

Drap in fir a peerie sheeks

Everybody enjoys a good yarn and a new event at the Museum and Archives will provide a chance to do just that. We will be holding free monthly Sheeksin sessions to let folk find out more about our collections.

"We're constantly thinking about how to let everyone know more about the objects and archival papers we look after, the conservation and restoration work we do and the new objects that are donated," explained Lifelong Learning Officer Kirsty Clark. "There's no better way of doing that, than having a cup of tea and a sheeks about it."

These informal events will be held in the learning room and will consist of a member of staff or a community museum volunteer bringing along objects they've been working with, explaining what's known about them and answering questions. Kirsty describes it as "more like a conversation, than a formal talk. Sheeksin is the dialect word for chatting, and describes the sessions perfectly."

Erik Erasmuson and Sonny Morrison started the series in March, talking about the restoration work carried out on a gig which is currently on display in the museum's foyer. In April, museum curator Dr Ian Tait brought along recent museum donations and talked about their history.

In May visitor service assistant, Steven Christie will be talking about the work he has been doing identifying people in the photographic collection. It will be a maritime theme in June when museum attendant Trevor Jamieson will talk about the boat collection.

So if you fancy an interesting, relaxed afternoon with a cuppa, head along to the museum on the second Tuesday of every month at 2.30pm.

The dates and topics for the next few months are : Tuesday 8th May **Putting a name to a face – Identifying the museums photo collection**, with Steven Christie and Tuesday 12th June **Discover the museum's boat collection** with Trevor Jamieson.



Sonny Morrison (left) and Eric Erasmuson (right) discuss the restoration of a gig, with Gerry Anderson, at the first Sheeksin session. Image courtesy of Billy Fox.

Opening Hours

Archives

Monday – Friday 10am – 4.30pm

Saturday 10am-1pm

Museum

Monday-Saturday 10am-5pm

Sunday 12pm – 5pm

Hay's Dock Café Restaurant

Daytime:

Monday – Saturday 10.10am- 4.30pm

Sunday 12pm- 4.30pm

Evenings:

May: Friday and Saturday 6.30pm-9pm

June: Tuesday – Saturday 6.30pm – 9pm

To book call 01595 741569

What's on Guide

May

1st May-31st August: Highlights tour; Every Tuesday and Saturday, 11am, meet in the museum foyer.

3rd: Lecture: Stoo-names in Shetland and Orkney: 17 place name puzzles, by Brian Smith, Auditorium, Free, but ticketed, Doors open at 7pm for 7.30pm start.

5th-17th Jun: Exhibition: 'Redd Up', 25 Years of the Voar Redd Up, Da Gadderie.

7th-31st: Exhibition: 'Focus Environment', Chevron Scottish Schools photography competition, Foyer corridor.

8th: Sheeksin: Putting a name to a face – Identifying the museum's photographic collection with Steven Christie, 2.30pm in the Learning Room.

24th-25th: Happy Holidays, Mootie Moose workshops, 10.30-11.30am

& 2.00-3.00pm, ages 3-5, £7.50 for three Mar-May sessions, booking essential.

24th: Thing Lecture: 'The Orkney Earls', by Dr Peter Anderson, Auditorium, tickets available from reception.

26th: Talk: Gunflints from Shipwrecks off Shetland – the gunflints and their time, by Archeologist Torben Ballin, 11am, Learning Room, free, no booking required.

June

Daily till 17th: Exhibition: 'Redd Up', 25 Years of the Voar Redd Up, Da Gadderie.

4th-30th: Exhibition: 'Painting of Shetland', by James Andrew Morrison, Foyer corridor.

1st- 5th: Film clips "The Queen and Shetland 1960"; Auditorium, 10.30am & 2.30pm, Total running time 5-7minutes.

1st: Diamond Jubilee Celebrations, Mootie Moose workshops, 10.30-11.30am & 2.00-3.00pm, ages 3-5, £2.50, booking essential

5th: Diamond Jubilee Celebrations, crowns and coasters, 10.30-11.30am, ages P1-3, learning room, £3.50, booking essential

5th: Diamond Jubilee Celebrations, Souvenir ceramic plates & magnets, 2.00-3.30pm, ages P4-7, learning room, £3.50, booking essential

12th: Sheeksin: Discover the museum's boat collection with Trevor Jamieson, 2.30, museum foyer

23rd-5th Aug: Exhibition: 'Thirty days of Light', paintings by Chris Rigby, Da Gadderie.

All events are free, unless otherwise stated, and are held at Shetland Museum and Archives. To book, or for more information please contact us on 01595 695057.

School memorial needs your help



The Anderson Institute World War One memorial which is on display in the English Department.

The Anderson High School is hoping to compile a memorial to pupils who died during World War Two. We are looking for names of former pupils who fell during the War.

At the moment, the old part of the school – where the English Department is now – houses the memorial to World War One. Unfortunately, the memorial lay in the school basement for many years. However, The Shetland Family History Society played a key part in restoring this memorial. The original art work was carried out by two former pupils, Irene Ganson and Magnus Peterson under the guidance of Miss Campbell and Miss Mathewson. It was unveiled at the school prize-giving and reported in the Shetland Times of 5th July, 1919.

Now, with the 150th anniversary of the school later in the year we are starting work upon completing a memorial for former pupils who lost their lives in World War Two. This will be a major project, and the aim is to have it finished within a two year timescale. It is hoped that the design will be similar to that of the World War One memorial, but with also with a subtle different slant on it. The school would therefore be very interested to obtain names and details of any former pupils who fell in World War Two. Also, any ideas towards this project would also be warmly welcomed.

For the past two years on Remembrance Day, the school has had a small ceremony at the World War One memorial. It was very touching to hear current pupils read out the names of all former pupils who died in World War One. To be able to also remember those who perished in World War Two is an important aim. In turn, the school would really appreciate any help which the readers of *Unkans* can provide in relation to this project.

If you have any details that you can pass on, or any ideas, please contact me at jonsandison@shetland.gov.uk or by telephoning the school on 01595 692306

Jon Sandison AHS Social Subjects

SHA AGM reviews work and looks to the future

The Shetland Heritage Association hosted its AGM on 17 March, with many informative speakers and a lovely lunch provided by Hay's Dock Café. Jonathan Wills reported initial findings from the SHA's review of community heritage. Some interesting facts emerged: over 6% of the Shetland population is a member of a heritage group; at least 19,000 hours of volunteer work is done annually for local heritage, amounting to at least £114,000 annually if calculated by minimum wage (£6.08/hr). This compares to £60,000 awarded annually as running cost grant from

the Charitable Trust. Andy Steven from Promote Shetland showed short films about Shetland's heritage and culture developed by his team. After lunch, small groups were formed to address specific questions related to the future of heritage in Shetland, and specifically economic constraints. Jimmy Moncrieff rounded off the day with a review of ways Shetland Amenity Trust is supporting local heritage. Reports from each of the speakers and the group discussion can be obtained from SHA Secretary Barbara Anderson, hevdi@tiscali.co.uk.

Summer exhibitions

The Museum and Archives will host a variety of new exhibitions this Summer. Da Gadderie will feature two very different exhibitions. In May and early June there will be a celebration of 25 years of Da Voar Redd Up. In July Artist Chris Rigby will show his *30 Days of Light* exhibition which is a selection of new paintings, developed after his month long residency at the Booth Studio in Scalloway.

In the display area near the foyer the Chevron Focus Environment Scottish Schools Photography Award exhibition will be on show throughout May. While in June there will be a collection of paintings by Scottish artist James Andrew Morrison.

We hope you get a chance to pop in and see some of these great exhibitions.



Sea Cave at Muckle Roe by Chris Rigby.

Papa Stour blog

Jane Puckey has created a blog about Papa Stour, including fascinating heritage information about the island. See <http://papastour21century.wordpress.com>.

Unkans – but not as you know it

Unkans has been produced by staff at the Shetland Museum and Archives for the last five years. The initial idea was to develop a newsletter which allowed heritage groups in Shetland to communicate with each other and share news. We have always been keen to have contributions from individuals and organisations with an interest in Shetland's heritage in general, not just from those involved with SMA. With that in mind we will be changing the format of Unkans slightly, beginning with the next issue.

There will be less Museum and Archives based content and more from others involved in the heritage sector in Shetland. We are looking for articles and new snippets so if you have something you'd like to share please get in touch with us at info@shetlandmuseumandarchives.org.uk Please remember to put Unkans in the subject box

Joanne Wishart and Emma Miller,
Unkans editors

Thank you, and goodbye

For the past five years I have been co-editor of Unkans, along with Assistant Archivist Joanne Wishart. It has been a great privilege to work with colleagues across Shetland on stories about our heritage, and I have enjoyed gathering information and images for each issue. But with increased curatorial and community heritage duties, and the decision to expand Unkans to a wider publication, it seemed a good time to pass on the baton. I look forward to reading future issues of Unkans for pleasure, rather than through the lens of editor!

Carol Christiansen
Curator and Community
Museums Officer

Gyaan sooth tae da guttin'

Most people are aware of the great summer herring fishing that reached its peak round the coast of Britain in the years before the Great War of 1914-18. No place was more important than Shetland.

In 1909, for example, it gave employment to 14,000 people (incomers and locals). In the same year 1670 Shetland women were involved in gutting, from one end of Shetland to the other.

In this short article, I want to focus on Shetland women and teenage girls who travelled elsewhere in Britain – mainly to Lowestoft and Yarmouth in East Anglia, though those in the photo went to Scarborough in North Yorkshire – to work as gutters and packers in England.

Statistical information is scarce. The Annual Fishery Board reports and files contain very little information on women from Shetland "gyaan sooth" to the gutting. A Fishery Office letter from Lerwick in August 1914 states that, of the 1248 local gutters employed in Shetland in the summer of 1913, 172 "went to the English coast", after the herring season ended here in September. A great deal depended on whether women had domestic or crofting responsibilities here in Shetland. Those from crofts usually had to wait until the hairst had been gathered, others might be able to go south a bit earlier.

In March 1912, Mr Duthie, the local Fishery Officer in Lerwick, stated that "About 72 women on average have gone from Shetland to Yarmouth and Lowestoft in the last three years." Their season lasted about eight weeks, and their gross earnings ran from £9 to £10, out of which, however they had to pay their own lodgings – 3/6d a week each as a rule. Those who went south in 1913 did much better – their gross average earnings from their two or so months in England amounted to £21 13s apiece. The terms of engagement were 5s to 10s a week of fixed wages (in addition to the customary "signing-on fee" or "arles", of a few pounds), and the usual payments for piece-work – 8d per barrel gutted and packed, for a crew of three women, and 3d per hour for their work. Travelling expenses to and fro Lerwick – by boat and train – were paid by the English curers.

There appear to be very few accounts of what life was like for the Shetland girls and women who opted to go to the gutting in Yorkshire or East Anglia. Willie Halcrow tells me that his grandmother – the Winnie Nicolson in the photo – shared a room at Scarborough with Annie Manson. They took their belongings from Shetland in a chest or kist, and many of the women had to sleep on these in the holds or in steerage on the passage to Aberdeen.



Image courtesy of Willie Halcrow, Lower Stove, Sandwick, Scarborough, North Yorkshire (1910). From left to right the four young women are: Annie Manson, Eldigarth, Cunningsburgh; Jessie Nicolson, Sellafirth, Yell; Mary Malcolmson, Vestinore, Cunningsburgh; Annie Thomson, Quarff.

In an interview in 1983, Aggie Tulloch (né Sinclair) from Lerwick but originally from Levenwick, gave a vivid description of her two years as a gutter at Lowestoft – not much appears to have changed since the pre-1914 era. Asked why she had decided to go sooth to the gutting, she replies: "Joost wanted to see whit wis outside Shetland, dat's all. Joost dat wis all. I wisna waantin more herrin, more money, or anything. I joost wanted to see whit wis outside".

Aggie got "fine digs" in Lowestoft, she paid six shillings for a room shared with some others. They gave money to the landlady to buy and cook their food – provided she "got da dividend book to deal with the Co-op, that way it'll be a good bit for me, and I'll see you have everything you need".

Miss Tulloch, like all the other Shetland gutters, "wrot hom" every week, and just before she left for Shetland again before Christmas, "got every wan a present". She clearly enjoyed the experience in Lowestoft. At the end of her second year there, she got married: "If I'd no married I'd gone again because I thought it wis very good all da way".

Gordon Johnston
Archives researcher

Thanks to Angus Johnson and Blair Bruce at Shetland Archives, and to Linda Riddell, Edinburgh.

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

heritage
Shetland
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DEADLINE FOR CONTRIBUTIONS FOR NEXT ISSUE IS NEXT ISSUE IS FRIDAY, 15 JUNE, 2012.