# World War II
# In Shetland









# Primary 5-7

# World War II in Shetland



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# World War II

Hitler, Nazi leader ('Fuhrer') of Germany, wanted to control Europe. On the 1st September 1939, he invaded Poland.
On the 3rd September, Britain and France declared war on Germany.

60 million people died in World War II, and around 40 million of these were civilians.

Civilians are people who aren't in the armed forces.

**Did you know?**
A year before war began, the government handed out 40 million gas masks.

It was too late for Britain to help Poland—she was occupied by Germany.

The war was fought in Europe, Russia, North Africa and in Asia.

By the summer of 1940, Germany had invaded Poland, Holland, Belgium, France, Denmark and Norway!

The second world war ended in 1945.

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War changed day to day life for everyone. You had to carry an identity card to prove you were not an enemy, and you had to carry your gasmask at all times.

Black cloth had to be draped over windows so planes wouldn't see you.

In an air raid, sirens would go off and everyone had to go into an air raid shelter to keep safe.

Air raid shelters in Central School playground—this is now Islesburgh!

AIR RAID SHELTER
MARKET CROSS
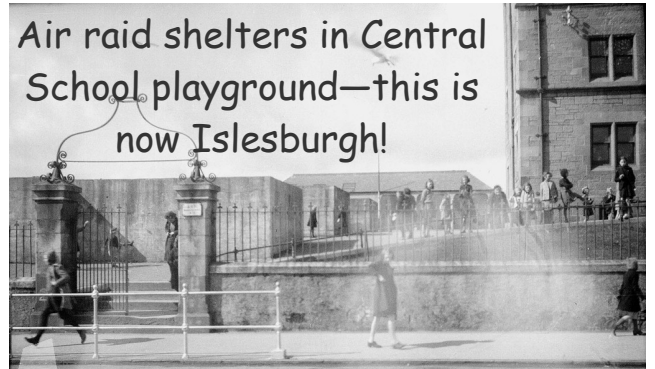
Children still went to school, but as well as their normal classes they learned air raid drills, leaving the classroom when the air raid sounded.

"Great excitement among the pupils today when six German aircraft circled over the school at low altitude. They attacked a seaplane in the north harbour, in full view of the school. The pupils were sent home quietly as the plane continued to circle the district."

People had to put blackout masks over headlamps on cars and motorbikes.

From the Bressay School log, 22nd November 1939
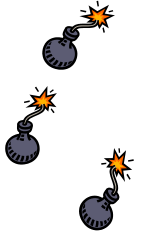
Soldiers standing outside Conochies!

ATHENIA
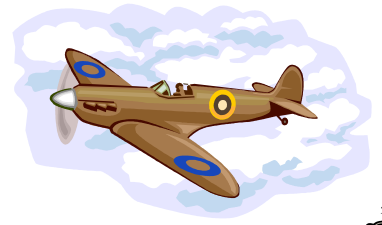
This name plate washed up on Sands of Sounds in 1940—it's from a British liner torpedoed on the first day of WWII.

Shetland was between Scotland and Norway, and acted as a good base for British soldiers to attack enemy planes and warships coming from Norway.

**Shetland was an important place in Britain during WWII.**

Shetland

Britain

Norway

Sweden

**Norway was occupied by Germany in 1940, and everyone was afraid the Nazis would attack Britain from the North, starting with Shetland!**

**Nobody was hurt by this bomb!**

The first German bomb from WWII landed in Shetland.

Almost overnight, Shetland welcomed over 20,000 servicemen to the isles.

**These British soldiers stayed in Shetland and attacked German Navy ships that went by.**

The Home Guard in Shetland.

Britain held fundraising weeks during WWII—this one at the Market Cross is probably for war weapons in the 1940's.

Shetland men too young or old to be sent away joined the Home Guard and, with the British soldiers, helped look out for enemies and kept people safe.

**Several RAF bases were set up at Sullom Voe.**

AIR RAID PRECAUTIONS

A London seaplane spotted in Shetland, 1939

Anyone in Shetland during the war would have seen lots of troops who were placed there.

After World War I Shetlanders found it difficult to get jobs in Shetland—unemployment had a saddening presence in the isles between the two wars.

The war and all the troops placed in Shetland created lots of jobs for Shetlanders.

People in Shetland would sometimes see German fighter planes flying overhead.

War job list in Shetland

* Build military camps
* Construct and improve the roads for military
* Lay cables
* Build airports
* Go out fishing to feed troops

German bombers dropped bombs on flying boats, on foreign boats around the isles, and sometimes on the land too.

Whenever a German plane was spotted, air raid sirens started and shelter was sought!

The Home Guard, and soldiers based in Shetland, would help keep people safe during an air raid.

Many German planes that passed over Shetland were doing training and didn't attack anyone.
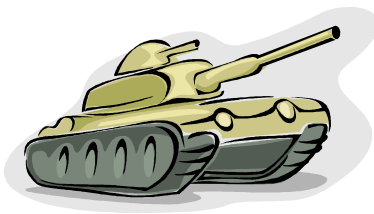
# OUT TO FIGHT

**Lots of Shetland men went out to fight with Britain in the war.**

Some were soldiers in the army, some were pilots in the air force, and many joined the Navy. Shetlanders were often very skilled at sea.

**Shetlanders served on ships and submarines all over the world, from the Atlantic to the Pacific.**

*Some worked on minesweepers, keeping allied shipping lanes clear. Others worked on warships.*

Many Shetlanders were lost in WWI, and the second world war was no different—Shetlander's suffered a higher percentage of loss than any other part of Britain.

Some worked on merchant ships—they were very important as they took essential supplies of wood, cloth and metal to Britain.

Just 6 of the 357 brave Shetlanders who died in WWII.

**Many Shetland women went south to help with the war effort.**

The 'Roll of Honour' lists all 357 Shetlanders who lost their lives as a result of the second world war.
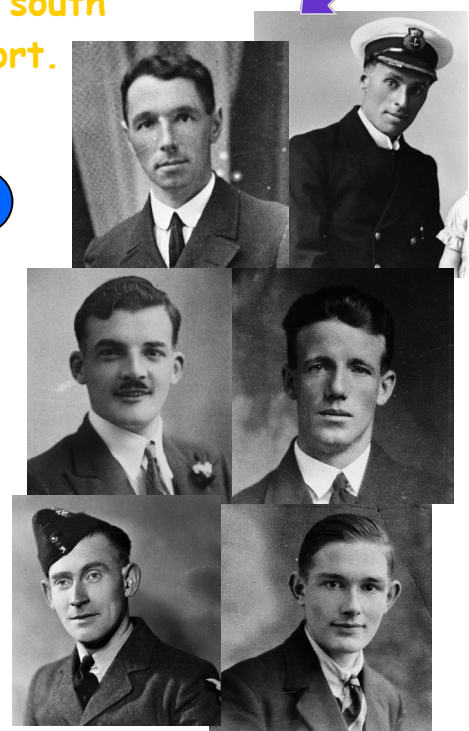
*The 'Roll of Service' lists over 3,300 men and women from Shetland who served in the three Armed Forces and the Merchant Navy.*
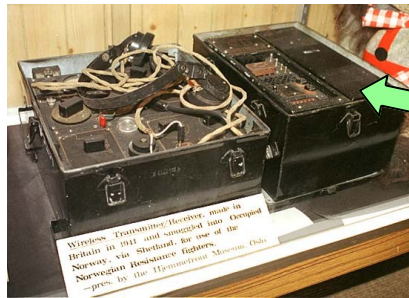
# The Shetland Bus

The 'Shetland Bus' was an undercover mission that took weapons and supplies to Norway from Shetland.

Problem: the fishing boats were designed for fishing, not for high-risk war situations.

The boats they used were usually fishing boats, from Norway or Shetland—they were disguised as working fishing boats.

One of the many agent radios taken to Norway by the Shetland Bus.

They took weapons, agents and instructions over to the allies. Sometimes they would bring people back to Shetland with them, to keep them safe from the Germans.

Many refugees that arrived in Shetland from Norway stayed here for life. Our connection to Norway is very important to us.

Operations were done under cover of darkness, and mostly in the winter—it was very dangerous crossing the North Sea in winter conditions!

Over 200 trips were made across the sea—some of the officers who sailed the boats have become well-known for their courage, bravery and skill.

Leif 'Shetland's' Larsen

Some 'Shetland Bus' boats were lost when enemy planes attacked.

The Shetland Bus Memorial in Scalloway

Leif Larsen, a Norwegian man, served in the Shetland Bus mission. He made 52 journeys between Shetland and Norway, and he is the most highly decorated allied naval officer of WWII.

Amazingly, no boats or crew members were lost due to navigational error by the skipper!

# The end of the war

The war finally ended in 1945.

VE day, Gilbertson Park

The war in the Europe ended in May, but the war in the Pacific carried on until August—the atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. So many lives were claimed that Japan surrendered.

The loss of many Shetlanders during the war meant that the population was much less. Shetland, much like the rest of the U.K., hadn't yet fully recovered from WWI.

All the British soldiers left Shetland after the war and went home.

There weren't many jobs for Shetland people after the war.

The jobs made from setting up military camps and roads were over when the war ended.

Many Shetlanders left the isles in search of a more promising future.

The government tried to help by providing money to build houses and aid financial worry.

Fishing, crofting, knitting and tourism helped Shetland a little in the '60's.

Shetland women had knitted many jumpers for soldiers during the war.

This jumper was knitted for Ralph Paterson by his wife. He was wearing it when he was taken Prisoner of War in Hong Kong. It was warm and comforting, a precious link to loved ones at home.

Poppies help us remember

Oil was found in the North Sea in the 1970's, and Shetland's economy was vastly improved.

On 11th November every year, we remember all of the people who died during the first world war, the second world war, and all the other wars since.