

FAIR ISLE TIMES

VOLUME 47 ISSUE 3

PUBLISHED SINCE 1978

26th JANUARY 2024

Snowy Days

I was excited because it was going to be very snowy on the forecast, and the first day of snow came! After, well, I'm not sure how long we were waiting for, it snowed. Me and Ander, a.k.a. 'we', noticed Freyja walking up to school. I was very good, I saw her and went straight outside to tell her there was no school. We had made up a time to go sledging. We had an amazing time.

OK, lots more to say, let's go to the next day... We went to school but it didn't last very long, we were there until lunchtime and left as there was an Amber Warning out for snow. The next day we made an igloo with Daddad, it didn't last for long as I think it got knocked over.

On Saturday, em, no wait, Sunday, Mum and Dad came home. It has been a great week!



Luca (8)

My News

Last week was snowy. The school was closed quite a lot. We went in one morning and played in the snow at break. Then we closed at lunchtime!

At the weekend I played online with my cousin Milo and his friend Oscar and my dad. We played Fortnite and had some wins. I also played with Orla and Alex.

Harris (9)

My Snowy Weekend

This week was really snowy, to the extent school was shut for three and a half days (we had to close school early because there was an amber snow warning on Wednesday!); that meant there was a lot of time for... SLEDGING!

It was great, I got to use my new wooden sledge off Neil; it goes super fast! Since we went sledging in the Shirva hay park there was a ditch at the end, so we made a tiny snow ramp. It didn't really work but it was very fun to build, especially when we ploughed the snow up with a sledge! At the end, when everyone was chilly, Pat gave us all cups of hot chocolate.

Since there is no internet - watching DVDs is a good excuse for a movie! We had a cinema night with tea. Also on Saturday, Dad and I watched a Star Wars movie. The best bit was

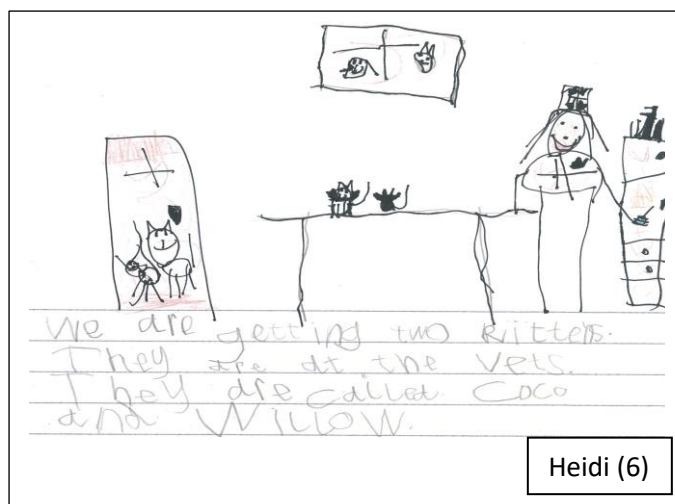
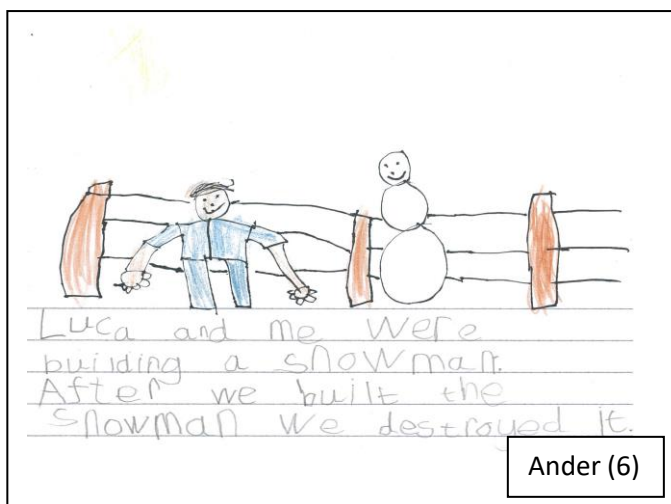
that I got carried through in my duvet! Later we played Monopoly and I won! It was quite close but I had a hotel that cost over 1000 M! We also played Roba Rally, and for the first time ever Mum won! However, we later played Wingspan, which normally Mum is really good at but this time I beat her by one point!

On Sunday, there was no church so we played some more games. We had a game of Risk which, as always, I won! Risk is my favourite game because you get to attack other people loads!

During the weekend we went round to Busta because it was Anne's birthday. It was nice chatting and they also showed us a book about a space exhibition and it also had lots of different pictures about a former steelworks and the area and animals around it.

I had a really fun week, especially all the snow!

Freyja (11)



Da week dat's awa – thanks to a Fair Isle favourite for this week's diary, always lovely to hear from you!

Well, everyone, it's a few years since we put a cello, a keyboard, various spinning wheels, crates of yarn, a dog, two cats and a car on the Good Shepherd and waved goodbye to all our dear friends on the pier who had come to see us off and wish us well for our long drive to Romania. Many things have changed in Fair Isle since then, but I still have a sense of belonging, partly because of the "Fair Isle Fisherman's Kep" Facebook group, partly because the Fair Isle Times comes down the blower and partly because of news from friends in the isle. I still can't stop knitting keps, even now, especially during the long, harsh Romanian winters. Anne Sinclair, you have a lot to answer for, hahaha!

There is no doubt that there are certain similarities between Fair Isle and rural Romania. Intermittent hiccups with internet and utilities, transport problems, inclement weather conditions, health care access problems and various other challenges, are common to both places. Also the natural beauty, the warmth of hospitality, the way neighbours help each other, the lightning speed at which news travels (!) and the value placed on preserving precious traditions. They love traditional music and dance here. Having been the Fair Isle nurse is a huge help to me: In Fair Isle I had to expect anything and everything, and here it is the same. It's an honour to be able to help people out, and I can be largely my own GP. I dabble in veterinary nursing, too!

Having retired from nursing (sort of) I have been reinvented as a dog rescuer. So you may find this boring, I don't know. I didn't ask for the job, but you just have to do something about the plight of



animals here, which is dreadful, due to poor education, corruption and disrespect for animal protection laws, which would solve most problems if they were enforced. After a period as a one-woman band, I joined up with an excellent local charity, "Apuseni Spirit". You can find us on Facebook and there is also a website. The animal protection part of the organisation rescues injured, abused and abandoned animals, organises spaying and neutering campaigns, collaborates with local councils to enforce the law, educates, and if all else fails, sues! Probably close to 100 dogs have passed through this house on their way to adoption, mostly in the UK or EU countries. A few doors and window frames have been eaten and we've been bitten a few times by grateful customers, but the constant supply of "success stories" from adopters is inspiring! I'm not sure how I ever found time to go to work: Even when the bird obs was full, I never worked this many hours!



Well, that's the background for people who don't know it, so now on to my week:

We live on the side of a mountain valley in Transylvania, and as I have said, we, also, have WEATHER! On Thursday we did indeed have that stuff. After recent heavy snowfall, the river is nearly bursting its banks, there's mud everywhere, the roads have sprouted potholes and in places the mountainside is sliding into the road. The weather forecast here is mostly 100% wrong and I appreciate Dave Wheeler more than ever! The fog made driving challenging, but I took little Porgy, a furry Pekingese-type chap with stumpy legs, to the vet to be vaccinated. He was abandoned and

hit by a car, resulting in nasty fractures and dislocations, but after complex surgery, you'd never know. He has a big personality for a little guy, so I do hope he finds his forever home.

I didn't get much sleep that night. It's a pity I didn't write DWDA last week, because we had a visit from a bear! It smashed through the fence, but thought better of it when big Brucie appeared. Bruce is 40kgs of Carpathian shepherd dog and is serious about his guarding job. At the time, we didn't know it was a bear, until we got the emergency phone alert, so we both went outside the gate in the middle of the night, to examine the hole in the fence. You can give us top marks for stupidity! Bruce is now on high alert and if he hears anything suspicious in the night, he tries to smash the door down to go outside. He creates nearly as much noise and damage as the bear did.

Another reason for sleeplessness was news from Leona that her grandfather, Jim Gear of Foula had passed away unexpectedly. Jim was kind to me and we shared a passion for music. I won't forget his delight when my stage piano arrived on the New Advance! It's a huge loss for Foula and we send them all our sincere condolences, especially Sheila, Penny, Kevin and Ross.

Saturday was warmer, sunnier and very clear. From my desk I could see a v-shaped swathe of white tree trunks lying across the mountain top like matchsticks; the legacy of wildfires from a few years back. The mountain will reforest itself but the ugly scar will be there for a few more years. I was at my desk because one of our charity members is being harassed by the local 'mafia' after filming illegal dog catching, so there has been quite an "exchange of views" with them. We are encouraged by how worried they are...

On Sunday mornings I love to stand outside and listen to the bells and the monks singing: Our neighbours are an Orthodox monastery. We have the oldest wooden church in Transylvania, 15th century, an adorable little treasure. It was another beautiful crisp, cold day. They very much keep the Sabbath here, so I abstained from tackling the overflowing laundry basket. It was a good day for birding. My garden list includes such treasures as: tree sparrow, willow tit, great tit, jay, magpie, RB shrike, GG shrike, sparrowhawk, common buzzard, nuthatch, green, black, grey-headed, MS and GS woodpeckers, chaffinch, starling, blackbird, fieldfare, redstart, black redstart, various wagtails, collared dove, house martin...and lots more. We also have our resident birds – two dozen giant Brahma hens. I chose these because the buzzards are put off by their large size and leave them alone. They are also hardy, calm, go broody (too) easily and can't fly. Plus they are extremely beautiful! They are starting to lay again now, after their winter holidays.

On Monday morning, loan was outside with a neighbour. They were sticking their heads in a hole halfway to the septic tank. It's blocked, yet again... The joys of rural living!

I spent much of the day knitting and watching the news. It seems that the world is overcome by absolute madness. Alabama intends to start gassing prisoners. They think this is humane, especially as the first 'beneficiary' has survived one botched execution attempt and has PTSS. Gaza is unimaginable, there are no words. The UK government is busy expunging all traces of human rights laws. The American Presidential race is between two confused old men, the best they can come up with in a country of 335 million which is oozing talent. The Ukraine border is only a few hours' drive from here but everyone behaves as if the war doesn't exist. Not their problem.... they think. Bucharest is struggling with a farmers' protest about EU regulation of Ukraine grain sales. The Romanian president seems to have given up and run away, and in parliament there are regular skirmishes. A new law says that Romanian pensioners can only buy firewood, using their heating vouchers, in one DIY chain, where it is twice the price of most places. I wonder how they secured that contract? Hmmm...

The first hour of Tuesday morning was spent de-icing the car. It was minus 7c and I drove 40 minutes up the valley to collect a hairy character called Roddy (after Rod Stewart, same hairdo), then the same distance home to collect another chap called Ziggy, before driving both of them 30

minutes further down the valley to the vet. Roddy is a handsome, calm, accepting 8 year old who we picked up off the streets. He's having weekly chemotherapy for a tumour, and it's working. We have no hope of a home for him. Ziggy is a young lad who was hit by a car and the driver then deliberately reversed to finish the job. Fortunately there were witnesses and we hope to have our day in court. For seven months now, Ziggy's life has been a series of operations and complications. He's a patient and loving boy, and after taking him to a top orthopedic vet for more surgery, 230 kms away, we seem to be getting somewhere at last. There's a UK lady patiently waiting to adopt Ziggy, and she also happens to be a vet. On the way back home, I picked up a lovely, cheery gipsy man who has a reputation for unblocking the unblockable! In a few minutes he had sorted out the septic tank and we were odour-free again. He seems to love his job – strange, but good for him! We think he's great!



Wednesday... We have managed to fundraise for a secondhand ambulance which we are going to convert into the first ever veterinary ambulance in this part of the world. It has arrived from Germany, it's in good condition, and we are very excited because we will be able to reach remote mountain settlements where people presently have no way of spaying and neutering their animals. More time and fundraising needed before we get it fully kitted-out, but hopefully we'll be mobile by the spring. It was a very cold day and also a public holiday so everything was closed, but there was traditional Romanian dancing in the centre of our nearest town. Later, it started snowing again.



Thursday morning greeted us with a thin layer of white stuff. I loan drove a bereaved neighbour to Sibiu, three hours away. Both of them are battling with bureaucracy. It took me a twenty minute phone call to sort out my UK pension. I loan has so far driven hundreds of km collecting pieces of paper and now has to sue one company for not coughing up his employment record, so his Romanian pension remains in the air...

It has been another day for memories of Shetland, as I “attended” Jim Gear’s funeral, together with 75 other people online. The Baxter chapel is looking much more dapper these days, having been bought by Foula Heritage. Well done, Foula Heritage!

I am presently waiting, impatiently, for the courier to come. There’s a great knitting shop in Cluj which also does mail order, and it’s a lifeline! New kep-knitting circular needles and sock yarn are on their way. The days of having to order everything from the UK are gone: After Brexit, every parcel has to be collected from the customs office, 75kms away on hairy mountain roads, but anyhow it is unnecessary because we can now buy in Romania and from other EU countries. It’s a ‘lose-lose’ situation for the UK, sadly.

So that brings me to the end of the week. We send our love to everyone we know who reads DWDA, and congratulations to everyone in Fair Isle for the great things you have achieved as a community in the years since we left. You can’t leave the isle completely: A part of your heart remains there. Don’t forget what I said at my leaving party: You all have an open invitation here, any time!

Elena Mera-Long

elenamera@yahoo.com

<https://www.facebook.com/spiritapuseni>

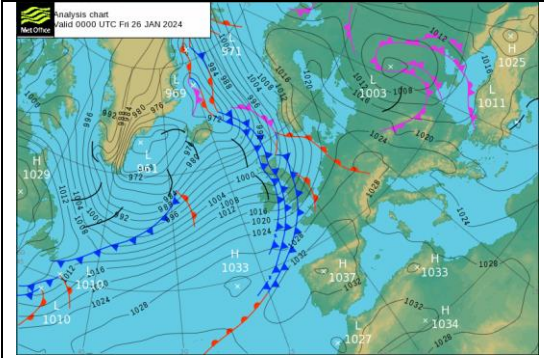
Thanks to David Parnaby for these beautiful photos of the Isle in snow last week, incredible skies!



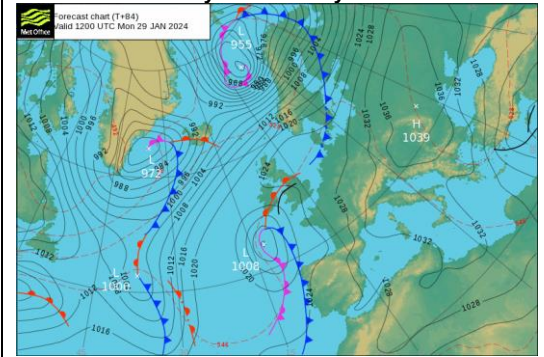
ISLE NOTICES

- **Chapel** this Sunday will be held at Utra at 11am, due to the poor weather forecast, Neil will be leading and all are very welcome to join.
 - **No refuse collection** until the after the next boat, thanks
- **FIDC AGM reminder** – meeting will be Monday 5th February at 7pm at the Committee Room. All permanent island residents can complete a membership form (sent around recently – thanks to those who have already completed theirs) and as well as this the FIDC are looking for at least one new board member, please refer to Eileen’s email if you are keen to join and make a difference for Fair Isle!

FAIR ISLE WEATHER FORECAST



Analysis Chart 0000 UTC
Friday 26th January 2024



Forecast Chart 1200 UTC
Monday 29th January 2024

GENERAL SITUATION

Friday 26th January 2024

A front having cleared east overnight a strong, showery westerly airflow now covers Fair Isle. With an area of low pressure slow-moving near Iceland this is expected to persist through the weekend with a trailing front near northwest Scotland clearing east later Sunday. A small Atlantic low drifting towards Ireland should ease the airflow which briefly turns south-easterly later Monday. However, as this low is absorbed into a depression over Iceland, a strong south-westerly airflow returns by Tuesday and, as the main depression moves east, a strong west then northwest from midweek.

OUTLOOK FOR THE WEEKEND

Temperatures 6° to 8° Celsius by day 5° or 6° overnight.

FRIDAY 26th: Breezy with F6-7 W winds. Sunny spells and scattered blustery showers occasionally heavy. Winds tend SW through the day but strengthen F7 to gale F8 and bringing more frequent showers later. A few clear spells and blustery heavy showers overnight with F7 to gale F8 SW winds. **Sea State:** Mostly very rough with a 5 metre W'ly wind swell. East of Shetland moderate or rough with a 2 to 3 metre W'ly wind swell.

SATURDAY 27th: Frequent showers. locally heavy, perhaps merging into longer spells of rain. F7 to gale F8 SSW winds easing F5-6 WSW later. Showers dying out overnight. **Sea State:** Very rough with a 5 to 6 metre WSW'ly wind swell. East of Shetland rough with a 3 to 4

metre SW'ly wind swell.

SUNDAY 28th: Cloudy but mainly dry at first before rain spreads east with F7 to gale F8 W winds. Drier with an easing W wind overnight. **Sea State:** Very rough with a 5 to 6 metre WSW'ly wind swell. East of Shetland rough with a 3 to 4 metre SW'ly wind swell.

FORECAST FOR NEXT

Temperatures 6° to 8° Celsius by day 5° or 6° overnight. **MONDAY 29th:** Mainly dry and bright with fresh SW winds, occasionally strong, easing for a time. Cloudy overnight with strengthening S wind. **Sea State:** Very rough with a 5 to 6 metre W'ly wind swell. East of Shetland moderate or rough with a 2 to 3 metre W'ly wind swell. **TUESDAY 30th:** Possibly a dry start but rain soon spreads up from the south. Strong S to SE winds. Showers and strong SW winds overnight. **Sea State:** Mostly rough or very rough with a 4 to 5 metre SW'ly wind swell. **WEDNESDAY 31st – SUNDAY 4th:** Rain or showers Wednesday and Thursday as SW gales veer W. Possibly a drier day with lighter winds Friday then the weekend unsettled with rain or showers and strong winds with risk of gales. **Sea State Wednesday:** Very rough to high with a 5 to 7 metre W'ly wind swell. East of Shetland rough with a 3 to 4 metre SW'ly wind swell.

Dave Wheeler

