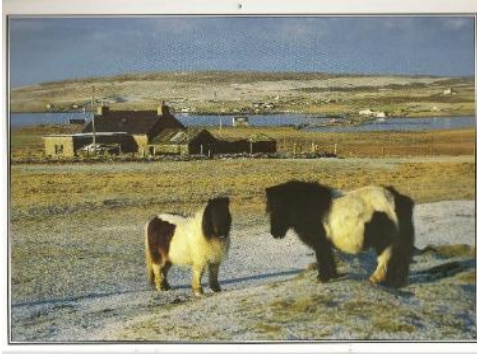
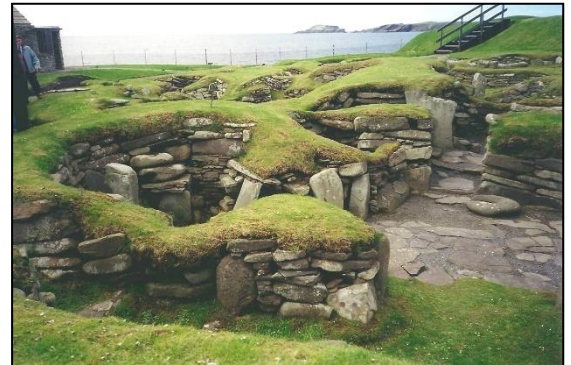
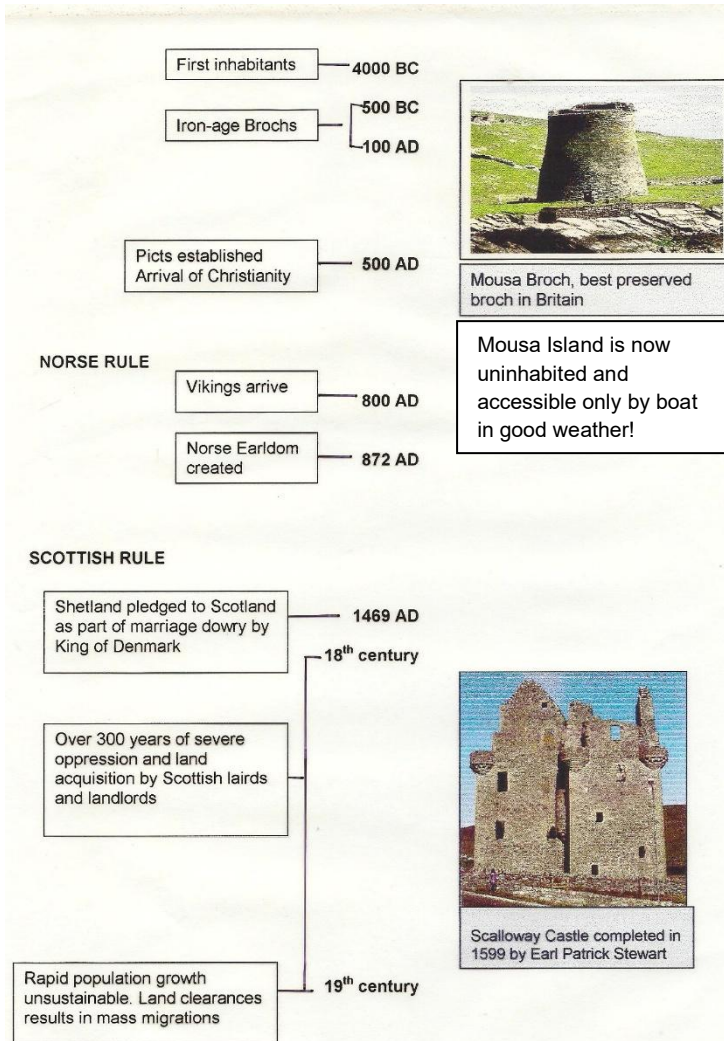


SHETLAND BY ROSE COUTTS

History, Commerce, Wildlife, Annual Up Hele Aa festival



- 100+ islands, only 16 inhabit
- Population approximately 23,000 (about the same size as Cambridge)
- Capital: Lerwick (since 1708) population approximately 7000 (less than Te Puke)
- Ancient capital: Scalloway
- Governance: Shetland Islands Council, one of Scotland's 32 council areas & Borders North Sea and the Atlantic Ocean



Excavations uncovered evidence of settlements from the Bronze Age, Iron Age, Pictish era, Viking era & the Middle Ages all built on the same site.

St Ninian's Isle Treasure, Pictish origin, thought to have been buried to avoid being found by the Viking raiders!



"The Betsy" Boat used by Jim's grandparents in the 1920's to commute from their small isle to the mainland.



Some signposts, examples of place names of Norse origin

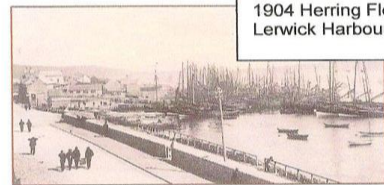
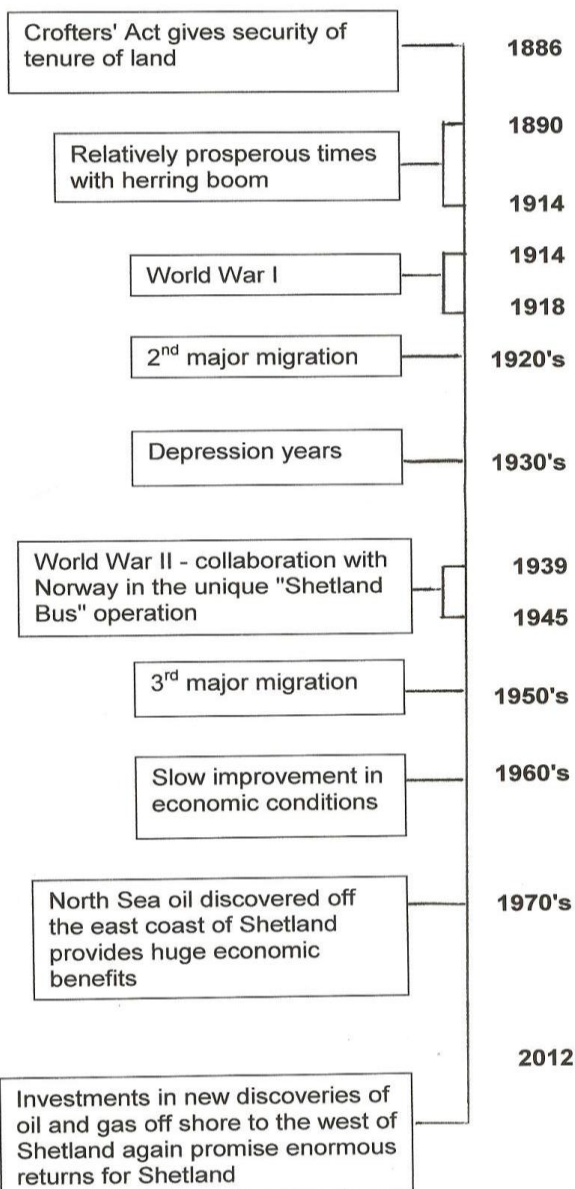


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Scalloway, Jim's (Rose's husband's) hometown



1904 Herring Fleet Lerwick Harbour



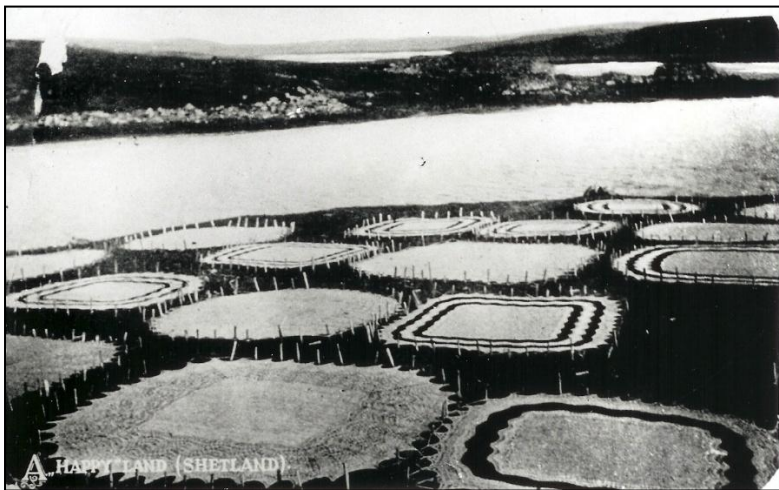
Shetland Bus memorial, Scalloway



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Fair isle jumper stretched out to dry



"Dressing" fine lace Shetland shawls



Carrying peat as she knits!



Jim's sister-in-law

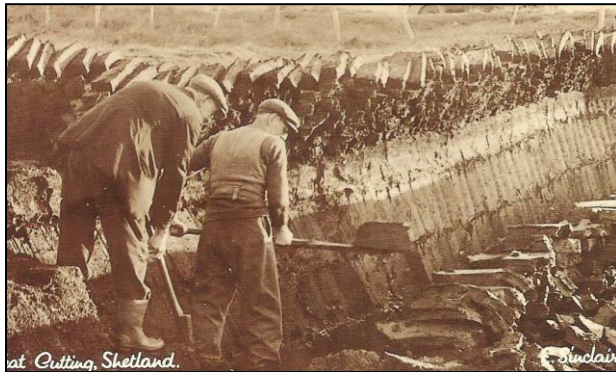
Jim's sister

Jim's Mum

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Peat: Used in the past for heating and cooking and now a valuable resource of carbon credits



A Sixareen: Shetland fishing boat commonly used in the 19th century



Oil: Sullom Voe Terminal



Tourist Ships call into Lerwick:
Contributing to Shetland's buoyant economy!



Proudly handmade!



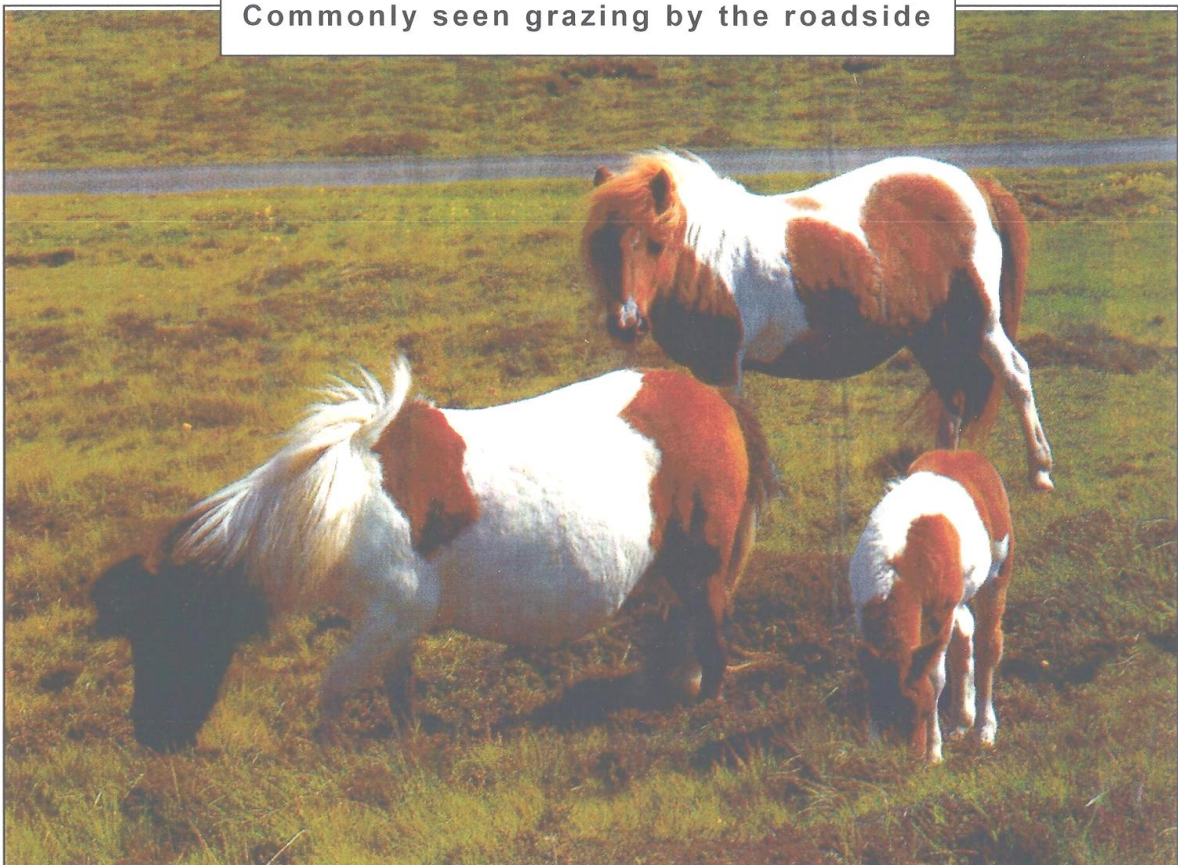
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Puffins, or "Tammie Norries" ↑

← Nesting Seabirds on the cliff face

Shetland Ponies
Commonly seen grazing by the roadside



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UP HELE AA FESTIVAL - Lining up for the photo-shoot

Jim ready to go !!!

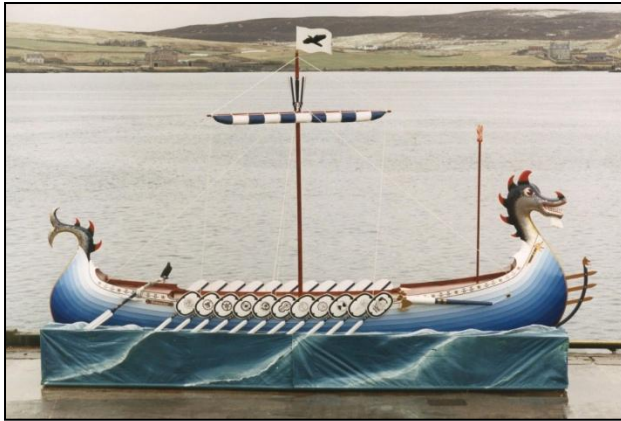


The Junior Jarl's Squad 2004



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The Galley!



The Torches are lit!



Flaming torches surround the galley



Torches being thrown into the galley



Scalloway Galley burning off the pier



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Year	Guizers	Squads
1949	60	49
1990	921	48
2004	899	46
2025	981	47

The **Up Helly Aa** (UP-hel-ee-AH; literally "Up Holy [Day] All") is a type of fire festival held annually from January to March in various communities in Shetland, Scotland, to mark the end of the Yule season. The event happens all over Shetland and is currently celebrated at eleven locations. The largest festival held in Lerwick, Shetland's capital, involves a procession of up to a thousand guizers who march through the streets of Lerwick on the last Tuesday in January. The other rural festivals (known as the 'country' Up Helly Aas) see lower numbers of participants in accordance with their lower populations.

Certain aspects of the festival have been changed for the modern day; for example, as of 2020 the use of blackface has been banned at festivals in Shetland. Traditionally the guizers at the main festival in Lerwick have always been male (although some women joined the march in 1901 disguised in their costumes). However, some smaller rural festivals now include women, and the South Mainland Up Helly Aa festival appointed a female Jarl in 2015. Starting from the 2023 festival, restrictions on women's participation within squads in Lerwick were removed.

Each festival involves a torchlit procession lead by squads (including Juniors) of costumed 'guizers' that culminates in the burning of an imitation Viking longship or galley. The principal character guizer is the "Jarl" (pron. "yarl"). There is a committee which a person must be part of for 15 years before one can be a jarl, and only one person is elected to this committee each year! Each Guizer Jarl takes the name of a figure in Norse legend. The Jarl's Squad is made up his supporters – Guizers. Each squad chooses a theme and dresses accordingly. The themes are very varied, some historical, some topical or satirical. After nightfall the longship is dragged through the streets of the town in a torchlight procession. The torchbearers are led by the Jarl's Squad.

When the torchbearers arrive at the final resting spot of the longship, they form a circle round it and sing the traditional Up Helly Aa song. After the singing of the Up Helly Aa song, the guizers throw their torches into the longship. Once the longship has burned and the flames die down, guizers sing the traditional song "The Norseman's Home" before going on to a night of partying.

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Example of a Squad skit based on The Swan



The Scottish herring fishing experienced its peak in the early years of the 20th century. Every summer hundreds of sailing vessels packed into Lerwick harbour, and other ports around the coastline. Two types of vessels dominated: the Fifies, and the Zulus. These massive timber boats were unique to the Scottish fleet and were the ultimate development in Scottish herring sail boats. The Fifies had vertical stern posts, and the Zulus had distinctively angled sterns. The boats measured 75 feet (23 metres) or more in length and were fitted with steam capstans that enabled them to haul their nets and handle their enormous masts and sails.

The Fifie Swan LK 243 was launched in May 1900 at Hay and Company's yard in Lerwick, Shetland. She was regarded as "one of the finest fishing boats afloat in the North of Scotland". But the Fifies' days were numbered - steam drifters were already beginning to push sail boats out of business.

The Swan, 120 years later



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5am! The Jarl's Squad arrives



The current Lerwick celebration grew out of the older yule tradition of tar barrelling which took place at Christmas and New Year as well as Up Helly Aa. Squads of young men would drag barrels of burning tar through town on sledges, making mischief. According to the Shetland Museum, the catalyst for the establishment of Up Helly Aa was the boredom of young men after their return from fighting in the Napoleonic Wars, which had given them an opportunity to see spectacles abroad. Concern over public safety and levels of drunkenness led to a change in the celebrations and saw them drawing inspiration from the islands' Viking history. After the abolition of tar barrelling around 1874–1880, permission was eventually obtained for torch processions. The first Yule torch procession took place in 1876. The first torch celebration on Up Helly Aa Day took place in 1881. The following year the torchlit procession was significantly enhanced and institutionalised through a request by a Lerwick civic body to hold another Up Helly Aa torch procession for the visit of Alfred, Duke of Edinburgh. The first galley was fabricated and burned in 1889. In 1894 Haldane Burgess, a Shetland author, wrote the book *The Viking Path* which was a major influence in creating the Viking theme of the Up Helly Aa festival. Burgess also wrote the Up Helly Aa Song which is sung at the burning of the replica longship and elsewhere. The honorary role of the 'Jarl' was introduced to the festival in the early twentieth century. In reality, despite many sources claiming these ancient origins, the festival, and many like it, were products of Victorian do-goodery. The Lerwick Up-Helly Aa was first established by the Total Abstinence Society in the 1870s to give the young men who would otherwise drink themselves silly something to do. The name itself derives from Upholiday, the lowland Scots' word for Twelfth Day, and was brought by them to the Shetland Islands in the 19th century.

