

Map 6: Els Ness to Backaskaill Bay

Landscape, Built Heritage & Archaeology

This map section commences at the narrow ridge of dunes at Quoy Ayre, which joins Els Ness to the mainland. The ayre measures only a couple of hundred metres across in places, although the dunes are relatively stable and are consolidated beneath a cover of lush vegetation. From here, the section extends around the Ness, into the inner coast bay, known as the Little Sea. From here it continues around Kettletoft Bay, around Bea Ness and beyond to the arching sandy beach at Backaskaill Bay.

Modern settlement in the area is centred on the sheltered inner coast shore of the Little sea and around the western side of Kettletoft Bay. In the main, settlement lies at some distance from the coast, with the exception of the buildings which stand around the harbour side in Kettletoft Village. The hinterland mostly comprises of enclosed pasture land, but there is open, rough ground from the tip of Bea Ness to the conclusion of this section at Backaskaill Bay.

This section is particularly rich in archaeological remains, ranging from Neolithic burial monuments to probable Viking/Norse period settlements and later industrial and agricultural sites. Els Ness, in particular, contains a wealth of funerary monuments including the magnificent chambered cairn of Quoyness (SY62). This Maes Howe-type tomb was excavated on several occasions, most recently by Childe in the 1950's, with a quantity of human bone and sherds of Neolithic pottery being recovered. The interior is well preserved. Near to Quoyness, is the more damaged tomb, known as Augmund Howe (SY63). This lies on the coast edge and has already been partially destroyed by sea, and possibly by casual digging. A chain of eleven smaller mounds (SY6) surround the rear of Augmund Howe; one at least is known to have contained cist burials. In the wider area upwards of twenty six further mounds (SY66) extend around the tip of the ness. A series of possible outliers have been identified by this survey, either as topographical features or as deposits seen in section (SY65, 67-71, 73). This concentration of burial monuments is paralleled on Sanday at Tofts Ness and possibly at Tres Ness (see Map 4).

At Ladykirk (SY78) eroding deposits seen both in section and on the beach may be part of a Viking/Norse period settlement. The remains are visible in front of the abandoned church, below the cemetery wall. They include a flagged floor, coursed walling and soils rich in domestic debris. At Backaskaill, in a similar location, deposits suggestive of settlement (SY87) have been recorded beneath the abandoned Cross Kirk parish church. The coast edge in this area has now been armoured and no further exposures were visible during this survey. It has been suggested that the nature and location of this site may be indicative of a high-status Norse settlement.

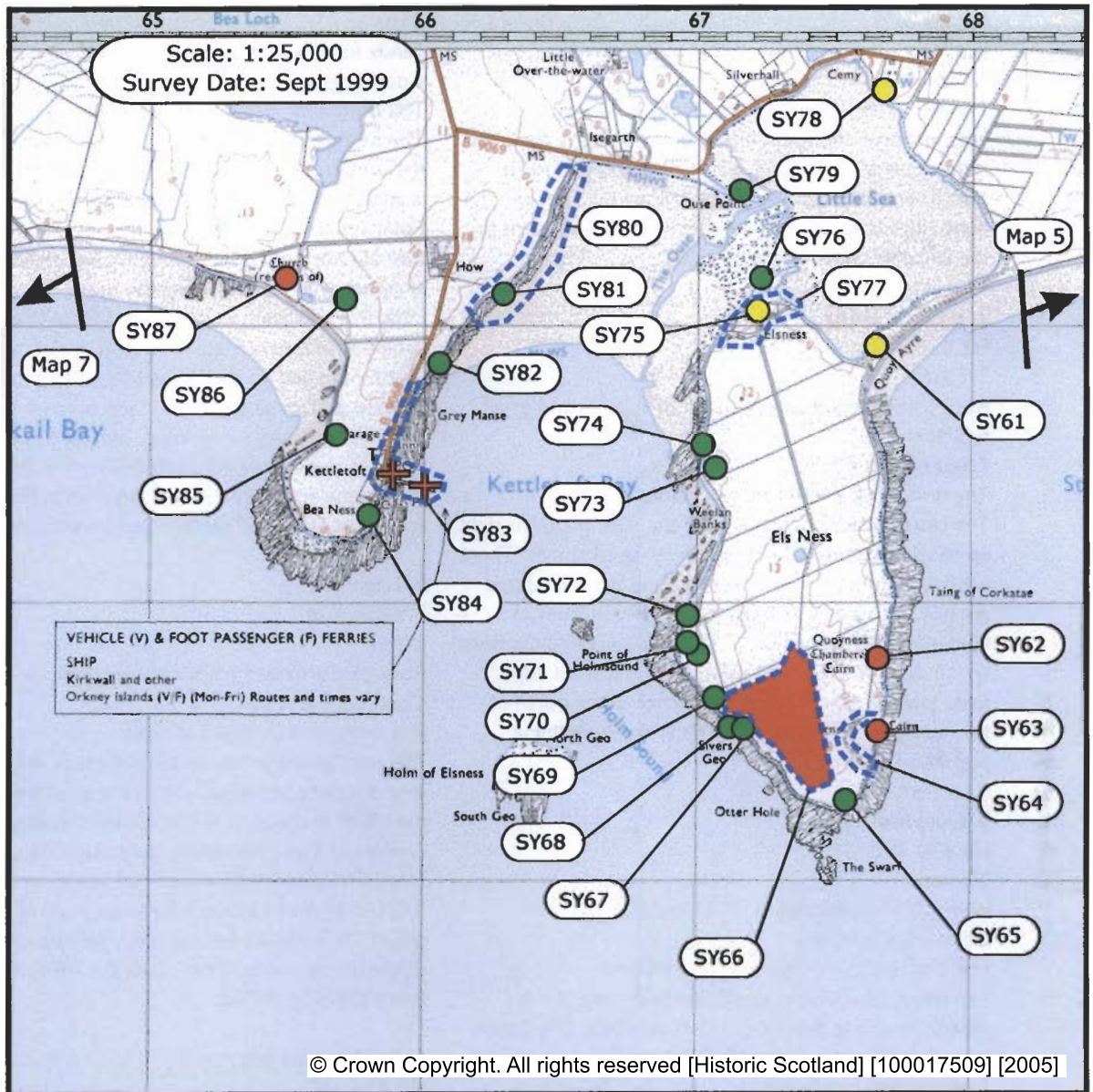
Geomorphology

There are moderate to gentle slopes around most of this unit. The sand dunes gradually fade out to the west side of Quoy Ayre, with more substantial soils becoming predominant. In this case most of the soils are podzol. The unit also contains a small area of saltings around Ouse Point.

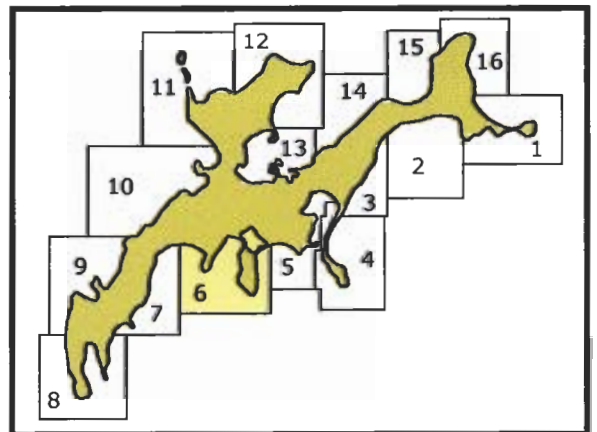
Erosion

Most of this coast edge is stable, although there are a few areas of localised erosion. These are most prominent on the west side of Els Ness. The soft sediments of the coast edge within Little Sea and to the west are protected by the enclosed bay. Sea defence walls lie along much of the west coast. While there is a substantial storm beach along the west side of Els Ness, extending as far as Quoyness chambered cairn, most of the area appears to be stable.

SY61 HY63NE19 HY676 389 Sty Wick Jaw crusher 18-20th C Not seen Monitor	SY68 HY6710 3759 Els Ness Mound & kelp pits 4th-3rd mill BC/18-20th C Poor Monitor	SY75 HY63NE7 HY672 390 Elsness Alleged site of broch 1st mill BC-1st mill AD Not seen Monitor	SY82 HY6602 3885 Kettletoft Bay Coastal exposure Unknown Fair/poor Monitor
SY62 HY63NE1 HY6766 3779 Quoyness Chambered cairn 4th-3rd mill BC Good Monitor	SY69 HY6705 3765 Els Ness Mound Unknown: ?prehistoric Poor Monitor	SY76 HY6721 3919 Elsness Old ground surface Unknown: ?prehistoric Poor Monitor	SY83 HY63NE18.0/.01/21-25 HY659 384 Kettletoft Village 18-20th C Good Nil
SY63 HY63NE3 HY6765 3754 Augmund Howe or Egmondshowe Cairn 4th-3rd mill BC Poor Survey	SY70 HY6700 3781 Els Ness Mound Unknown: ?prehistoric Fair Monitor	SY77 HY63NE20.00-.04 HY6726 3903 Elsness Farmstead 18-20th C Good/fair Monitor	SY84 HY6579 3830 Kettletoft Coastal exposure: cultivation remains Unknown Fair Monitor
SY64 HY63NE5 HY676 375 Augmund Howe West Group of small mounds 4th-3rd mill BC Fair/poor Monitor	SY71 HY6696 3785 Els Ness Enclosure, mound, kelp pits 18-20th C/?prehistoric Fair Survey	SY78 HY63NE11 HY6767 3986 Ladykirk Mound & coastal exposure Unknown: ?10-14th C Fair Survey	SY85 HY6565 3862 Bea Ness Coastal exposure Unknown Fair/poor Monitor
SY65 HY6754 3729 Els Ness Coastal exposure Unknown: ?prehistoric Fair Monitor	SY72 HY6697 3796 Els Ness Noost, kelp pits and bank 18-20th C/?prehistoric Fair/poor Monitor	SY79 HY6715 3948 Ouse Point Coastal exposure Unknown: ?10-14th C Poor Survey	SY86 HY6569 3913 How Mound Unknown: ?prehistoric Fair Monitor
SY66 HY63NE6 HY673 375 Elsness Cairns 4th-3rd mill BC Fair/poor Monitor	SY73 HY6706 3849 Els Ness Mound Unknown: ?prehistoric Fair Monitor	SY80 HY664 393 Kettletoft Bay Coastal exposure Unknown: ?prehistoric Fair Monitor	SY87 HY63NE8 HY6537 3920 Cross Kirk Parish church, disused 10-14th C & 18-20th C Fair/poor Monitor
SY67 HY6719 3759 Els Ness Structure, noost, mound, kelp pits 4th-3rd mill BC/18-20th C Fair/poor Monitor	SY74 HY6701 3855 Els Ness Coastal exposure Unknown Fair/poor Monitor	SY81 HY6628 3913 Kettletoft Bay Coastal exposure Unknown: ?prehistoric Poor Monitor	



- 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. Sty Wick
HY 678 390
0.7 km

Sandy foreshore with negligible cobble cover.
Coast edge is < 5 m.

The drift/rock interface is not visible.

This section is the south facing shore of Quoy Ayre and is made up of sand dunes with a road on the north side. There are very few cobbles along this section. The dune ridge is vegetated with more deflation evident to the extreme eastern side.

2. Els Ness (East)
HY 676 382

1.1 km

Rock platform with storm beach of cobbles and small boulders.

Coast edge is < 5 m.

The drift/rock interface is not visible.

The storm beach covers most of the rock platform right up to the coast edge forming a small lip of stones. There are many stones thrown back into the hinterland and are now grassed in. A small sea wall lies in front of Quoyness chambered cairn. The stone walls of the fields are set back from 4 m to 10 m from the coast edge. A deep loam of 40 cm lies in the corner at the north of this section. Soils are imperfectly to freely draining podzol.

3. Quoyness
HY 670 380

2.8 km

Rock platform with up to 70% cobble cover.

Coast edge is < 5 m.

The drift/rock interface is mostly visible.

The storm beach fades out at the beginning of this section revealing the rock to drift interface. The cobble cover becomes greater again along the west coast with a small storm beach within Siver's Geo. There are remnants of sea wall along the north west of Els Ness with intact sea wall closer to the farm of Elsness. Soils are imperfectly to freely drained podzol. The field stone walls are set back from the coast edge from 5 m to 10 m.

4. Elsness
HY 678 396
4 km

Sandy foreshore with cobble cover to the east.
Coast edge is < 5 m.

The drift/rock interface is not visible.

The sandy foreshore has up to 70% cobble cover along the eastern side of Little Sea. An almost continuous ayre is apparent at low tide running from Elsness to Ouse Point almost as a barrier to Little Sea. Along the west side of Little Sea the coast edge is well defined with a small sea wall running along the north east coast of Little Sea and again to the west of Ouse Point where gabions are also in place. The sand dunes run along Quoy Ayre and sandy soils grading into imperfectly drained podzol along the east and north sides. Some of these soils are sandy loams and up to 50 cm deep. There is standing water east of Silverhall and saltings behind the sea walls and bridge by Ouse Point. The road runs along the northern edge of this section.

5. Isegarth
HY 658 384
2.1 km

Rock platform with some cobble cover.

Coast edge is < 5 m.

The drift/rock interface is visible.

The rock platform has up to 50% cover in places and a well defined coast edge. There is a small area of sand to the south of the pier. A storm beach made up of cobbles and small boulders lies around the point of Bea Ness. The deep reddish loams of 40-50 cm lie over till. The buildings of Kettletoft have sea walls at the coast edge. The fields are fenced, well maintained with moderate or gentle slopes. Soils are imperfectly to freely draining podzol.

6. Bea Ness (West)
HY 654 392

1.5 km

Sandy foreshore with negligible cover.

Coast edge is < 5 m.

The drift/rock interface is intermittently visible.

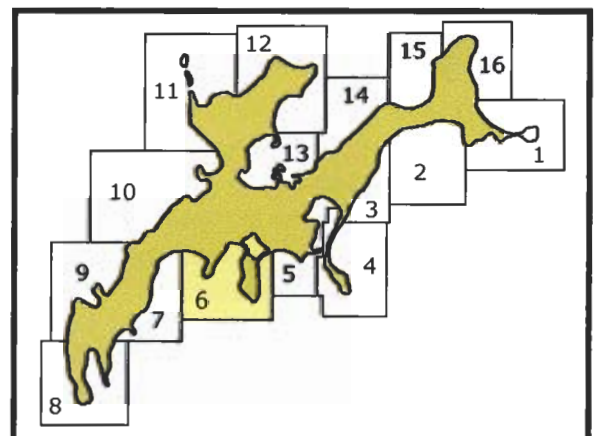
The sands grade over the rock platform at the beginning of the unit and lie against a well defined coast edge with a visible drift to rock interface. The beach at Backaskail Bay runs up against vegetated sand dunes and the coast edge is not so well defined. A small rock platform lies in front of the church. The hinterland has moderately sloping fenced fields with some stone walls to the south east of the section which run into vegetated sand dunes around the bay. Soils are imperfectly drained podzol running into freely draining sands.



- 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. Sty Wick**
HY 680 391
0.3 km
Accreting and Eroding.
There is localised erosion of the dune ridge coast edge due mainly to marine action with accretion of sand due to aeolian activity. The accreting sands lie on the upper foreshore and coast edge.
- 2. Quoy Ayre (South)**
HY 677 379
Stable
1.8 km
There are only two, localised, areas of erosion along this section, both due to marine action. These are at the western corner of Quoy Ayre and at Taing of Corkatae, where the storm beach appears to be active and migrating landwards.
- 3. The Swarf**
HY 671 375
1.2 km
Eroding to Stable
The coast edge has localised erosion along this section. All the erosion is due to marine action. At Sivers Geo there is accretion of cobbles in the geo.
- 4. Els Ness (West)**
HY 670 382
0.21 km
Eroding
A section of coast edge is definitely eroding where there is exposed till.
- 5. Weelan Bank**
HY 670 384
0.32 km
Eroding to Stable
The coast edge has localised erosion which is fairly stable to the centre. An old sea wall has been eroded out in a few places.
- 6. Els Ness (North West)**
HY 670 387
0.21 km
Eroding
This section is definitely eroding with much of the old sea wall now on the upper foreshore. Some of the wall close to the edge has been recently repaired.
- 7. Elsness**
HY 672 391
0.94 km
Stable
The coast edge is stable and well vegetated with a stable ayre running out towards Ouse Point.
- 8. Quoy Ayre (North)**
HY 681 392
1.13 km
Eroding to Stable
The road which runs alongside gives a great deal of protection. There are more substantial areas of erosion along the E of Little Sea, of soft sand and till. To the N of this section there is a 30 m stretch of coast line which is definitely eroding.
- 9. Little Sea (North)**
HY 673 398
2.29 km
Stable
Most of the coastline is stable along the north edge due to the sea wall defences. There is some localised erosion outside the cemetery walls.
- 10. Isegarth**
HY 664 393
0.55 km
Eroding to Stable
The coast edge has localised erosion due to some undercutting of the soft till.
- 11. How**
HY 657 382
1.85 km
Stable
There are two small areas where erosion is occurring. On the point of Bea Ness a storm beach is eroding small areas of coast line. On the west side of the ness there is localised erosion.
- 12. Backaskail Bay (East)**
HY 656 388
0.09 km
Eroding
Within the corner of the bay there is erosion of the sandy coast edge.
- 13. Backaskail Church (East)**
HY 655 390
0.4 km
Accreting to Stable
There is accretion of sands along the back shore and coast edge of the dune ridge.
- 14. Cross Kirk**
HY 652 391
0.17 km
Eroding to Stable
There is localised erosion of the coast edge. Much of this edge is vegetated.
- 15. Backaskail Bay (West)**
HY 649 392
0.45 km
Accreting
One of the few areas where there is evidence of accretion in the form of sands covering vegetation. Although the survey took place almost at the end the growing season there was little evidence of new vegetation colonising the accreted sands.

