

Chapter 1 : The Norn language of Orkney and Shetland by Michael P. Barnes

Norn is an extinct North Germanic language that was spoken in the Northern Isles (Orkney and Shetland) off the north coast of mainland Scotland and in Caithness in the far north of the Scottish mainland.

Languages of Scotland around the early 15th century, based on placename evidence. However, the decline of Norse speech in Orkney probably began in when the earldom passed into the hands of the Sinclairs , and Scots had superseded Norse as the language of prestige on the island by the early 15th century. Sources from the 17th and 18th centuries speak of Norn sometimes identified as "Norse", "Norwegian" or "Danish" as being in a state of decline and generally indicate that the language remained stronger in Shetland than in Orkney. A source from states that there are "only three or four parishes" in Orkney where people speak "Noords or rude Danish" and that they do so "chiefly when they are at their own houses". However, fragments of vocabulary survived the death of the main language and remain to this day, mainly in place-names and terms referring to plants, animals, weather, mood, and fishing vocabulary. Norn had also been a spoken language in Caithness but had probably become extinct there by the 15th century, replaced by Scots. While this classification is based on the differences between the North Germanic languages at the time they split, their present-day characteristics justify another classification, dividing them into Insular Scandinavian and Mainland Scandinavian language groups, based on mutual intelligibility. Under this system, Norwegian is grouped together with Danish and Swedish, because the last millennium has seen all three undergo important changes, especially in grammar and lexis, which have set them apart from Faroese and Icelandic. Norn is generally considered to have been fairly similar to Faroese, sharing many phonological and grammatical traits, and might even have been mutually intelligible with it; thus, it can be considered an Insular Scandinavian language. Few written texts remain. It is distinct from the present day dialect of Shetland, termed by linguists Shetlandic. Phonology The phonology of Norn can never be determined with much precision due to the lack of source material, but the general aspects can be extrapolated from the few written sources that do exist. Norn shared many traits with the dialects of south-west Norway. Grammar The features of Norn grammar were very similar to the other Scandinavian languages. There were two numbers , three genders and four cases nominative , accusative , genitive and dative. The two main conjugations of verbs in present and past tense were also present and like all other North Germanic languages, it used a suffix instead of a prepositioned article to indicate definiteness as in modern Scandinavian: Though it is difficult to be certain of many of the aspects of Norn grammar, documents indicate that it may have featured subjectless clauses, which were common in the West Scandinavian languages. Fyvor or er i Chimeri. La Konungdum din cumma. Lat riket ditt koma. A Shetland "guddick" riddle in Norn, which Jakob Jakobsen heard told on Unst , the northernmost island in Shetland , in the s. The same riddle is also known from the Faroe Islands , from Iceland, and a variation also occurs in England.

Chapter 2 : Norn language, alphabet and pronunciation

This book is probably the best (and perhaps the only) reference for the extinct Scandinavian language of Orkney and Shetland, Norn. Much of the book, however, is about Old Norse texts which are merely from (or believed to be from) the islands, even though not all of them contain any traces of local (ie, distinctly Norn) forms.

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Chapter 3 : Norn, the ancient language of Orkney and Shetland

Velkommen! Welcome to the home of Norn, the mysterious 6 th Scandinavian language that was spoken in Shetland, Orkney and part of Scotland until the th centuries, when it was replaced with Scots English.

History Languages of Scotland around the early 15th century, based on placename evidence. However, the decline of Norse speech in Orkney probably began in when the earldom passed into the hands of the Sinclairs , and Scots had superseded Norse as the language of prestige on the island by the early 15th century. Sources from the 17th and 18th centuries speak of Norn sometimes identified as "Norse", "Norwegian" or "Danish" as being in a state of decline and generally indicate that the language remained stronger in Shetland than in Orkney. A source from states that there are "only three or four parishes" in Orkney where people speak "Noords or rude Danish" and that they do so "chiefly when they are at their own houses. However, fragments of vocabulary survived the death of the main language and remain to this day, mainly in place-names and terms referring to plants, animals, weather, mood, and fishing vocabulary. Norn had also been a spoken language in Caithness but had probably become extinct there by the 15th century, replaced by Scots. While this classification is based on the differences between the North Germanic languages at the time they split, their present-day characteristics justify another classification, dividing them into Insular Scandinavian and Mainland Scandinavian language groups based on mutual intelligibility. Under this system, Norwegian is grouped together with Danish and Swedish, because the last millennium has seen all three undergo important changes, especially in grammar and lexis, which have set them apart from Faroese and Icelandic. Norn is generally considered to have been fairly similar to Faroese, sharing many phonological and grammatical traits, and might even have been mutually intelligible with it; thus, it can be considered an Insular Scandinavian language. Few written texts remain. It is distinct from the present day dialect of Shetland, Shetland Scots , which evolved from Middle English. Phonology The phonology of Norn can never be determined with much precision due to the lack of source material, but the general aspects can be extrapolated from the few written sources that do exist. Norn shared many traits with the dialects of south-west Norway. Grammar The features of Norn grammar were very similar to the other Scandinavian languages. There were two numbers , three genders and four cases nominative , accusative , genitive and dative. The two main conjugations of verbs in present and past tense were also present and like all other North Germanic languages, it used a suffix instead of a prepositioned article to indicate definiteness as in modern Scandinavian: Though it is difficult to be certain of many of the aspects of Norn grammar, documents indicate that it may have featured subjectless clauses, which were common in the West Scandinavian languages. Fyvor or er i Chimeri. La Konungdum din cumma. Lat riket ditt koma. A Shetland "guddick" riddle in Norn, which Jakob Jakobsen heard told on Unst , the northernmost island in Shetland , in the s. The same riddle is also known from the Faroe Islands , from Iceland, and a variation also occurs in England.

Chapter 4 : The Norn language of Orkney and Shetland in SearchWorks catalog

Norroena, or Norn as it was later called, remained the chief medium of oral and written communication in the Northern Isles throughout the Viking Age for much of the Middle Ages. This book traces t For some years a Scandinavian language was spoken in Orkney and Shetland.

Norn language Save Norn is an extinct North Germanic language that was spoken in the Northern Isles Orkney and Shetland off the north coast of mainland Scotland and in Caithness in the far north of the Scottish mainland. After Orkney and Shetland were pledged to Scotland by Norway in 1069, it was gradually replaced by Scots. History Languages of Scotland around the early 15th century, based on placename evidence. However, the decline of Norse speech in Orkney probably began in when the earldom passed into the hands of the Sinclairs , and Scots had superseded Norse as the language of prestige on the island by the early 15th century. Sources from the 17th and 18th centuries speak of Norn sometimes identified as "Norse", "Norwegian" or "Danish" as being in a state of decline and generally indicate that the language remained stronger in Shetland than in Orkney. A source from states that there are "only three or four parishes" in Orkney where people speak "Noords or rude Danish" and that they do so "chiefly when they are at their own houses". However, fragments of vocabulary survived the death of the main language and remain to this day, mainly in place-names and terms referring to plants, animals, weather, mood, and fishing vocabulary. Norn had also been a spoken language in Caithness but had probably become extinct there by the 15th century, replaced by Scots. While this classification is based on the differences between the North Germanic languages at the time they split, their present-day characteristics justify another classification, dividing them into Insular Scandinavian and Mainland Scandinavian language groups based on mutual intelligibility. Under this system, Norwegian is grouped together with Danish and Swedish, because the last millennium has seen all three undergo important changes, especially in grammar and lexis, which have set them apart from Faroese and Icelandic. Norn is generally considered to have been fairly similar to Faroese, sharing many phonological and grammatical traits, and might even have been mutually intelligible with it; thus, it can be considered an Insular Scandinavian language. Few written texts remain. It is distinct from the present day dialect of Shetland, Shetland Scots , which evolved from Middle English. Phonology The phonology of Norn can never be determined with much precision due to the lack of source material, but the general aspects can be extrapolated from the few written sources that do exist. Norn shared many traits with the dialects of southwest Norway. This includes a voicing of *t* before or between vowels and in the Shetland dialect, but only partially in the Orkney dialect a conversion of *þ* and "thing" and "that" respectively to *t* and respectively. Grammar The features of Norn grammar were very similar to the other Scandinavian languages. There were two numbers , three genders and four cases nominative , accusative , genitive and dative. The two main conjugations of verbs in present and past tense were also present and like all other North Germanic languages, it used a suffix instead of a prepositioned article to indicate definiteness as in modern Scandinavian: Though it is difficult to be certain of many of the aspects of Norn grammar, documents indicate that it may have featured subjectless clauses, which were common in the West Scandinavian languages. *Fy vor or er i Chimeri. La Konungdum din cumma. Amen* A Shetland "guddick" riddle in Norn, which Jakob Jakobsen heard told on Unst , the northernmost island in Shetland , in the s. The same riddle is also known from the Faroe Islands , Norway, Iceland, and a variation also occurs in England.

Chapter 5 : Norn language - WikiVisually

Norn was a North Germanic language spoken in in Shetland (Hjatland), Orkney and Caithness in mainland Scotland until the 19th century. Norn descended from Old Norse and was brought to Scotland and the islands of the North Atlantic by settlers from western parts of Norway from about AD.

However it is a common mistake made by visitors and the national, and international, media. It is just "Orkney". Strictly speaking the name is already plural as "Orkney" is simply a shortened version of the Old Norse "Orkneyjar", meaning "Seal Islands" See also: Orcadians simply refer to it as the Mainland. It is becoming more common to hear visitors and incomers calling it "Mainland" and talking about "their trip around Mainland" or "we spent three days on Mainland". This is something an Orcadian will never say. [Click here for full details.](#) Do the people of Orkney speak Gaelic? Gaelic was never spoken in Orkney, unless the language of the Picts - the inhabitants of the islands before the Norsemen took them - was an early form of Gaelic. This is itself highly debatable. The Norse settled the isles from the 8th century onwards and brought with them their own language, Old Norse, which replaced the Pictish language. Old Norse adapted over the years into the language known as Norn , which remained the language of the rural Orcadians until finally dying out in the 18th century. So can I learn Orkney Norn? Only a few scraps of the language remains. Few Orcadian speakers of Norn had the inclination, or the ability, to write. So, when the language was finally overtaken by Scots, it simply vanished. On saying that however, elements of Norn still exist within Orcadian dialect. For more details on Norn, [click here.](#) My family are from Orkney. Quite simply tartan, clans, bagpipes et al, are traditions from the Scottish Highlands. Orkney and Shetland never operated under the clan system, with surnames either being patronymic - i. Sigurd Erlendson - or changeable until the eighteenth century. As an example, surnames more commonly came from where the person was actually from. To a certain extent this still exists today. Using the fictional character, John, who moved from the Orkney Mainland onto one of the islands, say Rousay. There he might be referred to as John Mainland. Moving back to the Mainland a few years later he may become John Rousay etc etc. The unofficial flag of Orkney The new - and approved - Orkney flag. Does Orkney have a flag? For years, Orcadians flew the "Cross of St Magnus" as pictured top right. The design, he said, was too similar to a number of coat-of-arms, in particular the old arms of the Kingdom of Ulster. However, some supporters insisted that Orkney has a right to use the flag, the design of which, say some, was that of the flag of the Kalmar Union -- a union of Norway, Sweden and Denmark from until [Click here for more details.](#) The protests were in vain, however, and, in April , a new design was chosen from a number submitted by members of the public. The favoured design was submitted by Duncan Tullock, from Birsay , and featured a blue and yellow Nordic cross on a red background. Is it true it never gets dark in the summer? At midsummer, June 21, the sun only sets around As a result, there are no real hours of darkness, merely an extended twilight period. At this time it is perfectly possible to read outdoors at midnight. [Click here for more on the summer and winter solstice.](#) What is Udal Law? There has been some concern in the Northern Isles recently that the traditional rights afforded to people in Orkney and Shetland under the ancient Norse system of udal law will be scrapped as a result of proposals being considered by the Scottish Law Commission. The subject of Udal Law, as applies to Orkney, remains a contentious subject â€” over 1, years since Norse settlers first introduced it to the islands. But what exactly is Udal Law? At the root of Udal law was the principle of the bonder â€” farmers who owned their properties outright and owed fealty to no superior. But although the udal system meant the bonder had no immediate superior, there were still obligations to the Norwegian Crown. Not only was a udaller expected to take up arms for the Norwegian King if required, but he also paid scat â€” a form of tax to the crown. The other main distinction between udal and feudal law was the manner in which land was passed on. In Udal Law no written deed was required to transfer udal land and agreements were concluded verbally. This meant a lack of written deeds, a fact that led to problems after Orkney was annexed to Scotland. Not only did the system baffle the Scots, but it was also extensively abused and Scottish landowners used the lack of deeds to appropriate land from udallers. Inevitably, this practice led to fragmentation of land. Udal Law also included, and still includes, ownership of

the foreshore. This extended to the lowest point of the ebb, and also the ground further out, or marebakke, which is where the foreshore becomes steep at a depth of from two to five metres at the ebb tide.

Chapter 6 : Norn language - Wikipedia

Bibliography Includes bibliography. Publisher's Summary For some years a Scandinavian language was spoken in Orkney and Shetland. It was introduced into the islands by Viking settlers and became the dominant form of speech there.

Norn - the Language of Orkney "I am fifty years of age. When I was young, about five or six old men spoke mostly Norse but they were never taught to read or write any of it for a long time before so that their words and what does remain can be imperfect. Originally carried to the Northern Isles by Norwegian settlers in the 8th and 9th centuries AD , their language, Old Norse, gradually developed into the distinctive language we now refer to as Norn. The sheer scale of the Norse settlement of Orkney saw their language obliterate whatever indigenous language was spoken in Orkney. A few centuries later Norn was the dominant form of speech. But unfortunately, because Norn was the language of the common people, it was never written down. Although official documents do exist from this period, they were generally written in Norwegian. Norn remained the language of Orkney until the early 15th century, but, contrary to popular belief, its decline began well before the islands were annexed to Scotland, in For many years prior to the impignoration, Scottish influence on Orkney had been on the increase. The Earldom had passed from Norwegian hands into Scottish ones and the influence of these Scottish earls must have had some effect on the "nobility" of Orkney. Of particular importance, though, was the effect of Scotland on the church. Although the bishopric of Orkney was still subject to Norway, its bishops had shown a tendency to follow Scottish practices. By , the Scots calendar had been adopted and, as the clergy formed the bulk of the literate population of the island, the Scots language soon became more commonly used in clerical circles. Because of this, Norn remained spoken in rural areas for years or so later. From the late s to the early s, most Orcadians were probably bilingual - speaking both Norn and Scots English. But gradually, cultural change in society, coupled with the economic changes, meant that the old tongue began to die out. By the early 19th century, only a handful of older Orcadians still knew the language. When they died, Norn went with them. Although Orcadians had spoken Norn for almost a millennium, few, if any, of them wrote - or could write - a word of it. The illiteracy of the general population meant that the exact form of the language is unknown with only a few tiny fragments of written Norn remaining to us today. To see an example of what we know to be Norn, [click here](#). But although the grammar and intricacies of Norn are now lost, a huge number of Norn words survived in the spoken dialect of Orkney. These words, generally relating to everyday life, remained in the following centuries.

Chapter 7 : Orkneyjar - Orkney Frequently Asked Questions

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Welcome to the home of Norn, the mysterious 6th Scandinavian language that was spoken in Shetland, Orkney and part of Scotland until the th centuries, when it was replaced with Scots English. Like its close cousins, Faroese and Icelandic, Norn descended from Old Norse, the language of Scandinavian settlers who colonised various sparse populated or uninhabited territories in North Atlantic. The first Scandinavian settlements appeared on these archipelagoes around A. Little is known about the development of Norn before its fragments started being recorded in the th century and nobody knows for sure when Norn developed into a language different from Old Norse. The latter is the language of the oldest Scandinavian records found in Shetland and Orkney - runic inscriptions from the th centuries. Primarily ruled by native Norse earls, Orkney and Shetland accepted the authority of the King of Norway in and the written language used at those times in official correspondance was still Old Norse, which showed very few local features, if any. This is not surprising, bearing in mind that local scribes used to go to Norway seeking training in the language. In Shetland and Orkney followed Norway into an alliance with Denmark when the Norwegian and Danish crowns united Kalmar Union and Danish started replacing Old Norse as the language of clerical records. Danish was used well into the 16th century and even longer - the last document written in Danish dates back to Shetland. Surviving old documents in Old Norse or Danish are not illustrative about Norn, and, as the scarce existing records show, it was quite different from both. In the 14th century, the islands started experiencing a growing influence from Scotland and a few centuries later Scots English or Scots, regarded by some as a separate language started to compete with the local Scandinavian tongue. Orkney faced this influence to a greater extent, while Shetland, thanks to its relative remoteness, was more conservative and about one hundred years behind in accepting the changes that had already ocured in its southern neighbour. The first step of "Scottisation" of the islands was eventually made clear in the 13th century when the line of Norse earls in Orkney ceased and was replaced first by Scottish earls of Angus and then Strathearn lines, apparently Gaelic speaking. Later on they were succeeded by the Sinclair earls, who spoke Scots but still acted on behalf of the Norwegian king. The Sinclairs had a less formal influence in Shetland as well and in the 16th century, Scottish earls finally came to power in Shetland. The oldest preserved documents in Scots are from Orkney and Shetland. The Danish king pawned Orkney and Shetland to Scotland, to which they have belonged since, being presently a part of United Kingdom. Scots thus became the official language of the islands, despite the dominance of Norn as the spoken language. This dominance was though quickly threatened by a flood of immigrants from Scotland who had started moving to Orkney around and later reached Shetland, although to a lesser extent. Scots was slowly but surely displacing the Scandinavian language in the official domain and business, leaving to Norn the lower social niche - the language of poor fishermen and crofters. The fate of Norn was finally decided in , when the Reformation reached Scotland and the islands saw new Scots schools and Scots speaking clergymen. After that, the demise of Norn was just a matter of time: Tradition has it that the language died out in two generations. A major trigger for this attitude was probably the teaching of the English Bible in a school established in the island in by the Scottish Society for Propagating Christian Knowledge. But Norn did not give in easily as it is usually believed. Hugh Marwick mentions that in no less than 78 Orcadians moved to Bergen, Norway, hinting that the number of immigrants from Shetland was even higher. However, the ties with Norway were constantly slackening until, ultimately, this link to one of the most relevant areas for usage of Norn became a matter of the past. According to historical sources, most of Norn speakers of the th centuries, if not all, were bilingual. By Orkney Norn was believed to be practically extinct, although some of the local inhabitants were said to preserve a very limited memory of Norn apparently just some odd words and phrases around See the following testimonies by contemporaries: There are also some who speak Norse especially in the Mainland, as in the parish of Hara

there are a few yet living, who can speak no other thing, this Language not being quite extinct among them, since the Norwegians whose Language it is, had this Country in possession. They generally speak the English tongue, and many among them retain the ancient Danish language, especially in the more Northern isles.. Nor to this very time it is quite disused, being still retained by old people, and in vulgar use amongst them at this day. James Smith, writer in Stennes, aged 42, depones that he remembers the Norn or Norse Language to have been vulgarly spoke by a good many People in the Mainland of Orkney; and that he knows some People, particularly three or four in the parishes of Harray and Firth, who speak that Language pretty fluently, as far as he can judge, at this day. William Sinclair, tacksman of Rapness in Westray, aged 53, depones It was called here Norn contracted I suppose for Norwegian but is now so much worn out, that I believe there is scarce a single man in the country who can express himself on the most ordinary occasion in the language. They now altogether speak english, but with a great deal of the Norwegian accent, and even with some words of that language intermixed For many years past it has been almost entirely forgotten, except in one parish in the heart of the Mainland of Orkney , where the people are said, till of late, to have retained some acquaintance with it. Here it now exists only in a few vulgar and obsolete words, and in the names of men and places. Baikie of Tankerness, a most respectable inhabitant of Kirkwall, and an Orkney proprietor, assured me of the following curious fact: They listened with a great attention to the preliminary stanzas But when they heard a verse or two more, they interrupted the reader, telling they knew the song well in the Norse language, and had often sung it to him when he asked them for an old song. They called it the Magicians, or the Enchantresses. It would have been singular news to the elegant translator, when executing his version from the text of Bartholine, to have learned that the Norse original was still preserved by tradition in a remote corner of the British dominions. Although Norn survived for a little longer on the Shetland Isles, it precisely mirrored the fate of Orkney Norn. Shetland Norn is said to still have been in common use around , yet being widely replaced with Scots. Shetland Norn did most likely not survive into the 19th century except on the remotest islands, Foula in the west and Unst, Yell and Fetlar in the north, albeit spoken by limited number of people and already much worn out. The Norse hath continued ever since the Norwegians had these islands in possession, and in Orkney it is not quite extinct, though there be by far more of it in Zetland, which many do commonly use. The island of Unst was its last abode, and not more than thirty years ago several individuals there could speak it fluently. It was preserved too, for a considerable length of time, in Foula; but at present there is scarcely a single person who can repeat even a few words of it. The last man in Unst who is said to have been able to speak Norn, Walter Sutherland from Skaw, died about There are witnesses that the memory of Norn was still not extinct as late as the middle 20th century. This is certainly the very latest one has heard of Norn. But even after the complete demise of Norn, its remnants still live in the linguistic memory of Shetlanders and Orcadians. Their native Scots dialect has inherited a good deal of Scandinavian words including pronouns, prepositions and particles , several grammatical traits and even intonation, which is said to be very reminiscent of Norwegian. Hugh Marwick and Gregor Lamb comment on the Orcadian accent with the following words: The Orkney cadence is quite different from that of any part of the mainland of Scotland, and there is not the slightest possibility of confusing it with that of our nearest neighbour - Caithness. But on the other hand, a Norwegian in Orkney, listening to Orcadians talking among themselves at such a distance that only their tones were audible, might well imagine he was at home in Norway. Such has been the case in regard to Orkney and its motherland Norway. I was in a queue to a theme park in Denmark, where I found the accent difficult, when I heard very familiar voices coming up behind me, I turned to address what I thought were Shetlanders, when I realised from their appearance that they were in fact Norwegians! By "Rasmie" I was in a fishing shop in Bergen with two fellow Shetlanders and while we were discussing what would be the best gear to catch olicks, the young lady assistant came over and asked where we were from, saying we were not speaking Norwegian but we sounded just like Norwegians. By "Heimdal" Unfortunately, Norn did not attract the attention of scholars until it was practically out of use. The scientific study of Norn began in when T. About the same time the Orcadian scholar Hugh Marwick published "Orkney Norn" which comprised a vocabulary of over words of Scandinavian origin picked up from Orkney Scots. Most of the surviving specimens of Norn speech show signs of corruptedness and feature various elements coming from Scots.

Others, including Michael Barnes, refute this hypothesis, pointing at the lack of typological parallels for such a "creolisation" and put forward the idea of Norn having been given up in favour of Scots due to the low social prestige of the former. The latter point is regarded by many as more convincing. Nevertheless, there is a good deal of texts quoted by Jakobsen where you cannot say for sure whether it is Norn or Scots the alleged Norn-Scots creole? Let us also mention the language of Manx, which prior to its decline was gradually losing Goidhelic peculiarities becoming more and more corrupted - a typological parallel Barnes overlooked. This evidence makes the theory of Jakobsen and Marwick no less worthy of consideration than that of Barnes,...

Chapter 8 : Norn - The Reader Wiki, Reader View of Wikipedia

But Orkney Norn and Shetland Norn look very different; and imposing a single Nynorn over both might be a bad idea, especially if the locals know that Orkney Norn and Shetland Norn look very different.

Chapter 9 : Norn language | Revolvly

Barnes, The Study of Norn 28 almost exclusively to refer to Scandinavian speech as it developed in Orkney and Shetland. 2. Early references to Norn It is hard to say precisely when the study of Norn begins.