brother Hugh joined up on the same day, and claimed that they were three years older. After the war Robert went to sea, and the collection reflects his long naval career.



## Moving mound in Bressay

Bressay History Group's plans to excavate and reconstruct a burnt mound at Cruester have been awarded over £70,000 from the Heritage Lottery Fund, SIC, Highlands and Islands Enterprise and Shetland Amenity Trust (SAT). This is a partnership project with the Council for Scottish Archaeology and The SCAPE Trust, using expertise from SAT.

Varying theories exist about the function of the Bronze Age structures, ranging from cooking sites to saunas. Shetland's burnt mounds, which number about 350, form a special group of which Cruester is a complex example.

Bressay History Group met with staff from partner organisations in January 2007. It was decided the group would 'adopt' the site with the CSA's 'Adopt-a-Monument Scheme'. In June and July, archaeologists will excavate and dismantle the internal structures of the site. The stones will be carefully labeled and transported to a plot adjacent to Bressay Heritage Centre. There the site will be reconstructed into a visitor attraction and centre for experimental research. An exciting education programme, packed with living history events and experimentation with ancient technology, will accompany the reconstruction. It is hoped that the project will generate public interest in Bressay's unique heritage, and in the special importance of Shetland's burnt mounds.

Look out for details of interactive open days, living history events and exhibitions which will be distributed widely throughout Shetland from May onwards. If you are keen to participate in this exciting project, Bressay History Group is looking for volunteers. Please contact Douglas Coutts, 01595 820295 or Bressay Heritage Centre 01595 820750, email [bressayheritage@btinternet.com](mailto:bressayheritage@btinternet.com)

*Helen Bradley  
Adopt-a-Monument*

## COMMUNITY HERITAGE NEWS

### New Skills Building course

A new, free, Skills Building course has been added to this spring's programme. 'An Introduction to Effective Visual Merchandising and Display' will be held in Lerwick on 16th May, from 10-4. Contact Hazel Bews at 01463 715225 or [www.heritage-skills.co.uk](http://www.heritage-skills.co.uk) to book.

### Unst replica lace

Unst is justly proud of its lace knitting heritage and a new project by Unst Heritage Centre aims to keep this tradition alive while preserving its collection. In 1979, builders at the old Westside shop in Uyeasound found a collection of lace garments, dating from about 1880. Many were in very poor condition. Unst Heritage Centre decided to make replicas so they could be studied and displayed instead of the fragile originals. The replicated garments will be on display at Unst Heritage Centre, with two children's socks displayed in the case at Sumburgh Airport (see page 2).

### Help with interpretation

Two new resources are available on interpretation. The Association for Heritage Interpretation has launched a new website, which includes a handy list of suppliers for all types of interpretation requirements. See it at [www.ahi.org.uk](http://www.ahi.org.uk)

Another resource is 'Saying it Differently – a handbook for museums refreshing their display'. It includes sections on Discovery, Creation, Implementation, Saying it Differently, and Outcomes.

It is of particular help with text writing, especially using different ways to get your message across.

Download at [www.mlalondon.org.uk/uploads/documents/sayingitdifferentlyaw.pdf](http://www.mlalondon.org.uk/uploads/documents/sayingitdifferentlyaw.pdf)

### Adam Christie research

The life of writer and artist Adam Christie is currently being researched by Pat Christie of Cunningsburgh History Group. Adam, originally from Aith, Cunningsburgh, wrote prose and poetry, and made contributions to the local press in the 1890s. By 1901, however, he was suffering from mental illness and was admitted to Montrose Royal Lunatic Asylum. There he carved over 200 stone heads, many of which still survive (one is displayed in the Shetland Museum and Archives). If you have any information about Adam Christie or mental health in the early part of the last century in Shetland, please contact Pat on 01950 477372 or email [christiepat@hotmail.com](mailto:christiepat@hotmail.com).

## Reconstruction of Norse stofa on Papa Stour

The Papa Stour History Group is leading an exciting and ambitious heritage project this summer.

Following a very generous offer from Norway to provide timbers and expertise, we have taken up the challenge to partially reconstruct the 13th century wooden stofa at the Biggins. This building, the main 'living room' of the farm, is believed to be the one mentioned in Shetland's oldest surviving document from 1299.

Funded by Shetland Amenity Trust, the Russell Trust, and Shetland Islands Council Regeneration Funding, Phase 1 of the project was completed last autumn.

The next phase will involve the erection of the wooden walls. Log timbers were grown at Granvin, Horderland, West Norway. They were felled in December and taken to Bryggen in Bergen to dry out over the winter. When ready for transport, the logs, each weighing up to half a ton and measuring 5.5 to 7.5 metres in length, will be shipped to Lerwick aboard the Norwegian sail training ship, the *Statsraad Lehmkuhl*. From there they will be taken into Papa Stour ready for assembly during the second week in June.

The project also has served as a training ground for two young Shetland woodworkers. At the invitation of Papa Stour History Group, Tom Best from Fair Isle and Andrew Watt, a trainee at Papar Wark Furniture, Scalloway, went to Norway to learn traditional techniques. Under the tuition of skilled craftsmen, they have made their own tools with which to carve out the *findalslaft*, or notches, in 13th century fashion.

Tom and Andrew, together with Magnus Scott from Papa Stour, will assist the four Norwegian carpenters when the timbers arrive in Papa Stour. During this phase the Papa Stour History Group will present an afternoon of lectures at the Shetland Museum (see *Unkans' What's On Guide* for more details).

Following reconstruction, the site will be landscaped and prepared as a visitor attraction. It is hoped that it will be opened officially in late August or early September this year. On completion, it will be the only one of its kind in the whole of the U.K.

This project has generated enormous interest in Norway. The Bryggen Foundation, West Norwegian Cultural Academy, Norwegian Crafts Development at Maihaugen, and the Hordaland Council are all partners in this considerable undertaking. Closer to home, Shetland Amenity Trust is giving invaluable support and advice, and Shetland Islands Council has been invited to become a partner in the project.

**Jane Puckey**  
Papa Stour History Group



**Stonemasons and archaeologists complete Phase 1 of the project.**

Two stonemasons from Norway joined local dykers Jim Keddie and Rick Barton, and Glasgow-based archaeologist Beverley Ballin Smith, to rebuild the outer stone protective walls, or vernemure. Using stone from the site, the walls have been built along the original foundation to a height of 1.6 metres, to comply with 21st century planning regulations. A membrane was used to separate original stonework from new.

This page is dedicated to research on all aspects of Shetland's history and heritage. Contributions are welcome.

## Get in touch

We are keen to include contributions from anyone who has something interesting to share about Shetland's heritage. Deadline for the next issue is Friday 13th June. If you would like to stock our newsletter or distribute copies to your group, let us know.

Email: [info@shetlandmuseumandarchives.org.uk](mailto:info@shetlandmuseumandarchives.org.uk) Telephone: 01595 695057 Fax: 01595 696729

Post: Newsletter, Shetland Museum and Archives, Hay's Dock, Lerwick, Shetland ZE1 0WP

