



**Shetland Society of Wellington: Stout Memorial Lecture
Shaetlan: where did it come from and where is it going?**

Shaetlan / Shetland Dialect / Shetlandic
(What to call it?)

How is it different from English and from Lowland Scots?

How did it evolve?

Where's it going?

A Baby's Smile

Peerie ting
wi dy sprootin an flailin,
du gaffs an smiles
wi dy hael boady;
du could tresh coarn
wi yon legs o dine
an dir wappin.

Dy face is a flaachter
an dy smile bides
as a glöd o licht
fae a dippin sun.

Naethin at's göd
could daev dis spunk
or trottle dy sang.

A Baby's Smile

Little one
with your drooling and flailing,
you laugh and smile
with your whole body;
you could thresh oats
with those legs of yours
and their vigour.

Your face flutters
and your smile lingers
as a glow of light
from a dipping sun.

Nothing that's good
could eradicate this spark
or throttle your song.

HAEMFARIN

O aa da identities stackit athin wis,
whit een is da primal, da sharpest an truest:
da haert-holl time canna erase?

Why's haem aye da spaces o childhood, bricht
i da mindin, though decades is passed an life is
möved on? Ir we traivellers athin a rose-tintit

time-warp? An whit o haemfarin, laek salmon,
ta shores a graandmidder kent? Foo come
dis imprintin? Da poo o a place?

Whin wir fock is aa gien, dey'll still be a raison
ta come in wir thoosands, ta add tae dir story
da twists an da turnins ithin wir ain saison.

O aa da identities stackit athin wis,
whit een is da primal, da sharpest an truest:
da haert-holl time canna erase?

HOMECOMING

Of all the identities stacked within us,
which one is primal, the sharpest and truest:
the very heart time can't erase?

Why is home always childhood haunts, bright
in memory, though decades have passed and life has
moved on? Are we travellers in a rose-tinted

time-warp? And what of homecoming, like salmon,
to shores a grandmother knew? How come
this imprinting? The pull of a place?

When our relatives have all gone, there will still be a raison
to come in our thousands, to add to their story
the twists and turnings in our own season.

Of all the identities stacked within us,
which one is primal, the sharpest and truest:
the very heart time can't erase?

Significant features/ distinctive characteristics?

To English speakers, perhaps, the most noticeable differences would be:

Grammar;

- Two forms of the pronoun *you*: the singular and familiar form is *du*, *dee* (objective), *dy* and *dine* (possessive);
- Use of the auxiliary verb 'to have' (e.g. *he had ordered*) replaced with 'to be' (e.g. '*he wis oardered*'); '*A'm bön at da shop*';
- Negative forms of verb: *sanna* (shall not), *sudna* (should not), *canna* (cannot), *manna* (must not), *couldna*, *willna*, *widna*, *wunna*, *didna*, *dunna*;
- Verb past tense: English ends in *ed*, Shaetlan ends in *it*;
- Subject and verb agreements: as in Old Scots a plural subject often uses a singular verb;
- Verbs are often reflexive: e.g. '*Set dee in*'; '*We wir playin wis*', '*Come du*'.

Pronunciation / sound quality

- There are typical vowel sounds: *ö* (*mön, scöl*), *ü* (*hüld*) and diphthongs such as *'æ'* (*gærdin*); long *'aa'* or *'aw'* (*haand/ hawnd*)
- Consonants: lack of the *'th'* sound: words start with *'d'* (*dis, dat, dere, dan*) & end with *'t'* (*aert*);
- *significance of 'y': kyittle, kyerry, tyoch, nyuggel; k-nap; k-nee*
- Considerable regional variation pronunciation: Whalsay is most distinctively different (e.g. *styöl; way-a-din*)

Vocabulary

- whole swathes of categories are of Norse origin: place names; landscape features; weather words; birds; flowers etc;
- rich and distinctively different vocabulary. Frequently words can be guessed because they are particularly descriptive or onomatopoeic; *platsh, plöt, ootmaagit*,
- many nouns are masculine (eg weather, well – ‘*He’s offerin ta rain!*’; *waal – I couldna fin him*’) or feminine (eg boat – ‘*shö’s a boannie boat*’) rather than neuter;
- lacks abstract nouns & words for new technologies/ concepts;
- rich in idiom: ‘*back in dy kert!*’ ‘*yun’ll no hadd dy haert!*’
- Many words for diminutives: *peerie, mootie, mintie* etc;

Considerable regional variation in vocabulary.

Historic evolution of Shaetlan as a **Contact or Mixed Language**

- from research by linguists (e.g. Viveka Velupillai)
- from hearing views of Scandinavians

- Norn –part of **Scandinavian** family of tongues c 9th Century onwards;
- **Hanseatic** trade. Dowry for the marriage of **Danish** Princess Margaret to Scottish Prince James (later King James III of Scotland) in 1469;
- Major trade with **Dutch fishermen -16th -19th C** (knitwear, croft-goods for smuggled tobacco, brandy). Gradual encroachment of **influential Scots**, bringing the Scots tongue;
- Norn pushed to periphery/ diluted – died out completely by mid 19th C ... but much incorporated into local variant of Scots -**Shaetlan**. Education for all in **English** from 1870s;
- By 1950/ 1960s Shaetlan was still vibrant, especially in rural communities;
- 1970s – North Sea Oil construction phase – **many incomers – transmission broken**;
- 1990s – realisation that we were in danger of losing our language. **Major voluntary effort – through Shetland ForWirds – to stem the decline**: online grammar, apps, animations, films, school visits, and more attention given to resources for children. Social media playing a part. Importance of influential contexts e.g. local radio; music; knitting & boating. **But no policy on language learning!**





Unrefflin

Da Lang Ayre hadds
da wear an tear o banks.
Da ocean gadders, grades hit,
smores hit slowly: catch hit
if you can, trowe shaed
an licht, ultramarine
ta aquamarine.
Shörmal, fine as lace, fresh
as froady smoorikins, laps
da straand, adds a
aedgin tae da hap
hit's makkin:
da moorit,
da shaela,
da faawn een.

Unravelling

cliffs
gathers
smothers, drowns
colour

tideline, breaking wave
foamy kisses
beach
shawl
knitting
soft brown
dark grey
the fawn one



'Last evening I took a walk to Stapness shore to collect mussels for our mussel-bag of a cat. It was between nine and ten o'clock as I came home along by the boats at the Old Smiddy. Daylight was hanging as though reluctant to go asleep, like the silent hills. Then I startled a redshank from where it was feeding down on the dark shoreline, and, sounding its *pee hee weep, pee hee weep*, it made off to some other place.

Up along the sides of the lawn the daffodils were standing erect like little soldiers with enormous fancy hats. Daffodils in the dusk, I thought, how beautiful. I wonder if they close their petals. No, there they were, open and engaging just as they are by day ... '

Whit ails, whit heals

Ebbcock

Dastreen, he vaiged as far as Stapness shore
hentin ebb's arles fir dir mussel-baggit cat.

Comin haem bi da boats at da aald smiddy
da broos seemed waakrife an dat bairnly licht
didna want ta lay her doon an sleep. Brackin

da stillness – a shörmal splore – *pee hee weep*,
pee hee weep: a ebbcock, thwarted, signalled Voar

dan med aff wi a yodal, natty red legs
dancin i da darkenin. Back tae da cares
o da day, back trowe dir gairden

whaar raas o daffodils wis staandin prunk
laek peerie sodgers wi muckle bonnets.

Daffodils i da mirknen, he tocht, foo boannie.
Micht dey close dir petals, dover owre?
But na, dere dey wir, as oppen an as winnin as afore.

What ails, what heals

Redshank

Last night, he tramped as far as Stapness shore
gathering tideline gifts for their mussel-bag of a cat.

Coming home by the boats at the old forge
the slopes seemed restless and that childlike light
didn't want to lie down and sleep. Breaking

the stillness – sudden wave-edge action – *pee hee weep*,
pee hee weep: a redshank, startled, signalled Springtime

then lifted off with a yodal, natty red legs
dancing in the darkening. Back to the cares
of the day, back through their garden

where rows of daffodils were standing poised
like little soldiers with enormous bonnets.

Daffodils in the dusk, he thought, how lovely.
Might they close their petals, doze off?

But no, there they were, as open and as winning as before.



Glims o origin

I savoured dy aerly wirds as dey cam,
whinivver dey surprised dy mooth;
helpit shaep dem wi dee, hent dem.

Foo mony generations o bairns
is quarried dat sam wirds, fun
aa needfu soonds aroond dem?

An sea-farers at laandit here
höved in, fae uncan erts, wirds
kyerried on ocean's shiftin tides;

wave-wörn, wind-riven wirds,
dir aedges shaaved aff, makkin
a meld; a tongue fit fir saga

an fir psalm. Rumse ithin hit,
hock awa, an du'll fin veins
i da steyn, bricht glims o origin!

Glints of origin

I savoured your early words as they came,
whenever they surprised your mouth;
helped shape them with you, gather them.

How many generations of children
have quarried those same words, found
all needful sounds around them?

And sea-farers who landed here
threw in, from unfamiliar places, words
carried on ocean's shifting tides;

wave-worn, wind-riven words,
their edges hacked aff, making
a blend; a tongue fit for saga

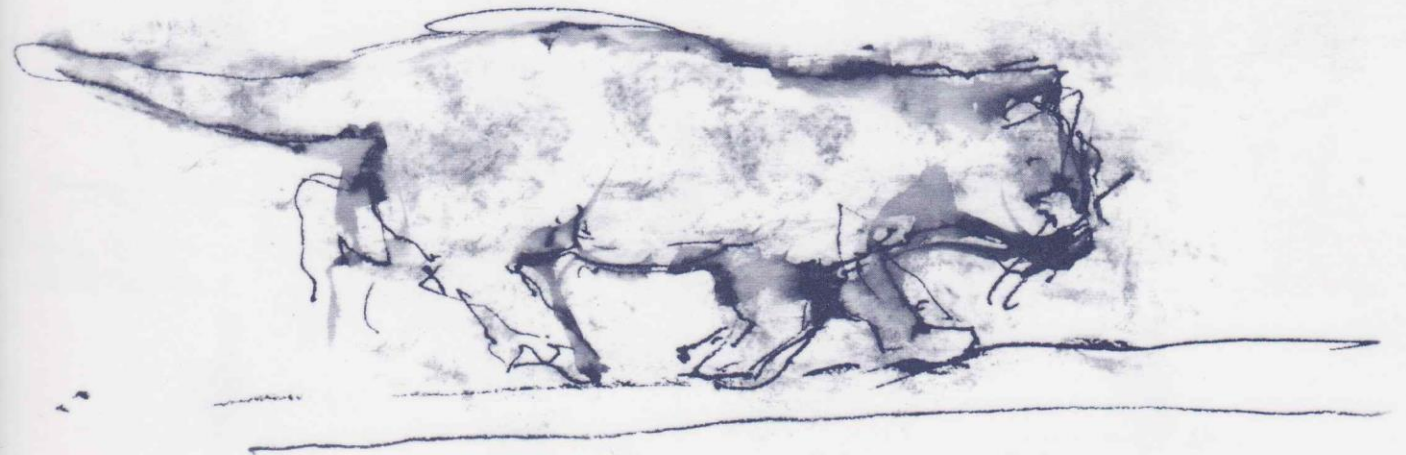
and for psalm. Rummage in it,
dig away, and you'll find veins
in the stone, bright glints of origin!

And where is it going?
Will it survive?



Smootie

comes ta Lerrick



Story bi Christine De Luca an draains bi Frances Pelly

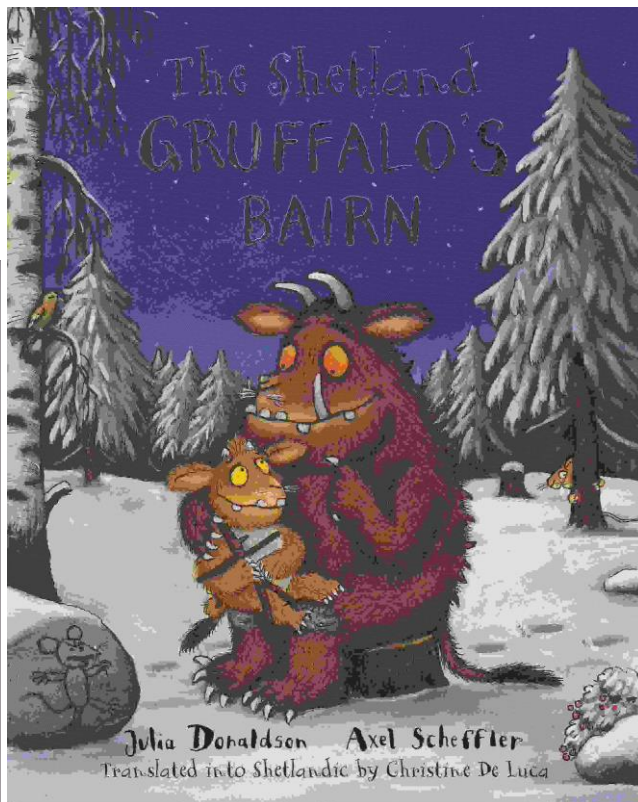
Dodie's Phenomenal Pheesic



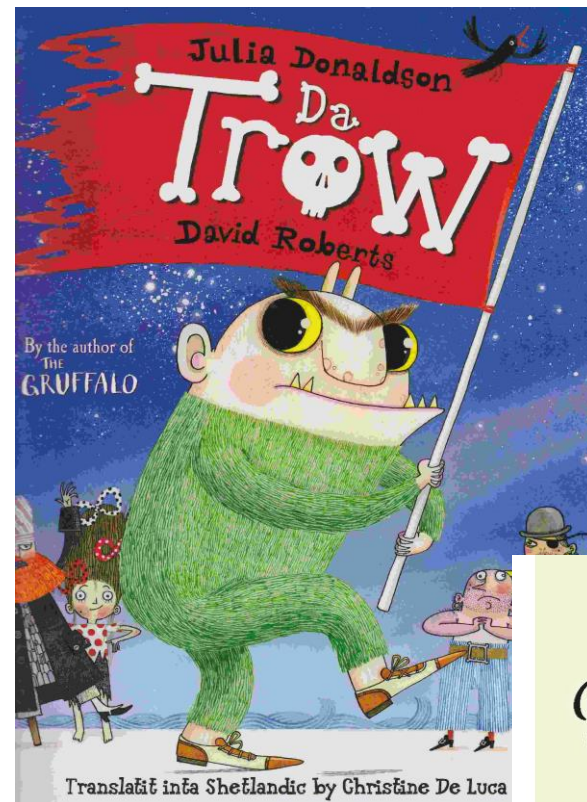
TRANSLATION OF ROALD DAHL'S
'GEORGE'S MARVELLOUS MEDICINE'
INTO SHETLAND DIALECT

BY CHRISTINE DE LUCA

ILLUSTRATIONS BY QUENTIN BLAKE



Julia Donaldson Axel Scheffler
Translated into Shetlandic by Christine De Luca



Translatit inta Shetlandic by Christine De Luca

ANTOINE DE SAINT-EXUPÉRY

Da Peerie Prince



Shaetlan (Shetlandic)



Discontinuity

I could blame da wye da sea is smoothed
da steyns; da sylk o touch; da waelin, laevin;
an will da haert be dere whin I come back?

Or I could blame da saandiloo. He wis clear
whit wye ta geng: dis wye noo, nae luikin
owre your shooder. Tide dusna wait;

see da wye da swill o joy is drained.
Dance daday. Damoarn you slip
inta eternity.

Or I could blame da hush at fills you
til you're laek ta burst wi aa da wirds
at could be said but you hadd back.

Hit's whit happens whan you step
in time, but sense a fault-line vimmerin
trowe you: dis side or dat?

Only da sea can greet an sing at da sam time:
shade an licht: cobalt, ultramarine an dan
da lönabrak – a tize, a frush o whicht.



Discontinuity

I could blame the way the sea has smoothed
the stones; the silk of touch; the sifting, leaving;
and will the heart be there when I come back?

Or I could blame the ringed plover. He was clear
what way to go: this way now, no looking
over your shoulder. Tide doesn't wait;

see the way the swill of joy has drained.
Dance today. Tomorrow you slip
into eternity.

Or I could blame the silence that fills you
to bursting-point with all the words
that could be said but you hold back.

It's what happens when you step
in time, but sense a fault-line trembling
through you: this side or that?

Only the sea can cry and sing at the same time:
shade and light: cobalt, ultramarine and then
the breaking wave – an enticing froth of white.





ONLY DA SEA CAN GREET
AN SINGER AT DA SAME TIME



ONLY DA SEKA GAN S REET

AN SING AT DA SAM TIM

Two extra slides – probably won't use

Foretochts from *The Trials of Mary Johnsdaughter*

Waas i da 1770's wis haem ta twartree hunder fock but a bit o a backwatter wi a undertow o secrets an scandals. Hit wis hard ta say whedder da laird an heritors hüd da ropps, or da kirk, fir dey wir dat weel spliced tagidder. Dem at baed dere lived affa da laand an da sea, maistlins fae haand ta mooth. Dey wir bön ill years an no sae ill years.

As you cam wast, wan peerie clim owre da Gallow Hill an Waas wid come inta sicht wi da isles o Linga an Vaila keepin da Atlantic at bay. Mony a ship fan shalter dere i da bosie o da parish, atween da Aester an da Waster Soond, atween da Hill o Foratwatt an da Hill o Voe.

Da croft-hooses aroond da voe wis maistlins low an taekit, wi a byre-end an maybe a barn forbye. Alang baith da aest side an da wast side o da voe – wi Germatwatt an Skeotaing luikin across da watter ta Stapness an Pointataing – dey wir strippit rigs: some years you got da staney rig or da rig fardest fae da ebb wi hits arles o tang, but hit wis aa fairly pairtit. Some crofts wis peerier as idders but aye a coo or twa dat dey could pit tae da hill i da simmer time. Maist crofters fished tae da laird as pairt o dir tenancy: dir boats wid a bön lyin aff if hit wis fair wadder, or poo'd up abön da ebb if hit wis coorse.

An dey wir idder biggins dat wid a catcht da eye. Bayhaa for wan, staandin prood ithin a huddle o cotters' hooses at Seafield, near da head o da voe. Hit wis a sombre haa wi tree storeys an eicht windows tae da front. Luikin oot ony o dat windows da Mistress o Bayhaa could see da isle o Vaila, da saet o her ain fock, da Scotts, da local laird. But Mistress Margaret wis a Scott nae langer; shö wis mairried wi John Thomas Henry o Foratwatt. He wis a laand-owner or heritor, an hed a tradin sloop caa'd da *Hawk*. Ivery voe he slippit inta, boats wid bring him whit he wis oarderred: barrels o fish oil or butter; bales o oo or dried fish.

An wha could a missed Happyhansel, da brand new scöl an scölhoose, sittin prunk apö da Hill o Voe? Or, alang da hill, set in hits ain toons sweepin doon da brae tae a pier, da terrace o hooses an da braa gairden belangin ta da Reverend James Buchan? Da widower Buchan wis bön mairried inta da laand-ownin Foratwatt Henrys an aa... ..

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Place names

Vocabulary

Grammar