



↑ West Sandwick Beach
VisitScotland / Paul Tomkins



↑ Otter David Gifford



↑ Boats, Burravoe
VisitScotland / Paul Tomkins

Getting to Yell

From Toft, in the north mainland, it takes only 20 minutes by car ferry to reach Ulsta at the south-west corner of Yell. For booking information and ferry timetables see the Shetland Islands Council website.

Useful information

Bus services

See the North Isles timetable on the ZetTrans website
zettrans.org.uk

Ferry booking office

Ulsta | +44 (0)1595 745804

Museum and visitor information point

Old Haa, Burravoe | +44 (0)1957 722339

Public toilets

Ulsta ferry terminal | Gutcher ferry terminal
Cullivoe Pier

Post offices

Aywick | Burravoe

Shops

Cullivoe | Mid Yell | Aywick

Fuel

Cullivoe | Aywick

Leisure centre and swimming pool

Mid Yell | +44 (0)1595 807704

Health centre

Mid Yell | +44 (0)1957 702127

Police 101

2024 | Disclaimer

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



shetland.org/yell

Yell

Gateway to
the North Isles



Shetland
Islands of Opportunity

Welcome to Yell

Yell, the gateway to the North Isles, is the second largest island in Shetland. Its long and varied coastline and stretches of uninhabited moorland have much to offer wildlife enthusiasts, hill walkers and those who simply want a measure of peace and quiet. Yell also serves as a good base to explore Fetlar and Unst.

Life in Yell

About 1,000 people live in Yell and you'll find a lifestyle which uniquely blends tradition with innovation and a progressive outlook. In 2014, Yell became the site of the world's first community-owned tidal power generator in Bluemull Sound, in the north of the island. Yell is also home to cutting-edge fishing and aquaculture industries.

Things to see and do

Flora

Blanket peat covers much of the island, providing a globally rare but important wildlife habitat. This peat is formed from the compression of dead (but not decomposed) plant remains and forms at the rate of about 1mm a year. In places this peat is over 3 metres in depth (taking about 3,000 years to develop!). Look carefully for two special plants, Butterwort and Sundew, which can be found on the moorland. Both these plants supplement their diet with insects, by trapping them on their leaves.



↑ Dunlins David Gifford

Birds

In summer, Yell's moorlands are alive with breeding birds. Whimbrels, Red-Throated Divers, Dunlins and Golden Plovers can all be seen from the roadside. The sharp-eyed observer may catch a glimpse of Britain's smallest bird of prey, the Merlin, as it dashes after small birds. Great Skuas, Arctic Skuas and Eider Ducks also nest on the moorland.

The Arctic Tern, the harbinger of summer, can also be seen, but please try to avoid walking near their breeding colonies as they will defend new eggs and young most vigorously.

Six species of gull nest on the island, the most common is the Herring Gull. Along the coast, Fulmars and Black Guillemots are common, with Puffins, Shags, Guillemots and Kittiwakes nesting on the sea cliffs.

Sea watching

Yell is one of the best places in Europe to see otters that enjoy the rich food supplies in the offshore shallows. A low peaty coastline allows the opportunity for excavating holts and abundant freshwater for bathing, to clean off salt water. Shetland's otters tend to spend a lot of time in the sea, so this is an important consideration. The map inside indicates some of the best places to see otters – but remember they are shy creatures with a keen sense of smell, so keep downwind of them.

Grey and common seals can often be spotted basking on rocks at low tide. With luck, you might also spot whales and dolphins, such as pilot whales, orcas or harbour porpoises.

Remember to keep an eye out for these and seabirds as you cross on the ferry from the mainland.



Exploring Yell

We've flagged some routes to take in Yell and sights to look out for along the way...

The West Road

From **Ulsta**, the main road follows the coastline, with views across **Yell Sound** with the **Ramna Stacks** silhouetted in the far north.

The **Ness of Sound**, just over the hill from Ulsta, is easily recognised by its distinctive double tombolo. In summer the roadside here is bright with wild flowers and many birds nest in the fields. The village of **West Sandwick** has one of Yell's best sandy beaches, a fine place for a quiet summer picnic. A coastal walk takes you in sight of the Iron Age fort at **Da Birrier**.

The Middle

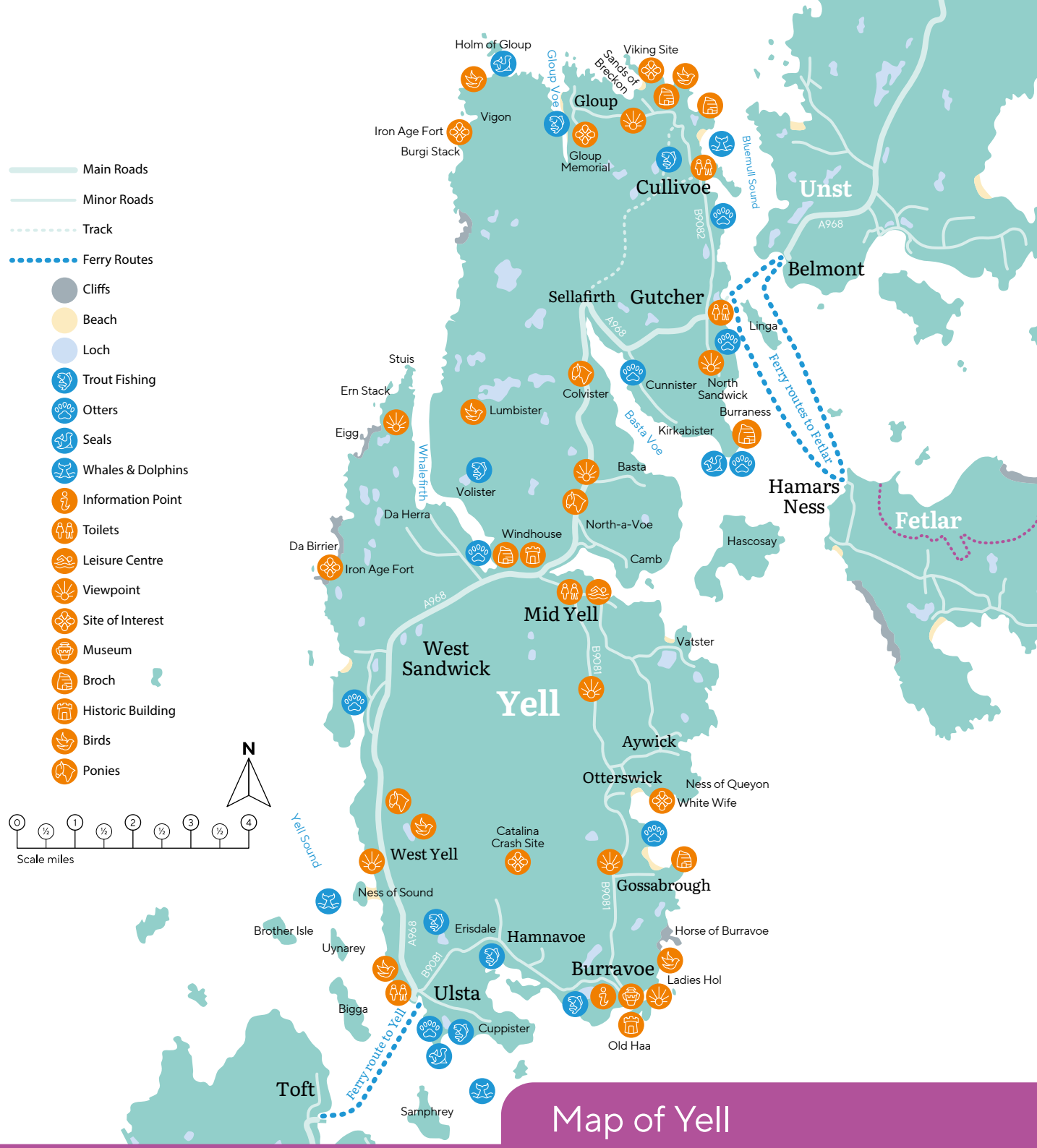
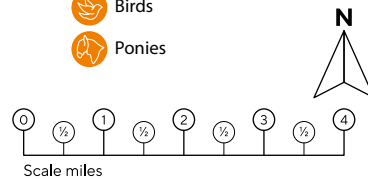
Yell is shaped like a rough rectangle, almost cut in half by two voes, **Whalefirth** and **Mid Yell**. Take the branch road which runs along the west side of Whalefirth to **Da Herra**.

As you travel along this road, look across to **Volister**, one of the many small communities left to decay and ruin in the last century when the laird evicted inhabitants from their crofts to make room for sheep. There is spectacular coastal walking north to the **Eigg**, **Ern Stack** and **Stuis**.

Leaving Da Herra, and heading east past the head of Whalefirth, the ruin of **Windhouse** stands high on the hill to the left. Notorious as Shetland's most haunted house, the site on which it stands was occupied for over 5,000 years although the oldest visible remains are of the 2,000 year old broch.

The communities of **Mid Yell** and **North-a-Voe** cluster around Mid Yell Voe which is sheltered by the island of **Hascosay**. Mid Yell is the main village on the island and has many community facilities including a Junior High School, shop, health centre, play park, marina and a leisure centre.

-  Main Roads
-  Minor Roads
-  Track
-  Ferry Routes
-  Cliffs
-  Beach
-  Loch
-  Trout Fishing
-  Otters
-  Seals
-  Whales & Dolphins
-  Information Point
-  Toilets
-  Leisure Centre
-  Viewpoint
-  Site of Interest
-  Museum
-  Broch
-  Historic Building
-  Birds
-  Ponies



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The North

In the far north of the island, the **Gloup Memorial** commemorates the 58 fishermen who were drowned when disaster struck the haaf fishing on the night of 21 July 1881. From the memorial you can walk south along the steep-sided voe which was once busy with men working at the haaf station, the remains of which can still be seen.

Head west to **Burgi Stack**, where you will find the remains of an Iron Age fort. Further north, you may see the isolated house of **Vigon**, uninhabited since the 1880s, and the **Holm of Gloup**, an excellent spot for watching seabirds and seals.

A most enjoyable day can be spent at the **Sands of Breckon**. Sheltered, except from the north, this lovely beach with its extensive area of blown shell sand has interesting traces of Viking and earlier occupation. Among the abundant wild flowers, look out for the rare Autumn Gentian.

Cullivoe has a thriving marina and is a hub for sea angling and boat charters. The Cullivoe Galley Shed hosts an Up Helly Aa exhibition during the summer. As you travel south, you will come to **Gutcher**, the terminal for the ferries to Unst and Fetlar. Take the road to **North Sandwick**, from here you can walk down to one of Shetland's best-preserved brochs at **Burraness**. Alternatively, you can take the turning a little further south towards **Cunnister** and **Kirkabister**, travelling along **Basta Voe**, and approach Burraness from that direction. This is prime otter territory, so keep a sharp watch for them.

Excavations have also been made of an Iron Age settlement at the **Tafts of Bayanne** at Sellafirth. Information about the site is available at Bayanne House where there are also facilities for family history research. The business park at Sellafirth has a wonderful art gallery.

From **Colvister** follow the north side of the fence west to **Lumbister**, an RSPB sanctuary. Birds breeding in this moorland include Snipes, Lapwings, Skuas and Ringed Plovers.

↓ Sands of Breckon [VisitScotland](#) / [Paul Tomkins](#)



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Scale miles



↑ Gloup Memorial [David Gifford](#)

↑ Bobby Tulloch Memorial [Melissa Stewart](#)

The East Road

Travelling along the road from Mid Yell towards **Aywick** and **Burravoe**, be sure to leave plenty of time to explore the side roads, and admire the magnificent views toward Unst, Fetlar, Whalsay and Skerries. Even Bressay and Noss are visible on a clear day.

At Aywick, there is a shop, post office, play park and charity shop. On the shore at **Otterswick**, you can see the figurehead known as the **White Wife** (or Widden Wife) which came from *Bohus*, a German training ship which was wrecked on the **Ness of Queyon** in 1924. The last side road before reaching Burravoe takes you to **Gossabrough** and another beautiful sandy beach.

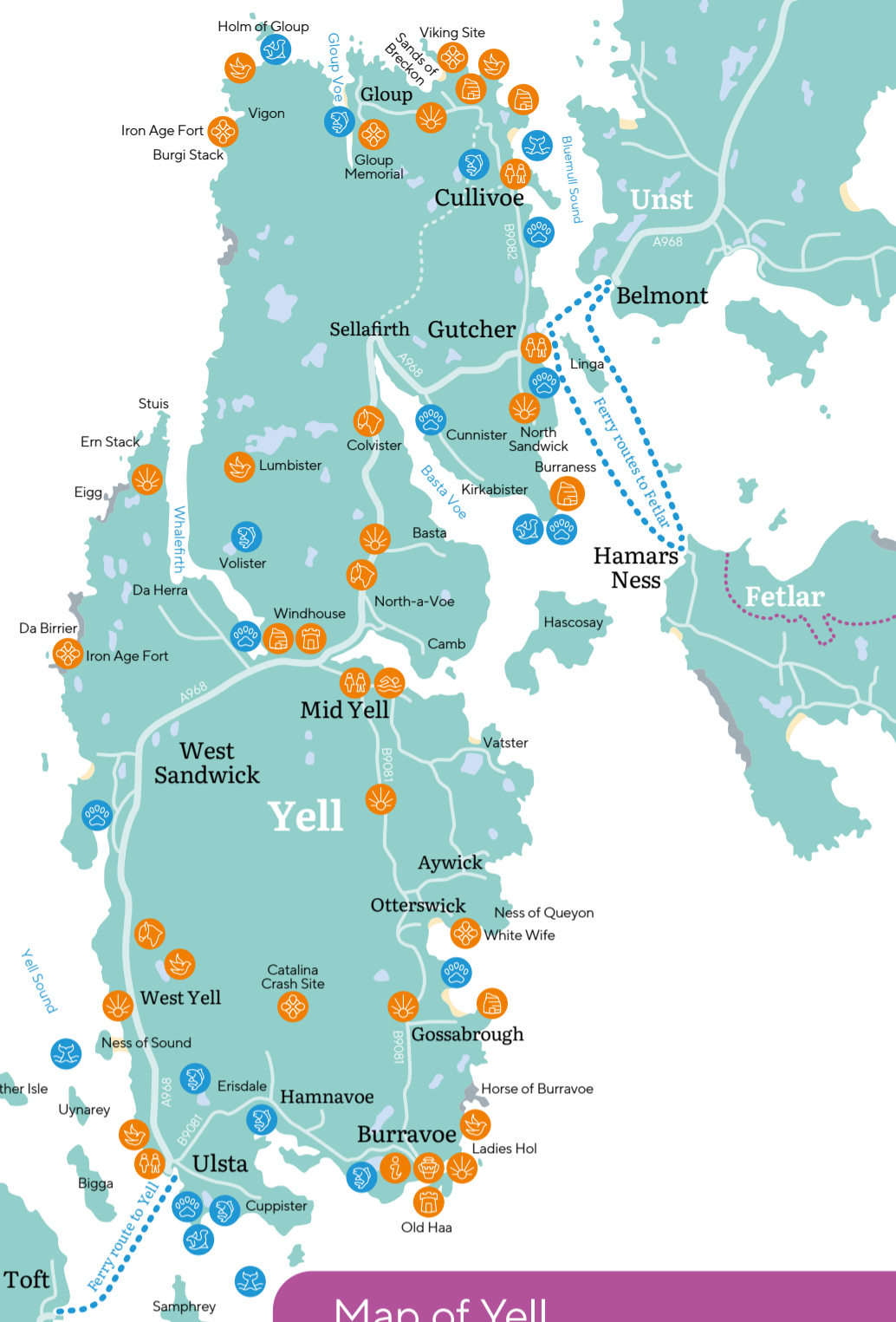
Burravoe has a marina and caravan park. A walk north from here takes you to **Ladies Hol** and on to the **Horse of Burravoe** – a good coastal walk where you should look out for seabirds and seals. Be sure to visit the local museum at Burravoe which is housed in the **Old Haa**.

Between Burravoe and Ulsta you can take a long walk up through the beautiful valley of **Erisdale**.

The Old Haa

The Old Haa at Burravoe dates from 1672 and was opened as a museum in 1984. It houses a permanent display of material depicting the history of Yell. Outside there is a monument to the airmen who lost their lives in 1942 in a Catalina crash on the moors of South Yell.

The White Wife, Otterswick [Elizabeth Atia](#) →



Map of Yell

The Old Haa is also home to the Bobby Tulloch Collection and has rooms dedicated to photographic archives and family history. Bobby Tulloch was a highly accomplished naturalist, photographer, writer, storyteller, boatman, musician and artist. He was the RSPB's Shetland representative for many years and in 1994 was awarded an MBE for his efforts on behalf of wildlife and its conservation. He died in 1996 aged 67.

The museum includes a tearoom, gallery and craft shop, walled garden and picnic area, and is also a visitor information point.

