

Wandering through the different parts of Fetlar, visitors can trace its occupation from the Stone Age, through the Picts and the Norse, to the more recent past when townships of people were evicted by the laird to make room for sheep. The Clearances left vast uninhabited areas and ruined croft houses, once the homes of hundreds of people. These areas, however, now provide a rich and varied landscape of ancient sites, exquisite flowers and habitats for ground-nesting birds. Particular beauty spots are the award-winning **Tresta Beach** on the west side of the island, **Urie Lodge** and **Funzie** (pronounced Finnie) in the east. Around 60 people now live on the island, most of whom live near Houbie where most of the island's services are based. The social life of the island is varied, and visitors are a welcome addition to any local event. There is a shop and cafe, bed and breakfast and self-catering accommodation, plus space and facilities for campervans and caravans at Fetlar Community Hall.

Fetlar's fertile soils and green landscape have led to its reputation as the Garden of Shetland. This rich natural heritage, along with the strong sense of community in Fetlar, has made Shetland's fourth largest island attractive to generations of visitors.

Welcome to Fetlar

The garden of Shetland



Fetlar is extremely rich in wildlife. One of Britain's rarest breeding birds, the Red-necked Phalarope, can often be seen feeding along the shores of the Loch of Funzie during the summer months. There is also a hide overlooking one of their breeding sites at the adjacent **Mires of Funzie**. Fetlar remains the stronghold for this bird in the UK, usually holding more than half of the breeding population. This tiny, attractive wader is unusual in that the male is smaller and less colourful than the female and takes on all incubating and chick-rearing duties. Whimbrels are another common sight, and Fetlar supports a significant proportion of the UK breeding population. Whimbrels are very similar to their larger cousin the Curlew but have a pale stripe through the centre of the crown and a characteristic and evocative call. A good place to see them is along the road to the airstrip. Fetlar was once home to Britain's only pair of breeding Snowy Owls. Recorded in 1967 by the late Bobby Tulloch, they bred successfully each year until 1975. Other birdlife of interest include Red-throated Divers, Golden Plovers, Ringed Plovers, Dunlins, Eiders, Arctic Skuas, Great Skuas, Arctic Terns and Oystercatchers. Fulmars, Black Gulliemots, Kittiwakes, Shags and Puffins can be seen around the coast. **Urie** and the old pier at **Brough** are particularly good spots for observing otters and seals.

Birds, wildlife and natural heritage Things to see and do

Geowall, Funzie Loch Arterra Picture Library / Alamy Stock Photo



Information on all aspects of Fetlar's natural heritage can be found at the **Fetlar Interpretive Centre** where visitors can see detailed displays and make use of multi-media presentations on birds and other wildlife, wild flowers and the island's geology. The **Geowall at Funzie** shows the complex nature of Fetlar's geology, including the unique Funzie conglomerate.



An upturned boat used as a shed roof VisScotland / Paul Tomkins



Red-necked Phalarope: David Gifford / Alamy Stock Photo
Funzie Bay: Bill Coster / Alamy Stock Photo
Whimbrel: Iain Lawson Wildlife / Alamy Stock Photo

Getting to Fetlar

To get to Fetlar from the Shetland mainland you must travel by ferry from Toft to Ulsta, Yell (approximately 20 minutes), and then drive across Yell and take another ferry across Bluemull Sound to Hamars Ness in Fetlar (approximately 25 minutes). Two ferries normally operate at Gutter so be sure to check with the ferry crew that the ferry you are boarding goes to Fetlar.

If you are travelling by car you are advised to book your vehicle on both ferries, particularly during the busy summer months. For the latest ferry timetable and booking information, see the Shetland Islands Council website.

There is no fuel available on the island so please make sure you have sufficient fuel before visiting. There are two electric vehicle charging points available at the Fetlar Interpretive Centre.

Useful information

- Ferry booking office**
+44 (0) 1595 745804
- Fetlar Interpretive Centre and visitor information point**
+44 (0)1957 733206
- Public toilets**
Hamars Ness (ferry terminal)
Fetlar Community Hall
- Post office**
Houbie
- Shop**
Houbie
- RSPB warden**
fetlar@rspb.org.uk

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All details believed to be accurate at the time of going to print.





↑ Pier into Wick of Houbie VisitScotland / Paul Tomkins

History and legend

Finnigert Daek is thought to be Fetlar's oldest surviving man-made structure. Dating from the Bronze Age it was built over 5,500 years ago. It runs north-south dividing the island in two, and although much of it is now ruined, large sections can still be seen.

Close by is an ancient ring of stones known as the **Haltadans**. Legend has it that the two centre stones were a fiddler and his wife who were playing music for a group of trows dancing in a circle when the sun came up and turned them all to stone.

More easily accessible is the **Giant's Grave**, just off the road to **Aith**. It is the site of a Viking boat burial which was the subject of excavations by the television programme *Time Team* in 2002, along with a Norse house site at **Gord**. Both sites were covered over after the excavations, but information on the digs can be found at Fetlar Interpretive Centre.

A standing stone known as the **Stone of the Ripples** can be seen by looking down into Leagarth House gardens from the road between Houbie and Fetlar Community Hall.

Buildings of interest

Not far along the road from the ferry terminal you will see **Brough Lodge**, built around 1820 for the Nicolson family. Although the house is not accessible to the public, it is clearly visible from the road. Close to the house, sitting prominently on the site of an Iron Age broch, is a rare Shetland example of a Georgian folly. The tower, built for Sir Arthur Nicolson, was used at one time as an astronomical observatory. Another example of a folly built for Sir Arthur is the Round House at **Gruting**.

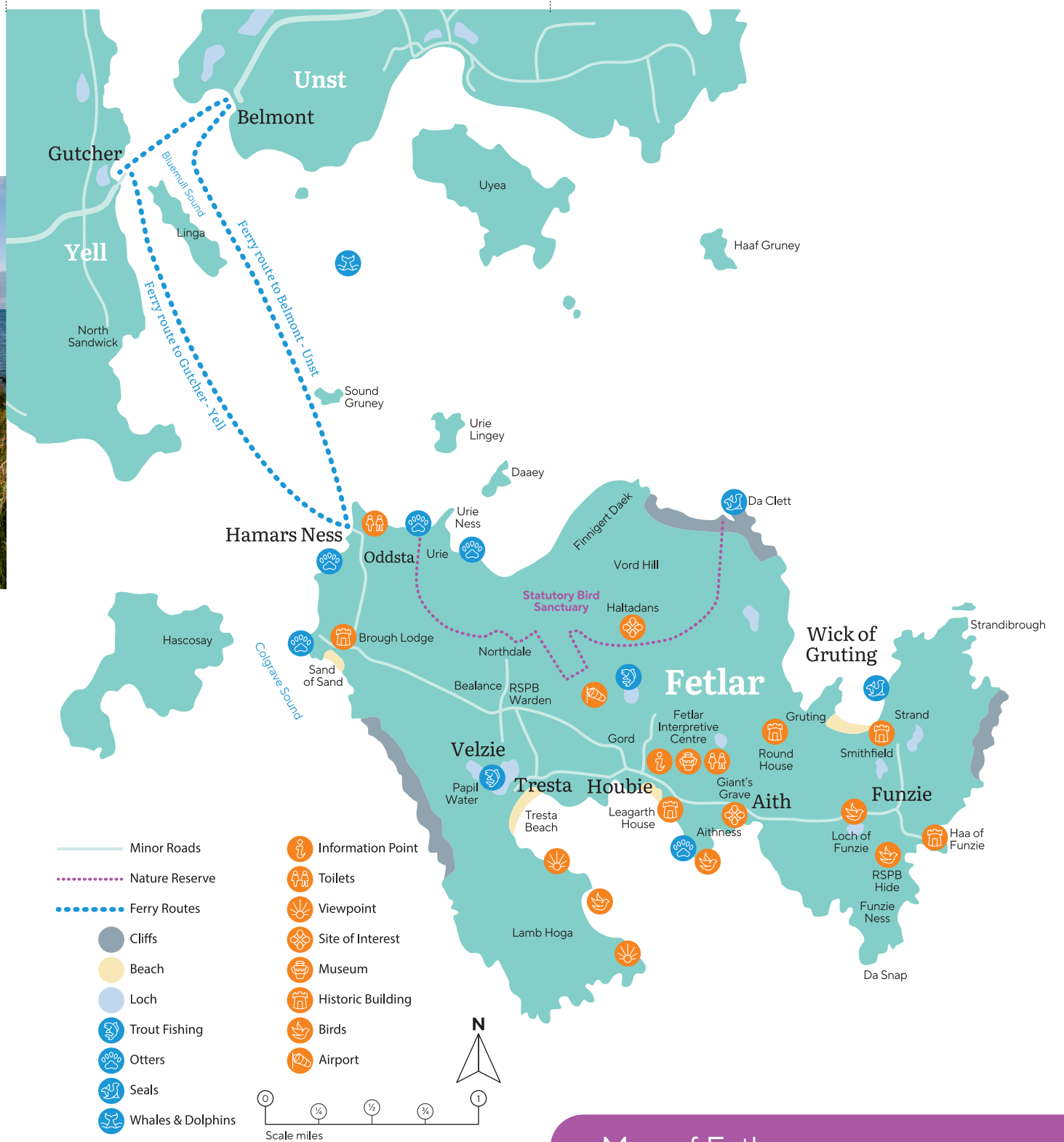
Leagarth House was built in 1900 by Sir William Watson Cheyne, a Fetlar man who became Lord Lister's assistant in his pioneering work on antiseptic surgery in the late 19th century, and later a prominent surgeon in his own right. Like Brough Lodge, the house itself is not open to the public, although an exhibition on both houses can be seen at the Interpretive Centre.

On the east side of the island is the now ruined **Haa of Funzie**, which was a fishing station in the late 1700s.

Loch and sea fishing

Fetlar's fishing is one of its best kept secrets. The four main freshwater lochs – **Papil Water**, **Loch of Funzie** (both easily accessible), **Skutes Water** and **Loch of Winyadepia** – all offer a good day's fishing. You can also sea-fish from the harbour at **Hamars Ness**, or the pier at **Brough Lodge** or **Houbie** – or you may be lucky enough to meet someone taking their boat out. Brown trout are prolific in the lochs and there are seasonal sea trout in Papil Water. For fishing permits, see the Shetland Anglers Association website.

↓ Brough Lodge and Tower VisitScotland / Paul Tomkins



Map of Fetlar



↑ Fetlar Interpretive Centre VisitScotland / Paul Tomkins

Fetlar Interpretive Centre

For all aspects of visitor information, the Interpretive Centre at the Beach of Houbie is open daily from May to the end of September. The museum offers displays and interactive multimedia on the island's culture, history, folklore, archaeology, wildlife and geology. A visit to the centre is well worthwhile for its award-winning exhibition on Sir William Watson Cheyne and the history of antiseptic surgery. Fetlar Interpretive Centre is also a visitor information point.

Walking

As with most of Shetland, the best way to explore Fetlar is on foot. There are some great walks with spectacular scenery and wildlife. Here are a few of them:

- **The Snap** – a clearly signposted walk around the headland on the south-east of the island. Great for Puffin and sea life spotting.
- **Urie** – a signposted walk along the North coast from **Hamars Ness**.
- **Lamb Hoga** – a walk from **Tresta Beach** to the top of Lamb Hoga and down to the southern tip. You'll see where peat was dug for fuel in Fetlar and where Shetland ponies used to take kishies (baskets) of peat down to the boats to be transported around the island.
- **Brough Lodge to Hamars Ness** – if you are walking to the ferry, this is the way to go – you will pass **Sna Broch**, one of Fetlar's seven brochs.
- **Papil Water** – a gentle walk around Papil Water (or Loch of Velzie), just north of Tresta Beach.

Fishing at Papil Water Promote Shetland / Euan Myles →

