

FAIR ISLE TIMES

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Our Whirlwind School Trip

On Tuesday, we were very excited to fly out for our school trip. We had an action packed 24 hours with visits to Aa Fired Up and Shetland Museum which opened especially for us. In the evening, we thoroughly enjoyed the Pantomime at the Garrison Theatre, starring Grace. Swimming lessons and a visit to the very welcoming Sandwick Junior High were squeezed in too. It was lovely to see Gillian, Harris, Heidi, Freyja and Ythan while we were out. A massive thank you to Hollie for organising such a great trip. Here are some of our highlights. Lucy and the boys



One of my highlights was going swimming. Swimming will always be a highlight because I have improved and I can breathe to the side in my front crawl. Another highlight was going to Sandwick Junior High. When I caught a glimpse of the good sized pitch, I wondered if I would be able to play on it. At break, I played football for most of break and the score was 1-0 to us. YAY! I scored the only goal and I felt over the moon!

Luca (9)



One of my highlights was swimming but I was nervous about putting my face into the water. Another highlight was the Pantomime, "Babes in the Woods." Grace was exquisite! Grace took me onto the stage to play air guitar. I heard lots of cheering.

Ander (6)

Call for used postage stamps!! Clan can raise funding from used postage stamps. I would be delighted if you could leave any either at the internal mail point in the shop porch or deliver them to Busta. I will send any collected down to Clan at the end of January 2025. Thank you in anticipation

Busta Anne



Chapel – this week all welcome to join at Utra at 11am for 2nd Sunday in Advent

Good Shepherd festive sailings – There will be a sailing on Tuesday 17th December as per the schedule. The next trip is scheduled for Monday the 23rd December, however if the forecast for the 23rd is poor, we would look to sail sooner. The following sailing is scheduled for Monday 30th December. As ever, all these dates are very much weather dependant, updates will be available nearer the time on the voicemail – 01595 743978. Thanks, Ian – Good Shepherd IV Skipper

Oral History Session - our final session before Christmas will be held on Friday 13th December at 3pm in the committee room at the Hall. The topic this time will be lighthouses and social activities. All are welcome and there will be coffee and cake. Thank you to everyone who has joined in with these sessions so far and we'll start meeting again in the New Year. Rachel, Barkland.

Hall Subscriptions – thank you to all who have paid your Hall subs so quickly, for any payments still outstanding, please either transfer to the Hall account as per Eileen's recent email, or you can pay at the Shop in cash. Thanks, Hall Committee.

Christmas tree party – will be on **28th December 2024 at 5.30pm**. There will be the much anticipated Fair Isle panto, followed by dinner, games, dancing. Entry is £10 per person and you can now pay at the shop, where there is a sign-up sheet and box for payments.

Festive Sing-a-long! - we're going to have an informal evening of festive singing from 7-8pm on **Friday 20th December** in the committee room at the Hall. Everyone is invited and we'll be singing carols as well as more modern Christmas songs. Wear your best (or worst!) Christmas sweater and feel free to bring a drink/nibbles! Please let me know in advance if you have any particular requests for carols/songs. Rachel, Barkland.

The Fair Isle Christmas trees arrived on the Good Shepherd this week, the same time as the large tree (*photo right*) arrived in London. The large tree in Trafalgar Square is a gift from Oslo to London each year, this being the 77th year of the tradition. John, Utra



Thanks for this week's item go to Matthew and Corrina from the Ragna's Islands project, who visited the isle this summer.

'Plenty of poultry': Fair Isle's bird place-names

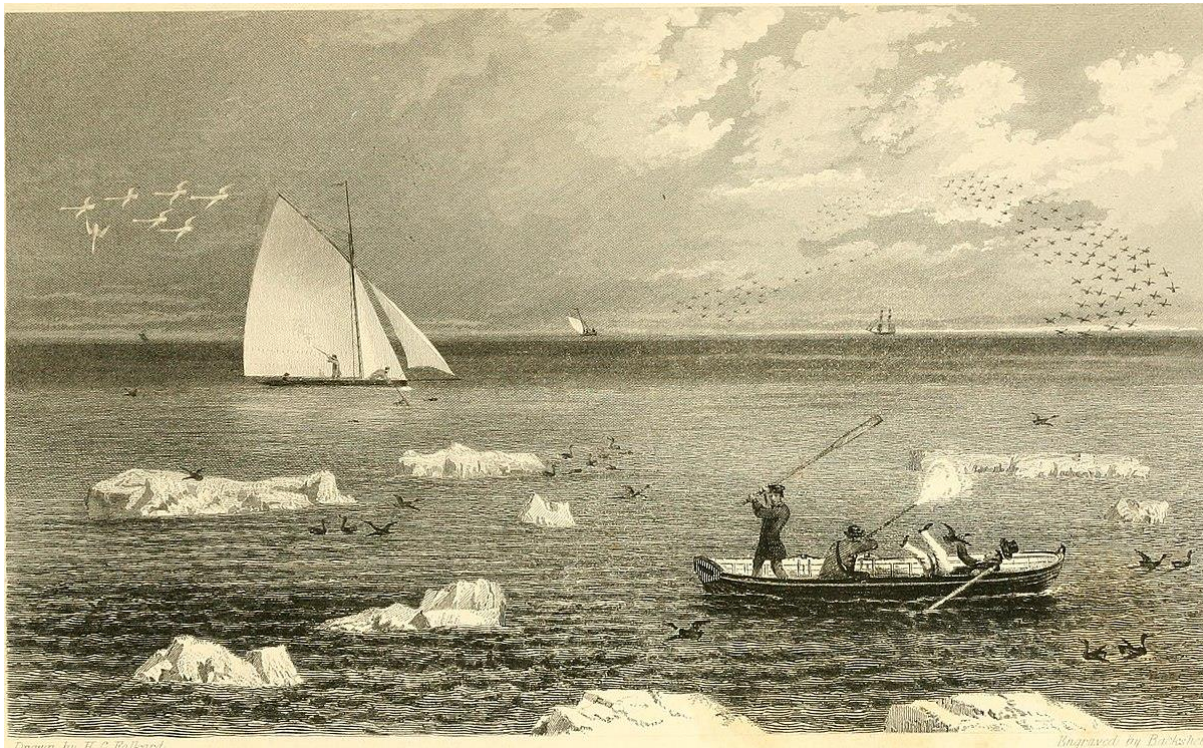


Image from *The wild-fowler - a treatise on ancient and modern wild-fowling, historical and practical* (1864), WikiCommons.

Our [Ragna's Islands](#) project is focused on the place-names of *The Saga of the Earls of Orkney* (otherwise known as *Orkneyinga saga*) and the three islands of Papa Westray (Papay), North Ronaldsay, and Fair Isle. One of the things that links these islands is birds. Papay has a very active birding community and of course both North Ronaldsay and Fair Isle are blest with their own bird observatories.

Birding may have a longer history than we might imagine. We have elsewhere discussed [The First Bird-Watcher on North Ronaldsay](#) in a passage from the saga that tells of Turf-Einarr scouring the horizon and saying:

‘I do not know what it is I see in North Ronaldsay, sometimes it lifts itself up, and sometimes it lays itself down. It is either a bird or a person, and I’ll go to it’ (chapter 8).

We have collected a number of place-names referring to birds occurring in both Papay (8) and North Ronaldsay (5), and it is possible that some of these may have been coined in the Norse period. Nearly all are coastal names and refer to shags and cormorants, although there are references to doves, ravens and guillemots. What are we to make of these names? At first glance they seem to be simple descriptions of features that stand out in the landscape where these birds perhaps abound. It is easy to see how a particular place with lots of shags or cormorants could attract such a descriptor.

When we get to Fair Isle the number of bird place-names dramatically increases with well over 20 names noted so far. They range from terms that just imply a sort of ‘bird place’ such as Fugli Stack (ON *fugl* ‘a bird’) to more specific examples (see below). Fugli Stack is actually a slightly perplexing name given that in *The Coastal Names of Fair Isle* Jerry Eunson says of it that it ‘is absolutely sheer on the inside and is so steep that the birds do not attempt to nest here’. Of course, the physical nature of the stack may have changed since it was named, or it may simply be that birds perch on the top in great numbers. **Can anyone help us understand this name better? Do you know how birds use the stack?**

Elsewhere, the Skarf Cletts (ON *skarfr* ‘cormorant, shag’ plus ON *klettr* ‘cliff-face, crag, bluff, escarpment’), Skarf Stack, Skarf’s Stane, and Scarf Skerry names give us a sense that these birds dominated the naming landscape in these places. But other birds do get a look in. For example, the similarly named Tystie Stane (black guillemot), Kro Stack (crow) and Norie Stack (puffin) suggest that these were significant landscape features adorned with a particularly dominant, visible, or noteworthy species.

We also see places with different generics (the second elements) in Scarfie Geo, Doo’s Hole and Doo Geo (rock dove). North and South Ramnigeo (ON *hramna-gjá* ‘raven-geo’) are further examples. The ‘geo’ and ‘hole’ generics perhaps hint at something else going on in these names. That is, it is not just prominent features that are being given bird-names and it may not simply be a case of a big rock full of noisy birds that gives the place a name; it might be the significance of the bird itself that is name-worthy, and this is what we should take a closer look at.

Two place-names that offer us a different perspective on the bird-names are Da Bolie o’ Kuppan (ON *bøli* ‘lair’ or *ból* ‘lair, den, sty’ (both of which have the sense of being for animals or birds) with ON *koppr* ‘recess’), and Ster Bolie (perhaps from ON *stórr* ‘big’ plus *bøli* or *bóli*). Jakobsen adds a further nuance, that the term *bøli* indicates a ‘breeding-place for sea-fowl’ (Jakobsen: 1985, 91). Here, then, it is the nests that are of interest to those that gave the place its name, and we are reminded of the importance of birds’ eggs to inhabitants of the island. Indeed, Eunson tells us that:

‘Formerly, when the islanders depended on birds’ eggs to supplement their meagre diet, the local men got into the bolie by tying two masts together and propped them up against the cliff from a

small ledge at the sea. They then climbed the masts on to the ledges where the birds were nesting' (Eunson: 2007, 38).

Eunson also remarks that at Shaldi Cliff, on the south side of the island, a large 'bolie' can be seen. So far, however, we haven't found a place-name associated with this feature incorporating *bøli*. **Does anyone know of one? Or any of any other such features on the island?**



Use TBC - Shetland Museum <https://www.shetlandmuseumandarchives.org.uk/blog/why-hunt-fowl>

An interesting comment by Emma Perring informs us that:

'Plenty of poultry' meant a lot of shags were fishing on the sandbanks: a good sign since the birds and therefore, crucially, the haddock would be feeding on the sand-eels, Herring gulls sitting on Meoness, Hoini, and Bunes in early May indicated the arrival of haddock on Da Grund, Keelin Grund and Midsaithen respectively. All those who went to sea knew the fishing grounds and hands. Comprehensive knowledge of these, and even some of the landmarks they related to, is no longer within the isles memory' (Perring: 2004?, 26–27).

Do you know of other traditions of this type? Your observations of bird behaviour may help us to understand what opportunities there were for catching fish in different locations, and it seems likely that this knowledge must have played a part in the naming of places across the island.

We know, from studies elsewhere, that these island birds were taken at the adult, chick, and egg stages and were a very valuable resource, not only for their meat and feathers, but also for their fat which used as fuel (Petersen: 2005, 195).

We have a nice description of the importance of the harvesting feathers in Fair Isle from 1711:

‘... here Multitudes of Sea Fowles, which are not a little beneficial to the islanders by reason of their Feathers, which is one chief Commoditie of this place, but they buy them dear, with their hazard always, and sometime the loss of their Lives, for they Nest in high Rocks, more then a 100 Fathom depth from the Surface of the Earth, as many Fathoms high from the Sea, they goe down in Ropes to catch them, and sometimes in stead of catching the prey, they sometime catch a flip and are either crushed on the Rocks, or drowned in the depth. An excellent Falcon nests and hatcheth in this place, whose young ones are taken with the same difficultie and hazard, that the Sea Fowles are caught’ (Monteith: 1845, 51–52.).

The same accounts says that Sheep Craig was accessible some forty or fifty years prior to writing in 1711... it also says that all the inhabitants of Fair Isle were bald, make of that as you will!

We need your help!

Please do get in touch with any information you may have, no matter how small the detail may seem, about the names and examples given above, or anything else you might be relevant. We would love to hear stories of the taking of eggs and birds, and also to learn more about the climbing traditions of Fair Isle. It all adds up to create a fuller picture of life and naming-practises in Fair Isle.

Matthew Blake and Corinna Rayner

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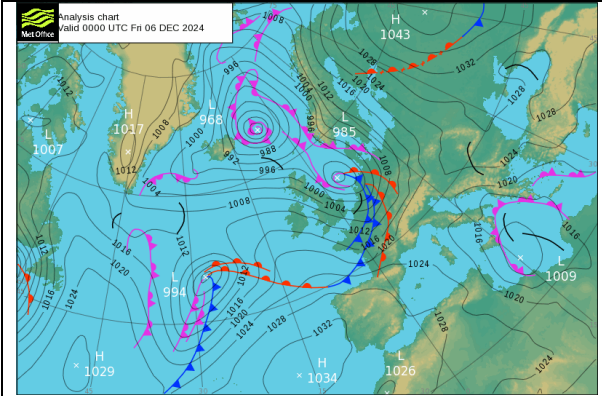
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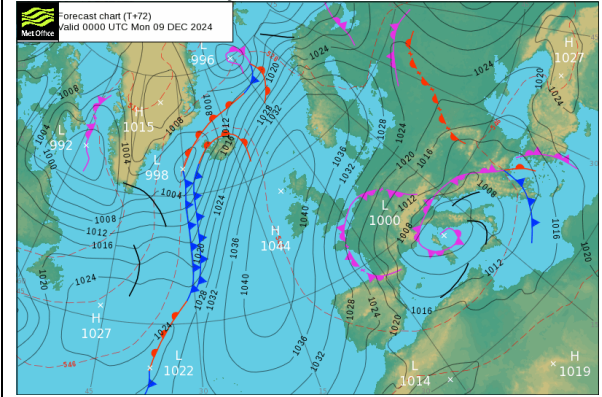


Last week we mentioned the recent visit of Shetland table tennis coach, Joan Smith, to the Isle. Not only did Joan spend the day giving the school bairns a fantastic day of coaching, she also held an open session for big kids too! Thanks to Pat for the great photo of all who took part. We hope to tempt Joan back for another visit soon!

FAIR ISLE WEATHER FORECAST



**Analysis Chart 0000 UTC
Friday 6th December 2024**



**Forecast Chart 0000 UTC
Monday 9th December 2024**

GENERAL SITUATION Friday 6th December 2024

Our fresh westerly airflow will ease today falling light overnight. Saturday will bring a strengthening easterly, backing north-easterly as Storm Darragh tracks southeast across the southern half of the UK. Overnight as the filling low centre moves away pressure building to the west will result in a cold northerly airflow for Sunday. High pressure moving east across the UK means a settled start to next week, though with a freshening milder south-westerly for the Northern Isles. From midweek, as the high weakens fronts approach northwest Scotland in a gradually freshening and cooler west-southwest airflow, possibly becoming a colder north-westerly for the weekend.

OUTLOOK FOR THE WEEKEND Temperature 7° Friday, 2° overnight. 6° and 2° for the weekend.

FRIDAY 6th: Bright with sunny spells and scattered showers. F5-6 W winds easing F5 WSW. A mainly dry night with clear spells and light winds so an early grass frost is likely though this lifting as cloud thickens later. **Sea State:** Rough or very rough in west and Fair Isle Channel at 4 to 5 metre W. Moderate or rough in the east at 2 to 3 metre W. **SATURDAY 7th:** Rather cloudy with showers or longer spells rain, Drier and brighter by the afternoon but feeling chilly as F5 NNW winds strengthen N F6-7, possibly gale F8. Wintry showers overnight. **Sea State:** Mostly moderate or rough at 2 to 3 metre NW. **SUNDAY 8th:** Mainly dry

with sunny spells. The chilly F7 N wind easing F5 falling light overnight with risk of a frost by dawn. **State:** Mostly rough or very rough at 4 to 5 metre NW.

FORECAST FOR NEXT WEEK 7° by day on Monday and 6° overnight. Then milder at 9° or 10° by day, around 7° overnight. Cooler later. **MONDAY 9th:** Dry, bright and milder with a freshening SW to WSW wind. **Sea State:** Mostly moderate at 2 metre NW. **TUESDAY 10th:** Cloudy, mainly dry with a fresh WSW wind. **Sea State:** Building rough at 3 metre W. **WEDNESDAY 11th – SUNDAY 15th:** Wednesday cloudy though mainly dry start with a fresh W wind veering N and easing. Chance of rain or drizzle patches later. Thursday mainly dry with freshening WSW winds, patchy rain possible Friday followed by cooler north-westerly winds for the weekend. **Sea State Wednesday:** Moderate or rough in west and Fair Isle Channel at 2 to 3 metre W. Moderate or rough in the east at 2 to 3 metre W.

Dave Wheeler

