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My Weekend News

At the weekend Frejya and Grace came to us on Saturday. We made a big den. Grace got taught how to put on makeup on.

On Sunday, we watched Strictly Come Dancing in the morning then went to church. After that we went to Pat's house for Sunday-school.

On Monday morning I woke up at quarter past nine and wondered where mum and Ander was! Dad said they had gone to Orkney on a helicopter! Ander was not very well but he is fine now.

Luca (8)



By Heidi (6)

My Wintry Weekend

This weekend Grace got to come home on Thursday since there was ice on the runway at Tingwall! We had already seen her that week as Dad, Grace and I had just back from a visit to Sunderland on the NorthLink. I was extra happy she got in this weekend, because that meant we got to put up our Christmas decorations! The house is feeling a lot more festive now! Another reason I'm feeling festive is, it was icy all the time Grace was in. So, on the walk back from school we skidded along the road and smashed all the puddles we could find.

On Saturday we made Christmas cards in the morning then in the afternoon we went to Houll so Grace could get a make-up tutorial and I could play with the boys. It was epic! We made a really cool den and we also watched Euro 2024 draw. That evening we watched Strictly Come Dancing (**SPOILER ALERT!**) and the first forty was scored (that's the highest you can get)!

Sunday was still really icy so we had to drive very slowly to church. Before we went to Sunday school Luca, Grace and I drew around everybody's hands to be used as leaves for a Christmas tree to be displayed at the front of the church. Another thing was since it was the 4th Sunday before Christmas Grace lit the first advent candle. Afterwards we went to coffee at LSB. Sadly Ander wasn't feeling well so Luca and I played that he was a crazy toddler and I had to lock him up! Grace and I decided to go the long way round the loop on the way back. There were big patches of ice everywhere, which of course we both went to slide on! The best patch was by the Kirk as the entire path was frozen! I had to hold Grace's hand on the way down. When we got back there were surprise mussels for lunch!

On Monday Grace had to go on the boat because she has a bean feast which she would miss otherwise. One good thing though was that school was closed on Monday so Grace and I got to play an hour of Mine Craft!

Freyja (11)

A Quiet Weekend

On Saturday we went to Hollie's house. My mum and dad are helping to look after Kes and Mac so Derek was showing them all the stuff. Heidi and I played in the lounge with Hollie. When we got home, I played Grounded. I am getting better at finding and building with resources. I can make a fort. This means I can hide from larvae, wolf spiders and red soldier ants because they attack. I like it when dad plays Grounded with me because we can work as a team.

Harris (9)

My adventure

I went on a helicopter and an ambulance. It was fun! The helicopter was loud. I went to Orkney. There is a soft play in Orkney, it was really fun! It was weird why we went to Orkney not Shetland. It was fun. We flew on a Loganair plane and we went to Islesburgh.

Ander (5)



Fair Isle Primary School joined in Christmas Jumper Day for Save the Children on Thursday, raising £30! Well done!

Da Week Dat's Awa

Friday starts bright, and cold, the theme for most of the next week. Fortunately for us Grace made it home from school for the weekend on Thursday, as that's the last plane we'll see for a while. Unfortunately for Grace it means she's on hand to help out with sheep in the morning. One of the yowes has a bad foot that needs seeing to and another has a very claggy back end, so we deal with that and check over how the ram's been getting on. It looks like all but a couple are now sporting a range of yellow, orange and red marker dye, which is encouraging, but means we'll no doubt have a couple of late stragglers right at the end of lambing. We've still got a couple of years of using up these colours, but I'm quite drawn to the neon green that's appeared elsewhere on the Isle. If only the manufacturers could be persuaded to bring out a range of glow in the dark dyes....

In the afternoon I go and dig tatties and carrots and some of the neeps the marauding rabbits haven't got to. It's very satisfying to hear the crunch of the frozen soil when you put the fork through, but any hopes that this cold snap is going to be helping kill off pests are dashed when I uncover a number of slugs happily still existing down at tattie level. Our chickens are not well behaved like those at Quoy which know exactly what they're meant to do, and try to escape into neighbouring fields if you put them in the kailyard so we've given up using them as pest control. It's been a mixed year for growing things, with a really dry spell in the early summer meaning some crops failed to do anything, but now I'm able to grow some things under glass I've been experimenting. Judicious use of over-ripe bananas means we all get a tiny sliver of Fair Isle melon (just a little bigger than a golf ball) and some more of the Physalis for tea. One of its other common names, besides Cape gooseberry, is Peruvian groundcherry, a name that is obscurely satisfying to say.

On a trip out to the freezer there's a definite hazy aurora, but rather than the usual pale greenish tinge, there's a definite patch of visible red over Raeva and away to the north. Usually here we only see colour variation if it's a really strong aurora and yet there isn't much more than a bright glow and the odd spotlight to be seen. We're soon joined in the garden by our lovely neighbours and the kids variously wander off to crunch frozen grass or stamp on icy puddles on the drive. We've got the telescope out as well, with four of Jupiter's moons visible in a very clear sky. All in all a very lovely evening.

Saturday and Sunday continue very cold, with showers coming through to add more layers of ice to roads and runways. I decide to walk up the road to clean at the fire station and hall, but it's definitely a case of sticking to the verges. I usually listen to podcasts whilst cleaning, and have worked out the fire station clean fits neatly with a MammalWatching podcast, whilst the hall is good for either You're Dead to Me, a more grown up version of Horrible Histories, or In our Time. This week the MammalWatching podcast is quite geek heavy, discussing species concepts and genetic diversity, but often the interviews are with a range of scientists, conservationists and wildlife guides talking about their work. As I'm heading back down the road in the dark, David phones to say he's on his way back from the waterworks, so I decide to wait at the junction so we can walk down together. He won't tell me where exactly he is though, so I'm absolutely convinced he's going to sneak up and make me jump (my children do this a lot!) until I see torchlight up towards Barkland.

The girls head to Houll for a play, and a make-up tutorial for Grace ahead of her first school BeanFeast. Lots of very trite things could be said about 'it takes a village to raise a child' and the likes, but we are always grateful to be part of a community that shares time and skills in the way that it does. The rest of the weekend is spent getting Christmas cards made and starting on decorating the house, as we won't see Grace again until term ends a few days before Christmas. Grace's luck is definitely out as everything is still very frozen on Monday morning, and she gets packed off to the Good Shepherd, along with a few other folk needing to head away, as there's every chance there'll not be a plane at all this week.

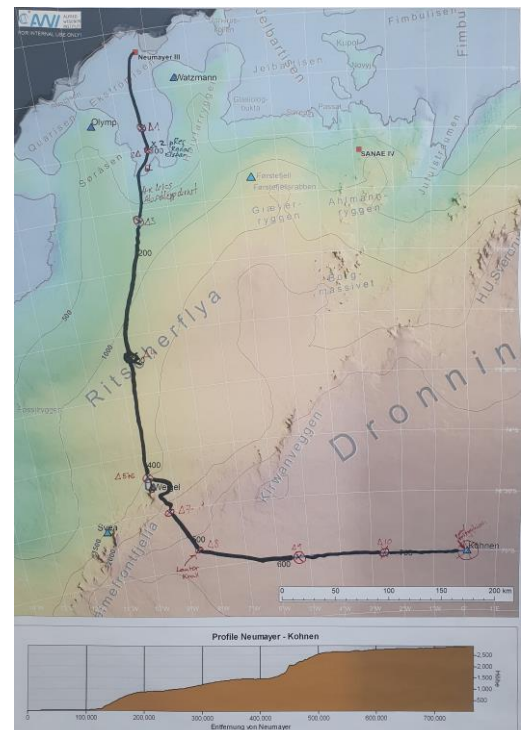
The rest of the week is low on highlights, being mostly a combination of Shetland Nature work and meetings. Monday's meeting with the accountant is rescheduled to the following day; turns out both of us have kids home that day as the usual range of winter bugs move through schools. Wednesday sees a fairly quick chapel meeting in the morning and the Isle quarterly meeting in the evening. It's a positive meeting, helped as ever by homebakes and coffee, and it's good to have one of the organisational changes we've been working on for a while signed off. The development company AGM isn't till January, when there'll be more constitutional documents to approve. It's not the most exciting process, but by the end we should have a community association and development

company that can work effectively together and with other agencies to tackle some of the challenges Fair Isle faces going forward. Thursday is the last meeting of the week (hurrah!), with our MPA project officer and the web designer who is building a new website for FIMRO. Now that a number of MPA related projects are underway we want to make sure we have somewhere people can find out what's been happening and share some of the results. There are a few more groups in Scotland now applying for DR MPA status and as the first to get there it's good to be able to share lessons learnt with others, so the process is hopefully quicker and smoother for them. It's a good constructive chat and nice to have someone who can pitch the tech stuff at the right level to help you decide what options work best, but I'm definitely ready for the weekend now!

Susannah at Shirva

Another update from Fyntan down in Antarctica this week. It's been cold enough in Fair Isle the past few days, nothing in comparison to the South Pole though...

We began the 770km traverse with beautiful weather and temperatures almost above freezing. The technicians drove 6 pistenbullys, dragging multiple containers behind them, while Hameed and I rode on a skidoo taking measurements of bamboo poles placed every 500m along our route. These bamboo poles are placed every year and the snow accumulation rate is determined by measuring the height of bamboo above the snow and comparing with the previous year(s). We also added a new bamboo if the remaining bamboos were too short or too tilted, but only every kilometre. With all the stopping and starting, we ended up moving about the same speed as the pistenbullys, which drove continuously at 10kph.



The first two days were pretty uneventful, although on the second day we had to stop to dig out another radar system and download the data, which took all afternoon. On the third day we reached the "grounding line", where the ice shelf ends and we are on the continent proper, with ground below the ice instead of ocean. The surface was much bumpier and unfortunately the wind had picked up a lot. This dropped the temperature significantly, and made the visibility much poorer due to the snow drifts. We ended that day very cold, but still made a good 70 km progress.

The next day the cook and doctor (the only non-technicians on the traverse except for Hameed and I) very kindly offered to help with the bamboo measuring, given how cold we looked the previous day. Therefore, I went out with the doctor in the morning, while Hameed and the cook did the measurements after lunch, giving me the afternoon off. I took the opportunity to ride in the front of a pistenbully, and while I chatted with the

driver a bit, I mostly slept. We made amazing progress that day, over 120 km, so the next day we continued with the same system, doing it in shifts and talking a half day off.

This allowed us to reach the Kottas mountains by the end of day 5, approximately 410km from Neumayer station where we started. The climb up the mountains was going to be tough, over a 1000m ascent in one go, as the pistenbullys couldn't stop on the slope. So the traverse leader allowed us a day off, which also happened to be the doctor's birthday. After celebrating with her in the morning we drove to a good viewing point of the mountains, which were quite a sight after days of white nothingness.



We continued the traverse and began the climb the next day, but unfortunately we had very problematic snow. The top 50cm were very soft and sticky, and after an hour the skidoo managed to bury itself into the snow and get stuck. It took us a good 40 minutes to dig it out, and we rushed to catch up with the others. Turns out we didn't need to rush - all of the pistenbullys also got stuck in the snow, which made me feel a bit better about myself! The pistenbullys left containers behind to reduce the load, and come back for later. Hameed and I continued onward, placing a new pole every km (for some reason the previous years' poles were nowhere to be seen). The day was brutal, easily the most physically difficult day of the traverse. While the weather was once again beautiful, the soft snow made even the short walk off the skidoo to the bamboo sled very tiring. Combine this with the difficulty we had driving (it was very bumpy and difficult to control) and the fact that the sudden increase in altitude made everything more exhausting, we were both a bit broken by the time we made it to the camp. Thankfully, all containers were retrieved by the end of the day.

Day 8 was a half day, due to a pistenbully needing repairing in the morning, which gave us a bit of a rest after the mountains. From this point onwards the bamboos for measuring were only every 1 km, and a new one was only required every 3 km, so we were quite a bit faster than the pistenbullys, which were still struggling a bit with the snow. Days 9 and 10 were also fast, as we took shifts with the doctor and cook again. This was greatly appreciated, as we had reached an altitude of about 2500m, and the temperature was sitting around -25C despite the sunshine and relatively little wind. I had 7 layers on, and 4 pairs of socks, but my toes still went numb by the end of my morning shift!

Throughout the traverse I slept in a small sleeping container, and had meals prepared by the cook in the living container. The "toilet" was simply a hole in the snow surrounded by a box with a seat, and we were only able to shower 2 or 3 times due to the effort of melting snow for water. Most evenings we'd spend a couple hours together in the living container after dinner, and were allowed 300 MB per day of (very slow) internet between the 10 of us, for private text messages and emails.

On Sunday the 3rd of December, the 11th and final day, Hameed and I drove the remaining 70 km, arriving at Kohnen station around 4pm. One driver took some drone footage of us approaching the station in a triangular formation, which I'll share once I have good internet again (unfortunately we have the same wifi situation at Kohnen as during the traverse). On the traverse we measured over 1500 bamboos at 1124 locations. A very

challenging journey, but we got incredibly lucky to have such nice weather and such a great cook and doctor that subbed in and gave us breaks.

Now we are at Kohnen, the technicians are busy warming up the station and preparing the airstrip for the first scientists to fly here on the 8th of December. My PhD supervisor will join us on the 16th, also by plane, and he has given us some snow sampling work to do while we wait for him to arrive. I will write another update on what we get up to at Kohnen, probably around Christmas time, which should be fun to celebrate here!
Fyntan

- **Good Shepherd sailings reminder –**

Sailing Tuesday 12th December will be changed to Wednesday 13th onwards

Sailing Tuesday 19th December

Sailing Thursday 28th December

Sailing Friday 5th January onwards

- **Thanks to John at Utra for the following quote from 'Microflying eNews. December 2023.**

"THE UK's first drone mail delivery service has been after a drone took what owner Skyports Drone Services called a "controlled descent" into water in Orkney.

Skyports said a remote operator deployed the in-built parachute after its system flagged a technical problem." (note from the F I T editor – it was nothing to do with me!)

- **Chapel –** Dave Brackenbury, all welcome to join for the second Sunday of Advent

- **Christmas Tree Party –** will be Thursday 28th December, quick meeting to plan details will happen this coming week once a few more folk home! Look out for an email!

- **Nurse visit –** Nurse Margaret Cooper is due to visit on Monday, weather permitting!

- **Fair Isle Marine Protected area -** Shaun Fraser will be visiting Fair Isle on **Wednesday 13th of December** to give a **talk at the hall at 7pm** to give some initial feedback on the Fair Isle inshore fish survey and hopefully show some new BRUV footage! Katie Cubbon, FIMRO officer will also give a brief update on the DR MPA project. All welcome!

DATE FOR YOUR DIARY!



Thursday 14th December

7pm

The Hall

Please come along to

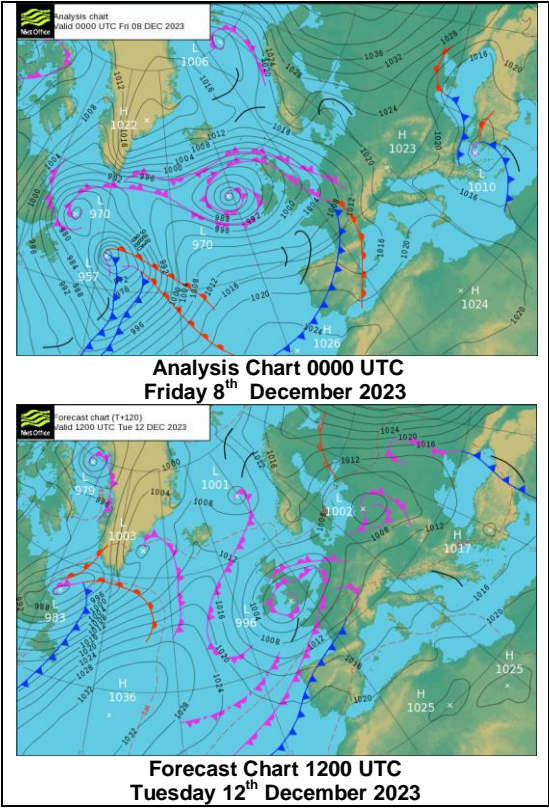
**Fair Isle Primary's
Christmas Concert**

Followed by

Tea/coffee & bakes

ALL WELCOME

FAIR ISLE WEATHER FORECAST



GENERAL SITUATION **Friday 8th December 2023**
 A depression west of the Hebrides will drift east across Scotland with an associated front over the Northern Isles slowly weakening and a strong south-easterly airflow weakening. As the remnants of the low clear east a showery airflow backs northeast for Monday with a developing ridge extending east bringing an easing airflow. The ridge across Shetland sinks south midweek with an Atlantic depression tracking northeast towards Iceland then resulting in a strengthening mild south-westerly airflow as fronts push in from the southwest.

OUTLOOK FOR THE WEEKEND Temperatures Friday 6° Celsius by day, falling little overnight. The weekend 6° or 7° by day 5° overnight.

FRIDAY 8th: Cloudy and misty with rain or drizzle, heavy at times in the morning easing off during the afternoon. F5-7 ESE winds occasionally gale F8 easing later. Further rain overnight with a strong E wind. **Sea State: Very rough** with a 5 metre SE'ly wind swell.

SATURDAY 9th: Cloudy with outbreaks of mostly light rain. F6-7 ESE winds. **Sea State: Rough** with a 3 to 4 metre SE'ly wind swell.

SUNDAY 10th: Cloudy with patchy rain, drier later but remaining cloudy with F6 ESE winds. **Sea State: Rough** with a 3 to 4 metre SE'ly wind swell.

FORECAST FOR NEXT WEEK: Temperatures around 6° Celsius by day 4° overnight. Milder from midweek. **MONDAY 11th:** Mainly dry though cloudy with some brighter spells. A mostly moderate E to NE breeze. **Sea State:** Rough with a 3 to 4 metre SE'ly wind swell. **TUESDAY 12th:** A brighter, mostly dry day with a moderate NE to E breeze. **Sea State:** Moderate to rough with a 2 or 3 metre SE'ly wind swell. **WEDNESDAY 13th – SUNDAY 17th:** Wednesday and Thursday bright with chance of showers dying out by Friday as a fresh WNW breeze backs SW. The week ending cloudy with strong SW winds bringing rain or showers. **Sea State Wednesday:** Moderate with a 2 metre SE'ly wind swell.

Dave Wheeler

