

## **“A lovin' midder and a hard mester”**

It is said that in Shetland it is impossible to get more than 5 kilometers from the sea no matter how hard you try and consequently the sea has always played a key role in the culture of the islands. In former years almost all the male population of the islands was engaged to a greater or lesser degree in maritime pursuits and those who did not fish from home were mostly in the merchant navy or “at the whaling.” During the time of the Napoleonic wars there were close on 800 men from Shetland said to be serving in the Royal Navy, almost ten times the official recruitment allocation defined by the admiralty. The sea is therefore an essential element in the interpretation of Shetland’s cultural heritage and the importance of the coastal culture of the islands cannot be overestimated.



The basis of coastal culture in island communities has always been boats and in the case of Shetland this means clinker built wooden boats. It is on these, and the uses to which they were put, that the Shetland NORCE project is based. In former years boats were the backbone of the islands transport system both for personal transport and for the shifting of fuel and livestock. These same open boats also provided the fishing industry with it fleet up until the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and in particular were key to the “haaf”

fishing when the largest open boats, the sixareens, were in use for commercial fishing. The Shetland NORCE project will give people hands on experience of these boats by building a trio of replicas which can be used by the public under supervision by skilled boatmen. The construction of the vessels will be open to the public and the skills of local boatbuilders will be demonstrated to visitors. Ultimately the project, by extensive exploitation of available marketing opportunities, will also link the boats to specific sites and exhibitions around the islands where the public can learn more about these craft and their place in Shetland’s cultural heritage.

Shetland Amenity Trust is an organisation dedicated to the preservation and enhancement of Shetland’s cultural and natural heritage for the benefit of the public. The

range of activities undertaken by the Trust is extremely wide and includes Archaeology , Biological Records , Anti-litter / Recycling , Architectural Heritage, , Woodlands , Place Names, Environmental Improvements and Interpretation. The Trust Is currently constructing the New Shetland Museum and Archives and will shortly assume responsibility for the provision of Shetland's Museum Service. At present the Trust employs about 41 staff in a number of different locations.

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A Charitable Trust set up to conserve and enhance Shetland's heritage.

