



The village of Houbie



Fetlar



How to get to Fetlar

If you are travelling by car, you are advised to book your vehicle on both the ferries that will take you to Fetlar by phoning the booking office. On leaving Lerwick, follow the main road north for Toft and the North Isles ferry.

The first leg of the journey takes about 40 minutes before you board the ferry at Toft. The crossing to Yell takes about 20 minutes, then follow the main road north for about 40 minutes. At Gutcher, board the ferry which will take you to Hamars Ness in Fetlar, a crossing of around 25 minutes. There are two ferries operating at Gutcher, so please check with the ferry crew that the ferry you are boarding goes to Fetlar.

There is also a public bus service from Lerwick to Gutcher. Contact VisitShetland for current times.

A dial-a-ride transport service from the Fetlar ferry runs Monday to Saturday. Bookings should be made by 4.30pm the day before travelling.

Please note that it is not possible to buy fuel in Fetlar.

Fetlar

The Garden of Shetland

Some Useful Information

Accommodation:	VisitShetland, Lerwick Tel: 08701999440
Ferry Booking Office:	Tel: 01957 722259
Dial-a-ride Service:	Tel: 01595 745745
Interpretive Centre and Neighbourhood Information Point:	Houbie, Tel: 01957 733206
RSPB Warden:	Tel: 01957 733246
Shop:	Houbie. Open limited hours. Contact VisitShetland, Lerwick for current hours
Fuel:	Not available on Fetlar
Public Toilets:	Hamars Ness (ferry terminal); campsite
Places to Eat:	Fetlar Interpretive Centre has tea and coffee facilities Fetlar Cafe is open during the summer months
Post Office:	Houbie
Public Telephones:	Hamars Ness; Houbie
Churches:	Tresta Church of Scotland; Society of Our Lady of the Isles



A shed at Houll with an old boat, the Charlotte, as its roof



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Welcome to Fetlar

Fetlar's fertile soils and green landscape have led to its reputation as the Garden of Shetland. This rich natural heritage, along with the strong sense of community in Fetlar, has made the island attractive to generations of visitors.

A persistent tradition says that Gruting in Fetlar was the site of the first Norse landing in the west. Wandering through the different parts of the island, visitors can trace the occupation of Fetlar from the Stone Age, through the Picts and the Norse, to the more recent past when townships of people were evicted by the laird to make room for sheep. The Clearances left vast uninhabited areas and ruined croft houses, once the homes of hundreds of people and even today a source of sadness. These areas, however, now provide a rich and varied landscape of ancient sites, exquisite flowers and habitats for ground-nesting birds. Particular beauty spots are the award winning Tresta Beach on the west side of the island, Urie and Gruting in the north, the Sand of Sand near Brough Lodge and Funzie (pronounced Finnie) in the east.

The social life of the island is varied, and visitors are a welcome addition to any local event. Of particular interest are the annual Sheepdog Trials and the Midsummer Foy.

Below left: The dramatic cliffs of Funzie, home to many seabirds and seals. Below middle: an Orchid. Below right: an Otter



Mires of Funzie



Left: a Whimbrel. Right: a Red-necked Phalarope

Birds, Wildlife & Natural Heritage

Fetlar is extremely rich in wildlife. One of Britain's rarest breeding birds, the Red-necked Phalarope, can often be seen feeding along the shores of the Loch of Funzie during the summer months. There is also a hide overlooking one of their breeding sites at the adjacent Mires of Funzie. Fetlar remains the stronghold for this bird in the UK, usually holding more than half of the breeding population. This tiny, attractive wader is very approachable and is unusual in that the male is smaller, less colourful than the female and takes on all incubating and chick-rearing duties.

Whimbrels are another speciality. Fetlar supports a significant proportion of the UK breeding population. Whimbrel are very similar to their larger cousin the Curlew, but have a pale stripe through the centre of the crown and a characteristic and evocative call. A good place to see them is along the road to the airstrip.

Fetlar was once home to Britain's only pair of breeding Snowy Owls. Recorded in 1967 by the late Bobby Tulloch, they bred successfully each year until 1975. Unfortunately no Snowy Owls have been seen since May 1995.



A Red-throated Diver

Other bird-life of interest in Fetlar includes Red-throated Diver, Golden Plover, Ringed Plover, Dunlin, Eider Duck, Arctic Skua, Great Skua, Arctic Tern and Oystercatchers. Fulmars, Black Guillemots, Kittiwakes, Shags and Puffins can be seen around the coast. Urie and the old pier at Brough are particularly good spots for observing otters and seals.

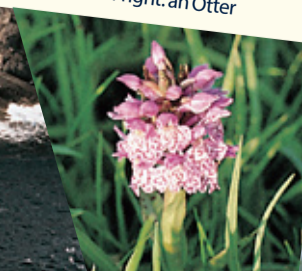
From April to August a succession of wild flowers brightens the landscape. The rarer varieties include the Frog Orchid, Creeping Willow, Water Aven, Knotted Pearlwort and Lesser Twayblade.

For further information on Fetlar's natural heritage, contact the RSPB warden. Fetlar's importance as a home for bird life is recognised by the statutory bird sanctuary set up in the north of the isle, at Vord Hill.

Though the sanctuary itself is closed from 1 May to 11 August to protect breeding birds, the range of species that live within it can be seen elsewhere on Fetlar.

Information on all aspects of Fetlar's natural heritage can be found at the Fetlar Interpretive Centre where visitors can see detailed displays and make use of multi-media presentations on birds and other wildlife, wild flowers and the island's geology.

The Geowall at Funzie shows the complex nature of Fetlar's geology, including the unique Funzie conglomerate.

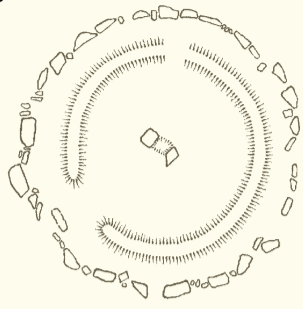


Fetlar geology wall

History and Antiquities

Finnigert Daek is most probably Fetlar's oldest surviving man-made structure. Dating from the Bronze Age it was built over 5,500 years ago. It runs north-south dividing the island in two, and although much of it is now ruined, large sections can still be seen.

Close by is an ancient ring of stones known as the Haltadans. Legend has it that the two centre stones were a fiddler and his wife who were playing music for a group of trows dancing in a circle when the sun came up and turned them all to stone.



The Haltadans ring of stones

Please note that the Finnigert Daek and the Haltadans are within the part of the Statutory Bird Sanctuary, which is closed from May to August. Please ask the RSPB warden or the staff at Fetlar Interpretive Centre for advice.

More easily accessible is the Giant's Grave, just off the road to Aith. It is the site of a Viking boat burial which was the subject of excavations by the television programme Time Team in 2002, along with a Norse house site at Gord. The sites were covered over after the excavations, but information on the digs can be found at Fetlar Interpretive Centre.



The Stone of the Ripples

A standing stone known as the Stone of the Ripples can be seen by looking down into Leagarth gardens from the road between Houbie and the Community Hall.

Fetlar is the home of the World Quickplay Hnefatafl Championships. Hnefatafl is a Viking board game and the championships attract competitors from across the world.

Buildings of interest

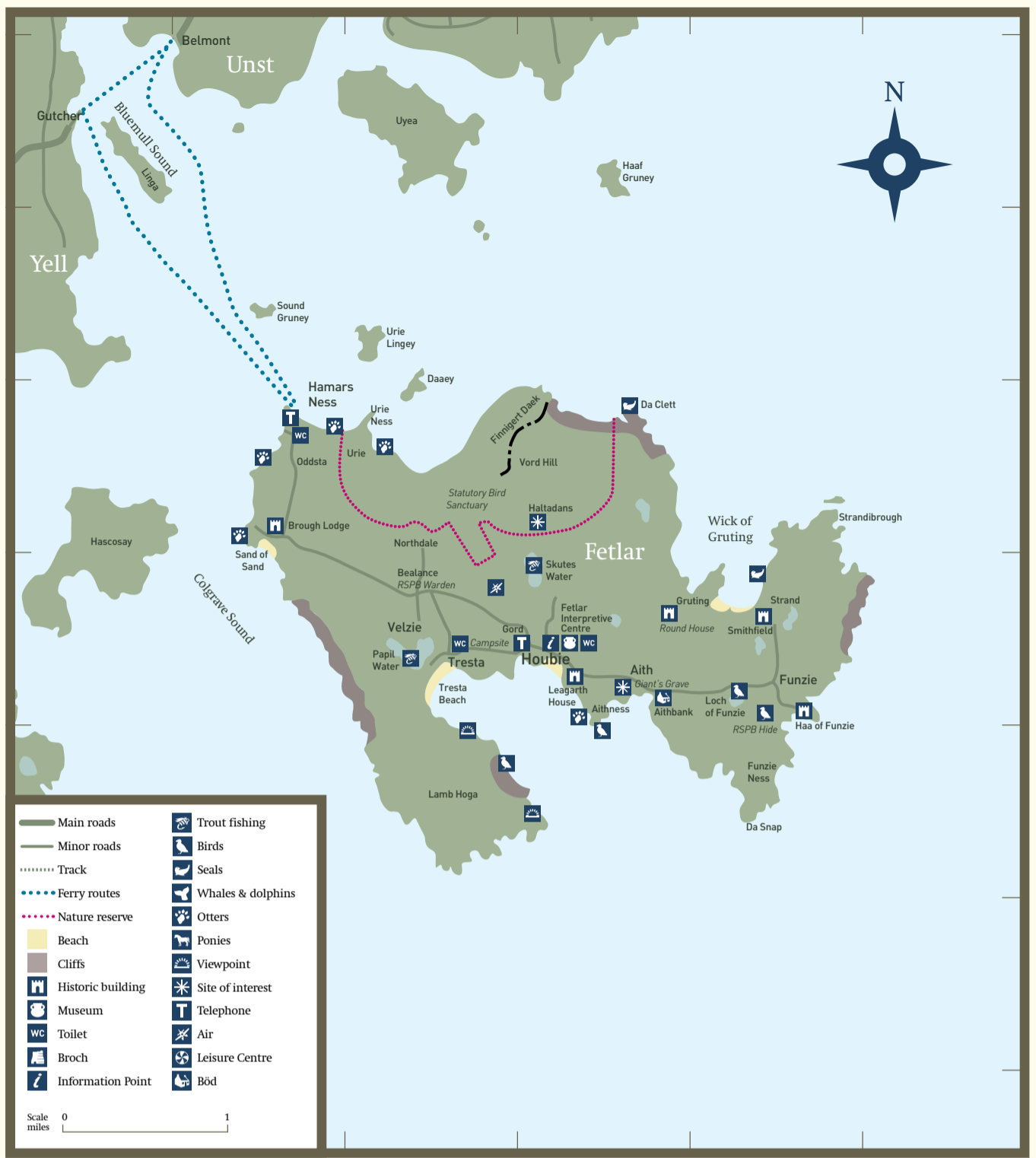
Not far along the road from the ferry terminal you will see Brough Lodge, built around 1820 for the Nicolson family. Although the house is not accessible to the public, it is clearly visible from the road. Close to the house, sitting prominently on the site of an Iron Age broch, is a rare Shetland example of a Georgian folly. The tower, built for Sir Arthur Nicolson, was used at one time as an astronomical observatory.



Brough Lodge

Another example of a folly built for Sir Arthur is the Round House at Gruting.

Leagarth House was built in 1900 by Sir William Watson Cheyne, a Fetlar man who became Lord Lister's assistant in his pioneering work on antiseptic surgery in the late 19th century, and later a prominent surgeon in his own right. Like Brough Lodge, the house itself is not open to the public, although an exhibition on both houses can be seen at the Interpretive Centre.



The camping bōd, close to the main road at Aithbank, began as a fishing station, and in the 20th Century became the home of Jamesie Laurenson, who was well known for his local knowledge and stories.

On the east side of the island is the now ruined Haa of Funzie, which was a fishing station in the late 1700s.

The Fetlar Interpretive Centre

For all aspects of visitor information, the Interpretive Centre at the Beach of Houbie is open daily from May to the end of September. 11am to 3pm on weekdays and 1pm to 4pm at weekends.

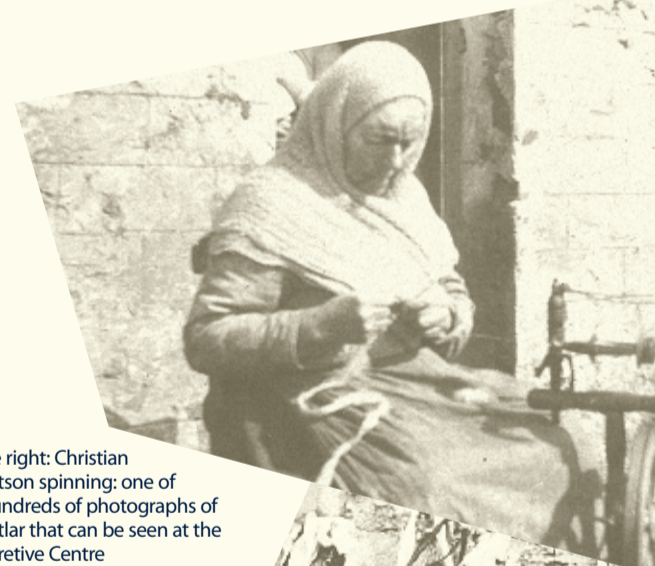
The museum offers displays and interactive multimedia on the island's cultural history, folklore, archaeology, wildlife and geology. Visitors can listen to recordings of Fetlar stories and see film of the island dating back to the 1930s.



Norse soapstone loom or fishing weight found at Gord

A visit to the Centre is well worthwhile for its award-winning exhibition on Sir William Watson Cheyne and the history of Antiseptic Surgery.

The Interpretive Centre is also a Neighbourhood Information Point.



Above right: Christian Robertson spinning: one of the hundreds of photographs of old Fetlar that can be seen at the Interpretive Centre



Below right: An old tradition at Halloween or New Year, Skekklers, children or adults dressed in a costume made from straw. They would visit each house in turn dancing and making a lot of noise



Right & below: The Fetlar flit boat which was used to ferry goods, animals (and even tractors and cars) from the steamer to the shore, before the advent of the Ro-Ro ferries

Aithbank, once the home of Jamesie Laurenson, well-known for his story telling, is now a Camping Bōd

Fetlar Interpretive Centre

