

Cantick Head, Hoy 2008

Project Outline

Outer Green Hill Broch

This is a large mound on the south side of Kirk Hope, South Walls that has a single track road clipping the north edge. In 2007 geophysical survey of this mound and several others on the Cantick peninsula was undertaken by Orkney College Geophysics Unit as part of an ongoing landscape interpretation project (Robertson & Moore 2007). The geophysical survey results imply that this mound is not a broch and indicates two likely possibilities of what the mound may actually be. It is recommended that an intrusive evaluation, comprising the partial excavation of one quadrant of the mound to allow for accurate identification and dating of the site.

Proposal:

The project is proposed due to the conflicting results of the geophysical survey that indicates that this mound is not a broch though it is recorded as this on the NMRS and SMR databases. The results give an unclear interpretation of two possibilities that are very different, a Neolithic stalled tomb or a Norse tower. Much has been written on the concentrations of coastal brochs and so the implications, of a change in interpretation that this mound is not a broch, is wide ranging. This area is also mentioned numerous times within Norse sagas with the sheltered bay for shipping, the early chapel with links to converting Norse Earls and also a battle site alongside their being no known surviving Norse remains in the area makes this potential and nationally important. If, on the other hand, the mound is a Neolithic chambered tomb the importance of the mound is increased as there are no known Neolithic tombs known in this area (nor on the shores of Scapa Flow), only the Dwarfie Stone at the north end of the island. The site is therefore of potential national importance and the need for an accurate identification is important. The trench is intended to reveal the nature of the mound to undertake recording to produce detailed records and to identify the true nature of the site. Samples will be taken if appropriate or possible to clarify site chronology. The correct identification of the mound is crucial to the landscape interpretation as each different scenario has significant implications.

Method:

Trench location etc. yet to be decided.

Green Hill of Hestigeo

The large mound of Green Hill of Hestigeo broch has been suffering from coastal erosion, with a section of the large wall having been lost to the sea, and in light of the interesting results of the geophysical survey in 2007 further non-intrusive investigation is proposed. The geophysical results were very quiet over the structure, which implied a great depth of survival, alongside the detail of plan information of the surrounding settlement / activity.

Proposal:

It is proposed to undertake traverses of GPR and Electrical Imaging to collect vertical slices to interpret the depth and make-up of the mound containing the broch structure. The gradiometer survey results were unusually quiet over the mound containing the structure and the further survey would give indications of the depth and make-up of the mound and perhaps indicate the reason of why it is so quiet.

The intrusive evaluation will produce a site assessment, an accurate identification and highlight possible mitigation and management strategies. The work will be conducted in accordance with guidelines and issues set out in Ashmore, PJ 1994 Archaeology and the Coastal Erosion Zone: Towards a Historic Scotland Policy, HS.

Archaeological excavations:

Outer Green Hill, Cantick

South Walls

30th June-12th July



Geophysics interpretation plot (gradiometer) following survey in 2007.

Neolithic tomb? Broch? or Norse Stronghold?

A landscape survey by Judith Robertson in 2006 explored the archaeological potential of two areas: Cantick Head, South Walls and an area of North Hoy. A complex multi-period landscape was identified at Cantick. This was followed up with targeted geophysics across the Cantick peninsula in 2007. Outer Green Hill remains an enigma in the landscape because, although it has always been assumed to represent the remains of an Iron Age broch (large roundhouse), the results of the geophysics are not conclusive. This evaluation excavation aims to determine whether the mound represents a Neolithic tomb, Iron Age settlement or Norse stronghold.



Local volunteers welcome

Visitors welcome every day

Contact: Nick Card/Dan Lee, ORCA, Orkney College 569342

Emails from Daniel Lee (Projects Archaeologist) ORCA Orkney College

July 14th 2008

"Thanks to all for making us so welcome during our excavations. We all had a really good couple of weeks and the results were great. The pottery has been confirmed as Late Neolithic (possibly early Bronze Age), so 5000 years old! This fits in well with the interpretation of a late neolithic chambered tomb. There should be an article in this weeks Orcadian, plus more on the Orkneyjar website. As you may have already heard we identified the first evidence for the Orkney vole in Hoy & Walls, but there is no modern population. Keith Dobney of Durham University who heads the Orkney Vole Project has taken some vole jaw bones for C14 dating and analysis. This may also help us date the tomb. I'll keep you informed of any developments on the project."

January 15th 2009

"Just to give you an update on the archaeological project. We have applied for some more funding from OIC to carry on the investigations on Cantick. We feel that continuing excavations on Outer Green Hill would be too large and costly a project to take on at this time. But this may form part of a larger project in the future. At this stage it would be good to investigate some of the other features on Cantick, such as other mounds and dykes, identified by Judith to build up a better picture of changes and places in the landscape through time. The project would also aim to continue investigation of some of the upland areas in North Hoy that Judith started to look at in her first survey. Fingers crossed for the funding! I will keep you informed of the progress of the funding and would like to have your input into the aims of the proposed project for the summer. I have yet to start writing the report for the excavations (its next on the list!). Keith Dobney has taken some of the vole bones away for radiocarbon dating, so the results of that should be interesting."