

**The Heart of Neolithic Orkney in its Contemporary Contexts:**  
A case study in heritage management and community values



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\*Cover Photo: visitors at the Ring of Brodgar, August, 2003

\*NB: All photos and illustrations in this report are by the author unless otherwise specified.

## **Abbreviations and Conventions**

HONO= Heart of Neolithic Orkney

WHS= World Heritage Site

UNESCO= United Nations Education Scientific and Cultural Organisation

ICOMOS= International Council on Monuments and Sites

BRCA= Brodgar Rural Conservation Area

OIC= Orkney Islands Council

OAT= Orkney Archaeological Trust

RSPB= Royal Society for the Protection of Birds

SNH= Scottish Natural Heritage

PIC= Property In Care

RoB= Ring of Brodgar

SoS= Stones of Stenness

MH= Maeshowe

SB= Skara Brae

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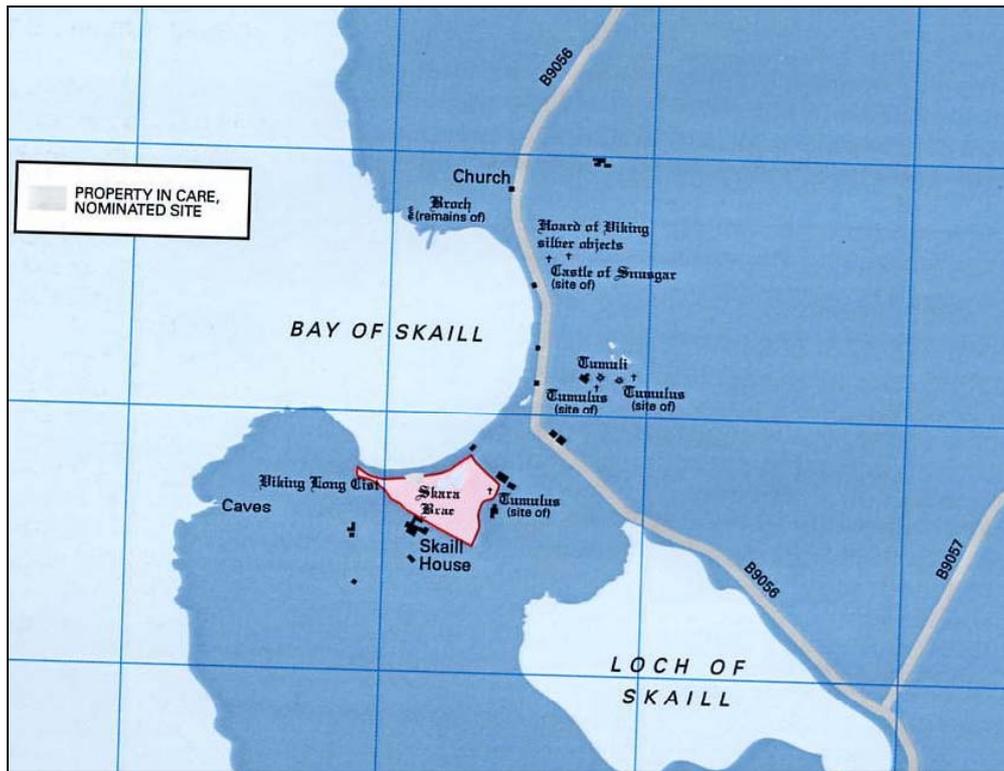
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All shortcomings within this report are, of course, mine alone.





**Figure 1. 2: Location of Skara Brae in the Northwest Mainland, along with its Buffer Zones (Crown Copyright).**

- 1.4 The area protected by the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act surrounding the Property in Care at Skara Brae acts as that monument's Inner Buffer Zone. An Outer Buffer Zone for the site is provided in the form of the curtilage of Skail House, which is a Category A listed building.
- 1.5 Both regions of the WHS possess special significance for a variety of communities who reside both in and outwith Orkney. Some of these groups include, but are not limited to: local residents (particularly farmers, landowners, residents and their respective community councils in Stenness and Sandwick); the natural and cultural heritage sectors like Historic Scotland, Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH), the Orkney Archaeological Trust (OAT), and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB); the tourist industry, including the Orkney Tourist Board, local tour guides, and visitors; community interest groups like the Orkney Trout Fishing Association, The Orkney Heritage Society, Friends of the Orkney Archaeological Trust and the Orkney Rambler's Club; and local government, including sections of the Orkney Islands Council (OIC) like the Forward Planning Department and the Orkney Heritage sector.
- 1.6 UNESCO guidelines suggest that a management plan should be drawn up by the government agency that nominates the site for World Heritage inscription, in this case Historic Scotland. These plans, according to UNESCO, should be designed to manage the site(s) with respect to the unique conservation needs of the designated area(s), as well as meeting the needs and requirements of the local communities where the sites are located. These stipulations are outlined in UNESCO's Operational Guidelines, which were formulated in 1977 to aid and instruct heritage agencies in the management of individual sites under the 1972 World Heritage Convention. The Operational Guidelines are periodically updated by appointed World Heritage Committees as social, cultural and environmental needs and requirements change over time. In 1997, the Operational Guidelines were revised to reflect a new emphasise on managing sites in cooperation with diverse social and cultural groups, or 'stakeholders', such as those listed in paragraph 1.5 above, who have vested interests in the sites, often of a

long-standing nature. This change in guidelines itself reflects an ideational shift in the way UNESCO views social groups and local communities with special interests in the sites, which will be addressed in Chapter Two.

- 1.7 UNESCO requires management plans for WHS's. A draft management plan for the Orkney WHS was submitted with the nomination and subsequently finalised. *The Heart of Neolithic Orkney World Heritage Site Management Plan*, was produced by Historic Scotland in 2001 to provide a wide-ranging framework for management of the HONO with reference to its social, cultural and economic dimensions in contemporary society. Respect for the knowledge, traditions and beliefs of the local community is emphasised in the text of the document in an effort to make the management plan as inclusive as possible (see especially points 3, 4, 9, 16, 17, 18, 20, 21 and 22 in the HONO Management Plan's Summary, and paragraphs 1.4.1 – 1.4.5 of the main text). Accommodation of the interests, views and requirements of landowners, farmers, visitors, tourist organisations and agencies is also mentioned (*ibid.*).
- 1.8 A second document that informs the management of the WHS, *The Heart of Neolithic Orkney World Heritage Site Interpretation Plan*, was drawn up by Historic Scotland in 2002. This internal working document was not formally published, although it was distributed to Orkney libraries, and is made available to anyone who requests it. The objective of this plan is to 'demonstrate how the WHS might be interpreted and presented to the public' (Historic Scotland 2002: 1). This document is informed by various recent studies into visitor needs and requirements in the World Heritage area<sup>2</sup>. These include a study in which heritage and museum consultants undertook twenty days of 'snapshot visitor surveys', consultation with local groups, site appraisal and gathering background information on the sites (Parkin et al. 2002: 7). The interpretation plan was also informed by data from the Orkney Tourist Board's respective *Visitor Surveys* in 1996 and 2000, and Ironside Farrer's *Brodgar Visitor Management Plan* (1998).<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, a Research Agenda has been outlined for the site, which aims to connect different disciplines to provide a multi-faceted understanding of the WHS as a place.
- 1.9 The project described in this report was grant-aided by Historic Scotland, and contributes to fulfilling UNESCO's guidelines for managing the site with respect for all parties with interests in the Heart of Neolithic Orkney WHS. It was developed within the School of Art History and Archaeology, where research into assessing the social and cultural values of heritage sites and museums is a prominent research theme. It involved in-depth analysis of the WHS in its contemporary contexts using qualitative methods, such as participant observation, behavioural observation and interview-based research. In doing so it builds upon the use of community archaeology and qualitative methods employed in heritage management and development projects elsewhere in the world. Several of the *Aims* listed in the Management Plan (Historic Scotland 2001), as well as a number of the *Actions* listed under the *Work Schedule* for specific projects (section 3.2) are nested within this broader holistic project, but with the advantage that they were researched in an integrated way. Furthermore, in-depth knowledge about people's beliefs, perceptions, and practices as they relate to the HONO WHS were acquired. The WHS thus provides a detailed case study for exploring wider issues concerning the impact of archaeological monuments, and the research, management and presentation surrounding them, within contemporary society.

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<sup>2</sup> The term 'World Heritage Area' is not an 'official' term used by Historic Scotland in any aspect of its management of the HONO WHS. Rather, it is a general term I have adopted in this report for the purpose of brevity to refer to the areas, primarily the BRCA and the Parishes of Stenness and Sandwick, within which the WHS monuments lie.

<sup>3</sup> Since the research for this project took place, the *HONO Site Interpretation Plan* is in the course of being updated to reflect changing circumstances (Historic Scotland 2004).

### *Aims*

- 1.10 The overall aims of the project were to examine the contemporary social, cultural and economic dimensions of the Heart of Neolithic Orkney WHS, and the research, management and presentation surrounding it. The role of archaeological monuments, and the institutions surrounding them, in the production and transformation of people's sense of place and identity can also be explored through comparison with other historic sites in Orkney and elsewhere in the future.

### *Objectives*

- 1.11 The objectives of this project were to gain:
- Insight into the traditions, beliefs and knowledge of the local community as they relate to the WHS, archaeological heritage generally, and heritage institutions.
  - A knowledge of how archaeological monuments figure in the daily practices of the local community and of how WHS status, heritage organisations and cultural tourism impact upon their daily lives.
  - Insight into the concerns, views and requirements of the farming community and other land owners as they relate to the WHS and surrounding monuments.
  - An understanding of how members of the local community, including the farming community, perceive sources of threat to the archaeological heritage, including their own potential impact on the physical condition of the sites
  - Knowledge and understanding of visitor perceptions and expectations as they pertain to Orcadian archaeological heritage generally, and the WHS in particular.
  - An assessment of visitor patterns both between and within sites, including which sites they visit and why, how they use sites and how long they stay.
  - A knowledge of visitor perceptions of ground surfaces, erosion, and their potential impact on the site (particularly in relation to the Ring of Brodgar).
  - An assessment of the impact of WHS status on visitors' desire to visit the monuments, and on their behaviour and perceptions of the monument.
  - A knowledge and understanding of the views, interests and needs of tourist organisations/agencies, and other relevant economic institutions.
  - An understanding of how the policies and practices of tourist organisations/agencies/representatives impact on how visitors perceive and use the WHS monuments and other archaeological sites and museums in Orkney.
  - Insight into how archaeological material and archaeological knowledge are employed in educational contexts and the impact of WH status on this process.
  - An understanding of how all of the above impact on the production and transformation of people's sense of identity and place.

### *Report Structure*

- 1.12 The report is divided into six chapters. This chapter presents a general introduction to the background of the study, as well as detailing the various aims and objectives of the project as a whole. Chapter Two provides an overview of current theories and critiques of heritage management, reviewing the quantitative methodologies that have traditionally been used to measure visitor use and satisfaction, and presenting the advantages of an innovative and in-

depth, qualitative approach. It also draws from other disciplines where qualitative approaches are frequently used to inform public policy, including social and economic development studies and applied anthropology.

- 1.13 Chapters Three, Four and Five present the main 'results' of the study. Chapter Three provides an overview of Orkney society, how Orkney residents perceive and use the monuments within the WHS, how the developments surrounding the sites affect them, and how their actions and perceptions contribute to senses of identity and belonging within the community and relationships with 'outsiders'. Chapter Four provides discussion of how heritage agencies, tour guides and various other interested individuals and groups construct and present the WHS, thus, mediating the past for all who live near, use, and understand the sites.
- 1.14 Chapter Five provides a detailed review of how visitors perceive and use all four WHS, including descriptions and illustrations of visitor behaviour at the four primary monuments within the Heart of Neolithic Orkney. Chapter Six combines integration and discussion of the project results with more detailed discussion of the implications for policies tailored to the World Heritage Sites.

## 2.0 Project approach: Theory and Method

2.1 This chapter introduces the theories and methods used to examine the social, cultural and economic dimensions of the Heart of Neolithic Orkney World Heritage Site. A range of qualitative methods derived from sociology and anthropology were employed, such as in-depth interviews, participant observation, and observational tracking, over the course of a full year during which the author lived in Orkney. Use of these methods sets the project apart from the shorter-term ‘visitor studies’ popular with heritage agencies in Britain, which usually employ quantitative methods, such as questionnaires and visitor counts. The first section provides a review of various approaches to heritage within contemporary society highlighting some of the themes and issues that have characterised heritage management, social policy and academic enquiry in recent decades. The second section discusses various trends in visitor and community research, particularly the growing interest in qualitative methods, and describes how existing methodologies have informed the present project. The third section provides a detailed description of the fieldwork design, and discussion of how the information was gathered, analysed and interpreted.

### *Approaches to heritage*

- 2.2 Most cultural heritage managers, and indeed others linked to the heritage industry like archaeologists, historians and museum curators, argue that their primary task is to act as ‘guardians’ who protect and preserve the past for posterity, as well as promote education about, and enjoyment of, heritage sites and objects for people in contemporary society. These and other similar sentiments are enshrined in heritage protection policies throughout the world, including international charters like the 1972 UNESCO Convention Concerning the Protection of World Heritage, and the 1964 Venice Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites. The values embedded in these international charters are largely taken as self-evident and straightforward aspects of cultural life in the countries that have adopted them.
- 2.3 There is a large body of heritage management literature concerned with heritage legislation and management, much of which consists of ‘guides to practice’ (Carman 2002: 3). These practical ‘guides’ deal with issues such as how to manage sites, the laws that dictate the kinds of things and places that should be protected, and the procedures heritage managers need to follow to successfully carry out their jobs. This literature is not particularly reflective, and rarely involves much analysis of how those working in the heritage sector view themselves, the policies they create, or their impact on cultural beliefs and practices. It is primarily concerned with ‘best practice’ when it comes to conserving, managing and presenting archaeological and historical remains. One of the most popular volumes under this category is Hunter and Ralston’s (1993) edited book *Archaeological Resource Management in the UK*. The content of the book is concerned with how archaeologists should interpret the past for the public, and explaining how various international and national heritage laws apply to British archaeological remains.
- 2.4 Critical analysis of the reasons underlying the conservation and preservation of ‘heritage’ has, however, become increasingly common in the last three decades. Practitioners from several academic disciplines, as well as applied social scientists and heritage workers themselves, have become interested in studying the philosophies underlying heritage preservation and presentation (de la Torre 2002; Howard 2003; Larsen et. al 1995; Munjeri 2000; Stanley-Price, Talley and Vaccaro 1996) to some extent revisiting debates that first arose in the nineteenth century. As will be discussed below, recent critiques have been framed by shifting power relationships in the post-colonial era and the growing political power of minority and indigenous groups in liberal democracies.
- 2.5 As Carman (2002) has pointed out, these recent critical studies take the form of ‘commentaries’ and view heritage as a ‘cultural phenomenon’; something that is *constructed* for social and

political aims in contemporary society. This type of literature often focuses on the representation of the past at heritage sites and museums and aims to identify underlying messages and agendas (ibid.: 2). One seminal example of this type of work is Hewison's (1987) critical study, *The Heritage Industry*, which claimed that the purpose of Britain's burgeoning 'museum culture' was to celebrate a 'golden past' that could boost the morale of the nation during a period of industrial decline. Others, like Urry's (1990) *The Tourist Gaze*, assert that in their impossible quests for authenticity, visitors to heritage sites objectify the objects of their 'gaze', converting them, and the people who created them, into 'exotic others'.

- 2.6 In addition to the literature that deals exclusively with heritage, there is also a wide range of research that is concerned with the relationship between heritage and other aspects of social life such as the construction of identity, nationalism, and so forth. Indeed, the concept of 'having a past' and 'having a heritage' has in the last three decades come under intense scrutiny within various disciplines that have diverse interests in the role of the past in contemporary society. Although much of this research does not discuss heritage management directly, it illustrates the increasing recognition of the importance of heritage in contemporary society and in particular its role in the production of identity and place.
- 2.7 Anthropological, sociological and historical studies have shown that cultural groups are often imagined and created as cohesive social entities on the basis of a belief in a deep 'shared past' (Anderson 1983). The interpretation and presentation of historical and archaeological evidence therefore plays an extremely important role in the construction of cultural identity (Eriksen 1994; Hobsbawm & Ranger 1987). Studies have shown that particular heritage places, objects and events are often selected as emblematic symbols that can be invoked repeatedly in a wide range of contexts. The use of such symbols, in product packaging, government logos, flags and so on means that they form a regular feature of people's everyday lives and a powerful means of producing and representing group identities. Handler's (1988) anthropological study of Quebecois nationalism, for example, highlights the celebration of *patrimoine*, as one of the primary ways that Quebecois identify themselves in opposition to other Canadians. Herzfeld's (1997) *Cultural Intimacy* also addresses the use of cultural symbols in the performance of 'traditional' activities, such as smashing plates, and illustrates their role in the production of Greek nationalism.
- 2.8 Although such critical studies have been partially responsible for stimulating interest in heritage management practices throughout the world, another important aspect of the heritage critique has stemmed from postcolonial contexts. One of the primary critiques in contemporary debates on heritage places and objects is in relation to disenfranchised ethnic groups in postcolonial countries who have long lobbied for increased control of the cultural objects that are linked to their histories and traditions, particularly in the United States and Australia (Layton 1989; Skeates 2000). Such political movements have resulted, in some instances, in new legislation such as the 1990 Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) in the U.S.A., which requires the total inventory and repatriation of all human remains and associated items held in museums and stores to appropriate Native American tribes. NAGPRA also demands more stringent control of archaeological excavations that reveal or are likely to yield the discovery of human remains, making it mandatory for any human remains and associated goods found to remain untouched or immediately repatriated to the appropriate tribe.
- 2.9 The passage of NAGPRA stimulated worldwide anxiety in the scientific, archaeological and museum communities, who became afraid that such legislation would destroy archaeological collections in museums, as well as severely restrict archaeological field practice. It would, some professionals feared, leave museums and other cultural institutions virtually empty of potentially rich educational resources for the public as well as for experts who might gain new knowledge from archaeological materials.

- 2.10 Such developments, along with postcolonial critiques of Eurocentric definitions of heritage sites and the recognition of sacred sites and landscapes (see Layton 1986), have caused many heritage managers to reflect on the purpose of their jobs and to question many of the principles underlying heritage conservation and presentation. Meethan (2001) states, for example, that Western conceptions of value, particularly in terms of aesthetics, economic value and cultural worth, have greatly influenced how heritage sites are interpreted and presented by managers. This may be in opposition to how people in other cultures, or even different sub-cultural and social groups, may perceive sites. Similarly, as pointed out by Jones (2003), heritage managers have traditionally been concerned with interpreting and presenting heritage objects and sites ‘correctly’ by trying to interpret and present what professionals believe to be ‘original’ meanings, rather than focusing on contemporary values with which sites are imbued.
- 2.11 Such critiques have encouraged greater self-reflection amongst archaeologists, museum curators, historians and heritage managers about how they should treat the historic cultural ties between the material past and contemporary living communities. The introduction of repatriation mandates in both the US and Australia also helped to revive international debates over the display and storage of ethnic and/or nationally symbolic archaeological materials by former colonial powers. Two of these debates involve initiatives to repatriate materials currently held in the British Museum, including transporting the Elgin Marbles to Greece in time for the 2004 Olympic Games, or ‘lending’ the Rosetta Stone to Egypt’s Supreme Council of Antiquities to celebrate the opening of a new wing at Cairo’s Egyptian Museum.
- 2.12 As a result of the debates discussed above, research into the beliefs and values attached to archaeological remains and sacred sites by local communities and indigenous minorities has become an essential aspect of heritage management in some postcolonial contexts. In the case of Australia, for example, the assessment of social value is now regarded as an important aspect of heritage management, even though there are still problems in terms of routine practice (see Johnston 1994). Cultural ties between people and heritage sites are also regularly examined in the US by the government Bureau of Ethnology (Crespi 1988; 1999; 2001). Furthermore, ‘public archaeology’ has become increasingly important in University curricula and a focus of conference sessions and journal articles. In a significant move toward concern with these themes, UNESCO now urges more inclusive consultation with interested groups as a routine practice in the management of all World Heritage Sites.
- 2.13 Despite these developments in the field of heritage research, there are still few in-depth studies that review how heritage management impacts on local communities in Britain and other parts of Europe. There are some notable exceptions which focus on the role of heritage in creating senses of place and belonging in smaller-scale groups like regional, local and transient communities (Bender 1993, 1995, 1998; Herzfeld 1991; Jones 2003; Kneafsey 1993; Macdonald 1997). Indeed, a number of studies in the last decade have focused on how various aspects of ‘cultural heritage’, particularly linguistic heritage, museums, archaeological and historical objects and landscapes are involved in the habitual practices of everyday life. Prime amongst these are Macdonald’s study of linguistic heritage in relation to Gaelic identity on the Isle of Skye (1997), and Jones’ (2004) recent study of community identity and belonging in relation to a famous carved stone, the Pictish symbol-bearing cross-slab from the village of Hilton of Cadboll in eastern Scotland.
- 2.14 To a greater or lesser extent these studies also represent a departure from the critical commentaries discussed earlier, because they tend to incorporate research into heritage management practices, and attempt to examine ‘what happens when heritage management is done’ (Carman 2002: 4). Instead of simply critiquing and debating the practices of heritage managers, this research explores the *specific* effects that particular heritage sites, objects and laws have on people and social groups. Such studies focus on particular social groups, such as local communities and visitors, to find out how they perceive heritage sites, how they feel about the laws surrounding them, and how community values and senses of identity may

contribute to these perceptions. Such an approach presents a more ‘holistic’ view of how heritage works, by studying its effects from the ‘bottom up’ through direct contact with those who engage with it, rather than from the ‘top down’, in terms of evaluating more abstract entities like ‘the nation’ (Herzfeld 1997: 7). This project falls within this category, which currently represents a small body of research, but one which is a growing focus of attention.

#### *Trends in visitor and community studies*

- 2.15 Heritage managers and museum professionals have long sought to ‘measure’ aspects of visitor use and ‘satisfaction’ at specific sites and institutions (Merrimann 1991: 42). These visitor studies are intended to find out what is being conveyed to the public through the displays, whether the messages they impart have an ‘educational’ value, and whether the interpretations and presentations of the materials are ‘successful’. During surveys, the encounter between researcher and respondent is often very brief, perhaps lasting no longer than 5 minutes, so as not to ‘impose’ on the visitor’s experience (Webb 1998).
- 2.16 While these approaches are useful in terms of gathering baseline data, some heritage managers are calling into question whether these facts and figures alone present an adequate picture of how the heritage sites and monuments in their care are perceived and used by visitors (see Screven 1984; 1993). Many of these methods are ‘market’-oriented, and focus on heritage sites as commodities to be consumed by visitors rather than tools which promote powerful cultural idioms about the past and provide the basis of group identities in the present. Areas of primary evaluation tend to focus on the assessment of the historic or environmental value of the site (Taplin, Scheld and Low 2002), or financial aspects like entrance fees, cafés, shop sales, and visitor satisfaction and ‘value for money’.
- 2.17 When surveys about how people feel toward ‘the past’ and ‘heritage’ are conducted, they tend to give over-arching answers that lack specific detail about why people respond as they do. For example, English Heritage (2001) recently commissioned the market research company MORI (Market and Opinion Research International) to undertake an extensive public survey of attitudes to ‘heritage’ in England. The results, discussed in the 2001 publication *Power of Place*, reveal statistics like ‘87% think it is right that there should be public funding to preserve [the historic environment]; 77% disagree that we preserve too much’. These types of results do not, however, reveal details about *how* or *why* people think monuments and sites should be preserved.
- 2.18 Traditional visitor survey methods have their place within certain aspects of heritage management (for instance, keeping track of visitor numbers at specific sites). However, they are less effective in providing information about issues like multiculturalism, class, gender and race relations, which, as we have seen, are important aspects of visitor experience and are increasingly the focus of social inclusion policies. Such issues, particularly in terms of the ways visitors perceive and behave at heritage places, require deeper understandings than quantitative methods are equipped to produce.
- 2.19 Bryman (2001: 77) outlines some of the main critiques of quantitative research in the volume *Social Research Methods*, three of which are highlighted here. First is the failure of quantitative techniques to distinguish the social from the natural world; in other words, the social lives and behaviour of humans is treated as a scientifically testable range of actions that can be repeated, leaving little room for agency. In the context of visitor studies, such an approach might over-simplify visitor replies to survey questions, simply fitting the visitor into a pre-designated category without explaining how or why the visitor chose the response. The second critique argues that the tools used to undertake quantitative research are highly structured, artificial instruments not normally encountered in daily life. The nature of a highly structured question and answer within a visitor survey means that the respondent has a limited range of choices in articulating their thought and action. The third critique is perhaps the most

relevant to this study in terms of arguing for a quantitative approach to visitor behaviour. This critique claims that despite a respondent's reply to a highly structured, quantitative research tool, there may be a chasm between what that person may *say* in a given situation, and what they *do* in everyday life. In other words, research results may not correspond to lived action.

- 2.20 Bryman (ibid.) argues that qualitative research methods allow the respondent to provide their own unique response, and to place emphasis on points or themes they particularly value. As well as providing a means to explore the values people place on heritage sites, qualitative methods can also provide insights into the more mundane aspects of everyday life and habitual practice that surround archaeological monuments. For instance, in terms of the physical, conservation-based aspects of heritage management, managers are keen to understand how visitor behaviour impacts on the material fabric of heritage sites; especially those that are un-staffed. Turley (1998), for example, wishes to acquire an accurate picture of the physical impacts visitors have on Hadrian's Wall, and paths that surround it. The site, itself inscribed on the World Heritage List, is subject to rigorous physical activity in terms of increasing numbers of tourists climbing on it, as well as treading paths that may impact on *in situ* archaeological remains. Rather than setting out a list of potential ways of assessing these issues at the un-staffed site, she simply states that 'more information is needed' (ibid.). In this case, observation-based methods at strategic points where path wear is problematic, coupled with brief interviews with visitors to Hadrian's wall, could reveal where visitors tread, how they engage with the site physically, as well as *why* they behave in the ways they do.
- 2.21 In light of the need for deeper understandings of heritage, qualitative methods derived from ethnography and sociology have started to be adopted as part of the heritage management process in some countries. The term 'ethnography' refers to anthropological methods of studying and learning about social and cultural groups in specific environments. Using qualitative methods like participant observation (in which the researcher both participates in and observes cultural activities) and interviewing, the ethnographer attempts to get a detailed understanding of people's lives. Ethnographic assessment at heritage sites can provide insights into a range of relationships between cultural groups, the sites themselves, and those who manage them. Furthermore, as Taplin, Scheld and Low (2002: 80) argue:
- ...applied ethnographic research produces information of great utility in planning and policy making. Park ethnography can complement the opinion survey by uncovering the cultural ties between parks and local communities. In bringing local communities into the decision making loop, the research process itself nurtures those ties. Ethnographic research also informs the planning process so that management decisions will resonate with user constituencies and avoid unwitting impacts on historic relationships between park lands and cultural groups.
- 2.22 The use of such methods in heritage management is most in evidence in countries, such as the USA, Canada and Australia, with vocal indigenous minorities/local communities who challenge aspects of heritage management policies. To date, Western European countries have been largely unaffected by these developments in terms of routine heritage management. However, the use of ethnography in heritage contexts is starting to feature in special pilot projects and in the sphere of academic research into heritage. For example, the Swedish National Heritage Board has recently sponsored a project entitled 'Cultural Heritage: a Societal Dialogue', which is being undertaken by Dr. Anders Gustafsson of the County Museum of Bohuslän, and Dr. Håkan Karlsson of Göteborg University. The project utilises qualitative methods, particularly ethnography and interviewing, to understand how people in the community of Bohuslän perceive and understand their heritage. Other studies, such as those discussed earlier (e.g. Bender 1999; Jones 2003) and the present study, are encouraging heritage agencies to see the value of different ways of 'assessing' the value of archaeological sites.

- 2.23 The methods employed by these researchers, including behaviour tracking, participant observation and interviews are not new in and of themselves, and have in the last decade become an important part of examining visitors' engagement with material culture and architectural space in art galleries and museums (Macdonald 2002; Serrell 1998). The use of such methods at places like archaeological sites, however, represents a new form of engagement with visitors and local communities in order to understand their use, perception and valuation of archaeological remains.

### *Specific Project Description*

- 2.24 On the basis of the arguments presented above, this study was designed using qualitative methods to investigate the beliefs, views, requirements and practices of the various social and cultural groups listed in the HONO Management Plan. Though these groups are referred to as important stakeholders in the WHS Management Plan, they cannot be respected and accommodated in the heritage management process unless a good knowledge and understanding of them is acquired. This type of study can also help to reveal people's knowledge and understanding of the purpose of heritage agencies and how they work. Here ethnography can play a key role as argued by Miki Crespi (2001: 1), Chief Ethnographer of the National Park Service Archeology and Ethnography Program in the US:

Ethnography adds dimension to places ordinarily seen as having fixed, objectively defined boundaries, places categorized as archaeological sites, historic structures, or cultural landscapes. Other characteristics emerge from the perspectives of people whose ethnic history and identity are traditionally associated with these resources and whose cultural survival depends, to some extent, on their continued use. Because culturally informed management requires readily available information on these resources, the people who value them, and whose views must be considered, NPS has begun a computerized Ethnographic Resources Inventory that promises to become an important management tool. [...] National parks and the diverse peoples linked to them are members of the same ecosystem, bound by different yet joint interests to the same body of resources. Ethnography makes these links apparent.

- 2.25 The HONO *Management Plan*, which was designed in accordance with recommendations gleaned from a wide range of interest groups, identifies a list of actions, which include studies addressing the local community, farmers, visitors and so on, and specifies consultation, visitor survey and application of local and national policies as the main methods of acquiring knowledge. However, such an approach does have limitations. For example, the methods outlined can play a significant role, but are overly dependent on cursory information exchange through consultation meetings, and statistical measurements of behaviour and attitudes (e.g. as acquired through visitor/consumer questionnaires such as Orkney Tourist Board *Visitor Survey* 1996).
- 2.26 As pointed out by Salmen (1987: 124-6) in his discussion of the evaluation of community development projects, these kinds of methods – cursory visits by managers, before-after evaluation and statistical measurements – have often proved insufficient in capturing the realities of the project and the experiences of those involved. Most importantly he argues, 'these evaluations fail to provide information about how a particular project activity is perceived by the beneficiaries - a basic concern of managers seeking to make a project more effective' (ibid.: 124).
- 2.27 The fieldwork for the Heart of Neolithic Orkney community study involved a variety of methods derived from anthropology, sociology and heritage management, including focused interviews, behavioural observation, participant observation, tracking visitors movement's around the monuments, and historical and documentary analysis. The project required engagement with several communities and individuals, such as local inhabitants, farmers,

archaeologists, visitors, tourist organisations, etc, in a variety of social settings. The range of locales included: archaeological monuments and visitor centres, community centres, museums, a variety of contexts within Stenness Village, Stromness and Kirkwall, three schools, heritage management establishments and meetings, the internet and so on. Within these different 'sites' combinations of the above methods were employed as appropriate.

- 2.28 These research activities were carried out over the course of 12 months' fieldwork in Orkney. I first lived in the port town of Stromness for 6 months, then in Kirkwall for one month, and subsequently in the parish of Stenness, near three of the sites in the WHS area, for 5 months, where I engaged in participant observation with the local community and the tourist community. Various methods of recording were used, including extensive field notes, 40 taped ethnographic interviews with informants, photography and acquisition of documentary materials. Analysis and interpretation drew upon anthropological and sociological theory in order to gain insight into people's beliefs, perception and practices. The ways in which the WHS impinges on people's experience of the Orcadian landscape and their sense of identity and place, as well as the impact that people have on the monuments themselves, were explored, taking into account their recursive relationships. Furthermore, the mediating roles of conservation, management and presentation practices were explored, and the implications for existing theories of heritage management examined.
- 2.29 Specific research into the beliefs, values and practices of visitors to the HONO sites was also carried out. At the RoB and the SoS, three main methods were used: interviewing, visitor tracking and participant observation. The movements and activities of 100 visitors were tracked and recorded on ground plans of the RoB and surrounding area. The same strategies were carried out with 50 visitors at the SoS. Semi-structured taped interviews were carried out with 50 visitors on their departure from the site. Finally, participant observation was also employed in various forms: at the WHS monuments, where the researcher engaged with visitors and participated in their activities, and on coach tours incorporating the WHS.
- 2.30 The tracking maps have been analysed to ascertain patterns in the movement of visitors around RoB and SoS. In particular, the ways in which people engage with the architectural space created by the monuments has been examined, along with the impact of their movement and activities on the material fabric of the monument. The taped interviews have been analysed in full using the qualitative data analysis software, Nud\*ist.
- 2.31 At Skara Brae and Maeshowe, visitor behaviour and movement was recorded in the form of field notes, though systematic tracking was not carried out, as hard-wearing pavements have already been installed here, and the site stewards can inform managers about site wear and movement. Semi-structured interviews were employed, however, in order to gauge people's knowledge and understanding of the monuments, as well as why people move around them in the ways they do.

### *Summary*

- 2.32 The aims and objectives of this project have been informed by wide-ranging issues, theories and trends relating to the study of contemporary heritage management. If heritage managers are to address the needs and issues of those who visit, use and live near sites and monuments, in-depth understanding of people's beliefs, perceptions, and practices must be acquired. This is especially important in the management of World Heritage Sites (Shackley et. al 1998), as management plans for these sites require a delicate balance between providing 'world class' facilities for potentially large numbers of visitors, as well as accommodating the values and needs of those who live in and amongst the sites.
- 2.33 Qualitative methods have been outlined as an important tool for enquiry into people's perception of, and behaviour at, World Heritage Sites and archaeological monuments more

generally. Based on the research undertaken for this study, it is argued in this report that in-depth qualitative research provides much greater insight into people's beliefs and practices than more traditional methods like surveys and questionnaires, because it enables researchers to understand *why* people perceive things in the ways that they do, rather than taking their opinions as self evident and straightforward. The results of the study are discussed in-depth in the next four chapters.

### 3.0 Heritage, tourism and society in Orkney

- 3.1 The archipelago of Orkney lies about seven miles north of Mainland Scotland, and consists of 90 islands, islets and skerries. Sixteen of the islands are currently inhabited, and the total population of the islands is just under 20,000. Around 11,000 people inhabit the Mainland, which is the biggest of all the islands, and is itself divided into eastern and western portions. Orkney residents generally refer to the whole of the archipelago as ‘the County’, and tend to divide the islands into three regions: the North Isles, the Southern Isles, and the Mainland. Apart from the East/West divide, the Mainland is further separated into smaller districts and parishes, most of which, like each of the smaller islands, have their own community councils, village shops and primary schools.
- 3.2 Agriculture, fishing, and tourism are the largest generators of income for the islands today (OIC 1996; 1998), and many residents have invested in small, niche-market industries like gourmet food, beer and wine production, as well as arts and crafts like jewellery, textiles and pottery. The transport industries, particularly the lifeline ferry services that operate between Mainland and Caithness, and between the islands within the archipelago, provide employment for many Orcadians. Orkney College, an institution which is part of the larger University of Highlands and Islands<sup>4</sup>, is located in the Islands’ capital, Kirkwall, and offers both higher and continuing education courses for students interested in subjects ranging from business studies to archaeology, and hospitality to information technology. Herriot-Watt University also has a campus located in Stromness, which offers courses in marine resource management and other environmental studies subjects. Cafes, newsagents, garages and hotel restaurants exist in most villages in towns and these also provide services and employment for islanders.
- 3.3 With its wealth of archaeological monuments and Scandinavian connections, Orkney is often perceived as being remote and unusual in comparison to Scotland’s Gaelic-speaking Highland and west coast island communities<sup>5</sup>. Comprising one half of Britain’s ‘Northern Isles’<sup>6</sup>, Orkney has only officially been recognised as ‘Scottish’ for a little over 500 years. Historians and heritage enthusiasts alike celebrate the fact that the islands were under Norse rule for hundreds of years prior to their often maligned ‘impignoration’, or ‘pawning’ to Scotland in 1468, one year before the same fate befell the neighbouring Shetland Islands (Thomson 1986: 218). The Islands of Orkney came as a part of a ‘package deal’ offered to Scotland as a dowry from a Danish king for the wedding of his daughter to James III (ibid.).
- 3.4 The tombs and settlements scattered throughout the Orcadian landscape make every green bump in an open field a potential curiosity for those interested in the ancient past - indeed, they may conceal Orkney’s next great archaeological discovery. Generations of the Islands’ inhabitants would, through the years, have been surrounded by the monuments of the distant past, just as we are today. Later prehistoric and historic peoples, for example, seem to have taken an interest in the islands’ archaeological remains, shown in the re-use, or at least, respect for, Neolithic monuments, through the Bronze and Iron Ages and beyond. Bronze Age barrows, for instance, seem to have been built in close proximity to Neolithic remains, whilst at the same time maintaining a marked distance that implies a kind of ‘respect’ for the sacred space surrounding them. Iron Age architecture seems to emulate aspects of Neolithic structures, again, possibly indicating some sort of ‘respect’ or other interest in ancestral pasts.

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<sup>4</sup> Although known as the University of Highlands and Islands, the institution is still in the process of achieving official accreditation.

<sup>5</sup> The highlands and west coast islands are often perceived to represent ‘traditional’ aspects of Scottish culture despite being largely imagined, romanticised inventions of nineteenth-century authors and historians; especially Sir Walter Scott (Macdonald 1997; McCrone, Morris and Kiely 1995; Schoene-Harwood 1995).

<sup>6</sup> The term ‘Northern Isles’ can be confusing, because it refers, on the British Mainland, to Orkney and Shetland. In Orkney, the term ‘North Isles’ refers to the islands in the Orkney archipelago which lie north of the Orkney Mainland.

Thus, in different ways of which we can only speculate, forms of ‘social value’ seem to have been associated with the monuments for thousands of years (see Hingley 1999 for further discussion).

- 3.5 The arrival of Scandinavian populations in Orkney is today a hotly debated topic amongst historians and archaeologists. There is no conclusive evidence as to exactly when or how the Norse began settling in Orkney, or whether they ‘invaded’ the Islands and displaced or simply blended with the Christian ‘Pictish’ society (Barrett 2003; Richards 2002; Thomson 2001: 40). Like inhabitants before them, however, there is evidence to suggest that at least some of the ‘Viking’ inhabitants took an interest in Orkney’s ancient monuments. For instance, runic inscriptions and a small, elaborately carved ‘dragon’ were carved in the inner chamber of Maeshowe.
- 3.6 Geographer and historian Ronald Miller refers to the Norsemen as the ‘founding fathers of Orkney’ (Miller 1986: 268). As mentioned above, Orkney is replete with Scandinavian place-names, and material evidence of a Norse Earldom<sup>7</sup>. Later Christian settlements and Earl’s residences are plentiful in the landscape. After a long and colourful reign in Orkney, which produced vastly important historical accounts like the *Orkneyingasaga*, Norway handed Orkney and Shetland to Scotland, as mentioned above.
- 3.7 The transfer of Orkney to the Kingdom of Scotland is seen by many historians to be the most defining moment in the County’s agricultural history (Rendall 2002). The Scottish Earls installed in Orkney were widely despised as they practiced land reform which resulted in the development of a feudal system engendering large scale poverty and suffering amongst tenant farmers. The later establishment of the ‘merchant laird’ system in the seventeenth century contributed to further economic decline and hardship for Orcadians. Property rent was increased while production capacities decreased, as the lairds refused to invest in modern technology that could have improved agricultural output (ibid.). These particular periods, when Scottish rule was perceived as particularly cruel, are reviewed in the pages of hundreds of historical accounts and in histories of the Islands more generally (see Cluness 1951), and figure prominently in how Orcadians see themselves and their identity today. Many hold that the ‘memory’ of these historical events will always make Orkney’s relationship with Scotland fraught with tension. Some particularly staunch residents have said to me that ‘Scotland treated us horribly when the Norse never did’.
- 3.8 By the mid-nineteenth century, agricultural reform resulted in higher levels of production and poverty eased. Where farming had previously seemed bleak for most of the island’s tenant farmers, new and wealthy land owners began to make capital improvements to large farms. According to Rendall (2002: XV), agriculture became ‘profitable, fashionable and a subject of widespread interest’. It was during this prosperous time that figures like Farrer and Petrie began to excavate archaeological sites in the islands. Antiquarianism became a fashionable pursuit amongst the middle classes, and many landowners, for example, the Burroughs of the Trumland estate in Rousay, encouraged and undertook investigations on their land.
- 3.9 During the 1980s up to the present, the niche market industries discussed earlier have become integral to the island economy, alongside beef exports. Despite the current success of these niche markets, Orkney, like other rural island communities in Britain, has been affected in recent years by a downturn in farming revenue, particularly in the wake of the BSE crisis and the Foot-and-Mouth epidemic. The population, while fluctuating, seems to hover around 20,000, though the decline of traditional industries like fishing has spurred depopulation of the outer-isles as young people migrate to the Orkney Mainland in search of work, leaving the

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<sup>7</sup> According to Thomson (2001: 452), the Orkney ‘Earldom’ is defined as a ‘conquest’ or ‘kingsland’ which formed part of the Norse Kingdom from around the eighth century to the thirteenth century.

smaller island economies at crisis points. The tourist economy has therefore become vital to the Orkney economy as a whole, as the associated service jobs provide employment

- 3.10 Because of their histories, as well as linguistic and material associations with ‘Viking’ culture, both sets of Northern Isles depart from the familiar ‘Gaelic, tartan and bagpipe’ image so often associated with Scottish identity today (McCrone, Morris and Kiely 1995: 50-56). Neither sets of Islands ever operated under a ‘clan’ system, they are both geographically closer to Norway than to Edinburgh, hundreds of their place names are Scandinavian in origin, and their accents are very distinctive from their Scottish counterparts. Although just as ‘modern’ as other British communities, the people of Orkney are often perceived by ‘outsiders’ and sometimes, marketed by themselves, as ‘having a culture’ in which ‘tradition’ and history are ‘still’ visible and ‘important’ to islanders’ identities. Indeed, both Ritchie (1995: 7) and Munro (2000: 1) comment that one of the reasons for the spectacular preservation of Orkney’s archaeological monuments is ‘the Orcadian pride in the past’,
- 3.11 With the mixed demands of contemporary society and island life, what is it exactly that defines the Orcadian ‘pride in the past’ that Ritchie (ibid.) and Munro (ibid.) refer to? How is this pride expressed, what role does history play in daily life, and does it inform how the community functions? How do Orkney residents engage with the monuments themselves? How does ‘WHS’ status and the developments surrounding the sites affect how people see themselves and how they perceive the monuments in the Heart of Neolithic Orkney? These and other questions are explored in this chapter.

*The history of archaeological exploration and management in Orkney*

- 3.12 In order to understand the contemporary significance and relevance of archaeological monuments and ideas and practices surrounding them it is useful to engage in a brief historical review. By examining both documented and oral histories that relate to archaeological monuments, as well as the role that archaeologists and heritage managers have had/still have in constructing some of these histories, it is possible to understand both ‘insiders’ and ‘outsiders’ perceptions of Orkney and its contemporary culture more clearly. From this understanding, it is in turn easier to see how the development of the World Heritage Site has influenced and/or affected current perceptions and feelings toward archaeological remains and the heritage agencies that manage them.
- 3.13 As we have seen, the revenue provided by tourists’ interest in the Islands’ archaeological remains have become integral to Orkney’s economy. According to the *Orkney Economic Review* for 1996, tourism was the highest generator of income, producing about £27 million, with over 100,000 people visiting the islands (OIC 1996). More detailed research by the Orkney Tourist Board shows that touring archaeological sites is the most frequently cited pastime among tourists during their stays (OTB 1996; 2000), for instance, in 1996, 73% of visitors surveyed reported that visiting archaeological sites was their main activity. The most popular visitor attractions in Orkney, according to the OTB 2000 survey were the Ring of Brodgar, with 66% of visitors reporting that they visited this monument, followed by 65% of visitors visiting Skara Brae. A recent forward plan by the Orkney Tourist Board (OTB 2002) states that World Heritage status highlights Orkney’s reputation for possessing ‘world class’ archaeology, and reinforces the economic value of the past in the present.
- 3.14 A special section of the Orkney Islands Council simply called ‘Orkney Heritage’ is responsible for developing new heritage-based initiatives, and for maintaining the islands’ existing museums, some sites, and visitor centres. The branch is headed by the Orkney Heritage Officer, who applies for grants to develop new facilities, and to improve and sustain existing heritage sites in the County. Orkney Heritage employees work in conjunction with those at the Orkney Tourist Board, who are responsible for marketing Orkney’s attractions. The two local organisations also collaborate with larger organisations like Historic Scotland,

to achieve specific aims. Such aims might include sponsoring both new and continuing research at archaeological sites, conserving archaeological monuments, as well as developing larger projects, for instance capital improvements in and around the World Heritage Site.

- 3.15 Archaeological investigations in Orkney more generally have a longer history than these heritage- and tourist-related bodies. During the mid-nineteenth century, it became popular for the wealthy landowners of Orkney's large farms to take part in, and sometimes to initiate, archaeological investigations in Orkney. Investigations continued in the early twentieth century, though halted during World War I. During this time, although a large military presence existed in Orkney, the relationships between civilians and the military were poor, and the economy became depressed. In the interwar years, however, archaeology again became popular, with the excavations of Skara Brae, led by Childe. The devastating effects of the depression in Orkney left many unemployed, particularly in the outer isles. By this time, archaeology had become a fully-fledged discipline within universities, and archaeological remains began to be conserved with public funding from government agencies like the Ministry of Works.
- 3.16 In the mid 1930s, Walter Grant resumed the tradition of excavating the remains on his Trumland Estate, which had previously been owned by the Burroughs, a wealthy couple who were keenly interested in archaeology. The pair, who were widely disliked for their cruel attitude toward their tenant farmers, had collected hundreds of artefacts during their ownership of the estate. In contrast to the previous owners, however, Grant was widely admired for his generosity, and was seen as trying to improve the economy of Rousay by employing young men to work on the Rinyo excavations, which he both initiated and funded privately. In an interview with a local heritage professional, James Yorston II said, 'He tried to improve the economy of the island. At that time, [it] was full of unemployed young men, and he was trying to make work for them. He took pity on me because my mother died, and that's how I got involved'.
- 3.17 Archaeological investigations in Orkney continued until the beginning of World War II, when excavations were halted. At this time, agriculture thrived with the demand created by the large influx of soldiers to the County. In the 1960s and 70s, economic decline loomed once again and the population of the islands started to wane as people sought work in the cities and towns of mainland Britain. The discovery of oil in and around Orkney in 1973, however, provided a controversial boost to the economy, enticing many to work on Occidental Oil company's terminal at Flotta (Thomson 2002). The revenues from the agreement were put in a trust account for the Orkney Islands Council to use for the community. Some of the most famous archaeological investigations in Orkney also happened during this period, including Professor Renfrew's excavations at Quanterness.
- 3.18 Today, the company, Talisman, who presently operate the Flotta terminal, partially fund a number of archaeological projects every year, though cutbacks to the number of employees, smaller wages and environmental concerns mean that the terminal can no longer support Orkney's economy to the extent that it once did. As discussed, the service and hospitality industries are of prime importance in the County today, and these are, in many ways, dependent on archaeological and cultural tourism.

#### *Orkney: perceptions and practices*

- 3.19 On arrival in Orkney, one is immediately confronted by a mixture of the 'old' and the 'new'. In Stromness, the Islands' primary passenger ferry terminal link to the Scottish Mainland, the smell of coal fires wafts through the air amongst 18<sup>th</sup>-century stone-built houses, as groups of teenagers dressed in the latest high-street fashions walk down the street, talking on mobile phones. In the countryside, rolling green hills are dotted with ancient burial mounds, and grey farmhouses are surrounded by sophisticated, high-tech farming equipment parked in the

driveways. On some farmsteads, modern, bungalow style houses stand only feet away from the crumbling remains of old croft buildings. In Kirkwall, the red sandstone St. Magnus Cathedral, built in the eleventh century, plays host to hundreds of tourists per day during the height of the summer tourist season, as an internet café in the centre of town buzzes with local people meeting up to chat, drink lattes and check their e-mail messages. Innovative farming practices, World War II huts, Sky-TV satellite dishes, standing stone circles and a nightclub that would be at home in any major city all exist alongside each other in the County.

- 3.20 Despite this mix of old and new, some people who have never been to Orkney occasionally ask whether the islanders have electricity or computers, and whether they still use horses to plough their fields. This kind of uninformed curiosity pervades in the urban-based Scottish media as well. For instance, a columnist from *The Herald*, a Glasgow-based national broadsheet newspaper, commenting on the Orcadian winner of the 2003 cult reality television series *Big Brother* observed that:

This incessant talk about a virtual reality television show putting Orkney on the map is interesting. On most maps, Orkney is usually relegated to the kind of box reserved for curious places on the edge of the known universe.

*(The Herald, 24/7/03: 16).*

Comments like this, particularly when espoused by the mainstream media, reify perceptions of Orkney as both a geographically and temporally 'distant' society.

- 3.21 Some residents scoff or chuckle at such assumptions by outsiders, regarding these kinds of statements as ignorant and naïve on the part of the commentators who make them. For others, they can be offensive. Some, however, believe that such a reputation is not necessarily a bad thing. It certainly provides a marketing tool that can be aimed at those who might wish to book a holiday in a remote, quiet place, or a short break tailored around visiting historical sites. Indeed, during the last twenty years, the tourist industry has become an integral component of the islands' economy, which thrives on Orkney's reputation as being distant and 'unique' in comparison to other areas of Scotland.
- 3.22 According to Rainbird (1999), tourist literature often reifies stereotypes of islands as remote, exotic locations which are ideal for the world-weary, cosmopolitan traveller. Indeed, the majority of brochures emphasise some aspect of Orkney's 'remoteness', 'traditional society', or its relaxed, easy-going people, making it an ideal 'island getaway'. For instance, the 2001 'Explore Orkney' tourist brochure claims that:
- Orkney's history has been nothing less than dramatic- providing raw material for the islands' natural-born storytellers. So whatever else you do, let an Orcadian tell you about a standing stone, a Viking palace, the myth of the basking seal or the moving story behind the Italian Chapel. You'll be enthralled by the lilting accent and feel welcomed into the soul of the islands.
- 3.23 Romantic evocations of history in the County are captured in the language of this excerpt that intends to captivate would-be visitors who are interested in places that have a sense of 'tradition' and heritage. 'Let an Orcadian tell you about a standing stone or a Viking palace', the ad beckons, implying that all Orkney residents would happily recount the history of their homeland in this essentialised and packaged form at any time if requested to do so by a visitor.
- 3.24 The people within the community are thus portrayed as sharing a particular 'way of life', which implies the existence of a homogenous, hermetically sealed and bounded culture persisting through time. Every islander is assumed to know their history and origins, and, as a group, they are attributed a static, 'authentic', and timeless identity. 'Orkney' is thus

portrayed as having a distinct, unique, ‘naturalised’ identity that is remote from the chaos of contemporary society. This identity can thus be commodified, preserved or used as a springboard to negotiate political or economic strategies. However, the ‘local’ people are not duped by such stereotypes, which are indeed negotiated and sometimes ‘played up’ by different communities living *within* the islands, in order to achieve specific economic and political goals (see Okely 1983 for examples of Gypsies participating in similar activities).

- 3.25 One only has to pick up the local newspaper to see that many Orcadians, and indeed, large numbers of incomers to the islands, do take explicit pride and interest in the islands’ heritage. Each week, it seems that at least one of the several local societies and groups concerned with heritage advertises a meeting or lecture in the ‘events’ section of *The Orcadian*<sup>8</sup>. Such meetings often feature guest speakers and local experts who talk about folklore, archaeology or historical connections with other countries and cultures. Some of these groups include the Orkney Heritage Society, the Orkney Family History Society, the Orkney-Norway Friendship Association, and the Friends of the Orkney Archaeological Trust. Letters regarding history and heritage also regularly feature in the newspaper’s editorial section.
- 3.26 Research on, and interest in, the cultural identities of Orkney’s populations over the years have proved popular, both within the islands themselves as well as abroad. Indeed, there is an impressive array of local, national and international books on these subjects, many of which can be found in Orkney’s bookstores and shops, as well as in libraries across Britain. Over the last twenty years, DNA testing has been used in attempts to establish a linear record of continuity from the Norse ‘migrations’ of AD 800 to Orkney’s modern inhabitants (see especially Berry and Firth 1986 and Richards 2002). Such quests for scientifically verifiable evidence of the population’s ethnic origins are popular, and they are regularly discussed and debated in local society meetings, lectures and conferences.
- 3.27 Some residents, however, do not seem concerned at all with such matters. Many think heritage is interesting, but at the same time they feel that it has little impact on their daily lives. Some are ambivalent toward it, and some think that the resources invested in old monuments and buildings would be better directed towards ‘practical’ things like road improvements, healthcare, education and transport subsidies.
- 3.28 Yet, despite occasional expressions of negativity or ambivalence with regard to the resourcing and control of heritage, many of those who claim *not* to have interests in ‘history’ or ‘old things’ often participate in what are perceived as ‘traditional’ activities. For example, many parishes host annual ‘Harvest Home’ celebrations, which commemorate successful crop and harvesting seasons. In late autumn, each island or parish sells tickets to a community ‘feast’, where traditional Orkney fare is produced and consumed. Clapshot is likely to be on most Harvest Home menus, which is a combination of potatoes and turnips mashed up with onion, butter, milk and pepper. Although visitors are welcome to attend the celebrations (and often do), such traditions are not as widely publicised for tourists as others (for example, the Boy’s Ploughing Match in St. Margaret’s Hope<sup>9</sup>), making it a more intimate social occasion for local communities. Seemingly, it is the privacy and tradition of such events that make them seem to participants to be ‘authentic’ and unmediated expressions of Orkney culture, in contrast to the ‘official’ management and presentation of most heritage sites.

### *Heritage, representation and the construction of Orkney*

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<sup>8</sup> *The Orcadian* is Orkney’s main newspaper, which is published every Thursday and distributed throughout the islands.

<sup>9</sup> The annual Boy’s Ploughing Match features colourful costumes worn by little girls, who represent the ‘horses’ used by the ploughmen. Pictures of the girls in these costumes feature in many tourist brochures.

- 3.29 Orkney's archaeological remains are highly researched and curated materials, having been the focus of antiquarian and archaeological activity for the last three centuries, and a focus of heritage preservation and management policies during the twentieth century (Ritchie 1995). However, having discussed the development of archaeological investigation, heritage management, and 'heritage tourism' in Orkney, it is important to note that County's archaeological monuments also have an enduring presence in people's habitual practices and everyday lives. As a result, many of them have been embedded in various forms of knowledge, including folklore and oral history traditions (Brown 1969; Dennison 1995), some of which would influence early conservation and presentation issues at the sites.
- 3.30 Stories about walking and talking standing stones, and legends surrounding rituals performed at monuments abound in traditional storytelling and island poetry. For example, Muir (1999: 25-6) recounts the legend surrounding one particular standing stone in a recent collection of folktales:

The Stone of Quoybune in Birsay... likes a drink at Hogmanay. On the stroke of midnight it silently leaves its post and walks down to the Loch of Boardhouse and dips its head into the water. After it has had its fill it returns to where it had come from, and there it remains for another year. It was considered dangerous to try to see the stone moving and people kept away. One young man from Glasgow had heard of the walking stone and decided he would stay near to it all of Hogmanay night to find out one way or the other. As the hour of midnight drew near the man started to feel very uneasy about the task that he had set himself. He paced to and fro for a while until he discovered to his horror that he was now between the stone and the loch. As he stared at the great stone he thought that he saw it move. Fear robbed him of his senses, and he fell to the ground unconscious. His friends found him in the grey light of dawn lying in a faint. Slowly he came around, but could not tell his friends if the stone had moved and knocked him down or not.

And, Marwick (1976: 28) details the widely told legend of the Stone of Odin, said once to be part of The Stones of Stenness, until the farmer who owned the land destroyed it by breaking it up in December of 1814. The stone, mentioned and drawn in several historic texts (Firth 1986; Thomson 2001; Marwick 1975), contained a hole through its middle, where it is said that 'the bodies of infants' were passed:

to prevent them from taking specific diseases, and the palisied limbs and pain-racked heads of older men and women seeking a cure. It was also used by all kinds of people in making vows, particularly lovers, who stood on either side, clasped hands inside the hole and swore an oath known as the Oath of Odin'

(Marwick 1976: 28).

- 3.31 The academic study of history in Orkney often proves as popular as myths and legends; indeed, both types of 'heritage' sometimes seem to blend seamlessly with one another in terms of people's collective imaginings regarding historical events. The Stones of Stenness provides an excellent example of the interaction between folklore, oral history, antiquarianism and heritage management. During his excavations at the SoS in the mid 1970s, Ritchie (1976) researched historical accounts of the monument before embarking on his exploration of the site, in an effort to piece together acts of both destruction and 'restoration' that had affected the physical state of the monument over time. He found that several eighteenth-century travellers had sketched illustrations of the stones, and had described them in diaries, providing certain clues about the monument's preservation through time.
- 3.32 The account of Sir Walter Scott's 1814 visit to the Stones of Stenness, however, was to prove particularly interesting, as Scott's observations were to inspire a myth around the site that

would later manifest itself in heritage management practice and forms of social commentary, satire and resistance in the twentieth century. A passage in Scott's *Memoirs*, dated 16 August, 1814 read: 'About the centre of the semicircle is a broad flat stone, probably once the altar on which human victims were sacrificed' (Scott 1814 quoted in Ritchie 1976: 5). Scott's assumption of prehistoric sacrifice appeared in his 1821 novel *The Pirate*, in which the climactic ending takes place at the SoS, where a character is indeed sacrificed on a dolmen structure.

- 3.33 When the monument was taken into the protective care of the state in 1906, in accordance with the 1882 Ancient Monuments Act (see below for a more detailed discussion of this legislation), the Office of Works, the agency then responsible for looking after Scotland's built heritage, was assigned the duty of 'repairing' the site for presentation purposes. By this time, Sir Scott's reputation as a romantic nationalist had swept the country, and his highly emotive literature was seen by many to 'embody' the nation of Scotland. Taking Scott's assumption that the cromlech would certainly have been a part of the SoS, the Office of Works took the large, flat stone which had lain for nearly a century in the middle of the monument, and mounted it on two stones which were thought to have 'supported' it, thereby constructing a dolmen (Ritchie 1976: 3). A 1906 report in *The Saga-Book of the Viking Club*, notes that a Mr. James Cursiter of the Ministry of Works detailed how and why the work was undertaken on a sheet of paper, which was placed in a bottle, and deposited in cement in the socket of the largest monolith of the circle (Spence 1906: 64-5).
- 3.34 Scott's romanticism also pervaded the popular imagination and, in 1954, caused a media stir in which Orkney, portrayed as a distant 'other' in Britain, took the lead role in a story involving 'devil worship'. In June of that year, the popular national tabloid *Empire News* used Scott's reference to fabricate a story surrounding the SoS, in which it is claimed that Orcadians annually sacrifice a virgin upon the cromlech during the summer solstice. 'A girl was sacrificed on a devil's altar', the headline reads. It describes the demonic rite in detail, noting that at Stonehenge, druids take part in rites, but that they are no comparison to the evil that takes place in Orkney every midsummer's eve.
- 3.35 Letters expressing outrage as well as humorous anecdotes about the authors of the article appeared in *The Orcadian* in the following weeks. The article implied that Orkney's inhabitants were backward, barbaric, and distant from 'civilised' society, practicing the dark arts of witchcraft and devil worship. Many of Orkney's residents, however, found the story amusing, and worthy of satire. As a result, seven farmers from the parish of Stenness decided to enter a float in the annual Stromness Shopping Week<sup>10</sup> parade, poking fun at the story and effectively re-appropriating the negative connotations of the article, turning it around to reclaim the symbolic imagery associated with the monument. The float went on to win first prize in the Shopping Week parade for its satire of the national media.

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<sup>10</sup> 'Shopping Week' takes place in July of each year in the town of Stromness, Orkney's second largest population centre. The festival marks the middle of the summer season, as well as acting as a celebration of the town itself, which views itself as the primary 'rival' of Kirkwall, Orkney's capital. The annual event is marked by a parade which features a variety of floats entered by various community groups and individuals. The floats are usually satirical representations of the year's events, including politics, entertainment or local events or issues, as seen by Orkney residents.



**Figure 3.1: A group of Stenness residents ride atop their prizewinning float during Shopping Week, 1954. (Photo by William Hourston, courtesy of the Orkney Photo Archive).**

- 3.36 Nearly twenty years later, the ‘cromlech’ of Stenness was inexplicably destroyed in an event that to this day seems to be shrouded in mystery. Ritchie (1976) mentioned the event briefly in his excavation report, but the local story goes that in 1972, an Orkney native, disgruntled with the modern invention, which was seen to represent associations with Sir Walter Scott and the Romantic Nationalist literary movement, pulled the structure down using a chain and a tractor.
- 3.37 Ritchie’s investigations at the SoS in 1973-4, which encompassed geophysical survey and partial excavation of the site, revealed one of the upright stones set in concrete which had supported the ‘capstone’. This stone was removed, and the ‘capstone’ was replaced flat on the ground, in line with where it appeared in early illustrations of the monument (Ritchie in personal communication to Sally Foster, 2003). As such, the way the monument looks today is in line as much as it can be with the earliest known records of its appearance.
- 3.38 With mixed views among residents as to whether it is necessary to invest so much time and money in ‘heritage’, the ‘development’<sup>11</sup> of many of Orkney’s well-known archaeological sites has become contested<sup>12</sup>. On the one hand, Orkney is a modern community whose people are very much concerned with contemporary social and political issues, and who consume forms of pan-global popular culture on a daily basis. On the other hand, Orkney’s landscapes are brimming with historical and prehistoric monuments, their histories and identities are as much linked to Scandinavia as to Scotland, and there is certainly income to be generated from

<sup>11</sup> The term ‘development’ is used here to mean the management and general high level of upkeep that tends to characterise many staffed Properties in Care, which have elements of interpretation and provide economic revenue, like visitor centres and shops. At the unstaffed and free sites of RoB and SoS, proposals surrounding their management, like improved car parks, path networks and adding signage are here seen as aspects of ‘development’, in contrast to archaeological attractions that while being actively managed are not visibly ‘developed’. In general, people *do* seem to perceive such sites differently than monuments that exist on private land and which are not actively managed for presentation to the public. The terms people tend to associate with the high profile PIC sites, especially SB, MH and the Broch of Gurness is that they are ‘polished’ and in some cases, ‘tidy’ and ‘manicured’ by Historic Scotland. These sites are seen to be very ‘hygienic’ and to many visitors, are symbols of centralised government and ‘typical’ tourist attractions.

<sup>12</sup> See paragraphs 4.33 and 4.34 for more discussion on feelings toward investment in ‘the past’ vs. ‘the present’.

bringing in tourists to explore the natural and cultural features of the islands. Deciding how to prioritise the management of heritage is thus not always an easy or straightforward task. As one local councillor said at a meeting of the Economic Development Committee in one of the West Mainland parishes, ‘Do we invest £200,000 to develop a heritage site for tourism, or do we spend it on the new retirement home we need in Dounby<sup>13</sup>?’.

- 3.39 The presentation of Orkney as an ‘authentic’ culture, though seemingly in contrast to the tensions between investment in the present and the past, also extends to the manner in which Orcadian hosts treat their guests. Five months of my time in Orkney was spent boarding at the Buttersquoy Farm, which is located in the parish of Stenness, about two miles from the Brodgar Rural Conservation area. My hosts, Jo-Anne and Charles, have owned Buttersquoy for over 50 years, from the time when Charles inherited the land. Buttersquoy is a beef farm, though some oats are also sown to feed the herds of cattle. Neeps and tatties are grown, but only enough so that the family can use them during the winter.
- 3.40 Thirty years ago, when their first adult children left home, Jo-Anne and Charles decided to convert part of their house into a bed and breakfast establishment to generate extra income from the tourist trade, which at that time, was supplemental rather than integral to Orkney’s economy. Two of the kitchen windows display a number of stickers visitors have sent to the couple from countries across the world, linking the distant homes of tourists with Orkney.
- 3.41 Jo-Anne, in her late sixties and very active, is a gracious hostess, bringing her guests biscuits and regularly topping up their tea cups. She tends to their every need, and asks them to think of Buttersquoy as their home while they are in Orkney. Charles is tall and physically fit. He charms guests with his broad Orkney accent, good looks and penchant for telling stories. The couple understand what visitors expect from them, and are well versed in delivering an ‘authentic’ Orcadian farm experience.
- 3.42 Jo-Anne and I talked regularly in the enormous kitchen of the seven bedroom farmhouse, which has a television, a sofa, and a table where she and her husband eat their meals. The space doubles as a sitting room during the summer, when guests use the more spacious dining room and lounge. This makes the kitchen the focal point for most of the social activity that takes place in the house. Between frequent visits from neighbours and meal times with family members, I asked her about Orkney history and archaeology. I asked what she thought about the sites in and around Stenness, and whether she thought that World Heritage Status had changed the way she and other community members felt about them.
- 3.43 ‘No, not really’ she would say. ‘They’re just the same as they were before’. Her attitude to the monuments seemed to be a combination of ambivalent familiarity, mixed with a strong sense of place and identity. ‘The stones are something that are just there’, she explained to me. ‘We just grew up with them, so to us, it seems like they’ve always been there; you know, part of the place. Sometimes, you don’t even see them. But we are glad they’re ours, though. Sometimes, we take visitors down so they can see the stones. We just sit in the car and wait so they can have their look around, you know’.
- 3.44 Jo-Anne’s comments, in many ways typical of numerous Orcadians I interviewed, indicate a seemingly contradictory practice of taking something for granted, whilst at the same time ‘taking pride’ in it in terms of personal and/or community belonging. The ownership referent ‘ours’ indicates the expression of a group sense of pride, also articulated, perhaps more explicitly, by Annabelle, who also grew up in the area. When I asked her what it was like growing up around the monuments, she said:

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<sup>13</sup> Dounby is a village located in the parish of Harray in the West Mainland.

We didn't think it was anything marvellous, it was part of our lives, you know. We knew what it was, well as far as in, as far as we were children you know, I couldn't have told you that this was even before Pictish times or anything, I couldn't have told you the exact history but we knew it was old, historic and *ours*.

3.45 Of course, such opinions are nuanced and differ between each individual. Annabelle offered a particularly articulate commentary on how and why she perceives the monuments and the landscape in the way she does:

Annabelle: When I went to Stromness Academy I went, you know the bus took us down the main road and so then I saw Maeshowe and the stones and the Ring of Brodgar every day from the bus and it really was just something that, well I suppose really you didn't notice, although I was aware of it and knew about it and enjoyed it, I did not realise the significance of it.

A McC: And you say there was a point when you did realise the significance?

Annabelle: When I was young everybody mostly went to church right, and it wasn't a, a harsh kind of religion but everybody mostly went to church and one Sunday when I was about fourteen or fifteen there was to be an open air service at the Ring of Brodgar and Lord Birsay, whom you probably won't have heard of, Robert, Harold Leslie, not Robert, Harold Leslie, he was a QC, a Queen's Counsel, a lawyer and he was Orcadian and he became Lord Birsay for his life's work, OK and he took the service, he spoke, he gave the talk and it was totally inspiring and he talked about Orkney and the history and religion came all the way through his talk but he kept referring to what we had around us and he talked about the stones and he turned and he stroked a stone and he said I feel that touch when I'm south he said, I feel that stone in my hand and I just thought wow! Mind you I was fourteen, easily impressed. Then, when I was an older teenager we used to have a midnight picnic at the stones on Midsummer's Night Eve which wasn't so respectful of the stones you know but it was great fun.

AMcC: Do you not think? How come, how come do you think it was disrespectful?

Annabelle: Well I always assumed they had a kind of religious significance you know, I'm not entirely sure if that's right, something to do with the sun obviously but I mean we felt a little disrespectful. I remembered Harold Leslie and his talk which was really quite startling, so ordinary and quite startling and the people arranged, we simply wandered in and we stood and it was a beautiful sunny day but not so windy and we just stood or sat around the stones wherever we felt and he leaned against a stone and talked to us. It was very informal and there would have been about a hundred and fifty people there.

AMcC: Do you go to the stones often?

Annabelle: Yes, and not so often now because well I'll just say it, I have a kind of bad hip and I can't walk to the stones and back, I could walk to the stones but not back, so I tend to take the car and walk round the stones but I don't seem to go quite as often, it's not so nice you know,

it's nicer to walk right down by the loch and all the way and I just, I always go in the evening because there's not so many tourists around you know. And there's just something, I was there actually just a couple of weeks ago when my daughter was home and we had a most beautiful August night, sorry, September night, the most beautiful night, quite calm and cool and the two of us walked round the stones and I think it was the atmosphere around the stones. It's very hard to put that into words, it's something you feel you know, it's something you feel. I think it's a strange kind of security.

- 3.46 Although Annabelle invokes the same kind of language frequently used by visitors for example, discussing the 'atmosphere' of the RoB, she associates this with 'security' and familiarity, whereas visitors seem to relate it to 'otherness' (see Chapter 5 for discussion of visitor perceptions of the WHS). In the above quote, she considers a visit to Brodgar as a time and place where it is appropriate to re-affirm family ties (a visit with her daughter who has come home to Orkney from Mainland Scotland), in which she associates the monument with home and a kind of 'belonging'. With her painful hip, she notes that it is especially important to be able to make the visit the site when there are not many other visitors around, so she can make her way slowly, and more privately, around the familiar place.

### *Conclusions*

- 3.47 Many twentieth century historians have argued that Orcadians are descended primarily from the Scandinavian immigrants who are widely thought to have populated the isles around AD 800 (Berry 1986). These immigrants, it is argued, 'displaced' inhabitants whom many have referred to as the 'Pictish' peoples of the Orcadian Iron Age. It is these sorts of references and constructed histories, along with the presentation and continual excavation of Viking-style material culture, and the study of the now extinct dialect 'Orkney Norn' and Scandinavian place-names, that contribute to the separate identity that many Orcadians express in opposition to Mainland Scots. 'We are Orcadian first, and Scottish second' many people would tell me during the course of my fieldwork.
- 3.48 But it is not that simple. As in all communities, issues surrounding 'heritage' are much more complex than that. Contemporary politics and identity as well as historical influences are also intricately involved, as research into the use of the past in the present has shown for over two decades. Taking people's continuing fascination with the past into consideration, it is fitting to state here that like interests in oral histories and folktales, the practice and presentation of 'heritage' in Orkney is itself inextricably linked with how those histories have been constructed through time. People can choose the stories they like and that fit their imagined ideas about the past, for example emphasising and celebrating the Norse material culture of the past, though disregarding the constant influx of Scottish lineage that has become part of society. The influence of these factors show constant shifts in the perceived 'social values' placed on the practices of discovering, excavating, interpreting and visiting archaeological sites have helped to shape how people view and understand their pasts, and thus, how they conceive of themselves as individuals and communities in the present.
- 3.49 We have seen that a small part of the Orkney landscape, which has been 'branded' as a World Heritage Site, is both a physical and conceptual terrain 'across which sites of power [are] mapped' (Daniels and Cosgrove 1988). Through everyday, mundane action, the landscape of Stenness and Brodgar is lived and politicised, with many interest groups, referred to as 'stakeholders' by heritage and tourist agencies, negotiating different aspects of their identities and needs, with the landscape being used as both an explicit and implicit tool (and see Chapter 4 for further discussion).

3.50 Beliefs about archaeological remains and the management of them have always been inextricably linked with the circumstances of history, and they have been influenced by sociocultural factors such as class, economic structure, and most recently, the global market forces of tourism. From early explorations and ‘rifling’ of the tombs, to amateur antiquarian excavations, to the inscription of the HONO World Heritage Site, the social values placed on the material evidence of the past are clearly affected by historic events and trends.

#### **4.0 Mediating the past: conservation, management and presentation in the Heart of Neolithic Orkney**

- 4.1 In Chapter Two, it was argued that heritage management policies and practices mediate the ways that people experience and engage with heritage sites. This chapter describes how the WHS is managed in relation to the different groups and agencies that are responsible for researching, presenting and protecting it.
- 4.2 Although several different agencies have interests in the HONO, the monuments making up the WHS fall first and foremost under Historic Scotland's jurisdiction when it comes to their conservation, management and presentation<sup>14</sup>. The four main monuments have been classed as Properties in Care before their inscription as part of a WHS. As noted in Chapter Two, other conservation measures have also been applied to the cultural and natural assets of the areas within which the monuments are located. For instance, within the parish of Stenness the RoB, SoS and MH are located within the Brodgar Rural Conservation Area. Near this conservation area the land surrounding the Lochs of Harray and Stenness are also designated Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) under the Wildlife and Conservation Act of 1981.
- 4.3 However, HS is the organization concerned with the archaeological heritage as opposed to the natural heritage of the region, the latter being the responsibility of Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH). Furthermore, whilst other heritage and management organizations and personnel, such as Orkney Island Council Tourist Board, the OIC Heritage Officer and Archaeologist etc, were involved in the process, it was HS as both site manager and state party who took the lead on the WHS nomination and its associated management plan.
- 4.4 HS is classed as an 'Executive Agency' within the Scottish Executive Education Department. It was created in 1991 as part of the UK Government's "Next Steps Initiative"<sup>15</sup> HS took up the role previously fulfilled by the Ministry of Works (formerly known as the Office of Works) and its successors, government departments which carried out conservation and restoration services for historic and archaeological sites throughout the twentieth century. HS advises Scottish Ministers on the built heritage and is ultimately responsible to the Scottish Ministers for its activities. It is advised in this role by the Historic Environment Advisory Council (formerly by two statutory bodies, the Historic Buildings Council for Scotland, and the Ancient Monuments Board for Scotland). As such, HS also has a symbolic role in emerging forms of Scottish national identity, particularly in relation to devolution. The agency acts independently from other UK heritage agencies, and through its activities, presents Scotland as having a lengthy and noteworthy history within the UK.
- 4.5 HS has broadly similar aims to other national and international heritage organisations. It works from the premise that the conservation of archaeological and historic remains is for the public good, and that it is in Scotland's national interest to do so. This is reflected in its mission statement, which is 'to Safeguard the Nation's built heritage and promote understanding and enjoyment'. The agency's primary objectives are:
- to protect and conserve Scotland's built heritage;
  - to encourage public appreciation and enjoyment of Scotland's built heritage;

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<sup>14</sup> Though Historic Scotland holds the primary responsibility for the management of Properties in Care, partnerships with other parties are required if wider management issues, beyond the boundaries of guardianship areas, are to be addressed.

<sup>15</sup> The aim of 1988 'Next Steps Initiative' scheme was to 'improve the delivery' of a broad range of public services 'within available resources, for the benefit of taxpayers, customers and staff' (National Audit Office 1989: 1). Some of the services involved in the scheme range from heritage management, armed services and pensions, to prison and customs and excise services (ibid.).

- to play an active role in the development and success of social, economic and environmental policies;
- to be effective and efficient in its work.

(Scottish Executive 2004: 3-4)

- 4.6 HS carries out its functions according to national heritage protection legislation, presently the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979, and is guided by international conservation guidance and polices (as developed, for instance, by international heritage organisations like UNESCO and ICOMOS). Thus, the policies and practices of the organisation conform to charters for the protection of heritage, such as the 1964 Venice Charter on the protection of archaeological sites.
- 4.7 In order to achieve its objectives with regard to its properties in care, Historic Scotland needs to work with a wide range of individuals and agencies, often referred to as ‘stakeholders’ and ‘partners’ (ibid.), who have varying interests in the properties and sites it manages. These range from environmental conservation agencies to road maintenance crews and town planners, local authorities, landowners, other heritage agencies, archaeological trusts, historical societies, developers, tourist boards, tour operators, landowners and property owners and visitors.
- 4.8 The Heart of Neolithic Orkney was designated as Scotland’s first archaeological World Heritage Site after a lengthy application process, which involved the production of a ‘Nomination Document’ for the site by Historic Scotland (1998). This document outlined the significance of the monuments in relation to UNESCO criteria for inclusion in the WHS list. Several reasons for inclusion are listed in the document which relate to the unique form, the immense scale, and the state of authenticity and preservation of the monuments. Specific justifications include the arguments that ‘Maeshowe, Stenness, Brogar and Skara Brae proclaim the triumphs of the human spirit away from the traditionally recognised early centres of civilisation’; that ‘Maeshowe is a masterpiece of Neolithic peoples’; that the RoB ‘is the finest known truly circular late Neolithic or Bronze Age stone ring’; and that SB ‘has particularly rich surviving remains’ from a ‘now vanished’ culture (Historic Scotland 1998: 4).
- 4.9 The boundaries of the WHS follow Property in Care boundaries. The individual sites sit within a landscape containing numerous other sites, which also require identification and protection. HS thus sought guidance from ICOMOS, who suggested that buffer zones be defined using various existing heritage designations (Foster and Linge 2002). This necessitated the use of a ‘rather disparate range of statutory built heritage, nature conservation and landscape designations which already covered the general area surrounding the components of the Site’ (ibid.: 142). The boundaries of the SSSIs of the two lochs and of the Brodgar Rural Conservation Area were adopted as the ‘Inner Buffer Zone’ for the RoB, SoS, MH part of the WHS. The Hoy and West Mainland National Scenic Area, designated under an Order of the Secretary of State for Scotland in 1980, makes up the ‘Outer Buffer Zone’ for this part. For SB, on the other hand, the area scheduled under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979 defines the ‘Inner Buffer Zone’, whereas the ‘Outer Buffer Zone’ is defined on the basis of the curtilage of Skaill House, which is a category A listed building. The buffer zones are seen as integral to protecting the ‘World Heritage values’ (ibid.: 142) of the site, including aesthetics and encroachment on/destruction of invisible archaeology in and around the Site. However, neither the WHS status of the site, nor the buffer zones beyond, bring any additional legal controls.

## *Conservation*

- 4.10 Like all heritage agencies, Historic Scotland find themselves in the paradoxical position of protecting and conserving archaeological sites as well as promoting public appreciation and enjoyment through developing the site as a ‘visitor attraction’ (Urry 1999). With respect to the HONO WHS, HS (2001) express concern over whether heritage presentation (display boards and obtrusive notices), tourist-related features (e.g. car parks and parked cars and coaches, etc.) impact on visitors’ aesthetic appreciation of the sites (see Historic Scotland 1999: 48-49). Similar concerns are expressed over the impact of modern activities on the landscape, including certain farming practices, overhead cables as well as modern houses, and how these might compromise the aesthetic value, historic integrity and overall authenticity of the monuments, particularly in relation to RoB and SoS.
- 4.11 The material fabric of the HONO monuments includes stone masonry and standing stone slabs, as well as the wider landscapes which include earthworks like ditches and mounds and the vegetation that grows on and around them. All are vulnerable to natural processes of erosion. Weathering causes cracks in the stones, as at the RoB (Historic Scotland 2001), and the entire site of SB is under threat from coastal erosion, where a reinforcement sea wall has been constructed to protect the site.
- 4.12 There is also considerable concern for the scale of human impact on the sites, for instance, how visitors’ habit of rocking the entrance stone to MH<sup>16</sup> might impact on the monument, or how visitor movements contribute to wear and tear on specific areas of the paths surrounding the RoB. There is also concern about other land management practices like grazing sheep and building fences at the SoS. Visitor safety is also a prime concern in and around the WHS, with current safety hazards posed to pedestrians by busy roads, and the disruption to farm traffic during tourist season.
- 4.13 The HONO Management Plan lists the primary conservation issues for each of the monuments in detail, alongside timescales for conservation activities to take place according to the degree of urgency. A conservation strategy has been prepared for all the WHS by Historic Scotland, which details specific threats and strategies for dealing with them, such as injecting resin into cracked stones (Historic Scotland 2000).

## *Presentation*

- 4.14 Historic Scotland’s archaeologists, architects, interpretation unit, stewards, public relations staff and monument conservation unit all have roles in how the HONO monuments are presented to visitors. This includes how the sites appear physically ‘on the ground’, as well as how they are portrayed in official literature, and discussed by on-site stewards who give tours and provide information for visitors. This information is largely presented as a factual account, although sometimes, information boards or stewards acknowledge that the interpretations offered are the subject of debate and may be wrong.
- 4.15 At the two henge monuments fences surround the sites and visitors enter through gates. Display boards detail Historic Scotland’s interpretation of the monuments, and paths guide visitors around the sites<sup>17</sup>. Falk (1996) has recently commented that the physical context for all museum visits includes the architecture and ‘feel’ of the building as well as the objects and

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<sup>16</sup> At the time of this research, stewards at MH encouraged visitors to ‘rock the entrance stone’ to demonstrate how heavy, but easily manoeuvrable the stone was. This behaviour has been halted by HS for conservation purposes.

<sup>17</sup> Please see Chapter Five for detailed discussion of the physical appearance and form of each of the WHS monuments.

exhibits on display. The same applies to the way in which monuments are branded and presented in the landscape.

- 4.16 Such practices hinge on widely accepted notions of authenticity amongst heritage managers. This implies that there are correct ways to ‘display’ and/or ‘conserve’ places, monuments and landscapes so that they ‘fit’ what a visitor expects to see. Macinness and Ader (1995: 31) have recently commented that:

With increased awareness of environmental issues, much of the public would probably now accept, and even desire a less formal appearance to some of the monuments. However, in some cases the informal look can be inappropriate, especially where the monument is ‘set off’ by lawns and planned vistas. Less formal management in these cases could give the impression to some people that the monument was being neglected [...].

- 4.17 The manifestation of this philosophy holds for each of the monuments of the HONO, and overlaps with what many of the visitors interviewed felt about the monuments, and indeed in some cases, expected of them. At the RoB, the ‘wild’ and ‘natural’ appearance, which is clearly cultivated within the management and conservation plans for the site is much appreciated (see Chapter 5 for detailed discussion). Visitors are not offered a great deal of interpretation and direction here, and many feel that they are able to engage with the monument in its original ‘natural’ form, despite its active curation. Similar attitudes were also found at the SoS. Awareness of ‘management’ and curation practices at MH and SB, however, was usually acute, with visitors often commenting about how informative the displays at the visitor centres were, along with the knowledgeable stewards and interesting interpretative boards. As discussed in Chapter 5, visitors’ experiences at the latter two monuments seemed to be more about their educational value than their supposed unmediated experience of the past.

- 4.18 The Orkney Tourist Board prepares guides, pamphlets and a website that describe and illustrate the WHS, with the hope of attracting visitors who are interested in heritage and culture. Independent tour companies interpret the sites for their customers by giving talks often based on their personal theories of origin and construction of the sites, and tidbits of ‘local knowledge’ and folklore that the visitors would not otherwise have known if they had visited on their own. Large travel companies, particularly ferry and bus services, produce brochures that proclaim the WHS to be a prime destination for visitors to Orkney, and a local hotel has produced its own guide to the monuments, calling itself the ‘Gateway’ to the Heart of Neolithic Orkney. All of these interpretations impact in some way or other on people’s perceptions of the monuments themselves, and Orkney more generally (see Chapter 5 for more detail). They emphasise visiting the WHS as part of the overall ‘package’ of Orkney, as well as privileging the Neolithic as one of the most important phases of Orkney’s history. Its romantic values are highlighted, and much of the literature focuses on the ‘relaxing’ and personal element of ‘finding time’<sup>18</sup>, a clever play on the historical and leisure elements of holidaying in the County.

- 4.19 In relation to the preservation of historic sites, Schwarzer (1998: 1) has recently argued that:

Their identity derives from a set of regulations on building construction and/or transformation, regulations which seek to channel capital movements in prescribed, predictable, and harmonious ways—with respect, of course, to the character of the district. Thus, existing models for historic districts are static, essentializing, centered on re-establishing and then preserving what is viewed as a lost historical presence.

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<sup>18</sup> ‘Find Time in Orkney’ was the catch phrase the Orkney Tourist Board used in their 2003-2004 ‘Explore Orkney’ annual travel brochures.

These processes are readily identifiable in the management of the HONO through the subtle, purposeful channelling and mediation of visitor behaviour in and around the monuments and will be explored in detail in the following chapter.

### *Partnerships and Stakeholders*

- 4.20 As discussed in the previous chapter, UNESCO recommends that the government agency responsible for nominating and maintaining a World Heritage Site consult with and inform interested parties in the local community about all proposed developments to the site. In accordance with this suggestion Historic Scotland sent invitations to those living in the immediate area of the HONO WHS to form a Consultation Group, as well as those who have particular interests in the monuments themselves, for example, tour guides and archaeologists, to attend regular meetings about World Heritage Site news.
- 4.21 My first encounter with the World Heritage Consultation group was going along to one of the early meetings in the summer of 2000. The meetings take place in a room in the Stenness Parish's Community School, which also functions as the village's community hall. At the weekends, the activity hall is transformed into a supper room and dance hall, complete with a stage for performers and a serving room that functions as a bar. Occasionally, it is used as a space in which to exhibit local crafts and artwork. For the Consultation group meetings, rows of chairs are set up for attendees, and a slide projector and an overhead projector are placed at the front of the room for occasional presentations.



**Figure 4.1: Stenness Community School, where the meetings of the WHS Consultation Group take place.**

- 4.22 To my surprise, tempers flared, and the local residents seemed to disagree with almost every point being proposed by the presenter, a representative from the Orkney Islands Council, who was showing various plans for car parks on an overhead projector. Roadside signs designating when drivers were entering the 'World Heritage Area' were also being proposed, and more contestations ensued. Concern was also expressed that inappropriate design could lead to 'disneyfication' of the area. Marker and gateway design must be sensitive to the local landscape and non-urban in character. At this time, discussion was mainly focused on how the objectives of the Management Plan relating to visitor access, interpretation and traffic

management could be taken forward. Despite such tensions, CG meetings have generated valuable discussion and ideas as to what people perceive about the management of the site. Nevertheless, it is useful to consider some of the sources of these tensions in more detail.

- 4.23 One of the issues is that of accountability, and in particular the perception amongst some CG members that Historic Scotland, whilst dealing with difficult challenges, is somehow less accountable than, say, the Council. For instance, Rose, who has been involved in the CG from the beginning, provided the following justification of her feelings about the way the site is managed and the function of the CG.

Rose: It's [the WHS] a bit over-regulated, if you ask me. I mean, [HS] are a government agency they've got responsibilities I mean if anybody, God forbid, did come down ill from touching a sheep there they'd get it in the neck if they were responsible for it.

AMcC: Hmm mmm.

Rose: But there's a danger that the baby'll go out with the bath water, it's that balance, it's the balance that worries me.

AMcC: How? What do you mean?

Rose: I don't know. Possibly because I think if it was just locally, apart from the Roads Department with their signposts and Norseman Village and all that lot, they must have a new road making you know a new sign making machine that they want to get their money's worth from, but apart from the Highways Department I think locally it would be more low key. There was an awful lot of worry about the Gateway signs to the site, that, that was a big worry because, you know, people had visions of this, you know, great big sign [...] I think they're a good idea having these, it does show you when you're entering a special site but [...] it needs to be subtle [...] I just wish people would say well they don't really know [what the monuments mean], I just find it worrying that everything has got to have an explanation. [...] I've been [to the Consultation Group] sometimes when people have been looking at that and heated arguments, well not heated arguments, discussions have started about it and people have said oh that's not necessarily so. And the Council I feel sorry for because the Council get batted by everybody. And I think they're, they're trying to manage a juggling act which is almost impossible to manage because they're sort of where everybody comes to, they're the ones who have got to sort of give out the planning permission, they've got to listen to everybody's arguments for and against and why erm I feel quite sorry for the Council, I don't agree with everything they do and every decision they make but I, I really feel quite sorry for them and they're also the only ones who are actually accountable so we do have some comeback at them you know sort of they are open more to pressure groups if you don't really agree with what's been done you can, there's something you can do there so in a way I, I really wish that they would have more say because they would have to listen to local people more.

- 4.24 Throughout the research, particularly in interviews, many Orkney residents claimed to perceive World Heritage Status to be a pleasant, symbolic gesture, but are not quite sure of the benefits it will really bring. Although this topic has been discussed at length by HS officials during meetings of the WHS Consultation Group in Stenness, the perceived philosophical 'meaning' of the term 'World Heritage Site' is still somewhat vague. Interestingly, some of the comments people made about the accolade stemmed from issues closely associated with

the feeling that Orcadians as a community didn't need officials from the outside world to tell them their monuments are 'special'.

4.25 This type of feeling was expressed by Matilda, a lady in her late sixties, who was born in Stenness, moved to the Scottish Mainland, and returned about ten years ago. 'We always knew the stones were special', she said. 'I suppose it's nice that they're recognising the area internationally, but in a sense, they're just coming here and telling us something that we already knew'.

4.26 This research has shown that issues of ownership, for example, as raised by Jo-Anne and Annabelle in the previous chapter (see paragraphs. 3.46-3.48), are of particular importance with respect to the development of the WHS. Will the inscription of the place as a WHS make people view the landscapes in which they grew up and presently dwell, differently? All of the native Orcadians I questioned directly about this suggested it would have little impact. For instance:

Chloe: No it doesn't change. I think that it makes you, it makes you think that other people are going to be made more aware of it, I mean we've always been aware of it but you know other people maybe don't pay that much attention to that kind of thing [...] I mean I could tell you somebody in Stenness who's never been at the Ring.

William: Well does it make much difference? I don't think so. It certainly offers some protection but erm you might say over the top in a sense so they'd award Gateways for the Heritage site, I made fun of it and said it would be the Arc de Triumpe of Tormiston or something you know but to the local folk I don't suppose it does.

Hugh: No, it's still the same place to me. I mean, all this World Heritage carry on..... you know, we need to stop being so concerned with the dead and the things they made. They're in the past.... gone. It's the living people we need to take care of.

4.27 These comments illustrate that in many ways people view the WHS in a mundane way in relation to their daily practices. Their conceptions of any new kind of 'boundaries', for example, Buffer Zones, do not bear on their experience of the monuments and the landscape in practice in the same way that it resonates with those involved in the management and 'development' of the WHS. Native Orcadians' and Orkney residents' engagement with the monuments differs from visitors' experiences in terms of their familiarity with the place; particularly the daily recognition of the landscape as *home*. This type of engagement is not necessarily as intentional as a purposeful visit to a monument (though in certain contexts local residents also make such visits), but is no less important in terms of the sense of place they provide. Furthermore, despite local residents assertions that the management of the monuments has little impact on the ways that they perceive them other conversations reveal a more profound impact.

4.28 Maggie runs a bed and breakfast establishment in Stenness. She has lived most of her life in the parish and is very involved in Stenness community life. She was a difficult person to pin down, and I kept arriving at her front door when she wasn't home. 'Is there a time I might catch her when she isn't busy?' I asked her husband. He chuckled ever so slightly and said 'she's always busy. You'll just have to keep trying', clearly amused at my persistence.

4.29 I finally did manage to find her when she was able to spare an hour from her daily community tasks, and we sat talking in the conservatory of her home, where the customary coffee and

exquisitely presented home-bakes were offered to me promptly on my arrival. After initial small talk, I asked her if the landscape in and around Stenness has changed since she grew up. She paused to consider what to say, looked down at her own coffee, then out the window, and said, 'When you've been with a place and seen it as it was, things are different, you know. But I suppose you have to change with the times'. There was no tone of sadness or nostalgia in her voice; rather, her comments were pointed and exhibited a matter-of-fact practicality that reveals a clear concern with the present.

- 4.30 As the conversation unfolded, she frequently related to me how she felt about the management of some of the individual monuments of the WHS<sup>19</sup>. She talked about how in the past, Historic Scotland erected signs and fences around the site, and tried to have 'unpleasantries', like black-plastic covered hay bails removed from the area. She talked about how using 'official' stewards had now formalized the experience of the monument [MH], perhaps giving people a false impression of Orkney. 'All this talk about World Heritage... I mean, it's an honour, but as Orcadians, we've always known the value of our landscape. Folk come here because they've heard about it and wanted to come and see it, not because it's a World Heritage Site. Not one of my guests has said that's why they came here. Do you know when all the World Heritage tourists are going to come? We don't want it to become a Disneyland either... Folk need to see that Orkney is on the cutting edge of agriculture, just as modern as any farm down South'.
- 4.31 Such comments reveal seemingly contradictory feelings about the influence of 'outside' rules and regulations on Orkney culture, but also demonstrate a need to show 'outsiders' that Orkney culture is equal to other societies in terms of its technologies and ways of life. On the one hand, Maggie's comments are indicative that memories of other events which are in some cases conflated, possibly slightly erroneous and not necessarily connected to current efforts, can often influence how people engage with and perceive organisations and their activities. On the other hand, memories can also be connected to events or relationships that did take place, but may have been perceived differently by representatives of management groups and organisations who did not realise the extent or nature of their impact.

### Conclusions

- 4.32 Communication problems arise between groups when management organisations see themselves as helping local communities<sup>20</sup> by introducing international (or simply *outside*) values in the form of any type of designation of renown. In the case of the Orkney WHS, this has caused some people in the Stenness community to feel that their choices (or lack thereof) and voices are being impinged upon, if not completely ignored by the state and 'high-brow' outside research interests. Knowledge of historical repression in Orkney, particularly episodes in history like the poor conditions in which Orcadians lived under the Merchant Laird system, probably contribute to negative feelings toward 'outside' authority. As one interviewee commented, 'we don't really speak up to authority figures when we should because we've been told we shouldn't in the past. I know that's not an excuse, but it's our way, sometimes. We don't put ourselves forward enough'.

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<sup>19</sup> It should be noted that the information related to me by informants and interviewees, including 'locals', visitors, and those involved in the management of the WHS are coloured by many things, including individual perceptions, respondents' relationship to events, etc. As such, views presented here are in relation to the results of the study rather than the author's opinion.

<sup>20</sup> It is recognised that 'helping' local communities isn't the primary function of WHS, and that conservation and education about the sites are paramount. However, community involvement is now an integral aspect of WHS management and is included in UNESCO documents, and so figures into heritage agencies' efforts to communicate with local people (see extensive discussion of this in Chapter 2). Mention of this in paragraph 4.32 is simply to make a point about how the relationship between the management agency and community is sometimes viewed by the parties involved.

- 4.33 As discussed in Chapter Three, issues of encroachment by outside influence, whether perceived by outsiders or not, also enter into feelings of loss with respect to Orkney customs and traditions, especially in terms of the large numbers of ‘incomers’ entering Orkney since World War II, and particularly since the 1970s (Forsythe 1979). Similarly, Orcadians’ feelings toward investment ‘in the present’ rather than the past (and the contexts in which this subject was often raised during my fieldwork) are not always explicitly linked to feelings toward heritage agencies and their employees. Rather, it seems that the general topic of the inscription of the ‘Heart of Neolithic Orkney’ as a World Heritage Site stirs feelings for some that are embedded in broader issues like social change and the perceived encroachment of ‘outside’ values on Orcadian culture.
- 4.34 Fear of widespread change causes some to perceive that ‘traditional’ Orkney life has collapsed in the face of changing values, work ethics, and access to information and outsiders coming into the landscape. In many ways, the introduction of World Heritage Status has exacerbated such feelings among some Orcadians in that it represents outside organisations coming in to assert power over the community. As many people said to me, ‘we don’t mind incomers coming up to live, as long as they don’t try to change it’.
- 4.35 One of the recommendations generated by this research, resulting from feelings and attitudes like those expressed in the above two paragraphs, would be to approach communities in a different fashion. Historic Scotland’s image is a corporate one, which is reflected in documents, management style, as well as surface appearances. In many ways, such symbols can become barriers in terms of how individuals and groups from the agency are perceived by a community with which they wish to communicate. As stated, this is an area that may be improved with management procedures that are not intrusive on the landscape, but with which Historic Scotland aim to manage visitors in subtle ways which they may not themselves recognise. This and other topics will be discussed in the concluding chapter of this report.

## 5.0 Practice in Context: studying visitor use and perceptions of Orkney's World Heritage Monuments

- 5.1 This chapter focuses on people's perceptions of each of the WHS monuments, and the ways in which visitors behave at them. It examines how visitors' expectations, prior knowledge and regulated practices influence their perceptions of the monuments and inform how they engage with them. As Macdonald (1992: 401) points out in relation to museums:
- [V]isitors inevitably come to any exhibition laden with cultural preconceptions which shape the nature of their visit and affect their response to it. [...] Indeed, the kinds of social and cultural conceptions which people may hold are often difficult to detect because far from being naïve, they are embedded in everyday life and make a good deal of sense within it.
- 5.2 At the same time, the act of visiting a site involves the active *production* of meaning and understanding (see also Winter 2002). Aside from the physical form of the monuments themselves, this process of producing meaning is mediated by heritage management policies and practices. Thus, as well as exploring visitors' expectations and perceptions this chapter also examines the ways in which heritage management practices, for example, creating paths for visitors to follow, providing information boards, constructing visitor centres, or providing stewards/guides, intersect with visitors' preconceptions and mediate their experience of the monuments.
- 5.3 As discussed in Chapter Two, a variety of methods were used to examine visitor perceptions and practices in relation to the Heart of Neolithic Orkney monuments. Qualitative interviews were used to gain insight into visitors' perceptions and expectations of the monuments. Tracking of visitor movement and activities was used to gain insight into the kinds of regulated practice that inform their experiences, as well as the impact they have on the monument. Participant observation with tourists and coach tour groups was used to further explore visitor perceptions and regulated practices, and to examine the ways in which visitors' behaviour at the monuments is influenced by tour guides, stewards, other members of their party, and so forth.
- 5.4 The kinds of regulated practice that visitors engage in at the two henge monuments is of particular concern to Historic Scotland as they are unstaffed and vulnerable to physical erosion and damage. The movements and activities of 150 visitors were tracked and recorded on ground plans of the RoB and the SoS and their surrounding areas (100 visitors to the RoB, and 50 visitors at the SoS; see Appendices B and C for tracking maps).
- 5.5 Where applicable categories of behaviour developed by others (e.g. 'butterflies' and 'strollers') have been employed (e.g. Macdonald 2002; Veron and Levasseure 1982), particularly in the analysis of the kinds of activities and practices that people engage in at the site. However, other categories have been developed specifically in relation to this study, particularly in respect to patterns of movement around the monuments.
- 5.6 Each monument will be discussed in turn, beginning with a description of its material form and additional physical features associated with its conservation, management and presentation. This will then be followed by a discussion of people's perception of each monument and their physical engagement with it, including both their movement around the monument and the practices that accompany this. Finally there will be a discussion and synthesis of the results. Because of the extensive research needed at the RoB, this monument will be discussed in much more depth than the three other HONO monuments. Tracking behaviour on maps was only undertaken at the RoB and the SoS, though some discussion of peoples' practice is included in the discussion of MH and SB.

## *The Ring of Brodgar*

- 5.7 The RoB is a vast henge monument, measuring 103.7m in diameter, with 27 standing stones making up the circle. The surrounding 10 hectares of Property in Care contain no less than thirteen burial mounds of various size, as well as a single standing stone called the ‘Comet Stone’. The burial mounds literally surround the ring itself and are as much a part of visitors’ experience of the site as the standing stones and the ditch. A fence encloses the entire henge and the mounds, with the exception of Plumcake mound, which is located adjacent to the visitor car park and the Loch of Harray.



**Figure 5.1: Visitors at the Ring of Brodgar.**

- 5.8 Archaeologists believe that the monument originally comprised 60 stones, many of which may have been removed and re-used for various reasons throughout the span of the monument’s history. Historical records from 1792 reveal that there were 18 upright stones with 8 lying recumbent, and documents from 1815 note that 16 stones were standing and there were 17 that were described as ‘fragments less than 1m tall’ (Historic Scotland 1999: 24). Captain Thomas reported in 1854 that 13 stood erect, with a further 10 prostrate and 13 were described as ‘stumps’ (ibid.). After the monument was taken into state care in 1906 under the Ancient Monuments Protection Act of 1882, many of the recumbent stones were re-erected by the Office of Works into what were thought to be their original sockets.
- 5.9 The upright stones range in height from 2 to 5.5 metres, with the surrounding ditch measuring 10m across and more than 3m deep. The monument has two causeways that allow access to the interior of the circle, leading archaeologists to believe that the RoB dates from the late Neolithic period, and was built after the SoS and MH. The RoB is the third largest henge monument in Britain, and was frequently referred to as the ‘Temple of the Sun’ in historical records throughout the eighteenth, nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.



**Figure 5.2: Photo of visitors headed toward Salt Knowe, taken from the South Mound**

- 5.10 The RoB is probably one of the most iconic images of Orkney, alongside landmarks like the Old Man of Hoy sea-stack, the cliffs at Yesnaby, and heritage sites like the Italian Chapel. Such sites have somehow come to ‘stand for’ Orkney; they are used, as noted in Chapter Three, on everything from cheese packaging to the Orkney Islands Council’s logo on their website. For many, the RoB represents a particular aesthetic in which Orkney is often cast to attract outsiders, in which the beauty of the natural landscape mingles with the ‘mystery’ and ‘romance’ of the past. Together, these features combine to create what many regard as a ‘special’ atmosphere; one that is only possible to ‘feel’ or maintain because of the ‘remoteness’ of the location and the ‘tradition’ of the people who have lived around it for thousands of years.
- 5.11 Despite the visibility of road and information signs, paths, houses, power cables and the MH visitor centre from the site, some of the most frequent comments about the RoB are that it seems ‘natural’ and ‘untouched’ by contemporary society. Many visitors, during the course of 50 interviews at the RoB, felt that their experiences allowed them to somehow get ‘closer’ to the past, often commenting that the open access to the site and lack of amenities allows people to see the monuments ‘as people from the past would have seen them’. Often compared with other monuments like Stonehenge that people felt had been ‘corrupted’ or ‘violated’ by highly visible visitor management, such as fences, regulations about where to walk within the site, and overcrowding, the RoB was perceived by many to be ‘spiritually intact’ and highly accessible to the public.
- 5.12 The research carried out for this project suggests that this perceived natural and untouched character of the site, as well as its ‘iconic’ role in Orkney’s history and landscape, are the overriding factors underlying its attraction, rather than its status as a World Heritage Monument. The monument is an essential stop for visitors to the County, and is presented as such in tourist literature, as well as according to local residents and those who promote tourism in the islands. In other words, to ‘do’ the RoB is an integral aspect of experiencing Orkney.

- 5.13 People's behaviour while visiting it is highly complex and varied, and ranges from people who need to touch and 'connect' with each stone, to those who simply stroll around it on a routine visit. It is a powerful symbol of belonging to the island's people, as well as standing for the purity and 'simplicity' of remote 'untouched' places, in opposition to the complexity, development and commodification associated with modern society. The results discussed below elaborate on these and other aspects of people's perceptions of the RoB under three sub-headings: *access*, *presentation* and *place*. These perspectives are not exclusive and often feed into one another.

#### *Access*

- 5.14 Within the heritage sector 'access' in a narrow sense is usually taken to refer to physical and intellectual access to a site or building, as well as sometimes the economic dimension of access. Assessment of access is also generally geared towards limiting forms of exclusion and disadvantage that some people might experience because their access to a site is physically, or economically impaired. However, these aspects of access also intersect with how people perceive and experience a particular heritage site. The way a site is 'accessed' can influence the meanings attached to a site, as well as its emotive and symbolic power, and these aspects are given equal weight in the following discussion.
- 5.15 Visitors were satisfied with the physical access and entrance to the RoB. When asked what they thought about the entrance, 80% responded by saying something along the lines of 'yes, it's fine'. Most responses to this question weren't followed up by further comment, suggesting that the entrance to the site is not something visitors consider in depth, or place particular value upon, although this is where the information boards for the monument are located. One visitor did comment that the fences leading into the monument 'guide' visitors up to the ring, turning this portion of the journey into a 'procession' that makes the RoB seem more 'important' than the SoS.



**Figure 5.3: Visitors Approaching the RoB from the main entrance path**

- 5.16 As Historic Scotland is aware, the interior pathway can be troublesome in wet weather, often becoming waterlogged and muddy. During these periods, many visitors commented that 'something needs to be done'. However, when asked how they would feel about their experience if there were 'formal, laid out paths for them to follow', most people recoiled from

this suggestion, despite recognising that they might be necessary. They commented that hard-wearing paths might be acceptable if they were ‘in keeping’ with the ‘look’ of the monument as a whole, particularly the perceived ‘natural’ and ‘untamed’ aspects of its appearance. For example, one visitor suggested using Orkney flagstones, and several others suggested that a hard-wearing surface disguised by turf, might be installed along the paths.

- 5.17 As regards disability, very few people with obvious physical disability were observed visiting the site, suggesting that it is not perceived as particularly accessible by those suffering from impaired movement. This observation has been corroborated by a market research study undertaken at the RoB during the summer of 2003, in which no visitors with disability were observed visiting the site (2003 personal communication with In-Site Total Selling Concept Research). During the course of my research, one interviewee (RoB-24) expressed concern that someone in a wheelchair might have trouble accessing the interior path, particularly when it is muddy. Another visitor, an elderly woman who used a walking stick, walked round to along the interior path for a short while before turning round and leaving. Her behaviour illustrated that the monument is accessible to the infirm to a certain degree, but suggested that their access to all aspects of the site is somewhat restricted. Many visitors of impaired physical ability are likely to ‘access’ the site from a vehicle and the lay-by is important in this respect.
- 5.18 In terms of economic access, visitors place considerable value on the fact that entry to the monument is free of charge. This was not merely an issue of financial consideration, but also impacted on how visitors saw and experienced the monument, and viewed the landscape itself. For example, Interviewee RoB-6 commented on how paying to see a monument makes it ‘lose some of its tradition in that somehow it makes it more of a commercial enterprise rather than some stunning piece of history really, for me anyway.’ The implication is that charging an entrance fee would somehow taint the monument with the perceived ills of modern society, in particular the commodification of material goods. It represents an instance where issues of access to the monument intersect with how visitors perceive it as a ‘pure’ place; an ‘ideal’ landscape.
- 5.19 Many people felt that free access also reflects the local community’s ‘respectful’ attitude toward their heritage. For instance, RoB-7 commented that ‘I mean with crime the way it is up here it’s hardly much of a problem’, implying that control of access through financial means was also a means to protect the monument from hostile forces in society. Other comments in the same vein also feed into perceptions of Orcadians as being highly protective of their history, culture and environment:
- RoB-24: Orkney’s not a place where your tourist vandal’s going to come. I mean, a) it’s too expensive, and b) what would they want? And the local teenagers aren’t going to come out here, I mean, it’s just part of their life and they’re used to it.
- RoB-42: I think people have got a natural respect, haven’t they, when they come into a place like this. I mean, obviously some people have written their names on the stones, but a lot of people have got more respect whether there’s signs in there or not, people just want to come and look quietly. It’s not turned into Stonehenge, where people have gone in there and the Druids fight every year to get a place on it. It’s just accepted that this [place] is what it is.
- 5.20 The fact that there are no site stewards to ‘watch’ what visitors do, and few physical barriers in or around the site to restrict movement and access, also seemed to make visitors feel that the site was ‘informal’, allowing visitors to explore the site at their leisure. This was in contrast to people’s behaviour at SB and MH, where visitors are either on a time limit or are supervised by stewards and restricted by signs and barriers. At MH, the site is interpreted by a

steward who keeps to a strict timetable, and at SB, people ‘gaze’ on to the site, encouraging more ‘museum-style’ visiting, and examining aspects of the monument as if they are part of an exhibition or display themselves. In contrast, respondent RoB-50, from Glasgow, commented with respect to the RoB, that:

This is quite nice, it’s informal. You feel like you’re free. There’s those little signs aren’t there, to stop you going in the middle but everyone respects the little signs, it’s quite nice, they don’t need to put big fences up I think, it’s quite nice like this.

- 5.21 Visitors and local residents alike are relatively happy with the way the RoB is presented, though 6% commented that they’d like more information, such as a leaflet they could take away about the site, or a visitor centre. Most comments, however, revolved around RoB’s ‘natural’ appearance, prompting a high proportion of visitors to compare it favourably with the presentation of monuments in the south of the UK, epitomised by Stonehenge. The latter is seen to be over-presented and over-protected with the result that it has lost the enigmatic appeal, mystery and wildness that visitors associate with the RoB. One Canadian respondent (RoB-8) perceived the ‘mystery’ of the RoB as personifying the ‘romance’ of the Scottish countryside and the Scottish nation, drawing the monument into the realm of national identity.

### *Presentation*

- 5.22 Most visitors stop at one of the three information boards at least on their way into the site. About half of the people who read the boards stand over them and read them in depth for about 2-3 minutes. This more in-depth consultation usually takes place when the monument is not so crowded, and visitors do not appear ‘hurried’ with respect to their time at the information boards. Many of those who seem to ‘skim’ the material on the information boards did so whilst other visitors were trying to read the same sign, and seemed happy simply to take in some interpretation and look at the diagrams.

- 5.23 Over half of those interviewed (62%) said they were happy with the explanations given as to the origins and purpose of the monument. Those who expressed contrary opinions, however, often made comments about the tenuous nature of archaeological interpretation, such as: ‘they’ll never know what it was used for anyway, so how can they say these things’; ‘they [archaeologists] all have different theories, so how can we tell?’ or ‘maybe none of them [theories] are right’.

- 5.24 The perception of ‘freedom’ from site stewards, as well as too much information seemed to feed into how visitors imagined the monument. In this sense, rather than a highly structured ‘museum’ experience, 32% of visitors mentioned that the lack of structure allowed them to interpret the RoB in their own way. RoB-13 comments that:

You try and see in your mind, don’t you, what’s happened there in the past. I don’t know if they were dancing around [this stone] or whatever or the people were dying in cairns or being dead and put in there. You try to imagine what it’s like to get a picture of it, and that’s probably nicer to have your own picture of it than to have someone tell you what’s happened.

- 5.25 Some visitors seemed to appreciate the opportunity to engage with, marvel at, and puzzle over, the monument for themselves. For instance, a Canadian visitor (RoB-8) who had been a history teacher at a primary school commented that he ‘hoped science would never figure out what these stones were used for because that’s what Scotland is [...] the mystery and the romance’. Another (RoB-19), when justifying why he and his wife walked along the path one way, then stopped, turned around to walk in the opposite direction, said:

I don't know why we went that way [...] obviously no one else really knows what these places were for. We're coming to our own conclusions, really... the thing where we really hesitated was looking at the sort of connection between here and erm, MH, the other stones and Barnhouse Village. You just get a better view of everything going the other way.

- 5.26 The UNESCO WHS marker at the RoB is, on the whole, seen as an unobtrusive element, as it is placed near the entrance gate, and sits low on the ground. Many people interviewed did recognise that the site was inscribed on the UNESCO list, though a slightly higher proportion did not engage with the marker long enough (or perhaps simply misunderstood what they mean) to recognise that the monument is part of a World Heritage Site.
- 5.27 None of the visitors said that the primary reason they visited the RoB was because it has WHS status. Most people who were aware of its WHS status assumed that this conferred some sort of special conservation status, or that it was acquired in recognition of the significant and unique value of the site, signalling that it was as important as places like Stonehenge. Reactions to WHS status and its significance were however mixed as the following examples highlight:
- RoB-20 My cynical version [of what WHS status means] is a bunch of bureaucrats acknowledging the fact that there are some things of value around. If it provides access to money, then that's good, but on the whole it probably means that bureaucrats have eaten up a bunch of money and not all of it's come back to the site.
- RoB-14: World Heritage to me means it's a site worth visiting. Don't ask me which ones I'm aware of 'cos at the moment I can't think of any, but the ones I know of have got it right, and the fact that this is one is indicative of that.
- RoB-33: I suppose it means bus-fulls of tourists, really.
- RoB-4: It's just yet another layer of conservation designations layered over existing ones, it's pointless.
- RoB-h: I think it's good. It shows that these sites are just as important as places like Egypt and Stonehenge.
- 5.28 About 62% of visitors thought that WHS status meant that the monuments get 'more money' spent on them. 28% of visitors also tended to conflate different heritage organisations, or become confused over the remits of different heritage organisations, for instance, some believe that RoB is cared for by Scottish Natural Heritage.
- 5.29 4% of visitors commented that they would like to see a visitor centre at the site, but on the whole, most seemed happy to travel to the visitor centres at SB or MH to receive more detailed information about the RoB and its neighbouring monuments, preferring the RoB to remain '*as it is*'.
- 5.30 92% of visitors revealed a high level of awareness of other archaeological monuments in the area, often pointing out the mounds immediately surrounding the RoB, the SoS or MH, as well as commenting that they had visited other monuments during their stay in Orkney, or immediately prior to their RoB visit.
- 5.31 When asked whether they would be interested in seeing a footpath network serving the Brodgar region and connecting the WHS monuments, 90% of visitors said yes. Many expressed an interest in walking, and commented that, while they were more than happy to

explore the sites travelling by car, they noticed that the area is not conducive to walkers at present.

RoB-33: You have to stop, find a place to park, get out of the car, fight with the tourists, you know, so I think if you could just wander between [the sites], that would be good. We'd probably be interested in something like that, yeah.

RoB-41: We were fed up with walking along the road. It didn't seem appropriate, you know, so we got off it and came in here [the RoB].

Rob-17: As long as it were some sort of turf, that would be great, I mean, we've walked here along the road, and it's been a blooming nuisance, really.

5.32 However, whilst many visitors welcomed the idea of a path network, the research showed that at the time of this study, there had been concern amongst some local residents and farmers regarding such a development. Some of the respondents cited issues about land ownership, while others raised questions about the financial investment such an endeavour would require (see Chapter Three).<sup>21</sup>

### *Place*

5.33 A distinctive sense of 'place' figured heavily in how respondents seemed to view the monument, both physically and conceptually. Visitors to the RoB made constant references to the 'remote', 'natural' state of the islands, the Islanders' apparent respect for their heritage, and the distance between Orkney and the 'rat race'.

5.34 In this sense, people's frequent comparison of the RoB and Stonehenge seemed to symbolise this distance, literally and metaphorically. It is as if the RoB and its perceived accessibility, in terms of both free entry and freedom from supervision, represents the 'unspoiled' or 'untainted' nature of remote places. Whereas Stonehenge, with its fences and restricted movement and 'outrageous' (according to one interviewee) admission prices represents the more overwhelming and unpleasant aspects of modern society as it is experienced in more heavily populated and developed areas. It can be suggested that people's perceptions of the RoB and other aspects of Orkney are bound up with a series of dichotomies between nature/culture, north/south, purity/pollution and so forth, which also serve to mediate their experience and practices when visiting the site.

5.35 A sense of 'spirituality' seems to be inextricably linked to the RoB for many people. About 50-60% of the interviewees mentioned a spiritual or metaphysical connection to the monument. Sometimes it was easy for visitors to explain their connection; for instance, one

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<sup>21</sup> Since this research was conducted, the Project Group proposal for the creation of a full footpath network have been modified to omit stretches where agreement with landowners was not possible. Efforts are currently focussed on the footpath that takes in the land around RoB, on both lochsides, and a connection between RoB and SoS, and more open access between Watchstone, SoS and Barnhouse. Completion of the footpath network remains along-term objective. The original proposal caused controversy amongst local residents as to whether this was something that they wanted for their own purposes and whether it would impinge on their rights as landowners (see Chapter Three). However, the results of the research relating to this topic are useful in terms of understanding how visitor experiences of the landscape can be somewhat fragmented due to how they are guided to the sites by roads and signs (i.e. it seems that because most visitors travel by car or coach to each site in discrete visits, they tend to think of the sites as discrete entities), and also people's frustration at the lack of amenities for walkers and/or those who would like to visit the site on foot, but don't attempt to because of the perceived danger of walking on the roads in the area. Furthermore, the contestation over the paths I encountered during my research is somewhat contrary to Historic Scotland managers' understanding of how local residents feel about the issue, demonstrating that sometimes, people's discursive discussion of issues with researchers in a more informal context can differ from what people say to heritage managers (or indeed how heritage managers perceive people's attitudes).

woman said that she could 'feel energy' from the stones. For others, this spirituality was described in terms of an 'inexplicable' feeling of inner-calm, or a physical 'need' to stand within or walk amongst the stones. Some expressed this spiritual dimension by touching and/or hugging the stones, while others stood back and refrained from physical contact out of feelings of awe and respect.

- 5.36 People's experiences of the site seem to be as much about its setting and landscape as the stones themselves. The views, water and wildlife, as well as the weather and light, informed people's overall experience, and visitors often came back to the RoB several times to experience the monument at different times of the day and evening. Some see the monument as changing constantly (with the weather, for example), while others think it represents 'triumph over harsh conditions', a kind of permanency, because it is still standing after 5000 years.
- 5.37 People seem to enjoy the 'solitude' at the RoB, and many will come at different times of the day to avoid encountering other people during their visits. Some interviewees went so far as to say they only visit the site when no one else is there. For example, RoB-28 mentioned that she had wanted to visit SB, but that it had been too busy, so she came to see the RoB instead.
- 5.38 The monument seems to symbolise a sense of 'belonging' to expatriate Orcadians. As discussed above, the image of the RoB is iconic and instantly recognisable, and seems to represent Orkney both as a place and culture. For instance, one visitor who was born in Orkney, but left at 18, returned five years ago. The man's wife died two years previously, and he observed that he comes to the RoB between 1-3 times per day during the summer to speak to visitors about Orkney and its monuments, as he feels this gives him 'a sense of purpose'. Similarly, one man who was born in Orkney but raised in Glasgow specifically visits the RoB on his trips to Orkney to reconfirm his connection to the Islands.

### *Practices*

- 5.39 People's practices and movement at the RoB are complex and varied. The way people move around the monument, and the activities they engage in while there, are both informed by, and reinforce, the perceptions discussed above. They are also mediated by the physical form of the monument itself. The following discussion is divided into patterns of movement around the site, followed by a discussion of the kinds of practices or activities that people engage in whilst there.
- 5.40 As discussed in Chapter Two, the movement of visitors around the RoB and its immediate vicinity were observed using the method of tracking. The patterns of movement that visitors engage in can be summarised using the following categories:

- ‘Conformists 1: Rounders’** (10/100 visitors)
 

‘Rounders’ are visitors who follow the ‘official’ interior path cut through the heather either clockwise or counter-clockwise, with very little if any deviation. Although not exploring the outer regions of the monument, these visitors vary in the kinds of behaviour associated with their journey round the site. Coach tour visitors in particular are usually rounders, as their time is limited and the group context tends to lead to greater conformity with members of the group following one another. Visitors in this category have a limited view of the monument; they only see from the ‘inside’ to the ‘outside’. Whilst this enables them to see other monuments in the area as well as the interior of the stones, they don’t look at the monument as an entire entity (except when approaching through the entrance), and tend to focus on stones immediately within the vicinity, or the stones across the heather in the middle.

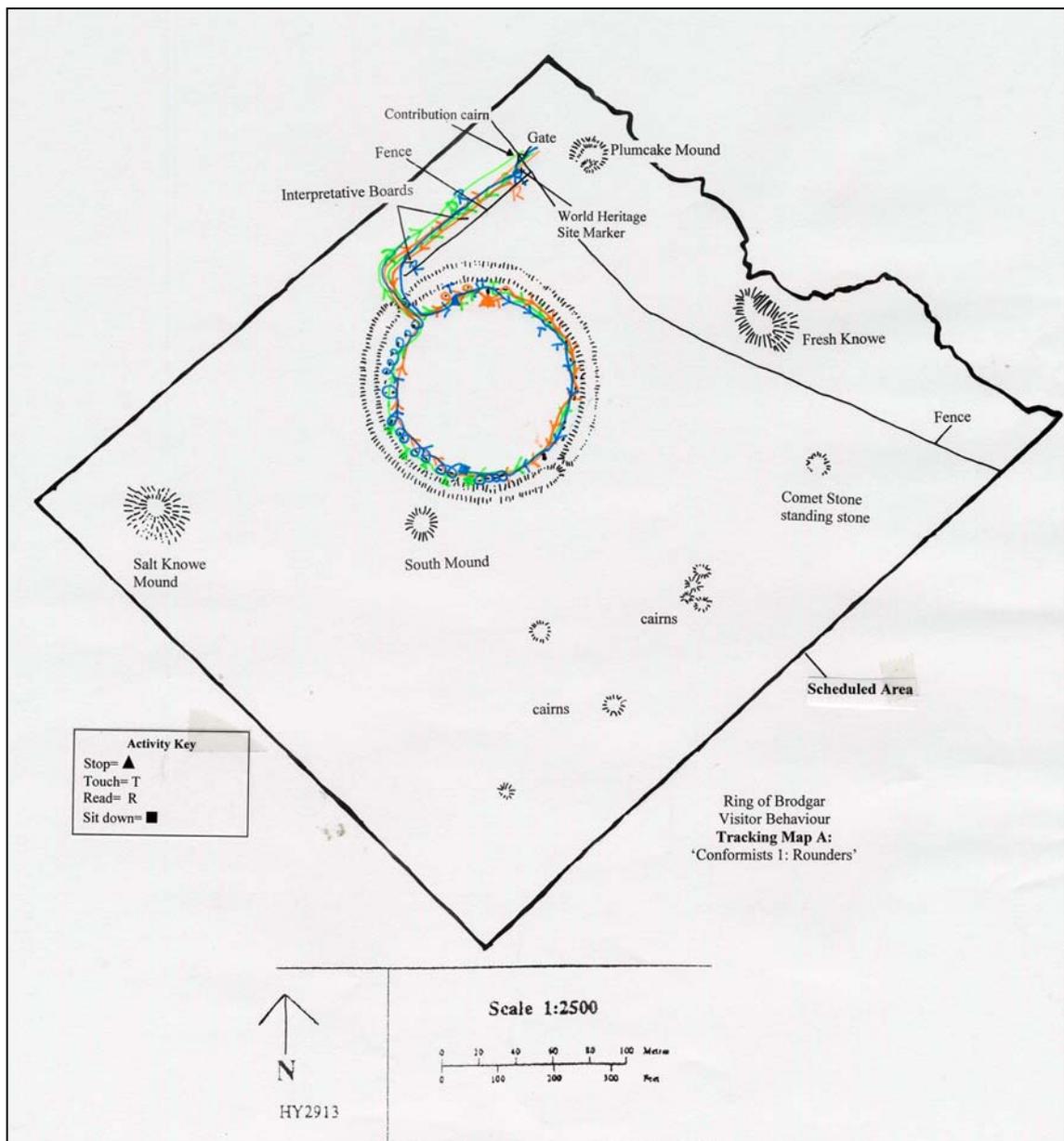


Figure 5.4: Some typical movement patterns of ‘Conformists 1:Rounders’

- **‘Conformists 2: Rounders who visit the South Mound’** (32/100 visitors)

This category includes visitors who walk clockwise or counter-clockwise around the interior of the path, and then cross the ditch, usually using the steps provided, to walk up on to the Southwest Mound. These visitors use the vantage point of the South Mound to look at the ‘view’, perhaps to view the monument from a ‘landscape’ perspective, and most take photographs at this point. They represent the largest category of visitors, with 32/100. Conformists 1 & 2 combined, i.e. whose movement at the site is structured by the paths and the steps across the ditch to the South Mound, represent almost half of the visitors.

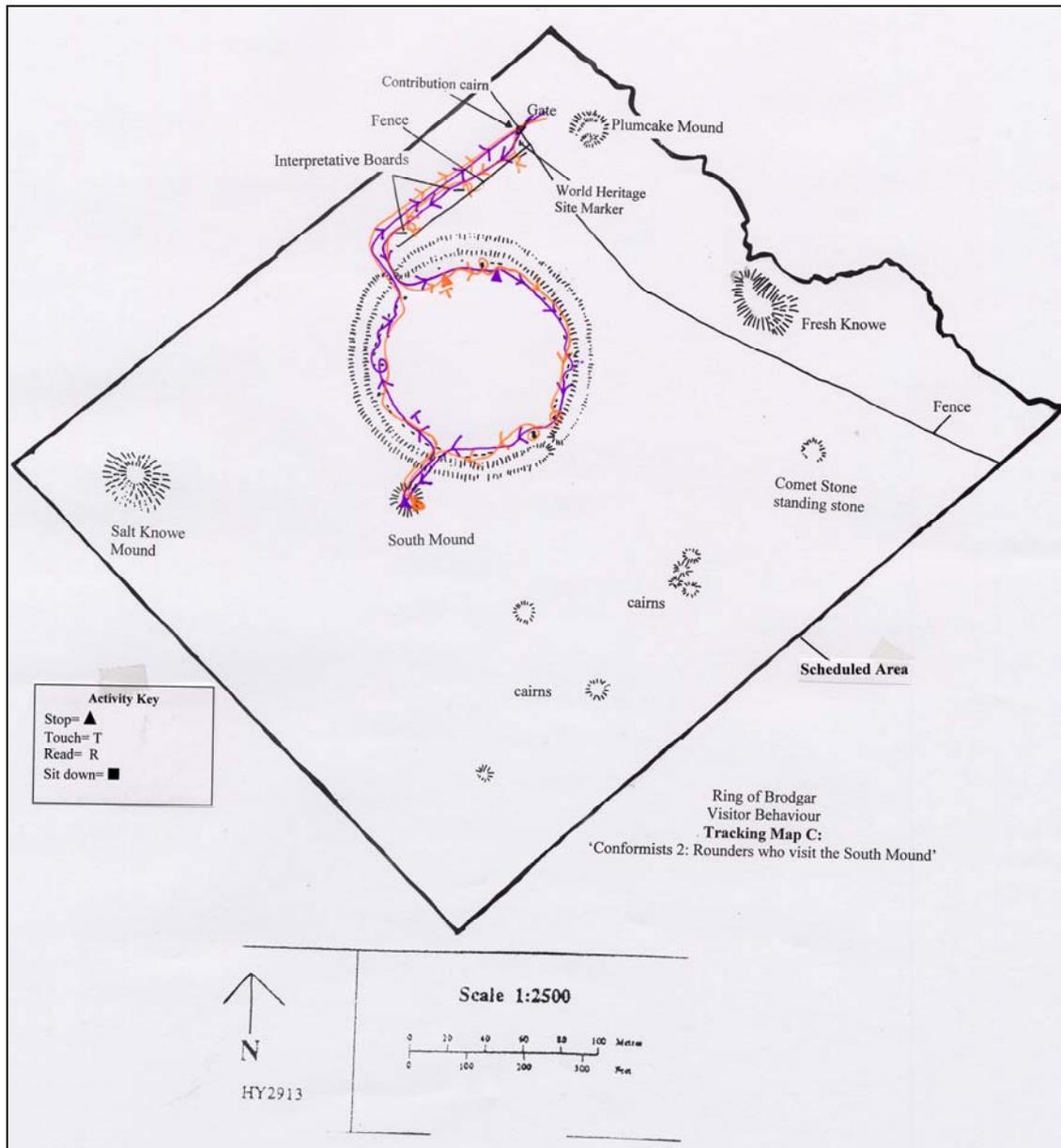


Figure 5.5: Some typical movement patterns of ‘Conformists 2: Rounders who visit the South Mound’.

- **‘Tasters’** (14/100 visitors)

This category includes visitors who tend to start around the interior path, but turn around after they’ve passed about 4-6 stones and come out again. Mostly their visits are fairly short, from 2-5 minutes. Many of those who walk clockwise around the circle tend to stop at stones that possess graffiti or at the stump. ‘Tasters’ usually came in sets of two, and the elderly tend to fall into this category. Like ‘rounders’, the experience of these visitors tends to focus on those stones that are within their immediate range of vision, as well as across the heather. The monument is not necessarily viewed as an entire entity, but rather, as a series of individual stones encapsulated by a ditch.

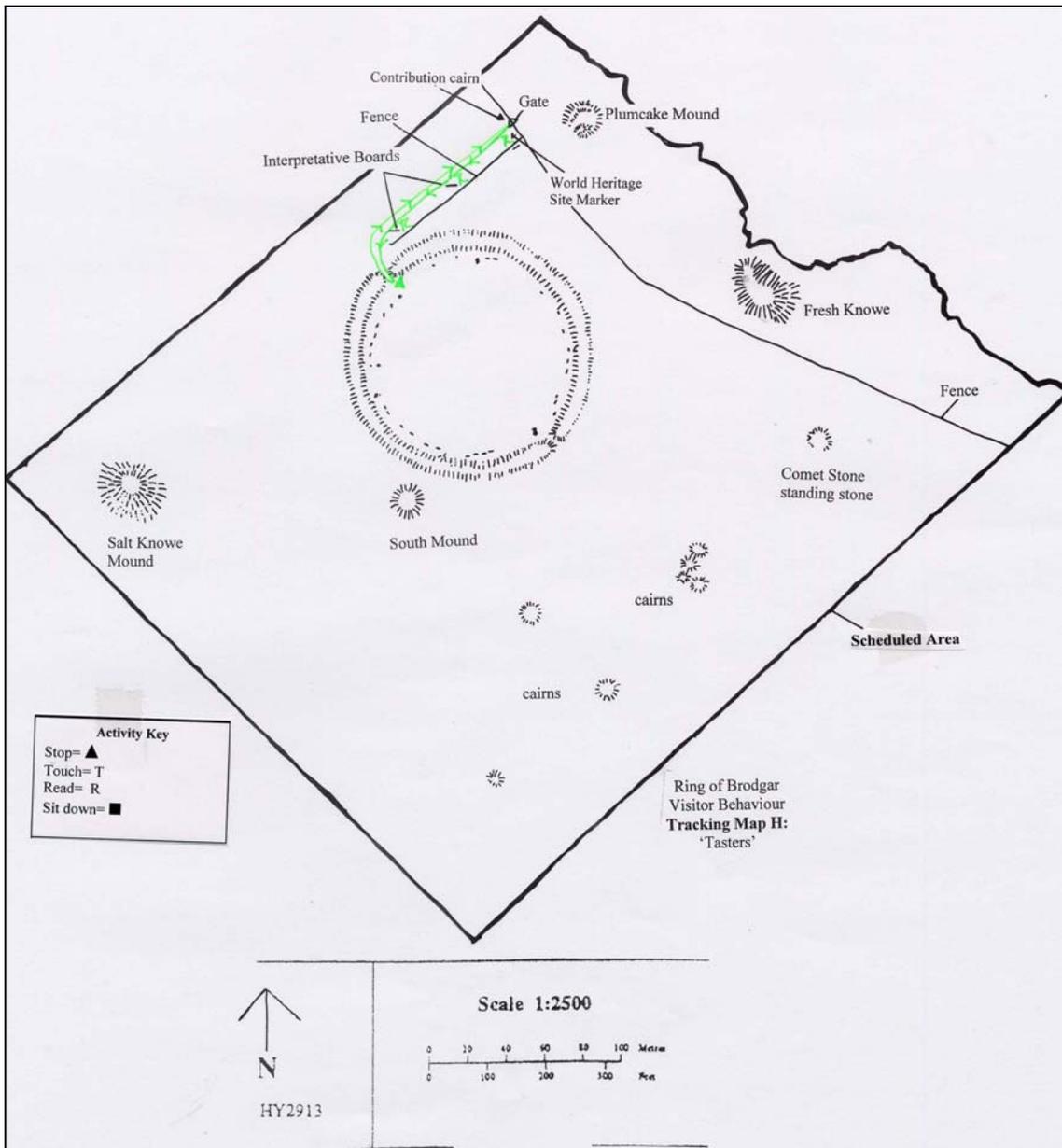


Figure 5.6: A typical movement pattern of ‘Tasters’

- **Explorers** (29/100 visitors)

This category includes visitors who explore part, or all, of the interior of the monument, but also like to investigate other parts of the monument, particularly the Salt Knowe. Within the interior of the monument their movement often conforms to the paths, but they seem to want to ‘explore’ further areas outside of the henge that the conventional circular path does not incorporate. Most move off to the Salt Knowe after visiting the South Mound. Some of these visitors walk down into the ditch through the heather. These visitors view the monument from both ‘within’ and ‘outwith’ the physical boundaries of the stone circle and the henge, allowing them to gain a variety of perspectives of the site. They can view the individual components up close (the stones, the heather, the lumps and bumps in the landscape), as well as the site as an entire entity, or in the case of 5 visitors, even look ‘up’ at the stones from below, as they stand in the ditch. They seem to be interested in how it looks from atop adjacent mounds, as well as gaining a different perspective of the monument’s shape.

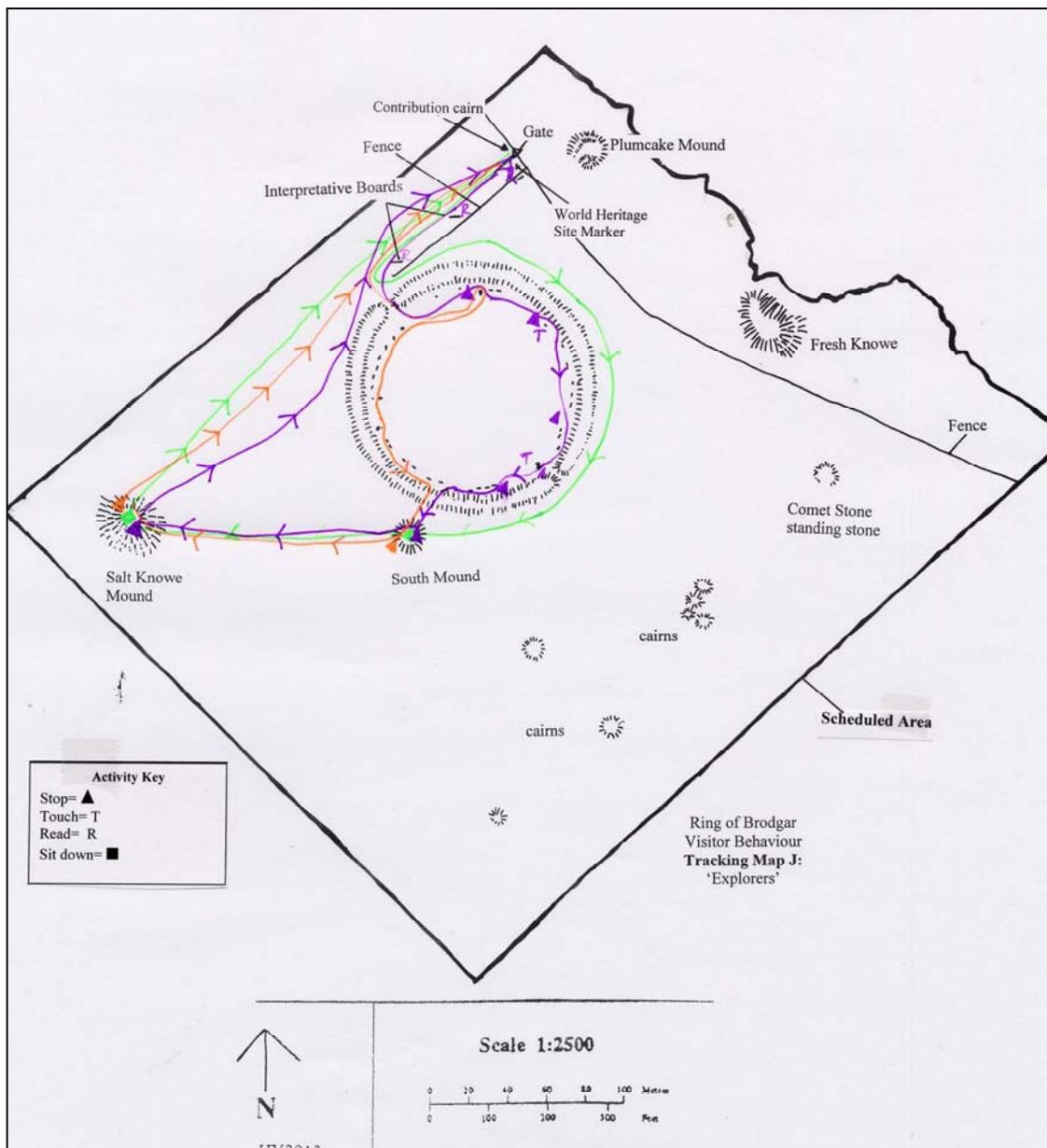


Figure 5.7: Some typical movement patterns of ‘Explorers’

- **Rebel Explorers (15/100 visitors)**

This category is closely related to the latter, but the visitors it incorporates diverge further from the conventional routes defined by the mown paths and the form of the monument itself. These visitors tend to use the interior path until about half way round and then forge a path through the middle of the monument. The interviews revealed that they have often read the signs asking visitors to keep to the paths, but they often explain their actions in terms of an inexplicable urge or ‘need’ to go to the middle. The perspectives gained by these visitors tend to incorporate many of those of the ‘Explorer’ category above (though some don’t visit the mounds surrounding the site), as well as viewing the site from the centre of the monument, giving the visitor a different sense of being surrounded by the circularity of the stones and the monument. This type of visiting may instil a sense of ‘independence’ or ‘rebellion’ in the visitor’s experience, as they are disregarding the ‘rules’ of accepted behaviour.

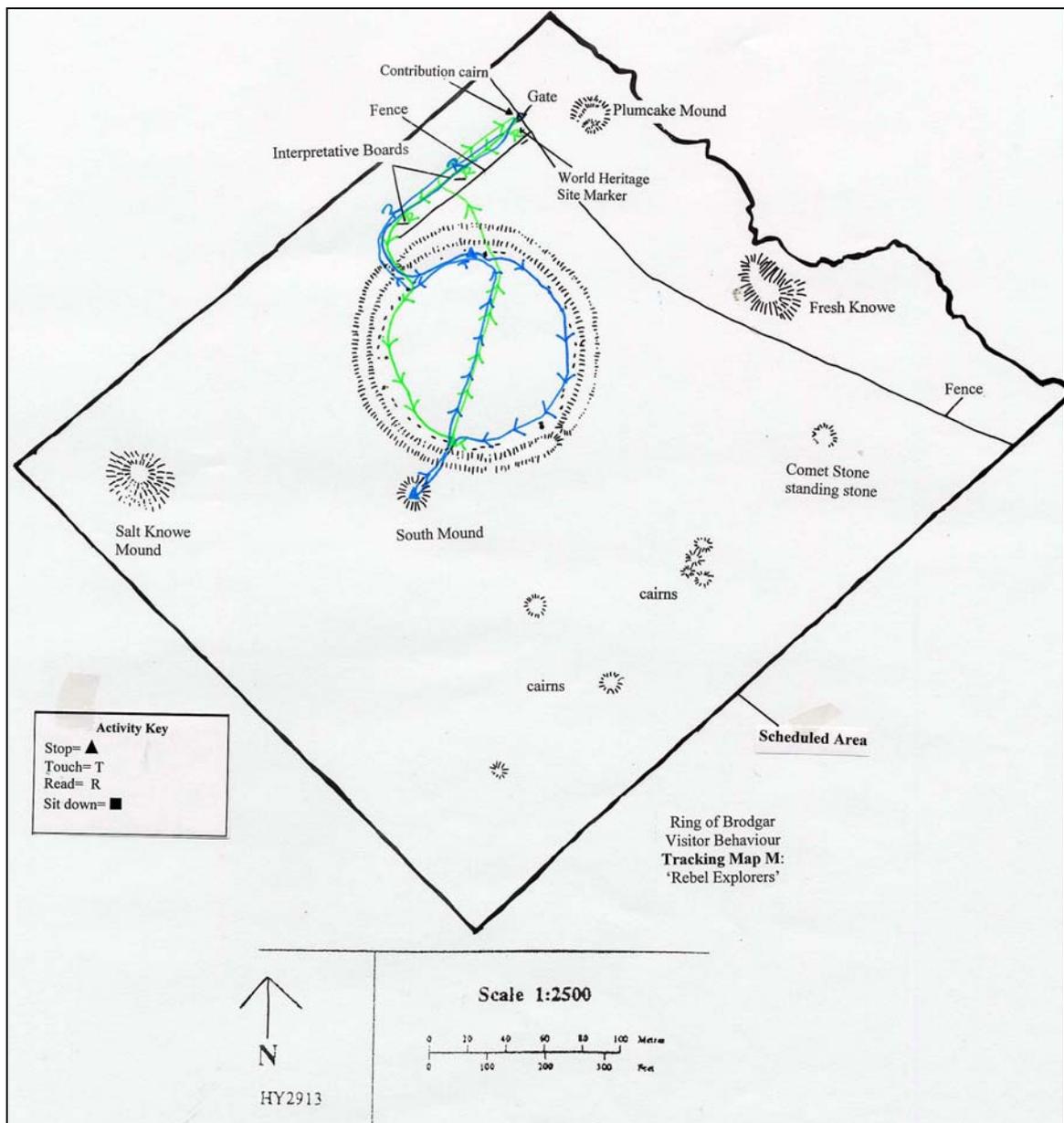


Figure 5.8: Some typical movement patterns of ‘Rebel Explorers’

- 5.41 Having identified various kinds of regular practice in terms of how people move around the RoB, it is also necessary to analyse the kinds of activities they engage in. The following categories relate to various kinds of behaviour identified during the observation-based fieldwork. These categories are by no means static, and visitors' behaviour often changes from one type to another, or in fact incorporates elements from several types simultaneously. Furthermore, there is also no fixed or one-to-one relationship between the particular patterns of movement described above and the modes of practice discussed here.
- **'Doers'**  
This category incorporates visitors who engage in a wide range of activities in a very active and determined fashion. They give the appearance of being visitors 'with a mission'. The range of activities they engage in includes touching the stones, pointing, discussing, taking photos, hugging stones, etc. 'Doers' often sustain their activities throughout the duration of their visit, though can also become 'strollers' (see below).
  - **'Strollers' (Veron and Levasseure 1982)**  
This category denotes those visitors who casually stroll through the site, rarely stopping for a closer look or to take a photo. Much of the time, they seem as much interested in their company as in the place. Interestingly, many Strollers begin their visit as 'Doers' (see above).
  - **'Viewers'**  
This category denotes visitors who stop along the paths to look at the monument and the landscape from different perspectives. They seem to stand back to 'take in' their surroundings, point and take photographs; often many of them. Interestingly, these visitors seem to see the monument in a different way to their counterparts listed here. Their experience is dominated by the visual rather than material. In their concern to find and record new and different vantage points, their movement tends to be slower.
  - **'Examiners' or 'Ants' (Veron and Levasseure 1982)**  
These visitors tend to take their time to examine specific features of the monument. They read signs meticulously, get close to the stones, sometimes bending down to see them, feel them, circle them, and discuss and point. Whilst the range of activities they engage in may appear similar to the 'doers', they engage in them in a more meticulous, but less determined and active fashion.
  - **'Butterflies' (Macdonald 2002; Veron and Levasseure 1982)**  
These visitors 'flit' from one feature to the next, often 'doing' some form of activity fairly quickly, such as 'patting' stones and taking photos. Like 'Doers' and 'Examiners' they engage in a wide range of activities often with a strong dimension of physical contact, but their activities are carried out much more quickly than 'Examiners', and they appear to be less focused and more readily distracted than either.
  - **'Experientialists'**  
These visitors, like examiners, take their time to do things. Their activities, however, are more concerned with sensual experience - 'hugging' stones, leaning against them with eyes shut, lying down in the middle of the monument, or on Salt Knowe. They are contemplative and appear to want to 'breathe' or 'soak' in the atmosphere or qualities of the place.
- 5.42 These types of movement and activity are by no means static, and one pattern of movement and activity can easily overlap with others. Here each pattern of movement is analysed in more depth and distinctive correlations between patterns of movement and different kinds of practice or behaviour are highlighted.
- 5.43 66% of all visitors (incorporating all patterns of movement) turned left to begin their journey around the interior path in a clockwise fashion. 27% of visitors began their visit by turning

right onto the interior path, hence moving in a counter-clockwise direction, and 7% used unconventional means of entering the monument, including continuing straight ahead through the middle, as well as going over the fence near the second information board, through the ditch and up on to the interior path.

- 5.44 ‘Tasters’, who make up 14% of the visitor patterns observed at the RoB, tend to spend their fleeting visits as ‘butterflies’ with little time to shift into a different pattern of behaviour. All read at least 2 display boards, with most looking at all three before entering the monument. Interestingly, usurping the usual pattern of turning left into the monument to walk clockwise round the interior path, 8 walked counter-clockwise whilst only 6 chose the clockwise route, each passing and/or investigating between 5-6 stones, then exiting.
- 5.45 ‘Conformists 1’, who only walk around the interior path of the monument, tend to walk in a clockwise fashion, with 9 doing this, and only 1 choosing a counter-clockwise route. 6 of these visitors read all three information boards, 2 read two of them, and 1 read only one of the boards. These visitors are associated with a wide range of different practices. They include ‘strollers’ (4) who don’t touch anything and rarely stop, ‘butterflies’ who touch stones, point frequently, and flit fast from one stone to another, then morph into ‘strollers’ or slower ‘examiners’, with one ‘stroller’ who became a ‘viewer’ near the end of the visit. Four visitors in this pattern were ‘experientialists’ who were very slow in walking around the site, using touch and sight in different ways to explore their feelings toward the monument.
- 5.46 ‘Conformists 2’, who walk around the interior path and visit the Southwest Mound, make up the highest proportion of visitors (32%). 24 of these visitors began their visit by reading at least two information panels, with only 2 not reading any at all. Most walked clockwise around the path, with only 8 choosing to walk counter-clockwise. These visitors include most behaviour groups, with a high proportion of ‘strollers’ and ‘butterflies’ who became ‘viewers’ and ‘experientialists’. There were just 3 who were strictly ‘experientialist’.
- 5.47 ‘Explorers’, who visit both the interior path and the exterior features of the RoB, were the second largest category after Conformists 2. 15 walked clockwise on the interior path, 6 taking an ‘unconventional’ route, with 8 choosing to begin their walk counter-clockwise around the interior path. These people were mostly ‘butterflies’, ‘strollers’ and ‘viewers’ sustaining this behaviour throughout their visit, with most reading at least one or two information boards.
- 5.48 ‘Rebel explorers’, so named because of their unconventional practice of walking through the middle of the site, tended not to read any display boards, with 1 out of 15 choosing to read one, 1 reading two, with the rest reading none at all. Within this category, 5 visitors walked clockwise around at least part of the interior path, with 5 choosing a counter-clockwise route, and a further 5 choosing to walk straight through the middle of the monument. The majority of these people were ‘strollers’, with one ‘viewer’, one ‘butterfly’, and one ‘butterfly’ who morphed into a ‘stroller’ on the latter half of the visit.
- 5.49 The way people engage with the RoB is informed by the material fabric of the stones, the paths, the ditch with its two causeways, and the interior heather and exterior grass. Over the years visitors have created considerable wear around the interior circumference of the stones. This erosion has been actively managed by Historic Scotland through a programme of turf repair and ground reinforcement. The turf that is used for the repairs stands out from the other grass simply because it is often a different shade to the surrounding grass, often being much greener.
- 5.50 This contrast therefore makes this route stand out, encouraging greater use of it by visitors. However, as time goes on, the colour fades and the paths get visibly worn. Once this occurs a circular relationship can be identified whereby most visitors follow the worn paths assuming these to be the ‘most acceptable’, with the result that the paths get more worn through time.

- 5.51 The degree to which paths are worn seems to suggest that ‘that way must be the right way to go’. They usually represent the routes that involve least effort and people are generally reluctant to walk in the heather, or on the inside of the ditch. However, the patterns of movement are not merely a reflection of visitors’ desire to pursue paths of least resistance, because they are equally reluctant to walk on the grassy areas around the monument (and, in doing so, miss out on the best views of the RoB as a whole).
- 5.52 Due to people’s tendency to follow worn paths, the interior path, as shown on the maps that accompany this document, gets the most wear. All of the recognised patterns include some form of movement along the interior path. Most people enter the RoB by means of the designated entrance and tread the path along either the whole or part of the interior path. This includes the ‘tasters’, who visit about 5-6 stones down either the right side or the left side of the circle. Inevitably, then, it is the first 5-6 stones and the path around them that receive the most frequent foot traffic.
- 5.53 Interestingly, the existence of worn paths and the regularity with which people follow them suggests that the experiences of visitors to the monument are highly structured. However, as mentioned above, people feel that the site is in a ‘natural’ condition; it is ‘wild’, not overprotected, and not tampered with in contrast to other monuments like Stonehenge. In this way, people don’t seem to be aware that in fact, their experience of the RoB is highly structured, and is in keeping with certain regulated practices that make up the ‘etiquette’ and accepted practices, so to speak, of visiting a heritage site.
- 5.54 These regulated practices and etiquette, i.e. heeding the instructions of the management agency and showing ‘respect’ to the monument, seem to be the accepted norms or ‘habitus’ (Bourdieu 1977) whilst visiting heritage sites. Conserving the monument for future generations and ‘respecting’ the material fabric of the site, both of which are encouraged by management agencies, are part of expected visitor behaviour at sites, which mediates the behaviour of most visitors.
- 5.55 Sometimes visitor’s perceptions and explanations of their actions and beliefs can be contradictory. For example, interviewee RoB-23 said she had come to the monument because it was a sunny day and she wanted to experience it in this kind of environment. She displayed ‘experientialist’ behaviour, as well as acting as a ‘viewer’ whilst sitting on the South Mound taking in the atmosphere and examining the form of the monument to get a sense of its circularity. When asked why she and her husband didn’t read the information boards on the entrance path, she replied that: ‘We’d rather speculate than read. It’s much more fun. Why muck up your imagination with facts?’ During the same interview, when discussing the paths around the RoB, she commented that the path with the staircase which leads up to the Southwest Mound was ‘completely wrong’ and ‘misleading’ to visitors, because she felt it should have come through two different stones. She said:
- I felt uncomfortable coming up the path because I didn’t know, I didn’t know whether this had once been someone’s sacred space. I was kind of surprised the path came up here rather than going around, to be honest.
- 5.56 The contradictory nature of this visitor’s comments is twofold. First, the uncomfortable feeling she had whilst coming up the stairs was based on ‘what she knew of other circles’, suggesting that, despite saying she’d rather speculate about the original meanings surrounding the circle, she did in fact believe there was a ‘correct’ way of presenting it. Secondly, although she felt the mound may have been a sacred place in the past, and expressed unease in walking up the path, she still participated in the act of sitting on it whilst speaking to me about it.

### *Coach and mini-bus Tours at the RoB*

- 5.57 During my fieldwork, I participated in six tours of the World Heritage Site, as well as attending talks given by other, smaller tour organisations at the SoS and the RoB. Most coach tour stops at RoB are brief, not usually lasting for more than 30 minutes, with most staying for an average of about 20 minutes. The time frame for visitors is tight, as the coach operators try to fit in as many sites as possible into their schedules. With many bus tours operating at similar times during the day during peak tourist season, other coaches often need to use the space, though the layby currently only provides enough space for two to fit comfortably. In general, coach tours are specific kinds of ‘touristic’ experiences (MacCannell 1976) that offer visitors ‘tastes’ or ‘samples’ of places. For example, some tour operators cater specifically for visitors who only have time to come to Orkney for the day, whisking them around the ‘main’ tourist sites like SB, MH and the towns of Kirkwall and Stromness, as well as Highland Park Whisky Distillery.
- 5.58 Indeed, many of the visitors I interviewed at each of the World Heritage Site monuments commented that they had been to Orkney previously on a coach tour, and wanted to come back to ‘spend more time’ and see the sites ‘properly’. Such comments imply that there is a ‘proper’ way of visiting heritage sites, and that for these visitors seeing them in the context of a whirlwind tour does not conform to how one should visit a site.
- 5.59 During the tourist season, between about mid-day and 3pm, as many as four coaches can often be seen waiting for their customers to disembark, have a quick walk around the stones, and quickly come back to drive on to the next destination. The visitors are often given a time to be back on the coach by the driver, who usually remains either inside the coach or in the vicinity of it. Often, if the weather is rainy, the driver doesn’t allow the passengers off the coach, opting instead to pull over briefly so visitors can take a picture of the monument.



**Figure 5.9: Coach tour passengers approaching the RoB.**

- 5.60 Although coach tour companies aspire to keep to specific timetables, overcrowding at the lay-by can often occur, impeding traffic and causing danger for visitors crossing the road, and for drivers negotiating the road. Coach drivers often emphasise caution when crossing the road to

get to the RoB entrance, and make jokes about visitors' tendencies to somehow become lax about paying attention to the road simply because they 'are on holiday'.

- 5.61 Coach Tour visitors tend to conform to the 'conformists 1 and 2' and 'taster' patterns of movement, as they are under pressure to complete their visit during the allotted time frame. The interior path is navigated, with visitors walking around the site both clockwise and counter-clockwise. Sometimes, coach tour visitors follow one another around the site, taking the route around the circle that the first person decided to take on entrance from the access path. Sometimes, a few visitors decide to visit the South Mound, but none were observed following the paths of the 'Explorers'. Similarly, no coach tour visitors were observed in the 'rebel explorer' category, where visitors walk through the middle of the monument. Perhaps this suggests that in large groups, there is a strong impetus to 'conform' to fellow visitor's behaviour, for fear of ridicule, or a desire to be publicly seen 'following the rules', as 'respect' for ancient monuments is an accepted part of visiting heritage sites. Indeed, when I mentioned seeing a teenager who had been standing in the middle of the monument, one of the coach tour visitors remarked that he hoped the visitor was not from his group, and another visitor suggested that in Orkney, respecting the monuments almost goes without saying in a place where 'everyone' seems to value the past.
- 5.62 Smaller package tours, on the other hand, spend more time at the RoB, with the tour guide (who is usually also the driver of the mini-bus carrying the visitors). These visitors often came under the 'examiner' and 'experientialist' categories. The guides often actively encourage visitors to physically engage with the monuments by touching them, and talking about the kind of material they are made of, positing theories about who, how and why they were constructed.

### **The Stones of Stenness**

- 5.63 The SoS henge monument sits on the right hand side of the road when driving north along the B9055 towards the RoB. Archaeologists believe that the monument once featured a circle of 12 stones, of which only 4 remain standing. Although like the RoB, archaeologists class the SoS as a henge monument, the scale of the SoS is much smaller, with a diameter of 44 metres. The site was ploughed until recent times and the ditch has long filled (the present ditch and banks are the result of modern landscaping). The stones themselves, however, are much taller and thinner than those at the RoB, with the tallest stone standing nearly 6 metres high. Some of the stones are angular at their tops, and are visible from the main road running between Stromness and Kirkwall (the A965), as well as from RoB and MH. Likewise, the standing stones making up the RoB are visible from SoS. The monument is thought to be older than the RoB, dating sometime around 3000 BC.



**Figure 5.10: The entrance gate at the Stones of Stenness.**

- 5.64 As discussed in detail in Chapter Three, the SoS was the subject of much contestation in relation to its management and presentation during the Twentieth Century. The 1906 partial reconstruction of the monument with a dolmen structure in the centre, as depicted by Scott in his novel *The Pirate*, prompted negative feelings from some Orcadians who felt that such a false presentation impinged on its correct and intrinsic meaning and aesthetic value in relation to Orkney's history and landscape. It is a popular story within the Orkney community that an Orcadian resident eventually became so perturbed by this false presentation by outside forces that s/he pulled the structure down with a tractor in an act of protest during the 1970s. Another popular tale surrounding the monument concerns the partial destruction of some of the stones that made up the original circle by a tenant farmer in 1814-15, including the total destruction of the famed Odin Stone. The SoS is still sometimes referred to by some as a 'Temple of the Moon', as it was popularly referred to in historical documents, and indeed in Office of Works documents, in the early twentieth century.
- 5.65 Today, the monument, like the RoB, is cared for by the Historic Scotland Monument Conservation Unit based in Orkney. A small curving car park sits just outside the fence leading up to the monument, and a swinging gate provides access for visitors. A UNESCO World Heritage Marker sits on the ground immediately to the left of an information board, which is designed so that visitors face the monument whilst reading the information provided. Barnhouse Village Neolithic settlement lies about 150m north of the SoS and is accessible via a pathway adjacent to the monument.

#### *Access, Presentation and Place*

- 5.66 Turf covers what is thought to be the original causeway over the henge and the entire interior of the circle is noticeably darker green in colour than the rest of the surrounding grass. Although there are no 'paths' around the monument, as such, the discernable difference in colour suggests that the darker green marks what visitors might perceive as the 'original' or 'appropriate' path into the site<sup>22</sup>.
- 5.67 Visitors seemed very pleased with the degree of access to the site which is both unrestricted and unsupervised. They enter through the gate and encounter an interpretative board and the WHS marker to the left. Most visitors tend to progress to the circle to look at the standing stones and the ways in which they move through the site can be divided into four categories (see below).
- 5.68 Sheep often stand within and around the monument, grazing the grass and rubbing against the standing stones, leaving traces of wool on their bases. Occasionally, tufts of white wool are scattered through the grass, and these can sometimes be seen blowing across the site during a heavy wind, catching on surrounding fence wire and posts.
- 5.69 The SoS receives a substantial amount of visitors, but does not seem to attract the large groups that visit the RoB. Observation of visitor patterns and behaviour revealed that there is usually a steady stream of visitors during the tourist season, but the large crowds that attend the three other monuments are rare. Coaches don't usually stop for passengers to disembark due to time constraints. Coach drivers tend to point out that the location of the monument and comment on the time period in which it was built. Sometimes the coach will stop briefly so visitors can

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<sup>22</sup> My use of the term 'original' in this context means that the way the site is presented to visitors suggests that the main entrance as presented today would have also been the primary entrance used during the Neolithic. This, of course, calls into question the taken for granted assumptions archaeologists use to interpret and represent the past.

take pictures from inside the coach<sup>23</sup>, but generally the only tour groups that tend to stop at the monument are smaller package tours who travel by mini-bus.

- 5.70 Because problems of erosion are not as severe at the SoS as they are at the RoB, the management issues for the site that are outlined in the *HONO Management Plan* are mostly concerned with its educational and interpretative potential, ecological value and aesthetic appeal. Historic Scotland is also interested in directing more people to the site to ‘reduce pressure’ on the RoB. The primary conservation concerns for the SoS area are: sheep grazing and defecating on the site, opening up of the surrounding landscape, the erosion of vegetation, the potential impact of increased visitors, and improved road signage.
- 5.71 The fieldwork for this site involved interviewing visitors and formally tracking their movement around the monument, using plans to record their behaviour. However, as at MH and SB, the field research was less extensive than at the RoB with 25 visitors interviewed, and 50 individuals tracked.
- 5.72 For many respondents, visiting the SoS seemed to elicit feelings of personal emotion and a sense of mystery, similar to those reported at the RoB. Visitors often reported feeling ‘connected’ to the stones and 5 reported feeling some kind of ‘energy’ radiating from them. Because there is less structure in terms of worn paths at the site, people tend to ‘hang around’ the four up-right stones, pointing at them, looking at them up close, and in some cases, touching them.
- 5.73 As at the RoB, the feeling that the site is ‘natural’ features heavily in visitors’ perceptions of the SoS. People seem to associate the freedom to roam around the middle of the monument and the lack of ‘over-interpretation’ with conceptions of the ‘natural’ and the ‘remote’. Its proximity to the Loch of Harray, as well as the vistas from the monument seem to be as important a part of visitor experience as seeing the site itself.
- 5.74 Six visitors reported that they preferred visiting the site when few other people are present and, for some, being allowed to contemplate the ‘meaning’ of the site in solitude was an important part of their experience. For example, one respondent (SoS-7) said that:
- I like the fact that you can go in and touch them, which you can’t now do at Stonehenge. I understand why of course, but I just think this is much more natural. Even than the other one [the RoB]. It’s been greatly defaced over the years. I touched the stones there, and they were just cold. Impersonal. There’s much more of a human element there. I prefer this one [because it seems untouched by other people over the years].
- 5.75 Regarding the preference for a ‘natural setting’ for the monument, another visitor [SoS-8] went as far as suggesting that the houses in and around the Stenness/Brodgar/MH should be ‘pulled down’ to improve the view and the authenticity of the site. She continued:
- It seems to destroy the natural setting of the site in a way. I mean its, you know, you’re standing here looking at things that are thousands of years old, and then you’ve got the wires, the telephone wires, you know, and you’re surrounded by the modern, you’ve got all this modern stuff.
- 5.76 The use of the word natural in this sense seems to suggest that the way people lived thousands of years ago was perhaps more authentic, closer to ‘nature’, and perhaps, more ‘correct’ than modern practices of dwelling. Such comments also seem to suggest that heritage sites should conform to particular conceptions of ‘authenticity’ that should not be impinged upon by
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modern life. This conception of authenticity is similar to that upheld in some spheres of heritage management, for instance as in the case of Stonehenge where English Heritage's plans to remove roads and other modern features, are driven, in part, by a desire to recreate a more 'authentic' prehistoric landscape.

- 5.77 However, this attitude towards the modern components of the landscape is not shared by everyone. Some visitors and residents find modern components of life sitting alongside ancient ones an interesting dialectic between the past and present, as well as accurate, realistic reflections of the Orkney landscape and the history that has produced it. For example, respondent SoS-12 mentioned that the visibility of modern components of the landscape, like roads and houses, made him think and wonder about how prehistoric people built the monuments without access to the kind of technology, like cranes, diggers and tractors. However, a small percentage of people mentioned that they would prefer to view the site without any visible elements of modern life, so they could see and understand the site in its *original*<sup>24</sup> context. There are obvious tensions between these viewpoints, which suggest that people's experiences of the site are highly mediated and nuanced by what they think is the proper way of viewing the site; whether it should be seen in more 'emic' terms and as a snapshot *in* history, or in 'etic' terms, within a modern context that has been shaped *by* history.
- 5.78 No visitors with obvious physical disability were observed visiting the SoS. As at the RoB, the topic of disability may be usefully discussed in a focus group about how and why visitors perceive access to the monument.

#### *Practices*

- 5.79 Observation of people's practices at, and movement around, the SoS reveals that they are heavily mediated by social interaction. Visitors to the site seem to be as preoccupied with each other as the monument itself. The small scale of the monument, and the lack of signage and obvious paths around it, seems to encourage more 'casual' visiting. In particular, visitors tend to linger inside the stone circle and engage in conversations, in contrast with the RoB where they seem to feel the need to keep moving. Different groups visiting the monument at the same time also appeared to have a marked influence on each other, adopting similar patterns of movement and practice, again illustrating the importance of social mediation in terms of people's experience of this monument.
- 5.80 Specific patterns of movement and practice have been analysed using the same categories developed at the RoB for the sake of comparison. However, the precise patterns of movement exhibited by say 'conformists' or 'tasters' at SoS differ due to the different scale and form of the monument. The discussion of practices at the SoS is integrated with analysis of the patterns of movement. Maps accompany the following descriptions of the patterns:

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<sup>24</sup> See Jones (2003) and Chapter Two of this report for discussion of how heritage agencies have traditionally been concerned with presenting the 'original' intentions of past peoples who built monuments rather than their contemporary values.

- **Conformists** (20/50 visitors)

This category of visitors entered the monument through the gate, walked up to the stones through the causeway, and proceeded to walk around them in an unstructured way. They have a striking tendency to stop frequently and point at the stones, and seemed more interested in looking at, rather than touching, the stones. These visitors are called conformists because they tend to follow other individuals or groups of people leading to the group conformity discussed above, which was commonplace at SoS. Often this resulted in visitors congregating in the interior of the monument where they seemed reluctant to walk around the outside of it unless another visitor ventured there. These activities of these visitors are largely confined to those of ‘ants’, ‘butterflies’ and ‘experientialists’.

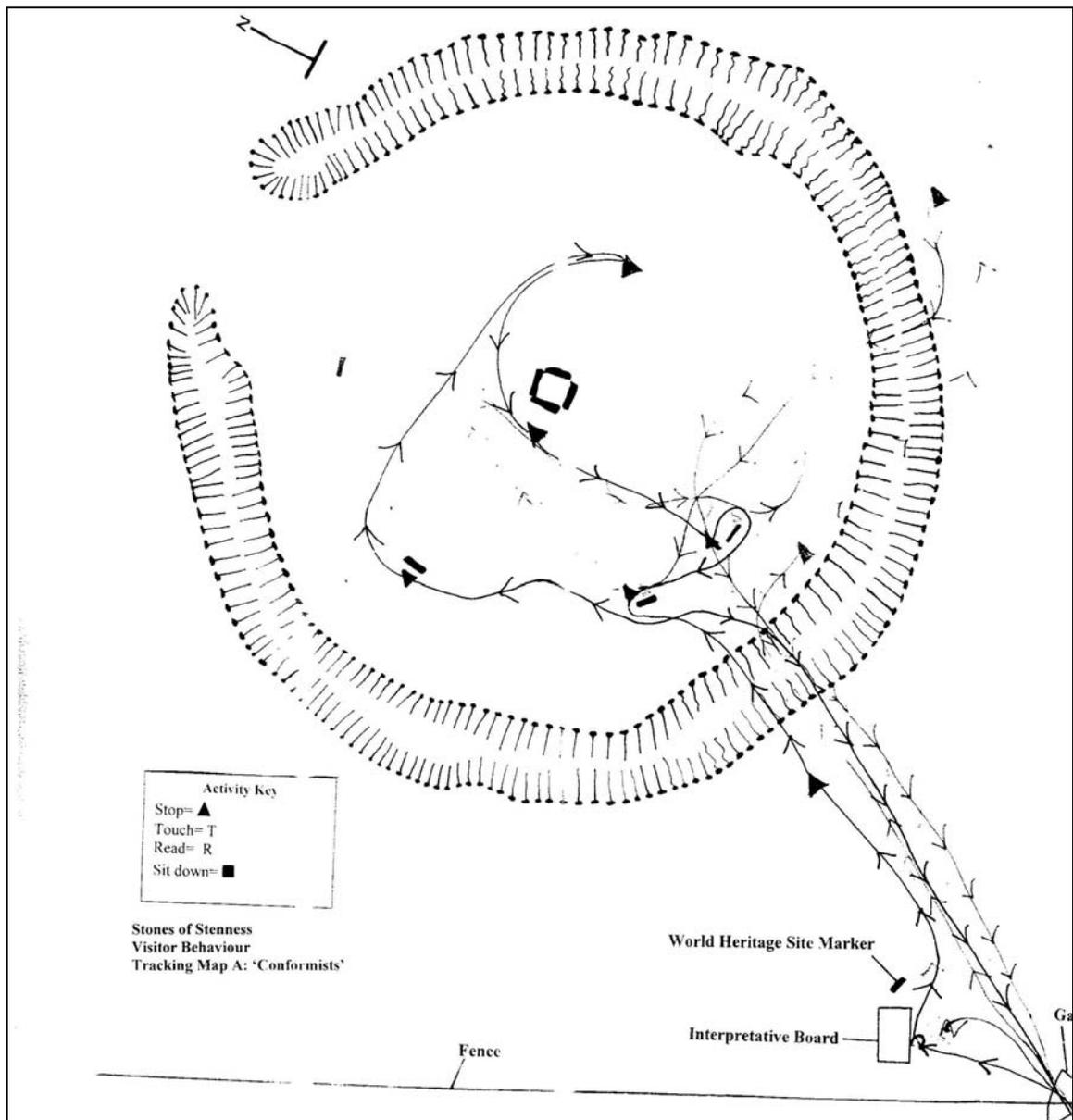
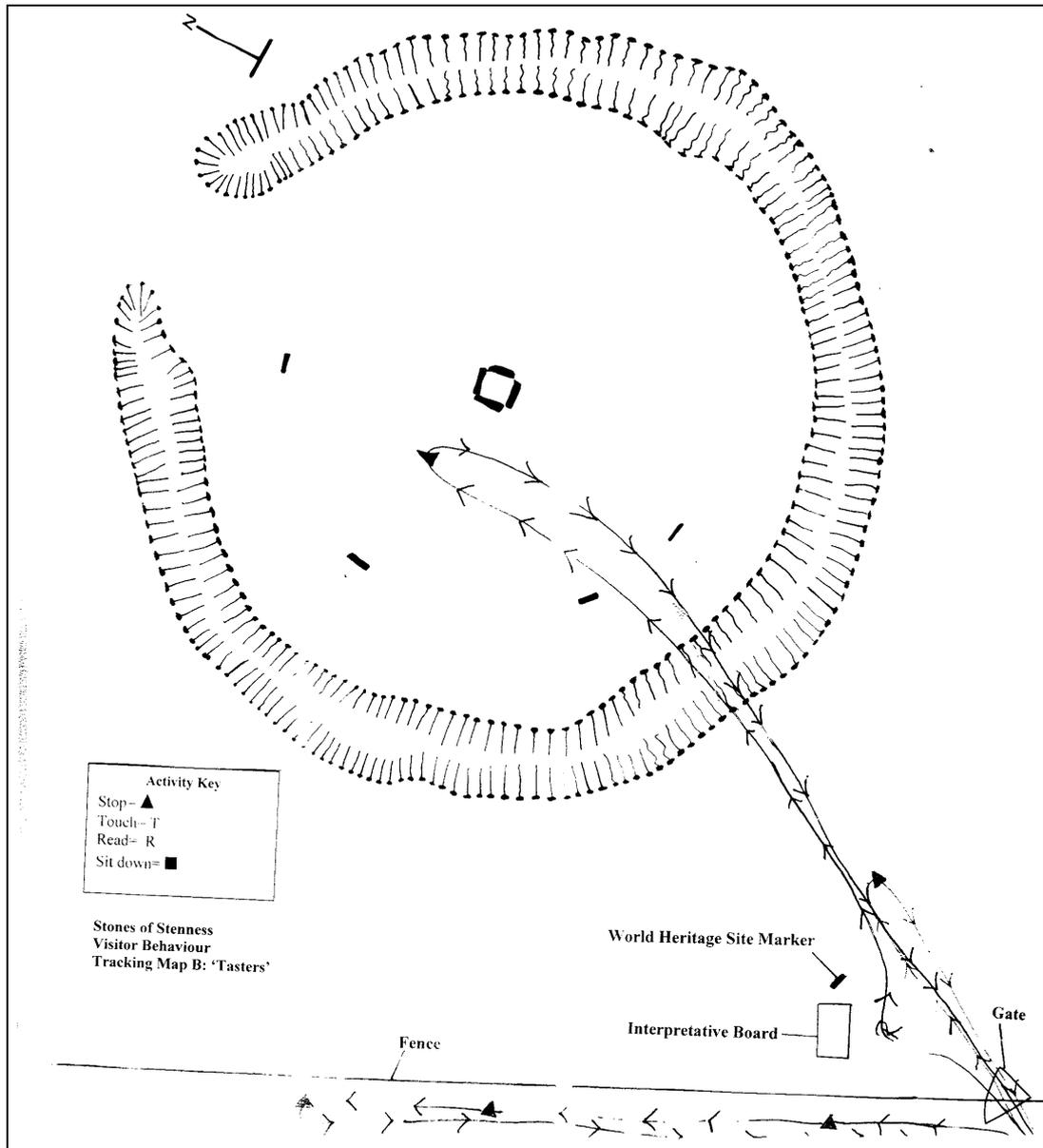


Figure 5.11: typical patterns of ‘conformists’ at the SoS. They tend to follow one another and engage with one another in groups as much as with the monument.

- **Tasters** (12/50 visitors)

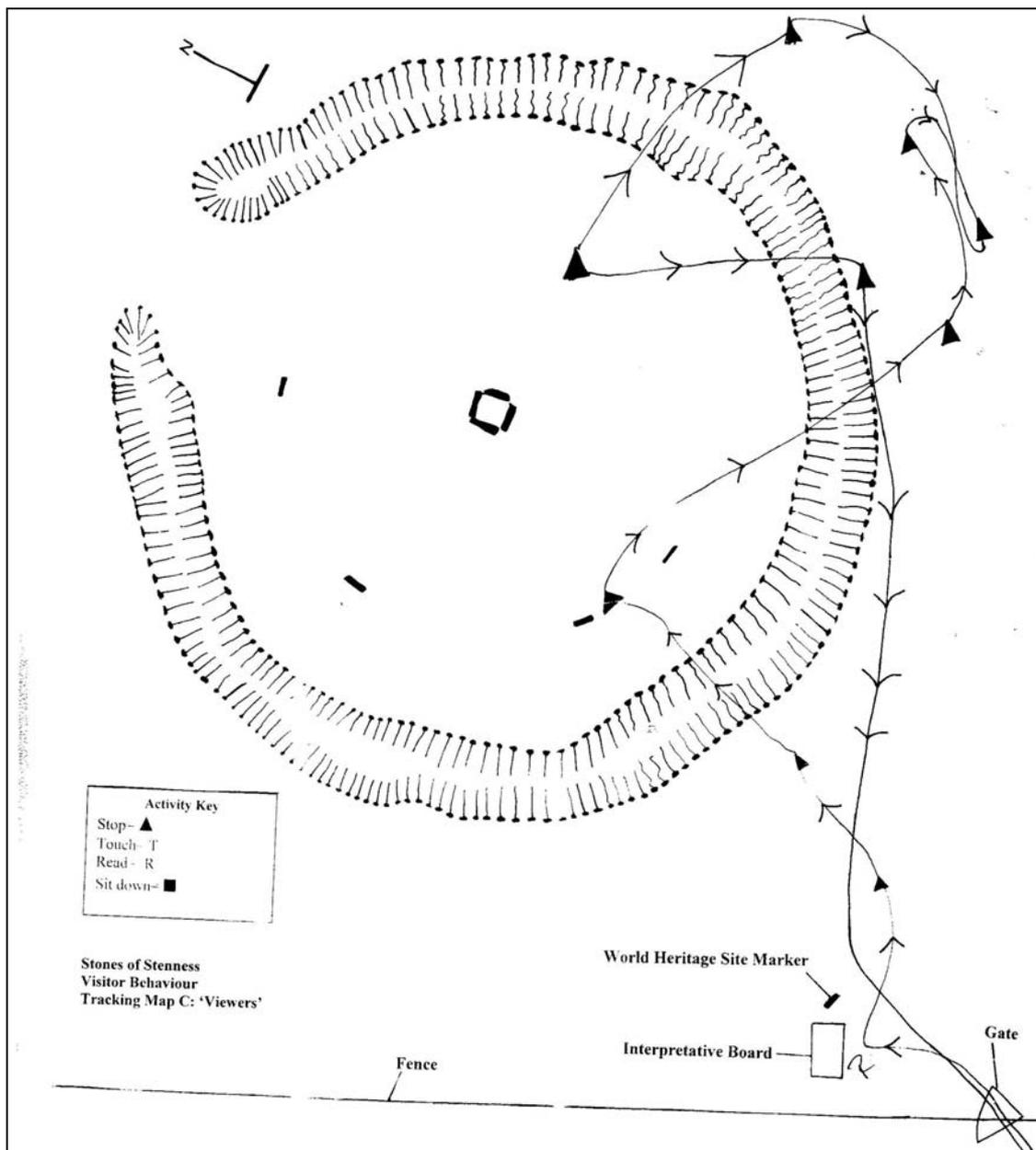
This category of visitors tended to enter the monument through the designated gate, read the information board, proceed around Stones Two or Stone Three, (Awaiting Map) then exit the monument through the designated path without visiting the North or East portions of the monument. They often took photographs, with some only staying to take pictures either of Stone Two or Three, or of one another in front of these stones.



**Figure 5.12: Typical patterns of 'Tasters' at the SoS. These visitors enter the monument either for a few minutes to have a look around then quickly leaving, or simply look at the monument from outside the fence.**

- **Viewers (7/50 visitors)**

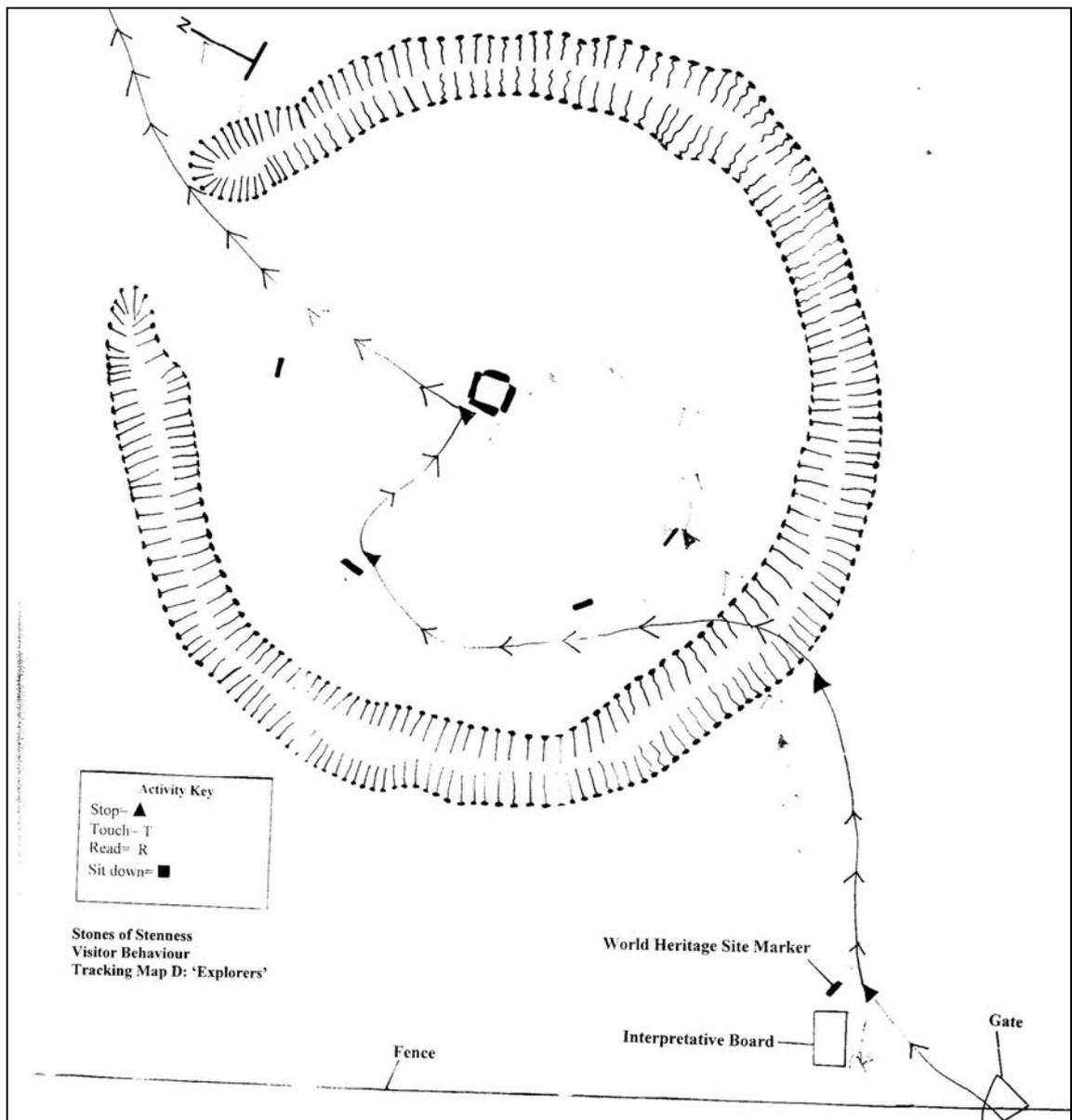
This category of visitors tended to behave like ‘Viewers’ at the RoB, and seemed very concerned with being able to position themselves to look at the monument from particular vantage points. Of these visitors, 6 were taking photographs or had video cameras. All of these visitors entered through the designated gate, walked beside Stone Two or Three, then proceeded to the outer ditch on the south east side of the monument. They frequently turned around to view the site, and many of them would kneel on the ground to look at, or to take pictures of, the stones. These visitors would ‘linger’ longer than the others, with their visits lasting an average of 15-25 minutes. Two of these visitors continued to walk around the ditch to the Eastern Side of the monument, and proceeded along the path to Barnhouse Village.



**Figure 5.13: A typical movement pattern for a ‘Viewer’ at the SoS. These visitors move around the monument and stop to ‘gaze’ on it for long periods of time, as if they are trying to picture the monument from specific points in the landscape.**

- **Explorers** (5/50 visitors)

This category of visitors tended to enter the site through the designated gate, and exit through the rear gate of the site which leads to Barnhouse Village. This category of visitors is so named because they take a route that is not as well-travelled as others. The behaviour of explorers was diverse, encompassing ‘doers’, ‘strollers’, ‘viewers’ and ‘experientialists’. Many of these visitors carried on to visit Barnhouse Village, and tended to be gone for 30-60 minutes. Although I did not engage in observation research at Barnhouse Village, their trip to the site, and the length of time they spent there shows that there is interest in the settlement, and suggests that better signage could direct many more visitors to it.



**Figure 5.14: A typical pattern of an ‘Explorer’ at the SoS. These visitors are so named because they venture off to Barnhouse Village after their visit to the SoS**

## Maeshowe



**Figure 5.15: Maeshowe.**

- 5.81 MH, thought to have been constructed around 5000 years ago, is one of the most famous passage tombs known to the Neolithic period. It is known for its complex ‘corbelled architecture’, as well as, like SB, its spectacular state of preservation. The HONO WHS nomination document describes the form and scale of the monument as follows:

The mound at MH is 35m across and 7m high. It is built on a partly artificial platform into which at least one socket for a very large standing stone has at some time been set. Round the platform is a ditch which was originally nearly 14m wide by 2m deep [...] Inside the mound are a passage and chambers made of stone slabs weighing up to 30 tonnes [...] The main chamber is 5.6m square. At each corner is a buttress flanked by a huge vertical slab and supporting the roof.

- 5.82 Though many passage tombs have yielded human and animal remains during excavation, such remains were never found within the monument. ‘Vikings’ are said to have broken into the monument sometime during the twelfth century AD, who left runic ‘graffiti’ on the walls of the main chamber, which is now considered to be the best known collection of runic inscriptions outside Scandinavia.
- 5.83 Alongside the complex architectural form and unique history of the monument, MH is also thought to have astronomical significance. During the mid-winter sunrise, rays of sun penetrate the rear chamber, slowly travelling across the back of the tomb. This event is popular amongst astronomers, archaeology and ‘new age’ enthusiasts, and is broadcast live annually over the internet.

### *Access, Presentation and Place*

- 5.84 MH sits alongside the main Stromness to Kirkwall road (the A965) with Tormiston Mill, itself a listed historic building, which is used as a heritage centre, café and ticket office, on the opposite side of the road. The passage tomb intersects the horizon as a peculiar mound in the landscape, covered in green grass, with fences surrounding the external ditch that encircles the monument. Sometimes, especially during the spring and in the autumn, large, circular bales of

hay encased in shiny black plastic, obscure the view of the monument from the east. The car park which sits in front of the mill often overflows with cars and coaches during the tourist season, and visitors are often seen crossing the busy road to get to the entrance to the site. On crossing the road they encounter a fenced gravel path between fields that leads up to the entrance of the tomb. This path is also surrounded by fences on either side, controlling the movement of visitors who are forced to walk in a line up to the monument. When the monument is closed to visitors, a door with bars covers the entrance, and sheep often graze on top of the mound, all of which is visible from the road. When it is open to the public, visitors are accompanied by a tour guide and numbers are normally restricted to around 17 people at any one time.

- 5.85 Like SB below, the visitor centre at MH (Tormiston Mill) features a small display with information like timelines, and interpretations of life in the Neolithic. A gift shop is located on the second floor, which, like museum shops, sells a range of literature about the site, the Neolithic and other archaeological and historical time periods, as well as curios, crafts and souvenirs. Coupled with the ‘guided’ tour, the experience seems to be comparable to museum-style visiting, which is an information-driven practice, rather than perhaps a solitary, contemplative one.
- 5.86 The experience of visitors is highly mediated by the presence of a site steward, who gives a verbal presentation about the tomb inside the main chamber. The stewards carry large walky-talkies, so they can communicate with the attendants selling tickets, and control the size of groups of visitors. Each group is allowed about 30 minutes for the tour, including the steward’s talk and looking at the tomb’s interior features. Display boards describing the monument and carrying the organisation’s logo are located adjacent to the monument alongside the entrance path. These also mediate visitor’s perceptions and engagement with the monument, presenting a basic history of the site alongside a conventional explanation of its likely meaning and use during the Neolithic. Apart from information about the speculative assumptions of the structure and function of MH, the information board also contains information about the Norse people or ‘Vikings’ who broke into the tomb in the Twelfth Century, and the runic inscriptions that they left adorning the interior of the monument, as well as its astronomical significance.
- 5.87 Fieldwork at MH included interviews and observations of behaviour. However, because formal paths already exist at the monument, and because the monument is staffed with stewards who control and observe visitor movement within the monument, no formal map tracking was undertaken.
- 5.88 Many interviewees (12) commented that being inside MH somehow felt ‘special’. 5 visitors commented that they felt the presence of past people, while 2 said that being inside the tomb felt ‘spooky’, and another felt ‘claustrophobic’, especially in the passage leading to the inner chamber. 1 Respondent, MH-3, associated it with his experience of more recent architecture, and said that being inside the tomb ‘felt like being in a church’.
- 5.89 For many visitors the architectural space of MH seems somewhat alien, but somehow also oddly familiar (i.e. the man who compared the monument to a ‘church’). The form of the monument, the intricate masonry, the low ceiling of the passage, coupled with the explanation of the site as a tomb, stimulated feelings of ‘mystery’ or at least the idea that the site is somehow ‘different’ and ‘special’. On the one hand, some of the features are unfamiliar; yet on the other, the purpose of the tomb is a familiar one, and the inside of the monument might seem comparable to a mausoleum.
- 5.90 Although some visitors climb up to the top of MH, few step from the formal path around other areas of the site to explore the exterior of the monument as a whole. If peoples’ tendency to follow worn paths because it is seen as the ‘correct’ way to respectfully visit a heritage site,

perhaps visitors feel that the exterior monument is ‘off limits’ to further exploration, as no visible path is discernable. The highly structured nature of the site may discourage their individual urge to ‘explore’, as it were.

- 5.91 Respondent MH-4 said she felt ‘privileged’ to see the inside of the monument, as she described it as perhaps once being someone’s intimate and private resting space. She also said she was ‘humbled’, as most people would not get the chance to see ‘something like this’ in their lifetime.
- 5.92 Respondent MH-5 said that after reading and hearing so much about the site, it was ‘amazing’ to actually see it for herself. She said it had surpassed her expectations, and that she would be coming back to visit the rest of the sites at a later date, as she was short of time. MH and the SoS were the only monuments she had had time to see, but for her, seeing the inside of MH had been the main priority.
- 5.93 A number of visitors commented on the educational dimension of visiting MH, specifically about the presentations given by the site stewards. One respondent (MH-22) commented that ‘the guides are really knowledgeable. It seems like they would have a degree’. This kind of comment reflects visitors’ perceptions that information about the site is presented authoritatively by well informed people who seem to have intimate knowledge of the site.
- 5.94 Since this research was conducted, HS has designed a new scripted presentation for stewards to follow. During my fieldwork, however, the ‘tone’ of the presentation of information was heavily influenced by which steward is narrating the history of the monument as each had their own style and approach. For example, some site stewards used humour to communicate information, for instance with respect to the meaning of the runes and the purpose of the monument, especially when dealing with large groups. Other stewards were solemn in their presentation, emphasising that the purpose of the monument is bound up with rituals and possibly death, making visitor experiences more ‘mysterious’.
- 5.95 The presence of a site guide who could answer questions and provide explanations, coupled with the restricted movement inside the monument, seems to constrain visitors’ experiences and encourage them to accept the information provided as the ‘correct’ meaning of the use of the site. This is in contrast to visitor experiences at the RoB and the SoS, where visitors seem to place value on the sense of ‘mystery’ surrounding the monuments and for some the freedom to interpret it as they wish. The label ‘tomb’ seems to render the purpose of MH more familiar and comprehensible to visitors than the completely alien architecture and material form of the henge monuments.
- 5.96 Three visitors expressed dissatisfaction with seeing sheep standing on top of the tomb, and another two disliked other visitors walking on to it. ‘It’s a shame’ said respondent MH15. ‘They shouldn’t be allowed to be doing that. Not with all the other protection for the site, you know, like having to go in with the guide’.
- 5.97 One visitor with ME was unhappy with the access provided to MH. She said that the structure of the visitor centre made it impossible for people with disabilities to access the first floor to purchase tickets for the site if the ground level ticket seller wasn’t available.

It was impossible for me to walk up the stairs, you know. I have to stop a lot when I’m walking, and I think the way it’s laid out isn’t good for people with disabilities. Even the long path to the site is hard for me, because I know there’s a time limit, and I just can’t walk fast enough to get there and not affect other visitors’ experiences.

- 5.98 Echoing visitors at RoB and SoS, respondent MH-11 commented that he would have liked to see the monument on his own ‘without the big group’. Sharing the space with others, he said,

'takes something away' from the experience, as he did not feel as free to look at as many of the runes as he wanted, as he would have had to 'push past other people'.

### *Practices*

- 5.99 As discussed above, visitor movement around MH is very restricted, with fences surrounding the ditch of the monument, as well as around the paths that lead up to it. This highly-structured atmosphere, coupled with the fact that visitors can only access the site with a steward who enforces a time limit on each group of visitors, makes experience of the monument very ordered and choreographed. With a few exceptions discussed above, most visitors seemed to find the arrangement acceptable, and were happy to be offered an interpretation of the site.
- 5.100 Visitors have no choice but to follow the path that leads up to the site entrance if they want to 'get close' to the monument. This path is both the entrance and exit to the site, thus leading the visitor in a pre-ordained pattern of movement up to, and away from, the tomb. The walk up the path thus becomes a procession of sorts, with most visitors making their way slowly along the path to the site. Once the visitor arrives at the entrance area of the monument, they are either ushered into the small opening by the site steward, where they must stoop to enter the dark passage and proceed to the inner chamber, or they are told to wait until all expected visitors arrive from the visitor centre, in which case, people stand around the entrance, talking to each other, pointing, and gazing at the surrounding landscape. Here, visitors tend to 'mill' together, waiting for the tour to begin rather than 'explore' very much of the exterior of the monument. Some do climb on to the top of the monument and a path is beginning to be worn into the turf (although this perhaps is only a seasonal phenomenon). Those who did climb on top of the mound seemed to have a tendency to follow the existing path, as was discussed at length in relation to the RoB.
- 5.101 Inside the passage grave, a thin, black railing placed about a foot from the walls of the inner chamber signifies to visitors that they must not lean in beyond this boundary, while the site steward ducks underneath, and explains why the railings are there. The steward then begins to give interpretations of the site, often in narrative form, for at least 10 to 15 minutes. During this period, people are usually quiet except for a few whispers and occasional questions, but many people seem to be looking around at the walls and sometimes, standing on their toes trying to see beyond other people or perhaps, craning their necks trying to see into the recesses of the walls. Once the site steward mentions the runes that are carved on the walls, people's efforts are directed to trying to find them, often crowding round specific spots to get a better view, particularly the small, delicate carving of the famous MH dragon.
- 5.102 At the time of the research, most visitors had a go at 'rocking' the massive slab that once acted as a blocking stone on their way out of the tomb. Indeed, the stewards usually used to discuss its function and encourage this activity, although such encouragement has since been halted by HS. Once outside, some visitors (usually about 1-3 of larger groups of around 10 or more) explore the site a little more, sometimes venturing into the ditch, or walking around to the back of the site. However, people still seem somewhat unsure of whether they are actually allowed to walk in the ditch, often looking around or at the site steward to see whether this act will be met with resistance. They no longer talk in the same hushed tones that were used inside the monument, and tend to act more 'casually', often laughing and joking or going back to read the information board near the path. It was as if the visitors were enjoying their freedom from the confined physical space, restrictions and controlled atmosphere they experienced whilst visiting the interior of the monument.

## Skara Brae

- 5.103 The ‘village’ of SB is comprised of eight ‘houses’ or ‘huts’ which were constructed amongst household middens. The monument, which is widely lauded for its spectacular state of preservation, is described as containing the ‘best preserved Neolithic Houses in Western Europe’ by Historic Scotland. Archaeologists have identified two distinct phases of building and occupation, which lasted in total around 600 years, with the earliest occupation beginning after 3100 BC (Historic Scotland 1999: 25). The houses are subterranean, so to get a good view, visitors must look down into them. The contents of the houses contain stone ‘furniture’, including what are thought to be beds and a structure that resembles a ‘dresser’. The houses are surrounded by vivid green turf, and visitors are guided around the site by stone paths, steps, and railings. Visitors are free to wander around the buildings in any order, although the numbered information panels and guidebook suggest a preferred route, not least to avoid congestion when the site is particularly busy.



**Figure 5.16: Entrance path to Skara Brae.**

- 5.104.1 Skara Brae is the most remote site of the four main WHS monuments. The site itself, located in the northwest portion of the Orkney Mainland on the Bay of Skaill in the parish of Sandwick, is 19 miles northwest of Kirkwall, and is accessed by the B9056, a long, winding and narrow road. Most people enter the site through the visitor centre, which is served by a large car park to accommodate several coaches at a time, but visitors can also access it by walking along the beach at the Bay of Skaill after opening hours.



**Figure 5.17: The EU logo at Skara Brae.**

- 5.105 On the outside of the visitor centre, signs, plaques and flags acknowledge the different organisations that helped to fund and/or manage the development of the visitor centre at SB, including the European Union and Historic Scotland. A plaque bearing the UNESCO World Heritage symbol indicates the monument’s WHS status. The SB Visitor Centre features a café with quotes from the Orkney poet George Mackay Brown, as well as comparisons with the Egyptian Pyramids and Stonehenge, in big letters on the walls. There is a shop selling Orkney produce and crafts, alongside Historic Scotland books and official guides. Above the till are framed certificates that the centre has been awarded for environmentally sound management and the creative use of locally produced goods within the Visitor Centre.



**Figure 5.18: Items made in Orkney for sale in the Skara Brae Visitor’s Centre.**

- 5.106 The displays in the visitor centre feature some of the artefacts recovered from the excavations at SB, although many of the most famous objects recovered from the site are housed in the National Museums of Scotland. High value is placed on the presence of original artefacts at SB by both the creators of the exhibition and visitors for whom they play an important role in terms of the ‘authenticity’ of the monument. For instance, some visitors and members of the Orkney community expressed interest and pride in the presence of these artefacts and the fact that visitors do not have to travel to the Museum of Scotland in Edinburgh to view them. The

displays also feature interactive exhibits and computer displays that examine topics ranging from geological and archaeological time, to allowing visitors to virtually excavate an archaeological site. The display also features an audio-visual show which tells the story of SB in a narrative form.

- 5.107 Visitors access the monument via a back door in the visitor centre, leading directly to the replica house, which is modelled on House 7. There is a peat fire burning in the hearth, to give visitors a better idea of what the houses might have looked, smelled and felt like. Not all visitors choose to visit the replica house, with some preferring to make their way direct to the site instead.

#### *Access, Presentation and Place*

- 5.108 People tend to visit SB because it is ‘something they learned about in school’ or ‘on the telly’, it is something they have ‘always known about’, it is ‘on the brochures’ as one of the main tourist attractions, or it is on the schedule of the various package coach tours available for visitors and tourists. In contrast to RoB and SoS, it seems to provide a familiar, almost ‘domestic’, link to the past. People ‘identify’ with the occupants of the ‘village’. The perception that the ‘houses’ at SB provided for the basic needs of their occupants in a ‘harsh’ environment, links with how visitors think of themselves and their own needs and circumstances. Visitors marvel at ‘how far society has come since those days’ or ‘how much better we have it today’. The familiarity of the structure of the houses, the ‘furniture’ in them, and the terminology used to present the site all contribute to a conception of the site as more ‘mundane’ or ‘domestic’ than the rest of the WHS. Thus, for one interviewee (SB-9), visiting the site was like ‘going back in time’, and, drawing an implicit comparison with domestic life today, she added that she ‘couldn’t believe how well organised people were in those days’.
- 5.109 Analysis of people’s perceptions of SB reveals that many people see it as a triumph over ‘harsh living conditions’, a way to identify with the mundane activities of everyday life as it was experienced in the past, and a way of measuring ‘how far’ humanity has come’ in linear terms since the ‘stone age’. People also perceive the site as a place where they can be educated about the past, in contrast to the RoB and the SoS, which seemed to be more about visitors’ own imagination and sensual experiences. The presence of the visitor centre, which offers overviews of archaeological periods, as well as real artefacts from the site, seems to help construct the site and shape visitors’ experience as a centre of learning. One visitor (SB-3) who was holidaying in Orkney said that coming to SB was better than going somewhere ‘to sit on a beach’. He continued ‘It is interesting to visit places like this because you just feel like you’ve learned something’.
- 5.110 The interviews carried out for this project suggest that most visitors are very happy with the way that SB is presented. Most stop to read the information boards on their way around the perimeter path. Many are happy with the explanations given as to the origins and purpose of the monument, and tend not to question it in the way that many do at the RoB and the SoS.
- 5.111 People expressed great awe at how old the monument was, and they perceived the houses to be ‘well preserved’. Even the excavation itself was sometimes perceived as a fairly straightforward, ‘clean’ experience. Furthermore, most were satisfied with the degree of access to the village, and liked the way in which they could look down into the houses. With regard to ‘seeing’ the site in this way, visitor SB-6 commented that:

One of the guidebooks was moaning away that you couldn’t walk into the houses and so on. Well you think of the number of people who come here, and you just couldn’t possibly do it. It’s potty. And I just sort of rather thought, well, we’re half way up the hill, I mean you look right down into them.

- 5.112 A few visitors (3 out of 25), however, felt that the site as ‘a bit too tidy’ or ‘manicured’, and said that in contrast to RoB and SoS they would not come back simply because of the admission fee.
- 5.113 More than half the visitors interviewed (17 out of 25) praised the visitor centre (particularly the replica house), and enjoyed the timeline leading up to the site. The timeline located SB in relation to historical events that most visitors felt familiar with, such as the Pyramids and Stonehenge and hence gave them an insight into how old the monument actually is.
- 5.114 It is worthy of note that none of the visitors said that the primary reason they visited SB was because it has WHS status. Rather, as noted above, visitors had read about the site in a guidebook, learned about it in school, saw it on television, or found it on the internet. Most people who were aware of its WHS status assumed that this conferred some sort of special conservation status, or that it was acquired in recognition of the value of the site, signalling that it was as important as places like the Pyramids at Giza (to which the monument is compared in the Visitor Centre) and the Great Wall of China. There is a high level of awareness and knowledge of the site, and most people said they ‘weren’t surprised’ that SB was recognised as part of a WHS.
- 5.115 SB is generally compared to monuments like the Pyramids and medieval and Iron Age ‘houses’ by visitors, rather than Stonehenge, a monument which is repeatedly referenced by visitors at the RoB and to a lesser degree at SoS. This further reinforces the point made earlier that the settlement is not perceived in the same way as the henge monuments, even though they belong to the same period as SB, the ‘Neolithic’. Clearly the time line situates the village in respect to heritage on an international scale, reinforcing its World Heritage status. At the same time, however, its ‘domestication’ in the perceptions of visitors also leads to associations with other forms of domestic architecture within the British Isles.
- 5.116 As at all of the other WHS, many visitors conflate different heritage organisations, or become confused over their remits. For instance, some believe that SB is cared for by SNH, although a slightly higher proportion of visitors recognised HS’s role than at the RoB and SoS, presumably due to the visitor centre at SB and the high visibility of HS logos.
- 5.117 Like the RoB, SB is an iconic image of Orkney and indeed ‘prehistoric Britain’ more generally. It seems to represent the ‘heartiness’ of the Orcadians in particular, and the ‘ancestors’ in a more general abstract sense. These categories seemed to be fluid and interchangeable for most visitors, as they made frequent references to both sets of groups. These ancestral inhabitants were perceived as ‘tough’ and ‘savvy’, ‘brave’ and ‘clever’, a characterisation directly linked to visitors perceptions of the harsh environment.
- 5.118 The environment and climate play an important role in people’s perceptions of Orkney as a place, particularly for tourists visiting the Islands. Two visitors to SB actually commented that they found the cold, windy weather on the day they were there, appropriate for visiting SB, as it gave them a taste of the ‘harshness’ that would have been experienced regularly by the village inhabitants. The frequent conflation of the prehistoric past with recent times is also manifested in the tendency of visitors to imagine that Orcadians lived in similar conditions to those in evidence at SB until very recently. Indeed some even made comparisons between aspects of the SB houses and the nearby Corrigan farm museum, where guides inform the public that people lived in two-room farm houses with their animals until the early twentieth century. Thus, SB provides one forum in which the Orcadian past is perceived as timeless and unchanging over millennia in keeping with the construction of island societies as traditional and marginal (see Chapter Three).

## *Practices*

- 5.119 Most visitors enter SB via the visitor centre, usually walking directly past the plaques which indicate its UNESCO WHS, as well as the organisations involved in funding and management. Once in the visitor centre, they approach the ticket desk (or join the queue for it if the Centre is busy) to purchase their passes. After this, they must either go to the café on the left, the toilets which also sit on the left hand side, or walk through the gift shop to access the AV introduction and museum-style exhibition, or through the door around the back to exit the centre.
- 5.120 On emerging from the visitor centre many people enter the replica house, but some choose to continue directly on to the prehistoric settlement remains. There is a gravel path from the visitor centre to the settlement and there are stone paths laid out along the rim of parts of the village, and around wall-heads, which connect to stairs going down into and out of the site in places. There is no fixed route as such around the site, but the physical nature of this prehistoric site inevitably limits where visitors can safely walk. Visitor movement is thus highly structured and patterns of movement were not as diverse as those seen at the RoB and the SoS other.
- 5.121 Visitors to SB often exhibited what could be described as ‘museum-style’ visiting. The layout of the (numbered) information boards and, sometimes, the general crowdedness of the site, seemed to encourage ‘butterfly’ style behaviour, where the visitor ‘flits’ from place to place. This ‘flitting’ mostly happens between information boards and certain vantage points along the rim and concrete paths and stairs surrounding the huts, because they want descriptions and renderings of the contents of what they see at the site.
- 5.122 Because the site is subterranean, and visitors must look down into it, a different kind of engagement seemed to take place than at the other WHS monuments, particularly RoB and SoS. There is less tactile engagement with the material fabric of the monument, and visitors seem to treat it more as an exhibit to be ‘gazed’ on, rather than purposefully choreographed architectural space to move within, as seen in visitor behaviour at the three other monuments. Nevertheless, visitor movement is highly structured in terms of modern visitor management as discussed above.
- 5.123 Visitors with cameras, which comprise about 85%, tend to walk along the rims and aim their shots down into the site. Because of the presence of safety railing at the site, these visitors were often seen manoeuvring in various ways and trying out shots from various angles to get photos without the railings in sight. One visitor (SB-2) commented that ‘being a bit of a photographer, it’s kind of ugly with those railings, but well, that’s how it is. It does spoil the site a bit’.

## *Discussion and comparison of the WHS*

- 5.124 If we take the above discussions of each specific site into consideration, one of the over riding factors about people’s experience is that they seem to conceive of each of the monuments very differently, rather than perceiving them as components of a larger ‘World Heritage Site’. Indeed, the title and ‘brand’ ‘World Heritage Site’ seems to mean little to visitors in tangible terms. The form and presentation of each monument elicits very distinct reactions and feelings from visitors. Some visitors are, however, interested in learning more about how the sites are connected (for example respondent RoB-19 wanted to see how the sites connected in the landscape). Information encouraging visitors to conceive of the 4 disparate sites as a connected and complex landscape could therefore be pursued.

- 5.125 Visitors appear to experience the RoB and the SoS in more sensual or spiritual terms, whereas SB, and to a lesser extent MH, seem to invoke familiarity and comparison with contemporary activities located firmly in the realm of mundane spheres, such as cooking and sleeping in the case of the former, and disposal of the dead, in the case of the latter. It is also clear that for many visitors their experience of RoB is strongly mediated by their own imagination and feelings, whereas at SB visitors draw more heavily on the information provided in seeking answers to the ways in which its inhabitants had coped with the problems of mundane, everyday survival.
- 5.126 SB and MH are staffed year-round and the movement of visitors, and thus their experience, is highly structured by railings, and gravel or concrete paths. At MH, visitors must be accompanied by a guide in order to see inside the tomb (they can wander around the outside at leisure before and after the formal part of their tour). SB and MH both have visitor centres that are equipped with some museum-style displays, as well as cafes where visitors can stop to rest, eat or warm up with a cup of tea. They also have shops where locally produced Orkney food and crafts like board games and knitwear, as well as whiskies and beer, can be purchased alongside mass-produced items like Celtic-cross figurines, tartan hats and clan-maps of Scotland.
- 5.127 Many people's perceptions of the two staffed monuments, especially SB, indicated that they felt the sites to be somewhat 'commercialised' and/or highly structured and 'tidy', whereas the RoB and SoS seemed freely accessible and 'natural'. This is not to say that the experiences at the former two sites were 'bad', they are simply different. However, it should be recognised that *all* of the sites, even those with seemingly minimal impact by management practices, are ordered spaces that are constructed to produce specific types of experiences of place.
- 5.128 One of the most valued aspects of visitors' experience of the RoB and the SoS lies in their perceived 'natural', 'wild' and 'untamed' state. In this respect they are regularly contrasted with other sites (especially Stonehenge) which are regarded as over-presented and over-protected. Other prominent aspects of visitors' experience relate to this overriding role of these monuments as icons of an untouched and enigmatic past which appears to have spiritual value for many visitors. Thus the absence of an entry fee is important in maintaining the perception of unmediated contact with the past, and some visitors even suggested that the introduction of a fee would taint their experience of the site with the trappings of a modern society dominated by commerce. Furthermore, whilst many visitors read some part of one or more of the three display boards there is a sense in which they appreciate an element of mystery and enigma in relation to the monument.
- 5.129 It should be recognised that the presentation and interpretation of the WHS monuments is also carried out by several groups and individuals who have particular interests in describing and portraying the sites to specific audiences. As site managers, HS provides on-site interpretation and publications, etc. In addition, for instance, the Orkney Tourist Board prepares guides, pamphlets and a website that describe and illustrate the WHS, with the hope of attracting visitors who are interested in heritage and culture. Independent tour companies interpret the sites for their customers by giving talks about their personal theories of origin and construction of the sites, often adding tidbits of 'local knowledge' and folklore about them that the visitors would not otherwise have known if they had visited on their own (or, perhaps, with other tour companies). Large travel companies, particularly ferry and bus services, produce brochures that proclaim the WHS to be a prime destination for visitors to Orkney, and a local hotel has produced its own guide to the monuments, calling itself the 'Gateway' to the Heart of Neolithic Orkney'.
- 5.130 The establishment of patterns of movement at the RoB and the SoS will contribute to Historic Scotland managers gaining a better idea of how visitors use the monument, as well as how they perceive and understand the sites. Understanding how and why visitors behave as they do

will contribute to knowledge of how the sites might be conserved according to particular patterns that will protect the site, but also enhance visitor's experience. Such information also contributes to intellectual understandings of how visitor behaviour and perceptions impact on one another in relation to the way in which heritage sites are managed and constructed.

## 6.0 Conclusions and Policy Implications

*Summary: understanding people's perceptions of the monuments*

- 6.1 Public archaeology is a topic of growing significance, both within the discipline of archaeology and in the sphere of heritage management. New attitudes to public accountability and the increasing weight attributed to the social value of heritage have prompted heritage managers to integrate local communities and special interest groups within site management processes (see Chapters 2 and 4). Furthermore, qualitative research into people's attitudes towards, and relationships to, heritage, already common in countries with a colonial history, such as the USA and Australia, is increasing in Britain and Western Europe (see Chapter 2). This research project is located within these current trends and it is intended to examine the contemporary social, cultural and economic dimensions of the Heart of Neolithic Orkney WHS, and the research, management and presentation surrounding it.
- 6.2 This research has shown that RoB, SoS, MH and SB, inscribed as the HONO WHS in 1999, are associated with a diverse, but overlapping, range of meanings and values for a variety of communities/social groups. Broadly speaking, the HONO monuments are seen as:
- **Emblematic symbols** of the Orkney landscape, history and culture. This is seen through artistic depictions of the monuments in a variety of media, their place in folklore and other traditions, and the ways in which Orkney residents verbally express feelings of 'ownership' of the monuments, for example, using the word 'ours' to describe them in interviews and during WHS consultation group meetings (see paragraphs 3.44, 5.10 and 5.38). The symbolic value of the monuments is also embedded in the notion that to have an 'authentic' Orkney experience, visitors are expected to visit some or all of the HONO monuments (see paragraphs 3.41-3.43), just as one should visit the Pyramids of Giza if visiting Egypt.
  - **Spiritual, and especially in the case of the RoB and SoS, 'free' and 'untamed' places** that represent purity and are perceived as untainted by the perceived chaos and alienation of global society (see paragraphs 3.22, 3.24, 4.17 and 5.33-7) due to their 'remote' location and mysterious atmosphere and apparently 'untouched' state. Visiting the monuments gives some visitors a feeling of inner calm, as well as giving some residents a feeling of 'security' or 'belonging' (ibid.). Such feelings are in contrast to respondents' comments about popular monuments like Stonehenge, which are perceived to be overly packaged and commercialised..
  - **Authentic remnants of the Neolithic period** that allow contemporary people to glean insight into the real lives of the people who built the monuments. For example, SB tends to be viewed in domestic, mundane terms, allowing visitors to compare the villagers' lives with their own. Furthermore, many visitors feel the spectacular preservation of the site, combined with cold, windy weather conditions, allows them to see and experience the harshness of Neolithic life (see especially paragraphs 5.116-7). HS also attests to the 'authenticity' of the monuments by highlighting the spectacular state of preservation of the monuments in both interpretative and management literature (see paragraphs 4.8 and 4.16).
  - **Visitor attractions**<sup>25</sup> that, through their 'authenticity', symbolic meanings and aesthetic value, have the ability to attract visitors, and thus, economic revenue to the

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<sup>25</sup> While many of the viewpoints on conservation and presentation are shared by professionals working in the tourism sector, it is argued here that stakeholders from this group view the monuments in the WHS largely as assets upon which the Orkney community as a whole may capitalize. Again, as with all

islands (See paragraphs 3.38 and 4.26). Most visitors seemed to feel that the free access to the RoB and SoS would preserve their feeling of engaging with an unmediated past, however, but seemed happy to pay entrance fees at MH and SB. There is also some feeling amongst a small number of residents that too much is being invested in ‘the past’ and that ‘contemporary’ concerns need to be taken care of before public funding is invested in heritage sites (3.27-8).

- **Contested terrain** in terms of their ‘ownership’, management and presentation, which in various ways feed into all of the perceptions listed above. For instance, debate between some community residents and the WHS Project Group over a proposed footpath in the Stenness/Brodgar region of the WHS (see paragraphs 5.32), as well as the mythicised story of the SoS and its artificial ‘dolmen’ or ‘cromlech’ being pulled down by a local resident who did not agree with the way it was presented (see paragraphs 3.36-3.38 and 5.66), tie in with the negotiation of authenticity and the ways in which the monuments are seen as emblems for Orkney. Perceptions of investing too much public money in the past, discussed immediately above, also demonstrate how issues of ownership and beliefs about how much resourcing heritage should receive can create contested relationships between interested parties upon whom the management of the WHS impacts. As these examples show, the monuments also figure as a medium for negotiation and reification of power relationships between certain social groups both within and out with Orkney.

6.3 The material remains of the past are very much a part of the lived, present-day Orkney landscape. These remains thus feature heavily in peoples’ daily routines and practices, (their subliminal ‘habitus’ (Bourdieu 1977), as it were), and most residents who live among them comment that they are very much a ‘background’ feature, and something that they simply ‘don’t notice’ or ‘don’t think about’. That said, however, the monuments are playing an increasing role in Orkney life by way of the burgeoning tourist economy, and the growing interest in ‘heritage’ amongst local residents. In these and other contexts, local people’s engagement with, and relationships to, the monuments of the Orkney WHS become the focus of discursive action. For instance, in the context of tourism, residents will self-consciously represent the islands in terms of its rich heritage to visitors, whether through conversation or accompanying visitors to the sites. Or, in the case of heritage developments that involve active intervention in the landscape, as in the case of the proposed footpath around the HONO, active resistance and contestation by local residents often leads to the objectification of the monuments and people’s relationships to them.

6.4 Other local practices that revolve around the WHS involve residents’ daily, habitual movements around the landscape itself, for example, as they travel to work, to the shops, or to visit relatives. The monuments are embedded in their perceptions of place, and through repeated action, become symbols of ‘home’ and identity. Residents also observe visitors’ movement around the monuments and the wider landscape, which, particularly during the peak tourist season, also becomes part of a cyclical, daily routine. Residents’ familiarity with tourists’ routines and movements is precisely why many of them feel they should regularly be asked about landscape planning proposals, such as where to place a crossing point for visitors at Tormiston Mill. For example, in interviews, some residents told me that they are the ones ‘who are on the ground... who see what happens here on a daily basis’. This is especially true with regard to safety issues like speed limits, the safety of visitors crossing roads at various points near the monuments, etc.

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of the groups who engage with the WHS, the perceptions and interests of those working in the tourist industry is fluid and dynamic, and they may express multiple interests in the landscape and monuments of the area. Representatives of the tourism sector are also usually Orkney residents, possibly involved in local heritage or naturalist groups.

- 6.5 In addition to examining the place of the monuments within their broader contexts, research also focused in on the specific patterns of movement and behaviour exhibited by visitors to the HONO. Participant observation and interviewing was undertaken at each of the sites, and visitor tracking was undertaken at the RoB and SoS. This fieldwork revealed a diverse but distinctive set of patterns regarding movement and behaviour at the four main monuments (see Chapter 5 for details).
- 6.6 Most visitors to the RoB travel by car or coach and stop at the car park on the Brodgar Road. Patterns of movement were established by tracking 100 visitors around the monument, and tend to take the form of one of 5 categories (see paragraph 5.40). These are:
- ‘Conformists 1’, who travel around the whole of the interior without deviating from the path;
  - ‘Conformists 2’, who travel around the interior but also visit the South mound, and who also do not deviate from the path;
  - ‘Tasters’ who enter the interior of the circle, sometimes walking around one or two of the stones, then exit again;
  - ‘Explorers’ who visit the interior of the monument, but also walk along other paths to visit other parts of the monument, particularly Salt Knowe;
  - ‘Rebel Explorers’ who tend to disregard signage and visit parts of the monument that are ‘off limits’, particularly the centre of the site.
- 6.7 Similar categories of movement to those at the RoB were established at the SoS (see paragraphs 5.82-5.83), although it was observed that at this monument, movement seemed to be mediated much more by peoples’ social interaction with one another rather than following a set path, as the SoS does not have a highly discernable, well worn interior path.
- ‘Conformists’ at the SoS walked up the causeway to the monument, and usually visited the interior of the circle in an unstructured way, exiting again in the same way they entered.
  - ‘Tasters’ entered through the entrance gate, read the interpretative board, visited Stones Two or Three, then exited the site.
  - ‘Viewers’ concentrated on finding vantage points from which to ‘stand back’ and look at the monument from a ‘landscape’ perspective. Instead of simply visiting the interior, these visitors often walked outside the circle to ‘view’ it.
  - ‘Explorers’ enter the site through the designated gate, look at the monument from either the interior or exterior, and exit through the back fence that leads to Barnhouse Village.
- 6.8 The establishment of these patterns, alongside interviews with visitors about their movements, reveal that most visitors tend to follow previously worn paths or ‘approved’ areas, and feel that by doing this they are following ‘correct’ etiquette and demonstrating ‘respect’ for the monument (see Bicknell and Mann 1993: 88; Bitgood 1992: 15-16; Bourdieu 1979: 1-3; Falk 1993: 133; Gurian 1991: 176; McManus 1991: 33). They also come to visit the monuments with pre-conceived notions of what it is that they will see there, which, of course, shape and mediate their experiences (Macdonald 1992: 401).
- 6.9 Although visitor practices are in large part directed by the layout of these sites, in particular their architecture itself, their turf paths and strategic placement of interpretative boards, interviews revealed that visitors perceive both monuments, especially RoB, as ‘untamed’ and seemingly, not really ‘managed’ at all. Specific management guidance regarding the wear and tear on these monuments as a result of these movements can be found below.

- 6.10 Movement was observed at MH and SB, but not in as much detail as at the unstaffed sites discussed above. The nature of people's movements at MH and SB sites is much more structured by highly visible management strategies, like fences, railings, concrete paths, and site stewards. Furthermore, visitors are conscious of the structured nature of their experiences at these two sites, in sharp contrast to the perceived 'natural' and 'untainted' state of RoB and SoS noted above. Visitors' comments about MH and SB tend to focus on their educational value and often stimulated comparisons to contemporary life, for instance, relating the 'beds' and 'dressers' at SB to modern furniture, or treating MH like a tomb or mausoleum.
- 6.11 The interviews did not reveal a particularly strong awareness of threats to the monuments. On the contrary, people were often surprised and pleased at the level of accessibility of the sites, and frequently contrasted this, in the case of RoB and SoS, to Stonehenge, where visitor access is more restricted. There was little recognition of the impact of touching the stones and masonry of the monuments, although a small number of visitors felt that refraining from touching them is a sign of respect. Physical contact with the monuments is thus clearly a very important aspect of the experience of other visitors and many explicitly commented on this. The graffiti on the stones at the RoB and the inscriptions on the inside of MH attracted more interest than concern, with a significant number of visitors wishing to examine it closely.
- 6.12 HS has made a concerted effort to include consultation as an integral aspect of the HONO management. A community consultation group was established and meets at various intervals during the year, when developments relevant to the local community emerge. Other committees have been created to discuss specific aspects of the WHS. They include the Brodgar Visitor and Traffic Management/Access and Interpretation Project Group (one of several such groups that convene to further specific issues, such as research or interpretation), the Travel Trade group, which includes tour companies, and the HONO WHS Steering Group, which is responsible for assistance and influencing the implementation of HS's Management Plan. These committees include relevant members of Historic Scotland, the local authority (heritage, forward planning and roads departments), the heritage sector, the Orkney Tourist Board, Scottish Natural Heritage, the RSPB, as well as local councillors, as appropriate.
- 6.12 Participant observation carried out at various consultation meetings held in during 2001 and 2002, alongside interviews with members of the group, revealed that whilst people felt the meetings were informative in terms of relaying information to local residents about the actions that will take place with regard to the physical management of the WHS, some residents felt that they were being 'told' as opposed to being 'consulted' about management decisions. This is not to say that these residents feel completely isolated or that the sessions were unproductive; but that they felt the approaches used could be different (see paragraph 6.34).
- 6.14 Apart from consulting about issues directly involving HS's management of the WHS, the agency also tries to act as a mediator between different groups of stakeholders, who sometimes disagree about ways to approach management issues. For example, in relation to research, presentation and general management of the site, there are sometimes tensions between archaeologists and naturalists in that the former feel that the naturalists fail to acknowledge the degree to which the natural landscapes of Orkney, i.e. the ecosystems and wildlife, are also products of cultural processes. In other words, people as far back as the Neolithic, whose monuments remain highly visible, shaped the landscape so it has become what it is today. How to negotiate these conflicting beliefs through appropriate research and presentation presents just one of many internal conflicts within the WHS interest groups.
- 6.15 Another example of the link between the participating agencies is that the first Local Plan produced by OIC's Forward Planning Department makes provisions for the management of the World Heritage Site (Orkney Islands Council 2002: 69). The Plan states that any development that would 'adversely' affect the area should be refused, and that rigorous planning measures should be exercised before development of any kind is considered in and

around the WHS. In terms of the management of the WHS, this means that the representation of the WHS and its surrounding landscape will be mediated, in part, by the OIC Planning Department with respect to ideas concerning the aesthetic appeal and authenticity of the landscape. For example, the Orkney Local Plan (OIC 2002: 43) states that any new housing development in Orkney's countryside must conform to the traditional grey-stone housing already in existing within the landscape:

Good use of vernacular building forms or features should be made, or design employed, which is in sympathy to or has affinity with local vernacular architecture. Use of traditional or sympathetic materials and colours must be made to enhance local distinctiveness and the character of the area.

- 6.16 'Access' featured in one way or another in most forms of social discourse relating to the monuments that I observed or engaged in. This research demonstrated that 'access' has multiple meanings for different social groups. For example, those who are interested in heritage as a realm of education refer to 'intellectual' access to the sites, and the need to make their interpretations relevant to the public through various strategies, including the creation of education packs for primary schools, erecting more interpretive signs in the World Heritage Area, or employing a ranger to actively interpret the landscape for visitors and locals alike.
- 6.17 Also of primary interest to several groups is the physical 'access' to the sites, for instance, in terms of freedom and ease of movement around the monuments and the ability to park cars within walking distance, or provision of access to the wider landscape context by creating footpaths between the monuments. Moreover, physical access is not restricted to the prehistoric heritage but is also a matter of connecting past and present communities through the creation of footpaths between the monuments and the village of Stenness, where it is hoped visitors will spend their money. This, as it has been termed in many meetings regarding the WHS, alongside the intellectual access discussed above, is referred to as 'opening up' the landscape for people to enjoy, learn, and consume.
- 6.18 Similarly, visitors' engagement with the monuments and the landscape is very much about 'access' to the monuments themselves, in terms of proximity and physical contact. As one woman remarked, 'it's important to be able to stand next to the stones [at the Ring of Brodgar] to compare them and see how tall they are; even to compare them to myself.'
- 6.19 The importance of 'atmosphere' or 'ambiance' in relation to Orkney's monuments was referred to heavily in the visitor research detailed in Chapter 5 (see especially paragraphs 5.33-8) and was emphasised by management groups long before the inscription of the monument on the World Heritage List. For example, in an archived letter dated 13 November, 1970, John Foster of Countryside Commission summarised his opinions on the amenity/landscape value of RoB. He writes:

The experience of the average visitor to this and other important megalithic monuments is greatly influenced by the atmosphere, or ambience of the site. This in turn is entirely dependent on both the visual appearance of the approaches to the monument and the amenity quality of its immediate surroundings.

Thus, 'atmosphere' is an integral concept around which heritage and tourism bodies decide how to conserve material remains, as well as how to conform with what visitors 'want' or 'expect' from a prehistoric monument, or a 'World Heritage Site', which, according to the results in Chapter 5, is contingent on the aesthetic, authentic and educational values of the monument which they are visiting.

## *Conflict*

- 6.20 This study reveals the conflicting conceptions of ‘ownership’ that surround the HONO and hence the importance of incorporating a wide range of social groups and local communities within the planning and decision making processes. Obviously, there are different expressions of concern about the management among the sites amongst various interest groups, which are seen by the CG as hierarchical, thus causing some to feel alienated as those forums may be seen as the actual decision making bodies. Furthermore, within the context of interviews, many Orcadians often criticised the Council for their actions when they specifically impact on daily life, such as with the allocation of funds for development projects like car parks or planning permission. However, in terms of the development of World Heritage Status, some members of the CG have felt as though the Council had worked hard on behalf of the Stenness Community’s interests in terms of what would happen to the physical aspects of the site if walking paths were created in and around the Stenness/Brodgar region of the WHS. It may seem to HS that these concerns seem contradictory and at odds with the feedback they receive at the CG.
- 6.21 Other issues, particularly topics revolving around more individual expressions of identity and belonging, are integral to how the community and the management agencies interface. Issues that the management agencies may not be aware of occur away from the community consultation group context, such as power struggles between members of the community. For example, feelings of resentment or perceptions of exclusion from planning activities may offend some residents so that they decide not to participate. Similarly, if some residents seem more ‘vocal’ than others, or if some appear to be ‘heard’ in management discussions whilst others do not, this may also cause tension between members of the community, and another reason why some people do not actively participate in the CG.
- 6.22 For some local residents, the rights of those who own the lands that surround the HONO monuments (and metaphorically, to a certain extent, the monuments themselves) are hotly contested, while in other spheres, they take on a subtle, more nebulous character. For instance, one Stenness resident said that constructing a footpath over or around a farmer’s land was ludicrous and would no doubt be incomprehensible to people who live on Mainland Scotland. In their opinion a farmer’s ownership and control over their land is inalienable and not subject to negotiation. Others argued that the ‘real’ Orcadians who attend the WHS Consultation group did not think that the footpaths were necessary, nor did they think that they would be financially lucrative (although it should be pointed out here that financial gains were not the primary goal of the original proposal; see paragraph 6.25 below).
- 6.23 Applied anthropological research surrounding development and cultural tourism has illustrated that management agencies often view consultation processes as a fairly straightforward (though not necessarily easy) process (Abram 1998: 3). This appears to be the case as regards the HONO WHS where several committees have been set up to consult different social groups about proposals and decisions surrounding the Site and various suggestions and concerns stemming from these committees have been taken on board. However, such processes often involve select interest groups who usually have a high profile and vocality. Local government has the role of mediating between these groups on the ground, while state and federal agencies usually have the financial backing and the control to finance (or not) what actually happens (Nelson and Wright 2000). Involvement of the ‘local’ community is usually down to specific stakeholder consultations, which are often brief and reify existing power structures by enforcing participation in the process through dominant heritage management and tourism discourses (Nelson & Wright 2000; Abram, & Waldren et. al 1998). As a result, processes of consultation can sometimes result in the alienation of local residents.

- 6.24 It is not suggested here that the WHS Consultation Group feels completely ‘alienated’. On the contrary, Historic Scotland have taken suggestions on board and implemented them into the management process. However, some participants in the community Consultation Group felt that the manner in which they are approached by Historic Scotland can sometimes be ‘too academic’, and that decisions about some actions have been made before the CG has been informed at all, seemingly rendering their participation void. These perceptions lead to contestation of some decisions, thus reifying power relationships between the groups and the state functionaries, both of whom ascribe different values to the Orkney ‘World Heritage’ area as a place. Some suggestions for remedying this problem are listed in the policy implications section below. Some of these have been independently implemented since this research was undertaken, for example, local councillors now chair the Consultation Group meetings.
- 6.25 Sometimes, issues of access may lead to conflicting interests and attitudes, as well as some misunderstandings. Visitors who favoured the creation of footpaths around the monuments in the Stenness/Brodgar/Maeshowe region of the WHS, for example, invoked a romantic rhetoric about the aesthetic value of the monuments and the surrounding landscape, and felt that seeing the monuments on foot would contribute to a more fulfilling experience<sup>26</sup>. Meanwhile, some residents seemed to perceive that heritage agencies and local interest groups (many of whom have representatives who participate in the Project Group) draw on management rhetoric concerning the economic value of footpaths and believe that the main focus would be on bringing people into contact with the local community with the specific aim of producing tourist revenue. Conversely, farmers and landowners may invoke their own ‘ownership’ claims, arguing that such an open access policy would obstruct daily practice, and that such proposals would never be forced on local people ‘down south. Although it is acknowledged that the intention of the footpath would be to help ‘open up the landscape’ (Historic Scotland 2004), i.e. to promote both physical and intellectual access to the sites as well as the local community with the added benefit of economic gains, some residents felt this would impact on their rights as land owners, residents and in some senses, being ‘Orkadian’ or ‘local’. In other words, some perceived the project as another decision which, although not exclusively made by an outside agency though is linked to one, would impact on local people, who were themselves removed from the decision making process.

### *Policy Implications*

- 6.26 A variety of policy implications arise from this research project. Some of these apply to the WHS as a whole, whilst some relate to individual monuments within the Site, although these can also impact on the way in which people engage with the Site as a whole. Implications have been outlined below according to broad areas, although these are not listed in any order of importance.
- 6.27 Markers concerning the heritage and conservation status of the WHS:
- As WHS status is not a significant factor in peoples’ decision to visit Orkney, it seems that maintenance of a discreet approach to the WHS markers at RoB and SoS would be most desirable for visitors, all of whom appreciate these monuments for their perceived natural state and/or educational values. The concern to raise the profile of the WHS accolade is a matter that may be largely restricted to some of the tourist and management agencies that are involved in the management, research, and presentation of the monument. Based on this research, WHS status seems to make little difference to visitors. Perhaps, with the erection of additional signs in the area at large, and the employment of a WHS interpretation ranger, WHS status may have more impact on how visitors view the monuments and the future attraction of visitors. However, care must be taken not to disrupt the value that visitors

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<sup>26</sup> It should be recognised here that visitors’ interest in the creation of footpaths was not just aesthetic, but also linked to safety concerns for those who do not travel to the area in vehicles.

attribute to the monument in terms of what many perceive to be a relatively unmediated experience of the monuments and the past they represent.

6.28 Physical modification and management of the surrounding landscape:

- Minor modifications of the surrounding landscape to make it more in keeping with, or sympathetic to, the prehistoric past, have been suggested. In particular, some local residents, visitors and heritage managers have suggested burying visible power lines under ground. Local residents often cited concern for wildlife as the main reason as birds frequently get caught in them. Visitors are more concerned once again with the 'natural' appeal of the site, observing that it might be 'nice' if the power lines 'weren't there', as obviously, they 'would not have been part of the prehistoric landscape'. Some residents and visitors, however, were opposed to such ideas, arguing that recent historical and contemporary activities and communities are also significant aspects of the landscape in terms of meaning, identity and place, and should therefore be seen alongside the archaeological monuments. Burying the cables, and other modifications or restrictions, should therefore be considered widely and carefully.

6.29 Development of the paths and fencing:

- The existing paths at the RoB mediate visitors' experience of the monument, but the absence of physical intervention in the surface means that people perceive them to be 'natural'. It can be argued therefore that the paths should be maintained as close as possible to their current appearance. Visitors who commented on development of the paths favoured the creation of hard-wearing surfaces that could be covered by turf or allow grass to grow through. (But see also discussion of access and disability below.) The tracking maps for the RoB show that certain parts of the path are getting heavier wear than others, so it might be feasible to take a 'graded' approach to the construction of hard wearing surfaces at the site, if such an approach proves necessary, as opposed to simply to installing them around the whole of the existing network of paths, as some would like.
- At the RoB, some visitors were aware of the need for more durable surfaces, although this was often more a facet of concern for the visitor when the path was muddy underfoot than a recognition of damage to the monument. In terms of raising awareness of potential damage to the site it might be useful to discuss problems of erosion in any information leaflet that is produced and show places where the monument is receiving the most erosion on a map, therefore informing visitors how their movements affect the site. This would educate people further about the site itself and show how contemporary practices affect its presentation.



**Figure 6.1: Wear and tear on the interior path at the RoB.**

- Perhaps it would be viable to insert a hard-wearing surface in the areas where the most erosion is found on the interior path, especially around stones 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 24, 25, 26 and 27. (see image 6.1 above, which pictures wear on the path around two of the stumps). It may also be possible also to re-align and ‘create’ or ‘forge’ different paths each year, especially to the Comet Stone and the Salt Knowe, in efforts to encourage visitors to ‘spread’ their movement. Perhaps paths like the one to Salt Knowe (see Figure 5.2) could be widened to signify to visitors that it is an acceptable route to follow.
- Based on feedback from visitors about their ‘respect’ for the site and their appreciation of its atmosphere, I suggest that it may be in HS’s interests to emphasise to visitors at the beginning of their experience, i.e. through an interpretative board at the monument’s entrance gate, that they themselves could help to lessen erosion if they were to follow alternative paths around the monument (for instance, walking around the outside of the ditch). Whilst it is acknowledged that many visitors appreciate being able to touch, walk around, and stand next to the stones, a significant number were also concerned with the monument remaining accessible, and could perhaps be persuaded to take alternative routes if encouraged that their actions could reduce stress on the site, therefore avoiding more visible management and mediation. Such action would present a *choice* for visitors to make, rather than, say, eventually placing a highly visible barrier around the site, as is the case at Stonehenge. The interviews suggest that visitors seem happy to ‘follow rules’ if they are not applied ‘forcefully’,<sup>27</sup> for example, the fact that there are no site stewards to watch visitor movement

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<sup>27</sup> I use the word ‘forcefully’ in this context to refer to measures like placing wire fences around a monument, which seems to visitors to be an act of negative, authoritative reinforcement that both their physical and intellectual access to a special place is hierarchical and restricted.

or fences to keep people away from the stones at the RoB and SoS. Publicising this ‘choice’ of movement might be accomplished, for example, by incorporating information about erosion on an interpretative board found near the entrance, or placing a sign on the fence immediately to the left of the entrance gate that details how heavy visitor traffic impacts on the site, and suggesting alternative routes. The language should emphasise the individual’s role and responsibility in the conservation of the places they visit. For example, a sign might read: ‘You can help to conserve this monument by choosing an alternative route around this site’. In placing such a sign so near to the entrance gate rather than close to the monument itself, there would be little impact on the aesthetic values of the site.

- The proposal to develop footpaths between the monuments, a project originally put forth by the WHS Project Group, received positive responses from visitors to the Brodgar/Stenness/Maeshowe area, though was regarded with some trepidation from some local residents. However, the ‘Right to Roam’ legislation introduced in 2003 may dictate that such paths are a mandatory aspect of ‘accessing’ the landscape according to the government. This issue is being addressed by the OIC planning department, who may need to work with HS in the future if it is deemed to be a viable and agreeable project, which may contribute in many ways to efforts to ‘open up the landscape’. Rigorous community consultation for such a project would again be something to strive for if this project were revisited in the future.

#### 6.30 Development of presentation and interpretation:<sup>28</sup>

- People often like to draw their own conclusions about what the RoB and the SoS were ‘made for’. Because these particular sites seem to ‘represent’ or ‘symbolise’ different things for different people, particularly in terms of their ‘natural’ appeal and ‘spiritual’ nature, development of further display material should be undertaken with caution. Some visitors commented that the existing display boards are ‘dated’, but in terms of the depth of information available and their situation along the entrance paths the existing boards are more than acceptable to most visitors. As noted by one visitor, it may be useful to produce a leaflet including a map of the RoB for those visitors who desire more information, that way not intervening in the physical appearance of the monument further with additional display boards or a visitor centre. This may fall in line with the OIC’s proposed ‘information leaflet’ for the entire WHS; otherwise, it might be useful as a stand alone project to be placed in a wooden box at the entrance.
- The creation of a ranger service for the WHS would be a positive development for the WHS as a whole. Based on the feedback from the study, people do not want any more physical interpretation than already exists, and having a ranger to interpret the sites and/or answer visitors’ queries would lessen the need for more visible aspects management (with the exception of the actions already suggested at the RoB).

#### 6.31 Parking:

- Most visitors felt that parking at the monuments was ‘fine’, but this seemed to be in conflict with what visitors reported in the Brodgar/Stenness/Maeshowe area regarding access to the monuments for walkers and cyclists (see especially paragraphs 5.31-2). Some visitors who travelled by car stated that they did so because it would have been difficult for them to walk, with the lack of provisions along the roads in the area. This is where the development of walking paths between the monuments received especially positive responses.

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<sup>28</sup> Some of these actions, for example, the creation of information leaflets, have already been suggested or exist in the Interpretation Plan. They are mentioned here for reference to the feedback I received from visitors.

- Some visitors mentioned they would be strongly opposed to an alternative car park at the RoB, although this would alleviate some of the traffic problems currently experienced when large numbers of coaches arrive at the site at the same time. These sentiments are again often tied into the perceived ‘natural’, ‘untamed’ and ‘peaceful’ nature of the monument which would be compromised by greater intervention in the area and indeed more visitors to the site. In some ways, the small car park limits the number of visitors that can access the site at once. Perhaps because Orkney’s tourist numbers seem not to have dramatically increased (and because increasing visitor numbers is not a goal of *Heart of Neolithic Orkney Management Plan*), many people, particularly visitors who do not see the congestion from day to day, have insisted that the arrangements are ‘fine as they are’. Health and safety regulations for the car park arrangements, however, are critical to local planning policy, and plans for the new car park are already going ahead. It is suggested here that once the new car park is in place, visitors will not take particular exception, as it has been designed to have minimal impact on the aesthetics of the site. It is also envisaged that the sighting of the new car park will encourage visitors to see an experience the landscape differently by directing their attention to aspects of the landscape that they may otherwise had not taken notice.

#### 6.32 Access and Disability:

- In terms of financial access, it is strongly recommended here that entrance to the RoB and the SoS remain free. The response from visitors with regard to the autonomy that free access allows was overwhelming, and indeed, was understood by many to be part of the ‘untamed’ and ‘unmediated’ experience of both sites. The introduction of entrance fees, as mentioned in Chapter 5, would represent the ‘commodification’ of the past, which, for many, would contribute to its ‘sanitisation’ and erode its perceived authenticity.
- The results concerning physical access and disability were somewhat inconclusive as they rely on the negative evidence that very few visitors of impaired physical mobility were observed visiting the monuments. At the RoB, the few people that were observed relying on walking sticks did not walk around as much of the site as many other visitors, but they were clearly able to reach the circle of stones and the interior path without too much difficulty. Others may well be using the layby to ‘access’ the site from vehicles – at least in visual terms – and the importance of having somewhere to stop with a good view over the site should be noted in this respect. Given the somewhat inconclusive nature of the results regarding disability and access, and taking into account that the 2003 survey of visitors to the site showed no visitors with disability, it might be useful to carry out further focused research with specific target groups. Currently, Historic Scotland is in the process of preparing its site proposals to be audited by companies who specialise in whether proposals properly adhere to the Disability Discrimination Act<sup>29</sup>.

#### 6.33 Consultation:

- The consultation process, which is increasingly featuring more regularly in heritage management policies worldwide, seems to have been perceived as an area of conflict. Although informative, many local residents, for a wide range of reasons, felt that their involvement in the decision making processes concerning the WHS was limited. There are very complex perceptions involved in these feelings; it is not a straightforward case of my fieldwork being one-sided, nor is it a case of attempting to gloss over the tensions within the local community. In order to make any consultation effort successful, the parties involved must all make attempts to understand one another. This report has attempted to understand the feelings and sentiments of the local community through detailing some of the complexities of why local residents may feel isolated (the historical experience of being treated unfairly by

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<sup>29</sup> The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) of 1995, emphasises the rights of disabled people in the areas of employment, access to goods facilities and services (which concerns HS), and buying or renting land or property.

Scottish authority figures and ‘not putting themselves forward enough’). It has also explored how and why Historic Scotland manages the WHS in the ways they do by examining the agency’s specific aims and objectives (Chapter 4 details HS’s aims and objectives for managing the WHS) for managing the HONO monuments, and historical sites more generally. In their volume *Power and Participatory Development* (1995: 161), Nelson and Wright state that:

It is ... common for practitioners to assume that everyone in a community is participating, and that development will serve everyone’s needs. The appearance of external solidarity, though, may mask internal differentiation- and understanding differences is crucial. Different livelihood strategies imply differentiated local knowledge systems, and these are easily missed by those who assume that communities are homogenous.

- 6.34 While I do not suggest that consultation with stakeholders is easy, it is acknowledged in recent literature on consultation processes within development projects (see Abram and Waldren 1998) that those making the decisions may have difficulty understanding how the process may be perceived by consultees. Nelson and Wright (1995) suggest that devolving the consultation process to community members who have the ability to integrate marginalised groups more readily, thus allowing their skills and knowledge to influence planning activities. They also suggest simple strategies, such as allowing local people to participate in activities like taking over the greeting of the CG (see paragraph 6.35 below), or having agency professionals (or local representatives) attend local council meetings, even if only every so often to show interest and support in the community. Other simple suggestions include physically arranging the meetings differently, for example, sitting in a circle and discussing, rather than arranging the room like a classroom, where the people feel they are being ‘told’ about developments that have been discussed elsewhere first rather than engaging in a dialogue with them.
- 6.35 Since this research has taken place, the WHS CG is now chaired by local community councillors, which will likely be a better format for local residents in terms of how the group communicates with the decision making committees for the HONO, and HS itself. Indeed, the main conflict and tensions between the stakeholders and the decision making bodies, as it were, seemed revolve around the perception that information relayed to the community in the early stages of WHS status seemed to residents to be very ‘filtered’ and un-reciprocal . If residents did not agree with some of the proposals that were put forward, even if they were not necessarily proposed by HS, its managers became, as it were, ‘bearers of bad news’. Thus, the agency was the most obvious body to blame for unease and dissatisfaction.
- 6.36 I suggest that the structure of any such consultation will always be hierarchical and fraught with some tensions, which, of course, could make some groups feel alienated in terms of active participation in decision making processes. If HS continues to take on a better understanding of people’s needs and beliefs, which it is currently undertaking by entering into extensive dialogue with stakeholders (for example, the establishment of the Travel Trade Roundtable, as well as becoming more involved with the Community Councils), more informative, productive and reciprocal discussion can take place.

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## **Appendix A: Explanation and Instructions for the use of Visitor Tracking Maps**

Enclosed with this report are two groups of maps that represent visitors' patterns of movement at the RoB and SoS. There is one paper copy and one acetate copy for each pattern (for full description of the movement and behaviour patterns, see paragraph 5.40 for the RoB, and 5.80 for the SoS).

The acetate copies allow readers to observe which areas of the monuments experience the heaviest visitor traffic, as they can be 'layered' over one another. For example, putting all patterns of movement at the RoB show that the areas impacted most are the entrance path, and the interior path around the causeway off the entrance path.

Each pattern included on the map represents the movement of one person around the monuments. Because it would be impossible to include each visitor that was tracked around the sites on one map, I have selected the most common forms of movement for purposes of representation.

Colour copies were used for the RoB maps to highlight the diversity of movement along what are very narrow and choreographed paths. Colour makes the patterns easier to discern here, particularly when the maps are overlain atop one another.

Black and white copies were used for the stones of Stenness, as movement at this site was more fluid and dynamic, and specific patterns can still be clearly discerned when layering the acetates over one another for this monument.

The 'chevron' shapes on the lines showing movement indicate the direction in which the visitor was moving. So, > indicates forward movement.

## **Appendix B: Visitor Tracking Maps at the Ring of Brodgar.**

The following patterns of movement are included on maps in this appendix:

- ‘Conformists 1: Rounders’
- ‘Conformists 2: Rounders who visit the South Mound’
- ‘Tasters’
- ‘Explorers’
- ‘Rebel Explorers’

## **Appendix C: Visitor Tracking Maps at the Stones of Stenness**

The following patterns of movement are included on maps in this appendix:

- 'Tasters'
- 'Explorers'
- 'Viewers'
- 'Conformists'