

The Orkney

Mini Guide

by Charles Tait



1st Edition

ISBN 9780951785xxx

The ORKNEY

Mini Guide by Charles Tait

The Orkney Mini Guide

1st Edition

Published by Charles Tait

Kelton, St Ola, Orkney KW15 1TR

Tel 01856 873738 Fax 01856 875313

charles.tait@zetnet.co.uk charles-tait.co.uk

This book is dedicated to my uncle,
John Mather Leonard (1912-2007)

Text, design and layout © copyright Charles Tait 2012

Photographs © copyright Charles Tait 1975-2012

Old Photographs from Charles Tait collection

Printing by Kine Italia, Italy

OS maps reproduced from Ordnance Survey mapping with permission
of the Controller of HMSO, © Crown Copyright Reserved 100035677

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be copied or reproduced in any form, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise (except for the purpose of bona fide review) without the prior written permission of the publisher. The author has asserted his right under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1998 to be identified as the author of this work.

CONTENTS

Welcome to Orkney	4
Kirkwall	10
Heart of Neolithic Orkney	20
West Mainland	30
East Mainland	38
Scapa Flow	44
South Isles, Hoy	48
North Isles	50
Getting Around in Orkney	90
Getting to Orkney	60
Local Services	62
Index	64

ISBN 9780951785xxx

1st Edition

WELCOME TO ORKNEY



Midsummer at Yesnaby, West Mainland

WELCOME TO ORKNEY, where is The rich archaeological heritage is one of the prime attractions, but the soft green and fertile landscape, beautiful beaches, spectacular cliffs, abundant wildlife and above all friendly people are equally important in making up "Orkney".

Midsummer dawn at the Ring of Brodgar



The archipelago lies just north of Mainland Scotland at around 59°N and comprises over 70 islands of which 17 or 18 are inhabited by about 21,000 people. The first written reference to the islands is by Pytheas the Greek in about 325BC, but they have been inhabited for at least 6,000 years. The timeline from prehistory through historical times to the 21st century is continuous, making the division between past and present at times hard to discern.

Attractions Perhaps most famous for its exceptionally well preserved Neolithic monuments, some of which now enjoy World Heritage status, Orkney has a wealth of visitor attractions. These range from archaeological sites, local museums, the Highland Park Distillery and St

WELCOME TO ORKNEY

Magnus Cathedral, to a diverse array of craft workshops and shops selling attractive local goods. Wildlife, especially birds, is another feature of Orkney not to be missed, whatever the season.

The Old Red Sandstone rocks result in a combination of fertile agricultural land, most of which is used to raise Orkney's renowned grass-fed beef cattle, moorland and spectacular coastal fringes, making it a haven for many species of birds in every season, while in spring and summer wild flowers are abundant.

The maritime climate combined with the relatively warm Atlantic Ocean, make the climate very equable, with snow and frost rare in winter. Equally, the temperature rarely exceeds 20° in summer. Situated at the meeting point of the North Sea and Atlantic Ocean the islands are surrounded by waters abundant in fish and shellfish, adding to the wide variety of locally produced quality foods.

Whether one arrives by air or sea at Kirkwall or by sea at Stromness, St Margaret's Hope or Burwick, Orkney presents a strong contrast to the Highlands. Both towns are dominated by their winding main streets and harbours, while Kirkwall also has the imposing 12th century St Magnus Cathedral.

Both towns have excellent shops, hotels and eating places, as well as interesting museums, and make good bases from



St Magnus Cathedral in Kirkwall

which to explore the rest of Orkney. Even on the shortest of visits there are several "must see" sites.

Suggested starting points are the Orkney Museum or the Highland Park Visitor Centre, with its excellent audiovisual, in Kirkwall. A tour of the West Mainland taking in Maeshowe, the Ring of Brodgar, the Standing Stones and Skara Brae is essential. If time permits there are many more places which can be visited in a day. These include Birsay, Stromness and the Italian Chapel.

Puffins and other seabirds come ashore to breed



WELCOME TO ORKNEY



Maeshowe winter sunset



Ring of Brodgar midsummer sunset



Ness of Brodgar

Skara Brae



Neolithic Orkney There is a wealth of Neolithic sites to visit, of which Maeshowe, the Standing Stones of Stenness, the Ring of Brodgar and Skara Brae are the most spectacular. Maeshowe is the largest and grandest of its type and dates from the third millennium BC, while the Standing Stones, Ness of Brodgar and the Ring of Brodgar were erected at about the same time.

All of these monuments are situated in the heart of the West Mainland, surrounded by farmland and near the lochs of Stenness and Harray, in turn ringed by heather-covered low hills. There is a timeless and spacious feel to this landscape as a result of the dramatic confluence of sky, water and land.

Skara Brae lies on the shore of the Bay of Skaill. Its well preserved 5,000 year old houses give a very good impression of life then. Together these and adjacent monuments form a the UNESCO World Heritage Site, "*The Heart of Neolithic Orkney*".

There are many other fascinating monuments and sites of interest ranging from the Neolithic to the 20th century which can be visited all over Orkney. Every parish and island has something different and special left by the people who inhabited the countryside during the last six millennia.

CULTURAL HERITAGE

Brochs Continuity of settlement is well demonstrated by the Broch of Gurness, one of the best examples of over 100 such structures in Orkney. It dates from the late Iron Age, the last centuries BC. The settlement was occupied for hundreds of years at least until early Norse times. Pictish houses can be viewed here.



Broch of Gurness

Picts and Vikings The Brough of Birsay is a tidal island off the northwest of the Mainland, the site of both Pictish and Viking settlements. These include Norse houses and a well preserved church. In the nearby village of The Palace, the ruins of the 16th century Earl's Palace provide a gaunt reminder of the more recent past, while St Magnus Kirk is built on the site of a much older church.



Brough of Birsay

St Magnus Cathedral The 12th century St Magnus Cathedral in Kirkwall was built by the Norse Earl, Rognvald Kolson, in honour of his murdered uncle, Earl Magnus Erlendson. It dominates the town, and its warm coloured Old Red Sandstone, makes the building especially attractive. The interior is particularly impressive and well proportioned.



St Magnus Cathedral

Italian Chapel



Italian Chapel During WWII Italian prisoners-of-war worked on the construction of the Churchill Barriers. During their time here, the prisoners built the Italian Chapel in their camp on Lamb Holm. This unusual and charming surviving artefact of war stands now as a symbol of hope and peace.

WELCOME TO ORKNEY



The Old Man of Hoy



Rough seas at Skipi Geo, Birsay



Grobust on Westray

Aikerness beach overlooks Eynhallow Sound



Natural Environment Orkney has a rich natural environment. The combination of fertile farmland with a great variety of other habitats makes it a very good place for wildlife, especially birds and wild flowers. There are cliffs, beaches, marshes, moors and maritime heath as well as sheltered bays, small islands and lochs, all of which attract a variety of different species, depending on the season and weather.

There are many wonderful opportunities for walking. Whether a stroll along a beach, or one of the many more adventurous walks, Orkney will never fail to please. The islands are also great for cycling, as the hills are not steep, and the side roads generally quiet.

The predominant colours are greens, blues and browns of grass, water, moor and sky. They vary with the season and are particularly vibrant in summer, but more muted in other seasons. Orkney is famous for its sunsets and its long hours of daylight in summer. Winter days are short, with long nights. The Aurora Borealis is occasionally seen, usually on a dark moonless winter nights. Skies are generally not polluted by light, so the stars and planets are easily observed.

The Orkney climate is much influenced by the sea, which varies in temperature by only a few degrees over the year. This ensures that winters are mild, but also that summers are never hot. The weather

NATURAL HERITAGE

is very variable, and it is possible to have every season in a day. This means there is really no "best" time to visit.

The combination of constantly changing weather and day length make for a huge variety of lighting conditions. This makes Orkney a paradise for artists, photographers and lovers of the landscape in all seasons. Just wait a few minutes and everything will be different.

During the summer many thousands of birds breed in Orkney. The cliff colonies of seabirds are especially impressive at Marwick Head in Birsay, and Noup Head on Westray. Both Grey and Common Seals, as well as Otters breed here, while cetaceans are sometimes seen offshore.

Maritime Heath is home to the diminutive *Primula scotica*, and is a favourite nesting site for Terns and Arctic Skuas. The Heather Moorland is home to Hen Harriers, Merlins and Short-eared Owls as well as many species of Waders. Waterfowl breed around the many lochs and marshes as well as, in some cases, near the shore.

Orkney is also a good place to see migrants and winter visitors such as Great Northern Divers, Long-tailed Ducks, Goldeneye, Iceland Gulls and other species. The Peedie Sea, harbours at Kirkwall and Stromness and the lochs are good places to look for these visitors.



Aurora Borealis from Wideford Hill in autumn



Midwinter sunset at the Loch of Stenness



Puffins are one of the many bird species

Orkney is home to Grey Seals



KIRKWALL



Crown copyright

Later, the town developed around the Cathedral, and became the administrative and commercial centre. Its access to the North Isles, central position and sheltered harbour in the then much bigger Peedie Sea made it an obvious location.

Today the winding main Street still follows the shape of the original settlement. Many of the fine old houses with end-on gables date from the 16th to 18th centuries. Narrow lanes run off the Street which has many attractive shops. At Broad Street it opens into the expanse of the grass covered Kirk Green in front of St Magnus Cathedral.

The harbour front is the scene of much activity with ferries, fishing boats and, in summer cruise ships. Over the last 200 years the pier has greatly expanded, it still retains much of its charm. The marina

KIRKWALL (ON *Kirkjuvagr*, Church Bay), as the main settlement in Orkney, is a good starting point for a visit to the islands. It is first mentioned in the *Orkneyinga Saga*. It was the dwelling place of Earl Rognvald Brusison about 1035, who built a church dedicated to King Olav of Norway there.

Kirkwall Harbour Basin



Albert Street and the "Big Tree"



KIRKJUVAGR



Kirkwall is dominated by the 12th century St Magnus Cathedral

is home to pleasure craft and is visited by many yachts in the summer. Occasionally one or more tall ships lends a taste of nostalgia to the scene.

Orkney Museum is housed in Tankerness House, parts of which date from the 15th century. This is an excellent starting

point from which to gain an insight into Orkney's rich past. Tankerness House Garden, behind the museum, is a pleasant place for a seat on a nice day. St Magnus Cathedral is across the road, and makes an suitable finale to a visit, with its peaceful interior.

Tankerness House is the home of the Orkney Museum



KIRKWALL

- St Magnus Cathedral
- Orkney Museum
- Earls' & Bishop's Palaces
- The Harbour
- Peedie Sea
- The Street - Old Buildings
- The Street - Shopping
- Highland Park Visitor Centre
- Wideford Hill
- Scapa Beach
- Eating Out
- Evening Entertainment
- Kirkwall Ba' Game

KIRKWALL



St Magnus Cathedral and the Bishop's Palace

Palaces The nearby Bishop's and Earl's Palaces date from Norse and Scottish times. The former was first built at the same time as the Cathedral, and was where King Haakon Haakonson died in 1263 after the "Battle" of Largs. The "Moosie Tower" was built during the 16th century.

The Earl's Palace was built by the notorious Earl Patrick Stewart in the early 17th century, but was only briefly occupied. It was roofless by 1750. Patrick was executed for treason in 1615 and so had little time to enjoy his palace, which has been described as a *Scottish Renaissance Masterpiece*.

Shopping The Kirkwall Street is a good place to seek out interesting souvenirs or presents, with its wide variety of quality shops. They stock knitwear,

The Earl's Palace was built about 1600



Bishop's Palace - "Moosie" Tower



KIRKJUVAGR

Orkney jewellery, local crafts and books, as well as many other home produced items. There is plenty of opportunity for retail therapy. In addition there is a good selection of Orkney food and drink products such as Highland Park and Scapa Malt Whisky, Orkney Herring, Orkney Cheese, fresh and smoked fish and shellfish of various kinds and of course the famous Orkney Beef.

Eating Out There is a wide choice of establishments around Kirkwall offering food and drink. These range from first class restaurants to chip shops and an excellent Indian. All offer local produce and friendly service.

Highland Park Visitor Centre on the southeastern edge of the town offers visits to the distillery. An interesting audiovisual introduction to Orkney and the making of Highland Park Malt Whisky precedes a guided tour. The shop stocks many items, mostly branded, as well as the full range of Highland Park Malt Whisky.

Wideford Hill is a fine vantage point from which to gain an overall impression of Orkney. Just to the west of Kirkwall on the Old Finstown Road, the summit (226m) can be reached by footpath or by road. From here there is a panoramic view of most of the North and South Isles, East and West Mainland and Scapa Flow. Scotland can be seen in the far distance to the south.



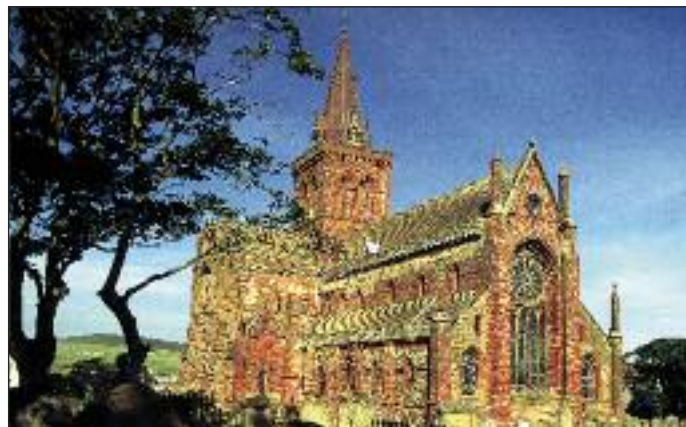
Kirkwall from Wideford Hill

Scapa Beach is about 2km (1.5mi) south of the town and makes a fine walk. There are expansive views over Scapa Flow from here. This is a good place for bird watching at all times of year, especially for waders and sea ducks. Scapa Distillery is on the west side of the bay and makes an excellent malt whisky.

Scapa Bay and Distillery



ST MAGNUS CATHEDRAL



St Magnus cathedral from the southeast

ST MAGNUS CATHEDRAL has dominated Kirkwall for over 875 years. It remains a symbol of the 600 year Norse rule and of the power and wealth of the Earldom. In 1103 the cousins Magnus Erlendson and Haakon Paulson succeeded to the Earldom. At first all went well, but by c.1117, disputes had arisen, and they met on Egilsay on 16th April. Each Earl was to take only two

St Magnus window



ships, but Haakon arrived with eight and in an uncompromising mood. Soon it was resolved to execute the rival Earl.

Lifolf, the cook, was ordered to kill Magnus, which he did by cleaving his skull. A cenotaph now stands on the spot where this act is said to have taken place. The roofless 12th century St Magnus Kirk on Egilsay is one of many churches named after the martyred Earl.

Magnus was buried at Christ's Church at Birsay, and soon prayers were being said to him, and miraculous cures were claimed to be taking place. Later, Earl Haakon made a pilgrimage to Rome, and on his return had the now ruined St Nicholas Round Church built at the Bu in Orphir, in about 1122.

KIRKJUVAGR

He was succeeded by his son Paul, who was deposed in 1135 by Magnus' nephew, Earl Rognvald Kolson. He had vowed to build "a stone minster at Kirkwall, and to dedicate it to Earl Magnus the Holy". On St Lucia's Day 1137 (13th December) he is said to have laid the foundation stone.

Much of the finance came from local farmers under pressure from the Earl. Durham masons were drafted in to supervise construction work. The church was consecrated about 1150 when Magnus' remains were transferred to a shrine in the east end of the building. This was in the apse, which was later extended to form the present St Rognvald's Chapel.

The choir and nave were lengthened, so that by the 14th century the Cathedral was more or less complete. Over the centuries it was allowed to fall into disrepair, but extensive restoration works have been carried out since the late 19th century.

St Magnus Cathedral is built from Old Red Sandstone, said to have been quarried at nearby Head of Holland, and also on Eday. It lends the slightly austere exterior a warm look. The interior of the Cathedral is about 69m long and 30m across the transepts, while only 5m separates the pillars in the nave. Despite this, the overall impression is of space and balance with the attractive colours of the stone giving a very welcoming feel.



The nave from the west door

The Cathedral belongs to the people of Kirkwall and Orkney, having been largely financed by them over the centuries. It is the principal venue of the annual St Magnus Festival, whose founders include the composer, Sir Peter Maxwell Davies, and the Stromness poet, George MacKay Brown.

Nave west window



HIGHLAND PARK DISTILLERY



The distinctive "pagoda-style" kilns make the Highland Park Distillery stand out in the landscape

Highland Park Distillery, the most northerly in Scotland, was founded in 1798, on the site of a house which belonged to Magnus Eunson, a smuggler and

illicit distiller, but also a Church Officer. On hearing that the Excisemen were after him, he removed all his casks from the kirk to his house, covered them with a coffin lid and a white cloth and called the congregation together around the whisky. When the customs arrived he was apparently conducting a funeral service, and a whispered "smallpox!" sent them off rapidly.

The site was chosen on account of the water supply which comes from springs in a small field called "Highland Park". It has been owned by several people, having been founded by a David Robertson. It was even owned by a minister of the United Presbyterian Church for a time! The Grant family of Elgin first became associated with the distillery in 1888, finally selling to the Highland Distilleries Co, in 1936, which in turn was taken over by the Edrington Group in 1999.

The Still Room



THE MOST NORTHERLY MALT WHISKY DISTILLERY

Making Highland Park Whisky takes water, barley, yeast, peat, sherry casks and lots of time. There are several stages:

Malting After steeping the barley in water, it is spread out on the malting floor and allowed to germinate.

The Kiln The malted barley is then placed in the kiln where it is dried over a peat fire. The peat smoke imparts a rich aroma to the malt, which then milled to form grist.

Tun Room The dried malt is mixed with hot water to form wort, then fermented by yeast in the mash tuns, and sampled at regular intervals.

Still Room When fermentation is complete the result is distilled twice in the familiar copper pot stills.

Bonded Warehouses The distillate is placed in sherry casks and laid down to mature for up to 25 years.

The Spirit Safe



Spreading the Barley on the Malting Floor



The Malt is Dried in the Kiln

One of the Bonded Warehouses



WEST MAINLAND



VisitOrkney

WEST MAINLAND The West Mainland includes “*The Heart of Neolithic Orkney*”, a designated UNESCO World Heritage Site, which includes Maeshowe, the Standing Stones of Stenness, the Ring of Brodgar, Skara Brae, and parts of the surrounding area. There is a strong argument for the whole of Orkney to be a World Heritage Site in view of its unique natural and cultural heritage, but for now the designation is

cultural only. The West Mainland encompasses the essence of the archipelago in a small and accessible area.

Apart from the Neolithic attractions, there are other many sites of interest. These include dramatic coastline such as at Yesnaby, Marwick Head and the Brough of Birsay as well as fine beaches like Warebeth, the Bay of Skaill, Birsay, Aikerness and Waulkmill.

THE HEART OF ORKNEY

For birdwatchers and botanists, the huge variety of habitats ensures a wide range of species to see at any season, while anglers have a choice of several lochs on which to try their skills and luck. Walkers will also find a diverse selection of interesting routes, coastal or inland, easy or more strenuous. There is much to do in the West Mainland.



The Castle of Yesnaby

Apart from the main archaeological sites, there are many others to visit. These include Neolithic chambered cairns at Bookan, Unstan, Cuween and Wideford Hill. The Broch of Gurness is the best preserved of many such Iron Age sites. There are Pictish and Norse ruins the Brough of Birsay, and a 16th century Earl's Palace in Palace Village.

The Farm Museums at Corrigall and Kirbuster, the Click Mill and Boardhouse or Barony Mill, all date from the 19th century. Skaill House, next to Skara Brae is a restored laird's home full of interesting artefacts.

Stromness has its internationally acclaimed Pier Arts Centre and a delightful small Museum, reached through narrow, winding streets. The sheltered harbour was called *Hamnavoe* by the Norse and is still home to much activity.

Orphir offers fine views over the great natural harbour of Scapa Flow, once home to the British Home Fleet, and last resting place of some the WWI German High seas Fleet. The St Nicholas Round Kirk is Norse, and was built by Earl Haakon in atonement for his murder of Earl, later to become St, Magnus.

WEST MAINLAND

World Heritage Site

Skara Brae, Ring of Brodgar, Ness of Brodgar, Barnhouse, Stones of Stenness, Maeshowe

Other Places to Visit

Brough of Birsay
Yesnaby and Marwick Head
Broch of Gurness
Skaill House
Farm Museums & Mills
Stromness
Orphir
Scapa Flow

SKARA BRAE



Hut 1 is open to the elements and can be studied in detail

SKARA BRAE The 5,000 year-old Neolithic village of Skara Brae was buried under sand dunes at the Bay of Skaill, in the West Mainland, until 1850, when it was revealed by a big storm. The

"The Street" is a subterranean passageway



houses are so intact that it is easy to imagine their inhabitants going about their lives. The site was occupied from about 3100BC to about 2600BC, and consists of at least six dwellings, all joined together by a "street" and buried in a mound of midden except for the free-standing "workshop".

The huts are well constructed with drains, (perhaps) damp-proof courses, stone dressers, beds, cupboards and tanks. There are even cells which might be toilets. All are quite similar in design and vary from about 6m x 6m to 4m x 4m. The roofs may have been supported by whalebone or driftwood rafters. They would have been covered with hides, turf and perhaps with straw or reed thatch, all held down with heather or straw ropes.

THE HEART OF NEOLITHIC ORKNEY

Hut 8 appears to have been the workshop, with evidence of stone working, and pottery making. "Grooved Ware" pottery was found along with bone and stone tools as well as jewellery made from bone and shells.

The people were stock farmers who reared cattle, sheep, some pigs and deer. They also fished in the sea, which would have been prolific with Cod, Haddock, Saithe and many species of shellfish. They also grew Bere Barley.

Due to the small amount of flint in Orkney, chert was used to make cutting tools. Bone was much utilised, but wood was not well preserved, though presumably it would also have been extensively used. Although no evidence of textile making was found, many possible leather working tools were found, suggesting that the people may have been quite well dressed, perhaps using skins and furs.

Skara Brae is contemporary with the other Orkney Neolithic monuments. It is so far the



Aerial view of Skara Brae

best preserved village to have been found and the only one which can be visited, apart from the houses at Knap of Howar on Papa Westray and the settlement at Barnhouse in Stenness. The fact that it is so impressively designed and built suggests that its inhabitants were well settled in Orkney and not newcomers.

Hut 7 is now covered over to preserve it



RING OF BRODGAR



Midsummer sunrise at the Ring of Brodgar

THE RING OF BRODGAR (ON *Bruar-gardr*, Bridge Farm) is situated on a peninsula between the Lochs of Harray and Stenness, in the heart of the West Mainland. This very fine stone circle originally comprised of 60 megaliths, of which 27 remain upright. It is a perfect circle, 103.7m in diameter and is surrounded by a rock-cut ditch 10m across and over 3m deep.

Dating from the same Neolithic period as Maeshowe and Skara Brae, the construction of the henge and ditch would have taken a lot of labour, implying an organised society with spare resources and some kind of strong beliefs. As with Maeshowe, the monument has been carefully situated, with clear views in all directions.

The monoliths resemble the uprights within Maeshowe in size and shape, ranging from about 2m to 4.5m in height, and often with angular faces or notches on one side. They are all aligned with their flat sides facing into the centre of the circle.

There is an outlying standing stone, the

The Ring of Brodgar on an autumn afternoon



THE HEART OF NEOLITHIC ORKNEY



Midsummer sunset at the Ring of Brodgar

Comet Stone, to the southeast, as well as several mounds nearby which could date from the Bronze Age. They may perhaps be points for viewing the variety of solar alignments relating to the solstices, equinoxes, Beltane and other dates which have been observed or suggested.

This may have been the intention of the designer or not, but will always remain enigmatic. Alignments with lunar phenomena have also been observed and suggested, particularly at the times of major lunar standstills, every 18.6 years.

Nowhere does the feeling of space, where water, land and sky all seem to merge feel stronger than at Brodgar. The constantly changing Orkney

light and weather mean that the site can be visited at any season or time of day and always look different. Although we know nothing about the beliefs of the Neolithic people who built the Ring of Brodgar it is clear that they were a highly motivated and imaginative society. Building such a monument took considerable architectural and engineering skill, besides the physical effort.

The moon hovering low over the Stenness Hills



THE NESS OF BRODGAR



Excavation work in progress

NESS OF BRODGAR is the narrow peninsula north of the bridge from which the area takes its name. In 1925 a stone decorated with Neolithic lozenges and chevrons was found in the area now being excavated, having been reused as the lid of a Bronze Age cist burial.

Discovery The site was revealed by geophysical surveys in 2003. After exploratory digging in 2004, excavations have been carried out here every year since then. So far only a small fraction of the buildings here have been investigated

Walling and paved area



Walls The site is bounded to the north and south by well built walls. The northern one was initially 4m wide, and up to 100m long. The walls were paved on the outside and must have been most impressive when built. Originally they could have been 3m or more high and enclosed an area roughly 125m by 75m.

The oldest radiocarbon dates found so far are from material under the southern wall and are from c.3200BC.

Buildings The largest building, structure 10, is 20m square with walls 5m thick. It is surrounded by paving and has stonework of remarkable quality. The cross shaped interior includes standing stones and in design is reminiscent of Maeshowe, with which the entrance seems to be aligned.

All of these buildings have side chambers built into the walls, central fireplaces and are aligned roughly north to south. Large quantities of *Grooved Ware* pottery and other artefacts have been found. In 2011 the "Brodgar Boy" clay figurine added to the growing finds of anthropomorphic artefacts in Orkney.

Painted Stones One of the most interesting finds was painted stones. Iron

THE HEART OF NEOLITHIC ORKNEY

based pigments mixed with animal fat or egg whites were used to create the yellow, red and brown coatings. Some have scratched designs obvious when new and which resemble other incised Neolithic artwork.

Flagstone Roofs These buildings may have been partly roofed by flagstone slates in a similar manner to traditional Orkney houses. A layer of large, worked, rectangular flagstones was discovered on the floor of two of the structures. These well formed "slates" had been skillfully trimmed.

Interiors Dressers and central hearths similar to those at Skara Brae were present, but the scale of the buildings and lack of evidence for long term occupation suggests that these were not houses for living in. More probably they were used for special occasions as has also been suggested for those at Barnhouse Village.

Abandonment The latest radiocarbon dates so far found are c.2300BC from cattle bones around structure 10. This was first built around 2600BC and involved much demolition and burial of earlier buildings. Development continued for about another 300 years, after which structure 10 was filled with midden and rubble. The cattle tibia, perhaps



The Ness of Brodgar lies between Harray and Stenness Lochs

represent feasting at the final closure of the site. Neolithic cultural activity continued for perhaps another 200 years, but on a minor scale.

Nick Card, Project Manager has said, "The discoveries are unparalleled in British prehistory, the complexity of finds is changing the whole vision of what the landscape was 5,000 years ago and that it's of a scale that almost relates to the classical period in the Mediterranean with walled enclosures and precincts. The site could be more important than Stonehenge."

Broken polished mace head



THE STANDING STONES OF STENNESS



The Standing Stones of Stenness on an autumn afternoon

THE STANDING STONES OF STENNESS originally comprised of a circle of perhaps 12 monoliths, surrounded by a ditch 2m deep, 7m wide and 44m in diameter. The tallest stone is over 5m high. In addition there is a hearth-like stone setting in the centre. The site dates from about 3000BC and is thus older than Maeshowe or Brodgar.

Socket holes for more stones or wooden uprights were also discovered within the circle and nearby, suggesting that the site was originally more complex.

The nearby Watchstone stands at the side of the Loch of Stenness. Observed from here some days before and after the winter solstice, the sun disappears behind the southern flank of the Ward Hill of Hoy, and then reappears momentarily on the north side, before finally setting.

There are several other standing stones in the vicinity, the Barnhouse Stone near the main road, and a pair of smaller monoliths on the north side of the Brodgar Bridge. In addition there used to be the Stone of Odin, which was destroyed in 1814. This stone was broken up and used to build a shed, but was a famous landmark. It had a hole through which lovers and others could hold hands and thus seal their vows. The *Oath of Odin* was binding on any contract, and also credited with healing powers.

The Watchstone at midwinter



Standing Stones midwinter sunset



BARNHOUSE VILLAGE

BARNHOUSE VILLAGE Nearby is the Neolithic Village of Barnhouse on the edge of the Loch of Harray. The bases of at least 15 free-standing houses are indicated here, each with a central hearth, and beds similar to those at Skara Brae. Two were bigger than the rest, the largest being 7m square internally with 3m thick walls.

At midsummer the setting sun shines directly down the entrance passage of one house.

These structures resemble some of the chambered cairns, especially Maeshowe. This may have been a meeting-place associated with events at the Standing Stones. Flint and other stone tools were found as well as *Grooved Ware* pottery, similar to that from Skara Brae, the Standing Stones and the Ness of Brodgar. There are strong similarities with the apparently slightly later struc-



One of the houses at Barnhouse Village

tures at the Ness of Brodgar, just over the bridge from here. Clearly much remains to be discovered about this fascinating area of Neolithic Orkney.



The Odinstone

Midsummer sunset at Barnhouse Village



The Barnhouse Stone



MAESHOWE



The winter solstice sunset shines down the passage at Maeshowe

MAESHOWE, or *Orkahaugr* in the *Orkneyinga Saga*, is one of the finest of all chambered cairns, of which there are many in Orkney. These tombs were built by Neolithic people from c.3200BC and

Runic graffiti on the inside of Maeshowe



were often used over a long period. Maeshowe dates from c.2700BC and is the largest and most splendid of its type.

The stonework is engineered with great skill, with massive stone slabs. The mound is carefully situated with the entrance passage aligned such that the setting sun illuminates the chamber for several weeks in the afternoon in midwinter.

Very few artefacts were found when the mound was cleared out in 1862, but the discovery of a large number of 12th century Norse runic inscriptions and other carvings somewhat mitigated this. These runes were carved about 1153 by Norsemen returning from the crusades and are of the form "*Ingibiorg, the fair widow...*" or "*Thorfinn carved these runes*".

The chamber is 4.5m square, similar to the smaller houses at Skara Brae, while the passage is 14.5m long and 1.4m high. It is lined with very large stone slabs, each of which weighs several tons. The three chambers are roofed with single huge flagstones. The mound is surrounded by a ditch dating from c.2750BC.

THE HEART OF NEOLITHIC ORKNEY

Maeshowe is very prominent in the Stenness landscape. The quality of its construction remains supremely impressive 5,000 years after it was built. It is highly doubtful whether the expertise to quarry, transport and assemble these massive flagstones exists today. Today's visitors can only marvel at the abilities of these Neolithic builders and wonder how they managed to do it all.

The other type of chambered cairn in Orkney is referred to as the Orkney-Cromarty group, which have upright "stalls", shelves at one or both ends and corbelled roofs. They may also have cells leading off the main chamber at floor level. Examples include Unstan in Stenness, the Tomb of the Eagles on South Ronaldsay as well as several on Rousay.

Excavation of a few of these cairns has yielded the remains of large numbers of people, and provided much information on lifestyle, life expectancy and diseases suffered as well as artefacts such as pottery and tools. Two types of pottery have been found - "*Grooved Ware*" and "*Unstan Ware*".

Some of the tombs seem to have been associated with a particular animal, such as



Interior of Maeshowe, with passage, a cell and massive stonework

Sea Eagles at the eponymous Tomb of the Eagles. The Neolithic people went to great lengths to provide "*houses for the dead*" and clearly their ancestors were very important to them. The cairns may well have been used for rituals as well as burials.

Whether Maeshowe was ever used as a tomb is unknown, but its ambience today is rather that of a "Neolithic Cathedral" than a burial chamber. The nearby Ness of Brodgar buildings are clearly associated in some ways yet to be discovered.

Maeshowe is a prominent mound



BIRSAY - THE BROUGH & MARWICK



VisitOrkney

outhouses, which can be clearly seen from the air.

Near the church lies an extensive area of buildings, complete with bath-house and under floor central heating. It is thought that Earl Thorfinn the Mighty's 11th century cathedral and palace were in the village, which is called "The Palace".

THE BROUGH OF BIRSAY is a tidal island off the northwest corner of the Mainland. There are remains of a large Viking settlement, which is underlain by Pictish buildings. Bronze casting was done here in Pictish times and a large symbol stone was also found.

Most of the ruins visible today are Viking, the small church is 12th century, but there may be an earlier Celtic one below it. On the slopes above the church are the outlines of several Norse long-houses up to 20m long, together with

Apart from the ancient monuments, the Brough has a lighthouse dating from 1925, and the whole area is a very pleasant place for a walk or to watch rough seas from the shelter of the car during a winter storm. It is also possible to see Puffins here during the breeding season.

The Earl's Palace at "The Palace" village was built by Earl Robert Stewart in the late 16th century and consists of four wings surrounding a large courtyard which has a well in the middle. It was

Earl's Palace, Birsay



Skipi Geo and the Whalebone



WEST MAINLAND

said to be "a sumptuous and stately mansion" in 1633. Stewart was a half-brother of Mary Queen of Scots.

The large exposed bay to the east of the Brough is Skipi Geo. There is a fine walk from the car park to the Whale Bone, from where there are spectacular views on rough days. In summer the whole area is awash with wild flowers, including Thrift, Spring Squill, Grass of Parnassus and Sea Plantain.

To the south the Birsay Links are a large area of sand dunes and machair. They are a sea of colour with wild flowers in summer. There are fine views over Birsay Bay from Garson, on the south side. A path leads all the way to Marwick Head from here.

Marwick Head (87m) lies about 4km (2.5mi) to the south of The Palace, and is an RSPB Reserve. In early summer it teems with breeding seabirds and is a very good place to view Guillemots, Razorbills, Fulmars, Kittiwakes, Rock Doves, Puffins, and even perhaps a Peregrine. The clifftops are carpeted by a profusion of Thrift, other wild flowers and yellow lichens in summer, which adds to the untamed wild beauty of the cliffs.



The Brough of Birsay from the northwest

The Old Red Sandstone rock has level beds and weathers into a myriad of small ledges which are ideal for nesting seabirds. There are also plentiful food supplies in the neighbouring waters.

The tower at the highest point of Marwick Head was erected after WW1 to commemorate the Minister of War, Kitchener, and the crew of *HMS Hampshire*, which was sunk by a German mine here in 1916. The cruiser was taking the Minister to Russia when the sinking happened. There were very few survivors.

Marwick Head with Kitchener Memorial



SANDWICK - SKAILL AND YESNABY



Skaill House faces the Bay of Skaill

Skaill House is situated near Skara Brae on the west coast of the Mainland. It is the only mansion house in Orkney open to the public as a museum and dates partly from the 17th century. In 1615 Bishop Graham 'acquired' a substantial amount of land from bishopric property and smallholdings, in the name of his eldest son, John, who became the first Laird. The oldest part was built by Bishop Graham in the 1620's and much of the house dates from the 18th century.

The tour is a good insight to the lives of the Lairds and their families, with connections to many historic events and

characters. These include some of Captain Cook's dinner service, a cupboard called the Armada Chest, with panels said to have come from a Spanish ship in 1588 and one of Bishop Graham's beds. The house is allegedly haunted, and during renovation work 15 skeletons were found, which are thought to be early Christian, perhaps Pictish.

There is a gift shop and the property is open from April to October. A visit makes an interesting contrast to Skara Brae. The present Laird, Major Malcolm Macrae, is the 12th and he has renovated the property as a museum.

Bay of Skaill Further south along the west coast of the Mainland lies the Bay of Skaill. The famous Neolithic village of Skara Brae is on the southwest shore. Skaill House is adjacent and shares ticketing with its more ancient neighbour. A stroll here is much recommended at any season, whether benign on a summer's day or wild in a winter storm.

Bishop Graham's bedroom and bed



The Bay of Skaill



WEST MAINLAND

Yesnaby During a storm huge waves crash into and over the cliffs here. The Castle of Yesnaby is a mini version of the Old Man of Hoy, which can be seen from here. The coastal scenery here is nature in the raw. Stromatolites, fossils which date from about 350 million years ago, may be seen here.

Yesnaby has many characters depending on the season, time of day and weather. On a gentle summer's evening it appears benign and welcoming. During a north-westerly force 12 gale with enormous seas breaking, the raw power of nature laid bare.

Wild Flowers This exposed place is one of the best places to see the rare endemic, *Primula scotica*. It flowers in May and July and can be spotted from the approach road. This hardy little plant only grows in Orkney and the north coast of



Yesnaby on a calm summer evening

Scotland. It has small magenta flowers. In summer Spring Squill, Thrift, Grass of Parnassus and Sea Plantain give the maritime heath a warm glow.



Coastal scenery at Yesnaby

Primula scotica at Yesnaby



Yesnaby Castle



BROCH OF GURNESS



Aerial view of the Broch of Gurness with village and broch tower

BROCHS (ON *Borg*, stronghold) are unique to Scotland and Orkney has about 100. They developed from roundhouses which first appeared around 700BC. Brochs typically have a large tower, up to 20m in diameter with hollow walls up to 5m thick at the base.

The walls have an internal staircase and the structures could be up to 15m tall. Most brochs are sited near the coast, but there a number in the West Mainland that are inland. Some are solitary, but others are surrounded by settlements.

Pictish houses at Gurness



Broch of Gurness Over 2,000 years after its construction, this broch at Aikerness remains imposing. The site, with its ramparts, ditches, broch tower and extensive surrounding settlement is an evocative place to visit. It was occupied from the Iron Age to Norse times.

The broch is surrounded by three massive ramparts and deep ditches, and may have had a tall tower. Inside there is a central hearth and an elaborate well with a collecting tank. The space between the broch and the defences encloses a small village which could have been occupied by 30 or so families. An imposing entrance leads via a small street to the broch doorway with its massive lintel.

The houses share walls and are furnished in stone with hearths, cooking tanks, drains, box beds, storage cupboards and even toilets. Unlike at other monuments,

Staircase inside the broch



IRON AGE ORKNEY

the visitor is free to wander at will and imagine life millenia ago.

During excavation many artefacts were found, including fragments of Roman amphorae from c.100AD, stone and bone tools, pottery and items with Pictish Ogam inscriptions. A 9th century Viking female burial with grave goods was present near the top of the mound.

Pictish Houses At Gurness are the only examples of shamrock-shaped multicellular Pictish houses currently on view in Orkney. These were rebuilt near the entrance as originally they were built into the broch mound. The small museum has a shop, and an excellent interpretation area.

Other Brochs Other excavated brochs to visit include Midhowe on Rousay, Burgin in Sandwick, Burrian on North



Broch of Gurness has an impressive tower

Ronaldsay and Burroughstone on Shapinsay. There are many more visible as mounds.

Earthhouses Another interesting development starting in about 600BC is the Earthhouse or souterrain. Typical examples at Rennibister in Firth and Grain near Kirkwall can be visited. These underground structures are thought to be cellars from long-gone roundhouses. They were probably used for storage, and any resemblance to chambered cairns is most likely superficial.

Earthhouse at Rennibister



Norse oval brooch from Gurness



STROMNESS



Crown copyright

Street The winding, flagstone-paved street is the backbone of the town. Many of the houses on the shore side have their own piers, while the houses higher up are reached by a multitude of narrow lanes. The lack of space for new development in the town has preserved its attractive character, with the industrial area being situated on the outskirts.

The intimate nature of the town makes Stromness popular with visitors and several events take place here including Orkney Traditional Folk Festival, Stromness Shopping Week and a Beer Festival.

Museum Stromness Museum has a fascinating series of displays on mostly maritime and natural history themes. These include the Hudson's Bay Company connection, and the scuttle of the WW1 German High Seas Fleet. There are also extensive exhibits of Orkney birds, mammals, molluscs and insects.

Pier Arts Centre Also well worth a visit is the Pier Arts Centre with its permanent collection of 20th century art and

STROMNESS (ON *Straum-nēs*, Stream Point) was also called *Hamnavoe* (Harbour Bay) by the Vikings. This excellent harbour is the ferry terminal for the crossing to Scrabster in Caithness. There are also many small fishing boats and dive boats which work from here.

The town dates from the 17th century and for many years supplied water, stores and crewmen to ships taking the northern route around Britain as well as ships of the Hudson's Bay Company and whalers. During the Herring Boom in the late 19th and early 20th centuries it was also very busy.

Victoria Street



Pier Arts Centre



HAMNAVOE



The view of Stromness from the ferry is one of Orkney's iconic scenes

temporary exhibitions. This attractive old building was once the agency and store for the Hudson's Bay Company and is built on a pier near the ferry terminal. It has recently been refurbished and extended to accommodate a greater variety of work.

Shopping There are many interesting shops in Stromness, offering a range of local crafts, knitwear, books and art, as well as several grocers and hardware shops. Parking is not very practical in the narrow street but there are plenty of spaces on the approach road.

Ness Battery was an important part of the defence of Scapa Flow in both World Wars. The WWII structures are largely intact and include 6in gun houses, the battery observation post, magazines, generator houses and accommodation.

Activities Apart from the timeless attraction of watching boats and people around the harbour, Stromness has a golf course and a variety of fine walks. There is an excellent panoramic view from Brinkie's Brae (94m) above the town. The beach of Warebeth lies to the west and offers fine views of the Hoy Hills and Hoy Sound.

Small boats in the harbour



Hoy Hills and Hoy Sound from Warebeth



EAST MAINLAND



VisitOrkney

The only ancient monument open to the visitor is Minehowe. This enigmatic, well-like Iron Age structure has 29 stone steps which descend in two flights to a small chamber. Minehowe is a small part of a large unexplored prehistoric landscape.

EAST MAINLAND The parishes of Tankerness, Holm and Deerness have much to offer the visitor, having a charm all of their own and being like a separate island in many ways. The area is generally low lying and mostly farmland, but all the same has much of interest to see and do. This includes many fine beaches, some spectacular cliffs and good walking.

Archaeology There is ample evidence of early occupation in the form of burnt mounds and brochs, most notably Dingieshowe on the Deerness isthmus.

The Brough of Deerness



Rerwick Head is the most northeasterly point of Tankerness. In both World Wars there were gun batteries on this headland, which may still be seen. There are fine coastal walks from here, southwards along the low cliffs to the Ness and Hall of Tankerness, or eastwards to the fine beaches at Heatherhouse and Redbanks.

Mull Head in Deerness is a Nature Reserve with indicated paths. Near the entrance the Gloop is a large partially collapsed cave, a deep chasm which can be observed with care from a gallery. The low cliffs at Mull Head are a good place to see seabirds and seals. There is a fine circular walk around the headland.

Brough of Deerness On the east side of Mull Head, about 1km north of the carpark, stands the promontory of the Brough of Deerness. There is a small chapel and a scatter of foundations of buildings. All are Norse, but Pictish people were probably here in earlier times.

TANKERNESS, DEERNES & HOLM

Copinsay is a small island and RSPB Reserve off the southeast of Deerness. It has a large seabird colony in summer on its east facing cliffs. Many Grey Seals also pup here in autumn. It is hard to reach, but well worth the effort if a boat can be procured.



The Mull Head

Holm The pretty village of St Mary's in Holm overlooks Holm Sound, through which *U47* sailed in 1939 on its way to sink *HMS Royal Oak*. There is a good view of the sound and the Churchill Barriers from the hill east of the village.

The fertile area in the south east corner is known as Paplay, where the Vikings found a large monastic settlement. No archaeological remains have been excavated from this time here, but a high status Pictish, and later, Viking, farmstead at Skail in Deerness was examined some time ago.

Dingieshowe has a lovely beach



Beaches In Deerness, Sandside, Newark and Dingieshowe are all very fine beaches for a walk or picnic. There are several attractive small beaches in Tankerness. In Holm, Wester Sand and Howes Wick, near the Old Kirk, are pleasant.

Wildlife There are many good birding sites here including the flat muddy shores at Mill Sands and St Peter's Pool, in Tankerness. St Mary's and Graemeshall Lochs in Holm, as well as the Loch of Tankerness should be checked. In Deerness the Mull Head is home to breeding seabirds and moorland species.

EAST MAINLAND

Rerwick Head
St Peter's Pool & Dingieshowe
Newark Bay, Sandside & The Gloop
Mull Head & Brough of Deerness
Copinsay
St Mary's & Paplay & Holm Sound

ITALIAN CHAPEL



The Italian Chapel on Lamb Holm

ITALIAN CHAPEL "*The Miracle of Camp 60*" was built by Italian prisoners of war of Camp 60, who arrived from Libya in January 1942 to help build the Churchill Barriers. It is an unusual survivor and memorial to the Second World War.

To brighten up the cheerless camp of Nissen huts the Italians made paths and planted flowerbeds. Artist, Domenico Chiocchetti made the St George and the Dragon statue from barbed wire and cement, to preside over the camp square.

The Italian Chapel and Barrier #1



lined with plasterboard and an altar with the rail cast in concrete.

Chiocchetti painted the Madonna and Child behind the altar. The image is based on a 19th century painting by Nicolo Barabino from a card his mother had given to him when he left for the war. He also frescoed a White Dove, the symbol of the Holy Spirit, at the centre of the vault and included the symbols of the four Evangelists around it, as well as two Cherubim and two Seraphim lower down.

The upper parts of the interior appear like brick with vaulting, while the lower walls are painted to look like carved marble. The "vaults" in the ceiling are especially well executed. Palumbo, a metalworker, made candelabra and the rood screen and gates. A façade was erected with the help of Bruttapasta, with an archway and pillars.

The prisoners soon had a theatre and a recreational hut complete with a concrete billiard table, but they lacked a chapel.

In late 1943 two Nissen huts were joined end to end and Chiocchetti set to work, aided by a small number of other POWs. One end was to be the Chapel, the other a school. The hut was

A belfry was mounted on top and a moulded head of Christ in red clay was placed on the front of the arch. The whole exterior of the hut was then covered with a thick coat of cement, never in short supply during the building of the Barriers!

Chiocchetti returned to Orkney in 1960, when he did much to restore the internal paintwork of the chapel. In 1961 his hometown, Moena, near Bolzano in the Dolomites, gifted a way-side shrine, the carved figure of Christ erected outside the Chapel, to the people of Orkney. More recently much work has been done to restore and preserve the Chapel, the memorial statue and surroundings for the future.

The Italian Chapel is now one of the most visited monuments in Orkney and is a fitting memorial to those lost in wartime. Chiocchetti, in addressing the Orcadian people, said, "*The chapel is yours, for you to love and preserve. I take with me to Italy the remembrance of your kindness and wonderful hospitality. I shall remember you always, and my children shall learn from me to love you. I thank (you)....for having given me the joy of seeing again the little chapel of Lamb Holm where I, in leaving, leave a part of my heart.*"

OVER THE BARRIERS



The interior is beautifully painted

It is somewhat ironic that most of the many visitors to Orkney cross the Churchill Barriers to see the Italian Chapel. They come not to remember the British war leader, or to marvel at military engineering, but to visit our little Italian shrine, which is a monument to hope and faith in exile. It is now over 70 years ago that the Italian prisoners of war from the Libyan desert arrived on a chilly Lamb Holm, but their chapel offers a warm welcome, and is an enduring symbol of faith and hope.

St George and the Dragon in the camp square



SOUTH RONALDSAY AND BURRAY



VisitOrkney

for wildfowl at all times of year. Many overwintering bird species can also be seen from the Barriers.

Orkney Fossil and Heritage Centre has displays of Orkney's geology, as well as relics of bye-gone days. There is a gift shop and tea room which is open from April to October.

South Ronaldsay (ON *Rognvald's-ey*) has a special charm. The small village of St Margaret's Hope dates from the 17th and 18th centuries. "Hope" comes from ON *Hjop* (Bay), and not the English word "hope". The village has the Old Smiddy Museum, several interesting shops, craft workshops and the Creel Restaurant.

Boys' Ploughing Match This event is held at Sand o' Wright each August. Girls dress up as horses and boys as ploughmen, before being judged as at a real horse event. Later, rigs are worked in the sand using ploughs which have often been handed down over generations.

Hoxa Tapestry Gallery Here Leila Thomson weaves wonderful tapestries "inspired by the life and landscape of Orkney."



OVER THE BARRIERS

The Tomb of the Eagles is to the south, near Burwick. This chambered cairn strongly resembles Unstan Cairn in Stenness. The remains of about 340 individuals were found. Of particular interest was the discovery of skeletons and talons of Sea Eagles, hence the name.



The cairn was built c.3150BC and used for c.800 years. Over 40 broken *Unstan Ware* pots were found, as well as fish and animal bones and charred barley. Carved stone objects and rougher stone tools are on display along with some of the skulls in the museum where they can be examined closely. The human remains have revealed much about the people's lives.

The nearby Liddle Burnt Mound dates from the Bronze Age, from perhaps 1000BC. It has a central trough which was used to cook joints of meat by throwing in stones heated in a fire - hence the mound of burnt stones.

Hut 7 is now covered over to preserve it

Ferries John o'Groats Ferries runs a passenger service in the summer between John o'Groats in Caithness and Burwick in around 45 minutes. Pentland Ferries also operate a daily year round ro-ro catamaran ferry between Gills Bay in Caithness and St. Margaret's Hope.

Hut 7 is now covered over to preserve it



SCAPA FLOW



VisitOrkney

were put in place to make the fleet safe in its anchorage. Early experiments with shipborne aircraft were carried out here for the first time.

Scuttle of German Fleet The harbour saw dramatic actions in both wars. After WW1, 74 vessels of the German High Seas Fleet were interned here, and on 21st

June 1919 they were scuttled. Some were beached, but most sank. The majority were salvaged during the 1920s and 1930s, but three battleships and four cruisers remain and are much visited by scuba divers today.

WWII At the start of the Second World War, Scapa Flow had a few gun emplacements left over from the previous conflict. It was soon realised that extensive defences would be required to render Scapa Flow secure from German attack.

SCAPA FLOW was used as the main base of the British Home Fleet in both WW1 and WW2 due to it being a large land-locked harbour with deep entrances and deep water anchorages. In both wars it took some time to make it secure.

WWI Early in the First World War, Scapa Flow was selected as the main base for the British Home Fleet. In 1914 it had no defences in place, but by 1918 it was very heavily defended. Coastal batteries, boom defence nets, controlled minefields and many other measures

German High Seas Fleet in Scapa Flow in late 1918



MAJOR NAVAL BASE IN WWI AND WWII

HMS Royal Oak In 1939 the German U-boat U47 crept into Scapa Flow through Holm Sound and torpedoed HMS *Royal Oak*, with the loss of 833 crew. This was to result in the construction of the Churchill Barriers and a huge increase in the defences in general.

The wreck of HMS *Royal Oak* was leaking considerable quantities of fuel oil and became a pollution threat. As a result the Royal Navy has removed much of the oil fuel that remained aboard.

Churchill Barriers Greatly increased defences were ordered to be built by Churchill in 1940 after the sinking of HMS *Royal Oak* to seal off the eastern approaches to Scapa Flow. The firm of Balfour Beatty was appointed as contractors. To solve the labour shortage, several



Aerial view of the Churchill Barriers from the north

hundred Italian prisoners of war were drafted in from Libya early in 1942 to assist in the work.

Camps and works were set up in the East Mainland as well as on Lamb Holm, Glimps Holm and Burray. Nearly 1 million cubic metres of rock in wire bolsters was used to complete the four Barriers, and by late 1942 they were breaking the surface. Over 50,000 5 and 10-ton concrete blocks were then used to clad the sides.

HMS "Royal Oak"



Holm Coastal Defence Battery



SCAPA FLOW



Scapa Flow Visitor Centre at Lyness

WWII defences Up to 40,000 men were based in Orkney at the peak of activity in WWII, and once secured maximum advantage was taken of the strategically important position of Scapa Flow. Much evidence still remains of the defences, including coastal batteries, searchlight emplacements, old airfields, and parts of the naval base at Lyness on Hoy.

During WWII, aircraft carriers were very important and Orkney served as base for repairs and training for many of

HMS "Victorious"



North Sea Oil In the 1970s oil was first exploited in the North Sea, and the Flotta Oil Terminal continues to process

Ness Coastal Defence Battery, Stromness



their aircraft. The action where *Bismarck* was sunk succeeded due to the seemingly archaic Fairey *Swordfish* torpedo bombers which doggedly searched out the battleship and, despite their apparent frailty, damaged the ship's rudder.

Scapa Flow Visitor Centre, based in the old pumphouse at Lyness, is

a museum and interpretation centre about the wartime history Scapa Flow. Lyness was a massive naval base in both World Wars. During WWII large oil tanks were built into Wee Fea, the hill above the harbour. Many artefacts are on display from both wars, ranging from large guns to small items. The remaining large oil tank is also used for exhibits.

and export large quantities of crude. Tankers remain a common sight in Scapa Flow. In addition vessels doing ship to ship transfers or undergoing maintenance often call.

Wildlife Scapa Flow is winter home to many birds which breed in the Arctic, including Great Northern Divers and Long-tailed Ducks. The Churchill Barriers are a good place to look for these species. In summer many Terns, Eiders, Red-breasted Mergansers and other seabirds nest around the shores.

It is occasionally visited by pods of young Sperm Whales and various species of dolphins, including Killer Whales and Porpoises. The shores are home to the elusive Otter, while Common and Grey Seals both breed in the area.

Transport Link Today the Barriers provide Orkney's only fixed transport links between the Mainland and other islands. Large sandy beaches have built up in Weddel and Water Sound on the east

Diving in Scapa Flow



MAJOR NAVAL BASE IN WWI AND WWII



Swordfish aircraft at Hatston

sides of Barriers #3 and #4. The blockage of the channels has also greatly affected the distribution of sand all around Orkney beaches.

The Churchill Barriers are often subject to adverse weather conditions. During storms waves can make crossing dangerous, particularly at high spring tides with a storm surge. Most visitors, however, will only see Scapa Flow in beautiful, benign and colourful summer weather.

Flotta Oil Terminal



Hoy



VisitOrkney

famous rock stack, the Old Man of Hoy (137m), which stands on a lava platform. The ferry passes the Hoy cliffs on its way across the Pentland Firth, allowing a stunning view of the noble stack.

Rackwick The wide sweep of Rackwick, on the north west side with a sand and boulder beach bounded on both sides by high cliffs, is well

appreciated from the path to the Old Man. This offers good views across the Pentland Firth to Scotland. Rackwick has a beauty and climate all of its own, beware the midgies but admire the dragonflies and wild flowers.

St John's Head The imposing crags at St John's Head (351m) are the highest vertical sea cliffs in Britain. The horizontal beds of sandstone have weathered to give dramatic reds and yellows, which are especially vibrant with a low evening sun.

Dwarfie Stone Below the Ward Hill, on the road to Rackwick, lies the enigmatic Dwarfie Stone with its hand carved chamber. This may be Neolithic, but is unique as the only such tomb in the UK. It must have taken a lot of work to excavate the cavity.

HOY (ON *Ha-ey*, High Island) is the second largest of the Orkney Islands and different in character from the others. The north end is hilly with the Ward Hill (479m) and Cuilags (433m) being prominent landmarks from many parts of Orkney. Much of the north end of Hoy is an RSPB Reserve.

Old Man of Hoy The north and west coasts have spectacular cliffs, only the south end being low and fertile. One of Orkney's most well-known icons is the

Rackwick



THE HIGH ISLAND

Scapa Flow Visitor Centre is in what was the pumphouse serving the Royal Navy fuel oil tanks during WWII. One of the oil tanks has also been retained and contains displays of military equipment and artefacts. Inside the pumphouse the machinery has been renovated and there are displays of small artefacts, photographs and documents relating to the two World Wars. Outside several WWI German guns, railway stock used in WWII and a propeller off HMS Hampshire can be seen.

Longhope Lifeboat Station at Brims is a museum whose main exhibit is the lifeboat which served here from 1933 to 1962, the *Thomas McCunn*. Since being established in 1874, many successful rescues were undertaken from here. Perhaps the late coxswain Dan Kirkpatrick was the most deserving of fame. It was from here that he and his crew left in the lifeboat TGB to aid a Liberian freighter, Irene, in March 1969. Sadly all were lost in tumultuous seas in the Pentland Firth. A bronze statue in Osmondwall Cemetery honours the TGB crew.

Longhope Harbour



The Old Man of Hoy

Martello Tower & Battery at Hackness, one of two Scotland. It was built during the early 19th century Napoleonic Wars to protect shipping from American privateers. Convoys were introduced at that time to guard merchant vessels from attack, and Longhope was a rendezvous.

The tower had a 24-pounder gun mounted on top, while the battery had eight 24-pounder guns, with barracks, stores and a magazine. The site has been extensively renovated inside and out.

Martello Tower gun



ROUSAY



VisitOrkney

hammar and Yarso. Both are of the "stalled" type and are divided up by upright slabs as in a byre.

Blackhammar contained only two burials and a broken *Unstan Ware* bowl, while Yarso had remains of at least 21 people. In both cases flint and bone tools were found as well as deer bones at Yarso.

Midhowe stalled cairn is the largest intact chambered cairn in Orkney. The chamber measures 23 by 4m and is divided by 12 pairs of "stalls". About 25 bodies had been laid in a crouched position on or under shelves between the stalls. The outside walls are carefully built with stones set at angles, similar to the designs on *Unstan Ware* pottery.

Westness Walk Midhowe forms part of the Westness Walk, which also takes in the Midhowe Broch, whose walls still reach 4.3m in height. This Iron Age building was occupied from about 200BC to 200AD. Finds included some Roman artefacts, as well as pottery and a bronze ladle. There was evidence of

ROUSAY (ON *Hrolfs-ey*, Rolf's Island) has been called "*The Egypt of the North*" due to its concentration of prehistoric tombs and other monuments. This round, hilly island has a road around the coast and makes a pleasant excursion from the Mainland via the roro ferry from Tingwall in Rendall.

Chambered Cairns Near the pier is the unusual two tiered chambered cairn of Taversoe Tuick. This unique little tomb also has two entrances. Further west are two more chambered cairns at Black-

Trumland Farm and House



Wyre and Gairsay from Rousay



THE EGYPT OF THE NORTH

metal working including crucibles, moulds and jewellery.

The site of a Pictish and Viking cemetery lies at Moaness near Westness Farm. Brooches, pins, tools and weapons were found, including an elaborate Celtic brooch pin. Boat graves had the remains of two men buried with their weapons, one had four arrowheads in his body.

There is another broch above the Bay of Swandro. The ruins of a Norse Farm are adjacent to this, and nearby, on Moaness, there is a Norse boat shed and slipway. Skaill is an 18th century farm whose tenants were evicted by General Burroughs in the 19th century. St Mary's Kirk is the former Rousay parish church. Westness was the most important part of Rousay for thousands of years, with continuous settlement since Neolithic times to the present.



Midhowe Broch overlooks Eynhallow Sound

RSPB Reserve The moorland Trumland RSPB Reserve near the pier is a good place to see Hen Harriers, Merlin, Peregrine and Red-throated Divers, while the rare *Primula scotica* may be found on the maritime heath of the west coast.

EGILSAY was the location of the martyrdom of Earl Magnus. It is the site of the fine 12th century St Magnus Kirk with its tall round tower. A cenotaph marks the place where the saint is said to have been killed at Easter c.1117.

Midhowe stalled cairn



St Magnus Kirk, Egilsay



WESTRAY



VisitOrkney

WESTRAY (ON *Vestr-ey*, West Isle), often referred to as “*The Queen of the Isles*”, is the second largest of the North Isles, and in many ways could be described as “*Orkney in miniature*”. The island has dramatic cliffs, good beaches, several ancient sites, and is the best place in Orkney to see Puffins easily. There are daily ferry and air services.

Pierowall The village is situated at the head of a sheltered bay in the northeast of the island. This excellent harbour was doubtless the reason for its early settle-

ment. Pictish and Norse graves have been found in the vicinity as well as Neolithic and Bronze Age remains.

Archaeology A large Neolithic farmhouse with many associated field dykes has been excavated near Grobust beach. The “*Westray Wife*”, a tiny stone human female figurine, was found at this site, along with many other artefacts. These include pottery, tools and large numbers of cattle bones. These sites were occupied from c.3000-2000BC.

Quoygrew, on the north side of Rackwick, was partially occupied until 1937. Around AD1000 a building was erected near the shore. Extended many times over the years. This Norse house can now be examined by visitors.

Westray Heritage Centre now prominently hosts the Pierowall Stone as well as other artefacts from recent excavations. Displays are changed annually, but the concentration on nature and the environment continues. There are excellent hands on things for children and their

Westray landscape



Noup Head



PAPA WESTRAY

parents. The large skeleton of a Sperm Whale lies in the garden.

Noltland Castle The gaunt unfinished shell of 16th Noltland Castle overlooks the village. It was commenced about 1560 by Gilbert Balfour, but never finished. There are fine views from the upper storey. With its many gunloops it has been compared to a ship of the line.

The great hall is spacious, as are the upstairs apartments. However the cavernous kitchen cannot have been very salubrious. The Castle may have been partially habitable as late as 1761.

Noup Head The landscape more than makes up for lack of ancient sites on display for visitors. The dramatic cliffs at Noup Head are an RSPB Reserve, which is second in numbers of breeding seabirds only to St Kilda. A substantial colony of Gannets is now established.

Puffins In the south the Castle of Burrian and surrounding low cliffs near Rapness Mill is the easiest place to see Puffins in Orkney. During the breeding season this rock stack and the low cliffs in the area are home to many of the cheeky little birds. It is possible to closely observe the Puffins here without disturbance as they pay scant attention to humans.

PAPAY or **PAPA WESTRAY** (ON *Papey hin Meiri*, Big Isle of the Papae), takes its name from the Celtic clergy who were there before the Vikings. This small island lies just east of Westray, across the shallow Papa Sound.

Knap of Howar is the oldest known stone built house in Orkney and, like Skara Brae, it was revealed after a severe storm. The walls of the dwellings still stand to a height of 1.6m, and the stone interiors are remarkably intact.

Large numbers of artefacts including *Unstan Ware* pottery was found, along with bone, flint and stone tools. Bones of domestic animals, fish, seals and birds, including Great Auk were abundant as well as mollusc shells. The earliest dates were from c.3600BC, 500 years before Skara Brae, and the latest c.3100BC.

St Boniface Church dates from the 12th century and is still in use today. The interesting grave yard has an 11th century hog backed gravestone which has been dubiously linked to the burial of Earl.

The Knap of Howar



SANDAY



VisitOrkney

cairn is actually on display to the public. This impressive Maeshowe-type cairn on the peninsula of Elsness dates from about 3000BC and very much merits a visit. It is largely built from light coloured rounded beach stones, giving the interior a quite special ambience.

Scar Boat Burial In 1991, an exciting find at Scar was a Viking boat burial, in which three people were interred. A spectacular whalebone plaque was among the artefacts found. This may be seen, along with other artefacts, at the Orkney Museum in Kirkwall. Although the wooden boat had long since decayed, its shape could be discerned from iron nails.

Start Point lighthouse was first lit in 1806, and the present light was built in 1870. The tower is painted with vertical black stripes to distinguish it from North Ronaldsay lighthouse, which has red stripes. Start Island can be reached at low tide by crossing Ayre Sound.

SANDAY (ON *Sand-ey*, Sandy Isle) is the largest of the North Isles. It is very low lying, apart from at the south end, and has many beautiful sandy beaches backed with machair. In summer there is a riot of wild flowers, while the shallow sandy bays are a favourite with the many migrant and resident wading bird species.

Quoyness Chambered Cairn Although there are many sites of archaeological interest, only the Quoyness chambered

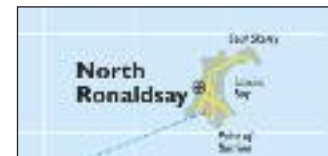
Backaskail Bay



Quoyness chambered cairn



NORTH RONALDSAY



NORTH RONALDSAY (ON *Rinnansey*, Ringan's or Ninian's Isle) lies to the north east of Sanday, which it resembles with its low lying landscape and sandy beaches. The island has a distinctly different character, and still retains many traditions and language usages now extinct in most of the rest of Orkney. It is the most isolated of the North Isles and is mostly served by air link.

Sheep Dyke This unique feature of the island was built c.1832 to keep the sheep off the agricultural land. The 19km (12mi) drystone dyke encircles the shore. The small, hardy, North Ronaldsay Sheep graze the seaweed off the shore as well as grass outside the dyke. The lean meat has a distinctive flavour.

During lambing time the ewes are allowed onto grass for a time. Special sheep punts around the shore are used for clipping and dipping. The white and brown fleeces make fine wool, suitable for knitwear, but the coloured ones are rather coarser.

Dennis Head old beacon



North Ronaldsay sheep



Bird Observatory (NRBO) North Ronaldsay is especially well situated on a migration crossroads for birds on passage to northern breeding grounds in spring and on their return in autumn. A number of rarities turn up every year. The NRBO was set up to study these movements. It also offers guest house and hostel accommodation as well as meals.

Lighthouse North Ronaldsay lighthouse, at Kirk Taing on Dennis Head, was the first in Orkney, and it was established in 1789. This was the only lighthouse in the North Isles until the Start Point light was built in 1806 on Sanday. The new brick built lighthouse was first lit in 1854. It was the last one in Orkney to be made automatic, in 1999.

EDAY



VisitOrkney

Chambered cairns There are many chambered cairns on the island, some in good condition and some ruinous. Vinquoy, is a Maeshowe-type cairn which overlooks Calf Sound. This interesting structure has been repaired and is built of large sandstone blocks. It has two pairs of side cells and the main chamber is over 3m high inside.

Carrick House was first built in 1633 and in 1725 nearby Calf Sound was the scene of the capture by its then owner, James Fea, of "Pirate Gow". Gow and his fellow pirates were tried and were executed in London.

Wildlife The hide on the Mill Loch is a very good place from which to observe Red-throated Divers, and other waterfowl which nest here. Whimbrels, Hen Harrier, Merlins, Arctic Skuas and Short-eared Owls may also be seen on the island during the summer.

EDAY (ON *Eid-ey*, Isthmus Isle) is less fertile than the other outer North Isles and much of it is peaty heather moorland. Its central position means that there are excellent views of much of Orkney from, for example, the top of the Ward Hill, or from the Red Head.

Stone of Setter is 4.5m high and very prominent overlooking Calf Sound and near the Mill Loch, in a focal point of the landscape. The weathered monolith is covered in lichen.

The Stone of Setter



Carrick House



STRONSAY

STRONSAY (ON *Strjonsey*, Profit Island) is one of the most fertile islands in Orkney. It has a much indented coastline, with many very fine beaches, as well as low cliffs on the south east side, with several large caves, and a natural arch at the Vat of Kurbuster.

Although most of the island is agricultural land, the headland of Rothiesholm is moorland, thus there is a large variety of habitat and feeding areas for wildlife.

Archaeology There are a number of archaeological sites on the island, but none of great interest, no doubt because it has been intensively farmed for many years. There is a large chambered cairn at Kelsburgh near the Bu and two smaller ones at Lamb Head.

Herring Stronsay was a major centre for Herring fishing for centuries. The Dutch were fishing in Orkney waters in late Norse times and by the 17th century had over 2,000 boats working the North Sea. The island was used as a harbour for Dutch and Fife boats during the season for hundreds of years up until 1937, when the fishery collapsed due to over-exploitation.

Whitehall Village was very busy during the fishing season, and once boasted the longest bar in Scotland. On Sundays there were hundreds of boats tied up; however, the increased catching power of the steam drifter meant that the stocks of



Whitehall Village

Herring were exhausted before WWII.

Today the harbour is home to a few in-shore creel boats. The former Fishmarket has been done up as an interpretation centre, cafe and hostel.



Boys at play in Whitehall

Aerial view of Whitehall



SHAPINSAY



VisitOrkney

SHAPINSAY (ON *Hjalpand-isey*, Helping Island) is only 20 minutes from Kirkwall by ro-ro ferry. It was one of the first areas where the old runrig system was changed to larger fields, and is nearly all cultivated today.

Broch of Burroughston This is the only archaeological site which is on display, having been excavated in 1862. It is surrounded by a ditch and rampart, and has a well-preserved interior, nearly 3m high inside. There is an intact corbelled cell in the entrance passage and a large central well accessed by steps.

Mor Stane The 3m Mor Stane is of indeterminate date and is said to have been thrown by a giant from the Mainland at

his departing wife. On the north side below Lairò Water, Odin's Stone may have been a Norse meeting place.

Norse Power Shapinsay featured in the unsuccessful bid by King Haakon of Norway to reassert Norse power in the west of Scotland in 1263. The great fleet was mustered here in Elwick Bay, before its departure for the Clyde.

Balfour Castle The house of Sound was built in 1674 by Arthur Buchanan, on the site of the present Balfour Castle. In 1775 Thomas Balfour married Frances Liginier, whose money paid for the Sound Estate. Soon the island was transformed with a new house, Cliffdale, the village, then called Shoreside, farm buildings and dykes all being built.

In 1846 David Balfour, who had made a fortune in India, inherited the estate, which now included the whole island. He had the house transformed into the present building. It has not changed much in 150 years, with most of the original furnishing and decor still in place.

Balfour Castle



Balfour Village



INTERNAL TRANSPORT

INTERNAL SEA TRANSPORT

Orkney Ferries operates to most inhabited Islands from Kirkwall, Tingwall, Head Office at the Pierhead, Kirkwall Tel 01856 872044

orkneyferries.co.uk

North Isles services depart from Kirkwall for Shapinsay, Westray, Papa Westray, Eday, Sanday, Stronsay and North Ronaldsay. Tel 01856 872044

Rousay, Egilsay & Wyre services depart from Tingwall. Tel 01856 751360

Papay services depart from Pierowall, Westray. Tel 01857 677216

Hoy and Flotta services depart from Houton in Orphir. Tel 01856 811397

North Hoy & Graemsay services depart from Stromness. Tel 01856 850624

INTERNAL AIR SERVICES Loganair operate daily services to most of the Outer North Isles, including Westray, Papay, North Ronaldsay, Sanday and Stronsay and Eday.

Loganair Internal Flights Bookings and Inquiries:

Tel 01856 872494 or 873457

loganair.co.uk

ISLAND SERVICES Please refer to the "Islands of Orkney" brochure or VisitOrkney in Kirkwall or Stromness.



Loganair "Islander" at Kirkwall Airport

PUBLIC TRANSPORT Stagecoach is the main bus operator in Orkney. They run services between Kirkwall and Stromness, to ferry terminals and various locations on the Mainland.

Public Transport Timetable. Full details of all these and other schedules are published by Orkney Islands Council.

Car Hire Several firms have cars for hire, including on many of the islands.

Taxis Taxis are available throughout Orkney, either for normal hires, or tours. There are taxi ranks at the Pier Head, Broad Street and the Airport in Kirkwall and in Stromness at the Pier Head.

Bicycle Hire Bicycles may be hired in Kirkwall and in Stromness as well as on several of the islands.

Tours of Orkney Apart from the tours offered by John o'Groats Ferries, smaller operators offer tours on the Mainland and several of the islands. Check with VisitOrkney, or locally.

GETTING TO ORKNEY



SAAB 340s of Loganair in Flybe colours

AIR ROUTES Kirkwall Airport is open seven days per week and is equipped with an Instrument Landing System, which greatly improves the reliability of flights in adverse weather conditions. The airport is about 4km (3mi) east of the town, and is easily reached by taxi or scheduled bus.

Flybe (franchised to Loganair) operate several flights into Kirkwall Airport (KOI) every day, from Aberdeen, Inverness, Edinburgh and Glasgow. There are also daily flights to and from Shetland. Flybe has a

MV "Hrossey" at Kirkwall



codesharing agreement with BA for on-wards flights.

Flybe Flight Details, information and bookings can be found online, or by calling Flybe

Tel 0871 200 7000

flybe.com

Information can also be had from the Loganair desk at Kirkwall Airport.
Tel 01856 872233

British Airways

General Reservations and Enquiries
Tel 0844 493 0787

ba.com

(Note: BA can only assist where the booking is on a codeshare flight with a direct connection to a BA service)

Kirkwall Airport is operated by HIAL
Information Desk

Tel 01856 886 210

Live flight information at
hial.co.uk/kirkwall-airport

ADS (Air Discount Scheme) Reservations and Assistance
Tel 0844 800 2855

SEA ROUTES The main routes are from Stromness to Scrabster, St Margaret's Hope to Gills Bay and Kirkwall to Aberdeen and Lerwick. There is also a passenger ferry in summer from Burwick to John o'Groats. All sailings are subject to weather conditions, and disruption due to storms can occur.

PLANES AND FERRIES

NorthLink Ferries currently operate *MV Hamnavoe* between Scrabster in Caithness and Stromness. This takes about 1½ hours to cross the Pentland Firth, passing the Old Man of Hoy on the way. She crosses up to 3 times daily and carries up to 180 cars and 500 passengers. NorthLink also operate *MV Hjaltland* and *MV Hrossey*, which run between Aberdeen, Kirkwall and Lerwick. These vessels call several times per week all year round.

Please note that the Northern Isles Ferry Service is being retendered as from July 2012. The operator, contact details, timetables and vessels may thus be changed.

NorthLink Ferries Ltd,
Ferry Terminal, Stromness,
Orkney KW16 2BH
Reservations 0845 6000 449
northlinkferries.co.uk

Pentland Ferries operate year-round services from St Margaret's Hope to Gills Bay in Caithness with *MV Pentalina*, a large catamaran. The scenic trip takes about 1 hour with 3 or more services per day (3 in winter).

Pentland Ferries Ltd, Pier Road, St Margaret's Hope, Orkney KW17 2SW
Tel 01856 831226
pentlandferries.co.uk



MV "Pentalina" in Hoxa Sound

John o'Groats Ferries run a summer passenger service between John o'Groats and Burwick in South Ronaldsay with *MV Pentland Venture*. There are coach services to Kirkwall, while a special bus service from Inverness connects with the ferry. Several variations on day trips are available.

John o'Groats Ferries, John o'Groats, Caithness
KW14YR
Tel 01955 611353
jogferry.co.uk

MV "Pentland Venture" at John o'Groats



ORKNEY SERVICES



Orkney Chairs

Accommodation Orkney offers arrange of accommodation, including hotels, guest houses B&Bs, self catering, hostels and camp sites. Full information is available in the current VisitOrkney brochure.

visitorkney.com

Eating Out There is a wide range of hotels, restaurants, bars, cafes, tea rooms and fast food outlets offering meals to everyone's taste. Most use local produce as far as possible, including beef, lamb, seafood, potatoes, fruit and vegetables in season. Expectations may frequently be exceeded.

Bride's Cog



Shopping Although an island destination might not appear to have shopping high on the agenda, this is far from the truth. There has been a renaissance in the retail experience in recent years, especially in Kirkwall, where "The Street" now offers a host of enticing shopping opportunities.

Designer Jewellery has long been a hallmark in Orkney, ever since Ola Gorie pioneered her innovative pieces in the 1960s. Based initially on Neolithic, Pictish and Norse symbols these themes have been developed to include nature, and Orkney in its widest sense.

Crafts High quality traditional crafts, most of developed from ordinary household furniture or utensils. The Orkney Chair is now an expensive and sought after piece of furniture. In the past was a homemade utility chair made from driftwood and spare oat straw.

The Bride's Cog remains a feature of every Orkney wedding. Made from wooden staves bound together with metal rings, it is really a bucket with handles. The happy couple circulate after the first dance and offer their guests a drink from the cog. Made from rum, whisky, dark ale, sugar and spices, the strong liquid is an essential component of every wedding.

ACCOMMODATION, EATING OUT AND SHOPPING

Art and Poetry Orkney has inspired many artists over the years. These range from painters such as Stanley Cursiter to poets like George MacKay Brown, musicians as for example, the composer, Sir Peter Maxwell Davies or cinematographers, including Margaret Tait. Today local artist Jane Glue is one of the best known and has her studio in Finstown.

The Pier Arts Centre is the centrepiece of art in Orkney with its permanent and temporary exhibitions. Other venues, including Orkney Museum, the Waterfront Gallery in Stromness and the Workshop Gallery in the Hope, hold regular shows.

Many people have been inspired to write about Orkney and a visit to one of the bookshops just what a lively publishing scene the county has. Book lovers will find delight in perusing the shelves of outlets in Kirkwall and Stromness as well as those at some of the main visitor attractions.

Traditional Music is another vibrant part of Orkney. A revival was started by the inspirational Orkney Islands Council practice of offering free tuition in schools. The thriving Orkney Folk Festival and the St Magnus Festival are two of the very successful results of this. The Wrigley Sisters' "The Reel" on Broad Street is a good place to find out about musical events.



Celtic-inspired jewellery

Knitwear has always been a cottage industry in Orkney, perhaps less well known than its Shetland equivalent, but nevertheless still very much alive. A number of shops specialise in knitwear, including The Quernstone in Stromness, Judith Glue and RA Finn in Kirkwall and the Workshop Gallery in St Margaret's Hope.

Crafts Trail An booklet by the Orkney Crafts Association showcases its members work including jewellery, textiles knitwear, art, woodwork and pottery.

orkneydesignercrafts.com

Traditional music



INDEX

Accommodation	62	Natural Environment	8
Air Routes	60	Neolithic Orkney	6
Art and Poetry	63	Ness Battery	37
Aurora Borealis	8	Ness of Brodgar	24
Barnhouse Village	27	North Ronaldsay	55
Bay of Skaill	32	North Sea Oil	46
Birsay	30	Noup Head	53
Bishop's Palace	12	Old Man of Hoy	48
British Home Fleet	44	Orkney Fossil & Vintage Centre	42
Broch of Gurness	34	Orkney Museum	11
Brough of Birsay	30	Orphir	19
Burray	42	Papa Westray	53
Chambered Cairns	29, 50	Pier Arts Centre	36
Churchill Barriers	40, 45, 47	Pierowall	52
Crafts	62	Primula scotica	9
Dwarfie Stone	48	Puffins	30, 53
Earl Haakon Paulson	14	Rackwick	48
Earl Magnus Erlendson	14, 51	Rerwick, Tankerness	38
Earl Rognvald Kolson	15	Ring of Brodgar	22
Earl's Palace, Birsay	30	Rousay	50
Earl's Palace, Kirkwall	12	Runes	28
East Mainland	38	Sanday	54
Eating Out	13, 62	Scapa Flow Visitor Centre	46, 49
Eday	56	Sea Routes	60
Egilsay	51	Shapinsay	58
Farm Museums	19	Shopping	12, 62
German High Seas Fleet	36, 44	Skaill House	32
Getting to Orkney	60	Skara Brae	6, 20
Grooved Ware	21, 24, 27, 29	South Ronaldsay	42
Heart of Neolithic Orkney	6, 18	St John's Head	48
Highland Park Distillery	13, 16	St Magnus Cathedral	14
HMS Hampshire	31	St Magnus Kirk, Egilsay	14, 51
HMS Royal Oak	45	Stone of Odin	26
Holm	39	Stromness	19, 36
Hoy	48	Stronsay	57
Internal Transport	59	Standing Stones of Stenness	26
Italian Chapel	7, 40	Tomb of the Eagles	29, 43
Kirkwall	10	UNESCO World Heritage Site	6, 18
Knap of Howar	53	Unstan chambered cairn	29
Maeshowe	28	Unstan Ware	29, 50
Martello Tower and battery	49	Watchstone	26
Marwick Head	31	West Mainland	18
Midhowe, Rousay	50	Westray	52
Mull Head	38	Yesnaby	33