

The  
**ORKNEY**

**SOUVENIR GUIDE**

*by Charles Tait*

4<sup>th</sup> Edition



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# The Orkney

## SOUVENIR GUIDE

by Charles Tait

### A Souvenir Guide to Orkney

4<sup>th</sup> Edition

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This book is dedicated to my aunt, Margaret C Tait (1918-1999)  
Cinematographer, Poet, Artist and Inspiration

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## CONTENTS

Welcome to Orkney	4	Scapa Flow	46
The Main Monuments	6	East Mainland	52
Nature and Environment	8	Italian Chapel	54
Kirkwall	12	South Ronaldsay & Burray	56
St Magnus Cathedral	14	South Isles	
Highland Park Distillery	16	Hoy	58
Heart of Neolithic Orkney	20	North Isles	
Skara Brae	22	Rousay	64
Ring of Brodgar	24	Westray	66
Ness of Brodgar	26	Papay	70
Standing Stones	28	North Ronaldsay	72
Maeshowe	30	Sanday	76
West Mainland		Eday	78
Brough of Birsay	34	Stronsay	80
Marwick & Sandwick	36	Shapinsay	82
Skaill House	38	Getting to Orkney	86
Farm Museums	39	Getting Around in Orkney	90
Broch of Gurness	40	Local Services	92
Stromness	42	Index	94

## WELCOME TO ORKNEY



*Midsummer at Yesnaby, West Mainland*

**WELCOME TO ORKNEY**, where is much to see and do. This guide is designed to help visitors find and appreciate the main sites of interest on the Mainland and other islands. The rich archaeological heritage is one of the prime attractions. The soft green and fertile landscape, beautiful beaches, spectacular cliffs, abundant wildlife and above all the friendly people are equally important in making up "Orkney".

The archipelago lies just north of Mainland Scotland at around

*Midsummer dawn at the Ring of Brodgar*



59°N and comprises over 70 islands of which 17 or 18 are inhabited by about 21,000 people. The first written reference to the islands is attributed to Pytheas the Greek from about 325BC, but they have been inhabited for at least 6,000 years. The timeline from prehistory through historical times to the 21<sup>st</sup> century is continuous, making the division between past and present at times hard to discern.

**Attractions** Perhaps most famous for its exceptionally well

preserved Neolithic monuments, some of which now enjoy World Heritage status, Orkney has a wealth of visitor attractions. These range from archaeological sites, local museums, the Highland Park Distillery and St Magnus Cathedral, to a diverse array of craft workshops and shops selling attractive local goods. Wildlife, especially birds, is another feature of Orkney not to be missed, whatever the season. This book aims to maximise the benefit of your visit, no matter how short.

The Old Red Sandstone rocks result in a combination of fertile agricultural land, most of which is used to raise Orkney's renowned grass-fed beef cattle, moorland and spectacular coastal fringes, making it a haven for many species of birds in every season, while in spring and summer wild flowers are abundant.

The maritime climate combined with the relatively warm Atlantic Ocean, make the climate equable, with snow and frost rare in winter.

## WELCOME TO ORKNEY

Equally, the temperature rarely exceeds 20° in summer. Situated at the meeting point of the North Sea and Atlantic Ocean the islands are surrounded by waters abundant in fish and shellfish, adding to the wide variety of locally produced quality foods.

Whether one arrives by air or sea at Kirkwall or by sea at Stromness, St Margaret's Hope or Burwick, Orkney presents a strong contrast to the Highlands. Both towns are dominated by their winding main streets and harbours, while Kirkwall also has the imposing 12<sup>th</sup> century St Magnus Cathedral.

Both towns have excellent shops, hotels and eating places, as well as interesting museums and make good bases from which to explore the rest of Orkney. Even on the shortest of visits there are several "must see" sites.

Suggested starting points are the Orkney Museum or the Highland Park Visitor Centre, with its excellent audiovisual, in Kirkwall. A tour of the West Mainland taking in Maeshowe, the Ring of Brodgar, the Standing Stones of Stenness and Skara Brae is essential. If time permits there are many more places which can be visited in a day.

*Puffins and other seabirds come ashore to breed in summer*



*St Magnus Cathedral in Kirkwall dates from 1137*

On a longer visit it is strongly suggested that a visit should be made to at least one of the other inhabited islands, all of which are easily accessible by ferry or aircraft. Each island has a character all of its own and all have interesting places to visit as well as accommodation and shops.

A good map is a great help in all such visits and VisitOrkney produces a useful one which also includes Shetland. The Ordnance Survey 1:50,000 Landranger Series covers Orkney in three sheets (5, 6 and 7) and they are recommended for all serious explorers.

### ORKNEY COUNTRYSIDE CODE

We are justly proud of our historic sites, wildlife and environment. Please help ensure that future visitors may enjoy them as much as you by observing these guidelines:

1. Always use stiles and gates and close gates after you.
2. Always ask permission before entering agricultural land.
3. Keep to paths and take care to avoid fields of grass and crops.
4. Do not disturb livestock.
5. Take your litter away with you and do not light fires.
6. Do not pollute water courses or supplies.
7. Never disturb nesting birds.
8. Do not pick wild flowers or dig up plants.
9. Drive and park with due care and attention - do not obstruct or endanger others.
10. Always take care near cliffs - particularly with children and pets.
11. Walkers should take adequate clothes, wear suitable footwear and tell someone of their plans.
12. Above all please respect the life of the countryside - leave only footprints, take only photographs and pleasant memories.

*Notice: While most of the sites of interest are open to the public and have marked access, many are on private land. Right of access is not implied, and if in doubt it is always polite to ask. Not all roads and tracks are rights of way.*

## A TOUR OF THE MAIN MONUMENTS

**Neolithic Orkney** There is a wealth of Neolithic sites to visit, of which Maeshowe, the Standing Stones of Stenness, the Ness of Brodgar, the Ring of Brodgar and Skara Brae are the most spectacular. The great chambered cairn of Maeshowe is the largest and grandest of its type. All of these ancient precincts date from the early third millennium BC.

Together these monuments form the UNESCO World Heritage Site, “*The Heart of Neolithic Orkney*”. They are situated in the heart of the West Mainland, surrounded by farmland and near the lochs of Stenness and Harray, in turn ringed by heather-covered low hills. There is a timeless and spacious feel to this landscape as a result of the dramatic confluence of sky, water and land.

The Neolithic village of Skara Brae lies on the shore of the Bay of Skail. Its well preserved 5,000 year old houses give a very good impression of life then, having been protected under sand dunes for several thousand years, before being revealed by storms.

There is a Visitor Centre at Skara Brae with a museum, replica house and a shop. Tormiston Mill, next to Maeshowe, also has a shop and interpretative display. The nearby excavation at the Ness of Brodgar is an essential visit during summer. Barnhouse Village, the Watchstone and the Ring of Bookan are nearby.

There are many other fascinating monuments and sites of interest ranging from the Neolithic to the 20<sup>th</sup> century which can be visited all over Orkney. Every parish and island has something different and special left by the people who inhabited the countryside during the last six millennia.



*Maeshowe entrance passage lit up by the winter solstice sunset*



*The Ring of Brodgar is a spectacular henge monument over 100m across*



*The Neolithic site at the Ness of Brodgar is under excavation*

*Skara Brae Neolithic village was rediscovered after a storm in the 19<sup>th</sup> century*



## FROM THE NEOLITHIC AGE TO THE 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY

**Brochs** The continuity of settlement in Orkney is well demonstrated by the Broch of Gurness. With its surrounding settlement and ramparts, this is one of the best examples of over a possible 100 such structures in Orkney. It dates from the late Iron Age, the last centuries BC. The settlement was occupied for hundreds of years at least until early Norse times. Pictish houses can be viewed here.



*Broch of Gurness aerial view showing the broch and settlement*

**Picts and Vikings** The Brough of Birsay is a tidal island off the northwest of the Mainland. It is the site of both Pictish and Viking settlements, with secular and ecclesiastic remains. These include Norse houses and a well preserved church. In the nearby village of The Palace, the ruins of the 16<sup>th</sup> century Earl's Palace provide a gaunt reminder of the more recent past, while St Magnus Kirk is built on the site of a much older church.



*Brough of Birsay aerial view showing Viking Age settlement ruins*

**St Magnus Cathedral** The 12<sup>th</sup> century St Magnus Cathedral in Kirkwall was built by the Norse Earl, Rognvald Kolson, in honour of his murdered uncle, Earl Magnus Erlendson. It dominates the town, and its warm coloured Old Red Sandstone, unmarked by air pollution, makes the building especially attractive. The interior is particularly impressive and well proportioned.



*St Magnus Cathedral dates from 1137*

**Italian Chapel** During WWII several hundred Italian prisoners-of-war worked on the construction of the Churchill Barriers. This was to defend the eastern approaches to Scapa Flow from German seaward attack. During their time here, the prisoners built the Italian Chapel in their camp on Lamb Holm. This unusual and charming surviving artefact of war stands now as a symbol of hope and peace.



*The Italian Chapel was built during WWII by Italian POWs*

## NATURE AND ENVIRONMENT

**Natural Environment** As well as the huge array of ancient and more recent monuments, Orkney also has a rich and interesting natural environment. The combination of fertile farmland with a great variety of other habitats makes it a very good place for wildlife, especially birds. There are cliffs, beaches, marshes, moors and maritime heath as well as sheltered bays, small islands and lochs, all of which attract a variety of different species, depending on the season and weather.

The many superb beaches, dramatic cliffs and inland paths provide wonderful opportunities for walking. Whether just a stroll along the Bay of Skail or Aikerness after visiting Skara Brae or the Broch of Gurness, or one of the many more adventurous walks, Orkney will never fail to please. The islands are also great for cycling, as the hills are not steep, and the side roads are (mostly) quiet.

The predominant daytime colours here are the greens, blues and browns of grass, water, moor and sky. The hues vary with the season and are particularly vibrant in summer, but more muted in other seasons. Orkney is also famous for its sunsets and its long hours of daylight in summer. The Northern Lights or Aurora Borealis are occasionally seen, usually on a dark moonless winter night. Skies are generally not polluted by light, so the stars and planets are easily observed.

The Orkney climate is much influenced by the sea, which varies in temperature by only a few degrees over the year. This ensures that winters are mild, but also that summers are never hot. The weather is very variable, and it is possible to have every season in a day.



*Rough seas at Skipi Geo, Birsay*



*The Old Man of Hoy is one of Orkney's "trade marks"*



*There are many superb beaches in Orkney, like Grobust on Westray*



*Aikerness beach in Evie overlooks Eynhallow Sound*

## NATURE AND ENVIRONMENT

The combination of constantly changing weather and fluctuations in day length make for a huge variety of lighting conditions. This makes Orkney a paradise for artists, photographers and lovers of the landscape in all seasons. Thus there is no "best" time to visit. Just wait a few minutes and everything will be different.

There are many good locations for observing wildlife, including several RSPB Reserves. During the summer many thousands of birds breed in Orkney. The cliff colonies of seabirds are especially impressive at Marwick Head in Birsay, and Noup Head on Westray. Waders, waterfowl and several species of raptor are also common. Both Grey and Common Seals, as well as Otters also breed here.

Maritime Heath, for example, on Papay and on Rousay is home to the diminutive and endemic *Primula scotica*. They are also a favourite nesting site for Terns and Arctic Skuas, while the Heather Moorland on the hills is home to Hen Harriers, Merlins and Short-eared Owls as well as many species of Waders. Oystercatchers, Curlews, Dunlin, Redshanks, and Golden Plovers are particularly abundant.

Orkney is also a fine place to see migrants and winter visitors such as Great Northern Divers, Long-tailed Ducks, Goldeneye, Iceland Gulls and other species. The Peedie Sea, harbours at Kirkwall and Stromness and the lochs in the vicinity of the Standing Stones are good places to look for these birds. The beach at Scapa, near Kirkwall is perhaps the handiest to reach of many, while the sheltered waters round the Churchill Barriers are usually attractive to Great Northern Divers and seaducks.



*Aurora borealis from Wideford Hill in autumn*



*Midwinter sunset at the Loch of Stenness*



*Puffins are one of the many bird species which can be seen in Orkney*



*Orkney is home to a large number of Grey Seals which pup in autumn*



# KIRKWALL



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**KIRKWALL** (ON *Kirkjuvagr*, Church Bay), as the main settlement in Orkney, is a good starting point for a visit to the islands. It is first mentioned in the *Orkneyinga Saga*. It was the dwelling place of Earl Rognvald Brusison about 1035, who built a church dedicated to King Olav of Norway there.

Later, the town developed around the Cathedral, and became the administrative and commercial centre. Its access to the North Isles, central position and sheltered harbour in the then much bigger Peedie Sea made it an obvious location.

Today the winding main street still follows the shape of the original settlement. Many of the fine old houses with end-on gables

date from the 16<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. Narrow lanes run off the Street which has many attractive shops. At Broad Street it opens into the expanse of the grass covered Kirk Green in front of St Magnus Cathedral.

The harbour front is the scene of much activity with ferries, fishing boats and, in summer, cruise ships. Over the last 200 years the pier has greatly expanded, but it still retains much of its charm. The marina is home to pleasure craft and is visited by many yachts in the summer. Occasionally one or more tall ships lends a taste of nostalgia to the scene.

**Orkney Museum** is housed in Tankerness House, parts of which date from the 15<sup>th</sup> century. This is

an excellent starting point from which to gain an insight into Orkney's rich past. Tankerness House Garden, behind the museum, is a pleasant place for a seat on a nice day. St Magnus Cathedral is across the road, and makes a suitable finale to a visit, with its peaceful interior.

**Palaces** The nearby Bishop's and Earl's Palaces date from Norse and Scottish times. The former was first built at the same time as the Cathedral, and was where King Haakon Haakonson died in 1263 after the "Battle" of Largs. The "Moosie Tower" was built during the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

The Earl's Palace was built by the notorious Earl Patrick Stewart in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century, but was only briefly occupied. It was roofless by 1750. Patrick was executed for treason in 1615 and so had little time to enjoy his palace, which has been described as a *Scottish Renaissance Masterpiece*.

**Shopping** The Kirkwall street is an good place to seek out interesting souvenirs or presents, with its wide variety of quality shops. They stock knitwear, Orkney jewellery, local crafts and books, as well as many other home produced items. There is plenty of opportunity for retail therapy.

The Earl's Palace was built about 1600



Bishop's Palace - "Moosie" Tower



Kirkwall is dominated by the 12<sup>th</sup> century St Magnus Cathedral

In addition there is a good selection of Orkney food and drink products such as Highland Park and Scapa Malt Whisky, Orkney Herring, Orkney Cheese, fresh and smoked fish and shellfish of various kinds and of course the famous Orkney Beef.

**Eating Out** There is a wide choice of establishments around Kirkwall offering food and drink. These range from first class restaurants to chip shops and authentic Indian and Italian eateries. All offer local produce and friendly service.

Tankerness House is the home of the Orkney Museum



**Highland Park Visitor Centre** on the southeastern edge of the town offers visits to the distillery. An interesting audiovisual introduction to Orkney and the making of Highland Park Malt Whisky precedes a guided tour. The shop stocks many items, mostly branded, as well as the full range of Highland Park Malt Whisky.

**Wideford Hill** is a fine vantage point from which to gain an overall impression of Orkney. Just to the west of Kirkwall on the Old Finstown Road, the summit (226m) can be reached by foot-

path or by road. From here there is a panoramic view of most of the North and South Isles, East and West Mainland and Scapa Flow. Scotland can be seen in the far distance to the south. The summit is a fine vantage point for sunrises and sunsets.

**Scapa Beach** is about 2km (1.5mi) south of the town and makes a fine walk. There are expansive views over Scapa Flow from here. This is a good place for bird watching at all times of year, especially for waders and sea ducks.

## KIRKWALL

- St Magnus Cathedral
- Orkney Museum
- Earl's Palace
- Bishop's Palace
- The Harbour
- Peedie Sea
- The Street - Old Buildings
- The Street - Shopping
- Highland Park Visitor Centre
- Wideford Hill
- Scapa Beach
- Eating Out
- Evening Entertainment
- Kirkwall Ba' Game

## ST MAGNUS CATHEDRAL



*St Magnus Cathedral nave from the west door*

**ST MAGNUS CATHEDRAL** remains a symbol of the 600 year Norse sovereignty over Orkney, and of the power and wealth of the Norse Earldom. For over 875 years it has dominated Kirkwall.

In 1103 the cousins Magnus Erlendson and Haakon Paulson succeeded to the Earldom. At first all went well, but by c.1117, disputes had arisen, and it was agreed to meet on Egilsay on 16<sup>th</sup> April. The plan was that each Earl was to take only two ships, but Haakon arrived with eight

*12<sup>th</sup> century consecration cross carving*



and in an uncompromising mood. Soon it was resolved to execute the rival Earl.

Eventually Haakon's cook, Lifolf, was ordered to kill Magnus, which he did by cleaving his skull. A cenotaph now stands on the spot where this act is said to have taken place. The roofless 12<sup>th</sup> century St Magnus Church on Egilsay is one of many churches named after the martyred Earl.

Magnus was buried at Christ's Church in Birsay; soon prayers

were being said to him, and miraculous cures were claimed to be taking place. Later, Earl Haakon made a pilgrimage to Rome, and on his return had the now ruined St Nicholas Round Church built at the Bu in Orphir, in about 1122.

He was succeeded by his son Paul, who was deposed in 1135 by Magnus' nephew Rognvald Kolson. Rognvald had vowed to build "a stone minster at Kirkwall, and to dedicate it to Earl Magnus the Holy". In 1137 on St Lucia's Day (13<sup>th</sup> December) he is said to have laid the foundation stone.

Much of the finance came from local farmers under pressure from the Earl. Durham masons were drafted in to supervise construction work. The church was consecrated about 1150 when Magnus' remains were transferred to a shrine in the east end of the building. This was in the apse, which was later extended to form the present St Ronald's Chapel.

The choir was lengthened in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, and the nave extended also so that by the 14<sup>th</sup> century the Cathedral was more or less complete. Over the centuries it was allowed to fall into disrepair, but extensive restoration works have been carried out since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. This work continues today.

*St Magnus Church, Egilsay*



## "THE GLORY OF THE NORTH"

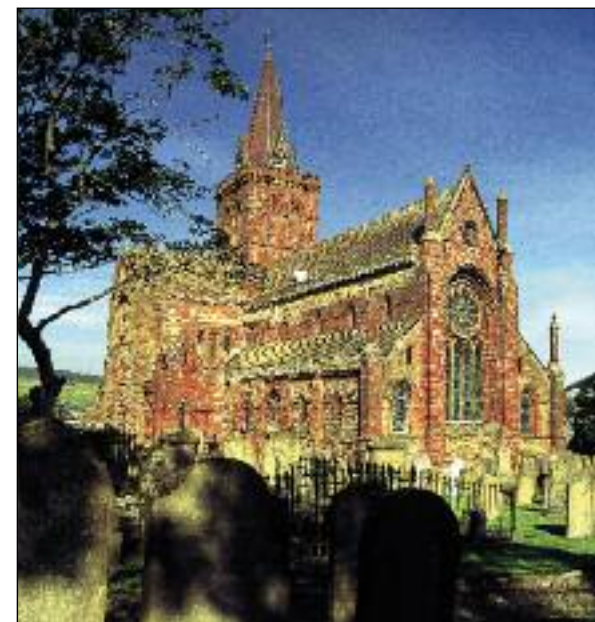
St Magnus Cathedral is built from Old Red Sandstone, said to have been quarried at nearby Head of Holland, and also on Eday. It lends the slightly austere exterior a warm look, which is particularly apparent in early morning or evening light. The varied use of colour is very effective.

The interior of the Cathedral is about 69m long and 30m across the transepts, while only 5m separates the pillars in the nave. Despite this, the overall impression is of space and balance with the attractive colours of the stone giving a very welcoming feel.

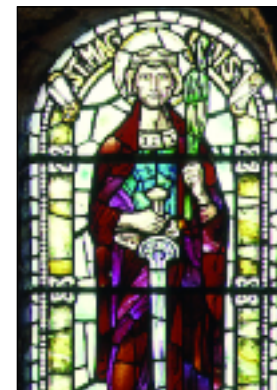
The Cathedral belongs to the people of Kirkwall and Orkney, having been largely financed by them over the centuries. It is the principal venue of the annual St Magnus Festival, whose founders include the composer, Sir Peter Maxwell Davies, and the Stromness poet, George MacKay Brown.

The nearby St Magnus Centre, is continued evidence of the strong role that the Cathedral continues to play in the Orkney community. It has a cafe open in summer, meeting rooms and a large hall. Weddings, conferences talks and other gatherings take place here. It also offers fine views of the east end of St Magnus Cathedral over the graveyard.

*Memorial to the 19<sup>th</sup> century Arctic explorer, John Rae*



*St Magnus Cathedral from the southeast*



*St Magnus stained glass window*



*West nave stained glass window*

*HMS "Royal Oak" memorial*





# HIGHLAND PARK DISTILLERY

THE WORLD'S MOST NORTHERLY MALT WHISKY DISTILLERY



1 - **Maltings** - after steeping the barley, it is spread out on the malting floor and allowed to germinate



2- **Loading the Kiln** - the malted barley is then placed in the kiln where it is dried over a peat fire



3 - **The Kiln** - drying the malted barley - the peat smoke imparts a rich aroma to the malt



6 - **Bonded Warehouse** - the distillate is placed in sherry casks and laid down to mature for up to 25 years



5 - **Still Room** - when fermentation is complete the result is distilled twice in the familiar pot stills.



4 - **Tun Room** - the milled malt is fermented in the mash tuns, and sampled at regular intervals



The Highland Park Distillery, the most northerly in Scotland, was founded in 1798, on the site of a house which belonged to Magnus Eunson, a smuggler and illicit distiller, but also a Church Officer. On hearing that the Excisemen were after him, he removed all his casks from the kirk to his house, covered them with a coffin lid and a white cloth and called the congregation together around the whisky. When the customs arrived he was apparently conducting a funeral service, and a

whispered "smallpox!" sent them off rapidly.

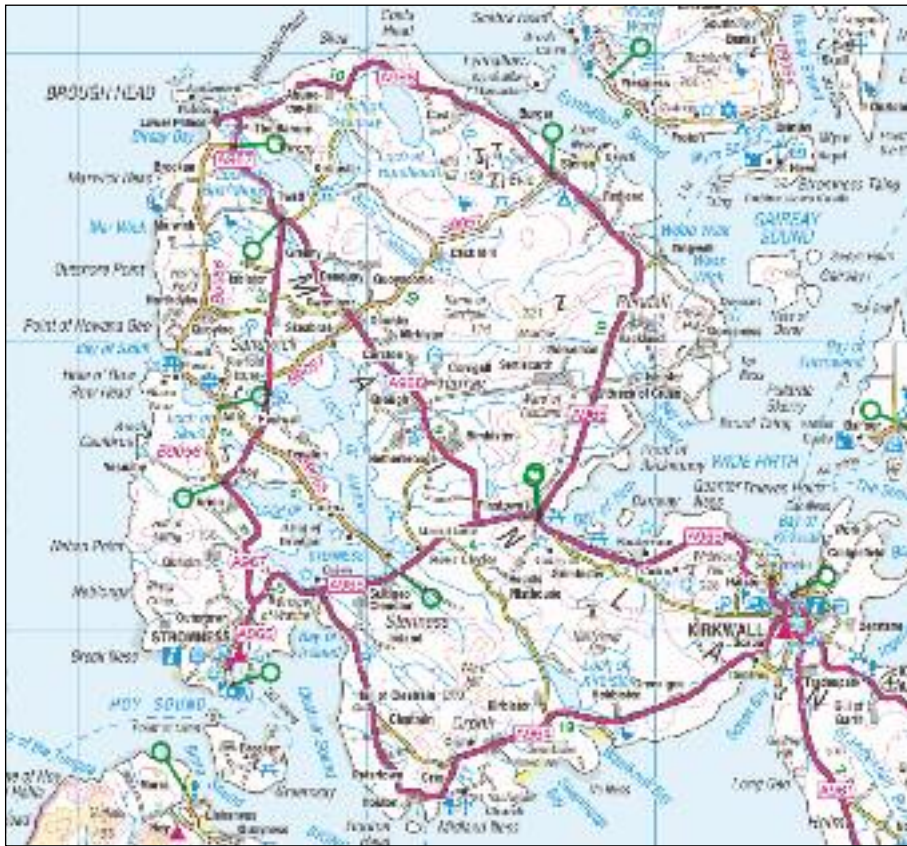
The site was chosen on account of the water supply which comes from springs in a small field called "Highland Park". The distillery has been owned by several people, having been founded by a David Robertson. It was even owned by a minister of the United Presbyterian Church for a time! The Grant family of Elgin first became associated with the distill-

has been owned by several people, having been founded by a David Robertson. It was even owned by a minister of the United Presbyterian Church for a time! The Grant family of Elgin first became associated with the distillery in 1888, finally selling to the Highland Distilleries Co, in 1936, which in turn was taken over by the Edrington Group in 1999.





## “THE HEART OF NEOLITHIC ORKNEY”



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**WEST MAINLAND** The West Mainland includes “*The Heart of Neolithic Orkney*”, a designated UNESCO World Heritage Site, which includes Maeshowe, the Standing Stones of Stenness, the Ness of Brodgar, Ring of Brodgar, Skara Brae, and parts of the surrounding area.

There is a strong argument for the whole of Orkney to be a World Heritage Site in view of its unique natural and cultural heritage, however for now the designation is cultural only. The West Mainland encompasses in a small and accessible area most of what is best about the archipelago.

ensures a wide range of species to see at any season, while anglers have a choice of several lochs on which to try their skills and luck. Walkers will also find a diverse selection of interesting routes, coastal or inland, easy or more strenuous. There is much to do in the West Mainland.

“Grooved Ware” pottery



Apart from the Neolithic attractions, there are other many sites of interest. These include dramatic coastline such as at Yesnaby, Marwick Head and the Brough of Birsay as well as fine beaches such as Warebeth, the Bay of Skaill, Birsay, Aikerness and Waulkmill.

For birdwatchers and botanists, the huge variety of habitats

Ancient fossils at Yesnaby



## THE WEST MAINLAND



Aerial view of the heart of Orkney

Apart from the main five archaeological sites, there are many others to visit. These include Neolithic chambered cairns at Bookan, Unstan, Cuween and Wideford Hill. The Broch of Gurness is the best preserved of many such Iron Age sites. There are Pictish and Norse ruins the Brough of Birsay, and a 16<sup>th</sup> century Earl’s Palace in Palace Village.

The Farm Museums at Corrigan and Kirbuster, the Click Mill and Boardhouse Mill, all date from the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Skaill House, next to Skara Brae is a restored laird’s home full of interesting artefacts.

Stromness has its internationally acclaimed Pier Arts Centre and a delightful small Museum, reached through narrow, winding streets.

The sheltered harbour was called *Hammavoe* by the Norse.

Orphir offers fine views over the great natural harbour of Scapa Flow, once home to the British Fleet, and last resting place of the WWI German Grand Fleet. The St Nicholas Round Kirk is Norse, and was built by Earl Haakon in atonement for his murder of Earl, later St, Magnus.

Yesnaby Castle



### WEST MAINLAND

#### World Heritage Site

Skara Brae, Ring of Brodgar, Ness of Brodgar, Barnhouse, Stones of Stenness, Maeshowe

#### Other Places to Visit

Brough of Birsay  
Yesnaby  
Marwick Head  
Broch of Gurness  
Skaill House  
Farm Museums & Mills  
Stromness  
Orphir  
Lochs of Harray & Stenness  
Scapa Flow  
Craft Workshops  
Galleries

## SKARA BRAE



Hut 1 with its stone dresser, beds, central fireplace and sea view

**SKARA BRAE** The 5,000 year-old Neolithic village of Skara Brae was buried under sand dunes at the Bay of Skaill, in the West Mainland, until 1850, when it was revealed during a violent storm. The houses are so intact that it is easy to imagine their inhabitants going about their lives. The site was occupied from about 3100BC to about 2600BC, and consists of at least six dwellings, all joined together by a "street" and buried in a mound of midden except for the freestanding "workshop".

Panoramic view of Skara Brae with the Bay of Skaill in the background



The huts are well constructed with drains, (perhaps) damp-proof courses, stone dressers, beds, cupboards and tanks. There are even cells with drains which might be toilets. All are quite similar in design and vary from about 6m x 6m to 4m x 4m. The roofs may have been supported by whalebone or driftwood rafters. They would have been covered with hides, turf and perhaps with straw or reed thatch, all held down with heather or straw ropes.

Hut 8 appears to have been the workshop, with evidence of stone working, and pottery making. "Grooved Ware" pottery was found along with many bone and stone tools as well as jewellery items made from bone and shells.

The people were stock farmers who reared cattle, sheep, some pigs and deer. They also fished in the sea, which would have been prolific with Cod, Haddock, Saithe and many species of shellfish. They also grew Bere Barley.

## "THE HEART OF NEOLITHIC ORKNEY"

Due to the small amount of flint in Orkney, chert was served to make cutting tools. Bone was much utilised, but wood was not well preserved, though presumably it would also have been extensively used. Although no evidence of textile making was found, many possible leather working tools were found, suggesting that the people may have been quite well dressed, perhaps using skins and furs.



Aerial view of Skara Brae

Skara Brae is contemporary with the other Orkney Neolithic monuments. It is so far the best preserved village to have been found and the only one which can be visited, apart from the houses at Knap of Howar on Papa Westray and the settlement at Barnhouse in Stenness. The fact that it is so impressively designed and built suggests that its inhabitants were well settled in Orkney and not newcomers.



Hut 7 - now not visible to the public



Carved stone object - possibly a bull's head with geometric carvings

The "Street"



### NEOLITHIC TIME-LINE

- BC
- c.3600 Knap of Howar oldest Unstan Ware pottery
- c.3300 Barnhouse earliest probable oldest Ness of Brodgar
- c.3200 Earliest dates Skara Brae Oldest Tomb of Eagles Stalled cairns
- c.3100 Quanterness cairn Grooved Ware pottery Knap of Howar latest
- c.3000 Wall of Brodgar built Standing Stones, Quoyness Skara Brae phase II
- c.2700 Ness of Brodgar 1, 8 & 12 Maeshowe built
- c.2600 Ness of Brodgar 10 built Barnhouse 8 built Ring of Brodgar
- c.2500-2300 Ness of Brodgar 10 Latest chambered cairns
- c.2300 Ness of Brodgar 10 infilled
- c.2200 latest Skara Brae dates
- c.2200-2100 latest Ness of Brodgar
- c.2000 Bronze Age burials

## THE RING OF BRODGAR



*Ring of Brodgar - aerial view from the north-west*

**THE RING OF BRODGAR** (ON *Bruar-gardr*, Bridge Farm) is situated on a peninsula between the Lochs of Harray and Stenness, in the heart of the West Mainland. This very fine stone circle originally comprised 60 megaliths, of which 27 remain upright. It is a perfect circle, 103.7m in diameter and is surrounded by a rock-cut ditch 10m across and over 3m deep.

Dating from the same Neolithic period as Maeshowe and Skara Brae, the construction of the

henge and ditch would have taken a lot of labour, implying an organised society with spare resources and some kind of strong beliefs. As with Maeshowe, the monument has been carefully situated, with clear views in all directions.

The monoliths resemble the uprights within Maeshowe in size and shape, ranging from about 2m to 4.5m in height, and often with angular faces or notches on one side. They are all aligned with their flat sides facing into the centre of the circle.

There is an outlying standing stone, the Comet Stone, to the south east as well as several mounds nearby which could date from the Bronze Age. They may perhaps be points for viewing the variety of solar alignments relating to the solstices, equinoxes, Beltane and other dates which have been observed or suggested.

This may have been the intention of the designer or not, but will always remain enigmatic. Alignments with lunar phenomena have also been observed and

*Ring of Brodgar - panoramic view from the centre of the ring - looking towards Harray Loch*



## "THE HEART OF NEOLITHIC ORKNEY"

suggested, particularly at the times of major lunar standstills, every 18.6 years.

Nowhere does the feeling of space, where water, land and sky all seem to merge feel stronger than at Brodgar. The constantly changing Orkney light and weather mean that the site can be visited at any season or time of day and always look different. Although we know nothing about the beliefs of the Neolithic people who built the Ring of Brodgar it is clear that they were a highly motivated and imaginative society.



*The Comet Stone*



*Ring of Brodgar midsummer sunrise*



*Ring of Brodgar midsummer sunset*



*The Ring of Brodgar takes on a pristine appearance in the snow*

## THE NESS OF BRODGAR



Ness of Brodgar under excavation

**NESS OF BRODGAR** is the narrow peninsula north of the bridge from which the area takes its name. In 1925 a stone decorated with Neolithic lozenges and chevrons was found in the area now being excavated, having been reused as the lid of a Bronze Age cist burial.

**Discovery** The site was revealed by geophysical surveys in 2003. After exploratory digging in 2004, excavations have been carried out here every year since then. So far only a small fraction of the buildings here have been investigated

**Walls** The site is bounded to the north and south by well built walls. The northern one was ini-

tially 4m wide, and up to 100m long. The walls were paved on the outside and must have been most impressive when built. Originally they could have been 3m or more high and enclosed an area roughly 125m by 75m. The oldest radiocarbon dates found so far are from material under the southern wall and are from c.3200-3100BC.

**Buildings** The largest building, structure 10, is 20m square with walls 5m thick. It is surrounded by paving and has stonework of remarkable quality. The cross shaped interior includes standing stones and in design is reminiscent of Maeshowe, with which the entrance seems to be aligned.

All of these buildings have side chambers built into the walls, central fireplaces and are aligned roughly north to south. Large quantities of *Grooved Ware* pottery and other artefacts have been found. In 2011 the "Brodgar Boy" clay figurine added to the growing finds of anthropomorphic artefacts in Orkney.

**Painted Stones** One of the most interesting finds was painted stones. Iron based pigments mixed with animal fat or egg whites were used to create the yellow, red and brown coatings. Some have scratched designs obvious when new and which resemble other incised Neolithic artwork.

"Brodgar Boy" figurine



Broken mace head



## "THE HEART OF NEOLITHIC ORKNEY"

**Flagstone Roofs** These buildings may have been partly roofed by flagstone slates in a similar manner to traditional Orkney houses. A layer of large, worked, rectangular flagstones was discovered on the floor of two of the structures. These well formed "slates" had been skillfully trimmed.

**Interiors** Dressers and central hearths similar to those at Skara Brae were present, but the scale of the buildings and lack of evidence for long term occupation suggests that these were not houses for living in. More probably they were used for special occasions as has also been suggested for those at Barnhouse Village.

**Abandonment** The latest radiocarbon dates so far found are c.2300BC from cattle bones around structure 10. This was first built around 2600BC and involved much demolition and burial of earlier buildings. Development continued for about another 300 years, after which structure 10 was put out of use. It was filled with midden and rubble.

Hundreds of cattle tibia were also found here, perhaps representing feasting at the final closure of the site. Neolithic cultural activity continued for perhaps another 200 years, but on a minor scale.

**Nick Card**, Project Manager has said, "The discoveries are unparalleled in British prehistory, the complexity of finds is changing the whole vision of what the landscape was 5,000 years ago and that it's of a scale that almost relates to the classical period in the Mediterranean with walled enclosures and precincts. The site could be more important than Stonehenge."



Brodgar Stone found in 1925



Excavation work in progress 2008



Arrow head



High quality stonework and paved path

Side cell



North Wall of Brodgar



# THE STANDING STONES OF STENNESS



Standing Stones of Stenness - midsummer sunset

**THE STANDING STONES OF STENNESS** originally comprised of a circle of perhaps 12 monoliths, surrounded by a ditch 2m deep, 7m wide and 44m in diameter. The tallest stone is over 5m high. In addition there is a hearth-like stone setting in the centre. The site dates from about 3000BC and is thus older than Maeshowe or Brodgar.

Socket holes for more stones or wooden uprights were also discovered within the circle and nearby, suggesting that the site was origi-

nally more complex. The cove structure within the ring may have alignments with Maeshowe and Unstan Cairn.

The nearby Watchstone stands at the side of the Loch of Stenness. Observed from here some days before and after the winter solstice, the sun disappears behind the southern flank of the Ward Hill of Hoy, and then reappears momentarily on the north side, before finally setting.

There are several other standing

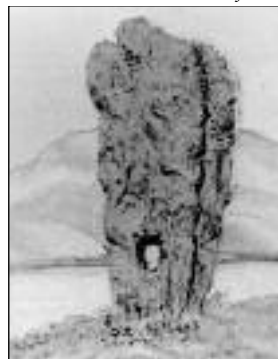
stones in the vicinity, the Barnhouse Stone near the main road, and a pair of smaller monoliths on the north side of the Brodgar Bridge. In addition there used to be the Stone of Odin, which was destroyed in 1814.

This stone was broken up and used to build a shed, but was a famous landmark. It had a hole through which lovers and others could hold hands and thus seal their vows. The *Oath of Odin* was binding on any contract, and also credited with healing powers.

Standing Stones of Stenness with the Hoy Hills and the Loch of Stenness



The Stone of Odin



# "THE HEART OF NEOLITHIC ORKNEY"



Barnhouse Stone

**BARNHOUSE VILLAGE** Nearby is the Neolithic Village of Barnhouse on the edge of the Loch of Harray. The bases of at least 15 free-standing houses are indicated here, each with a central hearth, and beds similar to those at Skara Brae. Two were bigger than the rest, the largest being 7m square internally with 3m thick walls. At midsummer the setting sun shines directly down the entrance passage of one house.

These structures resemble some of the chambered cairns, especially Maeshowe. This may have been a meeting-place associated with events at the Standing Stones. Flint and other stone tools were found as well as *Grooved Ware* pottery, similar to that from Skara Brae, the Standing Stones and the Ness of Brodgar.

Barnhouse midsummer sunset



Watchstone - midsummer sunset

There are strong similarities with the apparently slightly later structures at the Ness of Brodgar, just over the bridge from here. Clearly much remains to be discovered about this fascinating area of Neolithic Orkney. This is all part of the fascinating story of Orkney's archaeology.



Grooved Ware pottery



Hoy Hills and Loch of Stenness - midwinter sunset with "flashing" sun

Barnhouse Neolithic village - large house entrance



## MAESHOWE AND CHAMBERED CAIRNS



Winter sunset down the passage on 12<sup>th</sup> January - [www.maeshowe.co.uk](http://www.maeshowe.co.uk)

**MAESHOWE**, or *Orkahaugr* in the *Orkneyinga Saga*, is one of the finest of all chambered cairns, of which there are many in Orkney. These tombs were built by Neolithic people from around 3200BC and were often used over

a long period. Maeshowe dates from perhaps around 2700BC and is the largest and most splendid of its type to Orkney.

The stonework is engineered with great skill, with massive stone

slabs which have been expertly cut and positioned. Also the mound has been carefully situated with the entrance passage aligned such that the setting sun illuminates the chamber for several weeks in the afternoon before and after the winter solstice.

Very few artefacts were found when the mound was cleared out in 1862, but the discovery of a large number of 12<sup>th</sup> century Norse runic inscriptions and other carvings somewhat mitigated this. These runes were carved about 1153 by Norsemen returning from the crusades and are of the form "*Ingibiorg, the fair widow...*" or "*Thorfinn carved these runes*".

The chamber measures 4.5m square, similar to the smaller houses at Skara Brae, while the passage is 14.5m long and 1.4m high. It is lined with very large stone slabs, each of which weighs several tons. The three chambers are similarly roofed with single huge flagstones. The mound is surrounded by a ditch dating from about 2750BC, but the bank seems to be more recent.

Maeshowe is very prominent in the Stenness landscape. The quality of its construction remains supremely impressive 5,000 years after it was built. It is highly doubtful whether the expertise to quarry, transport and assemble these massive flagstones exists today. Today's visitors can only marvel at the abilities of these Neolithic builders and wonder how they managed to do it all.

There are a number of other Maeshowe-type chambered cairns to visit in Orkney including those at Cuween Hill near Finstown, on Wideford Hill near Kirkwall, and at Quoyness in Sanday. The other type is referred to as the Orkney-



"Ingibiorg" runes carved by 12<sup>th</sup> century Vikings

[www.maeshowe.co.uk](http://www.maeshowe.co.uk)

(live each winter)

Cromarty group, which have upright "stalls", shelves at one or both ends and corbelled roofs. They may also have cells leading off the main chamber at floor level. Examples include Unstan in Stenness, the Tomb of the Eagles on South Ronaldsay as well as several on Rousay.

Excavation of a few of these cairns has yielded the remains of large numbers of people, and provided much information on lifestyle, life expectancy and diseases suffered as well as artefacts such as pottery and tools. Two types of pottery have been found - "*Grooved Ware*" and "*Unstan Ware*".

Some of the tombs seem to have been associated with a particular animal, such as Sea Eagles at the eponymous Tomb of the Eagles, and dogs at Cuween. The Neolithic people went to great lengths to provide "*houses for the dead*" and clearly their ancestors were very important to them. The cairns may well have been used for rituals as well as burials.

Whether Maeshowe was ever used as a tomb is unknown, but its ambience today is rather that of a "Neolithic Cathedral" than a burial chamber. Today its solitary grandeur is perhaps being challenged by recent dramatic discoveries at the Ness of Brodgar.

The Maeshowe "dragon"



## "THE HEART OF NEOLITHIC ORKNEY"



Maeshowe from the northeast



Maeshowe sunset



Maeshowe sunset



Maeshowe interior showing passage, pillars and construction



Maeshowe aerial view from the south-west



## THE BROUGH OF BIRSAY



Crown copyright

**THE BROUGH OF BIRSAY** is a tidal island off the northwest corner of the Mainland. There are remains of a large Viking settlement, which is underlain by Pictish buildings. Bronze casting was done here in Pictish times and a large symbol stone was also found. Settlement seems to have started about the 6<sup>th</sup> century AD. Most of the ruins visible today are Viking, the small church is 12<sup>th</sup> century, but there may be an earli-

er Celtic one below it. On the slopes above the church are the outlines of several Norse long-houses up to 20m long, together with outhouses, which can be clearly seen from the air.

Near the church lies an extensive area of buildings, complete with bath-house and under floor central heating. It is thought that Earl Thorfinn the Mighty's 11<sup>th</sup> century cathedral and palace were

in the village, which is called "The Palace".

On the Point of Buckquoy a number of figure-of-eight shaped Pictish houses of similar age to the one at Gurness have been excavated, but none are on display. However "Groatie Buckies" (Cowrie Shells) may be found on the beach here in compensation.

Apart from the ancient monuments, the Brough has a lighthouse dating from 1925, and the whole area is a very pleasant place for a walk or to watch rough seas from the shelter of the car during a winter storm. It is also possible to see Puffins here during the breeding season.

The Earl's Palace at "The Palace" village was built by Earl Robert Stewart in the late 16<sup>th</sup> century and consists of four wings surrounding a large courtyard which has a well in the middle. It was said to be "a sumptuous and stately mansion" in 1633. Stewart was a half-brother of Mary Queen of Scots.

The large exposed bay to the east of the Brough is called Skipi Geo.

Brough of Birsay from the south with a rough sea



## THE WEST MAINLAND



Replica of Pictish symbol stone

There is a fine walk from the car park to the Whale Bone, from where there are spectacular views on rough days. In summer the whole area is awash with wild flowers, including Thrift, Spring Squill, Grass of Parnassus and Sea Plantain.

To the south the Birsay Links are a large area of sand dunes and machair. They are a sea of colour with wild flowers in summer. There are fine views over Birsay Bay from Garson, on the south side. A path leads all the way to Marwick Head from here.

Brough of Birsay aerial view showing Viking Age ruins



The Earl's Palace dates from the late 16<sup>th</sup> century



Skipi Geo and the Whalebone on a midsummer evening

### BIRSAY, EVIE & SANDWICK

- Brough of Birsay
- The Palace
- Earl's Palace
- Skipi Geo
- Barony Water Mill
- Marwick Head
- Bay of Skail
- Skara Brae
- Skail House
- Yesnaby
- Kirbuster Farm Museum
- Click Mill
- Broch of Gurness
- Aikerness Beach
- Eynhallow Sound

## MARWICK, YESNABY AND ORPHIR



Marwick Head from the south

**Marwick Head** (87m) lies about 4km (2.5mi) to the south of The Palace, and is an RSPB Reserve. In early summer it teems with breeding seabirds and is a very good place to view Guillemots, Razorbills, Fulmars, Kittiwakes, Rock Doves, Puffins, and even perhaps a Peregrine. The clifftops are carpeted by a profusion of Thrift, other wild flowers and yellow lichens in summer, which adds to the untamed wild beauty of the cliffs.

The Old Red Sandstone rock has level beds and weathers into a myriad of small ledges which are ideal for nesting seabirds. There are also plentiful food supplies in the neighbouring waters.

Bay of Skaill and Skara Brae



Kitchener Memorial, Birsay

**RSPB Bird Reserves** There are several other RSPB Reserves in the West Mainland. These include the Loons, near Marwick Head, the Birsay Moors and Hobbister in Orphir. Other good places for birds are the Loch of Harray, Burgar Hill in Evie, the Loch of Skaill and Stromness Harbour.

The tower at the highest point of Marwick Head was erected after WW1 to commemorate the Minister of War, Kitchener, and the crew of *HMS Hampshire*, which was sunk by a German mine here in 1916. The cruiser was taking War Minister Kitchener to Russia when the sinking happened. There were very few survivors.

**Bay of Skaill** Further south along the west coast of the Mainland lies the Bay of Skaill. The famous Neolithic village of Skara Brae is on the southwest shore. Skaill House is adjacent and shares ticketing with its more ancient neighbour. A stroll here is much recommended at any season, whether benign on a summer's day or wild in a winter storm.

The Head O'Row is on the south side of the bay and has superb views to north and south. The Hole O'Row is a natural arch, through which waves explode on a rough day. There is superb clifftop walk from the Bay of Skaill to Yesnaby, with its the wild cliff scenery.

**Yesnaby** During a storm huge waves crash into and over the west coast cliffs. The Castle of Yesnaby is a mini version of the Old Man of Hoy, which can be seen from here. The coastal scenery here is nature in the raw. Stromatolites, fossils which date from about 350 million years ago, may be seen here. There are also igneous dykes, granite intrusions and ancient lake beds to explore.

Yesnaby has many characters depending on the season, time of day and weather. On a gentle

## THE WEST MAINLAND

summer's evening it appears benign and welcoming. During a northwesterly force 12 gale with enormous seas breaking, the raw power of nature is laid bare.

**Wild Flowers** This exposed place is one of the best places to see the rare endemic, *Primula scotica*. It flowers in May and July and can be spotted from the approach road. This hardy little plant only grows in Orkney and the north coast of Scotland. It has small magenta flowers. In summer Spring Squill, Thrift, Grass of Parnassus and Sea Plantain give the maritime heath a warm glow.

**Birsay to Evie** From The Palace the road returns to Kirkwall clockwise via Evie and Rendall. Costa Head above the Loch of Swannay was the site of early aerogenerator experiments. Today Burgar Hill and nearby Hammars Hill are home to wind-farms.

**Aikerness Beach** (or the Sands of Evie) faces Eynhallow Sound and Rousay. This attractive beach is well worth visiting as part of a tour of the nearby Broch of Gurness. Seals, Otters and sea-ducks may be seen round the shores. The dunes, shoreline and banks of the burn are all good places for wild flowers.

*Primula scotica*



Yesnaby Castle with Thrift



Eynhallow Sound sunset from Aikerness



Grass of Parnassus



Spring Squill



Rough seas at Yesnaby

## SKAILL HOUSE, SANDWICK



*Skaill House from the west*

**SKAILL HOUSE** is situated near Skara Brae on the west coast of the Mainland. It is the only mansion house in Orkney open to the public as a museum and dates partly from the 17<sup>th</sup> century, when part of the Earldom estate passed to the Bishopric under Bishop Graham in 1615.

This Bishop “acquired” a substantial amount of land from bishopric property and smallholdings, in the name of his eldest son, John, who became the first Laird. The present Laird, Major Malcolm Macrae, is the 12<sup>th</sup> and he has ren-

ovated the property as a museum. The oldest part was built by Bishop Graham in the 1620's and much of the house dates from the 18<sup>th</sup> century, with further additions over the next two centuries.

The tour is a good insight to the lives of the Lairds and their families, with connections to many historic events and characters. These include some of Captain Cook's dinner service, a cupboard called the Armada Chest, with panels said to have come from a Spanish ship in 1588 and one of Bishop Graham's beds.

The house is allegedly haunted, and during renovation work 15 skeletons were found near the east porch, which are thought to be early Christian, perhaps Pictish.

There is a gift shop and the property is open from April to October. A visit makes an interesting contrast to Skara Brae.

Other mansion houses which may be visited include Balfour Castle on Shapinsay, Carrick House on Eday and Melsetter House on Hoy, all by arrangement.

*Dining Room*



*Bishop Graham's bed*



## FARM MUSEUMS & MILLS

**FARM MUSEUMS** The two Farm Museums, at Kirbuster in Birsay and Corrigan in Harray, are in strong contrast to Skaill House and represent examples of ordinary houses from the early and late 19<sup>th</sup> century respectively. Both have a dwelling house, byre, barn, corn drying kiln and outhouses.

**Kirbuster Farm** has no chimney, but instead an open fire with a “fireback” and a wooden smoke-hole in the roof with “skylin”. The smoke-hole also served to let extra light in. There is a neuk bed, reminiscent of the beds at Skara Brae built into one wall. Despite the lack of a chimney the house is not very smoky inside.

**Corrigan Farm** is more modern with chimneys and a higher roof but is otherwise similar. The bedroom end has boxbeds, and the floors are all of flagstone. On display are a variety of old implements, traditional crafts, furnishings and tools, as well as a variety of livestock.

**The Click Mill** near Dounby is a late 19<sup>th</sup> century example of a so-called “Norse” vertical axis corn mill. Named because of the noise made during operation, these were basically mechanised quernstones, and were common from Viking and possibly earlier times until the later 19<sup>th</sup> century when larger water mills became popular.

**Boardhouse, or Barony, Mill** is a restored 19<sup>th</sup> century watermill powered by water from the nearby Loch of Boardhouse. It was built in 1873 and still grinds grain in the winter. It incorporates a kiln for drying the corn at the east end and mostly produces beremeal from old fashioned 6 row Bere Barley. The 4.1m overshot wheel turns at 12rpm and is said to use about half a million litres of water per hour under full load.



*Kirbuster Museum showing fireback*



*Corrigan Farm Museum*



*Click Mill*

*Boardhouse Mill*



## THE BROCH OF GURNESS, EVIE



*The Broch of Gurness with surrounding settlement, ditches and ramparts*

**BROCHS** (ON *Borg*, stronghold) are unique to Scotland and Orkney has about 100. They developed from roundhouses which first appeared around 700BC. Brochs typically have a large tower, up to 20m in diameter with hollow walls up to 5m thick at the base.

The walls have an internal staircase and the structures could be up to 15m tall. Most brochs are sited on or near the coast, but there a number in the West Mainland that are inland. Some are solitary, but others are surrounded by settlements.

**Broch of Gurness** Over 2,000 years after its construction, this broch at Aikerness remains imposing. The site, with its ramparts, ditches, broch tower and extensive surrounding settlement is an evocative place to visit. It was occupied from the Iron Age through Pictish to Norse times.

The broch is surrounded by three massive ramparts and deep ditches, and may well have had a tall tower. Inside there is a central hearth and an elaborate underground well with a collecting tank. The space between the broch and the defences encloses a small vil-

lage which could have been occupied by 30 or so families. An imposing entrance leads via a small street to the broch doorway with its massive lintel.

The houses share walls and are furnished in stone with hearths, cooking tanks, drains, box beds, storage cupboards and even toilets. Unlike at other monuments, the visitor is free to wander at will and imagine life millenia ago.

During excavation many artefacts were found, including fragments of Roman amphorae from about 100AD, stone and bone tools,

*The Broch of Gurness from the entrance on the east side*



## THE WEST MAINLAND



*The Broch of Gurness from the west with surrounding ditches and ramparts*

pottery and items with Pictish Ogam inscriptions. A 9<sup>th</sup> century Viking female burial complete with grave goods was present near the top of the mound.

**Pictish Houses** At Gurness are the only examples of shamrock-shaped multicellular Pictish houses currently on view in Orkney. These were rebuilt near the entrance as originally they were built into the broch mound. The small museum has a shop, and an excellent interpretation area.

**Other Brochs** Other excavated brochs to visit include Midhowe

on Rousay, Bugar in Sandwick, Burrian on North Ronaldsay and Burroughstone on Shapinsay. There are many more visible as mounds.

**Earthhouses** Another interesting development starting in about 600BC is the Earthhouse or souterrain. Typical examples at Rennibister in Firth and Grain near Kirkwall can be visited. These underground structures are thought to be cellars from long-gone roundhouses. They were probably used for storage, and any resemblance to chambered cairns is most likely superficial.

*Pictish houses at Gurness*



*Rennibister Earthhouse*



*Pictish comb*



*Pictish symbol from Broch of Gurness*

## STROMNESS



Crown copyright



Stromness from the ferry

**STROMNESS** (ON *Straum-nes*, Stream Point) was also called *Hamnavoe* (Harbour Bay) by the Vikings. This excellent harbour is the ferry terminal for the crossing to Scrabster in Caithness. There are also many small fishing boats and dive boats which work from here. One of Orkney's three RNLI Lifeboats is based here.

The town dates from the 17<sup>th</sup> century and for many years supplied water, stores and crewmen to ships taking the northern route around Britain as well as ships of the Hudson's Bay Company and whalers. During the Herring Boom in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries it was also very busy.

**Street** The winding, flagstone-paved street is the backbone of the

town. Many of the houses on the shore side have their own piers, while the houses higher up are reached by a multitude of narrow lanes. The lack of space for new development in the town has ensured that it has retained its attractive character, with the industrial area being situated on the outskirts.

The intimate nature of the town makes Stromness popular with visitors and several events take place here including the Orkney Traditional Folk Festival, the Stromness Shopping Week and a Beer Festival.

**Museum** Stromness Museum has a fascinating series of displays on mostly maritime and natural history themes. These include the

Hudson's Bay Company connection, and the scuttle of the WW1 German High Seas Fleet. There are also extensive exhibits of Orkney birds, mammals, molluscs and insects.

**Pier Arts Centre** Also well worth a visit is the Pier Arts Centre with its permanent collection of 20<sup>th</sup> century art and temporary exhibitions. This attractive old building was once the agency and store for the Hudson's Bay Company and is built on a pier near the ferry terminal. It has recently been refurbished and extended to accommodate a greater variety of work.

**Shopping** There are many interesting shops in Stromness, offering a range of local crafts, knitwear, books and art, as well as

Pier Arts Centre



Stromness - Victoria Street



## HAMNAVOE OF THE NORSE SAGAS



Hoy Sound and the Black Craig in winter

several grocers and hardware shops.. Parking is not very practical in the narrow street but there are plenty of spaces on the approach road.

**Ness Battery** was an important part of the defence of Scapa Flow in both World Wars. The WWII structures are largely intact and include 6in gun houses, the battery observation post, magazines, generator houses and service accommodation.

**Activities** Apart from the timeless attraction of watching boats and people around the harbour, Stromness has a golf course and a variety of fine walks. There is an excellent panoramic view from Brinkie's Brae (94m) above the town.

The beach of Warebeth lies to the west and offers fine views of the Hoy Hills and Hoy Sound. There is a fine coastal walk to it via the Point of Ness, which continues westwards to Breckness. This shore has many interesting rock formations which date from 350 million years ago.

At the north end of Outertown, the Black Craig (111m) offers a fine panorama from the old coast-guard hut. A little further on is North Gaulton Castle, a fine, but little visited, rock stack. At Billia Cru the European Marine Energy Centre has testbeds for wave energy devices which may be visible.



Ness Gun Battery dates from WWI and WWII

Warebeth beach with the Hoy Hills in the background



### STROMNESS

- Hamnavoe (Harbour)
- Pier Arts Centre
- Stromness Museum
- The Street
- Login's Well
- The Cannon
- Point of Ness
- Ness Gun Battery
- EMEC Test Centre
- Warebeth Beach
- Black Craig



## SCAPA FLOW



Tom Kent

German High seas Fleet in Scapa Flow, November 1919

**SCAPA FLOW** was used as the main base of the British Home Fleet in both WW1 and WW2 due to it being a large land-locked harbour with deep entrances and deep water anchorages. In both wars it took some time to make it secure.

**WWI** Early in the First World War, Scapa Flow was selected as the main base for the British Home Fleet. In 1914 it had no defences in place, but by 1918 it was very heavily defended. Coastal batteries, boom defence nets, controlled minefields and many other measures were put in

place to make the fleet safe in its anchorage. Early experiments with shipborne aircraft were carried out here for the first time.

**Scuttle of German Fleet** The harbour saw dramatic actions in both wars. After WW1, 74 vessels of the German High Seas Fleet were interned here, and on 21<sup>st</sup> June 1919 they were scuttled. Some were beached, but most sank. The majority were salvaged during the 1920s and 1930s, but three battleships and four cruisers remain and are much visited by scuba divers today.

**WWII** At the start of the Second World War, Scapa Flow had a few gun emplacements left over from the previous conflict. It was soon realised that extensive defences would be required to render Scapa Flow secure from German attack.

**HMS Royal Oak** In 1939 the German U-boat *U47* crept into Scapa Flow through Holm Sound and torpedoed *HMS Royal Oak*, with the loss of 833 crew. This was to result in the construction of the Churchill Barriers and a huge increase in the defences in general.



"SMS Bayern" sinking in 1919 in Scapa Flow

Diver examines gun on WW2 German wreck "SMS Dresden"



## BRITISH HOME FLEET BASE IN TWO WORLD WARS

The wreck of *HMS Royal Oak* was leaking considerable quantities of fuel oil and became a pollution threat. As a result the Royal Navy has removed much of the oil fuel that remained aboard.

**Churchill Barriers** Greatly increased defences were ordered to be built by Churchill in 1940 after the sinking of *HMS Royal Oak* to seal off the eastern approaches to Scapa Flow. The firm of Balfour Beatty was appointed as contractors. To solve the labour shortage, several hundred Italian prisoners of war were drafted in from Libya early in 1942 to assist in the work.

Camps and works were set up in the East Mainland as well as on Lamb Holm, Glimps Holm and Burray. Nearly 1 million cubic metres of rock in wire bolsters was used to complete the four Barriers, and by late 1942 they were breaking the surface. Over 50,000 5 and 10-ton concrete blocks were then used to clad the sides.

**WWII defences** Up to 40,000 men were based in Orkney at the peak of activity in WWII, and once secured maximum advantage was taken of the strategically important position of Scapa Flow. Much evidence still remains of the

Blocks for the Churchill Barriers



TW

"HMS Royal Oak" firing her main armament



Blockships before Barrier #3 was built



Barriers #1, 2 and 3 with blockships in WWII

### SCAPA FLOW

- Ness Gun Battery
- Stromness Museum
- Houton
- WWI German Fleet
- Hatston Industrial Estate
- Kirkwall Airport
- Netherbutton Radar Station
- Churchill Barriers
- Italian Chapel
- Hoxa Head Batteries
- Lyness Naval Base
- Scapa Flow Visitor Centre
- Hackness Martello Tower
- Flotta Oil Terminal

## SCAPA FLOW



Coastal Defence Battery overlooking Holm Sound



"Swordfish" aircraft at Hatston Airfield, "HMS Sparrowhawk"



Aircraft Carrier "HMS Victorious"

defences, including coastal batteries, searchlight emplacements, old airfields, and parts of the naval base at Lyness on Hoy.

During WWII, aircraft carriers were very important and Orkney served as a base for repairs and training for many of their aircraft. The action where *Bismarck* was sunk succeeded due to the seemingly archaic Fairey *Swordfish* torpedo bombers which doggedly searched out the battleship and, despite their apparent frailty, damaged the ship's rudder.

**Scapa Flow Visitor Centre**, based in the old pumphouse at Lyness, is a museum and interpretation centre about the wartime history Scapa Flow. Lyness was a major naval base in both World Wars. During WWII large oil tanks were built into Wee Fea, the hill above the harbour. Many artefacts are on display from both wars, ranging from large guns to small items. The remaining large oil tank is also used for exhibits.

**North Sea Oil** In the 1970s oil was first exploited in the North Sea, and the Flotta Oil Terminal continues to process and export large quantities of crude. Tankers remain a common sight in Scapa Flow. In addition vessels doing ship to ship transfers or undergoing maintenance often call.



Scapa Flow panoramic view from Glimps Holm

## BRITISH HOME FLEET BASE IN TWO WORLD WARS

**Wildlife** Scapa Flow is winter home to many birds which breed in the Arctic, including Great Northern Divers and Long-tailed Ducks. The Churchill Barriers are a good place to look for these species. In summer many Terns, Eiders, Red-breasted Mergansers and other seabirds nest around the shores.

It is occasionally visited by pods of young Sperm Whales and various species of dolphins, including Killer Whales and Porpoises. The shores are home to the elusive Otter, while Common and Grey Seals both breed in the area.

**Transport Link** Today the Barriers provide Orkney's only fixed transport links between the Mainland and other islands. Large sandy beaches have built up in Weddel and Water Sound on the east sides of Barriers #3 and #4. The blockage of the channels has also greatly affected the distribution of sand all around Orkney beaches.

The Churchill Barriers are often subject to adverse weather conditions. During storms waves can make crossing dangerous, particularly at high spring tides with a storm surge. Most visitors, however, will only see Scapa Flow in beautiful, benign and colourful summer weather.



Scapa Flow Visitor Centre Pump House



Gun mounted on Hackness Martello Tower at Longhope on Hoy



Oil Tanker in Scapa Flow

Flotta Oil Terminal





## EAST MAINLAND



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**EAST MAINLAND** The parishes of Tankerness, Holm and Deerness have much to offer the visitor, having a charm all of their own and being like a separate island in many ways. The area is generally low lying and mostly farmland, but all the same has much of interest to see and do. This includes many fine beaches, some spectacular cliffs and good walking.

**Archaeology** There is ample evidence of early occupation in the form of burnt mounds and brochs, most notably Dingieshowe on the Deerness isthmus. The only ancient monument open to the visitor is Minehowe. This enigmatic, well-

like Iron Age structure has 29 stone steps which descend in two flights to a small chamber. Minehowe is a small part of a large unexplored prehistoric landscape.

**Rerwick Head** is the most northerly point of Tankerness. In both World Wars there were gun batteries on this headland, which may still be seen. There are fine coastal walks from here, southwards along the low cliffs to the Ness and Hall of Tankerness, or eastwards to the fine beaches at Heatherhouse and Redbanks.

**Mull Head** in Deerness is a Nature Reserve with indicated paths. Near the entrance the

Gloup is a large partially collapsed cave, a deep chasm which can be observed with care from a gallery. The low cliffs at Mull Head are a good place to see seabirds and seals. There is a fine circular walk around the headland.

**Brough of Deerness** On the east side of Mull Head, about 1km north of the carpark, stands the promontory of the Brough of Deerness. There is a small chapel and a scatter of foundations of buildings. All are Norse, but Pictish people were probably here in earlier times.

**Covenanters' Memorial** This tower on the north side of Deerness is a poignant reminder of the spot where about 200 political prisoners were drowned in 1679. Over 1,200 Covenanters had been captured at the Battle of Bothwell Brig and held at Greyfriar's Kirkyard in Edinburgh. Those who were not executed or did not submit or die from exposure, were to be transported to the West Indies as slaves.

The "Crown of London" left Edinburgh in December 1679. The ship took shelter off Deerness but was driven ashore. The crew were saved, but only 50 of the prisoners survived. Most were soon caught and sent onwards to Jamaica. The Covenanters were vehemently opposed to the imposition of the *Book of Common Prayer* by Charles I and later Charles II.

**Copinsay** is a small island and RSPB Reserve off the southeast of Deerness. It has a large seabird colony in summer on its east facing cliffs. Many Grey Seals also pup here in autumn. It is hard to reach, but well worth the effort if a boat can be procured.

Rerwick Head September sunset



## TANKERNESS, DEERNES & HOLM

**Holm** The pretty village of St Mary's in Holm overlooks Holm Sound, through which *U47* sailed in 1939 on its way to sink *HMS Royal Oak*. There is a good view of the sound and the Churchill Barriers from the hill east of the village.

The fertile area in the south east corner is known as Paplay, where the Vikings found a large monastic settlement. No archaeological remains have been excavated from this time here, but a high status Pictish farmstead at Skaill in Deerness was examined some time ago.

**Beaches** In Deerness, Sandside, Newark and Dingieshowe are all very fine beaches for a walk or picnic. Keep a good look out at Newark Bay in case you should see the mermaid! There are several attractive small beaches in Tankerness. In Holm Wester Sand and Howes Wick, near the Old Kirk, are pleasant.

**Wildlife** There are many good birding sites here including the flat muddy shores at Mill Sands and St Peter's Pool, in Tankerness. St Mary's Loch and Graemeshall Loch in Holm, as well as the Loch of Tankerness should be checked. In Deerness the Mull Head cliffs and moors are home to breeding seabirds and moorland species.

Newark Bay, where mermaids are said to appear



Mull Head, Deerness from seaward



Covenanters' Memorial



Copinsay cliffs from the east

### EAST MAINLAND

- Rerwick Head
- Minehowe
- St Peter's Pool
- Dingieshowe
- Newark Bay
- Sandside
- The Gloup
- Brough of Deerness
- Mull Head
- Covenanters' Memorial
- Copinsay
- St Mary's
- Paplay
- Holm Sound

## ITALIAN CHAPEL AND CHURCHILL BARRIERS



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The Italian Chapel was built by Italian prisoners of war in WWII

**ITALIAN CHAPEL** "The Miracle of Camp 60" was built by Italian prisoners of war of Camp 60, who arrived from Libya in January 1942 to help build the Churchill Barriers. It is an unusual survivor and memorial to the Second World War.

To brighten up the cheerless camp of Nissen huts the Italians made paths and planted flowerbeds. Artist, Domenico Chiocchetti made the St George and the Dragon statue from barbed wire and cement, to preside over the camp square. The prisoners soon had a theatre and a recreational hut complete with a concrete billiard table, but they lacked a chapel.

In late 1943 two Nissen huts were joined end to end and Chiocchetti set to work, aided by a small number of other POWs. One end was to be the Chapel, the other a school. The hut was lined with plasterboard and an altar with the rail cast in concrete.

Chiocchetti painted the Madonna and Child behind the altar. The image is based on a 19<sup>th</sup> century painting by Nicolo Barabino from a card his mother had given to him when he left for the war. He also frescoed a White Dove, the symbol of the Holy Spirit, at the centre of the vault and included the symbols of the four Evangelists around it, as well as two Cherubim and two Seraphim lower down.

The upper parts of the interior appear like brick with vaulting, while the lower walls are painted to look like carved marble. The "vaults" in the ceiling are especially well executed, and the visual effect is quite stunning. Palumbo, a metalworker, made candelabra and the rood screen and gates. A façade was erected with the help of Bruttapasta, with an archway and pillars.

A belfry was mounted on top and a moulded head of Christ in red clay was placed on the front of the arch. The whole exterior of the hut was then covered with a thick coat of cement, never in short supply during the building of the Barriers!

The Chapel in 1944



The Italian Chapel with some of the Italian prisoners of war



## "OVER THE BARRIERS"



The Italian Chapel interior

Chiocchetti returned to Orkney in 1960, when he did much to restore the internal paintwork of the chapel. In 1961 his hometown, Moena, near Bolzano in the Dolomites, gifted a wayside shrine, the carved figure of Christ erected outside the Chapel, to the people of Orkney. More recently much work has been done to restore and preserve the Chapel, the memorial statue and surroundings for the future.

The Italian Chapel is now one of the most visited monuments in Orkney and is a fitting memorial to those lost in wartime. Chiocchetti, in addressing the Orcadian people, said, "The chapel is yours, for you to love and preserve. I take with me to Italy the remem-



D Chiocchetti at work



Head of Christ above the door

*brance of your kindness and wonderful hospitality. I shall remember you always, and my children shall learn from me to love you. I thank (you)....for having given me the joy of seeing again the little chapel of Lamb Holm where I, in leaving, leave a part of my heart."*

It is somewhat ironic that most of the many visitors to Orkney cross

the Churchill Barriers to see the Chapel. They come not to remember the British war leader, or to marvel at military engineering, but to visit our little Italian shrine, which is a monument to hope and faith in exile. It is now 70 years ago that the prisoners from the Libyan desert arrived on a chilly Lamb Holm, but their chapel offers a warm welcome.

St George and the Dragon



The Italian Chapel with Holm Sound in the background



## BURRAY AND SOUTH RONALDSAY



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**SOUTH RONALDSAY & BURRAY** are easily accessed from the Mainland by the Churchill Barriers. There are many sites of interest apart from the Barriers themselves, their associated blockships and the lovely sandy beaches which have built up at on the east side of #3 and #4.

**Burray** (ON *Borgarey*, Broch Island) is low lying with very fine beaches on the east side. Echnaloch is particularly good for wildfowl at all times of year. Many overwintering bird species can also be seen from the Barriers.

**Orkney Fossil and Heritage Centre** has displays of Orkney rocks and fossils and tells the story of Orkney's geology, as well as relics of bye-gone days. There is a gift shop and tea room which is open from April to October.

**South Ronaldsay** (ON *Rognvalds-ey*) has a special charm. The small village of St Margaret's Hope dates from the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. The bay is said to be named after a 13<sup>th</sup> century Norse princess who died in 1290 while on her way to marry Prince Edward of England, but "Hope" comes from ON *Hjop*

(Bay), and not the English word "hope". In the village are the Old Smiddy Museum, several interesting shops and craft workshops as well as the renowned Creel Restaurant.

**Boys' Ploughing Match** At Sand o' Wright, the Boys' Ploughing Match is held each August. The girls dress up as horses and the boys as ploughmen, before being judged as at a real horse event. Later, rigs are worked in the sand using ploughs which have often been handed down over generations. Old timers then decide on the champion of the day.

**Marine Life Aquarium** Pool Farmhouse "offers a unique chance to see and understand some aspects of the marine environment."

**Hoxa Tapestry Gallery** Here Leila Thomson weaves wonderful tapestries "inspired by the life and landscape of Orkney."

**The Tomb of the Eagles** is to the south, near Burwick. This Orkney-Cromarty type chambered cairn is only one of two which have been excavated recently, and strongly resembles Unstan Cairn in Stenness. The remains of

about 340 individuals were found. Of particular interest was the discovery of skeletons and talons of Sea Eagles - hence the name.

The cairn was built about 3150BC and used for up to 800 years. Over 40 broken *Unstan Ware* pots were found, as well as fish and animal bones and charred barley. Beautifully carved stone objects and rougher stone tools are on display along with some of the skulls in the museum where they can be examined closely. The human remains have revealed much about the people's lives.

The nearby Liddle Burnt Mound dates from the Bronze Age, from perhaps 1000BC. It has a central trough which was used to cook joints of meat by throwing in stones heated in a fire - hence the mound of burnt stones.

**Ferries** John o'Groats Ferries runs in the summer between John o'Groats in Caithness and Burwick in around 45 minutes. Pentland Ferries also operate a daily roro catamaran ferry between Gills Bay in Caithness and St. Margaret's Hope, offering a scenic alternative to the route between Stromness and Scrabster.



Tomb of the Eagles, interior of the main chamber



Sea Eagles' Talons



Skull from Tomb of the Eagles



The Bay of Cletts and St Peter's Kirk, East Side

Fossil and Vintage Centre, Viewforth, Burray



Boys' Ploughing Match, South Ronaldsay



St Margaret's Hope, South Ronaldsay



### SOUTH RONALDSAY

- Burray
- Glimps Holm beaches
- Fossil & Vintage Centre
- 4th Barrier beaches
- St Margaret's Hope
- Old Smiddy Museum
- Hoxa Tapestry Centre
- Boys' Ploughing Match
- Newark Bay
- Tomb of the Eagles

## SOUTH ISLES - HOY



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**HOY** (ON *Ha-ey*, High Island) is the second largest of the Orkney Islands and different in character from the others. The north end is hilly with the Ward Hill (479m) and Cuilags (433m) being prominent landmarks from many parts of Orkney. Much of the north end of Hoy is an RSPB Reserve.

**Old Man of Hoy** The north and west coasts have spectacular cliffs, only the south end being low and fertile. One of Orkney's most

well-known icons is the famous rock stack, the Old Man of Hoy (137m), which stands on a lava platform. The ferry passes the Hoy cliffs on its way across the Pentland Firth, allowing a stunning view of the noble stack.

**Rackwick** The wide sweep of Rackwick, on the north west side with a sand and boulder beach bounded on both sides by high cliffs, is well appreciated from the path to the Old Man. This offers

good views across the Pentland Firth to Scotland. Rackwick has a beauty and climate all of its own, beware the midgies but admire the dragonflies and wild flowers.

**St John's Head** The imposing crags at St John's Head (351m) are the highest vertical sea cliffs in Britain. The horizontal beds of sandstone have weathered to give dramatic reds and yellows, which are especially vibrant with a low evening sun.

*Rackwick from the path to the Old Man of Hoy*



## SOUTH ISLES - HOY



*St John's Head (351m), Britain's highest vertical sea cliff, has been chosen as one of "National Geographic's" top ten world ocean views*

**Dwarfie Stone** Below the Ward Hill, on the road to Rackwick, lies the enigmatic Dwarfie Stone with its hand carved chamber. This may be Neolithic, but is unique as the only such tomb in the UK. It must have taken a lot of work to excavate the cavity.

**Scapa Flow** There are good views across Scapa Flow from the road along the east coast to North and South Walls (ON *Vagr*, *Voe* or *Bay*). Most of the population lives

at the south end of the island, where the landscape is more like the rest of Orkney.

**Water of Hoy** Near this small loch, a small, fenced memorial to Betty Corrigan lies on the parish boundary. This young girl sadly committed suicide in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. She had become pregnant to a local man who subsequently left on a whaling ship for the *Nor'Wast*. She could not be buried in consecrated ground.

Pegal Burn, further south, is the largest stream in Orkney. This attractive watercourse and estuary is a fine place for a picnic and also to see an Otter if you are lucky. The shoreline has fabulously eroded sandstone boulders.

**Lyness** was a large naval base during both World Wars and was known as *HMS Prosperine*. Underground oil storage tanks, a large harbour, dubbed "*Golden Wharf*" on account of its cost, and

*Dwarfie Stone*



### HOY

- Old Man of Hoy
- Ward Hill
- Rackwick
- Dwarfie Stone
- Pegal Burn & Water of Hoy
- Lyness Naval Base
- Scapa Flow Visitor Centre
- Melsetter House
- Longhope Lifeboat Museum
- Hackness Martello Tower
- Cantick Head lighthouse

## SOUTH ISLES - HOY



Scapa Flow Visitor Centre

a huge array of buildings sprang up. Most of the military detritus has been cleared up, and Lyness is now the ferry terminal for Houton on the Mainland and for Flotta. The wharf area has now been converted into harbour facilities, hard standing and warehouses for the marine renewables industry.



Longhope Lifeboat Memorial

Longhope Harbour



**Lyness Naval Cemetery** remains as a poignant reminder of the human sacrifice involved in wartime. There are memorials to British and German servicemen of both World Wars, including those lost on HMS *Vanguard* which blew up in 1917 near Flotta. Recently standing stones were erected near the ferry terminal remembering those lost in the WWII Russian convoys.

**Moor Fea** The Naval HQ and Communications Centre on Moor Fea, the hill above Lyness, has fine views over Scapa Flow and to the south. The hill here is honeycombed by giant underground tanks installed in WWII by Norwegian miners.

**Scapa Flow Visitor Centre** is in what was the pumphouse serving the Royal Navy fuel oil tanks during WWII. One of the oil tanks

has also been retained and contains displays of military equipment and artefacts. Inside the pumphouse the machinery has been renovated and there are displays of small artefacts, photographs and documents relating to the two World Wars. Outside several WWI German guns, railway stock used in WWII and a propeller off HMS *Hampshire* can be seen.

**Melsetter House** and Rysa Lodge were designed by William Lethaby in Arts and Crafts style for the Middlemore family. At Melsetter the original house dating from 1738 is part of the 1898 design, forming the most attractive country house in Orkney. It can be visited by arrangement.

**Longhope Lifeboat Station** at Brims is a museum whose main exhibit is the lifeboat, *Thomas McCunn*, which served here from 1933 to 1962. Since being established in 1874, many successful rescues were undertaken from here. Perhaps the late coxswain Dan Kirkpatrick was the most deserving of fame.

It was from here that he and his crew left in the lifeboat *TGB* to go to the aid of a Liberian freighter, Irene, in March 1969. Sadly all were lost in tumultuous seas in the Pentland Firth. A bronze statue in Osmondwall Cemetery honours the *TGB* crew. The present Longhope Lifeboat, The *Helen Comrie*, is of the latest *Tamar* class, and was on station in October 2006. She is based in the little harbour at Longhope.

**Martello Tower & Battery** At Hackness there is a Martello Tower and gun battery, one of two in Scotland. It was built during the early 19<sup>th</sup> century Napoleonic Wars to protect shipping from marauding American privateers.

## SOUTH ISLES - HOY



The Hoy Hills and Hoy Sound from Stenness

Convoys were introduced at that time to guard merchant vessels from attack, and Longhope was a good place for ships to gather.

The tower originally had a 24-pounder gun mounted on top, while the nearby battery had eight 24-pounder guns, with barracks, stores and a magazine. The site is now managed by Historic Scotland, and has been extensively renovated inside and out.

**Cantick Head Lighthouse** was completed in 1858 by David Stevenson and automated in 1991. There are good views over the Pentland Firth from here. Killer Whales have been seen close in to the rocks here at times.

**Nature** In contrast to the dramatic cliffs of North Hoy, the low cliffs, fine beaches and fertile land make for more gentle walking.

Melsetter House and Farm



*Primula scotica* and other maritime heath plants grow along the south coast. Otters and seals live around the shores and many of Orkney's characteristic birds thrive here. In winter North Bay is excellent for waders and wintering wildfowl. A flock of Barnacle Geese stays here each winter.

**Viking Drama** Perhaps the most interesting association dates from 995, when King Olaf Tryggvason

of Norway forcibly converted Earl Sigurd the Stout to Christianity. Refusal meant the killing Sigurd's son, so he chose to accept. He subsequently returned to his former ways and dies carrying the Raven Banner at Clontarf in 1014.

Hoy can be reached from Houton or Stromness by ferry. Accommodation, taxis, tours and meals are available on the island.



Hackness Martello Tower

Cantick Head Lighthouse





## NORTH ISLES - ROUSAY



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**ROUSAY** (ON *Hrolfs-ey*, Rolf's Island) has been called "The Egypt of the North" due to its concentration of prehistoric tombs and other monuments. This round, hilly island has a road around the coast and makes a pleasant excursion from the Mainland via the roro ferry from Tingwall in Rendall.

**Chambered Cairns** Near the pier is the unusual two tiered chambered cairn of Taversoe Tuick. This unique little tomb also has two entrances. Further west are two more chambered cairns at Blackhammar and Yarso. Both are of the "stalled" type and are divided up by upright slabs as in a byre.

Blackhammar contained only two burials and a broken *Unstan Ware* bowl, while Yarso had remains of

at least 21 people. In both cases flint and bone tools were found as well as deer bones at Yarso.

Midhowe stalled cairn is the largest intact chambered cairn in Orkney. The chamber measures 23 by 4m and is divided by 12 pairs of "stalls". About 25 bodies had been laid in a crouched position on or under shelves between the stalls. The outside walls are carefully built with stones set at angles, similar to the designs on *Unstan Ware* pottery.

**Westness Walk** Midhowe forms part of the Westness Walk, which also takes in the Midhowe Broch, whose walls still reach 4.3m in height. This Iron Age building was occupied from about 200BC to 200AD. Finds included some Roman artefacts, as well as pot-

tery and a bronze ladle. There was evidence of metal working including crucibles, moulds and jewellery.

The site of a Pictish and Viking cemetery lies at Moaness near Westness Farm. Many Viking brooches, pins, tools and weapons were found, including an elaborate Celtic brooch pin. The boat graves contained the remains of two men buried with their weapons, one of whom had four arrowheads in his body.

There is another broch above the Bay of Swandro. The ruins of a Norse Farm are adjacent to this, and nearby, on Moaness, there is a Norse boat shed and slipway. Skaill is an 18<sup>th</sup> century farm whose tenants were evicted by General Burroughs in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. St Mary's Kirk is the former Rousay parish church. It became disused in 1815 after the new church was built. Westness was the most important part of Rousay for thousands of years, with continuous settlement since Neolithic times to the present.

**RSPB Reserve** The moorland Trumland RSPB Reserve near the pier is a good place to see Hen Harriers, Merlin, Peregrine and Red-throated Divers, while the rare *Primula scotica* may be found on the maritime heath of the west coast.

Blackhammar chambered cairn



Yarso chambered cairn



## "THE EGYPT OF THE NORTH"



Rousay aerial from the north west, Egilsay and Wyre are in the background and Eynballow is on the right

**WYRE** Cubbie Roo's Castle dates from the 12<sup>th</sup> century. It is one of the oldest and best preserved early stone built castles in Scotland. Nearby romanesque St Mary's Chapel is also Norse. Both are said to have been built by Kolbein Hruga, a colourful character in the *Orkneyinga Saga*. His son, Bjarni became Bishop of Orkney in 1188.

**EGILSAY** was the location of the martyrdom of Earl Magnus. It is the site of the fine 12<sup>th</sup> century St Magnus Kirk with its tall round tower. A cenotaph marks the place where the saint is said to have been killed at Easter c.1117. Much of Egilsay is an RSPB Reserve, managed for the benefit of wildlife. It makes a pleasant and peaceful day out.



Westness Irish style brooch



Midhowe broch entrance, Westness, Rousay



Midhowe broch interior, Westness, Rousay

Midhowe stalled cairn



### ROUSAY

- Trumland House
- RSPB Trumland Reserve
- Midhowe Chambered Cairn
- Midhowe Broch
- Knowe of Yarso
- Blackhammar
- Westness Walk
- Faraclett Walk
- Wyre
- Egilsay

## NORTH ISLES - WESTRAY



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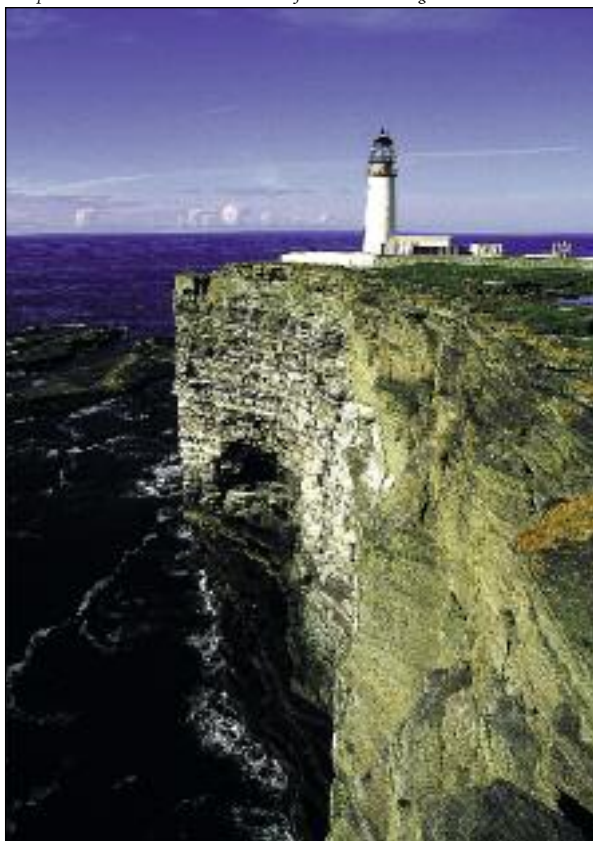
**WESTRAY** (ON *Vestr-ey*, West Isle), often referred to as “*The Queen of the Isles*”, is the second largest of the North Isles, and in many ways could be described as “*Orkney in miniature*”. The island has dramatic cliffs, good beaches, several ancient sites, and is the best place in Orkney to see Puffins easily. There are daily ro-ro ferry and air services.

**Pierowall** The village is situated at the head of a sheltered bay in the northeast of the island. This excellent harbour was doubtless the reason for its early settlement. Pictish and Norse graves have been found in the vicinity as well as Neolithic and Bronze Age remains. Although most of the artefacts are either lost or in museums elsewhere, some are slowly coming back to Westray.

**Archaeology** There was a Neolithic settlement at the Links of Noltland, in the sand dunes above Grobust beach. These are being steadily eroded, revealing much evidence of former habitation and cultivation. Excavations in the late 1970s revealed a Neolithic house built into the sand. *Grooved Ware* pottery and many other artefacts were found.

More recently, further work has exposed a large farmhouse with many associated field dykes. In

Noup Head is an RSPB Reserve and a major seabird breeding site



The Westray Wife



View looking northwest from Skelwick to the Bay of Tuquoy and Fitty Hill

2009 the “*Westray Wife*”, a tiny stone human female figurine, was found at this site, along with a large number of other artefacts. These include pottery, tools and large numbers of cattle bones. These sites were occupied from about 3000-2000BC.

Ruins of several chambered cairns exist, but none are very impressive. At Point of Cott the outline of an excavated cairn can be seen. A carved stone from a destroyed cairn was found at Pierowall and is now in the Westray Heritage Museum.

Broch mounds can be seen at Burrastae and Queena Howe. Westray has been intensively farmed for thousands of years

which may possibly explain the relative dearth of prehistoric monuments in good condition. Recent excavations at Quoygrew (Norse) and Knowe o’Skea (Iron Age) have thrown some light on the island’s past.

**Quoygrew**, on the north side of Rackwick, was partially occupied until 1937. Around AD1000 a building was erected near the shore. Extended many times over the years., this Norse house can now be examined by visitors.



Noltland Castle was built about 1560

Part of the Pierowall Stone



### WESTRAY

- Pierowall
- Westray Heritage Centre
- Noltland Castle
- Grobust Beach
- Links of Noltland
- Quoygrew Norse House
- Noup Head
- Fitty Hill
- Knowe of Skea
- Brough of Burrian
- Rapness

## NORTH ISLES - WESTRAY



Grobust Beach lies below Noltland, North Hill and Noup Head are in the background, seen here from the east

**Cross Kirk** is on the shore near Tuquoy and dates from the 12<sup>th</sup> century. It probably belonged to Hafliði Thorkelsson of Tuquoy and was dedicated to the Holy Cross. The old part is mostly intact. The remains of a large Viking settlement are eroding out of the shore nearby.

**Westray Heritage Centre** now prominently hosts the Pierowall Stone as well as other artefacts from recent excavations. Displays are changed annually, but the concentration on nature and the environment continues. There are excellent hands on activities for children and their parents. The large skeleton of a Sperm Whale lies in the garden.

Mae Sand



**Noltland Castle** The gaunt unfinished shell of 16<sup>th</sup> Noltland Castle overlooks the village. It was commenced about 1560 by Gilbert Balfour, but never finished. There are fine views from the upper storey. With its many gunloops it has been compared to a ship of the line.

The great hall is spacious, as are the upstairs apartments. However the cavernous kitchen cannot have been very salubrious. The Castle may have been partially habitable as late as 1761, although the roof is said to have been pulled off in 1746 as a result of the Jacobite sympathies of the then owner, Jerome Dennison of Sanday.

**Noup Head** The landscape more than makes up for lack of ancient sites on display for visitors. The dramatic cliffs at Noup Head are an RSPB Reserve, which is second in numbers of breeding seabirds only to St Kilda. A substantial colony of Gannets is now established.

**Puffins** In the south the Castle of Burrian and surrounding low cliffs near Rapness Mill is the easiest place to see Puffins in Orkney. During the breeding season this rock stack and the low cliffs in the area are home to many of the cheeky little birds. It is possible to closely observe the Puffins here without disturbance as they pay scant attention to humans.

Gannets at Noup Head



Westray and Papay aerial view from the south west, Pierowall lies along the bay at left centre

**Beaches** Sandy beaches are another feature of Westray, with Grobust in the north being perhaps the best. Others include Mae Sand, Swartmill Bay, Sands o'Woo and Bay of Tafts. In fact a sheltered beach can be found for every wind direction for picnics. In rough weather it can be very exhilarating to take a brisk walk along the sand, watch the waves and look for shells.

**Fish & Chips** Westray can be visited for a day, but merits at least an overnight stay. The Pierowall Hotel has been recently refurbished and offers "perhaps the best fish and chips anywhere", fresh from the local whitefish fleet, as well as a warm welcome.

Puffin at Noup Head



Cross Kirk at Tuquoy

**Wild Flowers** With its diverse range of habitats in a relatively small area, Westray is a good place for the nature enthusiast. The combination of sandy beaches, clifftops, maritime heath of the

northwest coast (with *Primula scotica*), charming agricultural countryside, unimproved meadows and luxuriant verges the island offers much to botanists.

Pierowall fish and chips



## NORTH ISLES - PAPAY



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**PAPAY** or **PAPA WESTRAY** (ON *Papey hin Meiri*, Big Isle of the Pape), takes its name from the Celtic clergy who were there before the Vikings. This small island lies just east of Westray, across the shallow Papa Sound.

**Knap of Howar** is the oldest known standing stone built house in Orkney and, like Skara Brae, it was revealed after a severe storm. The walls of the well preserved dwellings still stand to a height of 1.6m, and the stone interiors are remarkably intact.

Large numbers of artefacts including much *Unstan Ware* pottery was found, along with bone, flint and stone tools. Bones of domestic animals, fish, seals and birds, including Great Auk were abundant as well as many mollusc shells. The earliest dates were from about 3600BC, 500 years before Skara Brae, and the latest about 3100BC.

St Boniface Kirk dates from the 12<sup>th</sup> century



**St Boniface Church** near the Knap of Howar has been refurbished and is worth a visit. Boniface was a 7<sup>th</sup> century English missionary who became Archbishop of Germany in AD728, and was massacred with his followers in AD754.

It dates from the 12<sup>th</sup> century and is still in use today. The interesting grave yard has an 11<sup>th</sup> century hog backed gravestone which has been dubiously linked to the burial of Earl Rognvald Brusison in c.1045. This site has extensive Iron Age, Pictish and Norse remains, and there was probably a much older chapel here before the Vikings arrived.

**Holland Farm** has a fine 19<sup>th</sup> century steading with a circular horse engine house, doocot and corn drying kiln. The main part of the house dates from about 1636, and there is an interesting folk museum in the bothy. Hookin Mill is a 19<sup>th</sup> century undershot watermill on the shore south of the old pier.

**St Tredwell's Chapel** is dedicated to St Triduana and is built on top of an Iron Age broch on the east side of Loch of St Tredwell. Triduana was a nun whose eyes, it is said, were so admired by Nechtan, King of Picts, that she plucked them out and sent them to him on a thorn branch to retain her virtue.

11<sup>th</sup> century hog-backed gravestone at St Boniface



**North Hill Reserve** Papay is famous for its birds, and the North Hill RSPB Reserve is home to many breeding Terns and Arctic Skuas in summer. There is a small bird cliff at Fowl Craig on the east side, the site of the killing of the last Great Auk in Britain in 1813. They bred here in 1812, when the female was shockingly stoned to death for a museum.

The island is also a good place to search for migrants in spring and autumn. The Mull Head is said to be perhaps the best place for sea-watching in Orkney, as it forms a natural turning point. The beaches, loch and meadows all provide food and cover for migrating waders, waterfowl and passerines.

**Beaches** Like its larger neighbour, Papay has many attractive beaches. The shore north of the old pier has fine stretches of sand, sheltered from the north and west. Near the south end there are good sandy beaches at the Bay of Moclett and on the west side below Vestness. Between the Knap of Howar and St Boniface Kirk the shore hides a number of lovely little sandy coves.

**Holm of Papay** has two chambered cairns, the larger being of Maeshowe-type with a chamber over 20m long with 12 side cells. This impressive and mostly intact structure is well worth a visit.



The Knap of Howar is the oldest known house in Orkney, and dates from about 3600BC

Teistie Taing at the south end is a good place to see seals and the nearby Bay of South Cruive is good for finding *Groatie Buckies* (Cowrie shells).

**Flora** The North Hill is mostly made up of maritime heath and has an interesting variety of plants, many in dwarf form. These include several sedges and herbs such as Dog Violet, Primrose, Spring Squill, Grass of Parnassus, Heath Spotted Orchid, Mountain Everlasting and *Primula scotica*.

**Shortest Scheduled Flight** Papay is connected to Westray by the shortest scheduled air route in the world. The distance of about 3km (2mi) is undertaken in as little as two minutes, depending on the wind. The flight schedule varies seasonally. The island can also be reached via passenger ferry from Pierowall.



Crofts and fields on the east side of Papay



The Holm of Papay from the North Hill

Holm of Papay South chambered cairn - interior



### PAPA WESTRAY

- Knap of Howar
- St Boniface Kirk
- St Tredwell's Chapel
- Bay of Moclett
- Holland Farm
- North Hill
- Mull Head
- South Bay
- Holm of Papay
- South Cairn on Holm of Papay

## NORTH ISLES - NORTH RONALDSAY



Crown copyright



Kirk Taing, North Ronaldsay and old lighthouse beacon, 1789

**NORTH RONALDSAY** (ON *Rinanse*y, Ringan's or Ninian's Isle) lies to the north east of Sanday, which it resembles with its low lying landscape and sandy beaches. The island has a distinctly different character, and still retains many traditions and language usages now extinct in most of the rest of Orkney. It is the most isolated of the North Isles and is mostly served by air link.

**Sheep Dyke** This unique feature of the island was built about 1832 to keep the sheep off the agricultural land. The 19km (12mi) dry-stone dyke encircles the shore. The small, hardy, North Ronaldsay Sheep are similar to Soay sheep, and graze the seaweed off the shore as well as grass on the small areas outside the dyke. The lean meat has a distinctive flavour because of the unique diet.

During lambing time the ewes are allowed onto grass for a time. Special sheep puns around the shore are used for clipping and dipping. The white and brown fleeces make fine wool, suitable for knitwear, but the coloured ones are rather coarser.

Most of the houses are renovated traditional longhouses, with flag-stone roofs. The farming here tends to be less intensive and more traditional than elsewhere in Orkney. As a result the island is very attractive to many species of breeding birds in summer.

**Bird Observatory** (NRBO) North Ronaldsay is especially well situated on a migration crossroads for birds on passage to northern breeding grounds in spring and on their return in autumn. A number of rarities turn up every year. The NRBO was set up to study these movements. It also offers guest



Fields, farm buildings and Dennis Head, North Ronaldsay

North Ronaldsay sheep eating seaweed on the shore



North Ronaldsay sheep



house and hostel accommodation as well as meals.

**Archaeology** There are several sites of archaeological interest. These include the Iron Age Broch of Burrian on Strom Ness at the south end. The *Stan Stein* is a Standing Stone which has a small hole through it in a field near Holland. Traditionally people gathered here at New Year to dance and sing. The Muckle Gairsty and the Matches Dyke are ancient "treb dykes" which divided up the island.

**Lighthouse** North Ronaldsay lighthouse, at Kirk Taing on Dennis Head, was the first in Orkney, and it was established in 1789. This was the only lighthouse in the North Isles until the Start Point light was built in 1806 on Sanday. The Dennis Head beacon was extinguished in 1809 and its light replaced by the ball of masonry removed from the old Start Point beacon. There are ambitious plans to renovate the beacon and associated houses.

By 1852 the need for a lighthouse was clear and the new brick built lighthouse was first lit in 1854. It was the last one in Orkney to be automated, in 1999. At 42m it is the highest land-based lighthouse in Britain. Dennis Head lighthouse is open to the public by

Loganair Island aircraft serve North Ronaldsay



## NORTH RONALDSAY - "RINGAN'S ISLE"



Aerial view of North Ronaldsay from the northwest

arrangement. The North Ronaldsay Trust owns the out buildings, some of which now house a small mill to process the local wool. A shop and cafe is open in summer.

**Walking** North Ronaldsay is good walking country, whether the long walk around the dyke or the shorter walk to the lighthouse, the island will not disappoint.

**Transport** It is possible to reach North Ronaldsay by sea from Kirkwall once a week or on a few trip days in summer. These sailings are all weather dependent as the pier is very exposed. Most people travel on the Loganair Islander aircraft from Kirkwall Airport. There are special fares for those staying overnight, but advance booking is essential.



North Ronaldsay lighthouse



Stan Stein - the stone with the hole

### NORTH RONALDSAY

- North Ronaldsay Sheep
- Sheep Dyke
- Bird Observatory
- Stan Stein standing stone
- Dennis Head Old Beacon
- North Ronaldsay lighthouse
- Broch of Burrian
- Muckle Gairsty Treb Dyke
- Hooking Loch
- Linklet Bay
- South Bay



## NORTH ISLES - SANDAY



Crown copyright

**SANDAY** (ON *Sand-ey*, Sandy Isle) is the largest of the North Isles. It is very low lying, apart from at the south end, and has many beautiful sandy beaches backed with machair. In summer

there is a riot of wild flowers, while the shallow sandy bays are a favourite with the many migrant and resident wading bird species.

**Quoyness Chambered Cairn** Although there are many sites of archaeological interest, only the Quoyness chambered cairn is actually on display to the public. This impressive Maeshowe-type cairn on the peninsula of Elsness dates from about 3000BC and very much merits a visit. It is largely built from light coloured rounded beach stones, giving the interior a quite special ambience.

Sanday was settled before 4000BC, and the early farmers

would have found the light soils easy to till. It was also probably the first to be settled by the Vikings for the same reason. Excavations at Pool have shown that occupation was virtually continuous from the Neolithic until post Viking times.

**Scar Boat Burial** In 1991, an exciting find at Scar was a Viking boat burial, in which three people were interred. A spectacular whalebone plaque was among the artefacts found. This may be seen, along with other artefacts, at the Orkney Museum in Kirkwall. Although the wooden boat had long since decayed, its shape could be discerned from iron nails.



Whalebone plaque from Scar

Quoyness chambered cairn, Sanday



Start Point lighthouse, Sanday



## SANDAY - THE LARGEST OF THE NORTH ISLES

**Start Point lighthouse** was first lit in 1806, although an unlit beacon had been installed in 1802. The present light was built in 1870. It is painted with vertical black stripes to distinguish it from North Ronaldsay lighthouse, which has horizontal red stripes. Start Island can be reached at low tide by crossing Ayre Sound.

**Radar Station** In WWII, Sanday was the only one of the North Isles to have a major military presence. A Chain Home radar station called *RAF Whalehead* was built at Lopness. Along with its nearby reserve installations and a dummy airfield this brought a good deal of activity to eastern Sanday at the time.

**Wildlife** The many flat, muddy and sandy beaches, backed by machair, small lochs and marshes are very attractive to waders and waterfowl, both breeders and visitors. Sanday's easterly position, attractive shorelines and relatively large area makes it one of the first landfalls for migrants carried from Europe or North America.

Otters frequent the shores and small lochs, and may be seen in the early morning or late evening. Their presence can be noted from the distinctive tracks and fishy spraints which they leave. Many



Backaskaill Bay



Tres Ness has very impressive sand dunes

Common Seals live around Sanday, especially off the north coast. Grey Seals breed on the Holms of Ire and Spur Ness.

**Flora** Sanday is famous for its swards of summer wild flowers. The low intensity farming, sandy machair soil, lochs and marshes provide a diverse habitat. In mid-summer the colours rival any of the Outer Hebrides.

**Visiting** There are two hotels at Kettletoft for accommodation and meals. Sanday can be reached daily by sea or air from Kirkwall. With its flat terrain and lovely shoreline, Sanday is good for walking and cycling, but it is easy to underestimate the length of the island, so leave plenty of time to catch your return ferry or flight. An exploration of the southeast shores makes a good short walk.

Lopness Bay with remains of WWI destroyer, B98



### SANDAY

- Quoyness Chambered Cairn
- Start Point lighthouse
- B98 WWI destroyer, Lopness
- Backaskaill Bay
- Whitemill Bay
- Lopness Bay
- Tres Ness
- Bea Loch
- North Loch
- Kettletoft

## NORTH ISLES - EDAY



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**EDAY** (ON *Eid-ey*, Isthmus Isle) is less fertile than the other outer North Isles and much of it is peaty heather moorland. Its central position means that there are excellent views of much of Orkney from, for example, the top of the Ward Hill, or from the Red Head.

**Stone of Setter** is 4.5m high and very prominent as it is set in open terrain overlooking Calf Sound and near the Mill Loch, in a focal point of the landscape. The weathered monolith is covered in lichen, which emphasises its time-worn appearance.

**Chambered cairns** There are many chambered cairns on the

*Calf Sound from the east, Carrick House is mid left*



island, some in good condition and some ruinous. Vinquoy, is a Maeshowe-type cairn which overlooks Calf Sound. This interesting structure has been repaired and is built of large sandstone blocks. It has two pairs of side cells and the main chamber is over 3m high inside.

Braeside is a small tripartite cairn whose entrance passage directly faces the Stone of Setter, while the nearby Huntersquoy is on two levels like Taversoe Tuick on Rousay. The upper chamber has largely gone, but the bottom one is intact.

Recent excavations at the south end have revealed a Neolithic settlement. Although there are Bronze Age burnt mounds, so far no brochs, Pictish artefacts or Norse houses have been found.

**Carrick House** was first built in 1633 and in 1725 nearby Calf Sound was the scene of the capture by its then owner, James Fea, of "Pirate Gow". John Gow was the son of a Stromness merchant, who went to sea. In 1724 he and 5 others mutinied aboard the ship "Caroline" off Spain, murdered the officers and proceeded to harry shipping.

Having little success they ended up in Stromness, but the ship was

recognised and they sailed to Eday, looking for assistance from Fea, who had been at school with Gow. However Gow and his fellow pirates were captured and he and 7 of his crew were executed in London.

**Wildlife** The hide on the Mill Loch is a very good place from which to observe Red-throated Divers, and other waterfowl which nest here. Whimbrels, Hen Harrier, Merlins, Arctic Skuas and Short-eared Owls may also be seen on the island during the summer.

**Eday Heritage Walk** takes in the most interesting sights in the north of the island. It starts at the shop and passes the Mill Loch, Stone of Setter, chambered cairns and Noup Hill, from where there are fine views over the North Isles.

The bright red sandstone here is quite soft and does not erode to convenient ledges for birds to nest on. However a quarry at Fersness is reputed to be one of the main sources of stone for St Magnus Cathedral.

**Warness Walk** does the same at the south end, starting from Backaland Pier and going round the southwest part of the island. With the nearby pub this is a good between ferries walk.

## EDAY - "THE ISTHMUS ISLE"



*Aerial view of Eday and Stronsay from the north west, Holm of Faray and Faray in foreground*

**Calf of Eday** lies across Calf Sound from Eday. There are several chambered cairns. These include a long stalled cairn, a small two-celled tomb and two intact Bookan-type cairns. Opposite Carrick are the remains of a 17<sup>th</sup> century saltworks which was peat fired. Cormorants and many other seabirds breed on the island.

**Beaches** There are several very nice beaches. These include in the south, the Bay of Greentoft, as well as the Sands of Doomy and the Sands of Mussetter. facing Fersness Bay in the northwest. Mill Bay and the Bay of London, in the east, are muddy and are especially good for waders.

**Transport** Eday can be reached daily by ferry from Kirkwall, and less frequently, by air from Kirkwall Airport. There is a pub and accommodation on the island.



*The Stone of Setter*



*Carrick House*

*The Red Head of Eday*



*Vinquoy chambered cairn*



### EDAY

- Stone of Setter
- Vinquoy Chambered Cairn
- Carrick House
- Calf Sound
- Mill Loch
- Red Head of Eday
- Eday Heritage Walk
- Warness Walk
- Beaches
- London Airport
- Calf of Eday

## NORTH ISLES - STRONSAY



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**STRONSAY** (ON *Strjonsey*, Profit Island) is one of the most fertile islands in Orkney. It has a much indented coastline, with many very fine beaches, as well as low cliffs on the south east side, with several large caves, and a natural arch at the Vat of Kirbuster.

Although most of the island is agricultural land, the headland of Rothiesholm is moorland, thus there is a large variety of habitat and feeding areas for wildlife.

**Archaeology** There are a number of archaeological sites on the island, but none of great interest, no doubt because it has been intensively farmed for many years.

*The Vat of Kirbuster - a collapsed cave*



There is a large chambered cairn at Kelsburgh near the Bu and two smaller ones at Lamb Head.

**Herring** Stronsay was a major centre for Herring fishing for centuries. The Dutch were fishing in Orkney waters in late Norse times and by the 17<sup>th</sup> century had over 2,000 boats working the North Sea. The island was used as a harbour for Dutch and Fife boats during the season for hundreds of years up until 1937, when the fishery collapsed.

**Whitehall Village** was very busy during the fishing season, and once boasted the longest bar in Scotland. On Sundays there were

hundreds of boats tied up; however, the increased catching power of the steam drifter meant that the stocks of Herring were exhausted before WWII.

Today the harbour is home to a few inshore creel boats. The former Fishmarket has been done up as an interpretation centre, cafe and hostel. The Stronsay Hotel in Whitehall has recently been renovated and offers food and accommodation.

**Kelp-making** was introduced to Stronsay about 1719, to make potash and soda, which were used in glass and soap manufacture and were in short supply due to the French Wars. Kelp was produced by burning dried seaweed in pits on the shore. The expansive beaches in the North Isles were excellent sources of seaweed, which had traditionally been carted onto the land as fertiliser. At the peak, Orkney was exporting 3,000 tons of kelp per year.

The boom lasted from 1780 to 1830, and brought much money in to the landowners, some of which was invested in farm improvements. Kelp pits can be seen at many places round the shore, especially at Grice Ness, east of Whitehall.

**Beaches** On Stronsay there is a beach for every wind direction. St Catherine's Bay, the Bay of Holland, the Bay of Huip and Mill Bay have the largest expanses of sand, but there are many other small beaches to explore.

**Papa Stronsay**, now occupied by Transalpine Redemptorist monks, has a chambered cairn, the "Earl's Knowe", and a chapel site, dedicated to St Nicholas. The church recently excavated dates from the 11<sup>th</sup> century, but the site may go back to the 8<sup>th</sup> century.

## STRONSAY - FARMERS AND FISHERMEN



*Stronsay, aerial view from the south*

**Wildlife** Stronsay is an excellent island for birdwatching, being well sited to attract migrants in spring and autumn. The diverse range of habitats attract many unusual bird species at times. Grey Seals haul ashore to pup at several places around the island, with large numbers on Links Ness and on Linga Holm, as well as on Grice Ness, Odness and Lamb Head. Common Seals are also present.

**Walking and Cycling** Being flat, the island offers easy walking and cycling, with several waymarked official trails. These include Odin Bay to Houseby, Sand of Rothiesholm and Baywest, St

Catherine's Bay, Grice Ness and Holland Farm to Torness. A bicycle would allow most of these to be done between ferries.

**Transport** Stronsay can be reached daily by ro-ro ferry and by air from Kirkwall.



*Whitehall Village from the West Pier*

*Whitehall Village from the East Pier*



### STRONSAY

- Whitehall Village
- Herring Fishing (Fishmarket)
- St Catherine's Bay
- Bay of Holland
- Mill Bay
- Lamb Head
- Vat of Kirbuster
- Rothiesholm
- Grice Ness, Grey Seals
- Linga Holm
- Papa Stronsay

## NORTH ISLES - SHAPINSAY



**SHAPINSAY** (ON *Hjalpandisey*, Helping Island) is only 20 minutes from Kirkwall by ro-ro ferry. It was one of the first areas where the old runrig system was changed to larger fields, and is nearly all cultivated today.

**Broch of Burroughston** This is the only archaeological site which is on display, having been excavated in 1862. It is surrounded by a ditch and rampart, and has a well-preserved interior, nearly 3m high inside. There is an intact corbelled cell in the entrance passage and a large central well accessed by steps.

**Mor Stane** The 3m Mor Stane is of indeterminate date and is said to have been thrown by a giant from the Mainland at his depart-

ing wife. On the north side below Lairò Water, Odin's Stone may have been a Norse meeting place.

**Norse Power** Shapinsay featured in the unsuccessful bid by King Haakon of Norway to reassert Norse power in the west of Scotland in 1263. The great fleet was mustered here in Elwick Bay, before its departure for the Clyde.

**Balfour Castle** The house of Sound was built in 1674 by Arthur Buchanan, on the site of the present Balfour Castle. In 1775 Thomas Balfour married Frances Liginier, whose money paid for the Sound Estate. Soon the island was transformed with a new house, Cliffdale, the village, then called Shoreside, farm buildings and dykes all being built.

*Dishan Tower and Balfour Castle, Shapinsay*



*Sunset over the Wide Firth*

In 1846 David Balfour, who had made a fortune in India, inherited the estate, which now included the whole island. He had the house transformed into the present building. The Castle interior has not changed much in 150 years, with most of the original furnishing and interior decor still in place.

**RSPB Milldam Reserve** The disused Elwick Mill is one of the largest water mills in Orkney, and the artificial loch behind it is now the RSPB Mill Dam Reserve. Good views of many kinds of waders and waterfowl may be had from the hide on its west side. The small lochs of Lairò Water and Vasa are also fine places for birds, while the tidal Ouse and mudflats of Veantrow Bay are attractive to waders.

**Beaches** The island boasts a number of fine sandy beaches, including Skenstoft, Sandside, Innsker, Noust of Erraby and Sandy Geo on the north side. The best is probably the south-facing Bay of Sandgarth in the southeast corner of the island, said to be the Shapinsay folk's favourite.

**Walks** Shapinsay is one of the easiest of islands to visit from Kirkwall. A walking or cycling tour round the whole island

## HJALPANDISEY, OR "HELPING ISLE"



*Elwick Bay and Balfour Village, with Balfour Castle in the background, Shapinsay*

would take a whole day, making a fine introduction to one of the North Isles.

**Helliar Holm** is on the south side of Elwick Bay. Many Common Seals lie up on the flat rocks of the

bay. There is a chambered cairn at the highest point of the island. The lighthouse was built in 1893 to guide the eastern approach to Kirkwall Bay. In former times there was a fishing station near the present jetty.

**Transport** Shapinsay makes a pleasant short excursion from Kirkwall. There is an excellent restaurant, the Smithy. B&B accommodation is available on the island.



*The Mor Stane*



*Burroughston Broch*

*Balfour Village Harbour and MV "Thorsvoe"*



### SHAPINSAY

- Balfour Castle
- Balfour Village
- The Smiddy Heritage Centre
- RSPB Milldam Reserve
- Elwick Mill Pottery
- Broch of Burroughston
- Odin's Stone
- Mor Stone
- Elwick Bay
- Helliar Holm
- Lochs
- Beaches



## GETTING TO ORKNEY



Loganair SAAB 340 in Flybe colours at Kirkwall Airport

### GETTING TO ORKNEY

Although apparently isolated, Orkney is very well served by transport links. There are good daily year-round connections by air from all four major airports in Scotland. Ferries run several times daily to Caithness and several times per week to Aberdeen and Shetland.

Land travel to the ports is facilitated by car, bus and rail is straightforward. Contrary to the advice given by some travel agents, no passport is needed by UK citizens for entry to Orkney, prices are reasonable, and there are a plenty of services.

**AIRROUTES** Today it is not necessary to go to the lengths that the first airborne visitors had to. In 1910, the author's grandfather was surprised to find two young Germans from Munich on his doorstep. They had gone for a balloon flight, hoping to reach Switzerland. Much to their conster-

nation the weather changed and they crossed the North Sea, landing at the back of Park Cottage, Kirkwall, after seeing the lights of the town!

**Kirkwall Airport** (Grimsetter) is open seven days per week and is equipped with an Instrument Landing System, which greatly improves the reliability of flights in adverse weather conditions. The airport is about 4km (3mi) east of the town, and is easily reached by taxi or scheduled bus.

**Flybe** (franchised to Loganair) operate several flights into Kirkwall Airport (KOI) every day, from Aberdeen, Inverness, Edinburgh and Glasgow. There are also daily flights to and from Shetland. Loganair use Saab 340 aircraft which carry 34 passengers with a cruising speed of 250kt at 20,000ft. FlyBe has a codesharing agreement with BA for onwards flights.

MV "Hrossey" at Hatston Terminal, Kirkwall on a midsummer evening



**Flybe Flight Details**, information and bookings can be found online, or by calling Flybe  
Tel 0871 200 7000  
[flybe.com](http://flybe.com)

**Information** can also be had from the Loganair desk at Kirkwall Airport.  
Tel 01856 872233

**British Airways**  
General Reservations and Enquiries  
Tel 0844 493 0787  
[ba.com](http://ba.com)

*(Note: BA can only assist where the booking is on a codeshare flight with a direct connection to a BA service)*

**Kirkwall Airport** is operated by HIAL  
Information Desk  
Tel 01856 886 210

Live flight information at  
[hial.co.uk/kirkwall-airport](http://hial.co.uk/kirkwall-airport)

**ADS (Air Discount Scheme)**  
Reservations and Assistance  
Tel 0844 800 2855  
Mon-Fri 0700-1700  
Tel 01496 302022  
Sat 0900-1300  
Sun 1530-1830

**SEA ROUTES** Regular sea links to Scotland have been operated for many centuries. Today the main routes are from Stromness to Scrabster, St Margaret's Hope to Gills Bay and Kirkwall to Aberdeen and Lerwick. There is also a passenger ferry in summer from Burwick to John o'Groats. All sailings are subject to weather conditions, and disruption due to storms can occur in winter especially.

**NorthLink Ferries** currently operate MV *Hammavoe* between Scrabster in Caithness and Stromness. This large ferry takes about 1½ hours to cross the Pentland Firth, passing the Old

Man of Hoy on the way. She crosses up to 3 times daily and carries up to 180 cars and 500 passengers. NorthLink also operate MV *Hjaltland* and MV *Hrossey*, which run between Aberdeen, Kirkwall and Lerwick. These vessels call several times per week all year round.

*Please note that the Northern Isles Ferry Service is being re-tendered as from July 2012. The operator, contact details, timetables and vessels may thus be changed.*

**NorthLink Ferries Ltd**,  
Ferry Terminal, Stromness,  
Orkney KW16 £2BH  
Reservations 0845 6000 449  
Admin 01856 885500  
Fax 01856 851795  
[northlinkferries.co.uk](http://northlinkferries.co.uk)

**Pentland Ferries** operate year-round services from St Margaret's Hope to Gills Bay in Caithness with MV *Pentalina*, a large catamaran. The scenic trip takes about 1 hour with 3 or more services per day (3 in winter).

Pentland Ferries Ltd, Pier Road,  
St Margaret's Hope, Orkney  
KW17 2SW  
Tel 01856 831226  
Fax 01856 831614  
[pentlandferries.co.uk](http://pentlandferries.co.uk)

**John o'Groats Ferries** run a summer passenger service between John o'Groats and Burwick in South Ronaldsay with MV *Pentland Venture*. There are coach services to Kirkwall, while a special bus service from Inverness connects with the ferry. Several variations on day trips are available.

John o'Groats Ferries, John o'Groats,  
Caithness KW1 4YR  
Tel 01955 611353  
Fax 01955 611301  
[jogferry.co.uk](http://jogferry.co.uk)

## AIRCRAFT AND FERRIES



VisitOrkney

**Getting to Scrabster** The A9 trunk road north from Perth is not a good road, and it takes at least 6 hours to drive the 300km (250mi) north from Edinburgh or Glasgow. Care needs to be taken on this section of the A9 which has some short sections of dual carriageway.

The road north of Inverness is very scenic and less busy, though still tortuous in places. There are plenty of good hotels and B&Bs to stay in Caithness overnight, and indeed some time exploring this area is strongly recommended.



MV "Hjaltland" at Hatston Ferry Terminal

MV "Pentalina" in Hoxa Sound en route for Gills Bay



## GETTING TO ORKNEY



John o'Groats Ferry "Pentland Venture" in harbour

**BUSES AND TRAINS** Land transport links from Edinburgh and Glasgow to Aberdeen and Thurso are operated by Scottish CitiLink and by First ScotRail. Details of services and timetables are available from the companies.

**Scottish Citylink Coaches Ltd,**  
Buchanan Bus Station,  
Killermont St,  
Glasgow G2 3NP  
Tel 08705 505050  
Fax 0141 332 4488  
[citylink.co.uk](http://citylink.co.uk)

**First ScotRail**  
Customer Relations,  
PO BOX 7030  
Fort William PH33 6WX  
Tel 0844 556 5636  
[scotrail.co.uk](http://scotrail.co.uk)

**The Orkney Bus** is operated in partnership with John o' Groats Ferries daily from Inverness and to John o'Groats and back when the ferry is running.  
Tel: 01955 611353  
[jogferry.co.uk](http://jogferry.co.uk)

**Stagecoach in the Highlands**  
Inverness Bus Station,  
Farraline Park,  
Inverness IV1 1LT  
Tel 01463 258933  
[stagecoachbus.com](http://stagecoachbus.com)

**Connections** There are coach connections between Thurso train station and Scrabster as well as between Wick and Gills Bay. CitiLink buses also meet some sailings of the *Hamnavoe*. It should be noted that the timetables are not always synchronised and thus it is important to check out such expected connections in advance. All of the times may be checked out on the websites listed here.

**PRIVATE CAR** From Edinburgh or Glasgow it is about 64km (40mi) by motorway to Perth, from where Inverness is 184km (114mi). This should take roughly 2-3 hours, through some of Scotland's most spectacular scenery. The A9 should be tackled with care, patience and attention as it can be very busy. There are many good viewpoints and places to stop for a meal.

From Inverness to Scrabster is 180km (111mi). This road takes about 2-3 hours and offers many good stop-off opportunities at the attractive towns, villages and sites of interest along the route. When time allows, a slightly more leisurely journey can become a delightful part of the Orkney experience.

Alternative routes north or south include taking the west coast route from Dingwall to Ullapool and the loop around the north coast via Durness. This passes through spectacular and remote countryside, especially in Sutherland. The companion Charles Tait guide "*The North Highlands of Scotland Guide Book*" covers all of the area north of Inverness in detail.

## John o'Groats Ferries



*Day Tours & Short Breaks*  
*Direct Coaches from Inverness*  
**John o'Groats Ferries, Caithness**  
Tel 01955 611 353  
[ivor@jogferry.co.uk](mailto:ivor@jogferry.co.uk) [jogferry.co.uk](http://jogferry.co.uk)

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**Website: [www.northlinkferries.co.uk](http://www.northlinkferries.co.uk)**

NorthLink Ferries Ltd, Ferry Terminal, Ferry Road, Stromness, Orkney KW16 3BH

## GETTING ABOUT IN ORKNEY



VisitOrkney

All services are ro-ro except those to Papay, North Ronaldsay and Graemsay, where vehicles are handled by crane. The modern fleet of ships runs frequent daily services to all islands except North Ronaldsay, which is once or twice weekly. The services run as follows:

**Outer North Isles** services depart from Kirkwall for Westray, Papa Westray, Eday, Sanday, Stronsay and North Ronaldsay.  
To book Tel 01856 872044

**Rousay, Egilsay & Wyre** services depart from Tingwall in Evie.  
To book Tel 01856 751360

**Papay** services depart from Pierowall, Westray.  
To book Tel 01857 677216

**Hoy and Flotta** services depart from Houton in Orphir.  
To book Tel 01856 811397

**North Hoy & Graemsay** services depart from Stromness.  
To book Tel 01856 850624

**Fares.** There are two levels of fares to the islands. Tickets for the inner islands of Hoy, Flotta, Rousay, Egilsay, Wyre and Shapinsay are cheaper than those to the Outer Isles of Westray, Eday, Sanday, Stronsay and North Ronaldsay.

**ISLAND VISITS** A trip to Orkney is not complete without a visit to one or more of the islands, as well as visiting all the interesting places on the Mainland. Since each island is different, with its own charm and the inter island transport system is good, it is both easy and interesting to visit all of the islands as well as the Mainland parishes.

**INTER-ISLAND SEA TRANSPORT** The main inter-island sea transport operator is Orkney Ferries, which operates to most inhabited Islands from Kirkwall, Tingwall, Houton and Stromness. They publish an annual timetable with details of services. Further information from the head office at the Pierhead, Kirkwall Tel 01856 872044

Orkney Ferries vessels at Kirkwall Pier



## TRANSPORT SERVICES AND TOUR OPERATORS

### INTERNAL AIR SERVICES

Loganair operate daily services to most of the Outer North Isles, including Westray, Papay, North Ronaldsay, Sanday and Stronsay and to Eday on Wednesdays only with 8-seat Islander aircraft. Flying from Kirkwall airport, this service is very popular, and booking is generally required.

Special deals exist for visitors to Papay and North Ronaldsay when an overnight stay is included.

### Loganair Internal Flights

Bookings and Inquiries:  
Tel 01856 872494 or 873457  
Mon-Sat 0815-1745  
Sun 1330-1630)  
Fax 01856 872420  
[loganair.co.uk](http://loganair.co.uk)

### PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Stagecoach is the main bus operator in Orkney. They run a large number of services between Kirkwall and Stromness, to ferry terminals and various locations on the Mainland.

**Public Transport Timetable.** Full details of all these and other schedules are published by Orkney Islands Council every six months in the Orkney Public Transport Timetable. This booklet is indispensable to anyone wishing to make best use of the complexity of routes and times.

**Car Hire** Orkney is very much a car-orientated society, and independent transport makes it much easier to see the areas not served by public transport. Several firms have cars for hire, including on many of the islands.

**Taxis** Taxis are available throughout Orkney, either for normal hires, or tours. See advertisements for telephone numbers. Please check in "The Orcadian" or ask at the Tourist Office for fur-



A Loganair "Islander" aircraft

ther information. There are taxi ranks at the Pier Head, Broad Street and the Airport in Kirkwall and in Stromness at the Pier Head. Taxis may also be ordered to meet ferries, etc.

**Bicycle Hire** Orkney, being relatively flat, is good country for cycling, but note the wind direction before setting off, it could be much harder getting back! On a nice day there is no better way to absorb the rhythm of the countryside than from a bike. Bicycles may be hired in Kirkwall and in Stromness as well as on several of the islands.

**Tours of Orkney** Apart from the Maxi Tours offered by John o'Groats Ferries, smaller operators offer tours on the Mainland and several of the islands. Check with VisitOrkney, or locally, for the tours currently being run.

John o'Groats Ferries tour bus at Brodgar



Fresson Memorial, Kirkwall Airport

## STAYING, EATING & SHOPPING IN ORKNEY



Orkney Chairs

**Accommodation** Orkney offers the usual range of visitor accommodation, including hotels, guest houses B&Bs, self catering, hostels and camp sites. Full information on all of these is available in the current VisitOrkney brochure. Advance booking is essential in the main holiday season and strongly advised at other times.

Most of the hotels and guest houses are clustered around Kirkwall

Scallops



and Stromness. Self catering holiday lets are normally weekly and are easily the most popular type of accommodation. They are scattered throughout the islands.

**Eating Out** There is a wide range of hotels, restaurants, bars, cafes, tea rooms and fast food outlets offering meals to everyone's taste. Most use local produce as far as possible, including beef, lamb, seafood, potatoes, fruit and vegetables in season.

Kirkwall, being the main town probably has the best selection, but there are establishments serving food in nearly every parish and inhabited island. Expectations may frequently be exceeded. Unusual types of fish, meats such as North Ronaldsay Lamb, locally

grown tomatoes or strawberries and of course prime Orkney Aberdeen Angus beef are some of the treats awaiting.

[visitorsorkney.com](http://visitorsorkney.com)

**Shopping** Although an island destination like Orkney might not initially appear to have shopping high on the agenda, this is far from the truth. There has been a renaissance in the retail experience in recent years, especially in Kirkwall, where "The Street" now offers a host of enticing shopping opportunities.

**Designer Jewellery** has long been a hallmark in Orkney, ever since Ola Gorie pioneered her innovative pieces in the 1960s. Based initially on Neolithic, Pictish and Norse symbols these themes have been developed by her and later designers to include nature, and Orkney in its widest sense.

There are several jewellery shops in Kirkwall, all different in character, and reflecting their own inspiration from Orkney and its heritage, both cultural and natural. Around the Mainland, several smaller studios offer their own personal and distinctive pieces.

Orkney is synonymous with high quality traditional crafts, most of

Aberdeen Angus fillet steak



## ESSENTIAL INFORMATION

developed from ordinary household furniture or utensils. The Orkney Chair is now an expensive and sought after piece of furniture. In the past was a homemade utility chair made from driftwood and spare oat straw.

The Bride's Cog remains a feature of every Orkney wedding. Made from wooden staves bound together with metal rings, it is really a bucket with handles. The happy couple circulate after the first dance and offer their guests a drink from the cog. Made from rum, whisky, dark ale, sugar and spices, the strong liquid is an essential component of every wedding.

**Art and Poetry** Orkney has inspired many artists over the years. These range from painters such as Stanley Cursiter to poets like George MacKay Brown, musicians as for example, the composer, Sir Peter Maxwell Davies or cinematographers, including Margaret Tait. Today local artist Jane Glue is one of the best known and has her studio in Finstown.

The Pier Arts Centre is of course the centrepiece of art in Orkney with its permanent and temporary exhibitions. A number of other venues including Orkney Museum, the waterfront Gallery in Stromness and the Workshop Gallery in the Hope also hold regular shows.

Many people have been inspired to write about Orkney and a visit to one of the bookshops just what a lively publishing scene the county has. Book lovers will find delight in perusing the shelves of outlets in Kirkwall and Stromness as well as



Folk Festival

those at some of the main visitor attractions.

**Traditional Music** is another vibrant part of Orkney. A revival was started by the inspirational Orkney Islands Council practice of offering free tuition in schools. The thriving Orkney Folk Festival and the St Magnus Festival are two of the very successful results of this. The Wrigley Sisters' "The Reel" on Broad Street is a good place to find out about musical events.

**Knitwear** has always been a cottage industry in Orkney, perhaps less well known than its Shetland equivalent, but nevertheless still very much alive. A number of shops specialise in knitwear. These include The Quernstone in Stromness, Judith Glue and RA Finn in Kirkwall and the Workshop Gallery in St Margaret's Hope.

**Crafts Trail** An annual booklet produced by the Orkney Crafts Association showcases its members work. These include jewellery, silversmiths, textiles knitwear, art, photography, woodwork and pottery.

[orkneydesignercrafts.com](http://orkneydesignercrafts.com)

**Services** For its size, Orkney has a vast range of services available. There are garages, bike shops, builder's merchants of every type, tradesmen and people who can fix just about anything. Everything is easy to find, but if in doubt just ask locally, and if they do not know, they will put you in touch with someone that does. This pretty much sums up finding out things about Orkney. Do not hesitate to ask as you are sure to get a helpful and often interesting reply.



Traditional designer jewellery



Bride's Cog

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### BOOKS ON ORKNEY

A small selection of useful books on Orkney is listed below. The most comprehensive and up to date Guide Book is the new edition of the Orkney Guide Book. This 624 page book covers every aspect of the islands in depth and the latest edition was published in 2012. It includes a very full bibliography of sources. Orkney bookshops include The Orcadian and David Spence in Kirkwall, Stromness Books and Prints, as well as outlets at Skara Brae, Tormiston Mill, Skail House, Orkney Fossil and Heritage Centre and the Tomb of the Eagles.

The Orkney Guide Book, 4 <sup>th</sup> edition	Charles Tait	Charles Tait	2012
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### HISTORY & ARCHAEOLOGY

Between the Wind and the Water	Caroline Wickham-Jones	Windgather	2006
The New History of Orkney	William PL Thomson	Mercat Press	2001
Last Dawn, Royal Oak Tragedy	David Turner	Argyll Publishing	2009
Orkney Land and People	William PL Thomson	Orcadian	2008
The Kirkwall Ba'	John DM Robertson	Dunedin Academic Press	2005

### LOCAL GUIDE BOOKS

The local Guide Books produced by Historic Scotland and others are all worth buying. These include: Orkney's Italian Chapel, Skara Brae, Maeshowe, Brochs of Gurness & Midhowe, Bishop's and Earl's Palaces, St Magnus Cathedral and the Tomb of the Eagles.

Walking on the Orkney & Shetland Isles	Graham Uney	Cicerone	2009
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### NORSE SAGAS

Orkneyinga Saga	trans. H Pálsson & P Edwards	Hogarth	1978
Magnus' Saga	trans. H Pálsson & P Edwards	Perpetua	1987

### RECENT MILITARY HISTORY

Orkney at War Vol 1 World War I	Geoffrey Stell	Orcadian	2011
Cox's Navy	Tony Booth	Pen & Sword	2005
Scapa Flow	Ludwig von Reuter	Wordsmith	2005
Scapa Flow Defences 1914-45	Angus Konstam	Osprey	2009

### NATURAL HISTORY

Collins Bird Guide	Mullarney, Svensson, Zetterstrom & Grant	HarperCollins	2000
Scottish Birds: Culture & Tradition	Robin Hull	Mercat Press	2001
Orkney Bird Report	eds Booth, Cuthbert & Meek		1983-2011
Guide to Sea & Shore Life	Gibson, Hextall & Rogers	Oxford	2001
The Natural History of Seals	W Nigel Bonner	Helm	1989
Sea Mammals of the World	Folkens, Reeves et al	A&C Black	2002
Butterflies & Moths	Sterry & Mackay	Dorling Kindersley	2004
Wild Flowers of Britain & Ireland	Blamey, Fitter & Fitter	A&C Black	2003
Plants & People in Ancient Scotland	Dickson & Dickson	Tempus	2000
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OS Landranger Map 7	Orkney – Southern Isles	Ordnance Survey	2008
OS Explorer Map 461	Orkney - East Mainland	Ordnance Survey	2007
OS Explorer Map 462	Orkney – Hoy, South Walls & Flotta	Ordnance Survey	2010
OS Explorer Map 463	Orkney – West Mainland	Ordnance Survey	2007
OS Explorer Map 464	Orkney – Westray, Papa Westray, Rousay, Egilsay & Wyre	Ordnance Survey	2007
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## INDEX

Accommodation	92	Helliar Holm	83	Primula scotica	9, 37
Aikerness Beach	37	Herring Fishing	80	Public Transport	91
Air Routes	86	Highland Park Distillery	16	Puffins	68
Art And Poetry	93	Highland Park Visitor Centre	5, 13	Pytheas The Greek	4
Aurora Borealis	8	HMS Royal Oak	46	Quoyness Chambered Cairn	76
Balfour Castle	82	Holm	52	Rackwick	58
Barnhouse Stone	28	Holm Of Papay	70	Rerwick Head	52
Barnhouse Village	29	Hoxa Tapestry Gallery	56	Ring Of Brodgar	6, 20, 24
Bay Of Skail	22, 36	Hoy	58	Rousay	64
Birsay	34	Hudson's Bay Company	42	RSPB Reserve	9, 36, 53, 64, 68, 70
Bishop Graham	38	Inter-Island Sea Transport	90	Runes	30
Bishop's Palace	12	Italian Chapel	7, 54	Sanday	76
Black Craig	43	Italian Prisoners Of War	47, 54	Scapa Beach	13
Boardhouse, Or Barony, Mill	39	Kelp-Making	80	Scapa Flow	7, 46, 59
Boys' Ploughing Match	56	Kirbuster Farm Museum	39	Scapa Flow Visitor Centre	48, 60
British Home Fleet	46	Kirkwall	12	Scar Boat Burial	76
Broch Of Burroughston	82	Knap Of Howar	70	Scuttle Of German Fleet	46
Broch Of Gurness	7, 40	Loganair	86, 91	Sea Routes	87
Brochs	7, 40, 64	Longhope Lifeboat Station	60	Shapinsay	82
Brodgar	6, 20, 24, 26	Lyness	59	Shopping	12, 42, 92
Brough Of Birsay	7, 34	Lyness Naval Cemetery	60	Shortest Scheduled Flight	71
Brough Of Deerness	52	Maeshowe	6, 20, 30	Skaill House	38
Burray	56	Magnus Erlendson	14	Skara Brae	6, 20, 22
Buses And Trains	88	Maritime Heath	9	Skipi Geo	34
Calf Of Eday	79	Martello Tower & Battery	60	South Ronaldsay	56
Cantick Head Lighthouse	61	Marwick Head	36	St Boniface Church	70
Carrick House	78	Melsetter House	60	St John's Head	58
Castle Of Yesnaby	36	Midhowe	64	St Magnus Cathedral	7, 14
Chambered Cairns	6, 30, 64, 78	Migrants	9	St Magnus Festival	15, 93
Churchill Barriers	7, 47, 49, 54, 56	Milldam RSPB Reserve	82	St Tredwell's Chapel	70
Click Mill	39	Mull Head	52	Standing Stones Of Stenness	20, 28
Climate	8	Natural Environment	8	Start Point Lighthouse	77
Comet Stone	24	Neolithic Monuments	4	Stone Of Odin	28
Copinsay	53	Neolithic Orkney	6, 20	Stone Of Setter	78
Corrigall Farm Museum	39	Ness Battery	43	Stromness	42
Covenanters' Memorial	52	Ness Of Brodgar	6, 20, 26	Stromness Museum	42
Deerness	52	Noltland Castle	68	Stronsay	80
Domenico Chiochetti	54	North Hill RSPB Reserve	70	Tankerness	52
Dwarfie Stone	59	North Ronaldsay	72	The Heart Of Neolithic Orkney	20
Earl Rognvald Brusison	12, 14	North Ronaldsay Lighthouse	73	The Palace	7, 34
Earl Thorfinn The Mighty	34	North Ronaldsay Sheep	72	Tomb Of The Eagles	56
Earl Rognvald Kolson	7	North Sea Oil	48	Traditional Music	93
Earl's Palace, Kirkwall	12, 34	Noup Head	68	Unesco World Heritage Site,	20
Earl's Palace, Birsay	34	Old Man Of Hoy	58	Unstan Ware	31
Earthhouses	41	Old Red Sandstone	4	Viking	7, 34
East Mainland	52	Orkney Ferries	90	Warebeth	43
Eating Out	13, 92	Orkney Fossil & Heritage Cent	56	Watchstone	28
Eday	78	Orkney Museum	5, 12	Welcome To Orkney	4
Egilsay	14, 65	Orkney Trad Folk Festival	42, 93	West Mainland	20
Evie	40	Orkneyinga Saga	12	Westness Walk	64
FlyBe	86	Painted Stones	26	Westray	66
Fossils	36	Papa Stronsay	80	Westray Heritage Centre	68
German High Seas Fleet	46	Papa Westray	70	Whitehall Village	80
Getting To Orkney	86	Picts	7, 34, 41	Wideford Hill	13
Groatie Buckies	34	Pier Arts Centre	42	Winter Solstice	30
Grooved Ware	22, 29, 31	Pierowall	66	Wyre	65
Haakon Paulson	14	Point Of Ness.	43	Yesnaby	36



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*Sheila Fleet*  
DESIGNED AND MADE IN ORKNEY

## Charles Tait Publications

*Kelton, St Ola, Orkney KW15 1TR*

Tel 01856 873738 Fax 01856 875313 [charles.tait@zetnet.co.uk](mailto:charles.tait@zetnet.co.uk)

### Publications and Images

#### Guide Books

- The Orkney Guide Book (624 pages)
- The Outer Hebrides Guide Book (224 pages)
- The Shetland Guide Book (176 pages)
- The North Highlands Guide Book (400 pages)
- The Isle of Skye Guide Book (176 pages)

#### Postcards

Orkney, Shetland, Outer Hebrides, North Highlands and Wildlife landscapes, seascapes, archaeology and main visitor attractions

#### Annual Calendars

Orkney, Shetland, Outer Hebrides, North Highlands, Puffins  
12 pictures and cover, size 21x25cm

#### Photo Library

Orkney, Shetland, Outer Hebrides, Caithness, Sutherland, Ross-Shire, Skye and Wildlife landscapes, seascapes, archaeology, history, culture, main attractions

[charles-tait.co.uk](http://charles-tait.co.uk)