

Museums and Heritage Centres



Island treasures



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Unst Boat Haven:	Haroldswick
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Old Haa:	Burravoe, Yell, Tel: 01957 722339
Tangwick Haa:	Tangwick, Eshaness, Tel: 01806 503389
The Cabin:	Wirlie, Vidlin, Tel: 01806 577243
Midden Court:	Symbister, Whalsay
Bremen Bød:	Symbister, Whalsay
Bød of Gremista:	Gremista, Lerwick, Tel: 01595 694386
Bressay Heritage Centre:	Leiraness, Bressay, Tel: 01595 820750
Up-Helly-Aa Exhibition:	Galley Shed, St Sunniva Street, Lerwick
Shetland Family History Society:	6 Hillhead, Lerwick http://www.shetland-fhs.org.uk/
Shetland Croft Trail:	Burland, Trondra
Easthouse:	Duncansclate, Burra. Tel 01595 859623
Scalloway Museum:	Castle Street, Scalloway. Tel 01595 880734
Cunningsburgh History Hut:	Cunningsburgh. Tel 07771260198
Sandsayre Interpretive Centre:	Leebitton, Sandwick
Hoswick Visitor Centre:	Hoswick, Sandwick, Tel: 01950 431406
Crofthouse Museum:	Voe, Dunrossness, Tel 01950 460557
Quendale Water Mill:	Quendale, Dunrossness, Tel: 01950 460969
George Waterston Memorial Centre:	Fair Isle, Tel 01595 760244

Shetland Museum and Archives is open throughout the year, while most other museums and heritage centres are seasonal. Check current opening hours with VisitShetland, Tel 01595 693434



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Shetland has an extremely rich and diverse cultural heritage. This is something which Shetlanders, both native and adopted, are immensely proud of.

Our fascination for cultural and natural heritage is apparent in the extensive network of local history groups, visitor centres and community museums which exist throughout Shetland, and their rich collections of treasures - musical, written, objects and photographs.

This network, driven by enthusiastic volunteers and supported by Shetland Amenity Trust, is an extremely valuable resource, which is actively engaged in preserving the past and recording the present for future generations.

The Shetland Museum and Archives, situated on the restored Hay's Dock in Lerwick, is the best place to set out on your voyage of discovery to learn about Shetland's three billion year old history. Here you will discover the story of Shetland from its fiery birth, describing the influence of its inhabitants on the landscape, their lifestyle, technology, architecture, art, folklore and music. The new facility also incorporates Shetland Archives with excellent research facilities to explore the large collection of written, photographic and oral archives.



Customs and Folklore displays in Shetland Museum and Archives

The most famous Shetland treasure is the St Ninian's Isle Pictish treasure, discovered during excavations in 1958. The Museum of Scotland in Edinburgh displays the originals, but high quality replicas can be seen in the Shetland Museum and Archives along with carved pillar stones and other items from the excavation. However, the real treasures of Shetland are to be found in the islands, their people and the collections they care for.



Replicas of St Ninian's Isle Pictish treasure

The Cabin at the Wirlie, Vidlin is full to the roof of mementoes, artefacts, photographs and curios from Shetland's long maritime past. Of particular local interest is the Sea Gallantry medal presented to local men who rescued the crew of the Trawler *Rapid* in 1912. Many memories of wars are also held within the walls of the Cabin.

Shetland Bus display at Scalloway Museum

Scalloway Museum has many displays telling the history of Scalloway and the surrounding areas, giving visitors an insight into the lives of Shetlanders throughout the ages. The story of the Shetland Bus operation, when Norwegian freedom fighters carried out their own war against the occupying German forces, has its own dedicated area within the Museum. The Museum also has a cafe and children's play area.

The Old Haa at Burravoe in Yell tells a remarkable story about the *Bohus* which was wrecked on East Yell in 1924. You can see artefacts from the wreck, look at photographs and listen to recordings about the event.

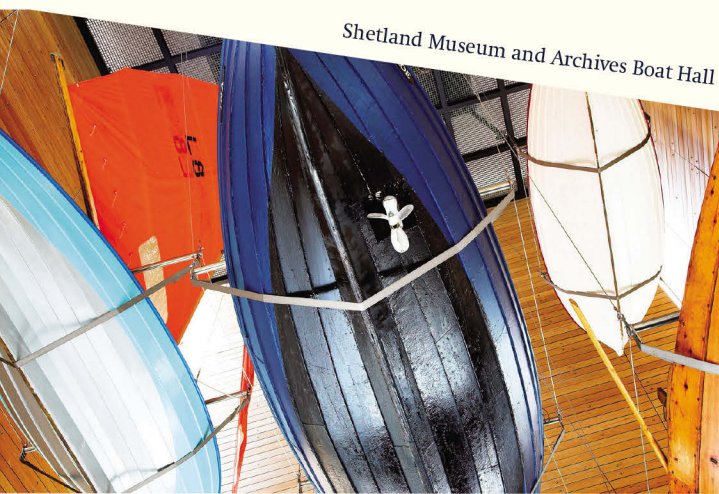


Brucie Henderson's curiosity cabinet

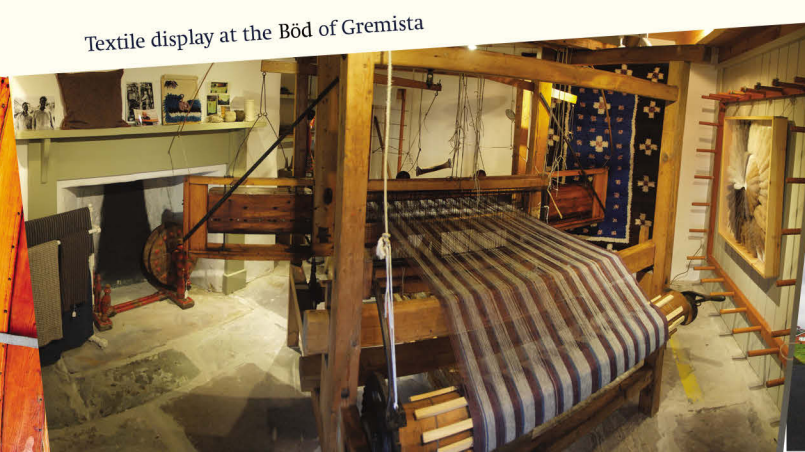
Of the many treasures held within the Old Haa, Brucie Henderson of Arisdale's Victorian curiosity cabinet, is one of the most popular.

A series of stone figures built in the style of Inuit 'inuksuit' can be found in the Old Haa Garden. The Inuit use inuksuit as waymarkers. Each figure is built from a different type of rock. The garden is open all year round.

Old Haa, Burravoe, Yell



Shetland Museum and Archives Boat Hall



Textile display at the Bød of Gremista





Crofthouse Museum at Voe, Dunrossness



Whalsay Heritage Centre fishing exhibition



Former Mousa flitboat and interpretation at Sandsayre, Sandwick

You get a great feeling for early life in a Shetland crofthouse at the Crofthouse Museum, Dunrossness. This restored thatched crofthouse and watermill are as it would have looked in the 1890's. If the smell of the peat smoke is too much for your nose, then take a sniff of the *reest* or salt fish, the custodians often dry above the fire. Have a go at setting the *moose faa* while you are there – a very effective trap!

While at the South end of Shetland, why not compare the mill at the Crofthouse Museum with the Quendale Water Mill. The mill was built in 1867 to handle the grain from the Quendale Estate, but it also ground grain for crofters from a very wide surrounding area. A 10 minute video of the mill in full working order can be viewed at the mill visitor centre. Imagine the smell and dust when the mill was working at full capacity.



Quendale Water Mill

To complete the croft experience, visit the Shetland Croft Trail at Burland, Trondra. This is a wonderful place for children to see old Shetland breeds of livestock and learn about crofting history and traditional crafts such as boatbuilding.

Fires and fireplaces are a recurring theme in Shetland Museums and Heritage Centres. Maybe it's because so much of life revolved around the fire, either cooking on it, keeping warm during the long winter days and nights, or the storytelling, which occupied the residents. The most northerly fireplace is to be found in the Unst Heritage Centre at Haroldswick. The Centre is also famous for its fine lace and you don't need to look close to appreciate the delicate work involved. Even more astounding when you consider that the knitter did not have the benefits of modern lighting and it was all created without patterns! Here you can also find out about the exciting Viking Unst project.



Unst Heritage Centre

Shetland Fair Isle and patterned knitting are perhaps one of Shetland's best-known art forms. At the George Waterston Memorial Centre on Fair Isle there are panels of knitting patterns representing the hundreds of designs kept in the minds of generations of women.

The Bød of Gremista, is home to the Shetland Textile Working Museum which gives a fascinating insight into the world of knitting, spinning and weaving which is such an important part of Shetland's heritage.



Fair Isle knitwear

Displays include knitted Shetland textiles from the 19th century to the present day, with new pieces commissioned specially. Items on show demonstrate Shetland's traditional heritage through knitted garments and accessories, showing how fashions have changed over the years.

If it's the high-life you are after then pay a visit to the Fetlar Interpretive Centre with its excellent interactive multi-media displays and photographic exhibitions of island life. Whether you are interested in wildlife, archaeology or Shetland culture, be sure to leave enough time to take in the wealth of activities. See the award-winning exhibition on the life of Sir William Watson Cheyne, the Fetlar surgeon who worked with Lord Lister on the development of antiseptic surgery. If you are interested in folklore, this is the place to be for storytelling recordings.

Lairds and their lives are highlighted in the Tangwick Haa Museum. In fact the museum itself is a restored Lairds house built in the late 17th century. One can imagine the grandeur of the house and its inhabitants when you look at the 1840 wedding dress belonging to the wife of one of the lairds and Crown Derby china from the same date. Life was not always cups of tea and weddings, the museum also tells of the story of the Stenness and Fethaland Haaf stations and the hardship faced by the men who fished from them in small open boats. Every year Tangwick also celebrates a particular aspect of Northmavine's heritage with a special exhibition.



Tangwick Haa

For boats you must go to the Unst Boat Haven where you can see examples illustrating open boat development not just in Shetland, but also in the North Atlantic. You only need to compare the lines of the Faroese boat with that of the Ness yoal to see that they come from the same ancestry.

The museum also houses a vast collection of maritime artefacts from Shetland's long association with the sea. However it is the boats and the stories behind them, which attract most attention.



Bremen Bød at Symbister

Another story of Shetland maritime past can be seen in the Bremen Bød at Symbister. This restored Bød tells the story of Shetland's long trading link with German merchants.

The Whalsay Heritage Centre has two permanent exhibitions – 'Whalsay's fishing heritage from the 13th century to modern times' and 'The Bruce Lairds and their influence on the Island'.

The seasonal exhibition is changed or added to every year and information from all the exhibitions is archived and can be seen on request.

The Centre also has old Parish Records, Whalsay Census 1841-1911, and a genealogy data base for those who wish to trace their ancestry.

However if its burning boats you are after, then you must visit the Up Helly Aa Exhibition in Lerwick and see the full size replica of the galley which is burnt every year.



The Up Helly Aa exhibition celebrates the great annual fire festival

Most museums in Shetland cannot be as collection specific as the Up Helly Aa Exhibition. They have to try and display artefacts that give the complete picture of island life. Some interpretative centres change their complete displays yearly concentrating on different subjects, encouraging repeat visits and collating much sought after information.

The Bressay Heritage Centre is one such centre, which not only displays artefacts borrowed from the local community for specific exhibitions, but is also used regularly for slide shows, talks, night classes and meetings. And like all of the community museums has extensive archives of photographs, tape recordings, local stories and records. Outside the Centre is a reconstructed Bronze Age burnt mound which was moved from its original location in a unique community project to protect it from erosion by the sea.

Moving further south Cunningsburgh History Group have a purpose built history hut where they can research and record the history and heritage of the local area. Next to the history hut is a restored lifeboat purported to be from the liner Oceanic.

Another centre worth a visit is the Hoswick Visitor Centre where as well as learning about the local area, you can see part of a large collection of radios owned by a local collector. Staying in Sandwick the Sandsayre boats sheds include historical, cultural and environmental displays.



Tune in to your favourite station at Hoswick Visitor Centre

Old buildings have been carefully restored to provide premises for some history groups such as Midden Court in Whalsay and Easthouse in Burra. Like the Bressay Heritage Centre, they combine work and meeting areas with permanent and specific displays. There are also many other community groups throughout the islands which meet in a village hall or school to discuss and record their history. Some such as Sandwick meet in the local heritage centre and other such as Nesting have their own premises for meeting in and also open to the public for occasional displays.

These History Groups have an extensive knowledge of Shetlanders' genealogical past, but if it is genealogy you are after and you have a desire to trace your long-lost Shetland ancestor then you must visit the Shetland Family History Society on the Hillhead in Lerwick.

And so we come full circle on Shetland treasures. There are many treasures to be found but perhaps the best treasures are in the people themselves and the custodians and volunteers who faithfully man the Museums and Heritage Centres throughout the year.



Handmade Fair Isle chair

The sea again features strongly in the collections of the George Waterston Memorial Centre. Look for the well-made and practical chairs made from driftwood and straw, a style unique in Shetland – if only we could hear some of the stories that have been told from such seats.

A china doll's head brings us back to reality in understanding the danger of the sea. This was

from the wreck of the *Lessing* in 1867 the scene of a daring and successful rescue.



Quendale Water Mill



Unst Boat Haven



Easthouse, Burra