

FAIR ISLE TIMES

VOLUME 49 ISSUE 20

PUBLISHED SINCE 1978

26th JUNE 2026

Fair Isle Primary School News

This week, we were very fortunate as Joan Lennon, resident writer staying at Lower Leogh, kindly volunteered to join us in school for a fascinating session on “Riddle Poems”. We were very imaginative and thought about what the world would look like from an animal’s perspective. With Joan helping us unleash our creativity using the five senses, we wrote our own Riddle Poems based on creatures found in Fair Isle. Can you guess what they are? Joan even insisted Jonathan wrote one too. The answers are at the bottom of the Fair Isle Times in an upside-down box.

We loved hearing about the books she had written and are delighted to have some in our library here too. If you would like to discover more about her works, we heartily encourage you to visit her website: [Joan Lennon – Part Thistle, Part Maple Leaf](#)

Thank you for visiting us, Joan!

Who am I? (Ander – 8)

I can see giant hideouts, little gaps, lots of big feet and big bits of food.
I can smell almost nothing.

I can taste little bits of wood when I am digging.

I can feel people picking me up.

I can hear the noise of footsteps getting closer.

Who am I?

Who am I? (Luca – 11)

I can see my home, my mate and our son.

I can smell my tea and the smell of my home and the sea air.

I can taste the fish I caught and the annoying bit of fluff on it.

I can feel my body temperature and my son getting excited with the bit of fish he was eating.

I can hear the sound of birds above me.

Who am I?

Who am I? (Khalicee – 6)

I can see big giants, predators coming this way, others wanting to marry and have babies of their own.



I can smell berries underneath the leaves, the sweet air, my home with my babies inside.
I can taste delicious sweet berries and grubs and sweet carrots from somebody's garden and sweet grass from the rain drops.
I can feel little stones as I hop past, the rain falling on my ears, snow that makes me scamper home.
I can hear the rain stop and the sun begin, baby bird eggs hatching, people walking by wanting to shoot me.
Who am I?

Who am I? (Jonathan – 712)

I can see bright colours beside me and galloping white horses below me.
I can smell the salt as it coats the cliffs.
I can taste the remnants of my evening meal, fresh in my throat.
I can feel the presence of a predator as its shadow soars overhead, waiting for its chance.
I can hear its harsh cackle taunting and teasing me, as I retreat to the dark safety of my home.
Who am I?



Ander – Woodlouse.
Luca – Fulmer.
Khalicee – Rabbit.
Jonathan – Puffin.

ISLE NOTICES

Volunteers for talks - If anyone fancies giving a talk up at the Obs at some point during the season, or to host a quiz or something, please get in touch with me through the Ranger email ranger@fairislebirdobs.co.uk. Would be lovely to have some isle folk up to do guest talks occasionally, especially with the knowledge everyone has here in Fair Isle.

Thanks, Carla – Ranger at FIBO

No Chapel this week as there is a visiting cruise ship Hebridean Sky on Sunday morning

This is the penultimate edition of the Fair Isle Times before the summer break, so please do send in anything you'd like to share before Friday. Many thanks as ever to our brilliant contributors!



Thanks to ranger Carla for this super photo of a new pirate sheep! The old pirate sheep was a stalwart of the North Haven for the past decade, so it's great to see another one in the hill, this one at Dronger

The Hall annual subscription for residents and seasonal staff is now due. There is an annual charge of £20 per person or £40 per household. A box will be in the shop for cash or cheque payment, or you can pay directly to:

Account name: Fair Isle Community Hall

Sort Code: 82-66-08

Account number: 60180316.

The hall continues to be a well-used, valuable space throughout the year with fitness classes, badminton and darts amongst other activities. On cruise ship days the hall provides an area to sell and display island crafts, and the hall is a venue for live music as we welcome Chroma back again this August.

Thanks in advance

Pat,

Fair Isle Community Hall Chairperson

40th years of the Museum

The George Waterston Memorial Centre, also known as the Fair Isle Museum celebrated 40 years since it was opened, on the 19th June. We took the opportunity to invite everyone to come to the museum for a celebratory toast and a chance to see the exhibits. Thanks to all who came and made it a very lightsome afternoon, and to Anne and all the museum trustees who make it such an important source of knowledge for us all, visitors and isle folk alike. Thanks to Carla for the photos from the day



Dis Week Dat's Awa begins deep in the FIBO kitchen sink, and I feel like I'm 20 again: washing up in a Yorkshire pub while volunteering at the bird observatory of my teenage years, several hundred kms to the south of here. Life moves on but some things will always find you again! Each day now moves to the same basic routine, and while many of my colleagues and guests are here to observe the movements of the birds, I notice the repetitive human migrations at play here: the to and fro of the morning Heligoland trap round; the beetling of the Obs' van up to the airstrip and back at least once a day; the 'staging site' of the Obs' lounge filling with hungry migrants before I clang the bell for lunch time and they file in like Pavlov's dogs.

I take my afternoon break on foot to the gull colony on Goorn, the stony outcrop that rests like the head of a crocodile north of Sheep Rock. I go there for little other reason than to be immersed among the seabirds. It is a very achievable goal here in Fair Isle. The edges of the banks from Finnequoy are fringed with approachable puffins, and I notice two birds with dusky black faces and fleshy pink legs - both only a few years old. Puffins are very long-lived birds and their neighbours may be in their second or third decade of life. In the gull colony I watch my every step for mottled brown gull chicks laid prostrate on the rocks. I scan the crevices for the remains of Guillemot eggs, plundered from their nesting ledges by the opportunistic gulls. Once a store of Fair Isle bakes, each '*lungvi*' egg is increasingly valuable, as this species undergoes an uncertain future nationally.

For a species which has adapted to nest on the most exposed of stone ledges squashed together like sheep in the cru, any reduction in their numbers begins to show as chinks in their evolutionary armour - gaps in their crowds provide access for the reaches of thieving gulls and ravens, where before there would have been an unbroken defensive wall; the jabbing bills of parent birds. I can't decide if it's good news for the gulls or bad news for the guillemots - the ground is a blue mosaic of shattered lungvi eggs. I check my phone and see some texts alerting all to a pair of bull Orcas off Bunness. I swing my binoculars past the Haven in time to see two towering fins passing the gap of the breakwater and heading north.



I walk south to the crofts and catch a ride with the FIBO directors doing a shuttle run to the George Waterston museum for the ceremonial prosecco popping. I have never heard of any other museum organising a game of generational sardines to mark its 40th anniversary, but I enjoy seeing it so full of the kinds of people who carry on the traditions of craft and community which this facility celebrates.

That evening the Obs dining room is a-chatter with the movements of the orcas and the plans for tomorrow, but not before we settle down for a 'book festival' style chat from Ann Cleeves, of crime fiction fame. The birders present are *gripped off* by her reminiscences of Siberian rubythroat, two Tennessee warblers and a hermit thrush during her years in the FIBO kitchen, and she admits her favourite literary murder to be Roald Dahl's scorned housewife who kills her husband with a frozen leg of lamb, pops it in the oven and then serves it up to the sergeant who investigates the crime. Isle men, beware...



FIBO head chef Nair defies one human's requirement for sleep, and as I clock in to work Saturday morning at 07:00 she is to be found already elbow-deep in food preparations for today's series of buffets. Rumours of what time of night she started this task are not exaggerated. We pipe, spread and arrange various tartlets, nibbles and sliders to her specification and, while sunny spells outside beckon in the airborne day trippers, the dining room pass begins to look like the setting of a rather lavish wedding.

The rest of the Obs team rush in and out, moving furniture and setting up for the joint opening ceremonies. From the kitchen we hear the muffled cheers from the next room which symbolises that FIBO has been 'opened' for an audience of journalists, funders, local Member of Scottish Parliament and the Observatory's board of directors. Food is scoffed and we scurry out into the sunshine for the afternoon break. It's a little swelly off the Gunglesund swimming spot for a solo dip, so I read a book in Mathers Hol, totally sheltered from the breeze. It's a *taps aff* affair. Suitably sunned, I bike back to the Obs' for the rest of the evening's shenanigans: a big, organised islanders' do for the official christening of Kenny's Bar in the FIBO lounge. Ann Cleaves whisks off the knitted curtain (created by Marie of Taft and Tracey of Leigh) and we toast the shining plaque.



Deryk Shaw and Ian Best of the Good Shepherd crew reminisce on whisky, wine and brown-headed cowbirds as they dedicate the FIBO bar in memory of Kenny Stout. The drinks flow, the volume rises, card games are broken out, and fiddles, tin whistles and guitars appear. FIBO alumni and honoured weekend guests reunite with long standing friends and islanders, while the setting sun hits Vaasetter and lights up Sheep Rock in red like Uluru. The night culminates in a great sing-a-long to the Pogues at around 01:00 in the morning.

Sunday is the summer solstice, and I have a 'wild thyme' in my afternoon break taking a botanically-heavy walk. The Isle is looking flush with the yellows, blues and pinks of a Shetland summer, and the cottongrass beginning to come into fluff. Surely if you could only visit Fair Isle once in your life it would be during June? A pair of grey wagtails in Finnequoy have hatched some chicks and newly fledged starlings are hard to miss, screeching and crash landing into dykes and heather. To round off the weekend of FIBO fever, Carla the Ranger led us all in a quiz in Kenny's Bar, the new sign alight. I felt our team was at an advantage for Round 1, Question 8 (*Name the Fair Isle faces*) as we had Ythan Shaw with us to identify his dad in the photograph, before I remembered another team in the room had the very man himself. During the *Name that Tune* round, previous Seabird Assistant Hywell Maggs was overcome with compulsion and sang the giveaway chorus to Anita Ward's '*Ring my Bell*'. In the end, Ythan, our team and I were pleased to win a collection of chocolate treats, although I looked on with envy at the boobie prize awarded to previous FIBO chair Douglas Barr's losing team - a tin of Stackhoull's finest chickpeas.

I have a day off from housekeeping work and join the Obs' ornithology team for a spot of seabird monitoring. Earlier in the month, the gannet nests of the island were counted from land, but the census must be completed with a trip in the RIB to tally up those nests which can only be seen from the waves below. Three of us opt for natty overalls and boiler suits (mine still smells of last year's lanolin), while AW Luke selects his usual shorts and hoodie for our voyage. I forget how breath-taking the west cliffs are when you're bobbing along below. I try to imagine what it must have been like for islanders of yesteryear, who knew this coastline and its cracks and caves better than any of us do now, and for whom cresting the waves at the base of the banks was not a once-a-year novelty, done for a laugh. An expedition to recover satellite tags from the Ramnigeo's razorbills is abandoned due to a roughening sea and Luke gets rather wet on the return journey.



Fire crew training is the order of the afternoon and we are acquainted with ladders and the roof of the community hall.

The rest of the week sees Sheep Rock shapeshifting among drifting banks of cloud and fog. Sometimes its head is sliced clean off, other times it looms as an ominous outline, a Godzilla arisen from the waves. The odd plane comes and goes in accordance with this unique island barometer and the Obs says goodbyes to the final weekend guests. Before departure, Douglas Barr donates his prize tin of chickpeas back to the Obs, a shockingly generous move from a professional vegan. FIBO's newest addition to the south wing, a shiny Polycrub, sees its raised beds completed and backfilled with topsoil from the excavations. I hesitate to note how many leftover bakes and cakes Iain and Andrew have had sent their way by appreciative Obs kitchen staff during its assembly, in case their other halves are reading. Obs Assistant Cook Chris and I fill our break with a walk down to the shop, our pace quickening when we see the crew of the tall ship the *Flying Dutchman* heading the same way from Pund. We manage to fight our way to the freezers and buy a peach Magnum lolly each, and I neutralise judgement of my other sweet purchases by adding some mouthwash to my shopping basket.

Assistant Warden Tom retains his Man of the Match title for the ornithological season by discovering a serin at the Chapel - only the sixth individual of this little European canary to be seen in Fair Isle. Late to the party as usual, I catch up with it on Thursday afternoon as it drops into the park next to Quoy while I'm walking past. I call Triona with the news to pass on to her birding

husband and within minutes I am amused to see not just Stewart and Triona but also Eileen, Luca and Ander's heads pop up in the porch window to watch the bird feeding on buttercups. I like this *Dial a Thomson* service!



A cancelled PM plane means the Obs' dining room is not full to capacity as scheduled tonight, and so Tommy from Haa redeems his meal vouchers won at last year's harvest festival and takes visiting plumber Graham Quarmby on a dinner date. From the kitchen pass, it's always nice to see a healthy crowd in the dining room, especially noticing the mixing of guests and groups as they get to know each other. We start laying out the pudding plates - tottering coconut cakes with thick strata of meringue icing, and I wonder if there'll be any spare for Iain and Andrew tomorrow...

Jonnie

Fair Isle Running Festival - 10k and Half Marathon - Saturday 4th July 2026

A reminder about next weekend's running festival! Anyone keen to join, please contact Jonathan at the Schoolhouse

Start Times:

The half marathon will begin at 10:00am with the 10k runners setting off at 10:30am. Please arrive and "register" at least ten minutes before the run begins so we know how many runners will be out on the course.

The Route:

The half marathon route is as follows:

Begin at Field road end >>> Hall >>> North Light >>> back to Hall >>> North Light (again) >>> South Light (via the west road) >>> back to Jimmy's Garage. Exactly 13.1 miles or 21km.

The 10k route is as follows:

Begin at Hall >>> North Light >>> past Fire Station down the middle road >>> finish is just before Burkle. Exactly 6.2 miles or 10km.

There will be a table with water or where water bottles can be left outside the hall.

The Finish:

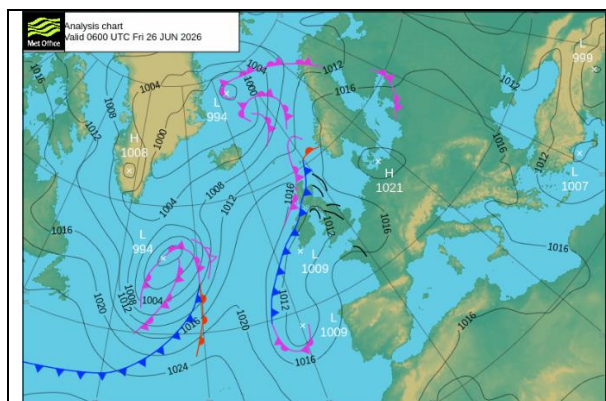
Light refreshments and drinks at Burkle (big thanks to Hollie and Deryk) afterwards to celebrate everyone's achievements. Every finisher gets a free medal (which will have a ribbon but please see attached picture).

Volunteers:

It would be great to have a few marshals to be stationed at North Light, Hall and timekeepers at the finish so we can officially time the runs. Anyone interested please contact JP.

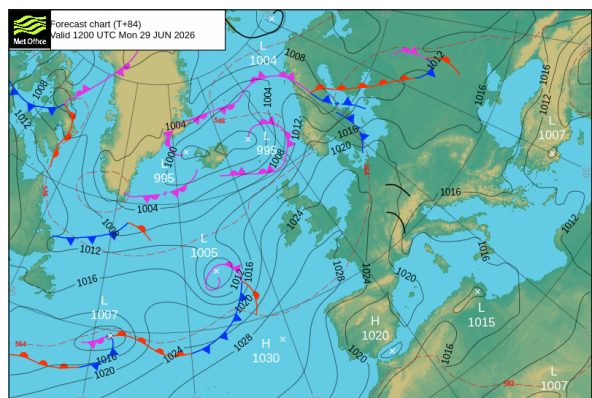


FAIR ISLE WEATHER FORECAST



Analysis Chart 0600 UTC

Friday 26th June 2026



Forecast Chart 1200 UTC

Monday 29th June 2026

GENERAL SITUATION Friday 26th June 2026

High pressure across Europe continues to feed a light warm southerly airflow - hot in the south - across the UK and mostly blocking the eastwards progress of Atlantic weather systems in all but the north of Scotland. Here a weak warm front remains slow moving during Friday and the weekend. For the first half of next week the north of Scotland sees a southwesterly airflow as an Atlantic low-pressure system tracks northeast close to Iceland. Then, during the latter part perhaps a southeasterly as a secondary low moves east towards Scotland.

OUTLOOK FOR THE WEEKEND

Temperatures 14° by day. 10° to 12° overnight.

SATURDAY 27th: Early fog clearing through the morning then brighter in the afternoon with sunny spells developing. F3-5 SE winds. Cloudy night with some rain. **Sea State:** Slight at SW 1 metre.

SUNDAY 28th: Early mist and rain clearing then brighter with sunny spells by afternoon. F3-4 SSW winds. **Sea State:** Slight at SW 1 metre.

FORECAST FOR NEXT WEEK Temperatures 13° to 15° by day, 10° to 12° overnight.

MONDAY 29th: Brighter spells and scattered showers with fresh SW winds. **Sea State:** Mostly moderate to rough at WSW 2 to 3 metre. East of Shetland slight at SSW 1 metre.

TUESDAY 30th: Rather cloudy with fewer showers and a moderate SW breeze. **Sea State:** Mostly moderate at W 2 metre. East of Shetland slight at SW 1 metre.

WEDNESDAY 1st – SUNDAY 5th: Mostly cloudy though dry at first with moderate occasionally fresh SW to W winds, Rain mist or fog later. **Sea State Wednesday:** Slight at W 1 metre

Dave Wheeler

