



## Living an Anachronism

An anachronism is defined as an error of chronology or timeline in a literary work. In other words, it is anything that is out of time and out of place. I often feel that we are living an anachronism, here in the north of Scotland. Caithness, our new home, is full of archeological sites from the Neolithic era, and even older..... surrounded by wind-farms, tidal and wave energy turbines, and an advanced experimental nuclear powerplant.

I recently took a spring hike, passing snowdrops in bloom (a sign of Scottish spring), a lovely burn (stream), and ending at St. Mary's Chapel, a 12<sup>th</sup> century ruin,.... with a wind-farm in the background.....talk about an anachronism.



I went back to the island of Sanday in Orkney to conduct a Bloodhound Rocket Car competition, where students build models inspired by the Bloodhound vehicle that is being built here in Britain to attempt a World Land Speed Record of over 800 miles per hour.



<https://www.facebook.com/478434615663137/videos/712426495597280/>  
<https://www.facebook.com/478434615663137/videos/712426428930620/>

While I was there launching rocket cars, I visited an amazing Neolithic monument. Quoyness Chambered Cairn is one of the most impressive ancient monuments in Britain. It lies on the shore of an isolated promontory along one of Sanday's beaches.



There are over two dozen cairns on one small peninsula on Sanday, and standing in one spot you can see several of them.



Quoyness was built on an irregular stony platform some 60 feet across, close to the shore. . The platform was built of flat slabs of stone.



The central chamber is contained within a small inner cairn, which is contained within a much larger outer cairn, and the entrance tunnel originally ran for 30 feet through both walls of the cairn.



The cairn is miles from civilization, with nothing to keep the determined visitor away, except this wee gate at the start of the entrance to the crawl.



As these next photos show, at the center of the cairn is a dry stone chamber 12 feet long, 6 feet wide, and an impressive 12 feet in height. This was covered with a roof made of large flat stones, and on top of that, dirt. This central chamber has six side chambers, each large enough for me to stand up in.



Some of the stones are huge, as you can see by comparing this lintel stone to my full sized flashlight.



When the cairn was excavated in the 1800s it was found to contain the bones of at least 10 adults and 5 children. So it is always a concern when exploring such tombs, that one may awake an ancient spirit.



Seeking its way, once more, out into the light of day.



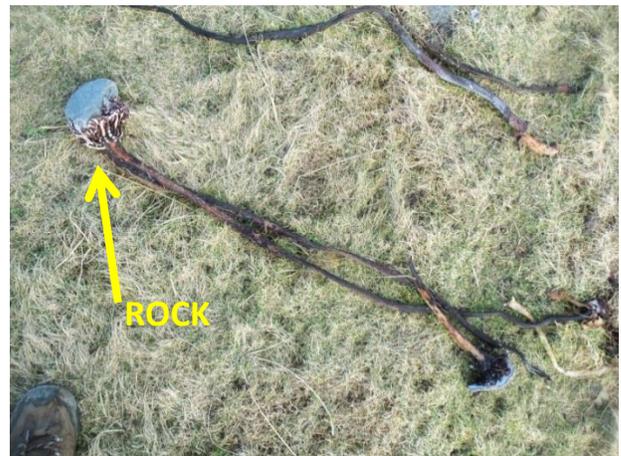
The next cairn along the beach would have been as big as Quoyness, but it is collapsed. However, you can see bits of the structure, resembling the walls seen in Quoyness.



Elsewhere on Sanday's shores you can find the remnants of a World War One German Destroyer. Damaged at the Battle of Jutland, the ship was eventually captured and held at the British Naval Headquarters in Orkney's Scapa Flow. But the ship was lost in one of Orkney's infamous storms and came aground on Sanday's coast. The remains are still there, and can be examined at low tide.



Speaking of storms on Orkney....the wind and waves can be so strong, that they can rip up a stalk of seaweed still clinging to its rock anchor.....and hurl it to the top of a 30 foot embankment above the high tide mark.



We had several other interesting experiences this spring. We attended a Burns Supper with friends in the Scottish Borders, and I had the honor of presenting the Haggis.



We went on a field club hike to Dunnet Head and Beach.



And we saw starlings in murmuration. Although this flock had less than 10,000 birds, we could still see the remarkable patterns they form in the sky. If you have never seen a video of this amazing occurrence, do an internet search for this phenomena and be amazed at what happens when flocks of hundreds of thousands of starlings perform.

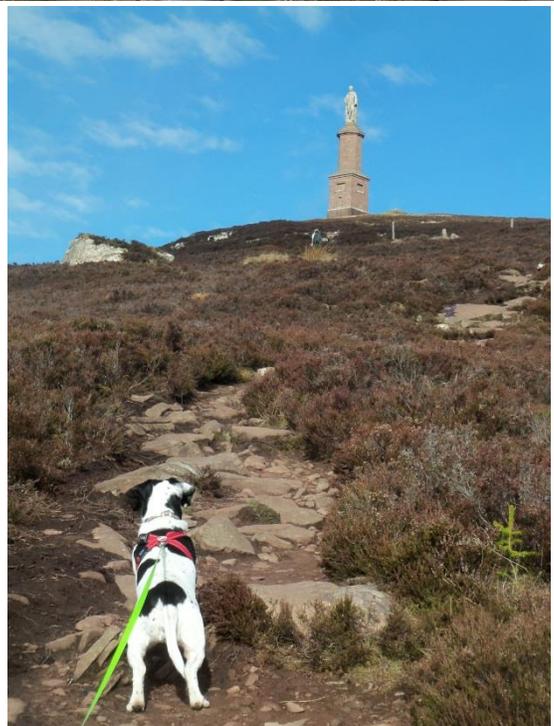


Next are photos of Molly exploring an old mill stone, Floyd keeping an eye on the birds in the garden, Pete preparing for Red Nose Day and Wendy looking for a restoration project.



On a clear day you can climb Ben Braggie to the monument to the Duke of Sutherland.

Spring walks along the coast are always popular here



With some spectacular views.



Wendy's garden this spring has Snowdrops and Heather.....how Scottish are we? !!!



All we need are some Scottish Thistles. But those are in the field down the road.



All the paths here are lined with gold..... golden gorse, that is.



I have been ending my newsletters with the very appropriate quote from Ben Franklin, below. But here is a rather interesting article on another American hero, Abe Lincoln, and his respect for Scotland's poet, Robert Burns:

<https://theorkneynews.scot/2017/03/13/abraham-lincoln-robert-burns/>

*"Did not strong connections draw me elsewhere, I believe Scotland would be the country I would choose to end my days in." .....*Benjamin Franklin