

4 – Finstown to Orphir Route



Theme: Forgiveness

Length: 10.65 miles (17.1km)

Terrain: Rough heather across Cuween with good steep tracks up and down Lyradale and a gentler track from Naversdale to Nearhouse. Around Orphir it mostly road walking with a beautiful off road coastal track from The Breck.

Total ascent: 332m

Total on road: 4.9 miles (7.9km)

Total off road: 5.75 miles (9.25km)

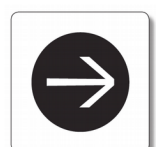
Time: 5-7 hours..

Route description

From Firth Kirk, cross the road to the shore side and walk along the pavement, past the legendary Leigh's burger van and the toilets. Cross the road again at Esson's garage and continue up the Old Finstown Road, turning first right to the Firth Community Centre. Follow the road up past the Community Centre, where it shortly gives way to a grassy track leading uphill. At the first opportunity, turn left across a heathery moor, following the path to Cuween. The stone stacks are a recent addition but if you wish to visit Cuween tomb, detour 50m to the left, entering the tomb from the far side. A torch is usually available – don't forget to switch it off again!

From Cuween head right up the hill following the waymarkers up the peat track where it bends around to the left, contouring the hill. Continue straight ahead on rough, where on a good day you can use the telecoms masts on Keelylang as a reference, but there are fencepost waymarkers right across the moor. At the far end there is a short descent onto the Keelyland track, above Cruan Stables.

Follow this track up hill until it bends around to the left and flattens out. There are a series of peat banks to the right – the most direct route is waymarked, it is the third bank before the cattle grid. At the far end of this bank is a stile over the fence. Pause here to admire the view in all directions.



From the stile, turn left and follow the peat track as it curves clockwise around and heads south west before curving again in a north westerly direction. This track leads all the way down past Oback on the left and through the farm at Kebro. Do take care to shut the gates here. Walk past the farm steading and the road curls clockwise before heading straight down to the Germiston Road. At this junction, turn right and then immediately left (signed Fea). Follow this road along past the farm at Fea and onto Naversdale.

Just before the house of Naversdale there is a grassy track to the right. Follow this along, past a ruined cottage and then turn left heading downhill beside a burn. Take care crossing the burn (there is a small bridge to help) and continue on the other side of the burn as it heads downhill. Pass through two parallel gates (shutting them again!) and finally through a third gate at right angles to the others. This leads to the Burgir track – the first few hundred metres of which are very boggy. *[We have applied for funding to improve the drainage here.]* As you gain some height the track becomes more distinct and drier. Follow this track all the way down to the main road. Turn right and, walking on the right hand side of the road, continue into Orphir village, passing the school on the right and turning left just past Orphir Kirk.

Continue down this road to a large patch of trees and take the road to the left, which leads to the Breck. At the shore turn right and walk along the shore path that leads up to Orphir graveyard. There is a bridge across the Bu burn that was recently repaired after damage from flooding the day before the route opened in 2017 (!). Enter the graveyard through the gate, and the Round Kirk is diagonally in front of you, behind a wall that has an opening in the middle.

From the Round Kirk, exit via the metal gates to the Earl's Bu and Orkneyinga Saga Centre, which can be explored. Leaving the centre turn right and head up the road again, that leads all the way, back to Orphir Kirk where this section ends.