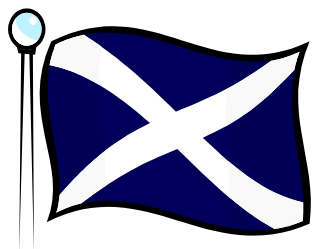
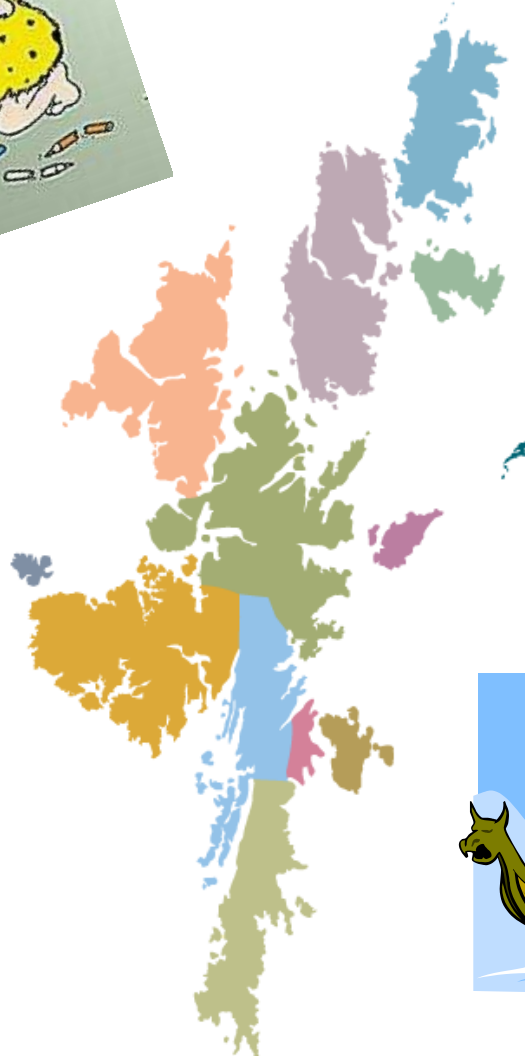
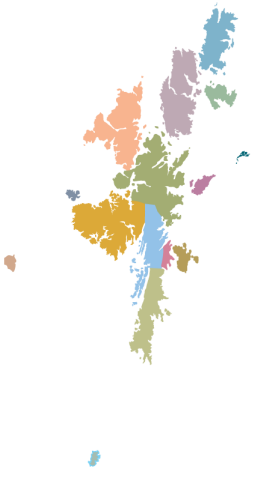


# The history of language in Shetland



Primary 5-7



# Language in Shetland

## Timeline



Pre-300AD  
Before the  
Picts

We don't know much about the people of Shetland or their language.

Pictish people carve symbols into stone and speak a 'Celtic' language.

300AD-800AD  
Picts

800AD-1500AD  
Vikings

Vikings occupy the isles and introduce 'Norn'. They carve symbols called 'runes' into stone.

Scotland rule gradually influences life on the islands. Scottish language eventually eradicates Norn.

1500AD onwards  
Scots

Today  
Us!

People in Shetland today have a 'dialect'. It contains Scottish and Norn words.

# The Picts and their language

The Picts built the Mousa Broch



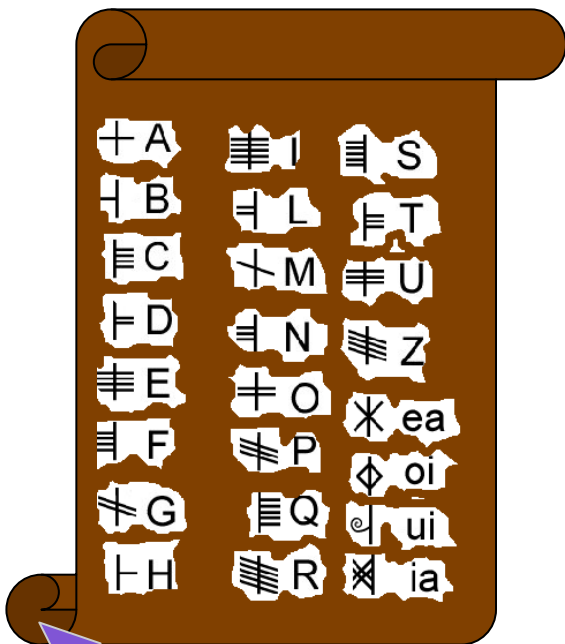
We don't know when the Picts first settled in Shetland, but we believe they were in Shetland by 300AD.

In Northern Europe (including Shetland, Scandinavia and Scotland), the Iron Age started around 500BC and ended around 800AD. Following this, Shetland experienced the 'Viking Age'.

The Bressay stone has Pictish symbols carved on it and an ogham inscription on each end of the slab. The inscription reads:  
CRROSCC : NAHHTVVDDADDS : DATTR :  
ANNBENNISES : MEQQDDROANN

Which translates as:

"The Cross of Nordred's daughter is here placed."  
"Benises son of Droan."



The Picts used these symbols to write things down, and they often carved them into stone.

This carved stone was found in Bressay.



Ogham writing

The ogham alphabet has been found on stone carvings throughout Britain.

Why did the Picts carve things on stone?

Til Hjaltland!

# Vikings invade!

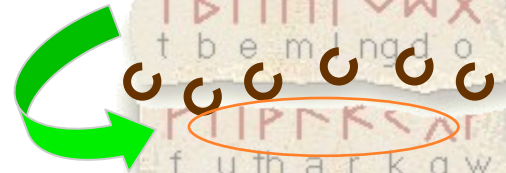


Vikings travelled to Shetland over a thousand years ago, sometime after 800AD. This was called the 'Viking Age'.

These are runes!

The Picts and their language disappeared when the Vikings came

disappeared when the Vikings came



The Vikings wrote symbols called 'runes'.



They travelled over the North sea from areas of Scandinavia—mostly from Norway.

They settled on the land as crofters and fishermen, and soon spread their language and customs over the isles.

Vikings spoke a language called Norn.

The word Norn derives from the Old Norse word **Norrœnn** meaning 'Norse' or 'Norwegian'.

Vikings named areas of land on the isles as there were no roads. They were possessive over territories and ownership.

*We don't have many written records of Norn—perhaps Vikings passed their language on orally rather than writing things down*

Norn was spoken in Shetland for centuries after its arrival.

Many areas in Shetland have names that harken back to Viking days.

## Viking influence



The names given to some places in Shetland come from Norn words.

These names help shed some light on the language the Vikings used. Many of the words used in Norn help to describe something, including place names!

Walls, or 'Waas', comes from a Norn descriptive word for the way the sea comes into the bay! *Va*, or *Vaas* (if plural).

Only a few Viking runic carvings have been found in Shetland. This stone, with runes carved on it, was found in Eshaness, in the north of Shetland.



Replacing 'th' with 'd' is an example of how the Norn language has survived in Shetland today.

"Am dat blyde noo da Voar is come."

*blyde: glad*  
*Voar: Spring*

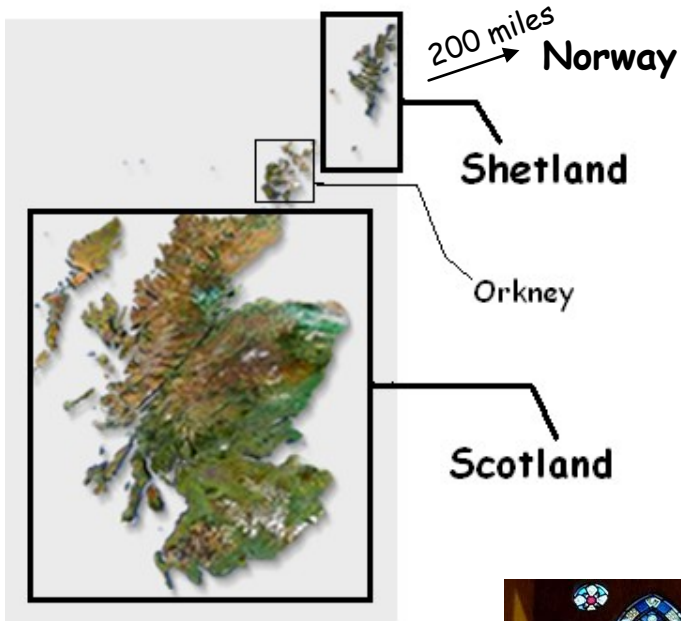
## TINGWALL

Pingvöllr  
(Old Norse: field of the parliament)

Place names that include 'ting' indicate possible assembly points. Tingwall was the location of the Old Norse parliament!

After Scotland took rule of Shetland, Scottish customs and language gradually began to influence the people in Shetland. Eventually, the strong Norn language was to fall away into disuse.

# THE SCOTS



In 1469, Shetland became a part of Scotland.



This happened because the Princess of Denmark was going to marry the King of Scotland (James III), and Shetland was given to James as part of the Princess' dowry.

*Dowry: money or goods a bride's family brings to the groom at the marriage.*

To begin with, life in Shetland didn't change much, but by 1611 they were obeying Scottish laws.



The Lerwick Town Hall 'Marriage Window' shows the Princess and the King! The dowry given to James III was to shape our way of life and our tongues to this day!

William Gordon and family in 1905 (below): a Church of Scotland missionary who, like many other Scots, settled on the isles.

Gradually people in Shetland began to live more like Scottish people, especially when Scots began to settle on the isles.

*Just like the Vikings, Scottish people brought their customs, their speech and their religion with them.*



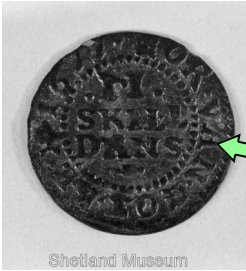
Norn had been the main language in Shetland for centuries, and even though the Scots language gradually became dominant, some Shetlanders could still speak Norn in 1800!

# Scottish influence

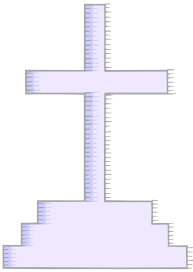
Around the 17th century the Scots language became widespread over Shetland.

The language in Shetland changed in different areas at different times—the transition into Scots was gradual and complex!

Geography, travel and isolation from immigrants, sea-farers or other areas determined how long the Norn language would remain in an area for.



2 Danish Skillings from 1677



Scottish economy and business was brought to the isles. Shetlanders started using Scottish weights and measurements. Eventually, Shetland traded only with Scotland.

Religion also helped shape the language. Shetlanders already practiced Christianity by this time, but when Scottish clergy moved into Shetland, they gave services and sermons in the Scots language.



Languages learned from trading became less relevant, and the Scottish language replaced them. Norn was not useful for trade.



"Favor i ir i chimrie..."

Beginning of the Lord's prayer in Norn.

Shetlanders became good at speaking Scottish, and used it more often. They could still remember Norn words, and some Norn words were still used.

These Norn words might have been used because there was no Scottish equivalent, or because they were more descriptive than the Scottish alternative.

At the end of the 19th Century, Jakob Jakobsen collected and recorded 10,000 Norn words still known by Shetlanders at the time!

Today, people in Shetland have a 'dialect'.

What did you say?

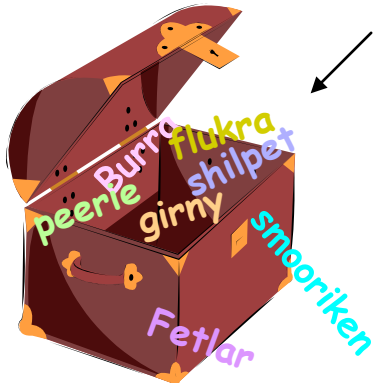
This dialect is a result of the Viking and Scottish people who influenced, and altered, the language in Shetland centuries ago.



Norn and Scots were both spoken in Shetland before Scots became the main language—we kept some of our Norn words, and these have changed over time to become some of the dialect words we use today.

Norn can be identified to some extent in our place names, and our pronunciation of some Scottish words, as well as in unique Shetland words.

blyde: glad  
Voar: Spring  
Haaf-fishing: deep-sea fishing  
Noost: boat's shelter  
Knap: a Shetlander's attempt to 'speak proper English'



A kist o' Shaetlan' wirds

Wir been lookin' fur trows!



These words have Norn roots, but as there have been so many influences on our language, it's often difficult to find out where our words have come from!

Some words were even taken from Dutch fishermen who frequented the isles in the 18th and 19th Century!  
Cabbi-labbi: a hubbub, confused noise from many people speaking at once (from the Dutch 'kibbelen')

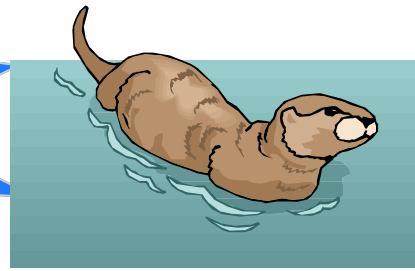


Sometimes my Dad needs aff on da restin-shair



# Norn in our language today

Draatsi (Shetland word for otter)



Surviving variants of Norn words are usually words that relate to our way of life today—perhaps words relating to fishing or crofting

Words that are no longer used might have been words describing utensils that we don't use anymore, like this



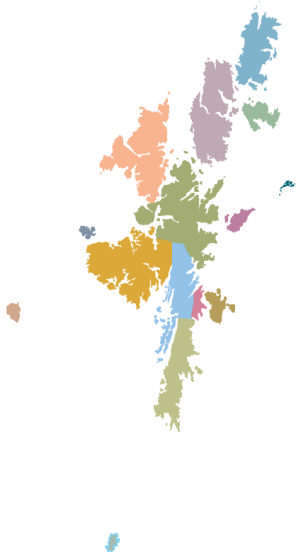
We also have dialect words that describe weather, nature and wildlife—how many birds can you name?

Or words that have no Scottish equivalent—like 'spaegie'!



This is a 'tari grep' (kelp fork), used to rake seaweed together to make a fertiliser for crofts

Baby 'Bonxie'! (Great Skua) on Noss



Different areas of Shetland have different ways of speaking the Shetland dialect.

We usually learn our dialect by hearing and speaking it rather than writing it..

Because of these two things, people don't always agree on how dialect should be written down.

This was because travel restrictions and geography made certain areas more isolated from other areas and from visitors and seafarers.

Our dialect today is unique. We sound the way we do because of our Viking and Scottish history.