

Bob SPINKS, membre de notre association nous a fait parvenir ce texte sur un séjour dans les Iles Shetland. Nous le publions avec plaisir accompagné de quelques photos.

A SHETLAND ADVENTURE



If you love rugged unspoilt countryside, beautiful white beaches and a coastline sculpted by wind and sea offering statuesque rocks with waves crashing against them, then the Shetlands Isles are for you. This unspoilt land of beauty however is situated as far north as Britain reaches and where the Arctic ocean meets the North sea, so be prepared for rapid changes of climate and almost constant wind. This is not just any wind, this is wind with attitude. A biting cold wind with sudden gusts that threaten to blow you off the face of the earth. A wind that guarantees that each evening you will have ruddy cheeks, a feeling of well being and a level of healthy exhaustion that has you falling asleep in the chair well in advance of bedtime.



Our decision to go there was on a bit of a whim as my partner Liliane had from childhood, desired to go explore the place. We found a doable route via Edinburgh and an extortionate flight with Loganair to the southern tip of the main Island at Sumburgh, a car hire and a 30 minute drive from there across the runway took us to our base in the Island's biggest town Lerwick. Our accommodation , the Grand Hotel , had indeed once been a grand hotel but was now in a somewhat tired condition but was being lovingly restored by its new owner, a Cornish farmer who was making every possible effort to make the guests welcome and to have the best possible stay. We were warm , comfortable and well breakfasted and even quite like the shabby appearance of the unrestored areas of the place. We enjoyed every day out, mostly on single track roads, many unsigned but all offering wonderful unspoiled views and I'm sure everyone has their own favourites but for me my special memories were, St Ninian's Island.

This beautiful place is reached by a blustery walk across a long white sandbank where seals like to bask and hosts the ruins of the island's introduction to Christianity and evidence close by of its Viking heritage. I contrast this with the Northern tip of Shetland at Eshaness. This wild coast with spectacular rocky outcrops and deep glefts in the headland provided views I will never forget.

We are wildlife lovers and there is plenty to keep such people entertained. A wide variety of seabirds and ground nesting fowl, Seals, dolphins and Whales can be viewed from various sites around the coast

although we were there to witness the sad sight of a 15 meter sperm whale that had swum too close to the shore and was, according to local experts, unlikely to survive the experience and it was a sobering sight watching its efforts to escape as it sent great plumes of spray from its blowhole. There are plenty of Shetland ponies and there are otters about but we were unlucky and failed to see them on this visit.



This is a wild and wonderful place but one of danger too. The coast, despite numerous lighthouses, offers tales of shipwrecks and deaths and the weather is truly not to be underestimated. We experience beautiful bright sunshine and an azure blue sea, heavy snow, sleet and rain and the unforgiving wind. We had the right clothing, walking boots and a supply of food and drink in our vehicle. (I used to be a boy scout) but to be unprepared is asking for trouble in this wonderful place. Try it for yourselves and find an endless supply of wild beauty you'll never forget.

