



SESSIONS AND SAIL 2020 - SHETLAND VOYAGE NOTES

The Trip



Join us aboard the **Swan** for **Sessions and Sail 2020 – Shetland**

This restored herring drifter will be your home for the week as we step aboard in Lerwick and head up the coast. The ship will be your base for a voyage of exploration and music with sessions, workshops, sailing and more.

Sail the waters of Shetland, where orcas, otters, and humpback whales are often spotted; and seals and seabirds are guaranteed.

You will learn tunes and join sessions under the guidance of Shetland musicians; as the Shetland Folk Festival approaches the excitement will grow and our musical may be able to go together to one of the Festival's world famous concerts on the Thursday night. Should you choose to stay in the islands for the Folk Festival, it will all be ramping up by the time we sail back in to Lerwick Harbour on Friday.

Throughout the trip we will enjoy good food, locally sourced where possible, prepared by our on-board chef.

Some of our likely destinations are outlined in these notes.

We look forward to having you join us!



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The Swan



Swan is a 'Fifie', a herring drifter launched in May 1900 at Hay and Company's yard in Lerwick. Built from larch on oak, she was regarded at the time as "one of the finest fishing boats afloat in the North of Scotland". She went on to have a long fishing career, before being converted to a houseboat and eventually falling into neglect in Hartlepool in the 1980s.

Swan was brought back to Shetland in the early 1990s, and following an extensive restoration was relaunched as a sail training and charter vessel in 1996.

She is 20.4 metres overall length and is rigged with two masts as a gaff ketch.

To learn more about the history, restoration and present day activities of the Swan, visit www.swantrust.com



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Accommodation on board



Photo: Garry Sandison

You will be assigned a bunk, and a place to store your bag on arrival on the Swan. Your bunk will be the fishing-boat style 'hole-in-the-wall'; these are comfortable with a padded mattress, a curtain for privacy and a reading light; you will have to bring your own sleeping bag and pillow. There are no individual cabins, and the accommodation is therefore usually mixed.

Forward of the main saloon is the galley to port and two toilets with wash hand basins and a shower to starboard. In the forepeak is a workplace/stowage area. The sink and wash hand basins have pressurised hot and cold water.

A 240v electrical system is onboard so you can charge camera batteries and portable music players etc.



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Food and Drink



Photograph: Molly Brindle

Meals are prepared in the galley – preparation may need to spread out into the lower saloon. Food will be of a good standard and prepared by our own chef. Meals, tea and coffee are included in the price of the trip.

A hand is always appreciated with meal preparation and clearing up, so don't be afraid to offer!

Alcoholic drinks will be on a bring-your-own basis; there are shops in Lerwick and in several of the more rural villages where you will be able to buy your preferred choice of drinks.



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Who is the trip aimed at?



If you are a keen musician playing at any level - whether beginner, intermediate or expert - with an interest in the traditions and folk music of Scotland or Shetland, this trip is for you. No sailing experience is necessary, but those keen to participate will be encouraged to join in the sailing of the ship, whether steering, keeping watch or helping set and trim the sails.

The accommodation arrangements aboard the Swan are a little more rugged, offering less privacy than that of the other ship we use, the Lady of Avenel; we would therefore recommend this trip to those with a better level of mobility (it can be a bit of a clamber to get in or out of the bunks).



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Lerwick



(Photo: 'Brilliant Blue', Simon Varwell. CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)

We will join the ship in Lerwick, the main town in Shetland. A town of 7,000 inhabitants, Lerwick will be gearing up to host musicians from all over the world as the Shetland Folk Festival approaches.

Nesting



(Photo: Fred Riley, CC BY-NC 2.0)

We may drop anchor in a remote bay such as Brough, near Nesting, and play tunes aboard the Swan for the evening, getting to know each other musically and as a crew.



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Vidlin



(Photograph: Vidlin: View towards the Inner Harbour, Chris Downer CC BY-SA 2.0)

At a village such as Vidlin, on mainland Shetland, we will tie up and head ashore to the local public hall where we will be met by local musicians (names to be announced) who will host a workshop on the local music style. Later, we can enjoy an evening hosted by the community in the local Hall.



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Cullivoe



(The Small Marina at Cullivoe – GeographBot. CC BY-SA 2.0)

Journeying north, and depending on the location of the Shetland Folk Festival concert on Thursday evening, we may make a stop at a village on the island of Yell, such as Cullivoe.

Home of the famous Cullivoe Fiddlers, and a unique style of fiddle playing, as well as being where Sessions and Sail founder Barry Nisbet grew up, we will be given a workshop and an introduction to the local style; later, the community will host us in an evening in the famous Cullivoe Hall.



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Shetland Folk Music Festival



The Shetland Folk Festival kicks off on Thursday April 30th. Concert locations have not yet been announced; but we will bring the Swan as close as possible to the venue and attend one of the first rural concerts together that evening. Expect stellar line ups featuring artists from many facets of the folk scene!



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Likely Itinerary

The following itinerary is a suggestion of how the trip may take form; all destinations are subject to change, are weather dependant and are at the discretion of the Captain.

Day 1

You meet the 'Swan' alongside the pier in Lewick, where the crew will welcome you aboard; you are given a tour of the ship and a briefing.

We leave the harbour and set the sails, heading north out the 'north mooth' of Lerwick Harbour. A three hour sail takes us to the sheltered anchorage at Brough, near the village of Nesting.

There may be time for a walk ashore, or some seal or otter spotting from the rocks; then, after a warm dinner aboard the Swan, we get to know each other with a music session in the cosy saloon.

Day 2

After breakfast, we hoist sail and move on to Vidlin, passing through Whalsay Sound and the rocky islands, home to hundreds of seals.

We tie up alongside the pier in Vidlin and head to the Hall here for a workshop session with local musicians. Whether melody player or accompanist, you will be encouraged to join in and learn some new music from the Shetland tradition.

We head back to the Swan for dinner; and later, walk back up the road to the hall for an evening of tunes and hospitality.



Day 3

We leave in the morning, sailing north again towards the island of Yell. You will be encouraged to join in as we set sails and manoeuvre the ship guided by the professional crew, although this is voluntary and some may prefer to sit back and watch the action!

Tying up in the afternoon at Cullivoe, we have an early dinner before heading to the Cullivoe Hall where we are joined by local musicians, including some of the Cullivoe Fiddlers, the last proponents of a rare local style of fiddle playing.

They will teach us some tunes, and we will learn what makes this style so special; then, the community will join us for an evening of music and socialising in the hall.

Day 4

We bid farewell to Cullivoe and, with the Shetland Folk Festival beginning today, we manoeuvre the Swan out of the harbour, and set the sails headed for the concert. If the weather is good, we may play some tunes on deck as we sail along, or we may just keep an eye out for wildlife as we sail past the islands and historical sites such as the 2,000 year old broch at Burray, the 19th century gothic Brough House on Fetlar, and Lunna House, site of the 'Shetland Bus' Norwegian resistance effort during world war 2.

We tie up or anchor at whichever of Shetland's many sheltered harbours is closest, and are taken to a village hall where the first of the several rural concerts will be held. There we hear a selection of the world-class music the Folk Festival committee have brought to Shetland in 2020.



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Day 5

With our ears still full of the music from the night before, and no doubt still debating what was the highlight of the concert, we sail down the coast and back towards Lerwick today, arriving this afternoon into a town filled with musicians and festival-goers.

In Lerwick we say our farewells to the Swan and our newly forged crew; however, for those of us staying on for the rest of the folk festival, we will probably bump in to each other frequently over the coming days!

Equipment list: (We recommend you bring the following):

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Instrument | <input type="checkbox"/> Gloves and a warm hat |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sleeping Bag | <input type="checkbox"/> Pillow |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Warm jumper/fleece | <input type="checkbox"/> Long trousers |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Waterproof footwear/seaboots | <input type="checkbox"/> Sunglasses |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Towel | <input type="checkbox"/> Proof of identification |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Thermal layers | <input type="checkbox"/> RYA logbook if you have one |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Thick socks | <input type="checkbox"/> A soft bag (no suitcases please!) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Waterproof jacket and trousers (oilskins can be provided) | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sufficient cash to last the week (there are cash machines in Lerwick but we can't guarantee elsewhere.) | |

Getting there

Air: There are daily flights landing at Sumburgh, on the south tip of Shetland, from Aberdeen, Inverness, Glasgow, Edinburgh and Kirkwall. www.loganair.co.uk

Ferry: There is a nightly overnight ferry from Aberdeen (calling into Orkney four nights a week). www.northlinkferries.co.uk

We recommend confirming travel arrangements as early as possible to avoid price rises and availability problems.

We would also recommend arranging accommodation in Lerwick as soon as possible if you plan to stay for the Folk Festival – hotels, B+B's and hostels will book out well in advance.



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Other

There may be the times when we visit cafes, bars or attractions ashore. Cash machines may not be available in all the remote places we will be visiting, so it is recommended to bring along enough cash for the week.

If there is any further information you need regarding your trip, please don't hesitate to get in touch with us by email or telephone.





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Barry Nisbet

The Sessions and Sail voyages were founded by Barry Nisbet, a tall ship sailor and musician from Shetland. Barry has been combining sessions and sailing for years, as captain of a variety of sailing vessels such as Søren Larsen, Pelican of London and Tenacious, and as a well-known fiddle player and songwriter.



(Photograph © Siobhan Diamond 2018)

More information on Barry's music career is available at www.barrynisbet.com



Barry will be on board throughout the Sessions and Sail trips to give guidance on music or sailing to any who need it.



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