

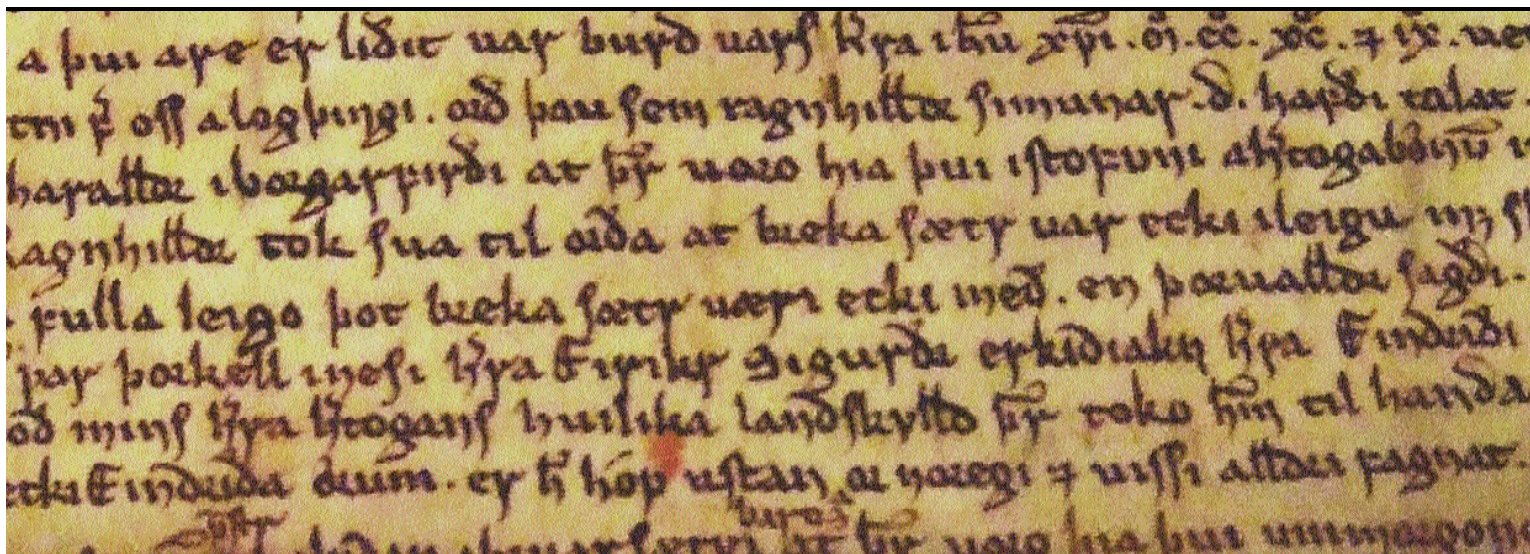
Unkans

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

FREE

July 2007
Issue 3

museum
Shetland
archives



A section of the 1299 document

See our oldest documents on display – but you'd better hurry!

Have you postponed your visit to the Museum and Archives, waiting for the crowds to die down a bit? Don't wait too long because some of Shetland's oldest and most interesting records are now on display – but only for a few months.

At an early stage in the Museum and Archives project, it was decided to feature documents as well as artefacts in displays. Just as some of the objects on show were borrowed from other institutions, some of Shetland's earliest records have made their way home for a quick visit.

Shetland's oldest document is a letter by the lawthingmen of Shetland to Duke Hakon Magnusson, about goings-on in Papa Stour in 1299. It is normally held in the Arnamagnæan Institute, University of Copenhagen. Another Shetland document, about a transfer of land in Unst

from 1360, has also been borrowed from the Institute. Both documents are in beautiful condition and they contain the seals of some of the Shetland officials and landowners who witnessed them. They are here until 30th August.

Another important record on display for a limited time is Earl Patrick's court book from the years 1602-4. This big book, which has been out of Shetland for 400 years, is full of law cases and details of criminal acts and fines. It tells us a great deal about Shetland's history and is open at a page with Earl Patrick's signature.

The court book was brought to Lerwick the day before the new building opened by Linda Ramsay, head of conservation at the National Archives of Scotland. It is on loan until 29th July.

All these items are on display in the Lower Gallery.

What's On Guide

July

Wed. & Sun. afternoons:
Film 'Caller Herrin'

1st -19th: Exhibition, 'Land Marks and Whale Roads' by Jack Chesterman. Da Gadderie.

2nd, 16th & 30th: 'A night by the fireside' storytelling and music. Crofthouse Museum, Boddam.

9th & 23rd : 'A night by the fireside' storytelling and music. Bød of Gremista, Lerwick.

10th: Felting Workshops for children and young people.

14th: Introduction to the Archives.

17th: Introduction to the Archives Searchroom.

21st: 'Fishy Fun!' Art workshop for 8-12 year olds.

26th: Shetland's Knitting Heritage. Talk by Margaret Stuart.

and the Faroe Islands' by Gunnie Moberg. Da Gadderie

4th: 'Going Potty!' Art Workshop for 6-12 year olds.

5th: Shetland's Knitting Heritage. Talk by Margaret Stuart.

6th and 20th: 'A night by the fireside' storytelling and music. Bød of Gremista, Lerwick.

13th & 27th: 'A night by the fireside' storytelling and music. Crofthouse Museum, Boddam.

15th: Introduction to researching your family tree, in partnership with the Shetland Family History Society.

18th: 'Trow-tastic'. Range of events for all ages on the mysterious hill folk.

26th: Shetland Heritage Association Membership Day.

August

Wednesday and Sunday afternoons: Film 'A Crofter's Life in Shetland'

2nd August -2nd September: Exhibition, 'Three Island Groups: Orkney, Shetland

All events are held at the Shetland Museum and Archives, unless otherwise specified. There may be a charge for some events. For more information phone 01595 695057, pick up a copy of our What's On Guide brochure, or just pop in.

Museum opening times:

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

Archives opening times:

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

Hay's Dock Café Restaurant opening times:

Day Time: Monday-Saturday 11.00am-5pm Sunday 12pm-5pm
Evenings: Thursday-Saturday 7pm-9pm. To book call 01595 741 569

Da Gadderie hosts exciting exhibition

Land Marks and Whale Roads
Jack Chesterman
Da Gadderie, Shetland Museum &
Archives
Bonhoga Gallery, Weisdale Mill
23 June – 29 July 2007

The work of Leeds-based artist Jack Chesterman will be showing in Shetland until the end of this month.

Land Marks and Whale Roads is made up of two concurrent exhibitions; one of landscape imagery at Bonhoga Gallery and one of maritime imagery at Da Gadderie, in the museum.

Jack first visited Shetland in the early 1970s. Then five years ago, he spent a month as visiting artist at the Booth in Scalloway, forging a connection with the islands that has seen him return every year since.

This exhibition, 'Land Marks and Whale Roads', contains both landscape and maritime subject matter arising from Shetland experiences. A number of the maritime images were made in response to collections of boats and photographs in the Shetland



Jo and Jack Chesterman in Da Gadderie

Museum and Archives, and from visits to present-day boat builders on Trondra and Fair Isle. Elements of landscape relate to journeys through many of the islands.

Opening times for Shetland Museum and Archives are listed on the front page of this issue of *Unkans*; Bonhoga Gallery is open Tuesday to Saturday 10:30 – 4:30 and on Sunday from noon to 4:30.

Recent acquisitions: the war that never was



Civil Defence Corps flag and uniform

There are many objects in the Museum collection that show Shetland's involvement in conflict over the years. Some are from short, now-forgotten episodes like the China War of 1900, whilst others are from major catastrophes like the Napoleonic War or the two World Wars. Until recently, though, there was almost nothing in the collection that bore testimony to one of the longest-running conflicts of all – the war that wasn't quite a war – the Cold War. This was the period of hostility between the Communist countries of Eastern Europe and the democracies of Western Europe and North America that lasted from the late 1940s to the late 1980s. During this period Britain, like other nations in the West, genuinely feared obliteration in a nuclear war led by the Soviet Union, and vice versa.

Past experience meant civilians expected that if it came to World War Three, they'd have to endure the horrors of warfare right on their own doorstep, even in a backwater like Shetland. It was in this climate of fear that two quasi-military organisations operated, ably manned by volunteers, to deal with potential enemy attack. The Royal Observer Corps dealt with monitoring communications, whilst the Civil Defence Corps protected

civilians and co-ordinated emergency response. The Museum already has an R.O.C. uniform, but until recently there was nothing in the collection from the C.D., which functioned at the height of the Cold War and was disbanded in the 1960s. This gap has been filled with a gift of three artefacts from the local unit of the Civil Defence Corps, whose base was in the Tollbooth: concrete rooms were hidden away in the basement of the building, and because of the secret nature of the facility there was a blank white space where the Tollbooth should be on some 1950s maps of Lerwick! One item is a flag, so presumably the C.D. advertised their presence at some point. With it is a Civil Defence Corps window notice. A third object is an Air Raid Precautions uniform, styled like a nurse's uniform. This is probably from the C.D.'s World War Two base at St Clement's Hall, St Olaf Street.

These items are stark reminders of how Britain envisaged a war that threatened her civilians, but it is debatable if the preparations would have saved many lives in a nuclear war.

Dr Ian Tait
Curator of Collections

Community archaeology and restoration projects: are they for you?



The restored cutch kettles at Hillswick

Are you interested in getting involved in your community, learning new skills and helping preserve your heritage? Monument restoration projects are a great way to do all these things and are increasing in popularity throughout Scotland. Two of Shetland's heritage groups have spearheaded this drive in recent years and show how projects can be approached in different ways.

The local development association HEARD has restored a complex of three cutch kettles on the Hillswick waterfront. Cutch is an Asian bark that was used as a preservative for sails, lines and nets. The kettles' stone frame has been rebuilt, access to the site has

been greatly improved, the threat of erosion has been diminished by a rockwall seafront, and a board explaining the kettles soon will be erected. HEARD is currently restoring a watermill just north of Tangwick Haa museum at Eshaness. The mill is associated with a legend about a *sjopiltie*, or water horse, information that HEARD will include on the site's interpretation board.

The Unst Archaeology Group was one of the first to join Shetland's Past Project, which helps local groups record archaeological sites. After several years of recording little-known sites (and discovering many new ones!), the Unst Archaeology Group decided to try their hands at excavation.

For the past four summers they have surveyed, recorded, and excavated an eroding Iron Age site at Sandwick beach, under guidance from archaeologists from Glasgow University and the SCAPE Trust. The Unst Archaeology Group now will take stewardship of the site as part of the Adopt-a-Monument project. Already they have secured better access through an improved car park area, footpath signs, and stiles. This summer the site is being consolidated and protected from damaging waves. Plans are afoot to display information signs on site and at Unst Heritage Centre.

If your group is interested in making a site, monument or historic building better understood or more accessible, there are several projects that can provide advice about funding and regulations, teach you the skills you'll need, and generally help you along the way.

Shetland's Past (recording and surveying archaeology and built heritage): contact Chris Dyer, Shetland Amenity Trust, 01595 694688.

Shorewatch (recording and monitoring erosion of coastal sites and built heritage): contact Tom Dawson, SCAPE Trust, 01334 462904, www.scapetrust.org.

Adopt-a-Monument (recording, survey, accessibility, and interpretation of sites and built heritage): contact Helen Bradley, Adopt-a-Monument, Council for Scottish Archaeology, www.scottisharchaeology.org.uk/projects/adopt.html

Dr Carol Christiansen
Curator and Community Museums Officer



Les Smith, Jan Sandison, and Margaret Hunter of Unst Archaeology Group excavate at Sandwick

Curatorial service

Shetland Museum has an efficient curatorial service. If you've got objects or queries you'd like to discuss with us, a curator will be available Monday-Friday 2-4pm and all day Saturday. Just come to reception. Outwith these times, a curator may be available, but it is advisable to make an appointment by phoning the Museum at 01595 695057.

To consult with an archivist, visit the Archives during opening hours – see this issue's cover for times.

The Beeb needs your help!

The BBC is preparing a 6-part documentary for television about Scotland's traditional music, to be aired in November. Shetland features heavily, of course, and they have already filmed Phil Cunningham and Jenna Reid playing wedding music at the Crofthouse Museum. They would like to find historic images to accompany the music and are searching for photographs of Shetland weddings up to the 1930s featuring fiddlers. They are also trying to find photographs of wedding parties from the 1940s and 1950s, in which accordion bands played.

Does your history group or family archive contain photographs of weddings showing the musicians? If so, please contact Carol Christiansen or Ian Tait at Shetland Museum: 01595 695057, or contact Margaret Montgomery at BBC Aberdeen studios directly: 01224 384848.

Shetland Heritage Association Day – 26th August, Shetland Museum and Archives

The Shetland Heritage Association has planned an afternoon at the Shetland Museum and Archives for heritage groups to come together, hear about current projects, and consider the future of the SHA. A luncheon will be served and illustrated presentations will be given by individuals representing local heritage groups, Heritage North, Hamefarin 2010, and Shetland Museum and Archives. Invitations will be sent in the next few weeks, but consider marking your calendar now!

Dyke cuts Trondra in two

An eye-catching feature on the map of Trondra is a sweeping curve which seems to cut off the north-eastern part of the island.

Heading north on the modern road, which cuts through it, a car passenger can see a turf and stone bank on the left, heading towards Cauldhame. Modern fences follow it for much of its length. The scale and method of its construction point to it being a township dyke, possibly of some antiquity.

In fact it is surprisingly recent. Shetland Archives contains a 1772 document addressed to the owner of Trondra from his locally-based

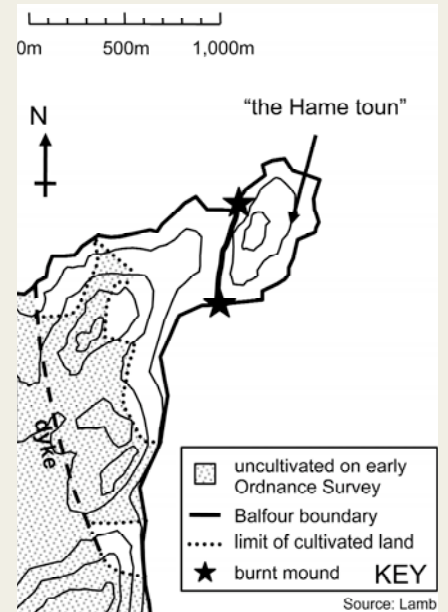


The dyke at Cauldhame

factor, William Balfour. He describes the island in detail, including its three townships, which he names as Burland, Hogaland and "the Hame toum". His careful inventory makes no mention of the dyke, nor of the crofts of Cauldhame at its northern end and Grindadale at its southern. It is unlikely that this was an oversight for he gives a full account of the island, even describing the acreage of the townships in such detail that it is possible to work out the position of the Hame toum boundary. If a line is drawn between the two burnt mounds on the coast at either end of the crags, then the space to the north and east matches Balfour's dimensions for the Hame toum almost exactly. It covered the areas now known as the North Ness, Dale and Cutts.

So the westward expansion of the Hame toum must have taken place after 1772. The extent of land under cultivation in the late nineteenth century can be ascertained from Ordnance Survey maps. The 1900 6"-to-the-mile map for the area was surveyed in 1878. It marks land that is not under cultivation with a pattern of stylised tussocks. It follows that cultivated land is readily identifiable. The shape of the dyke is clear, as is the inner perimeter marking the edge of cultivated land.

Between 1772 and 1878 it was not only the area under



North east Trondra

cultivation that had more than doubled. The 1841 census shows that there were 141 people giving addresses within the dyke, of whom only sixty lived in the area covered by the old Hame toum.

So the dyke must have been completed between 1772 and 1878. The cultivated ground of Cauldhame and Grindadale can be made out unmistakably. From their position relative to the dyke, it looks as though they may have been occupied after it was built. Alternatively, perhaps it was the line of the dyke which was dictated by the fact that they were there already? Something to ponder on, when wending one's way along the fine new road through Trondra.

Deborah E. S. Lamb

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. Deadline for the September issue is 11 August. If you would like to stock our newsletter 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

