

Hoy & Graemsay

... The high point of Orkney

From the summit of Ward Hill on Hoy – the highest point in the county at 1570 feet – every island in Orkney can be seen with the exception of Rysa Little – which, ironically, is the nearest.

Hoy means 'High Island' from the Old Norse 'HAey'. It is the second largest island in Orkney at 57 square miles. The north and west are hilly and more 'Highland' in character, the south and east low-lying and fertile, more typical of Orkney in general.

Hoy is steeped in history with sites which date from prehistoric times, through the Viking period and into the 20th century. Here you'll find the only rock-cut chambered tomb in Britain and discover Hoy's key role in British maritime history.

The richness of heritage is equalled by a treasure trove of natural history, for example you'll find plant communities normally associated with mountain areas. An ornithologist's paradise, a number of northern species can be seen in a natural setting which has few equals in Britain.

Hills and stunning sea cliffs offer excellent hillwalking, the west coast in particular is one of spectacular natural beauty. The dramatic summits of Ward Hill and the Cuilags stand in splendid contrast to the rest of Orkney and can be seen from almost anywhere on Orkney Mainland.

Geology

Much of Hoy is composed of Upper rather than Middle Old Red Sandstones which have been weathered into a complex of steep and craggy hills. The resulting landscape is unique within Orkney.

The upland mass of Hoy generated its own glaciers during the last Ice Age. Evidence of this can be seen in the small corries and wide glaciated valleys of northwest Hoy.

Plants and mammals

Hoy's upland character, its northern latitude and great exposure has resulted in a plant community which is normally associated with mountain areas. At heights of less than 1500 feet you'll find several arctic-alpine species such as the Least Willow and Yellow Mountain Saxifrage.

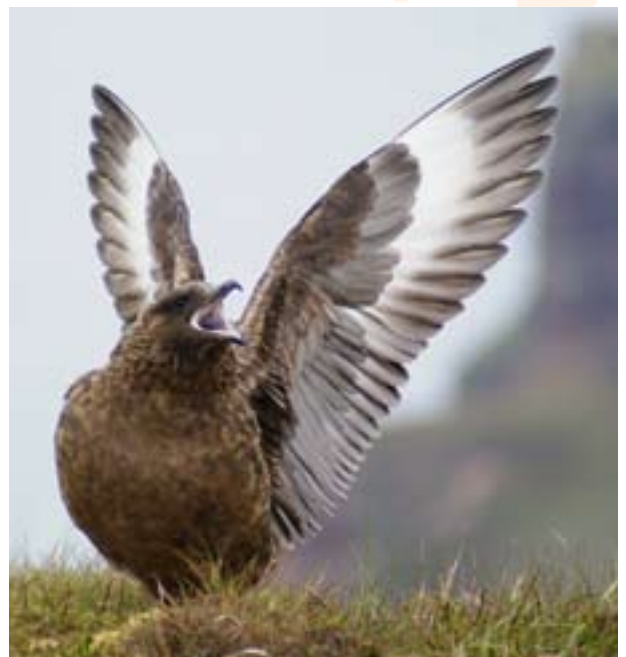
General lack of grazing has encouraged native tree growth and in Rackwick Valley, at Berriedale, you'll find the most northerly natural woodland in Britain, Orkney's only native woodland. Look out for the numerous and conspicuous mountain hares in the hills. Otters are common along the Scapa Flow coastline and have been found in the Rackwick Burn.

Birdlife

The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds own 9700 acres of moorland and sea cliffs which make up their North Hoy bird reserve. The Fulmar is the commonest seabird with many Guillemots and Kittiwakes and smaller numbers of Razorbills, Shags, Puffins and Herring Gulls. You'll find the second largest British colony of Great Skuas or 'bonxies'. The smaller and more dashing Arctic Skua also nests here. At the Burn of Forse in the south there's probably the largest colony of Great Blackbacked gulls in the world. The heather moorland which dominates Hoy supports a variety of birds including Red Grouse. Several duck species are found and birds of prey include Peregrine, Merlin, Kestrel.

Points of interest

- 1 The Dwarfie Stone:** Only rock-cut tomb in Britain; according to Sir Walter Scott it was the residence of the 'Troll', a legendary Norse dwarf.
- 2 Ward Hill:** At 1570 feet (479m) this is Orkney's highest hill and with the neighbouring Cuilags has a sub-arctic, glaciated environment attracting geologists, botanists and hillwalkers.
- 3 Rackwick:** This crofting township is considered one of the most beautiful places in Orkney. Bounded by towering cliffs and steep heathery hills, Rackwick rests beside a fine sand and boulder strewn beach.
- 4 Berriedale Wood:** The most northerly woodland in Britain; pollen analysis suggests that woodland of this type was more widespread in Orkney around 5000BC.
- 5 The Old Man of Hoy:** Famous 450 foot sea stack, first climbed in 1967 in a televised assault, is perhaps Orkney's most famous landmark. Occasionally steep footpath from Rackwick to the stack requires a three-hour round trip.
- 6 St John's Head:** Highest vertical cliff in Britain, the first direct ascent was made in 1970 by Edward Ward Drummond and companion who spent six nights on the face sleeping in hammocks.
- 7 Broch of Braebister:** This promontory provided protection for an Iron Age fort built some 2000 years ago. Remains are still visible in the form of a six to nine foot high mound.





west face of hoy - drew kennedy

8 Hoy High & Hoy Low Lighthouses, Graemsay: Completed in 1851 Hoy High's white 108-foot tower tapers to a balcony supported by Gothic arches. At the foot of the tower are keepers' houses, built in a style reminiscent of Assyrian temples.

9 Betty Corrigan's Grave: A young girl from Lyness abandoned, pregnant, by a visiting sailor last century, took her own life and was buried away from hallowed ground on the parish boundary. Surely one of Britain's loneliest graves.

10 Scad Head Viewpoint: A wonderful panorama of Scapa Flow and Orkney Mainland.

11 Lyness Naval Cemetery: Here rest the heroes from some of the most famous incidents in modern naval history – the Battle of Jutland (1916); HMS Hampshire sunk by a mine off Birsay (1916); explosion of the Vanguard off Flotta (1917) and the Royal Oak torpedoed in Scapa Flow (1939).

12 Lyness Naval Base & Interpretation Centre: Scapa Flow was a key anchorage for the Royal Navy in both World Wars. The pump house at Lyness naval base has been converted into an interpretation centre reliving the history of the base.

13 Martello Towers and Longhope Battery: These two towers, constructed between 1813 and 1815 were built as protection for the Baltic convoys. Renovated in 1866 they were used during World War I. Open for visitors.

14 Melsetter House and Chapel: Designed by WR Letheby in Arts and Crafts Style. visits arranged by appointment only, subject to owner's convenience – Sunday & Thursday. t: 01856 791352.

15 Osmondwall: This was a favourite Viking anchorage where in 955 Jarl Sigurd the Stout was given his famous choice – baptism into the Christian faith or decapitation. He chose baptism!

16 Longhope Lifeboat Memorial: At Osmondwall the Kirkhope burial ground is dominated by the lone bronze figure of a lifeboatman, erected in honour of the eight-man crew of the T.G.B. which was lost with all hands on March 17, 1969, en route to a rescue.

17 Moodie Burial Place: The Moodie family owned most of Walls parish from the late 16th century until 1820.

18 Cantick Head Lighthouse: First lit in 1858 it was built by David Stevenson to mark the southern entrance to Scapa Flow.

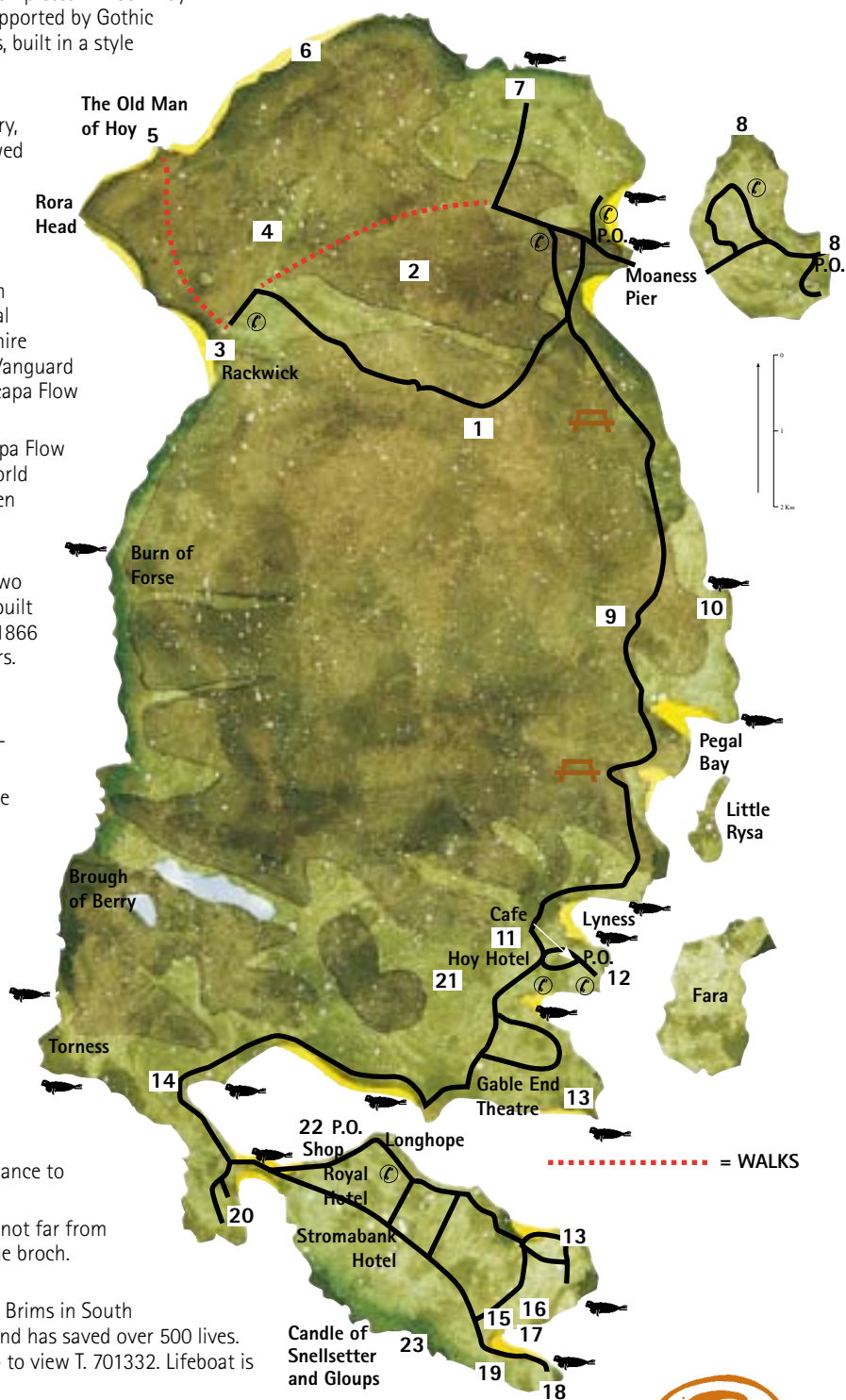
19 Green Hill of Hesti Geo: This large green mound, not far from the Candle of Snelsetter, contains an unusually large brooch. There are two gloopus nearby.

20 Longhope Lifeboat Station Museum: Situated at Brims in South Walls, Longhope Lifeboat station opened in 1834 and has saved over 500 lives. Boat shed is now being converted into a museum – to view T. 701332. Lifeboat is now afloat at Longhope pier.

21 Wee Fea Viewpoint: Panorama of the South Isles.

22 Longhope Lifeboat Station: Established in 1874. Alongside the pier you will find the lifeboat "the Helen Comrie" a Tamar class lifeboat. During the summer months a shop run by the Longhope Lifeboat Guild is open on Sundays 11am till 3pm (other times by arrangement). http://rnli.org.uk/rnli_near_you/scotland/stations/LonghopeOrkney.

23 Hill of White Hamars: A Scottish Wildlife Trust reserve which comprises spectacular coastal walks, overlooking the Pentland Firth. The reserve is one of the few places where you will find the rare Scottish Primrose.



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.

HOTELS

Stromabank Hotel (★★★ Small Hot) - Small family run hot with 4 ensuite bedrooms. One suitable for disabled. Children welcome. Bar meals - 6-9pm. Lunches 12-2pm weekends only. (Residents only meals on Thursdays). t: 01856 701494. www.stromabank.co.uk

BED & BREAKFAST

Quoydale, Hoy (★★★B & B) - Mrs F. Clark, double/twin en-suite, evening meal on request. t: 01856 791315. e: quoydale@supanet.com www.orkneyaccommodation.co.uk

Wildheather B & B, Millhouse, Lyness, Hoy. (awaiting inspection), Mrs Helen Hiscoke, 1 double/twin ensuite room with breath taking views over Mill Bay, evening meals and packed lunches on request.. t: 01856 791098, e: enquiries@wildheatherbandb.co.uk, www.wildheatherbandb.co.uk

SELF CATERING

Quoydale, Hoy (★★★SC) - sleeps 4, all amenities plus linen. Mrs A. Clark. t: 01856 791315. e: quoydale@supanet.com. www.orkneyaccommodation.co.uk

Burnhouse cottage, Hoy (★★★SC) - sleeps 5. Mr and Mrs E. MacKay. t: 01856 870058. . e: melfea@supanet.com. www.burnhouse-selfcatering.co.uk

Pools, Longhope (★★★★SC) - Mrs K. Kirkpatrick. Self-catering cottage, sleeps 6. 01856 701211. e: karen@hoy-selfcatering.co.uk. www.hoy-selfcatering.co.uk.

Cliffgate, Rackwick (★★★★SC) - self-catering house, sleeps 8. Mrs Lorraine Buchan. t: 01856 850253. e: info@cliffgate.co.uk www.cliffgate.co.uk

Snelsetter, Longhope (★★★★SC) - Mrs E. Davidson. Sleeps 6. Open all year. t: 01856 701244. e: snelsetterhols@btconnect.com. www.orknet.co.uk/snelsetter

The Spinning cottage (★★★SC) - Melsetter House. Miss E. Seatter. t: 01856 791352.

Old Hall Cottage (★★★SC) - 3 star self-catering, sleeps up to 6. Level entry disabled access. Open all year round. B&B also available. Contact Lydia and Keith t: 01856 701213. e: oldhall@freeuk.com website: www.oldhallcottage.co.uk.

HOSTELS

Hoy Centre (★★★★Host) - open all year, hostel, en-suite rooms, sleeps 32. Family & exclusive rooms available. Please pre-book. t: 01856 873535 ext 2415. e: recreation@orkney.gov.uk. www.hostelsorkney.co.uk.

Rackwick Outdoor Centre (★★★Host) - hostel, sleeps 8. Family & exclusive rooms available. Please pre-book. t: 01856 873535 ext 2415. e: recreation@orkney.gov.uk. www.hostelsorkney.co.uk.

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.

Hoy Hotel, 1 family room, 3 twin rooms, 1 single room. All ensuite. All ground floor. Richard & Inez Groat. t: 01856 791377. e: richard@accommodationinorkney.co.uk. www.accommodationinorkney.co.uk

Longhope Village, self-catering cottage to let; sleeps 5; all amenities. Mrs Kirkpatrick. t: 01856 701206. e: garyhas2061@aol.com.

Scapa Flow Holidays, Naval Hall, Longhope, self-catering, modern units; advance bookings, t: 01856 791007. www.scapafloreholidays.co.uk.

Cantick Head Lighthouse Cottages, sleeps 1-3 & 2-4/5. Ms Christine Willers. t: 01856 701255. e: cantick@gmail.com www.cantickhead.com.

House o' Wards, Longhope, sleeps 5, Mrs Lesley Budge. t: 01856 701263. e: lesley@burnhousefarm.fsnet.co.uk. www.longhope.co.uk/selfcatering.

The Orkney Croft, 2 award winning self-catering cottages each sleeping 6, 3 star. Short breaks and nightly lets available. www.orknycroft.co.uk t: 01856 791119 or 01856 851116.

The Glen, Rackwick, self-catering cottage with spectacular views over Rackwick Bay. New conservatory and utility room. Linen provided. Open all year. Mrs Dorothy Rendall. t: 01856 791262.

Uppersettir, Lyness, Mrs Louise Budge, 1 double/twin. Best Breakfast 2001. t: 01856 791234 or 07786 302508. e: uppersettir@freeuk.com.

West Linksness, self-catering - Mrs F. Matheson, t: 01856 851116. e: fioneil@fioneil.force9.co.uk. www.orknycroft.co.uk.

The Kennels, Melsetter - 1 bedroom cottage, sleeps 2. Anne Robertson. t: 01856 850216.

Transport

Bu Farm - Minibus and Taxi. Mr T. Thomson. t: 01856 791263.

Rendall's of Rackwick, Glen Rackwick - Taxi. Mr J. Rendall. t: 01856 791262.

Taxi & island tours by local Orcadian. Pick-up by arrangement from Moaness & Lyness. Hills of Hoy, Lyness - Island Tours 7 & 8 seat minibuses: 24 seat coach with PSV driver and Taxi Service. Mr W. Hill. t: 01856 791240.

North Hoy Transport, Quoydale - Taxi, minibus, Mr A. Clark. t: 01856 791315.

History

In the beautiful valley of Rackwick lies the only prehistoric rock-cut chambered tomb in Britain. The Dwarfie Stane is an isolated block of red sandstone, some 8.5 metres long, which dates from about 3000BC.

Vikings used the many sheltered bays of Hoy and Walls as havens to haul their longships ashore. Longhope became the rendezvous point for Baltic convoys during the Napoleonic Wars. The construction of two Martello Towers fortified the hamlet against attack from the navy and privateers of the United States.

The World Wars

Hoy's major contribution to Orkney's heritage came in the 20th century when in 1914 Scapa Flow became the base of the Royal Navy's Grand Fleet. which sailed and engaged the German High Seas Fleet at the Battle of Jutland on 31 May, 1916. The captured German fleet was interned in Scapa Flow and subsequently scuttled on 21 June 1919. During World War II thousands of navy personnel were based at Lyness and the now deserted naval base has been converted to a visitor centre with many exhibits from both world wars and the scuttled German fleet. In addition there is an audio visual display within the remaining giant oil tank.



visitor centre outdoor display - charles tait



Pegal bay, hoy - charles tait

Tours

Hills of Hoy, Lyness – Island Tours 7& 8 seat minibuses. t: 01856 791240.

Island Tours. Have a tour of Hoy with Albert. Meets ferry from Stromness and Houton on Mondays and Wednesdays. Visits places of interest. Booking is essential. Enquiries to Fay & Albert Clark. t: 01856 791315. e: quoydale@supanet.com

Glen Rackwick Tours. Max 4 people. Various itineraries. Mr J Rendall. T. 01856 791262.

Shops & Eating Out

Hoy Hotel, Lunches served 12 till 2pm daily. t: 01856 791377. e: richard@accommodationorkney.co.uk. www.accommodationorkney.co.uk

Royal Hotel, Longhope – Bar lunches served Mon-Sat 11.30am-2pm. Mon-Fri 5pm-7pm. Evening meals served Sat 6pm-9pm (bookings preferred). Sunday Lunch served 12.30pm-2pm. Larger parties catered for outside these times by arr. t: 01856 701276.

J.M.F. Groat & Sons, Longhope – General Merchants & Grocers, Petrol & oils – Calor and camping gas; off licence; hardware. Open 9-12.30 p.m. and 2-6 p.m. t: 01856 701273. f: 01856 701251.

Benethill Cafe, Moaness Hoy, Open daily throughout the summer season, licensed and specialising in local food with evening meals on Friday. B&B & evening meal by arrangement. t: 01856 791119 or 01856 851116.

Cafe, Scapa Flow Visitors Centre, Lyness – open in summer for hot and cold snacks, souvenirs etc.

Stromabank Hotel – Evening Meals daily except Thursday. (6-9 p.m.) Lunches Sat - Sun only 12-2pm. t: 01856 701494.

Post Offices

Longhope – within J.M.F. Groat's shop. t: 01856 701273.

Lyness. t: 01856 791387.

Hoy Post Office. t: 01856 791261

Other Services

Doctor – Dr P Kettle, Health Centre, Longhope. t: 01856 701209.

Nurse – Fiona Oag. Contact Health Centre. t: 01856 701224.

Healthy Living Centre. t: 01856 791085.

Leisure & Recreation

North Walls Centre – swimming pool and various sports activities. Mrs M. Groat. t: 01856 701226; Mrs M. Besant t: 01856 791359, booking clerk.

Hoy Ranger, R.S.P.B. Hoy Reserve, Ley House, Hoy. t: 01856 791298.

Churches

St Columba's, Longhope – Church of Scotland. All denominations welcome. Services advertised locally.



hoy high lighthouse, graemsay - charles tait

Step back in time with a visit to Graemsay. A fifteen minute sail from Stromness (forty five minutes via Hoy) will bring you to a small, green, unspoilt island lying at the northern entrance to Scapa Flow, between Stromness and Hoy.

The virtual absence of traffic makes walking a pleasure, enabling you to enjoy the abundant wild flowers and appreciate the superb views of Stromness and North Hoy. Relax on the safe coral and sandy beaches at Sandside, within comfortable walking distance of the pier. There are picnic benches around the island.

Explore the rocky shoreline where you can still find small pieces of crockery from the vessel Albion, shipwrecked off the Point of Oxan on New Year's Day 1866, on its way from Liverpool to New York. Meet seals, terns, Oystercatchers, Ringed Plovers, Redshank, Curlew, Lapwing, Fulmar, and Skuas, or just study the exposed rock strata.

There is no shop on the island and the Post Office is on Monday and Friday from 7.30am till 9.30am and on Wednesday from 11.30am till 1.30pm.



burra sound to hoy - charles tait