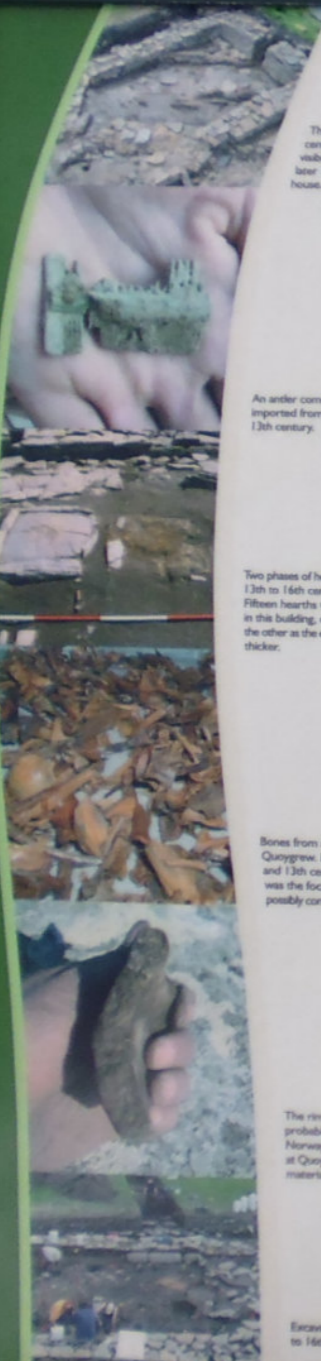


Quoygrew: From the Viking Age to the 20th Century



The remains of the 11th to 12th century fisherman's house visible under the byre of the later 13th to 16th century house.

An antler comb, probably imported from Norway in the 12th century.

Two phases of hearths from the 13th to 16th century house. Fifteen hearths were identified in this building, one replacing the other as the earth floor grew thicker.

Bones from midden dumps at Quoygrew. Between the 11th and 13th century Quoygrew was the focus of intensive, possibly commercial, cod fishing.

The rim of a soapstone pot, probably imported from Norway. Many of the pots used at Quoygrew were made of this material.

Excavating the 'hall' of the 13th to 16th century house.



Artist's interpretation of an 11th to 12th century fisherman's house excavated at Quoygrew. The upper walls were probably made of turf.



Artist's interpretation of the house in front of you when first built around AD 1200. It originally consisted of three rooms: a byre to the west, a 'hall' to the east and a small annex to the north.



The house in front of you as it appeared around AD 1400. A fourth room was added to the east end. It was first a bedroom, but was later turned into a workshop and ultimately a threshing barn.

Quoygrew was a settlement of farmer-fishermen for over 1000 years, from the 10th century AD until the 1930s. Although a very long-lived settlement, the rhythm of daily life was constantly changing. Archaeological excavations between 1997 and 2005 let us step back in time.

AD 950: Quoygrew was first occupied, several generations after the first Viking Age Scandinavians settled in Orkney. It was a successful farm, but not an overtly wealthy one.

AD 1000: Quoygrew's occupants began to fish for large cod on an unprecedented scale, creating large dumps of fish bone. At first the dwellings were further east, but around 1100 a small fisherman's house was built here near the shore. Many of the implements of daily life were imported from Scandinavia. Dried cod may have been exported via Norway to towns around the North and Baltic Seas.

AD 1200: The house in front of you was built, with a byre to the west, a 'hall' to the east and a small annex to the north. The hall had a central hearth and side aisles (filled with straw and used for both sitting and sleeping). Antler combs were imported from Norway and some cooking was still done in soapstone pots of Scandinavian style. At first the occupants still spent much time fishing, but farming soon became far more important for reasons that are not fully understood.

AD 1400: A bedroom was added to the eastern end of the house and the main hall lost its side aisles. A few soapstone pots were used (now from Shetland rather than Norway), but most imported goods came from lowland Scotland and the Rhineland – some probably brought by merchants of the German Hanseatic League.

AD 1500s: The building in front of you had been standing for almost 400 years and was about to be dismantled. The main room was still lived in, but the byre and northern annex had long since filled with midden. The eastern room, once a bedroom, was being used as a threshing barn. Finds of Dutch pottery show changing connections with the outside world.

AD 1930s: Quoygrew was now a small tenanted croft belonging to the larger farm of Trenabie. The last few occupants combined farming a few acres with fishing and making kelp. The very last tenants, James and Betsy Logie who left in 1937, lived in a 'But and Ben' now visible as ruins to the east of the excavated house.

Background Photograph: The 13th to 16th century house from the air

