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**ST ANDREWS** parish is divided into Tankerness and Toab. The former takes its name from the former parish church at the Hall of Tankerness, where the 12<sup>th</sup> century Norse farmer, Erling of Tankerness, lived. The name Tankerness may derive: (ON *Tannskari-nes*, Tannskari's Point). The parish is mostly low-lying agricultural ground, apart from a small amount of moorland on the Holm boundary.

Although there are few archaeological sights on display, it is interesting that many of Orkney's Bronze Age artefacts have turned up in peat bogs here. The Iron Age site of Minehowe now provides a fascinating visit.

**Kirkwall Airport**, Grimsetter (HY483077), is on the A960 about 5km (3 miles) from the town. It was originally an RAF satellite station, becoming active in October 1940 with *Spitfires* belonging to 14

Group engaged in local air defence. It was then transferred to Naval control in 1943 and was called *HMS Robin*. Various squadrons disembarked here from their aircraft carriers, types including *Avengers*, *Hurricanes*, *Fireflies*, *Wildcats*, *Swordfish* and *Seafires*, before it reverted to Air Force control in 1945 as *RAF Grimsetter*.

In 1948 it became Kirkwall's airport, after Hatston proved too small. Today the busy air-



Aerial view of St Andrews from the northeast - Deer Sound left, Rerwick Head right foreground, Inganess Bay right

port has scheduled flights operated by Loganair seven days per week as well as cargo and oil-related traffic. The terminal building and control towers have recently been replaced and an Instrument Landing System (ILS), facilitates aircraft operations in poorer weather. One original hangar is still in use.

**Rerwick Head** The gun emplacements at Rerwick Head (ON *Reyrr-wick*, Heap of Stones Bay, HY542118)

formed part of the defences of the Wide Firth and eastern approaches to Kirkwall where neutral and other ships were held and searched to ensure they were not carrying goods destined for Germany. Often up to 100 ships were waiting for clearance at any one time.

The battery had two 4-inch guns in WWI. In WWII two 4.7in guns were installed in 1940 in exposed positions. They were replaced in 1941 by two 6in guns, which were

salvaged from *HMS Iron Duke*, and mounted in fully-protected positions.

Two 90cm searchlights were mounted nearby. An electric

Aerial photo of RAF Grimsetter in World War II



Kirkwall Airport today



The first air services in the 1930s used De Havilland Dragon Rapides



**TANKERNESS ATTRACTIONS**

- Kirkwall Airport
- Sand of Essonquoy
- Weethick Long Ayre
- Redbanks Beach
- Heatherhouse Beach
- Rerwick Head
- Rough of Rerwick
- Craig of Ness
- The Ness (old battery)
- Ness Beach
- Loch of Tankerness
- Mill Sand
- Mine Howe
- Bay of Suckquoy
- St Peter's Pool
- Stembister Beach
- Dingieshowe (broch)



Pictish symbol stone found at Greens, east of Dingieshowe, in 1926

indicator loop with a controlled minefield, to detect and destroy submarines, ran from here to Hacksness in Shapinsay. Associated watchtowers completed the defences.. Most of the buildings remain intact.

**Rerwick Walk** There is a very fine circular walk around Rerwick Head and along the low cliffs to The Ness, where there is a much older battery site. In summer all is peace and colour, but with a heavy easterly sea and flood tide the low cliffs can make the waves look huge. Rerwick takes its name from the *Rough of Rerwick*, a natural heap of stones protecting a small lagoon at low tide.

**Minehowe** is situated opposite the cemetery near the Tankerness Community Hall. This well-like subterranean structure with two steep stone stairways which descend to a chamber with a high, corbelled roof, dates from the Iron Age. There are two narrow side-chambers, with similar roofs on the way down. The design has a strong



Pictish symbol stone found in Tankerness

resemblance to some of the wells in brochs, especially that at the Broch of Gurness. Minehowe is surrounded by a deep, revetted ditch, suggesting that it was within an enclosed area with some special significance. There may well have been a building above the 29 steps, which would then have formed an earth house.

Further excavations here have shown that Minehowe is just part of an extensive Iron Age site where metalworking was carried out. Recently two female Iron Age burials were discovered. Even more tantalising is the discovery on Longhowe, a nearby barrow, of scattered flints, which may date from Mesolithic times.

The visitor centre at Minehowe has interesting displays on the excavation of the site, artefacts and a small shop. Further investigations will



Minehowe - lower steps and bottom chamber

probably reveal much more of interest, making this site well worth a visit now and then.

**Beaches** There are several fine, generally unfrequented, sandy beaches in the area, including those below Redbanks, Heatherhouse, and the Hall of Tankerness. The Mill Sands (HY515080) is a good place for waders and seals, as well as for collecting Cockles and Spots at spring ebbs.

Other good locations for birds

are the Long Ayre below Weethick and the Loch of Tankerness. At high tide birds roost near the road on the Bay of Suckquoy salt-marsh near the old school.

**Crafts** Sheila Fleet Jewellery at the Old Schoolhouse, is next to St Andrews Church. The beautiful and inspirational designs are crafted of hand-fired enamel, silver, gold and platinum.

Old cannon below Ness



Rerwick Head 6-inch gun mounting



One of several caves at Rerwick, Tankerness







Aerial view of Deerness from the northeast with the Mull Head in the foreground

**DEERNESS** (ON *Dyrnes*, Animal Ness, perhaps from the shape of the Mull of Deerness (ON *Múli*, Snout) as it is like an animal's head) is joined to the rest of the Mainland by a narrow isthmus. On the south side the lovely sandy beach of Dingshowe backed by extensive dunes is one of Orkney's finest.

St Peter's Pool is named after the ruined chapel near the farm of Campston. This large shallow bay ebbs dry. It is very good for watching waders, as well as for collecting shells. Further out, Deer Sound is a fine anchorage and was much used by sailing ships whilst waiting for suitable wind or tide.

**Brochs** Dingshowe (ON *Tings Howe*, Ting Mound, HY548033) is at the west end of the isthmus which separates Deerness from Toab, in a good defensive position. No doubt the Vikings found it to be a good place for their Tings, or meetings. There is another broch, Eves Howe (ON *Efri Howe*, Upper Howe), on the east side of Deer Sound. Nearby Eves Loch is a hot spot for migrant waders and waterfowl.

**Iron Age** Excavations near Skaill (HY589064) have revealed the presence of an Iron Age settlement, a Pictish farmstead, as well as considerable Norse buildings. Plough marks underlie all of these remains.

The Iron Age roundhouse dates from about 100BC and was occupied for a long time. About AD700 the area was paved over and a large Pictish house was built.

**Norse Times** The earlier Scandinavian buildings seemed to be of a lower standard and had poorer quality pottery than the Pictish house. Later Viking structures were somewhat better, however it is possible that the main settlement has been lost to the sea. It may be that the early Norse house was a temporary re-use of an older house by settlers, who later built new buildings on the site. Remains of what may be an 11<sup>th</sup> century bath house, or perhaps a kiln, were also found.

Dingshowe broch



The Brough of Deerness



The sagas make mention of Deerness several times and Thorkell Fostri, who was effective in helping Earl Thorfinn to become sole Earl, lived here. The old church at Skaill had twin towers, but was knocked down in 1789. There is an interesting hog-back gravestone in the present kirk which was found in the graveyard and dates from about AD1100.



Brough of Deerness

**The Brough of Deerness** (HY596088), is about 2km (1.3mi) up the coast from the Mull Head carpark. The remains of a chapel and surrounding buildings cover most of this grassy rock, which is accessible only by a narrow path and nearly cut off at high tide.

There were two phases of building of the chapel, between which a 10<sup>th</sup> century coin was discovered. The present building may be 12<sup>th</sup> century and replaced an earlier wooden structure. Very few burials were found and there was no evidence for Pictish symbol stones or other Christian carvings.

More recent excavations have revealed several Viking Age

houses, which overly earlier buildings which may be Pictish and date from the 6<sup>th</sup> century onwards. The site was occupied over a long period and was probably the base of a local chief rather than a monastery. The function some of the buildings examined so far also changed over time from domestic use to sheds or byres.

There are remains of a wall and an entrance on the southwest corner of the stack, and also a well. A clearly defined track leads towards the chapel from the southeast corner of the Brough. A recent geophysical survey suggests that a large part of the site may have been covered by buildings during Viking times.



Brough of Deerness

The Brough of Deerness



**DEERNESS ATTRACTIONS**

- St Peter's Pool
- Dingshowe
- Newark Bay
- Point of Ayre
- Sandside Bay
- The Gloup
- Brough of Deerness
- Mull Head
- Covenanter's Memorial
- Halley Beach
- Mirkady Point
- Eve's Howe (broch)



The Gloup

**The Gloup** (ON *Gluppa*, chasm, HY593074) is a large cave which has collapsed on the landward side to leave a chasm 70m by 40m and 30m deep, joined to the sea by a cavern 60m long. Access can be had by boat in calm weather, but when there is a big easterly sea running the effect is dramatic. Care should be taken near the edge

here. There is a good view from a wooden gantry.

**Mull Head** (HY594097), a Nature Reserve owned by the Council, is about 1.5km (1mi) north of the Gloup. The path goes past the Brough of Deerness and follows the cliffs round Lang Geo to Mull Head (48m). Although the cliffs



Mull Head

Old Kirk, Skaill, demolished in 1789



between the Brough and Swin Ber are not very high, they are still impressive. A roost or tide race forms off the Mull which is especially spectacular when an easterly sea, driven by a south-east gale and a spring flood tide coincide.

There are several small coves to scramble down to which can be utterly peaceful even on a windy day. These include Howan Licken and Ramna Geo. Otters may be seen among the seaweed and Puffins, Guillemots, Razorbills Shags and Kittiwakes breed on the cliffs. Red-throated Divers, Arctic Skuas and several species of waders also breed here.

**Visitor Centre** Near the carpark a cottage has been made into a visitor centre. It has displays and leaflets about the Reserve as well as toilets and shelter from the weather on a rough day. The Mull Head Circular walk is about 5.6km (3.5 mi) and taking in the Covenanters' Memorial is about a further 4km (2.5mi).

**Sandside** formerly had spectacular sand dunes, but they have long since been removed to make concrete. The beach remains very attractive with fine views over Copinsay. It can be accessed by a track on the way to the Gloup. The dunes and machair are good places to hunt wild flowers in summer. Many species of Eyebright and orchids such as Lesser Twayblade may be found here.

The Old Kirk at Skaill is now

looked after by a trust. Inside may be seen a Norse hog backed gravestone. Until 1789 there was a much more interesting church here with twin round towers. Around the farm of Skaill there are a large amount of Pictish and Norse buildings which were excavated in the 1960s and 1970s.

Although nothing is visible to the visitor here today it is thought that Skaill is the site of Hlaupandanes, the residence of Thorkel Fostri, in the 11<sup>th</sup> century. Substantial, Pictish, Norse and later buildings were found, including what may have been the main house. Bronze and Iron Age occupation was also found in the area.



Dingieshowe looking southwest

**Dingieshowe** has a carpark with toilets and is universally known as Dingieshowe, but the map calls it Taracliff Bay. There are fine views to Copinsay and the Pentland Skerries from here. After a good southeasterly gale spectacular seas break here. All of the beaches on the southeast coast here can be good places to seek shells.

**South coast west** There are good walks in both directions from Dingieshowe. Take a south-westerly route along the low cliffs past a standing stone at Stembister. There is a miniature castle at Claisdie (HY539017) and then a small geo at Long Geo. From the cairn at Roseness there is a good view over Holm Sound, Burray



Newark Bay

Newark Bay slipway with Copinsay in the background



### Mermaids

In the 1890s, a Mermaid is said to have been sighted at Newark Bay for several summers. They were believed to be the daughters of *Finnmen*.

This one was described as being "the loveliest creature on God's Earth, or in a' the wide sea. Her face was most lovely, and her form perfect in shape and proportion, while her golden hair, descending below her waist fell over her snow-white skin. Her posterior was a tail in the water, and a beautiful petticoat embroidered with silver and gold on land, though often folded to appear like a tail."





The Covenanters' Memorial overlooks Denwick

and South Ronaldsay. Return via the road, passing Castle Howe, the old kirk and the interesting old farmhouse at Greenwall on the way.

**South coast east** A coastal path goes from Dingshowe to Newark Bay and on to Point of Ayre. A small rock stack, Muckle Castle (HY563032) is a volcanic plug and quite distinct from the surrounding sandstone beds. The route passes a burnt mound at Peerie Castle, before reaching Newark Bay, another very attractive beach which has a convenient new slipway. The dunes here are full of wild flowers in summer.

The path continues to Point of Ayre (HY591038), along the

Eve's Howe, Deerness, is a ruined broch



**SS Tennessee** In May 1940 the 5,667 ton Norwegian ship *Tennessee* ran ashore on Tammy Tiffy, a small skerry south of Skail. She was in a convoy and had collided with *SS Baron Fairlie* due to dense fog.

On board was a cargo of soya bean meal and teak. Much of this was officially salvaged before the ship broke up. However local folk "liberated" large quantities too. The meal fed the hens for months, while the teak was used for many purposes including fencing posts, some of which remain in good condition today.

**Northwest coast** The side road, B9051, is signposted to Halley on the north coast of Deerness. At the end of the road there is a fine small beach, sheltered when others are exposed. Another side road at South Keigar goes to the western shore. The broch of Eves Howe still has imposing ruins and overlooks the small loch of Eves Loch. This is a good place to seek migrants as well as breeding waders and waterfowl.

The shoreline here is a mixture of muddy sand and rocks. A circular walk takes in Halley, Eves Howe and Mirkady Point. The small Loch of Ouse is also worth a check during migration times. Common Seals haul out here, especially on the Point of Mirkady. Their mournful calls may be heard all round the bay.

**The Covenanters** After the Reformation in 1560, the Church of Scotland adopted a strict form of Presbyterianism, which was independent of the Crown and rejected Bishops. It was strongly against graven images, and did not celebrate Christmas or Easter. In contrast the Stewarts believed in the *Divine Right of Kings* and that they were appointed by God, so that their divine authority was above the civil Kirk. Charles I decided on the introduction of the *Book of Common Prayer*, which was finally published in 1637 and ordered to be read throughout the land.

**National Covenant** In 1638 the *National Covenant* was signed by huge numbers of people in Scotland. It was an anti-Anglican statement, and brought the Kirk and people of Scotland into a virtual state of civil war with the King and the rule of law. The ultimate result was the destruction of the Stewart dynasty and the introduction of constitutional monarchy. The Kirk had supported Cromwell, but when Charles II was restored to the throne in 1660, he repudiated the Covenant, and 28 years of bitter struggle followed.

The government appointed Bishops and curates to run the church, and over 400 non-conforming ministers were sacked. However most people refused to attend these services. Instead open-air conventicles became very popular. Persecution by soldiers became so oppressive that a spontaneous uprising occurred in 1666. Hundreds of Covenanters were killed or executed as a result. The government made attendance at conventicles a treasonable offence in 1670.

In 1679 things had become so bad that a large group of Covenanters openly rebelled. After initial success at the Battle of Drumclog, they were roundly defeated at the Battle of Bothwell Bridge. 600 were killed during the battle, and 1,200 taken prisoner. They were held in the Greyfriars Kirkyard in Edinburgh for five months, during which some died, others escaped and some recanted.

**Crown of London** The remaining 257 Covenanters were to be transported to the American plantations as slaves aboard the *Crown of London* from Leith. Under a Captain Patterson, the ship reached Deer Sound on 10<sup>th</sup> December and anchored off Scarvataing. When the anchor cable broke, the ship was driven ashore. The crew escaped by means of one of the masts but the prisoners were below beneath battened hatches, and but for the actions of one of the crew all would have drowned. Whether the grounding was intentional or not is not known, but the prisoners were certainly a problem for the Government.

Around 47 did reach the shore, many of whom were soon recaptured and shipped across the Atlantic. Some are said to have escaped aboard a Dutch ship which was in Stromness at the time. One man reputedly changed his name to Deerness and settled on Sanday, while others named Ritchie married in Rackwick on Hoy, taking the name Rich.

The years 1680 to 1685 became known as the *Killing Times*. The Catholic James II had come to the throne and was determined to eradicate Presbyterianism. A census was taken to help put down the Covenanters, and soldiers

were given *carte blanche* to kill anyone suspected of being a Covenanter without trial.

Men were murdered in front of their families, and women were drowned whilst tied to stakes in the ebb. Others were sold as slaves to the West Indies or Virginia. A preacher, Renwick, was the last to be murdered for his beliefs, being hung in Edinburgh in 1688.

In 1689 Parliament declared the throne vacant. William and Mary, the daughter of James II, were appointed joint monarchs and Presbyterianism was accepted as the established church in Scotland. Ultimately the common people won the day over oppression. Daniel Defoe reckoned that at least 18,000 people were murdered by the Government for adhering to their beliefs.

**Covenanters' Memorial** In 1888 a memorial was erected near the site of the wreck. Robert Halliday Gunning, a surgeon from southwest Scotland, was instrumental in its construction as he donated £50. He had become rich whilst practising in Brazil and had strong connections to the Kirk. Over 500 people attended the inauguration on 22<sup>nd</sup> August 1888.

Sufficient money was left to erect another monument in Kirkwall. An *absurdity in polished granite, utterly out of keeping with its surroundings* was put up on the site of the Old Tolbooth near the Cathedral in 1890. This drinking fountain is indeed rather incongruous but sits as a curiosity on the southwest corner of the Kirk Green to this day as a reminder of state terrorism and oppression in Britain.



Aerial view of Copinsay from the north

**COPINSAY** (ON Kolbeinsey, Kolbein's island) is a small wedge-shaped island off the east side of Deerness with a mile-long 70m-high cliff on its east side which is a major breeding ground for sea birds. Copinsay and its holms now form an RSPB Reserve. The east-facing cliff is dark and brooding, but with deep water close-to can be visited by boat.

**Seabird city** is noisy, smelly and very busy in early summer. Although lower than Marwick Head, this cliff is in many ways just as spectacular. About 35,000 pairs of Guillemots, Razorbills and Kittiwakes breed on the convenient ledges of the cliffs, as well as Shags, Rock Doves, many Fulmars and a few Ravens. In the past,

South Bay and Isle Rough at low tide



Peregrines also bred here. Corncrakes still may be heard in the long grass below the cliffs. The small loch at the south end is attractive to wild-fowl and waders.

Grey Seals come ashore to pup on Copinsay in the autumn and are present here all year. This small colony became established in 1992 and has grown very substantially since then. The seals lie up on the skerries near the jetty.

The islands have good examples of unimproved sub-maritime and coastal inundation grasslands with a number of distinct vegetation zones. The cultivated area has been reseeded with special mixtures designed to attract birds. For a

time Copinsay was ungrazed, but this was not a success as the grass became rank and tussocky. Despite the exposure the island has lush pasture, well-suited to cattle and sheep.

**Lighthouse** The lighthouse was completed in 1915, but only permanently lit in 1919, after World War I, and completed the lighting on the east side of Orkney for shipping. It was automated in 1991. Originally there was a large foghorn which was operated by compressed air. It was replaced by a much smaller device but this was in turn discontinued.

During the 1930s the Commissioners were doing their annual rounds. One of them deigned to speak with

some of the natives, who were some of the Groat family. Several peedie boys were at the top of the cliff with a horsehair rope at the end of which one brother was collecting birds' eggs. The visitor was astonished and asked what they would do if the rope broke and the little boy fell. The answer was "Ah weel there's plenty more o'wis". Another version is "there's plenty more rope".

The island used to support a large family and had its own school in one of the rooms of the house. Below the farmhouse, midden and old walls are exposed on the low bank facing the sea and are eroding away, showing that this fertile island was occupied in ancient times. There used to be excellent Haddock fishing in the South Bay, and the many creel buoys show that the area is still good for crabs and lobsters.

Copinsay is about 5.5km (3.5mi) from Sandside in Deerness. It is a delightful island to visit, especially in early summer when the birds are nesting and the wild flowers are at their best. The lighthouse pier below the farmhouse is a convenient landing, but the

Looking north towards North View and The Horse



Copinsay lighthouse in the mist

approach through the North Ebb skerries North Ebb requires care and knowledge of the leading marks. It also ebbs dry. The Bight of Hamnavo on the west side of Corn Holm is a better anchorage.

**HORSE OF COPINSAY** has a large colony of Great Black-backed Gulls, and immature Cormorants roost.

Hard to reach because of the strong tides around it, the Horse is a must for all island-baggers. This large rock, 28m high, has a Blaster Hole at the north end, which is very spectacular in rough weather, if visible in the spray.

**CORN** or **KIRK HOLM** is very good for Puffins, and has



Isle Rough in the mist from Copinsay

Copinsay lighthouse







December sunrise over Copinsay from Newark Bay

the remains of an ancient chapel. It can be reached at low tide from Copinsay by Isle Rough, a well-named ayre, or storm beach, of large stones, which ebbs dry. There is a colony of Great Black-backed Gulls, as well as many Eiders and Oystercatchers. The Bight of Hamnavo, on the west side, is an excellent place to observe

Puffins, Black Guillemots and seals up close, while the shingle of Scarf Skerry is home to perhaps the largest colony of Oyster Plant in Orkney.

The Belgian trawler *Prince De Liege*, ran aground on the eastern tip of Corn Holm in December 1962, having mistaken Copinsay for Auskerry.



Wreck of the "Prince De Liege" on Corn Holm

Oysterplant grows abundantly on the shingle



The bow is now lying high and dry on the east of Corn Holm. Most of the vessel was salvaged.

**BLACK HOLM** is made of black volcanic rock and is joined to Corn Holm by a shingle storm beach. A Bronze Age cist was discovered here.

**WARD HOLM** has two prominent cairns, one of which is probably on top of a Neolithic chambered cairn. The island is accessible at low tide from Corn Holm. The whole Copinsay group is in a way Orkney in miniature and well worth the effort required to get there. Boat trips are sometimes arranged from Sandside in Deerness.

Puffins breed on Copinsay and the holms



Horse of Copinsay from the east



Copinsay lighthouse



There is now a substantial colony of Grey Seals on Copinsay

Gannets roosting on the Horse of Copinsay



### The Copinsay Brownie

Long ago Copinsay was inhabited by an unmarried farmer. One winter's night he had an unusual visitor who was naked and extremely ugly. It had an odd-shaped bald head, a beard which looked like seaweed and gave off a faint iridescence.

Thinking that the visitor was supernatural, the farmer grabbed his psalm book and made a circle in the air with his steel razor, but this did not scare the visitor, which calmly watched him and made strange noises..

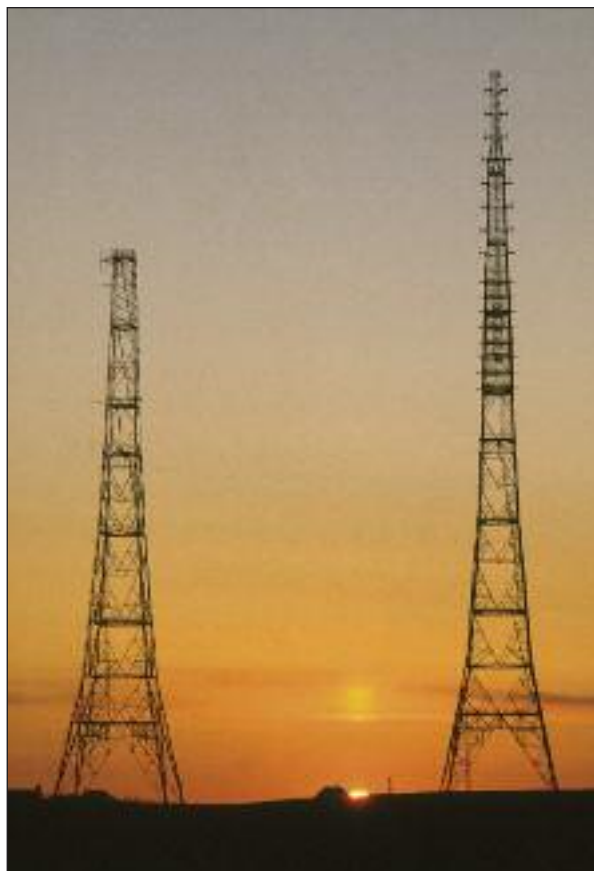
Attempts to scare off the strange creature with the poker and his shepherd's crook had no effect. Eventually the Brownie as he became know explained that he was called "Hughbo". He had spent his whole life in the sea living off the bones of drowned seamen, but dearly wished to stay ashore.

The Brownie agreed to grind corn for the farmer every night in return for a bowl of milk and a handful of *burstin* - roasted barley. All went well until the farmer married and took his new bride to live on Copinsay. The wife took pity on the naked Brownie and made him a warm coat with a hood, which she left for him on the quernstone.

When Hughbo saw the coat he immediately began crying bitterly and said over and over, "Hughbo's gotten coat and hood, So Hughbo can do no more good", whereupon he shot outside, never to reappear.



RAF Netherbutton was a WWII radar station then a BBC TV station



**HOLM** (ON *Homn*, haven or good anchorage) is pronounced "Ham". The eastern part of the parish is known as Paplay (ON *Papa-byli*, home or settlement of Papae). According to the Orkneyinga Saga the Sigurd who married Earl Erlend's widow, Thora, the mother of St Magnus, lived here. The old church is on the shore at Howes Wick (HY513005) and this may well be the site of a much earlier Celtic church.

**Picts** A Pictish symbol stone was found in Holm in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, but its exact provenance is unclear. The "Graemeshall Stone" may have been associated with the chapel that once stood near the mouth of the Graemeshall Burn at "Mass Howe", which may have been dedicated to Mary.

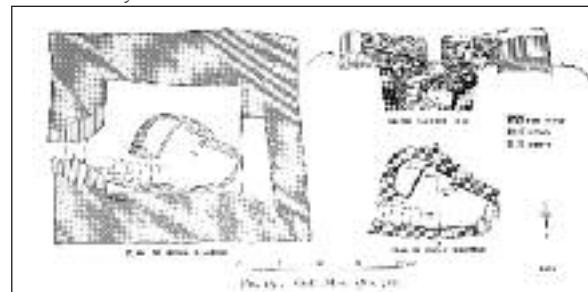
**Castle Howe** (HY514003), which strongly resembles the small stone castle of Cubbie Roo on Wyre, could be the remains of a large Norse stronghold, and it may be built on top of an Iron Age broch. At the eastern approach to Scapa Flow and overlooking the fertile area of Paplay, this would be a good place to establish a stronghold. This large unexcavated mound may hide all sorts of secrets, but so far the visitor must use imagination.

**RAF Netherbutton Radar Station** (HY463044), on the main A961, Kirkwall-Holm

road, was the most northerly of the "Chain Home" of radar stations built in the late 1930s all the way from Land's End to Orkney. Each such station had 4 steel towers, which were the transmitting aerials, here on the west side of the road, and four wooden towers on the east side, which were the receiving aerials. Although all the towers have now gone, much remains of the site including the transmitter room (now a house), the powerhouse and several other buildings.

Initially the station used equipment from other sites and by 1st June 1939 it was operational, but with small 90ft towers and obsolete electronics. Four 350ft metal transmitting towers were built in 1940, and the station was fully complete in July 1941, by which time the German air threat was much diminished. Netherbutton originally was linked to the Wick operations room, but from October 1940 it reported to the Combined Gunnery and Sector Operations Centre at Kirkwall (the "Black Building"), which then controlled all of Orkney's anti-air-

Castle Howe may be a Norse castle built on a broch



Graemeshall coastal defence battery and Churchill Barrier No.1



Castle Howe may be a Norse castle

craft guns and fighter squadrons.

At the end of the war the station was re-equipped, but by 1955 it was redundant. The station closed in 1958, but then found a new use as a television relay station. One of the towers was raised to 411ft and the transmitter block used for the equipment. The remaining two towers were

finally dismantled in 1986 by the same company which had built them 47 years previously,

**HOLM ATTRACTIONS**

- Netherbutton
- St Mary's Village
- Loch of Ayre
- Bay of Sandoyne
- Churchill Barriers
- Graemeshall Loch
- Mass Howe
- WWII gun battery
- Holm Sound
- Wester Sand
- Howes Wick
- Old St Nicholas Kirk
- Paplay
- Castle Howe
- Greenwall
- Roseness





St Mary's in about 1900



Totem pole at the end of No.1 Barrier

when the BBC moved to Keelylang. Orkney Wireless Museum in Kirkwall has various artefacts relating to this

Howes Wick and the Old Kirk with Roseness in the background



and other aspects of radio in World War II.

**St Mary's Village**, and its sheltered Bay of Ayre was a busy place during the Herring fishing season. Before the building of the Barriers a ferry ran from here to Burray. The name is from an ancient chapel, whose site is now lost. It may well have been near the broch, as the Loch of Ayre is also known as St Mary's Loch, but it was more likely at Mass Howe, near the mouth of Graemeshall Burn where an inscribed Pictish stone is said to have been found in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

**A French Raid** There is an attractive old storehouse at its

eastern end with a steep roof and crow-stepped gables, which was built in 1649. It was looted in 1694 by two French privateers which sailed into Holm Sound, after kidnapping three fishermen who were forced to act as pilots. The store was originally used for the collection of goods used to settle skat, the tax due under Udal Law.

The French landed on Lamb Holm and stole all of the animals there as well as supplies of grain, meal and butter. They also smashed a boat and took household goods, before landing next to the storehouse and taking everything of value. Beacons had meanwhile been lit and soon over 400 people, many of them armed, were watching helplessly. The laird fired his cannon but its range was too short to reach the ships.

**Graemeshall House** (HY488017) has a large private collection of antiques collected by Norris Wood over 55 years, the "Norwood Collection". There are five rooms of exhibits, and a small chapel. The house was originally built about 1626 by Bishop Graham as an extension to the older House of Meall and has since been extensively modified. Open May to September, admission charge.

**Wildlife** St Mary's Loch and Graemeshall Loch are both good spots for wintering wildfowl and unusual vagrants



St Mary's from Lamb Holm

during the migration seasons. Both can be observed using the car as a hide. Holm Sound and St Mary's Bay are also particularly interesting in winter with Long-tailed Ducks, Velvet Scoters and Great Northern Divers. Otters frequent the shores and are sometimes seen around the Barriers. Occasionally pods of Dolphins appear, no doubt chasing shoals of Mackerel or Herring.

**Walks** There is a pleasant walk out to the point at Roseness (ND520990), where there is a new lighthouse. It is possible to continue along the low cliffs to Dingshowe in Deerness. There are good views from

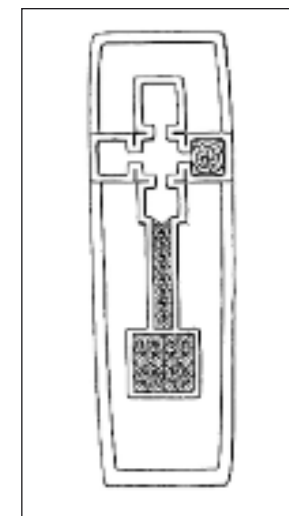
Old storehouse built in 1649



here to the east to Copinsay and southwards to the South Isles.

**St Mary's** There is a fine circular coastal walk via Skaildaquoy Point, and Howequoy Head to the Bay of Sandoyne. Return by side roads to the Loch of Ayre with its ruined broch and wildfowl.

**Paplay** The area around the Old St Nicholas Kirk on the shores of Holm Sound is particularly attractive. The Beaches at Wester Sand and Howes Wick are small but interesting, and are good places to look for migrant waders. The fertile east part of Holm is known as Paplay. The many small roads and



"Graemeshall" Pictish stone

viewpoints are well worth exploring. Greenwall is one of the oldest inhabited houses in Orkney.

Graemeshall formerly housed the "Norwood Collection"

