

### Fancy Dress Party

At the weekend we went to Houll because they had a fancy dress party in the garage. I dressed up as Fade from Fortnite, Heidi was Owlet from PJ Masks, Mum was Freddie Mercury and Dad was a superhero. Ander and Luca were Mario and Luigi and Freyja dressed up as Grace! We all played outside for a while. We had a pretend battle. After that we went inside to watch a movie and eat snacks. Yesterday, I played Fortnite online with Orla and Murray. They are my friends from my last school. It was amazing.



### A Fun Weekend

Ross and Ross came to Fair Isle. Big Ross is my uncle and Little Ross is my cousin. We had a huge fancy dress party on Saturday. I was dressed up as Luigi from MarioKart. Gillian my teacher had the best costume, she was Freddie Mercury! We went for a nice long walk on Sunday. We went to the foghorn, and we went to the trees, and we went to find chickweed wintergreen at the embankment. It is a plant and its flower is really bright white. We had a little walk at the trees and followed a burn. This is my last Fair Isle Times of primary 3!

Luca (8)



## My Exciting Week

This week was very exciting. I went swimming in Gunglesund two times in a row! I really enjoyed it because I brought my flippers and snorkel. I love flippers because it means you can go really fast!

Though the main reason my weekend was exciting was because Mum and I went to Shetland to see Grace's school play. It was a musical of Joseph and The Amazing Techni-coloured Dream Coat. Grace's characters were the pharaoh and one of the brothers. The pharaoh has their own song with a microphone! As the play was on Friday, we went out on the morning plane because the afternoon didn't look too good. Going early meant that I missed the day of school! So instead, we went shopping! We went to the toy shop and I also got some make up! Later we went to the Indian for lunch then to Magno's for tea. I got some pizza and ice cream! We went back on the plane the next day (though nearly the boat).

When we got back, I played with my new birthday Lego. It was lots of fun. I made a two-story boat, bedrooms and a Jet Ski. Sunday was Father's Day so in the morning before church we had a cooked breakfast. When we went to church there were really nice hymns. After the first two hymns we went to Sunday school where we painted rocks for outside the church. Later on, when parents came for coffee, we built two dens. They were really nice.

I had a great week!

Freyja (11)

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**Thank you Sue and Pat!** This week was the last week of Sue being the fantastic school cook at Fair Isle Primary. Thank you Sue – we will miss you and your amazing food! Also, Pat is (*almost*) retiring from the school after 34 years' service. Thank you so much for all you have done for the children and staff too, Pat! We celebrated their wonderful time at F I Primary this week with a mini tea party – here are a few photos...







### And a message for the kids from Sue:

I would like to say a massive thank you to everyone at the school who contributed to my lovely leaving gifts. I have already spent the garden centre voucher on exotic things over and over in my head, but in reality (you all know what I'm like) a big chunk of it may go on bird seed!! I wish I could kidnap a few birds out of the garden to take with me. Maybe Steven has a trailer suitable for that very purpose???!!

I will miss all of you at the school - staff and children, and will pass around my new address. You are all welcome to stop by for a pizza when you are down south on your holidays!

Have a great school trip to Dundee.

Love from Sue xxx

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### Da week dat's awa...

#### This week we hear from one of our regular visitors

**Thursday** - 24.5 degrees at 11.15am in Glasgow, and my meeting has been changed at the last minute from central Glasgow to up the hill at Blythswood Square, I arrived less than composed as I scurry there in the boiling heat. The meeting goes well, if a little hot, then I head home to pack for our trip north.

We decide on a taxi to the hotel as we are getting the early flight up to Shetland the following day, but the taxi driver has some issues locating the hotel. This is the 1<sup>st</sup> time my son Rossy has visited the isle in some 6 years. Early start tomorrow!

**Friday** - Early start and beautiful morning on the outskirts of the capital. We take a short taxi journey to Edinburgh Airport. After some tedious queuing we make it airside. The flight is slightly delayed, but we finally get into the air and head north. We are treated to lovely views of the Cairngorms before we fly north over Fraserburgh before descending over a cloudy isle to land on an easterly route to Sumburgh.

There isn't a cloud in the sky as we meander north to Lerwick on the bus. We have a lovely day in town and catch up with a couple of old school pals for lunch in the Dowry before ice-cream in the sun at Fiara. We then head to Tingwall, surely we will get in to the isle no bother...? Ahhh - ominous cloud coming in from the north east. Fair play to Richard the pilot though, we took off and after a figure of 8, landed back at Tingwall through the cloud to try again tomorrow.

This was an opportunity to show off the night life of Lerwick, Britain's most northerly town to my son Rossy as an adult for the first time. We were kindly put up for the night by my pal Malcolm then on to the Marlex, Chinese restaurant, Trench, the Legion then ending back at the Marlex. The evening grew funnier with old pals as the night progressed. Great fun!!

**Saturday** – I awake feeling slightly tepid. What will it be today? Boat or plane?

We took a confident view that the plane will go today - my Rossy is not the biggest fan of the boat. We have some dialogue with folk on the isle and the boat crew and it looks like we will get in on the plane. Tingwall Airport is busy and we take the chance to catch up with other islanders heading home from holidays too. We enjoy a fine flight in and are greeted by family at the airstrip. The holiday has started!! We take a quick trip north to see the boat come in then to Houll to prepare for the fancy dress party for Guillermo's birthday. The theme is IDOLS, and the party crowd make an excellent effort all round.

**Sunday** – Definitely a sluggish start, then we have a nice walk up around the North Lighthouse to clear the cob webs, followed by final of the Nations League – a very dull game, eventually won by the Spaniards on penalties. I still haven't met anyone who understands this cup/league?

**Monday** starts with rain and emails. I'm not a fan of working whilst on holiday, however there are a few things I need to do. After dealing with some unrealistic client expectations, I close my laptop for the day. The remainder of the day is spent playing with the boys. It is so good to see Luca and Ander.

**Tuesday** starts a better day. I watch the boat head to Grutness on the AIS tracker while I send emails and work through some tedious paperwork. Heard the news about the missing submarine, and was amazed how much coverage this received in the media. As awful as this clearly is, the desperation of so many migrants who face the daily challenge of crossing the Channel and those who perish is so much more newsworthy.

The sun comes out and we walk up the road to meet the boat. It is wonderful to see the progress on the new Bird Observatory. It really will be great for the isle once operational.

We are enjoying being home so much. We all eat at Houll in the evening, including lots of Fair Isle produce - delicious.



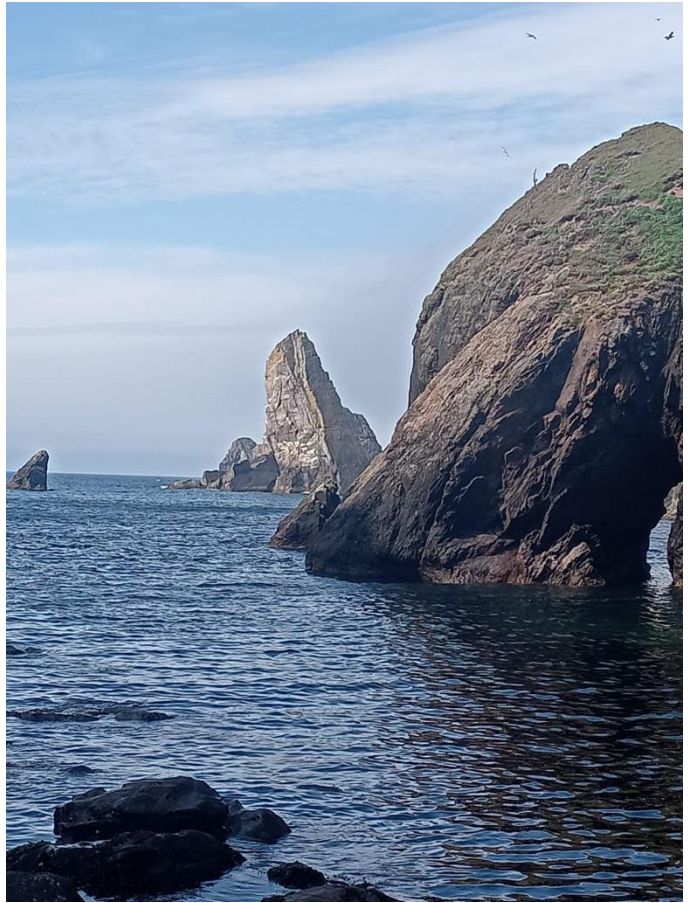
**Wednesday** – I'm up early to send emails and do some work, followed by a Zoom meeting I listen in on with Eileen regarding boat crew and housing. Many good points are raised, followed by some well needed movement on certain key points!!

I take an extra interest as I am keen to spend more time here at home with a view to being relief crew on the boat.

There is a large cruise ship in today, so we visit the hall and see what the isle has to offer.

I then take Luca down Steensie Geo. This is first time I have been down there for some 35 years I think – it hasn't changed much!





After some delays, Scotland then round off a great international week with another win.

That's my week that's away, I'm looking forward to the next week too.  
Ross of Houll, Stoneybrek and Glasgow

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### CAPTION COMPETITION



We don't like to make a habit of having caption competitions EVERY week, but this photo (thanks to David Parnaby) of Sue in the school canteen is too good not to share! Captions to Eileen please!!

## NOTICES

**Happy summer holidays to you all!!** Thank you to all our wonderful contributors for this term – we can't make a Fair Isle Times without you! Special mention as ever to the school children who write for us every week, as well as Dave for the weather and Neil for Maavi – we appreciate your hard work so much! We'll be back after the summer holidays – may there be plenty of good days for clipping sheep, working hay and having fun with friends and family. The Fair Isle Times Editors

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**CONGRATULATIONS** to Raven Shaw of Burkle for graduating with a 2:1 in Psychology from the University of Stirling – well done Raven! We wish you all the best for the future!

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### Fair Isle School Expeditionary Force takes in Sukka Mire, 19<sup>th</sup> June 2023

***Intrepid Ranger, Sally, led three schoolchildren and four adults on a late morning adventure to Sukka Mire, purpose to investigate life in burn, adjacent wet grassland and bog.***

The burn was choked with vegetation, a mixture of Bog Pondweed *Potamogeton polygonifolius*, Common Water Starwort *Callitriche stagnalis* and the intriguingly named Frogspawn Alga with its pom-pom rings around the stems.



Frogspawn Alga *Bactrachospermum* mimicking a giraffe

There were a few open areas of water but the early intention of doing some kick sampling was quickly dropped because of the amount of silt and the fear that small wellies might disappear below the mud. Instead, a combination of sweeping with nets and hooking out vegetation with a weed grab were the means of pulling out a range of interesting invertebrates. By far the commonest, in various sizes, ages and colour tones, was the Brackish Water Shrimp *Gammarus duebeni*, a crustacean which despite its name is as happy and numerous in our freshwater streams as it is in the rock pools around South Light. A few Water Crickets *Velia caprai* were amongst captures. These true bugs are so called because they are associated with water, as surface dwellers, and because they make a noise like a cricket. A good ear is required to detect this. Water boatmen are also aquatic true bugs and are probably more familiar to most. There are several species on the Isle. A medium sized one was taken and this proved to be *Callicorixa wollastoni*. It doesn't have a vernacular name as far as we know but we can call it Woollaston's Water Boatman. He'll surely not mind. ....



Woollaston's Water Boatman *Callicorixa wollastoni* at the edge of its microscope world

In thick vegetation, water beetles are often too quick for the net but one tiny one was obtained and this proved to be the Soft-haired Diving Beetle *Hygrophorus pubescens*, a well-known occupant of this habitat.



Soft-haired Water Beetle *H. pubescens*

A second beetle, The Reed Beetle *Plateumaris discolor* could be thought of as a water beetle too but it is more an insect of bank sides and fringing vegetation . It is common on the Isle but few people will know it, nor of how attractive it is in its glossy green and bronze.





Reed Beetle *Plateumaris discolor*

One more invertebrate to report: a couple of Wandering Snails *Radix peregra* – easy to overlook in the mud.



The team gathered around Nick to see the final collection of samples.

The enthusiasm of those gathered, young and old was palpable, despite the cool conditions and the onset of rain. Such conditions are not considered conducive to insect activity but a ten seconds' sweep across the grass resulted in the capture of about 50 flies plus a micro moth (*Bactra lancealana*) in the net. It just goes to show how much biodiversity, and biomass, lie hidden under our feet. The insectivorous plants are not complaining.



A pooter filled with a sample of flies from the sweep net.



Finally, not a main purpose of the exercise, but keen plant lovers will be pleased to learn that the gravelly bank at the edge of the airstrip car park has a fine population of Moonwort *Botrychium lunaria*; and we found a single Azores Adderstongue *Ophioglossum azoricum*, the latter a species restricted to the extreme exposed coastal fringe of the eastern North Atlantic. Good eyesight and the ability to kneel are advantages for those wishing to seek out these tiny aberrant ferns.

*Nick Riddiford, Schoolton & Sally Kunzig, FIBO Ranger*

And talking of Nick, look what turned up at the Fair Isle Times office this week, originally from *British Birds* – enjoy! And I wonder where that novel is...?

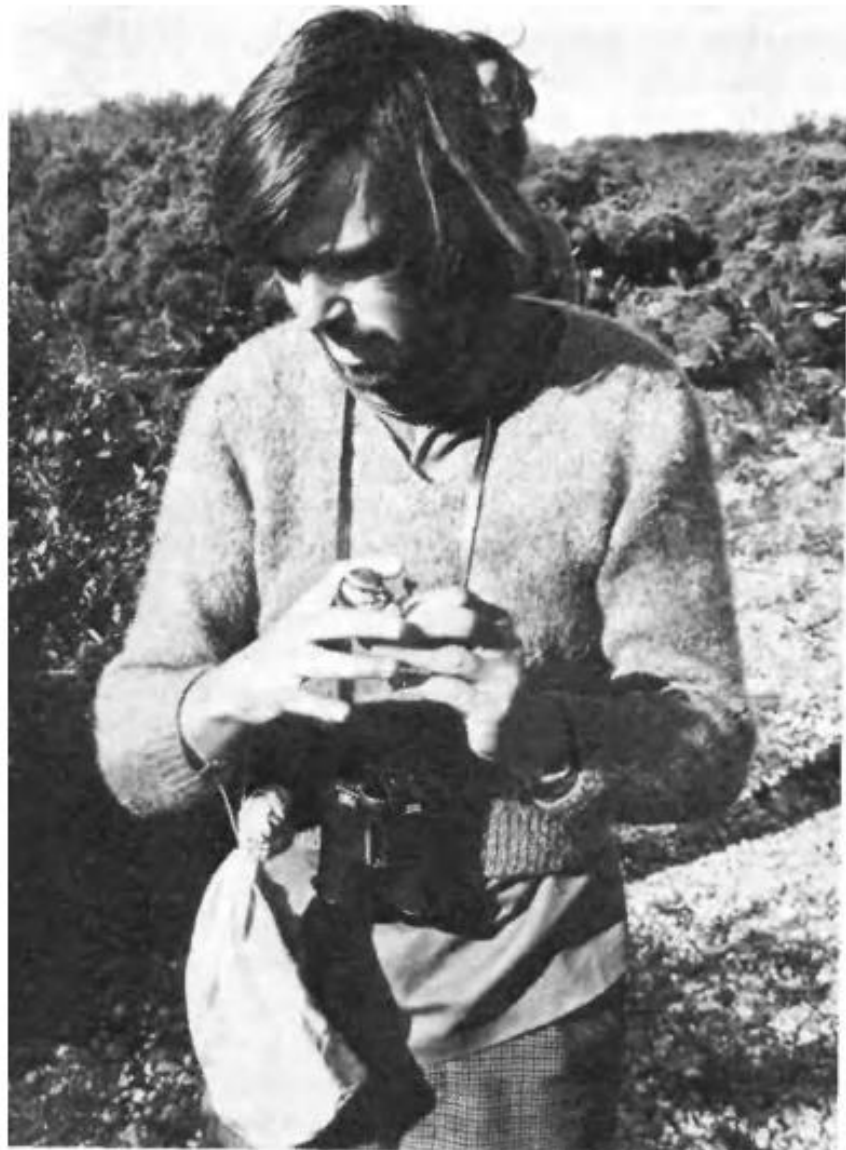
## Personalities

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### 14 Nick Riddiford

**A**nyone who has ever stayed at a bird observatory knows that wardens tend to be slightly eccentric. Perhaps this is an occupational disease, or it may be that such places provide fertile ground for the flowering of latent tendencies. In the case of Nick Riddiford, warden at Dungeness (Kent) since early in 1974, one can only hazard a guess, but eccentricity there certainly is. How else does one explain a fervent belief that Gloucestershire is the best cricketing county; or a penchant for the most

*Nick Riddiford*



**90.**  
Nick Riddiford  
(*René-François de  
Fontanges*)

excruciating puns? And how many other people can—or would—admit to being debagged by a wild boar while birdwatching? Perhaps the fact that Nick came into the world on Christmas Day—at Stroud, Gloucestershire, in 1948—has something to do with it all.

After leaving school, he followed in his father's footsteps and set out to be a teacher. He gained his Certificate of Education at St Paul's College, Cheltenham, and then went on to take a Bachelor of Education degree, but his subsequent teaching career, in France and England, was a brief one. He had been bitten by the bird bug, and he used his fluency in French to get a temporary post at the Tour du Valat in the Camargue in 1971; he was invited back the following year, then had a season as assistant warden on Fair Isle in 1973 before his appointment at Dungeness.

There, Nick quickly came to the notice of both regulars and vagrants: in fact, notices blossomed everywhere, on walls, doors and cupboards. But they effectively put over the message that he was a well-organised person and that he wanted a well-organised observatory, both scientifically and domestically. Since then, and despite those puns, he has won the regard and support of a host of new and old friends of Dungeness, who have recognised his keenness, ability and integrity. His teaching experience has stood him in good stead when handling parties of children and his linguistic talents have come in useful in coping with the observatory's increasing numbers of Continental visitors: for example, in explaining to a young Italian who spoke no English that, in this country, we cook bacon before eating it for breakfast. The photograph makes a physical description unnecessary, but it has been noted that Nick's plumage variations—beard or no beard—seem geared to the state of the battery in his electric shaver rather than to the time of year.

Birds are not Nick's only interest. He is a better-than-average botanist and a keen entomologist, with bumblebees and dragonflies as his latest targets. And somewhere, lurking in the background, is an embryo author with a prize-winning—but as yet unpublished—novel to his credit.

He has his likes and dislikes. Among the likes may be mentioned food, a taste for Pernod acquired in France, and a delight in showing his speed as a winger in kick-about on birdless days. And among the dislikes are parachutists: born of an incident when an Action Man, viewed from a distance through a telescope as it descended on the beach at Dungeness, led to his alerting the air-sea rescue services. Sanderlings, too, are a sore point: somehow or other, all his schemes for adding them to the observatory's ringing list go sadly astray. Nick also has a love-hate relationship with secondhand cars, which break down with monotonous regularity on the way to and from conferences. If offered a lift, be prepared to push. And, on the subject of lifts, who but Nick, having broken down in central France, could thumb one which took him all the way home to the observatory's doorstep?

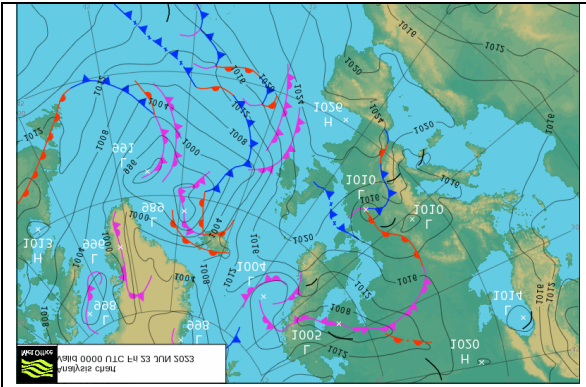
Despite his seven-day-a-week job, and the ringing in the past year of more than 10,000 birds, Nick serves as secretary of the Bird Observatories Council. He is also engaged in the daunting task of writing a report summarising the work at Dungeness during the past 25 years.

Perhaps eccentricity is not such a bad thing after all.

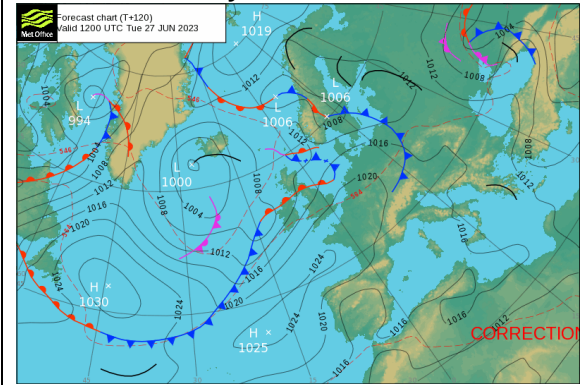
HARRY CAWKELL



**FAIR ISLE WEATHER FORECAST**



**Analysis Chart 0000 UTC  
Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2023**



**Forecast Chart 1200 UTC  
Tuesday 27<sup>th</sup> June 2023**

**GENERAL SITUATION**

**Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2023**

A narrow ridge of high pressure over the British Isles will decline east, a developing depression near Iceland then driving Atlantic fronts northeast, the first of these reaching Shetland on Saturday. On Sunday a strong southeasterly cyclonic airflow veers to a lighter south-westerly as the cold front follows from the west, A secondary low, developing on the southern flank of the filling depression is forecast to swing northeast past Shetland midweek, leaving a somewhat unsettled westerly airflow across the north of the UK for the remainder of the outlook period.

**OUTLOOK FOR THE WEEKEND**

Temperatures 14° or 15° Celsius by day, around 9° or 10° overnight.

**FRIDAY 23<sup>rd</sup>:** A warm, dry and sunny morning, the sunshine turning hazy through the afternoon as F3 SE winds freshen F5. Cloud continuing to thicken with patchy rain, mist and fog arriving overnight. **Sea State:** Slight or smooth with a 1 metre or less W'ly wind swell.

**SATURDAY 24<sup>th</sup>:** The rain dying out but mist, low cloud and fog persisting until brighter conditions arrive from the southwest later in the afternoon. F4-5 S or SW winds.

**Sea State:** Slight or smooth with a 1 metre or less SW'ly wind swell.

**SUNDAY 25<sup>th</sup>:** Starting mainly dry, bright and warm but with a F5 SSE wind. Chance of heavy and perhaps thundery rain later. **Sea State:** Slight or smooth with a 1 metre or less SE'ly wind swell.

**FORECAST FOR NEXT WEEK**

Though temperatures near or even a little above average feeling fresher with temperatures 12° to 14° Celsius by day, 9° or 10°

overnight.

**MONDAY 26<sup>th</sup>:** Early rain then bright with sunny spells and scattered showers. A moderate SW to W wind.

**Sea State:** Slight or moderate with a 1 to 2 metre S'ly wind swell.

**TUESDAY 27<sup>th</sup>:** Mostly dry but clouding over as S or SE winds freshen. Rain over Orkney edging up across Fair Isle to reach the rest of Shetland later in the evening, becoming heavy for a time overnight.

**Sea State:** Slight or moderate with a 1 to 2 metre SW'ly wind swell.

**WEDNESDAY 28<sup>th</sup> – SUNDAY 2<sup>nd</sup>:** Rain clearing to showers on Wednesday as fresh S winds, occasionally strong, veer SW and ease. The remainder of the week and weekend staying unsettled with rain or showers and winds mainly from the west. **Sea State Wednesday:** Moderate with a 2 metre SW'ly wind swell.

**Dave Wheeler**

