

This Old Golden Land

**An alternative Orkney guidebook
for spiritual seekers, mystics, and pilgrims**

Helen & Mark Woodsford-Dean

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Heartfelt thanks to everyone who helped and encouraged us throughout.

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Disclaimers:

(1) This publication contains some suggestions for meditative exercises; these exercises are not intended as a substitute for professional medical care or advice. Please apply common sense with regard to all of the suggested exercises; please don't attempt them unless you feel they would be safe for you to perform.

(2) This publication contains some suggestions for visiting sites. Whenever visiting any site, please make your own sensible decisions about whether access and the level of interaction are safe for you.

(3) Any errors and omissions are the sole responsibility of the authors; none have been made deliberately but if any are found please bring them to our attention and we will correct them and apologise.

First published in 2020 by Spiritual Orkney, Craigielea, Harray, Orkney, KW17 2JU.

Printed by Anglia Print Ltd. a certified Carbon Neutral company who use materials from eco-friendly, ethical, and environmentally certified sources.



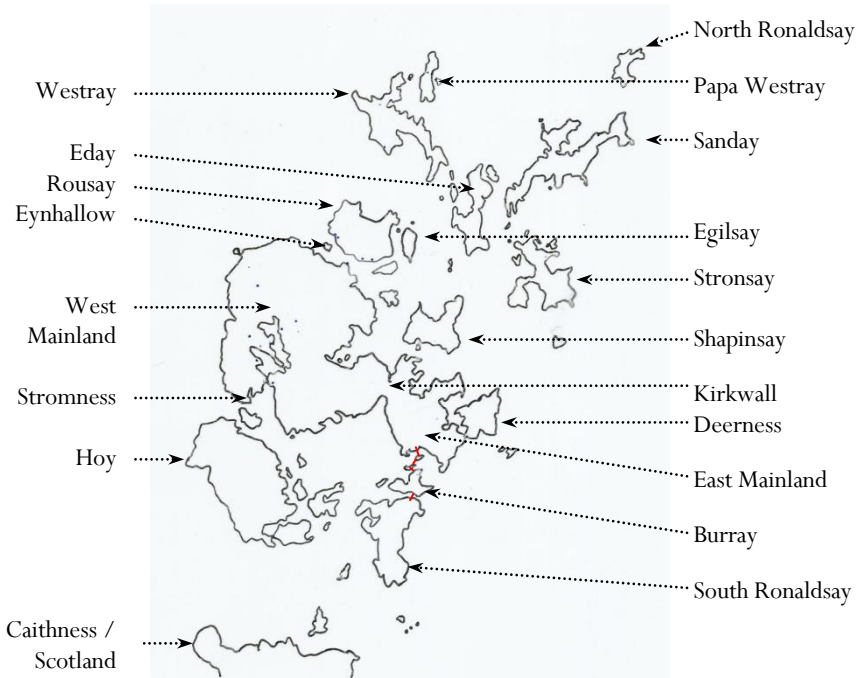
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*‘The indispensable conditions of existence are attachment to the soil of
one particular spot by generation after generation.’*

Thomas Hardy – Preface to ‘Far From The Madding Crowd’ – 1895

Map of the Orkney Islands



Islands and areas referred to in the text have been labelled

— indicates Churchill Barriers, linking the south isles

Introduction

The title of this book is in homage to Phil Rickman, one of my favourite authors. In Rickman's 'The Chalice'¹, his hero has previously made his name as an author, as well as a small fortune, by writing a unified theory of British folklore, entitled 'The Old Golden Land'. Rickman never tells us much about the contents of the book, only that it is a 'cult' book, full of archetypal references, and that his fictional author has struggled ever since to write a sequel – despite encouragement by his publishers.

I so wish such a book existed! For most of my life I have stumbled across hints of an underlying truth that periodically peeks out and says: 'there are secrets, there is more than this mundane world of offices and motorways'. When I first heard the name 'Albion' in my late teens, something reverberated within my heart, likewise with the myths of Arthur and Robin Hood, but no matter how much I chase this idea, the trail always seems to go cold on me. Yet still I persist in trying to reveal some of the underlying universal concepts running through the collective mythology of this land of Britain. Globally there's an almost universal belief that 'heaven' and earth were once much closer, that some places are subsequently particularly 'thin', and that there was a 'golden' age of paradise in the past². This belief manifests in British myth too. One of the more persistent themes in British mythology is a sense of a deep feeling and reverence for the land. There is a pervading concept that the land itself cannot be owned but rather that there is some sort of covenant in operation whereby the land will provide as long as its inhabitants are respectful. The idea that the land itself is a sentient and sacred entity is a constant; those who live upon it must become almost possessed by it: to serve and to be served.

This is not that book, however. This is an Orkney guidebook, but it is a different kind of guidebook for a different kind of visitor: the spiritual pilgrim or seeker (and occasionally it even flirts with being an anti-guidebook). I hope it refers to a few of the clues which may constitute those still to be fully uncovered, universal mythological concepts that I, and others, so desperately seek, but if it does, it will do so largely inadvertently. As well as providing information about Orkney and my own experiences at particular sites, I have also included 'practical exercises' which may, and are intended to, broaden the experiences that you have whilst in Orkney³. I also hope this book may act as a souvenir of Orkney and that, even if you don't spend very long here, you will be able to perform some of the 'practical exercises' at a later date, outwith Orkney, perhaps with your memory stimulated by some of the photographs.

Spiritual pilgrims tend to be post-religious; that doesn't mean they are anti-religion, but rather that they are often engaging in mystical practices which are core to many belief systems. Their religion, if they have one, won't be something which they use as a personal identifier, more something they can use to communicate the 'method' by which they approach 'God' to others. I, for example, am a Pagan, but I don't find 'Pagan' to be a very useful label, it's simply the best fit to the mish-mash of theologies

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that jumble in my head, all of them partial descriptions of my experience of ‘God’ – ‘Pagan’ and ‘God’ both being labels which I find inadequate⁴.

My personal definition of religion recognises that all religions are designed to offer a framework, a paradigm, but not necessarily the definitive answer. I don’t find rigid dogma to be helpful and I believe that all religions can benefit from adapting to new insights and revelations after rigorous consideration. I would propose that any religion’s true function is to induce, explain, consolidate and control spiritual experiences. I suspect that all humans (at least, but it could also apply to all beings) have spiritual experiences. Spiritual experiences are wholly natural occurrences, although they are also subjective and can be induced ‘artificially’; consequently I fully accept the right of some people to choose to dismiss said experiences, or to ignore them. I would personally go further and suggest that the state of not having constant spiritual experiences is a product of the gradual conditioning and diminishing of the modern mind and is a human phenomenon no more than 10,000 years old.

I could have organised this material in any number of ways but, after some introductory material, I have chosen to arrange it chronologically: each time period being described in order, from the earliest times to the more recent. For each ‘age’ of Orkney a brief overview is provided, plus a description of some of the key sites to which a visit is recommended. At the end is a ‘Places to visit’ section, which gives directions and practical guidance on how to get to some of the sites, particularly some of the less well known places, listed by period.

Some sites have been places where I have gained particular insights and these are described in a ‘Personal reflection’ section. Some of these insights are autobiographical in nature and where they are particularly personal I have placed them in *italics* – I hope this will make it easier for you to identify these more confessional pieces and circumvent them if you wish.

Meditative ‘exercises’ are also given, which I hope you will find relevant and useful⁵.

A further couple of points that I would like to make, early on, are part apology and part warning.

Firstly, I am not, and do not wish to be, a guru. I am a failed (in many senses), broken, often distraught, confused and stupid person, whose attempts at being human are a work in progress. Please don’t be tempted to put me on a pedestal, remember instead the Zen saying: ‘If you see the Buddha on the road, kill him.’ This advises that your spiritual aim is to stay on the road and keep moving; your spiritual aim is not anyone else whom you might encounter whilst on the road, and it certainly shouldn’t be me (although I’d rather you didn’t actually kill me). The reason why I make this specific point is because many belief systems, and modern Paganism in particular, tend towards the ‘cult of the personality’ whereby charismatic leaders exert disproportionate influence over their followers. I am neither a charismatic leader, nor do I seek to be one. To dissuade you from any attempts to turn me into one, just in case you are ever

tempted, I will at times write about myself in a manner which is as honest and self-deprecating as I can bring myself to do. I will try to be honest about my weaknesses, my beliefs (both religious and political), and my conflictingly muddled thought processes. I do this to expose both my inadequacy for guru-hood and my candidacy for fooldom. As stated, most of this will be autobiographical in nature and in *italics*, so it will be easy to skip these sections.

Secondly, Orkney has a strange quality: it seems to exert a siren ‘call’. Time and again I have asked others: ‘Why did you move here?’, only to receive the response: ‘I just had to’. Perhaps that’s why it’s called the ‘magnetic north’? Not everyone hears or feels (or imagines) this ‘call’ but even the most cursory look on social media will reveal accounts of visitors describing their time in Orkney as being akin to ‘coming home’ and how they are planning to return on a more permanent basis. Every year people move to Orkney, often unprepared for the reality of life here, thinking it’s permanently like the idealised ‘sell’ in the holiday brochures. Orkney is a fabulous and beguiling place and some of these people end up staying, whilst some of them don’t; please be aware that to actually live in a place, for any period of time, is a wholly different experience to holidaying there.

A little bit of autobiographical background

In many ways, Orkney is the golden land. There’s a strange light here. We’re at 59 degrees north, so the sun never gets directly overhead, not even at midday in midsummer; we nearly always have the sun at an angle and that gives us the oddest light. This light is desired by artists and photographers – they flock here; indeed, there’s a very prolific artistic community in Orkney, nearly everyone has some sort of creative outlet. When I’m guiding, I always tell my guests that it’s impossible to take a bad photograph in Orkney – I’m not fully joking, the natural light here is kind.

There are times when the light is such that its source doesn’t seem to be fully from the sun. The light seems to be thicker, almost liquid in quality; it drapes itself over standing stones and wildflowers like a wash of honey. Sometimes it’s the stones and the wildflowers themselves which appear to emit the light, not just reflect it from the sun – the whole landscape appears lit up, it glows and pulses light, everything becomes transfused and transformed – it’s like stepping into another world. And that world is a magical Otherworld, one where you don’t need to eat or drink, but just to breathe, where all your illnesses are healed, and all your worries just drift away, and you are utterly lost in the moment.

The truly special times are those which photographers refer to as ‘golden hour’, the hour before sunset, or after sunrise. During these hours, the angle of the sun is such that the light is extremely different. It’s like stepping into the land of faery.

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The light in Orkney is ever-changing too. Pause, if you have the time, perhaps watch the same stone for a few minutes as the light shifts and oscillates over its surface. Appreciate the impermanence. Observing the shadows of clouds as they skid and wobble across the hills is another favourite mediation of mine.

One of the other light related things that people notice about Orkney is that we seem to have a lot of rainbows – this is possibly because we also have a lot of rain! – I certainly notice the rainbows far more than when I lived in the south. It is not just the big skies that make them more obvious, it is not unusual to see double and even triple rainbows. In many mythologies, rainbows are symbolic of a contract between the supernatural and mundane realms: they often represent hope.

This magical, golden, ethereal place was the Orkney that I fell in love with over twenty years ago when I first came here on holiday. There was something that resonated with my soul here and it continued to tug at me long after I left physically, returning to my then home and work in Hampshire. The scenery in Orkney was sublime and the low golden sun was full of every fertile promise as it wrapped the land in a sheen of plenty. The sense that this was in some way ‘the right place for me to be’ was mesmerizingly strong. Orkney was different; it offered sanctuary and safety, a little piece of heaven on earth, my own paradise. Even today, whenever I travel back north to Orkney, driving for hours along the interminable A9, passing through mile after mile of often monotonous scenery, the contrast with Orkney’s gentleness never fails to amaze me. It is as if, beyond the bleak and rawness of much of Caithness and Sutherland⁶, and after an often gut-wrenching ferry crossing, there awaits a land of fertility and abundant plenty, the Summerlands, a Shangri La, as if I have slipped through some sort of temporal and geographical veil. I cannot help but wonder how much that contrast might likewise have impacted on those who travelled to Orkney in the past.

Then, when I moved here permanently and experienced my first Orkney winter, the contrast taught me why most religions sell an afterlife set in a land of summer fertility where it is warm and dry, and everything is verdant.

My happiest memories are nearly always associated with warm, sunny days; few of my peak experiences have occurred in the dark, or the rain, or the snow. Ask me to recall a time when I was content and it will usually be whilst looking around a castle or archaeological site, but it will have been a sunny, bright, dry and warm day – perhaps with a robust breeze, not gales, blustery, just enough to know the wind is there. We had those occasional golden-light but windy days in Hampshire, but we have them day after day in Orkney.

The light was only one of the reasons why Orkney called to me. I am often asked why I moved here and my honest answer, which I give only if I think it won’t be scoffed at, is: ‘because the Goddess told me to.’ I’ve never experienced a stronger feeling that being here, in Orkney, was something I was meant to do.

Every once in a while, I will experience an extremely vivid dream, one which stays with me and won't depart. Sometimes the dreams are so real and haunting that I wake from them, other times the dreams occur at the time just before I awaken and they disturb the rest of my day. When I was younger, much much younger, I had one of these vivid dreams and it had a special meaning for me. In this particular dream, I was receiving a divinatory reading from a Tarot reader, an old woman, cloaked over so I could not see her face, and she was reading for me, but not with Tarot cards – or at least not cards from any deck I recognised. She turned over a card for me, it showed a hare: 'Follow the hare in the morning mist', the reader advised me.

The hare, for most Pagans, is a symbol of the Goddess and the Moon, sacred and feminine, rare and beautiful. I had never seen a hare whilst in the south of England but I had always looked out for them. At the time I had interpreted this dream as a symbolic instruction to follow the Goddess and as a general encouragement to be more spiritual but whilst on holiday in Orkney I saw lots of hares, everywhere, and they were majestic. To follow these hares, surely I would have to move to the place where they were so abundant?

After a series of holidays – which were really reconnoitres – I moved here in 2009⁷. I planned the move over several years, being careful to first make myself as employable as possible by taking any training I could get to bolster my curriculum vitae, and prudently saving as hard as I could. The whole time my goal was Orkney. My sentences would start 'When I get to Orkney ...' If there was news of Orkney on television, I would watch avidly, tears coming to my eyes as I pined for where I was not. It got to the point where it hurt me to not be in Orkney and I was dissatisfied with everything that was not Orkney. It was as if I had eaten with the gods and all other earthly delights were now grey and tasteless in comparison with the heavenly ambrosia I had once fed on.

I have since learnt that this siren call from these islands has not only affected me. Other 'incomers' have described how, once hooked, they simply could not stay away. One of my closest friends described to me that when she first moved to Orkney, she would lie in bed at night and feel as if something was physically tugging at her heart to stay. Orkney is the sort of place about which it is possible to become quite obsessive as it beguiles with promises to satisfy your every need. Like Glastonbury and Lourdes and the Boyne Valley it exerts a gravitational pull on certain souls, leaving them unable to function in the 'real' world any longer.

It has been over ten years now, perhaps a not fully insignificant period, potentially a symbolic, almost Biblical length of time. Ten years since I resigned from my career, sold my house, and moved nearly 1500 km north to a remote Scottish island. Ten years since I commenced upon an accidental spiritual journey in which landscape, place and experience have combined and unfolded in a meaningful and seemingly non-random manner, full of synchronicities.

One of the defining episodes of this metaphysical journey began soon after I moved to Orkney. Underestimating how much my 'career' had been part of my 'identity', and unable to find a similar role in Orkney, I spiralled into a major panic about what I would 'do' and what I would live on for an income. I knew I couldn't go back 'sooth'; I had resigned from my job and my replacement was already in my post. I had burnt all my bridges. Having little confidence, and even less resilience, I went into shock and grief.

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This unfolding personal trauma acted in concert with one of the harshest winters for decades. Naively, I hadn't visited Orkney in winter; I was totally unprepared for the quantity of darkness and the enormity of heating costs. It was as if nature itself was reflecting my inner turmoil.

In desperation, I called to my gods to help. I did so by literally standing outside my house at night and screaming into the sky (our nearest neighbours are quite a distance away but nevertheless sound does travel further at night, it may not have been the best 'first impression'). In reply there was nothing, just void and emptiness. Apparently no supernatural force was coming to my rescue. The celestial vending machine, previously so reliable, had seemingly jammed. The expected, and accustomed, wave of calming reassurance failed to flood through me. It was as if everything, anything, that had ever been of any meaning to me, had suddenly abandoned me – or had revealed itself to have been nothing more than a trick of my wishful imagination all along.

Hindsight has taught me that when I first arrived in Orkney, I basically did the equivalent of announcing on the occult planes: 'Here I am, I'm finally making myself available to You, now reveal Yourself unto me and bestow upon me salvation / enlightenment / the wisdom of the ages / knowledge and conversation of my Holy Guardian Angel / awakening / Nirvana.' Whereas 'God' was still at the more reserved stage of: 'I'm happy to continue getting together for the occasional pizza.'

Realising that I had the wrong attitude, I started by questioning my motives for moving to Orkney. I had done so partly in order to have a more authentic, genuine life, to explore my spirituality and creativity, to downshift and escape the rat-race, to experience community and contribute meaningfully to society, and to commune peacefully with nature. But only partly.

I sought – and still seek – all those things, but I had baser motives too, which were concerned with a more primitive need for survival.

Life at the beginning of the twenty-first-century in southern England had, for me, become stressful, competitive, dangerous, exhausting, hectic, demanding, crowded, polluted and expensive. In addition, the global economy had become entrenched in a recession and the UK Government had tried (at the time of writing, they are still pursuing this strategy) to fix it by introducing austerity: monetary policies which progressively shifted wealth from the poorest to the richest. At their most tragic these policies were revealing themselves to be intentional economic genocide⁸. I was trying to run away from all of that. I also wanted to put a bit of geographical distance between myself and an ex-husband, and to ride the energies of a 'fresh start'.

My move to Orkney became financially possible because an inheritance gave me an opportunity to escape, to get out, to turn my back on my life, and to save myself. Running away from my problems is a strategy I have used several times in my life, and have fantasised about using even more often. It is a lazy and selfish strategy, and one which is ineffective. A better person might have stayed and worked to try and remedy these problems in society, and in themselves. Instead, I grabbed the opportunity of what I saw as a lifeboat ... and subsequently discovered that no matter how fast or how far I ran, I couldn't escape from myself.

A note on the general approach of this book

As stated, this book is part guidebook and part autobiography. I want it to be accessible so it is not an academic book. Some readers may find it frustrating that I don't reference as thoroughly as I ought to; personally I find it distracting if text is constantly interrupted by references, so instead I have provided references in endnotes. I have also sought not to plagiarise: when I refer to other people's theories, I clearly state this, usually in the endnotes. If I have not been exact in this, kindly inform me and I shall correct any omissions. I have also tried to provide a thorough bibliography but it is fairly eclectic and includes some references to works of fiction; I am aware this is 'unconventional' but I wish to be honest about my influences.

I believe that some of the places which I will recommend the spiritual pilgrim to visit whilst in Orkney, as well as some of the meditative practices which I suggest carrying out at those places (which are intended to augment your visit to those specific places), may be enhanced by some autobiography. These reflective sections are provided in order to explain why I am advocating visiting certain places over others and the relevance of particular exercises. My desire is to earth my suggestions into a relevant context so that the spiritual pilgrim can better understand why and when, possibly even how, my suggestions might also be relevant to their journey. As stated, I have placed these sections in *italics*.

Whilst I am aware that 'aesthetic' responses are crucial to the spiritual pilgrim's experience – indeed it is my own perception of an aura, surrounding many of the sites, which continues to exert a 'magnetic' draw on me – nevertheless, I am an archaeologist by training and background, so when I describe sites I will do my best to present the 'facts' as they are currently understood and will then aim to add layers of interpretation. I will try to differentiate these 'facts' – such as measurements – from general archaeological interpretation and subsequently from my own theories and subjective experiences.

By describing the physical evidence and the way that archaeological interpretation works, together with my own emotional responses, I hope to tread a middle path in which 'romantic' and 'academic' narratives can enhance, rather than overwhelm, each other. To achieve this, awareness is needed of the respective 'jurisdiction' of each type of narrative – the romantic and the academic are making different but complementary statements about the past. My intent is to provide a range of insights that act holistically, not solely spiritual ones.

However, part of my archaeological training involved using phenomenological⁹ methods to directly describe my conscious experiences from a subjective point of view, and it is this approach which I still favour. I want to engage, and encourage engagement, with the past with as many senses as I can, in order to better understand the past, or at least to better enjoy it. My approach is thus one which is primarily

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sensory. I also want to be free to explore ideas which some archaeologists, perhaps nervous that an excess of subjectivity will terminate their careers, won't venture into. Approaches to the past which incorporate personal experience still tend to be taboo within academia.

Any spiritual 'insights' offered will necessarily be subjective: they come from my personal experiences, impressions, and understandings. This could, quite legitimately, provoke accusations that I am a charlatan. I've met a few people who I consider to be charlatans and even more people whom I suspected were the victims of charlatanry. Charlatans all seem to operate in a similar way: when seeking to understand or explain something they not only give the highest value to their own subjective experiences and imaginings, but they also tend to behave in a rather adamant manner when promoting their 'correct' interpretation to others – hence perhaps why there also seem to be so many of their victims around.

I hope I can avoid such accusations by deliberately not operating like a charlatan (and continuing to resist the temptation to be one – it can, I have been given to understand, be quite lucrative). I don't intend for this book to be just a random collection of (what could be dismissed as) fantasies and imaginatively 'channelled' ramblings, yes, there is some of that, but I'm not seeking to propose that any of it is some unassailable 'truth'. Instead, I aim to build layers of interpretation, with the more subjective material presented as being the most tentative of 'evidence'. I'm certainly not zealously pushing 'my' interpretation as the 'only' interpretation, but simply offering it as another possible angle to consider.

Nevertheless, many of my individual experiences have been similarly experienced by guests whom I have had the privilege of sharing Orkney with (and I try to be careful not to plant suggestions when I am guiding, rather I tend to offer to gently discuss experiences). This correlation could be construed as providing a certain amount of subjective endorsement which, if you choose, could be dismissed as collective hallucination. By intentionally adopting an honest and self-questioning approach to these experiences, I will try to share an accessible spiritual approach, which I believe leads to a fuller 'understanding'.

As well as charlatanry, I also don't wish to venture into the realms of pseudoarchaeology. The archaeological training I went through was lengthy and rigorous and I was taught to think critically about the past; I have no motivation to change this stance (even though pseudoarchaeology can, like charlatanry, be quite lucrative). As stated, my intention is to demonstrate that the wonders of Orkney are sufficiently fine in themselves, without needing to prance too far into 'woo woo' territory. For this reason, there will be as little mention of aliens, UFOs, ley-lines, Atlantis, ancient Egypt, Druids, and human sacrifice, as I can get away with. These are, however, topics which many visitors to Orkney are interested in and they do need to be addressed in any 'alternative' guide, so I shall provide clarity where I deem it might be pertinent.

A little bit more autobiographical background

Moving to a remote Scottish island was, for me, the answer to a lifelong dream. This book is partly the story of what happened when I suddenly got everything I'd ever dreamt of: hopes, fears, and doubts, of battling with the elements and with depression. It describes what I learnt about myself, and possibly the human condition in general. It is concerned with spiritual adventures and experiments – all the dead-ends followed in pursuit of 'God' – what hasn't worked, and the few things that worked for a while.

It is set against one of the most stunning backdrops in the world – the Orkney archipelago, off the north-east coast of Scotland – and it is *place* which maintains centre stage throughout. This is a narrative of how I fell into, and then out of, romantic love with a place, and how my respect for it has subsequently grown and changed so that I now have an enduring love for it. A bit like a marriage, as opposed to an affair.

This book is definitely not a 'do this and be happy and successful' self-help manual – it's far more a case of: (1) learn from my mistakes, don't replicate them and (2) you might like to try this; I found it useful, so you may find it useful as well.

A note about measurements, temperatures and time

To avoid clunkiness, all measurements are given in metric and temperatures given in Celsius. Where stated in the descriptions of sites and artefacts, most measurements are approximations.

As a general approximation:

1 mile = about 2 kilometres

1 yard = about 1 metre

1 inch = about 2.5 centimetres

1 pound in weight = about 2 kilogrammes

To convert Celsius to Fahrenheit, I use: (temperature X 2) + 30 degrees. For example, 5 degrees Celsius is about 40 degrees Fahrenheit, whilst 20 degrees Celsius is about 70 degrees Fahrenheit.

Abbreviations:

km = kilometre(s)

m = metre(s)

cm = centimetre(s)

kg = kilogramme(s)

In order to be religiously neutral, I have used BCE for 'Before Christian Era', rather than BC, and CE for 'Christian Era' rather than AD.



'Earth Path' – geological formations

¹ Rickman, 1997.

² Heinberg, 1989.

³ Residents of Orkney tend to say ‘in Orkney’ rather than ‘on Orkney’. Mark Edmunds (2019) has drawn attention to how this reflects a sense of being immersed in the environment as opposed to interacting solely on its surface.

⁴ A note on my use of certain terms:

‘Pagan’ and ‘pagan’: I choose to spell this word with a capital ‘P’ when it is a proper noun, denoting the modern religion which is recognised by the Scottish Government. This word is spelled with a lower case ‘p’ when it is referring generically to historical non- or pre-Christian belief systems. This word is also spelt with a capital ‘P’ when it occurs at the start of a sentence and hopefully context will clarify which meaning is intended.

‘God’ is an imprecise term which I am not comfortable using, but which serves as a useful linguistic shorthand for a much broader concept. I’m not comfortable using ‘God’ because it has too many connotations, usually ‘invisible-sky-daddy’ ones, so I tend to put the word in inverted commas to denote a more general reference to: deity, the Divine, the numinous, the holy, the sacred, spirit, ‘other’, and so on. An amalgamation of all of these words comes closer to the sense that I am trying to communicate, but they do so less eloquently than the simple word: ‘God’. I use the word God without inverted commas when I am specifically referring to the Judeo-Christian concept of deity.

⁵ Disclaimer: The information and suggestions provided in the exercises, particularly the meditative exercises, are not intended as a substitute for professional medical or legal care or advice. As author, I assume no responsibility for your (as reader or recipient of this publication) thoughts, decisions or actions. With regard to all of the suggested exercises, please apply common sense; please don’t attempt them unless *you* feel they would be safe for *you* to do. Specifically, if you have ever been diagnosed as having schizophrenia or any psychotic condition, please do not perform any of the exercises which include visualisation.

⁶ I don’t intend to be disrespectful to Caithness and Sutherland’s landscape, which is equally, but differently, stunning to Orkney’s, but my personal impression is that Orkney’s landscape is ‘softer’.

⁷ Strictly speaking, I didn’t move to Orkney by myself, my husband, Mark, and our grey cat, moved with me, although our grey cat wasn’t fully consulted and lodged formal complaints for several weeks afterwards. However, I will tend to use ‘I’ instead of ‘we’ throughout the autobiographical sections, unless to do so would be disingenuous (I couldn’t for example, move and replant a tree by myself, so I use ‘we’ when describing that).

- ⁸ The manner in which I refer to the financial strategies of ‘austerity’, above, in the autobiographical section, are recognised by every economist I have read or listened to. The socialist ones criticise them heavily. The capitalist and neo-liberal economists applaud them as a tremendous success, advocating ‘survival of the fitness’. Economists do not argue whether or not this is happening, only whether this is beneficial or detrimental. Since where I sit on the political spectrum is entwined with my spirituality, for the purposes of clarity and honesty, as well as to remove any possibility of doubt, I am left of Lenin and highly critical of austerity economics.
- ⁹ Tilley’s (1994) exploration of the Wessex cursus has heavily influenced my approach to archaeological sites.