

BURRAY, LAMB HOLM, GLIMPS HOLM & HUNDA



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LAMB HOLM No blockships remain visible at Barrier No.1, which blocks Kirk Sound, the entry route of the German submarine *U47* in 1939. There are however still interesting bits of ships for divers to explore. Barrier No.1 is also popular for sea angling, as the deep water and food from the nearby salmon farm attract fish.

Apart from the Italian Chapel, Lamb Holm has a derelict pier and a large quarry used in the construction of the Barriers. The quarry now has a Lobster hatchery, while most of the island is a grass airstrip. The remains of a World War II coastal defence battery lie east of the quarry.

The engine of the *Lycia* sticks above the surface at low tide at the north end of Barrier No.2 and a few other pieces can be seen at low tide, including the remains of the barge *F/C Pontoon*, which was used in the salvage of the German Fleet, and *Emerald Wings*, whose boiler shows at low water near the Glimps Holm shore. This is the most exposed Barrier in bad weather.

GLIMPS HOLM has peat cuttings and an excellent sandy beach on the east side, which has increased in size due to the Barriers. This beach is sheltered from the north, west and east and provides safe paddling or swimming, as well as good *Spoot* hunting at spring ebbs. It is

also sometimes a good place to find *Groatie Buckies* and other shells. Arctic Terns and a few Little Terns nest on the island, from the west side of which there is a wonderful panoramic view of Scapa Flow. The banks above the shore are full of wild flowers in summers and are frequented by several species of butterflies and bumble bees.

Beside Barrier No.3, in Weddel Sound, is the most complete and one of the oldest blockships, the *Reginald*, a 930ton iron 3-masted motor schooner, built in 1878, sunk in 1915 and used to store Lobster creels today. Many starlings roost inside her hull in the evenings. On the west side are the *Empire Seaman* and *Martis*, only visible at low tide.

No.3 Barrier was the first to rise above the waves, on May 13th 1942, while Barrier No.2 was the last on April 21st 1943. Although it is the shortest, No.3 Barrier is very exposed during southwest gales.

Blockship "Reginald" is the oldest



View from new OIC viewpoint



ACROSS THE CHURCHILL BARRIERS

BURRAY (ON *Borgarey*, Brochs Isle) is not mentioned in the *Orkneyinga saga*, but the presence of a *Bu* farm suggests that it was farmed in Viking times and evidence of much older settlements has come to light during industrial sand extraction at the Links on the east side.

Echnaloch (ND475965), separated from the sea by an ayre, is particularly good for wildfowl at all times of year. Mute Swans and ducks can be observed from the car with their young from only a few feet away at the edge of the loch. Echnaloch Bay is also good for seaduck and Great Northern Divers in winter.

Chambered Cairns There was a stalled chambered cairn below Northfield (ND488988) until 1863 when the tenant farmer took a dislike to it and had it destroyed. Over twenty human and seven dog skeletons were found. There was apparently a side cell, which may have had slab-sided walls. As is usual in such cases of wanton destruction,



Barrier No.3 with blockships

the farmer gained little, but science lost a lot. On the southeast coast the **Hillock of Fea** (ND493956) is possibly a chambered cairn, but has been largely lost to erosion by the sea.

Brochs The two brochs on the northeast of Burray are still prominent and were investigated in the 19th century in the manner of the time. All that remains today is two grass mounds of debris, the larger of which is being slowly removed by easterly gales. The **West Broch** is smaller with an interior diameter of about 9m and walls about 3.5m thick, while the **East Broch** is much more substantial

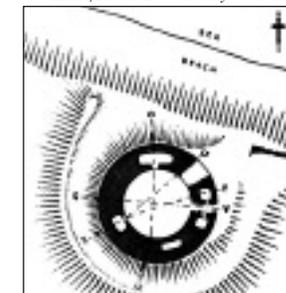
with an internal diameter of about 13m and massive 5.5m thick walls.

The West Broch may well pre-date its larger neighbour by analogy with the Bu of Navershaw and Howe Broch in Stromness. No doubt Holm Sound was important for shipping in the Iron Age, just as it was until the Barriers were built. It is interesting to note that both sides of the sound are guarded by brochs. In the 1860s both were cleared out to reveal internal stairways. The impressive East Broch has corbelled cells at its entrance, an internal scarcement ledge and survives to over 2m in height.

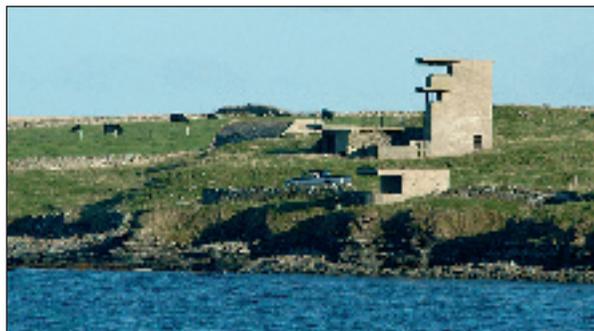
East Broch of Burray



East Broch 19th century drawing



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WWII battery at Northfield

Old St Laurence Kirk (ND482964) is at the south end of the **Bu Sands**, which were formerly backed by very extensive links and dunes. The church has interesting carved sandstone door jambs and lintels and has presumably been rebuilt several times, most likely on the site of a very ancient chapel, which may date to 1172 or earlier. The kirkyard has many interesting old graves-labs, while there is clear evidence of ruined buildings on the seaward side. The whole area is a blaze of colour in summer with wild flowers and butterflies.

World War II A coastal defence battery was installed at Northfield in April 1940 with a 12-pounder gun on a temporary emplacement.

Fossil fish at the Fossil Museum



Later a twin 6-pounder replaced this. It was backed up by three searchlights, but was removed to Graemsay in 1943 when the Barriers had blocked the sounds. Burray saw much activity during the war due to the building of the Barriers. A second camp for Italian POWs, camp 34, also had a chapel, but this was destroyed in 1945.

Boat Building Until recently Burray had a boat yard, which has been in the same family for seven generations building traditional clinker-built work-boats. In about 1700 John Duncan of the South Parish in South Ronaldsay set up a boatyard with a Mr Horne to build small yoles for the fishermen of the Pentland Firth

and to transport goods from Orkney to Caithness. With the growth of the Herring Fishery in the 1800s, the yard moved to Burray.

By 1914 there were about 20 "Zulus", sailing vessels of about 20m in length, based in Burray. Most were built in northeast Scotland and followed the shoals as they moved south. Stronsay was the principal station, but a considerable amount of Herring was processed at Burray and at St Margaret's Hope. By the 1930s the Herring Boom was over and the Churchill Barriers finished Burray as a port.

The **Fossil and Heritage Centre** at Viewforth overlooks Echnaloch and Scapa Flow. There is a fascinating display of fossils, some of which are over 350 million years old, as well as relics of bye-gone days, trade antiquities and artefacts from Orkney Vintage Club. Based on collections of fossils and minerals by Leslie Firth of Orkney Builders and of old joiner's tools by his father, the Centre tells the story of Orkney geology in a lively way. A small gift shop sells interesting items, including fossils and minerals. This is a good place to stop for a cup of tea or coffee and some home bakes. Open April to October 10:00-18:00, Tel (01856) 731255. There is an admission charge to the Exhibition Rooms.

ACROSS THE CHURCHILL BARRIERS

Walks – east coast A pleasant circular walk around the east coast starts at the links at the south end of the magnificent sandy beach, which is known as the Bu. (access past the ruined kirk ND493964). At Burray Haas (ND490988), the need for defence in different eras is emphasised by the 2,000-year old brochs beside a World War II gun battery. The low sandy shore towards Warebanks is a pleasant stroll, followed by a return along the road to the old kirk.

South coast Another shorter circular walk goes along the shore from the car park at No.4 Barrier towards Burray Ness, passing Wife's Geo on the way. The low, south-facing banks along this shore are a haven for wild flowers in summer. Hillock of Skea may be a chambered cairn, but has been mostly destroyed by the sea. Return via the old kirk and the road.

Barrier No.4 blocks Water Sound and has caused the build up of huge quantities

Carved stonework at Old Kirk



Herring Fishery at Burray

of sand to the east. The blockships *Carron*, *Collindoc* and *Pontos* are now largely buried, but the wide curve of new beach makes a delightful place to stroll. Many Long-tailed Ducks gather here before migrating north in spring, and the new dunes are slowly being colonised by plants, including the rare Oyster Plant.

HUNDA (ON *Hundey*, Dog Island, ND440970) on the west side of Burray is joined

by its own barrier, built during the war to form part of the boom-defences against small surface craft. The island has many Grey and Common Seals, and is one of the best places in Orkney to see Otters. Arctic Terns breed here as well as several other species characteristic of undisturbed islands. At Littlequoy (ND448964), Stephane Jaeger spins and hand-knits her unique home-grown wool and cashgora garments, visitors welcome, Tel (01856) 731228

ORKNEY FOSSIL & VINTAGE CENTRE

VIEWFORTH, BURRAY, ORKNEY KW17 2SX Tel (01856)

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Open every day April-October 10:00-18:00