

Stronsay

... All arms and legs

Some of the bristles from a 55-foot 'sea monster' which came ashore on Stronsay in 1808 were kept as a curiosity by Lord Byron. Scientific opinion name the creature as a basking shark but others hae their doots.

Stronsay is about seven miles long from north to south and is often described as being "all arms and legs" resulting from the three larger bays which bite into the Island. It is a place which prides itself on its friendliness and tranquillity, welcoming walkers, cyclists and motorists alike. Low-lying, the highest point is Burgh Hill which is only 46 metres (154 feet) above sea level and the Island boasts several lovely sandy beaches. Along its east coast between Lamb Ness and Odiness is a magnificent cliff-coast which includes the famous Vat of Kirbister, a dramatic opening or "gloup" spanned by the finest natural arch in Orkney.

A nature walk in the southeast corner of the Island takes in the scenery and history of cliff, hill and bay.

Birdlife

Stronsay abounds with birds throughout the year and sea bird colonies can be found on the cliffs to the southeast and southwest of the island. The island's fine loch and marshes are havens for ducks and waders including Pintail ducks. The island is now known throughout Europe as one of the best sites for rare migrants and several species new to Orkney have been recorded recently including Cretzschmar's Buntin in 1998. Stronsay Bird Reserve is owned and run by bird artist John Holloway and his family.

The wild places

The moorland peninsula of Rothiesholm is purple with Heather and Bell Heather during the late summer and the wetter areas are dominated by Rushes, Sedges, Cotton Grass and Cross-Leaved Heath. Burgh Hill on the other hand provides a fine example of northern maritime heath. There are also many lochs and associated wetlands providing rich flora and fauna.



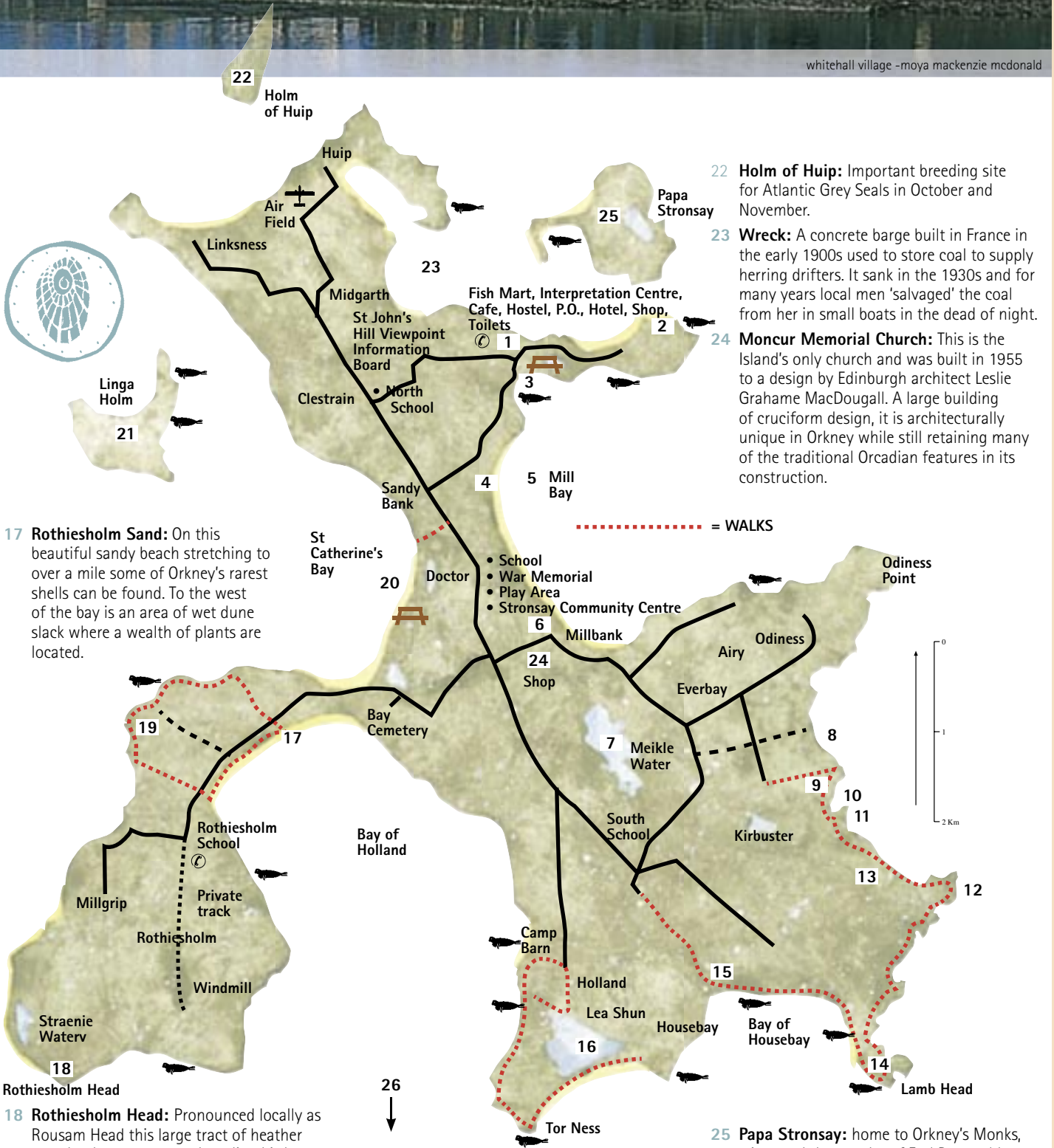
vat of kirbister

Points of interest

- 1 Whitehall:** The village took its name from a house built here in the 1670s by Patrick Fea. The village is the terminal for the roll-on, roll-off ferry service.
- 2 Lower Whitehall:** Now almost deserted this little community was built to house the families of herring fishermen.
- 3 Ayre of the Myres:** This beautiful sandy beach is ideal for a picnic, seal watching and swimming.
- 4 Well of Kildinguie:** Water from this fresh spring located just below the high water mark, when taken, was reputed to be a cure for all known ailments except the Black Death.
- 5 Mill Bay:** Nestling within this horse-shoe shaped bay is one of Stronsay's finest sandy beaches overlooked by a variety of grassy slopes, low cliffs and sand dunes which are home to a diverse flora of mosses and flowering plants.
- 6 Stronsay Meal Mill:** This privately owned three-storey meal mill with wheel and lade was built in the early 19th century and stands at the foot of Mill Brae, fed with water from a stream leading from the Muckle Water to Mill Bay.
- 7 The Muckle Water:** The Meikle or Muckle Water as it is known locally is one of Stronsay's largest freshwater lochs where bird and plant life abound. Merganser and Shoveler Duck are found and it's an excellent site for marsh plant communities. The loch has been stocked with Brown Trout and the fishing is free.
- 8 Bluthers Geo and the Malme:** Adjacent to the geo there is a natural swimming pool and the setting is ideal for a picnic. Nearby on a stack called the Malme a grass-covered mound is an early Christian hermitage site.
- 9 Vat of Kirbister:** This nature walk affords easy access to the Vat. Cliff scenery in the area is breathtaking – a must for every visitor. But take care. From Whitehall, a round trip of 10 miles, however, length of walk can vary to suit ability.
- 10 Tam's Castle:** On the summit of this stack is a hermitage ruin within the shelter of a high parapet wall.
- 11 Iron Age Fort:** A small promontory fort dating from the Early Iron Age has a stone-faced rampart across the narrow isthmus.
- 12 Broch of Burgh Head:** This is the largest of Stronsay's hermitage sites. Running along the landward side of the stack is a stone wall, the "Vallum Monasterii", a symbolic barrier against the outside world.
- 13 Burgh Hill:** This is part of the Nature Walk and the area abounds with plant life including a variety of mosses and lichens.
- 14 Lamb Ness & Lamb Head:** This beautiful promontory, home to myriad seabirds, is also dotted with interesting archaeological sites including 'Pict Houses'. At the neck of the isthmus the so-called Danes Pier, a natural rock structure said to be the site of a Norse harbour is a haven for seals. From Whitehall, a round trip of 12 miles.
- 15 The Pow:** The pow or pool is a safe anchorage used by a local fisherman which ebbs dry at low water. Along the track beside the Pow is an unusual population of White Thistles and a large area of Patagonian Ragwort, a naturalised plant belonging to Southern Chile and Patagonia.
- 16 Lea-shun and the Sand of Crook:** The large Lea Shun loch attracts a large variety of breeding wildfowl and along the adjacent beach can be found the lovely blue-flowered Oyster plant.



whitehall village -moya mackenzie mcdonald



17 Rothiesholm Sand: On this beautiful sandy beach stretching to over a mile some of Orkney's rarest shells can be found. To the west of the bay is an area of wet dune slack where a wealth of plants are located.

18 Rothiesholm Head: Pronounced locally as Rousam Head this large tract of heather moorland attracts many breeding birds. Here, by tradition, crofters are afforded 'Peat Rights' and many backbreaking but happy hours have been spent on the Hill.

19 Hillock of Baywest: Elongated mound just above the shoreline, an unexcavated site which contains a burial chamber of the stalled type dating from 3000BC or earlier. To the north is a mound containing a broch tower and the broad platform conceals the remains of an extensive Iron Age village.

20 St Catherine's Bay: A fine sandy stretch with very low tides which make it a popular 'spoot' or razor fish beach; this edible shellfish is dug out of the sand. Access road to parking area and beach.

21 Linga Holm: Now owned by the Scottish Wildlife Trust and is an important breeding site for Atlantic Grey seals and for Greylag Geese.

22 Holm of Huip: Important breeding site for Atlantic Grey Seals in October and November.

23 Wreck: A concrete barge built in France in the early 1900s used to store coal to supply herring drifters. It sank in the 1930s and for many years local men 'salvaged' the coal from her in small boats in the dead of night.

24 Moncur Memorial Church: This is the Island's only church and was built in 1955 to a design by Edinburgh architect Leslie Grahame MacDougall. A large building of cruciform design, it is architecturally unique in Orkney while still retaining many of the traditional Orcadian features in its construction.

25 Papa Stronsay: home to Orkney's Monks, witnessed the murder of Earl Rognvald Brusason in 1046 by the supporters of Thorfinn the Mighty; historic sites and wildlife aplenty. Mound of the Celtic Cross, memorial to the monks and hermits of the first two millennia who found on nearly every Orkney Isle "their desert in the pathless sea". Access to the cross is possible and visits can be arranged with prior agreement from the owners.

26 Auskerry.

Archaeology

Recent archaeological investigations have revealed the presence of several settlements and field systems on Stronsay.

Fortunately these sites remain very much intact and near the Hillock of Baywest lies one of Orkney's earliest chambered tombs, dating from 3000BC or earlier.

Of the several small islands surrounding Stronsay, Auskerry is particularly interesting, being rich in archaeological remains. Also the St Nicholas Chapel which dates from the 12th century has been recently excavated on Papa Stronsay.

Seals

Grey seals were comparatively rare in Orkney during the 19th century but now form perhaps a fifth of the British population. They are seen in numbers during the autumn when they come ashore for breeding and can be seen hauled out on Linga Holm, the Holms of Spurness, Huip and on Auskerry. Common seals haul out on Papa Stronsay, Linga Holm and the Bay of Holland.

Whitehall village

This was once one of the major herring ports in Scotland with several curing stations which, during the 1800s, employed hundreds of men, women and children. During its heyday the harbour's skyline was criss-crossed with the masts of up to 300 boats. On a Sunday it was sometimes possible to walk from Whitehall to Papa Stronsay across the decks of the anchored fleet.

Unfortunately the industry entered a decline during the 1930s. There are local folk who still remember these boom years and the old Stronsay fish market has been renovated and features an interpretation centre, cafe facilities and hostel.

The kelp industry

Kelp production was a major industry in Stronsay during the 18th century. In Orkney kelp was first produced in 1722 by James Fea of Whitehall, Stronsay. By the end of the 18th century the processing of seaweed was employing some 3000 people and providing large profits for Orkney's lairds.

Lighthouse

The construction of the 112-foot lighthouse on Auskerry began in 1865 and although progress was slowed by storms it was operational by March 1867. The lighthouse was manned for nearly 100 years but was finally automated in 1961.



common seals - charles tait

Services

Accommodation

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.

Transport

Self Drive and Taxi – D. S. Peace, Samson's Lane, Stronsay. t: 01857 616335.

Boat Trips

The monks offer a **free boat ride** to the mound or around Papa Stronsay by appointment and weather permitting. t: 01857 616389.

Shops & Post Office

Olivebank General Merchant, butcher and off-sales (petrol sold). Open 8.30am-6.30pm Monday - Saturday. M. Williamson, t: 01857 616255.

Post Office. Contact Lisa DeGeer. t: 01857 616217. Open 9am -12 noon Monday to Saturday and 1pm - 4pm Monday and Thursday.

Ebenezer Stores – grocery, general store, frozen food, off sales and souvenirs. Mike and Viv Erdman. Bike hire available. t: 01857 616339.

Redhouse Plants Market Garden. Seasonal vegetables available daily. Bedding plants and perennials available in season. Opening hours: 9am-5pm Mon-Sat. t: 01857 616377.

Café

Fish Mart Café, Open daily. t: 01857 616386.

Crafts

Auskerry Sheepskins – Hand cured North Ronaldsay sheepskins. Rugs in natural colours. KW17 2AU. t: 07778-358029.

Bird books available from the author/illustrator at Castle. Contact John Holloway t: 01857 616363.

Stronsay Arts and Crafts shop, Clifton, Whitehall Village. Over 20 craft producers, books, maps, gifts and a warm welcome. Open Tuesday to Sunday in the summer. Thursday to Saturday in the winter. www.stronsayartsandcrafts.co.uk, t: 01857 616434.

Stronsay Craft Shop Workshop. Knitting, crochet, tatting, lace items, soaps, etc. Wooden doll houses,



oystercatcher - charles tait

decorated shells, candles, cards, and more on sale locally. Commissions accepted. All made and produced on Stronsay. Val. t: 07760 373662.

Stronsay Art Works – paintings by local artist Jenny Flett – original Stronsay paintings, greetings cards etc. available locally and commissions taken. t: 01857 616282.

Services

Doctor – Dr G. McKay, Geramont House. t: 01857 616321.

Bank – Royal Bank (every Thursday).

Moncur Memorial Church, Stronsay, Church of Scotland. Rev. Dr. Jennifer George, Minister. t: 01857 616311.

Elsie Dennison, **Session Clerk**. t: 01856 616331. Sunday Worship: 11am.

Our Lady's Catholic Chapel, The Pier, Stronsay. Daily Mass 7am; Sunday Mass 9.00am. t: 01857 616210.

Community Centre – Hall bookings. Caretaker: Colin McAlpine. t: 01857 616446.

Public toilets open daily at rear of Community Centre.

Walks & Tours

Bu Walk. Coastal walk from the car park near Mount Pleasant to the back of the Bu.

Vat of Kirbister and Nature Walk over Burgh Hill to Lamb Head.

Leisure & Recreation

Two play area facilities suitable for children up to the age of 12, one at Stronsay Community Centre and the other in Whitehall Village.

Stronsay Swimming Pool – details of opening times available in local shops.

Stronsay Fish Mart. t: 01857 616386.

Interpretation Centre depicting the way of life on Stronsay during the herring boom.

Cafe – hostel also on site.

Transport links

Stronsay

Effective from 3 May until 28 September 2009

The services to Stronsay are carried out by the vessels **m.v. Earl Thorfinn** (190 passengers and 25 cars), **m.v. Earl Sigurd** (190 passengers and 25 cars) and **m.v. Varagen** (144 passengers and 32 cars). Canteen facilities are available on all vessels at modest prices. Bookings should be made at the Kirkwall Office: t: 01856 872044, f: 01856 872921, e: info@orkneyferries.co.uk See page 46 for occasional extra Sunday inter-island connections.



		Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wed.	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Kirkwall	dep	0840A		0720B	0700B	0700B		0700B
Eday	arr							0815
Eday	dep							0830B
Stronsay	arr	1015		0855	0835	0835		0905
Stronsay	dep		0815A	0910B	0850B	0850B	0730B	0920B
Eday	arr		0850		0925	0925	0805	
Eday	dep		0905A		0940B	0940B	0820B	
Kirkwall	arr		1020	1045	1055	1055	0935	1055
Kirkwall	dep		1010		1040			
Stronsay	arr		1145		1215			
Stronsay	dep	1710A	1155		1225			
Kirkwall	arr	1845	1330		1400			
Kirkwall	dep	1855A	1600	1620	1600	1600	1600	1600A
Eday	arr		1715		1715	1715	1715	
Eday	dep		1730		1730	1730	1730	
Stronsay	arr	2030	1805	1755	1805	1805	1805	1735
Stronsay	dep		1815	1805	1815		1815	1745A
Eday	arr							1820
Eday	dep							1835A
Kirkwall	arr		1950	1940	1950		1950	1950

A - Vehicles must be booked before 1430 hrs on Saturday.

B - Vehicles must be booked before 1600 hrs the day before sailing.

All other vehicle bookings must be made at least one hour before the departure from Kirkwall.

NOTES:

- 1) Vehicle check in times: **20 minutes** before departure. Passenger check in times: **10 minutes** before departure.
- 2) **No Show Charges** – All cancellations must be made not less than 24 hours before the intended date of travel or full charges may apply.
- 3) In order to accommodate certain local events these timetables will be subject to change. (See page 47).
- 4) For conditions of carriage of passengers and cargo see notices exhibited in the Company's vessels, offices and premises.

For full fares please enquire at Orkney Ferries Offices

Transport links



01856 872494/873457

MONDAYS				WEDNESDAYS				FRIDAYS			
Dep Kirkwall	Arr	Dep	Arr Kirkwall	Dep Kirkwall	Arr	Dep	Arr Kirkwall	Dep Kirkwall	Arr	Dep	Arr Kirkwall
0832	0840	0847	0910	0805	0828	0835	0843	0805	0813	0820	0843
1505	1528	1535	1543	1445	1453	1500	1523	1450	1513	1520	1528
TUESDAYS				THURSDAYS				SATURDAYS			
Dep Kirkwall	Arr	Dep	Arr Kirkwall	Dep Kirkwall	Arr	Dep	Arr Kirkwall	Dep Kirkwall	Arr	Dep	Arr Kirkwall
0805	0813	0820	0849	0955	1003	1010	1033	1000	1008	1015	1038
1550	1613	1620	1628	1550	1613	1620	1628				

This timetable is subject to contract. Visitors should check with the Airline for full details and reservations.