

Northern Lights



INSIDE

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Start Point Lighthouse, Sanday

PLUS

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The Whaligoe Steps, Caithness

Tivoli Theatre, Aberdeen



Discover more at www.northlinkferries.co.uk

Operated by **serco**

Welcome

Well wasn't 2018 a summer to remember for all of us here at NorthLink Ferries. It was a summer of record carryings for passengers, cars, freight and cabin use. Summer sunshine arrived and despite the usual exceptions to the rule it actually stayed with us during the school holidays and even into early autumn.

Our new booking app was launched in early September and is performing well, as is our website which now accounts for over 40% of our passenger bookings. The Call Centre team is still there though and for any queries, reassurance or guidance my colleagues there are the turn-to team.

Our advertising campaign has pushed out further than usual and in different formats. Did you see the bus t-sides in Aberdeen, Inverness, Edinburgh or Glasgow? My thanks to my Marketing team for getting us onto the big screens in both Glasgow Central and Edinburgh Waverley stations. Given the daily footfall in both stations, this was a real opportunity for the glories of the Northern Isles to be seen and shared with many prospective visitors. Magnus gets all over the globe and scarcely a day goes by without him popping up in an exotic location or participating in an exciting sport. If you use our social media feeds such as Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram you will no doubt follow his travels yourself. Who knows, you could be one of our lucky winners if Magnus travels with you too; to find out more about this see the page to the right.

I hope you all paid attention to the on-board safety announcements provided by pupils from Stromness Primary School and Anderson High in Lerwick. This was a fantastic collaboration with the schools and received many positive comments on our use of this opportunity to celebrate the Year of Young People.

Shortly we will be publishing our 2018 Community Engagement Book, the third edition capturing a real cross section of NorthLink Ferries in the community. We approach our twice yearly sponsorship programme never failing to be amazed by the contribution made by so many individuals and groups in fostering teamwork, encouraging athletic, musical and sport talents and organising community activities in the Northern Isles and North East. We hope that our Engagement booklets are a lasting reminder of these throughout the year.

The full length of the Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route, #AWPR, is due to open shortly. Whilst not impacting on the near approaches to the Harbour please take time to familiarise yourself with changes on the route when travelling either North or South and as ever, enjoy your journey. We will all be pleased to see you whether at check-in or on-board.



Stuart Garrett
Managing Director
Serco NorthLink Ferries

Travel safely.

Contact Stuart

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

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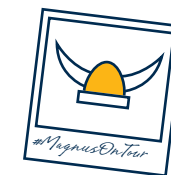
#MagnusOnTour



Congratulations to our latest #MagnusOnTour winner, Vit Javorik, who took a fantastic picture of his five-year-old son Nicolas holding the NorthLink 'Magnus' logo. Nicolas is pictured skiing in Cervinia, Italy, under the Matterhorn on the border with Switzerland.

Vit and Nicolas now have two return tickets, including a car and cabin, to Orkney or Shetland for use on any of our passenger vessels. Take a look at our back cover to see the other brilliant #MagnusOnTour entries we received!

For your chance to win a trip for two



To win return tickets including a car and cabin to or from Orkney or Shetland for two adults, simply post a picture of yourself in an awe-inspiring location with the iconic NorthLink Ferries 'Magnus' logo on any of our social media channels.

Use the hashtag **#MagnusOnTour** to be in with a chance of winning. Alternatively, you can send your photo to webmaster@northlinkferries.co.uk.

Spot the next winning picture in Issue 9 of Northern Lights.

Take the Northern Lights home

The arrival of colder and darker nights often brings an amazing sight to Orkney and Shetland skies. For those who are lucky enough to see them, Aurora Borealis – better known as the Northern Lights – will enchant spectators with swaying and shifting curtains of green, yellow, red and blue across the night sky.

In Orkney, the Northern Lights are referred to as the Merry Dancers while in Shetland they are called the Mirrie Dancers. However, they can be as elusive as they are enchanting. Generally appearing on cold, crisp and clear evenings, visiting the 'Orkney Aurora Group' and 'Aurora Shetland' Facebook pages is a good way to get up-to-date forecasts and predictions. For the clearest view, it is also best to see the Northern Lights in the countryside, away from streetlights, and not during a full moon.

Many who plan on witnessing the spectacle themselves may also be keen to capture the sight to share online with their family and friends too. We spoke to Orcadian photographer Charles Tait to find out how he recommends capturing the perfect shot.

Setting the scene

Taking a photo of the Northern Lights requires a long exposure. Wobbly hands will make your picture blurred, so pop your camera or smartphone on a tripod to keep it steady.

Most modern cameras can be set on 'automatic exposure' so your camera will automatically calculate how to get as much light as possible into the lens. However, if you want to set your camera manually, Charles recommends setting the lens aperture to F4 or F2.8 for the best result. Charles also advises setting the shutter speed on your camera or phone to 20 seconds, and if the picture is too bright, reduce it to around 10 seconds.

Focus and flash

When you're taking a photo of the Northern Lights you're taking a photo of the vast night sky so you'll need to turn off your camera's automatic focus setting.

Charles recommends focusing the camera on a bright object some distance away, such as a house or the moon, and then switching to manual. Then zoom out as far as you can so you can capture as much of the Northern Lights as possible.

Using the flash will wash out the Northern Lights so make sure to turn it off on your camera or phone.

Final settings

Phones and cameras will have ISO settings which control the light sensitivity of what you capture. The higher the ISO, the less light you need. To get the best photo, set the ISO to 1600 or 3200 and experiment a little as a high ISO can result in a grainy picture.

If your camera has long exposure noise reduction, use it. It might use a lot of battery power but its well-worth having it on as it will vastly improve your photo.

Taking it to the next level

If you want to take a photo with standing stones or a friend in the foreground, shine a torch on the object to light it up. You'll need to keep the light on during the exposure time but using a torch is much more controllable than your camera's flash and will result in some really interesting pictures.

Capturing Shetland's fire festivals

Shetland fire festivals take place from January until March. Lerwick's Up Helly Aa, the largest fire festival in Europe, falls on Tuesday 29th January 2019. These events also offer an excellent opportunity to capture some spectacular photos. As these are annual occurrences, you can never be too prepared. Charles offers the following top tips for those planning to visit:

- Wrap up warm and watch your surroundings; flaming torches are dangerous!
- Get into a good position in plenty of time and use a tripod if possible
- Keep your ISO settings to 3200 and turn off your flash
- Use the automatic settings as much as possible
- Take lots of photos; there's plenty of space on a memory card and though you may need to delete a large percentage of the images you take, there will be a few gems amongst them.
- Enjoy the event!

Visit www.northlinkferries.co.uk/uphellyaa for more information about Up Helly Aa events.



As well as being a photographer, Charles Tait is the author of several acclaimed travel books including the *North Coast 500 Guide Book*, the *Orkney Guide Book* and the *Shetland Guide Book*, which are available to buy in the Northern Isles shop on board NorthLink Ferries vessels.

The Vertical Stripes of Start Point

Rising above the sand dunes, sparkling white beaches and turquoise clear waters of Orkney's island of Sanday is Start Point Lighthouse.

Start Point claims a number of titles in Scotland. It is the only Scottish lighthouse to feature black and white vertical stripes, and was the first Scottish lighthouse to have a revolving light.



An Eastern Guardian in Stormy Seas

As the most easterly of Orkney's lighthouses, Start Point was preceded by an unlit masonry tower which did not provide an adequate warning for passing ships. Following a number of devastating shipwrecks around the eastern tip of Sanday, the Northern Lighthouse Board began work on a new lighthouse in 1806.

Created by the renowned lighthouse engineer Robert Stevenson, the construction of Start Point wasn't particularly straightforward and comes with its own story of disaster. A number of workers who had been building the lighthouse had boarded a vessel, 'Stromness', for their sail home to Edinburgh. A tremendous storm blew up and the 'Stromness' needed to shelter off the island of Flotta. During the night the cables broke and the vessel was smashed to pieces; almost all on board lost their lives. Only a cabin boy survived, he was found clinging to the boat's mast when he was rescued.

Despite such a disaster, the lighthouse, with its revolving light, was home to a Principal Lightkeeper along with an assistant. Both had families living there who were almost self-sufficient, rearing sheep and cows while the men maintained, cleaned, painted and kept watch over the light each evening.

By 1962 the lighthouse was automated and is now solely powered by 36 solar panels.

Reaching Start Point

For walkers keen to explore Start Point Lighthouse and the eastern edge of Sanday, a stunning coastal walk via a rough path can be accessed at low tide, with the walk alone taking around 1.5 to 2 hours.

There is limited access to the lighthouse, however a small number of tours each year can be arranged through Sanday's resident Ranger in advance of a visit. These are dependent upon the weather, tides and availability. Wellies and appropriate clothing are recommended. Call the Sanday Ranger on 01875 600 272 to discuss.

And for those looking to explore the rest of Sanday...

As its name suggests, Sanday is the North Isle of Orkney most famous for its beaches. A large but low-lying island, Sanday is particularly worth a visit in the summer when there are wildflowers, birdlife and seals in the sandy bays.

Sanday is also an island which saw plenty of Viking activity (the light soil would have been easy farmland to work) and a Viking boat burial was found in 1991 at Scar.

A chambered cairn called Mount Maesry (Mount Misery on the OS Map) is located on Start Point, just a few minutes' walk from the lighthouse. It was used by the lighthouse keepers to store potatoes! We'd also recommend a visit to 5000-year-old Quoyness Chambered Cairn, close to Kettletoft, and the Sanday Heritage Centre, on the outskirts of Lady Village.



Meet our Customer Service Assistant, Coral



At just 20 years old, Coral Cumming has excelled during the Year of Young People 2018 as one of NorthLink Ferries' apprentices.

Coral lives and works in Stromness in Orkney and is a Modern Apprentice within the Customer Service team. She has been with NorthLink Ferries for just over a year.

Here, Coral talks to us about her role and her Orkney roots.

Looking after customers with two legs... and four!

Each day, I'm responsible for being a friendly voice when our customers call us, or if they make enquiries by email.

However it's not just our two-legged travellers I look after, I also look after bookings for livestock and freight on the ferries. The freight shift, which starts earlier in the morning, consists of organising the livestock, dealing with dangerous goods and booking drivers and commercial vehicles on to the ships.

My day-to-day responsibilities do change depending on my shift but that's what keeps it interesting. However, one thing that does stay consistent at work is making a cup of tea or two for the office!

As a Modern Apprentice, I'm working towards my SVQ2 for Business and Admin. I'm nearly there and what's great about work is that I'm able to use the on-the-job knowledge and experience to inform my coursework.

Imparting local knowledge

Without a doubt, the best part of my job is the people I encounter. I work with a great team and get to talk to different people every day. The islands receive visitors from all over the world and I'm very fortunate that I get to speak to many of them. I've grown up on the islands and love sharing my own personal experience and knowledge with our customers.

In my spare time

Friends and family are very important to me. I try to catch up with my friends as often as I can; we meet up or chat via social media all the time. I'm also very close with my grandmother, who is currently trying to teach me how to cook which is definitely leading to some interesting results!

I'm also part of a netball team and we compete in the local league, and I love Groatie Buckie hunting on Orkney beaches. Groatie Buckies are small seashells that are meant to bring you good luck. It can be quite relaxing; I'd recommend a Groatie Buckie hunt to visitors to the isles!



Orkney Fudge Cheesecake

Recipe

Our Orkney Fudge Cheesecake served on board is one of our most popular dishes. A special treat to end a meal with, it is easy to make but hard to keep around for very long!

Thanks to the help of our kind chefs you can now create your own Orkney Fudge Cheesecake at home using the following recipe. Why not create the dessert for friends this weekend or make one to take into the office to share with colleagues?

Ingredients

For the base

- 250g digestive biscuits
- 85g soft margarine
- 1 tbsp brown sugar

For the filling

- 560g cream cheese
- 550ml double cream
- 300g Orkney Fudge

Start by making the cheesecake base. Place the biscuits in a sealed bag and crush with a rolling pin.

Next, melt the margarine and brown sugar on a low heat in a small pot. Once melted add the margarine and sugar to a bowl and tip in the biscuit crumbs. Mix well.

Take a round tin and line with the mixture, squashing it down to form a base. Place in the fridge and allow to set, around one hour.

In the meantime make the filling. Place 200g of the Orkney Fudge in a bowl and mash with a fork. Slice the remaining fudge into small cubes with a knife and set aside.

Add the cream and cream cheese to the bowl with the mashed fudge and beat until the mixture starts to thicken. Stir in half of the cubed fudge and beat again.

Remove the base from the fridge and pour the fudge mixture in, spreading with a knife or spoon to create a smooth finish. Sprinkle the remaining fudge cubes on top and place in the fridge again for at least two hours.

We would love to see your own versions so make sure to send us a picture via the NorthLink Ferries Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram page. Enjoy!



Supporting young peoples' journey

Earlier this year, NorthLink Ferries announced a search to find two outstanding individuals to receive a Year of Young People bursary.

In partnership with Caber Coffee Ltd and Ethyco Fairtrade Coffee, the £875 grants can be used toward event entry fees, they can cover accommodation or travel costs for those looking for work experience or training, or the funds can be used by those who excel in sport, music or the arts and are in need of a financial boost to help achieve their goals.

Shetland locals Sarah Maguire, 19, and Sula Brookes, 17, have been unveiled as this year's recipients.

Sarah will be using her grant to fund travel to the 24th World Scout Jamboree 2019 in West Virginia, United States. By helping run the event, Sarah will be ensuring that over 40,000 young people have a memorable experience.

Sula's grant will be used to fund travel and accommodation in London so she can participate in a British Sign Language course. Sula eventually hopes to apply for a sign language degree at Heriot-Watt University in Edinburgh and become Shetland's only official interpreter.

Welcome on board

Are you paying attention to your on board announcements? You should be. Safety announcements are an important part of a ferry journey, and this year we've introduced a fresh new sound to ours.

The team at NorthLink Ferries has been working with pupils from the Northern Isles to record refreshed versions of our on board announcements. Four pupils from Anderson High School in Lerwick (Brandon Pearson, Emma Anderson, Ishbel Mackenzie and Scott Ward) and four from Stromness Primary School in Orkney (Leah Hamilton, Einar Towrie, Olivia Macnamara and Zara Johnston) recorded messages for the MV Hjaltland, MV Hrossey and MV Hamnavoe as part of our celebration of 2018's Year of Young People.

By using young people's voices to communicate important messages, the new recordings have proved a hit, and are capturing passengers' full attention while also giving young people a glimpse into the workings of our lifeline ferry services.

Shetland's next top chefs

This year's Taste of Shetland festival saw NorthLink Ferries team up with Shetland Food & Drink in the hunt for Shetland's next junior culinary superstars!

The competition was entitled 'Peerie Bites' and the contestants took to the stage for a final, live cooking demonstration on Saturday 6 October during the festival. Vailla Thompson and Eva Jamieson wowed the judges with their enthusiasm for local Shetland ingredients and their creations certainly got the judges taste buds buzzing with their crabbie tattie pattie and smoked mackerel chowder in a sourdough bowl. Passengers with NorthLink Ferries will be pleased to hear that these tasty dishes will be added to The Feast menu in the near future!

Young people shoot for the Moon

A particularly special one-off volunteer-run Year of Young People 2018 event took place in Orkney called Skyran Moon. The artwork by Luke Jerram could be spotted in September 2018 in Stromness Academy Theatre.

Skyran is an Orcadian word meaning 'glittering, very brilliant' which comes from the Norse skir or skiren, and this work was a massive model of the glowing moon in the night sky suspended from the ceiling.

NorthLink Ferries was pleased to offer a discount to enable passengers from Caithness to see the haunting Skyran moon for themselves.

Beasts from the deep

Over the summer, we've been asking our younger passengers to use their imaginations and draw a terrifying sea monster chasing our lovable 'Vikings'. We've seen so many wonderful creations and wanted to share some of the frightening results!

Catriona (7) created a scary three-headed sea snake that sent shivers down our spines; make sure you check out the NorthLink Ferries website and Facebook page to see more examples of chilling sea monsters! If you want to draw a sea monster yourself, pick up a drawing sheet from the ship's reception when you are on board.

Future best-selling authors from Orkney and Shetland

And finally, NorthLink Ferries ran a writing competition in conjunction with schools in the Northern Isles to celebrate the Year of Young People 2018. The challenge for Primary 6 and Primary 7 pupils was to write an essay on the subject '5 reasons why Orkney is great' and '5 reasons why Shetland is great'. We hope you enjoy their work, published in the pages of this magazine, and we look forward to perhaps seeing their names on the cover of the next bestselling book!



*Colouring page:
A Vikling
Fire Festival*





To celebrate the Year of Young People 2018 NorthLink Ferries ran a writing competition for P6 and P7 pupils in Orkney and Shetland. Picking two winning articles was extremely hard, but we're sure you'll agree with our choices as they are brilliant!

Five reasons why Shetland is great!

By Ailee Burgess, aged 11, from Tingwall Primary School

Reason one: The sea life

There are tons of things going on at the sea every day in Shetland, from people fishing for the finest fish to the animals under the sea. You can see the cute little otters swimming around near the piers or the big seals bobbing their heads up now and again. Some people spot killer whales as well. I love going on boats and wet suiting.

Reason two: The food

I absolutely love the food in Shetland. It's outstanding. There are lots of places that you can go to get a bite, but the most popular place is Frankie's fish 'n' chips. Frankie's has amazing fish and chips. So good that they won the UK's best fish and chips award. Trust me they're fantastic. Also the puffin poo from the Shetland Fudge Company. It's got a coconut coating too. You get a lot of great tasting food from the street in Lerwick as well.

Reason three: The Street

Commercial Street in Lerwick is so lively and has tons of cool shops, like High Level Music and Harry's Toy Shop or the Shetland Times Bookshop.

We normally get a lot of cruise ships coming at the pier just there at the Street. Even Mr Stripey goes there also (Mr Stripey is an ice-cream van). There's this cat called Tom and he goes around all the shops and lies in the window displays. There is a tourist office where you can get all types of cool knick-knacks.

Reason four: Vikings

The Vikings are really well known in Shetland. Every year we have this huge festival called Up Helly Aa. It's held at the start of the year. The biggest fire festival is in Lerwick but there are many others, such as Nesting and Girlsta and Scalloway. You dress up in Viking clothes and guizers get torches for the procession and at the end they have to throw them onto the galley. I'm in the Scalloway one in 2019 and I'm so excited.

Reason five: All the little islands

I love going to the islands from the Shetland Mainland. You have to catch ferries to get to them. I've been to Unst, Yell, and Whalsay. The charity shop in Whalsay is so good. You might get lost like we did so grab yourselves a map from the tourist office. You have to get a plane to Fair Isle though and they have their own language which is cool. You should definitely go visiting some islands – they're amazing.

I hope you liked my 5 reasons and that I have encouraged you to come to Shetland. See you soon.



Five reasons why Orkney is great!

By Amelia Tomalin from Evie Primary School

Reason one: It's safe

Orkney has a really low crime level, because everyone knows everyone.



Reason two: Landmarks

There are lots of landmark type things in Orkney like Skara Brae which is an old stone age village in Sandwick. The Old Man of Hoy is a stack of rocks (Hoy is one of the Orkney islands). The Old Man of Hoy was once attached to Hoy but the sea wore Hoy down and broke off the Old Man of Hoy.

The Ring of Brodgar is something no one really knows about. Everyone is puzzled on how the stones got there in a circle, but there's a legend that giants came out at night to party and hid when the sun came out. One night the giants forgot to hide again and they got frozen in place and they've stayed there ever since.

Finally St Magnus Cathedral is in Kirkwall and lots of couples get married there nowadays. It is believed that St Magnus' bones are inside one of the columns inside the cathedral.

Reason three: Beaches

As Orkney is an island it has lots of beaches. Some are sandy or stony and some are sea-weedy! There's a famous type of shell called a Groatie Buckie some beaches are good for finding them

some aren't as good. Groatie Buckies are super hard to find. Birsay and some of the barrier beaches are good for finding Groatie Buckies. Groatie Buckies look a lot like shell pasta but a LOT smaller.

Reason four: Great walks

As Orkney is mainly countryside there is some really pretty scenery and there's lots of wildlife in all the grass and meadows. There is also some really nice trails through all the country and woodland walks like Happy Valley which is just outside Stenness, Binscarth wood which is in Finstown. The whale bone and Skipi Geo are both in Birsay. They're both on cliffs and you have to follow the same path for both, so you can see the whale bone and then carry on to see Skipi Geo. Also in Birsay is Kitchener's Memorial which is for Lord Kitchener who died on the H.M.S. Hampshire when it sank.

Reason five: Super Swimming Pools

In Orkney we're very lucky to have two big swimming pools and health suites. One of the swimming pools is in Stromness and has a really good steam room and sauna, there is a massive Jacuzzi as well! The pool has lots of floats and balls you can play with if you have kids. There's quite often a lane you can swim in. The other pool is Kirkwall which is a wider pool than Stromness but has a smaller health suite. Kirkwall often has a lane you can swim in as well.

Orkney is a really nice place in general as these 5 great things explain, hope you come and visit soon!

Meet the UK's most northerly chocolatier

Many of us have a soft spot for chocolate but Shetlander Dave Williams turned his love for the sweet into a thriving business, transforming him into the UK's most northerly chocolatier. Here, Dave tells Northern Lights how his small chocolatey idea lead to a change in career and the introduction of one of the Northern Isles' favourite sweet companies – Mirrie Dancers.

Tell us a bit about yourself

I joined the army as a chef at the age of 16 and stayed on until I was 42 years old. As you can imagine, the job allowed me to work in countries all across the world, serving and feeding soldiers from a half a dozen to as many as several thousand at one time.

Being stationed in Canada, Germany, Portugal and Denmark, to name but a few, I have served so many different and amazing people, even members of the Royal Family.

I ended my army career in Germany and stayed there to work for the Navy Army Air Force Institute (NAAFI). After my stint there I moved to the Rocky Mountains in Canada before returning to the UK where I became an Operations Director for a local company in Shetland.

How and when did you start making chocolate?

Back in 2015 there was a food fair in Lerwick. It still takes place annually and is growing year on year, showcasing the very best produce that Shetland has to offer.



For that particular fair I made a seaweed chocolate, created in partnership with a local gin company which was launching its own seaweed gin. I also took to the centre stage to demonstrate how to make a vegan cheesecake and it was at that time that I announced that I had a new plan.

Fast forward eight months and I had put that plan into action and opened my first shop in Lerwick, selling handmade artisan chocolates. My small idea of introducing bespoke chocolates to the local market has developed; we opened our second shop in Orkney in 2017 and today are busy developing plans to combine our Lerwick shop and kitchen in a new premises at the Market Cross.

How did you come up with the original 'Mirrie Dancer' chocolate?

The name 'Mirrie Dancers' came from the local name given to the Northern Lights – an amazing display of lights in the night sky that we are very fortunate to see here in the Northern Isles.

The natural beauty of the Northern Lights is what led me to the idea of making the Mirrie Dancer chocolate – sweets which capture the beauty of the transforming colour of the night sky.

Do you have a favourite chocolate product?

The honeycomb dipped in chocolate is definitely one of my favourites. When we're making it I really do have to sit on my hands to make sure I'm not making one for the shop and one for myself because that is a real temptation.

However, my favourite treat is the Gianduja which has a bit of a story to it. It's from the Piedmont area in Italy and was originally created after the war. During a period when people didn't have much money, it was a cheap sweet treat which could be whipped up very easily. The Italians used to grind down hazelnuts and mix them with cocoa powder and sugar, and today this has become a real classic.

We mix pure hazelnut paste with some of our origin chocolate – dark or milk – and then decorate them with nipped hazelnuts. It's one of the simplest chocolates we offer and they always fly off the shelves.

You already have stores in Shetland and Orkney, do you plan on expanding further?

Two of my daughters live in Australia and I have this crazy idea that we expand the business over there, calling it 'Southern Lights'. It would be great to have ventures at both sides of the world. In the meantime though, I'll be focusing on continuing to grow the operation in the Northern Isles working alongside a fantastic team, without them none of this would be possible.

For more information on Mirrie Dancers or to buy the chocolates, visit www.mirriedancers.co.uk. You can also find a selection of the products in the shops on board NorthLink Ferries.



Visiting the Whaligoe Steps

For those visiting Caithness we'd highly recommend stopping at the Whaligoe Steps. This flagstone staircase zig-zags down a cliff-face to a harbour at the foot of the cliff edge. These were used in the past by women who carried baskets of fish up the steps to the top of the cliff and then on to market.

The location is named after a whale that washed ashore long ago, and 'goe' comes from geo, derived from the Old Norse gjá which means 'an inlet, gully or cleft in the face of a cliff.'

An extraordinary place

Whaligoe is located on the A99, seven miles south of Wick, and when Billy Connolly visited during his 'World Tour of Scotland' he described it as truly an "extraordinary place."

Harbours suitable for landing fish from the waters of the North Sea were few and far between in Caithness, so many inlets and coves were adapted to accommodate the demand. Whaligoe is a large deepwater inlet that's surrounded on three sides by cliffs that tower over 250ft. The area was once described by Scottish engineer Thomas Telford as a "terrible spot" but nevertheless, the natural harbour proved to be a hub for fishing activity for generations and steps were created to safely reach it from the land.

The first mention of the steps that descend the cliff side at Whaligoe was a brief piece of text from 1769. These must have been an earlier and more hazardous version of the steps currently in place. The current steps were commissioned in 1793 by Captain David Brodie, who spent £8 – more than £1,100 today – to cut the flagstone steps. Records differ on the exact number of steps but on our last visit we counted 337.

Conquering the steps

The steps themselves are not too steep and there's an impressive view of the inlet for visitors as they descend. Nesting seabirds are dotted around the neighbouring cliffs and wild flowers spring from the cliffside. On our last visit it had rained and, that combined with a small fear of heights and the sight of the North Sea crashing against the cliffs below, made the idea of descending the steps a little daunting. However when

we spotted a cat sauntering up the steps without a care in the world, and realised there is a stone wall built on the seaward side, it became clear that the steps are quite safe. We would still be hesitant about taking small children here though.

At the bottom of the steps there's a small grassy area called 'the Bink'. This is a man-made area, a couple of metres above the water's edge. Here visitors can see a barking kettle and fireplace, some tar spillage and the shell of a building; a former Salt Store. Beside the salt store, there's a steep drop where waves rush in and under to a sea cave. A deep bass boom can be heard as the sea crashes inside.

Below 'the Bink' a small set of steps leads down to an area known as 'the Neist'. There is a winch here to pull boats out the water and hoops drilled into the rocky cliff walls. In the early days of Whaligoe being used as a harbour, the catch (herring, cod and ling) was dropped at the water's edge at 'the Neist'. Later on, 'the Bink' was built by the hardy folk of Caithness, allowing bigger boats to arrive at Whaligoe.

Past, present and future

In the past, women gutted and cured the fresh fish that was landed on 'the Bink'. Once prepared, those same women – some well into their seventies – would carry the catch in baskets on their backs, up the steps and walk seven miles to the fish market in Wick. They would even race each other up the steps; the story goes that whoever won got a free mackerel!

A photograph from the past shows 'the Bink' with tall poles for drying the fishing nets. A wooden jetty extends from 'the Bink' and this is where schooners or sailing ships moored. Barrels were brought down from the cooperage at the top of the cliff to 'the Bink' and filled with herring and salt. Then the barrels were rolled out along the wooden jetty to the schooners, and the salt herring would be exported.

During Whaligoe's heyday in the mid-19th century, over 140 fishermen and 35 boats were using the harbour. However by 1928 there were only 16 fishermen and 8 boats. Sadly, both world wars expedited the decline of the harbour and the Scottish fishing industry as young men enlisted in the armed



forces and those that returned came back to an industry on its knees.

Whaligoe's life came to an end in the 1960s. The last boat to use the harbour, The Windward, was pulled out the water in 1970. Thankfully for those who visit the Whaligoe Steps, the dedication of local residents who continue to care for and repair the steps means that they are enjoyed for generations to come. We were especially impressed with the well-kept grass on 'the Bink' during our visit. We later learned that Davy Nicolson, a gentleman who comes from the area and whose grandfather was one of the last fishermen to use Whaligoe, frequently carries a lawnmower up and down the steps. Davy acts as a local guide for the Whaligoe Steps and has even written a booklet about its history.

Visiting the Whaligoe steps is a very rewarding experience and it's an extremely impressive feat of construction. We echo Billy Connolly's sentiments when we say that the Whaligoe Steps are an extraordinary place to visit in Caithness!

The Place Names of Orkney and Shetland

A language developed over 6,000 years

Orkney and Shetland have been populated for over 6,000 years, and the languages spoken here have changed many times. We have no records of the language used by the Neolithic people who lived in Skara Brae in Orkney, nor of the Bronze Age people who occupied Jarlshof in Shetland.

From the early Iron Age, Orkney and Shetland were inhabited by the Picts, but there is debate over the language they spoke. It is believed to have contained elements of Irish Gaelic, and several examples of carved Ogham script found in Orkney and Shetland support this theory.

However Old Norse had the greatest influence

From 800AD, settlers from Norway arrived and the language spoken in Orkney and Shetland changed to Old Norse and then evolved to Norn. This was the language spoken in Orkney and Shetland until the 17th century. Scots eventually took over, but there are many words in the Orkney and Shetland dialect that may be quite unfamiliar to people from the Scottish Mainland!

It is Old Norse that has had the greatest influence on the vast majority of modern place names. Some pronunciations have changed over time, and some place names are often the result of mapmakers mishearing local accents! One example of this is the Broch of Gurness, which was so named because of a misinterpretation of the name of the area, Aikerness.

Orkney itself comes from Orkneyjar, which means 'Seal Islands'. The Orkney Mainland was once called Hrossey, and one of NorthLink Ferries' ships was given the same name. It means 'Horse Island'.

The other NorthLink Ferries vessel, Hjaltland, is the Old Norse name for Shetland. One theory behind this name is that the shape of the islands on a map resemble the hilt (hjalt) of a sword. Another is that the Picts referred to the earlier inhabitants of Shetland as Catts, and named it the Isle of Catts.

Hamnavoe (Harbour Bay) is the old name for Stromness in Orkney, and is now the name of the Stromness to Scrabster ferry. The NorthLink freight ship Hildasay (battle island) is the name of an uninhabited Shetland island and Helliær is named after the uninhabited island, Helliær Holm (cave island) which lies off the coast of Shapinsay in Orkney.

Here are a few more of the most interesting island names in Orkney and Shetland along with their meanings:

Orkney island names and their meanings	
Flotta	Flat Isle
Hoy	High Island
Sanday	Sandy Isle
Shapinsay	Helping Island (for ships)
South Ronaldsay	Rognvald's Isle
Stronsay	Profit Island (good farming and fishing)
Westray	West Isle

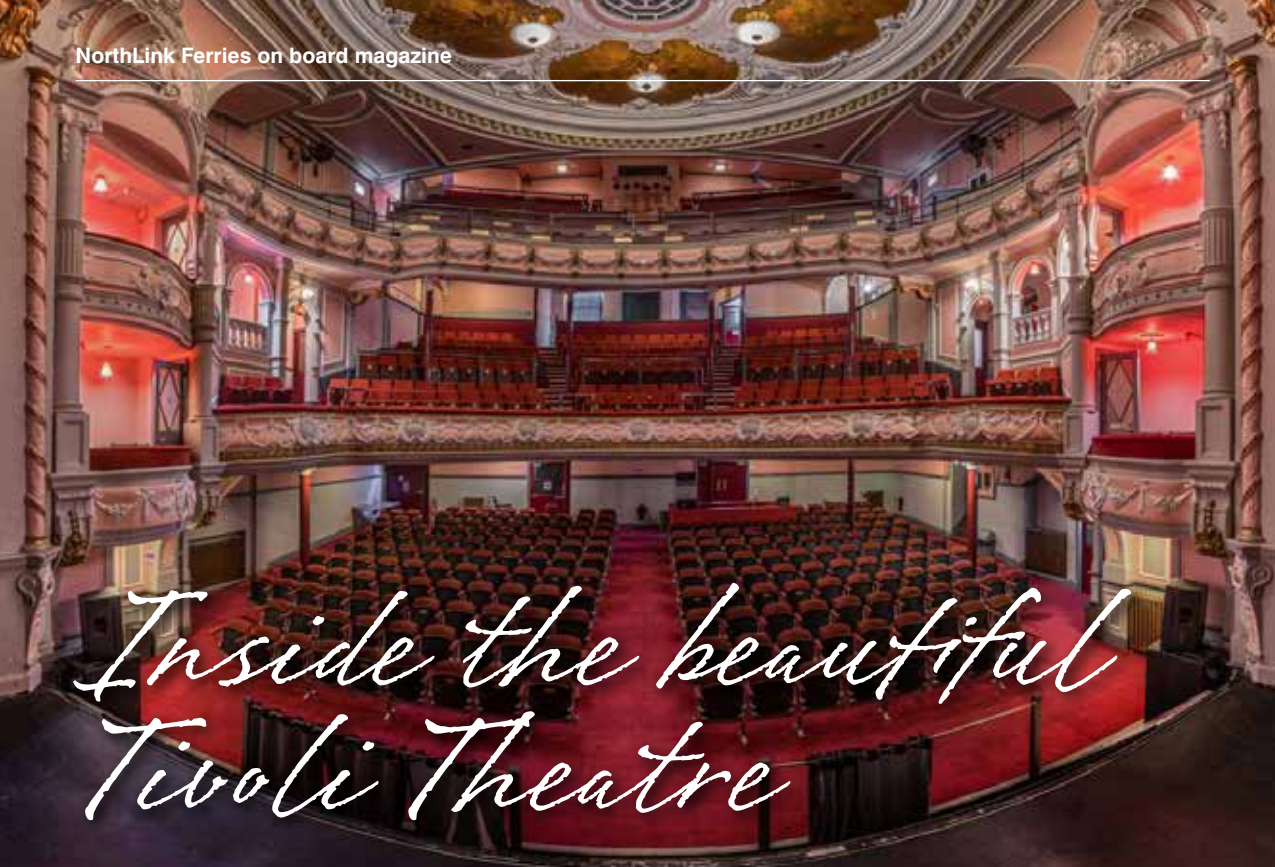
Orkney area names and their meanings	
Brodgar	Bridge Farm
Harray	Inland District
Holm	Haven or good anchorage
Kirkwall	Church Bay
Sandwick	Sandy Bay
Stenness	Stone Point
Stromness	Steam Point

Shetland Island names and their meanings	
Bressay	Broad Isle
Burra	Broch Island
Foula	Bird Isle
Mousa	Moor Island
Muckle Roe	Big Red Isle
Noss	Nose, Point of Rock
Whalsay	Whale Island

Shetland area names and their meanings	
Dunrossness	Noisy Tidal Race
Eshaness	Ashy headland
Fethaland	Fatland (fertile soil)
Lerwick	Muddy Bay
Lunna	A rolling wave to help beach boats
Scalloway	Longhouse or hut bay
Sumburgh	South Broch
Tingwall	Assembly Valley or Field

Finally, as you travel around Orkney and Shetland you may spot house, farm and place names which use parts of Old Norse words. The list below should help you decipher their meaning!

aith	isthmus
ayre	gravel beach
-bister, -bist, -buster	farm, dwelling
breck, -lee	slope
-clett, cleat	stone built house
ey, ay, a	island
-fell, -fea, -fiold	hill
firth, -ford	Fjord, wide bay
garth, -ton, -town	enclosure
geo	Inlet, gully
hope	shallow bay
howe, hox-	mound
knap	hill-top
-ness	nose, point of land
noup	peak
noust	boat beaching place
peerie, peedie	small
-quoy	cattle pen
seater, -setter, -ster	out-pasture
-skaill	hall, house
ting	assembly place
-toft, -taft	site of dwelling
voe, -wall, wick	bay



Over its 150 year lifetime, Aberdeen's Tivoli Theatre has welcomed showbiz royalty, including big names such as Charlie Chaplin and Julie Andrews, through its doors. Now, thanks to a recent £1.2m renovation, glitz and glamour has been restored to one of the city's best-loved venues.

With a history of dramatic highs and lows, the story of Aberdeen's Tivoli Theatre is one which could quite easily be told on stage. With the aim of injecting some culture and entertainment into the Granite City in 1860, a group of local businessmen came together to buy land on the city's Guild Street and create the city's first grand opera house.

Brian Hendry of the Tivoli Theatre explains: "The building was designed by renowned architects Charles Phipps and James Matthews. Phipps designed the auditorium and constructed the building with a rake stage and sightlines. He built-in pillars to support the structure, putting them in the right place to ensure the audience could see the entire stage."

Bright beginnings

After 12 years of construction, the building began life as Her Majesty's Opera House. Its ornate style and obvious glamour awed the city's residents, and the building lived up to its owners' original vision. The Kemnay Sandstone and Aberdeen Granite used in its construction glittered almost as much as the stars that graced the stage.

The Lady of Lyons was the first play to be performed at the opera house. Her Majesty's Opera House continued to flourish until the 1900s and welcomed more than 3,000 people through its doors every day – making it one of the city's biggest and most popular attractions.



To compete with a newer, larger rival Her Majesty's Opera House closed for a huge refurbishment; it opened again in 1910 as the Tivoli Theatre of Varieties. The theatre blossomed from 1910 until 1966 often having two or three shows a day, closing only on Sundays.

During the Tivoli's time it played host to many plays, musicals and pantomimes. The great vaudeville entertainer and juggler WC Fields performed there in 1910 and Stan Laurel – of Laurel and Hardy fame – also performed at the theatre as part of Fred Karno's Troupe.

Julie Andrews performed at the Tivoli Theatre when she was eight years old and would then go on to delight millions around the world as a Hollywood star.

One of the biggest box office draws was Robert Wilson. Described as the Rod Stewart of his day, people queued for hours to see him – he performed to 1,750 people, twice a day, six days a week. Robert wasn't the only Scottish great to come to the Tivoli Theatre. Kenneth McKellar, Moira Anderson, Peter Robertson, and Callum Kennedy have all graced the stage.

The premier icon of the silent film era – Charlie Chaplin – came to the theatre as a youngster and would return many years later, but the theatre was closed that day and he couldn't get in.

The worst time in the Tivoli Theatre's history was when it closed down in 1966. It then opened as a bingo hall briefly but fell into disrepair from 1998 until 2009. It was abandoned and was listed as critical on the Buildings at Risk Register for Scotland.

Bright future

However in 2009 The Tivoli Theatre Company Ltd formed and bought the building, with a view to bringing it back to life. Since then, £1.2m and countless hours of work have gone into restoring the theatre back to its former glory!

When it reopened, early performances only drew in around 100 people but now capacity has grown to more than 500 and many shows routinely sell-out.

Brian added: "The Tivoli Theatre has gone through many stages of evolution over the years and the great team behind the scenes are producing over 100 shows every year, including our headline Hogmanay Live show."

Keeping with the times, the Tivoli hosts many TV comedian tours and, in 2018, held its first summer



pantomime. The theatre still has its connections to silver screen royalty. A recent performance of A Spoonful of Sherman saw the producer of the show bring along the Sherman Brothers' Academy Award for the Julie Andrews classic Mary Poppins.

Despite being the oldest working theatre of its type in Scotland, the future continues to look bright for the Tivoli Theatre. With sell-out shows and bookings until 2020 on the cards, and the theatre almost next door to the ferry terminal, we highly recommend that visitors drop by to see some of the exciting shows and musical productions performed at the Tivoli Theatre in Aberdeen!





Thank you to all the runners up of the #MagnusOnTour competition! To see the winning image, please visit page 3, and make sure you take a copy of this magazine or a 'Magnus' logo on your next holiday.

For an opportunity to win return tickets including a car and cabin to or from Orkney or Shetland for two adults, simply post a picture of yourself in an awe-inspiring location with the iconic NorthLink Ferries 'Magnus' logo on any of our social media channels.

Use the hashtag **#MagnusOnTour** to be in with a chance of winning. Alternatively, you can send your photo to **webmaster@northlinkferries.co.uk**

Good luck!



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