

Map 1: South Gravity to Hollandstoun

Landscape, Built Heritage & Archaeology

This map section encompasses the southern part of the island, which is generally low-lying and fertile. There is more concentrated modern settlement to the east side, between Bustatoun and Linklet. Surrounded by small fields, much of this settlement is focused on the two main roads. To the west are larger fields associated with Holland House, the estate of the Traill family, lairds of the island since 1727.

The area covered by this section is rich in archaeological remains and particularly of early settlement. At Hooking (NR2) a large eroding 'farm mound' covers structural remains which may be of prehistoric date. Excavations carried out at Brae of Stennabreck (NR3) in the 19th C uncovered the remains of an unusual house, probably of the Pictish period. Faced with stone on the interior, the exterior 'wall' was an earthen bank. Built on top of a rise, the floor appears to have been cut down below the surrounding ground surface. The rise may be natural; alternatively it may represent accumulated debris derived from earlier periods of settlement.

The Broch of Burrian (NR7), which was also excavated in the 19th C, is most notable for its earthwork defences and the substantial and well preserved assemblage of worked bone objects found within it. The broch remained in occupation (or was reoccupied) into the Pictish period. A cross slab and an iron bell found in association with the later settlement are indicative of a community which had become christianised. The broch and the unexcavated environs are now perilously close to destruction. The secondary occupation at Broch of Burrian was said to have been associated with a wheelhouse, built inside the shell of the older building. This, despite the fact that it is commonly argued that the wheelhouse is an unknown construction in Orkney. A similar claim has been made, possibly more convincingly, for two structures found at Howmae Brae (NR11). Here, 19th C excavations uncovered two large roundhouses built into the dunes. The buildings are said to have been partitioned in a radial fashion and to have had partially corbelled roofs. These features are no longer visible because the site has been recovered with sand.

Of later date, a massive settlement mound at Howar (NR8), at the extreme tip of Strom Ness, covers the remains of a structure of Viking or Norse date. In the past, a burial of probable Viking/Norse date was uncovered in this area. The site is now in a very poor condition, having been entirely divested of its turf covering by the sheep. The exposed archaeological deposits are now extremely vulnerable to both coastal and sub-aerial erosion. This is possibly the worst affected site to be encountered during the 1999 survey.

Geology and geomorphology

The coastline of the southern end of the island comprises almost entirely of rock platform, with varying degrees of cobble cover; exceptions to this are the sandy beaches at South Bay and Stennabreck. The Sheep Dyke, which encircles the island, runs very close to the coast edge for most of this section. The hinterland is mostly enclosed pasture. The only hinterland areas with large concentrations of blown sand on the island occur within the area covered by this map section; to the eastern side of South Bay around Kirbist, and at Stennabreck, on the east side of the island.

Erosion

Much of the coastline within this map section is eroding or vulnerable to erosion. In particular, the tip of Strom Ness, is possibly the most vulnerable stretch of coastline on the island. Here, the effects of marine and wind erosion have been compounded and exacerbated by the overgrazing of sheep. This is a problem all along the coastline, but it is particularly pronounced in this area.

NR1 HY75SE21
HY7675 5370
Linklet Bay
Structure
Unknown
Not seen
Nil

NR2 HY75SE1
HY7673 5388
Hooking
Settlement mound & coastal
exposure
3rd-1st mill BC
Fair
Monitor

NR3 HY75SE4
HY7702 5262
Brae of Stennabreck
Settlement mound & structure
1st mill BC -1st mill AD
Fair
Monitor

NR4 HY74SE14
HY773 522
Brides Ness
Brides Kirk
Unknown: ?10-14th C
Fair/poor
Monitor

NR5 HY75SE26
HY7507 5347-7683 5214
Muckle Gairsty
Treb dyke
3rd-1st mill BC
Fair
Monitor

NR6 HY75SE32
HY7638 5160
Burrian
House
Unknown: ?10-14th C
Fair/poor
Survey

NR7 HY75SE3.00-.01
HY7627 5138
Burrian, Strom Ness
Broch
1st mill BC-1st mill AD
Fair/poor
Monitor

NR8 HY75SE2
HY7697 5140
Howar, Strom Ness
Settlement mound
1st mill BC- 1st mill AD
Fair/poor
Survey

NR9 HY75SE19
HY7603 5153
Strom Ness
House
14-18th C
Not seen
Monitor

NR10
HY7600 5171
Howar
Grain store & dwelling
18-20th C
Fair/poor
Survey

NR11 HY75SE5
HY7583 5227
Howmae Brae
Settlement
1st mill BC- 1st mill AD
Fair
Monitor

NR12
HY7508 5243
Nouster
Mound
Unknown
Good
Monitor

NR13
HY7501 5229
Nouster
Store house
18-20th C
Good
Nil

NR14 HY75SE28.00
HY7501 5222
South Pier
Pier
18-20th C
Good
Nil

NR15 HY75SE28.01
HY7495 5224
South Pier
Hand operated crane
18-20th C
Fair
Nil"

NR16
HY7456 5236
Lurand
Pund
18-20th C
Good
Nil

NR17
HY7497 5316
Lurand
Coastal exposure: shell midden
Unknown
Fair
Monitor

NR49 HY75SE29
HY7709 5260
Stennabreck
Corn-drying kiln
18-20th C
Not seen
Nil

1. Galtie Rock

HY 768 532

1.3 km

Sandy foreshore

Coast edge is < 5 m

The drift/rock interface is not visible

The foreshore is sandy with a small amount of patchy cobble cover. Around Hooking/Haskie

Taing the bedrock is exposed and has some cobble cover. There is a concrete sea wall in front of Hooking farm. The hinterland is grassed, with dunes towards the southern end of the unit.

2. Stennabreck

HY 766 519

3.3 km

Rock platform, storm beach to NE

Coast edge is < 5 m

The drift/rock interface is intermittently visible

There is some cobble throw throughout this unit. A storm beach lies to the west of Brides Ness. It is large with a flat top and some vegetation. It extends c. 20 m inland. The drift/rock interface can be clearly seen around Strom Ness. The hinterland is mostly grassed and enclosed but it is marshy east of Viggay. There is a gabion wall sea defence in front of Stennabreck farm buildings.

3. South Bay

HY 755 524

1 km

Sandy foreshore

Coast edge is < 5 m

The drift/rock interface is not visible

This wide sandy bay has some cobble throw on the upper foreshore, especially towards the centre of the bay. The hinterland comprises dunes, which rise to c. 4 m high towards the east side of the bay.

4. Nouster

HY 748 529

2.5 km

Rock platform

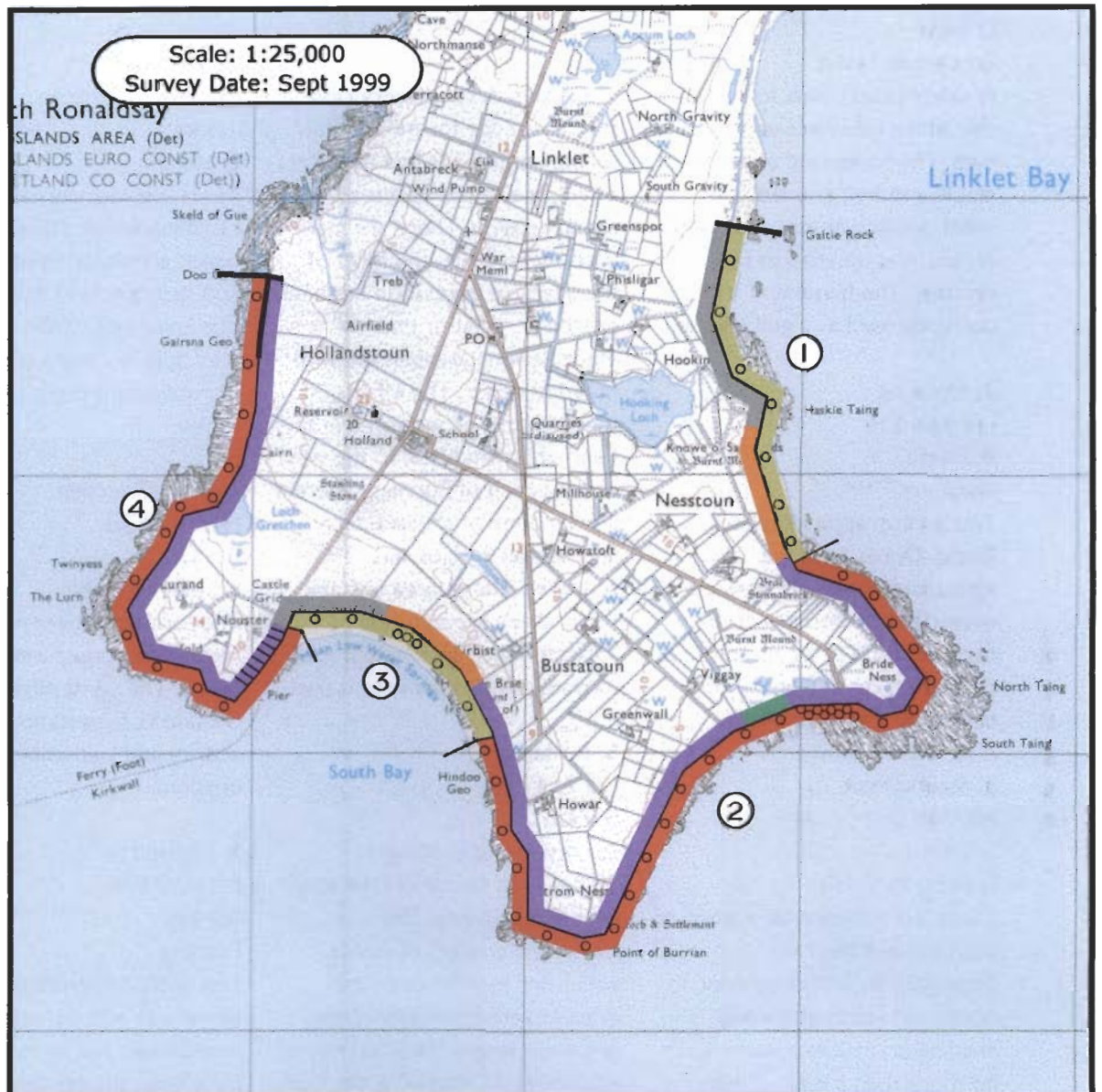
Coast edge is mostly < 5 m

The drift/rock interface is intermittently visible

This unit comprises a coast edge which is well defined and has a prominent rock platform. There is some cobble cover throughout. The land around Nouster is covered in storm thrown stones. The coast edge around the eastern end of the unit has been stabilised by the pier and road, with attendant sea defences. The hinterland is grassed and fenced.

Hinterland Geology & Coastal Geomorphology

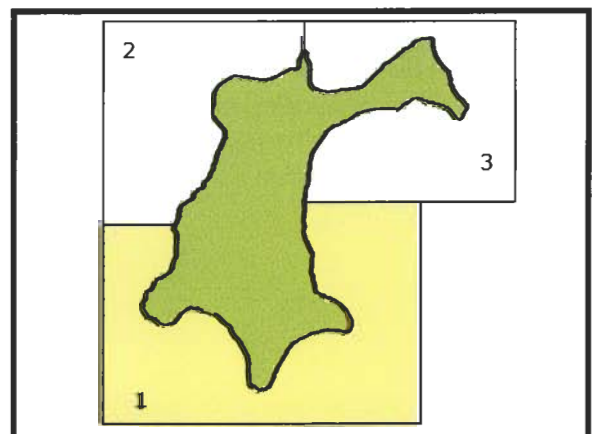
North Ronaldsay Map 1



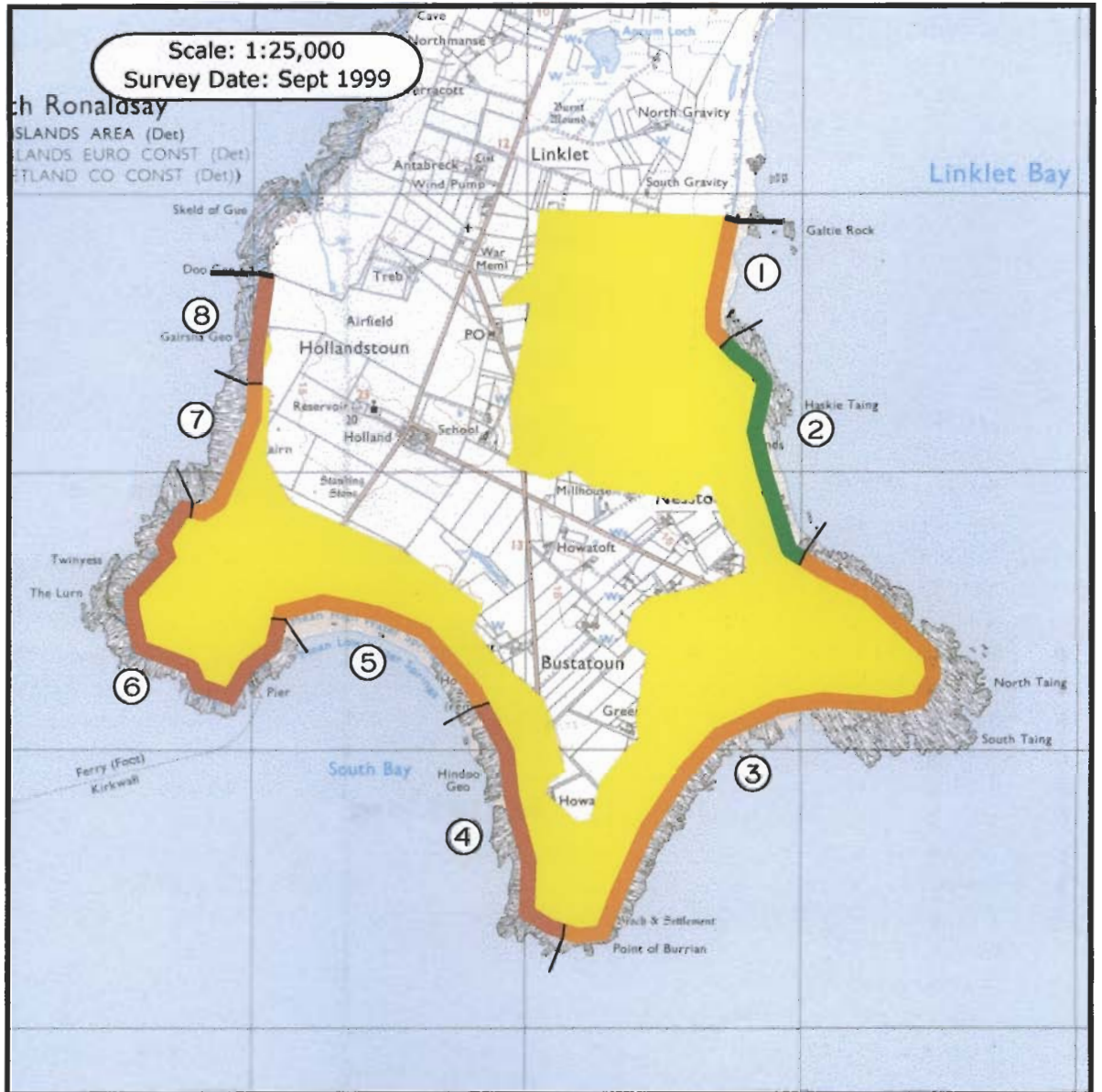
- Foreshore**
- Rock platform
 - Mainly sand
 - Mainly alluvial/marine mud
 - Marsh

- Modifiers**
- Low edge <5m
 - Cliff >5m
 - Man made barrier
 - Shingle/storm bank
 - Human disturbance

- Hinterland**
- Drift
 - Drift on visible rock
 - Raised beach etc.
 - Blown sand
 - Glacial sand/gravel
 - Alluvium



- 1. Galtie Rock**
HY 767 537
0.5 km
Eroding to Stable
A sandy beach leads to a small cliff which measures up to 1.5m high. The hinterland appears stable and well grassed. The small cliff face at the coast edge is clean and appears to be eroding. The hinterland is currently used as a golf course.
- 2. Hooking**
HY 768 529
0.9 km
Stable
This section appears mostly stable. Dunes lie in the hinterland, which are grassed over. There is some erosion at the north end of a concrete sea wall which lies in front of the farm buildings at Hooking.
- 3. Stennabreck**
HY 768 521
2.5 km
Eroding to Stable
There is a gabion wall in front of the farm buildings at Stennabreck. The coast edge to north and south of the wall is eroding in small exposures each no more than a total of 10m long. Elsewhere, the coast edge is mostly stable, with vegetation growing on top of storm beaches, but there is some damage which appears to be caused by sheep. Between South Taing and the Point of Burrian the red till has been exposed in several areas, especially towards the Point of Burrian where the sheep dyke has concentrated sheep activity within a smaller area.
- 4. Strom Ness**
HY 759 517
1 km
Eroding
The sheep dyke lies very close to the coast edge for most of this section, which has had the effect of worsening the effects of sheep erosion. There are many bare sheep trails, and most of the available vegetation has been grazed very flat or entirely eaten, leaving areas of soil with no good cover. The effects of this are most pronounced at the head of Strom Ness, to the west of the broch of Burrian, where a combination of sheep activity and aeolian erosion has rendered a large area unstable. Here, there are signs that adjacent fence lines have been moved inland in the recent past.
- 5. Bustatoun**
HY 754 524
0.9 km
Accreting and Eroding
This section comprises the inner part of South Bay. The hinterland consists of dunes, which are mostly stable and grass covered however there are areas where the grass cover has been lost, exposing the sand below. This may have been caused by apparent rabbit infestation. The land closer to the shore is eroding badly. Here, on the seaward side of the dyke which encircles the island sheep damage is apparent and is undoubtedly contributing to the erosion. The erosion is evident from the lengths of collapsed dyke and from the large 'lumps' or 'pillars' of sand left standing between hollows to either side. Fence lines have also been moved inland. Sand is accreting
- beyond the foreshore around collapsed dykes.
- 6. Nouster**
HY 746 523
1.4 km
Eroding
There are many areas of the coastline within this section which are denuded of vegetation and susceptible to salt spray. The coast edge around the pier area appears more stable, due to consolidation using dumped rubble.
- 7. Loch Gretchen**
HY 749 530
0.5 km
Eroding to Stable
The foreshore over much of this section comprises a storm beach. The coast edge is denuded of vegetation by sheep activity and vulnerable to erosion.
- 8. Holland**
HY 750 535
0.4 km
Eroding
This section is eroding; a new stone wall with concrete foundations has been built c. 2m back from the eroding old one. Sheep and rabbit activity is contributing to the erosion. There is little cobble cover here on the rock platform and this section is very exposed to the effects of the sea.



- Erosion Class
- Definitely Accreting
 - Accreting or Stable
 - Stable
 - Eroding or Stable
 - Definitely Eroding
 - Accreting and Eroding

- No access
- Land below 10m

