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## American 'Pen Friends'

In January 2024, we received a newsletter from a small school in the Cranberry Isles in Maine, USA, asking to be our pen friends. We wrote back to them and last month we received two letters! This week we have written back. Here are their letters and our responses!

Dear Fair Isles School,  
We have some questions about your island and we will tell you about our island.  
Elliott and Rowan.

1. How do you get to your island?
2. Do you have a harbor?
3. Do you have a store on your island?
4. What kind of fishing do you do?
5. Do you have any tourist visits in the summer?
6. Do you have any police/firetrucks/ems on your island?

Here is some information about our island that we thought you would like to know

1. Our island is 1.5 miles long.
2. We have a year round population of about 70 people
3. We have over 300 summer residents.
4. We have sailing and boat building camp in the summer.
5. Most of our jobs here are related to the fishing industry, mostly lobsters.



Dear Fair Isle School, we are writing to you from Islesford Maine. Our names are: Auriel Pease, and Luciana Pickering. We have 9 kids who attend school full time: Elliott, Rowan, Marina, Lucy, Solomon, Otto and Isaiiah. Here are some questions for you to answer:

1. Do you have any trees on your island?
2. Do you like it there?
3. How big is your island?
4. Do you have a shop on your island?
5. Do you have a cafeteria in your school?
6. Do you have any fun summer camps or activities on your island?  
(bonus question!)  
How many rooms do you have in your school?

And now, here are some interesting facts about our island/school.

1. You can pretty much walk everywhere on our island.
2. We have a two room schoolhouse.
3. We have a pond and we skate in the winter.
4. There is a two hundred year old house on this island. (it is Luciana's grandmother's house!)
5. There is always a boat launch in the summer, and for it to really begin the kids do a scavenger hunt!
6. Have you guys ever heard of the tv show Sponge Bob? The creator of that show lived on this island and used this island as inspiration when creating the show.
7. We've had really bad storms this winter that have done a lot of damage to the island. Have you guys had bad storms?



## Harris and Luca worked together on this letter ...

Dear Elliott and Rowan,

Thank you for your letter. Here are the answers to your questions:

1. We can get to Fair Isle by boat or plane. The boat is called the Good Shepherd IV. It is very old and can take 12 passengers. It takes about 2-and-a-half hours and is a very rough crossing so passengers are often sick! We are trying to get a new ferry at the moment. The plane can take up to 8 people and takes about 25 minutes.



2. We do have a harbour at North Haven where our only sandy beach is. Yachts often dock there in the spring and summer.
3. Our store is called Stackhoull Stores. It is small but you can get everything you need.
4. We catch cod, haddock and mackerel. We set creels and occasionally catch lobsters and crabs.
5. We get cruise ships in the summer and we set up stalls in the hall to sell things. Lots of people come to the island to see the birds during migration and people also come for knitting holidays or artists come to stay. Our knitting is famous all over the world.
6. We have a fire-engine and station. We have a nurse with a car with a stretcher. If there is an emergency the coastguard helicopter takes us to



Fair Isle Knitting - This is Hollie who is also our learning support worker and our PE instructor and when our nursery is open she is our pre-school teacher. She is a knitter and crofter too!



Our school stall for cruise ship customers who visit the isle for the day.

hospital.

Here are some facts about our island.

1. Our island's area is 7 km<sup>2</sup>
2. The highest point on Fair Isle is Ward Hill at 217metres.
3. About 50 people live on our island all year round. There are 8 children (under 18), 24 adults age 18-60 and 18 adults that are 60+ years old.
4. Many people on the isle have more than one job e.g. Deryk is a fireman, a crofter, ferry crew, works for Fair Isle Electricity Company, he puts heating fuel in the sheltered houses and is the lighthouse keeper.
5. We are the most remote inhabited island in the UK. We are 24 miles from Shetland's mainland and 27 miles from the Orkney isles.
6. Our island is owned by the National Trust for Scotland.
7. We have very high, dramatic cliffs, a sandy beach and some rocky beaches.
8. We have two lighthouses. One is at the north and one is at the south. They are mostly white with some black and yellow. They are automated.
9. Lots and lots of puffins come to Fair Isle in the summer. They come here to nest and lay eggs. They leave in the autumn and spend the whole winter on the sea until the summer comes again.



Puffins on Fair Isle. That is Sheep Rock in the back ground.



Our isle from the sky.

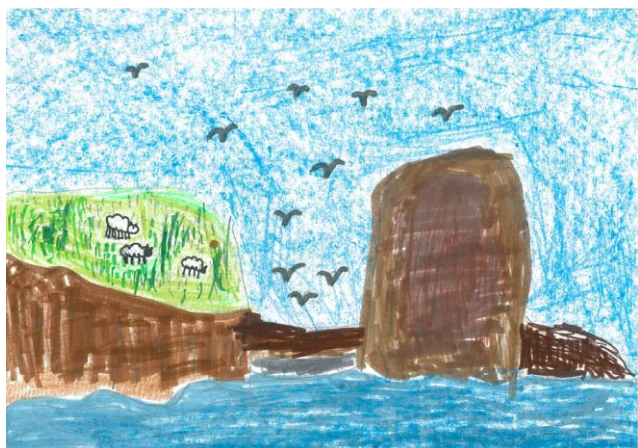
We have some questions about your island?

1. What is the highest point on your island?
2. Can you tell us what kind of nature is on your island?
3. Where do you go for swimming lessons?
4. How many teachers work in your school?

We hope to hear from you soon!

**From**

**Harris and Luca (we are both 9 years old)**



Sheep Rock by Harris

## **Freyja worked on this letter. Ander and Heidi answered a question each and did a great job typing on the computer for the first time!**

Dear Auriel and Luciana

Thanks for your letter. Your facts are really interesting and your island is even smaller than ours! We have five children in the school called Ander, Heidi, Luca, Harris and my name's Freyja.

- ❖ Yes, we have some trees but they are short and only grow in sheltered places like the plantation, which the bird observatory uses for catching birds.
- ❖ We all really like living on the island as the community is very close and the scenery is amazing.
- ❖ Our island is about 7km<sup>2</sup> (1.5miles wide and 3miles long)
- ❖ Yes, we have one tiny shop, called Stackhoull stores. It is a little grocery shop with a post office.
- ❖ We used the committee room for school lunches but our school cook moved off isle a year ago so we have packed lunches in the classroom now.
- ❖ We don't have any summer camps in the isle. We did have plans for a swimming pool in the old church but we don't know whether that's going to happen, so at the moment we go on the plane to go swimming in Shetland
- ❖ We have three classrooms: the nursery room, STEM room and classroom.

Here are some facts about our isle/school

1. We have some iron age archaeology on the island and lots of burnt mounds.
2. We use the community hall for playtime when the weather is bad. It is joined on to our school.
3. We have a big rock pool next to the lighthouse where we go swimming in the summer but it is always freezing!
4. The oldest house on the island is called Auld Haa which is about three hundred years old.
5. We sometimes get tall ships that give us a ride around the island but we don't have a boat launch
6. The Fair Isle knitting patterns have names which come from the shapes of the patterns i.e. 'creepy leegs' and 'rams horns' and people have been knitting them for hundreds of years!
7. When I was little, there were 100mph winds which blew my hat off! As well as that we get a lot of gales in the winter - this winter someone's house guttering blew off!

Our swimming pool!



Auld Haa



Christmas Lunch provided by our Parent Council



Here are some questions for you

- ❖ Do you have any lighthouses?
- ❖ Where do you go to high school?
- ❖ Do you have any cafes/ restaurants?
- ❖ We have two churches. Do you have any?
- ❖ Do you have any shops on your island?

**From Freyja, Heidi and Ander**





### Caption Competition

Thanks to all who entered. The Good Shepherd from Kenaby has chosen his winner, Dave B from the South lighthouse with: *"Ian seen in earnest conversation with SIC explaining what would happen if he doesn't get a new boat"*

Well done Dave!

Some extra entries from Jonnie at FIBO too...

"Hi, is that the Obs? Is one in the hand still worth two in the bush?"

"I don't care if you're live on ITV, I've told you before - never put me down as the Phone-A-Friend when lambing is on"

"What do you mean the School Nativity was in December? I've just sorted you those props!!"

"I can't talk right now, a bit tied up with childcare"

### NOTICES

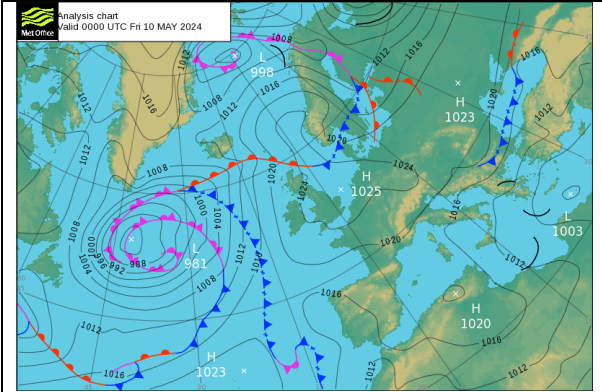
**Chapel** this Sunday with Neil leading, all welcome to join at 11am, no Sunday School

**Cruise ships** – We have had the first 2 ships this week, both very successful visits. The next ship due was Sea Spirit on 18<sup>th</sup> May which has cancelled due to still being in dry dock, they are also due on 22<sup>nd</sup> May but that is looking unlikely. Next one after that is Ocean Nova (which just visited) back on the 26<sup>th</sup> May. Eileen

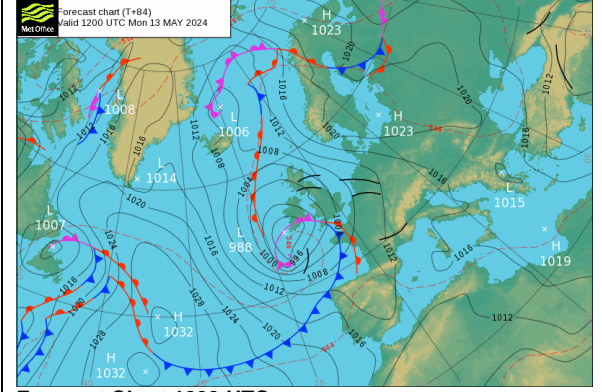


Ocean Nova leaving the isle on Wednesday

**FAIR ISLE WEATHER FORECAST**



**Analysis Chart 0000 UTC  
Friday 10<sup>th</sup> May 2024**



**Forecast Chart 1200 UTC  
Monday 13<sup>th</sup> May 2024**

**GENERAL SITUATION**

**Friday 10<sup>th</sup> May 2024**

Weak high pressure over the North Sea and a depression mid-Atlantic brings a moist southerly airflow across the UK, with the Northern Isles in a warm sector between fronts. During the weekend the Atlantic low drifts east to be just southwest of the British Isles. This low is anticipated to continue east over southern parts of the UK as a filling feature, maintaining a south-easterly airflow across northeast Scotland. As the remnants of the low move away pressure builds across northern Scotland.

**OUTLOOK FOR THE WEEKEND**

Perhaps 14° or 15° on Saturday otherwise 12° to 14° Celsius by day, 8° overnight.

**FRIDAY 10<sup>th</sup>:** The fog, with patchy drizzle, eventually clears late afternoon with some evening sunshine. F3-4 SE winds. Mainly dry overnight with some clear spells. **Sea State:** Slight with a 1 metre S wind swell.

**SATURDAY 11<sup>h</sup>:** Dry and mostly sunny, with F3 tSE winds and the chance of being our warmest sunniest day of the year so far! **Sea State:** Mainly slight with a 1 metre S wind swell.

**SUNDAY 12<sup>th</sup>:** Cloudy but mainly dry with a chance of haar. A mild F4 SE breeze. **Sea State:** Slight to moderate with a 1 to 2 metre SE wind swell.

**FORECAST FOR NEXT WEEK**

Temperatures 13° to 15° Celsius by day, around 8° overnight. **MONDAY 13<sup>th</sup>:** Brighter with chance of showers. A fresh SE breeze. **Sea State:** Moderate with a 2 metre SE wind swell. **TUESDAY 14<sup>th</sup>:** Cloudy with risk of rain or showers and fog. Moderate or fresh SE winds. **Sea State:** Moderate with a 2 metre ESE wind swell. **WEDNESDAY 15<sup>th</sup> – SUNDAY 19<sup>th</sup>:** Chance of showers Wednesday with moderate SE. Remainder of the week mainly dry with sunny or clear spells and light winds. **Sea State Wednesday:** Moderate with a 2 metre SE wind swell easing slight on Thursday.

**Dave Wheeler**

