

STENNESS – its volcanic and human past

Explore Stenness!

Stenness is one of the stops on the Geopark Shetland Volcano Trail. It is a small bay in Northmavine that has evidence of Shetland's volcanic past.

Discover Stenness' volcanic past

When a volcano erupts large amounts of magma and ash are thrust up from the magma chamber, up through the crater. This magma is called lava when it reaches the surface and will often flow down the side of the volcano and onto the land below it.

As the molten lava hardens it forms igneous rocks, such as basalt. Often gas trapped inside this lava forms bubbles in the rock. These are called vesicles. In these bubbles, water that is carrying minerals builds up and milky looking crystals are deposited. Over time the rock wears away and these crystals are on the surface of the rock. The crystals, that are very like small stones, are named agates and you can find them on beaches in Shetland. These agates can come in different colours and form a beautiful part of our volcanic past.

Agates are often used to make jewellery and can be quite valuable but you should not take these things from the beach as they are part of our geological heritage. Conserving this heritage is an important part of being a Geopark.

The volcanic story and the formation of agates are told in a Geoart exhibition near the beach, created for Geopark Shetland by the Shetland Amenity Trust.

Discover the history of fishing and housing

Stenness has a long history of fishing. There were many houses built in Stenness, because of the island in front of the bay. This island meant that the community got a lot of shelter from the south-westerly winds. This made it a good place to live and to build a fishing station.

The beach at Stenness has a ruined house, or Bod. In the 1800's, the Bod was a little house on the beach. It was a fish store and had more stores above it. The end of the Haaf fishing in the area meant that many people moved away and the houses and buildings were abandoned. The Bod has all crumbled now.

When Stenness was a thriving fishing community they would have used a range of items; large Vats for salting the fish; handbarrows to carry the fish from boats and between stores; masts were set up to support iron scales to weigh the fish. Barrels, "piltik" wands and buoys would have all been common along the beach.

Now Stenness is a peaceful corner of Northmavine. The Volcano Trails are encouraging people to visit this area once more, but this time as tourists.



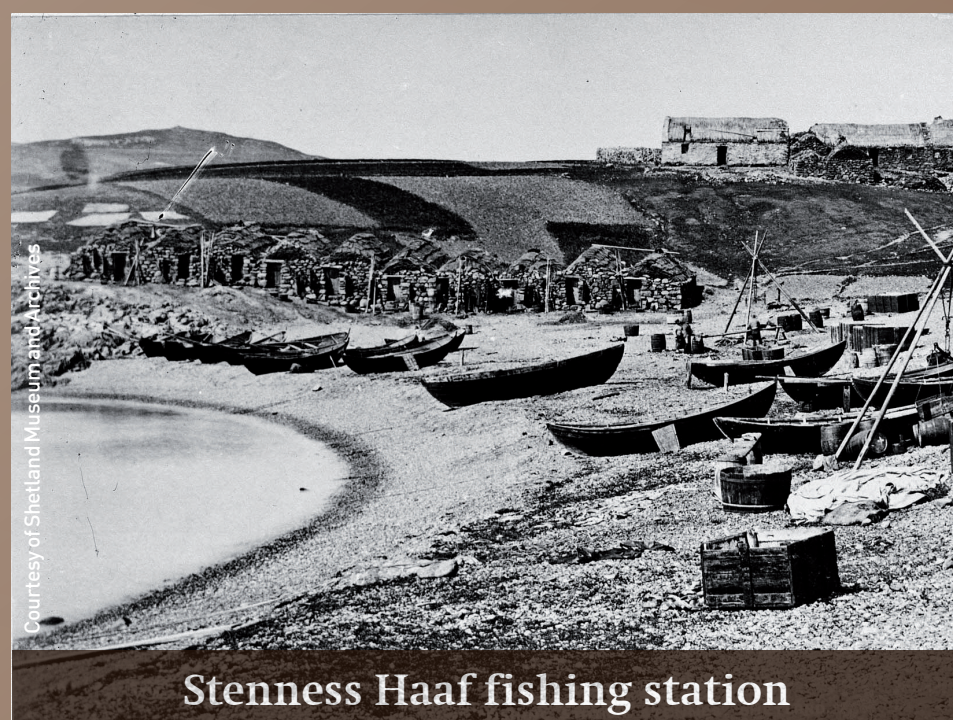
Geoart showing the agate formation



Students look for agates on Stenness beach



Stenness beach as it is now



Stenness Haaf fishing station



Field sketch of Stenness beach by Mary Dimitrov

Stenness: part of Geopark Shetland - Conserving our environment

Stenness is a beautiful part of Geopark Shetland. It is important to show respect for our environment and to think about making our area attractive for tourists. We should keep Stenness tidy.

It can be tempting to take home a "souvenir"; a piece of archaeology, some wildflowers, or maybe an agate, if you are lucky enough to find one! But if we all did this there would be no natural non-renewable resources left for everyone to enjoy. It all links to John Muir's belief and that of the Sierra Club he helped to form:

"Take nothing but photographs, leave nothing but footprints".

This poster was developed by pupils from Anderson High School. It is one of a series of three posters that tell the story of the Baltasound Junior High School and Anderson High School visit to the Eshaness peninsula. This was a joint project with the team from Geopark Shetland. By discovering, exploring and contributing to the conservation of this wild place, pupils are working towards a John Muir Award. Thanks go to the Royal Society for part funding the visit and to the Braewick cafe for hosting it.

www.geoparkshetland.org.uk

