

## It's all go at Sumburgh Head



**An artists impression of the finished Education Centre. Inset: Corramore Construction staff start work on the foundations for the new Education Centre, a resource which will be used by visitors and the community.**

Buildings at Sumburgh Head Lighthouse are being restored as part of a £5.4m project which will culminate in the creation of a world class visitor attraction. Visitors will discover many stories linked to the site - including the history of the lighthouse, its role in World War II and the area's rich natural heritage. Opening in 2014, the site will also include a brand new building which will house an education centre.

Sumburgh Head Lighthouse was lit in 1821 after engineer Robert Stevenson decided on the best location for Shetland's first lighthouse. Lightkeepers worked and lived at the lighthouse for 170 years before the light was automated in 1991.

All three lightkeepers' accommodation blocks, as well as the

Engine Room, Smithy and Foghorn, will be restored to create space for the site's interpretation, holiday accommodation and RSPB office.

The Engine Room will revert back to its former glory to create the sights, sounds and smells of a typical lighthouse building. The main theme will be to tell the story of the lighthouse as an historic guardian which has enabled mariners to navigate the dangerous waters around Sumburgh Head. The story to be told in the former Smithy will focus on the daily life and routine for the lightkeeper and his family. The room will feature a photo album showing keepers and their families who have lived and worked at the lighthouse.

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**Shetland Museum and Archives gratefully welcomes the loan of the Gayer-Anderson Cat from the British Museum. This stunning bronze cat was crafted in Saqqara, Egypt, around 600BC and will be on display in the foyer from Saturday 8th September until Sunday 9th December.**



### 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)

## Take a run up north



Have you visited Tangwick Haa recently? If not you are missing one of the sights of Shetland. Although the collections held in its several rooms focuses on the cultural history of Northmavine they are representative of the whole of Shetland.

Like all museums there are permanent exhibits, like the 'Laird's Room' featured above, but there are also regular changes very well worth catching up on. For example, at present there is an exhibition on local transport; wonderful period photos of the machinery and manpower of the 1930s coping with car roof-top levels of snow. It is easy to forget, with modern snowploughs, Post Office vans, 4x4s and supermarkets, just how much more physically challenging was the life of our grandparents.

There are around 20 heritage centres with collections of our cultural history scattered throughout Shetland from Quendale Mill to the Unst Heritage Centre. All are open to the public and run entirely by volunteers. The Tangwick Haa museum at Eshaness grew out of the Northmavine

History Group which was formed in 1981. In 1987, Shetland Amenity Trust (SAT) restored the Haa and shortly after that a local Trust was formed to run it and bring together and exhibit its collections. Although the upkeep of the building is taken care of by SAT, which also furnishes an annual grant, the handful of volunteers who run the Haa still have to find a substantial additional sum for the running costs.

Tangwick Haa, as the name suggests, was the home of the local lairds, the Cheynes, of whom perhaps the most notorious was Andrew Cheyne (1817-1866). Although he was conceived on the wrong side of the blanket Andrew had the support of his father and an education befitting his station. Andrew went to sea, became heavily involved in the sandalwood trade in the South Pacific and was eventually murdered there for crossing the wrong people! However, his written records and sketches of the culture and his charts of these islands are unique. An interesting coincidence that he should have been responsible for the recording of a culture on the other side of the world and almost 200 years since his birth his own home now does the same for his. Andrew Cheyne is also, of course, the father of the renowned surgeon Sir William Watson Cheyne.

There are many things to see at Tangwick Haa. Other aspects of the Cheyne family collection are the irreplaceable pieces of their china, Royal Brown Derby and a beautiful 1840s wedding dress. But there are many wider aspects of Northmavine to explore at Tangwick Haa including all the censuses and the Parish Records, which are an invaluable genealogical source for the many visitors who come seeking their family roots. Next year there are plans for an exhibition on the churches and religion of Northmavine.

Last year, almost 4800 visitors were recorded to Tangwick Haa. This is very impressive in itself but the museum does not exist in isolation, it is a key part of the local economy as many visitors go on to spend money in local shops and cafes.

The Haa is open from 11am-5pm every day until the 30th September.

## Sumburgh restoration

*(Continued from front page)*

The Marine Life Centre will take you into another world as light, sound, movement and visuals create an environment inhabited by a mix of nature from zooplankton to Minke Whales. The centre will explore the marine environment which supports a diverse group of top predators such as Killer Whales and Puffins. There are two Radar Huts at Sumburgh Head Lighthouse and this area will highlight the site's role during World War II. Other features include the former Muckle Roe Lighthouse which will mark the beginning of the visitor experience. On the walk up to the lighthouse site, visitors can learn about the area's rich Archaeology which can be traced back for hundreds of years. The history of the Foghorn and the Head's Geology will also be explored.

Work has been progressing well since contractors arrived onsite in May. The foundations for the Education Centre, the only new build element of the project, were laid in August and work is expected to move ahead quickly during September.



Shetland Amenity Trust staff recently visited the Fetlar Interpretive Centre and the beautifully restored Leagarth House. Katy from the centre provided an excellent introduction to the range of displays and archives about life in Fetlar, including Sir William Watson Cheyne, pioneering anaesthetist and owner of the stunning Leagarth House, recently restored by Shetland Amenity Trust's Architectural Heritage Team. Frank Brown gave an informative tour of the property, and the group are grateful to Bridget Lanyon, granddaughter of Sir William for giving access to the house.



# Lifetime devotion to China

As summer students at the Shetland Museum this season, our main task was the registration of a large collection of Goss China donated by Mr Andrew Nicolson. Seven of our ten weeks at the museum was spent describing and measuring the china before giving each piece registration numbers and packing them away in a safe place.

Though seven weeks seems like a long time to have spent studying Goss China it is nothing compared to Mr Nicolson's lifetime devotion to the intriguing pieces. On meeting Mr Nicolson one morning, we learned that not only has he been a devoted member of the Goss Collector's Club since its establishment in 1970, but he got his first piece of Goss China when he was just 10 years old! Noticing the china on his grandmother's table, she let him choose one piece to keep for himself and has loved it ever since.

Since this time he has collected over 600 pieces and kindly donated a significant number of them to the museum. All his remaining pieces

are on display in his home, as well a number of non-Goss pieces including an impressive Royal family collection. Walking into his home, all the china was perfectly clean and all gleaming in the light of the morning sun. Having spent so much time with the Goss China, we found this collection the most impressive with three cabinets full of it.

Goss China first started being produced in 1858 and continued to be produced through to 1939 by William Henry Goss (1833-1906). It was extremely popular as souvenirs to be sold in specialist shops throughout the country, after the railways started up and people started going further for their holidays. It was thought that around 90% of British homes had at least one piece of Goss China. However after the Wars there was a serious decline in the purchase of Goss China, apart from the dedicated number of collectors who continued to buy and sell china, and later form the Collector's Club.

The pieces of small white china

range from Shetland ponies to models of vases to tanks and battleships from WW1. Each piece has its own history and a small coat of arms of a place close to everyone's heart. Mr Nicolson mainly collected Shetland pieces, and relied heavily on the help of the other members of the Collector's Club to keep an eye out for pieces with the Shetland coat of arms. They also offered to send him pieces with Orkney coat of arms on it and he decided that due to the heavy connections between Shetland and Orkney it would be fitting to collect this also.

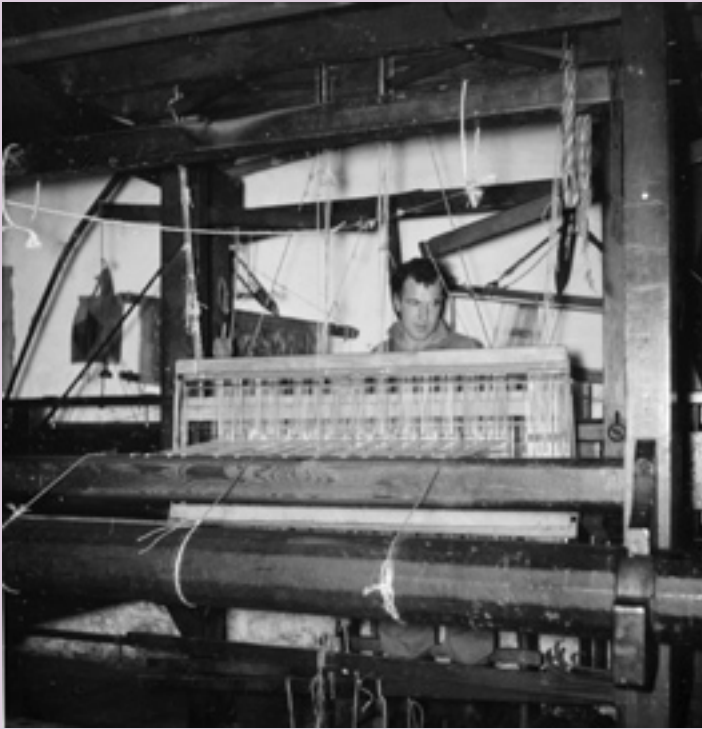
It is Mr Nicolson's ambition to inspire other people, young or old, to start collecting the china that he himself has spent a lifetime collecting. He has donated his entire Orkney collection, and a number of his duplicates from his Shetland collection, to the museum for this purpose, and hopefully in the near future a display will be set up to do the collection justice.

**By Nina Goodlad and  
Michaela Goodlad**



**Nina and Michaela with the impressive China collection.**

# Studying the history of Shetland tweed



Anderson Johnson (Greentaing, Muckle Roe) weaving on a loom in T.M. Adie & Sons' weaving shed, Voe.

I am doing a practice based PhD in textile design. An emphasis of the research is looking at the Shetland tweed industry, but more specifically, at the design of the tweed fabrics and how this developed over time.

The Museum holds the most complete Shetland tweed collection by TM Adie and Sons. It was donated by James and Elizabeth Adie after they retired in the early 1990's. This family run business in Voe, started in the 1830's selling flour and groceries. It developed into a general merchant's shop and then into fishing and curing. During the 20th century it was running all relevant local concerns: fishing, farming, local shop, tweed, hosiery and bakery.

The tweed collection represents a fascinating history of textile development spanning about 100 years. The collection starts in the 1890's with samples of hand spun Shetland wool, hand woven into basic tweeds. These would have been brought to the Adie shop from the crofts as bartering for groceries and would have been sold on to stockists in Edinburgh and London. There would have been no quality control and each length

would have had a different character and colour coming from the natural shades of the Shetland sheep. The collection finishes in 1992 having provided machine spun and hand and machine woven cloths of sophisticated tweeds developed for an international, luxury, tailoring and furnishings market.

A unique aspect of the Shetland wool used in these tweeds is its soft and light texture expressed through a variety of woven structures and fabric finishing processes. This is exemplified in the kind of names given to some of these qualities: light weight, special lightweight and featherweight. The natural Shetland wool shades are seen in all the designs, often as a backdrop to enhance the colours, creating a vibrancy and depth to the patterns. This interpretation of classic Scottish tweeds, juxtaposing the qualities with the colour combinations, gives the woven cloth a definitive Shetland character.

Meticulous records were kept of the firms yearly activities trading. TM Adie and Sons tweed story is succinctly described in a document dated Dec'13 1982 entitled 'Notes on the Firm', "The tweed reached a peak in 1955 with 32 workers making 88,964 yards of single width tweed. Over 90% of this was exported to the United States, but the trade declined when the U.S.A. brought in a quota system to limit the import of the woollen fabrics which were harming U.S. production. In 1983, 3 employees made 4844 yards."

Despite the limit on imports, the USA continued to be an important market throughout the 1950's, 60's and 70's suggesting that the desire for the Shetland tweeds was heightened because of the minimums put in place. Press published in the Daily News Record, NY, December 1963 shows four examples of Adie tweeds with a caption, "Hand woven in the Island town of Voe... inspirational behind the sporty country gentleman look. It's traditional....full of character....softness of texture... lighter in tone...quiet heathers enlivened with many rusts and greens. From Thomas Adie and Sons."

I am interested in researching tweed collections from other manufacturers that were contemporaries of the Adie's of Voe, like Tulloch of Shetland Ltd, John Tulloch, W.S. Manson & Co in Hillswick, L.J Smith, Stuarts of Levenwick, and Mouat's Cottage Weavers. I would really appreciate it if anyone might have more information on these mills or textile examples of their tweeds.

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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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**DEADLINE FOR CONTRIBUTIONS FOR NEXT ISSUE IS NEXT ISSUE IS FRIDAY, 12 OCTOBER, 2012.**