

The name Orkney derives from ON *Orkneyjar*, Seal Islands, however the *Ork* part is much more ancient. Diodorus Siculus, in about 59BC, referred to Orkney as the *Orcades*, quoting from a much earlier report by Pytheas from about 320BC. Writing in c.70AD, Pliny the Elder referred to the *Orcades* and stated that “Cape Orcas lies across the Pentland Firth from the Orcades...there are 40 Orcades separated by moderate distances.” Cape Orcas is probably Dunnet Head in Caithness.

The Old Irish name for Orkney was *Imse Orc*, Isles of the Orks.

The Vikings also referred to Maeshowe as *Orkahowe*, suggesting is that *Orc* was the totemic name of the inhabitants in former times and was recognised as such by the Norse. In Old Irish *Orcan* means pig, however in Gaelic *Orc* also refers to a small whale or dolphin. In fact Pliny himself calls this kind of whale *Orca*, and today the Orca or Killer Whale (*Orchinus Orca*) is still frequently seen around Orkney. It should also be noted that in Old Norse *Orkn* refers to a kind of seal.

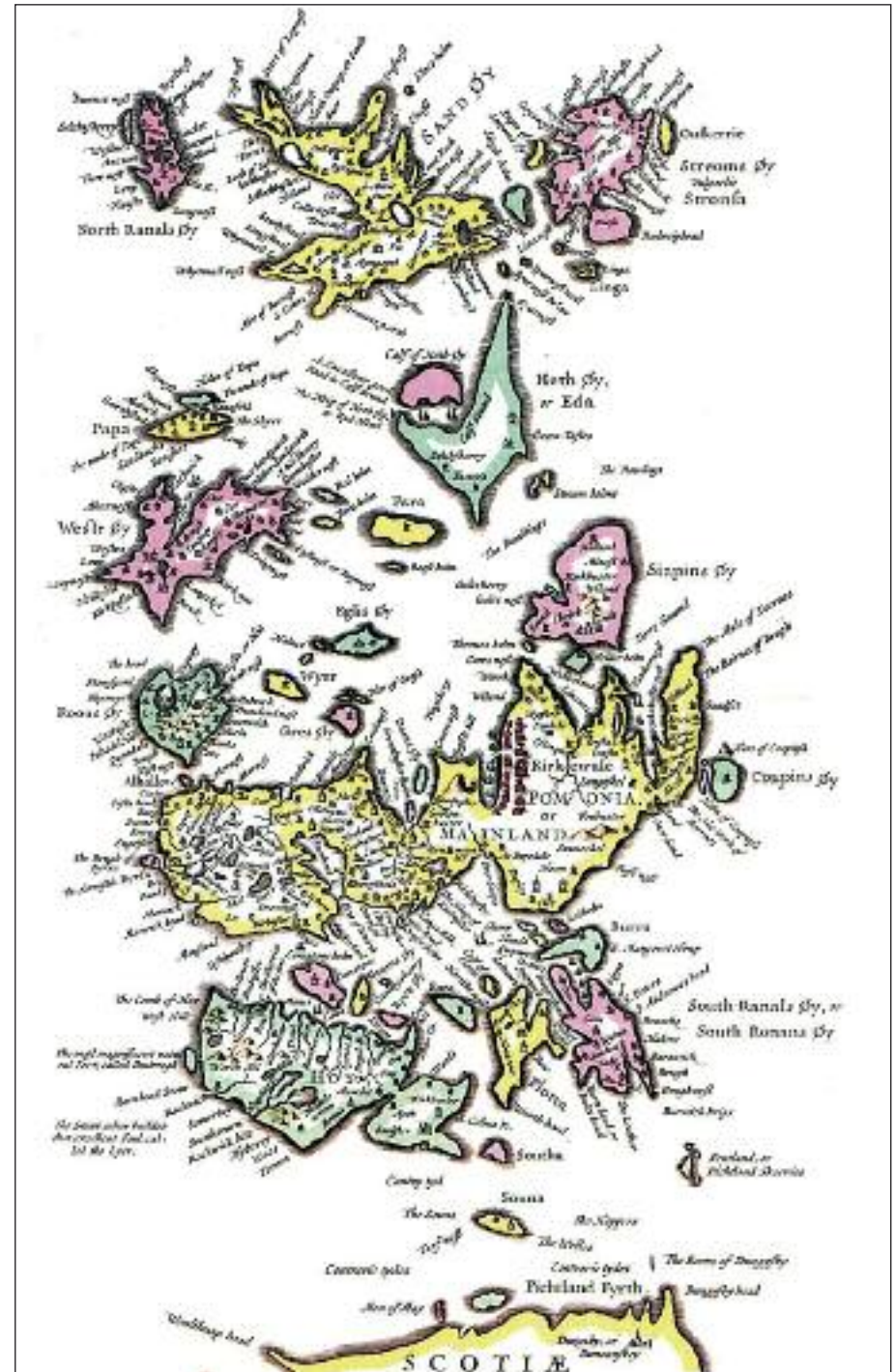
The Vikings were nearer the mark and Ork probably means *Sea Pig*

which could mean either a small whale or a seal. Wild Boars were never a major feature of Orkney but small cetaceans such as Orcas, Grampus, and other Dolphins, Pilot Whales as well as Grey and Common Seals were probably even more numerous in prehistoric times than now.

Seals or *Selkies*, (ON *Selr*, Seal), are also traditionally respected and the subject of much folklore in Orkney. Thus the name Orkney or Orcades most likely always meant *Seal Islands* and the people were thus Orcs or *Selkies*.

DERIVATIONS OF THE NAMES OF ORKNEY'S ISLANDS

Modern Name	Norse Name	Derivation
Mainland	<i>Hrossey</i>	Horse Island (from its shape)
Rousay	<i>Hrolfsey</i>	Rolf's Isle
Egilsay	<i>Egilsey</i>	Egil's Isle or Church Isle
Eynhallow	<i>Eyimbelga</i>	Holy Isle
Wyre	<i>Vigr</i>	Spearhead-shaped Isle
Gairsay	<i>Gareksey</i>	Garek's Isle
Westray	<i>Vestrey</i>	West Isle
Papa Westray	<i>Papa Meiri</i>	Big Island of the <i>Papar</i> (priests)
North Ronaldsay	<i>Rinansej</i>	Ringan's Isle
Sanday	<i>Sandey</i>	Sandy Isle
Eday	<i>Eiðey</i>	Isthmus Isle
Stronsay	<i>Strjonsey</i>	Gain or Profit Isle, or Beach Isle
Papa Stronsay	<i>Papey Minni</i>	Small Island of the <i>Papar</i> (priests)
Shapinsay	<i>Hjálpanðisey</i>	Helping Isle or Hjalpandi's Isle
Helliar Holm	<i>Elliarvik Holm</i>	Elwick Bay or Cave ( <i>Hellia</i> ) Holm
Damsay	<i>Daminsey</i>	Twin Isle (with Holm of Grimbister)
Copinsay	<i>Kolbeinsey</i>	Kolbein's Isle
Hoy	<i>Háey</i>	High Isle
Walls	<i>Vágaland</i>	Land of Bays
Flotta	<i>Flat-ey</i>	Flat Isle
Fara	<i>Faer-ey</i>	Sheep isle
Cava	<i>Kalf-ey</i>	Calf Isle
Graemsay	<i>Grimsey</i>	Grim's Isle
Burray	<i>Borgarey</i>	Broch Isle
South Ronaldsay	<i>Rögnvaldsey</i>	Rognvald's Isle
Swona	<i>Sviney</i> or <i>Swefney</i>	Swine Isle or Sweyn's Isle
Pentland Skerries	<i>Pettland-sker</i>	Pictland Firth Skerries









Pictish brooch found at Westness, Rousay

NMS

**Lord's Prayer, recorded by Wallace on North Ronaldsay (18<sup>th</sup> century)**

*Favor i ir i chimeri. Helleut ir i nam thite, gilla cosdum thite cumma, vey a thine mota vara gort o yurn sinna gort i chimeri, ga vus da on da dalight brow vora, Firgive vus sinna vora sin vee firgive sindara mutha vis, lyv vus ye i tumtation, min delivera vus fro olt ilt, Amen: or "On sa meteth vera."*

**But John, Robert Rendall**

*But John, have you seen the world, said he,  
Train and tramcars and sixty seaters,  
Cities in lads across the sea –  
Giotto's tower and the dome of St Peter's?*

*No, but I've seen the arc of the Earth,  
From the Birsay shore like the edge of a planet,  
And the lifeboat plunge through the Pentland Firth?  
To a cosmic tide with the men who man it.*

**Cragman's Widow, R Rendall**

*He wis aye vaigan b'the shore,  
An' climman amang the craigs,  
Swappan the mallimaks,  
Or taakan whitemaa aiggs.*

*It's six year bye come Lammas,  
Sin' he gaed afore the face,  
An' nane but an aald dune wife  
Wis left tae work the place.*

*Yet the sun shines doon on a' thing,  
The links are bonnie and green,  
An' the sea keeps ebban an' floun-  
As though hid had never been.*

**Sanctuary, Allison Leonard**

*There is one place where I may lay my head:  
The inquiring mind from roving has returned  
Tired with the immortal passions of the dead.  
The flame of intellect, a star that burned  
Aeons afar, cold, clear and very bright,  
All rayed with beauty in the dreaming dark,  
Sinks with the constellations of the night  
Into perspective. Oh, the passing mark  
Of pain fades with all unimportant things  
Like an old unremembered fear. I shed  
Falseness. Alone I'll take the path of kings  
But at the journey's end I'll lay my head  
In that one place where I can be at rest-  
Upon the healing quiet of your breast.*

**The Bloody Orkneys, Cap H Blair RN.**

*This bloody town's a bloody cuss --  
No bloody trains, no bloody bus,  
And no one cares for bloody us --  
In bloody Orkney.*

*The bloody roads are bloody bad,  
The bloody folks are bloody mad,  
They'd make the brightest bloody sad,  
In bloody Orkney.*

*All bloody clouds, and bloody rains,  
No bloody kerbs, no bloody drains,  
The Council's got no bloody brains,  
In bloody Orkney.*

*Everything's so bloody dear,  
A bloody bob, for bloody beer,  
And is it good? No bloody fear,  
In bloody Orkney.*

*The bloody flicks are bloody old,  
The bloody seats are bloody cold,  
You can't get in for bloody gold,  
In bloody Orkney.*

*The bloody dances make you smile;  
The bloody band is bloody vile;  
It only cramps your bloody style  
In bloody Orkney.*

*No bloody sport, no bloody games,  
No bloody fun, the bloody dames  
Won't even give their bloody names  
In bloody Orkney.*

*Best bloody place is bloody bed,  
With bloody ice on bloody head,  
You might as well be bloody dead,  
In bloody Orkney.*

**Tennyson**

*See what a lovely shell  
Lying close to my foot...  
What is it? A learned man  
Could give it a clumsy name.  
Let him name it who can,  
The beauty would be the same.*



Tapestry by Leila Thomson for J&W Tait's 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary

**What is an Orcadian from the Storm GMB 1954**

*First the aborigines  
That houked Skara Brae from the sand  
Then the Picts,  
Thoe small dark cunning men  
Who scrolled their history in stone...  
And then the tigers from the east over sea,  
The blond butchering Vikings,  
Whose last worry on sea or land  
Was purity of race, as they staggered couchwards  
After a fill of ale.  
Finally, to make the mixture thick and slab,  
The offscorings of Scotland,  
The lowliest pimps from Lothian and the Mearns  
Fawning on the train of Black Pat,  
And robbing and raping ad lib,  
But that's not all.  
For many a hundred ships have ripped their flanks  
On Rora Head, or the Noup,  
And Basque sailor lads and bearded skippers from Brittany  
Left off their briny ways to cleave a furrow  
Through Orkney crofts and lasses.  
Not to speak of two world wars  
And hordes of English and Yanks and Italians and Poles  
Who took their stations here:  
By the day the guns, by nigh the ancestral box-bed.  
Only this morning I delivered a bairn  
At Maggie O'Corland's  
With a subtle silk-selling Krishna smile.  
A fine mixer-maxter!*