

A BRIEF HISTORY

Nestin & Girlsta Up-Helly-Aa

Nestin & Girlsta Up-Helly-Aa was conceived on New Years Day 1961. As the festivities drew to a close it was suggested that the partying could continue if Nesting had its own Up-Helly-Aa. No second invitation was needed and that very February, Tony Herculson became the first Guizer Jarl leading a squad of individual guizers.

Importantly Nestin & Girlsta Up-Helly-Aa has always been run our way and from the outset we have always had female guizers and female members on the Committee. In the early days however, it took a while for Up-Helly-Aa to catch on here. Through the late 1960s and early 1970s it was almost as common for Up-Helly-Aa *not* to take place as to actually go ahead. But 1975 saw a rekindling of interest, with John Read becoming the first Jarl from Girlsta. Since then we have never looked back. In 1976, Maurice Thomson's year was a year of firsts...The first Jarl from North Nesting.....The first year the North Nesting Hall was used....the first Galley to be purpose-made and burnt (Loki).... and the first year of proper suits. Pat Read from Girlsta took pity on the poor Jarl Squad and made them splendid red kirtles and black cloaks. These were re-used for the next few years until 1982 when John Peterson's squad was the first to produce custom made suits.

In 2011 Nestin & Girlsta Up-Helly-Aa celebrated its 50th birthday with an unusual event. **Tony Herculson** became Guizer Jarl for the 2nd time, leading a squad comprised solely of ex-Jarls.

In 2012 Up-Helly-Aa expanded when Whiteness & Weisdale joined the festivities with squads from the Westside. In 2014, the late Dean Gilfillan was the first Guizer Jarl from W&W. This change has been a great success as numbers have soared to a record high as this year we have 279 guizers and 19 squads, almost 5 times the size of the very first Up-Helly-Aa all those years ago. In 2016, Up-Helly-Aa broke new ground, **or water**, as Jarl Squad and guizers launched and burnt the galley, 'da Sneekan, in the sea.

1992 saw the first Programme written by Andy and Jennie Bradley who continued in the role for the next 25 years.