

If you want something to stick all day
Get yourself a Limpet from fair Stronsay



This walking guide to Stronsay will help you explore the wilder corners of this lovely island. From wide sandy bays, to dramatic cliffs, lochs and wetlands, Stronsay has a wonderful variety of scenery for walkers to enjoy. Whether you are a serious rambler or want to go for a gentle stroll, you will enjoy walking on this unspoilt island.

A walk on the wild side . . .

Each of the walks will help you get to know Stronsay's wildlife. Whichever wild coast you explore seals will be swimming beside you as you walk, or hauled out on rocks to sunbathe. The birds change with the seasons, from colonies of cliff nesting birds in the summer, to migrants passing through in autumn or spring, and



flocks of ducks and geese arriving for the winter. In summer there are flowers everywhere you walk from coastal plants like sea pinks to wetland flowers like yellow flag. Wildlife spotting isn't confined to the walks though – it starts as soon as you arrive on the boat in Whitemill village. Black guillemots nest in the boat pier, they are very tame and are usually seen by visitors as they arrive and depart!



A walk through history . . .

Stronsay has a long history of farming and fishing. In the nineteenth and early twentieth century Stronsay had a thriving herring fishing industry. It started in 1816 when Samuel Laing set up operations in Whitehall village with six fishing boats. The industry grew rapidly and Whitehall became a very busy commercial centre and Orkney's main fishing port, with more than 300 boats operating out of the village at peak times. The herring season lasted for 12 weeks and during this time the island's population grew by about 4000 people. At the height of herring fishing Whitehall had 10 general merchants, 5 ice cream parlours and the biggest bar north of Inverness! The herring station eventually closed in 1936.



Fishing was only ever a part time job for Stronsay folk though, the real business of the island has always been farming. Stronsay is a low lying island and the land is very fertile, with most of the island having been used for farming for many generations.

Before the days of artificial fertilisers, seaweed, cast up on the shore by frequent winter gales, was used to enrich the land. This abundant supply of seaweed, in particular kelp, enabled Stronsay to become a major centre for another profitable industry – kelp making. The kelp stalks were cut and spread to dry, then burned in circular pits lined with stones, which can still be seen today around the shores. The



resulting kelp slag and ash was valued as a source of potash and soda and bought by soap-makers and glass-makers in industrial areas. For 50 years kelp making was a mainstay of the Orkney economy, but

the perpetual smoke and fire of the burning pits must have made Stronsay look like an active volcano and a much less pleasant place than it is today!

The Stronsay Beast . . .

As well as history Stronsay also has its legends, the most famous being the story of the Stronsay beast. In 1808 the remains of a strange sea creature were washed up on the rocks at Rothiesholm Head. It was described as a serpent-like creature, 55ft long with a neck 10ft long and three pairs of legs. It had a bristly mane of long wiry hairs which were said to glow eerily in the dark!

Tales of the monster spread far and wide and there was much speculation about its identity. However, scientists examining the remains were convinced that it was nothing more unusual than a basking shark. The 'six legs' were explained away as the remains of its lower fins, the 'neck' seemed long because the jaws were missing and the 'bristles' were the remains of the dorsal fin. Even if that were true, it was very large for a basking shark and still a monster in its own right.



Will you be lucky enough to find a Canoe Shell, found only on the Sand of Rothiesholm.

