

= Shapinsay =

Shapinsay is one of the Orkney Islands off the north coast of mainland Scotland . There is one village on the island , Balfour , from which roll @-@ on / roll @-@ off car ferries sail to Kirkwall on the Orkney Mainland . Balfour Castle , built in the Scottish Baronial style , is one of the island 's most prominent features , a reminder of the Balfour family 's domination of Shapinsay during the 18th and 19th centuries ; the Balfours transformed life on the island by introducing new agricultural techniques . Other landmarks include a standing stone , an Iron Age broch , a souterrain and a salt @-@ water shower .

With an area of 29 @.@ 5 square kilometres (11 @.@ 4 sq mi) , Shapinsay is the eighth largest island in the Orkney archipelago . It is low @-@ lying and fertile , consequently most of the area is given over to farming . Shapinsay has two nature reserves and is notable for its bird life .

At the 2011 census , Shapinsay had a population of 307 . The economy of the island is primarily based on agriculture with the exception of a few small businesses that are largely tourism @-@ related . Plans for the construction of a wind turbine are under consideration .

= = Etymology = =

Unlike most of the larger Orkney islands , the derivation of the name ' Shapinsay ' is not obvious . The final ' ay ' is from the Old Norse for island , but the first two syllables are more difficult to interpret . Haswell @-@ Smith (2004) suggests the root may be hjalpandis @-@ øy (helpful island) owing to the presence of a good harbour , although anchorages are plentiful in the archipelago . The first written record dates from 1375 in a reference to Scalpandisay , which may suggest a derivation from Judge 's island . Another suggestion is Hyalpandi 's island , although no one of that name is known to be associated with Shapinsay .

= = History = =

= = = Early history = = =

Standing stones provide evidence of the island 's human occupation since Neolithic times . According to Tacitus , the Roman general Agricola subdued the inhabitants of the Orkney Islands , and a local legend holds that he landed on Shapinsay . During the 18th century , a croft named Grukalty was renamed Agricola (which is also Latin for " farmer ") . Roman coins have been found on Shapinsay , but they may have been brought to the island by traders .

Shapinsay is briefly mentioned in the Norse sagas . The Saga of Haakon Haakonsson states that Haakon IV of Norway anchored in Elwick Bay before sailing south to eventual defeat at the Battle of Largs .

= = = 18th century = = =

The 18th century saw the beginnings of change to agriculture on Shapinsay , courtesy of the Balfour family . The family owned the estate of Sound , which covered the western part of the island . Sound had passed from the Tulloch family to the Buchanan family in the 17th century . In 1674 , Arthur Buchanan built the house of Sound , where Balfour Castle now stands . His granddaughter married James Fea , who is best known for his role in the capture of the Orkney Pirate John Gow . Fea was a supporter of the Jacobite Rebellion , and the house was burned by Hanoverian troops in revenge . The estate was acquired by Andrew Ross , Stewart Depute in Orkney of the Earl of Morton . Ross 's heirs , the Lindsay brothers , sold the estate to Thomas Balfour in 1782 . Balfour had previously rented the Bu of Burray , a large manor farm on another Orkney island , but had insufficient wealth to acquire the estate even though his wife had inherited a legacy on the death of her aristocratic brother . To raise the necessary funds , Balfour had to sell his military commission

and borrow from his brother , John , who was prospering in India with the East India Company . Once installed on the island , he built a new house , Clifdale , and founded the village of Shoreside , now known as Balfour . He also reformed the local agriculture , enclosing fields and constructing farm buildings .

William Irving was born c . 1740 in the small hamlet of Quholm in the northeast of the island . He became a sailor before emigrating to New York in 1763 . One of his sons was Washington Irving , author of Rip van Winkle and the first American author to gain international recognition .

Marjory Meason , a native of Shapinsay , was the last person to be executed in Orkney , in 1728 . She was a young servant , hanged in Kirkwall for the murder of a child . The execution is recorded as requiring 24 armed men , not including officers , and costing £ 15 8s .

During this period , burning kelp was a mainstay of the island economy . More than 3 @, @ 048 tonnes (3 @, @ 000 long tons) of burned seaweed were produced per annum to make soda ash , bringing in £ 20 @, @ 000 for the inhabitants . Thomas Balfour 's income from the kelp industry brought him four times the income that farming did .

= = = 19th century = = =

The 19th century saw more radical change in Shapinsay . Thomas Balfour 's grandson , David Balfour , transformed the island after inheriting the family estate , which by 1846 encompassed the whole of Shapinsay . Most of the land was divided into fields of 4 hectares (10 acres) , a feature that is still apparent today . Tenants were required to enclose and drain the land or pay for the estate to do it in the form of a surcharge added to their rents . In 1846 , 303 hectares (1 @. @ 17 sq mi) on Shapinsay consisted of arable land . By 1860 , that had trebled to more than 890 @. @ 3 hectares (3 @. @ 44 sq mi) . New crops and breeds of cattle and sheep were also introduced . Balfour 's reforms were described as " the fountain and source of Orkney Improvement . "

Balfour also gave the island its most noticeable landmark when he recruited an Edinburgh architect , David Bryce , to transform Clifdale House into the Scottish Baronial Balfour Castle . Other buildings he added to the island include the porter 's lodge (now a public house called The Gatehouse) , a water mill , a school , and a gasworks that remained operational until the 1920s . The gasworks is in the form of a round tower with a corbelled parapet of red brick and carved stones ? including one possibly removed from Noltland Castle on Westray , which is inscribed with the year 1725 . The structure appears to be fortified , in accordance with Balfour 's intention to give the village a medieval appearance . David Balfour was also responsible for the construction of Mill Dam , a wetland which was once the water supply for the mill and is now an RSPB nature reserve .

Fishing for herring and cod also grew in importance during the 19th century . Herring fishing was expanding generally in Scotland at that time , with fishing stations being set up in remote areas . Herring fishing began in 1814 on Stronsay and soon spread throughout the Orkney Islands . By the middle of the century , Shapinsay had 50 herring boats . Cod became important largely because the Napoleonic Wars forced English fishing boats to fish further north . Local fishermen , who had been catching fish using lines from small boats for centuries , also began trawling for cod . However , this was largely a part @-@ time venture , unlike in Shetland , where many inhabitants made a living from fishing . A saying originating from this time states , " a Shetlander is a fisherman with a croft , while an Orcadian is a farmer with a boat . " Consequently , fishermen from outside the Orkney Islands earned a large share of the profits . Helliar Holm 's beaches were used to dry both herring and cod after they had been salted . With the end of the Napoleonic Wars , which led to cheaper sources of soda ash becoming available from continental Europe , the kelp industry collapsed by 1830 . This collapse helped fuel agricultural reform , as crofters accustomed to earning a second income had to now earn more from farming .

= = = 20th century = = =

The Balfour estate sold its farms on Shapinsay between 1924 and 1928 . This was a common occurrence in Orkney at the time as wealthy landowners moved to more lucrative forms of

investment . Farms were generally sold to the sitting tenant or to their neighbours who wished to expand .

The 20th century saw many changes in farming on Shapinsay . Mechanised implements came to the island , particularly after the Second World War . In common with the rest of Orkney , the amount of land given over to growing grass increased . The growing of grain (with the exception of barley) and turnips steadily declined as these were replaced as winter fodder for livestock by silage , usually harvested by mechanical forage harvesters .

Orkney was a strategic site during both World Wars , and Shapinsay was no exception . In 1917 , during the First World War , the 836 @-@ tonne (823 @-@ long @-@ ton) Swiftsure was hit by a mine 4 kilometres (2 @. @ 5 mi) east of Haco 's Ness and sank in 19 metres (62 ft) of water with the loss of a single life . The site of the wreck was not discovered until 1997 .

During the Second World War , gun batteries were built on the island . A twin six pounder emplacement at Galtness Battery on the coast at Salt Ness protected the Wide Firth from German torpedo boats . A Castle Battery was operational from 1941 ? 43 , as was an anti @-@ aircraft battery . Mains electricity arrived on Shapinsay in the 1970s , when an underwater cable was laid from Kirkwall .

The trend towards more intensive farming began to be partially reversed by the end of the century as more environmentally friendly practices were encouraged by government and European Union grants . For example , Richard Zawadzki , owner of Balfour Mains (the largest farm on the island) , ceased to breed livestock (instead keeping animals bred elsewhere) and grew less grain (some barley is still grown on the farm) . Instead , some of the land is now managed under a Habitat Creation Scheme , which aims to encourage natural vegetation , wild flowers and nesting birds by limiting grazing and reducing the use of chemical fertilisers .

Tourism started to become important in the latter half of the century ; the first restaurant to incorporate bed and breakfast facilities opened in 1980 .

= = Geography = =

With an area of 2 @, @ 948 hectares (11 sq mi) , Shapinsay is the 8th largest Orkney island and the 29th largest Scottish island . The highest point of Ward Hill is 64 metres (210 ft) above sea level . The east coast is composed of low cliffs and has several sea caves , including the picturesque geo at the extreme northern tip known as Geo of Ork . Elwick Bay is a sheltered anchorage on the south coast , facing the Orkney mainland ; the island 's largest settlement , Balfour , is at the western end of the bay .

The island has several ayres , or storm beaches , which form narrow spits of shingle or sand cutting across the landward and seaward ends of shallow bays . They can sometimes cut off a body of water from the sea , forming shallow freshwater lochs known as oyces . Examples include Vasa Loch and Laird Water .

There are several small islands in the vicinity including Broad Shoal , Grass Holm and Skerry of Vasa . Helliard Holm is a tidal islet at the eastern entrance to the main harbour at Balfour ; it has a small lighthouse and a ruined broch . The String , a stretch of water that lies between Helliard Holm and the mainland , has strong tidal currents .

= = Geology = =

In common with most of the Orkney isles , Shapinsay has a bedrock formed from Old Red Sandstone , which is approximately 400 million years old and was laid down in the Devonian period . These thick deposits accumulated as earlier Silurian rocks , uplifted by the formation of Pangaea , eroded and then deposited into river deltas . The freshwater Lake Orcadie existed on the edges of these eroding mountains , stretching from Shetland to the southern Moray Firth . The composition of Shapinsay is mostly of the Rousay flagstone group from the Lower Middle Devonian , with some Eday flagstone in the southeast formed in wetter conditions during the later Upper Devonian . The latter is regarded as a better quality building material than the former . At Haco 's Ness in the south

east corner of the island is a small outcrop of amygdaloidal diabase . The island is overlain with a fertile layer of boulder clay formed during the Pleistocene glaciations .

= = Flora and fauna = =

The island 's bird life is particularly rich in waders such as curlew and redshank , found at The Ouse and Veantro Bay , and gull and tern colonies on the rockier shores and cliffs. pintail , shovellers and whooper swans are regular summer visitors , and there are also breeding populations of shelducks , hen harriers and bonxies . There is an introduced population of red @-@ legged partridges . Otters can be seen at the Ouse , Laird Water and Vasa Loch , and at various places around the coast along with common seals and Atlantic grey seals . There are plans to build a hide to allow visitors to observe seals without disturbing them . Shapinsay and Hoy are the only two larger Orkney islands that lack the Orkney vole (*Microtus arvalis orcadensis*) . Wildflowers abound in the summer , and the lichen *Melaspilea interjecta* , which is endemic to Scotland , is found in only three locations , including Shapinsay . In addition to the RSPB reserve at Mill Dam there is a Scottish Wildlife Trust reserve at East Hill in the southeast .

= = Demography = =

The highest recorded population for Shapinsay is 974 , in 1881 . Since then , the population of the island has steadily declined ; less than a third of that number was recorded in the 2001 census . The rate of absolute population loss was lower in the last decades of the 20th century than it had been in the first half of that century . In 2001 , Shapinsay had a population of 300 , a decline of 6 @. @ 8 % from 322 in 1991 . This was greater than the population decline for Orkney overall in the same period , which was 1 @. @ 9 % . However , the loss in population on Shapinsay was less than that experienced by most Orkney islands , most of which experienced declines of more than 10 % . The number of persons per hectare on Shapinsay was 0 @. @ 1 , similar to the 0 @. @ 2 persons per hectare across Orkney . At the time of the 2011 census the usually resident population had increased to 307 . During the same period Scottish island populations as a whole grew by 4 % to 103 @, @ 702 .

Of the island 's 300 inhabitants recorded in 2001 , 283 were born in the United Kingdom (227 in Scotland and 56 in England) . Seventeen were born outside the United Kingdom (four elsewhere in Europe , four in Asia , four in North America , one in South America and four in Oceania) . By age group , 85 of the inhabitants were under 30 years of age , 134 were aged between 30 and 59 , and 71 were age 60 and over .

= = Notable buildings = =

Balfour Castle dominates views of the southwest of the island and can be seen from the tower of St. Magnus Cathedral in Kirkwall . The castle library features a secret passage hidden behind a false set of bookshelves . The Balfours escaped unwelcome visitors through this passageway , which leads to the conservatory door , enabling the butler to truthfully tell visitors that the Balfours were not in the house . Another feature of the castle is the stags ' heads with gaslights at the tips of their antlers , although these are no longer used as working lights . The castle grounds feature deciduous woodland (now rare in Orkney) and 2 acres (8 @, @ 100 m²) of walled gardens . Though built around an older structure that dates at least from the 18th century , the present castle was built in 1847 , commissioned by Colonel David Balfour , and designed by Edinburgh architect David Bryce .

Other buildings constructed by David Balfour include the Dishan Tower , known locally as The Douche . This is a saltwater shower building with a dovecote on top . A local landmark due to its high visibility when approaching the island by sea , the building is now in a serious state of disrepair , with roofing slates missing and the dovecote in danger of collapsing .

A more ancient dwelling on Shapinsay is the Iron Age Broch of Burroughston . Only the interior of

this partially buried building has been excavated , allowing visitors to look down into the broch from the surrounding mound . The surviving drystone walls rise to about three metres (10 ft) and are more than four metres (13 ft) thick in some places .

The broch shows more evidence of David Balfour 's influence on Shapinsay . He arranged for the site to be excavated by the archaeologists George Petrie and Sir William Dryden in 1861 . The site was neglected after the excavation , slowly filling up with vegetation and rubble before being cleared in 1994 .

Shapinsay Heritage Centre is located in Balfour 's former smithy , along with a craft shop and a cafe . The castle 's former gatehouse is now the village public house .

= = Economy = =

In common with the other Orkney islands , Shapinsay is fertile agricultural land , with farms specialising in beef and lamb which export thousands of cattle and sheep annually . Orkney Ferries provides transport for pedestrians and vehicles , proximity to Kirkwall permitting closer contacts with the Orkney Mainland than is possible for most of the other North Isles . There are six crossings per day , the journey lasting about 25 minutes , which allows for a moderate amount of commuting . Between 1893 and 1964 , the island was served by the steamer Iona . Since 1964 , the Klydon and then the Clytus have operated the service ; the current ferry is the MV Shapinsay . The Orkney Islands Council has considered building a tunnel to the Orkney Mainland . Balfour Castle is now run as a hotel by the family of Captain Tadeusz Zawadzki , a Polish cavalry officer .

The Shapinsay development trust is working on the island 's community plan , and owns the island 's wind turbine , which was completed in August 2011 after the community voted for its construction . According to the development trust , the turbine could earn more than £ 5 million during its 25 @-@ year lifetime .

Small businesses on Shapinsay include a jam and chutney manufacturer , which uses traditional methods , and a studio offering residential arts courses such as stained glass crafting .

= = Education and culture = =

Shapinsay has a primary school , which in the 2006 ? 7 academic year had 26 pupils . Before 1995 , the island also had a secondary school but lost this because of falling enrolment and improved transport links with Kirkwall , to where Shapinsay secondary pupils now travel . The school doubles as a community centre and is host to a learning centre supported by the UHI Millennium Institute . This centre uses the internet , email and video @-@ conferencing to allow students in Shapinsay to study without leaving the island .

In December 2006 , the pupils staged a joint Christmas show with a school in Grinder , Norway , 875 kilometres (544 mi) from Shapinsay . The schools used the internet to collaborate , supported by BT Group (BT) , which upgraded the school 's broadband connection . The finale of the show involved the Norwegian pupils singing Away in a Manger in English while the Shapinsay pupils responded with En Stjerne Skinner I Natt in Norwegian . This multilingual collaboration was somewhat easier for the Grinder pupils , who are taught English from the age of six . This collaboration was part of an ongoing relationship between the schools , whose children exchange letters and cards . Shapinsay school 's headteacher has visited the Norwegian school , and there are plans for a reciprocal visit in 2008 .

Shapinsay Community School has gained a Silver Award under the international Eco @-@ Schools programme . School pupils have carried out an energy audit , helped to plant more than 600 trees close to the school and carried out energy saving campaigns . Shapinsay pupils have also won an award from the Scottish Crofters Commission for producing a booklet on crofting on the island .

= = Folklore = =

Cubbie Roo , the best known Orcadian giant , has a presence on Shapinsay . He was originally

based on the historical figure Kolbein Hrúga , who built Cubbie Roo 's Castle in 1150 on the isle of Wyre , which is possibly the oldest castle in Scotland , and was mentioned in the Orkneyinga Saga . However , the figure Cubbie Roo has departed far from his historical origins and has become a giant in the fashion that Finn MacCool (legendary builder of the Giant 's Causeway) has in Ireland . He is said to have lived on the island of Wyre and used Orkney 's islands as stepping stones . Many large stones on Orkney islands , including Shapinsay , are said to have been thrown or left there by the giant . Cubbie Roo 's Burn is a waterway on Shapinsay that flows through a channel called Trolldgeo . Cubbie Roo 's Lade is a pile of stones on the shore near Rothiesholm Head , the westmost point of Stronsay . This is supposedly the beginning of a bridge between the two islands that the giant had failed to complete . The name derives from the Old Norse trolla @-@ hlað , meaning " giant 's causeway " .

In 1905 , The Orcadian newspaper reported that a strange creature had been seen off the coast of Shapinsay . It was reportedly the size of a horse , with a spotted body covered in scales . Opinion on the creature 's origin was divided , with some islanders believing it to be a sea serpent , while others opined that it was merely a large seal .