

# Northern Lights



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# Welcome

I hope you are enjoying your journey.

Earlier this year each of m.v Hamnavoe, Hjaltland and Hrossey dry docked for their annual survey and each received a programme of planned technical works with dockings taking place on the Tyne, for the Hamnavoe and in Birkenhead on the Mersey for both Hjaltland and Hrossey.

If you are travelling on Hamnavoe you may have noticed, or may even be using, our new dog lounge, now providing a dedicated dog friendly facility on the Pentland Firth, which we hope you find to your liking. This lounge complements our two on-board pet cabins on this route, with Hjaltland and Hrossey each now having eight pet cabins, all continuing to prove very popular.

Also at dry dock and under the watchful eye of my Technical colleagues, Graham McKenzie and Iain Nicol together with our shipboard engineering teams, huge advances have been made in preparing both Hjaltland and Hrossey for shore power supply in Aberdeen and Lerwick. Running in tandem with vessel modifications we are also engaged with CMAL as asset owner, Port of Aberdeen and Lerwick Port Authority in working up the necessary electrical connections for shore power supply at both Ports. Design phase and technical requirements are almost signed off and we look forward to seeing progress.

It is great to have as our opening article in this issue a focus on home grown talent in the form of our Stromness based colleague and navigating Officer John Sutherland, congratulations to John as he continues to advance his career as a professional Merchant Navy Officer. At the same time we acknowledge the retirement at the end of 2022 of Captain John Strathearn, our long serving colleague and latterly Operations Director whose wise counsel and friendship has been appreciated by so many.

Our onboard offering in food, beverage and retail continues to provide a showcase for so much of the wonderful local produce and fine fare available over our operating area. This is carefully selected and ordered for us by our colleagues Tanya and Vikki who maintain great contact with our suppliers locally.

Enjoy your time onboard, remember to visit [www.northlinkferries.co.uk/competitions](http://www.northlinkferries.co.uk/competitions) to let us know how far or to where your copy of Northern Lights travels. Who knows, you yourself could feature in the next issue.

Safe travel.



*Stuart Garrett*  
**Stuart Garrett**  
Managing Director  
Serco NorthLink Ferries

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### NorthLink Ferries

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Front page photograph: Ian Cowe



#### Tell us a bit about yourself.

I was brought up in Stromness on the Orkney mainland. For as long as I can remember, I have wanted to follow in my father and grandfather's footsteps by going to sea.

In Stromness we are very lucky to have a navigation school, where pupils are taught basic seafaring skills. Back when I attended, we learned how to tie knots, basic chart work and how to row a boat.

When I left school, I got a job on MV Hamnavoe as a summer steward which was very rewarding. After the summer, I went on to Fleetwood Nautical College to start my cadetship, where I sailed on ocean-going vessels around the world. I loved visiting so many countries and all the different ports.

#### How did you get into your current role?

I was an Efficient Deck Hand with NorthLink Ferries and then progressed to Able Bodied Seaman. After five years, I enrolled on Officer of the Watch training through the Scottish Maritime Academy as a distant learner, backed by the Slater Fund, which is a scholarship run by the marine society. I completed my studies at the end of 2019.

Once qualified, NorthLink Ferries allowed me to gain experience as a third officer. I was given on the job training by the deck officers, which helped me step up.

#### What are your duties?

I am tasked with maintaining the fire-fighting equipment and life-saving appliances, and navigational watch keeping. NorthLink passengers will most likely see me on the car deck, loading and discharging vehicles. I have lots of different duties, so no two days are the same!

#### What is the best part of your job?

Working at sea and helping out my fellow islanders are definitely highlights. We take a variety of items to and from the Northern Isles, and recently took everyday essentials to SSE engineers who were hard at work after a winter storm.

#### What do you think people might find interesting about your job?

The incredible views we get to see every day while at sea – from the changing colours of the cliffs of Hoy throughout the year to the Northern Lights and the killer whales.

#### What do you do in your spare time?

I am kept very busy running my holiday let, gardening and keeping the dog entertained, but I also enjoy catching up with my family and friends.



# Small Museums in Shetland

## Museums give a glimpse into what island life looked like throughout history.

The Shetland Museum and Archives in Lerwick is a good place to begin, but we would also recommend visiting some of these intriguing small museums dotted around Shetland:

### Shetland Textile Museum

Shetland Textile Museum focuses on the island's unique textile heritage. The museum houses over 700 items including Fair Isle and lace knitting, taatit rugs, tools, tweed and more.

**Fascinating fact:** Visitors are often treated to live demonstrations of knitting, spinning or weaving.



### Scalloway Museum

Scalloway Museum offers displays on the wartime history, geology and folklore. The museum is adjacent to magnificent Scalloway Castle which dates back to the late 1500s.

**Fascinating fact:** Scalloway was the Shetland-base of the Second World War 'Shetland Bus' operation.

### Sumburgh Head Visitor Centre

Sumburgh Head Visitor Centre is a brilliant place to learn about the Sumburgh lighthouse and surrounding nature. Visitors can explore the light tower, engine room, and foghorn.

**Fascinating fact:** The name 'Sumburgh' means 'South Broch', referring to the Iron Age building that once stood where the lighthouse is now.

### Shetland Croft Museum

This traditional croft house in Dunrossness takes visitors back to the 1800s with its thatched roof, peat fires, box bed, and Shetland mousetrap. It even has a shed with an old rowboat for a roof.

**Fascinating fact:** Almost all the wooden furniture here was made from driftwood as trees are few and far between in Shetland.

### Quendale Mill

Quendale Mill was one of three large mills that operated in Shetland throughout the 19th century. Today, there are guided tours and fascinating displays detailing local history and island heritage.

**Fascinating fact:** Quendale Mill is the only large traditional mill left in Shetland.

### Tangwick Haa Museum

The Tangwick Haa near Eshaness was originally built in the late 17th century and was converted into a local history museum in the late 1980s. It's a super place where visitors can trace their ancestors.

**Fascinating fact:** The word 'Haa' means the house of the laird or landowner.



### The Old Haa Museum

Located in Burravoe in Yell, the Old Haa was originally built in 1672 and is now crammed with exhibits about local and natural history. Each room of this museum is full of character.

**Fascinating fact:** The Old Haa Museum also boasts a gift shop, gallery and café.



### The Cabin Museum

The Cabin Museum began in a shed but grew to a larger building. It is filled with wartime memorabilia including uniforms and vintage motorcycles.

**Fascinating fact:** Museum owner, Andy Robertson, served in the Royal Navy during World War II which sparked his interest in collecting war memorabilia.

### Unst Heritage Centre

The Unst Heritage Centre explores the cultural heritage and history of the island, with wonderful collections about the island's unique geology and Viking archaeology.

**Fascinating fact:** Visitors can enjoy recreations of an old schoolroom and the interior of a croft from the early 1900s.

### Unst Boat Haven

Unst Boat Haven is a museum dedicated to the history of Shetland boats. Fishing gear, photographs and charts are on display, in addition to the boats themselves.

**Fascinating fact:** This museum displays 17 boats. Most are traditional Shetland boats but there are also yachts from Faroe and Norway.

### Bressay Heritage Centre

The Bressay Heritage Centre was opened in 1996. It offers exhibits about the island's history, cultural heritage and archaeology documented through photographs, artefacts and maps.

**Fascinating fact:** Next to the Heritage Centre lies a reconstructed Bronze Age burnt mound.

### George Waterston Memorial Centre Museum

George Waterston was the former Scottish Director of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and a much-loved figure by the people of Fair Isle. The museum is packed with displays covering the island's history including famous Fair Isle knitwear.

**Fascinating fact:** George Waterston bought Fair Isle and helped co-found the Bird Observatory in 1948, which gave the island's economy a much-needed boost.

### Fetlar Interpretive Centre

This vibrant island museum contains a fascinating exhibit dedicated to Sir William Watson Cheyne and his contribution to antiseptic surgery.

**Fascinating fact:** It has an extensive archive of photographs dating back to the 1860s.



### Pier House Museum

The Pier House Museum is located inside the Old Pier House on the island of Whalsay. Between the 13th and 17th century, the area served as a hub for trading and the export of dried and salted fish.

**Fascinating fact:** The Pier House Museum is listed as a 'Category B' building of significant architectural and historical importance.

### Hoswick Visitor Centre

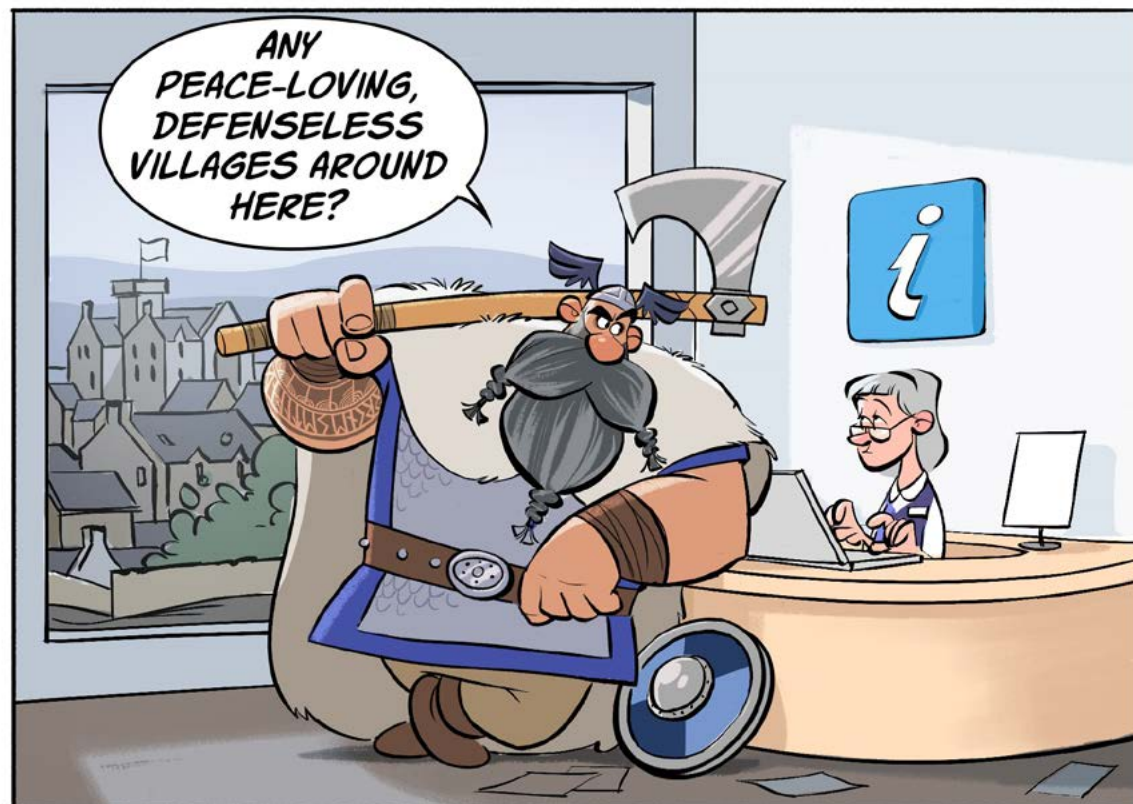
Hoswick lies halfway between Lerwick and Sumburgh, and the Visitor Centre offers a wealth of information about knitting and fishing in a former tweed weaving mill.

**Fascinating fact:** Hoswick Visitor Centre also houses exhibitions, a café and a gift shop.

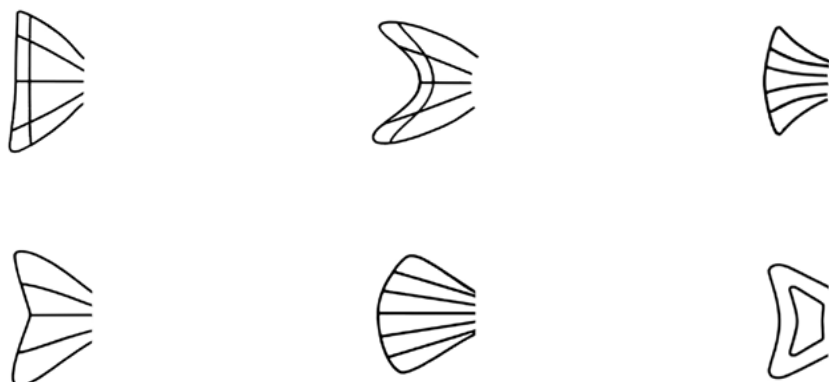


# The Viklings

Alex Leonard – No.2



*Children's Activity: Add details and colour to finish these fish!*



# Tempting Hoswick Tiffin Recipe

Recipe

For many visitors to Shetland, a highlight is a trip to the Hoswick Visitor Centre for some of their famous, mouth-watering tiffin.

Rosemary Inkster, who manages the busy Visitor Centre, kindly agreed to share the tempting and moreish recipe for this sweet tray bake!

## Ingredients:

- 220g butter
- 4 tbsp caster sugar
- 4 tbsp golden syrup
- 8 tbsp cocoa powder
- 450g digestive biscuits
- Raisins – are optional (but why would you not include?)
- 150g chocolate (for the topping)

## Method:

- Melt the butter, sugar, syrup and cocoa in a large pan.
- Crush digestive biscuits.
- Combine melted mixture with crushed biscuits.
- Press mixture into a greased tin.
- Top with 150g of melted chocolate.
- Leave it to set.

Hoswick Visitor Centre in Shetland is open throughout the year. Find out more about Hoswick Visitor Centre at [www.hoswickvisitorcentre.com](http://www.hoswickvisitorcentre.com)





# Orkney Inspired Design - An interview with Sheila Fleet

**Sheila Fleet Jewellery has grown steadily, thanks to Sheila's vision and enduring ability to create beautiful jewellery that is treasured by her customers. In 2013 Sheila was awarded an OBE for services to the jewellery industry and, a year later, received an honorary degree from Edinburgh College of Art.**



Sheila has five retail locations across Scotland: two in Orkney (The Kirk Gallery & Café and Kirkwall Gallery), Sheila's Edinburgh Gallery in Stockbridge, her Glasgow Gallery in Princes Square on Buchanan Street and her St Andrews Gallery in the Kingdom of Fife.

Now at the age of 77, Sheila runs her business alongside her son Martin, daughter-in-law Mairi and skilled team across the company and has no plans to retire anytime soon! Sheila kindly told us more...

## How did Sheila Fleet Jewellery begin?

After graduating from Edinburgh College of Art in 1967, I gained experience in the jewellery industry before going it alone in 1993. I started by selling designs from my front porch. I went on to develop an online platform and benefit from the fantastic tourism industry in Orkney, and have since gained a strong global reputation, which is amazing!

## How does an Orkney inspired idea turn into a beautiful collection of jewellery?

An idea can be inspired by a moment in time or a beautiful surrounding. Tradition was the inspiration for my latest collection, the Kirkwall Ba'. For many years, I wanted to make a memento to this traditional game. Although the event has strong connections for local people, I feel people all around the world will admire the design and might be surprised to learn the story behind it.

Stormy, tidal seas are a constant inspiration for me! We've added new designs to match our popular Tidal

bangle which we launched online and in-store earlier this year. The three wave shapes of this design are interlocked, but move independently, giving different design combinations as you move.

## Do you have a favourite design amongst your collections?

Runic is the one I wear most. It's one of my very early designs, made around 1994. The design reads 'reflecting times past and present' in runes. The Runic Iris also became my company logo.

Tidal has become my absolute favourite. I just *have* to wear my bangle every day! The movement of the three waves is mesmerising.



## What do you enjoy most about your job?

I enjoy the creative aspect and having a wonderful team around me! It's been rewarding to watch the business grow through demand from customers locally and, thanks to digital developments, all around the world.

## For those looking to purchase high quality jewellery what must they look out for?

There are various things people can look out for, but hallmarks and diamond quality are some of the most important.

A hallmark is your guarantee of quality for the jewellery you buy and can only be applied by an independent Assay Office, of which there are four in the UK. The hallmark consists of three symbols: the Maker's Mark, the Metal Fineness Mark and the Assay Office Mark. All my jewellery carries the maker's mark 'SD', granted by the Edinburgh Assay Office under my maiden name, Sheila Dearness.

When it comes to diamond quality, there are four things you need to understand: Cut, Clarity, Colour and Carat. Every single diamond we use is expertly set by hand in our workshop by our skilled craftspeople.

## How should people care for their jewellery?

We recommend frequently cleaning your jewellery to remove daily-wear residue. Clean in warm mild soapy water, rinse well, dry and finally buff with one of our silver polishing cloths. We have a 'caring for your jewellery' guide on our website. If you are unsure,

pop into any of our retail locations where our team will be happy to assist you.

## Do you have any advice for aspiring business owners?

Know your subject or craft, work hard, and enjoy the journey! There's a saying: find something you love doing, and you'll never work again.

## Can you tell us a bit about the Kirk Gallery & Café?

The Kirk Gallery & Café is a renovated former parish church which now showcases our extensive jewellery collections, including my very latest designs. We wanted to restore or reuse as many original features as we could, whether it's the original stained-glass windows or pulpit.

A tasteful extension houses the Kirk Café. We take delight in using local produce to create our menu, so you can enjoy a fantastic Orkney food experience! We recommend booking a table, especially in the spring and summer.

## Do you have any new collections on the horizon?

2023 is proving to be a busy year! We will be launching further designs to our popular Butterfly range and also have a very exciting new collection to be released in the summer.

To find out more about Sheila Fleet Jewellery please visit [www.sheilafleet.com](http://www.sheilafleet.com)



# Auskerry Lighthouse

**Situated to the northeast of the Orkney Mainland, Auskerry (the name is derived from the Old Norse meaning 'East Isle') is a small yet intriguing island.**

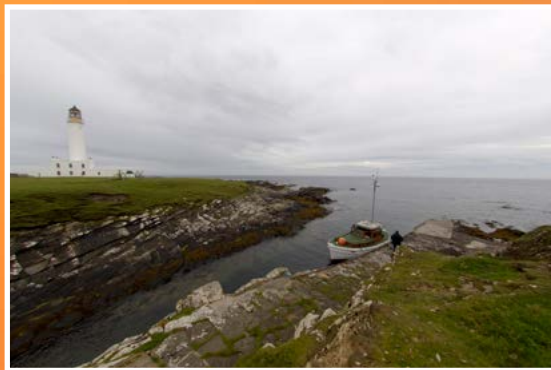
Like most of Orkney, the rugged red-sandstone isle is relatively flat and features charming boulder-strewn shingle beaches. However, the towering lighthouse that dominates the island's landscape is what draws attention from onlookers – and you may spot it when sailing with NorthLink Ferries.

To help ships navigate the choppy waters of the Stronsay Firth, it was determined that a lighthouse ought to be erected on Auskerry. So in 1864, the construction of Auskerry Lighthouse began on the isle's southern corner. Firstly, a jetty was built at South Geo to enable materials to be brought onto the island. Two years later, in 1866, the lighthouse was first lit.



The lighthouse was designed and built by David and Thomas Stevenson – members of the pioneering Stevenson family who are renowned for establishing most of Scotland's lighthouses. The white tower is a 'Category B' listed structure for its historical and architectural value, standing imposingly at 112 feet tall. Its light flashes every 20 seconds and can be seen up to 20 nautical miles away.

Auskerry is one of Orkney's most difficult lighthouses to reach because the island is so remote, has few residents and no ferry service. However, these factors heighten the isle's mystique and create a sense of magic and exclusivity for those who have visited it. Surprisingly, Her Royal Highness Princess Anne is a former guest. Princess Anne and the Northern Lighthouse Board inspected Auskerry Lighthouse



as part of the Queen's Golden Jubilee celebrations. They also met with the sole family who have called this island home for almost 50 years.

Attached to the lighthouse are two flats where lighthouse keepers used to live. Initially, the lighthouse housed just two keepers and their families, however a third keeper was stationed there for additional support during World War II. These keepers kept the lighthouse in operation until 1961, when Auskerry Lighthouse became automated, the first in Orkney and one of the earliest in Scotland to do so. It is now remotely monitored and maintained by the Northern Lighthouse Board.



A crater left by one of the two bombs dropped on the island in 1941 is located close to the beach, just south of the lighthouse. The second unexploded bomb was never discovered. As a consequence of this bombing, Auskerry received two Hotchkiss Guns for anti-aircraft defence. Lightkeepers were stationed at each of them, one positioned to the north of the island and the other to the south.



Simon Brogan purchased Auskerry in 1973, and his family relocated here permanently two years later. On the island, they raise around 300 North Ronaldsay Sheep and use their wool to make wonderful, handcrafted artisanal goods for their family company 'Isle of Auskerry'. North Ronaldsay Sheep are a hardy breed and survive on a diet comprised almost entirely of seaweed.

Aside from sheep, Auskerry is a haven for birdwatchers. Due to the island's breeding colonies of Arctic Terns and European Storm Petrels, it has been classified as a Special Protection Area. Other well-known bird species you may see include eiders, red-throated divers, guillemots, and even playful puffins! In the past, Auskerry was referred to as 'Hunter's Geo' as it was a popular location to hunt seals. That practice has ended, and today, seals can occasionally be seen lazing along the coastline.

Quite remarkably, Auskerry's archaeological remains are significant considering its modest size and isolation. It's believed that the island was once home to a thriving community, as evidenced by several standing stones – the tallest of which is 2.5m – and numerous shattered stones. A small 12th century church ruin, numerous houses and a burnt mound from the Bronze Age, and Iron Age agricultural evidence are among the other remnants found here.



# 15 'must see' stops on the road from Inverness to Scrabster

**The North Highlands are truly beautiful, and the journey from Inverness to catch the Hamnavoe in Scrabster is one to savour. This guide is for those travelling on the A9 from Inverness to Scrabster and back. We hope it will be useful for those with an hour to kill who might be looking for an interesting place to stop.**

## 1. Inverness

There's plenty to see around Inverness, including a trip to the emotive Culloden Battlefield and Visitor Centre, the mysterious Loch Ness, the grand Inverness Castle, which overlooks the town centre, and the peaceful Caledonian Canal.

## 2. The Black Isle

The first highlight north of Inverness is the dappled woodland and golden fields of The Black Isle, a peninsula surrounded on three sides by the sea. It was previously an isolated area, but now the A9 passes through it, met by the Kessock bridge and the Cromarty bridge. We'd recommend stopping at Munlochy Cloutie Well.

## 3. Tain

The road to Tain passes Alness and Invergordon and the deep blue waters of the Cromarty Firth are used for oil rig maintenance. The area was used to practise beach landings for D-Day. Tain has an attractive old fashioned town centre with independent shops and an impressive tower – The Tolbooth. Glenmorangie whisky is distilled here.

## 4. Dornoch

After Tain, the road north crosses the Dornoch Firth Bridge. If you've time, take a scenic detour over Struie Hill (known as The Million Dollar view), Bonar Bridge and, in autumn, visit the Falls of Shin to see salmon leaping. The picturesque town of Dornoch has a lovely cathedral and the Royal Dornoch Golf Club is considered a must-play golf course.



## 5. Golspie

After travelling through bright woodland and a shimmering tidal estuary called Loch Fleet, the town of Golspie is a fine stop. It has shops, cafes and a long sandy beach. Above Golspie, the hill Ben Bhraggie has a controversial statue on its summit – the 1st Duke of Sutherland – who was involved with the Highland Clearances.

## 6. Dunrobin Castle

Just outside Golspie stands enchanting Dunrobin Castle. This huge mansion house was designed in the 19th century by the architect of the Houses of Parliament and resembles a French chateau. This labyrinthine building, filled with art, books, and tapestries is the family seat of the Earl of Sutherland.



## 7. Brora

The village of Brora sits at the mouth of a river, and has shops, cafes, and a famous ice cream parlour. From the 16th to late 20th century coal was mined in Brora. The malt whisky made at Clynelish Distillery is a vital component of Johnnie Walker whiskies.

## 8. Helmsdale

The town of Helmsdale was developed to house displaced families from the Highland Clearances. Look out for the Emigrants Statue in Helmsdale, which commemorates the tens of thousands made homeless. A castle with a bloody history was cleared to make way for the new road bridge.

## 9. Berriedale

There's a steep drive downhill and uphill again at the dark gorge of Berriedale. Drivers will be pleased to know that Berriedale's hairpin bends have been improved in recent years. We think the peaceful cove here is worth exploring. Badbea Historic Village, south of Berriedale, was home to 28 families evicted by the Highland Clearances.

## 10. Dunbeath

Dunbeath was once home to Neil M Gunn, who wrote Highland River and The Silver Darlings. Today, a colossal bridge stands over the village, but the harbour and area upstream from the river (known as The Strath) are worth exploring to see Dunbeath Broch and the prisoner's leap.

## 11. Laidhay Croft Museum

A low, white-washed thatched cottage with red doors, Laidhay Croft Museum is a 19th century croft with furniture from the period and visiting is like stepping back 200 years. There's also a tearoom here, serving tasty scones and cakes.

## 12. Latheron

The Clan Gunn Museum and Heritage Centre is located at Latheron in a former parish church. It tells the clan's story, but isn't just for those looking for genealogical answers, as the museum also covers the history of the North of Scotland.

## 13. Cassiemyre

The final stretch of road to Thurso passes through a beautiful, desolate landscape. The Cassiemyre (causewaymyre) is a 13-mile-long causeway built across peatbog. The road sweeps past tiny settlements, quarries for Caithness flagstones, abandoned crofts and large windfarms.

## 14. Thurso

There's much to see in the most northerly town in Mainland Britain, including Old St Peter's Kirk from 13th century, surfers in the spindrift of Thurso bay, the original village close to the river and shore, and a mostly demolished castle.



## 15. Scrabster

In 1855 a regular steamship service to Stromness in Orkney was set up from Scrabster (from the Old Norse Skara Bolstair, meaning steading on the edge). MV Hamnavoe now undertakes this run from Scrabster to Stromness. Scrabster is also one of the busiest fish landing ports in the UK. If you've time, we'd recommend a visit to the cliffs at Holborn Head.



# 10 great places to visit in Old Aberdeen



**Aberdeen was formed as two distinct areas: New Aberdeen around the River Dee and Old Aberdeen around the River Don. Old Aberdeen is a long-established community with a history that dates back more than a thousand years.**

Strolling through its characterful, quaint cobblestone streets is like stepping back in time. With remarkable medieval architecture and beautiful scenery, here are 10 great places you must see.

## 1. Brig O'Balgownie

The Brig o'Balgownie is the oldest medieval bridge in Scotland and one of the oldest bridges in the UK. Bishop Henry Cheyne first began its construction in the late 13th century and it was finished in 1320, allegedly at the request of King Robert the Bruce.

The Brig o'Balgownie is bordered by mature trees along the banks of the River Don and attracts a variety of wildlife. Numerous waterbirds, as well as seals and otters, may be spotted in and around the shoreline.

## 2. Seaton Park

Seaton Park, one of Aberdeen's largest parks, is a fantastic location to relax thanks to its spacious open areas, formal gardens and children's play facilities. In August 2022, Seaton Park was selected as Fields in Trust's best park in Scotland.

Notable features include the Wallace Tower – a splendid early 17th century tower house, rebuilt in Seaton Park in the 1960s to make room for a new building. Another site is Tillydrone Motte, a large conical mound previously thought to have been a motte – a wooden fortification on top of a raised earth mound. Now, recent investigations suggest the site served a defensive role circa 200 AD, and possibly has earlier roots as an ancient cairn.

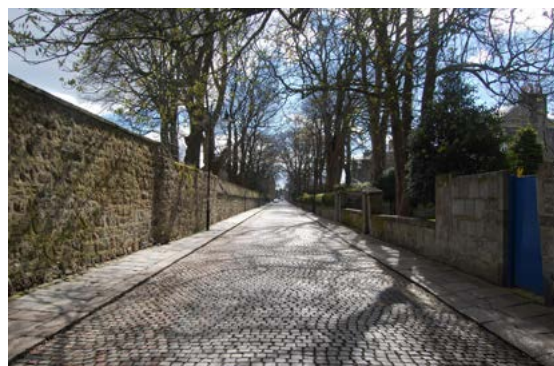
## 3. St Machar's Cathedral

St Machar's Cathedral, Aberdeen's oldest building that is still in use, peaks above the skyline of Old Aberdeen. The cathedral was built almost 1,500 years ago by St Machar – a Celtic saint and disciple of St Columba. Today, the building remains a popular venue not only as a place of worship, but also for musical performances.

This building is spectacular with a fortified west front, gorgeous stained glass, towering twin spires and a distinctive heraldic ceiling. In 1305, after his execution, legend says that William Wallace's left arm was buried within the cathedral walls.

## 4. The Chanonry

The Chanonry is the vicinity around St Machar's and also the name of the picturesque, cobbled street leading to the Cathedral. The canons (clergy) of St Machar's Cathedral, who were necessary for the Cathedral to operate, called this historic street home, giving rise to its name.



## 5. Cruickshank Botanic Garden

The Cruickshank Botanic Garden, established in 1868, is situated in the King's College campus of the University of Aberdeen. Visitors can enjoy the 11-acre garden's beauty and tranquillity year-round. The garden showcases a nationally significant collection of over 250 plant species and features a sunken garden, a rose garden and much more.

## 6. Zoology Museum

The Zoology Museum, part of the University of Aberdeen, is the only sizeable international collection of zoological specimens in the north of Scotland. The displays, which comprise some 75,000 objects, are the culmination of over 200 years of teaching and research efforts.

## 7. Old Town House

The Old Town House building was erected in 1788. It served as the heart of a thriving commerce community and the centre of the burgh. The Town House has served a variety of purposes over 150 years, including as a police station and a library – but is now a museum.

The remains of Old Aberdeen's market cross is displayed on a pedestal in front of the building. Parts of the cross date back to the 16th century and were recovered in a nearby smithy in 1841.

## 8. King's College

King's College, which was constructed in 1495 to house the University of Aberdeen, serves as the iconic centre of the campus. The university is the third oldest in Scotland. King's College is renowned for its exquisite architecture and symbolism of the pursuit of knowledge, as Aberdeen has a strong reputation as a place of learning.

## 9. Bishop Elphinstone Monument

Just outside King's College Chapel is an intricate and intriguing sculpture to commemorate Bishop Elphinstone, the founder of the University of Aberdeen. He passed away in 1514 and was buried inside the chapel. An updated memorial was crafted to honour the 400th anniversary of his death. However, it was built too big for its intended location inside and has sat outside since 1946.

## 10. The Powis Gates

Within Old Aberdeen, the Powis Gates are a distinctive landmark and monument. The twin cylindrical towers and parapets were designed by Alexander Fraser and built by John Leslie of Powis in 1833. The lavish and imposing structure from the 19th century functioned as Powis House's grand entryway.



# Island in Focus: Westray



**There are some islands that you can visit for a day, and during that time, you'll successfully see most of the main sites of interest. Westray is not that island! Besides, if you didn't stay overnight, you might miss out on eating the best fish and chips you'll taste anywhere!**

Westray has another name – the Queen o' the Isles. With its bright green farmland, wild seabird cliffs, dark moorland, and peaceful sandy bays, it showcases all of the elements that make Orkney so special.

The island was special to people in the past too and there is a wealth of archaeological sites here dating from 3500 BC. Many Viking settlements can be found on Westray also. The Norse folk were attracted by the island's safe harbour and fertile agricultural land.

Westray is the sixth largest of the Orkney Islands, home to 600 people, and located in the northwest of the archipelago. We hope you'll take time to visit.

## The Castle o' Burrian

The Castle o' Burrian is one of the best places in Orkney to see puffins. In Orkney, sea stacks are sometimes called castles, and the Castle o' Burrian is a low grassy sea stack, riddled with puffin burrows.

Low grassy cliffs surround the sea stack, offering visitors the perfect vantage point to watch puffins

going about their business. The best time to see puffins is between May and the end of July, in the afternoon and the evening.

## Pierowall

The lovely village of Pierowall stretches around a large sheltered circular bay. Pierowall was important during Viking times and was referred to in the Orkneyinga Saga as the Haven.

These days, you can buy unforgettable fish and chips in Westray, made using the freshest fish caught by Westray's fishing fleet and landed daily in Pierowall.

The island is prosperous. As well as the whitefish industry there is creel fishing for crab and lobster, a fish and shellfish processing factory, salmon farms in the clear tidal waters, and beef cattle and sheep in Westray's fields. Tourism is also important – there are plenty of places to shop, stay and eat.

## The Westray Wife and the Westray Heritage Centre

Westray has hit the headlines through the years with significant archaeological finds, including 9th century Viking graves in Pierowall and the Westray stone, a rock covered in intricate carved spirals.

Treasure discovered recently during the excavation of a Neolithic and Bronze age settlement at the Links of Noltland was even more momentous – though the find was tiny – only 4 cm tall! A carved figurine was uncovered, the earliest representation of a human in Scotland. It was named the Westray Wife. Since its discovery, four more figurines have been unearthed.

You can see the Westray Wife for yourself in the Westray Heritage Centre in Pierowall.

## Noltland Castle

Westray's grandest building is Noltland Castle, which was built in 1560 by Gilbert Balfour. Balfour was the Sheriff of Orkney and the Master of Mary Queen of Scots' household. Noltland Castle was intended as a place to shelter Mary if she managed to escape her imprisonment.

Noltland Castle changed hands and though improvements were made during the 17th and 18th century, the building we see now is roofless. Despite that, Noltland Castle still stands proudly above Pierowall. It is a joy to explore its dark dungeon, impressive staircases and massive dining hall.

## Noup Head

Whilst much of Westray is flat rolling land, the west coast is a little more dramatic. Westray's highest peak, Fitty Hill (169m) lies in the south, but to the north there are 5 miles of cliffs. In the summer, wildflowers bloom on the salty clifftops.

At the northwest tip of Westray there is a jutting ship's prow of a seabird cliff. This is Noup Head. The 76m tall crags below are lined with thousands of screaming guillemots, kittiwakes, and razorbills each summer. At the top, Noup Head lighthouse looks out over the Atlantic.

## Grobust beach

Westray has several fine beaches but Grobust beach is a highlight. It is a lovely stretch of white sand, backed by dunes and wildflowers. It looks across to Noup Head and is quiet and dramatic all at once! Children will love playing here whilst the surf gathers and breaks on the shore.

## Westray and Papa Westray

Westray has a smaller neighbour to the east, Papa Westray. There's plenty to see on this lovely island, including the Knap of Howar, which is thought to be the oldest house in Europe. When people lived there in 3,700 BC, Westray and Papa Westray may have been joined.

The distance between the two islands is 1½ miles, and though Papa Westray can be reached by ferry from Pierowall, many go to Westray's airfield to take the plane over. This is the shortest scheduled flight in the UK which takes less than 2 minutes!



# Hosting the Tall Ships Races in Lerwick

**Between the 26th and 29th of July 2023, dozens of Tall Ships will arrive in Lerwick Harbour and four days of celebrating, sharing culture, and international friendships will begin. We spoke to Emma Miller, who is project managing the visit to Lerwick.**

## **How did you become project manager of such an exciting event?**

I have worked on various events, including setting up the first Shetland Wool Week and establishing Shetland Boat Week. I set up my own company in December 2017, Realta Events Management, and have been working on a range of projects since then, including some previous work with Shetland Tall Ships. When this job was advertised, there was no doubt for me that I wanted to do it.

## **When did Lerwick last host the Tall Ships Races?**

Lerwick has hosted the Tall Ships Races twice before – in 1999 and in 2011.

## **Where do the Tall Ships begin their journey from?**

The 2023 races begin in Den Helder, the Netherlands. They will leave on 2nd July and race to Hartlepool, England. From there, they race to Fredrikstad, Norway before the leg to Lerwick, arriving here by 26th July. The Lerwick leg differs in that it's not a race and ships can stop at various guest harbours on the Norwegian and Scottish coasts. The Scottish ports taking part are Aberdeen, Stromness in Orkney, and Scalloway, Yell and Unst in Shetland. On leaving Shetland on 29th July, the final race is back across the North Sea to Arendal, Norway.



## **How many Tall Ships do you expect to visit Lerwick?**

We expect around 40 ships in Lerwick, which will be a really impressive sight. Visit our website to keep track of which ships are coming!

## **How many people do you expect will attend the event?**

Shetland is already a busy place in the summer, and the event will be well attended by regular visitors, in addition to people coming here specifically for the occasion.

## **As the only Scottish host port, are you planning anything special to welcome the Tall Ships?**

The fleet will get a very warm welcome in Lerwick. Many of them will choose to visit guest harbours *en route* so will be welcomed there too. There are four days of live music and family friendly events planned for Lerwick, in addition to island tours and fun activities for crews while they are in port. We expect to release the full event programme in spring.



## **What is the difference between a host and guest port?**

A host port is an official location for the races. A guest harbour is an unofficial stop offered to ships at one or multiple harbours between Fredrikstad and Lerwick.

## **What are you looking forward to most?**

I'm looking forward to the incredible atmosphere and sense of excitement that will come from the community pulling together to make this a spectacular event for our islands and the Tall Ships fleet.

## **What preparations are underway for the Tall Ships visit?**

We are well ahead with plans for the entertainment programme. We're going to have over 70 music acts, with a combination of local and visiting artists.



There is also a huge amount of work going into the more practical elements, such as sourcing additional toilets, staging, refuse collection, security, catering, and more.

## **How important is it for Shetland to host events like this?**

Shetland is an absolutely fantastic place, full of talented people. Events like the Tall Ships Races allow us to showcase what we are capable of as a community.

## **What is the biggest challenge when organising an event like this?**

The fact we are an island is clearly the biggest challenge. The Tall Ships Races is a huge event and as a community, we don't see this level of activity on a regular basis, so it requires a lot of planning and coordination. One great thing about the races is that crew come in their own transport with their own beds aboard, so it does reduce pressure on travel and accommodation.

## **How can folk get involved with the Tall Ships Races 2023?**

We are appealing for volunteers to help with various roles during the event including stewarding, providing assistance and event information, drivers to transport trainees and visiting artists to the airport, VIP liaison officers to assist visiting officials, performers, and many other roles.

Young people between the ages of 15 and 25 can apply to be a sail trainee and actually help to crew a Tall Ship. We are working with Sail Training Shetland to fund and recruit a minimum of 75 young trainees. Some will come from other Scottish coastal areas, but many will be selected from Shetland.

And, of course, everyone can get involved by coming along and enjoying themselves!

Visit [www.tallshipslerwick.com](http://www.tallshipslerwick.com) to find out more!





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