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ROUSAY (ON *Hrolfsey*, Rolf's Island), is where, more than anywhere else in Orkney, the past meets the present. Indeed it has been described as *Egypt of the North* on account of its large number of prehistoric tombs. It is a hilly island about 8km (5mi) in diameter, with fertile land around the coast and moorland inland. The road runs round the island, and makes a pleasant 21km (13mi) circular tour with many sites of interest. Rousay is a delight to bird watchers and archaeologists, as well as to fishermen and walkers.

The island has been inhabited for over 5,000 years and there are many chambered cairns, as well as brochs, Viking sites and medieval ruins to look at. In the 1930s Walter Grant of Highland Park Distillery, who also owned Trumland, did a great deal to develop the prehistoric archaeology of Rousay. As a result there are several very well presented monuments to visit today.

Neolithic Age Rousay has a particularly good selection of chambered cairns, many of which are substantially intact, and which suggest the impor-

ance of these structures to these people as well as illustrating their development.

Taversoe Tuick, near the pier, (HY425276), is an unusual two-storied cairn similar to Huntersquoy on Eday, was discovered when a Mrs Burroughs wanted to make a "look-out" on top of the mound. There are separate entrances for each chamber.

On excavation several skeletons as well as cremations and a large amount of pottery was found. Taversoe Tuick is unique in having a "mini-

Taversoe Tuick is an unusual two-storied chambered cairn near Trumland



Taversoe Tuick mini entrance



Aerial view of Rousay from the north-west with Egilsay and Wyre in the background and Eynhallow on the right

tomb" near the lower entrance, which is connected to the lower main chamber by a narrow, stoned-lined passage which tapers from about 50cm wide to less than 10cm in the lower chamber. It has

been suggested that this shaft allowed the living to communicate with their ancestors. The external tomb contained three small Unstan Ware pots.



Taversoe Tuick upper level

Taversoe Tuick is unique in having a "mini-tomb" near the lower entrance



**ROUSAY
ATTRICTIONS**

- Interpretation Centre, Pier
- Trumland House (private)
- Trumland House Gardens
- Trumland RSPB Reserve
- Blotchnie Fiold viewpoint
- Taversoe Tuick Cairn
- Knowe of Hundlett, broch
- Blackhammer Cairn
- Knowe of Yarso Cairn
- Knowe of Burrian, broch
- Westness House (private)
- Westness Walk
- Moaness
- Knowe of Swandro
- St Mary's Kirk
- The Wirk
- Midhowe Broch
- Midhowe Cairn
- Muckle Water
- Quandale Viewpoint
- Tofts
- Scabra Head
- Wasbister
- Saviskaill Bay
- Green Gairsty
- Leean Viewpoint
- Kierfea summit viewpoint
- Digro Memorial
- Faralsett Head Walk
- Yenasteen
- Loch of Sockness



Midhowe cairn is protected by a large shed, and has been described as being like a "great ship of death"

Bigland Round (HY438325) and the Knowe of Craie (HY419315) are small round chambered cairns of the Orkney-Cromarty type, divided into three distinct spaces by upright flagstones like stalls in a byre. The design resembles the Knap of Howar on Papay, where the houses are divided by similar uprights. These tombs may be early examples and are possibly associated with the nearby Rinyo settle-

ment. Nearly all the Rousay chambered cairns are prominently situated overlooking fertile lower pastures.

Long cairns There is a sequence of development evident from these small *tripartite* cairns to the very long ones of Midhowe (HY372304) and the nearby, but ruinous, Knowe of Ramsay (HY400280) with 12 and 14 compartments respectively. In each case pottery, where present

was of the Unstan Ware type. These two very long cairns are also unusual in being sited near the shore.

The Knowe of Yarso (HY404281), another stalled cairn, with four compartments, is also in good condition and contained the remains of at least 21 people, mostly in the inner chamber. The skulls were placed side by side at the bottom of the wall face up, while other

The settlement of Rinyo was excavated in the 1930s by Childe



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Oven base at Rinyo



bones were disarticulated and broken. Flint arrowheads and implements, bone tools and pottery sherds were also present.

Blackhammar (HY414277) is another, longer stalled cairn, which contained only two burials together with a broken Unstan Ware bowl, an axe-head and a flint knife. The tomb was very carefully constructed with six pairs of stalls, while the exterior was built on a layer of flat slabs with slanting slabs in interlocking triangles which can be seen at the entrance and which resemble the patterns used on Unstanware pots. Both tombs were in use about 3000BC.

Midhowe Cairn is the largest and longest in Orkney excavated so far and like the other chambered cairns dates about 3000BC. Now covered by a large building to protect it, the structure is 32.5m long and 13m wide. Almost complete, the outer wall base is of flat horizontal slabs, while above this are slabs laid at an angle in herringbone fashion in alternating layers, again reminiscent of the decoration on Unstan Ware pottery.

The chamber is 23.2m by 2m, and divided into 12 compartments, by vertical stalls, while the inner end may have had a shelf like at Unstan. Low stone benches were placed between several of the stalls with burials on top. The tomb was full of stones before excavation and remains of 25 people were found, mostly in a crouched position on or under the eastern



Blackhammar has six pairs of stalls



Knowe of Yarso is smaller with four pairs of stalls



Midhowe is very solidly constructed with a substantial exterior wall

Midhowe has twelve pairs of stalls, with shelves in between most



shelves of the chamber. Contemporary field-walls which adjoin the tomb have been traced 20m north-east and 13m south-east, showing that the tomb may have formed part of the surrounding agricultural infrastructure.

Neolithic Houses The Neolithic settlement of Rinyo (HY430322) near the farm of Bigland, although now back-filled, is similar to Skara Brae with at least seven houses. Like the more famous village, the houses had stone drains, fireplaces, beds and boxes. Only a few upright stones and drystone walls are visible today. Grooved Ware pottery was found. The houses had clay ovens which have not been found elsewhere. These were circular on the outside, but square inside and mounted on a hollowed-out



Midhowe Broch is very well built with an impressive sea-facing entrance

square stone. They would have been heated by lighting a fire inside and then used to bake or roast food.

Iron Age Rousay is ringed with brochs. There are a string of five running from North Howe to the Howe of Hunclett facing Eynhallow Sound, and a similar string of brochs on the Evie and Rendall side. These are complemented by a further broch

at Scockness and an artificial island known as Burrian on the Loch of Wasbister. When in use these lines of defensive structures must have looked most impressive.

Midhowe Broch (HY371306), stands nearby in a fine position overlooking Eynhallow Sound. The broch is nearly circular, 18m in diameter outside and 9.6m inside. There is an internal gallery at ground



Midhowe Broch is surrounded by a ditch and rampart on the landward side

The interior showing partitions, hearth and well



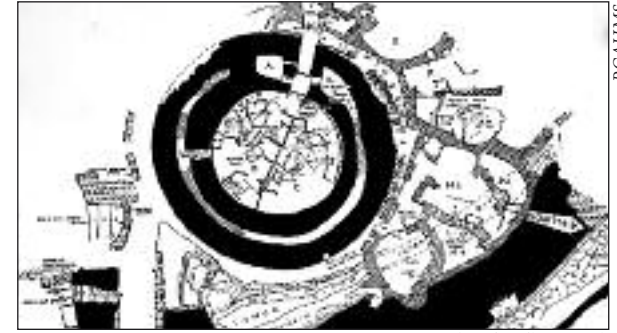
Ruinous buildings on the outside of the broch tower



level which seems to have weakened the structure and was subsequently filled up. The walls still reach 4.3m in height. The compact structure of surrounding ramparts suggests a fortified family house, rather than a major settlement, while the interior plan is confusing with several partitions, fireplaces and tanks, as well as a superb dry-stone alcove on the north wall. There is evidence of a first floor wooden gallery which might have been sleeping accommodation and a stairway leads to an upper gallery between the broch walls.

The surrounding outside buildings have been largely removed by erosion, and only part of one house survives. One was used for iron working, but no artefacts were found. It is unclear whether the outbuildings are later than the broch. Artefacts found included some of Roman origin - pottery pieces and a bronze ladle - as well as bone and stone tools, quernstones and bronze jewellery. Evidence of bronze working included broken crucibles and moulds. Bone and stone spindle whorls were found, showing that the people could spin wool. The design suggests that this may have been one of the earliest Orkney brochs to be a true tower. It was occupied from about the 2nd century BC to the 2nd century AD.

Viking and Norse Age The Westness Walk starts at Westness farm and goes along



Excavator's plan of Midhowe Broch



Midhowe Broch has a nicely constructed alcove

the shore to Midhowe. It passes a cross section of Orkney's past from 3000BC to the 19th century may be seen. Westness House, was built in the late 18th century by the laird, a Traill.

On Moaness (HY376293) is a graveyard containing many Pictish and Viking burials, some of which have been excavated recently. While the

Pictish graves were simple interments, many of the Viking remains were accompanied by brooches, pins, tools and weapons. One of the Norse burials was of a woman with her infant child and the artefacts included a beautiful Celtic brooch-pin, probably made in Ireland.

Two boat graves were excavated, the boats being clinker-

Well and hearth at Midhowe





St Mary's Church dates from the 16th century



The Wirk probably formed part of a large Norse hall

built with iron nails on oak. The shape of the boats could be made out from the iron rivets and each contained the remains of men together with weapons and tools. One man seems to have died fighting as there were 4 arrowheads in his body. Clearly Westness was an important Viking settlement. Sadly there is not much to see here at present and

there are not even replicas of any of the artefacts which were found to see. They are held at Royal Museum of Scotland in Edinburgh.

Norse Farm The ruins of a Norse farm lie nearby (HY375296), above the Bay of Swandro. A house about 37m long, divided into two rooms and two smaller build-

ings which might have been byres were excavated. Westness is several times mentioned in the *Orkneyinga Saga* and this might have been the house of Sigurd, a 12th century friend of Earl Paul Haakonson. The latter was kidnapped at here by Sweyn Asleifson in about 1135.

On the shore east of Moaness there is a Norse boat shed, or noust, with remains of a slipway (HY278292). These nousts are common in Norway and no doubt protection of valuable boats from the elements was a top priority for the Viking farmer. This building was a shed about 8m long and 4.5m wide, open to the shore and well sheltered at the top of a small inlet. It would have accommodated a yole-sized boat with ease.

The Knowe of Swandro (HY375297) is the remains of a broch, probably much robbed to build the Norse farmstead next to it. One of the longhouses was domestic and the other the byre. At Knowe of Rowiegar is a small ruined chambered tomb, while further on are the sub-

stantial ruins of a farmstead. Skaill is an 18th century farm from which the people were evicted last century by General Burroughs of Trumland.

The 16th century former parish church of St Mary's (HY374302) has been dis-used since 1820 and may be on the site of an earlier church. Some carved free-stones have been found here, which may have come from a tomb or chapel in the church.

Nearby stands The Wirk, a square tower attached to a massive rectangular structure which continues into the field beyond. This building is a two-storey hall, probably dating from the 13th century, which was clearly rather splendid in its time. The masonry of the Wirk resembles that of Cubbie Roo's Castle on Wyre and Castle Howe in Holm.

Medieval and Later History Brough Farm (HY375308) ruins date from the 18th century, but the site has been uninhabited since 1845. The



Tofts in Quandale dates from at least 1600



Kierfea (235m) and Sourin from the east, clearly showing terracing

Westness area was the main centre in Rousay from at least the Iron Age until the 19th century and the estate of Brough was one of the most valuable estates in Orkney. About 1600 the main farmstead moved from here to the site of the present Westness farm. The long period of settlement in this part of Rousay means that there are likely to be

many more interesting finds for future archaeologists. The Traills were a Fife family brought to prominence in Orkney due to the Stewart Earls and are first recorded at Westness in 1615. Their contribution to history was to make Rousay the only place in Orkney to suffer clearances, even if this was confined to Westness and Quandale.

View over Wasbister and Saviskaill Bay to Faraclett Head from the Brae of Moan



The Burrian, Loch of Wasbister



Muckle Water is good for Trout fishing





Scabra Head has a natural arch

Quandale had the reputation in the past for being one of the best corn (bere) growing areas in the North Isles, but George William Traill, who had made his money in India, thought that sheep would make more money, so he evicted the people and destroyed their farmsteads, except for the fascinating old house of Tofts (HY373324).

This remarkable building, now roofless and in disrepair, is claimed to be the oldest two-storey house in Orkney and dates from 1600 or earlier. It was thought to be decaying over 70 years ago, but no archaeological investigation or preventative maintenance has taken place. The pattern of

houses and fields can still be seen and shows the complicated system of runrigs previously used to divide up the land. The clearances took place in 1845 and 1855-59.

Trumland House was built in 1873 for General Burroughs, a soldier who had made his name in India and had been left the Westness Estate by his uncle. This bequest did not include any of Traill's substantial Indian fortune but did include the debts of the estate. The house was designed by David Bryce in traditional Scottish Baronial style and cost nearly £12,000.

Burroughs owned almost all of Rousay by this time, and set

about maximising his return from the estate by raising rents. When the Napier Commission visited Orkney in 1883 the Sourin Free Church minister, Archibald MacCallum gave a very articulate statement which had been prepared by the Rousay crofters.

In response Burroughs stated, "Is the property mine, or is it not mine? If it is mine, surely I can do what I consider best for it? If these people are not contented and happy, they can go away." The passing of the Crofters Act 1886 was to cause an outbreak of war between laird and crofter, which the former could not win, no matter how unpleasant he might try to be.

The house unfortunately went on fire by accident in 1985 and despite roof repairs lay derelict until recently. New owners are now planning to renovate the house and restore the gardens. The grounds and gardens are open to the public from May to October for a small admission charge. Some parts of the house can be viewed further rooms will

Loch of Wasbister with Kierfea in the background



be able to be viewed as restoration work progresses.

James Leonard of Digro was chairman of the tenant's committee which gave evidence to Napier. He, as well as James Grieve of Outerdykes, was evicted by Burroughs for their submissions to the enquiry. This was a national scandal at the time because Burroughs had defied a Royal Commission. For some obscure reason he was not stripped of his rank and title, but the last laugh is on James Leonard as a memorial plaque was erected in 2004 near his former croft of Digro (HY428320) to commemorate the defiant stand of the Rousay crofters.

West coast The west side of Rousay is maritime heath, and in summer supports large colonies of Arctic Tern, as well as Great Skua, Arctic Skua, Common and Great Black-backed Gulls. Oystercatcher, I, Golden Plover, Ringed Plover, Snipe and Eider also breed here. The unique flora includes *Primula scotica*, Grass of Parnassus Sea Plantain and Spring Squill.

Scabra Head, facing Eynhallow Sound, has a superb natural arch, while along the west side of the island are particularly fine cliffs, where care must be taken near the edge. If the sea is high the blowholes at Sinians of Cutclaws (HY365318) may be in action. Hellia Spur



Nousty Sand at Saviskaill is one of the few sandy beaches on Rousay



The Brings and Saquoy Head

(HY373340) is full of breeding Guillemot, Razorbill and Kittiwake in summer and a few Puffin nest in burrows at the top of the cliffs. At the Brings (HY383348) there are large cracks in the rocks near the cliffs which blow air on rough days.

Wasbister The Loch of Wasbister is a good place to

observe waterfowl, with several good vantage points from the road which runs around it. Nearby, at Saviskaill, is one of Rousay's very few sandy beaches, Nousty Sand (HY402335). Green Gairsty (HY410326) is a *Treb Dyke*, an ancient boundary wall which stretches from the road down to the shore.

Sound of Longataing from the Holm of Sockness





Sunset down Eynhallow Sound from the Westside

The road reaches 137m at its highest point near a quarry from where there is an excellent view of Saviskaill Bay and the other North Isles. The view is even better from the top of nearby Kierfea Hill (HY423322, 235m). The small chambered cairn Knowe of Craie (HY419315) is on the southern slope of the hill overlooking the Sourin valley.

RSPB Reserve. The RSPB has a marked circular nature trail on their Trumland Reserve. The warden is based at the Onziebust Reserve on Egilsay all year Tel (01856) 821395.

Woodland walk Trumland Wood is one of the few large

areas of trees in Orkney and it attracts a good selection of woodland species. These include Robin, Wren, Dunnock, Willow Warbler, Song Thrush, Blackbird and Chaffinch.

Westness Walk, This evocative route has been described as *the most important archaeological mile in Scotland*, and passes Orkney's biggest Neolithic chambered cairn, several brochs, Viking ruins and a cemetery as well as farm buildings and a church dating from the 12th to the 19th centuries. The *Orkneyinga Saga* mentions the area several times and there are excellent views of Eynhallow Sound and the West Mainland.

Rousay and Eynhallow Sound from Evie



Faraclett Walk (4km) Bigland Round Cairn (HY 438325) as well as the remains of the settlement of Rinyo (HY436324) are uphill from the modern farm of Bigland. There is a footpath around Faraclett Head (HY443335, 106m), from where there are spectacular panoramic views over the Westray Firth. The strong tides in the Rull Röst cause violent seas in northwesterly gales. Near The Loch of Scockness stands Yetnasteen (ON *Jotna stein*, Giant's Stone, HY447327), a large monolith which reputedly takes a drink in the loch each Hogmanay. The name refers to the Norse mythology that giants reside in rocks. The stone covers the distance to the loch in two

Faraclett Head with a large rockfall



steps, has a drink and returns to keep watch.

The Loch is a good place to see migrant waders and waterfowl, while the mound of the ruined broch makes a good vantage point. The very pretty little beach at North Sand is another of Rousay's few sandy shores and can be good for *Groatie Buckies*.



Trumland Farm and House from the ferry

Moorland walks Apart from the coastal walks suggested, the centre of the island has many peat tracks which can be followed for example from Sourin, Westness or Blackhammar. Muckle Water, Peerie Water and Loomachun can all be reached in this way. From the top of Blotchnie Fiold (HY418290, 250m) and Knitchen Hill (HY429288, 227m) there are particularly fine views over the North Isles and Mainland.

Walks over the moorland are likely to give sightings of Hen Harrier, Merlin, Peregrine, Kestrel, Short-eared Owl, Grouse, Curlew, Golden Plover and Red-throated Diver. As always care should be taken not to disturb birds during the breeding season.

Migrants. In late spring and in winter there is a large gathering of Long-tailed Ducks in the sounds around Rousay, especially in Wyre Sound. Great

Northern Divers are also present in winter - the best way to see them is from the ferry or other boat. The Lochs of Wasbister and Scockness are popular for migrating waders and waterfowl.

ROUSAY TOURS and TAXIS

Booking / Enquiries
Paddy Maguire

Tel./Fax 01856 821234 Mob 07786 169364

Arriving at Brinyan on the ferry "Eynhallow"



ROUSAY SERVICES

Getting to Rousay, Egilsay & Wyre Orkney Ferries' car ferry *MV Eynhallow* runs numerous services every day from Tingwall in Rendall. Advance booking is essential for vehicles, Tel 01856 751360. See current timetable for details.

Bus Services to Tingwall are operated by Stagecoach, see latest timetables for details Tel 01856 870555

Where to Eat and Drink

Pier Restaurant at ferry terminal - bar meals and evening dinners. Traditional music often played in the evening.

Taversoe Hotel overlooking Eynhallow Sound, open all year, home cooking, B&B Tel 01856 821325

B&B and Self Catering For the full range of available accommodation see the current VisitOrkney and *Isles of Orkney* brochures.

Tours Rousay Tours & Taxis - Tel 01856 821234

Shop & Fuel Marion's Shop in Sourin (not far from the school) is open daily Tel 01856 821365



St Magnus Kirk dates from the second quarter of the 12th century

EGILSAY (ON *Egilsey*, Egil's Isle, or Celtic/Norse *Eaglaisey*, Church Island) is an arrowhead-shaped island east of Rousay which is dominated by the fine 12th century St Magnus Kirk (HY466303). Although only 5km (3mi) long by 2km (1.25mi) wide, the island figures prominently in Orkney history. The present church is thought to be a replacement for a much ear-

lier one. Egilsay was one of the residences of the Bishop who is referred to as being there several times in the *Orkneyinga Saga*.

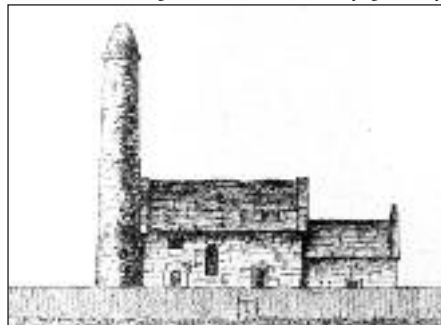
Martyrdom of Magnus Its main claim to fame is the murder of Eadl Magnus at Easter, in 1116 or 1117. A cenotaph was erected in 1937, on the traditional spot where he was killed (HY470300). The St

Magnus Church is thought to have been erected some time after this, most likely at the instigation of Bishop William, and on the site of an earlier church. Built on a prominent rise in the middle of the island, the Romanesque church dates from the second quarter of the 12th century.

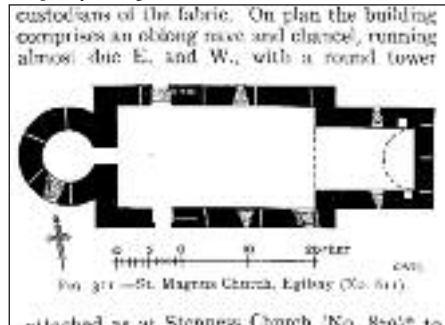
The unique tower is now 14.9m high, but may have once been 20m with a conical roof, while the main flagstone roof was still in place in 1822. Windows at different levels on the tower face north, south, east and west, and the sanctuary over the barrel-vaulted chancel could only be reached from inside the church. It may derive from Irish influence, but more probably from Northern European or Norwegian designs. Though it is unique in Orkney now, there were churches with towers at Skaill in Deerness and in Stenness.

At the south end there is a chambered cairn at Hilllocks of the Graand (HY474278) which may be Maeshowe type, while on the hill northwest of Howe there is a probable burial mound. The 18th century house of Howan (HY478292) is built on the possible site of the Bishop's residence,

St Magnus Church in 1822 with a flagstone roof



Old plan of St Magnus Kirk



Coastal phonebox

south of Manse Loch. This is also the probable site of Egilsay's broch.

Wildlife Egilsay has several small lochs and marshy areas which are good for breeding waders and ducks in summer. Winter brings large numbers of waders to its good tidal feeding spots. These are mainly Turnstone and Purple Sandpiper. There are also several good sandy beaches.

Onziebust RSPB Reserve (year round warden, Tel (01856) 821395) is being managed specifically to benefit Corncrakes. Although you are unlikely to see this elusive species because of its secretive habits, Egilsay is well worth a visit in late spring or summer for its wealth of breeding species such as Redshank and Skylark and to see its rich flora, both signs of the relatively unin-

St Magnus cenotaph, erected 1937



Egilsay from the north with Kili Holm in the foreground

tensive nature of the farming.

KILI HOLM (Celtic/ON *Cille Holm*, Holm of the Cell), off the north end may have been the site of a monastic cell. The possible presence of a Celtic church on Egilsay is strengthened by the name. There is a cairn at the highest point, which may either be a chambered cairn or a prehistoric house, while another mound with protruding stones may also have

been a building. The interestingly named Point of Pitten may be a further echo of a Celtic place name.

The HOLM OF SCOCKNESS (ON *Skogrr Nes*, Wooded Point) is very attractive small island, between Egilsay and Rousay. Strong tides on each side increase the sense of isolation of this charming holm. Signs of ancient remains mingle with undisturbed wildlife to create a sense of mystery.



Ruined structure on Kili Holm - a chambered cairn or a monastic cell

Howan on the east coast is the site of a probable broch





Cubbie Roo's Castle showing the central keep, walls, ditch and banks

WYRE (ON Vigr, Spearhead. This spearhead-shaped island is only 3.5km (2.2mi) long, but it figures strongly in Viking history. The great 12th century personality, Kolbein Hruga, or Cubbie Roo, lived here. He was married to a granddaughter of Earl Paul Thorfinnson and was said to be a very overbearing man.

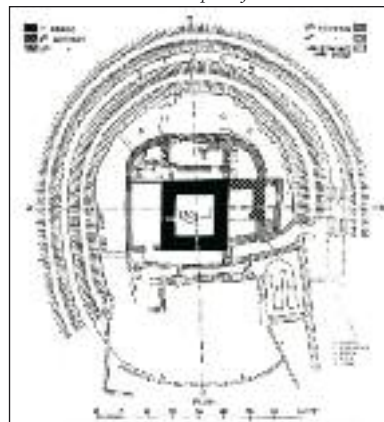
Cubbie Roo He built a strong

castle in about 1150, Cubbie Roo's Castle (HY441262) of today. It withstood at least one remarkable siege in 1231, described in *Haakon's Saga*. Snaekoll Gunnason and his followers took refuge in the castle after killing Earl John, son of Harald Maddadson and the last Norse Earl of Orkney. The castle resisted all attempts by the Earl's men to take it.

Cubbie Roo's Castle is situated on the highest point on Wyre



Old plan of Cubbie Roo's Castle



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This castle is one of the oldest and best preserved for its age in Scotland. The square central keep is 8m across, with the mortared walls 2m thick, and is surrounded by a wall, ditch and bank. It is likely to have been a refuge against attack, rather than a dwelling, which was almost certainly on the site of the nearby Bu Farm, where the Orcadian author and poet, Edwin Muir (1887-1959) spent part of his childhood.

St Mary's Chapel (HY443262) is next to the Castle and is also 12th century. It is a typical Romanesque chapel and would have served the Christian Norse family at the Bu. This chapel may have been founded by Kolbein Hruga, or his son, Bjarni, who became Bishop in 1188.

Braes o'Ha'Breck (HY437259) was discovered after ploughing in 2006. The ruins of five Neolithic houses have been found here. Grooved Ware pottery, stone tools, broken

carved maceheads and stone axe heads were all found. One house measures about 8m by 4m internally with walls 1m thick. The roof was supported by timber posts. Earlier houses were built from wood and later replaced by stone buildings.

The soil is quite shallow and ploughing has scattered much of the evidence. Although few bones have survived there is a large assemblage of botanical remains. At least one sherd of Unstan style pottery was found as well as others which may be Beaker type.

Wyre is a fertile and extensively cultivated little island, which may explain the apparent lack of a chambered cairn. There are however several burnt mounds and the enigmatic but undated enclosures at Skirmie Clett on the east side (HY456263)

Wildlife The Taing, at the west end, is a favourite place for seals to haul out. Arctic Terns, waders and Eiders nest here in summer, while the Loch of the Taing can be good for migrating waders and waterfowl. There are fine views across to Rousay and down Eynhallow Sound from here, a good place to be for a summer sunset.

This is also botanically-rich. A diverse range of plants can be seen in its variety of habitats which include exposed shoreline, saltmarsh, fresh water, marsh and grassy heath.



St Mary's Chapel is just east of Cubbie Roo's Castle

In winter Wyre and Gairsay Sounds are home to large numbers of Long-tailed Duck, Great Northern Diver and even the occasional White-billed Diver. Velvet Scoter and Red-breasted Merganser are also to be seen. Flocks of moulting Eider may also be present.



Window interior view



The Bu was the boyhood home of the poet, Edwin Muir

Excavations at the Neolithic site of Braes of Ha'breck



OLAF



Rousay from Rammageo

EYNHALLOW (ON *Eyin Helga*, Holy Isle). This small island lies between Evie and Rousay and very strong tides flow past both sides, making access difficult. The name of this island suggests that there may have been a Celtic church here in early Norse times, predating the present 12th century one (HY359288).

Monastery There are suggestions that this was possibly part of a monastery during Norse times and perhaps earlier. Evidence for this comes from the *Orkneyinga Saga* and other sources. The *Saga* tells of a Westrayman called Jon Voeng kidnapping Olaf, the son of Sweyn Asleifson and the godson of Kolbein Hruga, from the island, where it is suggested he was being

educated by the monks. A record from *Chronica Mealos* of 1175 states that "Laurence, former Abbot in Orkney, has been elected Abbot at Melrose", showing that there was a monastery somewhere in Orkney at the time.

The character of the buildings came to light when they were unroofed after the inhabitants were evacuated following the outbreak of an infectious and fatal disease. The 12th century church has a rectangular nave and a square stone porch which could have been a tower. It has interesting archways, especially the arch between chancel and nave. The site was in domestic use from the 16th century which confuses the interpretation of the other buildings, but the older parts to the west may well be

part of a monastery. The architect of Melsetter House on Hoy, William Lethaby, was responsible for clearing and consolidating the site in 1897.

Archaeology There are several possible prehistoric settlement sites. At Kyarl (HY364294) there is a cairn with remnants of stonework, perhaps a heel-shaped house, while at Monkerness (HY365292) and Little Kyarl (HY365294) there are foundations of two roundhouses. Various other unexcavated structures are visible on Eynhallow, which add to the air of mystery about the past. There is a particularly beautiful bay on the north side facing Rousay, Ramna Geo (HY362295). This uninhabited island now belongs to Orkney Islands Council and is one of the

most peaceful and atmospheric places to visit in Orkney. Trips are sometimes run here in the summer.

Folk Tales There are several folk tales about the island. The stalks of corn cut after sunset were said to run red with blood and a horse tethered after sunset would get free because iron stakes would jump out of the ground after sunset. There is also a story that rats, cats and mice cannot live on Eynhallow. Many farmers in Rousay and Evie took soil from the island for their stack yards to prevent vermin infesting their corn. It was also a common practice to use an Eynhallow stone as the doorstep in houses.

Eynhallow has long had a reputation for being enchanted. It was

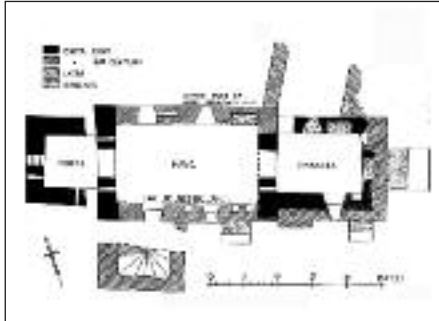
said that it was not always visible to human eyes and could disappear suddenly before it could be reached. The spell can only be broken by thrusting steel into the land above the high water mark. To this day wise visitors are still advised to take this precaution.

Wildlife Eynhallow has breeding Arctic Terns, Arctic Skuas, Tysties and many Eider Ducks, as well as a few Bonxies. Many Common Seals lie up along the skerry facing Rousay. A study of Fulmars has been going on here for over 40 years now which has added greatly to knowledge of lifespan, breeding behaviour and the wandering habits of the immature birds, which roam as far as Canada and Arctic Russia.



Eynhallow, Sound sunset from Aikerness

Old plan of Eynhallow Monastery



Aerial view of Eynhallow Monastery from the northeast



Eynhallow Monastery doorway



The Fulmar study continues

Eynhallow Monastery interior



Eynhallow Sound often has dangerous overfalls

