

Northern Isles Fibre Adventures

with Elizabeth Lovick

North Ronaldsay

North Ronaldsay is the most northerly of the Orkney islands, and is famous in the fibre world for the ancient breed of sheep which roam its shores.

These sheep are **genetically identical** to those on the island 2000 years ago, and their DNA is indistinguishable from that in 5000 year old sheep bones found at Skara Brae. In the Eighteenth Century they were excluded from the good arable land by the **building of a dyke**, or wall, leaving them on the foreshore to live off the seaweed thrown up by the gales. They still live on the shore, with the ewes brought on to good grass for the final month before lambing. When the lambs are about 3 months old, the ewes return to the shore with their lambs, eager to get to the seaweed once more!



We will **fly to the island** in a 9 seater plane and stay in the island's **Bird Observatory**.

From here it is only **a minute's walk** down to the shore where we can **watch the sheep** (and the seals) on the rocks.



The mini mill which processes the wool is based at the light house at the other end of the island. We will drive (or walk!) up here to have a talk from **Jane Donnelly**, the mill's manager, about the wool and how it is made into yarn. There will be an opportunity to **buy wool and roving** in the shop.



Other visits will include the **island heritage centre** based in the old kirk, and, weather permitting, a walk along the beach to the **Broch of Burrian**, the remains of an iron age settlement which was, even 2000 years ago, a centre of textile production.

During our time we will have an opportunity to **play with the North Ronaldsay fibre**, both spinning and knitting. The Obscave, warm whatever the weather outside, is a comfy venue for classes and talk.



See the file 'NIFA 2010' for information on dates and prices