

# FAIR ISLE TIMES

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## Knitting and Shetland Wool Week



Last Friday, at Fair Isle Primary School, we had a lovely visit from Heike, a German fashion designer staying on the island. We learned about OXO patterns, colours and Shetland Wool Week.

We designed our own jumpers!  
Thank you Heike!

Luca Rotolo



Fair Isle Primary

Heidi Maxwell



Fair Isle Primary

Anders Rotolo



Fair Isle Primary

Harris Maxwell

Fair Isle Primary









## Sheep Hill

On Thursday, Harris and Luca, helped the isle folk to 'caa' the sheep off the hill. It was Luca's third hill caa and Harris' first. They started at Bunes to help drive the sheep west and eventually ending up on Vaasetter. Heidi and Ander watched from the cattle grid as the sheep gathered at the bottom of the hill. Once all sheep were penned up at the cru, Harris and Luca worked as a team to help bring the male lambs to the small pen where they were sorted and lifted onto the crofters' trailers. They did a brilliant job helping the community, and Ander and Heidi loved being part of it too. What a brilliant community effort from all on a beautifully sunny day!





## Hillwalking in Fair Isle

The children had a lovely week with their new supply teacher, Lucy. They especially enjoyed learning about Lucy's other job as a mountaineering guide on the Isle of Skye - it sounds very exciting! On Tuesday after school, Lucy kindly took Harris and Luca up Malcolm's Head to enjoy the spectacular view. The following day, Harris and Lucy walked up Vaassetter - Harris loved seeing Sheep Rock from another viewpoint. Lucy left the children a packet of Isle of Skye tablet to share - it was delicious - thanks! Lucy will return to Fair Isle Primary in December. We will all cross our fingers that Lucy gets the weather window in November for her climbing trip to St Kilda!



## Da week dat's awa...

September bowed out with a mix of squally showers and westerly winds, a grim portent for any Observatory staffer when they consult the forecast as we bound towards the most exciting part of the year (for those afflicted with a passion for watching birds).

Luckily, though perhaps not for my employer, my eyes and my mind often wander from the birds I am paid to count while traipsing a third of the Isle each morning. A young rabbit at Linni Geo, far too gormless for its own good, caused me to think of the empty hutch at Houll, and the short-lived residency of that croft's previous pet rabbit in the spring. A few minutes later I had a handful of bunny and Ander and Luca were the proud owners of 'Popcorn' 2.0...for all of six hours. Nature is raw in tooth and claw.

The provisioners of many 'raw' natural encounters themselves are departing by the day as the bonxie population on the island wanes until next spring. There was a breeding season with a sour end, with many of the chicks reaching a decent size before they started eating each other. What was it I just said about nature?!

The woodpile at the Haven, growing hydra-like since the midsummer inferno, was ceremoniously lit again and a pleasant smoky evening was had as islanders mixed with the workmen tasked with fitting and forming the new Bird Observatory for a 2025 opening. In the name of community engagement, my colleagues and I made sure we were the last to leave this social event, but not before Warden Alex spied some sparkling mareel in the waves.

A switch to southerly winds at September's very end provided a welcome arrival of birds. As much as I relish walking up Ward Hill every three days, I must remark that it is a much more pleasant experience when there is a bluethroat skipping along beside you. This Arctic cousin of the robin could have hatched in Norway, Finland or Russia before it dropped into Dronger on its way to wintering grounds south of the Sahara. With a journey of some 5000km between here and West Africa, my twice-weekly ascent of Fair Isle's peak leaves me nothing to complain about, really.

Perhaps the drudgery of June left us in a sunshine deficit which we are being repaid for now, as October so far has been relentlessly sunny. Not only that, but every birder's most anticipated month of the year kicked off with a weapons-grade bang on the Isle, with birds arriving throughout the day on the 1<sup>st</sup>; the roll call of rarities getting longer as our sunburn got worse! A brown shrike from East Asia was soon joined by a black-headed bunting from Southeast Europe, while blackcaps dripped from the bushes. A hoopoe, a bird even the most ornithologically challenged of folk can get behind, popped up in the garden of Shirva and then did a victory tour of the crofts, even garnering the name of 'Houllpoe' at one juncture... Out on north census, Assistant Warden Luke stoically suppressed his heavy head cold, with an Eastern yellow wagtail from Asia as a reward. An Arctic redpoll and an Arctic warbler (no prizes for guessing where they come from) were found, followed by a Daurian shrike from Central Asia, which reduced the Fair Isle wren population by one in the garden of Utra.

A clear night and continued warm, windless weather meant that most of these celebrity migrants were gone the following day. Any feelings of loss were soon quelled as the cohort of rare birds were to be dutifully replaced by two prominent arrivals. FIBOT alumni Georgia Platt and Danny Gornall add their pairs of eyes (and numerous other talents) to the birding body here as they both enjoy some well-earned holiday time back on in the Fair Isle fold.

And that brings me to today; the third hill caa of the year, and the lambs coming 'off the hill' while we continue to languish in a hot high-pressure system. It may only be the 3rd of the month, but I will tell myself proudly that my shorts have been on for each day of October so far. A t-shirt, too, was all that was needed in the sun, and for the occasion I chose a bright pink one, if only so Ian and Deryk knew which useless sassenach they're bellowing to from across Burrashield. I always appreciate the chance for a run around and the excuse to scream uninhibitedly at a moving wall of wool, and so it was with a broad, silly grin that I watched some 20 stick figures marching backlit against the rolling slopes of Vaasetter, as the ravens played overhead and the sheep piled into the parks. Given that I'm usually the only human on this lump of land during census, it felt like being in a very niche Lowry painting to see it so crowded. These whole-island events are a joy to witness, as well as a privilege to be part of.

Some five hours and one goldcrest-heavy north census later, my day went from good to great as a fortuitous encounter with a kindly pair of Ian/Iains saw me swagger back south with a precious golden tin of Tennent's in hand. I swigged it contentedly in the early evening with my South Light comrades, while we watched the second lanceolated warbler of the Fair Isle autumn creeping about behind the Haa. A bird from a land both riparian and



Siberian, now slithering about in the grass just metres away from Jimmy Stout's spuds. What a place! What a world!  
What a week!

Jonnie at-the-Obs'

**ISLE NOTICES:**

**Good Shepherd sailings and upcoming refit** – The Good Shepherd IV is now sailing to the winter timetable. The refit is scheduled to take place from the 23rd October until the 6th November. The Snolda is booked to cover the route during the refit period.

I would like to thank everyone who helped with sheep runs this year. There is a lot of planning of numbers, trailer and pier washing, shortbread making and very early mornings. Thanks too if your booking was curtailed or endured on another day for the sake of sheep. It's very much appreciated especially whilst operating with less crew. Thanks also to Sonny Flaws for assisting us at Grutness.

Ian, Skipper Good Shepherd IV

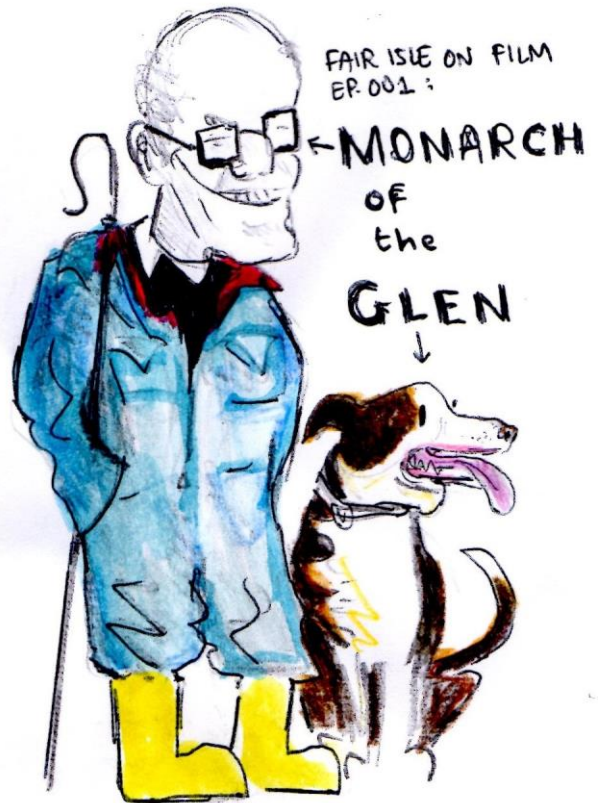
**Chapel** – this week will be at Utra, all welcome to join on Sunday at 11am.

**Harvest** – will be next weekend, Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> October. Please take any home produce to the Chapel at 2pm on Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> and all other raffle prizes etc to the Hall on Sunday afternoon.





**CAPTION COMPETITION:** Thanks to Alex for this 'flattering photo' from the cru yesterday, send any suggestions to Eileen please!!



And thanks to our relief cartoonist for this excellent drawing of two of our isle favourites!

### **Fair Isle Demonstration and Research MPA Update:**

**Date for the diaries:** On the evening of Friday the 29th of November there will be some marine research talk(s) at the hall. With confirmed speakers including Dan Harries from Heriot-Watt University and Carol Hume from NatureScot who will provide a summary of the Fair Isle Sea Cave Survey Report and its recommendations. They will be presenting remotely but there will be plenty of opportunity to ask them questions. More details coming soon...

**FIMRO equipment funding:** FIMRO have secured funding from the NatureScot Community Equipment Fund to purchase some new children and adult life jackets for the isle as well as some hard drives for storing community marine data.

**Shetland Marine Restoration Plan Feedback Survey:** UHI Shetland have released this online survey for Fair Isle and Shetland residents to share their thoughts on how we can safeguard, restore, and enhance our marine environment to help shape a community-led action plan to enhance Shetland's marine environment for the benefit of everyone. UHI Shetland are currently gathering ideas and identifying areas that could benefit from action. The goal is to ensure that our efforts are locally relevant and supported by both local evidence and the community. This survey is open until the 20th November <https://app.onlinesurveys.jisc.ac.uk/s/uhi/enhancemarine>

**Coastal Communities Network Gathering:** Katie (Fair Isle DR MPA research officer) is heading to Millport in the Isle of Cumbrae this weekend, on behalf of FIMRO to meet with various coastal community groups from around Scotland. This will be a great opportunity to learn about what other groups are doing in terms of marine monitoring, conservation and restoration.

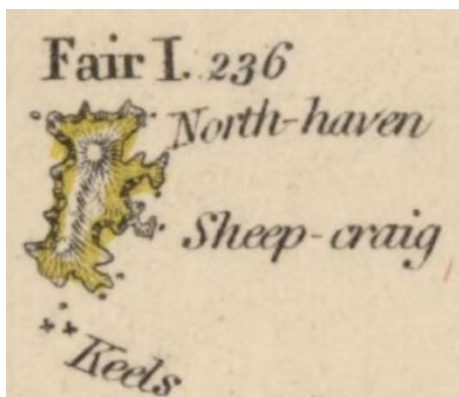
**Katie Cubbon | Research Officer – Fair Isle Demonstration and Research MPA**



## The Professor, the Poet, and the Place-Name Folk



We, Judith Jesch, Charlotte Eichler, Matthew Blake and Corinna Rayner from the University of Nottingham, arrived in Fair Isle on the 14<sup>th</sup> September for a week-long visit, staying at the Haa with Tommy who made us very welcome. We came to Fair Isle to talk with folk about Judith's new translation of the Saga of the Earls of Orkney (Orkneyinga saga)



and to look at island places and their names. We've been writing [blogs](#) for places mentioned in the saga as well as place-names on the three islands of Papay, North Ronaldsay, and Fair Isle. We're yet to write a blog about Fair Isle... we wanted to visit first! So watch this space!

We were lucky enough to meet and talk to many of you about our project at the two events we held in the Community Hall (special thanks to Eileen for the delicious cakes!), and through the oral history recordings we made with Neil, Anne and Stewart, to capture the pronunciations of the place-

names and the stories associated with those names.



The information we've been gathering will help us understand the place-names we're researching and the pronunciations will go onto the database we're building for the project. We'll be producing a hardcopy version of the Fair Isle place-names database entries to put in the George Waterson Memorial Centre towards the end of the project, plus a PDF version to put on the FIMETI website.



### Other things we got up to...

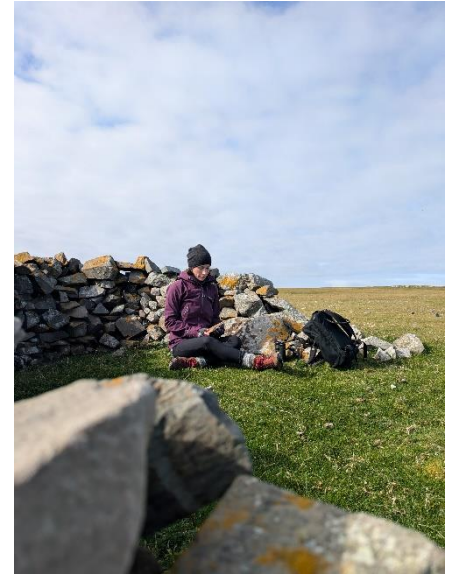


All three of us went on walks with Pat and Neil looking at the archaeological sites on the island, and with Jonnie to observe the Tennessee warbler and to generally prowl around the south end looking at flora and fauna... we were lucky enough to see an oyster plant still in bloom!

Charlotte, the project poet, came to get a sense of the isle to inspire her creative response and could be seen most days scaling the heights

of the isle, taking photos and sitting in sheltered spots making notes.

Corinna spent an hour or so one morning with Nick and Elizabeth inspecting the contents of their moth trap, and was given directions to the least willow on Ward Hill... so spent the rest of the morning heading up there to find it... which she did, thanks to Nick's excellent description of its location!



Anne gave us a very interesting tour of the George Waterson Memorial Centre and Museum too, and Marie showed us her studio at Taft where two of her visiting students were working on ponchos! Everyone made us feel very welcome!

### What will happen next?

We'd like to share some of our thoughts on Fair Isle place-names over the coming months – which we'll do via the Fair Isle Times, and we'd love to have your feedback on these!



If you'd like to get in touch with us in the meantime:

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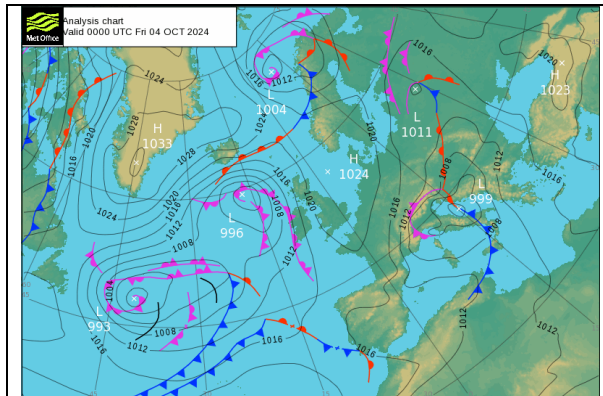
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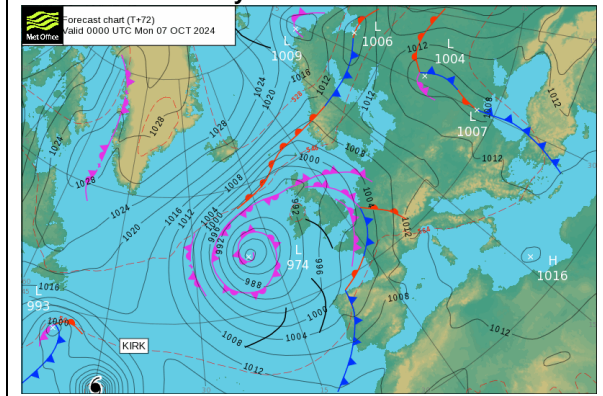
Find out what we're up to on our blog <https://blogs.nottingham.ac.uk/ragnaislands/>



## FAIR ISLE WEATHER FORECAST



Analysis Chart 0000 UTC  
Friday 4<sup>th</sup> October 2024



Forecast Chart 0000 UTC  
Monday 7<sup>th</sup> October 2024

### GENERAL SITUATION Friday 4<sup>th</sup> October 2024

The anticyclone of recent days has now slipped southeast across the North Sea a large area of low pressure west of the British Isles now the dominant feature. The southerly airflow will freshen today as a front approaches from the west bringing an unsettled weekend as the low centre edges closer. Current forecasts suggest this slow-moving depression gradually fills early next week only for the next Atlantic depression containing remnants of ex-hurricane Kirk (on Monday's chart), swings in across the UK later in the week.

### OUTLOOK FOR THE WEEKEND

Temperatures 12° or 13° during the day, around 10° overnight.

**FRIDAY 4<sup>th</sup>:** Rather cloudy with the chance of the odd spot of rain but overall mostly dry. F5 SSE to S winds. Mainly dry though cloudy overnight. Breezy.

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

**SATURDAY 5<sup>th</sup>:** Cloudy with chance of patchy rain this more likely and persistent late afternoon early evening. F5 SSW wind. Remaining cloudy but a mostly dry overnight.

**Sea State:** Moderate with a 2 metre S wind swell.

**SUNDAY 6<sup>th</sup>:** Cloudy but mainly dry with light rain for the evening persisting overnight. F5 SE wind occasionally F6 later ESE. **Sea State:** Moderate or rough with a 2 to 3 metre SE wind swell.

### FORECAST FOR NEXT WEEK

Temperatures at first around 12° by day, 8° or 9° overnight but soon turning cooler with 9° by day 6° overnight.

**MONDAY 7<sup>th</sup>:** Overcast with rain becoming heavier for a time through the afternoon. Strengthening ENE to NE winds. **Sea State:** Mostly rough with a 3 metre ESE wind swell. Northeast of Shetland 3 to 4 metre .

**TUESDAY 8<sup>th</sup>:** Overnight rain clearing then mainly dry though cloudy. Fresh to strong NE winds.

**Sea State:** Mostly moderate with a 2 metre N wind swell. West of Shetland rough with a 3 to 4 metre N wind swell.

**WEDNESDAY 9<sup>th</sup> – SUNDAY 13<sup>th</sup>:** Wednesday cloudy with chance of patchy drizzle and strong NE wind. Remainder of the week and weekend cool and cloudy with rain or drizzle and strong NNE winds tending N.

**Sea State Wednesday:** Rough with a 3 to 4 metre N wind swell building very rough at 5 metre.

**Dave Wheeler**

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**No Maavi this week as he has a sore wing, hopefully he will learn to flap with his *left* wing before long!**

**Next week will be the final edition before the October break, so do send in anything to share ASAP, especially caption competition suggestion!!**

**Eileen & Hollie**