



Heritage Crafts



Shetland Arts and Crafts Association

The Shetland Arts and Crafts Association is a group dedicated to promoting arts and crafts within Shetland and beyond. It is a voluntary based group which aims to help individual members reach their potential while helping new crafters find their feet. It also aims to maintain a network of craft workers in Shetland by providing relevant information and advice for individuals and the craft community at large. One of the main events organised by the Association is the Clickimin Craft Fair which takes place every year in the Clickimin centre, Lerwick in November and boasts a huge selection of what Shetland craftsmen and women have to offer.

The Shetland Arts and Crafts Association is a membership based scheme, members pay a small fee each year to be included in the association. Members can choose Associate, Group or Full membership. Full members go through an independent quality control process to ensure that the standard of work is consistently high. Full members' work is featured on the Shetland Arts and Crafts website and some of these members have opened up their workshops for visitors. These can be found on the Shetland Craft Trail, you will find details on the Shetland Arts and Crafts website and on the Shetland Arts and Crafts Craft Trail map and leaflet. Many of the shops in Lerwick and throughout Shetland stock local arts and crafts.

For further information please visit www.shetlandartsandcrafts.co.uk

Useful contacts

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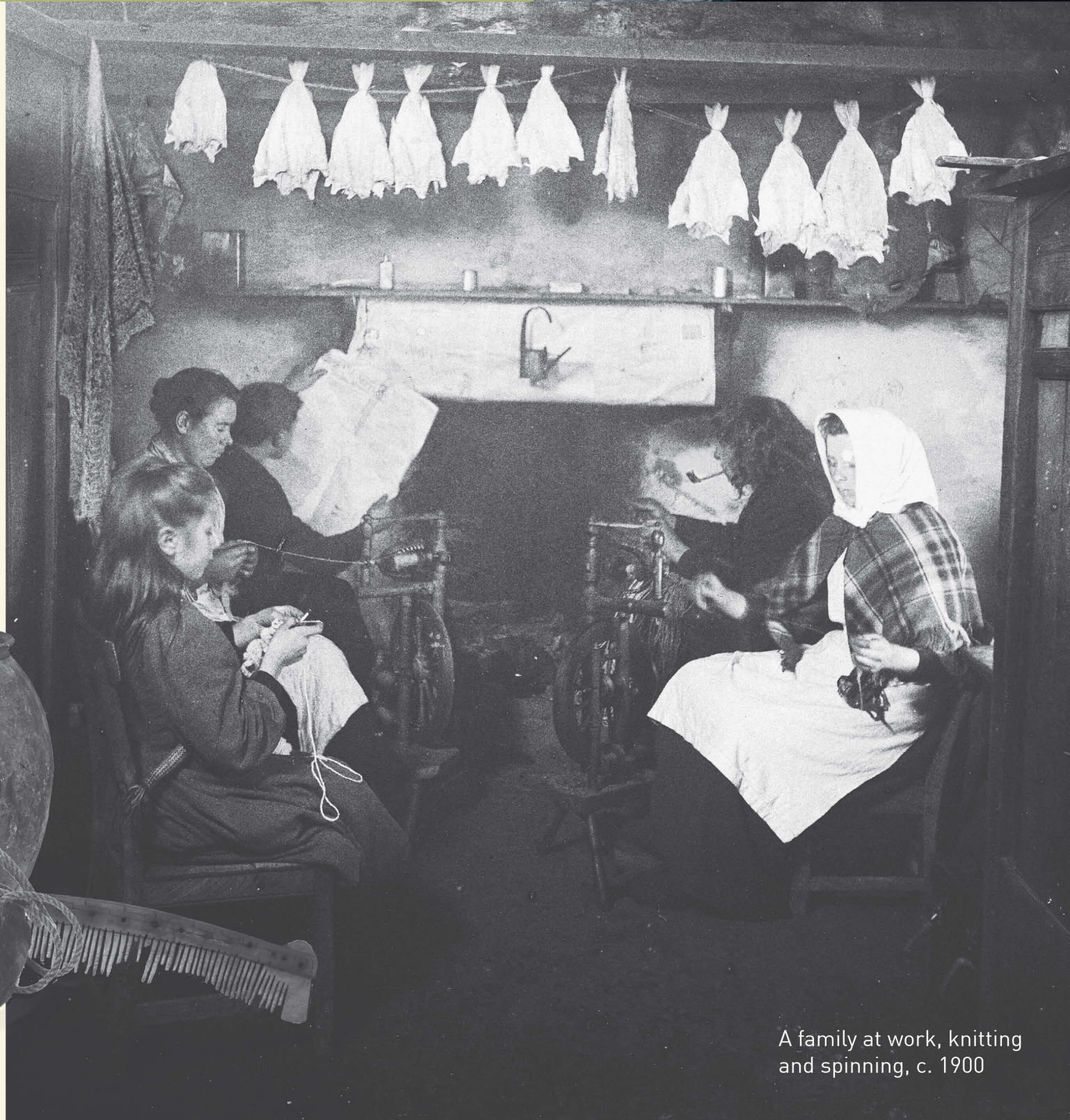
Imagine a life without shops.

Imagine if before going out in the morning you'd had to make your own clothes. Imagine if before dinner, you'd had to form pots, bowls and cutlery. And imagine if before you could sit and relax, you'd had to construct your own chair with your own hand-made tools.

These craft skills were once a part of everyday life in Shetland. Home was a family workshop. People used natural resources around them to make everything they needed.

Home remains a workshop for many craft-makers today. Skills have been passed from generation to generation, and many traditional techniques are still alive.

In this leaflet we go behind closed doors to reveal what is being made by Shetland's heritage craft-makers today.



A family at work, knitting and spinning, c. 1900



Wool

Knitting

Shetland knitwear has been popular with royalty, and nowadays appears on countless catwalks. Today it is Shetland's best selling craft product.



Top: Fashion drawing, c.1930

Left: Delicate fine lace shawl, knitted c.1900

Right: H.R.H the Prince of Wales wearing Fair Isle jumper, 1922

Bottom: Shetland sheep, one of the smallest breeds in Britain



Before industrialisation, A century ago Shetland women knitted whenever their hands were idle. They knitted socks, vests and jumpers for all the family. Women also produced large quantities of plain, patterned and fine lace garments to sell, to earn extra income.

Today's knitters draw on generations of skill in using stitch, colour and pattern. There are many contemporary designers working in Shetland, using wool and yarns to make garments and accessories that complement the global Shetland knitwear industry.

Top: Hand knitter Ina Irvine

Centre top: Burra bear

Centre bottom: Fair Isle notebooks by Mary Fraser

Bottom: Limited edition Mirrie Dancers costume designed by Nielanell and inspired by the grandeur of the Aurora Borealis. This costume was specially commissioned for Shetland fiddlers to wear at the Edinburgh Tattoo and reflects modern design combined with traditional techniques.

Photo by Ivan Hawick



And the secret to success? Shetland sheep. Their soft fleece is of the finest quality, and has led to the world-wide popularity of Shetland knits. The silky feel of their wool is due to the sheep's ability to survive Shetland's harsh climate on a diet of heather and seaweed.

Textile designer at Shetland College



Weaving

People have woven yarns to make cloth and braids for thousands of years. Families kept a loom at home to make clothes and blankets. From 1920 to 1970 Shetland tweed was a high quality export, to international fashion houses in America, Japan and Europe.

Today craft-makers create woven fabrics to incorporate into artworks, or to sell as products.

Wood

Carpentry

Shetland has a number of furniture-makers producing classic and contemporary ranges, and one-off pieces. Traditional furniture was simple in style, with discreet detailing, and this is still characteristic in modern designs today.

Smaller scale wooden items are crafted by many wood-turners and carpenters, such as toys, domestic items and exquisite boat models.



Above: Traditional wooden armchair by Paparwerk Furniture

Boat building

Before 1850 there were no roads in Shetland. Instead, every family owned a small boat to move from place to place. The *fourareen* (four-oared boat) was the most common, and was based on Norwegian boat types.

Nowadays similar boats are used locally for competitive rowing. Various kinds of locally-made boats are sailed during the summer months. Not surprisingly, boatbuilders' skills are in heavy demand, and not only from Shetland customers.



Below: Building a *sixareen* (six oared boat) at Shetland Museum and Archives boatsheds.

Instruments

Shetland's musical heritage is world renowned. At the core of that tradition is the fiddle (or violin). Acoustic and electric fiddles are designed and made locally, drawing on generations of local knowledge and experience.

Fiddle made by local luthier Ewen Thomson as a commission from the National Museums of Scotland



Plants

Basketry

Just as we use plastic carrier bags for so many purposes today, our forebears used woven baskets to transport or store just about everything around the house or croft.



They made them from different plants, and in a variety of shapes and sizes, depending on the purpose.



Left: Carrying a kishie of peats, c.1890
Right: Creative basketry using traditional techniques



Kishies were the most common type of basket, and used to transport peats and manure. The tradition of kishie-making is still alive today. Local experts hand down their skills through demonstrations and workshops, and today traditional basket-making techniques are used creatively in product and sculpture.



Hide, horn and bone

Leather-working

Hide has long been used to make items such as *rivlins* (shoes) or grain sieves. Later, leather-working became more common, for making sea boots and harnesses. Contemporary products include sheepskin rugs, and leather knitting belts.

Horn and bone carving

Shetlanders used horn to make cups and spoons, and bone to make small items like needles and buttons. Today there is a revival in using horn and bone as a creative material. Craft-makers are re-learning these ancient skills.

Metal

Blacksmithing

At one time each village had a local blacksmith who made everything from horse-shoes to anchors. The blacksmith was essential to each community. Today, blacksmiths are increasingly called upon to undertake decorative work.

Jewellery making

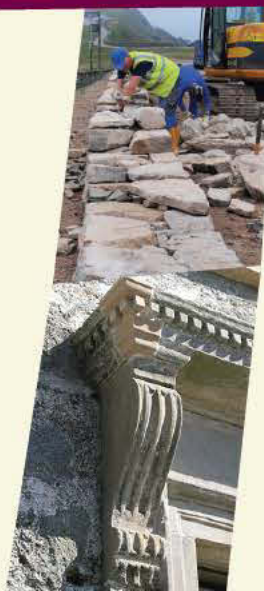
For 2000 years Shetlanders have made metal jewellery. Today there are a number of jewellers working in Shetland, often preserving the island's Pictish, Celtic and Norse motifs.



Stone

Stone is plentiful in Shetland. Throughout the islands you can see thousands of stone dykes and buildings. Stone wasn't wasted - derelict buildings were rebuilt into modern structures. Today rubble is often used to build modern dry-stone dykes or even to create public art!

Islanders also carved stone to make spinning whorls, whetstones, moulds and querns. Stonemasons today still carve decorative architectural work, as well as small one-off pieces.



Heritage for the future

A range of quality craft products has been developed by Shetland Amenity Trust as part of their Heritage Crafts initiative. The range of distinctive goods is inspired by, and reflects, Shetland's heritage and culture.

The aim of the project is to celebrate local craftsmanship, and to produce a range of outstanding branded goods that demonstrate good design, quality workmanship and effective use of materials.

Look out for the branded range at the Shetland Museum and Archives shop or shop online at

www.shetlandheritageshop.com

