

# Scottish Readers Remember Remote Scotland



*We never minded how old the bundles of newspapers were that we received, nor did anyone else in Foula. Such was the conditioning of long delays between mail boat crossings that even now I find it amazing that people expect daily newspapers as of right.*

Stella Sutherland

**T**he Shetland Isles are the most northerly part of the UK and for most of the century all reading material that arrived there had to travel by boat. Nevertheless, Shetlanders were ferocious readers and eagerly awaited books, papers and magazines, which kept them in touch with news and views long before most islanders had telephones.

The public library service in the island capital of Lerwick delivered books to some remote places; in others, there was often a small library in the local school. Without electricity, reading at home was often done by candlelight. During winter months in very remote islands, such as Foula, eager readers would snap up new supplies of reading for it might be many weeks before a boat could set sail again. And books and papers were often passed round family and neighbours many times.



Despite such difficulties, the reading tastes of Shetlanders were just as varied as in other parts of Scotland. Many changes came when oil was discovered in the North Sea, but reading has remained a favourite pastime for Shetland folk. The islands have also produced many fine writers such as the poet Stella Sutherland, whose memories of reading were recorded as part of the Scottish Readers Remember project.

