

Shetland Society of Wellington (Inc) Annual Report 2014

First and most importantly – huge thank yous to all those who contribute to the life of our Society. We are very fortunate to have a strong and active committee - Jane Haskell, Jane Dowson, Irene McLachlan, Ruth Mainland, Ross Mainland, Margaret Pitt, Andrea Hudson, Lois Henderson, Jo Lewthwaite. Everyone works hard on our committee, but I do need to give special mention to our Secretary, Ruth Mainland. Ably supported at all times by Ross, she is tireless in her work and we thank her for that. *And* a gasp of admiration for 40 years of continuous service on our Committee by Jane Dowson – cook, bottle washer, ticket seller, and enthusiastic Shetlander!

This year, as in the past, we have held a regular series of events – all of which have gone well. The Foy and the Christmas party focus on our children – to help them have a sense of their Shetland heritage and a sense of belonging in the NZ Shetland community. The February picnic is a family event – and I think it's an event we can promote more enthusiastically. We have our Anniversary Lunch and AGM, plus a very successful family history event – and in these and all our events there is a regular turnout of older members, keen to keep up connections with family and friends, and to enjoy our common Shetland heritage. And then there is our public facing Viking Ball – this year a success, but still needing a lot of work to stay sustainable in a community very different to when we began them over 40 years ago. Many thanks to all those who have worked on the Ball, and to those who've made a commitment to future Balls.

A bonus event this past year was an evening of poetry and conversation with Shetland based poet, Jen Hadfield. More than a dozen of us enjoyed meeting Jen, hearing her poetry, and talking about life in modern Shetland. This kind of serendipitous event is something we can't plan for, but it's great we are able to move quickly to take advantage of such a visitor.

At every event we are so pleased with the Society's library – well maintained and always with something new, thanks to Jane Haskell and others. Our website and our newsletter remain up to date and interesting – thanks to Mary, Jane, Ross and all those who ensure our Society has an appealing "shop front".

The Committee noted the closing of the Wellington Association of Scots Societies, in which the Shetland Society has been a regular and generous participant. It's a further sign of the times that this collaboration could not be sustained, but we are glad the annual St Andrews Day celebration will continue.

At almost every committee meeting we have applications for new members – a wonderful sign of continued relevance and interest. Increasingly, the new members don't live in Wellington region and we need to think through how we can help those members feel they are getting value by being part of our Society. Each month we set aside time to ask how we can better serve our members. Within our Society there are two distinct groups - the older members who are interested in connecting with their contemporaries, and the newer members who often want to explore their genealogy and connect with their Shetland culture. And now we have this growing group of members who live in other places. What an exciting problem – to find new ways of connecting with a diverse and growing membership! That will be one of our big tasks this coming year.

We are also conscious that our Society turns 100 in just 8 years time – in 2022. How can we celebrate? A reverse Hamefarin? A series of competitions related to music or craft? A permanent memorial to the role Shetlanders have played in NZ since the earliest days of settlement? We would love your ideas, no matter how different or ambitious.

Again – thank you. Our Society is in good heart. And we look forward to the coming year with confidence.

Peter Glensor
President
September 2014