

Flotta

... Key to Scapa Flow

The island of Flotta took a pounding during World War II air raids on Scapa Flow because when the ground and ship-based defences put up an incredible curtain of metal the Germans turned for home dumping their cargo of bombs on the nearest island.

For a thousand years Flotta, the 'flat' isle of the Norsemen at the gateway to Scapa Flow, slumbered.

During those long years perhaps the most sensational event came in 1725 when the Laird of Flotta Sir James Stewart an 'irascible and belligerent Jacobite' murdered Captain James Moodie of Melsetter in Hoy, in Kirkwall's Broad Street. Then within the past century the island has suddenly found itself in the spotlight, firstly as a strategic military base in two World Wars and latterly as the location for an oil terminal which has helped keep Orkney's economy afloat.

Like most of the island fringe Flotta's population has been in decline since the turn of this century, despite the sensationally busy War years (the Imperial War Museum holds a remarkable photograph of a World War I boxing match on Flotta with an audience of 10,000!) and the arrival of the terminal. In 1910, the island had two blacksmiths, four carpenters, three dressmakers, a teacher, doctor, minister and postmaster, all serving a population of 431. Flotta has one of the most spectacular 360 degree panoramas in the United Kingdom - the sweep of the Hills of Hoy, the great expanse of Scapa Flow and the hills of Mainland Orkney beyond, to the east Burray and South Ronaldsay, completing the circle by looking out across the Pentland Firth to the Scottish mainland.

Interestingly Flotta is thought to be perhaps the only place in Orkney where you can see Kirkwall and Stromness at the same time.



cletts

Points of interest

- 1 Flotta Oil Terminal:** The terminal became operational in December 1976 when crude oil arrived from the Piper platform.
- 2 Cinema:** Constructed during World War II, this building was designed to hold an audience of 1500. The roof now covers a garage in Kirkwall and after the end wall was removed in the 70s, the building was used as a sand store.
- 3 Memorial Seat:** In memory of an islander this bench has proved a welcome resting point on one of the flat island's 'steep hills'.
- 4 Rocket Batteries:** This WWII rocket firing battery was designed to protect important targets from low flying enemy aircraft. The 132 now crumbling shelters form a perfect grid and were used to protect the gun crews and store ammunition for the 66 rocket projectors.
- 5 Golta:** This part of the island was common grazing for the sheep population, as was the West Hill. Together they form about one third of the island's area. Wartime relics are found.
For access please contact Flotta Terminal Security on 01856 884359 before visiting Golta.
- 6 Y.M.C.A.:** This once magnificent stone-built construction was completed in 1917. Only part of the wall and the huge fireplace now remain. A post-war plan to re-open the building as a hotel fell through.
- 7 St. Vincent Pier:** This landing pier was erected by men from H.M.S. St. Vincent and as the foundation stone indicates was finished in 1915. It was used by the navy to land personnel at the Y.M.C.A., where they could enjoy a game of golf.
- 8 Boom Net and the Calf of Flotta:** The objects sticking out of the water between Golta and the Calf may look like rocks but are in fact hundreds of tons of anti-submarine cable dumped here after World War II; a narrow channel allows boats to pass between the two islands.
- 9 Community Centre:** There are sporting or social activities in the centre on most evenings. There is also a putting green which can be used all year round. The licensed bar is open on Friday evenings. There is a modern playpark for children of all ages to enjoy.
- 10 Buchanan Battery:** The well-preserved coastal defence battery here was built to guard the navy's main entrance to Scapa Flow. Feel free to explore the many shelters, but remember that extreme care is necessary.



- 11 Magnificent Lane:** This steep winding road was built by the men from H.M.S Magnificent and leads to Stanger Head.
- 12 Kings Hard:** Remains of a stone jetty where on July 9, 1915 King George V landed to inspect troops at Stanger Head.
- 13 Signal Station:** Built for the Royal Navy this large complex was used as a communication centre and connected with other stations around the Flow.
- 14 Quarry:** Most of the stone used in the construction of the oil terminal came from Stanger Head. Much of the army camp which once stood here has been removed.
- 15 Cletts:** The name given to the stone stacks which can be viewed from the cliff. This part of Stanger Head can be dangerous because there are also ghoups or blow-holes in the vicinity which are extremely dangerous. Keep a close eye on children and pets!
- 16 Flotta Kirk and War Memorial:** The kirk is open to visitors with access through the vestry, there are also many interesting gravestones surrounding the kirk. Across Kirk Bay is the uninhabited island of Switha.
- 17 NEB Battery:** Along both sides of the road are to be found the remains of many buildings and huts which once stood here. The pump house that once supplied water from the burn stands at the edge of the road. There are two dams, the lower was built in World War II and the higher dam in World War I. The battery and ammunition stores are well worth a visit.
- 18 Airstrip:** The airstrip is 2000 feet long and was built to transport workers during the construction of the oil terminal which has meant so much to the prosperity of Orkney.
- 19 Sutherland Pier:** This pier was built during WW II.
- 20 Gibraltar Pier:** Constructed during WWII, this pier was modified in 1983 to accommodate the linkspan for Orkney's first inter-island ro-ro ferry.
- 21 Peerie Museum:** This collection of wartime and oil-related memorabilia is housed in the Silent Cabin (see overleaf). Visitors are welcome to wander in and see something of the island's history and to handle any of the artefacts which are not in display cases. They are also at liberty to use the associated toilet and washing facilities. Rooms which they are requested not to enter are clearly marked 'NO ENTRY'.

History

The first European to be buried in Australia was said to have been a Flotta man, Forbie Sutherland, a member of Cook's Endeavour expedition. The Flotta Stone, held by the National Museum of Antiquities in Edinburgh, is unquestionably Flotta's most cherished artefact. It is a sculptured slab which was found in the site of a ruin which was supposed to have been an ancient church.

After having being in possession of Mr George Petrie of Kirkwall for a number of years it was bought by the Edinburgh museum in 1877. It is thought to date from the 8th century.

As you walk around the island see how many of Tom's 21st century artefacts you can spot. There are guns, tractors a WWII Doodlebug, and a penny-farthing bicycle that he has made from re-cycled scrap metal. If you go past the Rotten Gutter you may well find penguins that you can walk right up to!

Natural world

Oblivious to the presence of the great industrial enterprise on the north side of the island, Flotta's bird population nest on cliffs and moor. The colony of seals can be best seen from the southeast corner of the island overlooking the Sound of Hoxa. Flotta's 'forest' is a surprise for many visitors. In the vicinity of the old cinema the Royal Navy planted 1000 trees during World War II and about ten per cent survived. Then the oil company planted 40,000 trees and shrubs. There is a scurrilous island legend that rather than becoming victims of Orkney's balmy breezes many wartime trees disappeared for Christmas decoration. They were a designer's dream – without branches on the weather side they fitted flush with the wall!

The oil terminal

The flare at the top of its 223-foot stack can be seen all around Orkney and the North of Scotland and has become the symbol of modern Orkney in the way that The Old Man of Hoy represents the island heritage. The majority of the workforce commute daily by fast launch to the terminal from Orkney Mainland.

Silent cabin & the UB116

Joined to the dwelling house of Peerie Lurdy is a World War I hut dragged there by oxen at the end of the War and tagged on as a bedroom/sitting room and dubbed the Silent Cabin because it had served as the hydrophone hut at Quoyness. The observers sat with their headphones listening for submarine activity. From this hut the approach of a so-called 'suicide' mission by the UB116 was tracked. The submarine slipped under the boom defences but was destroyed in the minefield. This wreck and that of a German destroyer in deep water just off the Buchanan Battery on the east shore are regularly dived on. Wartime relics are everywhere. One of the most interesting is the rocket battery where, probably the world's first surface to air missiles, were tested. Folk from Flotta still recall the 'Whoosh' and sheet of flame from these rockets under test although they were never fired in anger.

The wreck of the battleship Vanguard which blew up at her moorings with the loss of over 840 men in 1917 lies only a couple of miles from Flotta. As a result of the huge explosion, flaming debris landed on the island and set fire to the heather on Golta.



gun emplacement - charles tait

James Hay

One of the most famous sons of Flotta was islander/poet James Hay who died in 1950. His published works are now cherished by connoisseurs of poetry in the style of the legendary William McGonagall, the Dundee poet who spent part of his childhood just across the water from Flotta on South Ronaldsay. Here is 'Roon Flotta's Isle' by James Hay:

*Roon Flotta's Isle we twa hae gane
 Frae Stanger Head by Hanging Stane,
 The Flossie Geo and Kirkie Ting,
 Then by the Burn o' the Mill
 Past Waster Noust and Langabar,
 The Cave o' Banks and Scatwick's ware;
 The Point o' Neb and famous Spence,
 Warth shore, then onward to the fence.
 At Quoy o' Weddel, then to shore
 Where scent of ware's felt more and more;
 This part is called the gutter rotten,
 One whiff of it is ne'er forgotten.
 Our way now lies by Sutherland Pier,
 Past the Boat Noust and Crubb is near,
 Next Whanclett's shore then Golta Hill,
 We journey on and on until
 The head called Rone is passed, and we
 Old Winster's Well now clearly see;
 Then the Red Face and Sinnesting,
 Where little birdies blithely sing.
 Past Curries firth and Busta Burn
 Our way now takes another turn
 By Sarraquoy and Lurdy's shore,
 The Pan and Quoyness lie before.
 Then Scartan point where sheep is loose
 Straight onward to the Giral's Hoose,
 Rinnagie, the King's Hard too,
 And Stanger Head again we view.*



oil terminal on flotta - leonard bain

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.

SELF-CATERING

13 Burnside, self-catering with one double, one twin and one single room, sittingroom, bathroom and fully equipped kitchen. For bookings and enquiries, please contact either Marina Sinclair on 01856 701252 or Jo Goodenough on 01856 701433.

HOSTEL

14 Burnside, former 3 bedroom council house now a hostel sleeping five. Sittingroom, bathroom and fully equipped kitchen. Open all year. For bookings and enquiries, please contact either Marina Sinclair on 01856 701252 or Jo Goodenough on 01856 701433.

Other Services

Post Office and convenience store, petrol and Calor Gas. t: 01856 701252.

Doctor: Stromness Surgery.
Island Nurse: 01856 701769.

By Sea

Flotta and Hoy

Effective from 8 May until 25 September 2011

The islands of Hoy and Flotta are served by the roll-on/roll-off ferries **m.v. Hoy Head** and **m.v. Thorsvoe** (125 passengers and 16 cars). All bookings should be made at the Houton Terminal in Orphir on the Orkney Mainland tel 01856 811397, f: 01856 811701, e: info@orkneyferries.co.uk



		Mon	Tues	Wed		Thurs		Fri		Sat	Sunday		
		HH	HH	HH	Thors	HH	Thors	HH	Thors	HH	1*	2*	3*
Longhope	dep	0625	0625	0625		0625		0625		0800	0830	0730	0830
Lyness	dep		0650	0650		0650							
Flotta	dep	0650	0710	0710		0710		0650		0830		0755B	
Lyness	dep	0710			0830		0830	0710	0830	0900	0900	0815	0900
Houton	arr	0745	0745	0745	0905	0745	0905	0745	0905	0935	0935	0850	0935
Houton	dep	0800	0800	0800	0925	0800	0925	0800	0925	0950	0945	0900	0945
Lyness	arr			0835	1000	0835	1000	0835	1000		1020		1020
Lyness	dep	0845			1010		1010	0845	1010	1030		0945	
Flotta	dep	0910	0845	0845		0845		0910		1055			
Lyness	dep		0910	0910		0910							
Houton	arr	0945	0945	0945	1045	0945	1045	0945	1045			1020	
Houton	dep	1015	1015	1015	1100	1015	1100	1015	1100			1030	
Lyness	dep	1100	1100	1100		1100		1100				1105	
Flotta	arr				1135		1135		1135			1125	
Flotta	dep				1200		1200		1200				
Houton	arr	1135	1135	1135	1235	1135	1235	1135	1235	1130			
Houton	dep	1145	1145	1145	1250	1145	1250	1145	1250				
Lyness	dep	1230	1230	1230		1230		1230				1500	
Flotta	dep				1445		1445		1445				
Houton	arr	1305	1305	1305		1305		1305				1535	
Houton	dep	1320	1320	1320		1320		1320		1415		1545	
Flotta	dep							1405					
Lyness	arr			1355		1355		1355					
Lyness	dep	1405	1405	1405		1405		1425				1630	
Flotta	dep	1425	1425	1425		1425				1500			
Houton	arr	1500	1500	1500	1520	1500	1520	1500	1520			1705	
Houton	dep	1515	1515	1515	1615	1515	1615	1515	1615			1715	
Flotta	arr			1550		1550		1550					
Flotta	dep	1600	1600	1600		1600		1600				1750	
Lyness	dep	1640	1640	1640	1715	1640	1715	1640	1715	1530	1600	1815	1600
Houton	arr	1715	1715	1715	1750	1715	1750	1715	1750	1605	1635	1850	1635
Houton	dep	1730	1730	1730	1805C	1730	1805C	1730	1805B	1615	1650	1900	1650
Lyness	arr			1805		1805	1840	1805	1840				
Lyness	dep	1810	1810	1810		1810		1810		1700	1730	1935	1730
Flotta	dep	1830A	1830A	1830A	1845B	1830A	1845B	1830A	1845B	1720A			
Lyness	arr				1900		1900		1900				
Longhope	arr	1850	1850	1850		1850		1850		1740	1750	1955	1750

By Road



Correct at time of going to print

Kirkwall to Houton (Hoy & Flotta)

MONDAYS TO FRIDAYS

	Kirkwall	Houton	Houton	Kirkwall
	Depart	Arrive	Depart	Arrive
FC	0735	0755	0800	0840
FC	0920	0940	0945	1005
FC	1240	1300	1305	1325
	1420(W)	1500	1500	1520
	1435(MTTF)	1455	1500	1520
FC	1710	1730	1735	1800

SATURDAYS

	Kirkwall	Houton	Houton	Kirkwall
	Depart	Arrive	Depart	Arrive
FC	0915	0935	0935	0955
FC	1345	1405	1405	1425
FC	1545	1610	1610	1630

(FC) This service will wait up to 15 minutes for a ferry connection and from the terminal may run up to 15 minutes through every timing point for the remainder of the journey.

(W) Operates Wednesdays only.
(MTTF) Operates Mon, Tues, Thurs, Fri.

t: Kirkwall (01856) 870555

1* - 08/05/11 to 05/06/11 2* - 12/06/11 to 14/08/11 3* - 21/08/11 to 25/09/11

Thorsvoe sailings marked in red are subject to crew availability and are subject to confirmation, please contact the Company's Houton Office.

A - On Request. Customers are requested to make advanced bookings by 1700 on the day before travel. At the very latest (except in emergency) bookings for these services **MUST** be made by 12 noon on the day of travel.

B - All vehicle bookings from Houton to Flotta must be made by 1600 on day of sailing. All passengers wishing to use this service from Houton to Flotta must be ready to board at Houton by 1750. All passengers wishing to use this service from Flotta to Lyness must inform the booking office by 1600 on the day of sailing.

NOTES:

- 1) All vehicle bookings must be made through the Houton Office. TELEPHONE: (01856) 811397, FAX: (01856) 811701.
- 2) Vehicles **MUST** be available for boarding **15 minutes** before departure times, and passengers **5 minutes** before departure.
- 3) **No Show charges** - All cancellations must be made by 1700 (1600 on Saturday for Sunday and Monday travel) on the day before the intended date of travel or charges may be applied.
- 4) For conditions of carriage of passengers and cargo see notices exhibited in Company's vessels, offices and premises.

For full fares please enquire at Ferry Services Offices