



Map showing the sites referred to in the text for chapters 'In the Beginning' and 'The Mesolithic' have been labelled, where not already shown on another map

— indicates Churchill Barriers, linking the south isles by road

The Mesolithic

Most of the Mesolithic sites are now underwater because of sea-level rises over the past millennia, but if you look at the area of the **Bay of Firth** (HY 370 135), just to the north of Finstown, this entire area was a large plain before the inundation of sea. Recent archaeological underwater investigations have found some intriguing structures which may date from the Mesolithic-Neolithic transition.

Scatters of worked stone which are characteristic of Mesolithic techniques have been found around the Loch of Stenness (HY 29 11), Wideford Hill (HY 405 115), the fields of Rendall (HY 38 21) and Tankerness (HY 505 080). Mesolithic artefacts have also been found below the early Neolithic houses at the Knap O'Howar (HY 483 519).

The Visitor Centre for **Isbister Tomb** (ND 470 845) (also known as the '**Tomb of the Eagles**') is on the island of South Ronaldsay, one of the southern islands which are linked by the Churchill Barriers and accessible from the Mainland of Orkney by road but not easily by public transport. From Kirkwall, follow the A961 south as far as you can, to the southern tip of South Ronaldsay, then turn left / east, following the signs for the 'Tomb of the Eagles'. This site is privately owned and there is an entrance charge but this includes access to the excellent museum and introductory talks from the knowledgeable and enthusiastic staff. The Visitor Centre includes one room dedicated entirely to the Mesolithic period. Open summer season with more limited access in winter.

Orkney Museum (HY 448 108), also known as 'Tankerness House', located in Broad Street, Kirkwall, opposite St Magnus Cathedral. Downstairs, room 1 of the Orkney Museum is dedicated to the raw materials which were utilised by both the Mesolithic and Neolithic people in Orkney and is valuable for setting the scene. Open all year, not Sundays.

Berriedale please refer to directions in section: 'In the Beginning'.