

Shetland Society of Wellington, Presidents Report
Year Ending 30th June 2024
Presented to the AGM 14th September 2024

When we completed our centenary celebrations, I felt that there was some consternation as to what direction the Society would take, as also was the thinking after our celebrations on our 75th. Never fear, as in 1997, we have continued to grow in strength and our activities have continued to attract new members with a rich variety of events and meetings, all designed to be entertaining, informative re Shetland but most of all by generating a friendly atmosphere which will encourage members to retain their membership and attract new ones of all age groups.

Our year started on the 20th August with The Stout Lecture which was delivered live from Shetland via Zoom. Maurice Henderson from Shetland gave us a very interesting talk on The Shetland Fiddle, which encompassed its style of playing around the various parts of Shetland, its history, where it's at now and where he sees the art going in the future.

The success of this venture has meant that we will again investigate the possibility of having more speakers from overseas as well as from New Zealand.

On the 17th September the Centenary lunch and AGM held at the Pipe band hall where we welcomed Tamsin Falconer and Fiona Dally on to the committee.

This year, in a departure from past events, we dispensed with having an entertainer at the Christmas get together and instead relied on the children to provide their own entertainment by dressing up in the junior Viking suits and parading round the hall to the delight of the adults. To add a bit of authenticity to the day they also carried imitation torches which they took home afterwards.

No Christmas party is complete without games, which were enthusiastically entered into by the wee ones and as usual at the finale the jolly man in the red suit made his entrance and dispensed his gifts to all the peerie ones.

As in recent previous years the Society picnic was held at QE2 Park at Paekakariki on the 25th February with the winners of the various cups and trophies thus:-

Gifford Tait Memorial Cup –Tavis Milner, Robert Stout Rosebowl – Sarah Glensor Best, Gumboot Throw – Kids - Makara Milner and Gumboot Throw – Adults-Peter Glensor

This is always a fun day out and it is hoped that it will continue to be one of the main stays of the Societies calendar as it is now into its second century of happening. Folk of all ages have a fun time and can participate in games and races that once were so common at group picnics in the not too distant past.

On Sunday 15th March Fiona Daly gave us a talk on the Tall Ships race which had called into Lerwick in August of last year. This was of particular interest to members as not only is Fiona one of our members but also headed the team which organised the Shetland leg of the race, and was therefore in a position to give us a very detailed and interesting account of the event.

Under the auspices of the Society a Wool Workshop, with the emphasis on the history of wool, knitting & spinning in Shetland, was held at the Lower Hutt Arts Centre on the 4th and 5th of May. This event was a direct spin off (no pun intended) from the Fibre and Photographic exhibition held as part of Centenary Celebrations the previous year.

As this workshop was limited in the numbers who could attend a follow up was presented on the 19th May at the Pipe Band Hall where members could see examples of what had been a successful weekend with some of the tutors who had helped giving a very interesting talk on what had been achieved.

The success of both these events was no doubt due to the combined driving forces of Robin and Ferial Falconer and it is hoped that it will be the precursor to similar events in the future.

We were hoping to hold a dance on the 15th June but unfortunately owing to previous engagements by the committee it was not possible to hold this event and it is now to be held on the 19th October in the Pipe Band hall.

As an adjunct to the regular meetings held by the committee, behind the scenes a lot of hard work has been put in by the Archives Committee, consisting of Ruth Mainland, Mary Wood, Tamsin Falconer and Sarah Laurensen to sift through the many and varied papers, taonga and items of interest that The Society has gathered since its inception with the view to culling what is not required and archiving that which it has deemed necessary to keep for posterity and future generations.

The Archives Committee have decided that the best repository for these papers will be the Wellington City Council Archives as the history of The Society is very much a part of the history of Wellington over the past one hundred and will be so for the foreseeable future.

In addition to the archival material there are also other items, some, of no great monetary value but extremely valuable as our treasures as they are the physical link to our past and help to tell the story of our involvement.

That some of these treasures, be they paper or physical entities, are not on display in our meeting room, here at the Pipe Band Hall was recognised by the Archival Committee and it was suggested that a display case be erected in the hall where we could have a permanent display which could readily be seen by our members.

This work is continuing and it is to be hoped that soon we will have a display case on show in the hall.

The Society is always looking at ways in which it can broaden its catchment of folk who are interested or have a connection to Shetland and exploration of new methods of communication are continuing. We have the traditional newsletter, mainly delivered by email, but still posted to a few members who do not have the internet. Our website is also up and running at <https://www.shetlandwellington.org.nz/>. We have also, as mentioned earlier, ventured into Zoom for our Stout Lecture this year and during Covid held the AGM also using Covid.

To this end and to extend our preparedness for the next one hundred years Tamsin and Fiona have been exploring the possibilities of setting up a Facebook page in our name.

A common theme at all our meetings during the year is the display of books in our library and the enthusiasm with which they are curated by Jane Haskel. Over the years she has built up, for us, a vast collection of reading and digital material with the sole emphasis on Shetland and its people.

This, I would say without doubt, is one of the finest collections of material on Shetland anywhere outside Shetland and certainly the largest in the Southern Hemisphere.

We must thank Jane for her untiring work in looking after the collection as it takes up not only a lot of her time but also a lot of her house. Thank you, Jane.

Again, I would encourage any members of the Society who would like to come on the committee to make themselves known and approach myself, Peter, or any of the committee.

Also, it is timely to remind members that the newsletter is compiled on a semi rotational basis by a committee member. Although not an onerous task it is one that takes up some time outwith that spent on committee tasks. So, if anyone would like to take on the role of editor, they would not have to be a committee member, please let us know as they would be most welcome as we have not had a full-time editor for some time now.

Finally, and the most pleasing part of the report to write is how grateful I am to the Committee for their hard work and support during the year and the support shown by our members who make the effort so worthwhile.

Thank you all.