

## Is Facebook the future for Shetland heritage?

Everyone it seems is jumping on the Facebook bandwagon with several new Shetland heritage related pages appearing in the last few months.

The most popular page which seems to have everyone talking is Shetland Past&Present. It has been going down a storm with Shetland's facebook community since it was launched. The page was started by Linda Drewery at the end of March and already has thousands of members who share photographs and memories about life in Shetland.

Linda who lives in Yell said she wanted to find a way to bring together her interest in Shetland history, and her quest to find relatives. 'I had a few Shetland people on my FB friend list and invited them to join and asked if they would invite their friends and family too,' she explained. 'I now have members from all parts of the world and get a lot of great feedback from everyone.'

What started as a page for Linda's own



use has snowballed and now more than 3,000 people reminisce and discuss days gone by. People who have lost touch with friends and family are using the page as a way to rekindle old friendships. Linda said she didn't expect the page to grow so quickly. 'Never did I think it would be so popular everyone seems to be really enjoying it, they share photos and stories and have a lot of fun as well,' she said. 'I would love to see our page keep growing.'

The discussions vary from favourite Shetland sayings to friends reminiscing about the past. Members have

also added hundreds of photographs to the site and they range from 1990s dance groups to boats, crofts, and scenery as well as dozens of school groups, families and unknown people.

A small admin team helps Linda to monitor the content and arrange the photographs. Linda hopes the page will go from strength to strength. Just search for Shetland past&present on facebook.

### Other new sites

There have been several other new Shetland related sites launched recently. The Tangwick Haa went live at [www.tangwickhaa.org.uk](http://www.tangwickhaa.org.uk)

in May and the site includes lots of information on the history of the building, exhibitions and facilities.

Shetland Museum and Archives launched their new facebook page at the end of May. The page will provide news about collections, exhibitions and events. Also the Shetland Heritage Association has joined facebook too. Their page has lots of interesting links and discussions between members.

We hope to have a regular feature on Shetland websites so if you know a useful site you'd like to share with others please just let us know.

### Local Events Listings

For information on local events please visit [www.shetland.org](http://www.shetland.org) to view listings.

To add your own event to this site please call 01595 989898

or complete the online form at [www.visit.shetland.org/submit-an-event](http://www.visit.shetland.org/submit-an-event)

# Project hopes to ease Times frustrations

Trawling through reels of The Shetland Times microfilm can be an interesting pastime, but trying to find information without knowing a specific date can often be quite frustrating. The Shetland Times has been in print for 140 years which results in over 7000 issues, ranging from an easily digestible four pages to a sizeable sixty.

As part of my graduate placement project with the Shetland Library I have been conducting a feasibility study into indexing The Shetland Times. I have worked closely with staff at the Archives and have been using their CALM

catalogue to do some trial indexing. This process involves considering what information should and should not be included at this stage of the index and creating a standardised procedure which can be used to keep future indexing in the same format. The index would eventually be available online via the Shetland Archives Catalogue.

In order to do this I have been sampling newspapers every five years from 1872-2002 and through this process I've come across several interesting items. One of these is from the local correspondent for Sandwick, who reports

Gideon Smith bringing the first ever motor vehicle to Hoswick in 1907. Another entertaining anecdote is from April 1968, when Curly Mackay and his band got snowed in overnight at Whiteness and Weisdale Hall, and seemed to thoroughly enjoy themselves! A more recent article from 2002 describes the opening of the new library and also gives a history of public libraries in Shetland. These are just some of the interesting titbits which will be described in the index along with reports on wartime concerns, Up-Helly-Aa and births, marriages and deaths.

My placement finishes

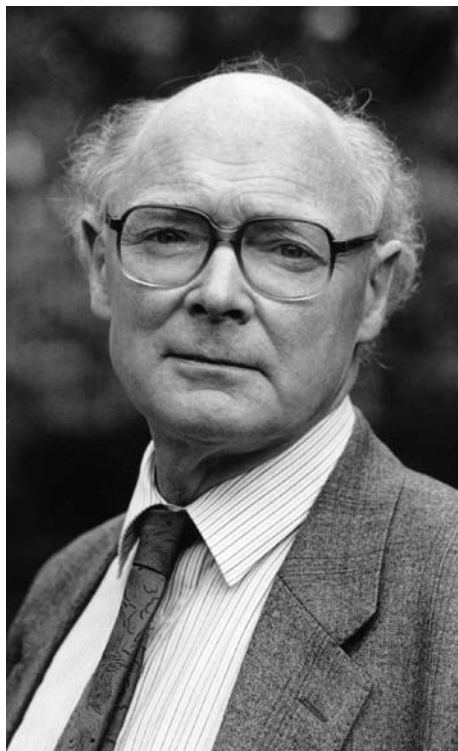
in September so obviously I'll be unable to index all Shetland Times issues, but I do hope to have a clear, easily understandable guideline well before that time so that this project can continue. As many of you will appreciate, an index of the Shetland Times would be a very valuable resource and we are looking for volunteers to continue the process, using the guideline produced. If you would like more information or you are interested in helping to add to the index, please contact me at [elizabeth.brown@shetland.gov.uk](mailto:elizabeth.brown@shetland.gov.uk) or on 01595 743862.

**Liz Brown**  
Graduate Placement

# Professor Sandy Fenton, 1929-2012

It's hard to summarise the achievement of a person of the stature of Professor Alexander Fenton in the space available here. The accomplishments of this Aberdeenshire native are formidable: he was the greatest ethnologist in Britain (perhaps western Europe), and we Shetlanders should be forever thankful for the meticulous work he did here 40 years ago.

Sandy Fenton was an archaeologist by training, and a linguist by volition. He developed his interest in collecting data on everyday pre-industrial life, ethnology, and used his prowess in Scandinavian and Celtic languages to work in the British Isles and all over Europe. Sandy was interested in eastern countries, especially Hungary – a country noted for its traditional agriculture. His research topics ranged broadly, from agricultural tools to foodstuffs, but his avenues weren't eclectic, for it all formed an intricate picture of everyday techniques of life. Characteristically, he published in a dozen countries, and wrote



**Prof Sandy Fenton who died in May.**  
**Photograph: Alexander Fenton**

around five works annually, up to his eightieth year.

In his thirties, when he was Assistant Keeper at the Antiquities Museum at Queen's Street in

Edinburgh, he conducted research trips to Shetland. He's best known here for his 1978 book, *The Northern Isles*, but his Shetland dealings were greater than that; I think his most important piece is his 1964 article on peat harvesting. The last time I met him we discussed the finer points of kale cultivation at length.

Sandy Fenton had honours heaped on him from institutions in Britain, Scandinavia and Germany, but he was an approachable, kindly, man. For all that, he had a steely drive that got things done, with an innate charm. No bad thing, for no Shetlander bothered to record the information in the 1960s that Sandy did. He was Director of the School of Scottish Studies, and the issues he championed continue in the Ethnological Research Centre at Edinburgh University, where he held his professorship. Such polymathic intellect comes once in a generation, and Northern Islanders owe him a large debt of gratitude.

**Dr Ian Tait**  
Curator

## Real Shetland Yarns



Authors gather outside Shetland Museum & Archives with copies of the book, hot off the press. Photograph: Malcolm Younger.

Shetland Heritage Publications is pleased to announce the recent publication of *'Real Shetland Yarns'*, a collection of personal stories and memories from Shetlanders about their connection to wool and textiles.

The book is the result of a competition held during Wool Week

2011 which asked anyone with a Shetland connection to submit their woolly memories in story form along with an image or item to illustrate this. The response was incredible with over 100 entries received and a very hard job for the judges to choose the final 40 for inclusion in the book.

The overall winner, Drew Ratter, received a bespoke Real Shetland Superb bed from competition sponsors, Vi-Spring. At a special event at Shetland Museum and Archives in May, the authors were presented with their own copy of the book. The majority of the stories included in the book are by authors who are not professional writers. The stories come from personal experiences and make for a delightful collection of tales to dip in and out of, alongside the range of contemporary and historic images. From stories of extraordinary sheep, to favourite jumpers reincarnated, and gathering henty laags, there is something in this book which will spark a memory for everyone.

The book is available to buy now from Shetland Museum and Archives gift shop, Jamieson & Smith's shop on the Old North Road, The Unst Heritage Centre and the Shetland Times Bookshop. It is also available online at <http://shop.shetlandmuseumandarchives.org.uk>

## Explore Geopark Shetland with our new app for Android

Geopark Shetland has completed many interpretive panels, displays and geo-art exhibits since becoming a member of the Global Geoparks Network, supported by UNESCO, in 2009 ([www.geoparkshetland.org.uk](http://www.geoparkshetland.org.uk)).

Over the past year we have exploited advances in digital technology to experiment with new forums for interpretation and a variety of media. With funding from Scottish Natural Heritage and Leader we have developed a map based application for Android and Iphone based around sites and regions of geological interest. The 'app', created by software

developer Zolk<sup>c</sup>, introduces users to Geopark Shetland via Google maps populated with sites and trails.

In July a trial version of the app for Android will be publicly available from Google Play. The free download contains forty sites of geological interest, and twenty-five sites of mixed interest that fall within three walking trails. Users can search for sites by region, trail or theme and access directions, information and images



to help them discover and enjoy Shetland's fascinating earth heritage.

We are recruiting volunteers to test the app and submit feedback so we can refine and improve it before launching a final version on Android and Iphone in summer 2013. If you would be interested please contact [robina@shetlandamenity.org](mailto:robina@shetlandamenity.org). An Android device is available for short-term loan.

The app is part of a European project led by Geopark Shetland. 'HINT' - Heritage Interpretation using New

Technologies - is a two year cooperation project in partnership with North Pennines AONB (England), Chablais Geopark (France) and aspiring Geopark de Hondsrug (the Netherlands). Each partner is undertaking a pilot project to trial a particular technology. An exchange of knowledge and ideas through meetings and workshops is helping the partners to develop innovative approaches to interpretation. A key project aim is to share the lessons learned with Geoparks across Europe. For more information visit [www.hintproject.eu](http://www.hintproject.eu).

**Robina Barton**  
Geoparks Officer

# Murder in Shetland in 1602

In the Court book of Shetland for 1602-1604 we read of the proceedings at the 'lawthing', the head court of the islands, held at Scalloway castle on 22 August 1602. Adam Sinclair of Broo in Dunrossness was accused of being involved in the 'slachter' of an Orkneyman, Mathow Sinclair of Ness, two months previously.

The 'assize' who dealt with the case heard witnesses, including some of Adam's own servants. They found that the night before Matthew's murder, Adam had given up 'freindschipe' with him, and, 'eftir the heit bluid in the feildis', had given the murderer, Francis Sinclair, and others, a horse and money to escape from Shetland.

The assize took 'lang and mature deliberatioun'. They inspected 'the chepturis of the law buik', and also the practices of Shetland in such cases. They found the matter proven, and confiscated Adam's goods and gear, including his 'haill heretable landis and possessiounis', for Earl Patrick Stewart. They banished him from Shetland, and said that if he returned he would be taken to the 'heiding-hill' at Scalloway, 'and thair his heid to be taine and strukin fra his bodie, in exempill of utheris'.

Our first question must be: what law book did the assize inspect? In the 1270s King Magnus Lawmender's code became the law book for all parts of Norway. But by 1602, in Shetland, the language of that code was unfamiliar to everyone but specialists. That was the case even in Norway. Could it really be the case that, more than 300 years after it was issued, and almost 150 years after the mortgage of Shetland to Scotland, the Norwegian Code of the Realm of 1274 was still being used in Scalloway Castle?

To answer this question we have to look carefully at the judgment of 1602. In book IV, chapter 2 (IV-2,) of the code of 1274, it was prescribed that movable goods should be confiscated as punishment for manslaughter. And according to IV-3, heritable land was also confiscated if the slaughter was shameful (niðings uigh). There were different types of this category of manslaughter. One concerned

the situation where a man broke a truce that he had sworn with another man (his trygðar). In this case, Mathew had probably committed a crime against Adam at one time, about which they made a truce. Adam Sinclair seems to have broken that truce the evening before the murder by forsaking friendship with Mathew. So we can conclude that the punishment meted out for this murder fitted well with what was prescribed in the Norwegian Code of the Realm of 1274.

But the assize didn't just inspect the 'law buik'. They also considered the 'parteikis of the contrie in sic caices'. To study the Shetland practice was necessary, because Adam Sinclair hadn't slaughtered Mathew Sinclair himself - he had forsaken friendship with him, and assisted his murderer.

An obvious flaw in the code of 1274 is the absence of a rule dealing with contributions to a crime. In the Frostating law book, used in one of the Norwegian provinces before 1274, it is stated that even psychological contributions to manslaughter, when the parties were bound by a sworn truce, were to be treated in the same way as committing the crime. Unlike many other rules in the Frostating book, this one was not adopted in the code of 1274.

However, IV-3 of the 1274 code, applied in this case, stated that it was a shameful act to advise someone to betray his king. Hence, the concept of contribution to a crime was not unknown, and the idea that the contributor was as much a villain as the actual doer of the crime was probably applied in practice.

The 'law buik' of Shetland in 1602 was the Norwegian Code of the Realm of 1274. Shetland's court book for Shetland for 1602-1604 contains clear evidence that Norwegian law was still being applied in Shetland. But just as clear is the evidence that Norwegian law was being supplemented by Shetland custom. The proceedings against Adam Sinclair of Broo in 1602 take us to the core of Shetland law in this period.

**Jørn Øyrehagen Sunde**

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

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heritage  
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**DEADLINE FOR CONTRIBUTIONS FOR NEXT ISSUE IS NEXT ISSUE IS FRIDAY, 17 AUGUST, 2012.**