

Musicians re-unite at Whalers Event

A recent meeting of the Shetland ex-Whalers Association at Voe Hall brought together a sizable group of ex-whalers and their wives and family members.

Among those present were Alan Tulloch (Whalsay), Davy Clark (Yell), Ronnie Nicolson (North-a-voe) and Ernie Peterson (Sullom) – a group of musicians who last played together over 50 years ago and were pleased to pick up their instruments and have a tune together.

The Association has been established for a few years now, organising social events to keep ex-whalers and their families in touch with each other. In addition, work is done to help record and preserve the history of the industry. Group members are currently working on a book of photographs and information about the whaling industry. The book is being part funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund.



Musicians (l-r): Alan Tulloch, Davy Clark, Ronnie Nicolson and Ernie Peterson.

*Shetland
ForWirds*
Promoting Shetland Dialect



Da Year a Dialect is speedin by, bit although wir gotten tae October der still a loka ta look forward tae, startin wi an Oo'ey Fjaana fir Wool Week.

Wir hoopin ta get in da entries fir da Rhoda Bulter Award be da 15th o October an wir winderin whit kinda picters/photos/prints folk'll be made in response ta da art competition we decided on fir da first year o da prize. Hit's donated be da Bulter family an Roslyn Thompson crafted da trophy, usin serpentine an silver ta create a unique piece o wark. Whase name'll be engraved on it in 2014 ?

Anidder element o dis year o dialect followed on fae a conversation

about craft wi Hazel Hughson an Angela Smith fae Shetland Arts back in voar. We caa'd dis project WirdCraft an invited crafty folk ta come up wi products

at incorporate da dialect. Ten o dem pat der names in an der been pittin der creative brains ta wark fir an exhibition o der wark in Bonhoga fae da 1st o November. On da 13th November at 6.30 der a short event dere as pairt o Wordplay. Book your ticket ta enjoy hearin some o da craft makkers spaekin about der wark, an twartree poems fae da Shetland ForWirds folk as weel as music wi Alan McKay an Robert Bennett.

Ee thing at's been important ta Shetland ForWirds fae we first started back in 2004 wis ta makk sure at Shetland hed a voice at national level when language/midder tongues wis up for discussion. We didna want

Shetland ta be left oot. Doon da years dat's included participation in an education consultation committee, spaekin at FRLSU conferences Sooth, an a campaign ta save the National Dictionaries an da Scots Language Centre when dey wir threatened be a cripplin loss o fundin at widda compromised der ability ta function. Wir MSP backit wis up on dat wan.

So hit wis aafil fine da idder day ta be handed a boannie peerie booklet produced by Creative Scotland caa'd *An Introduction to Scotland's Languages* an see Shetland ForWirds mentioned. Hit's satisfyin ta fin wirsels on da sam page as da Scottish Language Dictionaries, the Scots Language Centre an da Elphinstone Institute in Aberdeen under da headin *Resources for Scots*. We shuirly ir been shoutin lood enoff.

Mind, if wir no ta loss wir midder tongue, we mann spaek it.

Mary Blance

Local Events Listings

For information on local events please visit 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

Visit
www.shetlandamenity.org/unkans
to sign up for your electronic copy

Essential repairs commence on *Nil Desperandum*

Following a successful request for volunteers by the Shetland Amenity Trust, essential repair work has begun at Hay's Dock to the ex-seine netter boat *Nil Desperandum*.

Built in 1947, the boat is believed to be one of the best examples of its kind left. It was built for the Ministry of Defence, but purchased by the Wiseman family in 1951 after which it spend fifty years fishing the waters around Shetland.

The vessel has been in a deteriorating state of repair in recent years, and was gifted to Shetland Amenity Trust by James Wiseman in April 2012 in order that it could be preserved, with a view to becoming a floating display for visitors to the area.

Several volunteers were on hand yesterday morning to assist with the dismantling of the boat's mast, with the removal of the heavy winches scheduled shortly. A cover will be fitted to enable the volunteers to carry out significant repairs to the deck and deck beams while protecting the boat from deteriorating further. This work will continue over the winter months.



The first mast is removed from the boat

Peter Chroston a lead shipwright on several projects and a boat builder with 25 years of experience in the restoration of wooden and building of new boats is coordinating the boats repair. Peter said: "I enjoy the challenge of working on old traditional built boats." Peter replied to an advertisement seeking help to restore the *Nil Desperandum* and agreed to lead co-ordination of the repairs.

Tim Senften is another leading volunteer. A retired teacher originally from Ohio in America, who knew he would be able to help using his practical background and broad range of skills and trades which include joinery, electrician, engineering and welding.

Tim said: 'I like the identity of old boats and feel that it's an important heritage point for people to identify with their past'.

Anyone who is interested in volunteering to assist with repairs and regular maintenance of the *Nil Desperandum* should contact Alan Blain, Deputy Manager at Shetland Amenity Trust on 01595 694688.



Peter Chroston and Tim Senften get to work.



Before restoration commenced ...



... and during essential repairs in September.

Shetland Wool Week 2014 off to a vibrant start

Shetland Wool Week 2014 got off to a vibrant and colourful start at the official Opening Ceremony in Mareel on Sunday 5th October. Over 140 people from all over Shetland, and the rest of the world came together in celebration of Shetland Wool, and to view a flavour of the quality, design and knitting skills of our local producers.

Shetland Amenity Trust Chairman, Brian Gregson, officially opened the event – even donning his own hand knitted toorie to make the announcement. Oliver Henry, well-known local wool man then took the helm to explain the origins of Shetland Wool Week – started five years ago with the launch of the Shetland Fine Lace Project; a collaborative project between Shetland Amenity Trust and Jamieson and Smith (Shetland Wool Brokers) Ltd which sought to revive Fine Lace knitting in Shetland, with the development of a one-ply lace weight yarn. Launched at the same time as the national Campaign for Wool's event, this saw the beginning of a festival which has grown in size and visitor numbers each year.

With the assistance of Promote Shetland, and a committee of representatives from every sector of the Shetland Wool industry, Shetland Wool Week is now an inclusive and well-established, world renowned event. Visitors this year, have travelled from as far afield as New Zealand, Australia, Israel, South Africa and the United States, as well as all throughout the UK and Shetland. Many of these visitors were present at the Opening Ceremony, giving the event a real international atmosphere with many different accents discussing the quality of Shetland Wool!

Shetland Wool Week Patron for 2014, Hazel Tindall, took to the stage to welcome those who had travelled to Shetland and to thank everyone for their interest in the industry. Hazel, officially the world's fastest knitter, designed a special 'Shwook' hat pattern for Shetland Wool Week 2014, which is available to download for free from the website at www.shetlandwoolweek.com, and remarked how pleased she was to see so many of these hats



Hazel Tindall cuts the Shetland Wool Week Fair Isle cake (made by Gwen Sinclair).



Hazel referees the race between Garry Jamieson and Oliver Henry.

at the event in a variety of different colourways. She was especially pleased that the pattern has been downloaded over 3000 times, making

her wonder how many Shwooks are out there!

Following the now traditional cutting of the Fair Isle Shetland Wool Week cake (made by Gwen Sinclair), Oliver Henry of Jamieson and Smith, and Garry Jamieson of Jamieson's of Shetland, put on their Shwook hats and climbed aboard the indoor bikes to take part in the woolly bike ride, supervised by Hazel Tindall. Organised by the Campaign for Wool, the national event was held in London at the same time, where hundreds of participants, wearing knitted hats, set off from Potter's Field on a cycling tour of London Landmarks to mark National Wool Week.

Guests at the event were then invited to join in, with one visitor managing to combine her cycling with a bit of drop spindle spinning!

The rest of the afternoon was given over to meeting the wool producers, knitters and designers who were in attendance with examples of their work on display. Music was provided by Claire White and Robbie Leask, a local duo playing fiddle and guitar, with some wonderful vocals from Claire.

Exhibitors and guests all expressed their enjoyment of the event, and indeed the lively social atmosphere gave organisers the confidence that the fifth, and biggest, Shetland Wool Week will also be the best, with a full week of classes, exhibitions, talks and tours coming up.



The Mareel auditorium was packed with Wool Weekers in their Shwook hats.

Discovering the Mathewsons

My latest work assignment in the Shetland Archives concerns twelve boxes of unsorted papers, principally correspondence between members of a dispersed/ extended Mathewson family between the 1850s and 1890s.

The head of the family was Andrew Dishington Mathewson, probably one of the best -known early 19th century Shetland teachers, tutored by his aunt, Dorothy Fordyce, in Fetlar. He and his wife Barbara Robertson had a family of twelve children. Two died in infancy; one in his teens; two in their 20s; three in 1880, aged 32 to 40; and three survived their parents (Andrew D. jr, 68, Barbara, 75, Laurence 85). The family lived in Aywick at the schoolhouse there. Their lives are evoked in this collection of papers and correspondence, which spans 120 years (1813-1933).

Andrew Dishington Mathewson was employed as teacher, as registrar in East Yell, as a land-surveyor for land owners across Shetland. His income, together with the returns from his tenanted land, maintained his family. It was an economically precarious existence from the 1830s to the 1850s.

Andrew's children, educated and resourceful, were not particularly advantaged in the social hierarchy. They



Margaret Catherine Mathewson (1848-1880), on left, with her sister.

made livings as clerks and in public and domestic service. Their letters, frequently weekly, illuminate the lives of the family and their contemporaries in and away from Shetland.

Laurence left Shetland in the 1850s, a mariner, landed at the gold diggings in Victoria, Australia, married a Shetland wife, in May 1866, in Otago, New Zealand, and maintained a stream of letters for over sixty years. Laurence never returned to Shetland.

The three closest correspondents, Arthur, Margaret and Walter, were also victims of tuberculosis, which discouraged traditional Shetland livelihoods. All three left Shetland for 'improving' climes. Seven of the siblings left Shetland for periods. Laurence, Andrew jr, Arthur and Walter had work associated with seafaring. Andrew jr and Laurence, both at sea, travelled as far as Australia.

Walter joined the Northern Lighthouse Board as light-keeper in Skerries, Sanda, Devaar and the Calf of Man. Arthur travelled to Greenland, to the consternation of his family, and ultimately worked as shipping clerk for the company serving Shetland, beginning on board a steamer, finally at their Granton Harbour offices. His lung condition curtailed his working life.

Andrew jr remained in Yell, but he had travelled as far as Australia. He married Jane Christie one of the domestic helpers in his father's house. Her family of five sisters, together with their widowed mother, left Shetland for Liverpool; her brother, William Christie, a shipmaster, on routes between Liverpool and Australia, eventually settled in Australia.



Andrew D. Mathewson (1799-1887).



Arthur Mathewson (1839-1880).

A sister, Jessie (Janet) Christie, married a mariner from Yell, in Liverpool, and emigrated to Canada. Two others married Liverpool policemen, both Shetlanders. Their letters 'telegraphed' family news to and from Shetland. It is likely that Andrew and Jane mediated between their stressed and often jealous siblings in Liverpool!

Letters went back and fore, no matter how far the 'children' were from home. The papers of Andrew Dishington Mathewson, Arthur and Andrew are characterised by meticulous accounting, in journals, letters and on paper scraps, both business and personal.

The collection has now caught the attention of two American academics, Mary and Ken Carpenter. Mary is fascinated by the journals and letters of Margaret C. Mathewson, with her unique descriptions, as patient and survivor, of pioneering Victorian surgery and medicine on her tuberculous shoulder, which describe her treatment and recuperation. Ken is so taken by the family letters that he is editing a book of them.

The wonder of this collection is its window into the lives of Shetlanders over 140 years ago, as vital today as when they were written.

Blair Bruce
Archives assistant

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.

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DEADLINE FOR CONTRIBUTIONS FOR NEXT ISSUE IS FRIDAY 21st NOVEMBER 2014.