**NEOLITHIC**

The Neolithic period is associated with more permanent settlement, the introduction of farming practices, use of pottery, polished stone tools, the construction of monumental features in the landscape which include communal burial mounds. Although no domestic dwellings have yet been discovered on Stroma, Neolithic archaeology is well documented. Funerary monuments in both early and late Neolithic include the Orkney-Cromarty staked cairns as seen at Lambness, and the Maes Howe type tombs like the Ward of Housebay. Recently, artefacts of Neolithic date, including coarse pottery and a cushion mace-head traditionally associated with settlements and to ritual activity, were discovered at Midgarth during field walking as part of the 2007 survey.

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**IRON AGE**

Unique to Scotland and prolific in Orkney, Brochs are circular, windless, dyistone structures whose thick outer walls, often built to two storeys or more have a distinctively looking tower shaped profile. Developed over a period of time from simple roundhouses increasing in complexity to their monumental scale they are often the central feature of a more extensive surrounding settlement. The initial interpretation of purely defensive structure has given way over recent years to mostly domestic purpose with an emphasis in some cases to the importance of ritual interwoven in the daily life of their Iron Age communities. Many Brochs contain underground features and were contemporary with sites like Muck Howe, Tankerness. Ongoing research continues to bring interesting new interpretation to this time. Five Brochs have been identified on Stroma, Greens Knowe and the Hillock of Barwell are now grassy mounds, the one at Hinton being ploughed out and is no longer visible however considerable stone walling and features remain at Besicumb and Lamb Head.

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**BRONZE AGE**

The introduction of metalworking with the production of copper and bronze artefacts characterises the Bronze Age however this time also saw other significant changes such as the enclosure of parts of the landscape, in Orkney this is represented by massive linear earthworks known as 'Iredale Dykes' like the one at Burgh Head. There was also a shift from communal practice to individual inhumations or cremations in cist burials. Some were placed under mounds like the one at Cutlers Too or, notably, Oransay. The discovery of actual dwellings dating from the bronze age in Orkney generally has been illusive, however sites frequently attributed to this period and associated with domestic activity are burnt mounds which usually contain burnt stones, dark soil, charcoal and ash. Amongst the many documented examples on Stroma Bleaching Knowe is perhaps the best known although the site has suffered such damage it is now very difficult to discern.

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Scandinavia and the rest of Scotland, extends for a longer period than in England. Roman occupation did not extend to Orkney. The Iron Age therefore covers a period from c.500BC to around 800AD, with the last two centuries referring to the Pictish period when Orkney became Christian and when the islands were part of the Eastern Scottish kingdom of the Picts.

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**VIKING, NORSE**

The final centuries of the Scandinavian Iron Age also happened in Orkney. The arrival of the Vikings as raiders, traders and colonists started sometime in the late 8th century. Around 1000AD Orkney became officially Christian. Two settlements considered to be Norse date on Stroma were identified along the shores of the Bay of Holland at Rothiemholla Sands and a short distance from Banks, known as the 'Navey'. Discovered during an assessment of coastal erosion, these two sites consisted of dyistone structures, middens, pits and various finds of Viking/Norse date.

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There are several references to the Norsmen in 'The Orkneyinga Saga', including a detailed description of the murder of Earl Rognvald Brunson on Papa Stroma, by his uncle Earl Thorfinn, who went on to claim control of the whole of Orkney. Earl Rognvald's body was taken to Papa Westray for burial.

The Earlson placed a number of important people on Stroma at a farm called Brecklar, firstly Våthjó, son of Olaf Hrofsson and subsequently to Thorol Flaver, however Thorol was attacked at the farm and burned to death along with eight other men. No farm of this name survives today so its precise location is unknown. However these written accounts along with the settlements identified along the shores of the Bay of Holland during archaeological surveys attest to a strong Viking/Norse presence on Stroma.