

# Unkans

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

FREE

May 2010  
Issue 20

museum  
Shetland  
archives

## New home for textile museum

Shetland Textile Working Museum begins a new chapter in May as it moves temporarily to the Bød of Gremista in Lerwick.

The museum, which was established by the Shetland Guild of Spinners Weavers Knitters and Dyers in 1997, has been without a home for the past three years since the expiry of its previous lease at Weisdale Mill.

Now, with the assistance of Shetland Amenity Trust, the Textiles Museum will be able to enjoy a residency at the Bød before moving to their new home at Voe House in Walls.

The Guild, who manage the museum, felt that with the high demand expected during the Hamefarin in June, an exhibition space should be found for the museum. The museum collection includes important artefacts from Shetland's textile heritage and has a unique collection of Shetland textiles illustrating the history of spinning, knitting and weaving in the islands from their earliest development to the present day.

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### Opening Hours

#### Museum

**Monday-Saturday** 10am-5pm;

**Sunday** 12pm-5pm

#### Archives

**Monday-Friday** 10am-4.30pm;

**Saturday** 10am-1pm; **Sunday** closed

#### Hay's Dock Café Restaurant

Daytime **Monday-Saturday** 10.30am-

4pm; **Sunday** 12-5pm;

Evenings **Thursday-Saturday** 7-9pm

Please phone 01595 741569  
to book a table.



## What's On Guide

### May

**To 31st August From Peerie Angels to Shetland Heritage Fiddlers** Archives display case

**1st May – 6th June, Carved, Modelled and Cast.** An exhibition by northern isles artists John Cumming and Frances Pelly reflecting their work in Orkney and Shetland. Da Gadderie

**Sunday 2nd May, 3pm – 4pm,** Sculptor Frances Pelly demonstrates the lettercutting techniques she uses in some of her work. Free, no booking required

**3rd May – 27th May, Focus Environment.** The Scottish Schools' national environmental photographic competition entrants and winners for 2010. Foyer Corridor

**Sunday 9th May, 3pm – 4pm, Sculptor John Cumming,** an informal gallery talk discussing the inspiration behind his work, free, no booking required, Da Gadderie

**14th May – 14th June, Textile installation** by Shetland College degree student Hilary Seatter., Pier Store

**Friday 14th & Saturday 15th May,** Conference DNA: New Work on Health and History. £15, booking essential

There are a variety of tours available including the Highlights Tour, a History of Hay's Dock, and Textile Treasures, please contact us for more information.

Please see separate story for details of our children's and family activities.

### June

**12th June – 25th July, From Old Rock to New Life.** For Shetland Hamefarin 2010 this exhibition concentrates on emigration, exploring why Shetlanders left their native islands and identifying the main destinations, Da Gadderie

**12th-27th June, Film: Rugged Island- A Shetland Lyric.** 1933, silent, black and white, suitable for all ages. Directed by Jenny Brown (later Jenny Gilbertson). A young couple are split between emigrating to Australia or staying on their Shetland croft. This film is being shown to accompany the exhibition 'From Old Rock to New Life. Various days, please phone for exact dates and times.

**14th June – 25th July, Display Hamefarin quilts.** Organiser Ann Hill has collected blocks created by 'exiles' from all over the world, representing their interests and connections with Shetland. Ann has sewn them into two large quilts which will hang in the Auditorium to accompany the exhibition in Da Gadderie

**All events are held at the Shetland Museum and Archives and are free, unless otherwise stated. To book call 01595 695057. No booking is necessary for drop-in events.**

# Exhibition news

## Maakin Flooers

From the initial pattern by Joan Manson people throughout the UK have been inspired to create their own flooers and have donated them to the Raising Awareness of Biodiversity project begun by students on the Contemporary Textiles BA course at Shetland College UHI.



The individual flooers will be on sale at events in Shetland. Proceeds will go towards helping the students showcase their work at the New Designers, an exhibition of Contemporary Textile Design in London.

On show outside Hay's Dock Café Restaurant from 17th April – 1st May, then at Brae Hall, May 22, 1.30 - 4.00 pm, Cunningsburgh Hall, May 29, 1.30 -

4.00 and finally Shetland College Contemporary Textiles Degree Show, June 11, 6.30 - 9.00 (lower building Gremista campus)

## Focus Environment

Scotland's National Environmental Photographic Competition for Secondary is a competition for secondary school pupils throughout Scotland. The competition encourages young people between the ages of 11-18 to demonstrate their awareness of the natural world around them. 3rd May – 27th May Foyer Corridor wall.

## Hamefarin Quilts

As part of the Hamefarin celebrations of 2010 we are displaying two Hamefarin quilts. Organiser Ann Hill has collected blocks done by exiles from all over the world. The pieces represent their interests and connections with Shetland. Ann has sewn them into two 88" x 110" quilts. On display in the Auditorium from 14th June – 25th July

## Carved, Modelled and Cast

With a strong feel for the northern landscape and the lives lived within it artists John Cumming and Frances Pelly share a deep love of language, poetry and the carved and printed word. The predominant materials used are stone and clay. On display in Da Gadderie from 1st May – 6th June

Frances Pelly will be leading a letter-carving demonstration on Sunday 2nd May starting at 3.00pm and John Cumming will give a Gallery Talk on Sunday 9th May at 3.00pm



## From Auld Rock to New Life

Every 25 years expatriate Shetlanders return home for the Hamefarin, to revisit their homeland, or discover the islands their ancestors left. This year we highlight the lives of some Shetlanders past and present. Most stories will be unfamiliar even to Shetlanders; there are farmers, prospectors, artists, and more. Some became well-known, but most lived ordinary lives. The display includes objects which belonged to emigrants, and photographs of Shetlanders in their new homes throughout the Empire.

Da Gadderie 12th June – 25th July

# New home for textile museum

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The 18th century fishing böd was the home of Arthur Anderson, founder of the P&O shipping line, and the story of the man and his life will be shown in two rooms while the rest of the building will be given over to displays of the internationally important textiles as well as providing work and demonstration space for the Guild.

The first floor of the building will have on display exhibits of fine hand spun lace shawls and stoles alongside richly patterned Fairisle knitting.

As in previous years the Guild will again host an exhibition this year entitled 'New from Old' (Changes in Fashion)

Displays in the Textile Museum will include knitted Shetland textiles from the 19th century right through to the present day. Items on show will demonstrate Shetland's knitting and textile heritage through garments and accessories and will act as a detailed example of how fashions have changed over the years.

The Guild will also host a programme of demonstrations including knitting and spinning which will hopefully encourage others to join in and learn skills which will help to conserve and preserve an important part of Shetland's cultural heritage.

Chairman of the Trustees for Shetland Textile Working Museum, Frank Robertson said: "We are really looking forward to moving into our temporary home and we are grateful to the Amenity Trust for offering us the space. We hope to welcome lots of visitors, local and tourists this year".

A custodian has been appointed for the exhibition and will be on hand to interpret for visitors.

Entry to Böd of Gremista is free of charge but donations are welcome.

The building will be open from 1st of May to 11th of September, Tuesday to Saturday 10am to 1pm and 2pm to 5pm.

The Guild will celebrate moving into the building with a programme of special events from 1st to 4th of May.

For further information on the Böd of Gremista email:

[info@shetlandmuseumandarchives.org.uk](mailto:info@shetlandmuseumandarchives.org.uk)

For further information on Shetland Textile Working Museum email:

[arthur.cuckron@googlemail.com](mailto:arthur.cuckron@googlemail.com)

Give us  
a clue

This object was recently acquired by the museum after being found in a skip along with some tools. If you know what it is and what it might have been used for we would love to hear from you.



## Shetland men needed

In May our conference DNA: health and history will be held and the keynote speaker is looking for Shetland men to help with his research. Dr Jim Wilson is hoping to take genetic samples from men with the surnames Bairnson, Bigland, Bolt, Chalmers, Erasmuson, Eunson, Ganson, Gear, Herculeson, Jacobson, Jeromson, Leslie, Mail, Mainland, Manson, Mullay, Odie, Peterson, Russell, Stout, Thomason or Tulloch. He has agreed to supply volunteers with genetic details if they will come forward. It is another reason to attend a fascinating conference, which will give details of the most up-to-date research about one of the world's most fascinating molecules. For further information call the Museum and Archives on 01595 695057.

## Grønneberg's papers catalogued

Roy Grønneberg was well known to many in Shetland through his various interests. After his death his papers came to the Archives and they have recently been catalogued by volunteer Lorna Gibson. Roy was particularly interested in Shetland dialect and how it compared to Scandinavian languages and the collection includes many translations and articles about language. He also helped design the Shetland flag, was a founding member of the SNP and ran a bookshop in Lerwick. His papers include several drafts of dialect dictionaries, various articles and notes on Jakob Jakobsen, as well as various items related to Roy's political and linguistic interests.

## Planning your summer holidays?

Shetland Museum and Archives is getting ready for a packed summer with a wide range of workshops available for children and young people aged from 3 - 15 years old. All workshops are based on our collections or Shetland's heritage and culture and highlights this year include wire sculptures, pirate adventures, clay modelling and knitting for all ages. We also have a couple of workshops for families to enjoy together – felting and making butterfly feeders.

Details of all the workshops will be in the Summer Activities booklet, distributed through schools in early June. You can also find information on our website [www.shetlandmuseumandarchives.org.uk](http://www.shetlandmuseumandarchives.org.uk) from mid June. Bookings open on Monday 21st June and prices range from free to £8 per workshop.



Family fun at a felting workshop.

## Shetland's archivists

Shetland Archives and archivist Brian Smith are often thought of as one and the same. For the past 34 years Brian has been collecting, preserving and making available records about Shetland's past. However, there were others before him who also gathered old Shetland records and their role is important too. People such as scholar Gilbert Goudie, collector E. S. Reid Tait, and librarian George Longmuir were all influential in helping shape what later became the Shetland Archives.

In the nineteenth century interest in Shetland among historians and intellectuals grew, thanks in part to the huge success of Sir Walter Scott's *The Pirate*. Antiquarian societies were formed in Edinburgh, Scandinavia and Shetland which were interested in studying and preserving Shetland's history. Some of these organisations were more successful than others in helping to make Shetland's records available. For example the Orkney and Zetland Antiquarian Society, founded in Edinburgh in 1822, didn't get off the ground. On the other hand, the Maitland Club, based in Glasgow, published several works in the 1840s and 1850s based on Shetland documents.

Gilbert Goudie (1843-1918), was the first Shetlander to use local records to write a history of Shetland. Goudie was interested in the same things as a modern day archivist – he collected and helped preserve records and tried to make them available to a wider audience through his publications. His life's work,

The Celtic and Scandinavian Antiquities of Shetland, was published in 1904. Despite his hard work, it did not sell well locally.

After Goudie's death, his great-nephew Edwyn Seymour Reid Tait (1885-1960) acquired his book collection to add to his own vast assortment of Shetland material. Tait was to be a key figure in the history of Shetland's archives in the twentieth century, both through his own collecting and his role as councillor. He served for many years on the library committee and it was he who inspired George Longmuir to begin an historical collection in the library. Longmuir solicited donations from a variety of individuals, families, and other institutions, and laid the foundations of what are now the collections of the Shetland Archives.

In 1976, after some debate locally about whether the post was necessary, the position of archivist was created. Brian Smith was appointed and has spent his career seeking out, reading, conserving, and making accessible all kinds of material about Shetland. Smith sums up the situation saying: "We are standing on the shoulders of those who went before us. Without Goudie, Tait, Longmuir and all the others who have helped preserve Shetland records it is worrying to think how impoverished our sources of Shetland history would be."

**Joanne Wishart**  
Assistant Archivist



Left to right: Gilbert Goudie, E. S. Reid Tait and George Longmuir

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.

If you would like to stock *Unkans*, 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

heritage  
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culture

**DEADLINE FOR CONTRIBUTIONS FOR NEXT ISSUE IS FRIDAY, 18 JUNE 2010**