



Kirkwall Golf Course

LAND ACTIVITIES Those interested in keeping their feet dry will find plenty of activities in Orkney as a large number of sports and activities are keenly followed.

GOLF Records of Golf being played in Orkney go back at least to the 17th century. The lairds played on the links on Sanday and near the Ba' Lea at Papdale. In the 19th century the game was becoming more popular, and the links at Birsay and Deerness were regularly played on. There was a tradition on Sanday of a Golfing Festival starting on St Magnus Day, 16th April, which included much high living in the evenings.

Motocross has a large following with many events held



Kirkwall Golf Course In 1889 the Orkney Golf Club was formed, initially playing at Birsay and Pickaquooy, before moving to its present site at Grainbank on the A965 west of Kirkwall. The Course was expanded to 18 holes in 1922, and further improved during the 1960s and 1970s to give the fine 5,400 yards of fairways and greens existing today. There are regular competitions.

Stromness Golf Course Golf has also been played here for at least 100 years. About 1870, there was a 9-hole course in the links at Warebeth, but in 1924 the present course at the Ness was opened when the club bought

the farm of Ness. There can be few more scenic courses than this one, overlooking Hoy Sound and the Hoy Hills, a joy to play on a fine summer's evening.

The Clubhouse is shared with the Stromness Sailing Club and there is also a Bowling Green and Tennis Court at the premises. The furthest that a ball has flown was all the way to Hoy Low Lighthouse on Graemsay - with the aid of a seagull.

Other Courses There are 9-hole courses on the links on Sanday, North Ronaldsay, Westray and a new one on South Ronaldsay at St Margaret's Hope. The former 18-hole links course at Birsay was said to literally bristle with hazards.

HORSE RIDING is very popular in Orkney. The new Indoor Riding Centre near Kirkwall Pony Club with premises near Kirkwall means that equestrian activities are now carried out year-round. There are several Clydesdale enthusiasts and these beauti-

The Riding of the Marches - riding is very popular



ful equine creatures may often be seen at weekends with their proud owners. Although there are now very few working horses, occasional demonstrations are held at ploughing matches and there are always several very fine entries at the Dounby and County Shows.

The tradition of Riding of the Marches was revived in 1986, the 500th anniversary of Kirkwall getting its Royal Burgh Charter from Scotland's King James III. This August event pauses at Scapa Beach to reassert the Kirkwallians' Rights of Admiralty and Maritime Jurisdiction.

Several bridleways have now been trimmed up and sign-posted and there are many rights of way open to access by riders.

OTHER SPORTS Many sports are popular in Orkney, including Football, where the season is during the summer, with the Parish Cup Final on the evening of the County Show. The Orkney Rugby Football Club, has its clubhouse beside Pickaquooy, Tel (01856) 872163. The Club plays regularly against other Scottish clubs, with considerable success.

There are Squash Courts in both Kirkwall, at Hatston Industrial Estate, and in Stromness, near the Fudge Factory on Cairston Road.



Aerial view of Stromness Golf Course from the west

Motocross, or Scrambling, is perhaps the most popular spectator sport in Orkney, and the local club holds several events during the year, culminating in the Orkney Beach Race at Bu Sands in Burray. The season runs from March to October, with fortnightly meetings on Sunday being held at various locations, including several in the North Isles. See the Orcadian for details.

Athletics A series of meetings are held during the year, including Cross Country Races, Triathlons, the Ward Hills Challenge, Hoy Half Marathon and other events.

PICKAQUOY CENTRE in Kirkwall is a large multi-purpose complex which provides facilities for many sports, events and performances. It houses the *New Phoenix Cinema* and has a fitness suite.

KIRKWALL SPORTS CENTRE at the Grammar School is open in the Summer Vacation for Badminton, Tennis, Table Tennis and other indoor sports. Its Fitness Suite is also available for use. Various Community Halls are also open for activities. Details and contacts from OIC Education Department, Tel (01856) 873535.

The Pickaquooy Centre offers many facilities, indoors and out





Charles William Tait was a very keen angler (author's grandfather)

TROUT FISHING is one of the most popular pastimes in Orkney. There are six major lochs, all stocked with Wild Brown Trout, as well as many smaller ones. Each has its individual character, allowing the angler a choice and change. All of the major lochs are freely accessible to members of Orkney Trout Fishing Association (OTFA), due to the Norse Udal laws which still apply in Orkney, particularly in respect of ownership of the foreshore.

It is expected that visiting anglers will join the Association, which stocks the lochs and holds evening fly-fishing competitions during the season: from 15 March to 6 October (Brown Trout), and 26 February to 31 October (Sea Trout). On the smaller lochs,

where there is no OTFA site, it is sometimes necessary to ask permission to fish from the landowner. It is also courteous to ask before crossing someone's land.

The best months are generally May and June, although the lochs vary greatly in their peak times and most suitable weather conditions. As well as Brown Trout, there are also good stocks of Sea Trout which are generally caught near the outflows of burns, but some bays and coastal locations are also good. They may also be found in most of the lochs, especially Stenness.

Weather conditions greatly affect the numbers of insects hatching and while humans may hate midgies, Trout love them and their larvae. Olive Flies, Crane Flies and

Caddis Flies are also important prey. Late summer evenings can be good fishing as many insects hatch in the gloaming. Freshwater Sholties (Gammarus) are the other main prey of the Trout.

Harray (1,011ha) is the largest and most popular loch. Shallow, with many bays and skerries, and suitable for wading and boat fishing, this loch yielded a 7.8kg Brown Trout in 1966. Where to fish depends both on season and wind direction, but watch out for the skerries if in a boat. The south end is popular with waders. Boats are available for hire from the Merkister Hotel, Tel (01856) 771515.

Stenness, is connected to the sea, and partly tidal - in 1962 an 8.5kg Turbot was caught there. The salinity of the water depends on the tides and on the level of Harray Loch. Since few insects like the salty water the Trout live mostly on small fish, making the loch somewhat difficult for the fly fisherman. It is said that Stenness fish are the best eating - if you can catch them! Boats can be hired from the Standing Stones Hotel, Tel (01856) 850449.

Trout fishing on Harray Loch



A fine catch from Boardhouse



The peaty Birsay lochs, Boardhouse, Hundland and Swannay all offer excellent fishing. Boardhouse has few skerries, and a peaty bottom which encourages insect life and is popular with visiting anglers. Boats are available from the Barony Hotel Tel (01856) 721302.

Hundland is similar, but has many skerries, and is unusual in that it fishes well on bright days. Swannay is more of a typical Scottish Loch and is best fished from a boat, and well known for the size of its trout. It has no Sea Trout as its burn ends in a waterfall over the cliffs.

Kirbister in Orphir tends to have smaller fish, but can nevertheless offer good fishing, and is particularly popular for waders. It lacks Salmon and Sea Trout due to being a reservoir.

There are tackle shops in Kirkwall and Stromness and several hotels which cater specifically for fishermen. Further information on all the major lochs can be found in Stan Headley's *A Trout Fishing Guide to Orkney*.

SEA ANGLING to give it its posh name, has been carried out in Orkney ever since people arrived. The difference is that in olden times it was essential to survival, while now it is done for fun. Before the era of the modern fishing boats the seas were also teeming with fish. Commercial fishing has become more and more efficient at catching what remains of these stocks, with the result that today most of the old inshore fishing grounds are very poor.



Many people fish for the Haddocks of Birsay when they come in to spawn

This does not mean that there is no good sea angling in Orkney waters. Fishing on the drift is normal practice here, and the species most caught are Cod, Ling, Pollack and Coalfish. Large Halibut, Skate and Porbeagle are sometimes hooked as well.

The best fishing tends to be in and around the Pentland Firth, and up the West Side of Hoy, but good sport can also be had off the Birsay coast near Marwick Head, off Rousay, and off Noup Head in Westray. Nearer to Kirkwall the east side of Shapinsay and The String can also be good places.

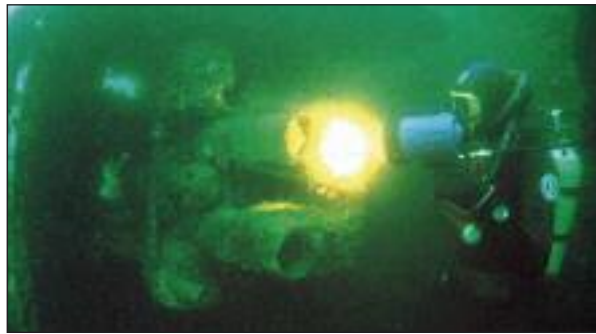
The Churchill Barriers are popular when the Mackerel come in around July, but Codling and Kuithees (Coalfish) can also be

caught there. Barrier No.1 across Kirk Sound is deepest and best. There are several good fishing locations around the coast where the coast is steep-to and strong tides flow close to the rocks, as for example at Hoxa Head (HY403930) in South Ronaldsay. Beach casting for plaice and flounders can be effective as well at places like the Bay of Skail (HY235195) or Warebeth (HY235087).

Advice can be had from the tackle shops in Kirkwall and Stromness, as well as the local Sea Angling Association. Several annual competitions are held from Stromness, and boats may be available for hire at Kirkwall, Stromness or other places.

Sea angling can be fine sport, especially in deeper, tidal water





Gerhardt Binanzer

Ding on the F2" off Lyness - a WWII German vessel

WATERSPORTS Orkney excels for all types of watersports. In particular diving, sailing, windsurfing and pottering about in boats are very popular. The old idea of *farmers with boats* lives on!

SWIMMING POOLS There are Swimming Pools run by the Council in Kirkwall and Stromness. These pools are open to the public only at certain times in school terms, but during school holidays are much more available. Access to Fitness Suites and sports facilities is also possible.

Several of the islands also have their own swimming pools now. These include Westray, Sanday, Stronsay and Hoy. All are part of the local Community School on each island.

Kirkwall Swimming Pool



DIVING Sub-Aqua has become a major leisure industry in Scapa Flow, with the attraction of being able to dive on the seven remaining First World War battleships and cruisers, as well as several other wrecks. Several operators work from Stromness and there is also the local branch of the Scottish Sub-Aqua Club from whose Kirkwall premises air supplies may be procured. Details of operators can be found at the Tourist Office. Scapa Scuba in Stromness supply sub-aqua equipment and souvenirs, while John Kemp in Kirkwall also stocks much of interest to divers.

Besides the Scapa Flow wrecks, there are many other interesting wrecks all over the islands. Before lighthouses and electron-

ics, Orkney was a veritable graveyard for ships. There is also much interesting underwater wildlife to observe and photograph, from beautiful sea anemones and other invertebrates to seals and fish, or even the odd Porbeagle Shark! It should be remembered that it is illegal to remove any artefacts from wrecks, or to dive on Official War Graves.

WINDSURFING has become a popular sport in Orkney all year round. With the many sheltered bays facing in every direction, and good winds, Orkney lends itself very well to this sport. A safe location can be found in virtually every condition, depending on the experience or audacity of the sailor. Of the North Isles, Stronsay is perhaps the best, while there are many suitable locations on the Mainland.

Scapa Beach on Sundays is a popular place for windsurfers, if you do not mind dog faeces, while Kirbister Loch is excellent for beginners and speed merchants alike. Bays such as Scapa Bay, Inganess Bay and St Mary's Bay in Holm are examples of safe

There are many suitable places for windsurfing



locations where there are no strong tides and waves are not too big.

For experts the seas on the west side at, for example, the Bay of Skail, Rackwick in Hoy and many of the Stronsay or Westray beaches are excellent for wave jumping, and similar advanced techniques, depending on wind and sea conditions.

The strong tides around the islands can be dangerous for even the most experienced, and in many places there are dangerous overfalls in certain conditions. For more information and advice about windsurfing in Orkney, telephone Dr Tim Wright, Tel (01856) 872606.

SAILING is another popular sport in Orkney, particularly during the summer when the water warms up to its maximum of 13° in July from its minimum of 6° in February. The invention of wet suits has made all water sports more fun locally! There are active sailing clubs at Kirkwall, Stromness and Holm, while regattas are held at several other locations.

Orkney yole of the traditional type



Stromness marina is very sheltered behind the ro-ro terminal

MARINAS There are marinas at Kirkwall, Stromness and Pierowall with spaces for visiting yachtsmen. These facilities have transformed things for local boating enthusiasts and many more are taking to the water than before they were installed.

Visiting yachtsmen are welcome at the Girnol, Kirkwall where shower and other facilities are available, while the Stromness Club shares facilities with the Golf Club at the Point of Ness. Information is available at the Harbour Offices. Recently there has been an increase in the number of local yachts, and racing of these together with various dinghy and catamaran classes takes place regularly.

WEATHER Weather forecasts can be by VHF or telephone from Shetland Coastguard, Tel (01595) 692976, in Lerwick, shetlandcoastguard.co.uk or Orkney Harbour Radio, which broadcasts area forecasts and navigational warnings on VHF channel 11 at 09:15 and 17:15.. orkneyharbours.com

Orkney Marine Services can also give information on local anchorages and berthing facilities, Tel (01856) 873636. This website provides a weather forecast and weather data, tide times and flow charts as well as other useful information for seafarers. BBC Radio Orkney (93.7Mhz FM) has a weather forecast after the Local News at 07:30 each weekday.

Yachting has gained in popularity due to the marinas





Ploughing matches are held in early spring

New Year's Day Ba' Men's and boys' versions of this famous traditional ball game. The Ba' is thrown up from the Market Cross on Broad Street, the boys' game start at 10:00 and the men's at 13:00. Images and online reports are available online after the games. bagame.com

Ploughing Matches In early spring ploughing matches are held all over Orkney. These are popular events have classes for modern reversible ploughs as well as and old fashioned tractors and ploughs, many of which have been painstakingly restored..

Orkney Jazz Festival in late April is based at the Stromness Hotel. It is a weekend of jazz by

Orkney Folk Festival



visiting and local performers, and includes the Annual Jazz Festival Service of Praise in St Magnus Church, Birsay. stromnesshotel.com

Norwegian Constitution Day Celebration on 17th April. A Tog is held from the Harbour to Broad Street. Norwegians in traditional costume parade up the street together with Orcadians. Flags are flown, there is a service in St Magnus Cathedral and Norwegian war dead are commemorated. A popular dinner dance ends the day.

Orkney Folk Festival is held in the last weekend of May. This internationally renowned annual celebration of traditional and contemporary folk music, fea-

tures concerts, ceilidhs, stumps, two festival clubs, workshops and informal sessions. It is based in Stromness, but events are also staged in the rural areas and smaller islands. Festival queries to: Orkney Folk Festival website, where online bookings can be made:

orkneyfolkfestival.com

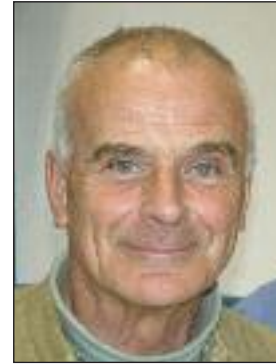
Hoy Half Marathon is held in on a Sunday in the middle of June. The scenic route runs from Rackwick to North Walls School. Entries are limited to this popular event so applications should be sent in plenty of time..

hoyhalf@freeuk.com

St Magnus Festival in mid June is Orkney's prestigious midsummer celebration of the arts. It was founded in 1977 by composer, Sir Peter Maxwell Davies, author, George Mackay Brown and others. with premieres. Featuring orchestral and chamber concerts, theatre and poetry as well as the visual exhibitions and events, this midsummer festival attracts audiences from around the world and early booking is advised for performances and accommodation.

The Festival is unique with its

Norwegian Constitution day



Sir Peter Maxwell Davis

blend of world-class performers and community participation. Bookings can be made online, by post or by calling St Magnus Festival, 60 Victoria Street, Kirkwall, Tel (01856) 871445 stmagnusfestival.com

Stromness Shopping Week was started in 1949 to promote trade in the town. It is held in late July. This Community Gala Week is run by local volunteers, with many varied events involving residents and visitors. The emphasis is on family fun, with lots of sporting and novelty competitions, music, sideshows, children's entertainment, and a firework celebration on the last night.

The Week is opened by the Shopping Week Queen, who is

Stromness Shopping Week



Julia Robinson Willmott



St Magnus festival Magfest event

elected by her peers in Stromness Academy. Every year a band comes to provide entertainments and the Scalloway Jarl's Squad adds colour. The Orkney Handcrafts Show, organised by Orkney SWRI runs from Monday - Friday during Shopping Week. stromnessshoppingweek.co.uk

Annual Agricultural Shows are held in early August. These include Sanday Show, East Mainland Show, Shapinsay Show, 'Hope Show, South Ronaldsay, Dounby Show, West Mainland, and the County Show, Kirkwall. They are the high points of the farming year where Orkney's best stock is on display. Apart from prime cattle,



Orkney County Show

Orkney County Show





Boys' Ploughing Match and Festival of the Horse

sheep and other animals, there are trade stands with the latest machinery, as well as many stalls run by diverse business and organisations.

Riding of the Marches is held on the Sunday after the County Show. This event was revived in 1986. It celebrates the granting of Kirkwall the status of a Royal Burgh in 1486 only 15 years after Orkney was annexed by Scotland. Horses and their riders follow a circular route from Broad Street via Scapa Beach and back to reassert Kirkwall's rights of Admiralty and Jurisdiction.

Orkney Vintage Rally is held in mid August at the Auction Mart site in Kirkwall. Entries of

Orkney Vintage Rally



old cars, commercials, tractors, motorbikes, stationary engines and any other farm implements or machinery are welcomed. There is an indoor exhibition area where collections or club displays and demonstrations of crafts or trades from a bygone era are on show.

Festival of the Horse and Boys' Ploughing Match, late August is held at the St Margaret's Hope School, where the horses and ploughmen are judged. Little girls are dresses in spectacular "horse" costumes, while the little boys carry their ploughs. Many of the outfits implements have been handed down over several generations.

After the judging the action

moves to the nearby beach of the Sands o' Wright, where the boys compete to make the best starts and fearings. The match is judged just like a real ploughing match. and Local children take part in a miniature horse-judging and then ploughing match on the beach.

Orkney Beer Festival in late August is chance to try out a wide range of guest beers and cask-conditioned ales, as well as Orkney's own ales, based at the Stromness Hotel. stromnesshotel.com

Orkney Blues Festival in mid September is a weekend of blues and boogie, with workshops, concerts, dances and blues performers from Orkney and beyond. www.orkneybluesfestival.co.uk

Orkney International Science Festival in early September is a kaleidoscopic mix of fresh insights, challenging ideas and lively activities, in an island setting. Topics range from astronomy to zoology, from renewable energy to the house of the future, with world-class speakers from many places.

Riding of the Marches



There are bus tours, concerts and ceilidhs. Food and drink, the arts, music and history are woven in. Founded in 1991, this festival has something to interest everyone. oisf.org

Christmas Tree Lightings take place in Kirkwall, Stromness and other communities in early December. Hordaland in Norway is twinned with Orkney and each year they gift a Christmas tree. On the first saturday in December a group of Norwegians, including musicians and councillors visit to attend the St Lucia event in St magnus Cathedral.

Local school children perform music and song and the Norwegians do likewise. After the tree is lit, a dinner dance is held in the town hall.

Maeshowe Internet Broadcast runs from late November until late January. Webcams broadcast of the light from the winter sunset shining into the ancient chamber of Maeshowe. The sun actually shines into the chamber on a clear day throughout this time. maeshowe.co.uk

Christmas and Day Ba' Games. Men's and boys' versions of the Ba' are held every Christmas Day and New Years Day. The boys' game is thrown up at 10:00 and the men's at 13:00. Images and online reports are available after the game. bage.com



Orkney International Science Festival



St Lucia Festival and Tree Lighting Ceremony



Midwinter sunset at Maeshowe



Throw up of the Men's Ba'