

Northern Isles Fibre Adventures

with Elizabeth Lovick

Papa Westray

Papay, as it is know here, has been inhabited ever since the ice moved north after the last ice age. On its western coast is the Knap of Howar, dated at 4,000 BC, the oldest dwelling in Northern Europe

A visit to Papay is a **perfect partner** to a visit to North Ronaldsay: North Ron is flat, Papay's fields run down from a central spine. The islands are only 15 mins apart in the 9 seater plane, but they are **very different places with a very different feel**. On North Ron you are always aware of the waves crashing on the rocks. Papay has a more **tranquil** feel.



Like North Ron, Papay is a **working island**, but here cattle predominate not sheep. **Holland Farm** near the air strip is a fine example of how an Orcadian farm has grown over the years, with buildings going back centuries, their use changing as required. And it is in one of their buildings that the **small**



museum is located. It gives a good idea of what life must have been like in the Nineteenth and early Twentieth Centuries.

But the current farm buildings at Holland are not the only ones on their land. Across a couple of fields is the **Knap of Howar**. This is the remains of a very early house and its store/workshop – at about 6,000 years old, it is the oldest domestic architecture in Northern Europe. Looking West over the Atlantic, it is a magical spot to sit and find inspiration of every kind.



On Papay we stay with **Jim and Morag Hewitson** in the building which was once the island's school. Jim is a journalist and raconteur, a Glaswegian who has lived on Papay for a good number of years. Morag as a superb cook, and also, in the winter months, a spinner, knitter and felter. Her food has to be tasted to be believed!! It is here that I took the photos of the Orkney shawl in my bedroom containing an Ashford traveller.....

Papay has a rare thing – a **yarn shop!** It is mainly the island's **Post Office**, but there is lots and lots of sock yarn, plus Manos del Uruguay and other brands, along side the **local wool** from sheep living on the Holm of Papay, an uninhabited island to the East of Papay.



Exactly how we spend our time will (as usual!) depend on the feelings of the group and the weather. The **local church** has a community room we can use for workshops if we want, or if the weather is good folk might like to take the **boat across to Westray** or a walk over North Hill, a **bird reserve** with puffins and the rare flower *Primula Scotica* in season.



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