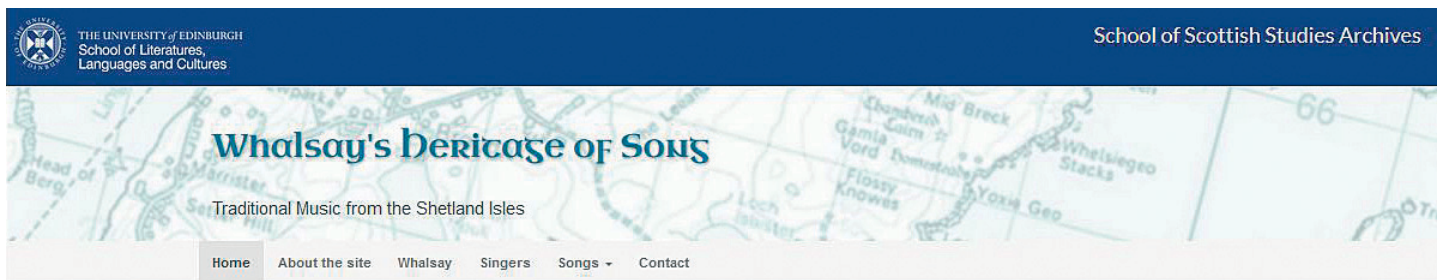


Unkans

The newsletter of the Shetland Heritage and Culture Community

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Sandwick Loch. Photo Ivan Reid

WEBSITE REVIEW: Whalsay's Heritage of Songs

Ethnomusicologist, Peter Cooke, has spent many years researching the music of Shetland from his base in the School of Scottish Studies at the University of Edinburgh. His research now forms an interesting and entertaining website featuring 120+



Peter Cooke

recordings made during the period 1969 – 1984.

The website includes ballads, songs, rhymes and riddles, delivering a rich sample of oral tradition. Peter emphasises that this site is a joint project, with many Whalsay islanders having contributed information on the singers (often their own parents and grand-parents) and helping him by checking texts, commenting on the songs and providing photographs.

Songs can be browsed by title, or by singer, with 29 singers to choose from including many well-known names. As would be expected, there are songs telling tales of adventure and tragedy at sea. Also included are a range of ballads and comic music –hall songs from the early years of the last century.

The library also includes a series of biographies for every singer included. It's a pleasure to read the story of the individuals as you listen to the songs.

Peter states: "Whereas many of our recordings were made at private sessions in the homes of the performers, the songs were performed at island functions such as wedding dances and regatta concerts and other entertainments as well as when friends met up in each others' houses. There was also a lively tradition of end of fishing season 'foys' when the men who made up the crews of Whalsay fishing boats visited their homes and those of relatives, carousing and singing into the small hours."

The website is a wonderful collection of memories and song. Browsers will easily spend a couple of hours listening to the range of tunes and immersing his or her self in the musical traditions of this island community.

The site can be found at www.ssa.llc.ed.ac.uk/whalsay/

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
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Above: Amanda Youngman, Shetland's 4th female councillor, with an invitation to meet the Queen in Yell. Photo supplied by JarlMedia.com & Youngman Family

Below: Kate Anderson, the first Shetland-born female councillor, in 1990 at a Ruby Wedding. Photo supplied by JarlMedia.com



The fantastic five: a look at Shetland's first female councillors

In 1907, Reina Emily Lawrence became one of the first women in the UK to get elected into local government when she was elected onto the Hampstead Borough Council in London.

In 1908, "Jean" wrote into *The Shetland Times* to say that there should be female representation on the Lerwick Town Council, which had existed since 1818 and never had a female elected or even contest an election.

We have to move ahead 25 years before Jean's request was honoured. At the 1933 Lerwick Town Council election, Shetland elected its first female representative. Charlotte Nicol (néé Stuart), a Montrose-born teacher, was elected as a Ratepayers Association candidate.

Charlotte's – a "very-well informed woman" as per her obituary in the *Times* – was re-elected in 1935 but was unsuccessful in 1937. Over the course of her tenure, Shetland also elected its second female councillor and first Zetland County Councillor (ZCC), who had travelled a little further than Charlotte to be in Shetland.

Selina Garriock (néé Darrell) was born in New York and had married a Shetlander in Dundee. She became the first woman on the ZCC in 1935, taking the seat from the sitting member who had held it since 1919. Such was her standing in the community, all Scalloway businesses were closed during her public funeral there in 1938. The *Shetland Times* was full of praise for Selina's work, saying "no district could have a more devoted, earnest and attentive member" than she.

It took almost 20 years until another woman was elected in Shetland. Grace Halcrow was born in Glasgow to Shetland parents. She became the first Shetland woman to become a Town Councillor when elected 1954, serving until 1957, then again from 1964-1971. She only ever stood as an Independent candidate, but was a staunch Conservative. In her later years, she was the honorary president of the Shetland Conservative Association.

Her election was closely followed by Amanda Youngman (néé Diamond), an Ellon-native, who was elected to the ZCC seat, Yell South, in 1955, holding the seat until 1961.

Completing our fantastic five was Shetland's first Shetland-born female councillor, Catherine 'Kate' Anderson. She was born in Aithsting and was by-elected to the seat of the same name on the ZCC after the death of the sitting member. She held the seat until 1961.

Since 1818 to the present, Shetland has elected close to 500 men to local government posts, but only 24 women have ever held public office in Shetland. Of 22 councillors in 2016, only three are women.

To learn more about these women, you can find them on Shetland's online political history database,

<http://www.jarlmedia.com>

Visitors flock to 2016 Shetland Wool Week

The seventh annual Shetland Wool Week got off to a busy start on Saturday 24th September as flocks of visitors from the furthest corners of the world arrived in the Shetland Wool Week HUB at Shetland Museum and Archives.

The cosy social space was the initial destination for those collecting their membership packs and catching up with friends and other visitors. For some this was a return after attending previous Wool Week's, and others had it all to look forward to.

The official opening ceremony, at Clickimin on the Sunday evening included a vibrant and varied programme of entertainment to delight the 350 strong crowd. Compere, Claire White introduced the Lerwick Jarl's Squad for a rendition of the Up Helly Aa song before the evening moved on to a fashion show with garments on display by local designers, Shetland college students and Anderson High School pupils from the Makkin and Yakkin knitting group. Other speakers included this year's event patron, Ella Gordon,

the young local designer responsible for the official 2016 Shetland Wool Week hat pattern with the distinctive Crofthoose design which she is known for.

The week included a vast array of classes such as traditional Fair Isle and lace knitting, Shetland haps, felting, dying, and even mini taatit rug workshops. There were also some slightly different skills to try including shawl pin whittling, making silver Fair Isle buttons and the always popular skill of using a knitting belt!

Almost 200 woolly themed events

took place over the week, which saw nearly 400 people travelling to Shetland to take part. Membership sales were 150% higher than 2015 and event organisers are delighted that the appetite for Shetland Wool and the classes seems set to continue to rise. Dates have already been announced for 2017 as Saturday 23rd September to Sunday 1st October. More details can be found at www.shetlandwoolweek.com where copies of the 2017 Shetland Wool Week annual can also be purchased. Other merchandise can be purchased at www.shetland.org/shop



Above: Concentration levels were high during Wool Week. Left: Crofthoose Hats and Fair Isle knitwear were abundant during the event. Below: So many colours to choose from. Images by Liam Henderson



The killer's touch : witchcraft and murder in 17th century Shetland

In March 1644 a woman from Hillswick called Marion Peebles, alias Marion Pardone, was charged with a number of offenses. All of them related to her being an alleged witch.

The case brilliantly illustrates the range of things an allegation of witchcraft might involve. Marion was accused of using her supernatural powers to harm and kill livestock, to make her neighbours suffer sickness and injury, to cause one person's cow to milk blood, and of souring a brew of malt.

Finally, and fatally, she was accused of causing a boat to capsize, drowning its occupants. Her other crimes were serious but the final charge of murder by means of witchcraft meant that this was to be a trial for her life. The indictment against her makes repeated reference to the involvement of the devil, and it is this diabolical element that guaranteed her execution.

In the course of the investigation Marion was made to place her hand upon the dead bodies of her supposed victims. The record suggests that the corpses started to bleed afresh at her touch. This was taken as final proof of her guilt.

To us, this seems bizarre. What did these people actually see? Why did they believe in a process that appears to be incredible? Was it an aspect of local folk belief from times long past, preserved by remoteness in Shetland? Far from being an extreme and exotic local folk practice, this form of trial by ordeal was an important

tool of criminal investigation in many parts of northern Europe during the middle ages – and it survived into the 17th century. In fact, it crops up in a number of areas of religious, legal, medical and cultural life.

In Shetland it is represented in an important folk tale. In literature and drama it was used as a device by Shakespeare and Sir Walter Scott, among others. Trial by ordeal was seen as God's judgment working in the court of law, and its theological status was hotly debated. Scientific minds tried to find some rational explanation why the blood of murder victims might act in this way.

Examining this trial by ordeal allows us to throw a light upon a wide area of European culture from the middle ages and into the 17th century. Then we can turn our attention back to Hillswick and to the hapless Marion, recognising that the most confusing aspect of her trial is best explained, not as local eccentricity, but as part of a much wider European history.

John Shaw's forthcoming lecture in Shetland Archives will delve into the world of witchcraft trials, and Marion Pardone's ordeal in 1644. It is on Thursday 20th October at 7.00pm. Tickets are priced £3.50 and are available now online at www.thelittleboxoffice.com/smaa or from Shetland Museum and Archives Reception on 01595 741562.

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 25TH NOVEMBER 2016.