

# The Shetland Times

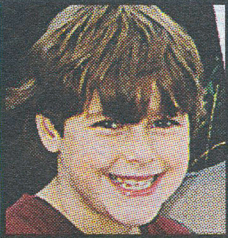
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## GENERAL NEWS

- **Hjaltland special** 11-14
- **Letter from the Queen** 37
- **Children's book festival** 7



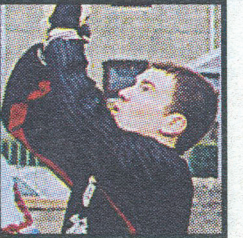
## REGULAR FEATURES

- **What's New** 22-24
- **Wilderness** 15
- **In the Garden** 21



## SPORTS NEWS

- **Final Dream League** 50
- **Scalloway are back** 52
- **Hockey uncertainty** 51



# Binmen call for clarity

By Mark Latham

BINMEN in Shetland are calling on council management to issue clear guidelines to the public on where to leave rubbish bags.

Speaking in a week in which a binman in Lerwick claimed he had a black bag thrown at him by an irate householder, shop steward of the Transport and General Workers Union Charles Lafferty said that managers of the council's waste management division had failed to address any of the men's grievances.

Many of the bruck boxes are badly designed and unsafe for

binmen to use, he said. Some bruck boxes are home-made and have nails sticking out of them which have injured binmen on more than one occasion in recent months.

Since the decision to reduce the number of essay carts operated by the council from five to four was implemented earlier this summer, binmen are working increasingly long hours, Mr Lafferty said.

As the men spend their working hours carrying heavy weights, ideally bruck boxes should be no higher than knee-height. However, some bruck boxes are up to five feet tall and that made getting the bags out very hard.

In addition many bags are overweight and binmen have hurt their backs, necks and shoulders getting them into the cart. One man had suffered a groin strain injury.

Another man who works as a binman added that some bruck boxes have small hatch openings. The small opening might not present a problem for the householder to put the bag in but after the contents have settled it is a lot harder to get the bag out, he said. What was needed was clear guidance from the council on what type of boxes were acceptable.

Mr Lafferty said that binmen had on two occasions in the last

year given council managers a list of households where bruck boxes were felt to be unsafe. Binmen had made it clear to management that they expected the council to write to householders outlining guidelines on the construction and siting of bruck boxes, but nothing had happened.

"The men are not adverse to going into boxes so long as they are properly constructed," Mr Lafferty said. "I would like to see the council educating the public about what is acceptable but they don't like the idea of telling the public what to do."

"It is supposed to be a kerbside collection. Shetland is the only

place in Britain where men are expected to go into properties. But the men don't like going into properties as they then get blamed for any damage. A number of meetings have taken place but nothing is ever done."

Mr Lafferty said the ideal solution from the binmen's point of view would be for wheelee bins to be used in Shetland. But this idea had been scrapped by the council following a consultation exercise two years ago.

The council's cleansing services manager Jonathan Emptage said that he was not aware of any lists of households with unsuitable

(Continued on page 2)

## Elderly Eshaness man dies after car accident

AN ESHANESS man died following an accident on the A970 on Tuesday. Gilbert Sandison (75) was the driver and only occupant of a Citroen ZX car which left the road south of Wethersta at about 4.45pm.

Mr Sandison had to be cut free from the car by the fire brigade before being taken to the Gilbert Bain Hospital, Lerwick, for treatment. He was later flown to the Aberdeen Royal Infirmary by air ambulance, but died on Wednesday.

Mr Sandison was a single man who, until his retirement, worked in the Eshaness post office. He was also an enthusiast for fiddle and accordion music.

## Erroneous signs have Gott to go

THE GOTT school is to have its name changed to Tingwall Primary School after 130 years, signalling a small victory for campaigners who want to preserve authentic Shetland placenames.

The council's services committee agreed on Wednesday to ask the full council to sanction the change next week in line with moves by Tingwall, Whiteness and Weisdale Community Council to end the misuse of Gott to describe Tingwall.

While pleased that justice was finally being done, the local councillor Jim Irvine was astounded by the length of time taken for the issue to wend its way through the council's agenda management

process. He said one of the letters from people consulted about the proposed change was dated 14th June 2001 yet the issue was only now being decided 16 months later.

"I could have written the report in five minutes," he said. He called for the school signs to be altered immediately otherwise it might be another five years before anyone got around to it. Road signs showing Gott have already been changed by the council.

The name Gott was originally foisted on parts of Tingwall by the General Post Office, which did actually have a post office at Gott

(Continued on page 2)

## A smashing start



Unexpected drama for NorthLink's guest of honour Nareen Fullerton and the crowd at Saturday's naming ceremony for the *Hjaltland*. Stories, pictures and review on pages 11-13.

Photo: Keith Morrison

## Basta cattle killed by lightning strike

SIX cows in calf were killed by lightning at Basta in Yell recently.

Owner Tom Leask said it appeared the animals had been standing in a huddle when a fork of lightning hit a stone between them and struck them down during the early hours of 20th August. He did not discover them until the following day.

The beasts were not insured but Mr Leask was philosophical about

his considerable financial loss. "It's just one of those things that you can do nothing about. It's an act of nature," he said.

The remains were buried in a hole a few days later by contractor Victor Jamieson.

Mr Leask said he had been told that a number of sheep were killed by lightning 30 years ago at almost the same spot.

## Are you earning £443 a week?

WAGES in Shetland are among the highest in the country, according to a national earnings survey carried out by researchers at Durham University.

Of the 229 local authority areas in the UK, the highest wages are paid in the south-east of England. London boroughs top the league with average pre-tax earnings for full-time workers in the City of London at £884.92 per week.

Shetland, positioned 60th in the list, is in the top third of all areas in the UK, with an average wage of £443.39 per week.

Areas of Ireland, Scotland and Wales dominate the bottom 50 places in the table though Aberdeen City (£476.77) is in 31st place and Edinburgh (£444.94) is in 59th place. The Orkney Islands are in 205th position with average earnings of £345.16. In bottom place is Moyle in Northern Ireland where the average earnings are £230.95.

Only three places in Scotland - Aberdeen City, Edinburgh and Shetland - have returned figures above the UK national average of £442.37.



**Hands on Health**  
Saturday 5th October  
**Brae Health Centre 2pm - 5pm**  
Organised by Delting Community Learning Group





## HJALTLAND SPECIAL FEATURE

# Hjaltland shows she's a real luxury liner

NEARLY 4000 people toured the new NorthLink north boat *Hjaltland* during her weekend stopover in Lerwick. A queue snaked the length of Victoria Pier for hours on Sunday when the doors were thrown open to the public. The previous day several hundred invited guests saw Narene Fullerton from Burra name NorthLink's first new ship at Holmsgarth before sampling the hospitality on board. John Robertson reports on the naming ceremony and his tour of the £30 million ship which is to begin serving Orkney and Shetland with her identical sister ship *Hrossey* on 1st October...

TELEPHONES have been red hot at the NorthLink office in Stromness this week with people booking their first trips on the luxurious MV *Hjaltland*. The reaction from some of those who toured the ship at the weekend was very positive but with understandable reservations: they see a sumptuous ship but remain to be convinced about how she will handle the worst the winter will throw at her.

That nearly one-fifth of the population has already been aboard the ship proves there is still huge community interest in the north boats, even if the days are gone when everyone sailed on them and hundreds thronged the quayside to wave them off.

NorthLink commercial director Gareth Crichton has been greatly encouraged by the feedback from the first visitors. "The most common response was that people had, over the years, decided that the ferry was no longer a viable option to flying. But having seen for themselves what we have to offer they are telling us that the ferry is now firmly back on the agenda."

The words "shoddy" and

"Scandinavian" never appear together so the quality of build and finishings was not in question. Overall, there is a feeling of solidity and spaciousness and the opulence of her public areas is not matched by any hotel in Shetland.

Boarding through the reception area is like setting foot in the foyer of a modern and tasteful five-star hotel with chequered polished granite flooring and a long, curved stone-topped reception desk. The floor could be slippery when wet but, with a covered walkway all the way from the pier, your feet should always be dry.

Wood and glass panelling and metal fittings are high quality and in tasteful tones, shown off to their best by subtle lighting. Leather seating abounds, carpets feel pleasingly plush underfoot.

The tone is maintained upstairs on Deck 6, the main public deck which houses, in the front half, the luxurious main Filska Bar overlooking the bow, a shop, video games room and three lounges. Two of these are recliner-seating lounges which are the main areas to sleep in for budget travellers without cabins. The seats do not recline as far as one might hope

but no doubt, as in the past, the more ingenious traveller will find more comfy nooks and crannies to crash out in.

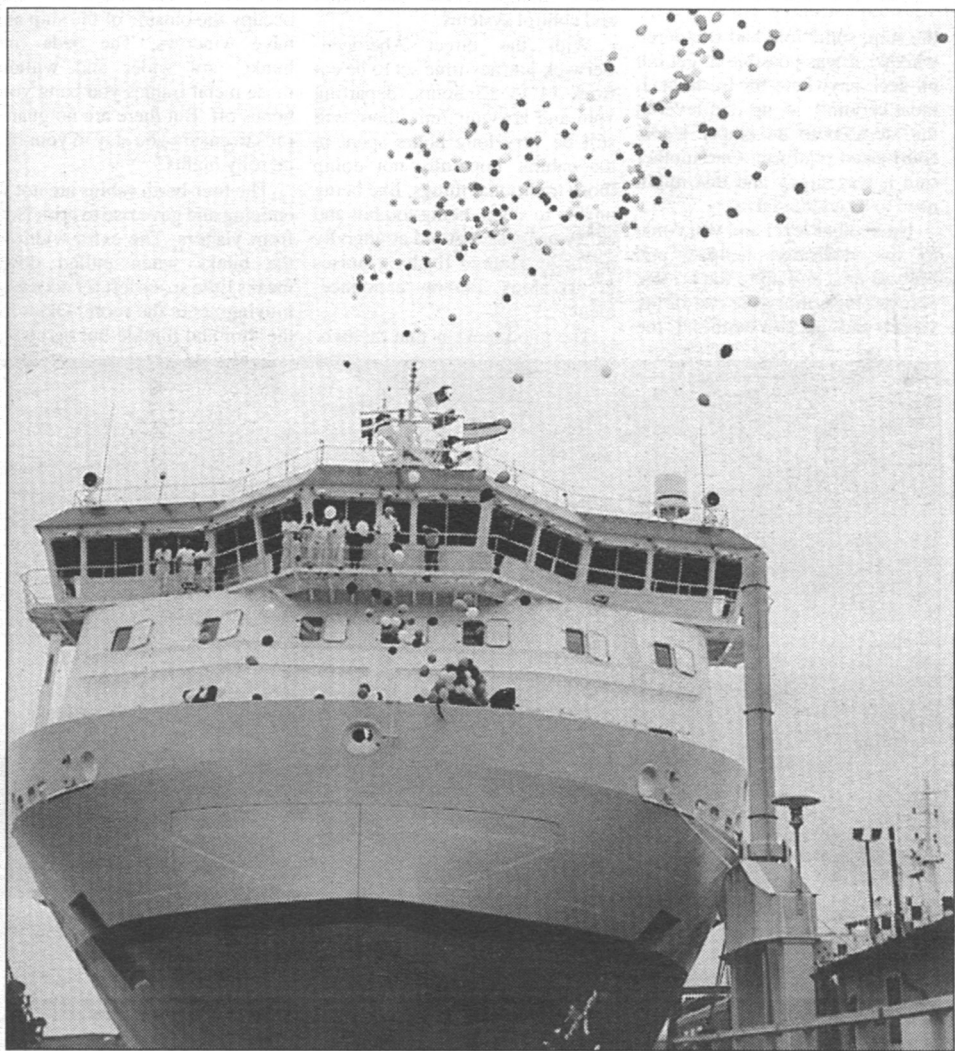
The rear half of Deck 6 feels particularly welcoming, containing a smaller mid-ships bar, which is part of the Lönabrak lounge and restaurant complex, and will stay open all night as a central point for assistance and snacks. But you can imagine trouble brewing on some trips if alcohol is to be available to gangs of men all night.

One plus point for those fed up being "forced" to drink the same draught beers that all the pubs in Shetland are supplied by JW Grays, is the brews on offer in the bars, include Caledonian 80 Shilling and the wonderful Calder's "Creamy". But someone has made a major mistake with the pricing. Pints are reasonable at £2.30, nips are £2.15 for 35 millilitres but a bottle of Becks is £2.55, a can of Guinness £2.75, a 330ml can of Pepsi £1.40 and, wait for it, alcopops like Smirnoff Ice and Bacardi Breezers are a stunning £3.60 each.

Across the corridor is a small club lounge, a more discrete place to sit and blear over a drink, next to the Lönabrak a-la-carte restaurant which, with just eight tables and a £28-a-head price tag for the full works, is not going to cater for huge numbers. Most will head for the smart Shoornal self-service restaurant which occupies a large area overlooking the stern, connected to the children's playroom. However, rumours that fish and chips was going to cost £8.50 are tosh. NorthLink said this week a hot meal would cost £5-£6.

NorthLink is priding itself on its extensive use of quality produce from Orkney and Shetland, including food, drink, crafts and apparently the soap is even from Shetland, being supplied by the Shetland Soap Company which only produced its first soap last week.

Looking up the tall sides of  
(Continued on next page)



Balloons fill the sky above the *Hjaltland*.

Photo: Keith Morrison



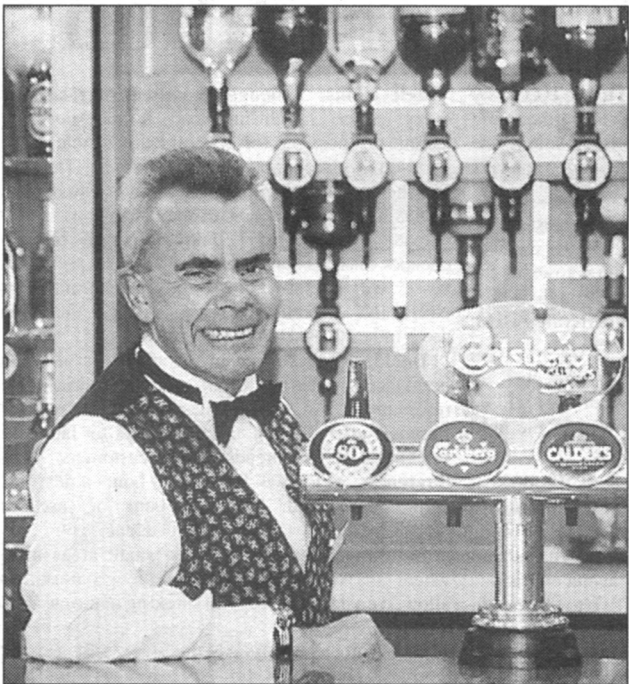
Waiting to greet you at the elegant reception desk onboard the *Hjaltland* is receptionist Suzette Morris.

Photo: Keith Morrison



The master of the *Hjaltland*, Captain David Wheeler.

Photo: Keith Morrison



Bartender Andy Dingle in the well-stocked Midships bar.

Photo: Keith Morrison



Chief engineer Graham McKenzie beside one of the four main engines.

Photo: Keith Morrison



# Comfy beds but a bit of a squeeze

(Continued from previous page)

the ship, some folk had wondered whether it was possible to get out on deck anywhere for fresh air. It most certainly is, up one level at the stern, onto an empty tennis court-sized platform. One mother said it was slippy and this might need to be addressed.

Up another level and you come to the dedicated helipad and lifeboat area and up to the bridge, perched high above the rest of the vessel and packed with all the

latest computerised navigation and control systems.

With the direct Aberdeen-Lerwick journey time set to be cut from 14 to 12 hours, departing 7pm and arriving 7am, there will still be very long hours spent in the cabins, hopefully not doing those traditional things, like being unable to sleep; being too hot and stuffy or being startled at ungodly hours by strange flushing noises or frivolous Tannoy announcements.

The good news is that the two-

berth cabins are delightful. They occupy the outside of the ship and have windows. The beds (not bunks) are wider and without those metal frames you bang your bones off. But there are no guard-rails to ensure you stay in your bed on rolly nights.

The four-berth cabins are not so enticing and gave rise to criticisms from visitors. The extra width of the bunks when pulled down means little space left for access or moving about the room. Okay for the thin and nimble but "crabbit"

for the bulkier and less agile among us.

The ventilation is said to be excellent and it will need to be or the lack of windows will make it feel claustrophobic and perhaps none too fresh.

Fortunately, the en-suite bathrooms are a major improvement on the cubby-holes we are used to, where it was possible to shower, brush your teeth and use the toilet simultaneously.

The four two-berth cabins for use by disabled people are also on

the inside but they have been designed with the help of local groups for the disabled and should therefore be suitable. In keeping with the hotel ethos, there are telephones in every cabin.

Another potentially good point is the demise of the "holiday camp" Tannoy announcements. NorthLink is to make more use of visual displays of information on overhead screens.

Down below, the main car deck is far superior to the dimly lit, bowels of P&O ships. For drivers

there are no narrow ramps inclined at scary angles. Access is flat and the hold is light and bright with few obstructions to trip over.

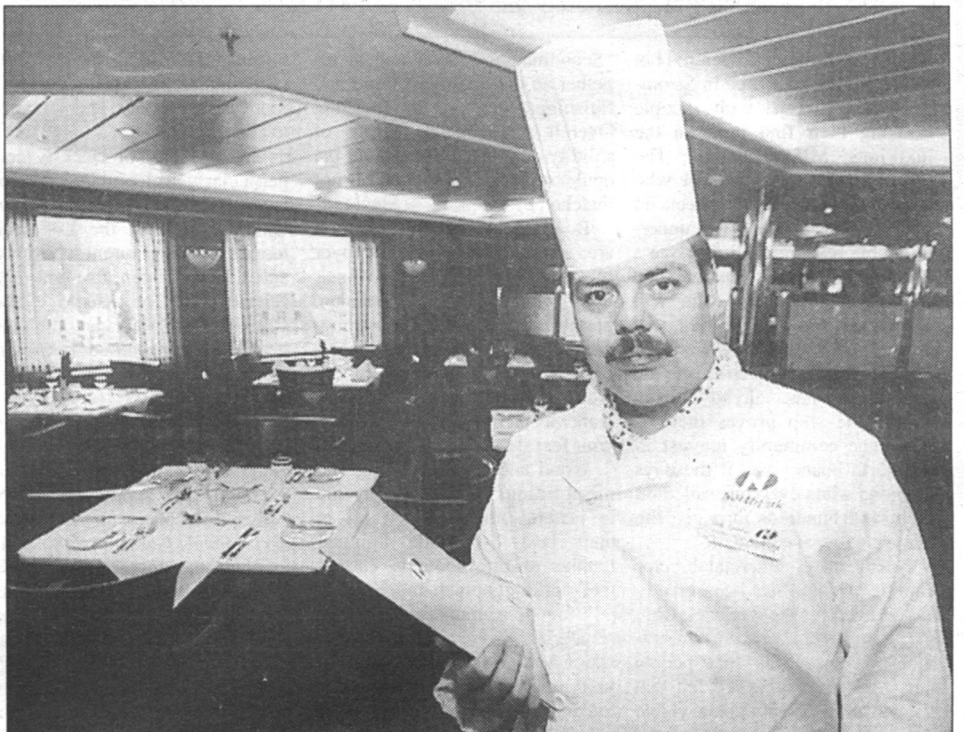
So, in summary, a beautiful boat the tourists will love and which should provide an experience to enhance our holiday vibes – if the cabins do not prove too cramped.

Hopefully those mutterings about high windage will prove irrelevant and the *Hjaltland* will indeed restore some of the magic to a trip on the north boats.



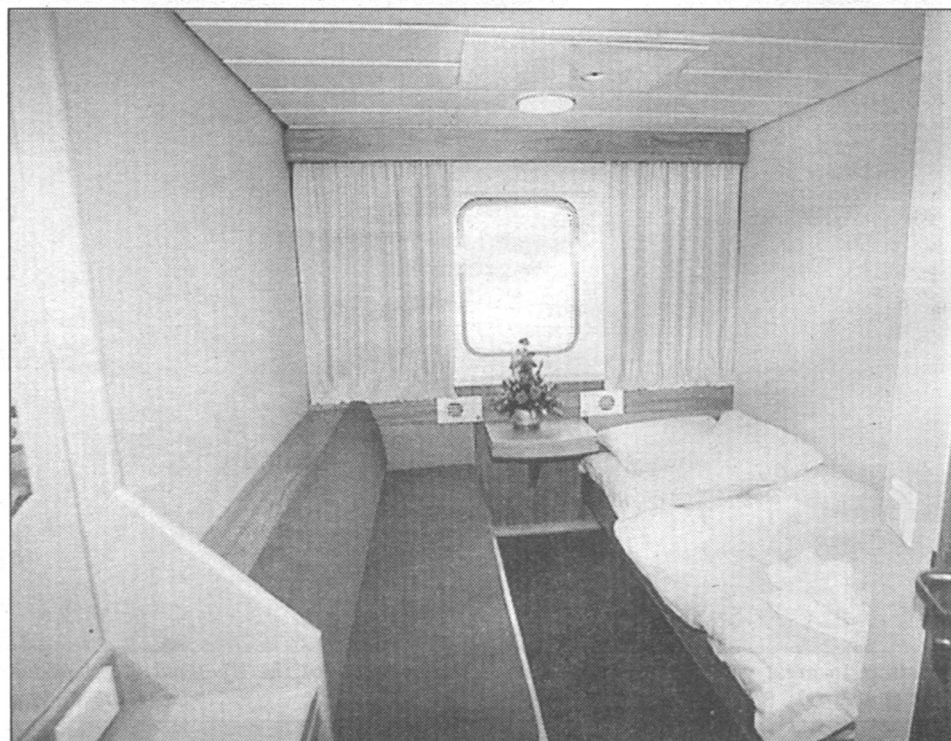
The bright and spacious self-service restaurant.

Photo: Keith Morrison



Senior executive chef, Paul Canning in the Lönabrack Restaurant and Lounge.

Photo: Keith Morrison



Inside one of the vessel's cabins.

Photo: Keith Morrison



The well furnished lounge bar.

Photo: Keith Morrison

## NorthLink innovations depart from tradition

ISLANDERS have become so used to the P&O way of running a shipping service that the forthcoming changeover will spring a few surprises. Among the issues triggering queries which we sought answers for were:

**Lifeboats:** although there are just two conventional-style lifeboats, instead of the eight of the *St Clair*, there are also escape chutes towards the aft end of the new ships down through which passengers would slide into inflatable liferafts. There are also two fast-rescue craft

**Luggage:** you are expected to take just an overnight bag onboard. The rest of your bags will be whisked away on check-in and stowed in the hold before being returned to you ashore

**Cinema:** there is no big screen in the 60-seat recliner lounge designated for showing films. Instead there is a series of small flat-screen plasma units hanging at intervals from the roof with sound provided by headphones. A larger plasma unit is due to be fitted at the front of the room. Two to three new-release movies will be shown each night, with a different programme showing on trips north and south. Passengers will be charged between £4 and £5 to see a film but have the opportunity to see up to six blockbuster films in the course of a return boat trip

**Televisions:** although promised originally for every cabin, NorthLink said it has not been technically possible (or economically viable) to get good-quality reception on so many sets. Therefore the shelves and aerial sockets already fitted in the cabins will not be used. This may change as satellite television technology improves and becomes cheaper. Instead, large-screen televisions around the vessel will be showing satellite programming and NorthLink is keen that passengers use the public areas rather than skulk in the cabins

**Bookings:** the office in Stromness is to be the permanent central point for inquiries and reservations. An office will open at Holmsgarth, Lerwick, after 3.30pm on sailing days for late ticket sales but it is intended that customers phone Stromness, which will be open 20 hours a day, from 7am-5.30pm and 8.30pm-4.30am or use the NorthLink internet site or a travel agent

**Smoking:** there are just two small areas inside where smoking is permitted, although it will be allowed on deck. There is no smoking in the cabins or the main bar.

**Valet service:** although the ships will arrive at 7am, passengers are allowed to stay on until 10am and can arrange to have their cars driven off and parked on the pier



The up-to-date computer systems in the ship's control room.

Photo: Keith Morrison



HJALTLAND SPECIAL FEATURE

# Hiccups add fizz to big day

THE CHAMPAGNE bottle keranged off the bow but did not break. "Oh no!" came the shout over the PA from Narene Fullerton as her audience on the quayside squealed. Is nothing to be plain sailing for NorthLink?

In a flash, *Hjaltland* captain Dave Wheeler dealt with the reluctant bubbly, three cheers went up and the invited guests piled aboard for cocktails and canapes.

It was the second slight hiccup in an otherwise wholly positive and impressive party laid on by NorthLink to celebrate the naming of its first ship. Minutes earlier, during his address as guest speaker representing Shetland, SIC convener Tom Stove had no such problem uncorking his froth. While NorthLink chief executive Bill Davidson was in celebratory mood on a "a momentous day" for his company, Mr Stove chose to prick a few balloons.

He told the gathering in the new terminal building he would not dwell on the many differences of opinion between the Shetland (through the SIC) and NorthLink yet went on to highlight the ongoing dispute over transfer of undertakings for P&O Scottish Ferries staff joining NorthLink.

"This is not a good situation and I would urge everyone

involved, even at this late stage, to work for a speedy resolution of this problem," he said. "Many of these people have given a large part of their working life to our lifeline shipping service."

When he concluded by wishing NorthLink every success, he said he was sure it was capable of providing a first-class service. But to many of the onlookers he sounded less than convinced.

Kicking off the speeches, Mr Davidson had told the audience the ship was the first new roll-on, roll-off ferry ever to be built for the Shetland route; was "the biggest we can routinely take in and out of Aberdeen harbour" and, due to new stability regulations, had been restricted to 100 cabins. They also had to be above the waterline, so farewell to those character-building E Deck experiences.

"We have tried very hard to make sure the ship is best suited to meeting the waters that she is going to be operating in," he said. "We have gone to great lengths to provide as much data as we possibly could to the designers to allow them to optimise the ship for these routes."

She is not short of power, packing around four times that of the *St Clair* and the equivalent of around 11,000 car engines to

produce a top speed of 24 knots and with plenty back-up in the event of breakdown.

The track record of Aker Finnyards is mighty, with over 1500 vessels built, including eight

passenger car ferries during the 1990s and other ships ranging from luxury cruise liners to hovercraft and warships.

Mr Davidson also congratulated Lerwick Port Authority

for their efficient delivery of the new terminal, pier extension, linkspan and covered walkway.

NorthLink chairman Bill Mackintosh spoke next, representing the Royal Bank of Scotland as co-

partners with Caledonian MacBrayne in the NorthLink project.

"I understand that there is some trepidation about the current vessels — people don't exactly look forward to travelling on them," he said, referring to P&O's ships. "We hope that changes very rapidly."

He pledged regular consultation with the people of Shetland to see if the service could be improved. "We will do our level best to meet your aspirations," he said. "Feedback will be very important to us."

Outside at Holmsgarth, the *Hjaltland* sat bow-on to the new ramp, festooned in flags (including the blue, white and blue stripes of the old North of Scotland, Orkney & Shetland Shipping Company) while berthed a few yards away was the rival Norse Island Ferries freight ship *Merchant Venture* and the *St Clair*.

Twin bagpipers fired up in the grey, north-easterly breeze as the naming party walked down the pier, vanishing into the car deck and upstairs to take their places in the prow. Lerwick Church of Scotland minister, the Reverend Gordon Oliver, blessed the ship and Narene Fullerton stepped forward to announce in a hearty voice: "I name this ship *Hjaltland*. God bless her and all who sail in her." Then she pulled the lever.



Guests board the *Hjaltland* following the naming ceremony. Photo: Keith Morrison

## Identical twin makes ready for northern manoeuvres

THE SECOND NorthLink ferry *Hrossey* is also to make her Northern Isles debut in Shetland.

The sister ship to the *Hjaltland* is due to arrive in Lerwick on Wednesday for an overnight stay

and berthing and manoeuvring trials at Holmsgarth. She will travel to her home port of Kirkwall for the first time next Friday with an open day planned for Sunday.

The ship has been undergoing final preparatory work in Leith

since arriving from the shipyard in Finland on Monday morning.

The *Hjaltland* and *Hrossey* are also set for a film and photo-call sailing together under the Forth Bridge to provide footage for publicity.

## Passenger fares fulfil the promise

WITH only 11 days to go before the handover from P&O Scottish Ferries to NorthLink all sorts of stories are being bandied about regarding fares. Are they really cheaper, as the new company certainly used to promise, or will the hidden extras push them way over what P&O charged?

As far as the cheapest possible price available goes, NorthLink scores over its predecessor in all the examples quoted in the accompanying table. But for one passenger travelling alone, by and large you have to go during the low season (January, February, March, November and December). Once you move into mid season (April, May, June, September and October) things begin to change somewhat. And during peak season (July and August) NorthLink begins to get considerably more expensive.

For couples sharing a cabin, whether they take a car with them or not, NorthLink is much cheaper than P&O in low season, and still less even during mid and peak times.

The situation is the same for a family of four (two adults and two children aged between four

and 16).

It should also be pointed out that on NorthLink's ferries you pay for the cabin, as opposed to a bunk. So even if single travellers are paying a bit more, exclusive use is guaranteed. Previously if you wanted an exclusive cabin on P&O you basically had to pay for two bunks.

If anyone doesn't mind bunking up with an unknown companion on NorthLink's ships, which was customary practice with P&O, there is also a discount cabin share scheme in operation.

Concessions are reasonably comparable between the two companies. NorthLink offer 25 per cent discount both on standard fares and cabin prices for senior citizens, students and registered disabled people, and previously P&O offered something roughly similar.

A 10 per cent discount is available with NorthLink for groups of 15 or more booked on one ticket and travelling together, whereas P&O offered the same reduction for groups of over 20 people.

### SMIRK'S VIEW

HIT'S FINE! BUT WHAARS DA REST O' DA LIFEBOATS?

SMIRK

COMPARING THE FARES						
	P&O SCOTTISH FERRIES			NORTHLINK		
	Low	Standard	High	Low	Mid	Peak
Basic return fare (no accommodation)		£88.70		£30.10	£37.10	£44.10
Basic return fare (inside cabin)		£121.10		£114.10	£121.10	£128.10
Basic return fare (outside cabin)		£131.30		£130.10	£171.10	£186.10
Driver with car (no accommodation)	£204.20		£214.20	£133.00	£169.40	£184.10
Driver with car (inside cabin)	£236.60		£246.60	£217.00	£289.40	£316.10
Driver with car (outside cabin)	£246.80		£256.80	£233.00	£309.40	£340.10
Couple travelling (inside cabin)		£242.20		£144.20	£158.20	£172.20
Couple travelling (outside cabin)		£262.60		£160.20	£208.20	£230.20
Couple with car (inside cabin)	£357.70		£367.70	£239.40	£319.50	£353.20
Couple with car (outside cabin)	£378.10		£388.10	£255.40	£339.50	£377.20
Family of four (two children aged 4-16) (four-berth cabin)		£304.48		£194.30	£263.30	£296.30
Family of four (two children aged 4-16) (with standard car)	£419.98		£429.98	£281.80	£381.60	£422.30



# Long queues as people check out new *Hjaltland*'s credentials



The tail end of the long queue of people eager to see the new ship wends its way aboard the *Hjaltland* on Sunday.

Photo: Garry Sandison

## Explorer scouts invested on their namesake vessel

ON SUNDAY the new *Hjaltland* Explorer Scouts were invested on the bridge of the new NorthLink ferry that shares their name.

Explorer Scout leader Tommy Goudie said: "The ship was chosen by the boys as their investiture locations, not only because of its name, but because these founding members of the unit have all moved up from the Lerwick Sea Scouts and are interested in anything nautical."

"The Scout Association has recently restructured its sections to give more flexibility for young members of the organisation and to encourage them to stay with Scouting into adulthood."

"Gone are the Venture Scouts to be replaced with Explorer Scouts and The Scout Network (18-25 year-olds). Explorers are aged between 14-18 and are the section that follows traditional scouts who

are now aged 10½-14, the new Explorer Scout unit would welcome new members, either male or female, of the right age, from anywhere in Shetland who are interested in any aspect of scouting."

After their guided tour of the new ship the master showed the group the bridge equipment before area commissioner Peter Davis invested the boys. Three of them, Andrew Kelly, Laurence Goudie and Liam Drosso, will represent Shetland at the 20th Scout World Jamboree in Thailand at Christmas.

The unit would like to thank NorthLink for their hospitality, with a special thank you to the master and chief officer of the *Hjaltland* for their time, and the purser for the tour.

Any young person who is interested in joining the Lerwick



On the bridge of the *Hjaltland* are (back, from left): chief officer Jami Toivonen, master David Wheeler, area commissioner Peter Davis, explorer scout leader Tommy Goudie. Front: explorer scouts Andrew Kelly, Laurence Goudie, Matthew Strmsek and Liam Drosso.

Photo: Garry Sandison

Sea Scouts (you do not have to live in Lerwick) or the *Hjaltland* Explorer Scouts should contact

Tommy Goudie on Lerwick 694506. Any adults who would be interested in volunteering to help

run and develop either of the above Scout sections should also give Tommy a call.

## Facts and figures about her

- Cost: £30 million.
- Built: Aker Finnyards, Rauma, Finland.
- Registered port: Lerwick.
- Length: 125 metres.
- Beam: 19.5m.
- Draught: 5.3m.
- Gross tonnage: 12,000.
- Max speed: 24 knots.
- Power: 4 x 5400kW MaK 6M43 main engines, generating 21,600kW at 500rpm.
- Auxillary power: 2 x 1520kW engine generator sets & 2 x shaft-driven generators.
- Propellers: 2 x controllable pitch.
- Accommodation: 50 two-bed outer cabins and 50 inside four-berth cabins (including four for disabled people).
- Construction materials: 3100 tonnes of steel, 270 kilometres of cabling and 54,000 litres of paint.



The new high-level covered walkway which will protect *Hjaltland*'s passengers from bad weather takes shape at the Holmsgarth terminal.

Photo: Keith Morrison



The *Hjaltland* puts on a turn of speed, heading south after her visit to Lerwick.

Photo: Kieran Murray