



You can say what you like, I don't care For I'm a beautiful Rousay mare.

From the stone age to the present day the sea has brought settlers and visitors to the islands of Rousay, Egilsay and Wyre. With 166 sites of archaeological interest and an important crofting history, the three islands provide a rich and rewarding spectrum of man's settlement in the area.



Glacial terracing can be clearly seen in Rousay

Rousay, the largest of the islands, is very hilly with distinctive glacial terracing and large expanses of wild, open moorland. Arctic terns and arctic skuas nest on the coastal heath; hen harriers breed on the moorland and red throated divers inhabit remote moorland lochans.



Rousay has a rich and varied archaeological history. Travelling along the west road from the pier you can visit four well preserved burial cairns and the stunning Midhowe Broch. The Quendale and Westness area of Rousay is the only place in Orkney to have suffered a major clearance. 210 people were evicted from their crofts in the mid C19 by George William Traill as part of his modernisation of the Westness Estate.



Nousy Sand

On the open landscape of Quendale and Brings you can see relics of traditional crofting – turf dykes, runrig (strip farming) and ruined crofts.

The history of Egilsay and Wyre are brought to vivid life in the Orkneyinga Saga. This famous Icelandic Saga paints a vivid picture of battles, murders and political intrigue taking place in Orkney in Norse times. The most famous event in the Saga, the murder of Earl

Magnus, happens on Egilsay and the church on the island was built in his honour. The Saga also mentions a powerful Viking chieftain who settled on Wyre and built himself a fortified stronghold there called Cubbie Roo's Castle in about 1145.

In contrast to Rousay, the two smaller islands are low lying and mostly farmed. Egilsay has rich wetland habitat full of wild flowers and the calls of breeding waders such as redshank and curlew. Wyre is very popular with seals and they can often be seen hauled out on the skerries as you pass the island on the boat.



Midhowe Broch in Westside.

