

Unkans

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

FREE

May 2007

Issue 2

museum
Shetland
archives



A completed display case.

Come and see for yourself

Join us to celebrate the opening of the new Shetland Museum and Archives with a series of special events on the 2nd and 3rd of June.

The open weekend will give you the first chance to come along and see the culmination of eight years of hard work.

Listen to a range of music from local artists, have a go at a variety of activities, and visit an exhibition on the Shetland Museum and Archives 'Art on Site' public art project.

There will be work on the museum's boat collection in the boat sheds and the new Archives searchroom will be open with documents on display and staff on hand to answer questions.

See the What's On Guide for other events at the new Museum and Archives.

The building will be open from 10am to 6pm on the Saturday and Sunday and everyone is welcome to come along and join in the fun.

Normal service begins on Monday 4th June.

Museum opening times are:

Monday- Wednesday, and Friday 10am-5pm
Thursday 10am -7pm **Saturday** 10am -5pm **Sunday** 12pm - 5pm

Archives opening times are:

Monday-Wednesday, and Friday 9.30am - 4.30pm
Thursday 10am -7pm **Saturday** 10am-1pm

What's On Guide

June

2nd & 3rd: Shetland Museum and Archives open weekend. Special events to mark the opening of the new facilities.

1st - 18th: Exhibition, "Art on Site" (SMAA Public Art Project).
Da Gadderie

8th: Introduction to the Archives Searchroom.
4.30 - 5pm. Booking required.

13th: Introduction to the Archives. 4.30 - 5.30pm.
Booking required.

19th: Introduction to researching maritime history. 7 - 8pm. Booking required

23rd & 24th: Sea Monsters! Drop in children's workshop.
2 - 5pm.

23rd & 24th: Sea Monsters & Mermaids.
Drop in storytelling with Elma Johnson. 2 - 5pm.

23rd June - 29th July: Exhibition, "Land marks and whale roads" by Jack Chesterman.
Da Gadderie.

All events are held at the Shetland Museum and Archives (SMAA) and are free. To book, call 01595 695057. No booking is necessary for drop in events.

Community museums open for the season

It's Spring! and Shetland's local museums and heritage centres come into full bloom this month. All winter long, volunteers have been researching Shetland's heritage to put it on show for you. They have delved into archives and stores, interviewed people in their community, unpacked artefacts, and created new displays. Between May and September is your opportunity to go for a visit and see what they've discovered!

Unst Heritage Centre:

Daily 11-5 until 30th Sept.; Friday afternoons: spinning and knitting 'have a go' sessions. New! A large loom, hand-made in Unst in the 1950s; Viking Unst archaeology

Unst Boat Haven:

Daily 11-5 until 30th Sept.

Fetlar Interpretive Centre:

M-F 11-3, Sa-Su 1-4 until 30th Sept.
New! Fetlar Penguins: whaler's carvings

Old Haa Museum, Burravoe:

T, W, Th, Sa: 10-4; Su: 2-5 until 30th Sept.
New! Women's Work: Croft & Home; Wild Arctic in pictures; Mid Yell Jr High Reunion photos

Tangwick Haa Museum:

Daily 11-5 until 30th Sept.
New! 'Wool: from sheep's back to your back'; Old postcards (some pre-1914); gifted collection of framed photographs of birds and flowers on display together for the first time.

The Cabin, Vidlin:

Days and times tbc, but if the flag's flying, Andy's in.
New! Entire premises!! Come along and see the military displays in the new Cabin!

Farmer's House, Whalsay:

W, F, Sa 2-5 until 29th Sept.
New! The Whalsay Wedding; At the Fishing

Bressay Heritage Centre:

T, W, F, Sa: 10-4; Sun 11-5:30 until 30th Sept.
New! Bressay's schools from township to today, Launches and Ferries; Varied Sands of Bressay Beaches; Archaeological Coins



Andy Robertson inside the new Cabin in Vidlin

The Böd of Gremista:

W-Su 10-1, 2-5 until 16th Sept.

Scalloway Museum:

M-Sa, 10-12, 2-4:30

Easthouse, Burra:

Open Sunday afternoons throughout the summer

Da Warp & Da Weft, Hoswick:

Daily M-Sa 10-5, Su 11-5, until last week Sept.
New! Photographs and documents about the Whale Legal case of 1888-1890

Quendale Water Mill:

Daily, 10-5, until 14th Oct. Crofting & milling tools & equipment; display of coins & banknotes; White Star Line posters

Croftthouse Museum, Boddam:

Daily 10-1, 2-5 until 30th Sept.

George Waterston Memorial Museum, Fair Isle: M: 2-4, W:10:30-12, F: 2-3:30 until 30th Sept. History of Fair Isle Bird Observatory; woodworking in Fair Isle

Can you help?

Shetland film company Digital Imagineering is researching Shetland's whaling heritage and would like to talk to anyone who can offer some insight into Shetland's whaling past, in local waters with caain whales and the

former whaling stations and with the whaling in South Georgia. They would also be interested in older whaling stories handed down in families and would particularly like to hear from anyone with family connections to the

Greenland & Davis Straits whaling, or the Hull whaler Diana.
If you would like to help the research please contact Robert Lowes at Walls 809742 or by email at digital-imagineering@hotmail.co.uk

Museum and Archive Exhibitions

When the Shetland Museum and Archives exhibition galleries open, visitors will be able to immerse themselves in Shetland's heritage like never before. The exhibition space is spread over two floors and contains a total of 72 display cases filled with nearly 3,000 documents and artefacts. The overall aim of the exhibition is to tell Shetland's story through artefacts, words, and pictures. Where this could not be achieved by using items from the collections, replicas were commissioned or objects were borrowed locally, nationally, and internationally.

The exhibition space is divided into twelve themed zones. The ground floor explores Shetland from its geological beginnings to 1800. Zones on the ground floor are Early Beginnings, Early People, Home & Land, Customs & Folklore, Harvest from the Sea, and Boats. The first floor covers modern Shetland through the zones of Changing Culture, Power and State, On The Move, Textiles, Trade & Industry, and Maritime & Fisheries.

In addition to the 65 permanent display cases, there are seven temporary cases scattered throughout the two floors and one outside the Archives' searchroom entrance. These 'focus' cases will allow for changing exhibits of new and unusual objects and documents.

Wonderful women's weekend

Drama and poetry added an artistic twist to 'A Woman's Island? Shetland Women – Past, Present and Future, a conference held in the new Museum and Archives in April to investigate the role of women in Shetland's history.

The two day event saw

120 delegates hear 22 speakers, from as far afield as Canada and Finland, discuss many aspects of women in Shetland from the discovery of female archaeological remains to current problems of accessing information in remote communities.



Jane and Julie Moncrieff closing the conference with their portrayal of Jeannie Jarmson and Ethel Brown, two 20th century Shetland designers. An exhibition of contemporary textiles inspired by Jeannie and Ethel is on display at the Museum and Archives throughout the summer.

Staff Profile:

Mike Skinner, Chef Manager, Hay's Dock Café Restaurant

Q. What does your job involve?

A. At the moment I am busy developing menus, recruiting staff, equipping the kitchen and restaurant areas, sourcing producers and suppliers, getting to grips with the world wide inter web not to mention a million other things.

Q. How would you describe the style of the café restaurant?

A. Hay's Dock Café Restaurant will be a relaxed and unpretentious place serving food of the highest quality in a friendly environment where customers will be comfortable and unrushed.

Q. What kind of things will be on the menu?

A. The food on both the Café and Restaurant menus will be inspired by our own culture and cuisine. By 'our' I mean the culture / cuisine of Shetland, Scotland and Europe, all of which are irrevocably intertwined at all levels. The produce we use will be representative of the very best produce that Shetland has to offer and we will be working very closely with local producers both small and large and will be actively promoting wild, free range and organic produce.

Q. How has being involved with the Museum and Archives influenced your work?

A. Being connected to the Museum and Archives has been absolutely fantastic, every day seems to bring new information or theories on fascinating subjects such as Bannocks - girdle, griddle or oven. Scandinavian charcuterie skills, why didn't they make it to Shetland, or my favourite, Sassermaet, do we know the real story? Incorporating knowledge of this sort into the fabric of Hay's Dock is going to be one of the most enjoyable and illuminating aspects of my job

Hay's Dock Café Restaurant is open

Mon-Sat: 10am-5pm and 6pm-9pm

Sun: 12pm-5pm

To book call 01595 741569



The mysterious Black's Castle

There is a curious little castle on a holm in the loch of Strom in Whiteness. The holm is attached by an impressive causeway to the 'mainland'. About 20 feet square, with walls four feet thick – and ten feet high at the north-west corner – the building is a mystery.

Twelve years ago I wrote an article where I suggested that it was 'a typical, albeit tiny, castle of the high or late Middle Ages'. I thought that it was like similar structures in Orkney. Now I am not so sure.

In 2000 Ian Clark and Robbie Arthur told Ian Tait and me some fascinating local traditions about the castle. Years before they had heard from local informants that it was called 'Black's Castle'. Black, according to the tradition, was a man in fear of his life. He either built the castle, or adapted an already existing building, to hide from someone who was out to get him.

Every day (the story went) Black climbed to the top of the hill above Shurton to look into Whiteness Voe, to see if his enemy was approaching. The hill is now called 'Black's Knowe'.

Ian and Robbie didn't know who Black was – there was no tradition of his first name. But I was astonished by what they told me. Around 1608 Jean Bruce, the widow of Hew Sinclair of Brough, remarried. Her second

husband was Thomas Black, who seems to have been an incomer to Shetland: he is styled 'servitor to the king' on one occasion. Jean's main property was at Brough in Nesting, but she had a manor house at Strom. In fact, it looks as if the couple may have lived at Strom: Thomas Black calls himself 'of Strom' from 1609 onwards.

Furthermore, Thomas Black of Strom had an enemy. In July 1608 Earl Patrick Stewart, with a party of 36 servants, besieged him in a house in Whalsay where he and his wife were staying. Thomas fled for his life. The following year he reported that Earl Patrick had encouraged eight Shetlanders to try to kill him, and also to 'molest him in the possession of his lands of Strom'.

There is no doubt in my mind, now, that Thomas Black of Strom had something to do with 'Black's Castle'. But did he build it? Perhaps it is so-called simply because he owned the property – and maybe the building is, as I thought, medieval in date. I wonder if Thomas might have barricaded himself in there, from time to time, when Earl Patrick's servants were on the prowl.

Brian Smith
Archivist

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



The causeway and castle at the Loch of Strom

Get in touch

We are keen to include contributions from anyone who has something interesting to share about Shetland's heritage. Deadline for the July issue is 8 June. If you would like to stock our newsletter or distribute copies to your group, let us know.

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