Out at Port Arthur the marina and Scalloway Boating Club offer a safe haven and a warm welcome for visiting boats and their crews. Next to the boating club is the NAPFC Marine Centre. The Centre offers training in nautical studies and research facilities for scientific and technological projects relating to the fishing and aquaculture industries. It also houses an excellent restaurant serving local produce.

Traditional boats drawn up on shore recall Shetland’s fishing past. In Norse times Scalloway (the bay of the hall) may have been the home of an important landowner or official.

Scalloway’s other attractions include a heated 17-metre indoor swimming pool, the youth centre, a hotel, guest houses, cafes, pubs, shops and playing fields. Throughout the village are a number of works of public art including sculptures done in Hildasay granite and flower tubs recycled from tractor wheels and tyres.

Welcome to the Central Mainland
Shetland’s Central Mainland contains the village of Scalloway, the islands of Burra and Trondra, and the parishes of Tingwall, Whiteness and Weisdale.

Central Shetland is a landscape of intricate contrasts: layers of limestone make slashes of green between brown hills of harder rock; long narrow voes, gouged out by glaciers, run miles into the land; storm-battered offlying islands shelter peaceful anchorages. It’s great walking and fishing country, with scenery, wild flowers and birdlife of amazing richness and variety.

Scalloway
The busy commercial port of Scalloway, Shetland’s capital in the 17th century, is the heart of Central Shetland. This picturesque, and surprisingly leafy, village is shielded from Atlantic gales by a barrier of rugged isles, many of which are uninhabited, and its sheltered harbour has long been a place of refuge for ships on Shetland’s wild Atlantic coast. To the north lies Tingwall’s fertile valley and the headlands of Whiteness and Weisdale.

Scalloway Castle
Overlooking the fine new harbour is Earl Patrick Stewart’s Scalloway Castle, built by forced labour in 1599. It was carefully positioned to control the safe anchorage and the fertile farmlands to the north. The castle is a grand example of a Scottish fortified house. But it was occupied for less than a century, and is now roofless. Beneath the grand banqueting hall are large kitchens and a guard-room where 17th century witches, condemned to hang on nearby Gallows Hill, waited to hear their fate. The castle is under the care of Historic Scotland and is open to the public.

Scalloway Museum
Situated next to the Castle the Scalloway Museum tells the story of Scalloway’s past and present – from the ploughs of prehistoric farmers to the latest developments in the aquaculture industry. There’s a fascinating display on the wartime exploits of Norway’s ‘Shetland Bus’ heroes, who made the village their secret base in the Second World War. A small Reference Room houses a collection of books and documents, mostly relating to the Shetland Bus and the Second World War and it can be accessed by anyone wishing to do research in that area. The museum also has a children’s area, a gift shop and hot and cold drinks are available.

Main Street
A short walk along New Street (past a curious stone plaque built into a wall, describing a theory of tidal motion) is the Muckle Haa, once the dwelling place of Scalloway’s most important families.

Further west on Main Street is a memorial erected to the men who lost their lives while serving with the ‘Shetland Bus’. Further still is the Prince Olav Slipway, built by the Norwegians to repair the boats damaged by storms and enemy action during raids on their Nazi-occupied homeland. Across the street, Norway House was their barracks.
Tingwall, Whiteness and Weisdale

In June and July the rich meadows of the Tingwall Valley, on the B9074 north of Scalloway, are one of the best places to see Shetland's native wild flowers, including several species of orchid.

A picturesque golf course lies between the Loch of Asta and Tingwall Loch - both fine trout lochs and also home to Shetland's first resident Mute Swans. Other birds include Tufted Duck, Red-breasted Merganser, and Common and Black-headed Gulls.

At the north end of Tingwall Loch lies the site of Shetland's ancient parliament. Delegates met at the Lawing Holm to make laws and decide the rights and wrongs of cases. Nearby is Tingwall Kirk, the mother church of Shetland, and its ancient graveyard.

Past the Lawing Holm and the Tingwall Kirk, near the junction with the main A971 road to the west, there is a pub restaurant, and the Tingwall Public Hall, noted for its Sunday teas and social functions.

One of the most spectacular views in Shetland is from Whiteness, on the boundary between Tingwall and Whiteness. Beyond the small islands lying in Whiteness Voe you can see as far as Foula, 25 miles to the west. You can also see the Bodd of Nesting, a 19th century merchant's store, now converted to camping accommodation.

North of the Loch of Stroom, with its small ruined castle, is the parish of Weisdale. Beside the small Loch of Hellister, Shetland Jewellery, a Neighbourhood Information Point, welcome visitors to view craft workers and silversmiths on the job.

John Unieus Ross, who became "king" of the Cocos Keeling Islands, was born in a particularly beautiful area at Sound. From the main road on the hill above, at the Scord of Weisdale, there's another magnificent view over south-west Shetland. The head of Weisdale Voe is a good place to see wading birds, while a couple of hundred yards up the B9075 road is the beautifully restored Weisdale Mill, housing the Bonhoga Gallery, and café, run by Shetland Arts. There is a small community garden beside the Weisdale Kirk.

The largest area of trees in Shetland surrounds the farm of Kergord, higher up the valley of Weisdale. There are no crofts here - the tenants were evicted in the mid-19th century to make way for sheep farms. The Kergord plantations, now being managed and extended, attract Chaffinches, Robins and woodland birds rare elsewhere in the islands. The secluded farmhouse of Flemington was the wartime Special Operations Executive's HQ for the Shetland Bus operation (see overleaf). From Kergord the road winds through the hills past peat bogs to Sandwater, another good trout loch with extensive reedbeds.

Turning right onto the main A970 road takes you past one of Shetland's biggest, deepest bogs, the Loch of Girkosto - famous for its Arctic Char and, tradition says, named after a Norse girl called Gerrihildr: she is supposed to have drowned here 1200 years ago. Following the A970 south through Tingwall and over the Windy Grind, visitors will find a welcome on Shetland's main golf course, at Dale, just north of the Bridge of Firth junction which takes you back to Scalloway.

Burras and Trondra

The B9074 road south from Scalloway goes through East Voe, before crossing the first of three bridges linking the Shetland Mainland to the beautiful isles of Trondra, West Burra and East Burra.

At Burbarland on Trondra the Shetland Croft Trail is a wonderful place for children to see old Shetland breeds of livestock, and to learn about crofting history and traditional crafts such as boatbuilding. The Burras Bridge leads to the pretty fishing village of Hennsruev, with lovely coastal walking out to the lighthouse on Fugleness.

Meal Beach is one of Shetland's finest beaches and a favourite picnic spot with convenient car park.

At the south end of West Burras the roofless kirk of St. Laurence at Papil is famous for three early Christian carved stones found in the graveyard.

Two of the original stones and a replica of the Papil stone are on show at the Shetland Museum and Archives in Lerwick.

At Duncansclett there's a fine example of an old croft house with a thatched roof. It has been restored recently by the local history group. A footpath from the car park leads down to the Atlantic armen beach at Minn and onto Kettinness - a wild headland with seals and colonies of Arctic Skuas and Arctic Terns. Please keep to the edge of the nesting grounds, if you disturb these birds they'll mob you and you may draw blood.

On an inlet next to the bridge between East and West Burras is the Outdoor Centre, a former school now used as a hostel for walkers, walkers and nature study holidays. The short turf on Burras' rocky hills and shores makes perfect hiking country. A walk up to the reservoir on East Burras gives one of the best panoramas of the islands.

Beyond the hamlet of House lies House Ness, a promontory with more good walking, rock scenery, seal colonies and seals. And, wherever you walk or drive on Burras, there's always that mysterious and dramatic silhouette of the isle of Foula, out on the Atlantic horizon.