

SOUTH ISLES - HOY



HOY (ON *Ha-ey*, High Island) is the largest Orkney island after the Mainland, being about 20km (12.5 miles) long by 9km (5.6 miles) wide. Most of the

The Hoy Hills and Hoy Sound from Stromness



island is more like the Scottish Highlands than Orkney, only the southern end being low and fertile. The north and west coasts are bounded by spectacular cliffs, while the southeast coast has so many bays that the Vikings called it *Vagaland*, Land of Voes. This became Scotticised into *Wawis*, and then Anglicised to *Walls*. The old pronunciation of "*Waas*", however, has survived.

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The difference in terrain is caused by the rocks. Hoy is mostly composed of Upper Old Red Sandstone, overlying the Middle Old Red Sandstone, which makes up most of the rest of Orkney. The start of the steep slopes of the **Ward Hill** (HY229023, 479m) and **Culcags** (HY209033, 435m) mark the boundary between the two types of sandstone, which can also be clearly seen in the cliffs to the west. The horizontal beds of sandstone have weathered to give dramatic vertical red and yellow cliffs, highest at **St John's Head** (HY187033, 351m), the tallest vertical sea cliff in Britain.

Hoy is perhaps most famous for its **Old Man** (HY177008, 137m), a great rock stack which stands on a lava flow. This hard outcrop forms a skerry which protrudes about 200m out to sea from the base of the great stack and has been a key factor in its formation. Early in the 19th century there was a second leg on the landward side, showing how ephemeral our coastal features are. Other lava flows in the area at the **Kame of Hoy** (HY198049) and **Too of the Head** (HY192988) have a characteristic columnar formation, while there is a prominent volcanic plug at **The Witter** (HY224047).

At the end of the Ice Age the Hoy Hills retained glaciers which formed the large cor-



The Old Man of Hoy in 1821 by William Daniell

ries at Nowt Bield and Quoyawa on the Ward Hill, Enegars below Culcags and small coastal ones such as Runnarto and Stours Kinora near the Old Man. Trowie Glen is a fine example of a "hanging valley". Terminal moraines from glacial melt-water are prominent at the Sandy Loch and in Rackwick. Although Orkney gets little snow, the Hoy Hills are often white in winter, due to their height.

Whether the visitor arrives on foot from Stromness at Moaness Pier, or by the car ferry via Lyness, Hoy splits

into three areas – north, west and south. The north is dominated by large hills, deep valleys and precipitous cliffs, while the dramatic west side also has a very imposing coastline, as well as a remote and largely unvisited interior.

South Hoy is divided into the parishes of North and South Walls, the latter usually being called simply "Longhope" locally. The east and south are mostly agricultural with many sheltered bays and much more evidence of past human settlement.

MV "Hamnavoe" passing the Old Man of Hoy on her way to Scrabster



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Berrie Dale, near Rackwick, is the largest area of relict woodland in Orkney

Moaness Pier is the arrival point for the ferry from Stromness and Graemsay. Overlooking Burra Sound, the Bu has an interesting old house dating from 1615, with crow-stepped gables, while Burra House was built as a manse in 1798.

The attractive old road to Rackwick from Moaness passes to the north of the Ward Hill through the Vale of Hoy from the **Sandy Loch** (HY219033) to the Ford of Hoy, passing the Red Glen, Segal Burn and **Berrie Dale** (ON *Berg-Dalr*, Cliff Valley) which has been

described as the “*Garden of Orkney*”. This sheltered ravine with its cascading burn holds many species of plants otherwise uncommon or extinct in Orkney.

Rackwick (ON *Reka-Vik*, Jetsam Bay) is a dramatic contrast to the rest of north Hoy with its wide sand and boulder beach, bound on both sides by 200m cliffs. This large and quiet glen, which was once well populated with crofters and fishermen, is now nearly deserted except for holiday homes. It has a beauty and a climate all of its own. The main road to the south of the Ward Hill is convenient for a return to the pier.

Beware, it is also one of the favourite places in Orkney for the dreaded *Culicoides impunctatus*, or Midge. In compensation, Hoy is by far the best place to see dragonflies and damsel flies. They are common near pools and streams in late summer.



The north side of Rackwick has large sandstone boulders

The spectacular beach at Rackwick has a large expanse of sand and is framed by high cliffs at each end



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Climbers on the Old Man

Old Man of Hoy The path from Rackwick to the Old Man is steep at first and the 6km (3.75 miles) return walk takes about 3 hours. Along the way there are panoramic views of Rackwick and the Pentland Firth, which are well worth stopping to admire. A number of interesting plants inhabit the slopes above the path including Arctic Bearberry, Dwarf Juniper and Least Willow.

There are several dramatic viewpoints from which to admire the Old Man, including from the south side of **Runnarto** (HY004178, ON *Hraun*, Heap of Stones), from The Knee or **Tuaks O'the Boy**, the nearest point to the stack and **Scarsa** (ON *Scard*, Notch in a Ridge).

It was first climbed in 1966, when the event was televised live, a major feat at that time. Climbers regularly ascend the Old Man and neighbouring cliffs, but this is not an endeavour to be undertaken lightly. In for-



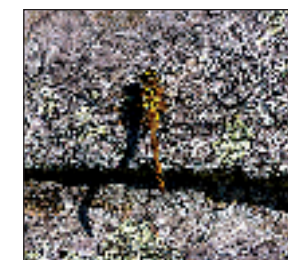
The 351m face of St John's Head is the highest vertical sea cliff in UK

mer times the young men of Rackwick were well known for their climbing ability, when they went in search of birds' eggs, using “*simmons*” made from heather as their ropes.

It is possible to descend to the base of the cliffs in dry weather in several places by taking obvious paths down the steep slopes, but this is not recommended, and is dangerous except in dry weather. The path to the foot of the Old Man is called the “*Stowar Road*”. There is a fine rock-fishing stance at the Trough to the seaward of the stack, while the bay to the south is called the **Sooth**

Loop, and that to the north, **The Neuk**. Both are good places for flotsam to collect.

From the Old Man there are several alternative return routes to Moaness pier, depending on time and energy. The energetic walk via **St John's Head**, Cuilags and the Kame may be the most spectacular. Leaden



Dragonfly on the Dwarfie Stone

Mist covers the top of St John's Head with the Old Man and Rora Head behind



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The Ward Hill (481m) dominates the north of Hoy

Geo and “Hendry’s Holes” are sites of former attempts at lead mining, while the vertiginous view from the **Bre Brough** and the nearby 351m drop below **Sui Fea** (378m) are not for those averse to heights.

Manx Shearwaters still nest in the craigs of Enegars above the Kame. The slopes into the Meadow of the

Kame are very steep and a more gentle return is via the summit of **Cuilags** (435m), with wonderful panoramic views, to the Sandy Loch. The northeast part of Hoy is more fertile, and there is a ruined broch or fort at **Brough of Braebuster** (HY052213) as well as an old chapel and cemetery near the Bu. The **Green Hill of Quoyness** broch



The Dwarfie Stone lies below the Dwarfie Hamars opposite the Ward Hill

The rock-cut interior of the Dwarfie Stone is very well finished



The top of the Ward Hill

(HY250028) has been half eroded by the sea, but still stands 4m high. It is in a good defensive position with commanding views of Burra Sound and the Bring Deep.

Other routes back from the Old Man are to head to the summit of **Moor Fea** (304m) and directly back to Rackwick or to take a detour to Berrie Dale woods. Alternatively follow the clifftops to the dramatic red rocks of Rora Head before returning to the path. The coast here has many caves and geos and is spectacular of a summer’s evening or during a winter storm.

Below the Dwarfie Hamars lies an isolated block of sandstone known as the **Dwarfie Stone** (HY243004). Thought to date from about 3000BC, this rock-cut tomb has a passage and two cells and there is a large block nearby which originally blocked the entrance. The marks of the stone tools used to hollow out the chamber can be seen and there are various interesting Victorian graffiti.

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After a serious heather fire in 1984, many sub-peat dykes, together with banks and mounds suggesting a prehistoric agricultural settlement were revealed in the nearby **Whaness Burn** area (HY025245).

From the Dwarfie Stone it is said that a “**Carbuncle**” can at times be seen on the northeast of the upper slopes of the Ward Hill during May, June and July in the late evening. This is said to “*shine or sparkle with light when seen from below*”, but the source has never been found by anyone climbing to seek its source. The tale may well be fictional, especially as it is given prominence by Walter Scott, whose writings were not exactly complimentary of Orkney.

West Coast Walk The really energetic can try Orkney’s most spectacular walk, which goes south from Rackwick to Torness (ND254884). This walk takes in very magnificent cliff scenery, with very fine views across the Pentland Firth. It will take a whole day due to the distance involved (12km, 7.5 miles) and rough terrain. With the many cliff views to admire, care must be taken to leave plenty of time.

After passing “**Willie Young’s Cairn**” below the summit of **Mel Fea** (324m), the route passes several



The Sneuk from the south

spectacular geos, including Lyrie Geo, where young men from Rackwick used to catch Manx Shearwaters. The **Summer of Hoy Burn** (ON *Sunn-moerr*, South March or Border) when full, forms a spectacular waterfall next to the **Sneuk** (ON *Snokr*, Snout, 165m).

Further south the **Burn of Forse** (ND220948) has a large colony of Great Black-backed Gulls in summer. **Little Rackwick** is the first easily accessible beach south of Rackwick. This



Arctic Bearberry

Berry Head (175m) faces the Pentland Firth



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Great Skua (Bonxie)

To the south there are a series of geos, many with inaccessible storm beaches, caves and cliffs, before **Berry Head** (ND237909, 175m) is reached, with its spectacular red cliffs. To the east are the Berry Lochs with Red-throated Divers in summer, while to the south there are several spectacular geos before the rough shores of **Ha Wick** with their many wrecks are reached. The small sandy beach here can be very good for *Groatie Buckies*.

There is an excellent sandy beach below **Melsetter** (ON *Melr Setr*, Sand Homestead), with sand dunes and a fine walk out to the point at **Torness** (ND255885), where there is sometimes a large Arctic Tern colony in the breeding season. The lighthouse here was installed in 1937. Before the light

Melsetter Beach with Tor Ness in the background



was installed this was a veritable graveyard for ships, especially trawlers returning from Icelandic waters.

In attempting to avoid the worst part, the "*Merry Men o'Mey*" or the "*Auld Ebbs*" of the Pentland Firth by skirting the coastline of South Walls, it was all too easy to miss the low-lying shores of Ha Wick and Torness and be carried ashore by tide and sea. The installation of the light was itself the probable cause of the loss of the *Johanna Thorden* on Swona in 1937, as the master was unaware of the new light, mistaking it for the south Swona light.

There are several other good walks from Rackwick, of which one is via Trowie Glen to the Knap of Trowieglen (ND240985) and either down Lyrava Burn or Pegal Burn (ND294975) to the main road. This wild area includes several lochans with Red-throated Divers, which should not be disturbed during the breeding season.



Red-throated Diver

The RSPB Hoy Nature Reserve (3925ha) covers most of the uncultivated land in the north of Hoy. The Warden can be contacted on Tel (01856) 791298. This reserve has a variety of habitats, ranging from the



Mountain Hare

most northerly natural woodland in Britain at Berrie Dale (HY202015) to the tundra-like high tops of the hills and the sea cliffs. Berrie Dale Wood has Hazel, Rowan, Downy Birch and Aspen and may reflect the type of vegetation, which existed before the arrival of the Neolithic farmers.

On the hills there are Red Grouse, Curlew, Meadow Pipit, Golden Plover and Dunlin, while Red-throated Diver frequent the lochs. These latter should only be watched from a distance to avoid predation of eggs and chicks by Skuas.



Segal Burn, Vale of Hoy

There is a huge colony of Great Skuas (1,973 pairs), the second biggest in UK after Foula, which will certainly dive-bomb if their nests are approached. There are also 72 pairs of Arctic Skuas, which declined steadily from over 400 pairs in the 1980s due to depredation from Bonxies and shortage of food.

Hoy has no Orkney Voles and thus not many Hen Harriers, or Short-eared Owls, but Peregrine, Kestrels, Merlin, Buzzards and even an occasional Golden Eagles or White-tailed Sea Eagles may be seen. Stonechats and Wheatears are common lower down, while Twite are also present on the moors.

The Fulmar is the commonest bird on the high cliffs, but there are also other breeding seabirds, especially at the north end, where there is a small colony of Manx Shearwaters which can be seen gathering at dusk in the

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bay at Rackwick. Puffins nest in small numbers in grassy banks on the cliffs.

The Mountain Hare is also quite common in Hoy, but absent from the other islands. Conspicuous in winter in their white coats if there is no snow, they revert to a normal coat in summer. Otters are also present along the Scapa Flow coastline, though many more spraints than animals are seen. Early morning or late evening is the best time to look, while suggested spots are Pegal Bay, Lyrava Bay, Mill Bay and North Bay in Longhope.

The upland nature of Hoy has resulted in many sub-arctic or alpine plants at relatively low altitudes. Dwarf Willow, Purple Saxifrage and Wild Azalea are all present, while very low levels of grazing on the moors has also allowed much long heather to develop. The dangers of accidental fire in the heather were made apparent in 1984 when a Boys' Brigade group accidentally set fire to the heather near Rackwick. The

Plantation below the Ward Hill which was partially destroyed by fire in 1984



Purple Saxifrage flowers in March

fire burnt for days and travelled several miles right round to the northwest side of the Ward Hill, before being put out. A large part of a conifer plantation was destroyed in the process.



Dwarf (or Least) Willow

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Betty Corrigan's Grave near the Water of Hoy

On the parish boundary, near Water of Hoy lies **Betty Corrigan's Grave** (ND2810998). She was a young girl who committed suicide after becoming pregnant to a sailor in the 19th century. She tried to drown herself but was saved from this, so hanged herself in the byre. Tradition has it that the father was a local man who left on a whaling ship bound for the *Nor'Wast*.

Since she could not be buried in hallowed ground she was buried here on the parish boundary. In the 1930s peatcutters found the burial, and during the war soldiers put a fence round the grave and tidied it up. The artist Harry Berry made the present tombstone and

enclosure. Even the hardest heart must stop for a moment and feel something here.

Nearby, on **Lyrawa Hill**, there is a panoramic view over Scapa Flow from the site of a World War II anti-aircraft battery. Lower down at Scad Head lies a coastal defence gun battery. Initially a twelve-pounder,

this was changed to a twin six-pounder in 1941. No overhead protection was ever installed here. There was also a twin twelve-pounder site at Skerry, next to Bu Farm. This battery is very well preserved and was built about 1941. It affords good views across Hoy Sound.

In **Burra Sound** the blockship *Inverlaine* was a prominent wreck. This 8,000 ton tanker had struck a mine in 1940 and was eventually sunk in this position in 1944. Although seemingly solid the ship was moved by a storm and is now under water. There are the remains of several other blockships in the area, all of which are also submerged.



Scapa Flow and Brigs from Lyrawa Hill AA battery

Aerial view of Rinnigill and Ore Bay



Lyness from Wee Fea Naval HQ & Communications Centre



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Aerial view of Lyness and Gutter Sound



AA battery in South Walls

LYNESS (ON *Hlidar ness*, Slope Ness), the site of the great Royal Naval Base developed in World War II, is in the middle of the area the Vikings called *Vagaland*. The flat land, with relatively deep water close to the shore and with much sheltered anchorage nearby was ideal for such a base. Although the Navy moved to Lyness briefly in 1919, the Longhope Hotel was their base during World War I, with smaller vessels mooring at Longhope, and larger ships north of Flotta.

During the 1920s and 1930s, Lyness became the base for salvage of the German fleet, Mill Bay being used to beach and strip the hulks before they were towed south for breaking. The last to be lifted, *SMS Derfflinger*, lay off Rysa all through World War II, not far from her erstwhile adversary, *HMS Iron Duke*, which was herself bombed and beached in 1940.

In 1939, with war looming, Lyness soon became busy and a rash of camps and

buildings mushroomed on the landscape. **HMS Prosperine**, as the base was known, had civil contractors as well as Naval, Army and Air Force personnel all playing their part in setting up the base. The proliferation of unplanned and largely wooden buildings would have been an excellent target for an incendiary raid, but none came.

There was a Barrage Balloon Centre at Ore Hill, which in 1941 maintained 81 balloons, and was supplied with hydrogen from a portable unit at Rinnigill. The permanent factory there took so long to build that it hardly saw use before the balloons left in mid-1944. The remains of the factory and its special pier can still

be seen today (ND318938).

Boom defence was very important, and the nets were maintained at Lyness. The wharf was too small in 1939 and the cost of extension was so great that when completed in 1944, it was called "*Golden Wharf*". With a length of 185m and a least depth of 9m, this pier could berth very large ships. Today one pier supports a Tern colony and on another many Tysties nest in the crevices.

The oil storage tanks on the surface were considered vulnerable and in 1939 underground storage tanks under Wee Fea were started. Norwegian miners from Spitzbergen were employed to excavate the huge reser-

Repairing boom defence netting at Lyness



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Scapa Flow Visitor Centre, Lyness

voirs. The first was ready in September 1942, but it was August 1943 before the full 100,000 ton capacity was filled with oil. Piers were also a problem but finally three were built, one at Rinnigill for hydrogen, the North Pier for ferries and supplies and the West Pier for tugs and small craft.

Virtually no shore facilities and few telephone lines existed in 1939 and *HMS Iron Duke* was used as HQ. Shore offices were completed in 1942, but it was 1943 before the **Naval HQ and Communications Centre** on Wee Fea, overlooking Lyness, was ready. This centre finally put all defence sectors in Scapa in direct communication with 270 staff handling nearly 9,000

calls per day during 1943 and 1944. This impressive building even has round porthole-like windows.

Anti-aircraft batteries, searchlight batteries, radar stations and supply depots were all established. In addition there were depot ships, stores ships, a hospital ship, a converted train ferry with a cinema onboard and everything else needed to

keep a huge military establishment operational.

By mid-1944, after the invasion of France, the base was already running down and in September 1945 many of the huts were given to the French for temporary accommodation in their war-ravaged towns. Finally, on 29 March 1957, the Lyness Naval Base was officially closed.

Scapa Flow Visitor Centre

Today much has been tidied up at Lyness. Many of the dilapidated buildings and hut bases left from World War II have gone and all but one of the large oil tanks have been cut up for scrap. The Orkney Islands Council has retained this tank and the



Scapa Flow Visitor Centre, Lyness - Pumping House

Propeller raised from HMS Hampshire



WWI German gun at Scapa Flow Visitor Centre, Lyness



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Lyness and Gutter Sound with Fara in the distance from the WWII Naval HQ and Communications Centre on Wee Fea

pump house. The latter has been converted into a museum and interpretation centre, the pumping machinery and boilers having been cleaned up and restored. Interpretation displays and small artefacts make this a very interesting visit.

The inside of the oil tank has been transformed into a display area, with an ever-increasing selection of military equipment and artefacts from both World Wars now on display, including vehicles, guns, searchlights and other larger items. Outside are several guns off World War I German ships, AA guns of the type used in World War II, one of the propellers from *HMS Hampshire* and some of the railway stock used on the "Golden Wharf" in World War II.

Lyness Naval Cemetery (ND301947) is the last resting place for brave naval personnel from many famous incidents. There are graves of people who died at Jutland, on *HMS Hampshire*, *HMS Vanguard*,

of Germans killed during the Scuttle, and of crew from *HMS Royal Oak*. There are also graves of German submariners from WWI and air-crew from World War II.

NORTH AND SOUTH WALLS (ON *Vagaland*, Land of Bays), have several very attractive valleys and bays. Each voe has a burn running into it and **Pegal Burn** (ND295976), Orkney's largest, is particularly beautiful. Sandstone boulders have been worn into interesting shapes along the shore and the contrasting colour of wild flowers, burn and shore are dramatic. There is a picnic site by the bridge, and the sheltered valley has a variety of trees shrubs and wild flowers.



Rowan at Pegal Burn



Eroded rocks at Pegal Burn

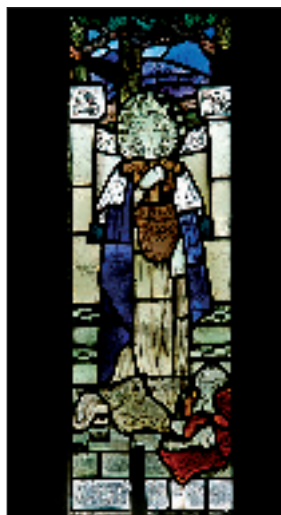
Pegal Bay and Scapa Flow



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Melsetter and the Pentland Firth from Binga Fea



Melsetter House Chapel

A good panorama of the whole of south Hoy, Scapa Flow and the Pentland Firth can be had from **Wee Fea** (ND288942). A road goes

up to the underground oil tanks, passing on the way the Naval HQ and Communications Centre and one of Orkney's rare conifer plantations, well sheltered from the west.

Melsetter House (ND270893) and Rysa Lodge were designed by William Lethaby for the Middlemore family in Arts and Crafts style. At Melsetter the original L-shaped house from 1738 was incorporated into the 1898 design, and the whole forms perhaps the most attractive country house in Orkney, which was described by William Morris' daughter as "*a sort of fairy palace on the edge of the northern seas*".

Melsetter House was built in 1898 in "Arts and Crafts" style



The walls are harled with sandstone dressings and gables have crow-steps. The roof is Caithness slate, while the light and airy interior remains mostly original. There is a paved courtyard



Victorian mail box

and a fine old walled garden as well as a small chapel dedicated to St Colm and Margaret. The chapel roof is a vault of unreinforced concrete in the shape of an upturned boat. Nearby, the farmhouses echo the boat theme and are also worth a look. Visits are by appointment only, Tel (01856) 791352.

North Bay, the inner part of Longhope, is very shallow, and is excellent for waders, and wintering wildfowl, while a flock of Barnacle Geese overwinters in this area. Otters frequent the shores, and seals are always present.

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Longhope Lifeboat memorial

Longhope Lifeboat Station (ND291887) at Brims is now a museum, with its prime exhibit the former lifeboat *Thomas McCunn*, the Watson boat which served here from 1933 to 1962. This craft undertook several daring and dramatic rescues and is now in course of restoration. The crews and boats here have saved over 500 lives since being established in 1874. In many long and difficult services rescues were carried out with much skill by the crews, who until 1926 had only oar and sail as power.

Coxswain Dan Kirkpatrick was perhaps the most deserving of fame with his

Longhope Lifeboat Museum, Brims



Longhope Lifeboat is now based at Longhope Pier

rescues of crews from the *Ben Barvas* on the Pentland Skerries in 1964 and the *Ross Puma* at Little Rackwick in 1968. On 17 March 1969, the lifeboat *TGB* was capsized in violent seas, with the loss of all 8 crew while on a mission to save the crew of the Liberian freighter *Irene* during a very strong southeasterly gale. A bronze statue, designed by

the artist Ian Scott of North Ronaldsay, was erected in the Osmondwall Cemetery in honour and memory of the disaster.

The headland of **Brims Ness** (ON *Brim*, Surf) has a rugged west coast, which was the graveyard of many sailing ships. The only known chambered cairn on Hoy is at **Duncan's Geo**



Aith Hope from The Ayre

Longhope Lifeboat Museum, Brims



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(ND287878). Wall facings can still be seen as well as four orthostats, one of which may be the back-slab.

Nearby **The Skeo Broch** occupies a very good vantage point over the western approaches to the Pentland Firth. Part of the tower can be made out, as well as an outer bank and ruined out-buildings. Just along the shore the ruined **Chapel of Brims** (ND283883) measures about 9m by 3m internally and is surrounded by an enclosure.

Osmondwall, (ON *Asmunda-Vagr*, Asmund's Bay of the *Orkneyinga Saga*), or Kirk Hope, is the first sheltered bay after Cantick Head, and a very useful anchorage for ships using the Pentland Firth. The presence of several brochs and religious sites, as well as fertile ground, indicate that this area was attractive to early settlers.

It was here that King Olaf Tryggvason forcibly caused Earl Sigurd the Stout to be baptised in 995. Sigurd refused to give up the Old



Moodie family mausoleum in Osmondwall cemetery

Faith, but relented when Olaf prepared to decapitate his young son. The *Orkneyinga Saga* says that though converted, Sigurd continued to use the Raven, the symbol of Odin, on his banner, so perhaps he was not a very pious convert.

Cantick Head Lighthouse (ND347894) was the fourth tower to be built in the 1850s in Orkney. The light was completed in 1858 by David Stevenson and was designed to make for safer passage into Longhope and Scapa Flow from the west. It was made automatic in 1991. The 22m tower has 49 steps, while the light has a nominal range of 18 miles.

The Lighthouse and accommodation are grade B listed

Cantick Head Lighthouse was completed in 1853



for their architectural and historic interest and the keepers' cottages are now high class self-catering units. There are sweeping views of the Pentland Firth from here. Pods of Orcas have been seen close-in on several occasions.

Hacksness Martello Tower and Battery (ND339112), along with another tower on the north side at Crockness, was built between 1813 and 1815 to guard Longhope against attack by American Privateers during the Napoleonic Wars. The United States had declared war against Britain in 1812 and due to the threat of action by the French in the Channel many vessels were taking the northabout route through the Pentland Firth. Ships collected at Longhope until a warship escort arrived and were vulnerable to attack while they waited. Escorted convoys became standard practice during this time.

These officially-sanctioned pirates had been a danger for centuries. Indeed Earl



Graffiti in the Martello Tower

Patrick Stewart had a small warship, the *Dunkirk*, ostensibly to defend against privateers in the early 1600s, but which may well have been used for some independent piracy of his own. During times of war US and French vessels were authorised to terrorise enemy, i.e. British shipping, and presented a severe threat to trade.



Hackness Gun Battery Magazine with blast-wall

Hackness Martello Tower 68-pounder gun



Martello Tower at Hackness overlooking Switha Sound

As in 1914 and 1939, Scapa Flow defences were non-existent at the time of greatest danger and fully effective only after peace was declared. The 10m towers contain living accommodation for the gun crew, a magazine below and a revolving gun carriage on top. The 24-pounder gun had a 360° arc of fire and a very good view of any approaching ships.

The battery nearby had eight 24-pounder guns covering Switha and Cantick Sounds and was protected by an embankment and stone parapet. Behind the guns were the barracks and stores, while the magazine was partially underground and surrounded by a blast-wall.

In 1866 the guns were replaced with more powerful

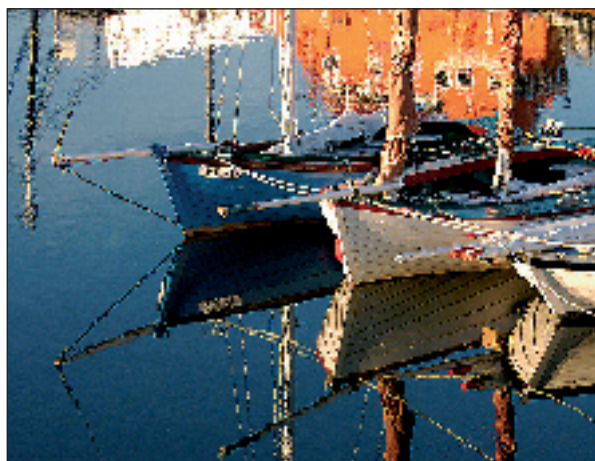


Hackness Martello Tower magazine

Hackness Martello Tower barrack room



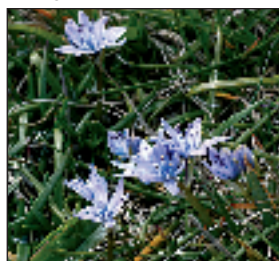
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Longhope Pier is home to a variety of boats including these Orkney yoles

68-pounder guns firing through embrasures and extra accommodation was provided at the battery. During World War I the tower was used as a signal station, while in World War II a radar scanner was mounted on top. Stone for the fortifications came from Bring Head in the north of

the island. The walls of the towers are 3m thick on the seaward and 2m thick on the landward side. The Hackness Tower and Battery are now under the care of Historic Scotland, and considerable renovation has taken place, including the reinstallation of a 68-pounder gun on the parapet.



Spring Squill



Primula scotica

Green Hill of Hestigeo is a large broch mound near Cantick Head



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jmfgroat@free.uk

Wildlife There are several interesting areas around the shore, especially from Cantick Head along the south coast to Aith Hope and the west side of Brims Ness. Now owned largely by the Scottish Wildlife Trust and managed to preserve the maritime heath, the **Hill of White Hamars** is a blaze of colour in early summer. *Primula scotica* is one of the many plants to be seen in the maritime heath here.

Brochs At **The Green Hill of Hesti Geo** (ND337890) a mound covers a large broch, some of which has been eroded by the sea. The remains of an outer bank and outbuildings can be made out. Further small brochs at **Outer Green Hill** on the way to Cantick Head and **Green Hill**, Longhope show the importance of the area in Iron Age times.

WWII sites South Walls has several remaining World

SOUTH ISLES - HOY, *THE HIGH ISLAND*

THE HOY HOTEL

Lyness, Hoy

Centrally located near the Lyness ferry terminal. Five bedrooms all en-suite.

Bar and Restaurant

South Road, Lyness,
Hoy, Orkney KW16 3NT
Tel (01856) 791386
Tel/Fax (01856) 791377

War II sites of interest including anti-aircraft positions, and the remains of a Chain Home Low radar station near the Stromabank Hotel. This was one of several such sites around Orkney which could detect low-flying aircraft and ships.

STROMABANK HOTEL



Situated ear Longhope Village with expansive views of the islands and the Pentland Firth. Conservatory Restaurant and four en-suite bedrooms - one suitable for the disabled. The Stromabank Hotel is an ideal and comfortable base from which to explore Hoy.

Stromabank Hotel, Longhope, Orkney KW16 3PA
Tel (01856) 701494
enquiries@stromabank.fsnet.co.uk
www.stromabank.co.uk

HOY SERVICES

Getting to Hoy The Orkney Ferries car ferries *Hoy Head* and *Thorsvøe* run numerous services every day from Houton in Orkney. Advance booking is essential for vehicles, Tel (01856) 811397. See current timetable for details.

Where to Eat and Drink **Stromabank Hotel**, in Longhope - small family-run hotel serving evening meals and lunches at weekends in summer Tel (01856) 701494 **Royal Hotel**, Longhope - traditional pub serving meals Tel (01856) 701276 **Scapa Flow Visitor Centre Cafe**, Lyness (summer only)

Tours and Local Transport Several operators run taxis, minibuses and tours. See the latest "Islands" brochure for details.

Shops & Fuel **JMF Groat** in Longhope is the main general store and petrol station. Tel (01856) 701272. There is no shop in the north of the island.

HOY ATTRACTIONS

HOY

North Hoy Nature Reserve
Ward Hill
Whaness Burn
Dwarfie Stone
Berrie Dale
Rackwick
Rora Head
Old Man of Hoy
St John's Head
Cuilags
Braebuster Broch
The Witter
Chapel & cemetery, Bu
Greenhill Broch, Whaness

WEST COAST

Mel-Fea
Lyrie Geo
Summer of Hoy
Candle of the Sneuk
Little Rackwick
Heldale Water
Hoglinns Water
The Berry
Ha Wick
Torness
Melberry & Sands Geo

NORTH WALLS

Water of Hoy
Betty Corrigan's Grave
Lyrava Hill viewpoint
Scad Head
Lyrava Burn and Bay
Pegal Burn and Bay
Lyness
Scapa Flow Visitor Centre
Lyness Naval Cemetery
Wee Fea viewpoint
Crockness Martello Tower
Binga Fea viewpoint
Melsetter House
North Bay
Brims
Lifeboat Museum
Duncan's Geo chambered cairn
The Skeo Broch
Chapel of Brims

SOUTH WALLS

Longhope
Hill o'White Hamars Reserve
Green Hill Broch
Outer Green Hill Broch
Hackness Martello Tower & Battery
Osmondwall Cemetery
Green Hill of Hestigeo Broch
Cantick Head Lighthouse

