

Fair Isle Times

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Snowy Wonderland

First we woke up and we went downstairs. I had some breakfast then Mum said there is no school as the roads were too icy. Then all the rest of us woke up and we went sledging just at the house. Then we went inside and watched some TV! The next 2 hours or so we went out and went sledging again and my brother, that's called Ander, actually took off on a bit! I went down a bit where it was all bumpy and it was quite scary because I crashed about 5 times and the first time my glove fell off! Then we went back to the house to watch TV again. Then we went to the shop in a sledge! We had a snow ball fight with Ian and we had a great time. Before we went to the shop, my wobbly tooth fell out! The next day, we went to school again and I really didn't think it was going to be a school day. The tooth-fairy came, and I got £1 and I was delighted.

Luca (7)



Snow Day!

On Sunday I went to Luca and Ander's house to play. The next day the school was closed because it was snowy. I went sledging with Freyja. It was amazing and so fast. David threw a snowball at me and I did a roly poly all the way down the hill. It was a funny video! After that I went to Freyja's house for hot juice and I borrowed some warm socks!

Harris (8)



My Snow Day

I had a lazy weekend we played one game called risk, I won. Then after finishing my lazy weekend, it snowed. That meant school was shut, that was great because I got a lie in. After breakfast Dad and I went out to sledge. We also had to stop by in the school porch (Dad pulled me up to school on the sledge because the middle of the road wasn't gritted) because I didn't have my wellies. Whilst we were there we asked Harris if he wanted to come and sledge with us. He said yes, so me and Harris got pulled down to the shop (we had stopped there earlier and needed to pick up our shopping) then walked down to our hay park to go sledging. We had two sledges which was great because we didn't have to take turns. We did that for ages then started throwing snowballs at Dad! After a bit we got chilly so headed up to Shirva for some hot squash and some tomato soup. We watched a bit of telly then walked with Harris back to the School House. Though whilst we were waiting for Dad, Harris and I had a snowball fight, by then the snow was perfect snow ball consistency! Then when Dad came out we started hitting him with snowballs. We did this the whole way up to the School House and even made a snowball at least fifteen cm long! After we had dropped Harris off I kept hitting Dad with snowballs! We got back at 3o'clock and had lunch. It was lamb soup, perfect for a snowy day. Later, I got some hot chocolate with my Christmas marshmallows and watched three hours of Lego masters with Dad. I had one of the best snow days ever!

Freyja (10)

Da week dat's awa

I was actually reading the Fair Isle Times on Saturday morning, when I was requested to record life on the Isle, or at least my small part in it, for this week.

So, Saturday morning and you could not see in the house without lights on, but it was dry still, so I hurried to feed sheep and my 'lambs'. The ewes had their first silage yesterday, so will get next delivery tomorrow. I know I am getting old, but my bales are heavy, and some extremely so. The rain duly arrived, heavy at times, and prolonged, so much that outside my door was a shallow lake. Wet fields soon get severely damaged when visited by these flocks of geese which are wintering here. I think the swans attract them, but they will soon be gone as they are dying off due to lack of food.

I watch the Manchester derby in the afternoon. I am not a 'City' supporter, but United were gifted their victory. VAR was introduced to assist referees reach correct decisions, but today's fiasco makes a mockery of those claims. No wonder the two former United players sitting in the studio could not stop laughing!

By Sunday morning, evidence of yesterday's deluge had all but vanished. For a short time the sky was blue and the sun was out, I duly fed the ewes, let out Fernando, and took a walk with Glen as far as the airstrip to collect a car. Heavy cloud soon begins to gather in the south, while the wind is from the north '*lee-hailing*', my father called it, heralding, on this occasion, heavy snow showers, and kind of ominous looking for a few days. It's Dave's birthday today... three score plus ten plus ten! So well done, and to celebrate we have lunch together, before I enjoy dinner with my family at Setter in the evening. I do feel blessed that I have them here, as I do get not get overjoyed on my own. With a bit of luck, I shall join the list of illustrious old men in the summer. I woke this morning with a sore shoulder, nothing in itself, but after a certain age, yet another pain to add to those already in place, and adding to the functions which no longer act as before. You may smile, and I shall not elaborate, and you just have to do what you can.

Monday morning, and although the clouds are ominous, we miss most of the snow showers. There is a good covering of snow, so I make the decision to stay in the comfort of my home... it sure would have been different once upon a time, when snow was an opportunity for things different, and at Lerwick school we sledged at the Knab, and the full length of Braewick Road. The road became one big skating rink. I see the gritting team out, and enough dogs for a sleigh ride on the go at Springfield. Venturing out later in the day, I find a welcome coffee; I see evidence of sledging, but no sign of huskies. Already this is a winter with colder conditions than of late, concentrating the mind on the welfare of pregnant ewes, balanced against the serious increase in the cost of feed. It's not a problem at this stage, but much more of this and we have to consider when to feed 'nuts', and reduce margins even more. Crofting has changed so much. It was fewer sheep and often a cow. It was low input financially, but much harder in other ways, growing oats and struggling to produce often poor hay, and at the end returns were low. Now, because of much higher relative expenditure, one has to look more carefully at the returns.

Tuesday morning, and snow all gone, replaced with lots of lying water and overflowing and blocked drains, but it clears up as the day progresses. Following my usual jobs I read some quality literature - this boy is listening to his mother and her friend referring to another lady as being 'highly strung'. The boys' mind is intrigued as to what physical dimension they are referring; I too had to smile. In the political world, everybody's friend Nicola has had her toes stood on as the controversial transgender bill, which was passed by the Scottish Parliament, is now rejected by Westminster. There are two points to consider here, but the standing on the toes will have greater impact and hurt the most.

Wednesday is similar - what George Mackay Brown termed "the cold hard air of the north", but the kind of day, that, once you get going, is not too bad at all. But it's still too fresh for any consideration of boat or plane services. I hear that enquiry into the sinking of the cargo vessel Cemfjord at the east end of the Pentland Firth on the 2nd of January 2015, is reaching its conclusion. Eight years after the loss, what good can it do except line the pockets of lawyers and the like.

I cut a bit of wood for the fire, which is so welcome in the long evenings, but actually spend as long sharpening blades as cutting the wood, as, once used, blades do not keep their edge for long. I did not intend to mention football again, but last night, in the Scottish Premiership, the results were so predictable, while Aberdeen, with a team put together supposedly as an attacking force, are a shambles in defence, on this occasion being thrashed by Hearts. Not good!

Weather wise, not much change on Thursday... fresh to strong wind from the north west with showers, but good news on the radio that Fair Isle has been awarded £27million from Westminster for harbour developments and a new ferry. We made great changes in the 80s and 90s with new slipway, new ferry and then breakwater. But these were changes really to improve what we had. They did that, and have stood the test of time, but these new developments, when complete, will change completely what we are familiar with. Even at present change is required and, if this place has a future, we must embrace the changes that must take place. Much will be debated and written in the years ahead, but surely to have the Observatory up and running again, will be a great benefit.

I should feel honoured to be able to report and record this event, but I feel that perhaps it should have been someone younger, someone having more foresight, rather than myself, with perhaps an excess amount of hindsight!

It's near Burns' night, so I can do no better than quote the bard in "To a mouse":

*Still thou art blest, compared wi' me
The present only toucheth thee:
But och! I backward cast me e'e,
 On prospects drear!
An' forward, tho' I canna see,
 I guess and fear!*

I could perhaps add another line "*and hope and pray*".
But perhaps instead of listening to the Scottish bard, I should turn to the English, to William Shakespeare and his famous words ascribed to Lady Macbeth... "*Screw your courage to the sticking place, and we'll not fail*".

We rise on Friday morning, to the reality of the present rather than euphoria of a glorious future. But it's a fine morning, the barometer needle is at a height not seen for a while, and our ferry is on route to Grutness. Hopefully the plane will not be delayed either, and will bring the treat of two weeks' Shetland Times! I shall feed my sheep and let Fernando out, he wants out, but quickly realises that little is gained by his release.

Take care, look after yourselves, and each other; life is precious.

Jimmy.

Levelling Up Fund: No doubt you will all have seen the coverage of the successful bid made to the Government's Levelling Up Fund by the SIC to fund the new Good Shepherd and improvements to the Haven here and Grutness. £27million is a substantial sum of money and we must see it as a sign that those in power think our Isle and community is worth investing in, as we certainly do. While there is still a huge amount of work to be done, I think we can be delighted that the main issue of funding has been solved.

Our thanks should go to those in the SIC and our dedicated councillors who have worked hard and fought for this essential development. The next part of the public consultation is due in the first week of February - we will share more details shortly.

Eileen

A comment from John at Utra on the Levelling Up Fund announcement: I missed the official report announcing the replacement of the Good Shepherd, retiring to bed around 22.30 hours. A considerable amount of building work is needed on Fair Isle and at Grutness. I trust this will get underway soon, and it would be pleasing to have the new boat built rather than have another couple of years wait after the piers are ready. I am making a positive and practical statement, not a negative, but hopefully contradicting my recent writing that I did not think there would be a New Good Shepherd in my lifetime.

Sunday service: With colds lingering, all are invited to an informal worship at Utra on Sunday morning at 11am, rather than at the Chapel. Dave Brackenbury leading.



The longest standing regular contributor to the Fair Isle Times, started 45 years ago, had a significant birthday last weekend. Dave has worn many hats atop his famous curly hair (see photos above, and immortalised in many a guising costume over the years!): weather man and crofter of course, but also IT teacher and relief light-keeper too, amongst many, many other important roles in the Isle. We wanted to include a small tribute to our ever dependable Dave, if only the weather he forecasted was so dependable!

Happy 80th Birthday Dave!

Dad was born on 15th Jan 1943. Some fun facts: born the same year as Mick Jagger, Robert De Niro, Gloria Gaynor, Billie Jean King, Barry Manilow and Julio Iglesias!

The UK Prime Minister was Winston Churchill and interest rates were 2%. The average salary in 1943 was £242! Petrol cost just 1p a litre, a pint of beer cost 2p, an average house price was £580, and an average car could set you back £335, and the world's population was a mere 2.127 billion (8 billion today).

Songs released that year included Bing Crosby 'If You Please', The Song Spinners 'Johnny Zero' and Dennis Morgan 'I'm Riding for a fall'. A cinema ticket would cost you 4p and you could watch films out that year such as Laurel and Hardy 'Jitterbugs'.

It is incredible to think how technology has changed during the last eighty years: renewable energy, internet, satellite exploration, communications, social media, smart phones and iPads, alongside changes in transport, electric cars and bikes, to name just a few advances in technology that make life very different to the year Dad was born.

Over the years and during his younger days, like many islanders, Dad has enjoyed a variety of different occupations and roles on Fair Isle, having been a meteorologist, crofter, fire fighter, IT teacher, coastguard team member and airport manager to name a few! However, for us he has been a brilliant and much loved Dad. He was always a really hands on, fun Dad, with his early life interests in climbing and hillwalking in the Scottish Highlands and South Georgia influencing his outdoorsy parenting style, we were often dangled off a climbing rope over the banks, one of us enjoyed this more than the other! Growing up on Fair Isle we had great fun exploring the coastline, with one of our favourite adventures climbing down Hesswalls, scrambling around the rocks and checking out all the interesting bits of bruck that had washed ashore in the last gale.

Dad's enthusiasm and interest in science and technology led to him building many contraptions for us to play with, some more successful than others! All sorts of things such as go-carts, climbing frames and the like, a swimming

pool made from barrels and plastic silage sheeting. One of the more unusual things was a wind-propelled sledge, a bit like wind surfing with a big sail attached to our sledges, which provided a lot of fun but varying amounts of success in staying upright! Along with possibly Dad's favourite activity of extreme kitesurfing, which threatened to see us take-off over the cliffs, were it not for Dad hanging onto our ankles!



Dad also loved getting us involved in the croft work, from the dreaded gathering sheep for clipping or dosing, bringing the cows in for milking, planting and harvesting vegetables or silage making in the summer. Catriona was especially excited about getting the bigger Zetor tractor, where there would be room in the cab for her too! She would proudly tell others in her class at the Anderson that she could plough a field before leaving primary school... there was no mention of how straight the furrows were though!!!

Dad has definitely passed on his love of weather watching to us. Recently we were reminiscing of a time during the storms which wrecked the Braer, crawling up to the cliffs in the teeth of a gale, and with the wind in our faces, peeking over the edge of the banks to watch with excitement as the huge swell which had been building for days raged beneath us. Dad has always been excited by forecasting and photographing 'interesting' wild weather, having a camera with him at all times, and Fair Isle continues to provide the perfect place to observe and record the most dramatic weather. Here is to the next decade, which will likely bring some interesting weather for Da Wadder Man!

Catriona & Lucy

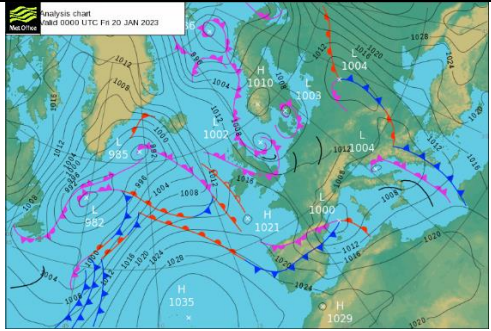
Dave I am honoured and privileged to have met you. You have my deepest respect. Most of all you taught me patience and perseverance, so with that said... I wish you a very happy 80th Birthday! **Love Ann (Ewer)**
xx



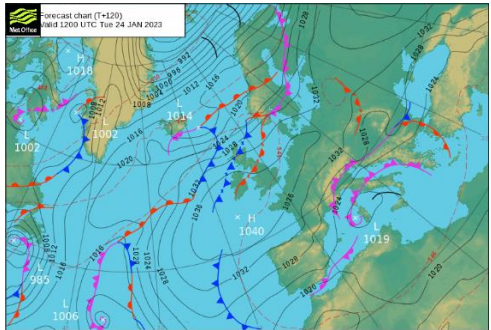
Caption competition, answers to Eileen please!!

FAIR ISLE WEATHER FORECAST

Friday 20th January 2023



**Analysis Chart 0000 UTC
Friday 20th January 2023**



**Forecast Chart 1200 UTC
Tuesday 24th January 2023**

GENERAL SITUATION

A ridge of high pressure crossing Shetland from the west will kill off the northerly airflow, a southerly airflow then freshening later today ahead of Atlantic fronts and warmer air pushing eastwards on Saturday. With pressure high to the south of the British Isles and a depression close to Iceland a mild south-westerly airflow will continue through into the start of next week. Current predictions suggest high pressure persisting to the southwest of the UK may ridge north towards Greenland midweek, At the same time a depression near northern Norway drives a cold front south bringing cooler air down into northern Scotland by Thursday. The ridge then topples east across the Northern Isles.

OUTLOOK FOR THE WEEKEND

Temperatures today rising to 6° Celsius with weekend temperatures around 7° or 8° Celsius by day 6° overnight.

FRIDAY 20th: Mostly dry though rather cloudy at first, the afternoon brighter with some sun. Remaining dry through the evening but clouding over as light winds freshen S'ly. Winds becoming strong overnight with patchy rain arriving late in the night. **Sea State:** Mostly moderate with a 2 metre N'ly wind swell becoming moderate to slight with a 1 to 2 metre NW'ly wind swell.

SATURDAY 21st: Cloudy with outbreaks of rain or drizzle and F6-7 S'ly winds, perhaps gale F8 at times. Some drier, brighter intervals possible. Windy with further patchy rain overnight.

Sea State: Moderate to slight with a 1 to 2 metre SW'ly wind swell. Becoming moderate or rough with a 2 to 3 metre SW'ly wind swell.

SUNDAY 22nd: A cloudy milder day with outbreaks of rain becoming mostly dry by afternoon. F6-7 SSW'ly winds easing F5-6. **Sea**

State: Mostly rough with a 3 metre W'ly wind swell. Moderate east of Shetland.

FORECAST FOR NEXT WEEK

Temperatures 8° or 9° Celsius by day, around 6° overnight. Turning cooler as the week ends.

MONDAY 23rd: Cloudy with some mostly light rain at times. Strong SW'ly winds. **Sea State:** Moderate or rough with a 2 to 3 metre SW'ly wind swell. **TUESDAY 24th:** Another cloudy mild day with patchy rain and strong SW to W'ly winds. **Sea State:** Mostly rough with a 3 metre W'ly wind swell but moderate east of Shetland.

WEDNESDAY 25th – SUNDAY 29th: Some rain on Wednesday clearing to showers as strong SW'ly winds veer NW'ly. Showers perhaps wintry on Thursday though N'ly winds easing. Friday and the start of the weekend possibly cool and bright with light winds and frosty nights. **Sea State Wednesday:** Mostly rough with a 3 metre W'ly wind swell but moderate east of Shetland.

Dave Wheeler

