

Northern Lights

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Hoy High and Hoy Low
Lighthouse, Graemsay

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Fascinating Facts about Shetland Ponies

Orkney and Shetland Words to know

Aberdeen Art Gallery



Discover more at www.northlinkferries.co.uk

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Welcome

We made it all the way to 10th December before being significantly affected by winter weather, for which we were all very grateful. Looking at our carryings for last year, we once again outstripped previous years for both cars and passengers, recording some six years of uninterrupted growth. And with freight volumes also achieving a fifth year of growth, it simply reminded me that even with zero cancellations for technical reasons and our customer satisfaction ratings sitting at 99% we still need to have weather on our side too.

2020 is VisitScotland's 'Year of Coasts and Waters' and of course we are superbly placed to play our part, not only in supporting the #YCW2020 celebrations and activity, but also to afford each and every one of you a fantastic opportunity to view the best of the Northern Isles and North East coastlines from any one of our five vessels.

We have a close run down the westerly side of Fair Isle, a departure north from Lerwick round Bressay, a trip to the Old Man of Hoy and the wonderful entry through Hoy Sound into Stromness to look forward to. Dolphin watching on leaving Aberdeen or the sighting of an Orca or Minke approaching Lerwick are all must do activities with NorthLink Ferries in 2020.

There are other ideas for activities to undertake in 2020 within the pages of this magazine. You'll find fascinating facts about Skara Brae and Shetland Ponies, places to go in Thurso and advice on how to research your roots with the Shetland Family History Society.

At the end of 2019 Aberdeen Art Gallery opened its doors after four years of renovation. Make sure you leave time to visit this exciting new development for the North East if you are travelling to or from Aberdeen.

On board we continue bringing new innovation and improvements. MV Hamnavoe dry docked in early January, and the third of our 'Changing Places' facilities, which offers dedicated and bespoke space for passengers with specific travel requirements, was fully fitted out for the season to come. If you have thoughts yourself as to future initiatives please do let me know.

You may have caught sight of our new high definition films providing an insight into our destinations, port and on board facilities. If you would like further information on what is available locally please speak to my colleagues who will be pleased to assist you as part of the VisitScotland 'iKnow' initiative where we will gladly support you in getting the best out of your trip.

Whatever your reason for travelling with us you are welcome on board. My colleagues are, as ever, on hand to assist you at every stage of your journey. Please ask for any assistance you need if it has not already been offered.

Enjoy your time on board and we look forward to welcoming you back.

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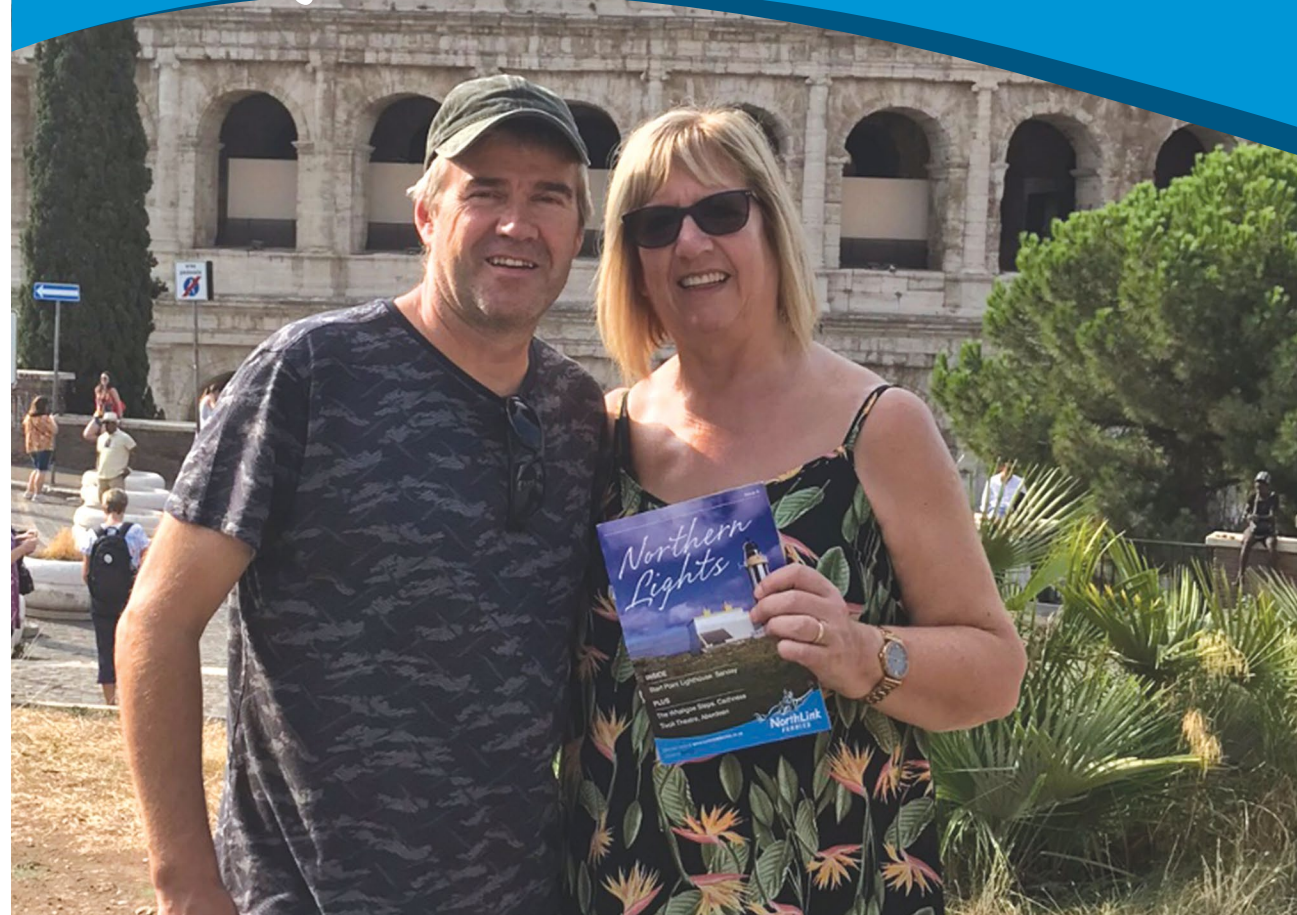
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#MagnusOnTour

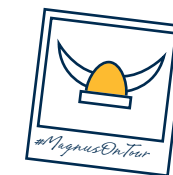


Congratulations to our latest #MagnusOnTour winner, Christine Glaser who took a fantastic picture while visiting the impressive Colosseum in Rome.

Christine now has two return tickets, including a car and cabin, to Orkney or Shetland for use on any of our passenger vessels.

Take a look at our back cover to see some of the other brilliant #MagnusOnTour entries we received.

For your chance to win a trip for two



To win return tickets including a car and cabin to or from Orkney or Shetland for two adults, simply post a picture of yourself in an awe-inspiring location with the iconic NorthLink Ferries 'Magnus' logo on any of our social media channels.

Use the hashtag **#MagnusOnTour** to be in with a chance of winning. Alternatively, you can send your photo to webmaster@northlinkferries.co.uk.

Spot the next winning picture in Issue 11 of Northern Lights.

An Interview with J. Gow Rum Founder, Collin Van Schayk

Located close to the Italian Chapel on Orkney's Lamb Holm, VS Distillers is an exciting new company creating bottles of handcrafted rum, named after Orkney's notorious pirate John Gow. We were pleased to speak to Collin Van Schayk who started the business aged just 27. Here, Collin speaks passionately about distilling Scottish rum and the story of VS Distillers so far.

What was the inspiration behind J. Gow rum? How did you come up with the business idea?

I like rum! That was the main reason behind it. I've always wanted to start my own business. I worked for my dad's company, Orkney Wine Company, making wine for many years and that is fairly similar to the rum-making process. We were toying with the idea of perhaps doing something else and there was a great opportunity with the space of the building that we had at Lamb Holm which was too good to pass up. We split the building, started the company and just went for it.

How did you decide upon the name for your rum?

Pirates are traditionally associated with rum and so naming it after Orkney's very own pirate made a lot of sense. John Gow grew up in Stromness, and he became a pirate after leading the mutiny of the Caroline in 1724. Travelling with the ship, renamed Revenge, Gow and his crew committed acts of piracy in the waters surrounding Spain, France and Portugal before heading home to Orkney. Though Gow and his crew assumed an air of respectability in Orkney, the authorities caught up with them and they fled. Eventually Revenge was captured off the island of Eday and Gow was sentenced to death by hanging just a year after becoming a pirate. The story is well known in Orkney and so our rum ties in nicely with local history and the seafaring traditions associated with the drink. I drew the designs on the labels myself!

What mixers would you recommend to go with your Spiced Rum?

Ginger beer is probably the best mixer to go with this one. We won the trophy for the Rum and Ginger Beer category in 2018 at the International Wine & Spirit Competition and it just works incredibly well

with it. Cloudy apple juice or cranberry juice are also recommended mixers, surprisingly. They both work really well as straight mixers with the rum, so you don't have to make fancy cocktails with them.

You mentioned that you've won awards for your Spiced Rum. What's your secret?

Don't be afraid to try new ideas, that one rule that I go by. The other is to give it time, because a lot of the flavours will take time to marry together. If it doesn't taste right straight away sometimes it just needs to mature. The most important thing with spirits, I think, is time.

What's next for VS Distillers? Can we look forward to more delicious drinks in the near future?

The biggest thing to look out for is that we are now focussing on our older-aged rums but obviously that takes a lot of time. The more aged a rum is, the more phenols and chemical compounds are extracted out of the wood. Shorter chain esters will form into longer chain esters so you get more complex flavours. It helps to mellow the drink out and add depth to it.

From there we want to do 8 year old and 12 year old rums and produce some casks for single barrel releases. This year we are just going to build up stock and keep filling casks and essentially wait. However I'm looking forward to getting into the older aged rums soon.

J. Gow Rum can be purchased on board NorthLink Ferries ships and in shops throughout Orkney and Scotland. VS Distillers Rum can also be bought online at www.jgowrum.com



Orkney and Shetland words to know before visiting

The dialect of Orkney and Shetland has been greatly influenced by the islands' history. After the Vikings arrived in the 9th Century, their language, Old Norse, slowly changed to 'Norn' and this was used most commonly around the islands.

Today, Scots is spoken in Orkney and Shetland, but there are a smattering of words (some used in both island groups) heavily influenced by Norn. We have compiled a list of some of these more unusual words.

Orkney	
Best kens	Goodness knows
Beuy	A greeting used for a familiar person
Birl	Spin around
Bruck	Rubbish
Buddo	Term of endearment
Clapshot	Potatoes and turnips mashed together
Differ	Difference
Freck	An animal / child that likes attention
Grimleens	Dusk
Groatie Buckie	A small cowrie shell
Gutter	Mud
Holm	A small island
Mixture o mercies	A number of odd things
Ower well	Satisfactory
Peedie	Small / Little
Peedie-breeks	Small child
Pleep	Whine
Poots	Sulking
Raffle	A mix up
Stoor	Dust
Swadge	Rest after eating
The morn	Tomorrow
Through by	Next door
Toorie	Knitted hat
Whit like	How are you?

Shetland	
Blyde	Happy / glad
Braaly	Pretty, fairly
Coop	Turn over, upside down
Creepie	Stool
Da	The
Du	You
Dastreen	Last night
Eenoo	Just now
Fant	To be very hungry, to famish
Filsket	Frisky, highspirited
Gadder	Gather
Gluff	A fright
Kent	Known
Kye	Cows
Middlin	Reasonably well
Mind	Remember
Peerie	Small / little
Peerie-wyes	Carefully, cautiously
Reestit	Smoke dried
Simmer Dim	The twilight of a summer evening
Sirpin	Soaking wet
Spaegie	Muscle soreness caused by over exertion
Tammy Norrie	Puffin
Trow	A mischievous fairy
Unkan	Strange / unfamiliar

Searching for sanctuary high and low on Graemsay



Nestled between Stromness and Hoy, Graemsay is a stark contrast to the busy town to the north and the famous island to the south. Whereas Hoy has far too many attractions to cover in one day, Graemsay has virtually none that you would see listed in a tourist guide.

However, it's that peace and unspoiled beauty that endears it to many visitors and which has earned it the local nickname of the 'green isle'.

There are only around 20 residents, compared with around 200 in the 1840s. Much like everywhere else on the Northern Isles, the people are far outnumbered by the wildlife, including seals and seabirds of every variety.

Among the homes and abandoned crofts, two of the most prominent built structures are the lighthouses of Hoy High and Hoy Low. They were built in 1851 to light the way through Hoy Sound. The designer was Alan Stevenson of the renowned family that pioneered lighthouse construction throughout Scotland (the sites were later visited by his nephew, Robert Louis Stevenson, then a budding author, when accompanying his father Thomas).

Originally tended by four keepers, living in quarters inspired by Egyptian temples, the lighthouses remained home to various families until the 1960s and 70s when they became automated. They are now private homes.



The lighthouses are right next to beaches – one rocky and one sandy – on the north coast of Graemsay, and are perfect locations for beachcombing. If you're lucky you might find a piece of discarded lighthouse lens washed up from 'relaxed' disposal in years gone by!

If you do take a walk along the serene shoreline, please take care to avoid any nesting birds, such as oystercatchers, or baby seals. They might seem abandoned but they're almost certainly not, and it's best to let nature look after itself.

So compact is Graemsay that you can walk around the entire island in less than half a day, and you are likely to have the route to yourself as well.

The length is only about 6 miles but covers minor road, rough coastal path, tracks and occasional boggy or overgrown patches.

One of the first sights is Sandside House, a large listed farmhouse that has been restored. You'll also pass the old pier, which was used during the building

of the two lighthouses and where stone, originally from Clestrain in Orphir, and cut in Stromness, was landed. When the stone was landed it was winched onto wagons mounted on rails, and these carts were then pulled by oxen to the building site.

The labourers who built Hoy High and Hoy Low were given lodgings amongst the island families, and two found wives. The lightkeepers and their families also received a warm welcome in Graemsay. The island, with its school and close proximity to Stromness, was a coveted posting for lighthouse families.

Hoy Low is so named because it is literally low, standing at only 12 metres. This is because it was designed to line up with Hoy High, allowing seafarers to navigate their safe passage into the eastern side of Scapa Flow.

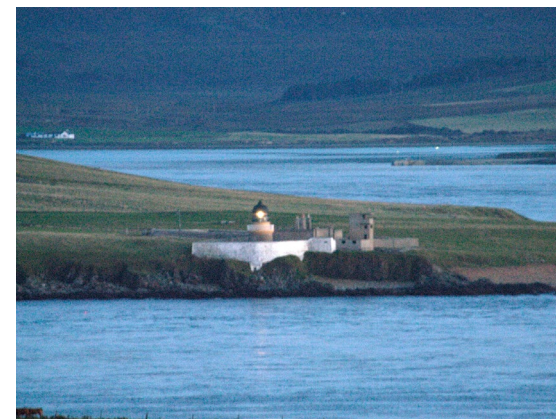
If walking the 3 or 4 hours it might take is too long, then you can hire a bike on the mainland and take it across on the ferry. But make sure you go slow enough or stop to take a look at the many species of wildflower that are able to grow throughout Graemsay's pristine ecosystem.

One other important site to take in is the remains of a WW2 gun battery, which was an important part of the island's naval defences. There are hundreds of such facilities around the UK coast. This one is



slightly unusual in having no roof, leaving the poor inhabitants exposed to the worst of the Orkney weather at times.

To get to Graemsay, get the ferry from Stromness, which goes via Hoy and takes around 45 minutes. Sailing times vary so check details with Orkney Ferries to plan your visit. There aren't any shops, hotels or other facilities, and no artificial shelter apart from the ferry terminal, so go prepared for changeable weather.





Louise Dawson, Customer Service Assistant, Kiln Corner, Orkney

Tell us a bit about yourself

I was born and brought up in Aberdeen where, after gaining an SNC in Travel and Tourism, I worked for several years in the travel industry, mainly arranging flights and accommodation for business executives. I took a break to have children – Kimberley, Michael and Kirstie – and in that time moved to Orkney. I have now lived in Orkney for just over 20 years.

How did your start your career with NorthLink Ferries?

I started working for NorthLink Ferries in 2002. I was looking for a part time evening / weekend job and saw a recruitment advert for NorthLink Ferries. I applied and have been with the company ever since.

I started working in Stromness and then moved to Hatston Terminal where I remained for 12 years – nine of them as supervisor. I joined the Kiln Corner office in 2013 that's where I'm based today.

What does your role involve?

My day begins at 9am when we open to the public for reservations. A lot of our customers like to book face-to-face and I make their reservation or help them with their query. As well as standard reservations we do also get bookings for freight and sponsorship and enquiries about islander registrations and lost property.

Along with serving at the front counter I am also part of the Travel Trade team which handles reservations from

travel agents and tour operators. I answer emails and enquiries from operators who wish to book groups or individuals to Orkney or Shetland, or both. These reservations can include coach and driver, cabin accommodation, meals on board and arranging the services of a local guide in Orkney and Shetland.

What types of customers do you speak to?

The Northern Isles are becoming increasingly popular. This year I have answered enquiries from Australia, Argentina, Israel and Portugal, to name a few. It always amazes me how so many people wish to come and visit these little islands at the top of Scotland and how they have come to hear about Orkney and Shetland. We give them information on our routes and ferries to help them make this possible.

How do you spend your personal time?

Out with work, and as my children are all away from home, my partner and I thought we would have time to enjoy some time to ourselves and see a bit of the world. We got as far as The Netherlands, loved it so much that we went back again and again. I love the people, scenery and its way of life. It's also so easy to get around. However, the travelling has been put on hold as we welcomed a new member to our family – a miniature schnauzer puppy called Saffi. She is a bundle of fun but after not having a dog since I was a child, there is so much to learn again. I am just enjoying having her and looking forward to the many days of joy we'll have in the future.



Orcadians are quite rightly proud of their patties. Only found on Orkney, these hearty little packages of mince, potato (tattie) and onion, battered and deep-fried, are considered a local speciality, and are something that visitors delight in sampling when they step off the ferry.

NorthLink Ferries is very lucky to have its own expert pattie maker. George O'Neill, Chef Tournant on MV Hamnavoe, has been kind enough to share his pattie recipe and has also provided some top tips to make approximately 12 perfect Orkney Patties in your own kitchen.

Please note: a deep fat fryer is required.

Ingredients

- 500g beef mince
- 1 onion
- 750g potatoes
- 1 beef stock cube
- Salt and black pepper to taste
- Vegetable oil
- 500g plain flour
- 1 teaspoon baking power
- 1 teaspoon bicarbonate of soda
- 25ml malt vinegar
- Approx. 1 litre cold water
- 1 egg yolk

Method

For the Pattie Mix

1. Peel and cut the potatoes in half. Boil them in a pan, seasoning the water with salt.
2. Once the potatoes are soft, drain the water and cover the pan with a lid to remove any excess water from the potatoes.

3. Mash the potatoes but don't add milk or butter; it's important to keep the potatoes as dry as possible.
4. Fry the mince in another pan with some oil. Season the mince with salt and black pepper to taste.
5. Once the mince is browned, dice a large onion and add it, along with a crushed beef stock cube to the pot, and mix it all together. Cook until the onion is slightly softened.
6. Spoon the mince out onto a baking tray and place in the oven at 180°C for 5 minutes to bake the mince. This helps remove excess fat and gives the patties a better texture.
7. Using a slotted spoon, move the mince into the mashed potatoes, leaving behind any excess fat on the baking tray. Mix the mince and potatoes together.
8. Allow the pattie mix to cool and once cool enough to handle, use all the mix to make roughly 12 balls. Press down with the palm of your hand to create the shape. A small ramekin or cup can be used to ensure all your patties are the same size. Lay the patties flat on a plate and put in the fridge to set.

For the Batter Mix

1. In a large bowl, sieve in the flour then make a well in the centre. Add the baking powder and bicarbonate of soda to the well and then add the malt vinegar; this will activate the powder, resulting in a crispy batter.
2. Using a whisk, add the egg yolk then the cold water a bit at a time, whisking vigorously until the batter mix is the consistency of double cream (note - you may not need to use all of the water to achieve this). Cover the batter and chill in the fridge.
3. Preheat your fryer to 180°C
4. Remove your patties and batter from the fridge. Give the batter a final whisk and dust the patties individually with flour. Dip a pattie in the batter mix and drop in the fryer gently, being extremely careful!
5. Cook the patties in batches until golden in colour. Remove them from the fryer and put them on a baking tray in the oven (set to 180°C) until piping hot.

Fascinating Facts about Shetland Ponies



Small but tough

Shetland Ponies have lived in Shetland for over 4,000 years and it is that unique island environment that has made them as robust as they are. Although they are no taller than 42 inches, they are hardy creatures and can withstand the worst of Shetland's storms. In winter, the ponies have hairs which shed the rain and in the summer, a coat that carries a beautiful silky sheen. Shetland Ponies have mane and tail hair that is long and straight and can be found in almost any colour except spotted.

Almost as old as the woolly mammoth

Ponies are thought to have arrived in Shetland by crossing ice fields at the end of the last Ice Age, around the same time that woolly mammoths still roamed. In isolation, the ponies evolved to be the Shetland Pony we know today and evidence from the Bronze Age suggest that they were used for work rather than hunted for food. In the centuries since, Shetland Ponies have carried out various tasks – from carrying loads, farm work and transport – so have proven themselves to be indispensable to island life.

Ponies around the world

Starting in the 17th Century, Shetland Ponies started to be exported around the world. The most popular destinations were Orkney, the mainland and The Netherlands (transported there by the Dutch Herring Fishing Fleet which travelled to Shetland every summer). By the end of the 18th Century, ponies had reached England, taken there by whaling ships returning from Greenland. There was a fine profit to be made by stopping in Shetland on the way home and taking some four-legged passengers on board.

In 1885 a Shetland Pony was exported to the USA and the breed proved to be very popular there. When the first Shetland Pony was unloaded from the train the owner was offered £100 for her – a jaw-dropping price at the time.

The biggest exportation of Shetland Ponies occurred after the 1842 Mines Act prohibited woman and children from working in the pits. The demand for ponies grew sharply, and hundreds of thousands of ponies were used up until the 1960s. Ponies were very strong but also small – ideal for confined spaces. Their docile nature also meant that they could be trained for the mines quickly. Shetland Ponies were also thought to have a sixth sense to warn them of danger.

Over-exportation of Shetland Ponies caused some issues. Although there were previously over 10,000 on the islands, by the end of the 19th Century that number was drastically reduced. Steps, such as setting up The Shetland Pony Stud Book Society of the United Kingdom in 1890 and the Shetland Islands Premium Stallion Scheme in 1957, were taken to ensure the breed was protected.

More ponies than people

Nowadays, there are estimated to be 100,000 ponies worldwide with 50,000 in The Netherlands and 15,000 in the UK. This means that Shetland Ponies outnumber Shetland Islanders by nearly four to one.

In Shetland, there are approximately 1,000 ponies with 170 owners. The Shetland Islands are once again the best place to procure a Shetland Pony as the unique conditions of the islands keep the quality high. Natural selection means that if a pony is not fit, it doesn't survive.

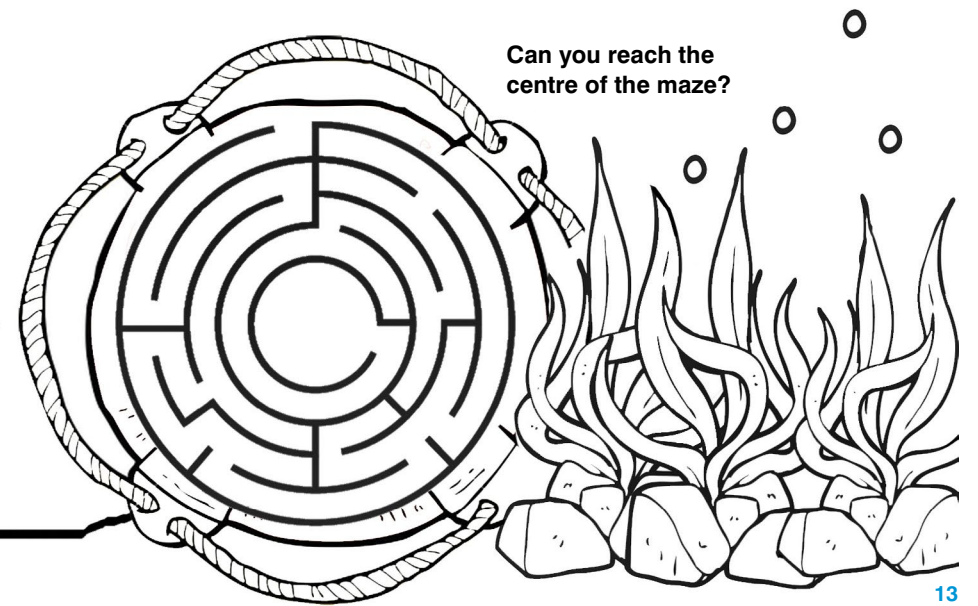
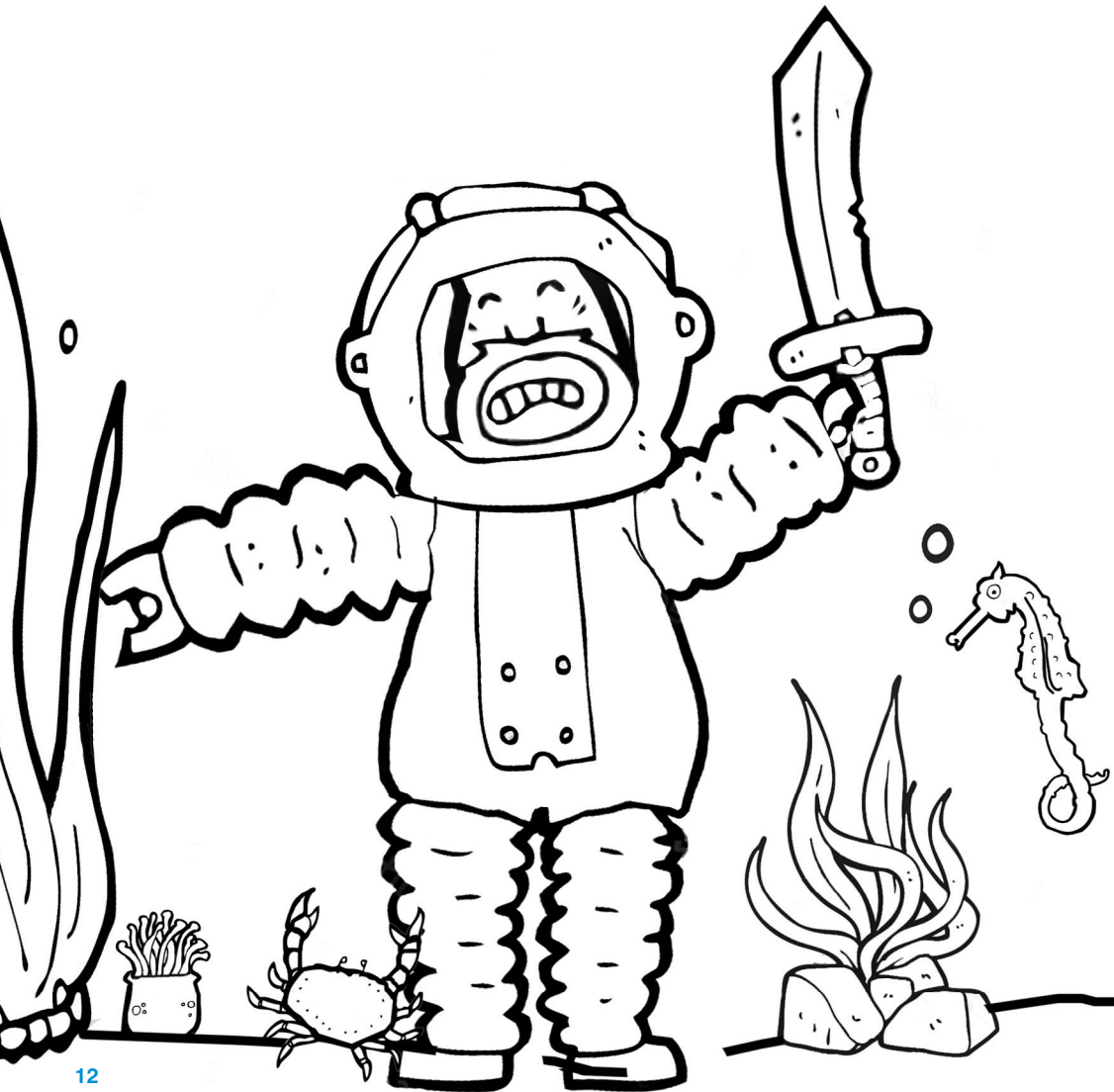
The annual Shetland agricultural shows further improve the pony stock by highlighting the standards to aim for. The Annual Shetland Pony Stud-book Society Breed Show held in July, the Viking Shetland Pony Show and the Cunningsburgh Show, both in August, are all well worth attending.

Shetland Ponies are a lovely sight to see around the islands - make sure you stop to say hello to a Shetland Pony on your next visit to the isles.



Welcome to the world of the Northlink Vikings

The Vikings have discovered an amazing creature underwater.
Can you draw what it is?



Discover Orkney's 5,000 year old Neolithic village

One of the most remarkable places to visit in Orkney is the Stone Age village of Skara Brae. At 5,000 years old, Skara Brae offers us a unique glimpse into Neolithic everyday life. We've highlighted some of the most interesting facts about this fascinating site below:

The storm of Skerrabra

In the winter of 1850 a great storm battered Orkney and the wind and high tides ripped the earth and grass from a large mound known as Skerrabra, which revealed a series of underground structures. Archaeology was the hobby of William Watt, the Laird of Skail, and he excavated four houses, gathering a rich collection of objects.

The site was abandoned until the 1920s when another storm damaged the structures and further excavation work was carried out by Gordon Childe, the first professor of archaeology at the University of Edinburgh.

A close community

Skara Brae was occupied for 600 years between 3,100 and 2,500 BC. Each stone house had a similar layout – a single room with a dresser to house important objects located opposite the

entrance, storage boxes on the floors and storage spaces in the walls. Beds could also be found at the sides of the structure, focused around a central hearth. The fact that the houses were so similar indicates that the 50 to 100 people who occupied Skara Brae had formed a very close community and lived together as equals.

Safe and sound

The houses were linked by roofed passageways and house doors could be secured by a wooden or whalebone bar for privacy. The Skara Brae houses were built into a tough clay-like material full of domestic rubbish called midden. This helped to insulate them and keep out the damp. Although much of the midden material was discarded during the 1920's excavation, what remains (wood, fragments of rope and bones) offers clues about life at Skara Brae.



Gifted farmers

Thousands of years ago, Skara Brae was much further from the sea and was surrounded by fertile land – coastal erosion has led the beach to Skara Brae's doorstep. It is possible that the settlement had more houses which have now been lost to the sea. Back then, Orkney was a few degrees warmer, and deer and wild boar roamed the hills, with wild berries and herbs growing throughout the island.

Resourceful recycling

At Skara Brae there is evidence of rebuilding and adapting the houses for successive generations. New houses were built out of older buildings, and the oldest buildings show evidence of having had stone removed to be reused elsewhere in the settlement.

The journey to abandonment

Why the settlement was abandoned is one of the most tantalising mysteries of Skara Brae. Although experts in the recent past saw the objects left behind as evidence that Skara Brae was evacuated in a hurry (a popular theory was that the residents left to escape a sandstorm), it is now thought that a more gradual process took place over 20 or 30 years.

Later, during the Bronze Age, people lived in their own individual farmsteads. It is possible that the abandonment of Skara Brae was a move away from communal living and the start of a new way of life. There is evidence that the younger generation moved away and left the older generation behind.

Once Skara Brae was finally deserted it was quickly covered by sand within a couple of decades.

For those keen to explore Skara Brae themselves, the site is open daily and managed by Historic Environment Scotland.



Ten places to visit in Thurso

If you have some free time while you're waiting to travel to Orkney from Scrabster on MV Hamnavoe, there are some interesting places to visit in nearby Thurso, the most northerly town in mainland Britain.

Thurso has a population of around 8,000 and a fascinating history. It was an important settlement in Norse times and was often mentioned in the Orkneyinga Saga, the medieval chronicle of Orkney and Shetland written in the 13th Century.

During the 19th century the town experienced a boom due to flagstone trade. Before concrete, flagstone quarried from Caithness was highly sought after for making pavements. In the 20th century Thurso experienced another boom when an experimental reactor was built (and later decommissioned) in nearby Dounreay.

The following highlights from the area offer an insight into other aspects of Thurso's history.

Sir John's Square

One of the first sights when entering Thurso's town centre is Sir John's Square. The town's war memorial stands in front of this lovely little square, and St. Peter's & St.

Andrew's Church stands behind it.

The Square is named after Sir John Sinclair, a leading agriculturist and town planner. In 1798, when Sir John Sinclair extended Thurso, he laid out the town in a grid pattern with wide parallel streets and houses with gardens to the rear. Some say that when New York was rebuilt, the planners followed Sir John Sinclair's Thurso street plan!



The Fisher Biggins

The Fisher Biggins is the most ancient part of Thurso: the original village. This was where fisher folk lived. Biggin is the Scots word for dwelling. You can find it today close to the west side of the river mouth. Many of the buildings date from the 17th and 18th century and have been tastefully renovated. The streets here are more curved than those created in the New Town using Sir John Sinclair's grid pattern.



Thurso River

The river is where Thurso got its name from; it was named Torsaa (Thor's River) in Old Norse. The river is 25 miles long and is famous for salmon angling. Prince Charles is a regular visitor to one section of Thurso River, called The Private Beat. Fishing on Thurso River can yield large catches, and it has slow moving, canal type waters. For more information and to fill in the appropriate forms to fish, visit www.riverthurso.com



Old St Peter's Kirk

One of the finest religious buildings from the Middle Ages to survive in the North of Scotland, Old St Peter's Kirk is nestled amidst the oldest part of the town, close to the river. The church was founded in the 13th century by Bishop Gilbert de Moravia, with later additions made in the 16th and 17th century. Among these is the striking window on the west aisle, which was carved from a single stone slab and inserted in 1630. Old St Peter's Kirk was abandoned in 1832 and is now a handsome ruin.



Pennyland House

On the western outskirts of town, just before the turn-off for Scrabster, stands Pennyland House; the birthplace of Sir William Smith, founder of the Boys Brigade. Born on 27th October 1854, Smith moved to Glasgow and joined the 1st Lanarkshire Rifle Volunteers and later became a Sunday School teacher. In 1883 these two influences led Smith to create the Boys Brigade and he was knighted for his services to children in 1909. A display of Boys Brigade memorabilia can be seen in the David Fraser room in Thurso's Sir William Smith Memorial Hall.



The Meadow Well

In the centre of Thurso, a circular wellhouse stands on Manson's Lane, close to the Royal Hotel. This wellhouse was completed in 1823 but the Meadow Well it encloses was used for centuries beforehand as the main water supply for Thurso. In 1876 people of Thurso gradually stopped using the Meadow Well after an improved water supply came from Loch Calder.



Holborn Head

Holborn Head Lighthouse sits above the Scrabster pier. Built by David and Thomas Stevenson and completed in 1862, it's a lovely building which has now become a private dwelling after the light was discontinued in 2003. There's a fine walk to Holborn Head across muddy terrain from the Principal Lighthouse Keeper's cottage. The Old Red Sandstone headland at Holborn Head is quite exposed, and you'll see birds, a war memorial cairn, dramatic cliffs, seawacks and ramparts. The name Holborn is possibly Norse in origin, meaning hillfort, but it is more likely that the ramparts are the remains of religious buildings.



Thurso Castle

Thurso Castle was once a very grand building on the east side of the town. Part of it is a ruin and another is a private residence. Thurso Castle dates from the 12th century and is said to have been built on the site of an Iron Age broch.



After a fire, the castle was rebuilt in the 1660s, it was restored and enlarged in 1806 and 1835, and remodelled again in 1872. During World War II, an anti-shipping mine came ashore below the castle and exploded. This led to sections of the building becoming unstable and being demolished in 1952. These days the building is still an impressive and imposing sight; the ruin can be enjoyed from afar on a beachfront walk.

Wolfburn Distillery

The wonderful story of the Wolfburn is that of a single malt whisky distillery rising phoenix-like from the ashes of an old distillery which ceased production in 1877.

The Wolfburn Distillery was opened in 2013 just metres from the old distillery on the outskirts of Thurso and, like its predecessor, draws its waters from the nearby Wolf Burn. Tours of the Wolfburn Distillery (complete with a tasting at the end!) are available. For more information visit www.wolfburn.com



Thurso Beach

Thurso beach is a very short walk from the centre of the town, and it faces northwards, across the Pentland Firth to Orkney and the island of Hoy. In recent years, Thurso beach has gained a reputation amongst surfers; in certain wind and tidal conditions, some of the finest waves in Europe can be enjoyed here. Thurso beach and the esplanade are also highly recommended for those who love a fine walk!



There are many other walks to recommend, including a popular route along the River Thurso. Start at the entrance to the park at the main road bridge through town; walk up river, cross the footbridge and back along the other side. There is plenty more to do in Thurso; the town has a swimming pool, a cinema, boating along the river in summer and some very fine shops to explore.

We hope that this guide helps you make the most of your time in Britain's most northerly town!



After four years and an extensive transformation, Aberdeen Art Gallery has opened its doors to the public once again.

The multi-million-pound project to the Category A listed building – along with the Cowdray Hall and Remembrance Hall – has breathed new life into one of Aberdeen’s best loved institutions, which dates back to the 19th Century.

The idea for the art gallery began in 1873 when a group of local art collectors held such a popular one-off exhibit of their works that they decided to create a permanent space that the public could enjoy. Eventually, Scottish architect Alexander Marshall Mackenzie was commissioned to design the gallery and the building opened in 1885.

When it launched, the collection featured industrial and art displays but this was greatly expanded in

1900 when Alexander Macdonald – a wealthy granite merchant – donated his private collection.

The 1920s was a period of development for the gallery. The building was extended to accommodate art from the newly established Gray’s School of Art and the Cowdray Hall and War Memorial were added. Renovations continued as the years went on, a tribute to the great local artist, James McBey saw the opening of the James McBey Print Room and Art Library in 1961. This tribute was thanks to James’ widow, Marguerite and is now known as the McBey Library.

In the years since, the collection has grown to include the finest examples of 19th, 20th and 21st Century art. It came as no great surprise that the decision was taken to completely modernise the building so that more of the collection could be displayed than ever before.

The restoration has seen the permanent collections within the gallery increase from 11 to 18 and the number of items on display from 300 to over 1,000. Already in place were impressive pieces from Ian Hamilton Finlay and Francis Bacon but there is now

an abundance of new acquisitions and commissions. The gallery is also re-introducing some favourites that have rarely been on display previously.

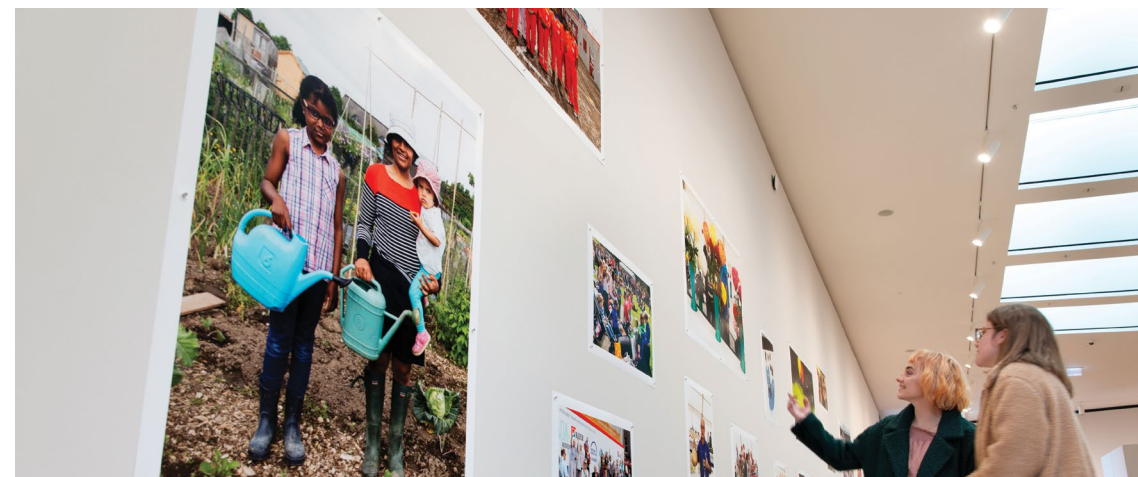
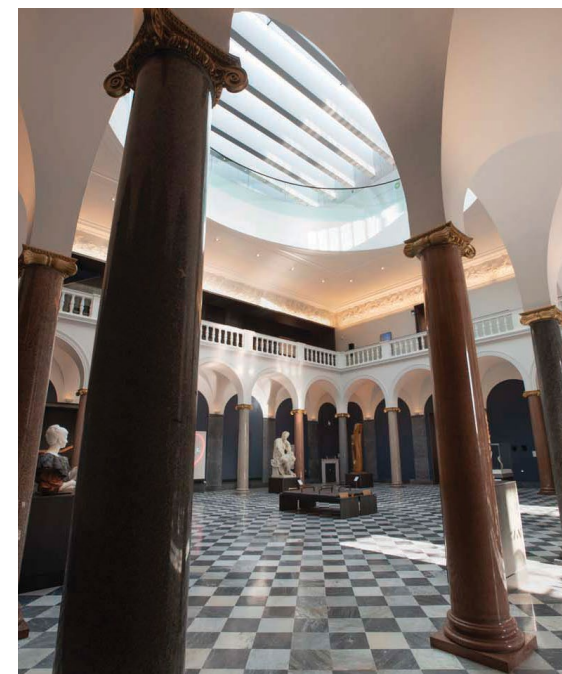
The new Aberdeen Art Gallery welcomed more than 10,000 visitors in its first week and it is believed the renovations will attract around 250,000 visitors a year, making it a major cultural attraction for the North-east and the country.

Publicised as Aberdeen’s most accessible public building, the art gallery has lifts to all floors as well as a Changing Places facility. There is also a new

rooftop café and terrace with fantastic views over the city.

Councillor Jenny Laing, Co-Leader of Aberdeen City Council said: “From the outset, the ambition was to create a world-class visitor attraction”. The redevelopment is the jewel in Aberdeen’s cultural crown and definitely worth a visit.

Opening hours for the Aberdeen Art Gallery are 10am-5pm Monday to Saturday and Sunday from 11am-4pm with free admission for all.



Uncover your Shetland ancestry with the Shetland Family History Society

For those interested in tracing their island roots, then the Shetland Family History Society is the place to start. The society is run by 22 hard-working volunteers and operates from their office in Shetland's capital, Lerwick. Here, Susan Cooper, the Chair of the society, shares more about the organisation and offers some advice for those keen to research their own genealogy.

Tell us more about the Shetland Family History Society?

The society was started in 1991 by a group of likeminded people. It was at a time when lots of family history societies were starting to form. They originally met in small groups and then in 1996 they moved into the offices we have now, at the Shetland Amenity Trust offices at Garthspool in Lerwick.

When did you first become interested in family history and genealogy?

I really loved history at school. I also had a grandfather who told stories and I loved listening to those stories. His mantra was; 'I won't always be here, so you have to ask me everything I know now.' Of course, there are many things now that I wish I had asked him.



How would a visitor go about getting in touch with the Shetland Family History Society?

Our office is open in the afternoon from 14:00 to 16:00 on weekdays and at other times by appointment and we are staffed completely by volunteers. During office opening times people can just walk in. We often get visitors emailing in advance to say that they will be visiting us soon. This is nice because it allows us to do a little bit of work ahead of their arrival so we can find any family that they might have.

When visitors arrive we will ask them for the names and dates of the relatives they know about. Then we search our huge database of Shetlanders, along with books and files in the office.

One of the things that is terrific about Shetland, is that many of the families that visitors are researching may still have members left in the islands. Quite frequently we can say, "Would you like to be put in touch with a cousin?"

One minute visitors are arriving here to find out about their family and the next minute they could be having a cup of tea with a not-previously-known-about-cousin!

Do you have any research tips for those researching their family history?

First of all, you should listen to what your family tell you. They may not be one hundred per cent right but there's often more than a hint of truth in the stories that they tell.

I also recommend making notes at every junction of your investigation. Then you can go back and check your notes, should you fail to remember where you found out about a particular piece of information.

How would someone start researching their ancestors?

To start with, I would recommend speaking with the older members of your family. Ask for birth, death or marriage certificates as they can give you lots of information about who their parents were or even who was a witness at a marriage. This can be quite useful as finding out about the witness at a marriage might reveal somebody's sister. You can work sideways as well as up and down.

However, it's important that you don't claim someone to your family tree until you've got at least two reliable written sources to confirm your research. It's best to check birth, death or marriage certificates and something else as well, like a name on a census to ensure that it's actually your ancestor and not just somebody with a similar name.

I would recommend starting with your grandparents and then build up your own family starting with what you know and then working towards what you would like to find out.

What's next for the Shetland Family History Society?

Every year we have a weekend event called 'Sharing Shetland Surnames' where we pick a particular Shetland name and look into it in great detail. People come along to the exhibition and it may be the case that they are members of that family. Last year we chose the name Arthur and Arthurson and we found out lots about that family.

It's well worth becoming a member of the Shetland Family History Society. We produce a quarterly magazine called Coontin Kin. This includes articles about the research, general hints, tips and news and we post it out all over the world. Canada, Australia and New Zealand are the most common locations as a result of the movement of Shetlanders during the early turn of the century, the Victorian times, and the Clearances. We have over 900 members worldwide!

To find out more about the Shetland Family History Society or to become a member, please visit www.shetland-fhs.org.uk



2020 - The Year of Coasts and Waters

The islands' coasts and waters have shaped the culture and lives of those who make Orkney, Shetland and mainland Scotland's northern shores their home.

It is therefore fitting that 2020 has been designated the Year of Coasts and Waters. Not only can this special year be used to celebrate the area's rich history and fascinating culture, there are also a host of special events which will be taking place especially for this year.

NorthLink Ferries will be engaging with #YCW2020 with posters, information sheets, competitions, new safety announcements, treasure hunts and events taking place on shore and on board our ships – keep an eye on NorthLink's social media feeds for more information.



Below you will find a selection of events and suggested activities for those keen to explore the coasts and waters of Caithness, Aberdeenshire, Orkney and Shetland themselves.

SPRING

Event: Orkney Nature Festival (9 to 17 May 2020) – from snorkelling safaris to Viking hikes

This annual event by RSPB is a celebration of wildlife and proves popular with residents and visitors to Orkney. The event takes in walks, talks, demonstrations and concerts, all focused on the stunning wildlife and nature found on the islands. While details for this year are still under wraps, previous events included Viking hiking, an eagle watch open day, a snorkelling safari and a nature cruise that NorthLink Ferries' MV Hamnavoe hosts to raise funds for the RSPB.

www.orkneynaturefestival.org



Activity: Surf the waves of Caithness

Thurso is known for waves of 20 feet or more and is considered one of the best places in Europe to enjoy surfing. For beginners looking to ride the waves themselves, then North Coast Watersports offers beginners lessons at Dunnet Beach, a short trip along the coast from Scrabster, where NorthLink's MV Hamnavoe departs from. For those who would rather stay on dry land and spectate, The Scottish National Surfing Championships takes place in April from Thurso.

www.northcoastwatersports.com

SUMMER

Event: North Ronaldsay Sheep Festival (27 July to 7 August 2020) – a volunteer festival fortnight

Join the seaweed-eating sheep of North Ronaldsay, along with the island's Sheep Dyke Warden during a two-week celebration of conservation. Volunteers will help restore and repair the sheep dyke on North Ronaldsay. This drystone wall is thought to be the longest in the world and is important in the day-to-day management of the sheep. Sign-up for specific days on the website and be part of the preservation of this unique part of Orcadian heritage.

www.nrsheepfestival.com



Activity: Explore Shetland's coast by Kayak

For visitors looking for a different view of Shetland's coastline, a kayak tour should definitely be on their list. Explore hidden caves, isolated wildlife colonies and stunning cliff faces on half-day, evening and full-day excursions. Suitable for complete beginners or more advanced kayakers, the team at Sea Kayak Shetland will determine the route and extent of a trip based on the ability of participants and the weather.

www.seakayakshetland.co.uk

AUTUMN

Event: Light the North – Lighthouse sculpture trail

The Light the North lighthouse trail will see the creation of over 30 lighthouse sculptures to raise funds for cancer support charity CLAN. Developed by Wild in Art, the lighthouses will be decorated by some of North-East, Moray, Orkney and Shetland's most talented artists and then positioned across the region. NorthLink Ferries have sponsored a

lighthouse sculpture and will assist with transporting it, along with a mini lighthouse to be decorated by school pupils. We hope you enjoy finding all the lighthouses on the trail!

www.lighththenorth.co.uk

Activity: Sample gin from the UK's most northerly distillery

The island of Unst's dramatic location at the very tip of Shetland, where the North Sea meets the Atlantic Ocean, has inspired the creation of Shetland Reel distillery. As the UK's most northerly distillery, Shetland Reel's gins are created using locally foraged botanicals. The distillery plays host to guided tastings for visitors from April to September on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays and can accommodate visits by appointment out with these times.

www.shetlandreel.com

WINTER

Activity: Seal spotting at Aberdeen

Seals are a regular sight in Aberdeen, especially at the harbour during winter months. Both Common and Grey seals can be spotted, as well as other visiting sea mammals including dolphins and orcas. Grab some fish and chips and take in the view!





Thank you to all the runners up of the #MagnusOnTour competition. To see the winning image, please visit page 3, and make sure you take a copy of this magazine or a 'Magnus' logo on your next holiday.

For an opportunity to win return tickets including a car and cabin to or from Orkney or Shetland for two adults, simply post a picture of yourself in an awe-inspiring location with the iconic NorthLink Ferries 'Magnus' logo on any of our social media channels.

Use the hashtag **#MagnusOnTour** to be in with a chance of winning. Alternatively, you can send your photo to **webmaster@northlinkferries.co.uk**

Good luck!



www.northlinkferries.co.uk

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