

Northern Lights

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cover story:
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NorthLink
FERRIES

Welcome

A warm welcome to NorthLink Ferries and to *Northern Lights* - our onboard magazine.

Serco is now in its third year operating NorthLink Ferries on behalf of the Scottish Government. We have been busy improving our services and constantly strive to offer passengers a comfortable crossing, great onboard facilities and most importantly, value for money.

With this in mind we have recently launched two special offers. Our 'Kids Go Free' promotion allows children to travel free on direct Lerwick to Aberdeen routes and is open for travel all year round to families who book a car and cabin.

Our 'Landbridge' offer enables passengers to travel from Lerwick to Kirkwall routing through Stromness and Scrabster at special fares starting from £25.20 – a saving of almost 30%. Passengers also have the option of spending the night on board the MV Hamnavoe in Stromness with a real value bed and breakfast offer before the 6.30am or 9am sailing.

Here at NorthLink Ferries we are embracing VisitScotland's Year of Food and Drink and are fully committed to this initiative, working towards Scotland becoming a Good Food Nation. This means we will always feature a wide variety of local produce in our menus, from our delicious Orkney beef burgers to succulent locally landed Shetland haddock, we will continue to celebrate the local origins of the food in our restaurants.

This issue of Northern Lights is packed full of interesting features – from an interview with the 2015 Guizer Jarl, Neil Robertson, to travel highlights across the North of Scotland, there's something for everyone. Of course, we haven't forgotten about the children on board today (see page 15).

I hope you have a comfortable journey and that you make the most of the facilities on board. Don't hesitate to speak to a member of the NorthLink Ferries team if there is anything we can do to improve your sailing.



Stuart Garrett
Managing Director
Serco NorthLink Ferries

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NorthLink Ferries

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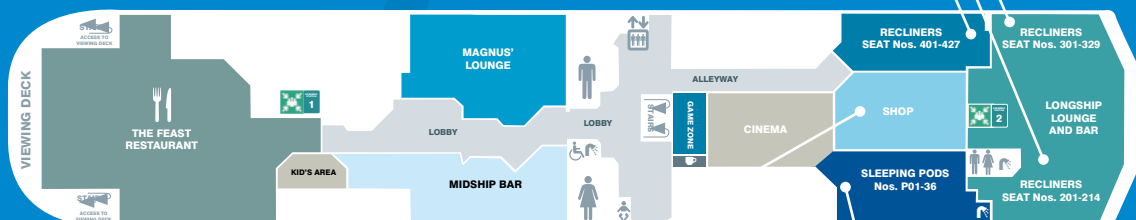
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Contact Stuart

I would welcome your feedback at any time. If you have any questions, then please contact me at **speaktostuart@northlinkferries.co.uk**



Travel information



MV Hjalmland and MV Hrossey

DECK 6

Reception and cabin accommodation can be found on Deck 5

MV Hamnavoe

DECK 6



DECK 5



Travel information

Great value can be found by upgrading to our **Magnus' Lounge** which offers the perfect place to work or unwind. On MV Hamnavoe you will receive complimentary tea, coffee, soft drinks, nibbles and newspapers. On morning sailings hot filled rolls are on offer, and in the evenings, passengers can relax with a complimentary drink.



On MV Hjaltland and MV Hrossey Magnus' Lounge is open until 01:30 before reopening in the morning where complimentary continental breakfast is served. You will receive complimentary tea, coffee, soft drinks, nibbles and two vouchers for an alcoholic beverage.

We've teamed up with **Highland Park** to offer Magnus' Lounge ticket holders **50% off the Best Spirit Tour at the Highland Park Distillery!***



*Valid for Magnus' Lounge passengers for up to two weeks after travel date. Discount will be given on production of a stamped Magnus' Lounge Highland Park pass. Best Spirit Tour normally £20 per person, offer price £10 per person payable at distillery.

Other fantastic on board facilities on MV Hjaltland, MV Hrossey and MV Hamnavoe include:

Cabins

Cabins are comfortable, modern and fully equipped with en suite, washbasin, toilet and shower facilities. There are a wide variety of cabins to suit every budget including exclusive and shared use, as well as cabins suitable for those with restricted mobility.

On board shop

Our shops stock some of the best crafts and products the Shetland and Orkney islands' have to offer with a wide selection of jewellery, knitwear, wines and spirits. There is an extensive range of books and magazines, including many by local writers. Our range of fragrances is very popular and offers excellent value for money on many leading brands when compared to high street prices.

MV Hjaltland and MV Hrossey also feature:

Reclining seats

A comfortable option for passengers choosing to travel without overnight accommodation. Blankets and pillows are available to hire from the Northern Isles Shop on board.

Sleeping pods

Sleeping pods come with a large table, adjustable lighting and USB socket. Costing just £18, the pods come complete with a sleep pack which includes a blanket, pillow and eye mask, as well as a shower token for the adjacent shower facilities. The sleep pack can be collected from the ship's reception desk.

MV Hamnavoe Bed & Breakfast

If you're booked onto the first MV Hamnavoe sailing, why not make the most of the affordable bed and breakfast deal? Prices start from just £36.50 which includes evening access to Magnus' Lounge.

Menu choices

BREAKFAST MENU

Breakfast Service Time:

Hjaltland / Hrossey

Breakfast Service Time:

From: 06.00 (Aberdeen) / 06.30 (Lerwick)

To: 09.00

Hamnavoe

Breakfast Service Time:

From: 06.00

To: 10.15

Breakfast Menu:

All you can eat breakfast

£9.95

A full cooked Scottish breakfast or a choice from:
bacon, sausage, grilled tomatoes, black pudding, sautéed mushrooms, fried or scrambled eggs and potato scones
Cereal with milk

Fresh fruit / Grapefruit or orange segments

Toast / Croissant with butter and preserve / Danish pastries

Cold meats and cheeses

Hard boiled eggs

A selection of chilled juices

Hot drinks from our ETHYCO Fair Trade range

Coffees - Americano, Cappuccino, Latté and Espresso

Decaffeinated coffees - Americano, Cappuccino, Latté

Teas - breakfast tea, infusion and herbal teas

Hot chocolate

Continental breakfast

£6.95

Cereal with milk

Fresh fruit / Grapefruit or orange segments

Toast / Croissant with butter and preserve / Danish pastries

Cold meats and cheeses

Hard boiled eggs

A selection of chilled juices

Hot drinks from our ETHYCO Fair Trade range

Coffees - Americano, Cappuccino, Latté and Espresso

Decaffeinated coffees - Americano, Cappuccino, Latté

Teas - breakfast tea, infusion and herbal teas

Hot chocolate

Up to two kids (under 16) **eat breakfast for free** with every adult

Lite Bite Alternatives

Lite Bite Alternatives available on MV Hjaltland and MV Hrossey in the Midships Bar, and on MV Hamnavoe in the Feast Restaurant

If you require any information regarding allergenic ingredients in our food please ask a member of staff.

Experience Sumburgh Head

Sumburgh Head is a world class visitor attraction, offering a wealth of experiences for visitors. Located at the southernmost tip of the island, the iconic Sumburgh Head Lighthouse, Visitor Centre and Nature Reserve is the first point of mainland Shetland visible when arriving by sea or by air.

Designed by Robert Stevenson and built in 1824, Sumburgh Head is the oldest Stevenson Lighthouse in Shetland, and has been in continuous use since its construction. The grade-A listed Lighthouse Buildings have recently been sensitively refurbished in a £5.4million project to include a series of displays telling the story of the development of lighthouse technology, and that of the men, and their families, who lived and worked there.

The surrounding cliffs are alive with the colonies of seabirds, making this RSPB nature reserve one of the best places in the British Isles to get up close and personal with puffins and other favourites. Information panels around the area help visitors to identify seabirds and learn about their feeding habits and other traits. The geology, archaeology and social history of the area are all interpreted through interesting and accessible information panels around the nature reserve.

The Engine Rooms have been fully restored, along with the Lighthouse Foghorn, which visitors can climb to take in the breathtaking views out to sea. Fair Isle can be seen in the distance on a clear day, and indeed the mighty horn could be heard that far away when it blew regularly.

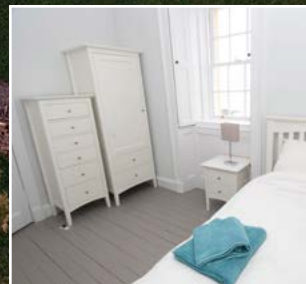
The Marine Life Centre, which was also once home to a Lighthouse Keeper and his family, was transformed into an exciting and interactive journey of discovery examining the sealife around

Sumburgh Head and the extensive bird colonies on the cliffs. Visitors can immerse themselves in the underwater environment before climbing up through the kelp forest to meet the lifesize killer and minke whales, and hear the sounds of the seabirds from all around.

The **Assistant Keeper's Cottage** has been carefully renovated and restored into luxury self-catering accommodation, with many original features reinstated alongside more contemporary furnishings to provide a stunning and welcoming holiday home. The cottage sleeps up to five guests in a single, bunk and double room layout, with underfloor heating throughout. The beautiful kitchen includes handmade units and an electric Aga cooker along with a gas hob. A separate, fully equipped utility room allows guests to be self-sufficient.

The website includes information about the visitor experience at Sumburgh Head, including opening times, season ticket prices and ideas for activities to download before visiting. Visit www.sumburghhead.com or follow on Facebook – www.facebook.com/sumburghhead.

NorthLink Ferries and **Sumburgh Head** have partnered to offer you the chance to win a fantastic trip to Shetland. The prize includes travel with NorthLink Ferries as well as a three night stay in the luxurious Lightkeepers cottage. To enter this exciting competition, just visit www.northlinkferries.co.uk/sumburghheadcompetition





North of Scotland Highlights

visit the mainland

CAITHNESS



Duncansby Head



Wick

CAITHNESS

The two areas of Caithness and Sutherland form Scotland's northern wilderness. Their spectacular scenery varies from wild cliffs and tiny islands to deserted moorland and remote sandy beaches with superb panoramic mountain views, tree-lined twisting roads and foaming rivers. Here you'll find dozens of interesting castle ruins and ancient monuments, some stunning golf courses as well as lochs and rivers perfect for trout or salmon fishing.

The Queen Mother's lasting legacy to Caithness is of course The Castle and Gardens of Mey. She acquired the property, which was the most northerly inhabited castle on British mainland, to renovate and restore it, creating beautiful gardens. For almost half a century she spent many happy summers there.

The Castle and Gardens of Mey have held VisitScotland's highest award of a 5 Star quality assurance grading every year since their first unannounced visit in 2007. Their annual assessments include all aspects of

the castle, gardens, animal centre, gift shop and tearoom. This is an important accolade for the castle and visitor centre, and well-earned recognition for all the hard work and enthusiasm of the staff.

Another spectacular Castle in Caithness and Sutherland is Dunrobin Castle, one of Britain's oldest continuously inhabited houses dating back to the early 1300s, home to the Earls and later, the Dukes of Sutherland.

The Castle, which resembles a beautiful French chateau with its towering conical spires, has seen the architectural influences of Sir Charles Barry, who designed London's Houses of Parliament, and Scotland's own Sir Robert Lorimer. The Castle was used as a naval hospital during the First World War and as a boys' boarding school from 1965 to 1972.

Dunrobin Castle is on the east coast of the Northern Highlands and is open annually from 1 April to 15 October.



Aberdeen Harbour



Balmoral Castle

● ABERDEEN

ABERDEEN

Often referred to as the 'Granite City', Aberdeen is Scotland's third largest city and the most populous part of the North East.

The bustling energy hub is home to a cosmopolitan mix of people, drawn to the oil industry and two of the country's paramount universities – Robert Gordon University and the University of Aberdeen.

From historic buildings to modern art galleries, Aberdeen offers a wealth of culture on the doorstep of a dramatic coastline and beautiful countryside.

Unbeknown to many, Aberdeenshire boasts more castles per acre than anywhere else in the UK. Visitors to the area must embark upon the UK's only Castle Trail which features 17 of the region's most striking castles and stately homes. The itinerary for the Trail is organised into four broad areas

of Aberdeenshire, to group the castles around a main hub town. A visit to any of the castles makes for a fantastic day out, or visitors can navigate their own way along sections of the Trail as part of a longer break.

From exploring the impressive remains of Balvenie Castle at Dufftown, to fishing in the grounds of Delgatie Castle near Turriff, there is something for everyone within the Castle Trail. Guided tours are even offered round the grounds, gardens and exhibitions of Balmoral Castle, the iconic Scottish home of the Royal Family.

Ness of Brodgar

We were delighted when **Nick Card, Director of the Ness of Brodgar, University of the Highlands and Islands Archaeology Institute**, answered our questions about the Ness of Brodgar.



Can you tell us a bit about how the Ness of Brodgar was discovered and when you became involved?

We always knew there was archaeology at the Ness – there are two standing stones in the garden of Loch View and over the years various artefacts were discovered in those two fields including the Brodgar Stone in the 1920's.

In 2002 soon after the World Heritage Site was designated, the Orkney College Archaeology Department (now the UHI Archaeology Institute) in conjunction with what was then the Orkney Archaeology Trust, decided to put all the known archaeological sites into their wider context and see what else might be present between the known upstanding monuments. We employed geophysical techniques – where you pass various types of electromagnetic waves through the ground to give you an indication of what might be there.

It was a huge project covering over 300 hectares from Maeshowe all the way up beyond the Ring of Brodgar that has revealed numerous new archaeological sites. The two fields that make up the Ness were the first we surveyed and this revealed a host of geophysical anomalies. At the time we had no idea of the date of them and there wasn't anything that indicated that they were prehistoric – we thought it was going to be a multi-period site that you often get in Orkney and can comprise of buildings of different eras constructed one on top of the other.

It was on 27th March 2003 when we got a phone call from the landowners Ola and Arnie Tait. When they had the field ploughed a large, worked stone turned up! I clearly remember visiting with Julie Gibson, the County Archaeologist and Professor Jane Downes – it was freezing standing in the field that day – and seeing this big stone slab that had obviously been artificially altered.

At that point we thought that this slab was a part of a Bronze Age cist burial, so Glasgow University was called in to investigate the presumed human remains. But what they uncovered was not a burial, it was the corner of one of these spectacular buildings we have at the Ness. The following year we decided to further investigate the nature of the site through a series of very small trenches and from there it's developed into what you see today. Our main trench today seems huge but is still only 10% of the site.

How would you describe the Ness of Brodgar to a first time visitor?

It's a difficult one because the Ness is unique. I think most people prior to the Ness being discovered would think of Stone Age buildings on the scale of those at Skara Brae. What we have at the Ness is a huge man-made mound which comprises of a sequence of very large, architecturally advanced and spectacular buildings contained within a massive walled enclosure all dating to the Neolithic period.

The scale and complexity and the beautiful nature of the stonework and really every other aspect of the Ness that tells us that this wasn't a domestic site but something a lot more special. The Ness is really transforming our understanding of many aspects of the Neolithic not just in Orkney but across Britain and beyond.

Why do you think Neolithic people built the Ness of Brodgar?

What we have here is a very special landscape. When you stand at the Ness you feel like you're in the middle of a huge natural amphitheatre that's defined by the hills all the way around in the far distance. All the main nearby monuments, - the Ring of Brodgar, Stones of Stenness, and Maeshowe - are all satellites to what's happening at the Ness. The Ness has a very central location in the landscape. There is no doubt that our Neolithic ancestors chose this area because of its very special nature. At the Ness, you have land surrounded by water that in turn is surrounded by more land and then the sea - it's like a microcosm of the wider world.

Do you think the Ness, the Ring of Brodgar, Maeshowe and the Standing Stones are linked?

The simplest answer "yes" - they were all contemporary at various stages of their life. Whilst they were not all built at the same time we now have evidence that the Ness was in use for over 1,000 years. Through most of that time the Stones of Stenness would have been there in one form



Enjoy free guided tours at the Ness of Brodgar from 8th July – 26th August

Monday – Friday: 11am, 1pm and 3pm

Saturday – Sunday: 11am and 3pm

*Ness of Brodgar, courtesy of
Hugo Anderson Whymark*

or another and parts of the Ring of Brodgar, Skara Brae and Maeshowe too – all inextricably linked by the Neolithic population who built and used them.

The Ness is thought to have been abandoned in a dramatic fashion. Can you tell us a bit about it and why the Neolithic people did this?

Dramatic is maybe too strong a word for it. However, around about 2300 BC it seems that the last major buildings of the site were deliberately demolished or deconstructed, and the buildings smothered with monumental amounts of midden – it was as if there was an attempt to erase the site from memory. It is too easy a solution to say that this was due to the introduction of new metal (bronze) technologies and all the social changes that this entailed. It is much more likely that there were a number of contributory factors, but whatever happened the grandeur of the heyday of the Ness was eclipsed.

We must remember that like the modern world, life and society in the Neolithic and prehistory was not static. People's ideas and beliefs evolved and changed – a very dynamic system.

An element of this 'decommissioning process' was the deposition of a mass of animal bone around the largest building on site, Structure 10 - hundreds of cattle and mainly just their shin bones. It's not just a dump of animal bone – it was all laid out very carefully.

An Orcadian told me about their grandfather who was considered to be quite a wealthy farmer because he had six cows. At the Ness of Brodgar there are at least 400 cattle, possibly as many as 600 represented in what appears to be a single event. We've just recently received more radio carbon dates and again, all the dates are concentrated around 2300BC supporting the idea that all the cattle were killed and deposited at this one time. It must have been quite an event! Neil Oliver called it the biggest barbecue in history.

It seems remarkable that such a big structure became 'hidden' in the landscape - how did this happen?

Some of the building was deliberately demolished and huge amounts of midden material, rubbish, were brought to the site and dumped, to cover it up. It seems to have been a deliberate act! The Ness of Brodgar was so well covered that for the next 4000 years the site was forgotten about.

Every year you excavate the Ness over a short summer period - what restricts the digging and how do you plan what you're going to investigate each year?

Each year we devise an excavation strategy by considering what's been discovered in previous years and how we might answer specific questions. The excavation of the buildings in particular is ongoing because it takes a long time (and lots of patience) to disentangle the different elements of such well-preserved structures and their complicated histories. In archaeological terms, the Ness is a hugely complex site. We've been very lucky with the team we have managed to assemble – we have some of the top archaeologists in the country - but there's still a lot of head scratching that goes on.

If anybody wishes to support us they can do so through either of those charities or get in contact with me. There are also collection boxes on the site itself, and although the guided tours are free, people are encouraged to leave a donation. Orkney has benefited hugely from the discovery of the Ness and we really appreciate and need the support of the public and businesses to allow this asset to be further realised to a worldwide audience.

To read the full interview with Nick Card visit www.northlinkferries.co.uk

Year of Food and Drink



During the course of the **2015 Year of Food and Drink**, and in order for **NorthLink Ferries** to have an integral share in the journey towards Scotland becoming a **Good Food Nation**, we pledge to continue our local food and drink sourcing strategy in order to maximise our use of produce from **Orkney, Shetland** and the **North East of Scotland**, in particular from sustainable, ethical and traceable sources.

NorthLink Ferries will increase the visibility of Scottish produce and products to help showcase and celebrate the seasonal variety and quality of our food and drink for the benefit of visitors from home and abroad. In so doing, NorthLink Ferries will provide healthy and affordable options that celebrate the local origins of food, and its contribution to health and the economy of the Northern Isles and the North East of Scotland.



Orkney Brewery

The award-winning Orkney Brewery is one of the UK's leading craft breweries. Housed in the former schoolhouse at Quoyle, in Orkney's west mainland, it is one of the most popular tourist attractions in the islands.

Formed in 1988, Orkney Brewery became part of Sinclair Breweries Ltd, run by Orcadian Norman Sinclair, in 2006. Norman has always believed that quality is fundamental to all of his products. He said: "We create traditional craft brewed ales full of flavour using only the best ingredients. The beers are brewed in tune with the ecology of our beautiful location on the island. We believe that the unique taste of our products owes much to the Orcadian water and the care we take in making our fine ales."

The Visitor Centre

When Norman took over Orkney Brewery he embarked upon exciting expansion plans which included opening a visitor centre to incorporate brewery tours, a café and events venue, along with a brewery shop to sell Orkney Brewery products alongside local arts and crafts.



When he opened the centre, he launched a community-wide search for local memorabilia which brought together old friends who had lost touch over the years.

Norman was emphatic that the experience should be enjoyed by the whole family and he ensures younger visitors are well catered for. Part of the brewery tour takes place in the former school's old classroom where the pupils used to bring a piece of peat in the morning for the fire, to heat the classroom and dry out clothes. Visitors can see old pictures, memoirs and artefacts and there are even replica Victorian school uniforms for the younger visitors to dress up in as well as old fashioned wooden toys to play with. The tour travels through to the brewhouse where visitors can learn about Orkney ales and the brewing process. Some more history as a timeline traces back major events in Orkney's past and even shows evidence of Neolithic brewing taking place on the

islands. The tour ends with sampling in the Tasting Hall.

The Orkney Brewery visitor centre opened in July 2012 and was awarded five stars from VisitScotland – the only Scottish brewery to achieve five star status.



The Tasting Hall Café

Local food and Orkney Brewery ales feature strongly on the menu in the Tasting Hall Café. Visitors can enjoy lunch or delicious home bakes including the famous Dragonhead Cake made with Orkney Brewery's Dragonhead Stout.

The Products

Orkney Brewery's range of hand crafted ales span a wide spectrum of styles and tastes from the iconic dark ale Dark Island to the lighter crisp style of the Corncrake Ale. The brewery's involvement with the RSPB includes a donation from every pint or bottle of the Corncrake Ale sold so giving to charity never tasted so good!

Orkney Brewery's World Champion strong dark ale DARK ISLAND RESERVE has expanded to the 330ml size as well as the original 750ml bottle, still with the much loved clay stopper. The brewery gift shop includes special gift packs of these world class ales.

Awards and New Developments

One of the original ales from Orkney Brewery is its legendary Skull Splitter which won a silver award at the Campaign for Real Ale's Champion Winter Beer for Britain 2015. The 8.5 per cent ale, which came home with a silver award in the category (Barley Wine and Strong Old Ales) is named after Thorfinn Einarsson, the 7th Viking Earl of Orkney, nick named The Skull Splitter!



Look out for the new Puffin Ale available from June.

Meet our service manager, Jane Leask:



What were your original career aspirations?

I remember when I was young, the first thing I ever wanted to be was a nurse, I think every young girl goes through that phase, and my Mum was a nurse too. Then in the early high school years I wanted to be an air hostess, until I was told that I was too short, as in those days, you had to be five foot five to apply.

I started working in the hotel industry when I was 12 as a pot washer and when I turned 15, moved onto reception. At the tender age of 16, I announced to my parents that I was moving to Aberdeen to work in a hotel. Looking back, it must have been a worrying time for them but they supported my decision and helped me make the move.

I worked in the hotel industry for a year before starting work as a sales executive in the freight forwarding industry where I worked for 13 years before moving back to Shetland in 1997.

What does your job involve?

I started with NorthLink in September 2002 when they took over the service from P&O. As a customer service manager based in Shetland it is my job to ensure we provide excellent customer service and that this is promoted throughout the business. Team spirit is a very important aspect of my working day; I like to work in a lively and vibrant atmosphere, with a healthy camaraderie present among staff. We have all our customer interests at heart and make sure they get the best possible outcome in every situation. No two days are the same; I am responsible for the day to day running of the Lerwick Terminal, including operations, customer care and liaison with Stakeholders, Lerwick Port Authority, ship's Captain and Hotel operations staff.

I am proud to work for NorthLink Ferries as I believe we have an excellent quality service and give first class customer care. We sponsor a variety of local events which I really enjoy going along to support. We also assist many local groups with travel costs and I enjoy being in close contact with the community.

What do you enjoy most about your job now?

I am very much a people person and enjoy interaction with the public day in, day out.

I look forward to helping people resolve their issues and ensuring that every passenger I deal with walks away knowing that I have done my best for them.

Any memorable stories for Northern Lights' readers?

Living in a small community and to be known for the work I do, I have had some interesting ways of people looking to contact me. There have been a few occasions where I have had people come to my home address to make a booking when the office is closed.

I once had a lady come to my house with car keys for her father who was coming off the boat the next morning and she had forgotten to leave the keys in the terminal earlier in the day for him! I also once had a gentleman phone my mother to ask for my phone number as he had left his wallet onboard from the previous sailing.

I often get approached in the local supermarket for information about availability on future sailings! On the flip side of that, if I see a booking for someone that I know that needs lift access or assistance, or even something simple like knowing that they prefer a portside cabin, I will prepare ahead for them coming.

What would be your advice to anyone embarking on a career in customer service?

I received some very important advice from my Dad about my working career when I was young. He always told me to treat people how I would like to be treated myself. Never leave yourself open for criticism. Go home knowing that you did your best and what was asked of you.

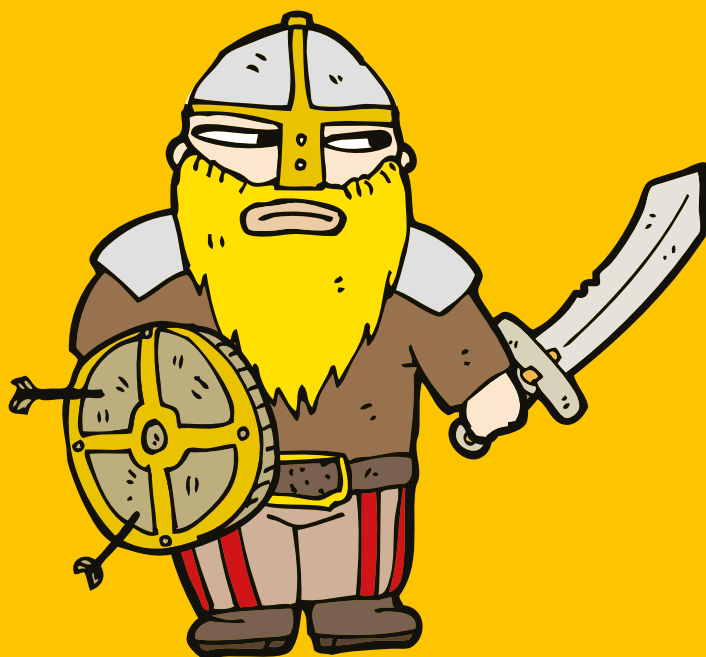
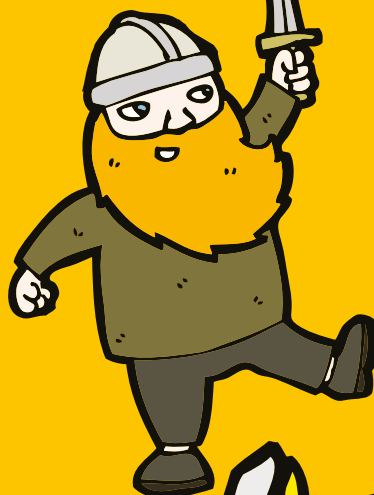
Vikling's Den!



Our ferries are equipped to the highest standards to give all our passengers, from the oldest to the youngest, a safe, comfortable journey. The **Vikling's Den** is provided for our younger passengers and contains toys, books, activities and a television showing cartoons or other children's programming.

For the older Viklings the **Games Zone** is equipped with electronic consoles including an Xbox tower. These are great value for money – costing only £1 for 15 minutes of play. Our shops offer a variety of toys, sweets, souvenirs and comics to keep children occupied on their journey to and from Orkney and Shetland.

Children can pick up a '**Draw your own Vikling**' sheet from the **Children's Play Area**. These can be handed to a member of staff in the Northern Isles Gift Shop and they will be displayed on board.



Jarl Squad



Neil Robertson was the **Up Helly Aa 2015 Guizer Jarl**, or Chief Guizer, leader of the Jarl Squad. The Jarl Squad are Vikings for the day at **Up Helly Aa**, Lerwick's annual fire festival....

Now that Up Helly Aa is over - did you enjoy the experience?

It was hard work, the Jarl's suit is really heavy – about three and a half stone – but overall it was brilliant, a big yes for enjoyment! The best part about being Guizer Jarl was the civic reception in the town hall. I'm a council employee so it was a rare chance for me to stand and have all the councillors listen!

What do you do when you're not the Guizer Jarl?

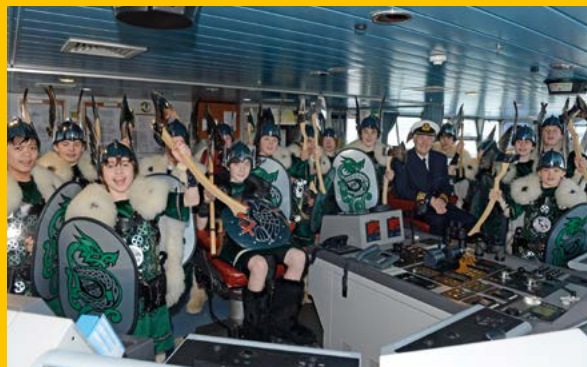
I'm a roads engineer with the council's roads department. Up Helly Aa has been a huge part of my life for the past 15 years. Next year's South Mainland Jarl is one of my colleagues – another colleague is 2017's Delting Up Helly Aa Jarl – so there's lots of Up Helly Aa chat in our office; lots of experts!

My first memories are fairly early, my dad and uncle were keen guizers and my grandmother, mother and sister were all hostesses; my sister still is! I would always remember the night when my Dad or Uncle Jim came home with a suit in a bag, it was a big secret, I'd be keen to get a peek at this before the big day!

Was there a particular Guizer Jarl that you looked up to and thought, 'I'd like to be like him'?

A couple of my teachers were Jarl's in 1974 and 75. These two guys have been lifelong friends of mine from when I left school; Jim Kerr – one of the nicest people I know and Morris Manson, who I have a small libation with on a very regular basis! So I looked up to them as teachers' and when they were Jarls they were something else!

NorthLink Ferries was part of the action at this year's **Up Helly Aa**, when our iconic Viking, **Magnus**, was brought to life. Acting as **King Magnus the Good**, 13-year-old **Lewis Harkness** led 15 members of the **Junior Jarl Squad** on board the **MV Hjaltland** followed by over 100 members of family and friends to enjoy a celebratory lunch. Marking the occasion, a Viking shield was presented by Lewis to **Captain Dave Wheeler** on board the vessel.





How long ago did you and your Jarl's Squad start preparing for this Up Helly Aa?

Financial preparations started about seven or eight years before and suit design was about two years before. You don't want to come up with something too soon in case any Jarls in between have similar ideas. We didn't start making anything until April 2014. As for the beard; I usually grow a bit



of a beard every year for Up Helly Aa but would rarely have a full beard. This year I had about 20 months' worth of beard! The Jarl's suit is the same basic suit every year, and the one thing that can look different is a beard so I thought, 'Let's go for it!'

How did it feel at Up Helly Aa to be on the Galley (a Viking's ship) surrounded by all those flaming torches?

It's a surreal sort of feeling – when folk are all circling around you in the park, you can see them trailing around you. It's like being at your own funeral, a surreal experience but a beautiful one none the less.

You were representing 'Olav Haraldsson' - can you tell us a little bit about him?

He was crowned King of Norway in 1015. 1000 years on; it seemed appropriate to represent him! An incredible man; his father died while his mother was in childbirth with him. By the age of 12 he was given his first command of a Longship. The nursery rhyme 'London Bridge is falling down' is thought to have come from when he pulled down Southwark Bridge with ropes during a battle! He united Norway as one country and changed the Norwegian laws to those used today.

Finally, if you were to advise a visitor to Shetland about Up Helly Aa, what would you say?

Book your travel early. If you can find someone in Shetland and get an inside track on getting a ticket for the hall, it's far more fun and a better party if you know somebody!

To read the full interview with Neil Robertson please visit www.northlinkferries.co.uk

Junior Inter-county

The two archipelagos of Orkney and Shetland are naturally drawn to one another in terms of friendship and rivalry. Nowhere is this more evident than in the annual Junior Inter-county sports competition.

About the Junior Inter-county

With adult sporting events between Orkney and Shetland already in place, Alex Doloughan, County Youth Organiser for Orkney, had a bright idea in 1947 to introduce a similar event for youngsters to help foster the same inter-island relations. The Junior Inter-county event was established and has since seen over 3,250 Orkney and Shetland youngsters take part.

The competition began with three sports, football, hockey and athletics, with swimming later added the following year and netball in 1950. With every effort and winning point counting towards the final score, the ultimate goal is for teams to take home the coveted Stuart Cup, a trophy donated by Shetland's Chief Constable, Tom Stuart, at the very first Junior Inter-county.

The Athletes

Junior Inter-county has a special importance to young Orcadians and Shetlanders, who are cheered on by parents and grandparents who once took part themselves and formed lifelong friendships with their island neighbours.

In the early years when the competition was run over a 24-hour period, visiting athletes were welcomed to stay with locals including competitors' families. As the competition has developed, the event now spans over two days with large numbers of athletes staying in local accommodation.

The excitement of being away from home for the first time was an exciting thought for youngsters many years ago and is still for teenagers today.

Jockie Wood, who took part twice in Junior Inter-county during 1963 and 1964, recalls

staying with a Shetland family: "Mrs Smith was a very kindly person who soon calmed my nerves and nursed me out of my crippling shyness".

"I remember her saying 'Noo boys! Doo're both playin fitba de night. Doo'll need tae hae somethen substantial for de tey. Wid du like ham n' eggs or whit aboot potted herrin?' Unfamiliar with this new accent I did not realise that I was being offered fish, and imagined a large grey bird in a pot!"

Junior Inter-county has inspired a fiery determination in athletes from Orkney and Shetland. Records have been broken over the years and coaches shipped in from further afield.





The Venues

One of the most noticeable changes since the start of the Junior Inter-county is the major improvement of facilities in Orkney and Shetland, and their effect on the performance of the respective Inter-county team.

In the early years, the swimming competitions were held in Kirkwall and Lerwick harbour. These hazardous venues, which were often used as sewage outlets, offered no defined lanes making it difficult to identify bunched up competitors. Other makeshift venues included a netball court that was held in a WW2 hanger and car park.

The aspiration to perform well in Junior Inter-county has had a large part to play in the planning of many purpose built venues.

1969 – Stromness swimming pool built leading to a surge of swimming wins for Orkney

1974 – Swimming pool opens in Lerwick

1986 – Clickimin Centre constructed in Lerwick with an all-weather running track

2001 – Kirkwall's Pickaquoy Centre established

NorthLink Ferries will support the 2015 Junior Inter-county in Shetland with additional sailings.

There will be an additional Kirkwall northbound call on Friday 19 June which will operate to the following timetable:
Dep AB 1800; Arr KI 0000; Dep KI 0030 (Sat 20 June); Arr LE 0730.

There will also be an additional Kirkwall southbound call on Sunday 21 June, which will operate to the following timetable:
Dep LE 1900; Arr KI 0000; Dep KI (Mon 22 June) 0030; Arr AB 0800.

NorthLink Ferries would like to wish both Orkney and Shetland the very best in this year's competition.



With grateful thanks to Jockie Wood, whose book 'United through Sport – Orkney v Shetland – the Story of the Junior Inter-county' offers a fascinating and comprehensive guide to the competition through the years!



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what you imagine...*



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ancient ruins, the islands are yours to
discover. And with regular, comfortable
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