

North Mainland, Muckle Roe and Skerries

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Ness of Hillswick

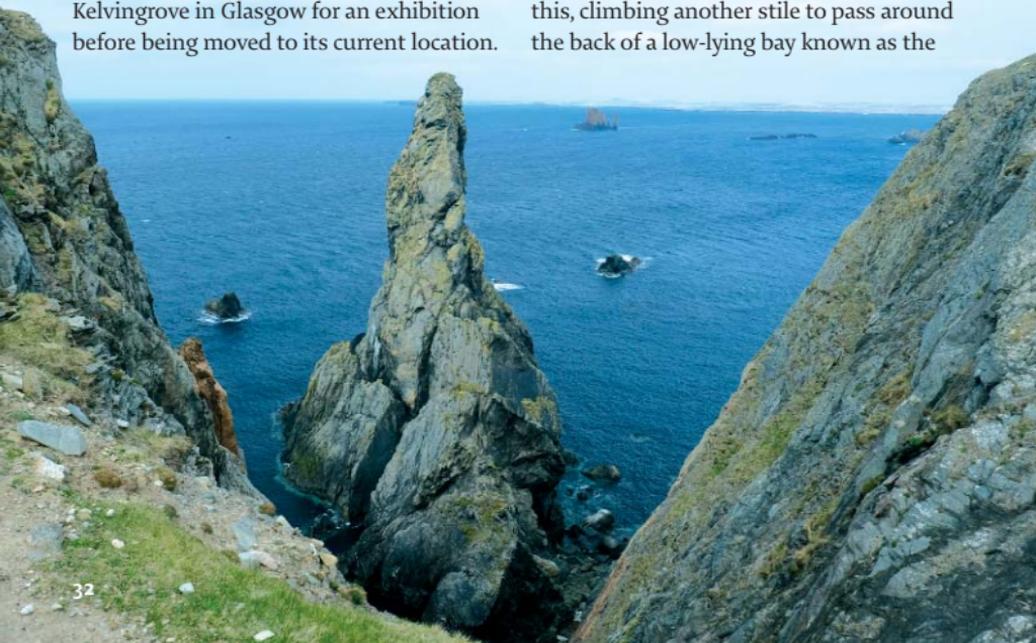
Distance 7.75km **Time** 3 hours 30
Terrain pathless grassy clifftops, stiles
Map OS Explorer 470
Access bus from Lerwick

This delightful coastal exploration of the Ness of Hillswick peninsula takes in some spectacular cliff scenery, including the Drongs sea stacks, and a visit to a tiny lighthouse at the furthest point.

The walk starts from the shoreside parking area near the public toilets in Hillswick. To reach it turn left opposite the imposing St Magnus Bay Hotel and head down past the shop. Well before Nordic flatpaks became household favourites, the hotel was manufactured in Norway more than 100 years ago and erected at Kelvingrove in Glasgow for an exhibition before being moved to its current location.

Start by walking southwest along the lane between the toilets and the large house – home of the Hillswick Wildlife Sanctuary which cares for sick or abandoned seal and otter pups. Continue along the road as it bears left and keep following it until it bends right at the far end of the bay. Turn left here to climb a stile and take the rough track towards the sea. Another stile leads to the grassy coastline; keep aiming right to follow the coast, with an eye open for swimming otters. After passing a flattish bay a gate leads towards Tur Ness and the cliffs begin to grow in stature, with a couple of sea arches below.

After a further stile a path leads towards a sheep enclosure. Keep to the right of this, climbing another stile to pass around the back of a low-lying bay known as the





Bight of Niddister.

A gate keeps you on the clifftops which gently climb, passing the promontory of The Quilse. As the deep inlet of Queen Geos is rounded the tiny lighthouse at the end of the peninsula comes into view for the first time. The cliffs get higher and the scenery becomes increasingly spectacular; a safety railing accompanies the final stretch to the lighthouse.

The return from the lighthouse is along the western side of the Ness and has the best views. The impressive Gordi Stack is suddenly revealed, changing shape from a needle to a fin as you follow the cliffs and view it from different angles. Further out to sea are the Drongs, a series of dramatic granite pinnacles which were climbed by famed mountaineers Mick Fowler, Andy Nisbet, John Lincoln and Craig Jones in 1992.

Go over Oris Field to reveal great views of the cliffs curving round to the Pund of

Grevasand. Cut across this projecting peninsula and regain the cliffs shortly beyond it. Pass through a gate and round the end of a deep geo before climbing steeply to the right beside a fence and aiming directly for the next grassy hilltop shown as point 82m on OS maps – another fine viewpoint.

Return to the clifftop and descend, heading through a gate to reach the beautiful bay at Sand Wick. To return to the start of the walk, keep left of a wall and fence and then aim right across a grassy pasture before crossing a stile and turning left on the road.