

Map 10: Scuthi Head to Howland

Landscape, Built Heritage & Archaeology

This map section commences at a central point on the west coast of the island. The coastline in this area is characterised by low banks and a relatively regular pattern of small fields of pasture in the hinterland. Exceptions occur at Scuthi Head, a high promontory and at Ness of Brough, where more open, rough land prevails. The section continues from here as far as the north side of North Bay, where despite a harder coast edge, erosion is occurring. Modern settlement in this area is concentrated around Broughtown, but most houses are set back from the coast, focusing instead on the road.

At Scuthi Head, a series of stout banks mark out parallel rectangular enclosures and a probable structure on a narrow promontory (SY126), surrounded by high cliffs. The site is one of the most likely locations on Sanday on which to find a defensive fort of prehistoric date. In this case, however, the regularity and rectangular shape of the enclosures are more indicative of a later, possibly early historic or medieval date.

Interestingly, there are other examples of large-scale earthworks in this area, although such remains are not otherwise commonly found on Sanday. At Fea Hill, a substantial land boundary or treb dyke (SY127) runs uphill from the coast and can be followed for over 100m, while part of an enclosure survives at Ayre (SY128). This theme can be developed further if two sites from the preceding Map 9 are included: at Mires (SY125) two banks of uncertain purpose are located in a valley base; while at Grunavi Head a bank and ditch close off access to a small promontory.

Remains exposed in the coast section at Ayre (SY129) apparently represent a rectilinear structure; associated anthropogenic deposits suggest a domestic context. The structure is buried by a layer of ploughsoil, up to 1m deep, suggesting that it is likely to be of some antiquity. This site may be associated with a nearby mound (SY130), which is eroding and has the appearance of a typical 'farm mound' or settlement of extended duration.

A possible human burial, eroding from the banks towards the south side of the Bay of Broughtown appears to be aligned east-west and may therefore be Christian. It is possible that, if confirmed, this burial may be part of a cemetery, possibly associated with the hitherto unconfirmed church site, previously thought to have stood at Chapel Head, nearby.

Geology and Geomorphology

The geomorphology can be separated into three areas. The south is high cliffed with moderate to steep slopes, the centre of this unit from Broughtown to Hermisgarth is relatively low lying with storm beaches and sands, and the third smaller area to the north has a coast edge of moderate height with gently to moderately sloping ground.

Erosion

Apart from the sections around Ayre and Ness of Brough the majority of the coast line in this unit is stable. There is also some accretion of shingle and cobbles in two areas around the Bay of Brough.

SY126 HY64SW5

HY6330 4007
Scuthi Head
Possible promontory fort
?1st mill BC - 1st mill AD
Fair
Survey

SY127 HY64SW6

HY640 406
Fea Hill
Treb dyke
Unknown: ?prehistoric
Fair
Monitor

SY128

HY6472 4130
Ayre
Enclosure
Unknown
Fair
Survey

SY129 HY64SE41

HY6522 4123
Ayre
Coastal exposure: settlement
remains
Unknown: ?prehistoric
Fair/poor
Monitor

SY130 HY64SE13

HY6536 4136
Chapel Head
Mound & alleged chapel site
?prehistoric or 10-14th C
Fair/poor
Monitor

SY131

HY6547 4135
Broughtown
Mound
Unknown: ?prehistoric
Fair
Survey

SY132

HY6541 4142
Broughtown
Coastal exposure: ?human bone
Unknown: ?10-14th C
Fair/poor
Survey

SY133

HY6554 4209
Styes of Brough
Structure
18-20th C
Fair/poor
Nil

SY134 HY64SE18, 26 & 30

HY654 421
Styes of Brough
Mounds
?prehistoric or 10-14th C
Good/fair
Monitor

SY135

HY653 422
Ness of Brough
Buried soil and kelp pits
18-20th C
Fair
Monitor

SY136 HY64SE6

HY6544 4256
Ness of Brough
Mound & coastal exposure
Unknown: ?prehistoric
Fair/poor
Monitor

SY137

HY6589 4231
Westbrough
Mound & coastal exposure
Unknown: ?prehistoric
Poor
Survey

SY138 HY64SE14

HY6633 4235
Westbrough
Mound: possible settlement
Unknown: ?prehistoric
Fair
Monitor

SY139 HY64SE47

HY6633 4288
North Bay
Boat noosts & coastal exposure
18-20th C
Fair
Nil

SY140 HY64SW55

HY6627 4288
Hermisgarth
Cist burials& stone pyre settings
1st mill BC-1st mill AD
Fair/poor
Monitor

SY141

HY6610 4330
Howland
Coastal exposure: indeterminate
Unknown
Fair
Monitor

SY142

HY660 434
Howland
Coastal exposure
Unknown
Poor
Monitor

SY143

HY6594 4352
Howland
Mound
Unknown: ?prehistoric
Fair/poor
Monitor

1. Belfour's Geo

HY 642 409

2.7 km

Rock platform with negligible cover.

Coast edge is > 5 m.

The drift/rock interface is visible

The rock platform has negligible cover with a cliff faced coast edge > 30 m in some areas. Between Belfour's Geo and Scuthie Head there is some gullying with landslip along natural structural weakness creating hummocks and gullies. There is also a soil > 35 cm deep towards Scuthie Head. The soils lie directly over a saprolite, soft red sandstone or marl for the most part. One gully north of Belfour's Geo stretches 40 m into the hinterland. The other main areas of the cliff face are fairly coherent. Further north at Taing of the Pund rock shards have been thrown back over 40 m. The hinterland is fenced although this generally lies 20 - 30 m from the coast edge. The near hinterland is down to rough grazing with arable crops in the far hinterland. Soils tend to be poorly to imperfectly drained gleys in the south with more imperfectly drained podzol to the north.

2. Broughtown

HY 655 414

0.9 km

Rock platform with storm beaches.

Coast edge is < 5 m.

The drift/rock interface is not generally visible

The rock platform grades into cobble cover with a small storm beach at Ayre running up to the road. There is then some cobble cover around a small jutting promontory and then a long storm beach to the end of this section. The coast edge is generally well defined. To the north of the small promontory by Noust of Ayre there is much dumping of general waste and scrap onto the upper foreshore and along the coast edge. The cobbles give 100% cover further to the north. The hinterland is grassed with a stone wall along the northern end. The promontory is fenced and grassed and lies between the road. A wet area of hinterland lies beyond the road at Noust of Ayre and to the extreme north. Apart from these two waterlogged areas soil are mainly freely drained podzol.

3. Bay of Brough (North)

HY 657 421

0.7 km

Sandy foreshore with some cobble and shingle cover.

Coast edge is < 5 m.

The drift/rock interface is not visible

The storm beach grades out slowly into shingle overlying sand. The cobbles then increase to the north again. A berm of cobble and shingle lies to the south along the upper foreshore. The coast edge is less well defined but runs onto a lip of sand and cobbles with a wet hinterland of saltings and a body of water. There is some fencing along parts of the hinterland. The soils at the ridge and to the north are freely drained.

4. Point of Styes

HY 654 425

1.2 km

Rock platform with storm beach.

Coast edge is < 5 m.

The drift/rock interface is generally visible

The storm beach begins with shingle cover and increases in size to cobble cover to the north. A red till 30 - 40 cm thick overlies the rock. The storm beach washes over the coast edge in two areas to the west and north of Ness. On the west side the cobbles grade into a berm and shingle with the rock to drift interface being obscured. The Brough of Ness is mainly unfenced with old two dilapidated walls. The hinterland is down to grass over a freely drained podzol.

5. Westbrough

HY 663 426

0.5 km

Sandy foreshore.

Coast edge is < 5 m.

The drift/rock interface is not visible

The sandy foreshore is generally free from shingle and cobble to the centre of the section. A small ridge of sand lies at the coast edge with grassed skeletal sands which is now fairly flat to gently sloping.

6. Hermisgarth

HY 661 433

0.9 km

Rock platform with some cobble cover.

Coast edge is < 5 m.

The drift/rock interface is intermittently visible

The sandy foreshore grades onto rock platform with a more well defined coast edge. There is some tipping of farm waste at the beginning of the section. The rock to drift interface is not always visible due to a large depth of reddish till which is >1.5 m in places. Soils are freely drained podzol with fenced grass fields.

1. Scuthi Head

HY 633 400

0.59 km

Eroding and Stable

The landslip from the last section continues up to Cuthie Head with a stable cliff edge along the next promontory before another area of erosion.

2. The Wheems

HY 639 406

1.1 km

Stable

The cliff edge is generally stable although there are a few areas where some minor rock fall has taken place at Clay Face and some minor erosion due to stream erosion.

3. Back Punds Geo

HY 646 413

0.95 km

Eroding to Stable

There are some localised areas of cliff erosion with some hinterland erosion at Taing of the Pund which is mainly due to wave throw and water run off.

4. Ayre

HY 652 412

0.12 km

Eroding

The coast edge is eroding due to the soft archaeological and soil materials within section. The buildings are in danger of erosion.

5. Noust of Ayre

HY 653 413

0.27 km

Eroding to Stable

The area to the south is stable with most erosion on the small promontory. Here the soil sediments are being eroded at a few localised points.

6. Broughtown

HY 656 415

0.34 km

Accreting to Stable

This is a stable section with an area to the north of the coast house with a large accretion of shale and cobbles.

7. Bay of Brough

HY 658 419

0.66 km

Stable

The coast edge is low but stable with a gently sloping beach.

8. Point of the Styes

HY 654 420

0.11 km

Accreting

The cobble and shingle along the upper foreshore and coast edge appears to be accreting with little evidence that the beach is migrating landward.

9. Ness of Brough

HY 653 423

0.46 km

Eroding to Stable

The coast edge is < 1 m for much of the section with localised erosion along the length.

10. Ness of Brough (North)

HY 655 425

0.37 km

Eroding

The low coast edge is being eroded around the north head of the Ness.

11. North Bay

HY 661 424

0.91 km

Stable

The low coast edge is quite stable although there are small areas where past erosion has exposed some of the coast edge.

12. Hermisgarth

HY 661 432

0.8 km

Eroding to Stable

Localised erosion is more common to the south of this section with a stable length of coast line to the centre.

13. Howland

HY 651 435

0.13 km

Stable

The rock coast edge rises and so provides better sea protection giving this coast edge more stability.



- Erosion Class
- Definitely Accreting
 - Accreting or Stable
 - Stable
 - Eroding or Stable
 - Definitely Eroding
 - Accreting and Eroding
-
- No access
 - Land below 10m



