

# Rousay, Egilsay and Wyre

## ... A calendar of lives

*The Yetnasteen or Giant's Stone on Rousay was said to wander down to a nearby loch every New Year's morning for a refreshing drink.*

Amidst the great tides of the Atlantic and the North Sea lies a group of islands that encompasses the unique heritage of Orkney. From the Stone Age to the present, the seas have brought to Rousay, Egilsay and Wyre a blend of peoples who have left a calendar of their lives for all to see.

With over 166 sites of archaeological interest and an important crofting history, the three islands provide as rich a spectrum of settlement as can be found anywhere in Northern Europe. The approach by modern car ferry provides the visitor with a first and most impressive memory of the islands. Rousay, the largest of the group is an unusually hilly island scarred by glacial terracing. It contains some of the richest and best preserved monuments in the North of Scotland and in the west the 'Great Ship of Death', as Midhowe has been called, lies along a famous route of cairns and brochs. They are freely open to the public, enabling the visitor to wander through 5000 years of history. The Trumland Orientation Centre/Visitors' Centre and Waiting Room contains detailed information and interpretation of many ancient sites as well as natural history, modern and historical Rousay. Much of Rousay has been officially designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest. The northwest coast in particular has a range of exciting cliff formations as well as a rich variety of wild flowers. Special seaspray-covered soils harbour a wide range of plants.

The uninhabited island of Eynhallow with its twelfth century monastic settlement can be reached from Rousay by boat. It's an island of beauty, mystique and legend with spectacular tidal roosts on either side.

On Wyre, according to the Orkneyinga Saga, Kolbein Hruqa, the giant Cubbie Roo of legend, built the castle here about 1150 and it is the oldest dated square keep castle in Scotland. Close by the castle is the beautifully preserved St. Mary's Chapel which was founded either by Kolbein or his son Bjarni, Bishop of Orkney at the time.

The Norse church of St Magnus on Egilsay stands silhouetted against the sky, a constant reminder of the Vikings and their heritage which still lives on in the farm and place names of the islands. Egilsay secured its place in history when in 1117 Earl Magnus met his cousin Earl Hakon to discuss peace terms. Hakon came with evil intent and had Magnus murdered.

## Points of interest

### ROUSAY

- 1 Trumland Visitors Centre & Waiting room:** Exhibition on all aspects of this group of islands, with waiting room, toilets and picnic area. Just above ferry terminal.
- 2 Trumland House:** The Jacobean-style mansion of the then laird, General Sir Frederick William Traill-Burroughs, was designed by the architect David Bryce and finished in 1876. Not open to the public.
- 3 R.S.P.B. Reserve:** A moorland reserve with a long and a short walk (a separate leaflet is available).
- 4 Taversoe Tuick:** A rare two-storied cairn.
- 5 Blackhammer Cairn:** An easily accessible stalled cairn.
- 6 Knowe of Yarso Cairn:** The highest situated of the famous Orkney tombs with spectacular views out over Eynhallow Sound and south towards Orkney Mainland and Hoy.
- 7 Westness House:** Historic laird's house (17th century). Private house, not open to the public.
- 8 Westness Walk:** Described as the most important archaeological mile in Scotland it spans settlements from the first Stone Age settlers, the Pictish Iron Age, the Viking invaders, the period of the Earls and the troubled crofting times (separate leaflet available).
- 9 Midhowe Broch & Cairn:** A fine example of a fortified dwelling built during the Bronze/Iron Ages; the Stone Age cairn is the largest known of its kind and is protected by a modern building.



cubbie roo's castle - charles tait

# Wyre

egilsay with rousay in the distance- charles tait



**10 Quandale Viewpoint:** A landscape frozen during the Clearances with traces of runrig farming and the ruins of Tofts, the oldest-known two-storied building in Orkney.

**11 Wasbister Loch:** This attractive loch is the site of two crannogs or Iron Age fortified settlements built on artificial islands.

**12 Saviskail Beach:** A sheltered sandy beach with a nearby seal haul-out.

**13 Green Gairsty:** A rare example of the ancient earth dykes found across the islands.

**14 Leean Viewpoint:** Panoramic views from the hillside across to Westray and the Atlantic.

**15 Faraclett Head Walk and Yetnasteen:** This excursion covers several different habitats and early settlements and offers some stunning views towards the outer isles.

## EGILSAY

**16 St Magnus Kirk:** One of only two remaining examples of the distinctive round towered churches built by the Vikings.

**17 Cenotaph:** Erected in 1938 it marks the spot where Earl Magnus was murdered.

**18 R.S.P.B. Reserve (Three Sections):** You may hear and possibly see the rare Corncrake; here also are a large number of breeding waders and meadows rich in wildflowers.

**19 Loch of the Graand:** A quiet place to watch waders and seals.

## WYRE

**20 The Taing:** Ideal viewing place for both Common and Grey seals.

**21 Cubbie Roo's Castle:** The stronghold of the Viking chieftain was built around the year 1150.

**22 St Mary's Chapel:** Beautifully preserved chapel founded by either Cubbie Roo or his son Bjarni who was Bishop of Orkney.

**23 Wyre Heritage Centre:** Exhibition about the life of Wyre, with photographs and memories of bygone years. Special sections on Cubbie Roo and Edwin Muir. Small craft area.

**24 The Bu:** Home for a time of Edwin Muir, recognised as one of the great Scottish writers of the 20th century.

## EYNHALLOW

**25 Monastery:** Remains of a beautiful 12th century religious settlement.

**26 The Lodge:** Designed by the architect Lethaby this building is the base for a long-term research project studying Fulmar Petrels.

**27 Monkerness:** Three prehistoric houses.



## Wildlife

Rousay's richest habitats are its moors (with birds such as Red-throated Divers, Hen Harriers and Merlins) and its maritime heaths which are home to colonies of Arctic Terns and Arctic Skuas while, in addition, the western cliffs hold considerable colonies of Guillemots, Kittiwakes and Fulmars. In contrast, Egilsay is famed for its wetlands, with many breeding ducks and waders, and its traditionally managed farmland which has allowed that increasingly rare species, the Corncrake to survive. Seven calling Corncrakes were present in 1997 and a reserve, newly acquired by the RSPB, is being managed specifically with their needs in mind.

## Clearances

Quandale and Westness in Rousay is the only area in Orkney to have suffered a major Clearance. Within this wild and open landscape of Quandale are found the relics of traditional crofting - turf dykes, runrig (strip farming) and ruined crofts. This deserted community is now home for some of Rousay's most rare and beautiful flowers and birds.

In the mid-19th century 210 people were evicted by George William Traill as part of the modernisation of his Westness estate. Traill was succeeded by his nephew General Sir Frederick Willaim Traill Burroughs, the man who commissioned Trumland House. Burroughs, known as the 'Little General' created such difficulties for crofters that he gained the reputation as the worst landlord in Orkney. His efforts resulted in troubled times and shaped the recent history of the island.

## Treasure house of history

Rousay has a remarkably rich archaeological heritage much of which has been uncovered thanks to the efforts of Walter Grant of Trumland House (1930s). His investments in whisky enabled him to invite some of the most influential archaeologists of the time to excavate sites now in the care of Historic Scotland. The best preserved are signposted and accessible but many more lie on privately owned land and permission for access should first be sought from the landowner.

On Rousay, along the west road from the pier, four well-preserved burial cairns can be visited - Taversoe Tuick, a most unusual two-storied cairn; Blackhammer and Yarso, both stalled cairns and by the cliffs at Scabra Head is Midhowe, the largest known stalled cairn which is protected by its own special building.

Close by is Midhowe Broch, the best of a range of fortified dwellings built along the shore of Eynhallow Sound dating from the Bronze/Iron Age. The Westness Walk, which is just over a mile long, has been described as the 'most important archaeological mile in Scotland'. It spans settlements from the first Stone Age farmers, the Pictish Iron Age, the Viking invaders, the period of the Earls and the troubled crofting evictions.



midhowe broch - charles tait

In this area Earl Paul Hakonson was kidnapped by Swein Asleifson and disappeared from Orkney forever. Earl Paul was hunting otters which are still found along this shore. Rousay's most spectacular relic, the Westness Brooch was found in 1963 in the grave of a Viking woman at Westness. It is thought to be Celtic in origin and may have been obtained on a raid around 750AD. It is now in the National Museum in Edinburgh but silver replicas can be bought in the craft and jewellery shops.

Faraclett Head Walk is an exciting new route covering several different habitats and early settlements.

## Services

### Accommodation

Accommodation providers listed below are members of VisitScotland's Quality Assurance Scheme and have been graded as part of the national scheme. Please refer to the disclaimer on the inside of the back cover.

**The Taversoe Hotel (★★★Inn)** - Non-smoking establishment, small on-site restaurant and public bar with pool, darts and wide screen TV. Offering two double rooms with panoramic sea views and one en-suite twin room. Private residents lounge with TV, DVD, books and games. On-island courtesy bus available to residential guests. t: 01856 821325, www.taversoehotel.co.uk.

**Trumland Farm hostel, (★★★Hostel)** 2 dorms, 1 single room, sleeping 13, camp site. Bike hire available. Carol Rae. t: 01856 821252. e: trumland@btopenworld.com

Accommodation providers listed below are not participants of VisitScotland's Quality Assurance Scheme. Please refer to the disclaimer on the inside of the back cover before booking.

### Other Services

**The Taversoe (non-smoking)**

The Taversoe is perfectly situated between the historic tomb trail, the horned cairn and the fantastic Westness Walk. At The Taversoe we have an established restaurant offering a selection of good home-cooked meals with vegetarian options available. Our dining room overlooks the rear garden and provides unparalleled sea views. The public bar boasts an extensive whisky selection, a large plasma-screen television and joins our games room with dart board and pool table. We have three bedrooms available on a B&TB basis and our accommodation facilities include a private residents' lounge separate from the bar with magnificent sea views, sofas, television, DVD and video players. t: 01856 821325. www.taversoehotel.co.uk.

**Trumland House Gardens**, open from 1st Mon in May to last Fri in Oct, Mon-Fri inclusive, 10am-5pm.

**Rousay Tours and Taxis.** t: Paddy 01856 821234.

**Pier Restaurant and Public House**, bar snacks and lunches served all day. Dinners on request. Also picnics available. Craft Shop and Internet Centre. t: 01856 821359.

**The Taversoe:** Public Bar and Restaurant, for good home-cooked meals and bar snacks. Vegetarians welcome. t: Carey on 01856 821325.

**Rousay Heritage Centre.** t: 01856 821374 or 01856 821359.

**Marion's Shop & Filling Station**, Licensed General Merchant, Calor Gas and picnic site. t/f: 01856 821365  
**Tou Cottage, Sub Post Office.** t: 01856 821352.

**Brinian, Doctor.** t: 01856 821265.



westness - moya mckenzie mcdonald

**Bu Ceramics**, The Bu, Wyre - Hand Crafted Ceramic Gifts & DIY Paint-a-Puffin Sessions on Wyre and Mainland Orkney. For Bookings t: 01856 821208.

**VisitRousay** (Rousay Tourist Association). For more information go to [www.visitrousay.co.uk](http://www.visitrousay.co.uk) or contact 01856 821359.

**Around Rousay** - taxis, tours and minibus hires around the Island of Rousay. Competitive prices. Discounts for groups. t/f: 01856 821360 Mobile: 07746838761. Web: [www.aroundrousay.co.uk](http://www.aroundrousay.co.uk)

e: richard@aroundrousay.co.uk

**Healthy Living Centre.** t: 01856 821443.

# Transport links

## Rousay, Egilsay & Wyre

Effective from 3 May until 27 September 2009

The modern roll-on/roll-off ferry **m.v. Eynhallow** (95 passengers and 9 cars) serves the historic islands of Rousay, Egilsay and Wyre on a daily basis. Bookings should be made at the Tingwall Terminal in Evie on the Orkney Mainland. t/f: 01856 751360, e: [info@orkneyferries.co.uk](mailto:info@orkneyferries.co.uk).



**Rousay Tours and Taxis**  
**all year round - 7 days a week**  
 Booked tours will be met on arrival of the 10:40 ferry from Tingwall. Our tour circles the island stopping at archaeological and scenic/wildlife sites which include Saviskaill Bay, Midhowe and Knowe of Yarso, and allows time for a picnic lunch at one of the sites. Tour finishes as arranged for departure of the 15:20 or 17:30 ferry to Tingwall. Booking essential for both tours and lunches. Paddy Maguire t: 01856 821234 m: 07786 169364 e: [patrick\\_maguire@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:patrick_maguire@hotmail.co.uk)  
 Tour Prices: Adult £16.50 - children £5.00 (does not include ferry fare).  
 Picnics Lunches. Gourmet: £5.50 - Standard: £4.50.



correct at time of going to print

### Kirkwall - Tingwall (ferry)

	Monday-Friday	Saturday
Dep. Kirkwall KTC	0745	0730
Arr. Tingwall (ferry)	0807	0810
Dep. Tingwall (ferry)	0810	0810
Arr. Kirkwall KTC	0850	0835
Dep. Kirkwall KTC	0935	0935
Arr. Tingwall (ferry)	1030	1030
Dep. Tingwall (ferry)	1030	1030
Arr. Kirkwall KTC	1057	1057
Dep. Kirkwall KTC	1335	1335
Arr. Tingwall (ferry)	1402	1402
Dep. Tingwall (ferry)	1445	1445
Arr. Kirkwall KTC	1512	1512
Dep. Kirkwall KTC	1520	-
Arr. Tingwall (ferry)	1600	-
Dep. Tingwall (ferry)	1610	-
Arr. Kirkwall KTC	1635	-
Dep. Kirkwall KTC	1710	1710
Arr. Tingwall (ferry)	1737	1737
Dep. Tingwall (ferry)	1813	1805
Arr. Kirkwall KTC	1850	1830

### Stromness - Tingwall (ferry)

Valid from 18th May, 2009

	Wednesday & Friday	
Dep. Stromness STC	0930	1630
Arr. Tingwall (ferry)	1028	1728
Dep. Tingwall (ferry)	1035	1755
Arr. Stromness STC	1129	1849

KTC = Kirkwall Travel Centre • STC = Stromness Travel Centre

		Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wed.	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Rousay	dep		0650	0650	0650	0650	0650	0650
Egilsay	dep		0710	0710A	0710A	0710A	0710A	0710A
Wyre	dep		0730	0730A	0730A	0730A	0730A	0730A
Rousay	dep		0745	0745	0745	0745	0745	0745
Tingwall	dep		0820	0820	0820	0820	0820	0840
Rousay	dep		0850	0850	0850	0850	0850	
Wyre	dep		0900	0900	0900	0900	0900	
Rousay	dep	0915	0910	0910	0910	0910	0910	0910
Egilsay	dep	0935B	0930	0930	0930	0930	0930	0930
Wyre	dep	0955B	0950	0950	0950	0950	0950	0950
Rousay	dep	1010	1005	1005	1005	1005	1005	1005
Tingwall	dep	1045	1040	1040	1040	1040	1040	1040
Rousay	dep	1120	1115	1115	1115	1115	1115	1115
Tingwall	dep	1155	1150	1150	1240	1150	1150	1150
Rousay	arr	1220	1215	1215	1305	1215	1215	1215
Rousay	dep	1315	1315	1315		1315	1315	1315
Egilsay	dep	1335B	1335A	1335A		1335A	1335A	1335A
Wyre	dep	1355B	1355A	1355A		1355A	1355A	1355A
Rousay	dep	1410	1410	1410	1410	1410	1410	1410
Tingwall	dep	1445	1445	1445	1445	1445	1445	1445
Rousay	dep	1520	1520	1520	1520	1520	1520	1520
Wyre	dep	1530	1530	1530	1530	1530	1530	1530
Tingwall	dep	1605	1605	1605	1605	1605	1605	1605
Rousay	dep	1635	1635	1635	1635	1635	1635	
Egilsay	dep	1655B	1655	1655	1655	1655	1655	
Wyre	dep	1715B	1715	1715	1715	1715	1715	1715B
Rousay	dep	1730	1730	1730	1730	1730	1730	1730
Tingwall	dep	1805	1805	1805	1805	1805	1805	1805
Rousay	arr	1830	1830	1830	1830	1830	1830	1830
Rousay	dep		1835B	1835B	1835B	1835B	1835B	1835B
Wyre	dep		1845B	1845B	1845B	1845B	1845B	1845B
Egilsay	dep		1905B	1905B	1905B	1905B	1905B	1905B
Rousay	arr		1920B	1920B	1920B	1920B	1920B	1920B

**A** = On request **TO and FROM** Egilsay and Wyre. Customers are requested to make advanced bookings by 1700 on the day before travel, except for travel on Monday which must be made by 1115 on Saturday.

**B** = On request **TO and FROM** Egilsay and Wyre. Customers are requested to make advanced bookings by 1200 on the day of travel, except for travel on Saturday or Sunday which must be made by 1115 on Saturday.

In the event of an urgent need for "on request" sailings outside of the above please contact the Company's Tingwall Office during normal office hours.

**NOTES:**

- 1) All vehicle bookings **MUST** be made through the Company's Tingwall Office. TELEPHONE/FAX: 01856 751360.
- 2) Vehicles **MUST** be available for boarding **15 minutes** and passengers **5 minutes** before departure times.
- 3) There is a connecting bus service between Kirkwall and Tingwall for most of these sailings - contact Orkney Coaches (01856) 870555.
- 4) **No Show Charges** - All cancellations must be made by 1700 (1115 for travel on Sunday's and Monday's) on the day before the intended date of travel or charges may be incurred.
- 5) For conditions of carriage of passengers and cargo see notices exhibited in Company's vessels, offices and premises.

For full fares please enquire at Orkney Ferries Offices