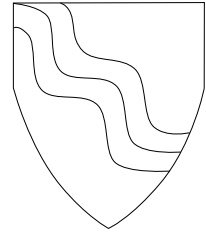


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# Place names in Orkney from 16th- and 17th-century maps



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For this project, I recorded the Orkney Island placenames found on maps published in the second half of the sixteenth century and the first half of the seventeenth century. I compared those spellings to modern Ordnance Survey maps.

Nearly all placenames in Orkney are of Scandinavian origin, and very few are of Gaelic origin. Norse migration from the North completely superseded the previous, Pictish inhabitants of the islands. Especially characteristic are suffixes of Old Norse origin; *-ay* (meaning 'island'), *-holm* (meaning 'round topped or grassy islet') and *-skerry* (meaning 'rocky islet').

## The maps

I have organized the period maps at my disposal into two categories: those based upon early sixteenth century data, and those based upon the survey of Timothy Pont in the 1580s and 1590s. Maps in the former category were published in the late 16th C and very early 17th C. For simplicity sake, I refer to these maps as "16th-C Maps". Maps of the latter category were all published in the 17th C, after Pont's death. I refer to these maps as "17th-C Maps".

### 16th C maps

In the "16th-C Maps" category are the maps of Abraham Ortelius, Gerhard Mercator, and John Speed. These maps are based upon documentation completed in the early sixteenth century, which is now lost. In his article, "A History of Orkney Maps", John Chesters theorizes that Ortelius' map, circa 1575, was based upon an early draft of Gerhard Mercator's. The surviving Mercator map, published 1595 is slightly improved over that of Ortelius, but largely similar. While Chesters does not talk about John Speed's 1610 map, an examination of the coastal lines and placename spellings suggests that his map is related to Mercator's as well.

The general inaccuracy of shorelines on these earlier maps can make drawing parallels with modern maps very difficult. Particularly vexing is the tendency to label parishes, which can be very hard to find because the

churches have generally fallen into disuse and ruin. Many have disappeared entirely. However it is somewhat humorous to note the repetition of the church names, “Our Lady” and “St Peter’s”, on island after island. There were three “Our Lady” churches on the Orkney Mainland alone!

Mercator, Gerhard (1512–1594). “Scotiae Regnum [north sheet] per Gerardum Mercatorem” printed 1595. This map presents northern Scotland, the Orkney Islands, and the western Scottish islands in fine detail. A majority of the Orkney Islands are indicated with shorelines which do not closely match those of modern maps. As one follows the map northward, the shorelines become more and more vague. As is typical of sixteenth century maps, Mercator indicates the locations of several parishes and a few towns.

Ortelius, Abraham, (1527–1598). “Scotiae tabula / Abraham Ortelius” printed circa 1575. This is a truly beautiful map. While of a smaller scale than Mercator’s map, this map makes an equal attempt to name all the islands and the towns and parishes in the islands. It does a better job of naming waterways between the islands, which the cartographer calls ‘roads’. This map is oriented with west at the top of the page.

Speed, John (1552?–1629). “The Kingdome of Scotland / performed by Iohn Speed” printed 1610 [1627 issue?]. Though published in 1610, coastlines and spellings are consistent with the maps published in the last quarter of the sixteenth century. Speed’s rendering of the Orkney Islands is very similar to Mercator’s, though at a smaller scale. Here the entire kingdom of Scotland is shown on a single sheet, the Orkney Islands being removed to an inset map in the upper right-hand corner of the sheet. Speed did not use Latinized names as other cartographers tended to (e.g., *The Yles of Orknay* rather than Mercator’s *ORCADES Insulæ*). Otherwise, the placenames are very similar to those of Mercator and Ortelius.

### 17th C maps

The second category of maps consists of those based upon Pont’s survey in the late sixteenth century. The earliest of these were prepared in the early seventeenth century and consist of the maps of Blaeu and Hondius. It is not clear whether one copied the other as competing publishing houses raced to publish their new maps. Despite the seventeenth century publication date, it is reasonable to assume that the spellings on the map are indicative of spellings from Pont’s time, at the end of the sixteenth century.

Pont’s influence on maps throughout the seventeenth century is easy to spot:

1. An improvement in the accuracy of the shorelines, except for the errors described in 2 and 3, below.
2. Due to a Renaissance copy-and-paste error, the north-western-most islands are rotated ninety degrees counter-clockwise from their proper

orientation. This error was copied from one cartographer to the next, throughout the 17th C and occasionally even into the 18th C.

3. A more subtle defect is the under-representation of the western highlands of the Orkney Mainland.
4. Finally, the characteristic spelling, *Øy* (Norse for ‘island’) on a majority of the larger islands.

Blaeu, John (Dutch, 1596–1673) and Gordon, Robert (English, 1580–1661). “*Scotia regnum cum insulis adjacentibus / Robertus Gordonius a Straloch descripsit*” published 1654 (Blaeu’s *Atlas Maior of 1654*). Though published in 1654, the engraving for this map was prepared by Willem Blaeu before 1628 [J. Chesters, in “A History of Orkney Maps” indicates this date is from “Moir (1973), *The Early Maps of Scotland*. Volume 1. p. 43, The Royal Scottish Geographical Society, Edinburgh”] This map of Orkney appears in a large inset map, along with the Shetland Islands. Additionally, the southern Orkney Islands are seen at the top of the main sheet map of Northern Scotland. The map has very fine detail and legibility. The characteristics of Pont’s survey are evident.

Hondius, Hendrik (Dutch, 1597–1651). “*Scotae pars septentrionalis*” engraved 1636 (the print I have access to was published 1662). As opposed to Blaeu’s engraving, the Orkney Islands on Hondius’ map are in the same frame as the rest of Northern Scotland. Due to this, the scale is smaller, detail is reduced and fewer placenames are listed. As with Blaeu, the northern islands are misaligned and the island names end in *Øy*.

### Modern maps

For modern reference I used the mapping system of the Ordinance Survey. This institution began in the nineteenth century, and set out to carefully map *everything* in the British Isles. I appreciate their commitment.

Ordinance Survey. Get-a-map™ (<http://www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk/oswebsite/getamap/>) ©2007. This is my primary source for modern spellings. This web-based application allows users to scroll about modern Ordinance Survey maps, at varying scales. The maps are extremely detailed for terrestrial features. They indicate topographical information, roads, and the locations of some buildings and other spots of historical interest. The maps are, unfortunately, somewhat less useful for determining names of water features between the islands. Also, the Get-a-map™ interface itself is very small, making one feel as though they are reading a map through a keyhole.

### Placenames list

This list of placenames is generally organized first by “major” island, starting with the Orkney Mainland. Each major island heads its own section.

Following the entry for the main island are any islands, towns, parishes or other features in the area in alphabetical order.

### How to read each placename entry

The **modern name** of the place appears first, if I can determine it, based upon the placename on the Ordinance Survey maps or in some other source, which will be indicated under “Notes”, below. If the attribution is questionable, a “?” appears after the name. If not known at all, the entry appears as **unknown church**, **unknown town**, etc. This is followed by a description of where in the islands the place is found.

**16th C:** This is the placename as listed on maps by Mercator, Ortelius or Speed. Text in *italics* indicate the spelling as it appears on the period map. Labels in [brackets] indicate the map (or maps) on which the preceding spelling appears.

**17th C:** This is the placename as listed on maps by Blaeu or Hondius. Text in *italics* indicate the spelling as it appears on the period map. Labels in [brackets] indicate the map (or maps) on which the preceding spelling appears. The Southern Orkney Islands appear twice on Blaeu’s map, once in an inset map, and also at the top of the main Scotland map. If spellings differ in these two places, I indicate first the spelling in the inset, then the spelling on the main sheet.

**Notes:** Under this label I place etymological information about the placename, discuss my logic in determining the modern placename, and admit any concerns I have about my accuracy.

### Abbreviations

**betw.** between

**C** Central

**E** East or Eastern

**G** Gaelic

**m-d** modern-day

**N** North or Northern

**ON** Old Norse

**S** South or Southern

**W** West or Western

### The region of the Orkney Islands

**Orkney Islands** Island chain. North of Scottish Mainland. **16th C:** *ORCADES Insulæ The Yles of Orknay* [9], *ORCADES INSVLÆ the isles of Orknay* [11], *The Yles of Orknay* [14]. **17th C:** *ORCADES INSULÆ* and *Orcadum Insular um pars* [1], *ORCADES Insulæ The Yles*

of *Orknay* [7]. **Notes:** The name of the island chain is ancient with the spelling *Orkas* dated to 330 B.C., and refers to the Pictish tribe, also called *the Ores* [3, p. 267, s.n. Orkney]. *Orka-* might be a Norse genitive plural and *Orkahaugr* could be taken as the ‘howe of the Orks’ [8].

### Mainland Orkney and vicinity

**Mainland Orkney** Island. Considered the “center” of the Orkney Islands.

**16th C:** *Pomonia ye Mainland or S. Magnus yle* [9], *Mayuelande* [11], *Pomonia* [14]. **17th C:** *Pomonia Ins. hodie Mainland* and *Maynland* [1], *Pomonia* [7]. **Notes:** Johnstone lists three possible (though doubtful) origins for *Pomona*, a name that is rarely seen today [3, pp. 276–77, s.n. Pomona]. *S. Magnus yle* refers to Magnus Erlendsson, first Earl of Orkney, martyred c. 1115. On Thomasso Poracci’s map (1572): *Meilan*.

**Ayre, Bay of and Ayre, Loch of (St Mary’s)** Village. SE Mainland.

**16th C:** *Air* [9, 14]. **Notes:** It appears that there is no longer a village of Ayre. Since the time of these maps, the town has become known as *St Mary’s*, after the nearby church, which is also listed on maps by Mercator and Speed. Water features in the area are still known by the name *Ayre*. See also: *St Mary’s*.

**Bay of Kirkwall & Wide Firth** Waterway N of Kirkwall, Mainland.

**17th C:** *Kirckwald road* [11]. **Notes:** See *Kirkwall*, below. [11] refers to navigable channels as “roads”. The label on [11] map appears to serve to identify both the town and waterway.

**Birsay, Brough of** Tidal islet. Off the W coast of Mainland, connected

at low tide by Brough Sounds. **16th C:** *Birsa* [9], *Birza* [14]. **17th C:** *Byrsa* [1], *Bjrsra* [7]. **Notes:** Period maps draw Birsay as an islet with no indication of connection to the Mainland.

**Breckan?** Church and/or Village (Our Lady #1). NE Mainland. **16th**

**C:** *Brencks* [9], *Orlady* [11], *Our Lady* [14]. **Notes:** Based solely on the general location on pre-Pont maps and the unique annotation on Mercator’s map, I took a guess this might refer to modern-day Breckan. I am not, however, overly confident in that attribution.

**Bring Deeps** Channel between Mainland and Hoy. **16th C:** *S Margret*

*roade* [11].

**Clumlie? Cumbra?** Church. W Mainland (Sandwick area?). **16th C:** *S.*

*Columban* [9, 11, 14]. **Notes:** In [8, p. 15], Hugh Marwick associates St Columbia (Columban) with *Clumlie*, a place he describes as “near Sandwick”. The Ordinance Maps show Clumlie S of Sandwick, and Cumbra, W of Sandwick.

- Copinsay** Islet E of Mainland **16th C:** *Kobunsa* [9], *Kobunza* [11, 14], **17th C:** *Coupins Oÿ* [1, 7]. **Notes:** Kolbein's or Colvin's isle [3, p. 139, s.n. Copinshay], Thomaso Poracci's map (1572): *Cobonsay*.
- Eynhallow** Islet. Between W Mainland and Rousay (in Eynhallow Sound). **16th C:** *Enhallo* [9]. **17th C:** *Alhallow* [1]. **Notes:** From ON for 'holy isle' [3, p. 173, s.n. Enhallow]. Due to distortion of W Mainland on maps based upon Pont's survey, Eynhallow appears much closer to the open sea than on earlier (and modern) maps.
- Firth, Bay of (and Grimbister)** Town? Mainland, W of Kirkwall. **17th C:** *Fyrth* [1]. **Notes:** *Firth* is a variant of *fjord* [3, p. 180, s.n. Firth]. Grimbister is situated on the Bay of Firth, which corresponds with the location on Blaeu's map.
- Foubister** Village. E Mainland. **17th C:** *Fowbuster* [1]. **Notes:** *Bister* is one of many derivations of ON *bolstaðr*, 'a dwelling-place' [3, p. 42]. Nothing to add for *fou-*.
- Gairsay** Islet. Off the N coast of Mainland, in the Gairsay Sound. **16th C:** *Gersoy* [9, 11]. **17th C:** *Gres Oÿ* [1]. **Notes:** 'Garek's island' [3, p. 185]. Thomaso Poracci's map (1572): *Grisay*.
- Graemsay?** Islet. Off the SW coast of Mainland between Mainland and Burray, in the Clestrain Sound. **16th C:** *Grainza* [9, 11], *Grisay* [14]. **17th C:** *Carestonholm* and *Careston holm* [1] **Notes:** Blaeu's map appears to label modern-day Graemsay. It seems reasonable that this may have been an older name and gave its name to the Clestrain Sound.
- Kirkwall** Town. Located on the isthmus midway across the Mainland. The capitol of the Orkney Islands. **16th C:** *Kirkwall* [9], *Kirkwald* [11], *Kirkwal* [14]. **17th C:** *Kirkwale* and *Kirkwall* [1], *Kirkewale* [7]. **Notes:** From ON for 'church on the bay' [3, p. 230].
- Lamb Holm** Islet. Off the SE coast of Mainland between Mainland and Hoy. **16th C:** *Glownsholme* [9], *Glown shome* [14]. **17th C:** *Labholm* [1]. **Notes:** *Holme* is a borrowing of common ON word *holmr* 'an island' [3, p. 203, s.n. Holm].
- Mull Head or Mull of Deerness** Point at Extreme NE Mainland. **17th C:** *Mul of Deerness* [1]. **Notes:** *Mull* is from G. "brow of a rock, cape" [3, p. 259, s.n. Mull of Deerness or Moulhead]. Johnstone also guesses Deerness is from N. for 'door-like', describing a recess in the headland there [3, p. 154, s.n. Deerness].
- Papley** SW Mainland. **17th C:** *Papla* [1], *Papley* [7]. **Notes:** Could not find on Ordinance Maps, though Johnstone mentions it. 'Little island of the priest'? [3, p. 269, s.n.n. Papill, Papley].

- Rendall** Town. On the N coast of the Mainland, W of the Bay of Firth. **17th C:** *Rendal* [1]. **Notes:** From ON for ‘stream valley’ [3, p. 283].
- Saint Dotto’s Church** Church or Monastery. Near Kirkwall. Mercator places the church NE of Kirkwall, Ortelius NW. **16th C:** *S. Dotto* [9, 11]. **Notes:** Saint Dotto’s church is said to exist today, but I could not find it on maps. It was named for a 9th Century abbot of a monastery in the Orkney Islands.
- Saint Magnus Church** Church. In Birsay, W Mainland. **16th C:** *S. Magnus* [9, 14], *S. Magionis* [11]. **Notes:** Not to be confused with Saint Magnus’ Cathedral in Kirkwall. The ruins of Saint Magnus Church are situated near ruins of Earl’s Palace. Named for Magnus Erlendsson, Earl of Orkney, who ruled half of the islands, but was slain by his brother Haakon’s men [17].
- Sandside** Village. NE Mainland. **17th C:** *Sandset* [1], *Sanset* [7]. **Notes:** From similar names, it does seem that *sand* is cognate with the English word [3, p. 290].
- Scalpa Flow** Betw. Mainland, Hoy and S-Ronaldsay. **16th C:** *Scalpa road* [9], *Ye road of Scalpa* [11]. **Notes:** *Scalpa* comes from ON *skálpr*, ‘boat’ [3, p. 299, s.n. Scalpa, Scalpay].
- St Mary’s** . Town named after its church (Our Lady #2). SE Mainland. **16th C:** *Owr Lady* [9], *Our Lady* [14]. **Notes:** The town has since taken on the name of the church. See also: *Ayre, Bay of & Ayre, Loch of*.
- Weyland** Village. Originally NE of Kirkwall, now absorbed into the larger town. **17th C:** *Wiland* [1]. **Notes:** ‘Land by the road(way)’? [3, p. 323, s.n. Weydale].
- Unknown islet** W of Gairsay on Mercator’s map, betw. Mainland and Gairsay on Ortelius’ map. **16th C:** *Gersol* [9], *Gershhol* [11]. **Notes:** Grass Holm is near Gairsay, though not particularly near the island indicated on either Mercator’s or Ortelius’ maps.
- Unknown village** On Gairsay. **17th C:** *Lie* [7].
- Unknown village** S coast of Mainland. **16th C:** *Linknes* [9, 14]. **Notes:** Unless a major error was made, this can’t be Modern day Linksness, as that town is on Hoy, not the Mainland. Judging by map location alone, this appears to refer to modern-day Midland Ness.
- Unknown church** (Our Lady #3). W Mainland. **16th C:** *Owr Lady vel S. Maria* [9], *Orlady* [11], *Our Lady* [14]. **Notes:** This is not to be confused with the other two ‘Our Lady’ churches listed on the Mainland on early maps.

**Unknown church** Stromness area, SW Mainland. **16th C:** *S. Brandao* [9, 14], *S. Brando* [11]. **Notes:** Strictly judging by its location on the 16th-C maps, this church was near or in m-d Stromness.

**Unknown church** On Pre-Pont maps, this church is situated E of Kirkwall. **16th C:** *S. Niclas* [9], *S. Nicola* [11], *S. Nichalas* [14]. **Notes:** There are remains of a St Nicholas's Church in Orphir, but that is far from the point indicated on the 16th-C maps.

### Hoy and vicinity

**Hoy** Island. S Orkney Islands. **16th C:** *Hoy* [9, 11, 14]. **17th C:** *Hoy* [1, 7]. **Notes:** from ON for 'high isle' [3, p. 205], referring to the highlands in W Hoy. On Thomaso Poracci's map (1572): *Hoye*.

**Brabuster?** Village. Western coast of Hoy. **17th C:** *Braburgh* and *Braburg* [1], *Brabrug* [7].

**Brim** Village. S Hoy. **17th C:** *Brimms* and *Brim* [1]. **Notes:** From the ON word for 'surf' [3, p. 115].

**Bu** Village. N Hoy (Just northwest of town of Hoy). **17th C:** *Bow* [7]. **Notes:** Perhaps the ON word *bú* 'farm, farm stock, cattle' [3, p. 113, s.n. Bowhill]. Bu Hill overlooks the village.

**Calf of Flotta** Islet. Just off the N coast of Flotta. **16th C:** *Calf of Flatta* [9], *Calfa* [11]. **Notes:** For origin of *Flotta*, see Flotta (island) below. *Calf* is ON cognate with the English word. Hence, the small island is the 'calf' of the larger [3, p. 121, s.n. Calf].

**Cava?** Islet. On Mercator's map, located just W of Fara. **16th C:** *Raua* [9]. **Notes:** Connection with modern-day Cava is based strictly on comparing relative locations of islets on Mercator's maps and modern maps. I do not have a high degree of confidence in the connection.

**Fara** Islet. Off E Coast of Hoy. **16th C:** *Fara* [9], *Faro* [11]. **17th C:** *Far(a)* and *Fara* [1], *Fara* [7]. **Notes:** On Blaeu's inset map the word is not legible, and appears almost like *Farn*. It seems that the islet has been uninhabited since the 1930s.

**Flotta** Islet. Off E Coast of Hoy. **16th C:** *Flatta* [9, 11, 14]i. **17th C:** *Flotta* [1, 7]. **Notes:** From ON for 'fleet island' [3, p. 181]. On Thomaso Poracci's map (1572): *Flata*.

**Hoy** Town. N Hoy (island). **16th C:** *Hoy* [9, 11, 14]. **Notes:** Town is named after the island. See also: Hoy (island) above.

**Hoy Hills** W Hoy. **16th C:** *The Hilles of Hoy Orcas Droment* [9]. **Notes:** The Hoy Hills include Ward Hill, the highest point in the Orkney Islands.



**Ore Farm (and Ore Bay)** Village. NW Hoy. **17th C:** *Ore* [7]. **Notes:** Perhaps from ON for ‘grey’ [3, p. 267, s.nn. Orr, Ore Water].

**Rackwick** Village. SW Hoy. **17th C:** *Rackwyk* and *Rakwyck* [1]. **Notes:** From ON, *rack* ‘seaweed’, *wick* (or *vic*) ‘bay’ [3, p. 281].

**Rysa Little?** Islet. On Mercator’s map, it is between Hoy and Raua. **16th C:** *Danza* [9]. **Notes:** Connection with modern-day Rysa Little is based strictly on comparing relative locations of islets on Mercator’s maps and Ordinance Survey maps. I do not have a high degree of confidence in the connection.

**Switha** Islet. E of Hoy. **17th C:** *Southa* [1, 7]. **Notes:** Uninhabited (Wikipedia).

**Unknown church** S Hoy. **16th C:** *Owr Lady* [9], *Orlady* [11], *Our Lady* [14].

**Unknown village** SE Hoy. **17th C:** *Snelster* [1], *Saelster* [7]. **Notes:** While nearby to modern-day Saltness, I doubt any connection exists.

**Unknown church** N Hoy. **16th C:** *S. Peter* [9, 11, 14].

**Unknown village** S Hoy. **16th C:** *Ways* [9, 14], *Wase* [11].

### South Ronaldsay and vicinity

**South Ronaldsay** Island. S of E-Mainland. **16th C:** *Soutrowassa insula* [9], *Soutrouassa* [11], *Soutroassa Ile* [14]. **17th C:** *South Ranalds Oy* [1], *South Ranals Oy* [7]. **Notes:** ‘Island of Ronald or Rognvald’. Note that S- and N-Ronaldsay derive from different names [3, p. 286, s.nn. Ronalds(h)ay, N. and S.].

**Burray** Island between Mainland and S Ronaldsay. Today it is part of a bridge system connecting the two major islands. **16th C:** *Barra* [9, 14]. **17th C:** *Burra* [1, 7]. **Notes:** Johnstone [3, p. 118, s.n. Burra] describes an island in Shetland. ON for ‘castle firth or bay’, from *borg*, ‘a fort’. I can only guess that perhaps this Burray shares etymology with the other.

**Cara** W coast of S-Ronaldsay. **17th C:** *Cara* [1, 7]. [6] indicates that the surname *Cara* is dated from the 16th C and derives from the placename.

**Hunda** Islet. Off the W shore of Burray. **16th C:** *Hunder* [9]. **17th C:** *Hunda* [1].

**Saint Margaret’s Hope** Town. N S-Ronaldsay. **17th C:** *S Margarets hope* [1]. **Notes:** Per [16], St Margaret’s Hope is where the ship of Margaret, Maid of Norway, went aground in a storm. Margaret was sole heir to the Scottish crown and was on her way to marry Prince

Edward of England. Unfortunately, she passed away here at the age of eight before being able to continue her journey.

**Saint Mary's Church or The South Church** In Burwick, S S-Ronaldsay.

**16th C:** *Owr Lady* [9], *Orlady* [11], *Or. Lady* [14]. **Notes:** Per [5], locals refer to Saint Mary's as "The South Church" as opposed to Saint Peter's, "The North Church".

**Saint Peter's Church or The North Church** N S-Ronaldsay. **16th C:**

*S. Peter* [9, 11, 14]. **Notes:** Per [5], locals refer to Saint Peter's as "The North Church" as opposed to Saint Mary's, "The South Church".

**Swona** Islet. SW of S-Ronaldsay. **16th C:** *Sewunas* [9], *Sownas* [11],

*Sownas* [14]. **17th C:** *Souna* and *Sowna* [1], *Souna* [7]. **Notes:** From ON for 'swineherd island' [3, p. 305]. Uninhabited.

### Pentland Firth and vicinity

**Pentland Firth** Channel separating the Orkney Islands from Caithness,

to the S. **16th C:** *Pinthlande* [9], *Pithland Fjyrth* [11], *Pinthland firth* [14]. **17th C:** *Pentland Fyrth* [1], *Pichtland Fyrth* [7]. **Notes:** Not a firth (*fjord*) at all. From ON 'Picts' land', a rare reference to the earlier inhabitants of the islands [3, p. 43]. On Thomaso Poracci's map (1572): *Pentlenser*.

**Pentland Skerries** Chain of Islets. S of S-Ronaldsay. **16th C:** *Pinthland*

*Skerries* [9], *Petland Skjyrres* [11], *Pinthland Skerrys* [14]. **17th C:** *Pentland Skerryes* [11], *Pentland* [7]. **Notes:** See Pentland Firth. *Skerries* (sing. *skeir*) is a common Norse word for rocky inlets [3, p. 295, s.nm. Skeir, Skerries]. The Pentland Skerries are tiny, smaller than many other islets which are not listed on period maps, yet they appear on all the maps I have. This is likely because they are important as navigational landmarks.

**Island of Stroma** Island in the Pentland Firth. **16th C:** *Stroma* [9, 11,

14]. **Notes:** 'Island in the stream/current', referring to the swift current in the Pentland Firth [3, p. 304]. Administratively, Stroma is now part of Caithness, on the Scottish mainland [18].

**Unknown currents?** Jagged lines in the Pentland Firth seem to indicate

currents. **16th C:** *The Boyer*, *The Heppers & The Swell* [9], *The boÿer*, *The Heppers & The Swell* [11].

### Rousay and vicinity

**Rousay** Island. N of W-Mainland. **16th C:** *Rosa* [9, 11, 14]. **17th C:** *Roos*

*Øy* and *Rous Øy* [1], *Roous Øy* [7]. **Notes:** *Rousay* means 'Rolf's isle' [3, p. 287].

**Egilsay** Island. E of Rousay. **16th C:** *Egelsey* [9], *Eglesey* [11]. **17th C:** *Eglis Oy* [9, 7]. **Notes:** Johnstone says “Prob. not fr. G. *eaglais*, ‘church,’ but fr. a man Egil” [3, p. 171, s.n. Egilshay]. On the other hand, Hugh Marwick [8] states a case for the Celtic origin, due to the large church on the island and proximity to Kili Holm, which the author infers is from G *ceall* ‘cell’; a retreat for the priest to meditate in.

**Rousay Sound** Channel betw. Rousay and Egilsay. **16th C:** *Rosa roade* [11]. **Notes:** Takes its name from the island. Here ‘roade’ refers to a navigable channel.

**St Mary’s Kirk** Near Westness, S Rousay **16th C:** *Owr Lady* [9], *Orlady* [11], *Our Lady* [14]. **Notes:** “The church probably dates back to the 1600s, though is thought to be on the site of a medieval church. . . dating back to around 1300” [16]. [15] indicates parts of St Mary’s Kirk have been repaired.

**Wyre** Islet. SE of Rousay. **16th C:** *Wyre* [9], *Wj̄er* [11]. **17th C:** *Wyer* [1]. **Notes:** [15] explains that this is from ON *vigr* ‘spear’, thus ‘spear-head shaped’ island.

**Unknown** NW of Rousay? **16th C:** *The belibreke of Rosa* [11]. **Notes:** It is unclear to me what location on Ortelius’ map this label refers to. A waterway or bay?

**Unknown church** W Rousay. **16th C:** *S. Peter* [9, 11], *S Peter* [14].

**Unknown village** W Rousay. **17th C:** *Burgh* [1], *Brug* [7]. **Notes:** Perhaps Westness area?

**Unknown village** N Rousay. **17th C:** *Stamsgord* [1]. **Notes:** Perhaps Wasbister area? Or Stennisgorn?

### Shapinsay and vicinity

**Shapinsay** Island. N of Mainland. **16th C:** *Schapun* [9], *Shalpasa* [11], *Schapun* [14]. **17th C:** *Siapins Oy* [1], *Siapins Oy* [7]. **Notes:** ‘Hjalpand’s isle’ [3, p. 293].

**Lady Kirk** SE Shapinsay. **16th C:** *Owr Lady* [9], *Orladij* [11]. **Notes:** Mentioned in [15], possibly from ca 1560? Now in ruins.

**Sandgarth, Bay of?** Town? S Shapinsay. **17th C:** *Sands* [1, 7]. **Notes:** Connection with modern-day Bay of Sandgarth is questionable.

**Unknown** N Shapinsay? **17th C:** *The Rowlings* [1]. **Notes:** The label appears just N of Shapinsay. It is not clear to me what location on Blaeu’s map this label refers to.

**Unknown church** SW Shapinsay. **16th C:** *S. Peter* [9, 11, 14]. **Notes:** Balfour Castle now occupies this area, though its construction began in 1782.

### Stronsay and vicinity

**Stronsay** Island. N Orkney Islands. (NE of Mainland) **16th C:** *Stronza* [9, 11]. **17th C:** *Stronsa* [1], *Streoms Oÿ* [7]. **Notes:** Johnstone indicates uncertainty about the origin of the name. Might be from ON for ‘star-shaped island’, or perhaps of Gaelic origin [3, p. 304].

**Auskerry** Islet. S of Stronsay. **16th C:** *Ouis Kelle* and *Ouis Kell Kyrles* [9], *Ouiskelle* and *Owÿskyll Kyrles* [11], *Ouiskelle* and *Ouiskelle Kyrles* [14]. **17th C:** *Oulkerrie* [1], *Ouskerrie* [7]. **Notes:** From ON for ‘eastern rock’ [3, p. 295, s.nn. Skeir, Skerries]. The earlier maps invariably show a group of islets, *Ouis Kell Kyrles* (e.g.), where Auskerry appears on modern maps, plus a larger islet, *Ouiskelle* (e.g.) further NE, where nothing appears on m-d maps.

**Holland, Bay of** Bay, S Stronsay. **16th C:** *Holandes Wyk* [9, 11]. **Notes:** From ON ‘high land bay’ [3, p. 203, s.n. Holland; p. 324, s.n. Wick].

**Holm of Huip?** Islet. N. of Stronsay. **16th C:** *Sigleholm* [9], *Sigleholme* [11]. **17th C:** *Sigle holm* [1]. **Notes:** Connection to m-d Holm of Huip is based on location on maps relative to other islands.

**Linga Holm** Islet W of Stronsay in Linga Sound. **16th C:** *Lingholm* [9, 14], *Ling holme* [14]. **17th C:** *Linga* [1]. **Notes:** From ON for ‘heather isle’ [3, p. 239, s.n. Linga; p. 203, s.n. Holm].

**Little Linga** Islet. NW of Stronsay. **16th C:** *Lingalytel* [9], *Lingalittel* [11]. **Notes:** Smaller islet than Linga Holm, above.

**Papa Stronsay** Islet. NE of Stronsay. **16th C:** *Papa* [11]. **17th C:** *Papa* [1]. **Notes:** *Papa* is ON for ‘priest’ [3, p. 269, s.n. Papa]. Locals call the island simply *Papey* (pronounced \pop-eye\), but for clarity, the map name is *Papa Stronsay* (pronounced \papa\) [8].

**St Magnus Priory?** Church. N Stronsay. **16th C:** *S. Magnus* [9], *Magnus* [14]. **Notes:** There is a modern St Magnus’ Priory on Stronsay, opposite Papa Stronsay. Due to the very general coastline of Stronsay on Mercator’s and Speed’s maps, which do not even show Papa Stronsay as a separate island, it is impossible to be certain they are the same place.

**Unknown church** Central Stronsay. **16th C:** *S. Niclas* [9], *Niclas* [14]. **17th C:** *Nicolas K.* [1] **Notes:** Blaeu rarely labels church locations, so this one must have been important.

**Unknown church** E Stronsay. **16th C:** *Soline* [9], *S. Oline* [11], *S. Olive* [14].

**Unknown islet** NE of Stronsay. **16th C:** *Lesha* [9, 14]. **Notes:** Nothing appears in the area indicated by Mercator and Speed.

### **Eday and vicinity**

**Eday** Island. N Orkney Islands, N of Central Mainland. **16th C:** *Etha* [9, 11, 14]. **17th C:** *Heth Øy* or *Eda* [1], *Heth Øy* [7]. **Notes:** From ON for ‘isthmus isle’ [3, p. 169]. On Thomasso Poracci’s map (1572): *Eday*.

**Calf Eday** Islet. NE of Eday. **16th C:** *Calf Etha* [9, 14], *Calfa* [11]. **17th C:** *Calf of Eda* [1], *Calf* [7]. **Notes:** This islet is the ‘calf’ of the larger [3, p. 121, s.n. Calf].

**Calf Sound** Channel separating Eday from Calf Eday. **16th C:** *The Sounde of Calfe* [9, 14], *The Sound of Calfa* [11]. **Notes:** The sound takes its name from the nearby islet.

**Faray** Island NW of Eday. **16th C:** *Fara* [9], *Faro* [11]. **17th C:** *Fara* [1, 7]. **Notes:** Apparently uninhabited after the 1930s.

**Green Holms?** Islets S of Eday. **17th C:** *Stroem holms* [1]. **Notes:** M-d Green Holms have approximately the correct size, shape and location to match Blaeu’s map.

**Greentoft** Village. E Eday. **17th C:** *Green tofts* [1], *Green Tostes?* [7]. **Notes:** Illegible on Hondius’ map.

**Lady Kirk** Skiall E Eday. **16th C:** *Owr Lady* [9], *Orlady* [11], *O Lady* [14]. **Notes:** [12] describes Lady Kirk as an eighteenth century structure but notes archeological evidence of older use.

**Red Holm** Islet NW of Eday. **16th C:** *Redholme* [9, 11]. **17th C:** *Red Holm* [1]. **Notes:** *holmr* is ON ‘islet’ [3, p. 203, s.n. Holm]. Perhaps ‘red’ is the coloration?

**Rusk Holm** Islet. W of Faray. **17th C:** *Roost holm* [1].

**Saint Magnus Church** On Stronsay. **16th C:** *S. Magnus* [9], *Magnus* [14]. **Notes:** There is a modern St Magnus Priory on Stronsay, but I do not have a map of its location or any history of it.

**Veness?** Point at SE Eday. **17th C:** *Spur ness* [1]. **Notes:** While *Spur ness* appears at the N point of Eday on Blaeu’s map, this is due to the incorrect orientation of the northern Orkney Islands. I chose Veness because it is the point “counterclockwise” from Greentoft.

### Sanday and vicinity

**Sanday** Island. N Orkney Islands, NE of Stronsay. **16th C:** *Sandes* [9, 11, 14]. **17th C:** *Sand Oÿ* [1, 7]. **Notes:** From ON and Danish, ‘sandy isle’ [3, p. 290, s.n. Sandaig]. On Thomaso Poracci’s map (1572): *Sanday*.

**Crosskirk?** Church/town S Sanday. **16th C:** *Croskirk* [9, 14], *Croskrick* [11]. **Notes:** Could not find on Ordinance maps, but found a 19th-C. reference to Crosskirk on Sanday. The intuitive derivation of ‘cross church’ seems supported by Johnstone [3, p. 146, s.n. Cross; p. 227, s.n. Kirkaby].

**Fea Hill** Village? W. Sanday. **17th C:** *Fia* [1]. **Notes:** G. [6, p. 24, s.n. Fea] gives a derivation for the word; “fm. ON ‘fia’, meaning ‘enemy’ or ‘fiend’...”

**Holm of Elsness and/or Els Ness** Islet S. of Sanday. **16th C:** *Halouys* [9]. **17th C:** *Elnes holm* [1].

**Lady** Village (and church) C Sanday. **16th C:** *Owr Lady* [9], *Orladÿ* [11], *Our Lady* [14]. **17th C:** *S. Mary* [1], *S. Marie* [7]. **Notes:** 18th-C. “Lady Kirk” now stands in ruins near the village of “Lady” and may have been built over earlier church site. An unusual way for a town to take on the name of its church, but the explanation seems to fit.

**Saint Colm’s Church** Church. In Burness, NW Sanday. **17th C:** *S. Colms k.* [1], *S. Kolmsk* [7]. **Notes:** The church no longer remains. On Hondius, *Kolms k.* is constricted into what appears to be a single word.

**Tressness, Bay of Bay**, S Sanday. **16th C:** *Trasohenes hauen* [11].

**Unknown church?** E Sanday. **16th C:** *S. Augustin* [9, 11], *S Augustin* [14].

**Unknown church** W Sanday. **16th C:** *S. Peter* [9, 11], *S Peter* [14].

### Westray and vicinity

**Westray** Island. Extreme NW Orkney Islands. **16th C:** *Pappa Westra* [9, 14], *Pappawestre* [11]. **17th C:** *Wester Oÿ* [1, 7], also *Westra* [7]. **Notes:** From ON for ‘western isle’ [3, p. 323, s.n. Westray and Papa Westray]. On Thomaso Poracci’s map (1572): *Vastray*.

**Holm of Papa** Islet E of Papa Westray. **16th C:** *The Skyre of Pappa Westra* [9], *The Skjre of Pappawe stra* [11]. **17th C:** *Holm of Papa* [1]. **Notes:** Perhaps *skyre* is from *skeir*, ‘a rock’. Thus ‘the rock off of Papa Westray’? (Based upon the etymology for *Skyeburn* [3, p. 297].)

**Papa (Westray)** Island NE of Westray. **16th C:** *Pappa* [9, 14], *Papa* [11]. **17th C:** *Papa* [1, 7]. **Notes:** ON for ‘priest’s isle (near western isle)’ [3, p. 323, s.n. Westray, Papa Westray]. Locals call the island simply *Papey* (pronounced as \pop-eye\), but for clarity, the map name is *Papa Westray* (pronounced \papa\) [8].

### North Ronaldsay and vicinity

**North Ronaldsay** Island. Extreme NE Orkney Islands. **16th C:** *North Ronche* [9], *Nort Ronhe* and *Ronaldsa* [11]. **17th C:** *North Ranalds Oy* [1], *North Ranals Oy* [7]. **Notes:** ‘Ringan’s island’ [3, p. 286, s.n. Ronalds(h)ay N. and S.]. N- and S- Ronaldsay derive from different personal names. Ortelius’ map lists both *Nort Ronhe*, with a coastline matching that of N-Ronaldsay and *Ronaldsa* which resembles ‘Fair Isle’, beyond N-Ronaldsay to NE.

**Dennis Ness and Dennis Head** NEN-Ronaldsay. **17th C:** *Dunnas Ness* [1]. **Notes:** Ness of ‘din’, refers to the sound of the surf [3, p. 154]. Johnstone’s earliest dated spelling is from Blaeu.

**Seal Skerry** Islet N of N-Ronaldsay. **17th C:** *Selchs-Skery* [1]. **Notes:** Perhaps ‘seal islet’? (Based upon [3, p. 293, s.n. Sellay, Shellay or Shilley] and intuition.)

**Twinyess** Point at W N-Ronaldsay. **17th C:** *Tumgnes* [1].

**Unknown church** On N Ronaldsay. **17th C:** *Sola kirk* [7].

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A personal travel guide and photo gallery of the glorious Orkney in the Scottish Highlands, listing attractions, walks, accommodation, and heritage highlights. Eynhallow Church was used as a dwelling from the 16th century and was only discovered by accident. Eynhallow, Orkney, Highlands and Islands, Scotland. Heritage Rating: Nearest: Hotels - Self Catering - Bed and Breakfasts. Italian Chapel. 16th - 17th Century Maps. The awakening of interest in geography in Europe started with the need to find new trade routes to the Far East. This was very much inspired by the rediscovery of Ptolemy's Geographia. The development of improved methods of surveying and invention of more precise instruments enabled large areas to be surveyed. Starting in Italy and Central Europe, map making and Atlas publication moved to Netherlads where Gerard Mercator produced his first map on the new projection in 1569 and Ortelius published the first modern atlas Theatrum Orbis Terrarum in 1570. Due to great interest in these publications, maps of superb quality were produced making this period the golden age of cartography. History Map of the World Map, 16th Century; illustrating Roman Christendom, Eastern Churches, Mohamedan (Dark Blue, conquered from Christendom), Spanish conquests in the New World, Portuguese discoveries. From The Public Schools Historical Atlas by C. Colbeck, 1905. Related Maps Map of the Spanish and Portuguese Discoveries World Map 17th Century. More History. People in History.