

## Map 5: Cata Sand to Els Ness

### Landscape, Built Heritage & Archaeology

This map section extends along the coastline from the neck of Tres Ness, around the inner sea coast of Cata Sand and back to Sty Wick on the outer coast. The land is low-lying and fertile, especially around the inner coast where conditions are more sheltered. The Plain of Fidge backs onto east side of Cata Sand and is largely unenclosed; the hinterland to the west side of the bay has numerous small pasture fields. Beyond the mouth of the inlet, this changes again to open and rough ground. Modern settlement is concentrated to the west side of Cata Sand, but is set back some distance from the coast edge.

While archaeological remains are not abundant in this area, early activity is indicated by two probable prehistoric settlements and a possible burial mound. It is likely that further remains survive but are not readily visible due to drifting sand deposits which have a tendency to level out the topography. Sites recorded in the coast section here are situated on fast-eroding headlands and points and have thus been rendered visible. It is probable that even gradually eroding sites would be difficult to identify since they would be likely to be obscured by blown sand.

A possible burial mound was recorded at Neigarth (SY55); it lies inside a pasture field and is not currently under threat from erosion. A larger mound at Russ Ness (SY57) is being eroded by the sea; the coast section reveals stratified anthropogenic deposits suggestive of domestic activity. This may be a farm mound or multi-period settlement of extended duration. Chance finds include pumice, small chips of flint and undiagnostic prehistoric pot sherds. The site is infested with rabbits and fulmars.

At Sty Wick, an unusual oval enclosure is defined by stout earthen and stone banks (SY58). It appears to be built over a pre-existing mound, although it is difficult to be certain since there is such an accumulation of blown sand in the area and the vegetation is overgrown. The location, on a headland close to a sandy bay, is reminiscent of the type of areas selected for settlement in the Viking /Norse period. A pool, visible in the shingle bar which lies immediately offshore may be artificially deepened for use as a fish trap. The location would appear suitable since there is a strong tidal current through the narrow channel which joins the inner coast of Cata Sand to the sea.

Another unusual site, but of more recent date is the decoy airfield, a relict of WWII (SY53), very little of which now survives.

### Geomorphology

A relatively level hinterland faces Cata Sand, which is itself is very flat. The seaward facing coast edge is generally lined with sand dunes. These have small slopes of moderate gradient. A large area of cobbles and boulders lies around Lang Taing. Within the confines of Cata Sand, most of the hinterland is fenced but is generally unfenced along the seaward facing side.

### Erosion

Apart from localised areas, the coast line within Cata Sands is stable. There is more accretion of cobbles and shingle than sands to the south side. More erosion occurs to the west of the unit.

**SY53** HY74SW28

HY7035 4138  
Plain of Fidge, Cata Sand  
WWII decoy airfield  
18-20th C  
Poor  
Nil

**SY54**

HY6979 4131  
Canker  
Mounds & earthworks  
Unknown  
Fair  
Monitor

**SY55**

HY6966 4090  
Neigarth  
Mound  
Unknown: ?prehistoric  
Fair  
Monitor

**SY56**

HY6938 4059  
Bressigarth  
Earthworks  
Unknown  
Poor  
Monitor

**SY57**

HY6999 4035  
Russ Ness  
Mound & coastal exposure  
Unknown: ?prehistoric  
Fair  
Survey

**SY58**

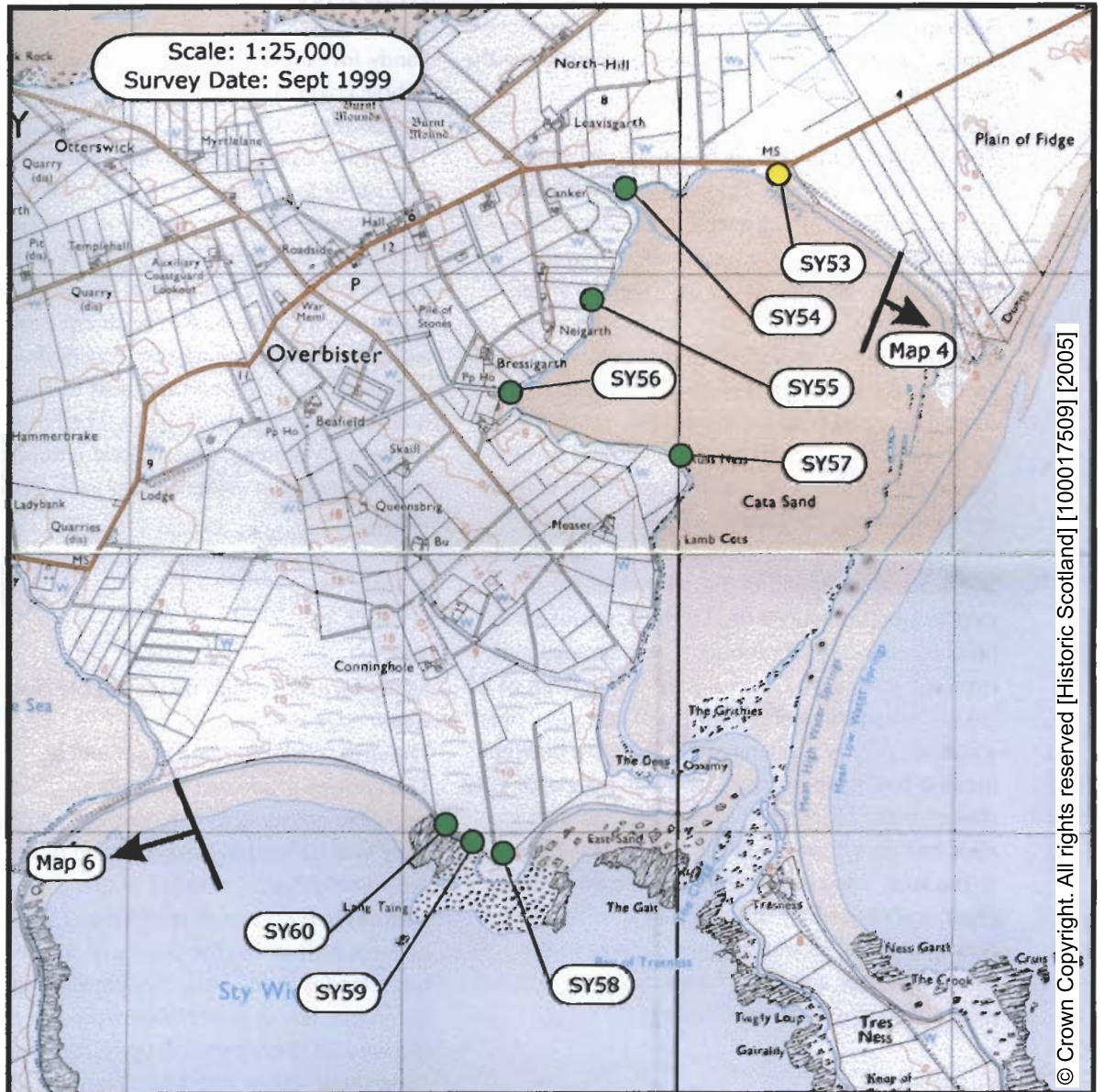
HY6935 3893  
Sty Wick  
Enclosure, mound & possible fish trap  
Unknown: ?prehistoric  
Good  
Survey

**SY59**

HY6925 3897  
Sty Wick  
Kelp workings  
18-20th C  
Fair/poor  
Nil

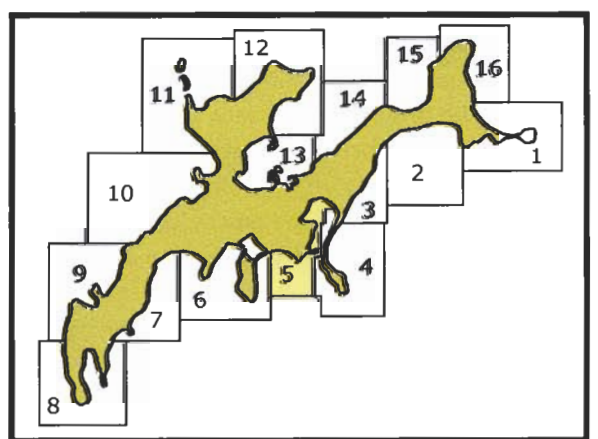
**SY60**

HY6914 3901  
Sty Wick  
Coastal exposure  
Unknown  
Fair/poor  
Monitor



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- Built Heritage & Archaeology**
- Protected Ancient Monument or area of Designated Wreck
  - Monument formally proposed by Historic Scotland for scheduling or wreck for designation
  - + Listed Historic Building
  - Undesignated wreck
  - Known ancient monument
  - Site found by this survey
  - Site complex



## 1. Cata Sand

HY 697 409

3.8 km

Sandy foreshore with some cobble cover along the west side.

Coast edge is < 5 m.

The drift/rock interface is not generally visible.

The foreshore within Cata Sand is very flat with very little distinction between upper and lower foreshores. The coast edge is generally well defined with an edge of 20 to 50 cm. A small buried soil, over 15 cm, is evident at the very beginning of this section which lies below 30 cm of sand and extends to below the upper foreshore sand. The coast edge resembles saltings to the north west corner with small talards and some tipped rubble along the coast edge. More cobbles are found along the eastern upper foreshore.

Within the small coast edge up to 15 thin organic layers are evident within the sandy loam and overlie a buff coloured till. To the south of Russ Ness there is a small mound of archaeology and exposed in section. Generally this is made up of 45 cm of dark loam over 15-20 cm of red loam over a buff till. A grey ash lens of 5-10 cm lies between the first two main horizons and a thin layer of grey clay over the till. A small section has the drift to rock interface showing in section. Fields are fenced to the west side of the sands and are down to grass. Soils are freely draining sands to the east, poorly draining to waterlogged saltings to the western corner and imperfectly to poorly drained podzol and gley to the south west.

## 2. The Dees

HY 701 391

1.2 km

Sandy foreshore.

Coast edge is < 5 m.

The drift/rock interface is not visible.

A sandy foreshore runs around this small promontory with varying amounts of cobble cover. Most of the patchy cover lies to the east and south of this section. The dunes rise to over 3 m and have a well defined coast edge. A great deal of shell also lies to the east by the neck of Cata Sand. The dunes are vegetated and are freely draining.

## 3. East Sand

HY 693 388

0.7 km

Sandy foreshore grading to rock platform with cobble cover.

Coast edge is < 5 m.

The drift/rock interface is intermittently visible.

The sandy foreshore to the east increases in cobble cover towards the point. Between the point and Lang Taing there is a large area of boulder and cobble cover extending from upper to lower foreshore as an ayre. A relic storm beach lies along the coast edge as a lip, much of which is vegetated. At one point the drift to rock interface is visible in section over 10 m. The hinterland is moderately sloping, grassed and unfenced with much ragwort in evidence. Soils are freely draining sands.

## 4. Lang Taing

HY 687 393

1 km

Sandy foreshore with minor cobble cover.

Coast edge is < 5 m.

The drift/rock interface is not visible.

The cobbles grade out from the east side with negligible amounts to the centre. The coast edge is fairly well defined against the sand dunes. There are some deflation hollows within the dune ridge with some dumping of waste materials within one of these hollows to the centre of the section. The hinterland is moderately sloping and slightly hummock like in appearance from the centre to the west of the section. A fence runs behind the dune ridge with grassed fields beyond infested with ragwort. Soils are freely drained sands.

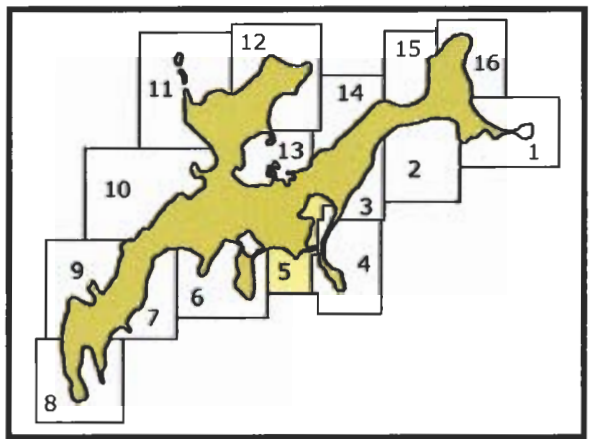


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- Foreshore**
- Rock platform
  - Mainly sand
  - Mainly alluvial/marine mud
  - Marsh

- 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. Cata Sand**

HY 694 405

3.4 km

Stable

Although there is probably a slow insidious erosion of the coast edge to the north west of the bay there is little observable erosion apart from three small lengths of coast where there is only localised erosion. One lies close to the east of the road where the erosion could also be coupled with some minor accretion of sand. The second lies to the west of Russ Ness where there is only mild erosion of the coast edge talards. The third area has a small area of definite erosion at Lamb Cata where archaeology in section is being eroded.

**2. Cata Sand (South West)**

HY 697 394

0.32 km

Eroding to Stable

The beginning of this section has definite erosion of the sandy coast edge which lessens to the south and eventually runs into stable coast line.

**3. The Dees**

HY 699 392

0.5 km

Stable

Although the coast edge is made up of a sand ridge it is stable and probably due to the aspect which faces north into the sheltered bay.

**4. Ossamy**

HY 699 390

0.5 km

Accreting to Stable

The upper foreshore and back shore have an accumulation of sand and shingle. The back shore accretion has some vegetation stabilising the area.

**5. East Sand**

HY 695 390

0.34 km

Accreting and Eroding

A small section which also includes a small area of accreting to stable coast line. There is also more cobble along the foreshore and coast edge.

**6. Lang Taing (East)**

HY 694 388

0.21 km

Stable

A cobble ayre and old cobble storm beach protect the coast edge from erosion although there is evidence of minor erosion as a few freshly thrown cobbles are pushed back over the coast edge lip.

**7. Lang Taing (West)**

HY 692 389

0.28 km

Eroding to Stable

A small section where there is localised erosion. This is coupled with some accretion of cobbles on the east side.

**8. Sty Wick (East)**

HY 688 391

0.59 km

Stable

A stable coast edge with a stable storm beach to the east before sand dunes.

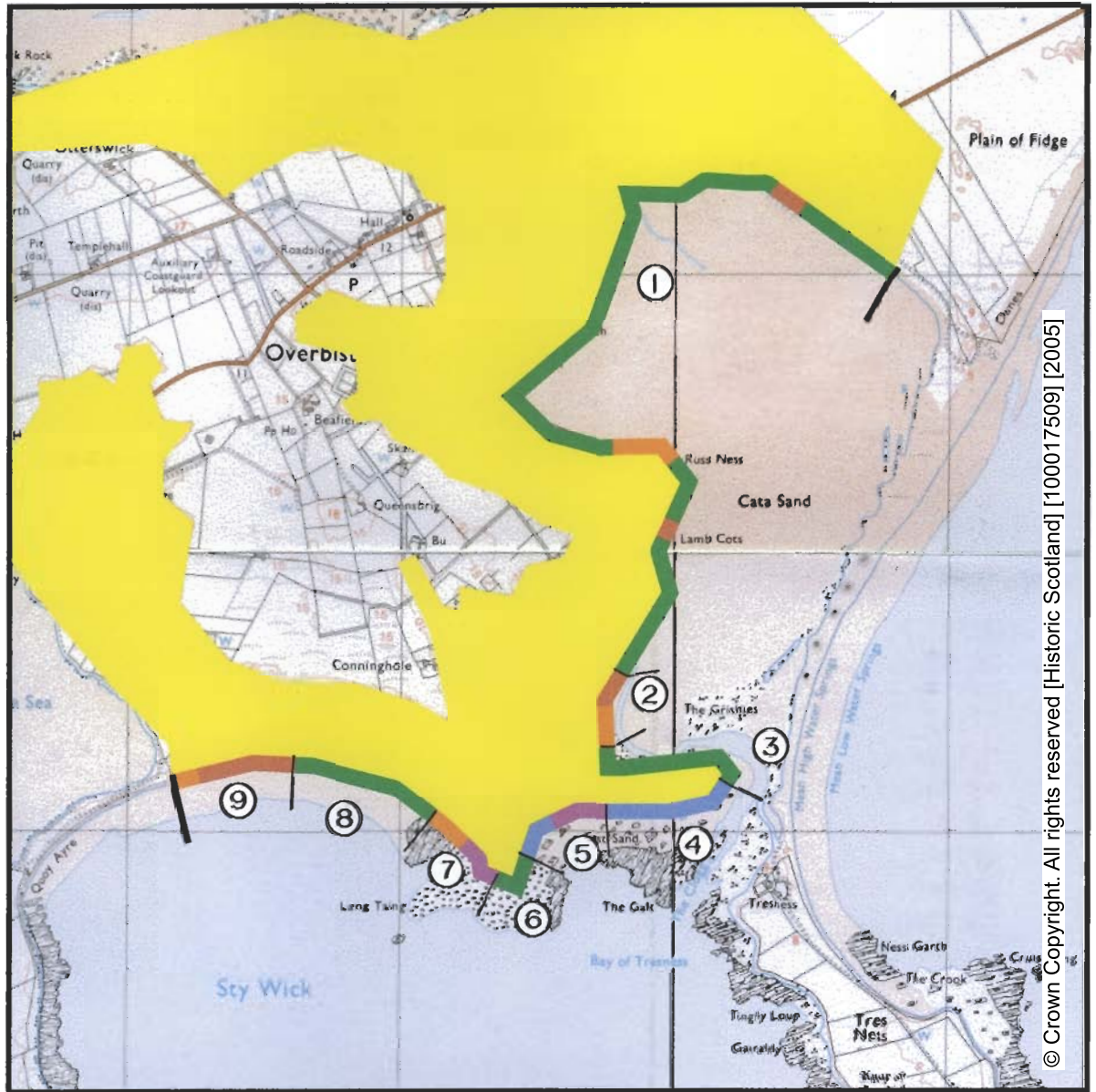
**9. Sty Wick (West)**

HY 683 392

0.61 km

Eroding

The erosion of the Sand ridge is mainly due to wind action which has created some deflation hollows along the ridge. There is also some marine erosion of the coast edge in these places. The erosion becomes more localised to the west.



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

