

# FAIR ISLE TIMES

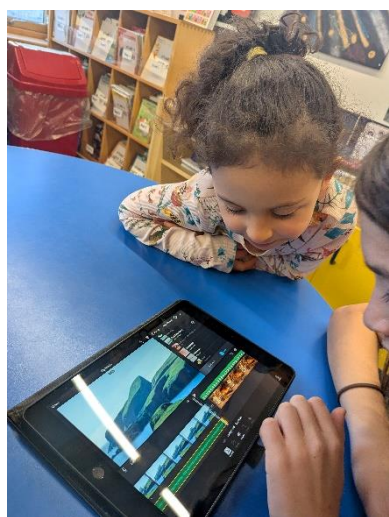
VOLUME 48 ISSUE 30

PUBLISHED SINCE 1978

21st NOVEMBER 2025

## Fair Isle Primary School News

**Guess what? It's panto season (oh yes, it is!)**



The children have been working their absolute socks off in school rehearsing, learning lines and beginning to create a very creative backdrop with Fiona. We would love for you to come and watch us perform.

This week, we used our own green screen to produce a "Panto Teaser". We used excellent persuasive and advertisement features in our writing and then collaborated using technology skills to make a movie! Please click on this link to watch us tell you why we think you should come to the show.

[Panto Trailer](#)



*The children of Fair Isle Primary School  
present to you...*



**Fair Isle Hall**  
**Thursday 18<sup>th</sup>**  
**December 2025**  
**6:00pm**

*A tale of bravery, courage, defeating evil  
and, um, sheep.*





**Dis week dat's awa' begins**, as every morning does, by exercising the dogs Fly and Riki before breakfast and hoping to catch the sun's first rays as they burst from the clouds over Meoness. Since the Bird Observatory closed for the season, we have been languishing in the south of the isle, housesitting for Marie at Taft while she attends various fire training, networking events and social calls. We are lucky this morning and the sun does indeed shine on my charges and me, and I appreciate the fresh air and vitamin D after quite a late and liquid Friday night dinner with Diane from Skerryholm. It's shaping out to be a beautiful day, but maybe a flock of 13 crows caterwauling on the Chapel roof are a noisy omen for the week ahead...isn't the collective noun a 'murder' of crows? Perhaps I'll ask Ann Cleeves...

Eileen from Houll requests a hand at Pund to gather in their share of the class of 2025 hill lambs – Riki and I are happy to oblige. The pooch moves with liquid agility and the high rolling shoulders of a big cat, dancing around the short-legged lambs with ease. He's been mostly taught in Polish, however, so many of the commands I attempt fall short, with the same two ubiquitous words in my arsenal as learnt by all Fair Islanders since South Light's Konrad took charge of his companion. *"Chodź tu, Riki!"*

Even during these bright, golden winter days the light starts to fade and too soon it's in darkness that I find myself burning cardboard waste in a barrel at the Haven, the dogs playfighting on the beach in the gloom. A nice walk home to Taft follows, and leftover lamb ribs for dinner. An invite to Houll is gladly accepted and a few hours spent in the usual silliness and exuberance that befits the abode is just the tonic to end a pleasant Saturday.



The weather becomes worse as the week goes on, with the Tingwall runway icier than Christmas dinner at the Mountbatten-Windsors. Showers of hail and sleet become frequent, coating the windows of the bothy at Pund (my current workstation) as the wind picks up.

No flights reach the Isle, the *Good Shepherd IV* does not run, and as a result our housesitting duties are required for another week.

Perhaps those crows were an augury. Alex takes the opportunity to head out in the dark to dazzle birds for ringing – an activity more suited to wild, windy nights apparently, and catches a few Snipe



and Woodcock. He targets the Greylag Geese too, now stationed in Fair Isle for the winter and readily encountered grazing alongside the sheep in the day, sometimes accompanied by darker-necked, paler-backed Pink-footed Geese from Iceland and peerie Barnacle Geese in white, black and blue, swapping Svalbard for Shetland. If you happen to miss the geese in the day, evidence of their presence can be found plastered all over the road. They do say a vegetarian diet keeps you regular.

Snow Buntings from Arctic climates appear in a small flock around the Puffinn and are disturbed by the dogs on our morning constitutional. Water Rails, usually secretive scurrying birds of the isle's ditches and mires, become bolder in their search for food and we encounter a group of four together at Barkland – a temporary territorial truce while the ground hardens with cold. Back at Pund the bothy log-burner keeps Diane and me warm and productive, knitting Fair Isle ponchos and jumpers without our fingers freezing.



Banished outside after rolling in something smelly, Riki enthusiastically licks salt off the windows. It's something to do, I suppose. A message from Grace Parnaby of Shirva alerts all to two bull Orca off South Light so we pop down before breaking for lunch. The sea is choppy and the wind biting and it's clear that the moment to search for a pair of distant black fins among the waves has probably passed. We return to the grindstone. During the evening dark I don the cosy Taft flotation suit and shuffle across the parks, with sleet falling sideways, to buy some eggs at Burkle where I disturb Fyntan Shaw from the Scotland v Denmark qualifier.



An early bicycle kick goal from Scotland had my WhatsApp chats going wild, so I shuffle back home where Alex has the game on in the background while chipping away at winter Warden work. If it wasn't for the whistling wind, I expect even the deafest of croft dogs could have heard the shrieks from the various island homesteads at the end of play, when extra time goals saw Scotland finally secure a spot in the World Cup for the first time in 28 years.

The night's snow lies thinly on the ground come midweek morning, with Ward Hill looking delightfully dusted against the dark grey skies. Diane and I move the Pund ewes to pastures new for better grazing during this cold snap and they're soon scattered, heads down and happy in the greener silage park. I manage to get another jumper off the needles and into a bag for a lucky finisher and walk the dogs in the dark. To repurpose a phrase from Ross Thomson, Fly and Ricki are a *curious old couple* and show the duality of the Fair Isle collie community. One is short-legged and shaggy like an arctic fox; the other a lanky shadow on stilts. Riki opens door handles and wriggles out of his collar if leashed; Fly can't make it over a low fence and tangles her own lead around tufts of grass. Where Fly trots along at my heel, her fluffy tail whisking, Riki is miles away,

undetected against the blackness – only appearing as a pair of eerie green eyes flashing in a scan of the torch. In the evening, I check job listings online for any chance of remote work. Director General of the BBC has an attractive salary, but I fear the hours may interfere with knitting.



Thursday is brighter, breezy but pleasant and the sun breaks out often. I try some beachcombing at Muckle Uri Geo, where some blue By-the-wind Sailors had washed up recently. Despite detailed briefing, the dogs fail to produce me a wave-tossed sea bean from the Caribbean, focussing instead on a few dead seabirds and my jealousy of Gina Scanlan and Glen Tyler's summertime find intensifies

The day is spent mostly inside of doors with leek and potato soup on the stove and laptop and diary open to complete planning the winter holidays. I haven't left the northern isles since January and as my friends down south insist on continuing to get married, purchase houses and produce babies, there's a fair number of faces to see and drinks to be enjoyed, all of which takes some organisation. I'm grateful for our 21<sup>st</sup> century ability to stay in touch, not only for the ability to feel closer to friends and family but also to stay informed and ahead of this weather.

Marooned off-isle, Andy at Upper Stoneybrek texts his uncertainty towards the hoped-for Friday plane. Konrad messages the plan for the next Good Shepherd sailing. I wish Hollie Shaw a happy birthday, and she responds by sending the wrong emoji.

The dogs and I take a lengthy afternoon walk to the Observatory as the light wanes, and check that all is well in the building. On our return leg we bump into Jonathan from the Schoolhouse giving his running shoes their daily miles, and we try to chat without blinding each other with head-torches. It's not even 5pm.

An overnight fault at the generators threatened a power outage today but thanks to the work of FIEC, the lights have been kept on and the croft windows twinkle us back home.

That brings us to Friday morning and the house still smells of last night's lentil dahl. The dogs are asleep on the kitchen floor and outside Fyn is on his rounds, feeding the Burkle rams. There's a streak of sun in the pearly sky and a cold wind persists but now it comes from the south-west, not the north. The Chapel roof is clear of crows, and I hear there's a plane on the way...

**Jonnie**

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## Is this a holiday?

When I'm travelling away I always try to make the most of being on the mainland, but I think this time I really outdid myself!

Last week Fiona and I were in Shetland to get our "ticket to ride" with the Fire Service. That means we can be in charge if there is an incident and hopefully direct the operations. I must admit it was way out of my depth but both Fiona and the instructors helped me get my head around it all and I passed. I will keep touching wood for no incidents while Fiona is away and in general no incidents at all.

A few weeks ago I received an invitation from the King's Foundation to attend a mentoring event in London. It felt a long way to go just for a brunch but as I was already in Shetland for the Fire training and they were paying for the trip it felt fitting to try and go. This is the kind of opportunity that does not come around very often I would say.



In between, a designer I am working with invited me to attend the Festival of Fashion in Braemar, the weekend between my training and the event in London. The prospect of a weekend in the Highlands instead of a weekend in London was really exciting and I attended the different talks in Braemar that weekend which were really interesting. I drove from Aberdeen to Braemar and it was so nice to see the autumn. It felt like I had not seen it in eight years. I had forgotten how beautiful forests of orange and yellow leaves are. Even though we do get an autumn in Shetland we do not really see those colours. It really felt like being on holiday.

On Monday I travelled from Aberdeen to London and it was nice that my hotel had a sushi place and a crepe place just next door. I had knitted myself a Fair Isle jumper to wear the next day to match a cord outfit I had bought online and had to pick up in the shop that day. It was a gamble whether the colour in the picture was going to work with what I had knitted but I was relieved to see it did work pretty well.

On Tuesday I attended the brunch where we received really good advice from CEOs, heads of departments and buyers who are at the top of their fields. The event was hosted in the Broadwick Soho Hotel which, just for the building alone, was absolutely magnificent. I had never been in such a beautiful place. In the afternoon, infused by all the interesting conversations, I spent hours on my computer refining my business proposal and dreaming big.

On Wednesday I travelled from London to Whitby. By “coincidence” Lee Coutts and Ian Best were visiting the shipyard to see the start of the Good Shepherd V and offered me to join them. It seemed a great opportunity to be nosy and also to show how passionate the islanders are about the new ferry. I wanted to make sure the builders knew how much we are looking forward to it and how important it is for the island. It was so impressive seeing how much work has gone into it and how thoughtful the design is.

I never thought I would say this but I am actually looking forward to my first trip on it. It looks like the build is in very capable hands, in a family run business with sympathetic staff.

Following the visit, Ian gave Lee and myself a lift to Newcastle train station from where I took a train to Bristol to spend the weekend before getting back to Shetland on Monday.



I was hoping to fit airport fire training in Sumburgh before getting back to the island but that might be a bit too ambitious, I just don't like the thought of having to leave the island again before Christmas.

I will definitely need a holiday after this. Though I should note this is the first time I have been away and knitting is still happening in the Bothy, so it is really great to have Jonnie and Diane making so much progress without me even needing to be there. I am so happy that after years of trying to convince anyone I meet to knit with me I have finally succeeded for the first time!

Marie, Taft

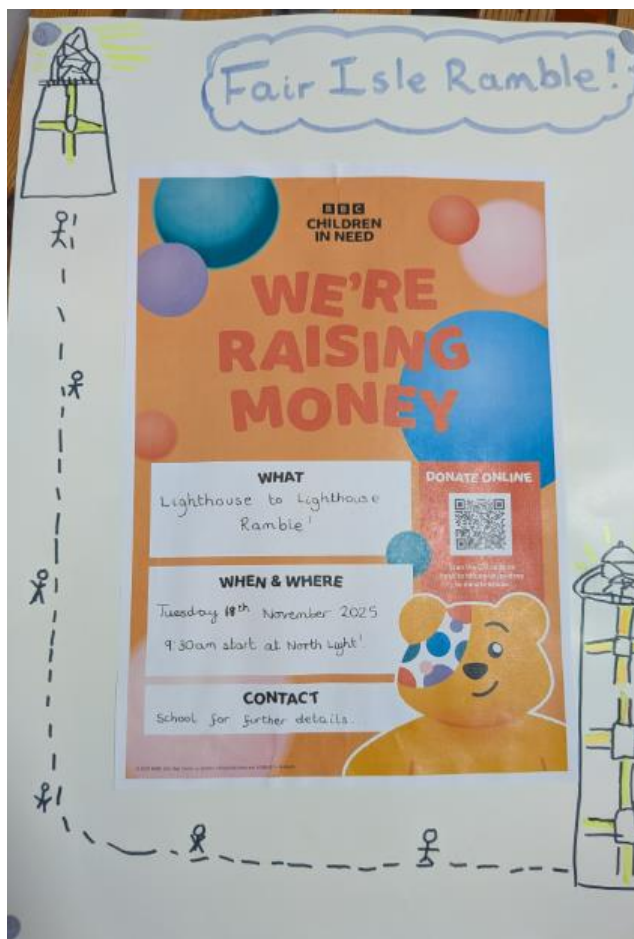
***If Marie's week wasn't busy enough, F I Times reporters understand that upon seeing the icy forecast for Tingwall Airport, Marie made the excellent decision to head to see family in Switzerland rather than being stuck in Lerwick for a while. Good choice Marie and bon retour for next week!***





On Tuesday, we will be having our postponed Children in Need fundraiser. We will be walking ALL the way from the North to the South Lighthouse to raise money for this worthy cause. Donations will be gratefully received to help us walk extra speedily!

There will then be a fundraising coffee afternoon in the Hall from 2pm – 3pm with homebakes, so please come along to enjoy a nice afternoon and help us raise plenty of for this amazing cause



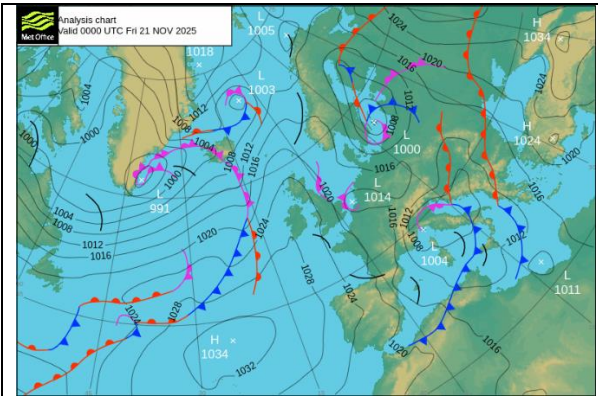
Let's get rambling...

**Chapel** – this Sunday at 11am, Dave will be leading the service and all are very welcome to join.

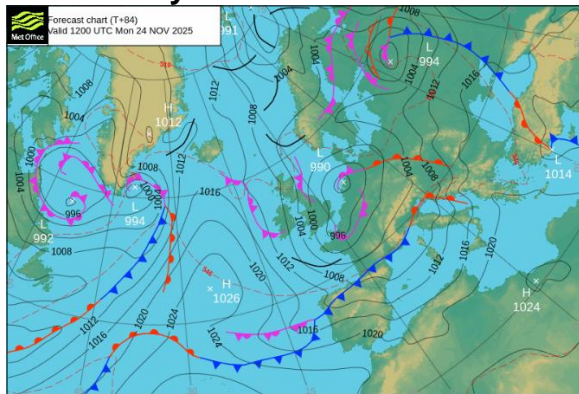
**Stamps** – Anne will be collecting stamps to raise funds for CLAN house in Aberdeen this year, so please keep any stamps from your mail and Anne will collect after Christmas.

**Nurse cover** – no nurse in the isle this weekend, Dave is due back on Monday. If you require medical assistance over the weekend please call NHS 111 or 999 in case of an emergency.

## FAIR ISLE WEATHER FORECAST



**Analysis Chart 0000 UTC  
Friday 21<sup>st</sup> November 2025**



**Forecast Chart 1200 UTC  
Monday 24<sup>th</sup> November 2025**

### GENERAL SITUATION

**Friday 21<sup>st</sup> November 2025**

During the next 12 hours an occluded front will clear east across northern Scotland leaving northeast Scotland in a slack south-west to westerly airflow. During the weekend a depression slipping southeast across southern parts of the UK brings a light easterly for Sunday and a fresher northerly by Monday. This then backs south-westerly by Tuesday as a ridge of high pressure moves east over Scotland. This then strengthens on Wednesday as a large depression south of Iceland drives Atlantic fronts eastwards bringing a windy, unsettled end to next week – possibly followed by colder north-westerlies by the weekend.

### OUTLOOK FOR THE WEEKEND

Temperatures 7° or 8° by day, 6° or 7° overnight.

**FRIDAY 21<sup>st</sup>:** A dull wet end to the day with a cold-feeling F5 SSW wind. The cloud and rain will clear for a time overnight but further rain will spread east before the dawn. **Sea State:** Moderate or rough at SSW 2 to 3 metre.

**SATURDAY 22<sup>nd</sup>:** A cloudy start with outbreaks of rain. This will soon clear to leave a brighter, drier day with an occasional shower and a F4 W breeze. **Sea State:** Mostly moderate at SW 2 metre. East of Shetland slight at S 1 metre.

**SUNDAY 23<sup>rd</sup>:** A mostly cloudy day with patchy rain or showers though some drier brighter spells may occur. F4 E winds. **Sea State:** Mostly moderate at SW 2 metre. East of Shetland slight at S 1 metre.

### FORECAST FOR NEXT WEEK

Temperature around 8° or 9° by day, 6° or 7° overnight. Possibly colder later.

**MONDAY 24<sup>th</sup>:** A cloudy day with some early showers then mainly dry with sunny spells. Moderate occasionally fresh W winds. **Sea State:** Mostly moderate at W 2 metre. East of Shetland slight to moderate at N 1 to 2 metre.

**TUESDAY 25<sup>th</sup>:** Mainly dry with brighter spells and moderate occasionally fresh N winds. **Sea State:** Mostly moderate at W 2 metre. East of Shetland moderate at NE 2 metre.

**WEDNESDAY 26<sup>th</sup> – SUNDAY 30<sup>th</sup>:** Wednesday cloudy with rain and strong SSW winds. Thursday drier and brighter though still a fresh or strong SW wind. Friday and the weekend perhaps colder with showers as winds turn NW. **Sea State Wednesday:** Mostly rough at SW 3 metre.

**Dave Wheeler**