

Northern Lights

INSIDE

Ratray Head Lighthouse

PLUS

Textiles in Shetland

A Walk in Deerness

Up Helly Aa in the past



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Welcome



I hope you, your family and friends are safe and well as we continue to operate within the confines of Covid-19. 2020 was an extremely difficult year for everyone and to those who have lost loved ones during this time, my heartfelt thoughts, on behalf of myself and my colleagues at NorthLink Ferries, are with you.

Captain John Strathearn and Connor McGarry, our Marine Superintendent have led our Covid-19 response, managing the very necessary risk assessments we have in place to ensure your safety and that of my colleagues in maintaining our lifeline service. We will continue to work within the Scottish Government's guidelines for travel, particularly to ensure that Coronavirus (Covid-19) Strategic Framework objectives can be delivered as we now move through the five levels of intervention in the latest guidance in our fight against the pandemic. I ask for your support in complying with all advice given both whilst onboard and whenever changes are made.

If you have not already downloaded the NHS Scotland Protect Scotland app, can I ask you to stop what you are doing and do so now – your health and that of your family, friends and work colleagues may depend on you doing so.

When I wrote my last introduction, we were still in lockdown and our passenger and car volumes had been severely curtailed. Indeed, by the time our June 2020 figures were captured, passenger and car volumes were both down just under 95%.

It was encouraging to see our volumes return, and at the end of December we recorded passenger volumes down by 54% and car volumes down by 39% compared with the same period last year. However, the impact of Covid-19 in 2020 was significant, with passenger volumes down in the year by 65% and our car carryings down by 56%.

In contrast to the significant decline in passenger numbers, our freight volumes have held up remarkably well. This highlights the important role our services play in the islands supply chain, transporting a range of goods vital to the economic wellbeing of our island communities. The types of goods shipped vary from the everyday items such as post and parcels, food and drink and medical supplies to large volumes for primary industry sectors like seafood and agriculture.

As is the case every year, the latter has shipped significant volumes of livestock off island in September and October via local sales at Orkney and Shetland Marts and mainland sales at Aberdeen & Northern Marts based at Thainstone, Inverurie and we take great pride in our role in this process.

Throughout we have regularly communicated with our key industry contacts to make sure the capacity we provide has been suitable to meet demand. My thanks go to Kris Bevan who with his freight team and all my colleagues both ship and shore deliver this vital logistics operation.

Close contact is maintained with Orkney and Shetland Resilience Planning Groups, a vital and effective communications network of key public and private sector organisations, working together to ensure we are all sighted on emergent issues, trends or concerns. Whilst Covid-19 is a challenge for us all, it is heartening to be part of a framework of individuals working to ensure the safety of others during these times.

My Commercial Director, Jim Dow, remains in close liaison with VisitScotland and other marketing led organisations to ensure that when the sun does appear from behind the clouds that we are and remain ready to welcome visitors to the Northern Isles.

As ever, you are very welcome onboard. My colleagues are on hand, albeit perhaps with just a degree more of physical distancing, and a face covering too, but still I trust with a NorthLink welcome. My thanks to them for all they do both ship and shore in delivering our essential and lifeline service.

We look forward to having you back onboard with us.



Stuart Garrett
Stuart Garrett
Managing Director
Serco NorthLink Ferries

Contents	
Pet-friendly cabins	04
Staff Profile – Tanya Sim	05
The future is bright for Shetland textiles	06
A Walk in Deerness	08
Blow away the cobwebs at Rattray Head Lighthouse	10
Why generations of families keep returning to River Thurso	12
Up Helly Aa through the years	14
Greyhope Bay – a new attraction for Aberdeen	16
Mackenzie's Farm Shop & Café	18
Cloutie Dumpling recipe – in 30 minutes	19

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Pet-friendly cabins

Each NorthLink passenger ship now has pet-friendly cabins available. These retain the same high standards of comfort as other cabin types, but also have:

- A vinyl floor instead of a carpet
- A dog bowl provided on request
- A dog treat from 'Wow Dog'

Customers can walk their dogs on the outer deck and are advised to bring their own bedding for their pets.

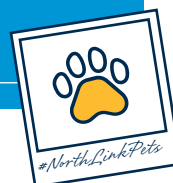
It is expected that pets will remain on cabin floors and that any mess is cleaned up. As well as the cabin charge, there is a £15 supplement for each pet staying within the cabin.

Pet-friendly cabins can be booked at www.northlinkferries.co.uk



Post a picture on social media of your pet travelling with NorthLink Ferries! Use either of the following hashtags:

#petfriendlycabins
#NorthLinkPets



Staff Profile - Tanya Sim

In each issue we feature an interview with one of our NorthLink colleagues to give our passengers a chance to learn more about what goes on behind the scenes. This edition features Tanya Sim, who joined NorthLink Ferries after graduating. Here, Tanya tells us more.

Tell us a bit about yourself.

I'm a born and bred Aberdonian with an outgoing personality. I'm also a non-identical twin! I've worked at NorthLink Ferries for nearly nine years and like to class myself as the office entertainer.

How did you get into your career / current job?

I studied travel and tourism at Aberdeen College and took on the role of Customer Service Assistant in NorthLink's Aberdeen terminal after I graduated. Within two and a half years I was promoted to Customer Service Supervisor before applying for the role I'm currently in, Hotel Operations Co-Ordinator. I've now been in this role for six years and can honestly say I really enjoy my job.

What do your day-to-day responsibilities include?

My daily duties are extremely varied. My main responsibility is to actively assist in the smooth running of the hotel departments onboard all five of our vessels. I ensure the hotel departments have what is required to provide an excellent level of customer service.

Additionally, I have strong working relationships with our suppliers, particularly those in the local areas of Aberdeen, Caithness, Orkney and Shetland as we currently source more than 90% of all our hotel operations from organisations within 50 miles of our operating ports. I'm proud to be a part of our commitment to local businesses.



What is it about your job that you enjoy the most?

The main thing I enjoy about my job is the teams I work with, both onboard and in the office. There are some great characters and I love hearing all their stories. I also learn a lot from the people I work with as they have been in this industry a lot longer than me. Another aspect I really enjoy about my job is how varied it can be. One day I will be adding fragrance lines to the ships' system for them to order and the next day I can be sourcing toilet brushes for the cabins onboard.

When you're not working, what do you like to do in your spare time?

In the past you would have found me dancing in any spare time I could find – when I was 12, I had a full scholarship to The Dance School of Scotland where I studied for 4 years, and this allowed me to travel the globe doing what I love. Nowadays I like to spend time at the gym, going for long walks with my two dogs and getting together with family and friends.

The future is bright for Shetland textiles



**By Misa Hay, author
at Shetland Wool
Adventures.**

**Shetland has
something that
makes it truly stand out
amongst other destinations – a rich,
living textile heritage and a vibrant and
creative textile manufacturing scene.**

In recent years the industry has begun revitalising its present and rediscovering its past. Whether it's because people care more about the provenance of their clothing or are tired of mass consumption, Shetland is slowly rebuilding its reputation for creating outstanding, high quality and lasting knitwear.

There has been a huge global resurgence in crafts, in particular hand-knitting which, for millions of knitters worldwide, is focusing attention on Shetland. Shetland Wool Week, now in its eleventh year, is a testimony to this trend and over the years it has become Shetland's biggest annual event.

"The story of textiles in Shetland is bound with the people and the place. The landscape, which has been home to the sheep and inspired craftspeople for centuries, is as central to the making of the isles' cloth and garments as the materials, tools and techniques themselves. Textiles have been key to the shaping of Shetland's society, economy and culture."

Shetland Textiles 800 BC to the Present

A decade ago few people imagined that knitting would go through such an incredible resurgence and that Shetland would once again become an important place in terms of textiles. For a long time the isles had been associated with distinctive knitwear that reached the Royal Court as well as people in faraway places, but in the 70s and 80s of the last century this tradition started to decline.



There were many reasons, but the main one was the discovery of oil in the North Sea and the boom that followed. This new industry offered many exciting employment opportunities with far higher wages. The traditional industries such as hand-knitting started to decline. So much so that one generation in Shetland almost missed the tradition of learning to knit altogether.

There were also changes in the way people dressed – men and women no longer wanted to wear hand-knitted woollen garments. New designs and materials such as polyester came into fashion. Looking after man-made fibre clothes was far easier than washing and dressing Fair Isle jumpers. This trend had a detrimental effect on the cost of wool. All of a sudden, this previously valuable and precious commodity was lying beside the roads, left to rot away, as it was almost not worth selling. It was a depressing time for Shetland crofters and the textile industry.



In recent years, thankfully, the situation has changed and Shetland is yet again attracting attention for its knitwear, striking designs and most importantly Shetland wool, a truly wonderful fibre.

Today more and more folk are dreaming of visiting the isles and spending time immersed in the culture and heritage, experiencing the way of life and learning to knit, spin or weave with local people. Not only are there many small textile businesses but also crofts gradually diversifying into places local people and visitors alike can visit, providing the opportunity to experience first-hand the attraction of living on a sustainable smallholding. Some of them, such as Uradale Farm, Foula Wool or Donna Smith even produce yarn from their own sheep's fleeces.

Ronnie Eunson and his son Jakob of Uradale Farm grow lamb, beef and wool from their native sheep and cattle. Their yarns come only from native Shetland sheep and all aspects of livestock management are carried out under certification by the Scottish Organic Producers Association. This is the highest level of accreditation available in

Shetland for animal welfare and health. With a flock of 700 ewes, Uradale farm covers 2,000 acres of naturally challenging land with grazing available right from the hill tops down to the shores. The sheep forage from the heather summits down the valley sides right onto the seaweed at the tideline.

Another favourite stop on my tours is a visit at Marion Anderson's Breckenlea Pony Stud and Croft in Tresta. Marion has a wonderful flock of native Shetland sheep in many beautiful colour variations. There are eleven main whole colours in Shetland sheep, with many shades and variations in between. And more than 30 recognised markings have been identified. Shetland sheep are a small, very hardy breed and they are able to stay on the hills all year round.



We are very lucky to have a textile unit at the local further education college which offers a 'Contemporary Textiles' course, building on the isles' reputation for quality woollen textiles production. The students develop technical skills and the knowledge to produce innovative textiles, as well as the business skills to market them globally. Many local companies were founded by graduates of this programme.

The future of Shetland's textile industry is now looking bright again. It is one of the elements of what makes a very special and sustainable place.



A Walk in Deerness

Only a thin strip of land attaches the parish of Deerness to the rest of the East Mainland of Orkney. This is why this lush green and fertile place with stunning beaches is sometimes called 'almost an island'.

This picturesque location boasts a range of bracing walks which take in the north east corner of Deerness at the Mull Head Local Nature Reserve and encompasses the routes of the Gloop, the Brough of Deerness, Mull Head and the Covenanters Memorial. Each walk can be approached individually or enjoyed as a longer circular trail.



The Gloop

The closest place to the car park at the Mull Head Local Nature Reserve is the Gloop. This is only a short walk towards the sea along a grassy path and it is a spectacular sight to see.

The Gloop was once a long sea cave but during storms the waves that entered the cave couldn't surge any further and crashed upwards. This caused the roof to collapse into the water below and now the Gloop is an open chasm measuring 70m in length that is full of seawater.

There are wooden viewing platforms which are fenced off to allow safe photo-taking but care should be taken still.



The Brough of Deerness

To visit the Brough of Deerness and Mull Head, continue seaward and pass through a gate. Then turn left and follow the coast north for almost 1.5 miles.

The journey to the Brough of Deerness is across bare stone with a few wild plants such as thrift, spring squill and sea plantain. These desolate cliff edges occurred because in the 1800's there was an agricultural practice called 'paring' which involved removing the topsoil from coastal areas and spreading it on farmland as fertiliser.

There is a wooden staircase down the cliff to the shore but another scramble must be made over a slope into the rocky cove next to the Brough of Deerness. This hidden place beneath the cliffs is fine to splash about in on a summers day and it is nicely sheltered from the wind.

For the most adventurous in your party, there are rock-cut steps to the top of the Brough of Deerness. This path is narrow and a little slippery, but there is a chain handrail to help visitors reach the summit. Here there are the remains of a chapel from the late Norse period (11th and 12th century) atop the 30m high sea stack, as well as the foundations of very old stone huts and a well near the south end.



Mull Head

After the Brough of Deerness it is possible to continue further north for around one mile to the seabird cliff at Mull Head.

On this uneven route walkers will encounter Lang Geo, a long narrow chasm which stretches inland and was once a sea cave. The caves along this stretch of coast were used in the 19th century to store contraband goods, and occasionally by young men hiding from the press gang.

Although the cliffs at Mull Head are not very high they are still impressive, and the ledges here are covered with sea pinks and team with nesting kittiwakes, guillemots, razorbills and puffins in the summer.



The Covenanters Memorial

After Mull Head follow the path west along the north coast of Deerness towards the Covenanters Memorial. The path there changes from heather to grass with some wooden boardwalks to cross. Take time to enjoy the view out to Orkney's North Isles.

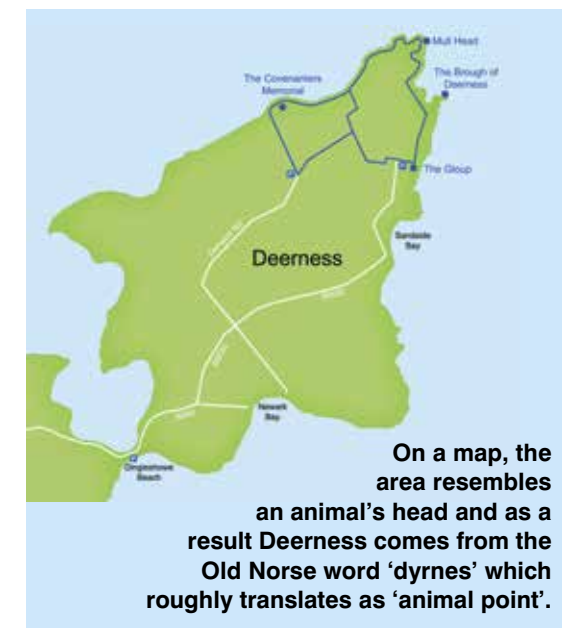
The Covenanters Memorial is an impressive historic monument which stands high on an exposed cliff and commemorates a shipwreck from 1679.

The Covenanters were devoted to maintaining Presbyterianism as the sole religion of Scotland in the 17th century. However after a failed uprising at the Battle of Bothwell Brig, 1,200 Covenanters were taken prisoner. Most were set free, whilst others were executed or died from wounds. The remaining 257 prisoners were to be transported from Leith by ship, The Crown of London, to work on American plantations as slaves.

On 10th December 1679, The Crown of London sheltered from a storm by anchoring the headland at Scarvataing. The Covenanter prisoners were held locked in the hold and when the anchor broke and the ship was driven ashore, the crew chopped down a mast and managed to clamber ashore to safety.

The prisoners were not so lucky. Though a crew member hacked through the deck with an axe, only 47 prisoners escaped and made it to shore and the rest perished. Nearly all the prisoners were recaptured and were eventually sent across the Atlantic to slavery. Some remained hidden in Orkney however, and the first crofters in Rackwick on Hoy were said to be Covenanters.

In 1888 a monument for the 200 lost Covenanters was erected, on a cliff just 250m from where the ship sank, and it is a lovely place to walk to. To return to the Gloop car park, walk inland to the parking area for the Covenanters Memorial, then follow the marked path back to the Gloop to complete your circular walk.



On a map, the area resembles an animal's head and as a result Deerness comes from the Old Norse word 'dyrnes' which roughly translates as 'animal point'.

Blow away the cobwebs at Rattray Head Lighthouse

Rattray Head has been described as ‘one of the wildest and most isolated spots on the Aberdeenshire coast’ by Days Out Scotland. Located between the well-known fishing towns of Fraserburgh and Peterhead, Rattray’s quiet, sandy and picturesque white beach suggests a serene landscape.

However, the decision to build a lighthouse here in 1890 was borne out of an almost 30-year plea by seamen who sought to protect themselves from a treacherous stretch of coast. The area was well known at the time for its shipwrecks, and evidence of wrecks remain to this day.

Situated offshore from the Aberdeenshire mainland, at high tide Rattray Head Lighthouse looms over its solitary corner of the North Sea like a large buoy, anchored solidly to the rocky seabed below, and stands strong against the incoming tides. During high tide the lighthouse is completely cut off from the mainland, however at low tide a causeway reveals itself, and the vehicle-width route provides access for maintenance.

The white and granite structure of the lighthouse reaches 37 meters in height and was developed by David Alan Stevenson of the acclaimed Stevenson

family of engineers. Built over a 16-month period, the lower section of the lighthouse was created using 20,000 cubic feet of dressed granite, with white brick forming the upper section of the structure.

The lighthouse survived attempted bombings and machine-gun fire during WWII, and after a few updates and alterations to its functioning following the war, it became automated in 1982. The lighthouse tower is now listed as a building of architectural and historic interest.

Rattray Head Lighthouse’s corresponding buildings and original keeper cottages are a good walk from the lighthouse itself. Space was limited on the low rocky outcrop that the lighthouse was built upon, but with plenty of space nearby on the mainland, the associated complex can be found nestled between fields and farmland, just beyond the sand dunes of Rattray Head Beach.

While the lighthouse isn’t open to the public, Rattray Head itself is a good place to blow away the cobwebs. The quiet open beach is expansive, and sand dunes on the approach to the beach are known to be more than 30ft high.

Popular walks include a near three-hour route from the 800-year-old ruined St Mary’s Chapel at the south end of nearby Loch of Strathbeg. The loch is Britain’s largest dune loch, and is a site of international importance for wildlife. Depending on the season, visitors could come across pink-footed geese, whooper swans or tree sparrows, with colourful pansies and violets brightening up the area during the summer months. The total route is just under five miles.

After enjoying the fresh air, explorers can sample some impressive history and delve into the country’s past by joining Scotland’s Castle Trail. The route

across Aberdeenshire includes 19 magnificent sites dotted throughout the region, with the closest to Rattray being Kinnaird Head Castle Lighthouse and Museum, just over 10 miles up the coast. Other venues a slightly longer journey away include Haddo House and Tolquhon Castle.

For more information about Rattray and the surrounding area, visit www.visitabdn.com.

Photograph: VisitScotland / Discover Fraserburgh / Damian Shields

Why generations of families keep returning to River Thurso

John Drummond controls the operating and financial aspects of Thurso River Ltd. With a genuine passion for the outdoors, he combines his role on the riverbank with looking after operations at the nearby hotel. Here, he delves deeper into his background and gives some tips on finding the perfect catch.

Wildlife thrives in and around River Thurso

Caithness is a great place to go salmon fishing due to its sense of remoteness and isolation while still being easily accessible.

Much of Caithness and The Flow Country is covered in ancient blanket peat land and is recognised as the largest such area in the world, which supports many rare birds and wildlife. Much of the county is designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and a Special Area of Conservation (SAC). As a consequence of little human intervention, agricultural cultivation or industrial pollution, wild fish stocks and other wildlife thrive and numbers are at relatively high levels.

The salmon fishing season runs from 11 January to 5 October and generally we are fully booked throughout the entire season. Salmon fishing, like many other Scottish sports, is generational so we see families returning year after year, with more members added. It's great to see so many returning guests and their families grow too.



Passion for outdoors makes this my perfect job

I have a love for all things outdoor. I've been fishing for many decades now and began when I was just 13 years old. I enjoy many Scottish country sports but salmon fishing sits firmly at the top. As well as controlling the financial and operating aspects of Thurso River, I also lead the management teams at the Ulbster Arms in delivering great customer service both on the riverbank and in the hotel. It's great to be able to mix my love of fishing with my day job.

No shortage of spots to catch fish

There are numerous wild brown trout lochs dotted around Caithness and most are very accessible to visitors. River Thurso is the largest in the county, with 26 miles of double bank prime wild Scottish salmon fly fishing. We have 12 beats, each fished by two rods, giving us up to 24 fishermen each day.

Salmon fishing takes place from a Monday morning through to Saturday evening and many visitors spend a week on the River Thurso, arriving on the Sunday and staying until the following Sunday. We get visitors from across the globe coming to Thurso to make use of the fantastic river as well as plenty of local people too.

Be mindful of rules around fishing on the river

Each river can create its own rules, although ours are quite simple: no fishing on a Sunday, fly only and a maximum of two rods per beat. Government catch and release regulations state that all fish must be returned to the River until 1 April, although we have extended this until mid June, then all fish above 8lb must be returned throughout the remainder of the season – this helps our conservation efforts. Wild fish are a very precious resource and these days no one really has any intention of keeping or eating what they catch. The satisfaction of catching it then recording it and watching the fish going back and swimming strongly through the river is what makes fishing so special.

Helpful tips for making the most of your visit

My top tip would be to invest in hiring a gillie, as their local knowledge will ensure anglers make the best of their time, taking them to the best spots depending on weather, water height and time of year. My other tip would be to be prepared for the weather. Caithness is one of the driest places in the UK, but also one of the windiest. When it does rain, it's often horizontal and quite heavy.



For more information about Thurso River Ltd, please visit www.riverthurso.com.

Up Helly Aa through the years



Up Helly Aa is a day of fire, feasting and frolic. It has a long and proud history – and while it has been postponed in 2021, its return is much anticipated.

The festival is strongly influenced by the old Shetland custom of guizing, which involved disguising yourself, visiting a friend’s house, performing a turn, before unmasking. Of course, Shetland’s Norse heritage is also a major influence.

Before Up Helly Aa, a much more dangerous activity took place in Lerwick. This was tar barrelling, and it involved a mob filling a huge fish tub with tar, oil, and old ropes, setting it alight, and dragging the flaming sled around the town.

Here is a whistle-stop guide to the history of Up Helly Aa:

1874	The practice of tar barrelling was banned as Lerwick was becoming more respectable.
1881	The year of the first torchlight procession. At the end of the procession, the guizers began visiting open houses and performed a turn at each. No guizers were dressed as Vikings in the early years.
1882	The first Worthy Chief Guizer, Peter W. Greig, was appointed, along with the Committee of Management to organise the event.
1885	There was no Up Helly Aa in 1883 or 1884, but in 1885 the event was well organised, with instructions to guizers on where and when to attend displayed at the Market Cross.
1888	The brass band joined the procession for the first time. It was also clearly established this year that only guizers could take part in the procession.
1889	The first Viking longship was used, however in an uncomfortable echo of tar barrelling, it was set ablaze and pulled through Lerwick. This was a significant year when the festival began to find its own identity. Every year since, the galley has been dragged to a burning site before being set ablaze.
1893	A model of a lighthouse was used instead of a galley in the procession and set alight. The reason for this change is lost to history!
1896	For the first time the galley had a raven banner on its mast, echoing the black raven and Norse galley on the Lerwick Burgh coat of arms. The guizers also sang the Hardy Norseman (now called the Norseman’s Home) for the first time.
1897	J.J. Haldane Burgess, a Shetland poet and author, became one of the most influential voices for Up Helly Aa. He wrote the Up Helly Aa song, but the current tune did not come until later.
1898	The influence of Up Helly Aa begins to spread to other communities around Shetland. Scalloway was the first to hold its own fire festival, starting in 1898.

1899	The first ‘Bill’ was raised at the Market Cross. It is an annual political cartoon, created in secret and revealed on Up Helly Aa day. It is a summons with a double meaning. Words marked in red form another narrative, one filled with local humour.
1906	The ‘Worthy Chief Guizer’ was renamed ‘Guizer Jarl’. A Viking suit of armour was bought for each Guizer Jarl to wear. For that year only, the whole Jarl Squad also dressed as Vikings.
1908	It was decided that Up Helly Aa would always take place on the last Tuesday of January. The decision was also made that the following day, Wednesday, would be a public holiday.
1910	Up Helly Aa was becoming too popular and too big for open houses. Two halls were also opened to accommodate the increasing numbers attending.
1912	The Docks Boys were asked to turn their skills to the galley and to stop their practice of making several other battleship models for the procession. This paid off; the centrepiece in 1912 – a 30ft long galley – was spectacular.
1915 to 1919	Up Helly Aa stopped during WWI.
1921	It was decided that the Jarl Squad would always appear in full Viking costume. Also, Thomas Manson, whilst convalescing in bed (from ailments related to blood pressure) wrote the stirring tune which has accompanied the Up Helly Aa song ever since.
1928	Private houses stopped hosting Up Helly Aa squads. From this year, only halls were open.
1937	Up Helly Aa was postponed for two weeks because of the influenza epidemic.
1938	On Up Helly Aa night there was the most magnificent display of Aurora Borealis overhead.
1940 to 1948	During WWII, Up Helly Aa stopped.
1953	Those that look at previous Up Helly Aa images will be struck by the clean-shaven Vikings. It was not until around 1953 that workplaces began to permit men in the Jarl Squad to grow a Viking beard.
1956	Junior Up Helly Aa begins. Though boys had enthusiastically celebrated Up Helly Aa by burning their own small galleys through the years, there was no formal ceremony in place.
1958	A little silver longship from the people of Måløy, a town on Norway’s west coast, was presented to the people of Lerwick. This started an annual ritual, where the Guizer Jarl and the Jarl Squad visit Lerwick Town Hall and drink a toast from the ship.
1969	After years of the galley being built all over Lerwick, a permanent workshop was established at the Galley Shed on St Sunniva Street.
1971	Oil was discovered beneath the North Sea to the east of the islands. The population of Shetland dramatically increased, from 17,000 in 1971 to almost 23,000 in 1981. The volume of men participating in Up Helly Aa became much larger as a result.
1972	Although the Up Helly Aa organisers defiantly proclaim, ‘there will be no postponement for weather’, Up Helly Aa in 1972 took place in winds so strong that the flaming torch heads were blown off their shafts.
2020	Jarl Squad costumes, which looked amateurish at the start of the 20th century, now look very professional, almost like the costumes of film extras. The Jarl Squad now always tries to create something original, with the design not revealed until Up Helly Aa day.

Greyhope Bay - a new attraction for Aberdeen



Known locally as an historic fishing community, Aberdeen's Torry area is one of the city's hidden gems. Blessed with an abundance of marine life, and home to an impressive scheduled ancient monument, a new development launching in 2021 will combine the best of the area's existing assets and help create a new visitor attraction in this community-focused corner of the Granite City.

The idea for a marine experience centre and community space – Greyhope Bay – was founded in 2016 and is designed to connect local people and visitors to the natural, marine and historic environments on Aberdeen's doorstep.

Dr Fiona McIntyre, founder and Managing Director of Greyhope Bay, shared more with us about this ambitious new project.



Making the most of the natural environment

Torry is in the beautiful coastal location of Aberdeen and is a great vantage point to watch bottlenose dolphins. I am a Marine Scientist by background and worked in the local marine lab for six years. I spent a lot of time walking the headland, seeing dolphins, being in awe at the activity and thinking, this is right here on our doorstep and yet as a city it's not immediately obvious to us. Greyhope Bay was born out of an enthusiasm for something that I thought was needed. I think there is a sense of resonance locally, and that this speaks to what the city is missing. All I really did was push the idea forward, it already existed for many people.

Reimagining historic defences

Greyhope Bay is set up as a charity and we aim to develop the historic monument at Torry, known as Torry Battery, to create a community facility – an education space and a café that will tell the story of the city and its connection to the coast. Located on the South side of Aberdeen Harbour, there are views of the harbour, Aberdeen Beach and down the North and South coastline. There's an opportunity to see dolphins every day, so it is quite an exceptional spot.

Torry Battery was built in the 1860s as a defence battery and it was used during both WWI and WWII as a stationed army barracks. A lot of physical

structure remains, and whilst it was used as a defence battery it also had its own high street, prison, well, cookhouse and all the things its inhabitants would need for daily living.

After WWII there was a housing crisis locally, and Torry Battery was then used to house families that had nowhere else to go. Now what is left is a ruin, however it still has the curtain wall, parade level and an amazing archway.

Small steps, big ambitions

Greyhope Bay is a test space for a more permanent development of the historic monument. In this first phase, which we are hoping to deliver in early 2021, we will convert shipping containers to create a glass fronted education centre and café. The containers will sit literally on top of the monument and offer the perfect vantage point, looking into the harbour and right around to Girdle Ness Lighthouse.

It won't feel like a container, it will be wood clad and the parade and outdoor area is going to be filled with decking, seating, outdoor exhibits and art interpretation – it's going to be largely an outdoor experience with a sheltered cafe space. The idea is that, in the future, the parade can be used for festivals, food markets and lots of different types of outdoor events.



Admirals and Skippers sought to join the crew

The community aspect has always existed within the project, but in the last year or so we have built a specific structure that allows the community to lead. That is through our Admiral and Skipper programmes where investors, individuals and local groups can support this project financially and/or creatively.

Regular collaboration has led to our community designing ways that people can engage with the project. One of the things that has been born out of this is our new online platform which we will be launching at the same time as we open. It is called Greyhope Stories, a major collaboration with about sixteen local organisations, identifying stories either related to the marine environment, history and heritage of the site.

We continue to look for support for our educational programmes and what we ask from our admirals is that they not just invest but that they get involved, so everyone can play a part.

We will also be opening our crew membership up which is for individuals who want an annual membership, while for youngsters we plan to open a children's program called 'Greyhope Cadets' which should be launching quite soon.



Dot the dolphin marks the area where the café and education centre will be, so when you find her before we open you can experience the view that Greyhope Bay will have. Dot will remain on site for as long as the weather allows. We have been surprised by how people interact with her and we have received some lovely photos on social media!

We are now waiting to be able to announce an opening date – that isn't here yet but we do hope to be able to do that sometime in the not too distant future.

Find out more about Greyhope Bay by visiting www.greyhopebay.com.

Mackenzie's Farm Shop & Café



Together with her husband Kenneth and their family, Hazel Mackenzie owns award-winning Mackenzie's Farm Shop & Café. Born in Shetland and raised on the South Mainland Croft at Aister in Cunningsburgh, Hazel and her family have been stewards of the croft for hundreds of years, with their heritage tracing back to further than 1750.

Here, Hazel tells us more about the farm shop & café and her passion for Shetland produce.

Why did you decide to open the farm shop & café?

We like to say that 'it all started with an egg'. We had extra eggs on the croft one week and needed an outlet to sell them. We decided to put an honesty box at the end of our road and add the extra eggs every week. The idea proved really popular so we decided to add more produce and very quickly our little honesty box became too small. From there we put an old livestock trailer to good use and added more items such as dairy and bakery products.

When we opened two onsite self-catering properties, Nortower Lodges, guests regularly asked where they could buy and eat local produce. This prompted a discussion with my late father-in-law around our kitchen table and it was then that the idea of a farm shop was born.

What do you think makes Shetland produce so special?

It's the traceability of Shetland produce that makes it so special – it's the low carbon footprint and knowing exactly where it came from.

For us, as a family, we regularly sit down to eat meals that are completely produced on our croft. Shetland animals eat the finest of what Shetland has to offer, whether it be banks grass or neeps and that makes the meat truly delicious. It's that quality and traceability that makes Shetland produce unique.

What can people expect when they visit the farm shop & café?

Mackenzie's Farm Shop & Café is situated at the side of the A970 road that runs through Shetland. My dream was always to create a destination that was also a community hub and that's what we now have.

Our chefs make delicious food using our own and local produce and our supper nights have become legendary. We've also introduced a beauty salon, free Wi-Fi, visitor information, toilets, ample parking and an outside seating area where dogs are welcome. We also have easy access throughout the building for those with restricted mobility.

Something a little different is our newest range of clothing accessories. We shear our 100 native sheep by hand and the wool is processed into a beautiful collection of natural dyed shades that are then crafted into gloves and keps (hats).

What's one local delicacy you recommend everyone must try?

That's an easy one for me. My sister-in-law makes our own range of jams, marmalades, chutneys and relish that are available in the farm shop kitchen. The marmalade is also available onboard NorthLink Ferries.

Our Spiced Pepper & Tomato Relish is delicious and it has recently won a prestigious two-star award from the Guild of Fine Food Awards.

Find out more about Mackenzie's Farm Shop & Café by visiting www.mackenziesfarmshop.co.uk.

Clootie Dumpling Recipe - in 30 Minutes

Sometimes known as 'plum pudding' or 'duff', clootie dumpling is a traditional Scottish dish usually made by wrapping the mixture in cloth and simmering in a pot for around four hours. It's a family favourite often associated with Christmas and New Year but many enjoy the treat at any time.

This easy recipe explains how to make a tasty clootie dumpling in just 30 minutes by using ingredients from your store cupboard and a microwave.

Dark brown sugar and treacle give the mixture the traditional dark colour of the dumpling but lighter sugar or the absence of treacle will still give the same great taste. The addition of grated apple prevents the mixture from drying out during cooking and keeps the texture lovely and moist much like the traditional boiled version. In Orkney, clootie dumplings are traditionally made with a mix of sultanas and raisins but more generic Scottish recipes include a variety of dried fruit, so you can add different types to suit your taste.

Ingredients:

- 225ml milk or water
- 150g dark brown sugar
- 250g butter
- 2 tbsp treacle
- 1 small apple, grated
- 1 tbsp cinnamon
- 2 tbsp mixed spice
- 1 tsp ground ginger
- 450g dried fruit
- 250g plain flour
- 1 tsp bicarbonate of soda
- 2 eggs, beaten

Recipe



Method:

Start by adding the milk or water, sugar, butter, treacle, cinnamon, mixed spice, ginger, grated apple and dried fruit to a large pot. Bring to the boil and then allow to simmer for around 1 minute. Set aside and leave to cool slightly.

Meanwhile, line a 2 litre microwavable pudding bowl with cling film. This is to ensure that the Clootie Dumpling does not stick to the bowl and can be easily turned out onto the serving plate later! When the mixture has cooled slightly, sieve the flour and bicarbonate and stir into the fruit mixture. Then mix in the eggs.

Pour the mixture into the lined bowl and leave uncovered. Cook in a microwave on full power (around 850W) for 11 minutes.

Remove from the microwave and leave to rest for two minutes. Turn out onto a serving plate and remove the cling film. For best results leave for 15 to 30 minutes before cutting. Serve with custard or cream.



Travel information

Some useful information to know about travelling on board MV Hamnavoe, MV Hjaltland, and MV Hrossey:

Fresh food and drink

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