

### My Sea Finds

On Friday, I found a cuckoo ray at the North Haven. I was playing and then I found it. It was dead and quite big. I didn't know what it was then Eileen, my Mum, asked someone. I also caught a butterflyfish. I also found a 2 spot goby, it is a fish which was brown with blue specks and had a big spot.

On Sunday, we went swimming at the North Haven. I got higher than my chest in the water! At the start we went fishing with Daddad at the pontoon and we caught one very little sillock.

Luca (8)



### My Weekend

On Friday, me, mum and Heidi went to the beach. It was so much fun. I went into the water to my waist. It was freezing! Eileen showed us what was in the creels. There were four crabs but only two were big enough to eat. One of the crabs was a girl!

On Saturday, we went to Freyja's birthday party. She was 11. I won musical statues and Luca and Grace drew at musical bumps. Luca and I played on the Houll for a while.

On Monday, we went back to the beach. I had my wetsuit with us this time and I went in the sea with mum. Later on I went in the sea with Grace and Luca but this time I just had my clothes on. We had a brilliant time!

Harris (8)



## My Wild Weekend!

This weekend Nana and Gramps and Grace were in and it was also a long weekend! It was also my birthday on the Saturday! I had lots of fun at my party and opening all my presents. We played games at the party including pass the parcel, musical statues and four corners. After the party, we had a birthday dinner and played Pit and Egg Splat, which is where you fill plastic eggs with water and crack them on people's heads, it is very funny! It was very late when I went to bed! I got lots of nice presents including a massive soft sloth toy that I have called Cuthbert and I got Minecraft.

Sunday was a very sunny day and so Grace and I went to the beach with Nana and all the other children. I made sand sun loungers for people to lie on when they came back from swimming.

Monday was Nana and Gramps's last full day in Fair Isle and we got a message in the morning that Orcas had been seen. Nana and Gramps had never seen Orcas even though they have been visiting Fair Isle for 12 years! We walked out to where they were, we saw them very close in and we even heard them breathing when they were surfacing! I heard a big thud when they flipped a seal in the air. It was the best views I'd ever had of Orcas and Nana and Gramps really enjoyed it. Later that day we went to visit Busta but had to leave early because there was a Snowy Owl at Homisdale! I saw it through the telescope and was surprised how white it was! I really enjoyed my time with Nana and Gramps.

Freyja (11!)

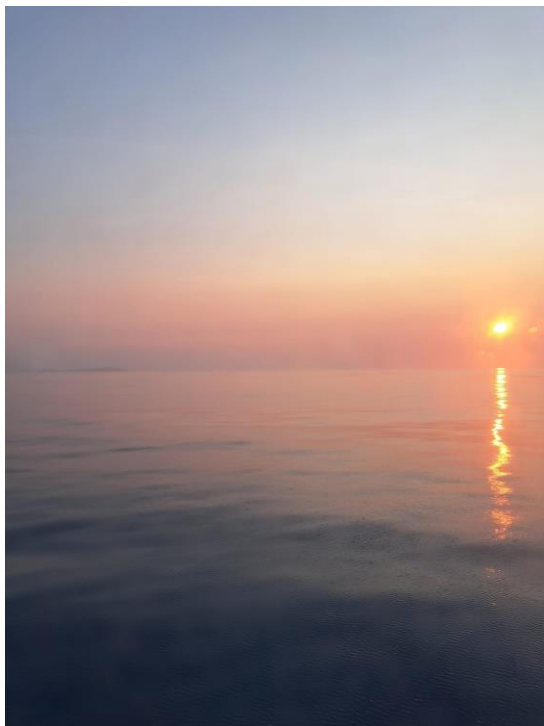


## De Week Dat's Awa

And **Friday** starts with a plethora of pings on my phone as the Silver Wind is lying off Meoness contemplating landings at Kirkigeo. A move by the ship to the North end of the Isle and plans to land in the Haven are scuppered by the swell after 2 hours of trying and we all stand down. WhatsApp comes into its own at times like this and thank you to Eileen for keeping us all informed. In the past I would have been waiting in the museum till someone arrived at the door to tell me that I could leave; now we can stay home till we get a definite decision. I begin putting captions on a series of historic photos but it's such a nice afternoon I walk down to the museum to restock some books and take a walk up by the Quoy well. The may floers *primula vulgaris* are nearly over but the müdda dukkies/cuckoo floers *cardamine pratensis* are looking good. Walking east over Stiksgirt the sea sounds as if it's exploding on the shore, the sound only dying as I walk past Kenaby where the sound is muffled by the rise up to the cattle grid. Reach Busta to find the grass cut and a triumphant but tired Barry.

**Saturday** begins with misty weather and a trip to Shirva and the shop today with Triona (the Busta car went out for its MOT on the 9<sup>th</sup> and hasn't been seen since!). Back home I attack the mountain of books on my bedside table before there is an avalanche and get (some) books back on shelves. This involves more reading than it should so time disappears at a rate of knots. The Good Sheperd makes the trip to Grutness in spite of the fact that the sea is still thundering on the shore. I hope you had a brilliant birthday Freyja.

On **Sunday** the sun is shining and it really feels like summer. Ian and Iain put an extra barricade on the



lower fences as some of the sheep are into high jump/short flights mode. Ian comes in for coffee and I do a huge washing. Very different from past times. Anything considered to be work was never done on a Sunday, and washing was very hard work. At Springfield water was either carried from the well or taken from the rain barrel at the north west corner of the house. A large pot was filled with water, boiled over the fire, carried out and poured into a tub in the washhouse. Enough cold water was added to adjust the temperature then clothes were washed by hand using very hard soap which had to be softened before it could be used. Clothes were then rinsed in cold water and put through a wringer before being hung on the clothes line. In sunny weather the wet sheets would be laid out on the grass to whiten them. It is days like this I am so thankful to all the folk in Fair Isle, past and present, who have enabled us to have electricity and, specifically, me to have a washing machine. Today coffee breaks and lunch are taken alfresco. Jenny (Sturgeon) sends me a view of the Isle just before sunset (21.00hrs) from the steamer going south.

**Monday** starts very mundanely for me with a 'try to catch up' effort re the piles of paper work I need to sort. Elsewhere in the Isle it is a morning of great excitement. Orcas traveling south put on a proper display, coming in close, making a kill and giving the watchers on land brilliant views as they made their way down the east side of the Isle. After lunch we have a welcome visit from David and Joyce, Grace and Freyja, full of delight after the morning's adventure. This most welcome visit was cut short by the promise of more adventure in the shape of a snowy owl seen at Homisdale.

In the evening I watched the beginning of a BBC2 series 'Once Upon a Time in Northern Ireland'. From my very early days I sang. Thanks to spending a lot of time with IVS volunteers during the school holidays I learnt a great many interesting folksongs, including Irish Rebel songs. In the mid 1960s as a student in Edinburgh I spent a lot of time folksinging around the south and central belt of Scotland. I learnt very quickly that there were places where you could sing Irish Rebel songs, and there were places you most decidedly could not. I started to read anything I could find on the subject. Fast forward to the mid 70s and a book by Simon Winchester called 'In Holy Terror'. Well written and informative, it seemed to pull together a lot of the strings of cause and effect. In the 1980s more TV programmes on the subject were

aired. As time goes on nothing is resolved. This series gives testimonies from all sides of the conflict and the first episode was fascinating. I do plan to watch the other 4 episodes. Whether I will make any more sense of the conflict now than I did as a fairly naïve student then remains to be seen.



The ex-Naval huts at North Haven, home of the Bird Observatory between 1948 and 1969, with the mail-boat 'Good Shepherd' on the slipway and Sheep Rock (422ft) beyond.

**Tuesday** - I have decided that it's time I got back to using a knitting machine. Marie has lent me one of hers so have started making tension swatches. Stewart and Triona come over for coffee and to see Richard Richardson's album of the new hostel opening on the 18<sup>th</sup> October 1969. Inherited by birder Peter Newton, he has now gifted it to the Museum. We can't thank him enough as it encapsulates the story and the people involved. Especially interesting is the list of guests who were at the opening ceremony. The photo to the left, one of the pages in the album, is where the story starts. The boat goes, the plane gets here, and I get a bit more knitting done. The weather is so problematic that the 'Spitsbergen' has cancelled hall and museum requirement for tomorrow. In the meantime I am sorry to report to Ian and Iain that the new fence has

ensured that the recalcitrant ruminants have upped their game. One of them gave a very impressive half twist as she went over today. I anticipate a full blown Fosbury flop by the weekend!

**Wednesday** morning and we have a lovely visit from Mairi and Ellie, but poor Luca has got chicken pox. More plans for designer knitwear requiring more maths than flights of fancy. The first knitting machine came to Fair Isle c 1900. It was a gift from James Coats Jnr of the family firm Coats of Paisley. The machine for knitting socks was never used at the time as the hand knitters could knit so fast they saw no need to learn a new method of production. In the 1950s the Zetland County Council reintroduced weaving – the last local weaver, Robert Wilson of Springfield, died in 1948 – and an industrial double bed Harrison knitting machine was introduced to the Isle. They also sent in Adam Johnson, a weaver from Levenwick, to teach weaving and machine knitting. Four young men learnt to weave and one to knit. The photo shows George Stout and William Stout on the loom and Annie Thomson, handknitter, promoting Fair Isle and the National Trust for Scotland at an international exhibition in Edinburgh in 1958.



The sad news today – the death of Tina Turner, strong and powerful lady, incredible singer and amazing dancer

Now it's **Thursday** and a fine day it has been. The morning was spent at the museum. One old friend to my surprise and delight, all the way from Australia, and five lovely visitors. Interested and interesting people. Now it's afternoon and I have to (a) write this and (b) learn how to insert and manoeuvre photos in a Word doc. I have been using Publisher for years but am finding out more and more that publishers don't do Publisher. HELP!!

Have a great weekend

Busta Anne

**Tall Ship** - available for a donation to school funds. Stewart will probably know the ships name. LxHxD approx 110x110x50cm Needs dusting! First come first served. If no interest the ship will sail. Phone John.

**Sunday service** – back this Sunday in the Chapel at 11am. Dave leading the service and all are very welcome to join

**Date for your diary - Chroma visit** – Fabulous music and arts group Chroma will be back in the Isle this September to do a project with the school and isle folk. This year it is on El Gran Grifon and the Spanish Armada. The concert will be on Saturday 30<sup>th</sup>, so pop it in the diary!

**Cruise ships** – the Seabourn Venture is due tomorrow morning (Saturday) but unlikely due to weather, next cruise ship is the Sylvia Earle due here Monday afternoon.

**Edinburgh Marathon** – Good luck to Fair Isle Times editor Hollie who will be running the Edinburgh Marathon this weekend in aid of Macmillan:

<https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/hollie-shaw4>

We know you can do it Hollie!!

\*\*\*\*\*

We were saddened to hear of the passing of June Ross-Smith, formerly of Taft recently. June loved living in Fair Isle and her family wanted to share the funeral notice below, should any isle folk like to join:



**NOTICE**  
*Funeral of the late*

***JUNE ELIZABETH ROSS-SMITH***  
***51 KALLINESS, WEISDALE***

will take place on **THURSDAY 1<sup>st</sup> JUNE**  
at **11.00am** from **ST. MAGNUS EPISCOPAL CHURCH**  
to the place of interment in **LERWICK CEMETERY NEW EXT.**

FAMILY FLOWERS ONLY. DONATIONS TO JUNE'S FAVOURITE CHARITIES  
GRATEFULLY RECEIVED AT CHURCH DOOR.

**Friends please accept this invitation**

**Thanks to Alex at the Obs for the following piece – what a special day we had here on Monday...**

The 22<sup>nd</sup> May will be remembered for years to come by many of the lucky folk that were in the isle – a day of excitement after excitement, with two Subalpine Warblers, awe-inspiring views of hunting Orca, and a gleaming white Snowy Owl as the icing on the cake.

The day started well for the isle's birders, with a 'textbook' male Western Subalpine Warbler trapped and ringed during the morning trap round. It's the first of this species that any of the current Obs team have seen in the isle (after a quiet few years for 'Subalps') so very much appreciated, and a lovely smart male to boot, with typical rich brick orange underparts, lead-grey upperparts, a bright red eye-ring and white 'moustache'. This made for a refreshingly straightforward ID in what can be a difficult species group.



Photo Georgia Platt

The morning continued as normal without too much further excitement, until shortly before midday, a message went out of Orca seen off Sheep Rock! This was the first record of the year, and one we'd all been eagerly awaiting, after seemingly constant sightings of pods both to the north and south of us. A visit from close-in Orca is a 'drop everything and go' situation, although that was going to prove tricky for me, as I'd just reached Dronger – the far NW tip of the isle and exactly where you don't want to be when you've got to get anywhere fast! I resigned myself to missing out on this occasion, but as I reached the top of Ward Hill, they were picked up again, still lingering off Sheep Rock. That was good enough for me, and I made for the Obs (the nearest car!) to head down the isle in an attempt to catch up with them. Picking up Georgia and Patrick on the way, we zipped down towards Meoness to try and get ahead of what we now knew to be Hulk and Nótt – two impressive bull Orca that roam between Iceland and northern Scotland (and who had visited us in Fair Isle multiple times last year).



Photo Alex Penn



Alex and Georgia watching the orca by the Burrian. Photo Patrick Safford

As we approached South Harbour, we could see folk already lining the SE cliffs, and we hurried up Meones to join them. Reaching the clifftop, we looked down to see both huge bulls surface just metres from the cliffs, their towering dorsal fins swaying from side to side. They spent the next 15 minutes hunting around Da Burrian, at one point seen tail-slapping a Grey Seal (making a successful kill) and putting on an amazing show. There's no feeling quite as awe-inspiring as watching these incredible animals at close quarters – looking down through the clear water to see them under the surface, hearing them breathe in great lungfuls of air as they break the surface, and feeling their intelligence as they systematically hunt along the cliffs. After their kill, the bulls put on a burst of speed, turning around the corner of Meones, through South Harbour and heading off towards Orkney, passing more delighted onlookers on Skadan on their way.

After that excitement (and a fair bit of running!) we could all have done with a lie down, but after a quick lunch, it was back out to finish census for the Obs team. After a brief diversion to catch another Subalpine Warbler that had been found skulking in the Setter garden (this one a decidedly trickier bird to assign to species), I was reaching the tail end of my census of the north, reflecting on an exciting spring day, as I reached the end of the airstrip and glanced down at Homisdale in front of me.

A gleaming white blob sat next to a large rock on the opposite slope caught my eye – an odd place for a Fulmar to be sat, but Fulmars are prone to doing some odd things. Raising my binoculars, my brain momentarily refused to accept what my eyes were telling me I was looking at. There, plain as day, was a shining white Snowy Owl, sitting in the heather and glancing around at the Bonxies flying past, as if it had every right to be there. I can't honestly remember what words came out of my mouth at that point, but I'm confident that they'd not be suitable for publication.



Photo Alex Penn

News was put out, and cars started to appear, with more and more folk arriving, until it became the biggest twitch that we'd seen in the isle during our time here! With the last Fair Isle occurrence of this iconic bird being almost two decades prior in 2005, it was no wonder that islanders and visitors alike were keen to see it. Even the notoriously avian-apatetic Hollie Shaw put in an appearance, an event that certainly deserves mention in the FIT! The owl remained exceptionally indifferent to its admiring crowd, content to sit and take in its surroundings, later making a couple of short flights, showing off its vast size and almost unmarked dazzling white wings, before being left in peace (aside from the odd curious sheep). After a relatively quiet spring for both rare birds and cetacean sightings, all was forgiven after such

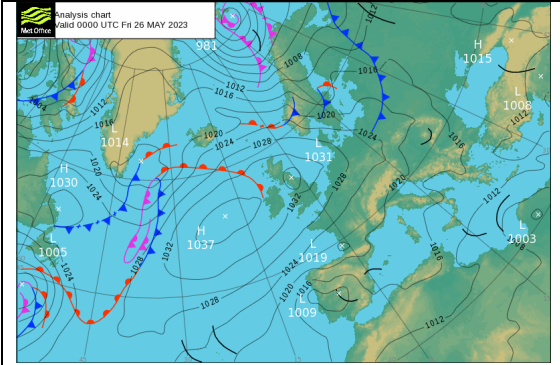
a brilliant day, made all the better by seeing so many folk out enjoying the special wildlife experiences that Fair Isle can offer!

Alex – FIBO

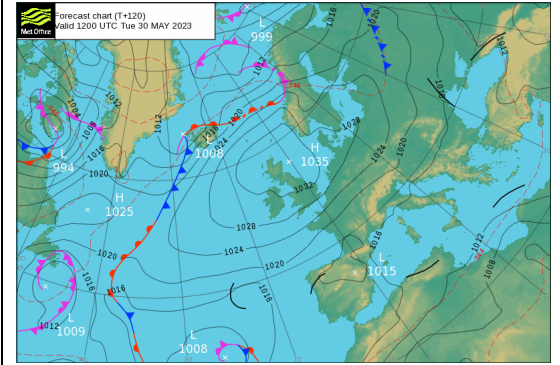




**FAIR ISLE WEATHER FORECAST**



**Analysis Chart 0000 UTC  
Friday 26<sup>th</sup> May 2023**



**Forecast Chart 1200 UTC  
Tuesday 30<sup>th</sup> May 2023**

**GENERAL SITUATION**

**Friday 26<sup>th</sup> May 2023**

With a small anticyclone west of the British Isles and a ridge east across central areas the Northern Isles lies in the cloudy westerly airflow on its northern flank. Trailing fronts associated with a depression tracking east over Iceland will cross Shetland on Saturday bringing a cooler north-westerly airflow. During Sunday the high is forecast to move closer to northern Scotland before expanding early next week to encompass the whole of the British Isles and probably persisting until the end of the week.

**OUTLOOK FOR THE WEEKEND**

Temperatures around 11° Celsius by day and 7° or 8° overnight. Cooler on Sunday around 9° and 5°.

**FRIDAY 26<sup>th</sup>:** Dry and bright at first then cloudier with some rain for the afternoon. SW winds freshening F5. Cloudy with some rain overnight. **Sea State:** Moderate with a 2 metre W'ly wind swell, slight east of Shetland.

**SATURDAY 27<sup>th</sup>:** A cloudy start with patchy rain, then brighter with sunny spells and showers by afternoon as F5 SW winds veer F6 WNW. Dry with clear spells overnight and easing winds. **Sea State:** Moderate with a 2 metre W'ly wind swell, slight east of Shetland.

**SUNDAY 28<sup>th</sup>:** The odd shower possible otherwise mostly dry with brighter spells. F4-5 NW winds.

**Sea State:** Moderate with a 2 metre W'ly wind swell, slight east of Shetland.

**FORECAST FOR NEXT WEEK**

Temperatures 12° or 13° Celsius by day, 9° overnight.

**MONDAY 29<sup>th</sup>:** Mainly dry with sunny spells later. Moderate W winds, occasionally fresh.

**Sea State:** Mostly slight with a 1 metre W'ly wind swell'

**TUESDAY 30<sup>th</sup>:** Dry and bright with some sunny spells and moderate W winds.

**Sea State:** Mostly slight with a 1 metre W'ly wind swell.

**WEDNESDAY 31<sup>st</sup> – SUNDAY 4<sup>th</sup>:** A spell of settled weather, mainly dry with variable amounts of cloud and light winds. **Sea State Wednesday:** Mostly slight with a 1 metre W'ly wind swell.

Dave Wheeler

