

ORKNEY AND SHETLAND

Outstanding Circular Walks

Pathfinder® Guides 

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guides

walk 13



Start

Rackwick, Hoy



Distance

5½ miles (9km)



Height gain

720 feet (220m)



Approximate time

3 hours



Route terrain

Clear path throughout,
stony in a few places



Parking

Rackwick Bay car park



OS maps

Landranger 7 (Orkney
– Southern Isles),
Explorer 462 (Orkney –
Hoy, South Walls &
Flotta)



GPS waypoints

ND 202 992

A ND 198 996

B ND 189 989

Old Man of Hoy

The name ‘Hoy’ comes from the Norse meaning ‘high island’, and from almost any part of Mainland Orkney the dramatic difference in landscape is evident, with two high hills to the south and a deep glen in between. The high sandstone cliffs of Hoy and the sea stack of the Old Man have been a popular destination for visitors since Victorian times.

Note The summer 10:15 ferry from Houton to Lyness, returning at 16:40, gives ample time to complete the walk, which begins with a 40-minute drive from Lyness to Rackwick. En route, if time allows, it is possible to take a short walk to the Dwarfie Stane (HY 243 004) or the poignant grave of Betty Corrigan (ND 280 997).

The walk starts from the car park by following the track (signed for the Old Man of Hoy) towards a group of cottages and soon crossing a cattle grid, beyond which it continues as a broad track. Follow the track as it curves right and strikes inland, now climbing gently. When it bends left, at a three-way junction of tracks, continue straight on as far as a signed path cutting back acutely at a rock sign for the Old Man .

Craa's Nest Museum

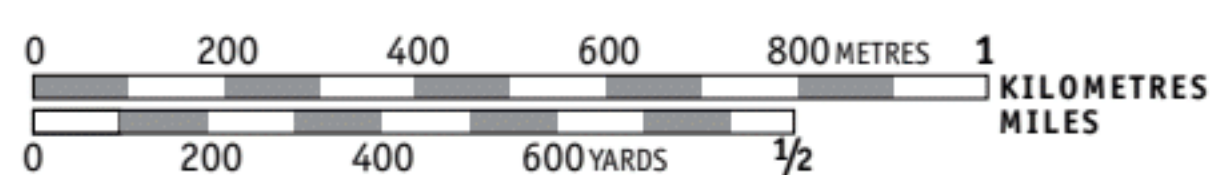
The low-lying turf-roof buildings here are the Craa's Nest Museum, which has displays about the heritage of the village and Hoy and are worth a visit on your way back.

Having left the broad track, a grassy path now ensues, climbing to and past one final building eventually to arrive at a kissing-gate giving on to the RSPB Hoy Nature Reserve. The path continues beyond, rising steadily onto the open hillside with excellent retrospective views of the sandy beach at Rackwick Bay.





from it, heading back towards the Lochs of Dridgeo, keeping them to your right as you head south back to Calder's Geo. The lighthouse here is not the most attractive, but, built between 1925 and



1929 by David Alan Stevenson, it remains in use, albeit automated.

SCALE 1:25 000 or 2 1/2 INCHES to 1 MILE 4CM to 1KM



Sea cliffs, Eshaness



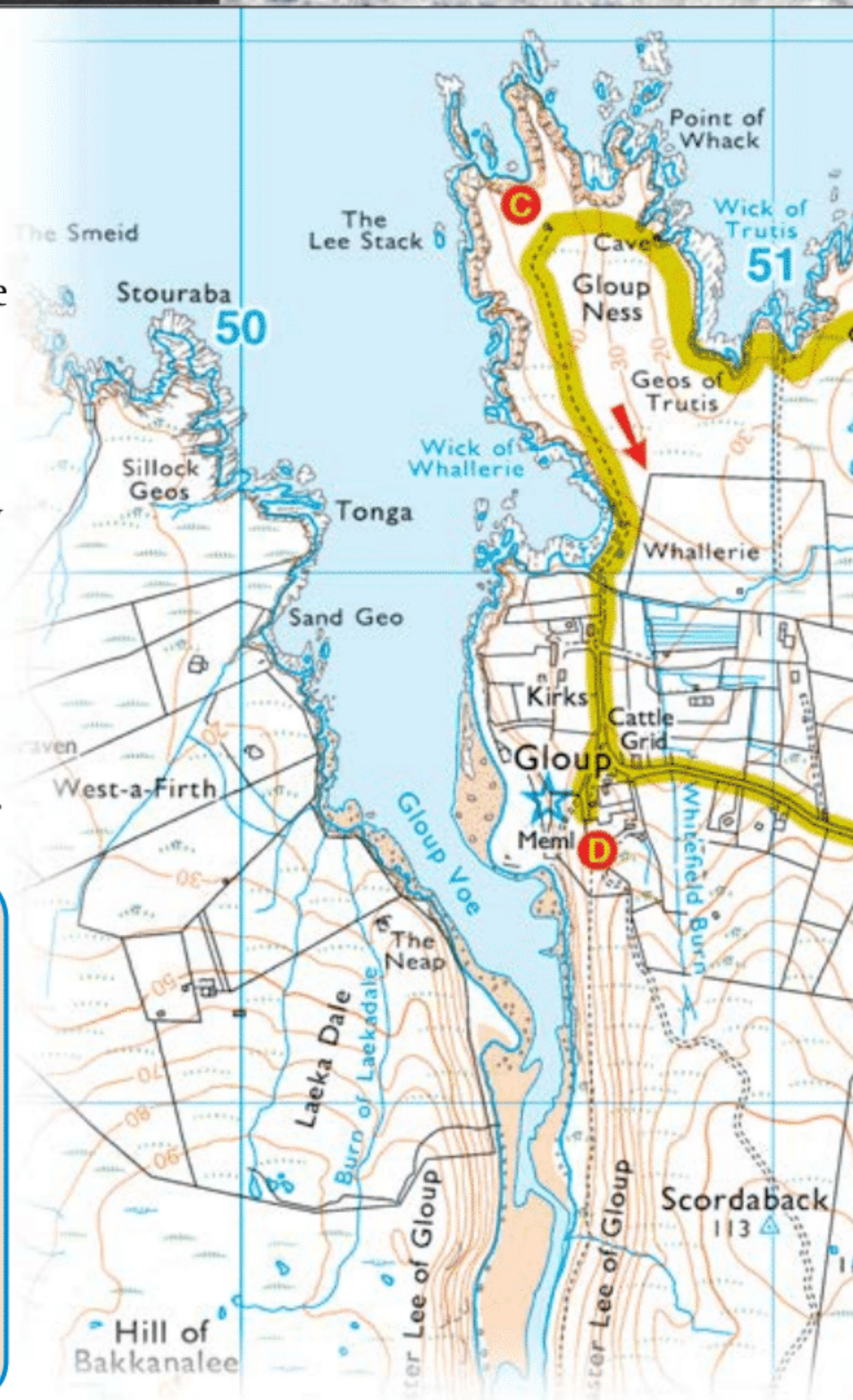
Across the Wick of Breckon to the coastguard lookout

and so conclude a brief visit. But from the gate, the main route bears right above low sea cliffs to a gate and then across rough ground to a step-stile **B**.

The exact nature of the ongoing route is what you make of it; intermittent sheep tracks, boardwalks, stiles and gates lead round the Wick, passing the small headland of Brim Ness and finally pressing on to climb gently to a coastguard lookout station **C** on Gloop Ness. But on a fine day, it is nothing short of a delightful if rugged amble above increasingly impressive sea cliffs.






Remembrance

The Gloop Fishing Disaster occurred in 1881, in which 58 fishermen were killed by an unexpected summer storm coming from the direction of Iceland. The memorial was erected 100 years later and depicts a mother and child gazing out to sea searching for the return of their loved ones.



At-a-glance

ORKNEY

Walk		Page					
1	Hoxa Head (South Ronaldsay)	10	The Bu, Hoxa	ND 409 933	1¾ miles (2.75km)	165ft (50m)	1 hr
2	Kirkwall Town Trail (Mainland)	12	Foreshore car park	HY 443 114	2 miles (3.2km)	80ft (25m)	1 hr
3	Orphir Bay (Mainland)	16	Orkneyinga Saga Centre, Orphir	HY 334 044	2¼ miles (3.5km)	210ft (65m)	1 hr
4	Cantick Head (Hoy)	18	Kirk Hope beach, South Walls	ND 334 892	2½ miles (4km)	280ft (85m)	1¼ hrs
5	Cuween Chambered Cairn and Hill of Lyradale (Mainland)	20	Upper Bigging, Grimbister	HY 368 129	3 miles (5km)	510ft (155m)	1¾ hrs
6	Binscarth Woods and Loch of Wasdale (Mainland)	22	Finstown	HY 362 136	3½ miles (6km)	395ft (120m)	1¾ hrs
7	Bur Wick and Brough Ness (South Ronaldsay)	24	Burwick	ND 442 842	3½ miles (6km)	105ft (30m)	1¾ hrs
8	Mid Howe Broch (Rousay)	27	Mid Howe	HY 376 308	3½ miles (5.5km)	425ft (130m)	2 hrs
9	Brough of Birsay, Skipi Geo and the Earl's Palace (Mainland)	30	Roadside parking, Northside	HY 247 278	4 miles (6.5km)	655ft (200m)	2 hrs
10	Marwick Head (Mainland)	33	Mar Wick Bay	HY 229 240	4 miles (6.5km)	820ft (250m)	2¼ hrs
11	Stromness and Warebeth Beach (Mainland)	36	Stromness	HY 256 095	5 miles (8km)	475ft (145m)	2½ hrs
12	Mull Head (Mainland)	39	Sandside, Deerness	HY 589 079	5½ miles (9.2km)	1,215ft (370m)	3 hrs
13	Old Man of Hoy (Hoy)	42	Rackwick	ND 202 992	5½ miles (9km)	720ft (220m)	3 hrs
14	Yesnaby (Mainland)	45	Yesnaby	HY 220 160	6 miles (10km)	755ft (230m)	3 hrs



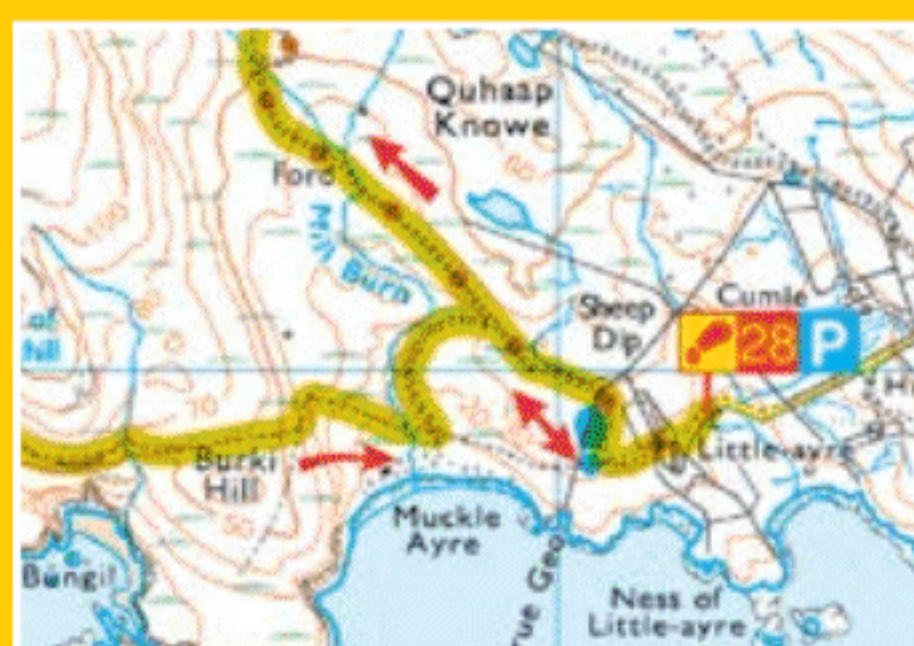
Puffins, Birsay

Ruins of St Mary's Church, Rousay

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