

1: Viquoy Hill, chambered cairn, Eday, North Isles, Orkney Islands

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Built before the Pyramids, Stonehenge and the Great Wall of China, the ten houses that can be seen today were occupied from about 3500 BC. Over the centuries it was covered with sand and remained untouched until a winter storm blew up in 1851, thus bringing the Stone Age into the modern era. It sits just above the magnificent white beach of the Bay of Skail that arcs round in one huge semicircle. Since their original roofs of turf have long since disappeared, visitors can now look down into the mound and see the layout of the village. Each house has its hearth in the centre and box beds around the walls. Bracken or heather would have been used for bed linen and animal skins for quilts to keep out the cold. In some there are seats, grinding stones and boxes on the floor. Possessions were either hidden in alcoves in the walls or displayed on shelves on the dresser which faces the entrance of most houses. Larger cells in the inner walls, under which primitive drains were found during excavations, may have been used as toilets. Local man Sigurd Towrie has detailed information about the site. *Stone Age Farmers Beside the Sea*: Even though today only thirty-six stones remain out of the original sixty, the size of the site is breathtaking. Set on a promontory between the Lochs of Harray and Stenness, the circle is exactly Megalithic yards across just over metres. Around it runs a ditch some three metres deep which alone would have taken 80, man-hours to dig. The stones themselves were somehow brought from a quarry situated to the north of Skara Brae and carefully erected at six degree intervals. Several burial mounds exist in the immediate vicinity, but the centre of the circle has never been excavated. Local man Sigurd Towrie has detailed information on all this. Robert Pollock has also written about this circle. Few of the original twelve stones are still intact and upright, two having been damaged by a farmer in the last century and others having simply disappeared. Laying on the ground in the centre, four small stones have been set in a square. When excavated, human remains were found to have been cremated there. Accessed via a field of cattle, this, the best example of a chambered tomb to have been found anywhere in north-west Europe, appears as a large green hump on the landscape. A wide ditch circles the mound to form an enclosure over a hundred metres across. The custodian takes small groups of visitors inside. A low passageway runs some 16 metres into the middle of the mound. Halfway along in a recess on the left is a blocking stone thought to have been used to seal the tomb from the inside when rituals were taking place. At this point the roof and side walls were constructed using massive slabs weighing up to 30 tonnes. From there, the passage expands a little and slopes upwards into darkness where you can at last stand upright. When I was there, the custodian activated several dim lights and we realised that we had emerged through one of the walls of a square chamber. Part way up each of the other walls was the entrance to a small cell. These 3 individual tombs would probably have been blocked up by the huge stones found lying on the ground in front of the openings. When the sun sets near the winter solstice, it shines directly through the passageway and onto the rear wall of the main chamber. Only the remains of a human skull and some horse bones were found. It is believed that the Vikings plundered the tomb in the mid-twelfth century and carted off whatever had been lying there for the previous years. In compensation, they left behind a series of inscriptions which amounts to the biggest collection of runic writing in the world. Mysteriously, several of the runes talk of treasure being carried away by Hakon, whilst others speak as though it is still hidden in the mound and to the north-west. However, most of their writings are frighteningly similar to the graffiti we see in our streets and playgrounds today. Tryggr, Arnfithr and Ottarfila all recorded their visits in the same juvenile manner, but another scribe obviously thought himself too famous to bother with his name. Someone else, with an equal show of imagination, tried to carve the sixteen-character runic alphabet but unfortunately managed to get the last two wrong. Then right across the wall of the south-east side chamber next to an extremely bizarre drawing of what researchers have described as a slobbering dog stretches "Ingigerth is the most beautiful of women", under which is written "Benedikt made this cross". Whether or not they were there together remains another matter of conjecture. Viking carvings

located on the side of a tall slab that forms part of one of the corner buttresses represent a lion which looks more like a dragon, a walrus which could in fact be an otter with a fish in its mouth and a most peculiar snake which appears to have tied itself in a knot. Another pillar bears primitive lines and triangles which, through their similarity to ones found at Skara Brae, are likely to have been etched by the builders of the tomb. Robert Pollock has also written about this monument. Park on the coast and follow the path. The Brough is situated on a small island which can only be reached at low tide plus or minus two hours. Once over the concrete path which leads through the sand and rocks, you find yourself amongst a jumble of ruins from Pictish, Early Christian and Viking settlements. Enclosed within a large square wall, lie the remains of a 12th-century church and cemetery which may have been built over an earlier ecclesiastical site established by the Celts. A Pictish symbol stone was discovered in this graveyard. With the original in an Edinburgh museum, a copy now stands in its place, showing three bearded warriors, an eagle and a fantasy beast known as the swimming elephant. Around the church are the remains of other buildings which have proved harder to identify. Birsay is said to have been the seat of Earl Thorfinn the Mighty and some of what can be seen today could be what is left of his palace. Archaeologists though are in no doubt as to the significance of the foundations found up on the grassy slope. Long ago, they were Norse hall-houses. Located on a farm four miles outside Kirkwall. Enclosed by iron railings in the middle of the farmyard is a sort of manhole cover which lifts to reveal an almost vertical metal ladder disappearing down into the darkness. Below in the oval chamber is where the jumbled bones of six adults and twelve children were discovered in when a tractor fell through the roof. The original means of entry was probably the narrow passage which leads off one side of the chamber. It is not thought to have been built as a burial vault and yet after its initial function was fulfilled, it appears to have become the resting place either of those who used it or those who came after them. Built in the first century BC, it may have stood up to 12 metres high and had 3 lines of ditch and rampart defences. Around it were dwellings, some now destroyed by the ever encroaching sea, but many of whose stone skeletons are still visible just above ground level. Finds of Norse and Pictish artefacts indicate ten centuries of almost continuous occupation. Historic Environment Scotland now owns the site and has opened a small exhibition which is included in the cost of admission. After crouching down to pass through a low, narrow passage, you enter a rectangular chamber. At either end, upright stone slabs make screens behind which human remains were found in Runic letters and a bird are carved on the lintel of an opening in the side wall which gives access to a small cell where two crouched skeletons were discovered. Since most of the original roof was lost in centuries gone by, a modern structure had to be built within the earth mound. During excavations, finds were also made of pottery whose distinctive style has become known as Unstan ware. Orkney Lovely colour guide with over pages of photos devoted to these amazing islands. Covers local heritage and culture, ancient monuments, history of settlement, nature and the landscape, places to visit, etc. Second edition published Order online from Amazon.

2: Orkneyjar - The History and Archaeology of the Orkney Islands

For decades, the ancient monuments of Orkney, especially those clustered on the largest island (called The Mainland), have attracted researchers. The massive stone circles, chambered tombs, and buried villages, some of them (at more than 5,000 years) older than Stonehenge or the Pyramids, were inscribed in the UNESCO World Heritage list in

Most interesting landmarks of Orkney Islands Below are listed the most amazing natural and man made landmarks of Orkney Islands. Natural landmarks of Orkney Islands Sea stacks Selected list out of many amazing formations: North Gaulton Castle – western coast of Mainland. Very tall and thin rock spire in the sea. Old Man of Hoy – Hoy. Yesnaby Castle – western coast of Mainland. Spectacular, 35 m tall rock spire rising from the sea. A hole goes through the rock closer to its base and rock spire seems to defy gravity. Impressive sea jet – when the storm is from east, there can be observed up to 60 m high spouts produced by wave power. Geo of Ork – Shapinsay. Rounded opening in sharp promontory of Shapinsay Island. The Gloup – Rousay. Partly collapsed sea cave, divided from the sea by 80 m wide land bridge. The chasm is some 40 m long and 25 m deep, with boiling sea below. Vat of Kirbister – east coast of Stronsay. Barnhouse Settlement – Mainland. Well preserved remnants of Neolithic settlement, base parts of at least 15 houses have been found. Knap of Howar – Papa Westray. The oldest preserved house in Northern Europe, one of the best preserved Neolithic settlements in Europe, occupied in 3500 BC. Similar to the more famous Skara Brae but older. Consists of two dry stone houses. Links of Noltland – Westray. Remnants of Neolithic settlement. Here found central house of the village as well as valuable artwork – Westray Wife, the oldest representation of human face in United Kingdom. Ness of Brodgar – Mainland. Important Neolithic settlement with interesting finds which show how people lived here BC and later. Found remnants of houses, which were painted in bright colors, pottery, tools. Remnants of some m long stone wall – possible border between nearby sacred sites and village. Found also temple like structure. Skara Brae – Mainland. Impressive, extremely well preserved Neolithic settlement. Occupied in 3100 BC – 2500 BC. Remaining ten stone houses. Brochs Brochs are a "speciality" of Scotland and are common in Orkney islands. There dry stone towers represent high achievement of Iron Age structural engineering. Burroughston Broch – Shapinsay. Earth covered round stone structure from Iron Age. Remains of stone furniture still located in chambers. Broch of Gurness – Mainland. Neolithic settlement surrounding a central tower – broch. Walls of broch are up to 4 m thick. The purpose of these Iron Age structures is not fully understood. Grain earth-house – Mainland. One of the deepest known underground dwellings of Iron Age – earth-houses. Stone corbelled roof is 2 m below the ground level. Mine Howe – Mainland. Prehistoric monument of unknown purpose – a subterranean chamber, which goes down 29 steps to 6 m depth. Especially impressive is the 4 m high corbelled roof made of dry stone. Exact age of the structure is not known, it is created in Neolithic or Iron Age. Rennibister earth-house – Mainland. Earth house, built sometimes around 3000 BC. The large chamber is supported by 4 pillars and 5 alcoves in walls. It contained bones of 6 adults and 12 children, which, possibly, were added here in later times. Here is listed just a selection: Blackhammer Chambered Cairn – Rousay. Impressive chambered cairn, most likely built sometimes around 3000 BC. Interior of this underground structure is divided into seven compartments with large stone slabs. Dwarfie Stane – Hoy Island. Unique monument – chambered tomb carved in single block of sandstone. Possibly the only sample of Neolithic rock cut structures in Britain. Fresh Knowe – Mainland. Enormous Bronze Age or late Neolithic mound, 38 by 26 m across, 5 m high. Holm of Papa cairn – Papa Westray. Possible burial site of Knap of Howar inhabitants. Enormous Neolithic cairn and passage grave. Inside the mound is passage grave built of stone slabs weighing up to 30 t. Rear wall in the central chamber is illuminated in winter solstice. Built before 3000 BC. Contains numerous runic inscriptions left by Vikings. Midhowe Chambered Cairn – Rousay. One of the best examples of Orkney – Cromarty chambered cairn. This impressive megalithic grave was built in the 3rd millennium BC. Quoyness Cairn – Sanday. Magnificent chambered cairn, built sometimes around 3000 BC. Approximately 4 m high. Nearby 12 Bronze Age mounds. Southcairn – Holm of Papa. The chamber of this ancient monument is divided in compartments by large stone slabs. Unique features are ancient carvings on stones of this cairn, including

"eyebrow motifs". Taversoe Tuick – Rousay. Unique Neolithic circular cairn with two floors, where each floor is accessed via separate passage. Tomb of the Eagles – South Ronaldsay. Impressive Neolithic chambered tomb built sometimes around BC or earlier. Unstan Chambered Cairn – Mainland. Large Neolithic chambered cairn of unusual type, built between and BC. Very well preserved, original roof replaced with modern concrete roof. Type locality of Unstan pottery – shallow, elegant bowls. Ring of Brodgar – Mainland. Circle of standing stones inside of a henge. Developed around – BC. Northernmost circle henge in Britain. Diameter of stone circle is m – the third largest in British isles. Standing Stones of Stenness – Mainland. Group of prehistoric standing stones. Central structure is a ring of thin stone slabs – only 4 of the original 12 stone slabs are still standing. Around this ring there is cut a ditch in the rock – up to 2 m deep. Erected around BC. Stone of Setter – Eday. Megalith – standing stone of amazing form, 4.

3: Neolithic discovery: why Orkney is the centre of ancient Britain | Science | The Guardian

The list of historical sites covered in this website in no way shows all the islands have to offer. Statistically, Orkney boasts three historical monuments per square mile. Statistically, Orkney boasts three historical monuments per square mile.

Share via Email Circle of life: This is the heartland of the Neolithic North, a bleak, mysterious place that has made Orkney a magnet for archaeologists, historians and other researchers. For decades they have tramped the island measuring and excavating its great Stone Age sites. The land was surveyed, mapped and known until a recent chance discovery revealed that for all their attention, scientists had completely overlooked a Neolithic treasure that utterly eclipses all others on Orkney and in the rest of Europe. This is the temple complex of the Ness of Brodgar, and its size, complexity and sophistication have left archaeologists desperately struggling to find superlatives to describe the wonders they found there. Yet for decades we thought it was just a hill made of glacial moraine," says discoverer Nick Card of the Orkney Research Centre for Archaeology. The bones of sacrificed cattle, elegantly made pottery and pieces of painted ceramics lie scattered round the site. The exact purpose of the complex is a mystery, though it is clearly ancient. Some parts were constructed more than 5,000 years ago. The people of the Neolithic – the new Stone Age – were the first farmers in Britain, and they arrived on Orkney about 6,000 years ago. They cultivated the land, built farmsteads and rapidly established a vibrant culture, erecting giant stone circles, chambered communal tombs and a giant complex of buildings at the Ness of Brodgar. The religious beliefs that underpinned these vast works is unknown, however, as is the purpose of the Brodgar temples. But the religious beliefs of its builders remain a mystery. In size and sophistication, the Ness of Brodgar is comparable with Stonehenge or the wonders of ancient Egypt. Yet the temple complex predates them all. For many archaeologists, its discovery has revolutionised our understanding of ancient Britain. Ideas spread from this place. The first grooved pottery, which is so distinctive of the era, was made here, for example, and the first henges – stone rings with ditches round them – were erected on Orkney. Then the ideas spread to the rest of the Neolithic Britain. This was the font for new thinking at the time. Farmers first reached Orkney on boats that took them across the narrow but treacherously dangerous Pentland Firth from mainland Scotland. These were the people of the New Stone Age, and they brought cattle, pigs and sheep with them, as well as grain to plant and ploughs to till the land. The few hunter-gatherers already living on Orkney were replaced and farmsteads were established across the archipelago. These early farmers were clearly successful, though life would still have been precarious, with hunting providing precious supplies of extra protein. Those who survived childhood usually died in their 30s. Discarded stone tools and shards of elegant pottery also indicate that the early Orcadians were developing an increasingly sophisticated society. Over the centuries, their small farming communities coalesced into larger tribal units, possibly with an elite ruling class, and they began to construct bigger and bigger monuments. These sites included the 5,000-year-old village of Skara Brae; the giant chambered grave of Maeshowe, a Stone Age mausoleum whose internal walls were later carved with runes by Vikings; and the Stones of Stenness and the Ring of Brodgar, two huge neighbouring circles of standing stones. These are some of the finest Neolithic monuments in the world, and in 1999 they were given World Heritage status by Unesco, an act that led directly to the discovery of the Ness of Brodgar. And the first place selected by Card for this electromagnetic investigation was the Ness of Brodgar. The ridge was assumed to be natural. But once more the Ness of Brodgar would confound expectations. Test pits, a metre square across, were drilled in lines across the ridge and revealed elaborate walls, slabs of carefully carved rock, and pieces of pottery. None came from the Bronze Age, however, nor from the Viking era or medieval times. Dozens of pits were dug over the ridge, an area the size of five football pitches, and every one revealed items with a Neolithic background. Then the digging began in earnest and quickly revealed the remains of buildings of startling sophistication. Carefully made pathways surrounded walls – some of them several metres high – that had been constructed with patience and precision. Little slithers of stones had even been slipped between the main slabs to keep the facing perfect. This quality of workmanship would not be seen again on Orkney for thousands of years. Two great walls,

several metres high, had been built straight across the ridge. There was no way you could pass along the Ness without going through the complex. Within those walls a series of temples had been built, many on top of older ones. There are very few dry-stone walls on Orkney today that could match the ones we have uncovered here. Yet they are more than 5,000 years old in places, still standing a couple of metres high. This was a place that was meant to impress – and it still does. Two years ago, their excavations revealed that haematite-based pigments had been used to paint external walls – another transformation in our thinking about the Stone Age. But what was the purpose of their construction work and why put it in the Ness of Brodgar? Of the two questions, the latter is the easier to answer – for the Brodgar headland is clearly special. Card believes the weather on Orkney may have been warmer and clearer 4,500 years ago. Cosmology would have been critical to society then, he argues, helping farmers predict the seasons – a point supported by scientists such as the late Alexander Thom, who believed that the Ring of Brodgar was an observatory designed for studying the movement of the moon. These outposts of Neolithic astronomy, although impressive, were nevertheless peripheral, says Richards. The temple complex at the Ness of Brodgar was built to be the most important construction on the island. Or as another archaeologist put it: Yet its purpose remains elusive. The ritual purification of the dead by fire may be involved, suggests Card. As he points out, several of the temples at Brodgar have hearths, though this was clearly not a domestic dwelling. In addition, archaeologists have found that many of the stone mace heads, hard, polished, holed stones that litter the site had been broken in two in exactly the same place. This was a place concerned with death and the deceased, I believe. Around 2,500 BC, roughly a thousand years after construction began there, the place was abruptly abandoned. Radiocarbon dating of animal bones suggests that a huge feast ceremony was held, with more than 100 cattle slaughtered, after which the site appears to have been decommissioned. Perhaps a transfer of power took place or a new religion replaced the old one. For more information or to donate to the dig, go to orkneyarchaeologysociety.org.

4: Orkneyjar - Historical Sites

Prehistoric Orkney refers to a period in the human occupation of the Orkney archipelago of Scotland that was the latter part of these islands' prehistory. The period of prehistory prior to occupation by the genus Homo is part of the geology of Scotland.

Built in a true circle, the Ring of Brodgar is thought to have been originally composed of 60 individual stones, though presently there are 27 intact. The stones themselves are of red sandstone and vary in height from feet. The stones are surrounded by a large circular ditch or henge. Orkney is located in a truly fascinating area made up of around seventy islands, most of which are uninhabited. There are ancient monuments on nearly every corner of the islands and most of the nearly 3, identified Neolithic sites in the area are in remarkable condition. The astronomical importance of Stonehenge and Avebury are well documented and the same is true for the Ring of Brodgar. Why were they built? Theories about the true purpose of the Ring of Brodgar and the surrounding sites are many and varied. Festivals of thanks, places for animal sacrifice, general meeting areas, religious temples, and funerary complexes are just some of the explanations that have been given. However, in the s a man named Alexander Thom concluded that the Ring of Brodgar and many of the other megalithic sites in the area were astronomical observatories. An expert in the field of archeo-astronomy, Thom spent decades studying the stone circles. He discovered that all these sites seemed to show remarkable geometric precision despite having been built long before the age of Pythagoras. Large mounds were built so that watchers could be placed on the top to warn people below of the impending rising of the moon. For its ancient users it may well have provided a horizon that was perfectly flat in all directions and allowed the heavens to be viewed as an exact hemisphere. Whether or not the Brodgar stones were used to measure the passage of time or the position of the stars and their relation to growing seasons, the area in which the circle is built is ideal for these purposes. Using natural landmarks like dips between the surrounding hills, it becomes very easy to chart the seasons from the positions of the ring and setting sun throughout the year. Whatever the true purpose for The Ring of Brodgar and the surrounding sites, the people who built them went to a great deal of trouble to put them at this particular northern latitude. Other than the stones themselves, and the very apparent and curious astronomical alignments found therein, so little remains of the people that built the henge that it becomes difficult to offer anything but speculations. The remains of the earthworks or henge can still be seen today. According to Aubrey Burl, the Ring of Brodgar could have held 3, people if there was any sort of timber placed above the standing stones as a roof. Colin Renfrew has estimated that the amount of labor needed to cut just the ditch into the bedrock was at the very least , man hours. Other studies have shown the number to be anywhere from 85, to , man hours. We can figure that if 40 men worked 50 hours every week through all the seasons that it would have taken at least a full year to cut the henge alone. These workers would have needed food, clothing, shelter and tools. Considering, as mentioned earlier, that this area was a marshy bog at the time of construction if we are to presume that all of our dating methods are indeed accurate we must also realize that there would be very minimal amounts of fuel on the islands and certainly no timber for houses or boats. The large megalithic stones in the Ring of Brodgar. There is a widespread notion that the megaliths were hauled into place from quarries on wooden rollers. The lack of timber in the area at the time of construction certainly takes issue with that notion. Colin Richards made a brief excavation in His theory posits that it was not the completed stone structure that was so important so much as the physical act of constructing it. As of today, the interior of the Ring of Brodgar has never been fully excavated. However, this simply tells us that these people were here at some point, and does not confirm that they were the original builders. We are left to wonder about the rest. The Ring of Brodgar.

5: Scheduled monuments in Orkney - Wikipedia

*The Ancient Monuments of Orkney [Anna Ritchie, Graham Ritchie] on www.enganchecubano.com *FREE* shipping on qualifying offers.*

Paleolithic[edit] No traces have yet been found in Scotland of either a Neanderthal presence or of Homo sapiens during the Pleistocene interglacials. The first indications of humans occur only after the ice retreated in the 11th millennium BC and the current Flandrian interglacial began. Since that time the landscape of Orkney has been altered by both human and natural forces. This meant that the Orkney islands may have been attached to the mainland, as was the present-day island of Great Britain to Continental Europe. Much of the North Sea basin was also dry land until after BC. This would have made travel to northern Scotland relatively easy for early human settlers. The subsequent isostatic rise of land makes estimating post-glacial coastlines a complex task. A charred hazelnut shell, recovered during the excavations at Longhowe in Tankerness in , has been dated to BC. With a tentative dating of BC or older it may prove to be the oldest settlement site found so far on Orkney. During this time, complex new societies came to the fore that were a radical departure from the earlier hunter-gatherers and which were capable of creating substantial structures. The Neolithic in Scotland lasted from approximately to BC and Orkney as a whole has nearly 3, identified Neolithic sites all told. British archaeologists have often interpreted this era as having two distinct phases; the Earlier Neolithic dominated by regional styles of pottery and architecture followed by a relatively abrupt change into the Later Neolithic characterised by new traditions found throughout the British Isles that incorporate structures on a grander scale. In the Orcadian context, there are definite developments during the Neolithic, but the changes are gradual and tend to build on earlier ideas rather than appearing to form two distinct periods. However, recently discovered evidence shows that Orkney was the starting place for much of the megalithic culture, including styles of architecture and pottery, that developed much later in the southern British Isles. Situated on the island of Papa Westray which may have been combined with nearby Westray in the early Neolithic , the farmstead consists of two adjacent rounded rectangular thick-walled buildings with low doorways linked by a passageway. This structure was inhabited for years from BC but was evidently built on the site of an even older settlement. Unstan ware pottery pieces were found on the site, which was only discovered in the s when this part of the coastline was exposed by gales and tides. The design of the houses, which were built above ground level, includes a central hearth, recessed box beds and stone dressers. There is a network of stone drains leading to a common ditch. Occupied between 4000 BC the houses are similar to those at Barnhouse, but they are linked by common passages and were built into a large midden containing ash, bones, shells, stone and organic waste. Only the roofs, which were probably supported by timber or whalebone, would have been visible from the outside. In each case the stone dressers were erected so that they dominated the view on entering the house through the low doors and there are elaborate carvings of unknown meaning on some of the stones in the houses and passages. A variety of bone beads, pins and pendants and four carved stone balls were also discovered at the site, which was only revealed after a storm in the winter of ripped away the grass from a covering sand dune. The existing ruins mostly belong to a secondary phase of building with the foundations of the first phase largely hidden from view. The exterior walls of this large stone burial mound survive to well over head-height and the constituent stones are arranged in a herring bone pattern. In a lozenge-shaped figurine was discovered, which may have been carved BC and is believed to be the earliest representation of a human face ever found in Scotland. The face has two dots for eyes, heavy brows and an oblong nose and a pattern of hatches on the body could represent clothing. Archaeologist Richard Strachan described it as a find of "astonishing rarity". However, it would be a mistake to imagine that because Orkney is so placed today that this was always so. There is a substantial amount of evidence that suggests that a variety of the smaller islands in the British Isles developed an advanced society in the Neolithic that took several centuries longer to develop on the mainland of Great Britain. There is also the possibility that tribal differences were part of the Neolithic cultural landscape. Unstan Ware pottery is associated with small settlements like Knap of Howar, and stalled tombs such as Midhowe. It is aligned so that the rear wall of its central chamber, a rough cube of 4.

It gives its name to the Maeshowe type of chambered cairns, see above that include other significant sites such as Cuween Hill, Quanterness and Wideford Hill, and at Quoyness on Sanday. The Norsemen left a series of runic inscriptions on the stone walls of the chamber, some of which were left by a group of crusaders in the winter of 1138. Over thirty individual inscriptions remain, one of the largest such collections in Europe. Some of the remaining stones are 4. The ring stands on a small isthmus between the Lochs of Stenness and Harray and it is generally thought to have been erected between BC and BC. Pottery, bones, stone tools and polished stone mace heads were discovered. It appears to traverse the entire peninsula the site is on and may have been a symbolic barrier between the ritual landscape of the Ring and the mundane world around it. Although containers of pigments have been found previously at sites such as Skara Brae, this was the first discovery in Britain, and possibly in Northern Europe, of evidence that Neolithic peoples used paint to decorate their buildings. London may be the cultural hub of Britain today, but 5,000 years ago, Orkney was the centre for innovation for the British isles. Ideas spread from this place. The first grooved pottery, which is so distinctive of the era, was made here, for example, and the first henges – stone rings with ditches round them – were erected on Orkney. Then the ideas spread to the rest of the Neolithic Britain. This was the font for new thinking at the time. The site is thought to date from BC, one of the earliest dates for a henge anywhere in Britain. The Ring of Brodgar lies about 1.5 miles from the Watch Stone stands outside the circle to the north-west and is 5. Other smaller stones include a square stone like a huge hearth setting in the centre of the circle and this along with the bones of cattle, sheep, wolves and dogs found in the ditch suggest ritual sacrifice and feasting. The "Odin Stone" was pierced with a circular hole, and was used by local couples for plighting engagements by holding hands through the gap. He started in December by smashing the Odin Stone. This caused outrage and he was stopped after destroying one other stone and toppling another. The toppled stone was re-erected in along with some inaccurate reconstruction inside the circle. This chambered tomb was in use for years or more from BC, and has five separate stalls and three side-chambers. This style is quite unlike any other Neolithic Orkney site and probably dates from about BC. It was the first Orcadian ancient monument to be described in writing, appearing in the 16th century *Descriptio Insularum Orchadiarum* by Joannem Ben who provided the explanation for its existence as having been built and used by giants. This may in part be due to deteriorating weather conditions in the second millennium BC. Nonetheless the great ceremonial circles continued in use [75] as bronze metalworking was slowly introduced to Scotland from Europe over a lengthy period. In the excavations at Quanterness, near the site of the Neolithic chambered tomb, revealed an Atlantic roundhouse. This was built about BC using stone stripped from the older building that had fallen into disuse some two millennia previously. There are also many impressive broch sites. Although Orkney has no broch towers where the surviving walls are more than a few metres high, several important sites have been excavated which have numerous associated buildings forming a "broch village". There appear to have been at least two separate periods of occupation and at some point buttresses were added to the exterior of the wall, suggesting the structure was in need of support. It is one of 11 broch sites on either side of the Eynhallow Sound. Its earth cladding is intact, allowing visitors to peer down into the broch from above. The remains of stone furniture are evident in the interior. Its purpose is not obvious. The walls are lined with stones fitted to form an arch over the cavity and steep steps lead to a rock floor. The entrance is at the top of the small hill and there is a surrounding ditch and evidence of sophisticated metal working around the site. Although these structures are usually associated with the storage of food this site is reminiscent of the Neolithic chambered tombs and excavations revealed 18 human skeletons. The Greek explorer Pytheas visited Britain sometime between 325 and 300 BC and may have circumnavigated the mainland. In his *On the Ocean* he refers to the most northerly point as Orcas, conceivably a reference to Orkney. Very little is known about the Pictish Orcadians, the main archaeological relics being symbol stones. One of the best examples is located on the Brough of Birsay; it shows 3 warriors with spears and sword scabbards combined with traditional Pictish symbols. The Buckquoy spindle-whorl found at a Pictish site on Birsay is an Ogham –inscribed artefact whose interpretation has caused controversy although it is now generally considered to be of both Irish and Christian origin. Evidence associated with the St Boniface Church on Papa Westray suggests this island had been the seat of the Christian bishopric of Orkney in Pictish times. The Norse era has provided a variety of written records, the substantial

Orkneyinga Saga amongst them and at this point the archipelago fully emerges into the historic era. Following soon after this, work on the "Picts-house" i. Thomas, whose day job was as a Captain in the Royal Navy published *The Celtic Antiquities of Orkney* in 1814, which listed various sites and aimed to interest "antiquarians" in the subject. His hopes were met and about a dozen chambered tombs were worked on between 1814 and 1820 by James Farrer, R. Hebden and George Petrie. However, other than work at Unstan near Stromness there was then a lull for about six decades. Then, from the late 1850s, work recommenced with the assistance of the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland and the Ministry of Works. The most eminent archaeologist to work here at this time was Vere Gordon Childe. He was involved in excavations at Skara Brae and Rinyo, but it was only when a shard of pottery was discovered at the latter site that it became understood that these settlements dated to the Neolithic rather than the Iron Age. The advent of radiocarbon dating enabled even more detailed dates to be established and refuted earlier theories that the chambered tombs of Orkney had developed from similar structures found in the Eastern Mediterranean, such as those built by the Minoans, when it became clear that the former pre-dated the latter by a considerable margin.

6: Orkney Islands - About Argyll Walking Holidays Scotland

The Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland (RCAHMS) was an executive non-departmental public body of the Scottish Government, which was "sponsored" [financed and with oversight] through Historic Scotland, an executive agency of the Scottish Government.

History[edit] The Royal Commission was established in 1909, twenty-six years after the passage of the Ancient Monuments Protection Act 1882, which provided the first state protection for ancient monuments in the United Kingdom, and eight years after the passage of the wider-ranging Ancient Monuments Protection Act 1900. Critics – including David Murray in his *Archaeological Survey of the United Kingdom* and Gerard Baldwin Brown in his *Care of Ancient Monuments* – had argued that, for the legislation to be effective, detailed lists of significant monuments needed to be compiled; and had also made unfavourable comparisons between the policies of Britain and its European neighbours. Brown, Professor of Fine Art at the University of Edinburgh, explicitly proposed that the issues should be addressed by a Royal Commission, comparable to the Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts. His suggestion was favourably received by Sir John Sinclair, Secretary for Scotland, and, following a brief period of consultation, the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland was established on 14 February 1909, with Brown as one of its first Commissioners. Please help improve this article by adding citations to reliable sources. Unsourced material may be challenged and removed. April Learn how and when to remove this template message The Commission was based in Edinburgh where it had a huge selection of photographs and drawings for consultation. It also published a range of books and documents on Scottish architecture and archaeology. Study was also increasingly conducted of previously neglected industrial and agricultural constructions, as well as 20th-century buildings, including high-rise tower blocks. Since 1909, RCAHMS conducted intensive aerial survey of archaeological sites, buildings, landscapes and natural features. In addition to its holdings of its own mainly oblique aerial photographs, it held the National Collection of Aerial Photography, one of the largest and most important aerial imagery collections in the world, containing over 1. RCAHMS was one of the first national collections in Scotland to embed social media into its online services, enabling user generated images and information to be added to the national database Canmore. An outreach programme included publications, exhibitions, induction and training sessions for students and other groups, and a series of free lunchtime lectures, as well as daily Facebook and Twitter feeds. The register was formerly maintained by the Scottish Civic Trust. This was later updated to The findings were published in a series of inventories. Changes in what constitutes a construction "of note", plus developments in how the public could access this information, led to the abandonment of the inventories after publication of the last Argyll volume in 1993. Consequently, only approximately one-half of Scotland was covered by this method. Three further publications, *North East Perth: An Archaeological Landscape* and *Eastern Dumfriesshire: An Archaeological Landscape* were appended to the series. As the titles suggest these were concerned with archaeological remains rather than significant above-ground structures. Unlike all earlier volumes, these publications used the boundaries of the Local Government Scotland Act 1975. The Dumfriesshire volume related to both the eastern end of the historic county and the post district as the areas were identical. To date the Dumfriesshire volume is the only area to be revisited as part of a completely new inventory. RCAHMS also published a series of lists covering archaeological sites and monuments which simply enumerated and identified, rather than interpreted, historic structures. As before, this series did not see completion. The series of 29 lists was begun in 1909 with the districts of Clackmannan and Falkirk within Central Region and concluded with the Easter Ross area of Ross and Cromarty District of Highland Region in 1937. The chairperson always had a key role in the operation of the Commission, and, at one time or another, undertook the writing and editing of Commission publications. Commissioners were appointed by the Queen, advised by the First Minister of Scotland, with all appointments regulated by the Office of the Commissioner for Public Appointments in Scotland.

7: Scheduled Ancient Monuments in the Historic County of Orkney

The Heart of Neolithic Orkney lies in a wider archaeological landscape rich with remains from Neolithic times and many later periods of Orcadian history. Location The Heart of Neolithic Orkney is near Stromness on the island of Mainland, Orkney.

Skara Brae to Yesnaby, Stromness Wednesday: The Heart of Neolithic Orkney Thursday: Isle of Hoy Friday: We can enjoy an evening meal on board the ferry and the long hours of summer allow us to stay up late watching the coastline of Aberdeenshire, Caithness and southern Orkney go by. Although only m long by m across, this little island offers pleasant walking and a chance to explore some important ancient and historic monuments. Fifth century Christian missionaries are thought to have been the first to establish a settlement on the isle. After that the Picts established a settlement and built a fort. The Norse, in turn, displaced them in the 9th century. The most extensive remains on the isle are from this Norse period, including the remains of a small Romanesque church. Back on Mainland we continue our walk along the northern shore of Mainland, by low cliffs, to Skippi Geo, a natural harbour used by Norse fishermen. Midhowe broch, Rousay Monday: After a short ferry crossing to Rousay, our day begins with the Westerness Heritage walk, a 2. Older than Stonehenge and the Great Pyramids, this stone build settlement is comprised of eight houses. Our walk takes us from Skara Brae along impressive cliffs, past sea stacks, geos and the remains of the Broch of Borwick to Yesnaby. Ring of Brodgar, Mainland Orkney Wednesday: Many now agree the site, with its standing stones, temple complex, chambered tombs and villages, is the most important Neolithic site in Britain, the ritual centre for a years old Stone Age farming culture. Today we will explore all of these important sites, walking west to east from the Ring of Brodger, to the newly discovered temple complex and then on to the Stones of Stenness. Afterwards we visit the Maeshowe Chambered Cairn. Orientated exactly with the hills of Hoy this amazing structure remained intact until it was looted by Vikings in the 12th century. The runes left by these Vikings represent the largest collection of such carvings in the world. After taking the car ferry to Lyness on Hoy we travel to the northern end of the island. Our first stop is a short walk to the Dwarfie Stane, a 5, year old Neolithic stone cut tomb carved from a huge sandstone erratic boulder. It is quite unique in Britain and is most akin to the rock cut tombs found in the Mediterranean. We then travel to the spectacular Rackwick Bay. With good weather there are fine views across the Pentland Firth to the Scottish mainland. The walk is on a good path and takes a bit more than an hour one way. We return to Rackwick Bay by the same route. Deerness is almost an island, separated from the rest of Mainland by a narrow isthmus. In the north eastern extremity of Deerness the good farmland gives way to heather moorland and cliffs eroded and sculpted by the North Sea. We do a circular walk along this coastline visiting the Brough of Deerness, a remote headland that was once home to a community of Vikings. Only the remains of a chapel and hut shaped mounds survive today. Afterwards we travel south to Scapa Flow and the Churchill Barriers. On one of the small islands forming part of the barrier is the Italian Chapel. After an evening meal in Kirkwall we will travel to Stromness to board the ferry for an overnight stay on board for the early departure bound for Scrabster. Thurso - Glasgow After having breakfast on the ferry we disembark at Scrabster and go to Thurso train station. Our train arrives back in Glasgow late afternoon.

8: The Ancient Monuments of Orkney by Anna Ritchie

RCAHMS , The Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland. Twelfth report with an inventory of the ancient monuments of Orkney and Shetland, 3v, Edinburgh, 54, no Ritchie, A , Orkney and Shetland, 'Exploring Scotland's Heritage' series, Edinburgh, , no

9: Incredible sophistication of 5,year-old temple complex on Orkney Island | Ancient Origins

Undiscovered West. This tour is designed for all the family. It gives a mix of our ancient monuments from the Neolithic

period to more recent history where we get a flavour of how local people made their livings and the heritage of Orkney traditions were formed.

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