

The Docks' Boys' galleys

The format of Up Helly Aa is familiar to everyone – the longship, torchlight procession, squads and acts. The festival evolved as elements were added and even the Viking theme wasn't there initially. There was no galley, Jarl, or proclamation.

However, one of the most interesting early features is no longer part of the festival. The Docks' Boys' galley was in its heyday a century ago, but is known by few today.

A century ago, Garthspool was a busy place where people lived and worked, and where the Boys were apprentice boatcarpenters. Groups around town were contributing to the nascent Up Helly Aa, and in 1903 the Docks' Boys took to making their own ship to feature in the procession. The Viking galley was already established, so both galleys took part for a few years.

The first Docks' Boys' galley was a brig. It impressed everyone, and the next year they undertook a fully-rigged barque detailed down to lifeboats and illuminated navigation lights, setting the standard for their galleys thereafter. Most years their galley was topical, and magazine illustrations and newspaper reports were scoured for

inspiration. In 1904 the world was gripped with news of war between Russia and Japan, and the Boys constructed the Japanese flagship *Mikasa* for the 1905 festival, with all detail attended to, from searchlight to wireless telegraphy. Later in that year there were celebrations for the bicentenary of the Battle of Trafalgar, and to commemorate this, the Boys made H.M.S. *Victory* for the 1906 Up Helly Aa.

By 1907, there was an arms race, and the Docks' Boys, caught by the spirit of the age, made H.M.S. *Dreadnought*, the most revolutionary warship of the century. A newspaper report noted, "The model carried ten 12-inch guns, and a large number of 6-pounders. The fire-controlling top was accurately reproduced. On the quarter was a launch with brass funnel and propeller". Soon Britain had six of these ships, and in 1910 the Boys unveiled H.M.S. *St Vincent*. The newspaper sounded disquiet: "The outcome of the twentieth century, with all the latest adaptations of scientific skill [will be] to convert the floating battery into a death-dealing machine". The next year the Boys made the American battleship U.S.S. *North Dakota*.

The galley for 1908 was a historical warship, the English *Great Harry* of 1514. The only year a local issue was covered was 1909, when whaling divided opinion between families gaining employment and fishermen whose nets were damaged. The Boys built the whaler *Arctic*, which was paraded behind a banner saying, "Captured inside the limits". On Up Helly Aa morning the longship and the Docks' Boys' galley were displayed. Later in the evening around 200 torch-carrying guizers went along Commercial Street, up Harbour Street, along the Hillhead, then down Queen's Lane to Victoria Pier, where the longship and Docks' Boys' galley were burned.

With many skilled lads working together their galley rivalled the longship, and the task of making it was taken over by the Boys in 1912. This allowed a bigger festival to be built around a stronger Viking theme, but after this, there were no more separate Docks' galleys built.

The Docks' Boys' galleys are commemorated in an exhibition in Da Gadderie which runs from 5 January to 4 February 2008, with photographs and newspaper quotations from the Museum and Archives' collections.

Dr Ian Tait, Curator of Collections



The Docks' Boys' barque of 1903.

What's On Guide

January

5th - 4th Feb.: Exhibition: The Docks' Boys' Galleys, Da Gadderie.

18th: Course: 'Care of Paper and Photographic Collections', 10am to 4pm. Free, but booking essential from info@heritage-skills.co.uk. Venue tbc.

26th, 28th, & 29th: 'The Docks' Boys' Galleys', talk by Dr. Ian Tait, Da Gadderie. 26th: 3:30pm, 28th & 29th: 1:15pm

The Museum and Archives are open 30th Jan., the day after Up Helly Aa. Stop by Hay's Dock Café Restaurant for some winter warmers!

30th: Thor's Hammer pendant workshop, 10:30am, 11:30am, 2:30pm, 3:30pm.

For P1-7, 45 mins., £3, booking essential.

28th-30th, 'The Origins of Up Helly Aa', gallery talk, times vary throughout day, 20 mins. Free.

February

All month: Film: 'St Kilda, Britain's Loneliest Isle', directed by Paul Rebello and Bobbie Mann, 1928, Black and white, Silent, 16mins.

2nd: Course: 'What do museums have to do to achieve and maintain Accreditation?' 10am to 4pm. Free, but booking essential from info@heritage-skills.co.uk. Venue tbc.

3rd: Course: 'Museum Displays and Exhibitions', 10am to 4pm. Free, but booking essential from info@heritage-skills.co.uk. Venue tbc.

11th: Going Potty!, pottery workshop for 3 & 4 year olds and their parents, 10.30 -11am, or 11.30am- 12pm. Free, but booking essential.

21st: 'Leaving St. Kilda', lecture by Sam Davies, St Kilda Archaeologist, National Trust for Scotland, followed by 1928 short film, 'St Kilda, Britain's Loneliest Isle', directed by Paul Rebello and Bobbie Mann, 7:30pm, Free.

22nd: Course: 'Business Planning and Skills Development for Museums', 10am to 4pm. Free, but booking essential from info@heritage-skills.co.uk, Venue tbc.

28th: 'Searching for Place-Names', talk by Eileen Brooke-Freeman, 7pm, free.

29th: Course: 'Thinking the Worst - Emergency Planning for Museums', 13:30 to 17:30pm. Free, but booking essential from info@heritage-skills.co.uk, Venue tbc.

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 or just pop in.

WINTER HOURS

Museum opening times:

Monday-Wednesday, and Friday 10am-5pm

Thursday 10am-7pm **Saturday** 10am-5pm **Sunday** 12pm-4pm

Archives opening times:

Monday-Friday 9.30am-4.30pm

Saturday 10am-1pm **Sunday** closed

Hay's Dock Café Restaurant opening times:

Daytime: **Monday-Saturday** 11.00am-5pm **Sunday** 12pm-4pm

Evenings: **Thursday-Saturday** 7pm-9pm. To book call 01595 741569

Making Music



In the 19th century the ever-inventive Victorians developed machines that could play music by themselves (whether or not you had any musical talent of your own). Most well-known is the musical box, in which a clockwork motor rotated a brass drum with tiny spikes, which, in turn, plucked a comb with teeth of different lengths. The machine was quite costly because there were many moving parts, like a clock. The box itself was a decorative marquetry affair, reflecting the cost of the device.

Around 1890 a new type of home music machine came into being, called an organette. This worked like a small organ, except that the bellows were operated by a crank on the side instead of pedals, and the music itself was produced by card rolls with slots in them. The organette was more affordable because the workings were easier to manufacture – mostly simple glued and nailed components – and card rolls were far cheaper to make compared to brass cylinders. The organette was to be short-lived because the phonograph, which played wax cylinders, came on the scene around 1900.

The Museum's collection did not contain an organette before we were kindly given one by Ernie Peterson, Sullom. It came from Tingwall, and although many organettes were made in the United States, this brand, called the "Orchestral Organette", is a British make. There are three stops on the top that allow the tone to be adjusted. The machine is complete with eight card rolls that cover a varied range of Shetland listener's tastes in 1890: the maritime-sounding *Bay of Biscay*, the perennial favourite *Soldier's Joy*, the religious *Something for Jesus*, and *Old Folks at Home* for a sentimental piece.

Dr Ian Tait, Curator of Collections

Shetland literature study

Archives assistant Mark Smith is embarking on a major study of Shetland writing.

Since moving back to Shetland from Glasgow in 2005, Mark, who has a degree in English Literature, has discovered that there is a large body of local creative writing that has been studied very little. "Dating back to the early 19th century, there are long-forgotten books of poetry, an unpublished novel about Shetlanders and communist Russia, and several sets of writers' papers in the Archives that may well contain a hidden Shetland masterpiece," said Mark.

As well as bringing this material to light, Mark will investigate several general themes and questions that may help to put the Shetland literary tradition in context. "I intend to look at how Shetland's literature fits into the wider body of Scottish literature, at the use of dialect in much of the work, and I will investigate the Norse influence that many writers have drawn on," he said.

In addition to native writing, Mark will examine Shetland-influenced work of

more widely known writers– not least the tempestuous sojourn of the poet Hugh MacDiarmid in Whalsay. "My study will culminate in a PhD thesis and is being done via the Scottish Literature department at Glasgow University. I hope, by doing this work, that a little-known aspect of Shetland's culture will become more widely known."



Archives Assistant, Mark Smith.

DISCOVERY BOXES

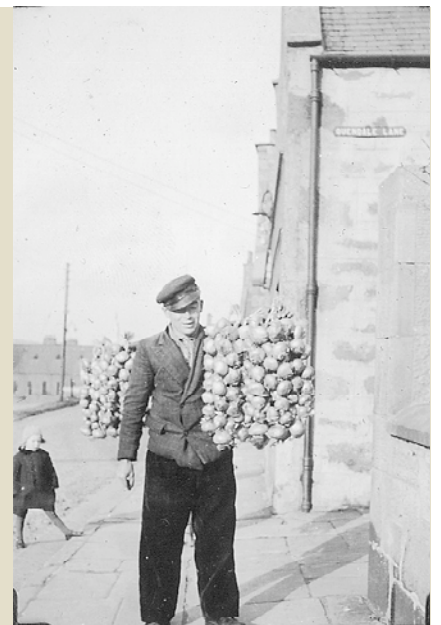


Are you aware of our Discovery Box Service? It consists of themed boxes of artefacts that can be borrowed by groups and schools for up to one month. The artefacts can be handled and have been used for reminiscence, school projects and inspiration for art work. Themes include Crofting, A Night by the Fire, and Whaling. For a copy of the catalogue and more information contact Kirsty Kennedy, Lifelong Learning Officer on 01595 741558 or email kirsty@shetland-museum.org.uk.

Discovery Box, 'In the Kitchen'.

Give us a clue!

This photograph of an onion seller on the Hillhead recently came to light among a small private collection of photographs. It possibly dates from 1936. 'Onion Johnnies' were very common all over Britain, selling their produce and bringing with them their unique, colourful brand of selling. Can any reader identify the people in the photo, or tell us more about Shetland's 'Onion Johnnies'?



Staff changes at Museum and Archives

We've had to say good-bye to two members of staff, and we've welcomed two new staff onboard. John Anderson retired in November after 6 years as Museum Attendant. John took good care of us in the old museum building and was a valuable asset in the run-up to opening. Lynsey Anderson left her post as Curator and Exhibitions Officer the same month, and is now Interpretation Officer at Shetland Amenity Trust offices.

John Hunter, previously a Lecturer in sculpture at Edinburgh Art College, has been hired as Exhibitions Officer. John lives in Aith with his family.

Jenny Murray is our new Museum Collections Assistant. She recently completed her BA in Cultural Studies of the Highlands and Islands at UHI, where she graduated with honours. Jenny and her family live in Brae.



John Hunter.



Jenny Murray.

COMMUNITY HERITAGE NEWS

Shetland Heritage Association EG Meeting

The Shetland Heritage Association held an extraordinary general meeting on 8 December to decide the future of the organisation. Present were 23 people representing local heritage groups across Shetland. Douglas Sinclair, President, and Barbara Anderson, Secretary, stood down. An AGM is planned for 16 February at which a new president, secretary, and executive committee members will be elected. In the meantime, Mike McDonnell and Pat Christie were elected as temporary chairperson and secretary respectively, and Robin Hunter, Rosemary Inkster and Carol Christiansen were elected as temporary executive committee members. A separate focus group in charge of preparing the SHA membership booklet for publication was also formed. More information about the events of the meeting and the next AGM will be sent to members by the SHA executive.

Heritage courses come to Shetland

The third and final year of Skills Building for the Future courses will be held in 2008. The courses are free to anyone working or volunteering in the heritage sector, and travel expenses are reimbursed. Courses in Shetland for 2008 range from care of paper and photographic collections, managing your museum shop, business planning, and practical marketing. There is one course specific to local museums who are considering applying for accreditation. The course list and information can be found at www.heritage-skills.co.uk, or contact Rowan Tree Consulting at 01463 715225.

Is your local war memorial at risk?

The War Memorials Trust is asking for help in reporting ageing, weathered, or damaged war memorials. Monitoring your local war memorial is a simple and quick procedure, and the Trust offers easy 2-page Condition Survey sheets with which to record the condition of the monument. They also offer grants to repair damaged memorials. If you or your group would like to help out, contact the War Memorials Trust at 0207 259 0403, or www.warmemorials.org.

Wartime oral histories: Their Past, Your Future Phase 2

The Scottish Museums Council has been awarded funds by the Big Lottery to deliver phase 2 of Their Past, Your Future project. The project will award up to £15,000 to at least 10 member museums to develop and lead oral history projects between young people and veterans of World War II and subsequent conflicts. The oral histories will be rounded out with related historical items: diaries, news stories, photographs, films, drawings, and paintings. With the information gathered, local partners will produce an exhibit, event, or publication which can be incorporated into an online learning resource through the Scottish Schools Digital Network. If you would like more information, please contact the Scottish Museums Council on 0131 550 4143, or www.scottishmuseums.org.uk.

Ship Archive Website

Aberdeen Maritime Museum hosts a website in which nearly 3,000 ships built in Aberdeen since 1811 are recorded. The website includes a large number of short films shot at dockyards between the late 1950s and early 1960s. These can be viewed directly on the website with the correct software. To visit the online archive, go to www.aberdeenships.com.

New book of Shetland documents

In 1994 and 1999 John Ballantyne, a researcher in Edinburgh, and I, produced two volumes of Shetland documents, covering the period from 1195-1611. These books contain virtually every document known to exist from more than 400 years of Shetland's history. We have found one or two since that we had missed, but otherwise the volumes stand as a record of virtually everything we will ever know about Shetland in those action-packed years.

Windhouse (an ancestor of one of the editors!), who caused uproar here in the 1620s when he fell out with the Mouat family; and about a major dispute between the Sinclairs of Scalloway and the Bruces of Muness, which rumbled on in the Court of Session for thirty years.

When landowners scrapped with each other, they usually managed to involve other Shetlanders in their disputes. So the new volume, like its predecessors,

contains material about every class in the little Shetland society which flourished around 1620. Many ordinary people gave evidence in the dispute between Neven and the Mouats.

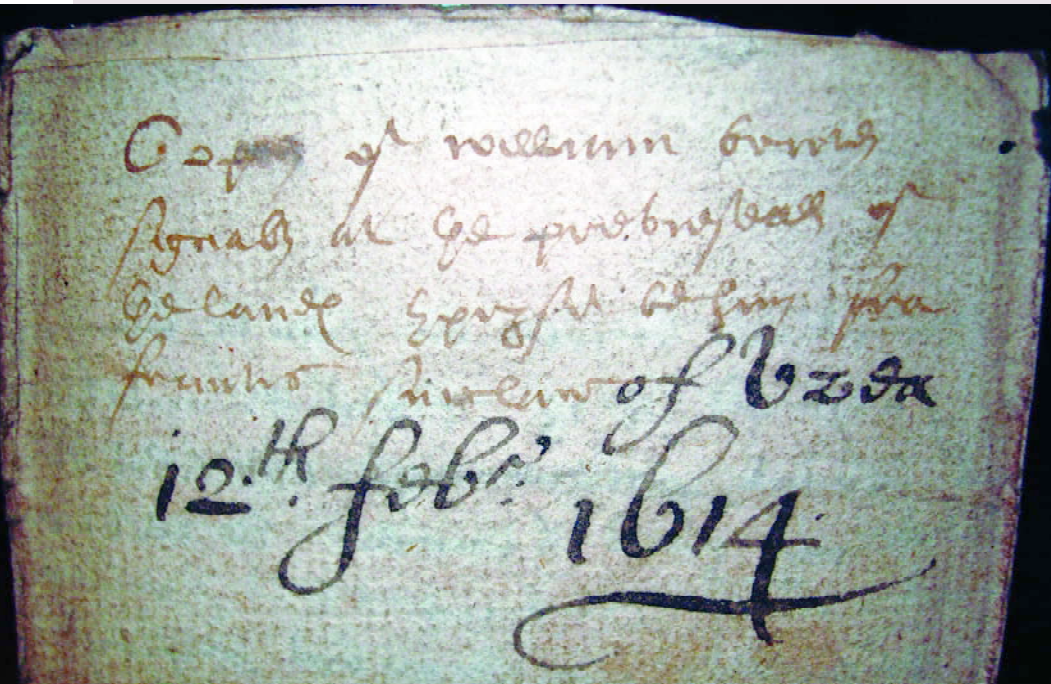
Once again, John Ballantyne has been burrowing amongst Court of Session volumes and papers – records so vast that nobody else has ever mastered them in the way that he has. John is a phenomenon: he has brought to light Shetland documents that haven't been seen for 400 years, by patiently ploughing through many thousands of sources. We all owe him a huge debt of gratitude.

An important part of the new book will be an appendix comprising Andro Smyth's rental of Shetland of 1628.

Smyth, from Hurtiso in Orkney, acted in Shetland for Sir John Buchanan, who had a lease of the king's estates here. His beautifully-written rental contains the earliest comprehensive list of Shetland settlements and the taxes and rents they paid to the crown. It is vital evidence for place name scholars as well as historians.

It is hoped that *Shetland Documents 1612-1637* will appear in 2008.

Brian Smith,
Archivist



One of many hundreds of documents in the forthcoming book: William Bruce of Symbister acquires lands in 1614 from Francis Sinclair of Uyea, Unst.

We have been working on a new volume, from the next phase of Shetland's history. It covers the period from 1612-1637. By that time the survival rate of Shetland's records is far greater, and from only a single generation there has come down to us about 700 pages of new material. When the index, introduction and other material is complete, it will be a very big book.

In the period after Earl Patrick Stewart's fall – he was guillotined in Edinburgh in 1615 – several Shetland families began to jostle for power. The new volume contains juicy material about Ninian Neven of

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 next issue is Friday 15th February. 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

