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**EDAY** (ON *Eid-ey*, Isthmus Isle) Formed mostly from Middle Old Red Sandstone, Eday is less fertile, and has much more peat cover than the other North Isles. The red sandstone is exposed in spectacular cliffs at the Red Head (HY570405). Eday freestone, from a quarry near Fersness (HY536336), is said to have been used in the building of St Magnus Cathedral.

The island also has its own London Airport. This one only takes Loganair's *Islander* aircraft, not Boeings, and is situated near the Bay of London (ON *Lund-inn*, Woodland, HY564342). The name suggests that there may have been trees here in Norse times. Certainly at low ebbs roots can be seen at the Bay of Mussetter, which is just across the isthmus which gives the island its name.

Like Rousay, Eday has a hilly centre with agricultural land around the shores. Most of the cultivated land is at the south end, and in the north on the shores of Calf Sound. The island is 12km (7.5mi) long and 3km (2mi) wide, with a maximum height of 101m at the Ward Hill (HY52300), from which there is an excellent panoramic view of the North Isles.

London Airport



The Stone of Setter is the tallest monolith in Orkney



Aerial view of Eday from the southeast - Warness and Veness in foreground, Fersness and Faray in centre, Calf Sound on right

There are good panoramas from Flaughton Hill (HY554320, 100m), Vinquoy Hill (HY561385, 76m) and the Red Head (HY570405, 70m). Because of its central position Eday has good views in all directions. This position was convenient in the past when much peat was exported to other islands as fuel.

**Neolithic Age** The Stone of Setter (HY564371) is one of Orkney's most spectacular

standing stones, its ancient appearance and height (4.5m) adding to the drama of its central location overlooking Calf Sound. It is placed at a focal point in the island landscape and can be seen from most of the chambered cairns. This standing stone has luckily so far escaped the attention of those who steam-cleaned the Brodgar and Stenness stones, and it is still covered with a marvellous selection of lichens.

Spiral-marked stone from Church chambered cairn



**EDAY ATTRACTIONS**  
"by the sun"

- Backland Pier
- Sui Generis
- Standing Stone
- Bay of Greentoft
- Castle of Stacklebrae
- Warness Walk
- Burnt Mound
- Ward Hill
- Flaughton Hill
- Sealskerry Bay
- Westside
- Sands of Mussetter
- Sands of Doomy
- Loch of Doomy
- London Airport
- Mill Bay
- Mill Loch
- Stone of Setter
- Braeside cairn
- Huntersquoy cairn
- Vinquoy cairn
- Vinquoy Hill
- Noup Hill
- Red Head
- Paplayhouse
- Carrick House
- Calf Sound
- Calf of Eday
- Eday Coop
- Mill Bay
- Bay of London
- Church cairn





Braeside chambered cairn faces the stone of Setter

Due to weathering the monolith resembles a giant hand, but local lore has it that it was put there by a laird. He had carefully prepared the socket and the stone was in place on an earth ramp ready to slide into position, but despite strenuous efforts his men were not able to move it.

He asked his wife, of whom he was not overfond, to jump onto the end of the stone to assist with rocking it into position. Her substantial weight was sufficient to move the stone, but as she jumped up and down she overbalanced and fell into the hole, closely followed by the monolith. The stone was secured upright with stones and the wife allegedly remains beneath it to this day.

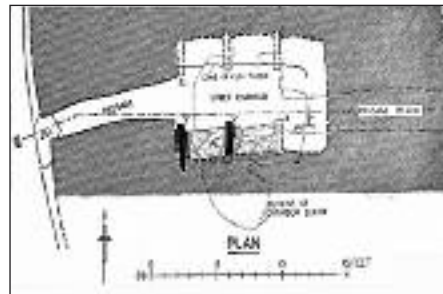
Huntersquoy chambered cairn lower entrance



**Braeside** chambered cairn (HY536375) has been much robbed but is a small tripartite Orkney-Cromarty type cairn. Interestingly the passage is at a slight angle to the axis of the cairn, and directly faces the Stone of Setter. Two pairs of stalls and the upright back stone remain, while traces of the walls can be made out.

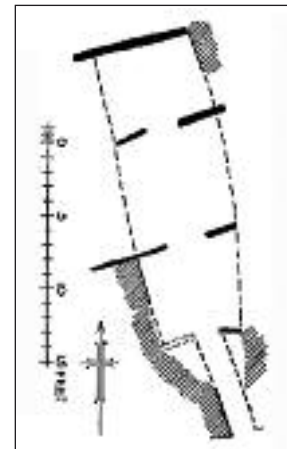
**Huntersquoy** chambered cairn (HY562377) is on two levels like Taversoe Tuick on Rousay. The upper chamber is largely gone, but is of the Bookan-type, where the interior was divided by flagstones and the entrance faced west. The lower chamber is still intact, but is normally full of water. The well-built interior is rectangular and divided into three compartments by two

Plan of Huntersquoy chambered cairn upper level



pairs of upright flagstones which almost touch the roof. There is an extra compartment over the east-facing entrance passage. The roof lintels form the floor of the upper chamber.

**Vinquoy** The restored Vinquoy chambered cairn (HY560381, 72m) is near the top of the eponymous hill and has a fine view to the south. This Maeshowe-type tomb is built of large blocks of red sandstone and has two pairs of side chambers, which have low entrances and are rectangular in plan. The cells are about 1.5m high, while the main chamber reaches nearly 3m.



Plan of Braeside chambered cairn



Hearth in centre of house at Green

The east-facing entrance passage is about 4m long.

**Neolithic Settlement** At Green (HY571290) on the southeast corner of the island, a Neolithic settlement is under excavation. A rectangular stone house with a central hearth has been revealed, with other buildings nearby. This early Neolithic site is similar to others in Orkney. In 2007 a stone with designs picked into it was found near the house entrance. It includes straight and curved shapes, some of which resemble the larger inscribed stones found on Eday and Westray.

Vinquoy chambered cairn interior showing cells



Stone with inscribed and pecked designs from Green

**Bronze Age** The Fold of Setter (HY564375) is a Bronze Age enclosure 85m in diameter, possibly used for livestock. Eday has a large number of sub-turf dykes, many of which have been

revealed by peat cutting, suggesting that it may have been much more fertile in the past before the peat started to form around 1000BC. These dykes can be seen in several banks, often partly exposed above the



Church chambered cairn is largely destroyed

Vinquoy chambered cairn interior showing cell and entry







Carrick, Calf Sound and the Red Head



Carrick House dates from 1633

turf. Good examples are at Linkataing (HY554393), where a dyke can be traced for 350m, enclosing a prehistoric roundhouse. A saddle quern can be seen in the ruins. Two standing stones and a stalled tomb are on the slope above.

Further remains of dykes can be made out round the ruined United Presbyterian Church (HY558325) which was built in 1831 using stones quarried from a large nearby cairn. A

Bay of Greentoft in the south has an attractive sandy beach



broken spiral-marked stone was saved here, the rest of which is presumably somewhere in the abandoned church. It is somewhat ironic that the tomb survived for 5,000 years, but its nemesis did not last for 100!

There is a Bronze Age burnt mound exposed by a small stream at Warness (HY553285), where burnt stones once used for cooking can be seen. Eday has several

other burnt mounds indicating a considerable population at that time.

**Iron Age, Picts and Vikings**  
Eday is unique among the larger islands in having no obvious broch site. However the Castle of Stacklebrae (HY564288) at the south end may well be concealing a multi-period settlement site. Similarities to ruins at Tuquoy in Westray suggest that there may have been an important Norse fortified house here, while parts of walls, midden and artefacts which may date from the Neolithic to Norse times have been found here.

The name Veness (ON *Veness*, Holy Headland) is also interesting, suggesting the presence of a chapel here either in early Viking times or later. The southeast end of Eday is quite fertile, while both the Bay of Greentoft and Backaland Bay are excellent places to keep boats.

**Scottish Connection** Carrick House has a fine setting, with a superb view over Calf Sound. It became famous as the penultimate scene of a latter day pirate drama in 1725, when *Pirate Gow* was captured by his one time school mate and owner of Carrick, James Fea, who surrendered him to the authorities.

The original building of 1633 includes the low, crow-stepped part of the house, courtyard and arched gateway



Veness from the east

to the sea. The builder was John Stewart, brother of Patrick Stewart, under whom he was *Master* (heir) of *Orkney*. He was created Lord Kinclaven and subsequently Earl of Carrick, a title he was allowed to take by renaming his property at Calf Sound, in 1630. Lands were conveyed to him in 1632 by Charles I and formed into the grand-sounding *Burgh of Carrick*.

Stewart (b. c1568) was the third son of Earl Robert Stewart and Jean Kennedy. The four brothers did not seem to be very friendly, and 1596 John was tried in Edinburgh for "*consulting with Alyson Balfour, ane Witch, for the destruction of Patrik Erll of Orkney by poysoning.*" The "witch" had been accused by a Thomas Paplay, a servant of John. Alyson and even her seven year-old daughter were brutally tortured for days to gain "confessions".

John was of course acquitted as both Paplay and Balfour retracted their "confessions"

before being executed. The inquisitor, who was parson of Orphir and Patrick's chamberlain, did not need to wait long for his comeupance. He was caught and killed by John in Shetland only 18 days later. Needless to say the *Master of Orkney* escaped again, this time by simply ignoring summons to court in Edinburgh.

The Carrick Estate and Sound in Shapinsay came into the possession of the Fea family through the marriage of James Fea to Janet Buchanan. An armorial tablet set in the wall is thought to have been taken here some thirty years later from Sound, when the estate was owned by Arthur Buchanan. The house can be

visited by arrangement with Mrs Joy, Tel 01857 622260.

**Red House** (HY556385), above Papleyhouse, at the north end of Eday, is a 19<sup>th</sup> century croft, which overlooks the Sound of Faray. It con-



Standing stone near Greentoft

Red House is a 19<sup>th</sup> century croft above Paplayhouse





The Red Head of Eday has spectacular sandstone cliffs

sists of a dwelling house with byres, a barn, stable and other outbuildings, all of which are substantially intact. The mill is worked by a waterwheel.

It is in the process of renovation and makes a very interesting visit, which is a fine counterpoint to the ancient sites on the island. The Red House Cafe serves lunch, dinner, tea and coffee, Tel 01857 622217.

**North School** has interesting scholastic and nautical items on display. It also has a replica control room of the submarine *HMS Otter*. This has been built with equipment and parts salvaged from actual submarines by the owner Mike Ilett, Tel 01857 622225.

**Wildlife** The Red Head cliffs are not very high at 70m, but the bright red colour of the Eday Marl more than makes

up for the lack of height. This type of rock does not erode to leave many ledges, but Fulmars manage to find spaces all the same. Some Puffins, Razorbills, Kittiwakes and Shags also nest here, while there are colonies of Herring and Greater Black-backed Gulls on the slopes near the cliffs. Vegetation on Noup Hill has to contend with acid peat and salt blast. Nevertheless the moors and clifftops are very colourful in summer with wild flowers.

Red-throated Divers nest on the lochs. There is a hide at the edge of the Mill Loch (HY564368) from which excellent views may be had. The moors have a few breeding Whimbrel, as well as Hen Harriers, Short-eared Owls, Merlin and Arctic Skuas.

On the Calf of Eday the low (45m) cliffs of the Grey Head hold nesting seabirds. Orkney's largest Cormorant colony is at the southeast end of the island and many Great Black-backed Gulls nest nearby. The mostly stoney beaches of Calf Sound are well worth checking for migrants.

The Sands and Loch of Doomy (HY558340), Mill Bay (HY570360) and the Bay of London (HY564343) are all shallow, and good places to observe waders. The variety of habitats and large amount of unfarmed land ensures the presence of a varied flora. In summer the wild flowers are particularly colourful.

Grey Seal mother and pup



Grey Head, Calf of Eday

**Grey Seals** are present all year, but are most numerous in autumn during the breeding season. Large numbers come ashore to give birth and mate in October and November. Fersness is the best place on Eday to have good views, but the seals and their pups may be observed at several other places. Large numbers of Grey Seals breed on the small islands nearby, especially Faray and the Green Holms.

**Quarries** Eday stone was formerly quarried and exported for use in building, most famously for some of the freestone in St Magnus Cathedral. There is a large coastal quarry at Quarryhouse (HY535336). Several other disused quarries are marked on the OS map.

All of these offer shelter and habitats attractive to a range of plants which might not otherwise thrive on the island. They also give interesting slices through the local geology.

**Eday Heritage Walk** starts from the shop and takes in the hide at Mill Loch, Braeside, Huntersquoy and Vinquoy chambered cairns and Vinquoy Hill. Either return directly or via Carrick House and the road.

The walk can be continued north to Noup Hill and the Red Head, from where there are good views over Westray and Calf Sound. A track runs over the Muckle Hill of Linkataing, to the road, passing Papeyhouse with its nearby 19<sup>th</sup> century farmstead.

**Fersness Bay walk** Eday's best beach stretches for nearly 2km along the southeast side of Fersness Bay. This shallow inlet has a sandy bottom which gives lovely colours on a sunny day. The Sands of Mussetter and Doomy are backed by dunes and machair. The Bay of Doomy is a delightful little sheltered cove.

Starting from the Visitor Centre follow the public road southwards. Stop and scan the Loch of London and the Bay of London for birds before continuing to a road junction south of the airport. Access can be gained to the west end of the Sands of Mussetter via a track. Follow the shore and dunes to the Loch of Doomy. Return from the north end of the Bay of Doomy via a marked path.

**Stephen's Gate Walk** The low cliffs between Mill Bay and the east end of Calf Sound make an interesting short walk. Starting from the shop take the road northwards and then eastwards to the end of the road. A path leads around the coast and back to the shop.

The Castles are miniature rock stacks. Further south there is a natural arch just south of Stephen's Gate, a natural causeway exposed at low tide. There are several caves and other interesting features along this coast.

**Warness Walk** Starting from Backaland Pier take the road to the Bay of Greentoft (HY560288), where there is a good beach. This signposted walk follows the shore and cliffs to the Point of Warness and

Stephen's Gate and Calf Sound from the east





**PIRATE GOW - A SAD 18<sup>th</sup> CENTURY TALE**

Calf Sound was host to the final act of a latter day pirate drama in 1725. John Gow was the son of a Stromness merchant, William Gow and Margaret Calder. He was born in 1698 in Wick, and the family moved to Stromness in 1699, where he grew up. Like many Orcadians, the young Gow went to sea, and in August 1724 joined the *Caroline* in Amsterdam. He was made Second Mate and Gunner. They took on a cargo of leather, beeswax and woollen cloth at Santa Cruz, which was bound for Genoa, but the crew was becoming restive due to poor food and conditions on board, which caused the French Captain Ferneau to have small arms made ready to enforce discipline if necessary.

On 3 November, in Santa Cruz, Gow and five others murdered the Captain, Mate, Surgeon and Supernumerary. The vessel was renamed *Revenge*, and for the next two months they harried ships off the Spanish coast. Two prizes were taken, but both carried cargoes of fish. Running short of food and water, they made for Madeira but succeeded only in obtaining water, some beef and hens.

An American timber ship was next, followed by a ship carrying wine from Cadiz. The last ship stopped was again carrying fish. Gow released the prisoners from each earlier ship onto the next and soon word was about of their activities. Lacking provisions to cross the Atlantic, they now made for Orkney, arriving at Stromness in January 1725, changing the name to *George* on the way.

Gow called himself "Mr Smith" and played the part of a shipping trader. Unfortunately for him and his crew another ship, *Margaret*, was also in Stromness. Two of its crew had jumped ship to the *Caroline* in Amsterdam and the Captain recognised the *George* for what she really was. One of the crew, Robert Reid, absconded and surrendered to the law in Kirkwall. Ten men deserted in the longboat, and Gow had to leave Stromness on 17 February 1725.

After an abortive raid on Robert Honeyman's house, the Hall of Clestrain, two servant girls are said to have been abducted. They were soon put ashore "laden with presents" on Cava. By now the authorities were alerted, a frigate was dispatched and Kirkwall prepared for an attack. However Gow opted to head for Eday, where his school friend, James Fea, owned Carrick. Entering Calf Sound from the north, the ship mis-stayed and went aground on the Calf of Eday. With no longboat she could not be kedged off. Negotiations for assistance failed and eventually Gow and his crew were captured by Fea and his men.

John Gow and seven of his crew were hanged in London in June 1725. Apparently he was hanged twice - the rope breaking at the first attempt as the hangman jerked his legs. The bodies were left in the Thames for three tides after which the two leaders were tarred and hung in chains as a warning to others. Gow had formed an attachment with a Helen Gordon while in Stromness and that they took a vow at the Stone of Odin. She is said to have travelled to London to hold his tarry hand to break the vow.

James Fea was reputed to have made £1,700 for his part in the capture of Gow, but lost it in lawsuits afterwards. A strong Jacobite, Fea also owned Sound in Shapinsay and was the cousin of James Fea of Whitehall in Stronsay, who probably introduced kelp-burning to the islands. Sound was one of the houses burnt by Cumberland's men in 1745. The reporter at the trial was Daniel Defoe, the editor of *The Spectator*, who recounted his version of the story in *An Account of the Conduct and Proceedings of the Pirate Gow*. Later these events were used by Walter Scott as source material for *The Pirate*, one of his lesser novels.

returns to the road via the farm of Greentoft. Hannah's Kirk (HY557287), now a ruin, may be an early chapel.

**Westside Walk** Another longer walk round the south end takes in the Ward Hill and the West Side. Follow the Warness Walk and then continue via the Ward Hill to the road at Newbigging (HY543312). The attractive beach at Sealskerry Bay with its small area of dunes and marsh is well worth scanning for waders, while Sealskerry is a popular haulout for selkies. Return via the road to the Sands of Mussetter and of Doomy (HY550335) and thence along the B9063 to the pier.

**Arts and Crafts** The island has a high quality furniture business, Sui Generis, run by Colin Kerr, who has a showroom displaying various styles of furniture, bookbinding and art in wood at Redbanks, near the pier. Tel 01857 622219. At Blett hand-spun wool by Emma Popplewell can be seen. Spinning demonstrations, teas and meals are available, Tel 01857 622248.

**CALF OF EDAY** The Calf of Eday (ON *Calf*, as of a calf with its mother), lies to the northeast of Eday, across Calf Sound, where the tide flows through the narrow sound like a river. There are several chambered cairns on the island, including a long stalled cairn (HY579386) with two chambers, an early two-celled tomb and a later stalled tomb with four divisions.

Of two Bookan-type chambers, one (HY579386) is complete except for a hole in the roof and in good condition, while the other (HY579385) is built into the hillside and, though open, is also intact.

Two buildings on the shore (HY575390) opposite Carrick are the remains of a 17<sup>th</sup> century saltworks built by John Stewart. The structures were about 13m long, with massive end walls and are built out into the sea. Peat fires and a complex system of vents were used to evaporate the water. The remains of a massive peatstack lies behind the buildings. Salt had for long been produced at home in Orkney and this is an interesting early attempt at industrialisation of an ancient process.



Open Hydro tidal mill in the Fall of Warness

**Tidal Power** EMEC has a Tidal Test Facility in the Fall of Warness between Eday and the Muckle Green Holm. Streams reach 3.6m/s (7kt) at springs and 1.5m/s (3kt) at neaps in this channel, which is not a main shipping route. Prototype tidal mills up to 20m in diameter and generating up to 750MW are tested here.

**Eday Heritage Centre** is in the old Baptist chapel in the north of the island. The exhibition area has artefacts, information, documents and photographs to peruse. There is also a licensed cafe which is open by arrangement. The displays include the work of EMEC and a board about the Eday Ranger.



Bookan-type cairn on the Calf of Eday



Aerial view of the Calf of Eday and Calf Sound

**EDAY SERVICES**

**Getting To Eday** Orkney Ferries, Tel 01856 872044 operate daily services to the island from Kirkwall. Depending on the schedule it is possible to travel between Eday, Sanday and Stronsay. Loganair operate only on Wednesdays, Tel 01856 872494. Please refer to their latest timetables for details.

**Eday Car and Motorhome Hire** Donna, Damside, Eday (taxi on request), Tel 07739 286350

**Eday Taxi** John Booth, Stackald, Eday (near pier), Tel 01857 622 206

**Shop and fuel** Eday Community Enterprises, Tel (01857) 622339

**Accommodation** B&B and self-catering is available on Eday. Please check the latest *Islands* and VisitOrkney brochures.

**Eating Out** Roadside Pub and B&B Roadside, Eday, Tel 01857 622303 Red House Tea Room Red House, Eday, Tel 01857 622217