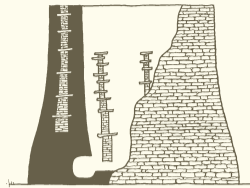


## Brochs

Shetland's most spectacular sites are some of the 80 visible Iron Age brochs which are located around the coast. From the wall head of Mousa Broch there is a good view of both the sound and of the Broch of Burray, opposite (at Sandwick). It is possible to see from one broch to the next in the South Mainland, and part of their purpose must have been to act as a network of watch towers to guard the shores.

Inside the tower, we think there were several wooden floors and numbers of people must have lived inside. The area around the broch was often enclosed - an outer defence in times of danger and, later, additional houses were built in this courtyard.



A broch was solid at ground level, other than where there were cells

Brochs are very enigmatic and so archaeologists have carried out major work at Old Scatness; unfolding the story of the broch and the Iron Age Village which surrounds it. Clickimin Broch, on the edge of Lerwick, stands several metres high and is easily accessible. Mousa is the best preserved broch in Scotland (brochs are not found outside Scotland) standing 13 metres high with a staircase between the double wall to the top. Off the beaten track, the striking red granite broch at Culswick, West Mainland, the well-

preserved broch at Burravoe, Yell, and the broch on the edge of the Loch of Houlland, Eshaness, are just some of the treats in store for the walker.



Mousa Broch is 13m high with a staircase between the double wall at the top

Clickimin Broch



## Warning

Many of Shetland's sites are scheduled and it is illegal to dig into them or disturb them in any way, even if you do have the landowner's permission. Play safe and do not disturb any sites - they are Shetland's Heritage for everyone to enjoy.

The official record of the sites in Shetland, the Sites and Monuments Record, is held at Shetland Amenity Trust, Garthspool, Lerwick, Shetland, ZE1 0NY. Tel: 01595 694688.

If you find any objects when you are exploring, in Scottish Law, they must be reported. Staff at the Shetland Museum and Archives, Hay's Dock, Lerwick will be pleased to help you. Tel: 01595 695057.

## Some Useful Contacts

Shetland Museum and Archives:	Hay's Dock, Lerwick, Tel: 01595 695057
Unst Heritage Centre:	Haroldswick, Unst, Tel: 01957 711528
Fetlar Interpretive Centre:	Houbie, Fetlar, Tel: 01957 733206
The Old Haa:	Burravoe, Yell, Tel: 01957 722339
Tangwick Haa Museum:	Eshaness, Tel: 01806 503389
Scalloway Museum:	Main Street, Scalloway
Bressay Heritage Centre:	Leiraness, Bressay, Tel: 01595 820750
Hoswick Visitor Centre:	Hoswick, Sandwick, Tel: 01950 431406
Quendale Mill:	Quendale, Dunrossness, Tel: 01950 460969
George Waterston Memorial Centre:	Fair Isle, Tel: 01950 460405
Mousa Ferry:	Sandwick, Tel: 01950 431367



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# Archaeology

heritage  
Shetland  
culture

## Discover yesterday tomorrow



Wherever you look in Shetland you will be sure to find the remains of ancient Shetlanders who have been there before you. Low intensity use of the hill land in more recent times and the scarcity of timber means that these remains are some of the best that you will find in Britain.

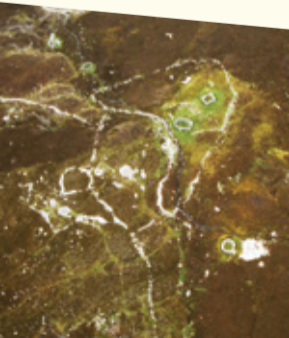


Sanydale temple on Shetland's Westside

In addition there are the spectacular and internationally important sites of Mousa broch (Scotland's best preserved broch), Jarlshof and Clickimin, (multi-period sites several metres high). Shetland is indeed a treasure trove from the past.

## Ancient Crofts

Shetlanders have been working the land, keeping sheep and cattle, and growing crops, for over 5,000 years. On the Westside, visitors can follow ancient boundary dykes for miles across the hill. The Scord of Brouster has three excavated houses amongst the fields. There are five houses at Sanydale, together with an exceptionally large and very impressive building described by its excavator as a 'temple'.



Ancient fields, clearance cairns and houses can be found in many hillside locations in Shetland

Multi-period site at Jarlshof



## Houses for the Dead

The earliest Shetlanders were buried in cairns, the majority built in the shape of a heel. The remains were laid in a small chamber in the centre. Who was buried in them? We do not know - there aren't enough for the whole population and the chambers are small. Perhaps the bodies were laid out for animals and birds to eat, and just a few bones from each person were put inside the cairn. A ceremony might have taken place in the concave façade at the front of the cairn. Even so, there was not room for many people inside.



A burial chamber or cist in Pettigarth's Field on the island of Whalsay

The biggest cairns are on hilltops (e.g. Ronas Hill) but there are also very impressive cairns on lower land - usually on knowes which command good views. Punds Water and Vementry are examples not to be missed.

## Standing Stones

Standing stones have been erected throughout Shetland from prehistoric times to the present day. They formed boundary markers, navigation aids and others were memorial stones. Among the dramatically placed stones are Newing, Nesting; one along the road to Muness, Unst and one in the garden of Leagarth House, Fetlar, where the Stone of the Ripples was later moved and set into landscaped grounds.



The largest standing stone in Shetland is sited at Lund in the island of Unst

## Burnt Mounds

If you find a turf covered heap of fist-sized, heat-shattered stones beside a burn, it will be a Bronze Age burnt mound.

Burnt mounds are usually crescent shaped and might have a box of stone slabs visible in the centre. Archaeologists debate their use. Were they cooking sites, meat being boiled in the trough by heating stones in a fire and placing them into the water? Experiments at Tangwick demonstrated that this was difficult. Perhaps water was taken from the trough and poured over hot stones to create steam for a sauna, or to make felt, or was it for a more smelly purpose, such as tanning or fulling? Burnt mounds were usually well away from the houses. Cruester, Bressay demonstrates how complex these sites can be. There are some spectacular burnt mounds on Fair Isle, but with over 300 on the mainland alone, they are easy to find.



Tangwick, Eshaness. Excavated burnt mounds seem to have industrial buildings beneath them

## Souterrains

Shetland's earliest refrigerators, these small underground passages which widen out slightly at the end, would have been good places for storing salted meat over the winter. However, occasionally they are found inside houses, under hearths (e.g. Jarlshof). Perhaps grain or items which needed to be kept dry were stored here. Crawl down a lit souterrain at Jarlshof, or, for the more adventurous smaller person, disappear into the souterrain at Wadbister, Bressay (take a torch).

Underhoull, Unst - an Iron Age refrigerator



# Archaeology in Shetland



Left: A Pictish house under excavation at Old Scatness Right: Life in Pictish times at Haroldswick

Many ruinous 12th century chapels stand in graveyards still used today as at Lund, Unst



Papil Stone - a replica stands in the churchyard

## Picts

By the 7th century AD, Shetland was firmly part of Pictland, and the most enduring legacy of these people is their art work: carved stones and silverwork. Carved stone slabs have been found at Cullingsbrough, Bressay (where intriguingly the graveyard has been built over the broch), and Papil, Burra. Mail, Cunningsburgh was the find spot of several rune and ogham stones and the Mail Figure. Some of these stones are on display in the Shetland Museum and Archives.

## St. Ninian's

When the chapel on St. Ninian's Isle was excavated, the remains of 7th century stone shrines were found, showing that the island was important in early Christian times. The chapel which is still visible is rather later in date (it lies over an earlier one). There are replicas of the silver treasure found here in the Shetland Museum and Archives. Interpretation is provided on site and the spot where the treasure was found (inside the chapel, near the altar) is marked with a stone pillar.



St. Ninian's Chapel, reached via a beautiful tombolo

## Monks & Hermits

Priests set up chapels in the heart of Shetland (eg Papil, Burra and St Ninian's Isle) but the small cells on remote stacks and peninsulas either housed monks and hermits or were places of retreat for the priests themselves. An example can be found at Da Birrier, Yell (best viewed from the air), facing a similar settlement on the Kame of Isbister across Yell Sound. Today, these are still some of the most inaccessible places in Shetland.



Da Birrier, West Sandwick, Yell

## A Haven for Vikings

Shetland was right in the middle of the Viking seaways, and so it is hardly surprising that some of them stopped here, built houses and established farms. They brought with them a new style of building, a new political system, new laws and a new language, all of which have left their mark. Archaeologists have begun systematically investigating some of their longhouses in Unst, one of their first landfalls. How did these incomers fit in with the existing population? What difference did their flexible boats with keels and sun compasses and their advanced fishing weights make to Shetland's economy?

The current Viking Unst project started by excavating longhouse sites at Belmont and Hamar. Both were altered through time, and the Belmont longhouse was longlived. Other interesting sites include the house on the beach at Sandwick, and Framgord, a mile further along the coast, where the chapel associated with an unexcavated massive Viking farm building (to the north) is still in use today. There are small attractive early Christian crosses in the graveyard. The longhouse at Underhoull has an Iron Age souterrain next to it and a broch above it.



Artist's impression of life in Viking times

There are several houses, possibly one farm, which evolved over the centuries, at Jarlshof. The Vikings' parliament (or Alting) was situated fairly centrally in Shetland in the fertile Tingwall Valley, where an islet projects into the loch.

## Soapstone

The properties of soapstone, or talc, were known 3,000 years before the Vikings ever came to Shetland. The Vikings, however, did not make much pottery, but instead used natural materials. They carved stone bowls straight out of the rock. The shapes of the bowls were left in the hillside, and can be best seen at Catpund, Cunningsburgh. The cliff faces at Fethaland, North Mainland is also covered with these marks.



Evidence of where bowls were carved out of Catpund soapstone

## Chapels

By the 12th century there were numerous chapels throughout Shetland. Most of these are now very ruinous but take time to visit Lund, where there is a fish carved on one of the window lintels. Framgord has fascinating crosses in the surrounding graveyard, as well as a Viking or Norse farm just outside. Both these sites are in Unst, as is Kirkaby, where the early circular graveyard is still visible.



Replica objects carved in soapstone during the living history project at Old Scatness

