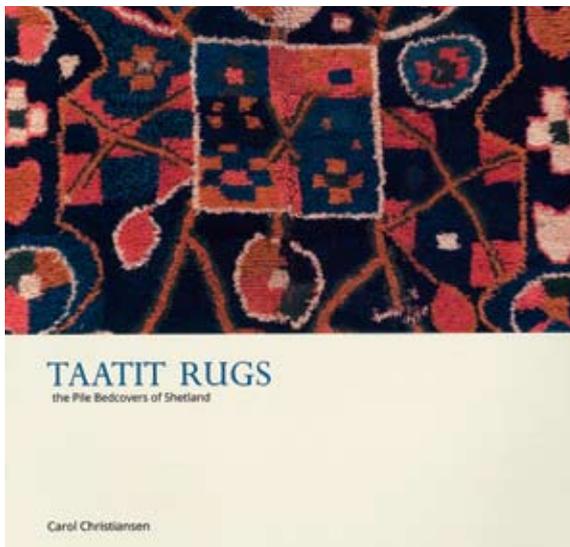


## New Publications Focus on Textiles and Archaeology

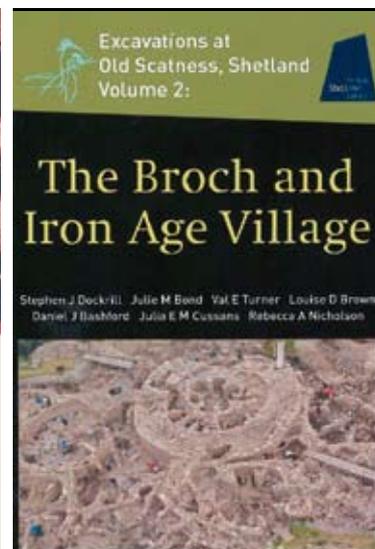
Two new books have recently been released by Shetland Heritage Publications, focussing on textiles and archaeology, and both are significant publications in their fields.

'Taaitit Rugs: the Pile Bedcovers of Shetland' is the culmination of a study of these unique bedcovers by author, Dr Carol Christiansen. Shetland's taaitit rugs are part of a Nordic tradition of pile bedcovers which extended from Finland to Ireland. The woollen bedcovers were made using natural dyes to create bold, colourful designs. Some of the designs incorporate symbols used in Nordic and Shetlandic folklore. Stories of individual covers in the book reflect the lives of Shetlanders over the last 250 years. Some of the 80 bedcovers included in the book



only came to light during the study of these unique textiles. Covers from the Shetland Museum Textile Collection – a Recognised Collection of National Significance in Scotland – and from individual owners are beautifully photographed and presented in the pages of this stunning sourcebook. The research project was funded by the Esmée Fairbairn Collections Fund.

Price £28.00, ISBN 978-0-9932740-4-6  
Excavations at Old Scatness Volume 2: The Broch and Iron Age Village, is the second title in the series from the extensive excavation project carried out at Old Scatness, following on from the publication of the first volume in 2010.



Perhaps the most complex archaeological excavation ever to have been carried out in Scotland, the Scatness project used cutting edge scientific techniques. The second volume examines the earliest phases of the archaeological remains. These start with the Neolithic remains but the focus of the volume is on the exceptionally well preserved Iron Age Broch and Village, dating between 400BC – AD400.

Price £35.00 ISBN 978-0-9932740-0-8  
**Both books are now available for sale from Shetland Museum and Archives Gift Shop ([www.shetlandheritageshop.com](http://www.shetlandheritageshop.com)) and other local booksellers.**

## Photos in a Flash – Instant Photo Archive Printing

Visitors to Shetland Museum and Archives can now access instant prints from a wide range of popular photo archive images. The new service is available through the public access computers in the first floor galleries, where visitors can choose from a selection of photographs from the archive, with the option to print and collect from Reception. A4

prints will be supplied for £6.00 each without having to wait several days for delivery as with orders placed through the photo archive website. Instead prints will be ready to collect in around 15 minutes per image. Although this does not extend to the full collection as yet, more images will be added if demand increases.



## Local Events Listings

For information on local events please visit [www.shetland.org](http://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](http://www.visit.shetland.org/submit-an-event)

Visit  
[www.shetlandamenity.org/unkans](http://www.shetlandamenity.org/unkans)  
to sign up for your electronic copy

# Gifford Laurenson's brochs

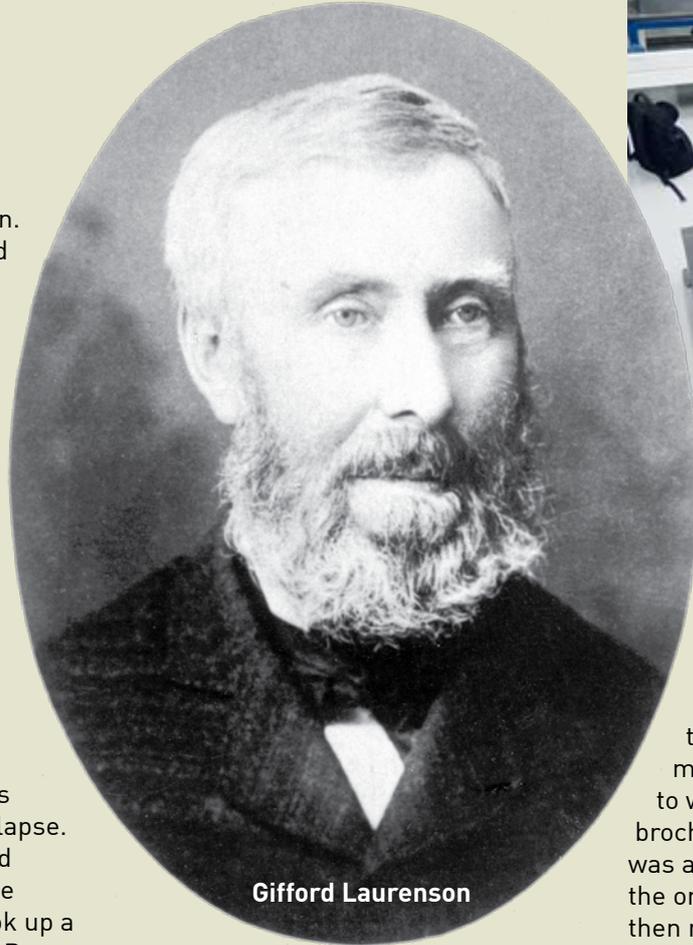
On 12 May 1858 the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland discussed a paper by the antiquarian Sir Henry Dryden. Dryden had been in Shetland a few years previously, drawing brochs. He had been particularly struck by Mousa broch, 'in every way the most interesting'.

'Unfortunately', said John Stuart, the secretary of the Society, 'its present condition is far from satisfactory; and, according to the recent report of a practical architect, it is likely to go rapidly into ruin, unless its decay be arrested by timely and judicious repairs.' A section of the broch wall was bulging and in danger of collapse.

The antiquaries contacted John Bruce of Sumburgh, the proprietor of Mousa, and took up a subscription for the repairs. Bruce employed Gifford Laurenson, a local stonemason, a native of Bressay who lived in Scalloway, to do the work.

It went well. On 10 June 1861 Stuart reported 'that the repairs on the ancient 'Burg' of Mousa had

now been completed; ... and the fabric was now reported to be in such a state of repair as to give promise of its permanency as a complete specimen of this peculiar class of ancient remains.'



Gifford Laurenson



Jim Taylor with Gifford Laurenson's model of Mousa Broch at the National Museums' store. Photograph: Brian Smith

He also said that it would be good to have a model of the broch for the Society's museum. So Laurenson set to work again. His model of the broch, in 'small slaty stones', was as good as his repairs to the original. I first saw it in the then museum in Queen Street in Edinburgh, in the early 1970s; it is now in the National Museums' store at Granton.

Gifford Laurenson kept up his archaeological interests. In 1866 the Shetland Literary and Scientific Society employed him to excavate at the Broch of Clickhimin (*Orkney Herald*, 12 June). And then he emigrated, to New Zealand, in 1874.

There is an intriguing postscript to this story. Sometime in the 1860s Laurenson's father, James Laurenson, went to live with a relative in the island of Havera. James was also a stonemason. During that decade the unusual windmill in Havera was built. It looks rather like a broch! We know nothing about the circumstances in which it was designed and built; but it is worth asking if Gifford Laurenson, with his antiquarian interests, had anything to do with it.



The Havera windmill. Photograph: Brian Smith

## IN FOCUS: Karl Manson

A new focus case has been unveiled at Shetland Museum & Archives. This display highlights the life of World War One soldier, Private Karl Manson (1897-1917) and the Battle of Arras, which claimed the lives of at least 20 Shetlanders. This display showcases personal belongings and letters belonging to Private Manson, including a ring engraved with 'ARRAS'. The letters, to his mother, are especially poignant, showing a bright and intelligent young man whose life, like thousands of others, was tragically cut short by war.

The exhibition also highlights the *Roll of Honour & Service for Shetland* which was compiled by his father, Thomas Manson. A copy of the *Roll of Honour* is available to browse through. The exhibition will run throughout 2016.



## Update on Robertson Research

The last issue of Unkans included an article on J. J. Robertson and a photo album, which his family were keen to trace more information about. The response to the article, and the subsequent display of photos in Shetland Museum and Archives, has indeed identified some of Robertson's fellow sailors and led to ongoing research of the story. It appears Mr Robertson was partaking in a spot of 'rum-running' perhaps during a few days off from his normal merchant career. Many of the images in the album are now known to have been taken around the Canadian coast and at least one other Shetlander has been identified as David Halcrow Johnson from Sandwick – in fact his son, David, also has copies of many



of the same photographs. A joint investigation is now progressing and both families are keen to identify the other men shown in a new photograph come to light. The image, printed on a postcard shows a group of well-dressed young men, with names on the reverse, who the families would like to trace. The

image shows: (rear left-right) J. J. Robertson, A. Robertson (Yell) and L. Smith (Sandwick). Front (left-right) D. Johnson, and 'Paddy'.

If anyone is able to identify A. Robertson, L. Smith or Paddy, please get in touch. Email [emma@shetlandamenity.org](mailto:emma@shetlandamenity.org) or telephone 01595 694688.

# The ubiquity of the Shetland boat



**Digging fourareens out from under snow in their noost at Stivlar, Nortavoe, to make a trip to the shop at Mid Yell. Nina Charleson (Stivlar), Helen Smith (Park), Katie Moar (Hivdigarth), Jeemie Spence (Braeside), Bertie Spence (Kavarna), Joannie Smith (Park). Nina holds a paraffin flask in her hand. Photograph, Peterson, J. Yell, Feb. 1947. Photo: ©Shetland Museum.**

The clinker constructed open boats of Shetland have always been associated with fishing, with the Sixareen particularly, taking a lot of the glory. Fishing undoubtedly was, and continues to be, of immense importance to Shetland's economy and cultural heritage, but, boats were not just used for fishing. They were the cars of their day, and boats were needed to visit folk, to fetch the doctor, to take the minister to church on a Sunday, to flit livestock, peats, and goods of all descriptions

(ironically even cars too). In some places the post was delivered and collected by boat, and people used the boat to go shopping. There were several shops in Shetland situated next to the water, a couple of examples being, the old shop at Sandsound, and the shop at Vidlin.

This way of life has now disappeared. The turning point seems to have come with the introduction of the Ro Ro ferry service in 1975, which made it possible, for the first time, to travel

between most of the major islands without leaving the comfort of your car. As well as the Ro Ro ferry service, the building of the bridges connecting Burra and Trondra to the Mainland also made getting about by car so much more convenient. It seems that a time has come when a lot of folk have forgotten what life was like before the Ro Ro ferry service and the bridges. For the younger generations, and incomers such as me, we know no different, and would find it hard to imagine what life was like before the car replaced the boat as the ubiquitous mode of transport in Shetland.

As an outsider examining Shetland's past maritime culture, it seems very important to me, that life before the Ro Ro ferry service should not be completely forgotten. And that this way of life should be recorded for future generations, so that they can learn about, and appreciate their small open boat maritime heritage.

To help preserve this heritage (as part of my PhD research) I would like to record stories of everyday boat use in Shetland prior to 1975. So, if you have a tale you would like to share then I will be delighted to meet with you to hear and record your story.

Please get in touch, your stories are important, and should not be forgotten.

Cheers for now.

**Marc Chivers,**  
*PhD student, Centre for Nordic Studies, Shetland College.*

01595 859588 or 07824 996506

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](http://www.shetlandamenity.org/unkans)

Email: [info@shetlandmuseumandarchives.org.uk](mailto: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 FRIDAY 22ND JANUARY 2016.**