

Whalsay attains SCIO status

Recently, the former Whalsay History Group has undergone a complete change in its legal structure and become a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SCIO) within the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR). This is a new and preferable way to go for small groups seeking incorporation rather than a company limited by guarantee.

Other than that, its business as usual at the Hillhead premises, with a new re-vamped fishing display which now shows photographs of Whalsay's fishing heritage throughout the ages on a modern photographic timeline. It begins with the Hanseatic influence, which still has its physical evidence in the restored Booth at Symbister. The timeline then extends the story through the sixern era, which included Greenland whaling and Faroe cod fishing. After some 170 years around about 1870 the sixern era



Whalsay Heritage Timeline Section.

in Whalsay gave way to larger decked craft and it's here that the benefits of photography can be seen in this new modern display, starting with the clinker built Fifies of the late 19th century.

The story continues with the change to motorised sail boats in the thirties and after World War 2, and the beginning of the modern Whalsay fishing fleet of the fifties and sixties; right up to photographs of the very latest white fish and pelagic trawlers. The part women played in the story is also acknowledged with a section on the herring gutting and

packing operation, which was also a significant part of Whalsay's fishing heritage. It was carried out by groups of three women working as a team for long daily hours during the herring season.

The timeline is supplemented by artefacts from the fishing eras. Amongst the artefacts given to the Heritage Centre is the barometer presented to Laurence Moar by the Shipwrecked Mariners Royal Benevolent Society for his bravery during the snowstorm of 9 December 1887. Many other items are also on show including the lines and herring nets



Laurence Moar Barometer.

used, examples of the clothes fishermen wore, old compasses and the first radios and echo sounders.

Whalsay is unique in that it has an unbroken fishing timeline from the Hanseatic League going back to perhaps the 13th century right up to the 21st century and the very latest white fish and pelagic trawlers. Fishing is still a vibrant and crucial part of Whalsay's economy.

The Heritage Centre is open from May to September on Wednesday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday from 2pm to 5pm.

Andrew Sandison

More paintings on display

Following the successful exhibition celebrating BBC's 'Your Paintings' project, Shetland Museum and Archives are keen to show more works from their extensive art collection. As there are nearly 200 oils and acrylics and many more drawings and watercolours, it is not possible to make them all accessible to visitors permanently. This summer, three paintings will be on display: 'The Watcher' by Wilma Cluness, 'Russel Hobbs' Day Off' by Dougie Graham and 'Papa Stour, Wadder Head' by Lesley Burr. The Paintings will be located in various places within the museum galleries.

Papa Stour, Wadder Head by Lesley Burr



Local Events Listings

For information on local events please visit www.shetland.org to view listings. To add your own event to this site please call 01595 989898 or complete the online form at www.visit.shetland.org/submit-an-event

Visit
www.shetlandamenity.org/unkans
to sign up for your electronic copy

Mosquito wreck on Royl Field Hill

Royle Field Hill is part of the Clift Hills in the south Mainland of Shetland, and lies just across the sound from the southern tip of East Burra. On a relatively flat area about 300 feet below the summit lies the remaining wreckage of a Mosquito twin-engined bomber, and a memorial stone to the two crew members who died in the crash. Still on site are the two Rolls-Royce Merlin engines, the armour plates from behind the seats of the pilot and navigator, tyres, undercarriage and some tiny fragments of the wood from which the Mosquito's fuselage and wings were made.

The story behind the tragic crash began at RAF Woodhall Spa in Lincolnshire on 22 November 1944.

Mosquito DZ642 of 627 Squadron, an unarmed B.IV bomber adapted with bulged bomb doors to carry up to 4,000 lb of bombs or Target Indicators, took off with two others with a mission to mark the U-boat pens in Trondheim, Norway for 171 Lancaster bombers of RAF 5 Group.

The crew of DZ642 comprised a highly experienced 26 year old pilot, Flight Lieutenant John Reid from Winchester, and a Canadian navigator, 34 year old Flying Officer Wesley Irwin. Both were married, and Wesley Irwin had a young son, in Pitsea, Essex.

The first leg of their mission took them to RAF Lossiemouth to refuel for the long trip to Trondheim. The seeds of tragedy were sown there, because for some unknown reason two Mosquitos were refuelled, but DZ642 was not. And on the subsequent leg to Trondheim the mission itself had to be aborted because one of

the Lancasters mistakenly left its radio switched on, inadvertently warning the Germans of their target and allowing them to totally obscure it with a massive smoke screen. At some point on the demoralised return journey Reid and Irwin noticed that their Mosquito was short on fuel, obliging them to head for the nearest Allied airbase in Shetland. The other two Mosquitos accompanied them, because DZ642 was also having trouble with its long range radio. By now it was a late November evening, dark anyway but with cloud cover down to about 800 feet. RAF air controllers at Sumburgh warned DZ642 of high ground and gave them a course to follow. The first course correction was acknowledged by the Mosquito but further instructions weren't, either because of radio trouble or because disaster had already struck. No-one knows for sure what happened, but somehow the Mosquito struck the Clift Hills some 10 miles north of Sumburgh Aerodrome. It appears that the propellers were turning at impact, but the lack of evidence of fire at the crash site suggests there was very little, if any, fuel in the plane.

It was only on 6 December 1944, a fortnight after contact was lost with Mosquito AZ-H, that three men driving sheep came upon the wreckage on Royle Field Hill. They were George Mann of Uphouse, Laurence Malcolmson of Culbinsgarth and Adam Adamson of Brind. The crew were recovered and John Reid was buried in Winchester and Wesley Irwin was buried in Manor Hill, East London.

In May 1991, at a book launch dealing with the history of 627 Squadron,



Top: One of the Merlin engines.

Middle: Memorial plaque, Royle Field Hill; Pilot and navigator seat armour, with intercom plug on seat back.

Bottom: Catherine Irwin and Louise Hazard at the Cunningsburgh History Society display, June 2011.

Wesley Irwin's watch (which had also been recovered at the crash site) was presented to his son Douglas in a moving ceremony. And in June 2011 Douglas Irwin's daughter Catherine made a trip with her cousin Louise Hazard to the crash site. Members of the Cunningsburgh History

Society were their guides, and also showed them a display concerning the crash at their premises in Cunningsburgh. Among the items on display there was the recovered compass from Mosquito DZ642.

Viking Congress returns to Shetland

The Viking Congress is returning to Shetland in August this year, after a gap of 63 years.

This prestigious event was first held in Shetland, in 1950, and was a partnership between the University of Aberdeen, the British Council and the people of Shetland.

The late Mortimer Manson was heavily involved along with other local historians, and by all accounts, it was a highly successful event. Over the years the congress has developed into an important event for academics to discuss new discoveries and thinking related to the Viking world.

The Congress draws together leading scholars who are active in studying Vikings – not only archaeologists, but people studying Viking literature, language and history. Congress delegates are selected by National Representatives, as spaces are limited and each country has a restricted number of invitees. This years Congress will see around 110 delegates visiting Shetland, to join with local representatives.

The themes of this years Congress are:

- Shetland in the Viking World
- Mapping the Viking World

- Viking Identities and Traditions
- Viking Islands
- Viking Homelands

Shetland will be well represented by Brian Smith, Andrew Jennings, Doreen Waugh, and Val Turner, in addition to well-known faces including Anne-Christine Larsen, Barbara Crawford, Steve Dockrill and Julie Bond.

In a departure from the usual format of events, the Shetland Congress will include a public day of lectures, which will give Shetland folk the chance to hear talks by nine excellent speakers. Amongst these, Patricia Sutherland will talk about her recent discoveries in Arctic Canada; Dan Carlson discusses Vikings in the Baltic and Russia; Neil Price speaks on 'Nine Paces from Hell'; and Gísli Sigurðsson reflects on Norway in the Family Sagas. Brian Smith and Kevin Edwards will add a Shetland dimension. These presentations will take place on Sunday 4th August at Mareel. Tickets, available from Shetland Box Office near the time, will be free and open to the public. See local press or the Shetland Amenity Trust website for details.

Treasures from the Deep

Shetland Museum and Archives are showcasing a selection of fascinating finds from the wrecks of two Dutch East India ships wrecked off Out Skerries.

De Liefde, a 150 foot-long, armed sailing ship carrying a crew of 300, with a cargo of considerable quantities of coins and bullion, was wrecked on her homeward voyage, on the islands south west tip on the 8th of November 1711. There was just one survivor who lived with the locals for 12 months before leaving for home.

Kennemerland, an armed merchant vessel with 150 crew travelling to the East Indies was wrecked, with only 3 survivors, off Stoura Stack on the 20th December 1664. She carried a consignment of various items including gold, mercury, tobacco-boxes, clay pipes, and golf clubs.

These finds have long been in storage at the museum and will be on display throughout June.



Laurie Goodlad inspects the display.

Did Henry Mayhew come to Shetland?

Around March 1862 a gentleman arrived in Shetland to take a holiday. Although he wrote a lengthy article about his observations concerning the islands, for the new paper the *Shetland Advertiser*, we know very little about him. He called himself 'A Stranger'. Almost all he says about himself is that he had been 'for some time past gathering information in reference to the condition of London labour and the London poor'.

After spending time in Lerwick he headed north, on foot. Someone had told him he would get a bed for the night at a house on his route. Almost there, he met an 'athletic man' in sailor dress, who told him he would definitely get a bed at the house in question, which was his father's.

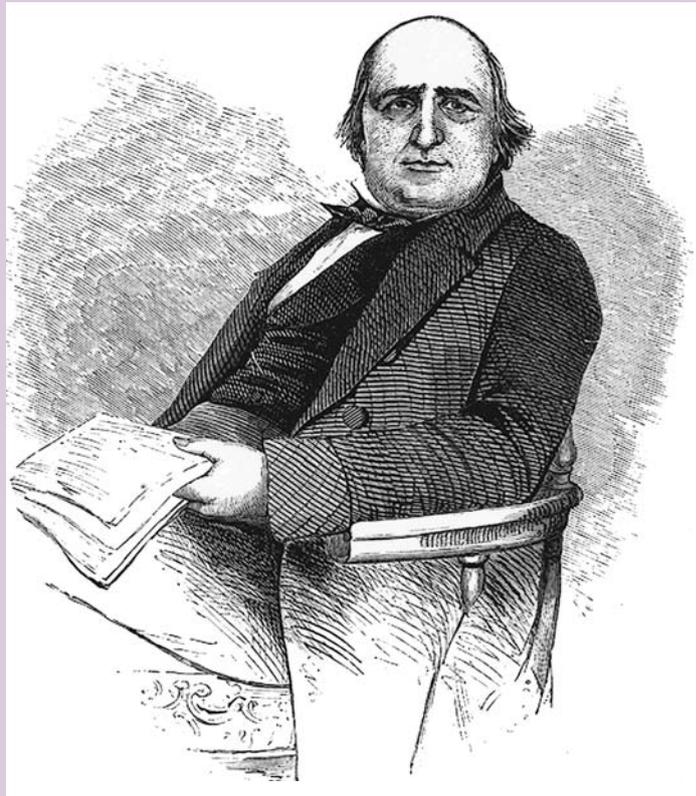
The gentleman enjoyed his evening. 'I learned the young man', he said, 'who escorted me over the moor, was a good mathematician and a good scholar, and had a superior mind well furnished with general information. I have no doubt he will one day be a credit to his family, and an honour to our naval service.' There was an elder brother too, also a sailor, 'a very intelligent young man, with a vigorous mind'. The following morning the elder brother, called James, accompanied him half-way to Delting, reciting 'several beautiful poetical compositions of his own' on the way.

When I first read this account, more than forty years ago, I wondered if the anonymous stranger might be the social investigator Henry Mayhew (1812-87), author of the 1861 edition of *London and Labour and the London Poor*. I consulted the late E.P. Thompson, who had written a fine essay on Mayhew. He told me that in the late 1850s and early 1860s Mayhew often travelled incognito, because he was being pursued by creditors. He went to Germany in 1862 for that very reason.

I despaired of finding out more. But in December last year the Shetland Archives received a donation of Angus family papers. One of the items was a journal kept by James Stout Angus, the Shetland poet, in 1862, when he was a ship's carpenter. It turned out that James was the elder brother who had accompanied our stranger, reciting poetry to him the while!

But the mystery only thickens. The Anguses hadn't learned much about their guest, although he had spent a night with them at Catfirth. 'I did not know what to think of him', wrote James, 'but I remember that as soon as he put off his hat I noticed that his head was very large.' Mayhew's head was large!

Then he had second thoughts, crossed that out, and wrote: 'He was tall and bony and rather clownish in his gait. His face was long and pale. His eyes were grey or pale blue. ... He stooped in his gait, as every man with a very large brain does. Under his glance I felt an uneasiness at first, a sort of fear. I fancied he was reading my very soul. I did not [know] what to make of him but I fancied he might be some policeman or something of that sort. Someone come to spy out the nakedness of the land.' It is clear that the poet was perplexed by his new acquaintance – and didn't find out his name.



Henry Mayhew.

I can't make up my mind if our Stranger was Henry Mayhew. I wondered if he might be Mayhew's collaborator Andrew Halliday (1830-77). But an examination of the books of essays that Halliday published in the 1860s has convinced me that he knew nothing about Shetland. I can't believe that he ever wrote a long essay on the subject.

The Stranger, on the other hand, studied Shetland in detail, wrote a 20,000 word essay about the islands when he got back to London, and insisted that '[h]ad I remained sufficiently long in Shetland, I would have made a careful and comprehensive survey not of a district only, but of the whole island'. He was a committed social investigator, and his style is not wildly different from that of the author of *London Labour and the London Poor*. He did his best to conceal who he was, in print and from those he met. I think he may have been Henry Mayhew, travelling incognito here.

Brian Smith
Archivist

I am very grateful to Blair Bruce for lengthy discussions about this matter.

This page is dedicated to research on all aspects of Shetland's history and heritage. Contributions are welcome.

Get in touch

We are keen to include contributions from anyone who has something interesting to share about Shetland's heritage.

You can now have each new issue of *Unkans* delivered straight to your inbox.

Sign up for the mailing list at www.shetlandamenity.org/unkans

Email: info@shetlandmuseumandarchives.org.uk Telephone: 01595 695057 Fax: 01595 696729

Post: Newsletter, Shetland Museum and Archives, Hay's Dock, Lerwick, Shetland ZE1 0WP

heritage
Shetland
culture

DEADLINE FOR CONTRIBUTIONS FOR NEXT ISSUE IS 19 JULY 2013.