

# The Burri Stacks of Culswick, Shetland, and other paired stack-settlements

by R G Lamb

Many visitors to Shetland must have walked from the road's ending in Culswick village, through the gate in the hill dyke, and past the loch of Sotersta, to view the battered wreck of Culswick broch (which until the 18th century stood second only to Mousa in completeness, and for its setting, crowning a conical headland bold above the Atlantic, is still without rival). The cottage which was built of the plundered stones of the broch itself now is a ruin, and the township of Sotersta, lying in the valley between loch and sea, has for long been deserted; while Culswick village itself, which as late as the 1930s was a vigorous enough community to support its own regular bus service to Lerwick, has lost nearly all its population. The burn of Sotersta runs southward into a small bay with a shingle beach where a small boat may land, but the bay's western arm, which is called Burri Geo, is cliffbound. In Burri Geo there are two inaccessible rock-stacks.

On the summit of the nearer and smaller of the stacks, plain to see from the mainland, is a squarish stone ruin nestling within the hollow formed by a very considerable bank which on three sides forms a parapet along the edge of the stack. At the 1973 Scottish Archaeological Forum meeting, the writer suggested that this structure was monastic, and tentatively compared it with Bede's description of St Cuthbert's hermitage in the Farne Islands (Lamb 1973, 83-4). In 1974 a more detailed examination was made of both stacks, using a 20× to 60× variable-magnification telescope, and photographs were taken with a 35-mm camera fitted with 135-mm and 400-mm telephoto lenses. These magnifications not only gave enlarged views of the structures, but enabled the stacks to be viewed from the higher ground further inland – which gave a more favourable angle of view. The stacks were photographed from The Nev, the headland on the W side of the bay, through the 135-mm lens, and from the much higher ground E of Sotersta, at a distance of half a mile, using the 400-mm lens. This has shown the true form of the features on the N stack, and for the first time has revealed that the S, more outlying stack also carries remains of buildings. In their oblong form and in layout these buildings resemble those at Kame of Isbister – the type-site for a remarkable class of settlements which are interpreted as early eremitic monasteries (Lamb 1973, 76-83).

The northern and inner Burri Stack sends a steeply down-sloping arête of rock towards the mainland; but the arête is cut short, and the stack is isolated at all states of the tide. The N half of the summit is occupied by a nearly-square enclosure formed by a steep bank standing at least 1.2 m above ground level within. The W, N and E sides of the enclosure run along the edges of the stack, where the bank forms a parapet. The entrance gap seems to have been in the N side near the NW corner, where the arête descends; the arête in less eroded form may once have given access to the summit. On the E side of the gap, the bank appears to be inturned. To form the S

boundary of the enclosure, the bank cuts across the centre of the stack, but does so in an out-pointing V-plan rather than as a straight line; the enclosure therefore is pentagonal. The ruined building within appears to be rectangular approaching to square; it is crudely built of large irregular stones. Outside the enclosure to the S is a pair of smaller, parallel banks, running from the S side of the enclosure to the S side of the stack, the E bank being a parapet on the cliff-edge. Because of the acute angle at which the stack is viewed, it is impossible to say whether these are the long walls of a very long rectangular building, or the boundaries of small garths or garden-plots. It is of course possible that erosion has removed other parapet-banks from the S and SW edges of the stack (fig 1).

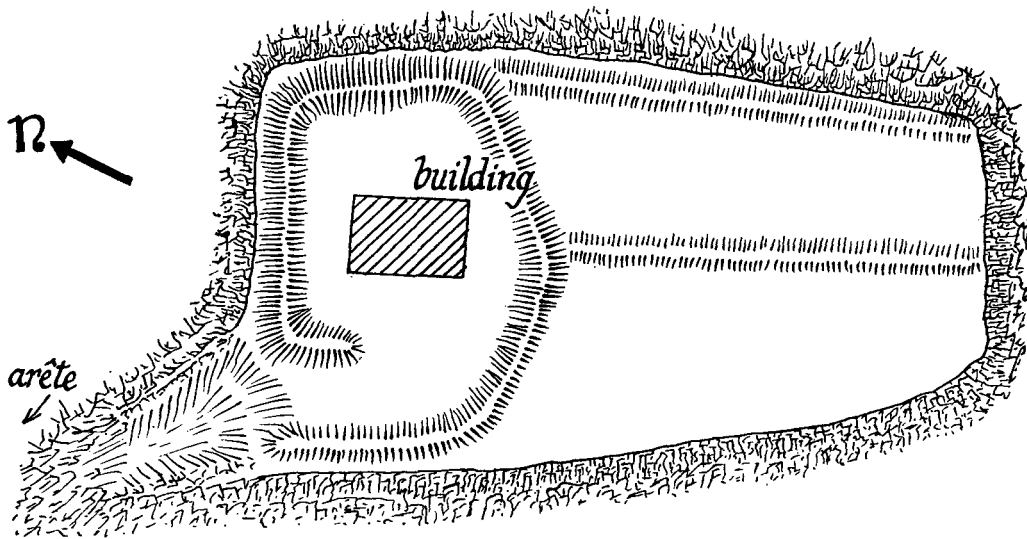


FIG 1 Sketch-plan of the summit of the northern Burri Stack of Culswick; the plan is based on telescope examination from different angles (the length of the building is 2-3 metres)

The S stack is more distant and more difficult to view; the structural remains upon it are slighter, and cannot be picked out by the unaided eye from the mainland. The long-range telephoto pictures taken from higher ground have revealed a row of oblong buildings with rounded corners, built contiguously side-to-side along the SW edge of the stack, ends-on to the brink. They appear to vary in length, so that they present an irregular frontage towards the centre of the stack. Those at the S end of the row are best preserved, the northern ones being less distinct. They number at least eight.

These groups of oblong buildings have parallels on other stack, islet and clifftop sites in Shetland and Orkney. An almost identical layout, with buildings side-to-side and ends-on to the cliff-edge, occurs on Kirkholm, Sandsting (RCAMS 1946, iii, 111, no. 1460) where, however, the buildings are unusually large, averaging 12 m by 5.5 m. The Burri Stack ones appear to be closer to the norm of around 6 m by 3 m established by Kame of Isbister, Birrier of West Sandwick, Blue Mull, and Castle of Burwick. At Kame of Isbister the buildings are grouped away from the cliff-edge, but still are placed side-to-side. Blue Mull in Unst (Low 1879, 157) is a high cliff-headland with seven oblong buildings, side-to-side in a row. An apparently identical layout, but by reason of lush vegetation less distinct, occupies the summit of Castle of Burwick, South Ronaldsay, Orkney (Low 1879, 28) within the multivallate defences of an iron-age promontory

fort. And if we believe Low's account – he is a very reliable witness – buildings exactly like those on Blue Mull existed on Sumburgh Head, the bold cliff-promontory which forms the S extremity of Shetland (Low 1879, 185).

A variant on the side-to-side-in-a-row arrangement is the grouping of buildings in an L-plan. This is very marked at Birrier of West Sandwick and is a tendency at Corn Holm (Lamb 1973, 78-80). It is apparent in the grouping of the smallest of the buildings at Kame of Isbister. The most spectacular of all stack sites with oblong buildings is the Clett of Fetlar, over 70 m high, where the visible buildings – as many as can be seen by telescope from the nearby clifftop, which gives a very unfavourable angle of view – appear to form two rows set at right angles.

The buildings on all the sites mentioned so far are of the simple, not over-long form (length-breadth ratio usually 3 : 2 or 2 : 1, never more than 3 : 1) which the writer has associated with the early period of monastic settlement. Some very similarly-sited settlements, such as Strandibrough (Fetlar), Maiden Stack and Brei Holm (Papa Stour) and the Broughs of Birsay and Deerness (Orkney) carry longhouse-type buildings of Norse form. The essential structural difference between the two types of settlement can be emphasised by plotting the floor areas of the buildings on a graph. The sites with Norse longhouses are identified as monastic houses of the 12th or 13th centuries (Lamb 1973); both in their extravagant siting and in their tendency to form pairs, they show an interesting similarity to the earlier variety. In the present paper, the term 'oblong buildings' is reserved for those of the earlier type, and the Norse sites will be referred to as 'longhouse-settlements'.

But not all stack-sites – particularly the ones on very small stacks – have these oblong buildings or longhouses. The N Burri Stack is the most readily studied of these. Another high-banked enclosure around a stack summit occurs at Harrabrough, South Ronaldsay; a peninsular rock, not quite a stack, which can be reached by scrambling down a ledge and across a low saddle from the mainland. The summit is enclosed by a turf or earth parapet which on the land-facing side is 2 m high. Within this enclosure may be made out two possible buildings of indeterminate form. The isolated stacks of Candle of Snelsetter (South Waas) and Castle Mestag (Stroma) may be stone-built versions of Harrabrough. At any rate, the only description of Snelsetter (RCAMS 1946, ii, 341, no. 1019), 'two chambers each with rounded corners or curved faces within a surrounding wall', certainly sounds like it. No one has climbed Mestag, but the Royal Commission's photograph (RCAMS 1911, 21, no. 58) shows an apparently similar structure. Harrabrough, Mestag and Snelsetter form a distinct group and it is possible that they are not monastic, but rather some *unknown kind of fortification or refuge* – unlike the majority of stack sites, they can be imagined as having been joined to the mainland at the time of occupation.

Most small stack-sites are inaccessible and all that is known is that there were structures of some kind upon them. In Shetland are Burgar in Unst; Gloup Holm (possibly a large settlement of the oblong-building or longhouse type) and Aastack in Yell; the Maiden Stack of Eswick; Friarsbrough in Foula; and Clett of Dale, Sandness. In Orkney there are three stack-sites on a short length of cliff-coast of Stronsay – Tams Castle, Malme, and Brough of Burgh Head – and Moustag in Deerness. The coast of Stroma, besides Castle Mestag, has another stack called Flendie Clett (see Appendix for details). The importance of the Burri Stacks of Culswick is that they provide a close association between one of these small stack-sites and a settlement of oblong buildings.

Similar pairings between stack-settlements are observed in a surprising number of cases, sites being regarded by the writer as associated when they occur within a mile of each other on a length of coast, or when sited opposite each other across a narrow stretch of water. Such pair-associations occur between two oblong-building settlements (Kame of Isbister and Birrier

of West Sandwick); an oblong-building and a small stack-site (Burri Stacks); a longhouse-settlement and a small stack (Brough of Deerness and Moustag); two longhouse-settlements (Maiden Stack and Brei Holm); and most interestingly, an oblong-building settlement and a longhouse-settlement (the Clett of Fetlar and Strandibrough). There are two pairs of stacks of which almost nothing is known – Aastack and Gloup Holm, and Castle Mestag and Flendie Clett. The relationship between the two sites in a pair is of historical importance – are we dealing with contemporary occupations of the stacks, or with a sequence, when for some reason the occupation shifts from one stack to another? (Figs 2, 3.)

Dr W Douglas Simpson has suggested one possible relationship, that of a large monastery to a small hermitage used as an occasional retreat by any monk who wanted a spell of solitary meditation. This idea is expressed in the 8th-century ‘Rule of Columcille’ – ‘Be alone in a desert place apart in the neighbourhood of a chief monastery, if you distrust in your conscience to be in the company of many’ (Haddon and Stubbs 1873, II, i, 119; Kenney 1929, 474; Chadwick 1961, 85). Cuthbert’s hermitage stood in this dependent relationship to the monastery of Lindisfarne. The single building (which incidentally is of the same oblong form as the Northern examples) perched eyrie-like on a shoulder of the summit of Sceilg Mhichfíl (Henry 1957) may have been a retreat of this kind. This theory is an attractive explanation of small stack-sites, in that it admits their economic dependence upon a larger establishment. Like an early Byzantine *stylite*, the dweller on the stack would have been passively dependent upon being supplied with food; and there is also the question of access by boat to the foot of the stack. In those waters, no boat could have been left moored at the stack-foot – so the inhabitant would have had to rely on being ferried out by his friends.

Simpson was using this suggestion to explain the enigmatic structures on Dinnacair, a stack in the bay S of Stonehaven, and to relate this stack to the promontory site of Dunnottar (Thompson 1860; Simpson 1968, 2–3). He thought that, if Dunnottar Rock had supported an early monastery, Dinnacair could have been a hermitage dependent upon it. Unfortunately, there is no archaeological evidence from Dunnottar itself, the site being masked by the Castle; and although Pictish symbol stones were taken from Dinnacair early last century, these are indication only of the approximate date of the occupation and do not establish its Christian character. Dinnacair is almost climbable (the writer has got within six feet of the top, and the ascent should present no problem to a skilled cragsman); but from the nearby cliff-top it is possible to see one, and possibly two, circular raised features, which might be very large hut circles or small enclosures. The structure on Moustag, Deerness (RCAMS 1946, ii, 243, no. 628) looks very similar.

Moustag lies 1 mile S of Brough of Deerness; it is an isolated rock in the middle of a small cliff-bound bay. A long narrow ridge projects into the bay, but stops short of the stack; it is not clear whether a rock-bridge existed at the time of occupation. The ridge is a promontory fort, its land end being closed by a massive barrier, which probably is a structure of blockhouse type. If the structure on the stack is not related to the fort, it may be a dependent hermitage of Brough of Deerness, which is a longhouse-settlement. There is a good possibility of an earlier monastic occupation of the Brough, but all the buildings now visible are readily ascribable to the late Norse period.

Two obviously related and probably contemporary settlements of the oblong-building type are the classic *arête*-promontory sites of Kame of Isbister and Birrier of West Sandwick, which face each other across the turbulent waters of Yell Sound. Both sites have such steep slopes down to the sea that the settlements would have been nearly invisible from the land behind each; but each settlement was in view of the other. The Kame is the larger site and has the

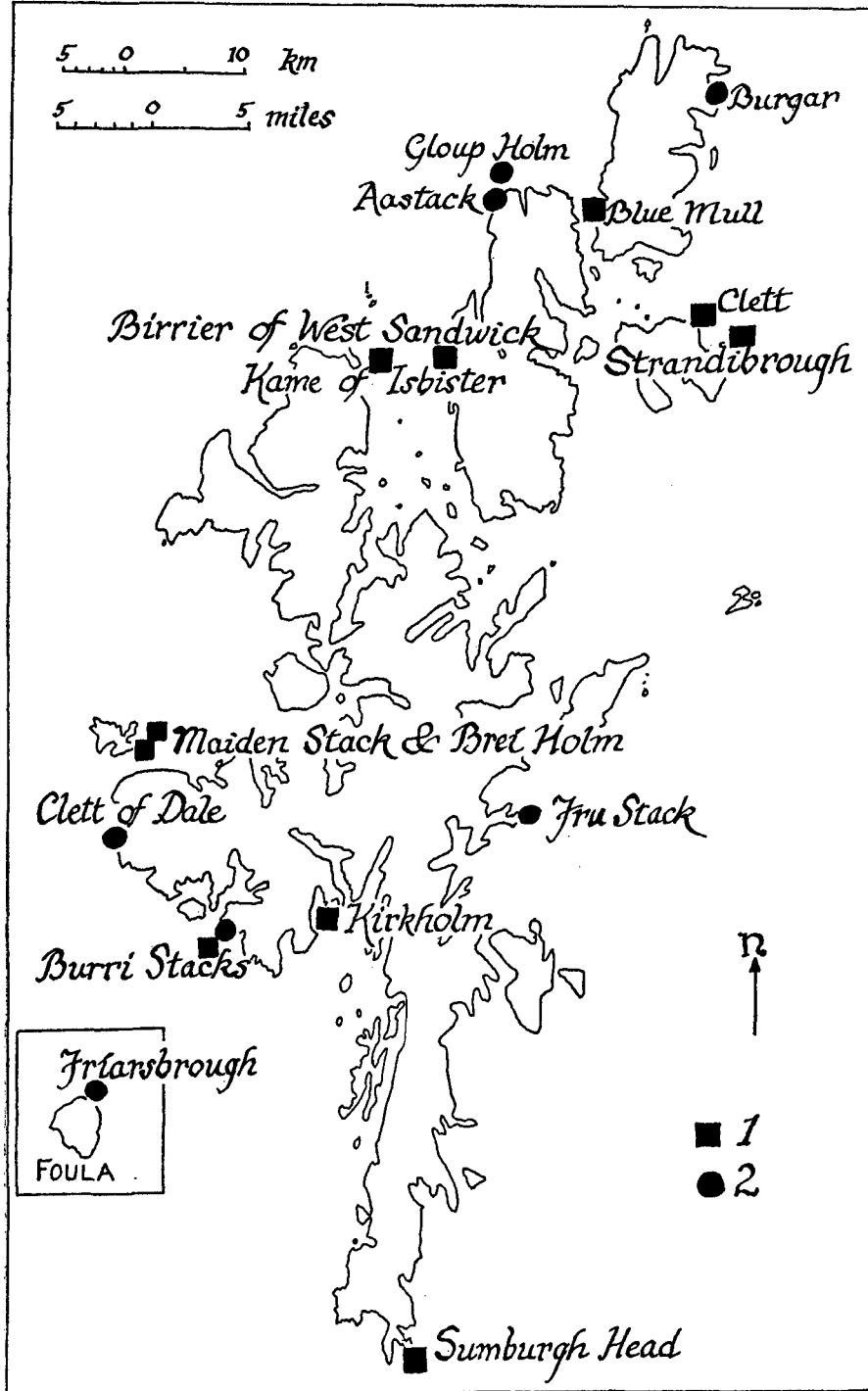


FIG 2 Shetland: stack, arête-promontory, headland and islet sites with oblong buildings or longhouses (1); and stacks bearing structures of other or unknown form (2)

larger buildings, but it is noteworthy that its smallest ones (Lamb 1973, 77, fig 1) form an L-plan closely similar to that at Birrier, where all are of small size. Perhaps this L-plan in each case was the original settlement-nucleus, the larger buildings on the Kame representing subsequent growth? It remains unanswered whether Birrier of West Sandwick and Kame of Isbister were parallel foundations made at the same time, or one was a daughter house of the other.

A very similar topographical relationship exists in Fetlar between Strandibrough and the Clett. The Clett is reputedly climbable on its seaward side, but boat access to its foot is possible only in a flat calm (which has never happened when the writer has been in Fetlar). There is said to be a spring of good water near the summit. The buildings can be seen from the nearby cliff-top, which is higher; but the Clett lies so far offshore that the angle of view is none the less unfavourable. As far as can be judged by telescope, the buildings are of the oblong kind, disposed in an L-plan. Strandibrough is a Norse settlement of longhouses, divided between a headland (the Inner Brough) and a stack (Outer Brough); the rift between them is narrow and a wall, running along the land-facing edge at the point where the sound is narrowest, further suggests that the two parts were once connected by a rock-bridge. But there is still a definite separation of the buildings between groups on the two Broughs. In this case, it may be that Outer Brough (really the *inner* settlement) has the main monastic buildings, while the Inner Brough complex is an outer group comprising farm buildings. There is however a paired settlement of Norse date in Maiden Stack and Brei Holm where this explanation cannot apply because both groups of buildings there are on stacks (Lamb 1973, 86–9, figs 3, 4).

Paired associations between settlements therefore occur within both period-groups and, in the case of Strandibrough-Clett, between sites of different periods. In the earlier paper (1973), the writer treated the oblong-building settlements separately from the Norse sites with longhouses – a division well enough justified by the graph of floor areas there presented. It is clear, however, that the resemblances between the two groups extend beyond a shared preference for extravagantly inaccessible coastal sites; there also are the paired relationships within both groups, with the Strandibrough-Clett situation providing an even more tangible link. The implication is that the two types of settlement, although attributable to different period-contexts, are quite closely related; there is continuity, at any rate, of the tradition of building monasteries on stacks. We may go so far as to suggest that we are in fact dealing with a single class of sites – monastic settlements – which span a long period, encompassing a change in building customs and in the structural form of monasteries.

The historical context of the longhouse-settlements can hardly be other than the 12th or 13th centuries. This late date is first of all suggested by the complex plan of some of the buildings on Strandibrough, Brough of Deerness, and Brough of Birsay; these complex building-plans resemble the monastic buildings on Eynhallow and have good parallels among the Norse farmsteads in Greenland. The layout of the church and immediately associated buildings on the Brough of Birsay has a well-known parallel in Garðar, the episcopal seat of medieval Greenland. The time of greatest vigour of the Church in the Northern Isles was the 12th century, when the Earldom was still enjoying the political power built up by Thorfinn the Mighty (died 1065). The year 1230 saw the end of the direct line of the Norse earls and is regarded as marking the end of the power of the Orkney earldom, although the decline was well advanced before the 12th century was out. But the first half of that century had seen the building of Kirkwall cathedral and the consolidation, under William the Old, of a politically influential Church. Bearing in mind the part played by bishops in the establishment of religious houses in Iceland, it is likely that Bishop William would have done likewise in Orkney; in the absence of documented history, it is reasonable to assume that monasteries would at this time have been established in the

diocese. In Iceland the majority of houses (Jóhannesson 1956, 227-36) have foundation-dates between 1130 and 1230.

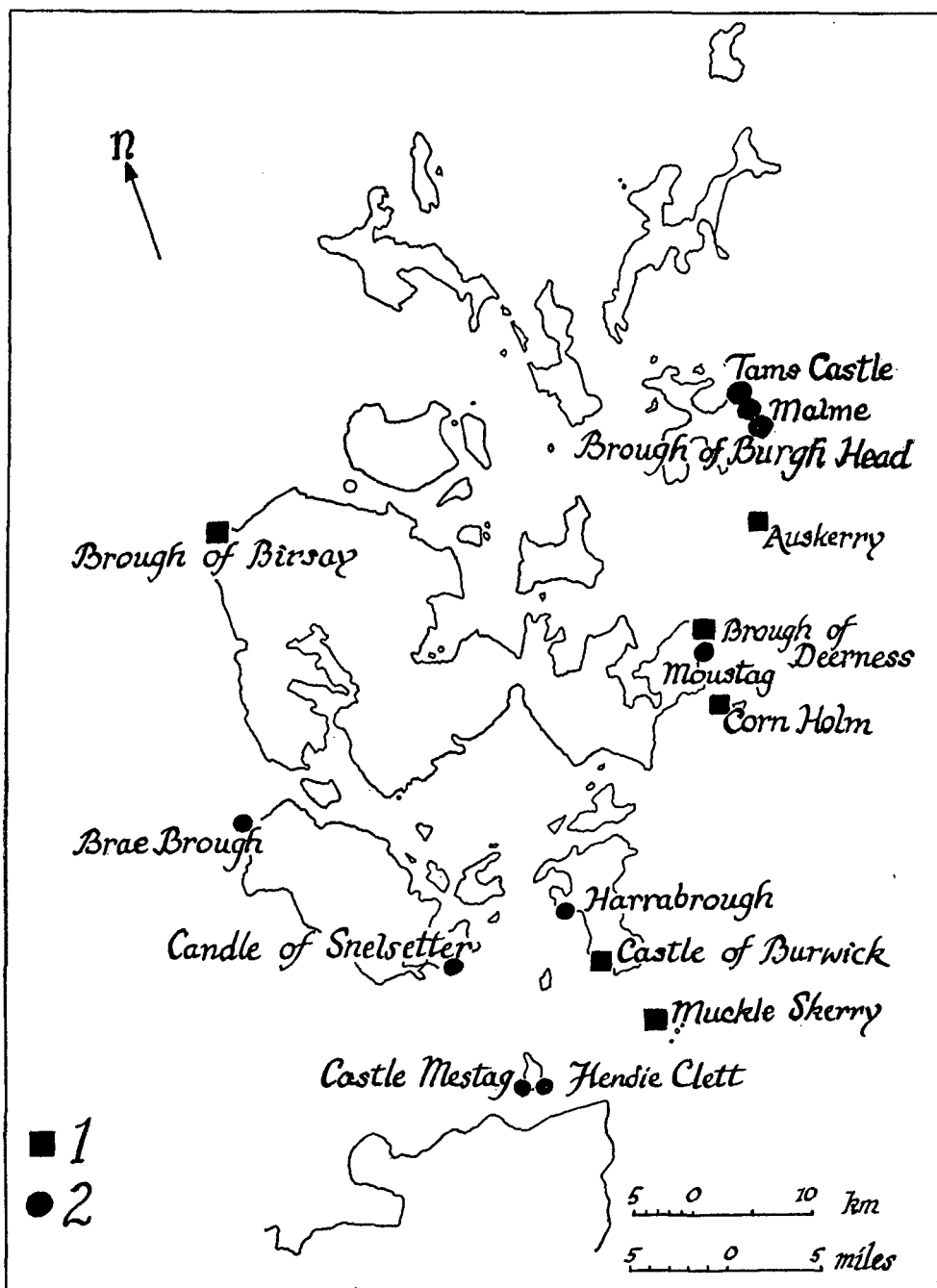


FIG 3 Orkney (with Stroma): stack, headland and islet sites with oblong buildings or longhouses (1); and stacks bearing structures of other or unknown form (2)

In 1973 the writer identified the oblong-building sites as eremitic monasteries or 'communal hermitages' of the Early Christian period, and very tentatively suggested that the very extreme ascetic practices, which they implied, indicated a late date – later, at any rate, than the Culdee revival. The 8th century was suggested as a possible context. Might not their currency extend even later than this? Is it entirely inconceivable that they flourished through the 10th and 11th centuries? We have at the moment precious little evidence, either historical or archaeological, of the state of relations between the Norse farmer-settlers, the indigenous population, and the early Church. In this connection it is worth noting that the eyrisland chapel sites, which are an integral part of the Norse settlement pattern, so often occupy the sites of native iron-age dwellings that one wonders whether they originated as Christian nuclei among the Pictish population.

At the moment, it must be admitted that nothing is known about the relationship between the immigrant Norsemen and whatever of the Church existed in the islands which they colonised, and that the dating of the eremitic monastic settlements is speculative. It can be put no more strongly, than that a 10th- or 11th-century date for the oblong-building settlements would do much to explain their close circumstantial resemblance to the 12th-13th-century Norse monasteries. Some continuity of ideas, if not of actual sites, must be reckoned with. Can we for example imagine that the Clett – the most extravagantly ascetic of all oblong-building settlements – was the direct precursor of Strandibrough, a Norse monastery in a similarly sea-girt but less dangerously exhilarating situation?

There are, of course, limitations to archaeology by telescope. Most of the obvious questions about stack sites remain unanswered. Was the northern Burri Stack of Culswick the lonely desert retreat of some far-northern Cuthbert, with, on the neighbouring stack, a small monastery subsequently established by the holy man's disciples? Or was the small stack-hermitage established as an outpost of the larger settlement? Many important historical problems arising from the interpretation of the sites as religious houses will only be solved when the practical difficulties of getting on to, surveying and eventually excavating stack sites have been tackled and overcome.

#### *'Maiden' Stacks*

Just as in England and Scotland the name 'Maiden Castle' is given to more than one hill-fort, so in Shetland there were certainly two, and possibly three, stacks called Maiden Stack. To two of these are attached folktales which strongly suggest that the maiden in each case was a nun or anchoress.

The best-known story is that attached to the Maiden Stack of Papa Stour (the twin of Brei Holm) as retailed by Samuel Hibbert:

One of these insulated rocks, named *Frau-a-stack* or the Lady's Stack – accessible to none but the best of climbers – is crowned on the summit by the remains of a small building, that was originally built by a Norwegian Lady, to preserve herself from the solicitations of suitors, when she had entered into a vow of pure celibacy. The ascent to the house was considered almost unsurmountable, except by the help of ropes. But a dauntless lover, an udaller from Islesburgh, contrived in the dark secrecy of evening to scale the stack, and, after the first surprise was overcome, so far ingratiated himself in the fair devotee's affections that, in a fatal hour, she was induced

To trust the opportunity of night  
And the ill counsel of a desert place  
With the rich worth of her virginity.



When the consequence of the Lady's faux pas could no longer be concealed, Frau-a-stack became the scoff of the island, and was deserted by its fair and frail tenant. The house was soon afterwards unroofed and reduced to ruin, in contempt of the vow of chastity that had been broken' (Hibbert 1822, 285).

It is notable that Hibbert gives the name in a Norse form, followed by a translation, the 'Lady's Stack'. *Frau-a-stack* suggests a genitive form, *frúar*, although *frú*, which is probably a contracted form of *freyja*, in old sources is indeclinable in the singular, the genitive *frúar* first appearing in a 15th-century manuscript (Cleasby and Vigfusson 1874, 175).

The name *Fru Stack* appears on the Ordnance Survey map against the stack off the Mull of Eswick, called by Cowie the Maiden Stack:

'Facing the bluff point of the Mull of Eswick, and immediately under it, the Maiden Stack rises precipitately out of the sea. Some ruins crown its narrow but lofty top. These are said at one time to have formed the abode of a fair damsel, who was banished to this aerial prison in order to ensure separation from some lover who was obnoxious to her relentless father. The gallant Norseman, nothing daunted, scaled the cliffs, carried off his fair prize, and left to posterity the name *Maiden Stack*' (Cowie 1871, 183).

Off the N coast of Foula is a stack named by Anderson in his 1873 list of brochs (1890), and described by Muir in 1885. Anderson states that the structure on the stack had been destroyed by idlers climbing up and throwing the stones into the sea; Muir calls it a 'ruinated burgh'. Evidently the structure was in very bad condition, and it is very unlikely that it was a broch (for which a stack is a most unlikely site). Probably the name *brough* (alias *broch* – *brough*, *broch* and *burgh* being different modern spellings of the same local word, derived from Old Norse *borg*) applied to the stack itself rather than to the structure upon it. Both Anderson and Muir got their information first-hand, from oral sources, and both wrote down the specific name of the stack as *Friars*.

It is most improbable that this really is the English word *friar* (traceable to Middle English *frere*, Old English *frère*, Latin *frater*). We do not, it is true, have any way of knowing that this word did not exist in late medieval Shetland Norn; but it is not present in any other of the Scandinavian languages which make do with one word (modern Icelandic *munkur*, Danish *munk*) for both monks and friars. It is much more likely that the Foula stack is another Maiden Stack, this time preserving the uncontracted form of the noun, *freyja*.

## APPENDIX

List of stack and related settlements in Shetland and Orkney and on the north coast of Scotland

### 1 *Stack, arête-promontory, headland and islet sites known to have oblong buildings or longhouses*

*Blue Mull*, Unst, Shetland. NGR HP 556046. High, flat-topped headland approached up steep slope; seven oblong buildings. Low 1879, 157; Hibbert 1822, 398; Ordnance Survey Card Index HP 50 SE 19.

*Strandibrough*, Fetlar, Shetland. NGR HU 6793. Headland and offshore stack, both with groups of longhouses. OS card index HU 69 SE 1; Lamb 1973.

*The Clett*, Fetlar, Shetland. NGR HU 642945. Spectacular stack with oblong buildings visible from mainland. RCAMS 1946, iii, 161, no. 1229.

*Birrier of West Sandwick*, Yell, Shetland. NGR HU 439913. Arête promontory with 14 oblong buildings. OS card index HU 49 SW 1; Lamb 1973.

*Kame of Isbister*, Northmavine, Shetland. NGR HU 382915. Arête promontory with 19 oblong buildings (23 were reported in 1876; site was accessible by cliff-path until 1930). Gordon 1878; OS card index HU 39 SE 4; Lamb 1973.

*Maiden Stack and Brei Holm*, Papa Stour, Shetland. NGR HU 1960. Two neighbouring stacks both with longhouses. Hibbert 1822, 285; RCAMS 1946, iii, 156, no. 1704; OS card index HU 16 SE 2; Lamb 1973.

*Kirkholm*, Sandsting, Shetland. NGR HU 337460. Steep-sided islet with group of eight oblong buildings. Low 1879, 85; RCAMS 1946, iii, 111, no. 1460.

*Burri Stacks*, Culswick, Shetland. NGR HU 260441. Oblong buildings on one of two stacks in Burri Geo; subject of this paper.

*Sumburgh Head*, Dunrossness, Shetland. NGR HU 408080. Oblong buildings similar to those on Blue Mull reported by Low 1879, 185. These were destroyed when the lighthouse was built.

*Auskerry*, Stronsay, Orkney. NGR HY 677161. Small island with chapel site. Longhouses seen there by Mr E V Macgillivray, formerly County Librarian in Kirkwall (personal communication).

*Brough of Deerness*, Orkney. NGR HY 596087. Now virtually an island, at time of occupation was probably a promontory. Large settlement of longhouses surrounding stone-built oratory. Low 1879, 55; RCAMS 1946, ii, 240, no. 621; Radford 1962, 167; Lamb 1973.

*Corn Holm or Kirkholm*, Deerness, Orkney. NGR HY 5901. Thirteen square to oblong buildings observed with difficulty by writer in thick turf; more probably exist. Low 1879, 47; Mooney 1926, 28; RCAMS 1946, ii, 250, no. 672; Lamb 1973.

*Brough of Birsay*, Orkney. NGR HY 239285. Tidal island with church and large settlement of longhouses and other buildings. RCAMS 1946, ii, 1–4, no. 1; Radford 1959; Cruden 1958 and 1965; Lamb 1974.

*Castle of Burwick*, South Ronaldsay, Orkney. NGR ND 435843. Iron-age multivallate promontory fort with ill-defined row of oblong buildings badly obscured by vegetation. Low 1879, 28.

*Muckle Skerry*, Orkney. NGR ND 4678. A very inaccessible island amid the tide-races of the Pentland Firth. Briefly visited by writer, during heavy rain, in August 1972. Large longhouse-like foundation on promontory called Broti Ber; footing of rectilinear stone building (? conjoined oratory and cell) surrounded by possible oblong-building footings, beside track leading to lighthouse.

*Borve Castle*, Farr, Sutherland. NGR NC 725642. At the seaward end of the castle promontory, quite separate from the castle buildings grouped near the isthmus, is detectable a group of oblong buildings similar to those on Blue Mull. For castle, RCAMS 1911, 89, no. 264.

*Aodann Mhor*, Durness, Sutherland. NGR NC 408693. Arête promontory with terraced square and oblong hut-platforms. Lamb 1973.

## 2 *Stacks bearing structures other than oblong buildings or longhouses, and stacks with structures of unknown form*

*Burgar*, Norwick, Unst, Shetland. NGR HP 661140. Arête promontory, almost a stack. Surface of summit looks hummocky. Locally said to be site of 'Picts' Houses'.

*Gloup Holm*, Yell, Shetland. NGR HP 486062. A precipitously high, inaccessible islet. 'Little houses' on summit reported by proprietor, Irvine, 1897 (papers in Library of Society of Antiquaries of Scotland).

*Aastack*, West Neaps, Yell, Shetland. NGR HP 477044. Stack 40 m high with substantial bank visible along landward edge.

*Clett of Dale*, Sandness, Shetland. NGR HU 169522. Stack with turf dyke along landward edge, and very hummocky surface.

*Friarsbrough*, Foula, Shetland. NGR HT 9541. Stack reported as site of 'ruinated burgh' by Muir 1885, 166–7.

*Burri Stacks*, Culswick, Shetland. NGR HU 260442. The landward of the two stacks has a building within an enclosure, described in this paper.

*Fru (or Maiden) Stack*, Eswick, Shetland. NGR HU 502535. Narrow stack with buildings; tradition of incarcerated virgin. Cowie 1871, 183.

(*Holm of Noss*, Bressay, Shetland. NGR HU 550391. Find of cross-slab on stack was mentioned by the writer (Lamb 1973, 84) following erroneous statement by Thomas 1971, 118–19. It now appears that the cross-slab came from the old kirkyard on Noss itself, and not from Holm of Noss.)

*Brough of Burgh Head*, Stronsay, Orkney. NGR HY 699228. Large stack with strong stone wall along land-facing side, through which is a wide gateway very similar to that at Brough of Deerness.

*Malme*, Stronsay, Orkney. NGR HY 686244. Walling visible in disturbed ground on land-facing side of inaccessible stack.

*Tams Castle*, Stronsay, Orkney. NGR HY 689234. Sub-rectangular drystone enclosures on stack summit. OS card index HY 62 SE 20.

*Moustag*, Deerness, Orkney. NGR HY 593074. Apparently circular feature on stack summit.

*Harrabrough*, South Ronaldsay, Orkney. NGR ND 415904. Peninsular rock, almost a stack. Substantial enclosure and possible buildings on summit.

*Candle of Snelsetter*, South Waas, Orkney. NGR ND 323886. Massive stone structure on stack summit. RCAMS 1946, ii, 341, no. 1019.

*Castle Mestag*, Stroma, Caithness. NGR ND 340764. Stone structure similar to Candle of Snelsetter. RCAMS 1911, 21, no. 58.

*Flendie Clett*, Stroma, Caithness. NGR ND 359766. Walling visible on stack summit. OS card index ND 37 NW/NE 8.

### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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