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

FREE
JULY 2011
Issue 27

museum
Shetland
archives

Busy summer ahead

Staff at SMAA are hoping for warm sunny days this summer, but there will be plenty going on regardless of the weather. New guided tours, children's workshops, and an outdoor barbeque have been planned, so you will find something for all the family.

Most of our summer events are based around the Tall Ships Race, including the current exhibition 'High Seas to High Teas'. We offer a daily tour based on the exhibition, and Curator Ian Tait will give an in-depth lecture on the tea trade and Shetland's passion for the drink. Family workshops include a Mad Hatter's Tea Party, fashioning your own ship figurehead, and making tall ships from willow!

There are several new exhibitions, with work from Samantha and Jo Jack, Diane Garrick, and Bert Simpson, and maritime paintings from the Museum's own collections.

During the four days of the Tall Ships Race, Hay's Dock Café Restaurant will operate an outdoor barbeque, serving mackerel baps in front of the Boat Shed.

Shetland Museum and Archives is the premier location to enjoy the spectacle of the tall ships!

See the What's On Guide below, or contact us for more information.



Pupils from Bells Brae P6 take High Tea in Da Gadderie.

What's on Guide

July

daily: Highlights Tour: Discover 5000 years of Shetland's history, 11am-12noon.

daily: Sail Around the World: scavenger hunt, pick up clues at Reception.

daily: Exhibition: Maritime Paintings from the Shetland Museum Art Collection, Foyer corridor to 6th, Hay's Dock Café Restaurant from 8th.

daily to 10th: Exhibition: 'The Fight': Jo and Samantha Jack, Pier Store.

daily to 26th: Exhibition: From High Seas to High Teas, Da Gadderie.

daily to 26th: Tour: For All the Tea in China: an in-depth look at the exhibit in Da Gadderie, 2.30-3pm.

Mondays: Tour: Textile Treasures: 2-3.30pm.

Mondays: Spinning and Knitting Demonstrations: 2-4pm, Textile Gallery.

Saturdays: Tour: From Herring to Heritage: discover the history of Hay's Dock, 2-2.30pm.

1st: Lecture: 'Old Lerwick': Douglas Sinclair, in aid of St. Margaret's Church Centenary celebrations, 7.30pm, tickets £5.

2nd: Nature Festival: GeoPark Shetland and Biological Records Centre drop-in session, Learning Room, from 11am.

5th: Shetland Nature Festival lecture on Geology, by Jonathan Swales of Scottish Natural Heritage, 7.30pm.

10th: Brilliant Bunting and Fantastic Flags: family workshop, 12-4pm, free.

14th: Ship Figurehead: workshop for P4+, 10am-4pm, £6, booking essential.

15th-31st: Exhibition: Makkin' Sail, Diane Garrick, Foyer corridor.

20th: Lecture: Take Tea with Ian: by Curator Ian Tait, 7.30pm.

21st-24th: Hay's Dock BBQ: outside Boat Shed, 12-3pm.

22nd: Peerie boat builders, family workshop, 11am-3pm, free.

22nd: Lecture: 'Viking Navigators' by Donna Heddle of Centre for Nordic Studies, 7.30pm.

23rd: Mad Hatter's Tea Party: workshop, 11am-12noon, P1+, £3, booking essential.

23rd: In About The Museum: Shetland story, song and dance, 12-2pm.

26th: Willow Tall Ships: workshop, 10am-4pm, P6+, £6, booking essential.

28th: Mosaic Tea Cup Coasters: workshop, 10.30-12noon, P4+, £3, booking essential.

from 30th: Exhibition: 'A Skoitaboot', Bert Simpson, Da Gadderie.

August

daily: Highlights Tour: Discover 5000 years of Shetland's history, 11am-12noon, enquire at Reception.

daily: Exhibition: Maritime Paintings from the Shetland Museum Art Collection, Hay's Dock Café Restaurant.

to 14th August: Sail Around the World: scavenger hunt, pick up clues at Reception.

to 28th: Exhibition: 'A Skoitaboot', Bert Simpson, Da Gadderie.

Mondays: Tour: Textile Treasures: 2-3.30pm.

Mondays: Spinning and Knitting Demonstrations: 2-4pm, Textile Gallery.

Saturdays: Tour: From Herring to Heritage: discover the history of Hay's Dock, 2-2.30pm.

1st: Knitted Cakes Tea Party: workshop, 10am-4pm, P7+, £6, booking essential.

2nd: Pirate Puppets, workshop, 10am-1pm or 2-5pm, P4 -P7, £5, booking essential.

8th-11th September: Exhibition: Jane Mathews: Pier Store.

9th: Pirate Fantastic, workshop, 10am-12noon, P1-P4, £4, booking essential.

11th: Under the Sea Creatures, workshop, 11am-12noon, P1-P4, £4, booking essential.

All events held at Shetland Museum and Archives. To book, or for more information, please visit Reception or call 01595 695057

Opening Hours (Summer)

Archives

Monday-Friday 10am-4:30pm

Saturday 10am-1pm

Museum

Monday -Friday 10am-5pm

Saturday 10am-5pm

Sunday 12pm-5pm

Hay's Dock Café Restaurant

Daytime:

Monday-Saturday 10.30am-4.30pm

Sunday 12pm-4.30pm

Evenings:

Tuesday-Saturday, 6:30-9pm (last

orders) To book: 01595 741569

Croft House Museum

Daily: 10am-1pm, 2-5pm

Boats brought back to life



The cod boat *Mary 79 LK* was built in 1904 for Andrew Leask, Linga. By the 1950s she was a motorboat, but today she is back to her original form. Andrew's grandson Wibby Leask (above) took the *Mary* up Clift Sound with his uncle, and revisits her fifty years on with Curator Dr Ian Tait.



Open boats used to be part of every Shetlander's life, but now they're pretty rare, and those that survive are considerably altered. Shetland Museum has assembled a superb collection of the main types formerly in use, but until the new Museum and Archives was built, there was no facility to display them, and the vessels lay in storage. Over winter 2010-11 we had several boats restored to their original form. Builders worked in our Boatshed, removing later adaptations for motors, replacing damaged or decayed timber; the finishing touches were tarring, painting, and fitting the nameboards. Many of the restored boats are over a century old, and all eight shall go on show outdoors for the first time during for the Tall Ships Race, along with other renovated boats from the islands' community.

More accreditation kudos

Three more museums in Shetland have achieved full accreditation in the national Museums Accreditation Scheme managed by Museums Galleries Scotland. Unst Boat Haven,

Unst Heritage Centre, and the Old Haa Museum and Gallery in Yell were successful in attaining the required standards of best practice in museum management, visitor services,

and collections care. Staff completing the standard are mostly volunteers, and are to be commended for achieving such a high quality of excellence for their respective museums.

Shetland's commissary records

Commissary records were kept by the Sheriff Clerk beginning in the early nineteenth century and continuing until the late 1970s. They include inventories of a deceased's property and sometimes a will, although many people died intestate and therefore are not represented.

In the last few months I have been indexing the records in the Archives. This has involved entering details of the deceased, such as name, address and date of death, into our online catalogue. From there researchers can obtain the full record from the Archives www.calmview.eu/ShetlandArchive/CalmView

The records include inventories of personal estates, from landowners to tenants, fishermen, crofters and mariners. Women are often categorised by their marriages rather than their role in society. An illumination is the widow's estate, which combines a family's financial records, as her will succeeds that of her husband's. Unmarried women emerge in their own right as crofters, school teachers and occasionally as merchants. One poignant entry is as follows:

Inventory of the personal estate of the late Miss Katherine Irvine,

South Commercial Street, Lerwick, died in Edinburgh 12 September 1907, who stipulated: 'I should like Miss Morrison to get my Norwegian spinning wheel.'

The largest inventories are those of landholders and merchants, and of those to whom debts are owed. The entanglements of sorting out an estate are often reflected in lengthy periods between a person's death and the registration of their estate.

The records include the inventories of sailors, mariners and shipmasters. Amongst these we find details of shareholding or ownership of Shetland boats, which provides insight into the constitution of the fishing community. But the most harrowing are of those lost at sea. The records state the vessel's details and the individual's last location, recorded with specific bearings of latitude and longitude. They reflect the far-ranging, and sometimes exotic locations, Shetlanders travelled to, and where some met their death.

A joiner and fisherman, residing in Clumly, Dunrossness, drowned in the Wakamarina river at Marlborough in the colony of New

Zealand on or about 17 February 1866.

Inventory of the personal estate of the late James Andrew Jamieson, Fairbanks Mining and Recording Precinct, Fourth Judicial Division, Territory of Alaska, USA, died 18 October 1913.

Inventory of the personal estate of the late William Mouat, seaman on board the SS 'Windward' of London, Reform Lane, Lerwick, died at Franz Josef Land on 17 June 1895.

In the late nineteenth century greater numbers of estates were registered, reflecting the investment in life policies which, in many cases, form the bulk of the estate. In the mid 1960s the scope of the inventories was expanded to include heritable property, citing excerpts from the register of sasines, alongside tenancies of land and crofts.

Cataloguing the archive collections can reveal extraordinary facets of Shetland's past and these testaments will enhance genealogical research, highlight evidence of social circumstances, and illuminate the far ranging lives of generations of Shetlanders.

Blair Bruce
Archives Assistant

Step back in time

Being a Visitor Services Assistant (VSA) at the Crofthouse Museum means we begin our working day with 19th century housekeeping duties. We light da fire, takk oot da ess, wind da American clock, an dust da brace!

A stream of visitors arrives throughout the day with regular visits from school groups. We enjoy answering questions about life in 19th century Shetland, the house, articles on display,

the drying kiln and water mill.

It's a pleasant and unusual working environment, but it's also a valuable asset and an important part of Shetland Museum's services. The most rewarding aspect is meeting folk from every corner of the globe. The descendents of families who left the islands during the decades of emigration find the house interesting, as it resembles the home their



VSA Linda Fox with her wires, at the Crofthouse Museum

forebears would have left – very often against their will. It's a privilege to meet these people and pass on information and enthusiasm for our history and heritage.

Even after forty years of being open to the public it's still surprising how many Shetlanders have never visited the Crofthouse Museum. Those who do often bring their family, with the smell of peat smoke bringing back memories to many. Whether you're from nearby or far away discover this example of living history for yourself – we look forward to seeing you!

Barbara Anderson
Visitor Services Assistant

Putting Shetland on the Map: The Geology of Samuel Hibbert



Samuel Hibbert (1782-1848) is cited mainly for his antiquarian observations on Shetland trows, tings, and the sword dance of Papa Stour. But following in the footsteps of Robert Jameson's *Outline of the Mineralogy of the Shetland Islands and Island of Arran* (1798), Hibbert's primary reason for visiting Shetland was to study geology.

On 23 January 1819 Hibbert read part of his 'geognostical' description to the Werner Natural History Society in Edinburgh. 'A Sketch of the Distribution of Rocks in Shetland' was published in 1820 in two parts with an accompanying map in the *Edinburgh Philosophical Journal*.

During six months of collecting minerals and charting stratifications in 1818, Hibbert faced many challenges, as he describes in his *Description of the Shetland Islands*, published in 1822: 'The Geology of Shetland cost me great pains to draw up; my labour was also much impeded, by the wretched charts of these islands that have been published, so that I was obliged, with



Hibbert's geological map of Shetland, published in 1819.

the aid of nothing more than a pocket compass, to climb almost every point of high land in the country, in order to obtain a new draught fit for my purpose. The map, therefore, that is now produced, appears so totally different to any that has ever been before engraved, as to have every claim to the title of a New Survey. That it contains many imperfections is to be expected, but I believe they do not affect it in the least, in a geological point of view.'

Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine chronicled his discovery of iron chromate in Unst: 'Last season, Dr. Hibbert observed, in serpentine veins, that valuable mineral the chromate of iron ... From this ore several beautiful and very durable pigments are obtained, which are highly valued in the arts. Hitherto the market has been supplied with it from North America, but now that it has been ascertained to occur in profusion, and of excellent quality, in Shetland, it will become an article of trade from that country.'

Hibbert's discovery generated a raft of interested speculators, from William Mouat of Gardie to Thomas Edmondston of Bunes. Concerning the challenges of mining chromium from the serpentine, Hibbert called upon the Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce for their assistance.

'... I would submit to the manufacturing chemists in London the propriety of rendering the Shetland gentlemen every scientific

assistance which they may require from their advice, or even, if wanted, from other exertions in prosecuting the search after this ore, providing its quality suits their purpose. It appears to me that some serious obstacles cannot fail to result from the inexperience of the Shetland gentlemen in whatever concerns the operations of mining.' (*Philosophical Magazine and Journal* (1821) p.265-266).

Hibbert went on to deliver geology lectures in Manchester. From numerous trips to the Continent, he also published papers concerning the volcanic regions of France, Italy and northern Germany. Subsequent editions of *A Description of the Shetland Islands*, published in 1891 and 1931 have chosen to omit much of Hibbert's geological findings. Perhaps Shetland's UNESCO status as a Geopark merits another look at his pioneering work.

Glenn Bard
Independent researcher
Whalsay

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 Telephone: 01595 695057 Fax: 01595 696729

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

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DEADLINE FOR CONTRIBUTIONS FOR NEXT ISSUE IS NEXT ISSUE IS FRIDAY, 19 AUGUST, 2011.