

Explore Shetland, Orkney and the Western Isles!
Learn all about these Scottish islands and
discover what makes them such unique places.
Listen to interactive stories about pirates and
witches or translate Old Norse place names
from the age when Vikings ruled the islands.
Get ready for an island adventure!

Between Islands

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Produced for An Lanntair's Between Islands Project
2020



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Shetland

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Orkney

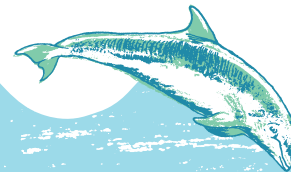
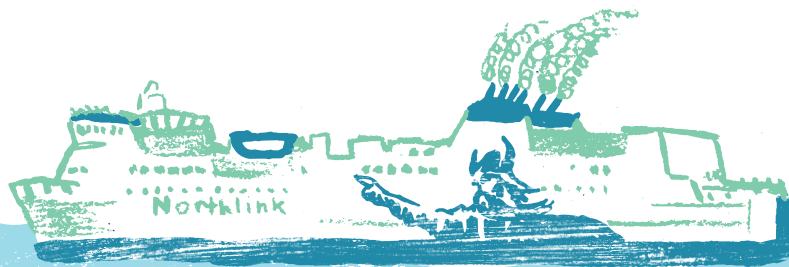
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welcome to the islands

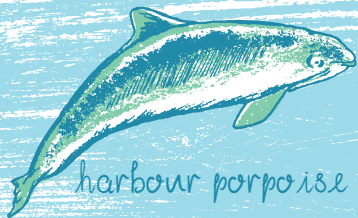


If this is your first time travelling to a Scottish island you might be surprised at how long the journey took!

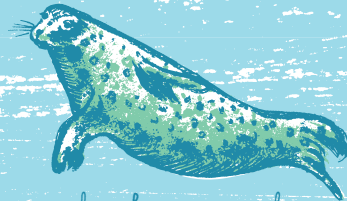
If you are looking for a way to pass the time on a long ferry journey, why not try some wildlife spotting? All sorts of exciting sea creatures can be glimpsed from the windows or deck of the ferry. You might just see some dolphins showing off by jumping in and out of the waves or catch sight of a seal bobbing up to have a look as the boat comes into the harbour.



common dolphin



harbour porpoise



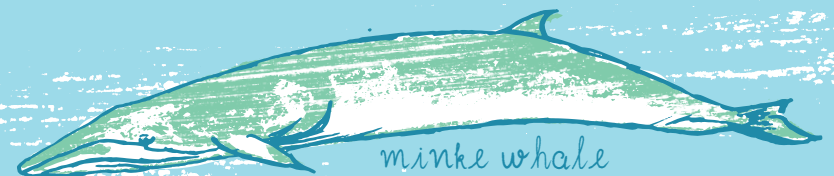
harbour seal



orca



basking shark



minke whale

Did you know...

The world's shortest commercial flight operates between isles of Westray and Papa Westray in Orkney. The flight only lasts around 89 seconds!

what can you see in the Western Isles?

I spy in Stornoway...



Matheson Memorial

You can see this in the Castle Grounds. It is a memorial to Sir James Matheson who built Lews Castle.



An Lanntair

The art centre is always busy. It has a gallery, a cinema, musical events, classes and a café!

I spy in Tarbert...



The Harris Hotel

If you stay for tea make sure you get a window seat - you might notice the initials of J.M. Barrie (the author of Peter Pan) etched into the glass. He visited the hotel in 1912 and carved his name into the windowpane.



Tarbert Stores

You can't miss this general store building in Tarbert as it's bright yellow!



Isle of Harris Distillery

This is one of the first buildings you'll see as you come off the Tarbert ferry and has become a 'must visit' destination for tourists. It has a shop and a café and provides tours of the distillery.



Stornoway Mural

This sculpture by artist Iain Brady is located in Perceval Square.



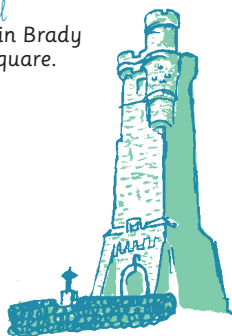
Highland Bull

This sculpture by Uisdean Paterson can be seen at the entrance to the Co-op.



The Town Hall

This is one of Stornoway's most historic buildings. It is over 100 years old.



War Memorial

The tower overlooks Stornoway. It was built in 1924 to commemorate the island lives lost in the First World War.



The Porter's Lodge

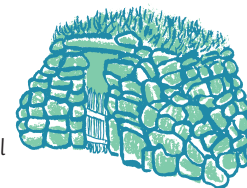
Sir James Matheson built this lodge as the entrance to Lews Castle.

I spy in Lochmaddy...



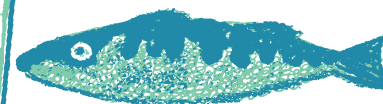
Taigh Chearsabhagh

This is the North Uist museum and art centre. Pop in for a look around their exhibitions or stay for a cup of tea in the café.



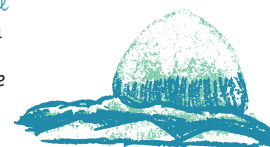
Hut of Shadows

You can stand inside this artwork by Chris Drury! The surrounding landscape is projected onto the wall inside the hut.



Mackerel Mosaic

Keep an eye out for this sculpture by Rosalind Waites. It is part of the Uist sculpture trail.



High Tide, Low Tide

Another sculpture on the trail is High Tide, Low Tide by Christine Boshier. The dome is covered in glass particles resembling salt crystals.



I spy in Castlebay...



Our Lady of the Sea

This statue of Madonna and child was built in 1954. It stands on Barra's tallest hill, Heaval and overlooks Castlebay.



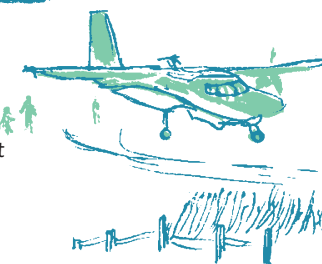
Cilie Bharra

You can see the remains of an ancient church built in the 1100s. This is part of the remaining doorway.



Kismul Castle

Built in the 1400s for the chief of the Macneil clan, this is the only surviving example of a medieval castle in the Western Isles. You can visit the island by boat.

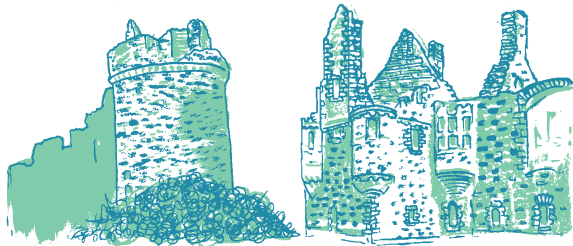


The Barra plane

The Barra plane is unique as it is the only scheduled flight in the world that uses a beach as the runway!

what can you see in Orkney?

I spy in Kirwall...



○ The Bishop's Palace and Earl's Palace

The Bishop's Palace was built in the 1100s and has a rich history – King Hakon of Norway died there in 1263. The Earl's Palace was constructed in 1606.



○ St Magnus Cathedral

The cathedral was founded in 1137. It was built by Earl Rognvald and took 250 years to complete.



○ Grain Earth House

You can enter this underground Iron Age chamber and step back in time to the end of the first millennium BC. The chamber was probably once used for storing food.



○ Groatie House

In Tankerness House Gardens you'll find this stone structure with an interesting history. It was built with stones salvaged from the ballast of a pirate ship – the Revenge. The ship belonged to the Orkney pirate John Gow.

I spy in Stromness...



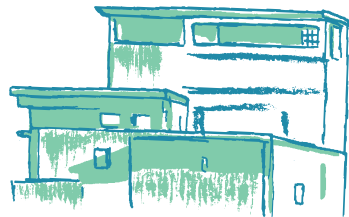
○ The Pier Arts Centre

This small gallery houses a permanent collection of work by world famous artists including the sculptor Barbara Hepworth.



○ Login's Well

This well was used for centuries to supply fresh water to ships before they set sail on long voyages. Many famous vessels stopped here including Cook's ships 'Endeavour' and 'Discovery'.



○ Ness Battery

This is one of the UK's most well preserved wartime sites. Several of the original camp huts are intact and one features an impressive mural painted across three walls.



○ Stromness Museum

A museum of maritime and natural history, Stromness Museum was built in 1856.

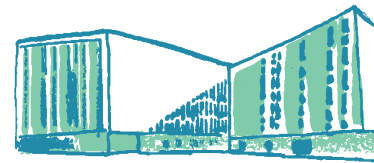
○ The Holms

These tiny tidal islands can be reached at low tide.



what can you see in Shetland?

I spy in Lerwick...



○ Mareel

The arts centre is home to a music venue, cinema, a café and education facilities.



○ The Garrison Theatre

This small theatre hosts lots of live events including stand-up comedy, pantomimes and dance performances.



○ Lodberries

These stone buildings were store-houses that were built out into the sea so goods could easily be transferred to and from boats.

○ Da Lightsome Buoy
'Da Lightsome Buoy' is a sculpture by Jo Chapman celebrating the role of the fishing industry in Shetland life.



○ Shetland Museum & Archive

This award-winning museum is one of the main tourist attractions in Lerwick. The story of the Shetland Islands is told through the museum's collections.

I spy in Scalloway...

○ Scalloway Castle

One of Shetland's two castles, Scalloway castle was built in the 1500s. From 1600 – 1650 a spate of witch-hunts took place across Scotland. Many trials took place in the castle.

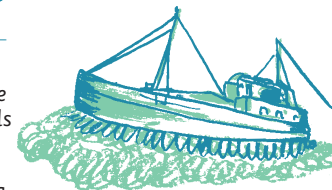


○ The Booth

This converted fisherman's store is a residential studio for visiting artists.

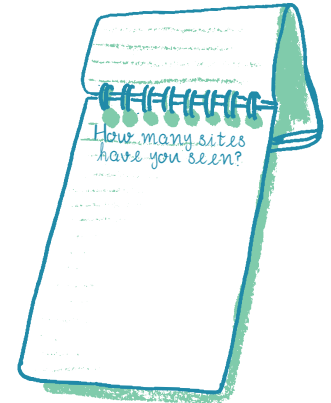
○ The Shetland Bus Memorial

This is a memorial to the crew of the fishing vessels that helped Norwegian refugees to escape Nazi occupied Norway during WW2.



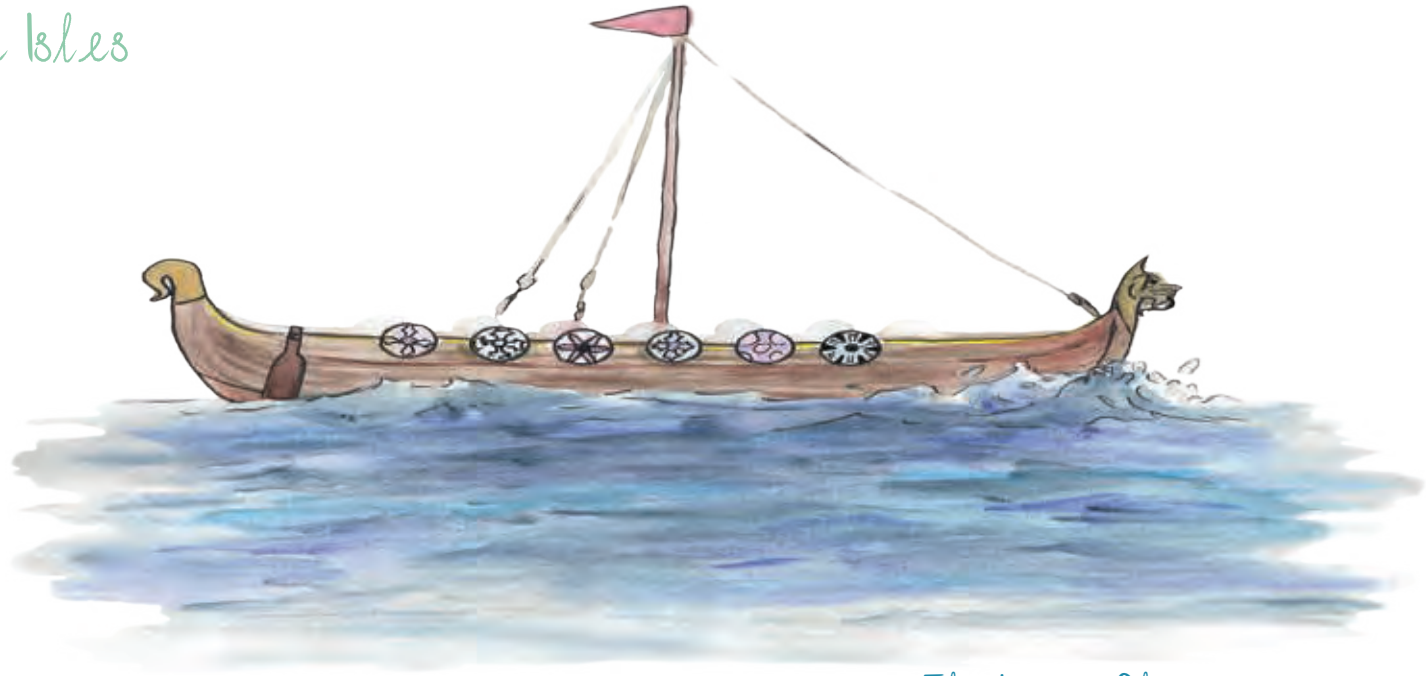
○ Scalloway Museum

This museum tells Scalloway's story from its earliest settlers to the present day.



The Kingdom of the Isles

The Vikings arrived in Scotland from Scandinavia in the 8th century. The islands were violently attacked and looted by the invaders before eventually becoming Viking settlements. The 'Kingdom of the Isles', as the Norse settlement was known, was divided into the Suðr-eyjar or South Isles (the Inner and Outer Hebrides and the Isle of Man) and the Norðr-eyjar or North Isles (Orkney and Shetland). The Vikings have left their mark on the islands and their influence can still be seen today - you only have to look at the names of some the towns and villages in the islands!



Can you translate these Old Norse place names?

Shetland

Pingvöllr/Tingwall
Skjöldr/Skeld
Leiravík/Lerwick

Orkney

Straumrnes/Stromness
Kirkjavágr/Kirkwall
Papi vestry-ey/Papa Westray

Western Isles

Stjórnvágr/Stornoway
Breiðvík/Breivig
Laxdalr/Laxdale

Norse to English translation:

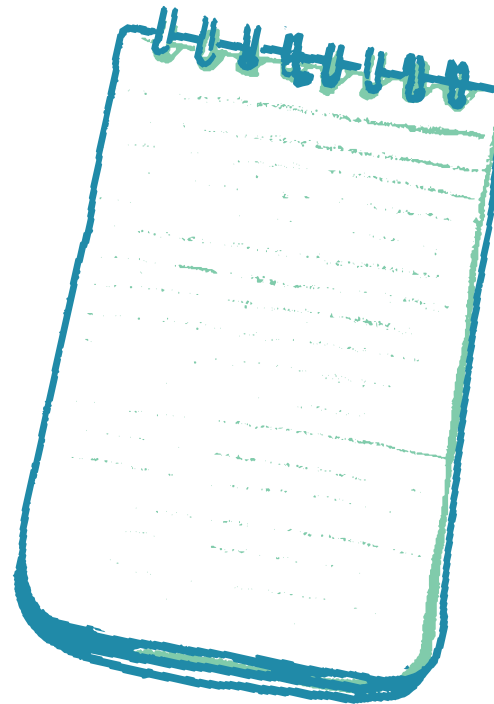
völlr = field
vík/vágr = bay
leira = muddy
Breiðr = broad
vestri = west
ey = island
straumr = current

papi = priest
nes = headland
kirkja = church
dalr = valley
Þing = assembly
skjöldr = shield
Stjórna = steering
lax = salmon



The Lewis Chessmen

One of the most famous archaeological finds from the Viking period, the Lewis chess pieces date from the 12th century. The chessmen are made from carved walrus ivory and whale teeth. They were discovered in Uig on the Isle of Lewis in 1831. In 2019 a missing piece was discovered and was sold at auction for a whopping £735,000!



brochs and standing stones



Callanish Stones (Western Isles)

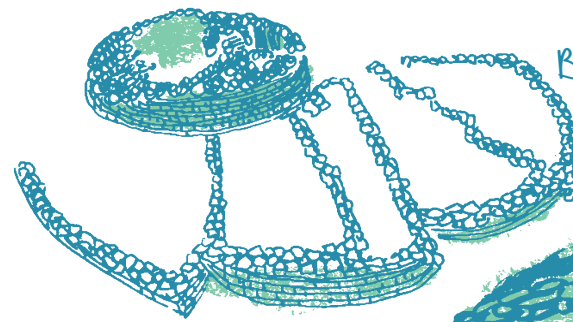
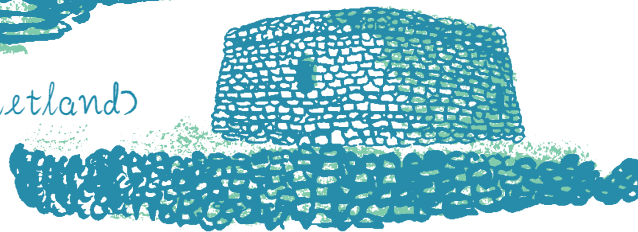
One of the most complete stone circles in Europe and older than Stonehenge

Shetland, Orkney and the Western Isles all share an ancient history. There are hundreds of archaeological sites scattered across the islands, many of which you can visit. From prehistoric stone circles that have been standing since before the pyramids were built in ancient Egypt to incredibly preserved Neolithic buildings containing pottery and stone tools, the islands archaeology helps to tell the story of the history of humankind through the ages.



Midhowe Broch (Orkney)

Clickimin Broch (Shetland)

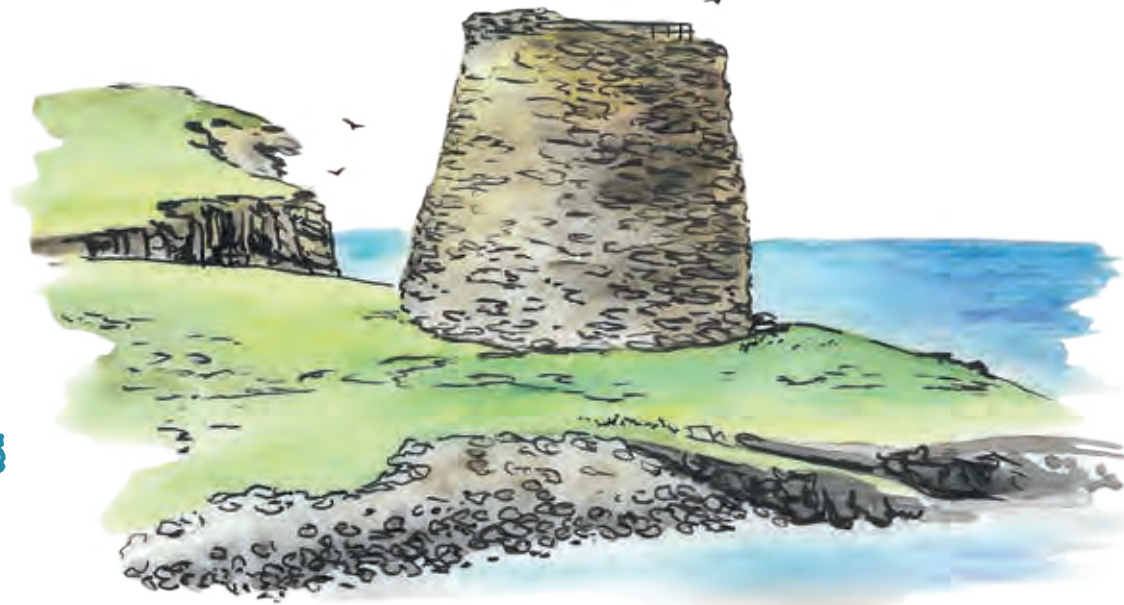


Broch of Gurness (Orkney)

Broch of Borwick (Orkney)



Brochs are stone roundhouse structures that are only found in Scotland. They were built in the Iron Age and must have taken huge skill to engineer. Iron Age builders would be proud to know that so many are still standing today - 2000 years later! The purpose of brochs is not completely understood. Were they forts, storehouses or status symbols? They appear to have been used through the ages for a variety of purposes. The famous Mousa broch in Shetland was apparently used as a hiding place for an eloping couple in 1153 according to the Orkneyinga saga!



Island tales and stories

Telling stories around the fire on dark, windy nights would have been common practice in the islands through the centuries. Shetland, Orkney and the Western Isles have a shared tradition of storytelling. Tales that have been passed down through the generations are still with us today. Many island folklore tales feature magical creatures like water spirits, fairies and witches. Perhaps the rugged, ancient landscapes of the islands inspired these stories or maybe it is possible to stumble upon the fairy folk when you're out for a walk!

The Blue Men of the Minch

The minch is the body of water between the Western Isles and the mainland. It is said to be the home of a clan of blue spirits the size and shape of humans who can control the waves. They are sometimes friendly towards humans but should be treated with respect. They can challenge seafarers with riddles and rhymes so practice your poetic skills if you're planning a trip to the Hebrides!



The Trows

The trows are Shetland and Orkney's fairy folk. The trows are mischievous, troll-like little people who live under mounds and in caverns under hills. They are said to be fond of music and like to kidnap human musicians to play at their feasts. They are particularly fond of fiddle music.



The Water Horse

Searrach Uisge (Western Isles), the Njuggle (Shetland) or the Nuggle (Orkney)

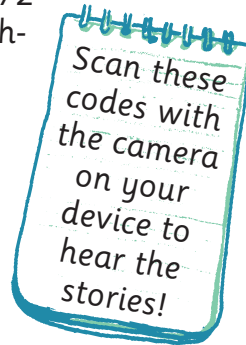
A dark and mysterious water spirit is native to the lochs of all the islands. Known as Searrach Uisge in the Western Isles, the Njuggle in Shetland or the Nuggle in Orkney, this dangerous beastie takes the form of a horse that lurks by the water's edge waiting to prey on its human victims – not a creature you want to meet on a dark evening! It is said that anyone who chose to climb on to the horse's back would be charged into the depths and never be seen again. This creature has Celtic roots and is known in Celtic mythology as the Kelpie.



The Storm Witch

Some stories can trace their roots to real events in history. In the 16th and 17th centuries witch-hunts became common across Scotland. Many folktales about witchcraft stemmed from this era. Listen to the story of Janet Forsyth – the Westray Storm Witch.

There is a special stone at Gallow Ha' in Kirkwall which serves as a memorial to the 72 men and women who were accused of witchcraft in Orkney during this period.



John Gow (the Orkney Pirate)

The life of the notorious Orkney pirate is perhaps so interesting and exciting because it's a true story! Find out about John Gow's adventures aboard his ship, the 'Revenge'.



Create a folktale character:

Pick your own characteristics or roll the dice!

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. From the island of...	Orkney	Shetland	Fairisle	Lewis	Harris	Barra
2. Lives in ...	lochs	caves	under-ground burrows	bogs	stone circles	the sea
3. Likes ...	music	children	the dark	riddles	gifts	money
4. Dislikes ...	fire	untidiness	sunshine	humans	locked doors	protective symbols
5. Has a ...	lantern	ship	magic cloak	wand	potion	a beautiful voice

What is your creature called? Can you write a story about them?

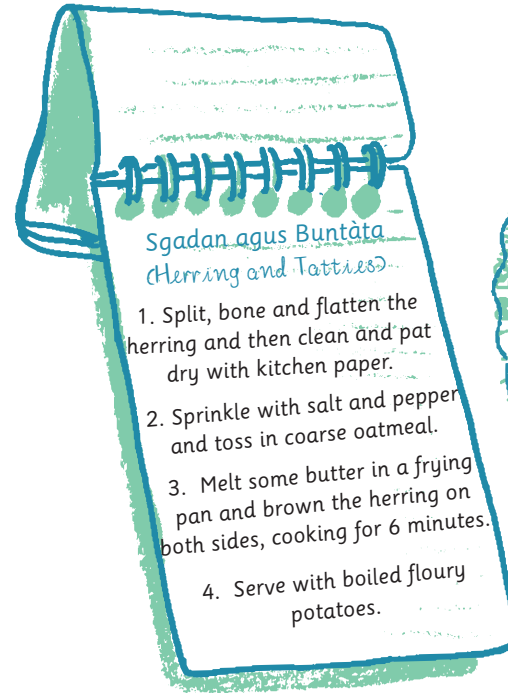
The Herring Girls

If you take a stroll around Stornoway you may notice some life-size bronze statues of the herring girls. During the 19th and early 20th century herring was considered a delicacy and the Scottish fishing industry became the largest in Europe, shipping salt herring around the world. Fishing boats would follow the shoals of fish around the coast and at every port the Herring Girls would be waiting to gut and pack the fish. This was hard, cold and exhausting work. The girls might work from 6 o'clock in the morning until 11 o'clock at night if there were large catches. They used a sharp little knife called a 'cutag' for slicing the fish open. They wound rags around their fingers to protect them from cuts.



mind your fingers!
The girls were paid per barrel of packed herring so they had to work quickly. Some experienced gutters could gut up to 60 fish in a minute!

Try out this recipe for herring and tatties!



The herring were gutted in large troughs.

Then they were packed with salt.

Finally the barrels were sealed shut and shipped.

Fair Isle knitting



The distinctive motifs are hand knitted using two colours for each band and alternating repeating patterns. The hand spun yarns were dyed using natural plant dyes. Patterns commonly feature: crosses, hearts, hexagons, anchors, ram's horns and stars.

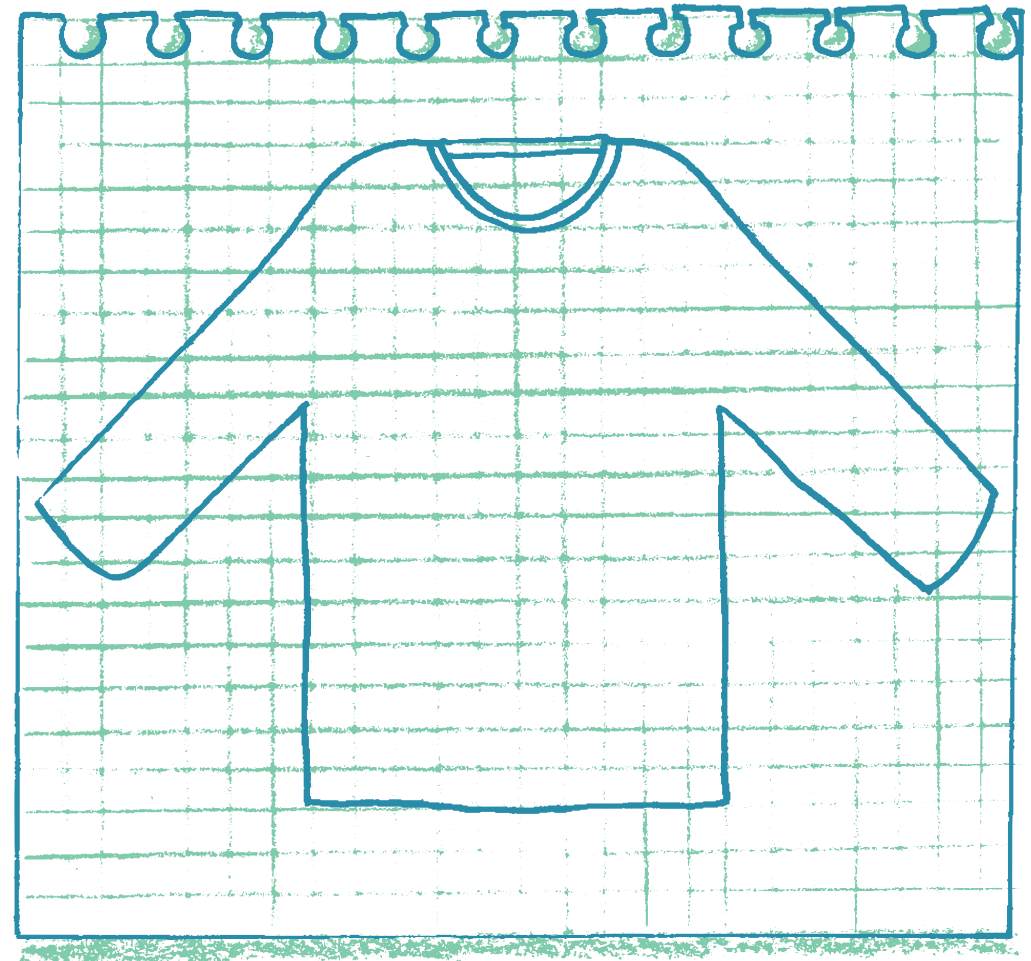


Fair Isle is an island situated between Orkney and Shetland. The intricate, colourful patterns developed by the women of the island have been popular in fashion since the 1920s when the Prince of Wales started to wear patterned jumpers as part of his golfing outfit.



Design your own Fair Isle pattern:

Have a go at designing two repeat pattern bands. Use two colours for each one.

[illegible]

Harris tweed

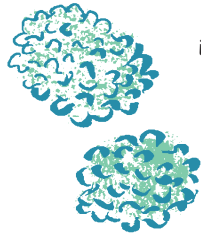
The islanders of the Outer Hebrides would have woven cloth for themselves for centuries but tweed became fashionable during Victorian times and grew in popularity. Today Harris Tweed is just as popular. An act of Parliament created the Harris Tweed Authority to ensure that all fabric stamped with the 'orb' is authentic. The Act states that Harris Tweed cloth must be: "handwoven by the islanders at their homes in the Outer Hebrides, finished in the Outer Hebrides, and made from pure virgin wool dyed and spun in the Outer Hebrides." In the old days, island crofters would have performed all of these steps by hand but today a lot of the work is done in mills.

However, Harris Tweed must still be woven by hand on a loom.

How to make tweed the traditional way:

Step 1:

Shear your sheep. This is a difficult job! The trick is to firmly wedge the sheep between your knees while you shear so it can't wriggle around too much. Once you have your fleece, clean out as much dirt as you can.

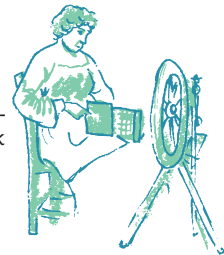


Step 2:

Find your plant dyes. Lichen is a good choice and has been used in Lewis and Harris for centuries. Collect enough to fill a pot and boil to make a yellow colour. It can also create a vivid purple dye but the process is rather unpleasant. The lichen needs to be steeped in urine for 3 months!

Step 3:

Bring a large cauldron of water and the dye to the boil on a peat fire (make sure it's a nice day for an outdoor fire as this step is smelly). Soak the fleece until you are happy with the colour, then leave to dry.

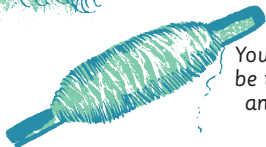


The next step is carding. For this you use two paddles with metal teeth to tease the wool so that the fibres are all facing in the same direction to make it easier to spin. When you have your fluffy carded wool ready you can begin using a spinning wheel to twist the fibres together into yarn.

Step 4:

Step 6:

Your yarn is now ready to be taken to the loom shed and woven into the Clò-mhòr.



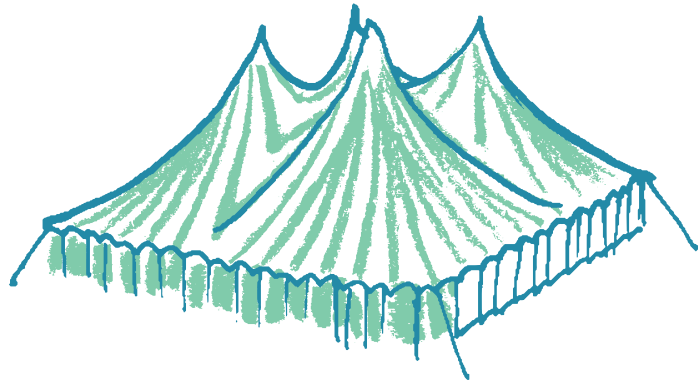
Waulking the Tweed

Waulking the cloth sets the dye and shrinks and softens the fabric. This was traditionally done by hand. Soaked cloth would be thumped and pounded on a table to the rhythm of Gaelic songs. This was traditionally a job for women. It could be quite a fun activity; a lot of the òran luaidh (waulking songs) are a bit cheeky!

Càit' am bi na maraichean an oidhche a bhios an t-sian ann
Càit' am bi na maraichean an oidhche a bhios an t-sian ann
Càit' am bi na maraichean an oidhche a bhios an gèil' ann
Ag iasgach nan adagan a-mach à Port nan Giùran
A' dannsa ri na cailleagan an taighean geal' a' Ghrianaig



music



The Western Isles, Orkney and Shetland all share a strong musical heritage. The musical traditions of the islands are celebrated and promoted; children are encouraged to sing and learn to play instruments (as well as learning traditional dances) and annual folk music festivals take place welcoming visitors from all over the world. You might have participated in the Mòd through your school, enjoyed ceilidh dancing or listened to bands at one of the local music festivals.



Can you name all of these instruments?



Answers:

1. melodeon/maleòidean 2. harp/clàrsach 3. guitar/giotar 4. fiddle/fidheall 5. snare drum/druma-tòrnain 6. bagpipes/pìob-chiùil 7. keyboard/meur-chlàr 8. accordion/bogsa-ciùil

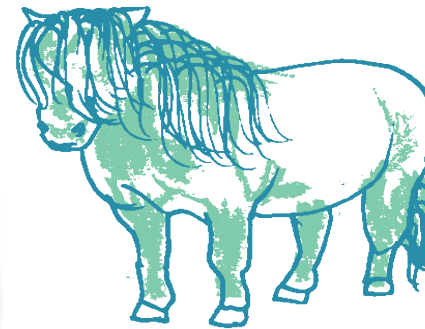
life on the croft

Crofting is still fairly common on the islands. Rather than large farms like you might see on the mainland, islanders would usually have plots of land attached to their houses for growing crops and keeping animals to sustain their families.



Island Animals

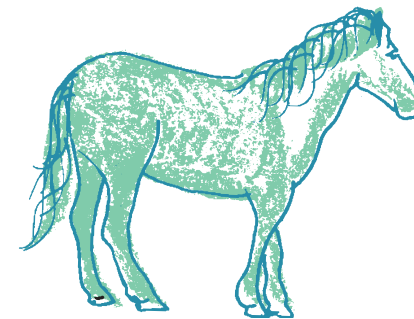
Shetland pony



The Shetland pony is an ancient breed. Bones found on archaeological sites show that small ponies existed in Shetland during the Bronze Age. Shetland ponies are extremely strong despite being rather short and stout. They were used for work in mines and were also hard workers on the island crofts.

North Ronaldsay Sheep

The North Ronaldsay sheep is a breed from Orkney. They used to be kept for their wool but now the last flocks roam wild on small islands. Their diet consists mainly of seaweed!



Eriskay pony

The Eriskay pony is the surviving ancestor of the hardy native breed, which traditionally would have been used by island crofters through the centuries. They are not used as work horses anymore instead they roam free on the island of Eriskay. They are strong and sturdy with thick winter coats. The breed is endangered and under protection.

machair

Machair is a type of landscape unique to the Scottish islands and it is remarkable for its variety of wildlife and wildflowers. Machair is found on low-lying, sandy coastland. The combination of grazing livestock (cows and sheep), seaweed nutrients and sandy soil create the perfect conditions for hundreds of species of wildflowers to thrive. These grasslands make the perfect habitat for lots of insects and birds.



wildflower guide



sea pink



ragged robin



forget-me-not



birdsfoot trefoil



heath spotted orchid



lady's smock

This image shows a full page of blank, lined paper. It features approximately 20 horizontal blue lines spaced evenly across the page, typical of notebook or legal stationery. The lines are thin and light blue, set against a plain white background. There are no margins, text, or other markings present.