

SHETLAND FOLK-LORE

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649704019

Shetland Folk-Lore by John Spence

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Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

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JOHN SPENCE

**SHETLAND
FOLK-LORE**

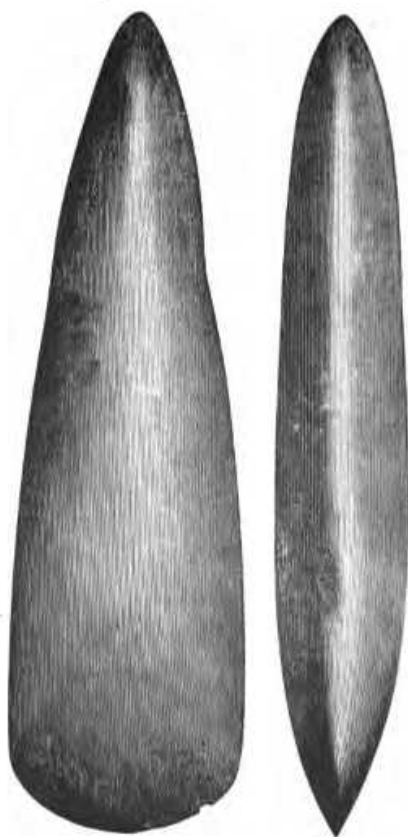


FIG. 1.—*Polished Stone Axe.*

N. W.
A.

SHETLAND
FOLK-LORE

BY

JOHN SPENCE, F.E.I.S.



LERWICK
JOHNSON & GREIG

1899

PRINTED BY
JOHNSON AND GREIG, LEEWICK

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TO
EVERY LOVER OF THE "OLD ROCK"
THIS VOLUME IS
RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED
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Folklore
Thorp
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P R E F A C E

THERE is undoubtedly a growing tendency among the younger people of the present day to undervalue or neglect what has come down to us from former times. The object of this work is to preserve the memory of the old traditions, stories, phrases, words, and social customs, which were once familiar to bygone generations of our island folk. Most of the tales that constitute the folk-lore of our islands have a charm of their own. To understand that charm fully, one must picture to one's self the old grandfather or grandmother telling to the eager bairns, round the blazing peat fire on the long winter evenings, tales of *trows* and witches, spirits and apparitions, until at last the children

Preface

who had gathered from the neighbouring houses felt afraid to venture back alone. These traditionary tales formed virtually the only current literature the people had. In those times information was conveyed by tale and story, and not by books as now. To save the relics of the past and interest the rising generation in them, one must use the printed page. The young folk do not listen now ; they read.

For nearly forty years the writer has been gathering from the lips of the old folk the sayings and superstitions handed down to them. This volume is the outcome of his gleanings in that field. Though it does not profess to be exhaustive, it is placed before the public as the first book specially devoted to the subject. It thus contains the fullest collection of Shetland folk-lore available to students of the subject and to natives of the Islands at home and abroad. The book may chance to have, as well, some value for philologists. The dialect of the