

Summer 2020
John Scott, Chair, North Ronaldsay Trust

Time flies, it doesn't seem like three months since the last Newsletter. Thanks to all who contributed and to Alex for pulling it all together, great to see a range of articles and news updates.

Over the past few months we have seen, among other events to many too mention:

- Support during Covid as highlighted by CDM in this publication.
- Mark and Bernie leaving NR, their send-off reflecting their very significant input into island life and various island organisations and events.
- Islander Heather Woodbridge announced her candidature as North Isles Councillor, and I am sure you shall hear more from Heather over the next few weeks. I personally wish her every success in her goal of representing the North Isles.
- News of a family with young children moving to North Ronaldsay.

Membership

For those who may not yet have returned Membership Forms and if appropriate Subscription Forms, please do send these to Alison Duncan asap.

Dykework

There is a small amount of funding available to pay for rebuilding work on the Sheep Dyke, similar position to previous years when three individuals carried out dyke work. If interested, please contact either Michael Scott or Alison Duncan for more information. It would be good to have work carried out before the weather deteriorates.

Orkney International Science Festival – commencing on 3rd September

North Ronaldsay is centre stage in two events on the first day of the festival, which is 3rd September. The first event, “The Sheep on the Shore”, is at 1pm and picks up on the news story that seaweed in the diet can reduce methane emissions from livestock. Details can be found at www.oisf.org/fest-event/the-sheep-on-the-shore

The second event, “Resources on the Shore”, follows at 3pm, and covers the production of yarn at the North Ronaldsay woolmill and also the conversion of ocean plastic into filament for 3D printers. Details at www.oisf.org/fest-event/resources-on-the-coast

There is an opportunity to see the sea breaking on North Ronaldsay shores with a retrospective exhibition of the work of the artist Ian Scott. Details at www.oisf.org/portfolio-items/exhibitions

North Ronaldsay mutton is also in the news; the famous chef Tony Singh was tasked with creating a dish for each of the Cù Bòcan whisky expressions. This resulted in the Cù Bòcan Signature dish, Carpaccio of North Ronaldsay Mutton, Sweet Smoked Paprika, Spiced Picked Shallots and Croutons. I thought we had already decided Grouse was the perfect match for NR mutton, but perhaps we ought to be more innovative in the use of Ronaldsay mutton!

Community Development Manager (CDM)

Helga provides more detail in this Newsletter, but to summarise – the current funding is about to end and we are about to move into a new period of funding from HIE. It is fair to say the role was funded on the basis of

meeting very specific goals / milestones, which meant the CDM could not undertake tasks outwith the funding remit. In a short period leading up to and during the time the CDM has been in the role (commenced mid 2018), very significant funds of c. £600k have been raised for the NRT and other Island organisations. Some funding has already been received and used, some is approved but not yet used, and some is at a more provisional stage. Raising this level of funding takes considerable time, commitment and effort, which is perhaps not always recognised and appreciated. So huge thanks to all those involved over the past twenty years, including the various funding bodies and all those who have assisted in any way.

Teamwork has been instrumental in raising funds and the various funding bodies have been a pleasure to work with. Alison (from Hooking) summarises the CDM purposes very succinctly:

“The Orkney LEADER Programme have been pleased to fund the post of CDM to help build capacity within the community to enable additional funding applications for projects on housing, economic development and marketing whilst also improving communication. Alison Barclay LEADER Development Officer.”

Communications

Anyone who has been involved with applying for and securing funding will understand that the process is rarely straight-forward and is often a complicated, time-consuming and arduous process. While the Covid-19 pandemic has encouraged many people to engage with digital communication like never before, face to face communication has been made all the more tricky. We have of course been unable to meet to share information, discuss issues, ask questions and generally clear the air during public events such as island coffee mornings. Additionally, due to some funders placing an embargo on the announcement of successful bids, information cannot always be released / publicised by the applicant and first becomes available via Press Release initiated by a funder. It is also fair to say the global pandemic has had an impact on how entities operate and prioritise, and as a result, things have been slowed down.

The NRT is working really hard to make all available information available and transparent through a quarterly island newsletter and facilitating community coffee mornings. There's information that is public knowledge and there is information that through necessity or legality has to remain confidential. We would urge anyone interested to please get involved, give of their time and skills and support activities to work towards securing a sustainable island community for all. Paid posts such as CDM and Sheep Dyke Warden are sharing their progress where possible through social media, blog posts and updates in this newsletter, for example. Please do continue to get in touch – ask questions, suggest ideas. We are committed to listening and representing the views of residents and in whole-hearted public consultation.

Treb

At a previous coffee morning (late 2019) opinion was canvassed on a range of topics with the results summarised below. I have excluded verbatim comments, as respondents may not necessarily wish to have these circulated. What is evident is the support for Community Development, and the acquisition of Treb is intended to meet or facilitate many of the requirements identified. Treb shall complement, not compete with the Lighthouse complex.

As part of the funding application for Treb, we also looked at other properties and had discussions with the owners, however these were not progressed for a number of reasons, which included feedback at one of the coffee mornings.

The survey shows that whilst it is not possible to please everyone all the time, we are focused on the areas where there was / is significant support and where we see long term benefit to North Ronaldsay. It is also evident there are concerns around Housing, Services, Employment etc. see section 3 of the survey. NRT and other organisations are working on addressing these issues in a managed and measured manner, accepting that meeting all aspirations may be a stretch! The new five-year Island Development Plan (2022 – 2027) is an ideal opportunity for the community to put forward ideas - further to follow from the CDM in due course.

Thanks to all for their input and support.

NR Residents and supporters - Your views about the current and future direction of your community.

North Ronaldsay Trust are working on a Feasibility Study and Business Plan for several sites on NR where facilities could be developed to deliver benefits to the community. We would like your views.

1 Please tell us a little about yourself

	Male	Female	Prefer not to say
Are you?	7	13	1

2 How old are you?

Under 18	18-25	26-35	36-45	46-55	56-65	66+
	2	1	4	7	1	6

3 How do you feel about the current status of the North Ronaldsay community when taken as a whole? (Thinking about people, housing, services and employment etc.)

Very positive and not concerned at all	Slightly concerned	Moderately concerned	Very concerned and worried
1	8	4	6

4 Things you could do to help NR?

I am willing to	Definitely not	Probably not	Maybe	Probably yes	Definitely yes
Start a new business on NR	6	5	4	4	
Apply for jobs in new businesses on NR	6	5	3	3	2
Learn a new skill/ undergo training for a job/role on NR	4	3	4	4	4
Take on a volunteer role (or another one !!) in the NR community	2	2	5	3	7
Speak with elected representatives and decision makers in public bodies		4	3	5	7

pto



Red hot poker flowers and The New Manse

5 Community development on NR can happen in many ways. In general, how do you feel about the following potential options for ‘future proofing’ NR?

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither	Agree	Strongly agree	Don't wish to say
Repurposing an existing building as a community enterprise/business/visitor hub based on sheep (wool, meat, skins & heritage)	3			4	14	
Building a new community enterprise/business/visitor hub based on sheep (wool, meat, skins & heritage)		1		7	10	
Building a new well-being centre to house medical, emergency (fire/ambulance) and gym facilities	1	4		4	11	
Building a new combined community hub and well-being centre on same site possibly under one roof	1	4	1	3	9	
Attracting more tourists to NR			1	6	12	
Buying old houses and refurbishing them for rent	3			1	14	
Buying land and building new houses for rent	1		1	6	14	
Increasing the population of NR to 55 by 2025				8	11	
Increasing the population of NR to 65 by 2030				9	11	
Having three properties for rent by 2022	1			5	12	
Having six properties for rent by 2030	1			6	11	
Re-opening the NR Primary School by 2022				6	15	
Building a new all-weather ro/ro ferry berth	1	1		3	16	

This was a survey, not a vote. For a survey of this type there is a high percentage of response from within the community.

A Look Back at 10 Years of Community

Mark Holbrook, Harwich, Essex

It's a long time ago since October 2010 when we arrived on the island. We moved first into Dennishill whilst the surgery was renovated. The next 10 years passed with, looking back, so much happening: Bernie settling in to providing healthcare with cover provided by Berna, another Irish nurse; enjoying the freedom to go beyond a 10-minute appointment, and being able to talk about more than the reason for the visit; finding out where people lived to support house calls, and getting to know all the residents.

In March 2011, after an initial conversation with Ian Scott, then Billy, followed by a meeting with Norman and Sinclair, I took over the lighthouse cafe, and looking after the visitor centre and bike hire.

Seeing a need for home care, Bernie contacted Maureen at Verhus, who became an OIC home carer, followed by several others through the following years. Bernie also organised First Responder training with the Scottish Ambulance Service, six volunteers stepping forward, as well as getting the first ambulance.

John of Milldam contacted me to say the airport was seeking fire fighters/baggage handlers, and I dutifully signed up. Meanwhile, with word getting out about the new fare of mutton pies and North Ronaldsay chocolates at the visitor centre, knowledge of the café was spreading.



Mark and Bernie at the Bird Observatory July 2020



Mark and Bernie leaving North Ronaldsay on 25th July 2020

At the end of 2012, Bernie was awarded the NHS Orkney award for Improving Patient Access to Care and The Chairman's Award, presented by NHS Chair John Ross Scott. In 2014 she was a finalist in the Nurse of the Year awards, attending the Grosvenor Hotel in London for the ceremony. Whilst not winning, she was very grateful for the acknowledgement by the Nursing Times.

I successfully applied to become a Scottish Fire and Rescue firefighter on the island and began training at Invergordon, successfully passing the two-week breathing

apparatus training shortly afterwards, and becoming a competent firefighter. Later I joined Scottish Water, working first with the water treatment, then later with the water network and maintenance, through to emptying septic tanks.

Regatta

I'd brought up my racing dinghy, and one day I was told about the upcoming Kirkwall regatta. After shipping the dinghy across to Kirkwall, I started my first Orkney regatta of many, ultimately representing Orkney at the Inter-island Games in 2019 in Gibraltar.

Throughout all this time, both Bernie and I have enjoyed being first accepted, then becoming part of the community, through to the wonderful comments at the end. In between, we enjoyed participating in the various clubs - book, fitness, singing - as well as joining in the music groups at the school. Then there were all the Burns' Suppers, Harvest Homes and Christmas dinners, and listening and laughing, at the appropriate moment, to the various speeches and toasts.

But there comes a time when you can no longer just comment from the sidelines - and somebody says you should put yourself forward. Within in a very short space of time, I suddenly found myself elected as director to the North Ronaldsay Trust, North Ronaldsay Community Council, and North Ronaldsay Community Association. But it should always be remembered that whatever is achieved is due to the teamwork of each organisation, and it has been a pleasure for both of us to serve the community which has given us so much.

This would also include stepping into the limelight to recite the words written by Sid when performing in one of his many pantomimes, which hopefully were enjoyed by all.

Being part of the North Ronaldsay community is something that will stay with us forever - enjoying the warmth and social company of residents both in and out of their homes, and the many friends we have made and hope to see again, someday, somewhere. At the end, with our heads focused on deadlines and being in so many places, it was perhaps difficult to take in fully the extent of the gratitude and warmth that came our way, and even now, with one month gone, these two time zones have just been reversed.

Special Announcements

Please send in your articles and photograph of any births, marriages, graduations etc.

We don't want to miss any special occasions.

Reprints

Extra printed copies are £6 each plus postage
£1.85 (First Class) or £1.60 (Second Class)

alexandrawright70@gmail.com or 01857 466323



Sinclair Scott piping the steamer goodbye

Welcome to the Summer 2020 newsletter.

Thank you to the 33 people who contributed articles and pictures. Thank you to Sue Taylor for proof reading. Please send your articles, interviews, quizzes, photos, art etc to: alexandrawright70@gmail.com

Community Development Manager's Report

Helga Scott, Old Manse

Covid-19 support

It's been a strange past few months for everyone everywhere, and my role took a bit of a different path as a result. Along with development workers in the other islands, the new priority became applying for funding support to help the community during the Covid-19 pandemic.

As advised by the OIC, in early April North Ronaldsay set up a resilience group made up of representatives from the main community groups/services in response to the pandemic, the main purpose being to help find solutions to any issues arising on the island and to roll out funding to eligible residents within the community. Folk who came forward and agreed to be part of the group were Mark Holbrook, Bernie Holbrook, Ian Deyell, Peter Donnelly, David Scott, Alison Duncan, Heather Woodbridge, Alex Wright and myself.

The community, through the North Ronaldsay Trust who kindly agreed to take on the role of anchor organisation, secured funding from the Supporting Communities Fund from the Scottish Government, via Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE). HIE distributed the Supporting Communities Fund in the Highlands and Islands on behalf of the Scottish Government, for all eligible community anchor organisations, who play an active role in providing services within communities across the region. This funding enabled the provision of food tokens, fuel tokens, personal protective equipment in public places, the printing costs of the island newsletter, a phone and Kindle Fires to support residents to access online resources such as the community WhatsApp group, as well as resources such as Orkney Libraries and Archives electronic book service. It was



Sinclair Scott enjoying his fish and chips

really lovely to get such a lot of positive feedback from the community and good to hear that the support made a difference during such a difficult time.

“It’s great to get the vouchers when we are so cut off from the Mainland, very useful to be able to do some shopping, and a lot of fun, quite apart from there being a really good choice of products. It is a real help and makes a big difference to the variety of food we are able to get. Thanks to everyone who is responsible for organising the food and fuel vouchers. It is a real help in these difficult times.” Christine Muir, Garso.

Support from the The Wellbeing Fund was also secured through the North Ronaldsay Trust and used to run a community quiz and fish and chips night on Friday evenings. The fish suppers have been prepared by North Ronaldsay Bird Observatory and available for free to eligible individuals and available to buy too. The take-up has been really good and it has helped replace the long-established Day club opportunity for coming together for a hot meal on Fridays.

“The fish and chips night on a Friday has been very popular and much appreciated by islanders, and great for the Observatory team. The food tokens have been well used in our shop too.” Alison Duncan, North Ronaldsay Bird Observatory.

“It’s all just fandabbiedosey and a great cure for the Covid-19 blues.” Jimmy Craigie, Lochend.

“The worst thing about the lockdown here in North Ronaldsay is the lack of social interaction. So the fish and chip night, together with the quiz has been great in re-establishing connection. It has made Friday night something to look forward to, different kind of day of the week. So thanks to all those who have contributed to it!” Anne Ogilvie, Cursiter.

“Friday night is fish and chips and ice-cream night, and that’s brilliant, no cooking, no washing up, and even delivered to the door. It’s lovely to have a treat at the end of the week, and definitely all the hard work providing it is much appreciated.”
Christine Muir, Garso.

Many thanks to all those making these activities possible, in particular North Ronaldsay Bird Observatory for making the fish and chips night happen (and the delicious fish and chips!) and Mark Holbrook (and latterly Alex Wright) for the excellent quizzes.

Community Development Manager funding

The past two years of the Community Development Manager post have been funded through LEADER, Highlands and Islands Enterprise and Orkney Islands Council, with a contribution towards funding made by the North Ronaldsay Trust also.

The North Ronaldsay Trust’s funds raised during the Community Development Manager role during that time have exceeded £600,000. This figure represents the amount of funding raised for the island, some of which is approved in principle for future projects and includes the amount for the CDM project. My job has involved meeting targets and milestones carefully set out at the start of the project (based on the priorities set out and agreed by the community in the island development plan) and during this time the North Ronaldsay Trust has managed to progress some significant projects, such as:

- Organisation and delivery of the island Conference in June 2019
- Recruitment of the Sheep Dyke Warden
- Delivery of the fully renovated Schoolhouse, now tenanted by the SDW
- Submission and approval of Stage 1 application to the Scottish Land Fund
- Submission of Stage 2 application to the SLF for planned acquisition of the Trebb complex at North Ronaldsay airfield
- Various fundraising initiatives/events

- Liaising with land owners offering to gift land to North Ronaldsay Trust and compiling information explaining possible properties/sites for affordable housing, along with costs and recommendations.
- Establishing improved communication and community involvement, such as the regular island coffee mornings
- A marketing plan for the island
- Work has begun on a sustainability and circular economy plan for the island.
- Dark Skies application submitted, and now ready to resubmit. Dark skies events organised and Dark Skies group set up on the island
- Assisting with funding development of a number of natural heritage sites
- Supporting sustainable energy initiatives such as researching possibility of electric bikes, vehicles, renewable energy sources, Heep:Abs scheme for households.

In addition, the impetus and project capacity created by having a CDM has contributed to NRT and the community in general having new hire bicycles, new fitness equipment and created a positive outlook encouraging new residents to North Ronaldsay.

The post has been fully funded by Highlands and Islands Enterprise for another two years. Moving forward, some of the projects the CDM will look at over the next two years will be:

- Working with the community to create a new five-year Island Development Plan (2022 to 2027)
- Continuing to look into options for developing affordable housing
- Securing Dark Sky status for North Ronaldsay
- Developing a new commercial unit and securing further funding related to the project
- Consulting with stakeholders and NRT to develop a plan to maximise opportunity of the NR sheep, create events and investigate other sources of income from the sheep flock
- Fundraising
- Moving forward with identified actions from the marketing plan.

Please get in touch with me by email at northronaldsaycdm@yahoo.com.



Local Candidate Standing in By-election Heather Woodbridge, Lurand

After much thought and careful consideration, I have decided to stand in the Orkney Islands Council by-election for the North Isles ward. This position became vacant due to the passing of my father, Kevin Woodbridge in April, after a short and unexpected illness.

Standing in this election personally means a great deal to me, with a view to continue my father’s good work as a strong voice for the North Isles. This is a unique opportunity to bring something to Orkney Islands Council they have sorely been lacking – a young person who grew up and returned to live in one of the North Isles.



I understand and have experienced challenges shared by many communities in the North Isles ward and believe that I am in an excellent position to serve all of the North Isles as a Councillor.

Snippets from a Sheep Dyke Warden's Diary
Siân Tarrant, The Schoolhouse



31 May



I have been working on some sections between Quoybanks and Neven this month. It's been nice working my way along the dyke, rebuilding and ending up with a nice stretch of good dyke. It's very quiet working on this part of the island, but there is a haul-out of seals nearby who sing throughout the day.



14 June

This week I have been repairing a section which has fallen down recently near the stone crusher in Linklet bay. Norbert and Fang (caddy lambs) have been accompanying me to the beach, and are chief dyke testers. Naturally they have taken to jumping and walking along the dyke, testing each rock I've placed, and wobbling on some as if to hint "this one could be better!".

28 June

This week I was called to Howar when June discovered a group of shore sheep in her fields. Wandering past a group of alpaca, investigating the fence line to identify possible points where they were breaking in, nothing was obvious, until the sheep started jumping through the fence back onto the shore! The fence posts are in a very sandy area and they had become quite loose, so the sheep were managing to push the fence at an angle and jump through the wire. Olly and I set to straightening and bashing the fence posts further into the ground to stabilise them.

12 July

Time has flown by in the first week that Elizabeth, a vet student from Cambridge who is volunteering and lodging with me, has been here. We have been busy in the sunshine rebuilding a wall which creates a funnel into a pund near Bridesness. It's been so nice being able to show off the delights of North Ronaldsay to someone new, and to have an extra pair of hands on the dyke has been wonderful! I've been lucky that Elizabeth seems to be a natural when it comes to dyke building, and we put up that stretch of 14 metres at the pund in a week.





26 July

During Elizabeth's last 2 weeks on the island we have put up another long stretch of dyke, this time outside Scottigar. We have also been helping with shearing, a first for me, which was very enjoyable. But it certainly hasn't been all work and no play! Making the most of the glorious weather when it has appeared, we have been swimming in



the sea, climbing in the geos, kayaking and toasting sausages on sticks over a bonfire on the beach.



9 August

This week I have been lucky enough to have another volunteer - Robert Brewis, who is on the committees of the North Ronaldsay Sheep Festival and Orkney Sheep Foundation. It has been interesting to hear all about keeping North Ronaldsay sheep down south. We have been building at Westness, which has involved lots of large flat stones, which has pleased me but has perhaps been a bit heavy going for Robert who "forgets" his lunch occasionally!



Crossword Answers

Across

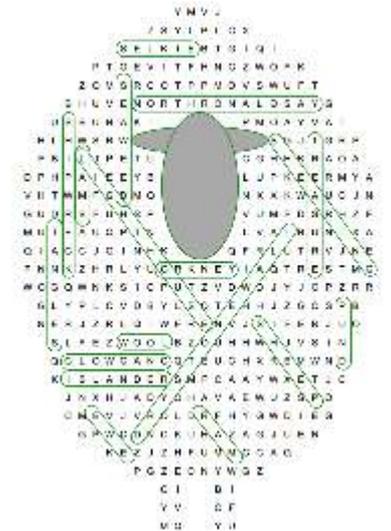
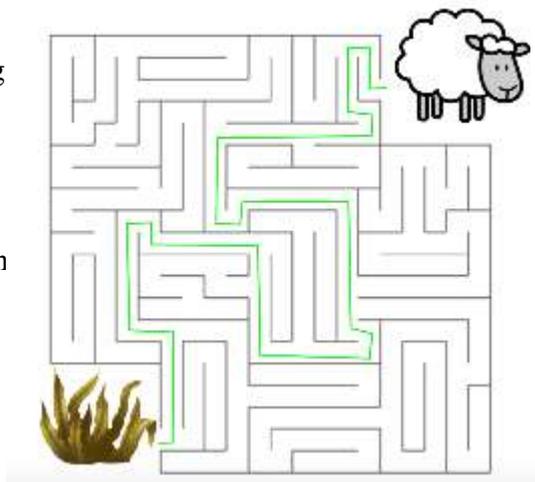
- 5. Storms
- 8. Twelve
- 10. Iguana
- 11. Orkney
- 12. Ewe
- 14. Clowgang
- 16. Punds
- 17. Mill
- 19. Winter

Down

- 1. Stone
- 2. Ram
- 3. Beacon
- 4. Selkie
- 6. Shearing
- 7. Fifty
- 9. Tangles
- 13. Sweden
- 15. April
- 18. Low

Answers to last issue's quizzes

Help the sheep find the seaweed



A Vet Student on North Ronaldsay Elizabeth Stephenson

One of the humbling privileges of being a vet student is the opportunity to fully immerse yourself in a community whilst on placement. It gives you a perspective on places far beyond what is gained from merely visiting them. My time on North Ronaldsay was no different, and I learned and gained so much from my experience.

My desire to visit stemmed from when I first heard about the seaweed-eating sheep whilst on some pre-vet school work experience at Flett & Carmichael a few years back. They sounded pretty awesome (and I can confirm they are), and it brought together my love of visiting wild and remote places with learning about an amazing breed. Fast forward a few years and I found myself in my second year of vet school, contacting Siân out the blue to ask if I could come stay, help her build the dyke and learn about the sheep.



I thought it might be a bit of a long shot, as it was before she set up her volunteering scheme, but to my delight she emailed me back and said yes. After the logistics of driving up in my mum's 16-year-old mini, being seasick on the Aberdeen ferry and watching the car fly through the air, I finally arrived a few days into July. Siân and Olly greeted me at the ferry terminal with many smiles and no small amount of relief that I'd made it safely, and then it was swiftly back to the Schoolhouse to meet Norbert and Fang, their pet (and absolutely gorgeous) lambs.



Norbert and Fang are a good inlet into a further description of the North Ronaldsay sheep, who are mostly confined to the shore, having been walled off by the dyke since 1832. The ewes come onto grass for their lambs in April, but otherwise it's seaweed all year, an amazing physiological adaptation which holds many potential advances in livestock feed for reducing emissions. Learning how the sheep shelter from storms, form 'clow gangs' (groups that they stick to in a small section of the shore), some of the common issues such as vitamin B1 deficiency (thanks to Sinclair and June for educating me on that one), and many more facts about them was fantastic for my placement.

Sheep introduction

A rainy walk along the Links on my first afternoon provided my first introduction to the sheep and allowed Siân and Olly to quickly realise what they'd signed up to with having a ridiculously excited vet student on their hands for three weeks. After recovering over the weekend, Monday was the first day of building, something I had been itching to get at. We headed over to Bridesness to re-build a section of the pund round there that had fallen down. The section was about 12 metres in total, and accompanied by beautiful weather and the lambs, we had it up within the week.



Building turned out to be something I absolutely loved. After weeks of revision, it was so refreshing to be using my brain in such a different way and puzzling out exactly where each stone ought to go. It is a skill I wanted to learn for several years and I am delighted to have done; now I'll be building North Ronaldsay-style walls everywhere.

Other adventures during my first week included a fab dip in the sea with Siân for about 20 minutes and seeing a seal close-up, sea

kayaking, putting up four new climbing routes in Inglass Geo, and some lovely walks with the lambs. I also got stuck into the book *A Window on North Ronaldsay* by Peter A. Tulloch and was fascinated by the immense history of the island, so much of which is still clearly visible. An evening fire with halloumi and sausages on the West coast solidified it as my favourite part of the island - the sunsets are stunning with the rocky coastline, and watching the waves hurl themselves at the rocks is mesmerising.



One of the things that stood out most to me during my time was the peaceful and calming nature of the island. I felt more relaxed than I have in a long time and having lived near a motorway and on an A-road all my life, the lack of traffic noise was just incredible. I woke up every morning, pushed the curtains open and I could see the sea glinting (or perhaps not!), hear the wind dancing and the birds announcing their existence to the vast sky. The smell of salt on the breeze is sorely lacking back home.

The beautiful and abundant garden at the Schoolhouse also inspired me to recreate a similar set-up when I have the means. Eating fresh leaves everyday was something I got way too used to, and I am very grateful for the skills in making pasta, bread, cream, etc imparted to me by Siân and Olly, many of which I hope to use later on to try and become more self-sufficient and environmentally conscious. It was certainly a shift from having shops so readily accessible back home and challenged me to think more about what I eat and how I could swap some things out for homemade versions.



New section

Week two signalled the start of a new section of wall, this time over by Scottigar. With Siân and Olly's car now off the island, it was up to the plucky little Mini to squeeze the three of us and two lambs into the car. With minor poo damage to Olly's jumper, we safely made it about the island in the Mini, much to my mother's amusement and outrage.

With the weather being slightly more temperamental in the second week, we ended up having a few days off building and put in a strong shift on the DIY front, building a chicken coop for the lovely Scots Dumpys, who had somewhat outgrown their inside home, and a trip to the archive for me, which was an incredible selection of local history. A trip out in the kayak to check the creels resulted in fresh crab for dinner which was delicious (until I managed to get it all over me). The week was finished off with helping the Bird Obs guys out with their punding and shearing on the south-west, my first lesson in how to shear a sheep, managing a not-too-shabby four, though there is a lot of room for improvement!



My third and final week brought the much anticipated punding of the whole island. I was also doing 50 miles in a week run too, so it was quite full on in the end. Monday involved a 10-mile run around most of the island dodging being dive-bombed by terns, and accidentally running into fulmar chicks as a result. Tuesday we were punding over by Westness, followed by a wonderful lunch with Alex (who bizarrely I had a connection with that neither of us knew about beforehand), as well as a delicious dinner with her and Jack later in the week.

The final pund was by the Old Beacon and provided much entertainment running about after errant sheep before pitching in with the collective shearing effort. It was so humbling to see everyone coming together as a community and all helping out with the punding, and it's fantastic that the flock is still communally managed and that punding is such a gathering-together event of so many families and people. I felt very welcomed and delighted in dashing over rocks after the sheep, with my sure-footed fell-running skills coming in handy. A shame that there are not more systems with a similar ethos to this still going, and it was fascinating from a veterinary perspective to get to grips with the management of the sheep.



Ringing invitation



During this week I was also invited out by the Bird Obs guys to watch ringing, starting at 11.30 pm. I wasn't totally sure what to expect, having not had much experience of this, but it opened up this whole new world of bird life to me that I was utterly enthralled by. Their knowledge and care was amazing to see and I have departed with a new-found love of birds (and an increased love for these amazing sheep).



To wrap up, I would like to thank Siân and Olly for the most incredible hospitality and generosity - they taught me so much and I will cherish my time on the island until I am able to come back. Siân, you are a massive inspiration to me! Thanks also to all the wonderful people of North Ronaldsay who showed me so much humour and generosity. Being part of your community for a few weeks and learning what it is really like to live somewhere like North Ronaldsay, which is not without its hardships, was humbling and so insightful.

A final message of love to Norbert and Fang and all the other North Ronaldsay sheep - you were so worth the journey to this beautiful, wild, far-flung corner of Orkney.

I often find on vet placement that where you are becomes a little world of itself; you are so immersed in what you are doing and learning, that it's easy to slip into a new routine and way of living. Well, North Ronaldsay, you were a beautiful and wild world to be part of and I'm so grateful to have got that opportunity.

Thanks for having me, and I'll be back soon.



Memories of Mary Robina Barnett (Sandback) Jean Tulloch, Scottigar



Mary Robina Tulloch was born at Sandback, on 9 August 1924 to Robert and Janet Tulloch. Her paternal grandfather was of Sandback, and her paternal grandmother had lived at Midhouse. Her maternal grandparents were of Westness and Sholtisquoy. Mary was a younger sister to Jenny, and an older sister to Bella.

Leaving school at 14, Mary found employment as a housekeeper to Roy and Ivy Scott of Antabreck, becoming nanny to their three young children, Rognvald, Ella and Inga. Roy was a farmer and Ivy was a school teacher. The friendship between Mary and the family during this time together brought much joy to both parties in the years that followed, with Ella speaking very poignantly at Mary's funeral service.

Mary often spoke of life in North Ronaldsay during the Second World War. She recalled watching German aircraft flying so low over the island that you could clearly distinguish the faces of the young pilots. She fondly recalled attending dances with Royal Air Force personnel stationed at the lookout post that had been established at Holland House, and was able to recall many of their names well into her latter years.

Whilst collecting water from the Lady well near Lochend, a mine washed up at the north side and exploded, showering the area where she stood with shrapnel. On hearing the explosion, her father rushed outside, fearing the worst, only to find Mary completely unharmed.

Following the war, Mary moved to the Orkney Mainland in 1947, finding employment as a housekeeper at Messigate, Tankerness, followed by a period employed at the Glaitness Laundry.

In 1953, she married Brian Barnett, initially residing at Garden Street, and thereafter at 55 Junction Road, before purchasing their first home at 2 Baikie's Buildings. A son, Brian, was born in 1957, and in 1971 the family moved to Twartquoy, 7 New Scapa Road, where Mary was able to remain until the end.

Mary was well known as a welcoming host, and her home was often a hive of social activity. She maintained an active social life, undertaking frequent bus holidays with her sisters, often to Lairg and Nairn, as well as continuing to return to North Ronaldsay each year whilst able. In later years, she enjoyed weekly visits to the Gilbertson Day Centre, and was still able to walk into town and meet with friends well into her late eighties.

Mary worked for many years as a sought-after private home help, and was active in a number of organisations, supporting the British Red Cross as an accomplished knitter, making socks, and was a dedicated member of the East Kirk and Women's Guild, as well as long-standing member of both the Women's Royal Institute and Arthritis Care.

A loving mother to Brian and his wife Sylvia, a devoted 'Nannie' to their three boys, Stephen, Colin and Euan, and a much loved auntie to myself, Eileen, Linda and Jennifer.

Mary sadly passed away on 28 May 2020 aged 95, following a brief admission to the Balfour Hospital.

NHS Update Ian Hall, Nurse Practitioner

Now that travel has returned to normal and the Loganair timetable is back to usual, the GP visiting is also back to the normal Tuesday morning 0830-1030am clinic (weather permitting). Anyone wanting to see the GP is advised to phone ahead first to avoid excessive waiting and to observe social distancing and face-covering rules in operation at any given time (which obviously may change as time goes on).

The guidance to help you stay safe and protect others is updated regularly. If you're unsure about what you should or shouldn't be doing go to gov.scot/coronavirus for the latest information

Symptoms of Covid include:

- a new cough;
- a temperature;
- loss of taste or smell.

Please ring the North Ronaldsay Surgery if you have any of these symptoms

Practice: (01857) 633226

Mobile: 07876 651885

Health Science Graduation Duncan Gray, Kirkwall

After graduating from the University of Aberdeen in June with a BSc in Health Science with First Class Honours, I first thought I should briefly explain what my degree is all about.



Health science differs from basic sciences such as biology, physics and chemistry because those disciplines often explore topics unrelated to health. Although this type of science concentrates specifically on health problems and health outcomes, it is a broad interdisciplinary field that encompasses both the prevention and treatment of disease and overall enhancement of wellbeing. It seeks to further our scientific knowledge and understanding about physical activity, the principles, and the application of nutrition and psychology to benefit health.

Health science programmes combine laboratory science classes with lectures and seminars that are essential for understanding population health factors. Key courses included integrative physiology, the science of ageing from cradle to grave, clinical exercise physiology and metabolic health. I personally really enjoyed learning the physiological function of the cardiovascular system and the impact of exercise on metabolic health.

My dissertation was also a particular highlight, entitled *Efficacy of frequent vigorous exercise regarding atrial fibrillation and cardiac troponin on cardiovascular health*.

Currently, my next steps are to further my education at Master's level at either the University of Aberdeen again or the University of Glasgow, studying cardiovascular science.



Graduation

Sarah Moore BA (Hons), The Meedoo

It's the end of an era – or at least that's what it feels like for me. On 21 July this year, my six long years at the Open University came to a pretty unceremonious anti-climactic end, albeit a happy one. Thankfully I get to walk away with a bachelor's degree in English Language and Literature.

When I began this journey, I had no idea how much my life would change in six years. Just one year into my degree, I moved to North Ronaldsay and began a whole new way of life. Into the second year, I had to battle with 'barely-there mobile data' that took the entire day, with my phone perched in a very specific spot on the armchair, to get enough signal to download a text document, detailing the tasks for the coming week. Thankfully by year 3, I had satellite broadband and then Cloudnet – back to a civilised way of studying.

It was fortunate for me the way the courses were laid out – starting in October and finishing around the end of May. It did mean that the hardest part of my course – the final assignments and exam overlapped with the awakening of all the jobs that lay in hibernation over the winter, but that couldn't be helped. It was hard at times to stay motivated/interested and focused on the work when there are so many other distractions and obligations – even in the winter, when you would think you would have more time to work on these things, but somehow that never seems to be the case.

I always started and tried to remain two weeks ahead of where I was supposed to be and sometimes even worked through official holidays to ensure I never fell behind. Managing the course like this did help give me a buffer in case something came up and I was unexpectedly busy for a week or so, but it also meant that I was completely out of sync with the other students on the course. If I was struggling with something, I couldn't post a question in the online forum as the tutor hadn't even made it yet!

Nevertheless, I made it to the end, and need to figure out what on earth I'm going to do with this degree now that I have it. But for now, the most important thing is I never have to lift a textbook again in my life... but I will lift a glass or two!

Last issue Sarah posed the question: from which house can you see three lighthouses?

The answer is Greenwall
and the lighthouses are Start Point on Sanday, Noup Head on Westray and Dennis Head on NR

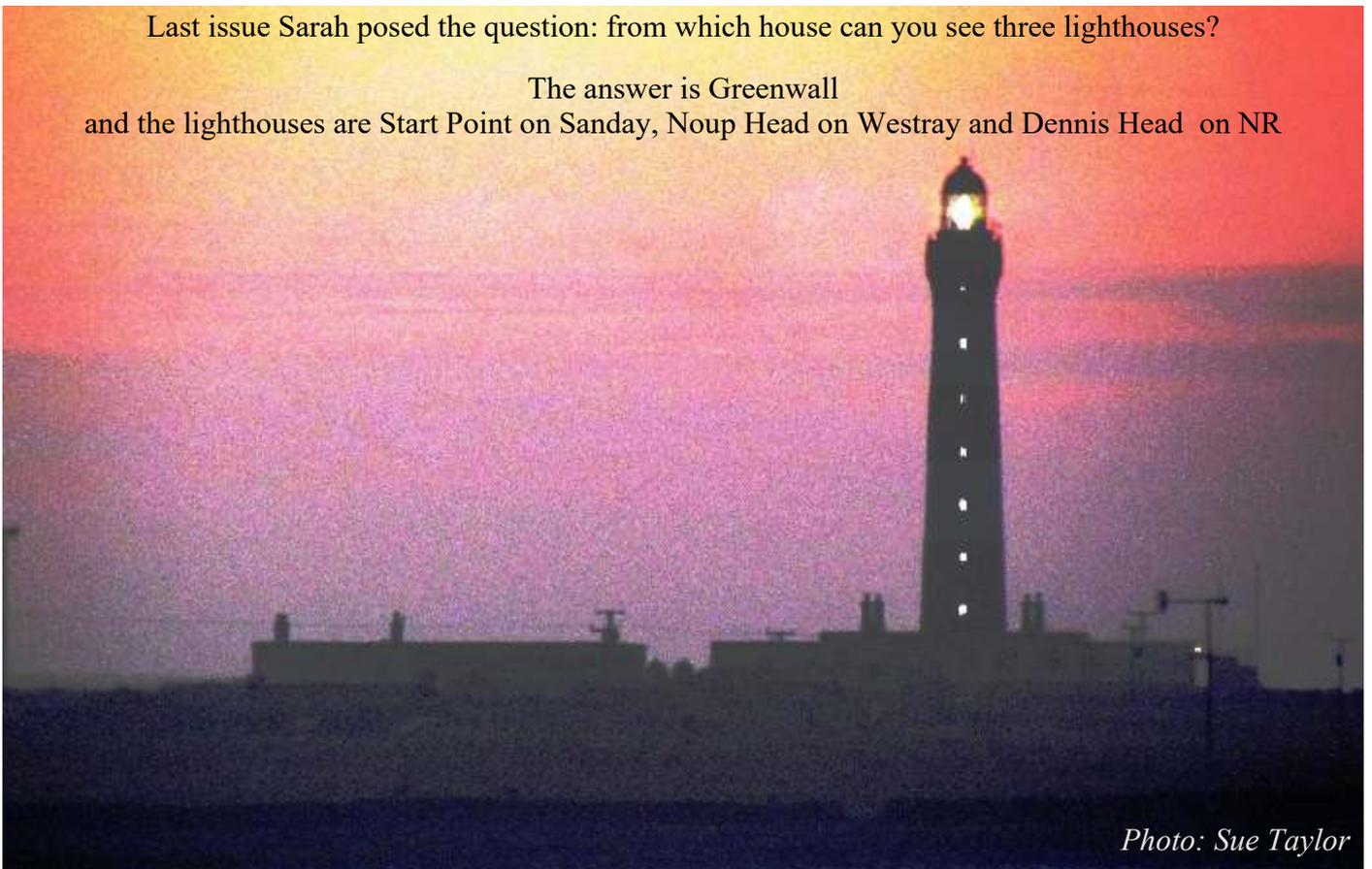


Photo: Sue Taylor

Graduation Genna Scott, Norfolk



This summer, I graduated from St Andrews with an MA (Hons) in Medieval History, First class. Growing up, I never imagined myself becoming a historian (or at least, studying history at university), but the interest has always been there. I have Orkney, with its standing stones, ancient ruins and living history to thank for that!

My courses have introduced me to a huge range of interesting topics (interesting to me at least, I'm getting used to a lot of glazed eyes). Some of these topics were very niche, from the 10th century Byzantine empire to 14th century French medicine. If you ever need an expert in 7th century Irish watermills (don't all line up at once) I'm your girl! I also learned that people haven't changed much over the centuries, and that our understanding of our own history is very much a relevant and evolving thing.

In my final year I was given the option to make a video documentary instead of a dissertation, and I chose the topic of the Viking legacy in Orkney. I really enjoyed this aspect of my degree. Aside from learning the technical skills necessary to film and produce a documentary, I also had the chance to interview academics who specialised in Orkney's history and folklore.

My last few months at university weren't exactly how I imagined them (I'm fairly sure I'm not alone on that front!) – nevertheless I loved working on my documentary, and I want to continue presenting history in different ways. In September I will be continuing my studies at University College Dublin with a Masters in Public History, which takes history out of an academic context, and makes it accessible to everyone through things like documentaries, podcasts and exhibitions.

Technically I'm not able to show my documentary to people, for legal reasons, so I've included some photos from the project below.



Learning with Lockdown

Teigan Scott, Verhus

Lockdown for me has been an interesting experience, but it's not really different from what I'm used to. As you all know, living on an island means you have to work around certain obstacles you encounter, so it's not much different for school work. The way I have managed to keep on top of my school work is on Teams - the teachers set us assignments and tell us how to answer the stuff on the assignment they have given us and what to expect from the exams coming up. For me, having to basically teach myself how to do some of the work is something I'm used to because I have had to learn to be independent from a younger age.

The main thing that has been good for me is that having to learn at home is beneficial in some ways because it made me focus more on my work. The only bad thing about being in lockdown is that I'm missing the social aspects of being in school, but now that lockdown has eased off I've been able to visit more of my friends.

The thing that I find most of my friends have encountered is that they have sometimes not found the motivation to actually get up and do the work before the due date. This can affect the way they look at things when our exams start but once school is back to the "new normal", then the study aspect of things might improve. Having Teams for work is a good app to use because you can do so much on it, and it makes sure everyone can access everything they need to be able to type up or make notes on the work they're doing.

Even though we are all in lockdown that doesn't mean we can't achieve things, like for example, at KGS they have a house cup and they present it every year and the way you can win it is to get things called house points, and the house with the most points at the end of the year gets to win the cup, and this year my house won it! In total there are about 3 houses in the whole school, Copinsay, Eynhallow and Fara, and this year Copinsay won. So even though we are in lockdown, it doesn't mean we aren't capable of being successful!

One thing I found out which was not a good thing is that so many people have been using Teams all over the world that it sometimes gets overrun and glitches so that people aren't able to access the notes they need. But if we didn't have Teams, we would not have been able to learn the things we need for our exams coming up, so it was a good experience to endure, even if it was annoying sometimes especially when the WiFi goes off, but that's not really happened to me this term which was good.



Harley, Teigan's dog, is 9 years old, he is cross between a spaniel and a collie and he loves to get attention from people

One Man and His Dog
James Boyden, The Sugar House



James and Dave

After 25 years in mind-numbing, soul-destroying factory and warehouse work, wrecking the planet to churn out rubbish and 12 years in the centre of England, stuck in a shared house with crazy neighbours, I lost the will to live! I got the chance to spend two months on North Ronaldsay and I didn't want to go home. After a year and one failed attempt to get back here, (my friend's van broke down and we had to be towed home over 500 miles and 30 hours on 5 different tow trucks!), I finally made it.

I love it here and so does my dog Dave. I'm trying to teach him to help with the sheep. He's a German Shepherd, the best one in the world, but he'd never seen sheep before we came here, so we're still waiting for his genes to kick in. So far, the only command he listens to is "Do your own thing Dave, after all, It's your life..." (We've got that one perfected). Maybe I need to learn German. Most of the time though he has herded the sheep in the right general direction, and he has proved invaluable rounding up escaping lambs that run at warp speed 9.



This island is perfect for us. We both love the great outdoors. We both love walking down empty shores and we both love to bark at seals although 'Davey Seals - Ocean Explorer', is now on a 'North Sea curfew' after disappearing 8 times into the big blue. He swims so far out that I only know he's still there when a seal dives under the water and the splash twinkles in the sunlight, he stays out there for over an hour!



In a pointless attempt to fix a 'disposable...just throw it away and buy a new one' world, I've been recycling paper and cardboard to make fireballs and firebricks. I'm still perfecting the process, but they seem to work quite well. I'm also hoping to be able to recycle plastic bottles soon to make clear tiles for cold frames.

I've been busy 7 days a week now for over a year in an attempt to get a garden (and my life) into some kind of shape. I've done a variety of island tasks since I've been here from chasing feral sheep to fixing dykes, tractors, trailers, turbines and countless fences. I've been told the salt in the air here creates a conductive surface over everything, (I've had more shocks than Frankenstein, the inmates in the Cuckoo's Nest and Thor combined!). I've had shocks from rubber insulators, plastic handles, porcelain insulators and cows. I could probably charge a tractor battery if I plugged jump leads on to my ears.

A few years ago, I was bitten by the gardening bug, (if I knew I was going to end up gardening on North Ronaldsay, I would have taken anti-biotics). Here it's a whole new level. I've had to change my gardening style from a 'leisurely/casual English allotment' style, (cup of tea, do a bit of weeding, more tea, light the bbq, open the crate of beer, finish weeding tomorrow), to a more aggressive 'Orkadian combat-ready' style. Here you need green fingers and a green beret. If gardening were a game show, I've just gone from Deal or no Deal to Mastermind (and my specialist subjects are 'pre-World War 2 era stamps' and '80's tv theme tunes'). I once had to chase a chicken away from my plants and then snatch my dinner back from a mouse!! You don't see that on the Krypton Factor! My plants have been destroyed by cats, dogs, mice, chickens, sheep, rabbits, (bring out the 'Holy hand grenade!'), half the insect kingdom, 'Wrath of God' level winds and pillars of salt. Only about 30% of the hundreds of seeds I planted germinated and critters and cold got to most of them and countless plants bolted and started to flower so it's not been a very successful year but you know what they say about success: "if at first you don't succeed, then redefine success".

Last year I arrived in June and only grew a handful of courgettes. I've already had more produce this year and the surviving plants are now looking green and healthy and I've just dug up a few super tasty purple tatties, so this has been my most successful year here yet!





A North Ronaldsay Garden Anne Ogilvie, Cursiter

Lockdown has given us all an opportunity to appreciate what a marvellous environment we are lucky enough to live in.

We have used the extra time to enjoy our garden, which Sid designed and made, starting 20 years ago. The garden is made up of small sections divided by fences made of pallets, this helps protect the plants from the strong winds, especially the roses. They are not exhibition-class, but the fact that we can grow them on North Ronaldsay is remarkable.

The pond, too, is a lovely place to sit and relax by. We have numerous carp, some over 15 years old, including goldfish, comets, shubunkin and ghosts. They have interbred and so probably have exclusive North Ronaldsay heritage. Water lilies have thrived and we possibly have too many, but the lily pads help keep the blanketweed at bay. This plant is a blight and we have tried everything to get rid of it, but the fish enjoy eating it and hiding in it.

Several years ago we received some frog spawn from Rose Mabel in Kirkwall. They have since spread yearly all over the island, according to anecdote. They are marvellous at keeping the slugs down in the garden, something the hostas appreciate.

Anyone is welcome to come and collect some hosta plants in the autumn when we have to cull them, as they have become so successful.



Plantings

Interview with Winnie Scott, North Manse



When did you starting planting?

The first planting was on the road over 20 years ago

What did you plant?

Fuchsia, Veronica, Escallonia, London pride and Aconite.

When was the next planting?

That was the Cottie Dyke.

Is that the area we call Ancum Willows?

Yes

When did you plant that?

Cameron and I planted a piece the size of this table, a lot of years ago.

What did you plant?

Willow, I'm not sure of its name, it's some that my sister found on the beach and I took cuttings from it. Her husband said it would never grow, but it did.

Who planted the other willows?

That was Martin Gray. I planted Pampas grass later on.



Pampas Grass, Willows and Fuchsia

North Ronaldsay Drone Photos

Mark Holbrook







Nature Sightings



Red Admiral - Alison Duncan



Risso's dolphins - Alison



Cuckoo - Alison



Pied Flycatcher - Alison



Blue Jellyfish, Cyanea lamarckii - Sian Tarrant



Moss Carder Bumblebee - Sian

Bird Observatory Update



Daryl Mcleod, head housekeeper



Dante Shepherd, volunteer, making a home delivery of messages from the shop.



James Wilson, volunteer, ringing a fulmar chick.

Birds Obs Shop

We are open 12-2 everyday, except on Tuesday when we'll be open 12 to 1 and 2 to 4 (i.e. closed between 1 and 2) to give us time to unpack stock from the freight plane.



During lockdown, Friday nights at the bird observatory have been transformed into a flurry of deep frying.

As we swap our binoculars for tattie peelers, North Ronaldsay residents await their fish and chip delivery - ketchup at the ready!

Bird Round-Up

George Gay, Bird Observatory

Spring treated us quite well for scarce migrant birds, despite the lack of commoner migrants, with the Red-backed Shrike appearing no fewer than six times, involving three rather smart males. Added to the cast were two male Bluethroats at Sandback and Viggay, whilst a Short-toed Lark was seen near Mildam as George and Gav delivered Friday fish and chips!

An extremely smart adult male American Golden Plover was found one evening on the grass in front of the telephone masts at the north end. Several Marsh Warblers - of which two were heard singing - appeared at Holland and Ancum. Hooking Loch played host to a Great White Egret during 4-18 July, and a rather smart Pectoral Sandpiper was found displaying at a Snipe over Burray before relocating to the area surrounding Hooking.

Meanwhile, the island's second ever record of a Spoonbill was seen flying south towards Ancum before disappearing on 2 May. A total of 13 Long-tailed Skuas spent the best part of two weeks hanging around on Tor Ness in various sized flocks, a spectacle for anybody lucky enough to see them.

The major highlight on the ornithological front was a Green Warbler caught at Holland on 1 June, now confirmed by DNA analysis. It represents the seventh record for Britain and the first for North Ronaldsay and Orkney.

Away from birds (yes, we do other things!), the moth trap has produced a few bits and bobs. A True Lover's Knot on 13 July was a second for North Ronaldsay, and more interesting moths have included Burnished Brass, Dark Swordgrass and Red Carpet. And a new hoverfly for the island - *Volucella bombylans* - was found by the bothy on the west side. This represents the most northerly UK record.



Red-backed Shrike



American Golden Plover



Green Warbler



Pectoral Sandpiper



Long-tailed Skua



Bluethroat

North Ronaldsay Flora
Alex Wright, Breckan

This summer has seen plenty of activity on the North Ronaldsay Natural History Facebook group (new members always welcome). We are collecting sightings of plants which will be sent to the County Recorder, John Crossley. These plant records are collated on national databases and are invaluable research data. For example, the effects of climate change on plants can be monitored or the movement of invasive species.



*A particularly noteworthy spotting was Ingrid Tulloch's find of Slender St John's Wort *Hypericum pulchrum* which has not been recorded on North Ronaldsay for 100 years.*



*Sandra Tulloch's find of the Lesser Trefoil *Trifolium dubium* was the first record since Elaine Bullard's recording in 1969.*

Three new records for North Ronaldsay are Slender Speedwell *Veronica filiformis*, Wavy Bittercress *Cardamine flexuosa* and Bugle *Ajuga reptans*. These could well have arrived in pots with garden plants.

This year saw the beginning of my personal project to create a visual plant identification guide for all the flora of North Ronaldsay, so at over 100 pages to date, it's a third of the way there. Please let me know if you would like a pdf copy (free) of the work so far. I am posting each page separately on the FB group.

I am also collecting samples of all the plants on North Ronaldsay to create an island herbarium. This involves collecting a plant (top, not roots) only when there are more than 20 plants of the type (to protect very rare plants), then pressing and drying them before mounting them. A collection of the dried plants is useful for future research.

WANTED

Have you seen a Great Yellow Bumblebee?

It is one of Britain's rarest bumblebees and has been seen recently on most Orkney islands,

Are they on North Ronaldsay????

If you see one, please take its picture and send it to alexandrawright70@gmail.com

Yellow or brownish-yellow body **Black strip between wings**

Other bumblebees you might see on North Ronaldsay include:

Garden Bumblebee	Moss carder Bumblebee
	
3 yellow strips	2 black strips
	white bum

Summer at Cavan Louise Paterson, Cavan

Summer has been a great time here at Cavan. It has been so nice to be able to spend most of our time out of doors. Living on the west coast of mainland Scotland, you are always forced inside by the midgies, so to be able to enjoy the long summer evenings is a real pleasure. Neil has been out and about doing a few handyman jobs and will be off in September to do some courses with the Scottish lime people. At the end of May we hatched out six Brahma chickens. We have had chickens for years, but these little Brahmas have been a wonderful discovery.



They are very sweet-natured, friendly and so laid back, they are almost horizontal! We were really pleased that all six hatched from posted eggs, which is almost unheard of. They all have completely different personalities and have ended up with names to reflect them - Oddbod, Lemon Pie, Mr Becket and Houdini. They are getting really big and have the most fantastic fluffy feet.



I spoke to the breeder yesterday who told me that they won't reach full-size for two more years, and the cockerel will make over a stone in weight.



In the meantime, they keep us laughing with their antics and generally bring us much joy as we prepare for Liam to leave the coop. It's time for him to spread his wings and launch into his next chapter, going to St Andrews to study astrophysics. A time of mixed emotions for us as it seems only yesterday that he arrived as a little five-year-old with scabby knees. The nest is going to feel very empty in a few short weeks, even with giant chickens!

Fusion 3: Silaging with a Difference Sarah Moore, The Meedoo



This year, Kirbist farm leads the way in pioneering the next evolution of farming on the island.

The McHale Fusion 3 is the flagship of the worldwide leader in the production and development of integrated baler wrappers. It has been specifically designed as a high output robust machine, equipped with a 2.1-metre galvanised pick-up, to lift even the shortest of crops, and a unique patented bale transfer, producing 50-60 wrapped bales an hour.

The bale chamber splits horizontally (like a clam shell) and the lower section of the chamber doubles as a transfer mechanism to transfer the netted bale into the vertical wrapping ring. This keeps the 5.8-metre Fusion short for better manoeuvrability in small fields or hilly conditions. The vertical wrapping ring takes 30 seconds to apply six layers of wrap while remaining on the move, so the wrapping platform is always waiting for the next bale. Each time a bale is ejected from the wrapping table, oil and grease pass through their respective blocks, ensuring the machine consistently delivers the correct amount of oil or grease depending on the load the components are under.



The Fusion is controlled by an expert control console which allows Liam to view graphically what stage of the wrapping cycle the machine has reached. The bale wrapper automatically wraps and tips the bale when the next bale is being netted (on flat conditions) or when the operator presses the tip bale button (in hilly conditions). On top of that is the camera fitted to display the wrapping process in the tractor cab but also to aid when manoeuvring in tight spaces when the baling is finished for the day.

OK, that's enough of the techy bit. I'm about as far from an expert on the ins and outs of silaging as is possible but even I can appreciate what an impressive bit of kit this is. This baler can clear a field in the blink of an eye, making silage time that bit easier. This is an incredible boon, not only when it comes to the mad dash of producing bales in Orkney's changeable climate but also in manpower. I've got to admit, I'm a little biased towards the Fusion as it gets me out of the mind-numbingly boring job of wrapping bales, alone in a field all day. Hopefully you'll all get a chance to see it on the go this season - if not, there's always next year!



The Grey Stane Pow Ian Scott, Antabreck

I was asked if I might like to write something about the Grey Stane Pow (pool). I have mentioned the place in previous 'Letters', but let me once again tell you a little more about this once wonderful natural little swimming or bathing pool.



In the past, some of the island's young folk used to frequent this ready-made rock pool. For instance, a lighthouse keeper (possibly two over the years) taught my father and others to swim in the 1930s and 1940s, and I learned in the late 1950s when John Tulloch, Upper Linnay, taught me the simple breast-stroke. John, seven or eight years older than me, and some other boys of his age who were in the scouts were taught by a lighthouse keeper, Bill Crow.

The pool is not very large, maybe 17 or so meters long by 6 or 7 wide, but sufficient to dive and swim in. It had a soft moss-type bottom covering, sloping to the shallow north end with its deepest part being five foot or more. On the south side there is a convenient little ledge from which one could dive into the deepest area and swim even underwater for most of its length. When it was stream tides (with the new and full moon), the pool was cleaned out, for the sea, no distance away, fills the pool, adding another two feet or more of extra depth and greater length. In the summer, on real hot days, the water in the pool became quite warm and often we would be in the water for an hour or more.

*Left to right : Ann (Purtabreck), Walter then Norman
(both standing on the Grey Stane) then Kathleen.
Taken in the 1960s.*

Above the somewhat difficult-to-find pool stands the Grey Stane - a large boulder or rock just below the face of the banks at Turrieness hill . It gives the pool its name and it, like the pool itself and surrounding rock formations, probably dates back to the ice age.

Well, sad to say, this pool has been irrevocably ruined by heavy winter seas these past 10 years or so (the last time I swam in it was 16 years ago) that have wrenched and lifted rocks, some weighing tons, from deeper water nearby and deposited them into the pool, totally blocking the space so that it is no longer possible to swim there again. Looking at it recently, I do not think it can be cleared easily.

But around the 1960s, my two sisters, Ann and Kathleen – four and five years respectively younger than me - learned to swim in the Grey Stane. We generally used the easy breast-stroke. Two much younger brothers,

Walter and Norman, mostly only paddled about in the shallow end and other adjacent areas. The other member of the family, Sinclair, by that time, was away in the south working.

I suppose for the next few years, seven or eight maybe, we were down at the Grey Stane Pow almost every summer evening if the day had been warm and the summers then seemed days of grand weather. Somehow time was easy, but then our parents were in their prime and the work at Antabreck got done, thus allowing us this nightly excursion without a care in the world. I have seen us there as the sun was setting and in the mirking of the night later in the summer. Out at sea there would be a passing ship or two, and once a liner sailed north all ablaze with twinkling lights.

We were greatly addicted to this activity and on Sundays we would be in the sea at Nouster bay with its snow-white sands and crystal clear water - colder, but nevertheless as enjoyable. Then back home and down to the Grey Stane in the evening to enjoy warmer water. What fun this all was! We experimented with WW2 gasmasks (sealing the breathing part) and seeing for the first time the magic of the underwater colours of the rocks, short seaweeds, coral-coloured encrustations and such sights as one sees in rock pools that the sea has access to. Then we graduated to proper masks and flippers to enjoy another dimension of our water activities.



Children in the Grey Stane Pow circe 1971

The years passed all too soon and other aspects of life took over as they inevitably do and our days of visits to the Grey Stane Pow gradually came to an end. Maybe there were occasional visits, but the care-free years were in the past.

But still the name of that very special place brings back many happy memories of those days of our youth that come and go all too soon. I'm glad that I am of a generation that enjoyed an older North Ronaldsay and learned from our wise and knowledgeable elders and was lucky enough to have lived through those days I've been remembering.

So it's goodbye to youth and the passing years, and goodbye to the old Grey Stane Pow.



Grey Stane Pow - Summer 2020

Alex Wright, Breckan

Some of us recently attempted a swim in the pool. Sadly, over the last 10-15 years, large rocks of around 1-metre square have been swept into the pool, making proper swimming impossible. It is such a shame as the water was quite warm and it would be such a safe place for children to swim.

News from the Looms Helen Galland, Rue

So, further to my experiments and ideas that I wrote about in the last newsletter, I have now become a three-loom family! A new vintage table loom is helping me produce 3:1 based twills which are a pain to do on the counterbalance loom, despite all the text books telling me otherwise.



Fishing net cowl

I had attempted a real waffle weave on the counterbalance (as opposed to the mock waffle I do on the ridged heddle loom), and pretty much had to raise each shaft by hand as the foot pedals would not allow enough clearance for the weft yarn to pass back and forth. After much colourful language, I finally finished the 2-metre long piece, and it has an interesting texture, but I'm not quite sure if it is correct. The new loom will allow me to do this weave with more clarity (and much less profanity).

I had another texture weave on the ridged heddle at the same time, and decided on an open weave, possibly good for net curtains or a summer shawl, depending on the thickness of yarn used. It turned out quite nice - I call it a fishing-net scarf - but having full'd it (washed to partially felt the wool fibres) three times, the yarns were still all distinct and loose. The length of the scarf, however, had halved, and what was a nearly 2-metre scarf is now barely a metre. So now it's a fishing net cowl....

Bottle bases

I also had a plan to make textiles, maybe a nice cushion with matching lampshade. I made one and had the idea (it's not a new idea, I know) to use old wine bottles as bases for the lampshades; there are lots of tutorials online about all this. I enquired of the Bird Observatory, and they said they (like we all should do) recycle the glass bottles.

However, Orkney Gin comes in a non-glass bottle and so, not being recyclable, they had accumulated rather a lot, thanks in part to the happy punters at the last sheep festival I believe - no blame, no shame. Their mounting pile of gin bottles was my gain. They have turned out to be the perfect base, being local (if I leave the label on anyway) and somewhat humorous, as well as doing my part for the 5 R's, in this case repurposing them. If you haven't already read my article *Recycling on a Small Island*, you won't know what I am talking about, but never fear - that article is in this newsletter too!

So never a dull moment pondering the uses of wool here at Rue. Hopefully when lockdown ends, I might actually get them out into the shops and craft fayres.



Waffle weave throw in stone grey



Rhubarb plaid twill lampshade and cushions

Last Call for Submissions to My Lockdown Life! Sue Taylor, South Gravity

We've had lots of lovely submissions for this community project now - but there's room for a few more. So..... if you were thinking about it, or just not got round to it - now's your last chance! Just let me know, and please submit by next weekend. Details again.....

"My Lockdown Life" - community art project

What's kept you going through lockdown? What things have helped you every day to get through these strange times? and how would you show this in a picture?

Make a still life arrangement of the objects, people and/or places that convey how you're surviving lockdown (see example pic below). All interpretations/variations welcome! Then take a photo of it, or draw/paint/print etc, add a few words about it, and send or give it to me.

I'll make all the pieces into an online display that you can show to family and friends. And once lockdown eases, we might have a real-life exhibition somewhere on the island, and maybe even elsewhere.

Open to all islanders and anyone with a connection to North Ronaldsay. One image only per person. Please email to: suetaylor_@hotmail.co.uk, or contact me to arrange drop-off.



Recycling on a Small Island

Helen Galland, Rue

It can be no surprise to readers that the buzzword around the world was - until the C word came along this year - environmentalism. Government and councils are tripping over themselves to try to meet targets in reducing carbon emissions, and are encouraging us to be involved in this drive to reduce our combined carbon footprint. Many people don't need advising; we already know that the planet cannot cope with our previous throw-away philosophy. And many people have been doing at least the minimum by recycling for years.

But can we do more? Is there any motivation to go above the minimum - or even go above and beyond? For some, the knowledge that the environment is being damaged by humanity's past and current behaviour is enough of an incentive to do something. Others might need a bit of persuading.

So what are the wee remote islands of Orkney doing in the campaign to fight climate change? Last year I visited a couple of our neighbouring islands, as well as mainland Orkney, to see just what is going down, on the ground, with our waste.

My first port of call was Stronsay. A much larger and more populated island than North Ronaldsay, it still suffers similar problems, in that waste has to be shipped off the island. My second visit was to Papa Westray, a similarly sized and populated island with possibly a slightly lower average age. Finally, I went to the recycling depot at Hatston to see what happens to the waste collected from both mainland households and our outer isles.

Orkney Islands Council (OIC) provides recycling facilities to households, and on mainland that means separate bins for metal, glass, paper/cardboard, and plastic (but only bottles). Further collections can be arranged for green (garden) waste, but there are no food/ kitchen/catering waste collections, because no-one locally can process this waste for making compost.

This is not the case for the outer islands. They are provisioned with recycling bins to allow residents to recycle the following (I'm detailing more than basic info here in case some of you don't know exactly what can and cannot be put in each bin).

Metals

This bin is for steel and aluminium, such as food cans (eg cat food, soup), drinks cans, tin foil (only clean, not contaminated with food), metal bottle tops, food jar lids, aerosol cans (try to remove plastic top but don't worry if you can't - the metal is very valuable and reusable), metal CO2 cartridges. Don't crush your cans, as it makes it harder to compress into bales later on in the recycling facility. Also, if you have lots of small items (eg beer bottle tops), put them all in an empty food tin and squeeze the sides together to hold it all in.

What should you not recycle in the metal bin?

- Batteries (but they can be recycled in a separate waste collection where available)
- Metal components from cars, electrical items (these all need to be recycled via different waste streams where available)
- Sundries, such as nails, staples, screws, wire (again, they are recyclable but not in this container).

Glass

This bin is for glass bottles (eg wine), jars (eg jam), and nothing else. Many things are made of glass but they all have different properties, depending on the manufacturing process, and only glass bottle and jars melt at the same temperature for joint recycling.

Paper

Some places have a paper bin and a card bin. Generally, paper is for newspapers, greetings cards (no glitter or embellishments), cereal boxes and other card food packaging, A4 printer paper, envelopes and other junk mail you get in the post (no staples). Card is for the ridged corrugated cardboard boxes that need a lot of physical force to breakdown into a size to fit in the recycling bin. Both these items are entirely burnable, but now there's a greater demand for reducing carbon emissions, it is expected that recycling of these items will become more of a necessity.

We do not have a plastic recycling facility - why? Because the costs to the council to procure this waste would not be covered by the amount recyclers are willing to pay for it. The fact is that plastic is not fantastic - it is hard to recycle and there is just too much of it about.

In addition, there aren't just one or two types of plastic; it is often categorised into seven different types. OIC has agreed to take on the recycling of Category 1 and 2 (PET 1 and HDPE 2), which you will find stamped in a little triangle symbol on the item. These are the most recyclable plastics. But the council has limited the collection to bottles only (cola bottles, shampoo bottles - as long as it's a bottle and C1 or 2, it's fine.)

Why? Because OIC claims the public finds it hard to know what to recycle at the best of times, and presenting them with all the different ways C1 and C2 plastics can be found would confuse and confound them. This would mean that non-C1/C2 plastics would often also end up in the recycling bin, causing contamination, the bane of the recycling manager's life. Thus the whole consignment might be condemned - in other words, it would all go to landfill, including the perfectly recyclable component.

Travesty

To try to mitigate this travesty, OIC has said it will only take bottles. This has caused a lot of consternation among the greener members of the community, and also well-meaning, less informed folk, but hopefully I have explained well enough why they felt it was necessary.

Yet we outer islanders can't shift even that plastic pariah. The Scottish Government announced a plan (soon to be enacted) to bring in a deposit return scheme, whereby we would all pay a little more for plastic-bottled drinks, but could claim this deposit back if we returned the empty bottles to the vendor. No outer islander wants to travel to town carrying an unwieldy sack of bottles, so there needs to be some compromise for remote areas. This has yet to be put into the plan, but MPs have still got two years to iron out the kinks before it goes live.

As someone who lived in London for nearly a decade before moving here, I am used to all my waste being taken away from my doorstep (as long as I complied and put the right thing in the right bin). But we should not feel hard done-by up here because we do not benefit from that. I still had to drive a 60-mile round trip to dispose of electrical items, furniture and garden waste, or pay for a skip. It did make me think long and hard about my personal use of stuff.

So let's look at the 5 Rs - Refuse, Reduce, Re-use, Re-purpose, Recycle - and what they mean to us.

Refuse Do you really need it? you could just refuse that plastic bag, that disposable coffee cup.

Reduce How much of it do you really need? Buying something in a bulk container rather than lots of small containers reduces not only the number of times you buy it, but also the amount of packaging it's responsible for.

Reuse Wait! Don't bin it - is it still useable? Re-use by refilling plastic drink bottles; un-crinkle that foil sandwich wrapper for next lunchtime.

Repurpose It may not be fit for its original use, but can it be used for something else? Use egg boxes or margarine tubs as seed trays, or make a plant container out of old holey wellies, for instance.

Recycle And if none of the above is appropriate, is it recyclable? If so - do it!

It's amazing how much you can reduce the waste in your black bin bag by observing the above.

Stromsay have been participating in a pilot scheme enabling their plastic (bottles) to be taken by the council. In return, Stromsay have agreed to manage the recycling of their glass and cardboard waste on island, by getting funding to purchase a glass imploder and a cardboard shredder/brickette maker. They have a very functional recycling community hub at the refurbished old fish market buildings. Currently someone is employed to implode the glass and shred card to make brickettes. Training was needed to use the machinery involved. It is hoped a new wind turbine will pay the electric costs in future.

As for plastic, it does depend on residents buying into the importance of this project. People still put the wrong type of plastic in the bin (whether intentional or through ignorance is unknown). Because the facilities are not always attended, there can be no policing of the recycling. The community officer has resorted to getting inside the bin and extracting the wrong plastic so that the load won't get rejected when it gets to Mainland Orkney. And in the spirit of going above and beyond, they now also have a textile recycling area (both secondhand clothes and no longer wearables) run by volunteers, and have workshop spaces for any residents who have innovative ideas.

Hot on Stromsay's heels, **Papa Westray** are also challenging the council to work with them on plastic waste. They too now recycle all their glass as building aggregate on the island and make cardboard brickettes in a more primitive, ultimately cheaper fashion. In addition, they have a market gardener working on the island and all food waste is collected to make compost.

Both food and cardboard is deposited at an agreed recycling shed (unattended) but volunteers have also been enrolled to collect these waste streams from residents who find it hard to get to. They have also started a textile swap shop, again enabling clothes to be reused without the need for staffing the project. Both residents and visitors are invited to swap clothes, should they happen to like something in the shop.

On Mainland, the OIC recycling facility at **Hatston** is minimally manned, and lacks technology to sort recyclates. If the product comes in contaminated (see earlier), the whole consignment will be rejected and sent to landfill. Non-recyclable waste however goes to Shetland, at a cost to OIC of £150 a tonne, and is incinerated to provide heating to a housing project. Pure recyclates are sent south to various reprocessing plants. While metal is a very valuable commodity, plastic costs the council money to manage.

It's easy to see why the council are reluctant to increase their plastic recycling capabilities, and the 5 Rs suggest that we can all do our bit by reducing the plastic in our lives in the first instance. Businesses are coming onboard in this thinking, changing packaging from plastics. But there will still be plastic in our lives for the foreseeable future.

So what can we on **North Ronaldsay** do? Is there any desire to see our island become more green? to be plastic-free by 2023?

With this in mind, we are producing a survey - which will be delivered to you - to find out what you guys think. What are you doing already? Maybe you're already composting for vegetable growing, or going above and beyond by sending collected crisp packets to one of Orkney schools terracycle schemes? We want to know what's happening on island now, what you folk want help with to do, where we can go with this, and how to achieve this.

Please, everyone - fill in the survey, and help initiate a greater understanding of North Ronaldsay's rubbish.



Stronsay's very expensive cardboard and pallet shredder and hydraulic brickette-maker



Stronsay's glass imploder makes fine or coarse pieces suitable for aggregate or crafting

Isabella's Photo Diary of Her Charity Walk Round North Ronaldsay Isabella and Helga Scott, Old Manse



'I liked the little whale on the sign.'

On the summer solstice this year, Saturday 20 June, Isabella (along with her Dad, Mum and sister Lottie) set off from the Husmire Slap, cheered on by sign-waving supporters Sian Tarrant and Olly Gibb. Alex Wright set off too, and walked with Isabella all the way to Westness. It was a calm morning and peaceful in the mist, until terns began to swoop and screech as we walked along Nouster at low tide.

Isabella learned about plastic pollution in the sea during a project for school called 'Life under water', and was shocked when doing beach mini-clean-ups during lockdown at just how much plastic she found on the shore. She decided she wanted to do more to help and after researching different charities, decided to raise money for the Marine Conservation Society. They are the UK's leading marine charity and work to ensure our seas are healthy, pollution-free and protected, and their vision is for seas full of life where nature flourishes and people thrive. Isabella set up a JustGiving page and marked out her walk on a map of the island, working out where she wanted to start and finish from, as well as the all-important issue of where to stop for picnics!



'Alex showed us lots of different plants along the way. I learned about different types of lichen and grass, such as Yorkshire Fog, and tasted a plant at Doo Park that tastes like cod liver oil.'



One of Mark's photos taken by the drone.



'Mark took photos of us walking along Nouster with his drone. The drone is small and shaped a bit like a frog. It sounded like a big bee and made a 'zzzzzzzzzz' sound.'



'I found lots of buoys, ropes and nets from fishing boats – it's sad when animals get tangled up in them and die. I saw lots and lots of plastic bottles too – it's really good to use reusable bottles instead.'



'Me at the top of the steep stile at Gue Geo.'



'We saw things on the shore that have been there for a long time like this kelp pit. It was interesting to pass puns, planticrues, the lighthouses and even a Viking grave too.'



'Grandad came to see us and check how we were getting on, just up from the Grey Stane Pool. Alex is looking at little plants in this photo. Once we got to Westness, we had a lovely picnic in the shelter of the dyke with Alex before we left her to continue on. We had buns that I baked – they tasted so good after all the walking!'



'This is me and Lottie at the lighthouse, we were looking forward to stopping at Bewan for lunch. We were met by Olly, Sian and the lambs Fang and Norbert there, and had our packed lunch on the shore. It was still foggy but quite warm. Lottie enjoyed a break from being in the baby carrier.'



'After Scottigar the fog started to lift and the sun came out.'



'Ingrid and Lorna joined us to walk along the beach at Linklet. Ingrid and dad swung me - they did 'one, two, three wee!' Ingrid played me some songs on her phone to keep me going.'



'Grandad joined us at The Tent. It was fun to have him with us for the last bit and there to celebrate the finish too.'



'I loved the yellow colour of the irises at Bride's Loch.'



'This is me jumping for joy when we reached Husmire!'

We set off at 10am and finished nine hours later at 7pm. 'It was fun!' said Isabella, reflecting on the day. 'My favourite parts were the picnics, and walking along the beach at Linklet in the sun and seeing the little lambs.'

A couple of weeks ago a parcel came in the post for Isabella, and in it was a beautiful t-shirt and certificate from the Marine Conservation Society congratulating her on her walk and on raising a grand total of £740 – far exceeding her original target of £130.

As Ernest Hemmingway said: 'It is good to have an end to journey towards; but it is the journey that matters, in the end.' And indeed, it was the journey that really mattered – it was a really wonderful one that will stay with us all and was made very special and memorable by everyone who kindly joined us along it, cheered Isabella on and gave such kind messages of support and sponsored her – to all those people, she would like to say a big thank you!