

Living and working as a GP on Westray

*Doctor Nora
and members
of the public
checking out
the new
SAS helicopter
July 2015*



Westray's community turbine



The Old Pier, Papa Westray

Welcome

Westray Community Council, on behalf of the Westray Community, are delighted that you are considering applying for the GP post in Westray and the neighbouring island of Papa Westray (Papay). This is a linked practice with one regular surgery in Papay each week. The likelihood is that you are already strongly attracted by the prospect of working in a beautiful and unique area of Scotland, within a working environment which offers the advantage of 'having time to do the job properly', as a previous incumbent put it.



The surgery, Trenabie House, highlighted.

Our 'Introductory' leaflet has been prepared with the intention of providing more detailed information about our particular islands, and about some of the additional attractions of living and working as part of our very dynamic and forward-looking communities. Included in our leaflet you will find information about aspects of life in Westray and Papay, including what we, as current residents, see as the significant strengths of our communities and the associated benefits for ourselves and our families. Our community websites complement the material in this leaflet and are well worth a visit.

Even if you do not have children of school age, you may be interested to see what a happy, caring and vibrant school we have here in Westray.

It is very important for us to recruit a skilled and committed practitioner who feels enthusiastic at the prospect of bringing his/her professional skills to these small, robust island communities.

We hope that you might be that person and that what you read in this leaflet might reinforce your interest.

Danny Marcus, Chair Westray Community Council

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Useful web sites

www.westraydevelopmenttrust.co.uk

www.westrayheritage.co.uk

www.westray-surgery.co.uk

www.westraypapawestray.co.uk

www.westraak.co.uk

www.pierowallhotel.co.uk

www.wheeling-steen.co.uk

www.humesweethume.co.uk

www.westrayartgallery.co.uk

www.chalmersquoywestray.co.uk

Working as a GP on Westray

The surgery is located at Trenabie House, a substantial building situated at Gill Pier in the north of the island, with fantastic views across the bay. Details of the surgery times and services offered can be seen on the surgery web site.

There is comfortable living accommodation at Trenabie House, although previous doctors have usually elected to purchase their own properties after taking advantage of the Health Board accommodation for an initial period.

There are many advantages associated with practicing medicine in Westray. The caseload allows 15 minute appointments as standard and the schedule of appointments mean that longer can be taken when necessary. This helps reduce repeat visits to address different problems that many patients endure in modern practice. Having adequate time also helps reduce doctor stress. We are usually able to offer same day appointments. Westray patients are genuinely appreciative of the service they receive. After a short time, one can put a face to most patient names and be familiar with their past and current medical situations, which is very rewarding.



View from the window in the flat at the surgery

The Surgery team comprises one full time GP, one holiday relief GP, 3 part time Community Nurses providing 24/7 cover, 2 administrators and 1 relief administrator.



The Golden Mariana on its way to Papay

The Westray GP also provides services to Papa Westray, visiting by ferry each Wednesday morning. Papa Westray has 2 Community Nurses who provide 24/7 cover for a week at a time. They contact the GP when advice and support is required. In an emergency the ferry can be used to take the GP to Papa Westray.

In November 2015 the surgeries of Westray and Papa Westray were merged with 4 other islands (Sanday, Stronsay, Eday and Hoy) to form the Orcades Practice. The merge was undertaken at the suggestion of the island practitioners to provide streamlining of administrative processes along with more efficient use of electronic and clinical systems. Instead of each island developing their own systems this can now be undertaken across the island practices. A Practice Manager based in Kirkwall, but who frequently visits the isles, has been appointed to co-ordinate the smooth running of the practice and to support the administrators and clinicians on the different isles.

The Orcades Practice is a further development of the Isles Network of Care (INOC) a system established in 2010 to provide greater support to the single-handed isles practices of Orkney. The practices meet for an hour each week using videoconferencing. The meetings discuss all emergency cases and admissions, along with other interesting cases, shared clinical guidelines or administrative issues. The sessions provide an excellent learning forum as well as a source of professional and personal support.

Availability of the internet has banished the professional isolation that island GPs experienced in the past, giving the practitioner ready access to remote learning as well as speedy second opinions. Learning opportunities are present locally, through Video Conference and courses run on Mainland Orkney.

Working as a GP on Westray

The sheer variety of the work is refreshing and stimulating. Chronic disease, mental health and social problems tend to form only a small part of the daily work and are complemented by general medical problems which one has the opportunity to take further than in city practice. Access to investigations and external advice is very good.

The range of the role is rewardingly extensive. For example, direct involvement in antenatal checks, dealing with children with minor problems and visiting the frail elderly in Kalisgath Care Centre help facilitate a holistic family orientated approach. More complex medical problems are often managed within the community and we enjoy excellent Consultant support from both the Balfour Hospital, Kirkwall and Aberdeen Royal Infirmary. This further helps increase the sense of job satisfaction.

The job in Westray offers the opportunity to be a GP in the full, perhaps more traditional, sense. There is ample opportunity to become involved in community events as well as representing and advocating for the community. There is a regular chance to convey health messages and news in the monthly island newsletter, while close liaison with the community school offers an opportunity to tackle child health issues in the school environment as well as in the home.

Westray residents seem to appreciate their good fortune in receiving the kind of attention and easily obtained appointments that this kind of working environment makes possible. Along with their courtesy and common sense, this appears to have the advantage of reducing the number of calls out of office hours. The out-of-hours' element is interesting but not high volume and it is extremely unusual to be contacted about issues that might be deemed trivial. We avoid NHS 24 deliberately as it seems to generate unnecessary contact and undermine patient empowerment.



It's unusual not to go home for lunch

The practice is well equipped, partly through the generosity of the island community.

Equipment includes:

- Electronic patient records using the Vision system with results and letters uploaded using Docman. There is also direct access to centralised results and letters held electronically between Aberdeen and Orkney which facilitates rapid access to information. X-rays can also be viewed from the surgery using the electronic PACS system.
- Large screen videoconferencing is used for the INOC meetings as well as educational and administrative meetings.
- Near patient blood tests for INR, d-dimer and ESR are available; otherwise blood samples are taken twice a week and flown into Kirkwall. Urgent blood samples can be sent in daily either by flight or ferry, when required.
- There is comprehensive emergency equipment – supplied by NHS Orkney, BASICS Scotland and some with the financial support of the island community. There is a retained ambulance crew and an ambulance which is used about twice a month for transporting patients to the airfield for urgent transfer. This is well equipped with stretchers, splints and monitoring.

The Westray GP is a busy, but intensely satisfying and rewarding job. As GPs we feel fully supported by the friendly, caring and progressive community of Westray and enjoy living and interacting with our patients on a daily basis. We are currently looking at a number of ways to increase the efficiency of the practice systems in order to create more time for rest and relaxation. Nora Ricketts has been the full time incumbent for the last 6 years and will be retiring at the beginning of May.



View of Pierowall from the West side approach

Nora says “I have particularly enjoyed this job after 20 years in a big town practice of 10,000 patients. The personal nature of every daily contact here, with both staff and public, is surprising at first, but you soon get used to calling yourself “Nora from the Surgery” instead of “Dr Ricketts.” I will continue to live in Westray with my husband Ian after I retire because we feel really at home here. The people are so friendly, there is always some event on, and everyone participates with things in a way I have never known before. The seafood and beaches here are absolutely amazing. I hope we will be able to wander on the beaches with our dog and grandchildren and cook fish or lobster over a fire, before watching the Northern Lights in the evenings! I just hope I don't miss the Surgery too much.”

Charlie Siderfin provides holiday and study leave cover for Nora and is also the Lead GP for Primary Care. He looks forward to coming out to Westray from Kirkwall for his 1-3 week sessions and members of his family enjoy coming out at weekends to visit, when home commitments allow. They have lived in Kirkwall for the last 15 years and prior to taking up this post he and family members usually came out to Westray to attend the annual regatta and bi-annual Bisgeos Run. He has an old wooden dinghy in the surgery garage as a restoration project which he looks forward to getting started on! Charlie will continue to provide leave cover after Nora retires.



Symbolic burning of a viking longship the evening after the Regatta

We both enjoy the unique challenges of providing comprehensive healthcare to an island community and feel privileged to be able to work in a traditional, rural GP role and being part of the community structure.

The generous two weeks paid study leave and the opportunity for additional paid work experience in an A&E department, hospital MOPD or mainland practice, is very effective in helping to meet educational needs and in maintaining professional skills related to the role in Westray.

There are 10 weeks of annual leave to help compensate for the 24/7 on call nature of the job; this also helps to make the overall package sustainable.

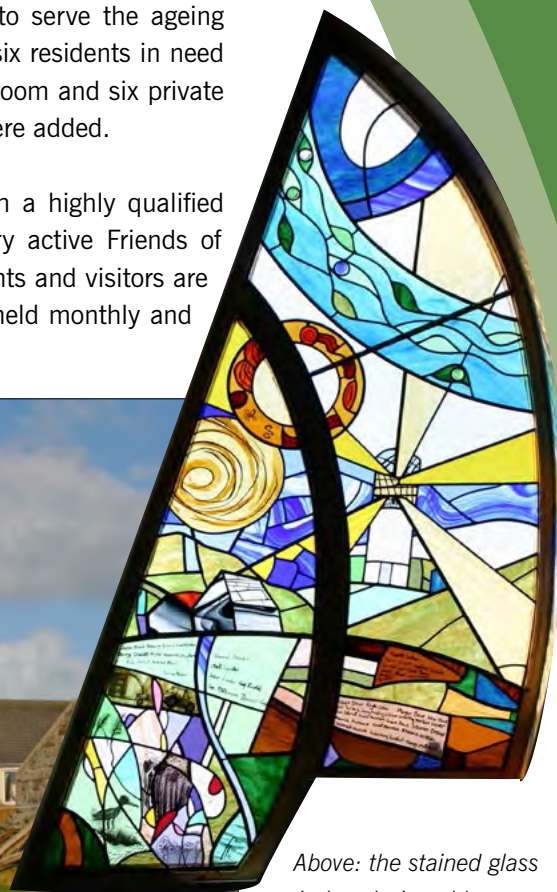
The level of paperwork and bureaucratic stress is much lower than in busy urban practices, while employed status and guaranteed income also contribute to stress reduction. The remuneration remains above national average for a full-time GP, reflecting the on-call commitment that comes with the job. The pay is linked to the national settlements for NHS employed staff – again differing from national GP trends.

Westray cares

Westray is one of the largest of Orkney's Outer North Isles. The island, nearly 12 miles long by a mile wide, is 80 minutes away from Kirkwall by ferry and has around 600 inhabitants.

Following the Westray Conference in 1998, the Westray Development Group (now Trust) was set up to look into the sustainability of the island. One of the main outcomes was the need for a care facility to serve the ageing population. As a result, Kalisgarth was built to house six residents in need of constant care. It has a kitchen, large lounge/dining room and six private rooms and in 2013 a further two separate buildings were added.

The facility is run by the Orkney Islands Council with a highly qualified Westray resident in overall day to day charge. A very active Friends of Kalisgarth group attends to the wellbeing of the residents and visitors are encouraged at all times. Evening church services are held monthly and are well attended by all faiths.



Above: the stained glass window designed by island youngsters.
Left: Kalisgarth
Below: wall panels designed by a young Kirkwall artist.



Island industries

Westray is known for its fishing, now mainly creel fishing for lobster and crab, which are landed at Gill Pier and processed at the crab processing factory, Westray Processors. This provides a good source of employment, and in addition there is now a large rapidly expanding salmon farm. Farming is one of the main industries, with top quality beef cattle being the primary occupation with sheep rearing coming a close second. Westray potatoes are known throughout Orkney for quality.



In addition to these typical Orkney industries, Westray also has many diverse occupations which include building, pottery, artists, writers and photographers, artisan chutney, and broadband ensures that IT services are well served and car repairs are in safe hands if you have a breakdown.

The hospitality industry is well supplied with hotel, hostel, self catering establishments and B&Bs. The Pierowall Hotel is open all year round and has staff available to serve lunchtime and evening meals, together with a take-out service for fish and chips. The hotel is situated next to the Heritage Centre.



Generally speaking there is no such thing as unemployment on the island, folk are either working or have retired to enjoy the peace and tranquillity the isle offers.



Westray Junior High School

Westray Junior High School caters for children from 3-16 years of age. All pupils follow the Scottish Curriculum for Excellence. Pupils start Nursery at 3 years of age, moving to Pre-school year the following year. We have 2 classes in the Primary Department: P1 - 3 for 5 - 7 year olds and P4-7 for 8 -11 year olds. Pupils from S1 - S3 (12 - 14 years) follow the Broad General Curriculum before entering their Senior Phase in S4, when they take their final qualifications which are called Nationals. Our senior pupils almost always achieve well above the Scottish National average.



We are well served with travelling teachers for specialist subjects such as Food Technology, Woodwork, P.E., Art and Music. We are very well supported by Fiddle and Woodwind instructors, There is a wide range of after school clubs, run by volunteers, which include football, rugby, and Run, Jump and Throw. There are also two very popular swim clubs in our adjoining swimming pool.

We were the second school in Orkney to achieve Fairtrade accreditation – Papa Westray was the first! We are also linked to Chitengu School in Malawi. Two pupils from Malawi have visited Westray, which was an enriching experience for both visitors and hosts alike.

We regularly fundraise in order to support Chitengu school. This includes paying for materials for new classroom. The most significant difference was the sinking of a borehole to provide clean, easily accessible water for the entire village. Pupils' enthusiasm for fundraising reflects the generous nature of the island.

We regularly take pupils to the Orkney Mainland for day trips, to visit places such as Skara Brae, Maeshowe, and the Italian Chapel, as well as taking part in the annual Orkney Science Festival in September each year. Senior Pupils undertake a variety of residential trips. We had a very successful and thought-provoking trip to Krakow in Poland in 2013.

We have Papa Westray as our feeder primary, with pupils travelling daily by boat once they start Secondary School. The P1-3 class visit Papay most years in June, to visit the Knap of Howar which is the oldest man-made building in NW Europe – older than the Pyramids! This is also the ideal time to get to know our friends at Papa Westray Primary, who will go on to become classmates in S1.



The school is very fortunate to receive additional funding from Westray Development Trust, which is really helping to enhance pupils' learning. This year it has allowed us to purchase our own Van De Graaf Machine, 4 Raspberry Pi computers as well as laptops and sewing machines.

An education at Westray Junior High ultimately prepares our pupils for life beyond school, whether that be in the world of work, Orkney College or Kirkwall Grammar School.

We are delighted that so many former pupils return to live and work on the island, helping make it a successful, go-ahead, thriving and enterprising place in which to live and bring up children.

Island living

Westray has an enthusiastic community, especially concerning sport which includes football, netball, rugby, badminton and the bi-annual Bisgeos run from Rapness in the south to the Bisgeos self-catering unit in the north. Out past the school and opposite Noltland Castle there is a superb 9-hole golf course which has been lovingly refurbished over the past five years and it is open to all who want to take in the glorious scenery on this links course.

Music plays a large part of the island culture, for instance the Westray Connections festival weekend which takes place biannually, drawing musicians here from all our islands and northern Scotland. The Westray Band is noted throughout the isles for its playing at functions like dances and weddings.



First Nation visitors from Canada giving a war dance demonstration.



Pierowall Fish, a local company that supplies fresh fish to all the islands, has a sister company Westray Chutney, here seen launching its new Fairtrade range of chutneys, sold throughout Scotland.

Natural history

Noup Head at the north-western corner of Westray in May or June is one of the most spectacular experiences in Orkney. The cliff ledges will be home to large numbers of seabirds including guillemots, puffins, kittiwakes and gannets; the air will be full of wheeling birds and a variety of raucous cries.

The island's western cliffs house the largest seabird colony in Orkney. On the maritime heath behind the cliffs will be breeding Skuas and Arctic Terns.

Seabirds are not the only wildlife to enjoy on Westray. The freshwater lochs and surrounding vegetation are home to a variety of waterfowl and waders whilst the island's beautiful beaches are great places to enjoy flocks of



Seals and pups at Wether Ness in October



Noup Head cliffs

sanderling, ringed plover and bar-tailed godwits. Many migrant birds pass through in spring and autumn; in recent years, these have included some real rarities such as red-flanked bluetail and Ross's gull.

Apart from the wonderful birdlife, animals to look out for include Seals, Otters and the Orkney Vole. On days when visibility is good and the sea calm, some very lucky folk will see porpoises, basking sharks and even killer whales. Rock pools are home to a range of creatures including starfish and hermit crabs whilst road verges and wet areas are worth examining for wild flowers like marsh marigold, ragged robin and northern marsh orchid.

Such natural riches, combined with stunning coastal scenery and minimal traffic, make Westray an ideal destination for the birdwatcher and wildlife enthusiast.

Heritage

Westray, known as the 'Queen o' the Isles', has a thriving community of 600. It has a vibrant charm and genuine island spirit. Westray also boasts a wide range of visitor attractions making it a popular year-round destination.

Thanks to its outward-looking attitude, Westray has a growing community with a new generation of islanders who have planned their future on this beautiful isle. Westray was firmly put on the map in the summer of 2009 when a tiny carved stone figurine – the Orkney Venus but locally called the Westray Wife – was discovered. It is the oldest representation of the human form to be found in Scotland. Found at the Links of Noltland, this huge archaeological dig is producing great interest throughout the world, bringing new visitors each year to experience the island's heritage.



Practicalities

Westray caters well for the needs of its inhabitants and visitors.

There are three well-stocked shops that supply all you could wish for on a daily basis, from fresh vegetables to frozen food, milk, daily bread from the island's bakery and two off-licenses. Fresh fish is available from Pierowall Fish, there are two post offices,

Orkney meat, Westray cheese and seasonal vegetables in all the shops and JACKS chip shop is open Wednesday and Saturday nights.

The Royal Bank of Scotland comes out weekly and is situated opposite the Gospel Hall in Pierowall village.



Fridays for sausage rolls



Wednesdays for Patties

Travel

Transport services between Westray and the Mainland of Orkney are very good. Orkney Ferries' Ro-Ro ferry makes two return trips a day during the winter timetable and three returns some days during the summer timetable between Kirkwall and Westray, and a single return trip on Sundays.

The island also has its own airfield with hard runway and the Loganair plane makes two return trips from Kirkwall each weekday, with one return trip on Saturday and on a Sunday. The journey by air takes approx 12 minutes and is usually much enjoyed by visitors.

The flight from Westray to Papa Westray is the shortest scheduled flight in the world taking less than 2 minutes. The flights from Westray regularly include the connection with Papa Westray on route to Kirkwall.

On both air and ferry fares, resident islanders benefit from favourable discounts.

Transport links between Orkney and the mainland of Scotland are also excellent.

Flybe flights operate daily between Kirkwall Airport and Scotland's main cities: twice daily to Edinburgh and Inverness, three to Aberdeen and daily to Glasgow.



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Pentland Ferries and NorthLink Ferries both run daily ferry services across to the north coast of Scotland. For those who prefer to cut down on driving time through Scotland, NorthLink Ferries operates an additional service with cabin accommodation on the Kirkwall - Aberdeen route.



All Orkney residents travel at discounted rates on both of these NorthLink Ferries' routes and an Air Discount Scheme has recently been introduced to provide residents with significant reductions on the cost of flights to Scottish mainland destinations.

Left to right: Offices of Cooke Aquaculture (farmed salmon), Westray Development Trust office and the Höfn, young peoples' drop-in centre and the building on the right is the fire station.

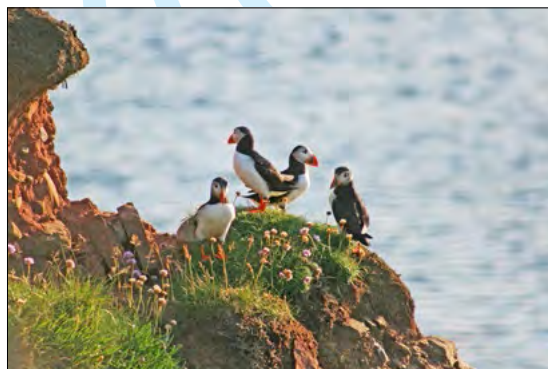


Westray, Queen o' the Isles, once visited, never forgotten. The islanders welcome newcomers, the scenery is spectacular and the facilities here are excellent.

Join our community, experience the fellowship and enjoy the homebakes with your cup of tea. It's the way we are, it's Westray.



The Castle o' Burrian rock stack, famous for its puffins.



Papa Westray

The practice also serves Westray's closest neighbour Papa Westray when the doctor travels over from Gill Pier to Papay on the Golden Mariana every Wednesday morning for his clinic.



*The Golden Mariana
ferry to Papa Westray*



JOCELYN RENDALL

The Knap of Howar



JOCELYN RENDALL

St Boniface Kirk

FOR MORE DETAILS PLEASE CONTACT

Dr Charlie Siderfin
Primary Care Lead GP and GP Associate Advisor
Primary Care Department
Balfour Hospital
Kirkwall
ORKNEY
KW15 1SU
01856 888009
MOBILE 07900405964