

Bressay History Group's plans to excavate and reconstruct the eroding burnt mound at **Cruester** has been awarded over £70,000 from the Heritage Lottery Fund, Shetland Islands Council, Highlands and Islands Enterprise and Shetland Amenity Trust. This is a partnership project with Archaeology Scotland (formerly the Council for Scottish Archaeology) and The SCAPE Trust and drawing on the expertise of Shetland Amenity Trust.

Burnt Mounds generally date to the Bronze Age (around 4000 years ago) though some display evidence of activity as late as the medieval period. Different types are found across the British Isles and varying theories exist about their function, ranging from cooking sites to saunas. Shetland's burnt mounds form a special group of which Cruester is a complex example, consisting of a series of stone structures built into a surrounding mound of burnt stone. Excavation in 2001, funded by Historic Scotland, revealed a series of stone cells (including a 'hearth cell') surrounding a sloping passageway leading to a stone-built water tank. The mound expanded as stones were heated then placed or rolled into the tank to heat the water before being discarded.

In January 2007, Bressay History Group members met with the partner organisations and Shetland's Regional Archaeologist, Val Turner, and decided to 'adopt' the site with Archaeology Scotland's 'Adopt-a-Monument Scheme'. Since then, detailed plans have been made and during June and July this year, archaeologists will excavate and dismantle what remains of the structures that make up the site. The stones will be carefully labeled and transported to a plot adjacent to the Heritage Centre where the site will be reconstructed into a fully functioning visitor attraction and centre for experimental research. The work will be under the supervision of specialist stonemasons who have gained a wealth of experience working at Scatness (a large Iron settlement that has been partially reconstructed on Shetland Mainland under the auspices of Shetland Amenity Trust and The University of Bradford).

An exciting education programme, packed with living history events and experimentation with ancient technology, will accompany the reconstruction. This will involve a range of activities from making and firing pottery to artistic reconstruction workshops. It is hoped that the project will generate public interest both in Bressay's unique heritage, and in the special importance of Shetland's burnt mounds. Details of interactive open days, living history events and exhibitions which will be distributed widely throughout Shetland from May onwards, and can be viewed at the project website

www.shorewatch.co.uk/cruester.

Bressay is easily accessible from Lerwick via a short ferry crossing. The Heritage Centre and the adjacent reconstruction site are located just behind the ferry terminal on the island. A car park and full disabled access and toilet facilities are available at the heritage centre.

Those interested in booking a volunteer place should contact Barbara Anderson on 01595820295 or email bressayheritage@btinternet.com

Archaeology Scotland <http://www.scottisharchaeology.org.uk>

The SCAPE Trust: www.scapetrust.org

Shetland Amenity Trust: <http://www.shetland-heritage.co.uk/amenitytrust/>