

# Unkans

A newsletter for Shetland's  
Heritage and Culture

## Jimmy Moncrieff: 1959 – 2017



Shetland Amenity Trust General Manager, Jimmy Moncrieff, sadly passed away in February. Mr Moncrieff was at the head of The Amenity Trust for over 20 years and was the driving force in delivering many high profile projects which enhance and promote Shetland's heritage and culture. These included Shetland Museum and Archives, Sumburgh Head Lighthouse Visitor Centre, the archaeological dig at Old Scatness and more recently, the international

Follow the Vikings Project.

Mr Moncrieff's passion for history started at an early age while growing up at the Lodberrie in Lerwick. His love of the sea and boats was also prominent throughout his life and he was very proud to welcome the UK Maritime Heritage Forum conference to Shetland in 2013. He was very pleased to see the creation of Shetland Boat Week in 2016, which welcomed his friend, Kevin Fewster, Director of Royal Museums Greenwich as the first keynote speaker.

Mr Moncrieff studied law at Edinburgh University after leaving the Anderson High School and returned to Shetland in 1982 to work in the legal department of the Shetland Islands Council. Following this, he joined the Shetland Salmon Farmer's Association in 1987 where he played a significant role in a case against the Crown Estate on seabed rentals, and also gaining compensation following the *Braer* wreck.

Vikings were a particular passion for Mr Moncrieff, who held the position of Chairman of the Destination Viking Association. This led to the re-establishment of the European Viking Cultural Route, and the Follow the Vikings Project.

Friend and colleague, Val Turner said of Mr Moncrieff, "He was a visionary and he could see the bigger picture... He always wanted the best for Shetland."

### Unkans celebrates 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary with new format

After ten years of publication, the Unkans newsletter will be moving forward to become a mainly online publication. With a worldwide readership, the shift to digital publication will ensure we reach a growing audience and are able to offer a more interactive experience to our readers. For those who prefer a paper copy, there will still be a limited print run available to pick up from Shetland Museum and Archives.

First published in March 2007 to coincide with the opening of the new Shetland Museum and Archives, the publication was produced to provide details of events, research and activities within the service, and was later expanded in 2012 to incorporate the wider heritage and culture community.

Looking to the future, Unkans will continue on a quarterly basis, with occasional 'bumper' issues to cover specific events or occasions. The editor would like to thank everyone for their interest in Unkans and we look forward to seeing how the publication will develop in the years to come.

Emma Miller  
Unkans Editor

# Birthday Celebrations at Shetland Museum & Archives



On Wednesday 31<sup>st</sup> May, it was officially ten years since Her Majesty the Queen of Norway and Their Royal Highnesses the Duke and Duchess of Rothesay opened the Shetland Museum and Archives building at Hay's Dock.

It has been an incredible ten years, with over 850,000 visitors in through the doors – a remarkable achievement for a place with 23,200 people! There have been 900 events in the building and 86 exhibitions in the dedicated gallery space. Fifty-nine happy couples have either been married, or celebrated their Hamefarin in this wonderful dockside setting.

To celebrate, staff hosted an open day on Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> June and delivered a packed programme of events. This included gallery talks on the Scatness Bear, shipwrecks, Porfido Verde Antico (the *other* St. Ninian's Isle Treasure), and the death of Christie Fraser. Visitors had the opportunity to see behind the scenes in the Archives and visit the searchroom for a look at some of the more unusual pieces.

A selection of the more obscure items from the Museum collection was on display in the foyer for visitors to try and make a guess as to the function or purpose of the item, and this was a popular focal point, generating much conversation and debate.

The galleries also played host to a collection of unusual characters, leading groups of visitors on a tour through history. Costumed guides told stories of particular objects or people from Shetland's past including an appearance from the ghost of Earl Patrick Stewart himself – portrayed by none other than Curator, Dr Ian Tait.



*Costumed guides: Freya Garden as the Victorian Lady; Davy Cooper as the Pirate; Cathy Hallett as a Nordic Knitter; Ian Tait as Earl Patrick Stewart and Tracey Hawkins as a Viking Maid. The group led tours through the galleries as they told stories and pointed out different artefacts.*



*Anne and John McCullagh were first time visitors to the Museum and Archives .*

Around 560 people came along to join in the birthday celebrations, including first time visitors John and Anne McCullagh from Northern Ireland. This was their first visit to Shetland and they were looking forward to discovering the rich history of the islands as they began their journey through the galleries by examining the restored Threshing machine.

Lerwick residents Victoria Tait, and her daughter Freja, (*pictured below*) also enjoyed their visit, as they completed one of the Scavenger Hunts on offer to discover a trail of artefacts. Although Freja's favourite part of the Museum and Archives is the Trowie Knowe, she did admit she hasn't yet



found any trows!

Shetland Museum and Archives staff have taken pride in delivering a world class service to visitors over the last ten years and are justifiably proud of the Five Star visitor attraction status awarded by Visit Scotland, as well as other the other accolades given in this time.

Curator, Dr Ian Tait, said "We're very proud of what we have achieved over the last ten years. The exhibitions, events and projects that the Museum and Archives have been involved in has left a legacy that we will continue to build on over the next ten years, and beyond.

### A Summer of Activity

The next few months will be a flurry of activity with events to encourage and facilitate access to Shetland's natural and cultural heritage.

**Shetland Nature Festival** (1st-9th July) is now in its 10<sup>th</sup> year, continuing with a range of outdoor and indoor based activities in association with European Geoparks Week.  
[www.shetlandnaturefestival.co.uk](http://www.shetlandnaturefestival.co.uk)



**Shetland Boat Week** (7<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> August) takes to the water for the second year with more boat trips and the building of a brand new traditional boat.  
[www.shetlandboatweek.com](http://www.shetlandboatweek.com)



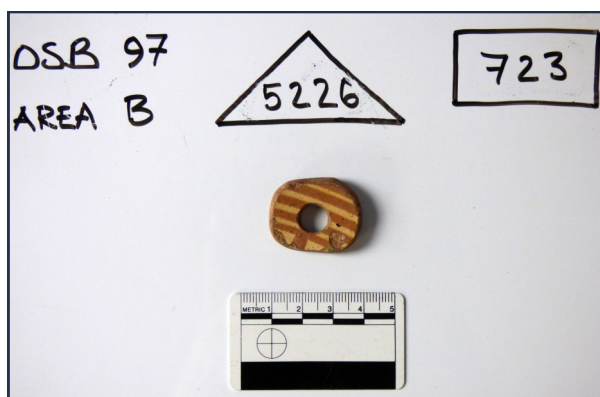
**Shetland Wool Week** (23<sup>rd</sup> September-1<sup>st</sup> October) returns with another record breaking year of event numbers and visitors from all around the globe.  
[www.shetlandwoolweek.com](http://www.shetlandwoolweek.com)



# Archiving Old Scatness

Over a year ago Shetland Museum and Archives acquired all the archaeological finds from the excavations at Scatness (1995-2006). The assemblage includes some well-known artefacts such as a carved stone depicting a boar, currently on display in the Museum galleries. However the collection also includes hundreds of boxes of animal bones, pottery, clay pipes, stone objects, metal objects, and environmental samples. A project began in Spring 2016 to archive this assemblage.

Old Scatness is famous for its Iron Age remains including a broch and wheelhouse, but the excavations also revealed Viking and Medieval deposits, structures and artefacts.



*An example of recycling: A spindle whorl made from a pottery sherd. The original pot was slip decorated with yellow and brown stripes. Post-Medieval.*

This new acquisition is exciting, but also a little daunting. Over 1500 boxes were shipped to Shetland from the University of Bradford, where they had been stored since 2006. Over the past ten years, a post-excavation team at Bradford has analysed, dated, and published the material (Dockrill et al. 2010, 2015 & forthcoming). The challenge for the current project team is to take this collection and make it user-friendly and readily accessible to the public.

All new acquisitions to the Museum are catalogued,

including details of the object's origins, dimensions and description. In this digital age, all these details are entered into a database along with a digital photograph of the artefact.

Heading this project are Dr Samantha Dennis and Tracey Hawkins, supported by a troop of enthusiastic volunteers. Follow the progress at: [www.facebook.com/OldScatnessBrochProject](http://www.facebook.com/OldScatnessBrochProject). The project will be completed in the spring of 2018.

This project was formed by Jenny Murray, Curator of Archaeology at Shetland Museum and Archives, with funding provided by Museums Galleries Scotland's Recognition Fund.

## References:

Dockrill, S.J., J. Bond, V. Turner, L. Brown, D. Bashford, J. Cussans, and R. Nicholson (2010) *Excavations at Old Scatness, Shetland Volume : The Pictish Village and Viking Settlement*. Shetland Heritage Publications: Lerwick

Dockrill, S.J., J. Bond, V. Turner, L. Brown, D. Bashford, J. Cussans, and R. Nicholson (2015) *Excavations at Old Scatness, Shetland Volume 2: The Broch and Iron Age Village*. Shetland Heritage Publications: Lerwick

Both titles are available to purchase online from [www.shetlandheritageshop.com](http://www.shetlandheritageshop.com)



*Belly of a salmon: a fragment of a carving on coarse-grained sandstone. Only the underside and fin survive. Pictish*

We are keen to include contributions from anyone who has something interesting to say about Shetland's culture and heritage. If you would like to submit an article please contact us.

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