ARCHAEOLOGY AND FOLKLORE. THE NORSE IN ORKNEY'S PREHISTORIC LANDSCAPE

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ABSTRACT

This research focuses on the representation of mounds and standing stones in Orkney's folklore, and how this can inform us about potential Norse perceptions towards such sites. The study aims to highlight the value of folklore in archaeology as a means to widen perspectives on the past, and to complement physical evidence. The Orcadian folkloric record will be examined under consideration of parallels from the wider Nordic world, as well as potential influence from other areas. This includes a consideration of changes in attitudes towards mounds, and an evaluation of subtle differences in megalith-related tales. Case studies are considered individually as well as within their wider landscape setting. Due to their widely recurring motifs and narratives folk tales are not treated as mere stories, but instead as potential remains of past mentalities and belief systems, whilst potentially encapsulating bygone views on the landscape.

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All radiocarbon dates unless stated otherwise have been calibrated using OxCal v.4.2.2 (Bronk Ramsay 2013) with atmospheric data from Reimer *et al.* (2013).

DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis is a presentation of original work and I am the sole author. This work has not previously been presented for an award at this, or any other, University. All sources are acknowledged as References.

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PROLOGUE

KIRKWALL, ORKNEY, 1861…

Plate 1 *"Beware the Hogboy…"*. Based on and citing Farrer, J. 1862: 12-4 (incl. footnotes). See Chapter 8 for full references and background information. Orkney dialect by Dr. Tom Rendall. *Drawn by the author*.

As James Farrer made preparations to excavate the chamber cairn of Maeshowe on Mainland, Orkney, he received a somewhat unusual warning from locals. Allegedly, a spirit resided inside the mound - a "*Hogboy* (…) *possessing great strength*" (Farrer 1862: 12). Maybe Farrer smirked to himself whilst documenting this in a footnote in his 1862 report. A belief in mound dwellers (ON "*haug-buínn*"), however, is not unique to this particular event or place. For the people of Orkney, the presence of fickle and powerful mound-dwellers had been deeply ingrained in their mentalities and everyday lives for a long time. Generations of elders had warned their children not to go near ancient mounds – let alone to disturb or manipulate them. The people of Orkney knew from long-standing oral tradition that the creatures inhabiting the mounds could do great and long-lasting harm to people, livestock and entire harvests, when treated wrongly. Countless anecdotes, supposedly from living memory and personal experience, were continuously in circulation to back their warnings up. Farrer proceeded with his investigations nonetheless, and makes no further mention in his report of encounters with the "*Hogboy*". He does, however, document in great detail the discovery of numerous runic inscriptions from the inner chamber – a clear indication that the 1861 excavators were not the first ones to open this mound since its use in prehistory. The mere presence of these inscriptions, however, poses more questions than it answers: *Why* did the carvers of the runes enter this mound, already during the Norse period a relic of a long bygone age? How does this relate to Norse attitudes towards mounds in general? Can Maeshowe even be treated as a representative example, or are the carvers to be viewed as an exceptional group?

Crucially, Farrer's account is a witness to an important change in the development of our approaches to the past: It encapsulates a glimpse into a time in which folklore as a means of explanation overlapped with the advance of scholarly and scientific research. During this time, folkloric narratives took a background role in favour of "*more scientific*" means to explain the unknown (Honko 1972: 10-1; Thomas 1973: 29; Johnson 2010: 35). Scholars in more recent decades have begun to favour the consideration of folk beliefs again, after several decades of their dismissal (see esp. Downes *et al.* 2005 and 2013; Omland 2010: 150; Schjødt 2014). Importantly, both worlds of thinking are part of the same human motivation: a curiosity for ancient monuments and the lives and ideas of people who built them – only the means by which the monuments were approached differed. Archaeology was established as an academic discipline during the 19th century (Bradley 2002: 9; Card 2005: 40), yet our interest in the past is much older than that. Interpretations and re-interpretations of ancient monuments start at the point of their construction (Bradley 1993: 2) and are changed numerous times throughout their existence (Bradley and Williams 1998; Tilley 1994: 36, 217). They form a key part of the way in which mankind deals with fundamental questions regarding life, death and purpose (Semple 2013). This research highlights our interest in the remains of the past not only as a recent academic discipline, but as a deeply rooted and essential part of humanity that has changed guise and method over time, according to prevailing ideologies and drawing on the methods and techniques available at the time (Gazin-Schwartz 2001: 266; Thomas 1973).

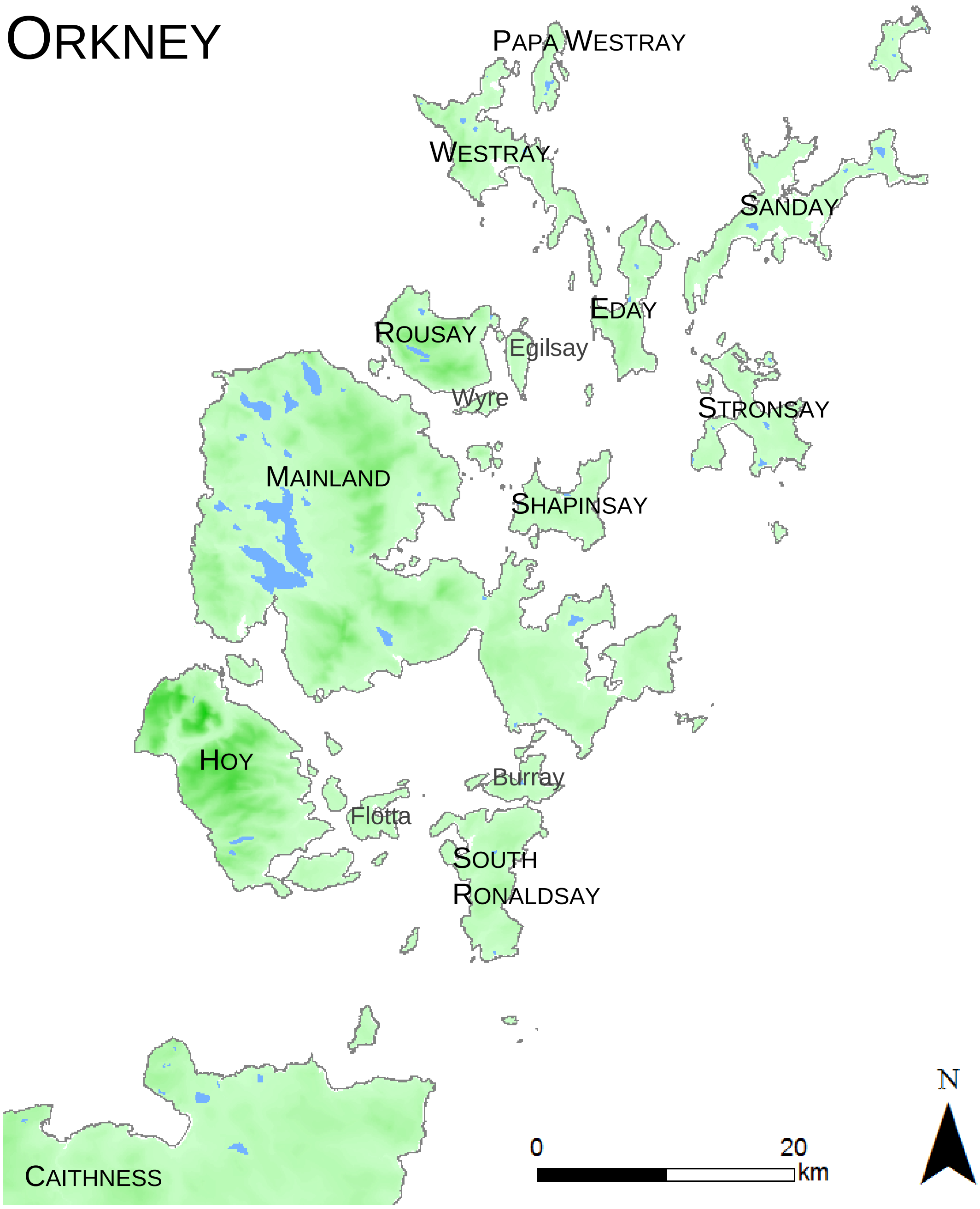
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

"BUT YOU MUST NEVER FORGET THAT A DAY IN THE LIFE OF ONE OF THOSE PEOPLE WAS JUST AS FULL OF IMPORTANT INCIDENT AND MEANING AS A DAY IN YOUR OWN LIVES"
(Vere Gordon Childe in a lecture on the Lower Palaeolithic, cited in Green 1981: 111)

At the core of this research lies the human experience within an ancient landscape. Focusing on the representation of standing stones and mounds in local folklore, this study examines potential perceptions of ancient landmarks during the Norse period on Orkney. Whilst potential Norse attitudes towards Orkney's ancient landscape will be suggested, influence from various other mentalities are, tentatively, also highlighted.

The geographical focus of this research is Orkney, a c.70-island archipelago north of the Scottish mainland (Map 1.1). Most of the smaller islands are flat, whilst Hoy, Rousay and Mainland feature elevations, with Ward Hill, Hoy, reaching the highest point of 481m / 1,578ft (Map 1.1; Figs. 1.1, 1.2, 1.3). The islands are largely unforested, a characteristic already remarked upon by Snorri in his saga of *Harald Hårfagr* (Crawford 2013: 104). Whilst pollen analyses have revealed that alder, birch, hazel, oak and pine had once grown on Orkney during the Mesolithic and the early Neolithic, human impact had steadily reduced it (Saville 2000: 97), and the stormy, saline marine climate was a key factor in prohibiting new growth (Davidson and Henshall 1989: 9; Wickham-Jones 1998: 9). Inter-visibility between the islands depends much on weather conditions, sometimes shrouding individual islands in fog, whilst at other times allowing for a far-reaching view on surrounding islands.

Links between Scandinavia and the wider world for trade, raiding and explorative purposes will at numerous times have led to, from or via Orkney, linking the archipelago intrinsically into the Norse diaspora (cf. Jesch 2015: 68-9, 200-1). This has been extensively researched from various scholarly angles. Previous studies have focused on a wide range of topics - including artefacts (Ashby 2005; 2007; 2009 and 2014: 111 on bone combs; Forster 2004 on steatite), burials (Owen and Dalland 1999), economy, networks and production (Barrett 2012; von Holstein *et al.* 2014) and the wider landscape (Morris 1985; Morris *et al.* 1985; Griffiths 2006; Griffiths and Harrison 2011; Leonard 2010 and 2011), in addition to various all-encompassing studies (*e.g.* Batey and Graham-Campbell 1998; Crawford 2013) - adding invaluable insight to our understanding of the Norse past of the islands. A selection of earlier studies will be outlined in this chapter, providing a framework of the physical Norse environment in which this study is set. Questions of underlying motivations and attitudes towards the inhabited landscape, however, are under examined (although see Leonard 2011). Over the centuries of Norse settlement, a vibrant cultural interface – with existing groups on Orkney as well as with other parts of the world – has left its marks not only in the shape of artefacts and structures, but also in intangible form, including dialect, place-names, and the remnants of beliefs and customs. This research aims to examine ways to cast light into areas that tangible remains alone cannot answer.



Map 1.1 The Orkney archipelago and key island names, to the North of the Scottish Mainland (Caithness). Note the differences in size and topography, especially noticeable when comparing the largely elevated island of Hoy with the other, almost entirely flat, islands. Rousay and Mainland have in common a combination of flat and elevated areas.

Figs. 1.1 and 1.2 The Hills of Hoy are at 481m / 1,578ft the highest elevation on Orkney.

Fig. 1.3 View on Hoy from Orkney Mainland. Most of the archipelago is flat and unwooded like this (Binscarth Woods, bottom left, was planted during the 19th century). *Photos: Author*

1.1 THE NORSE LANDSCAPE – A BRIEF PANORAMA

Before turning to the intangible sources of Norse Orkney, I will briefly outline the geographical and societal framework within which the discussions are set, as illuminated by previous research.

1.1.1 Chronology

Orkney's Norse archaeology is generally treated as part of the wider Nordic world, including debates regarding phasing, and dating of individual sites. Due to the absence of primary written sources to inform us about early Norse settlement on Orkney, no 'start date' has unanimously been agreed on. Various sites from Orkney (O) and Shetland (S), therefore, have suffered from the problem of a relative chronology based on the Lindisfarne model, an issue raised by Bjørn Myhre (1993). Examples include Jarlshof (S), Underhoull (S) and the Brough of Birsay (O). These sites were initially attributed to the 9th century based on the late 8th and 9th-century raids in England, rather than on independent evidence from the sites themselves (*cf.* Myhre 1993: 187; Barrett 2003: 84-6). In the case of these sites, more recent findings would suggest a later rather than an earlier date (*ibid.*). Recent identification of deer species in antler combs from Orkney and Norway has furthermore challenged the idea of long-standing contacts between Scandinavia and Orkney before the 9th century (von Holstein *et al.* 2014). However, the possibility for aspects of Norse Orkney to be earlier than expected cannot be excluded (see *e.g.* Almqvist 1986: 189; Hunter *et al*. 1990: 192; Buteux 1997: 262; Curry 2013 and Peets 2013).

Among leading suggestions for Norse phasing on Orkney are those suggested by John Hunter (2007) and James Barrett (2003, and updated in 2012): Hunter attributes a "*Viking Age*" to the 9th to later 11th century, followed by a "*Late Norse Phase*" (2007: 147), terminating with the passing of Orkney to Scotland in the 15th century. James Barrett distinguishes between a "*Viking Age (AD 750-1050)*" and the "*Middle Ages (AD 1050-1560)*" (2012: 11). By doing so, he has between 2003 and 2012 shifted the suggested start of the Orcadian 'Viking Age' back by 50 years, now placed before the boundary of the aforementioned Lindisfarne model (*cf.* 2003: 74). Whilst such timeframes are important and useful for individual studies, a universal timeframe comprising a definite 'start' and 'end' of the Norse period on Orkney overall would prove challenging, if not impossible. This is primarily due to the various factors influencing the discussion. The elements that form part of the Norse presence on Orkney – including language, politics, economy and belief – would each have represented a different layer of an on-going and fluid process. For example, whilst the political 'end' of the Norse period can confidently be attributed to AD 1468, when Orkney's Scandinavian rule terminated, the Norn language continued to be actively used into the 18th century (Barnes 1998). Similar facets would have influenced the 'start' of earlier stages of Norse settlement. Recorded political benchmarks appear more clearly like *caesurae* when seen on paper, whilst the people living on Orkney will not have felt every societal change in such strength – the recipient of their taxes perhaps representing the key change. Various crucial aspects of everyday life, such as language and beliefs, would have seen a more gradual change (Hedeager 2011: 26). Overall, this research refers largely to the timeframes for Norse presence as set out above. However, it uses material – primarily folk narratives and, to a lesser degree, toponyms – that requires discussion of much earlier material as well as its survival into later times. Consequently, this timeframe will often be extended in both directions. In addition to this, the decision was made to solely use the term ‘Norse’ in this thesis, rather than distinguishing between ‘Viking’ and ‘(Late) Norse’ or ‘Medieval’. This is primarily due to the fluid nature of the material discussed, as outlined in this paragraph, but also to avoid problematic terminology such as ‘Vikings’. This research is not the place to critique the use of this term, and it is not intended to use it undisputed.

1.1.2 Social and cultural context

The ambiguity regarding the earliest Norse colonists has not only encumbered debates about chronology. Questions regarding Norse presence among pre-existing communities on Orkney have inevitably led to a long-standing, much debated relationship between Norse settlers and the Pictish[1] inhabitants of the islands (*e.g.* Wainwright 1962; Thomson 2001 (1986): chapter 3). This debate has over the past decades developed into an increasingly polarised discussion between a ‘war’- and a ‘peace’-school. At present, the best-known views on this matter include strongly opposing articles by Brian Smith and Jessica Bäcklund, advocating a violent and a peaceful interface respectively (see esp. their articles published in *Northern Studies* ***36***, 2001). Both deliver a rigorous argument, yet there is not enough evidence to fully support either side. In fact, due to its ambiguity, the same piece of evidence can be plausibly explained according to the viewpoint of either school (see esp. the interpretation of Ritchie’s Buckuoy excavations in Smith 2001: 15; see also Barrett 2004: 210). Even the *Orkneyinga Saga* remains intriguingly silent about a ‘Norse-Pictish’ interface – perhaps simply because the people encountered by earlier Norse generations were forgotten by the time the *Saga* was written. Whilst Orkney’s place-names create an impression of an almost entirely Norse population of the isles (Wainwright 1962: 162), several sites indicate phases of overlap with previous Late Iron Age activity, although the nature of this overlap is largely unclear from the archaeological evidence alone. The undisturbed nature of pre-Norse graves in the Westness cemetery (Ashmore 2003: 37) would indicate that the Norse from that area showed respect at least towards the dead (Bäcklund 2001: 40). In contrast, at other sites an interruption of use is indicated by long intervals between occupation or use (Smith 2001: 14).

Various multi-period sites, including Howe, Stromness, Mainland (*Canmore* ID 1731) (Ballin Smith 1994), Pool, Sanday (*Canmore* ID 3422) (Hunter 2007), the Birsay Bay area, Mainland (Morris *et*

[1] As is the case for the term ‘Viking’, the term ‘Pict / ‘Pictish’ is widely used, yet often with unclear denotations (as discussed by Thomson 1987: chapter 1). Within the context of this research the term ‘Pict’ is used as defined by late 3rd century AD Roman writers, denoting “*communities living North of the Antonine Wall*” from the iron Age into the 9th century, distinguished by ogham inscriptions and characteristic picture stones (Darvill 2008: 346). No citation marks will be used unless in citation.

al. 1989; Thäte 2007; Barrett 2003: 86-7; Leonard 2010 and 2011), Dingishowe (Owen 2012) as well as discoveries from Oxtro, Mainland (Morris 1989: 25; Illus 11; MacKie 2002; Ashmore 2003), suggest a complex nature of cultural interface. Many of these sites indicate an almost seamless transition from the Late Iron Age communities to the Norse (although see Neil 1985: 207). Whether this is an indication for a "*replacement*" (Julie Gibson cited in Towrie 2015b), or whether there is perhaps the possibility of a period of strategic, allied co-existence (perhaps akin to the situations observed in areas of Roman occupation) (see also Barrett 2004: 216) cannot be discussed at length here.

One key flaw of both the 'war' and the 'peace' school is the focus on a largely macroscopic explanation (see esp. Barrett 2004), generating the idea of 'the Norse' as a homogenous group with one unanimous incentive for settlement on the islands (although see Bäcklund 2001: 42-3). In analogy with Scandinavian settlement elsewhere (Sveinsson 2003 (1940): 150; Frog 2011: 25), a coexistence of diverse Norse groups can also be envisaged for Orkney (Barrett 2004: 214-15). This also applies to pre-existing Orcadian communities: terms such as 'indigenous' or 'native Orcadians' can easily mislead into the idea of a largely homogenous group. More likely, however, the archipelago would have hosted a variety of communities, differing further between individual islands. In addition to this, Christian communities had been established across Orkney since the 6th and 7th centuries (Lamb 1995; Ritchie 2003: 8; Morris 2004: 182), which possibly resulted in gradually changing local attitudes towards their own earlier beliefs and monuments (Thäte 2007b: 127). The result of this is likely to have been a complex societal environment, witnessing a co-existence of Christianity,[2] pre- (and non-) Christian Orcadian beliefs (Owen 1999: 183), as well as a variety of concepts brought in by Norse groups. This societal interface took place within a small geographical area long before most of Scandinavia converted officially (Morris 2004: 182; see Brink 2004 on the complex nature of Scandinavian conversion), and the environment will have differed greatly from the much more sporadic contact 8th or 9th century Scandinavia will have had with Christianity through individual missionary visits, or foreign explorations. The reactions of various parties towards such differences and changes will have been expressed in material culture as well as in intangible form – such as narratives and toponyms – and the suggestion of links between these needs a careful approach (Barrett 2004: 217). Evidence for the relationship between Norse colonists and indigenous groups is not conclusive, and given how strongly this topic is debated, the scholarly lens through which the evidence is seen will significantly influence its interpretation into either direction. This research does not intend to side with either of the ('War' or 'Peace') schools. Instead, the aim is to highlight possible attitudes towards ancient sites. Such perceptions – if nothing else – might have been something all people living on Orkney during the Norse period had in common, even if very different core beliefs were hidden under a seemingly identical guise.

[2] Throughout the further course of this thesis, the term 'pre-Christian' will be used to describe the belief systems present before the introduction of Christianity to Orkney. This is, of course, a term laden with modern bias, primarily due to the absence of sources that would provide a coherent overview of early beliefs and how these should be defined or referred to (*cf.* Schjødt 2014: 50, 56-7).

1.1.3 Where are the sites?

Having outlined matters of dating and social setting, I will now introduce a selection of key studies of Norse Orkney and their research foci. Perhaps a key factor to start with is the unusual nature of Orkney's Norse archaeology, interpreted as predominantly high-status nature (Graham-Campbell and Batey 1998: 62). Various factors – including long-standing coastal erosion, but also development and construction in more recent centuries – have led to a loss (or unawareness) of aspects of Norse Orkney (Hunter 2003: 245; Leonard 2011: 45). Accordingly, Orkney's Norse sites have for a long time primarily been studied in isolation (although see below). On the other hand, the strategic position of the islands has been noted by James Barrett as "*the hub of maritime traffic between the North Sea, the Irish Sea and the North Atlantic*" (2012: 11), being placed between the surrounding harbours of the Atlantic to create and maintain links (*ibid.*), although potential settlements – such as at the Point of Buquoy and Skaill Bay (Griffiths 2006: 219) – have been highlighted. Overall, the evidence for earliest Norse settlements is scarce (Barrett 2003: 84). Ephemeral, perhaps even seasonal, buildings of more perishable material are suggested for the area of Scalloway, Shetland, and might have been linked to the *þing*-assemblage at the nearby Ting Holm (Owen 2005a: 299-301). Pierowall (ON *Höfn*: 'harbour'), Orkney, might have hosted a further seasonal site (*ibid.*; Graham-Campbell and Batey 1998: 56), and the location of this site within a harbour along a significant sea route (*ibid.*; Ager 1999: 360) would add weight to this idea. Determining links between Orkney's Norse sites, or examining their interrelationship, however, remains challenging (*cf.* Hunter 2003: 245).

The first larger-scale attempt to synthesise aspects of Orkney's Norse landscape was *The Birsay Bay Project*, led by Christopher Morris in the 1970s and 80s. This was an important step towards the synthesis of the Orcadian records: Morris gathered available findings from Buckquoy (Brough Rd.), Point of Buckquoy and Red Craig, considering a wider landscape setting rather than sites in isolation (Morris 1989). Within this project, Morris confirmed the political importance of the Birsay area for Norse Orkney – at least during the later phases of Norse settlement (Brundle 2005: 75) – as well as the presence of both Norse and Pictish activity there (Morris 1989: 279). Findings from this study were further supported by Norse radiocarbon dates from the area (*e.g.* from Red Craig: *ibid.*: 287). More recently, this project has been continued with the *Birsay-Skaill Landscape Archaeology Project* under the direction of David Griffiths and Jane Harrison since 2003, contributing geophysical surveys (*e.g.* 2011: 13, but also at the Brough of Birsay in 2007) and further radiocarbon dates (undertaken by SUERC) from the area of Snusgar, Skaill Bay, in 2004, 2007, 2008 and 2010 (Griffiths and Harrison 2011: 15-6; 18).

In recent years, attention has been given to the Norse particularly within the context of the prehistoric landscape. In 2011 (based on her unpublished MA dissertation, 2010), Alison Leonard examined Norse settlement on Mainland Orkney within the setting of prehistoric monuments, taking into consideration portable artefacts, structural remains, combined with a study of place-names. Her study examines possible strategies to solidify and validate Norse presence on the islands, whilst presenting a compelling layer of emotive responses to the landscape. In my MSt dissertation (2012) I focused on the spatial relationship between Norse-settled areas and prehistoric monuments considering their representation in folklore. The dissertation formed a pilot study for this research and, as will be discussed in Chapter 4, the overall conclusion of the MSt dissertation has led to a significant change in methodology, which will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 4. The MSt research employed distribution maps as well as viewpoint-analyses to examine spatial relations between areas of Norse activity and prehistoric monuments. By doing so the approach relied too heavily on GIS as an analytical tool in a topography and with a dataset that had seen much change since the Norse period. This, however, was a useful conclusion in its own right. An examination of ancient sites and their representation in folklore (and, to a lesser degree, in toponyms) proved to be a more promising approach, as will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 3 and 4.

These landscape studies are complemented by a larger number of studies focusing on individual sites and finds. Burials are among the most numerous Norse sites on Orkney, and across the archipelago the funerary evidence takes a range of different forms. Among the earliest recorded discoveries – as early as 1778 – is the Reverend George Low's notice of Norse finds at Pierowall, Westray, although it was not until the 1960s that Aarne Thorsteinsson identified 17 different burials from these finds, indicating a minimum of 20 graves overall (Thorsteinsson 1968: 150-72; Graham-Campbell and Batey 1998: 131; Allen 1999: 46). Most of the graves, dating to the 9th century, contained grave goods, including brooches, a key, and various weapons (Ager 1999). Pierowall is nowadays still known to be among the largest known Norse cemeteries in Scotland (Owen 2005a: 299), surpassed by Westness, Rousay, which comprises 40 identified graves (Graham-Campbell and Batey 1998: 135-8; Ashmore 2003: 36-7; *Canmore* ID 2204). Similar to the Pierowall cemetery, the Westness burials contained various grave goods – including jewellery and weapons – in addition to two boat burials (Graham-Campbell and Batey 1998: 136), yet perhaps the most intriguing aspect of this cemetery is that it shows continuous use from the 5th up to the 10th century,[3] with no discernible disturbance of the pre-Norse graves (Ashmore 2003: 136; Julie Gibson pers. comm.).

[3] Ashmore (2003) dates the graves between the 5th and 10th century, whilst several other sources quote the dates as 7th – 9th century. Regardless of this discrepancy, the start date of both pre-date the earliest accepted Start date of Norse settlement on Orkney.

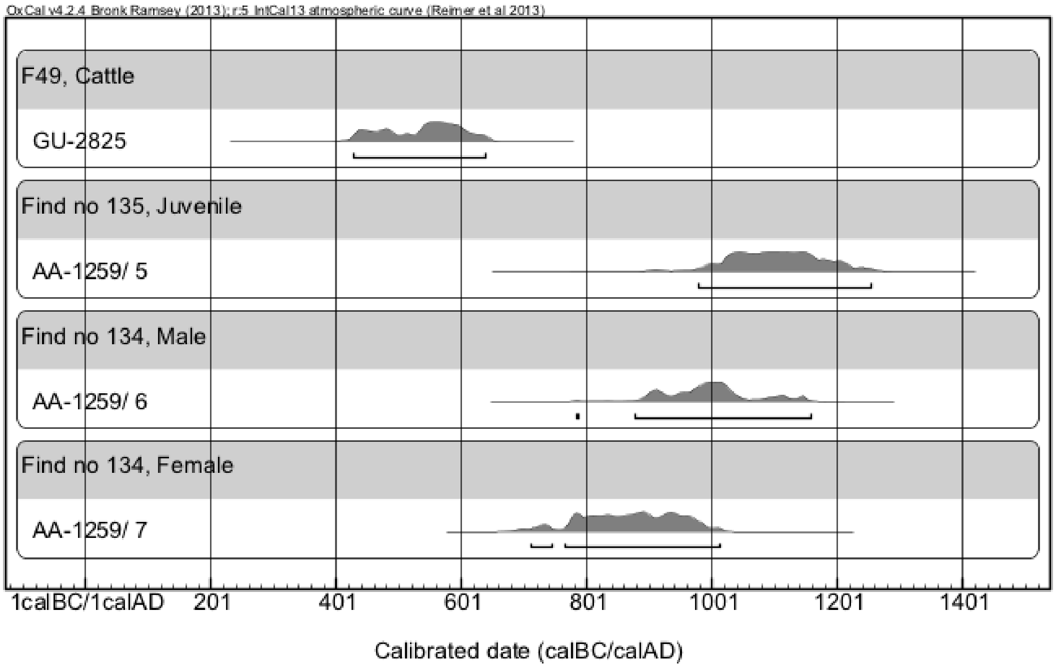


Fig. 1.4 Radiocarbon dates from the Scar burial (after Dalland 1999: 162).

The best-known Norse grave, however, is the Scar boat burial from Sanday. Discovered in 1985, the site needed quick excavation due to coastal threat (Owen and Dalland 1999: 1-2). The boat grave contained three people: a child, a man in his thirties and an elderly woman, accompanied by various grave goods, including the exceptionally well-preserved Scar plaque (Fig. 1.5), but also gaming pieces, a bone comb and a sword (Graham-Campbell and Batey: 140; Owen and Dalland 1999: 188-9). The relationship between the three individuals and the cause of their death is unresolved, and whilst the burial is a likely representative of ‘pagan’ Norse customs, not much can be said about the buried individuals with confidence (*ibid.*). Intriguingly, the radiocarbon dates from the three bodies, whilst buried at the same time, show a discrepancy in their dates: the dates for the child are over a century later than those of the adults (*cf.* Dalland 1999: 163) (Fig. 1.4). Dalland deems the idea of a marine bias unlikely, although reasons for the

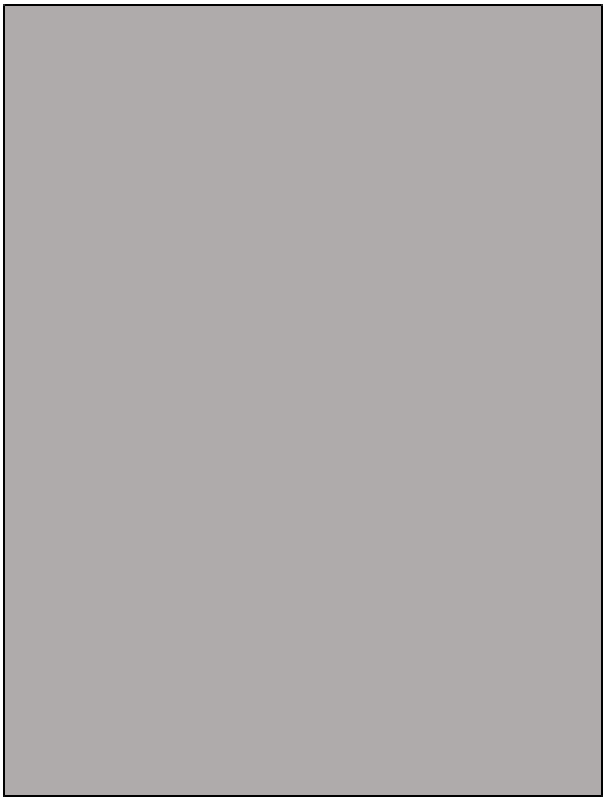


Fig. 1.5 The Scar plaque, whalebone. One of the grave-goods from the Scar burial (Owen and Watson 1999: 76)

rejection of this idea are not discussed (*ibid.*: 164).[4] Boat burials are also known from Westness, Rousay (Allen 1999: 46; Ashmore 2003: 36-7), possibly within the large cemetery at Pierowall (Allen and Owen 1999: 50), and possibly at the Styes of Brough, Sanday. There, a potential boat-shaped stone setting containing human bone was discovered in 1997, potentially relating to the iron sword found nearby in the 19th century (Owen 1999: 14). In 2015, house repairs revealed a further boat burial on Papa Westray (Towrie 2015a). The phenomenon of burials in boats (as opposed to boat-shaped stone settings) is a further indicator for the Norwegian links of the people buried (and / or burying) here (Allen and Owen 1999: 50). Perhaps most intriguingly, the use of functional boats in an insular area such as Orkney is a striking example of wealth destruction – regardless of the size of the boats, or the richness (or presence) of grave-goods (although depending on whether the boat had already surpassed its time of usage, *ibid.*: 49; see also Brundle 2005: 69). Akin to various other aspects of Norse life on Orkney, however, are questions regarding the underlying beliefs and motivations of such 'pagan' burials, and how these related to Orkney's largely Christian environment on the one hand, and to the contemporaneous West-Scandinavian customs on the other hand (Owen 1999: 170; Owen and Dalland 1999: 191).

1.1.4 Essential characteristics

Throughout this thesis, contrast between Orkney and West-Scandinavia is made at various points. This is due to the largely (West-) Norwegian background of the settlers (Graham-Campbell and Batey 1998: 26-7), although this by no means excludes the possibility that people of other backgrounds would have been among them. Official Scandinavian rule of the islands began with the 9th-century Earls and terminated in 1468 (Morris 1985: 210). In light of this, Orkney has been much impacted by Scandinavian – largely Norwegian – culture. Importantly, it would be convenient to focus primarily on the similarities between shared folkloric motifs of Orkney and Norway whilst the differences remain overlooked (*cf.* Honko 1989: 25-6; Maitland 2012: 150). One of the most important differences between the two regions is topography – this forms the scenery in which narratives are set and is key to the credibility and oral survival of phenomena featured in narratives (Maitland 2012). Whilst there are similarities between Scotland and Scandinavia (Graham-Campbell and Batey 1998: 4), the geographical differences between Orkney and Norway are too striking to assume a direct transmission of concepts from one place to the other: Norway offers forests and mountains over a large space of land, providing a generous range of hiding places even for large supernatural entities. In contrast, Orkney's comparably small, largely flat and unwooded islands, as discussed above, offered comparably sweeping visibility with little to no hiding space for a giant or other large creature (Robertson 1991: 260). In such a different setting, some notions will have acquired more of a background role in favour of other concepts that slotted better into the new

[4] Albeit in want of further supporting data, the idea of a marine bias might be worth considering: the shorter lifespan of the child would have inevitably resulted in less accumulation of marine-biased radiocarbon isotopes in comparison to the food consumption over the longer lifespans of the adults.

environment. The result of this would have been a new take on the beliefs imported from West Scandinavia (*cf. ibid.*; Marwick 1975: 30). This compares well to the problem of translating mentalities between languages and the inevitable loss of crucial concepts during this process, as discussed in more detail in Chapter 4. One point where this becomes prevalent is the comparably small role of the sea-*draugar* in Orkney (Marwick 1975: 30; Robertson 1991: 262) in comparison to their role in Norwegian lore (*cf*. Furset 2011; Christiansen 1968: xxx-xxxi, 53-4, 66), but also the way in which Orcadian mound-dwellers take on roles otherwise fulfilled by hill- or mountainfolk in Norwegian records (*cf.* Christiansen 1968: 95, 124, 130-1). This does not necessarily mean that the Orcadian *hogboon* is entirely different in concept from early West Scandinavian *haugbúar,* as has been questioned (*cf*. Sävborg and Bek-Pedersen 2010: 29). It does, however, imply that this concept took root in Orkney and further developed there, largely independent of its West Scandinavian counterpart. This is an organic process in which a relocated concept – material or immaterial – takes on aspects from its immediate surroundings (Friðriksson 2000: 549; Leonard 2011: 59). The crucial differences, however, do not lie primarily in the outer details of a narrative, such as the type of being featured, but much more in the underlying motivations for the behaviour shown in tales (Almqvist 1986: 193) and how these contribute to a broader discussion of a Norse explanation of Orkney's ancient monuments. As I will discuss further in Chapters 3, 5 and 6, it is these narrative undercurrents that are of key significance to this research. Before focusing on these, however, it is a brief review of prehistoric Orkney that I will turn to next.

1.2 THE PREHISTORIC LANDSCAPE

1.2.1 Adopting an informed outsider's perspective.

Having introduced aspects of Norse Orkney I will now briefly turn to Orkney's prehistoric landscape. The archaeological insight into prehistory as known today will not have formed part of a Norse mindset. Views that were acceptable at the time were turned to, some of which are examined in this research. Ancient monuments play significant roles within numerous folk tales, and several medieval place-names refer to them. These are two independent, yet nonetheless connected indicators of the impression ancient monuments had on people even centuries after their construction (Wainwright 1962: 120). Whilst an archaeological discussion of Orkney's prehistoric monuments is not a key contributor to this research, it is necessary to introduce a key selection of site types and their above-ground appearance to provide a basic familiarity with the nature of Orkney's prehistoric landscape - a landscape that formed the basis for several toponyms and integral narratives.

Fig. 1.6 Bird's eye view on Structure 10, the Ness of Brodgar (Neolithic), under excavation in 2010. The purpose of the structure remains debated. Note the substantial walls. *Photo: Author*

Numerous sites have survived from the Neolithic onwards. A key reason for this extraordinary record of surviving archaeological material is their construction in stone (Fig. 1.6). Orkney's geology offers a rich source of durable building material and builders have drawn from this source since at least the 4th millennium BC (the Knap of Howar being the earliest known prehistoric settlement on Orkney, Wickham-Jones 1998: 21). Local flagstone and several varieties of Orcadian sandstone have been amongst the key building materials for Orkney's monuments. Red Sandstone derived from Eday Beds, Head of Houton, provided material not only for the interior of some of the Neolithic structures (*e.g.* Structure 10) at the Ness of Brodgar (Fig. 1.7) (Thomas 2016: 206), but also for St Magnus Cathedral in Kirkwall during the 12th century (Fig. 1.8) (Card *et al.* 2010: 55, 62). Different stone types lead to variations in preservation and durability depending on environmental conditions, which will have affected the appearance of monuments throughout time (Richards 2013: 85; Downes *et al.* 2013: 106). In addition to this, the above-ground visibility of prehistoric sites is, to a degree, also a result of the time of their construction. This is particularly noticeable in the comparably high visibility of various Neolithic monuments, such as chamber cairns (Henshall 1985: 83-117; Davidson and Henshall 1989), stone circles (Ritchie 1985: 119) or substantial structures (Fig. 1.6), in contrast to Bronze Age monuments, of which barrows are the most noticeable relic (Øvrevik 1985: 138). Flat cist graves and burnt mounds near freshwater sources, for instance, are further, much less conspicuous remnants from the Bronze Age (*ibid.:* 146). In contrast, the Iron Age saw once again an increase in more visible structures, such as Early and Middle Iron Age brochs (Atlantic Roundhouses) in prominent locations (*e.g.* Hedges 1985: 157; Ballin Smith and Banks 2002; MacKie 2002; Gilmour 2002: 55), although the various subterranean spaces characteristic to Orkney's Iron Age would not have had as much above-surface visibility (Miket 2002: 77). Importantly, re-use and amendment of several sites at various stages after their initial construction will have further changed their visibility. A relevant example is the incorporation of Late Iron Age buildings into Norse buildings, which compounds their identification further (Leonard 2010: 56, 72).

Overall, the above ground perception of ancient sites and places can be discussed with more confidence than any awareness of their interior, unless there are clear indications that they were re-entered or modified during the Norse period, and this is comparably rare. Even a secondary burial within the upper strata of a mound that covers earlier structures – such as at Howe[5] (Ballin Smith 1994: 120) – only indicates awareness of the mound itself. The outward perception of such sites, therefore, is of key importance to this research. Bearing in mind, however, that some mounds are likely to have been disturbed during the Norse period – such as Maeshowe – a brief outline of their interior is deemed appropriate.

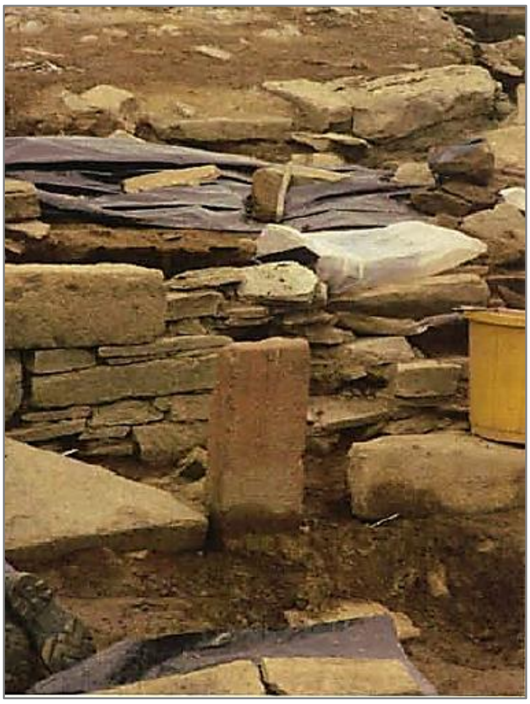


Fig. 1.7 Red sandstone from Eday was used for parts of the interior of Structure 10, the Ness of Brodgar... *Photo: Author*

Fig. 1.8 …and, *c.*4000 years later, for St Magnus cathedral, Kirkwall. *Photo: Author*

[5] Although in the case of Howe problems with the exact context of the burial (Neil 1985: 207) adds a layer of uncertainty to the exact nature of Norse activity at this site.

Below ground

Amongst the most common terms concerning Orkney's prehistoric mounds are 'passage grave' and 'chamber(ed)[6] cairn' (or 'cairn'). Going into more detail, terms such as 'Orkney-Cromarty-type' cairns and 'Maeshowe-type cairns' are the key division of this site type. This abundance of terms can quickly be confusing and calls for a brief overview of what they denote.

A 'cairn' is best defined as "*a monument featuring a bank or mound constructed primarily of stone*" (Classification by *Canmore*; see also Darvill 2008: 67). A passage grave can be a cairn, but is named mainly after the characteristically narrow and low passage through which the inner grave chamber would have been reached during use. As an example, Maeshowe is a chamber cairn – comprising a larger, central stone-built main chamber plus three small side chambers – that can be reached via a passageway of a few metres in length. Therefore, sites such as Maeshowe or Cuween can be (and are) described as both cairns and passage graves. Going into more detail, the distinction between Orkney-Cromarty- and Maeshowe-type cairns denote different interior characteristics respectively. These categories were discussed in much detail by James S. Davidson and Audrey Henshall in their publication on *The Chambered Cairns of Orkney* (1989).

Fig. 1.9 Bird's eye perspective onto a selection of chamber cairns from Orkney, showing sites mentioned in this thesis (after Hedges 1986: 22).

The former type comprises round (or elongated) cairns with chambers that are divided by slabs, the number of which varies between individual monuments of this kind (*ibid.*: 37) (Fig. 1.9). In contrast, Maeshowe-type cairns do not usually contain division slabs, but consist of a main chamber with side

[6] There are on-going debates whether 'chambered cairn' or 'chamber cairn' is the correct term. For this research, however, this is not of key importance and for consistency's sake I will use the term 'chamber cairn' throughout.

chambers, usually varying between 3 and 6 in number (Renfrew 1979: 201) (Fig. 1.9). Orkney-Cromarty type cairns are found both on Orkney and on the Scottish mainland, whilst Maeshowe type cairns are unique to the Orkney Islands (Davidson and Henshall 1989: 37). Isbister and Unstan on Mainland, however, are examples of passage graves that contain both internal dividing slabs and side chambers (Hedges 1986: 22; Davidson and Henshall 1989: 164), proving that there are exceptions and local variations to the ways monuments are built. Furthermore, the way monuments are archaeologically classified cannot fully reflect the underlying motivations that shaped these sites. A further exception to be noted is Taversoe Tuick on Rousay, a two-storeyed cairn featuring an upper and a lower chamber with a (now sealed) entry passage, in addition to an adjacent Neolithic souterrain (Davidson and Henshall 1989: 30). The only other example of a two-storeyed chamber cairn is Huntersquoy on Eday (Davidson and Henshall 1989: 123-4).

1.2.2 Discussion

'The prehistoric landscape' as such does not exist. Due to the constant re-invention of landmarks (Tilley 1994: 36; 217; Bradley and Williams 1998; Fowler 2013) a landscape is a constantly on-going process, depending on environmental and social contexts (*ibid.*). Therefore, what survives of the megalithic landscape should not be regarded as a mere two-dimensional 'snapshot' of a distant past. Chris Gosden's and Yvonne Marshall's convincing theory of "*object biographies*" (1999: 169-78) has an equal measure of relevance for monuments (Holtorf 2000-8; Muir and Richards 2013: 292). Each individual monument has a different, long-standing – and, importantly, still on-going – history reaching far beyond its prehistoric construction and use. This includes the modern bias of sites that are prominent today, primarily because of their good preservation. Considering the large number of sites that might have had significance in the past, yet which are either badly preserved or completely levelled today (Chapter 3), the prominence of certain sites today does not necessarily reflect their role and importance in the past. Ancient landmarks, however, have over the past millennia prompted responses to an enigmatic past (*cf.* Tilley 1994; Leonard 2011: 64; Brink 2013: 36). Orkney's prehistoric monuments were, therefore, as much a part of the 'Norse landscape' as they are a part of today's landscape.

1.3 APPROACH

1.3.1 Aims

This study examines ways in which archaeological evidence can be complemented with sources that might shed further light onto past mentalities. A key aim is to add to our understanding of perceptions and beliefs that formed part of the Norse diaspora, with focus on the Orcadian perspective. By dealing with questions regarding incentives and beliefs, this research does not draw from tangible material alone, instead combining tangible and intangible sources. As part of this the remnants of past mentalities are examined primarily in folkloric motifs – in contrast with their parallels in Scandinavia – as well as any traces of mentality that resound in toponyms and runic inscriptions. Archaeological evidence forms the essential framework for any conclusions drawn from such ‘intangible’ sources. Crucially, whilst there have been in-depth studies of Orkney’s place-names (Hugh Marwick, especially 1947 and 1952; Sandnes 2010; Leonard 2010 and 2011) and folklore (*e.g.* Traill Dennison, compiled by Muir 1995; Marwick 1972 and 1975; Robertson 1991; Muir 1998; Irvine and Muir 2014) this research represents the first larger-scale attempt to draw such data together in the context of the Norse Orcadian landscape (although see Robertson 1991 for Marwick’s article on Norwegian links with Orkney’s folk tales, which was the first attempt to contextualise the material).

The combination of various angles has good potential to take research several steps further. An interest and curiosity in the past and the traces of bygone societies is as popular in the present day as it was crucial in the past (Gazin-Schwartz 2011: 64), being both a driving force for scholarly interpretations as well as a means of coping with fundamental questions of life. This interest is not limited to academia alone, and especially includes a large number of interested parties from various backgrounds outside academia (see, for example, Thomas 2016: 1-3 on the large and international visitor numbers at the Ness of Brodgar, Orkney). Questions concerning the ways people in the past would have coped with events and emotions we can relate to are often of key interest when learning about the past. One certainty an artefact or a monument can give us is *that it was produced* (Johnson 2010: 12; Schjødt 2014: 54). Essential information it can give includes the materials people had access to, the most likely routes by which these were acquired, as well as the variety of different skills that was necessary to make the most out of these materials. Attached to all this, however, are the lives of countless individuals and their mentalities, and this is where the clarity begins to fade: Less certainty can be given to *why* objects were made (or monuments built), or whether they were always used for their apparent (functional) purpose (Johnson 2010: 12; Barrett 2003: 96). These are the questions concerning motivations and beliefs that are the most challenging to trace in the tangible record. Through adding a range of sources that lie outside archaeology the aim is to add to the existing record of interpretations concerning past lives to maintain and nurture contemporary interest in the past. With this research the aim is to demonstrate that whilst challenging, it is not impossible to shed some light onto such areas.

1.3.2 Objectives

Gaps in what can be understood about past mentalities are inevitable, and whilst the aim is to provide a wider angle, this research cannot provide a seamless picture of Norse Orcadian attitudes. Instead, a core intention is to assess if and how folklore can be used to cast light on areas that tangible material alone cannot illuminate fully. The effectiveness of interdisciplinary work has been widely recognised (*e.g.* Thrane 1998: 219-30; Steuer 1998: 129; Thompson 2004: 336; Brink 2008a; Leonard 2010 and 2011; Muir and Richards 2013: 292-3; projects such as the *Retrospective Methods Network* or *Vägar til Midgård*). A joint approach can bring a wider spectrum of ideas and sources to research, but also offer crucial questions from a different perspective (*e.g.* Thrane 1998: 224-5; Fitzpatrick *et al.* 2015).

The research questions set out below are not intended to result in single, overarching explanations, nor specific answers. Instead, the aim is to conclude this research with more refined variants of these questions.

1.3.3 Research questions

The two core research questions that underlie this research are as follows:

I. *How can folklore[7] contribute to archaeology as a means of approaching past mentalities?*

A core aim of this research is to examine the value of folklore in Archaeology as a means of approaching past mentalities. Disciplines in isolation can yield significant findings, and there is already a large body of existing research into past mentalities from various angles (Chapter 3). However, on their own these can primarily provide insight into those aspects of the past that they directly represent. A combination of various sources, whilst unable to provide a complete picture, enables us to cast light into areas where other disciplines meet their limit. Examining folklore from Orkney and its links with the wider Nordic world aims to add a further angle from which the Norse period on Orkney can be studied, adding to the existing research outlined previously.

Importantly, this research does not attempt to switch between schools of thought – instead, any sources outside archaeology are approached from an archaeological point of view. Examining the material of one discipline through the eyes of another discipline can yield alternative insights that can, in turn, be of benefit to both sides. Chapter 5, for instance, comprises case studies of folkloric motifs and potential narrative undercurrents from an archaeological perspective, suggesting 'layers' of development. This approach has the benefit of strengthening and re-iterating co-operation between different disciplines, by suggesting alternative paths of enquiry, and, more generally, by adding to the existing record of interdisciplinary research.

Rather than analysing folk tales primarily for their contents it is important to examine the motivations behind their creation. I wish to emphasise that folk narratives can encapsulate expressions of bygone perceptions and beliefs (Gunnell 2014: 19), with echoes of such perceptions resounding in place-names (Brink 2008a) as well as in material culture (*e.g.* Kaul *et al.* 1991; Hedeager 2011). Importantly, it would be unrealistic to aim for a reconstruction of the *"truest or most ancient"* (Hedeager 2011: 3) version of a narrative. Instead, this research aims to test alternative ways of shedding light on potential past mentalities. This includes an examination of overarching and recurring concepts that are likely to have persisted over several centuries, if not millennia (Zipes 2010 (2006): xi; Waddell 2014), whilst acknowledging amendments to these narratives depending

[7] Chapter 3 includes a more detailed discussion on the terminology of folklore / folk tales.

on audience and social environment (*ibid.*; Thompson 1977: 434). These, in turn, have led to Orcadian "*oicotypes*"[8]. An *oicotype*, as defined by folklorist Carl Wilhelm von Sydow (von Sydow 1977: 45-59), denotes local adaptations of more widely known narratives (*cf*. Dundes 1999: 139) - in this case integrating wider Nordic concepts concerning liminal spaces into an Orcadian setting. For this purpose, Orkney is embedded into the context of surrounding Norwegian folklore, with references – where relevant – to the wider scope of Scandinavian-settled areas, including Iceland and parts of Ireland.

II. Can we detect key Norse attitudes towards ancient sites on Orkney?

As shown previously, the Norse period on Orkney covers several centuries as well as numerous generations and different groups of people. Therefore, this research acknowledges a wide variety of probable conclusions. These need not be mutually exclusive, yet could, in fact, represent the remains of past mentalities from various chronological stages. The underlying theme is to examine Norse activity not as the sudden advent of a homogenous group, but instead as a process shaped by varying ideologies and motives over several centuries (Hedeager 2011: 2-3; 26). It is therefore intended to study the Norse period on Orkney not by artificially separating Norse settlers, but instead by examining experiences and attitudes towards the landscape in the period under study as a whole. The Norse period on Orkney is here regarded as shaped by the combination of all people living on the islands at the time. Especially within such relatively small geographical space, this interface of cultural concepts would have formed an environment which is likely to have led to expressions of identity that differed from areas with less intercultural contact (*cf.* Hedeager 1992: 294). In addition to this, seemingly 'characteristic' Norse material culture – for example as grave goods, or stray finds – may be misleading as these do not necessarily indicate native origin, but instead adopted identity (Richards 1991: 102; Barrett 2003: 96-9).

1.3.4 Impact and relevance

The combination of Archaeology and Folklore has proven fruitful in other study areas (*e.g.* contributions to Gazin-Schwartz and Holtorf 1999; Omland 2010: 150; Waddell 2014), and calls have been expressed in the past two Orkney Research Agendas for a more in-depth inclusion of Orkney's folklore in studies of the islands' past (Downes *et al.* 2005: 86; 125; Downes and Gibson 2013: 6, 20; see also Muir and Richards 2013: 300). Whilst Orkney-focused studies have begun to consider folklore as a potentially valuable source in combination with tangible data, the above calls have not been answered with an in-depth consideration of the material. Leonard notes their potential as a means of complementing GIS studies along with a detailed consultation of place-names (Leonard 2011: 62), yet she remains cautious to not give folk tales prime focus in her study and refers to them

[8] This term has also incorrectly been referred to as "*ecotypes*" in a number of sources, yet this must have been the result of the term being heard rather than read, and written down as pronounced, due to the Greek pronounciation of "*oi*" as Engl. "*ee*".

only on a few occasions (*ibid.*; see also Leonard 2010: 162-3). It is indeed sensible to not rely too heavily on folklore when spatial constraints of a study do not allow for an in-depth consideration of their value and flaws. This was also noticed during my pilot study, contrasting the distribution of mounds and standing stones with their representation in Orkney's folklore (2012). For instance, the notable distance between standing stones and areas of Norse activity (also highlighted by Leonard 2010: 78) would indeed offer a tempting link with the warnings against approaching standing stones known from various Orcadian folk tales (Scholma 2012: 27). During this research, however, it became clear that the underlying motivations of seemingly similar narratives – especially with regards to standing stones (Chapter 6) – are too complex to neatly concur with the representation of sites on maps, or to be attributed to an overarching explanation. Given the overall problems with the dating of standing stones there are various other explanations for their distribution – for instance as boundary markers, or the re-use of megaliths for building material – that will have factored in to their distribution on present-day maps (Scholma 2012: 16). Similar cautions apply to the mound-dweller and its often-cited role of scaring people away from mounds. This has been widely accepted as an explanation for past mound-perceptions covering several centuries, yet in Chapter 5 I wish to demonstrate that this, too, is likely to have been more complex. The value – and, importantly, the risks – of using folklore in archaeology thus requires a rigorous evaluation. They cannot be employed as informative sources at face value, yet should also not be too quickly disregarded (Gazin-Schwartz and Holtorf 1999; Briggs 1971: ix). A research project of this scale provided sufficient scope within which the potential of folklore for research into Norse Orkney could be evaluated in more depth, and on the basis of which suggestions for future directions can be provided (Chapter 8).

In discussing the significance of narrative undercurrents, this research also touches upon the issue of 'ritual' as a means to explain enigmatic aspects of past societies. The idea of rituals – in past as well as in present-day societies – does not need to be problematic. The definition of a 'ritual' as a combination of demarcated actions to achieve a certain aim (Schjødt 2004: 16) allows for a broad application of this term. The use of 'ritual' for want of alternative explanations, however, needs re-thinking (Thomas 1971: 29; Brück 1999; Gazin-Schwartz 2001: 266; Waddell 2014: 4-5). Regardless of how enigmatic past traditions and customs might appear to the present-day observer, these were the techniques and the knowledge of the time and thus served no less 'functional' purpose than any methods relied on nowadays (Gazin-Schwartz 2001: 266; Scholma-Mason 2016: 52; see also Schjødt 2004). Similar issues can arise with the use of the term 'folklore' (and related terminology), serving as standalone explanations of the enigmatic, where an in-depth examination of context might offer valuable insights. It is, therefore, aimed to provide alternative suggestions concerning past motivations.

1.4 THESIS STRUCTURE

Chapter 2 provides an overview of past approaches to landscapes and re-use. Various approaches to bygone mentalities have emerged over the past decades, largely as a response to interpretative limits of culture historical classifications of the 19th and early 20th centuries. These earlier approaches will be outlined – with focus on the more recent endeavours to adopt phenomenology into archaeology – along with alternative suggestions to reduce the risk of subjectivity in our approaches to bygone mentalities. I will suggest that it is necessary to constantly consult available sources of evidence such as place-names and folklore (and its wider expressions) to substantiate any ideas regarding past mentalities.

Chapter 3 follows on from Chapter 2 in that it discusses the value of folklore in more detail as a means of substantiating our approaches to landscape perceptions. This chapter also defines key terminologies used for the scope of this research. The focus will be placed upon the profound motivations to make sense of our surroundings by the best available and known means. This will form the basis of the argument that 'folkloric' narratives were once not merely entertaining stories, but instead the expressions of such motivations and beliefs (see also Gunnell 2014: 17). This approach also acknowledges the changing role of such narratives and concepts with the decrease of their significance within successive societies, in favour of other coping mechanisms (Thomas 1973: 643; Last 2010: 174-5).

The notions developed in Chapters 2 and 3 will be applied to a Norse Orcadian environment in the case study chapters, Chapter 5 and 6. The case studies were selected to illustrate how a variety of alternative sources can aid in a wide variety of ways where archaeological material is either limited or absent. The key case studies for this research are divided into 'mounds' (Chapter 5) and 'standing stones' (Chapter 6) – umbrella terms for their respective monument types. As pointed out previously, detailed archaeological discussion would distract attention from this key aim. Focus, therefore, is on the way these monuments are represented in folk narratives.

Focusing in detail on two key site types, standing stones and mounds, a wide variety of further folkloric elements from Orkney are not discussed. Several of these are likely to have West-Scandinavian parallels, such as the dangerous water horse 'Nucklavee' (Norw. *Nøkk(en)*, Christiansen 1968: xxxii; Icel. *Nykur*: Simpson 2004: 114), or the 'Selkie Folk', bearing similarities with the Scandinavian *huldre*. Beliefs and traditions connected with natural landscape features have seen extensive study (especially Bradley 2000 and 2017; Lund 2010), and the Orkney archipelago offers a wide range of potentially relevant natural places. This research, however, focuses on the representation of standing stones and mounds in folklore. Such monuments offer an intersection between tangible, purpose-built landmarks and their intangible representation in folklore and place-names. This allowed for an in-depth examination of their representation in Orcadian folklore on the one hand, as well as for a wider contextualisation with parallels from other Norse-settled areas.

Chapter 4 discusses the key sources, including the use of a database supplied by the RCAHMS[9]. In my MSt dissertation (2012) I had piloted the idea of contrasting the folkloric record against GIS distribution and viewshed-analysis maps. In this study, the GIS maps play a significant analytical role. For this research, however, direction was changed, and in Chapter 4 I will discuss why the decision was made to use the GIS maps as illustrative points of reference rather than for analysis. Further sources discussed in Chapter 4 are runic inscriptions, the *Orkneyinga Saga*, and place-names, how they each can benefit this study, and where their individual limits are.

Chapter 5 discusses mounds and their representation in folk narratives. As part of this discussion I wish to propose a tentative 'relative chronology' of three core attitudes towards mounds, building on issues raised by Brendalsmo and Røthe (1992), Myhre (1994) and Atle Omland (2010). Furthermore, having considered Orkney's folk narratives in its wider Nordic context I will suggest the consideration of links between *The Hogboon of Hellihowe* with migratory legend ML6045. This suggestion is based on an approach of Orkney's and Scandinavia's narratives from an archaeological viewpoint, suggesting chronological 'layers' of narrative elements.

Chapter 6 examines standing stones (individual monoliths as well as stone circles) and their representation in folklore. A key point of discussion is the complexity of standing stone-related narratives, especially with regards to their wider origins. The roles of megaliths differ from those played by mounds, and the nature of their links with Scandinavian beliefs can be less clearly traced. Consequently, the standing stones-discussion is of a different nature to the mounds-discussion in Chapter 5. Due to the scarcity of available evidence less depth could be given to individual tales or monuments, and the discussion focuses on issues of polygenetic developments and the merging of different perceptual strands that appear similar.

Finally, Chapter 7 concludes the thesis, summarising key argumentative points and suggestions. Returning to the research questions posed in Chapter 1, the conclusion will not provide specific answers. Instead, the questions will be refined ad expanded on for the benefit of future studies of this, or similar, kind.

Chapter 8, the Postscriptum, briefly summarises the role of illustrations used in this thesis and their overall value as a means of visualising research. This also includes a table of citations.

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[9] The *Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland* (RCAHMS), still active at the start of this research, has since October 2015 been merged with *Historic Scotland*, forming *Historic Environment Scotland* (HES).

1.5 SUMMARY

In this chapter I have introduced various physical aspects of Norse Orkney. These tangible remains present a picture of Norse settlers arriving into a territory of existing communities, and the (re-)use of pre-existing places would indicate a degree of direct interface between Norse colonists and pre-existing groups. This has seen extensive research over the past decades, and has therefore only been re-iterated briefly here. These physical traces, however, remain silent about Norse attitudes towards these existing structures and how these would have become part of quotidian life on Norse Orkney. For more understanding about Norse perceptions towards Orkney's prehistoric landscape to be obtained, the physical archaeological evidence has clear limits. The potential for examining traces of Norse mentality in the intangible data, however, has not seen much study (although see Section 1.3.4 of this chapter). The calls expressed in the past two Research Agendas for a more in-depth inclusion of Orkney's folklore in our studies of Orkney's past have already been noted above, and with this research it is aimed to contribute to a reduction of that gap. In this research, Orkney's folklore plays a major role in an examination of Norse approaches to the ancient landscape, with focus on the representation of standing stones and mounds in selected tales. Place-names are recognised as invaluable sources in the study of past mentalities and are considered at various points, yet to a lesser extent than the folkloric record. This is primarily due to the increasing record of place-name studies by other scholars (*e.g.* Marwick 1947 and 1952; Brink 2008a; Sandnes 2010; Leonard 2010 and 2011), who have extensively qualified their use in studies of the past. Orkney's folklore, on the other hand, whilst having been thoroughly studied as an individual subject (see Chapter 3.4), has not seen an in-depth examination for their value for archaeology (and related studies of the past). In the following two chapters I will discuss existing approaches to the landscape, followed by suggestions to complement landscape studies with the addition of folklore as a means of approaching potential remnants of Norse mentalities.

CHAPTER 2: LANDSCAPES AND PEOPLE

In Chapter 1 I introduced aspects of Orkney's Norse archaeology. As these previous studies demonstrate, archaeological data can shed significant light onto the lives of Norse Orcadians. In isolation, however, physical remains have their limits when it comes to questions regarding beliefs and motivations: what remains open are those aspects of life that leave no tangible traces (Johnson 2010: 13-5; Schjødt 2014: 54). Ideas and beliefs, however, are what shapes the tangible record, both being influenced by and, in turn, influencing the physical surroundings (Childe, private letter, cited in Green 1981: xiii; see also this chapter, Section 2.3). A key factor that underlies this research, therefore, is the human experience in the landscape, and those points where the tangible and the intangible intersect.

As will be discussed in the next section of this chapter, several attempts have been made to 'recreate' past experiences of the landscape by means of introducing the concept of phenomenology into archaeology (see esp. Tilley 1994; Ingold 1993). This has provoked ample debate (*e.g.* Fleming 1999 and 2005). Crucially, a deliberate ignorance of modernity does not automatically free us from present-day perspectives, as these are deeply ingrained (Hodder and Hutson 2003: 119). Any attempts to understand aspects of the past are inevitably flawed by the contemporary and personal biases through which information is filtered (Veyne 1988: 103; Benozzo 2004: 55-7; Frog 2009a: 7). Our present-day perceptions do not adapt seamlessly to past environments, and the same applies to any engagement with the ancient by past societies (*ibid.*, Johnson 2010). Even though vital necessities remain the same, the framework within which these are defined change constantly. Various neurological factors have a vital influence on this issue, although these can only be outlined very briefly here (Section 2.1.2), with the primary purpose of highlighting potential for future research.

2.1 BREAKING OUT OF THE VICIOUS CIRCLE

2.1.1 Working with the intangible

In this section I will discuss past approaches to the landscape and how this research can contribute to these on-going debates. A key part of this discussion focuses on the use of phenomenology in archaeology, highlighting key shortcomings and potentials of this approach. Finally, the potential use of folklore to aid our understanding of past landscapes and attitudes will be brought forward. This critique consists primarily of two core components: Firstly, the issue of setting realistic aims in approaching past mentalities; and secondly, the risk of circularity and subjectivity. Whilst not all phenomenological approaches are equally questionable, there is a need to include more source material to substantiate our own approaches to past landscapes and mentalities. Chapter 3 follows with a more detailed discussion of folklore and its potential for studies of past mentalities.

The idea of studying past mentalities in archaeology has emerged from a development of archaeological thought over several decades. Whilst broader trends in archaeological thinking can perhaps be observed over a wider area, the development of archaeological thought can by no means be understood as universal (Johnson 2010: 30). The discussion in this chapter is therefore primarily focused on approaches to past landscapes within British archaeology. This is a brief overview of key developments in archaeological thought relevant to this discussion, although this is by no means to overlook those scholars that were ahead of their time in suggesting more nuanced approaches with less interpretative boundaries (particularly the work of Gordon Childe and Grahame Clark).

Following 'culture historical' approaches of the early 20th century that largely focused on typologies and classifications often in isolation from their context, the 'New Archaeology' of the 1960s and 70s increasingly favoured scientific methods to provide further context for the physical remains of the past. This evoked a series of critical reactions, attempting to place the individual human experience back into the forefront of attention (*e.g.* Hodder 1982; Shanks and Tilley 1987), which has since given rise to a wide variety of archaeological theories (Hodder 2005: 211). Importantly, over the course of these developments the landscape transformed from a mere backdrop to the focus of scholarly attention. The 1990s saw an increase in individualised approaches, with Tim Ingold and Christopher Tilley's (1993 and 1994 respectively) widely debated endeavours to adopt phenomenology into archaeology. Importantly, all these approaches were crucial steps towards more nuanced understandings of the past, within which the landscape played an active part (Tilley 1994: 25). Despite – or perhaps because of – their flaws these discussions paved ways that enabled on-going researchers to define more rigorous studies of past perceptions (esp. the work of Sarah Semple, Richard Bradley and Howard Williams; Edmonds 1999; Thäte 2007a and 2007b). Alongside these thorough works, however, there are remaining problems that need to be discussed, before adding further suggestions. Here I wish to discuss the widely-debated concept of phenomenology, and its shortcomings and values for archaeology. By examining past mentalities towards the landscape, this research, too, touches upon aspects of phenomenology, and an awareness of potential risks and flaws is therefore essential.

Trusting our own senses?

Within its archaeological context phenomenology is largely understood as "*A set of theoretical approaches through which attempts are made to understand the way in which people experience the world they create and inhabit*" (Darvill 2008: 344). However, to date there has been little agreement on its role within archaeology, and phenomenology does not represent a single, unified, school of thought. This has led to phenomenology being regarded as an insufficiently defined and subjective area (*cf.* Fleming 1999 and 2005; *contra* Hamilton *et al.* 2006: 31). Philosophies concerned with the issue of perception and the reliability of our senses can already be traced back to Hellenistic Scepticism (Lee 2010: 13), and whilst the philosophical concept (and term) of *Phänomenologie* stems from 18th-century Germany – including the works of Kant, Hegel and Lambert – its adoption into archaeology generally draws from Heidegger's work (esp. 1927). Building on this, Tilley's and Ingold's theories (1994 and 1993 respectively) sparked a widely divisive debate concerning the applicability of phenomenology to archaeological theory, attracting at least as many opponents as supporters. Sue Hamilton laments the "*outright hostility*" towards this concept whilst reiterating its validity as an "*alternative framework for investigating* […] *past lives*" (Hamilton *et al.* 2006: 31-2). Importantly, her argument focuses primarily on what phenomenology *could* contribute to archaeology rather than on what it – in most cases – *actually* adds: phenomenology indeed has the *potential* to be a promising alternative to traditional archaeological theories, yet before it can be widely recognised as such there is need for refining its definition.

Issues of translation, and consequently a diffusion of focus, might lie at the core of this issue: As mentioned above, phenomenology is an anglicised version of a philosophical term coined in 18th-century Germany, with a Greek etymology. Even the seemingly direct translation of such a term does not necessarily mean that its underlying mentality is also sustained – an issue relevant to any translation. In addition to this, converting *Phänomenologie* from philosophy into archaeology comes with a switch between schools of thought, compounding the issue of 'translation' and understanding further. *Phänomenologie,* in its essence, is concerned with questions regarding existence, '*Da sein*', in general – a concept that is not entirely out of place, yet also not necessarily central to, approaching past mentalities and landscapes. This has led to an ill-(re)defined concept that lacks overarching consensus of what its purpose in Archaeology is meant to be. Whilst such approaches have yielded crucial starting points for further deliberation and a reconsideration of aspects that might have otherwise been taken for granted (*e.g.* Ingold 2010: 253; Brück 1999), not all of these ideas are equally consistent. What the majority of sources have in common is that the application of Phenomenology to archaeological case studies is mostly subjective. Rather than being drawn from external factors and sources, a more or less unbroken succession of postulates and personal impressions forms the core argument, whilst conclusions are based almost entirely on ideas stemming from this succession rather than on a consultation of external sources. This is akin to a 'vicious circle' (Fig. 2.1). Postulated 'references' to natural features by monuments as well as 'correlations' between monuments and features that were, in all likelihood, arbitrary rather than intentional were brought to our attention by Andrew Fleming (2005: 921), whilst Bjørnar Olsen notes that phenomenology is, in fact, a perception of the surroundings at present rather than helpful in a recreation of past observations (2010: 66). Richard Bradley comments on the scholarly misunderstandings concerning proposed similarities between prehistoric monuments and natural rock outcrops across Britain (1998a; for a similar critique see Scarre 2011: 13-4), and Philip Rahtz succinctly summarises theories concerning the Glastonbury "*zodiac*" and how the impact of more recent centuries on the landscape will have added significantly to these allegedly 'ancient' figures (1993: 50). The propensity of the human brain to optically construe visual data as something familiar – faces, figures, creatures, or objects – is a well-known neurological phenomenon, and is already evidenced by various forms of ancient rock art from across the world (Alpert 2008: 78-82, 119). Such impressions are interpreted with connotations that are subjective to the individual. In light of this, caution needs to prevail before entire theories concerning past perceptions are built onto a basis of mostly subjective associations – a balance needs to be found within which aspects of our own world-view can be an aid rather than a distraction (Schjødt 2014: 53-4). It is crucial to continuously pierce this 'vicious circle' and to continue basing our conclusions on relevant external factors, where available, that provide a more solid basis for our interpretations (Fig 2.2). Unless theories become more firmly embedded into the wider context of bygone societies – considering their conceptual framework and social structures – the criticism of subjectivity in Phenomenology will persist with good reason.

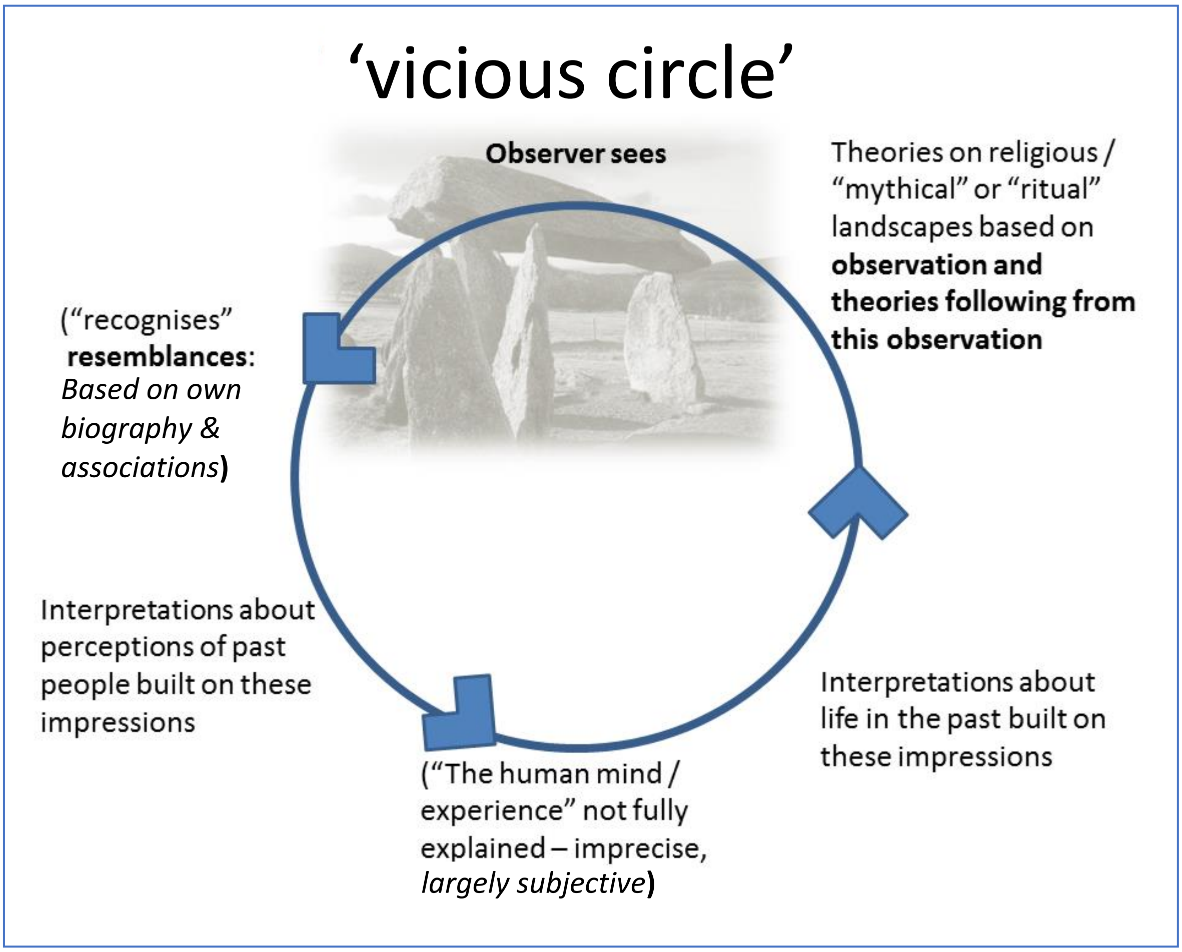


Fig. 2.1 Interpretations based on an unbroken chain of subjective observation and interpretation. The biography of the observer is a prime influence.

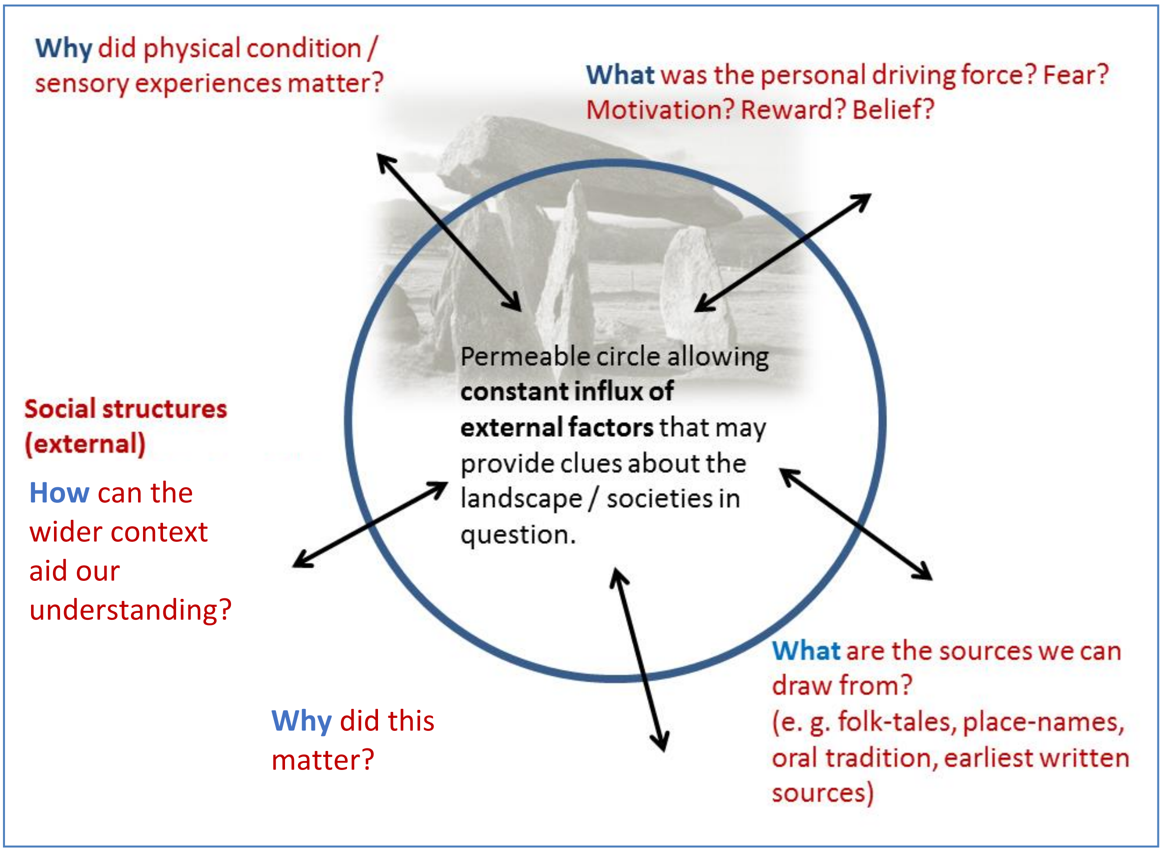


Fig. 2.2 *Ideally*: Interpretations based on an on-going dialogue between the physical observation and existing sources to substantiate ideas. The biography of the observer still influences any interpretation, yet under consideration of more external factors.

2.1.2 The physicality of the mind.

Progress has been made in this direction during the past decade with scholars urging that more factors should be taken into consideration. Joanna Brück proposed that physical state and sensory experiences should be taken into account in order to avoid simplification (2005). Barbara Bender notes the need to *"recognize that people, things, places are always in process"*, calling for the recognition of exceptions rather than norms and permeable instead of static perceptive boundaries (2006: 310). Critical discussions such as these have brought significant progress to archaeological phenomenology by recognising the risk of simplification as well as initiating a crucial step towards breaking the circularity. Nonetheless, these factors, too, are still at risk of becoming drawn into the 'vicious circle' if not rooted in, or connected with, relevant outer factors. For example, it is necessary to not only consider how the physical state impacts on the landscape experience as such, but also how this influences the neurological processing of what is seen. This includes, for instance, not only the question of whether people in the past had good or bad eyesight, but also everything in between: A slight myopia, otherwise not impacting daily tasks, would be enough to mistake things and movements in the distance for whatever the brain choses to turn it into: Flickering fire reflected on the uneven surface of standing stones in the dark can easily become dancing giants or trolls, if such concepts are ingrained into the mentality of the observer, and socially deemed a plausible phenomenon. A further issue is that of the social role of injury or bodily mutilations: Was injury seen as punishment by higher forces, or did it raise the status of the injured individual (Evans 2013; see also Sweet 2001: 142, 146)? How did injury impact on the ability of this individual to fulfil tasks and survive? Were they dependent upon their ability to undertake these tasks themselves, or were there others who could provide for them? How would this, in turn, have linked back into the social context of the time?

Whilst the surroundings and the overall bodily constitution of the perceiver are essential elements in landscape experience, there is no clear consensus about how the 'mind' is to be defined. This, however, is crucial to our understanding of past perceptions. Consequently, much room still exists for broad, unspecific interpretations which, in turn, weakens the basis for any resulting arguments. Discussions about the human 'mind' often portray it as playing a mostly passive role. The human being in the landscape, however, does not solely represent a passive *"medium through which* […] *engagement* [with the landscape] *occurs"* (Barrett and Ko 2009: 280). The way people perceive their environment is largely regulated by the sensory experiences we receive and the physical processing of these that follows, which in turn shapes actions and thoughts (see Cavalli-Sforza cited in Zipes 2006: xiii; Maschner and Marler 2010: 109). The value of more focus on the way people change neurologically depending on external conditions – both social and environmental – has in recent decades seen acknowledgment by archaeologists (*see esp.* Hodder and Hutson 2003: 117-8; Gosden 2008: 2010; Renfrew 2012: 130) and it may represent a key aspect of the 'missing link' between people in past landscapes and the fiercely debated phenomenological theories. The impact of our surroundings on our neurological composition has been extensively researched in other fields. A good example for such studies is MRI neuroimaging, which involves testing magnetic resonance in the bloodstream to map activated parts of the brain under selected conditions (Grön *et al.* 2000, cited by Maschner and Marler 2010: 115; see also Renfrew 2012: 130). Chris Gosden refers to existing studies revealing the strongly developed right hippocampus of a London taxi driver, the result of memorising various complex routes through London (2008: 2005). Studies like these underline how the social and natural environment constantly reshapes our neurological composition and this, in turn, effects the choices we make and the way we perceive our surroundings (Gosden 2008: 2010; Hölzel *et al.* 2011: 36-43; Bloch 2013: 7-9). Approaches to past mentalities would benefit much from more co-operation between Humanities and fields such as Neuroscience and Psychology (for an effective example see Alpert 2008). Given that this transgresses into disciplines that lie far outside the boundaries of this research, however, these issues cannot be examined in-depth here. This very brief outline, therefore, is primarily to acknowledge the wide variety of factors that impact our sensory experiences and our perceptions. More co-operation with these fields, however, should be encouraged as these might be able to add valuable insights to studies of landscape perceptions, and another peg to break up the 'vicious circle'.

Summary

Approaches to past landscapes and experiences need a constant dialogue with available sources that can further substantiate our interpretations. Here I have outlined earlier approaches to past landscapes and phenomenology, along with key methodological flaws, especially the problem of circularity and personal bias. Further factors that influence the way we perceive our surroundings were briefly highlighted as part of this. In the further course of this chapter I will discuss physical traces of past engagements with the landscape, best manifested in – although not limited to – the re-use of sites. Chapter 3 will follow on to discuss how the inclusion of folklore in this research aims to take phenomenological approaches to the landscape further, under consideration of additional sources that can permeate into the ‘vicious circle’.

2.2 RE-USE

A key factor that needs to be considered in landscape studies is that meanings, as highlighted earlier on, are not static (Chapter 1). Whenever an initial source of narratives and concepts is cut off, places and concepts are inevitably invested with new meanings (Tilley 1994: 36). These new meanings, as it is the case with any kind of “*misreading*”[1] (Bloom 1997: xix, 5, 30), depend almost entirely on the society that re-invents them and their corresponding association and ideology (Frog 2009a). Before discussing the notion of re-use there is a need to briefly outline existing scholarly debates on the subject of re-use and the re-appropriation of sites and landscapes. The notion of re-use of ancient monuments in the past is a topic that has increasingly gained scholarly interest over the last two decades. More recent scholarly work has highlighted the growing interest in past mentalities and perceptions of landscapes and monuments. Among these are Sarah Semple’s work on changing landscape perceptions in Anglo-Saxon England, and John Waddell’s recent publication on links between Celtic[2] Mythology and Irish prehistory (2014). These contributions to archaeology are crucial as they represent an impulse to move away from largely subjective discussions, and towards more informed, multidimensional perspectives that are based on surviving traces of past mentalities.

2.2.1 Past Perceptions of ancient monuments: Previous studies.

Parallel with the development of alternative approaches to the landscape the 1990s saw an increasing interest in the re-use of ancient monuments in the past, with particular focus on Anglo-Saxon England. Key scholars to initiate and drive this debate forward are Howard Williams from 1997, and Sarah Semple from 1998 onwards, constantly up-dating their arguments with on-going publications. James Whitley criticises approaches to past landscapes for placing too much focus on ancestral links

[1] The notion of “*misreading*”, as defined by Harold Bloom, does not equate with ‘not-comprehending’, but instead denotes two people understanding the same subject slightly differently due to their individual biographies.

[2] For the context of this research, ‘Celtic’ is defined as the language (Goidelic and Brithonic), and therewith also aspects of wider customs and notions, that preceded the Irish, Scots Gaelic, Manx, Cornish, Welsh and Breton (Darvill 2008: 81-2). Gaelic, where used, is viewed as a descendant of Celtic (*ibid.*). Quotation marks will henceforth not be used, unless in citation.

rather than other associations with ancient sites and landscapes (2002). These concerns, however, have not found much support and importantly, even ancestral explanations contain a wide range of associated interpretations that are by no means one-sided (*cf.* Semple 2013: chp. 3). Semple in particular has drawn attention to the value of intangible sources, such as place-names and folklore in addition to the archaeological record, in examining the changing nature of landscape perceptions through time. Especially in her more recent work she highlights how both time and region had a significant impact on the ways monuments were re-appropriated, serving various local as well as larger-scale agendas (2009: 45 and 2013: 157), and that neither mere "*labour saving*" (through re-using pre-existing structures) nor solely a "*legitimisation of power*" (through using conspicuous monuments) are sufficient interpretations alone of a phenomenon existing for several centuries and covering extensive geographical areas (see also Thäte 2007b: 280). An alternative suggestion to these is the significance of creating links with the (idealised) past (McLeod 2015). These discussions coalesce with an increasing demand to move away from 'culture-historic' labels (Lucy 2002: 72), instead focusing on alternative explanations for remains from the past and the context within which they were found. These developments are crucial for our understanding of past societies, as they bring the human element back into focus.

The occurrence of monument re-use across early medieval Europe highlights that one answer does not suffice for such a large and widespread record. The re-use of monuments in Scandinavia has been studied by Eva Thäte (2007a and 2007b), and Atle Omland has extensively studied the perception of South-West Norwegian mounds into recent times and how local beliefs have influenced the treatment of such sites (2008 and esp. 2010). The re-use and perception of ancient sites on Orkney, however, has seen comparably little attention apart from work undertaken by Eva Thäte (2007), Alison Leonard (2010 and 2011) and in my MSt dissertation (2012). Importantly, the gap left by a lack of written primary sources for Norse attitudes on Orkney cannot simply be filled with attitudes inferred from studies into Anglo-Saxon perceptions – whilst there will be overlap, the ideational framework will have differed significantly (Sanmark 2010; Semple 2011: 188). An examination of alternative sources, therefore, is even more crucial within Orkney, as the archipelago will have had a significantly different societal environment.

2.2.2 Defining re-use

The phrase "*the past in the past*" was coined by Richard Bradley in *World Archaeology* (1998a), denoting a conscious engagement of past societies with ancient remains. This is largely represented in the archaeological record through evidence of monument re-use. Before analysing any occurring cases of monument re-use on Orkney in specific, however, the term 're-use' needs to be defined more clearly. After all, every successive generation is inevitably constructing its buildings over existing layers of previous activity. As a result, every inhabitable part of this earth is a palimpsest – constantly being 're-used' (Bender 2006: 304), yet not all of this is relevant to this discussion. It is the *intentional* re-use and perception of places that is of interest in this research.

Fig. 2.3 Settling amidst the remains of the past: Farmstead built on Norse grounds, with the prehistoric tomb of Midhowe (dome-covered) in the background. SW coast of Rousay. *Photo: Author*

As part of her work on monument re-use in Scandinavia, Northern Germany and Scotland (2007a; 2007b) Eva Thäte sets out a tentative definition of "*monument re-use*", distinguishing between "*re-use*" and "*continuity*" as defined by "*chronological succession*" of use and a "*break or gap*" between uses respectively (2007b: 8). She generally defines a "*break or gap*" by "*at least one archaeological period*" between two phases of using, with a minimum of 200 years depending on the site and the density of each phase's occupation (*ibid.*: 9). Whilst it is plausible to define a gap by a considerable amount of time, the disadvantage of this approach is that archaeological periods are defined by much later applied terminologies that have little to no relevance to the past societies they represent. In addition to this, period names are neither definite nor universally useable, as they can vary between countries, as Thäte points out herself (*ibid.*: 10). In addition to this, the decision of how to classify an archaeological period or society depends largely on research questions and available material (for a good example see Christiansen 2002: 7). Adding to this the uncertainties regarding radiocarbon dates – such as mixed charcoal, marine bias, and wide standard deviations – physical phases are not as clearly cut as they might appear on paper.

There is sufficient indication that pre-existing monuments were approached in the past with some awareness of the different age of monuments (see esp. Bradley 2002). Importantly, the way in which differentiation between stages of antiquity happened in the past and how the lapse of time was perceived needs to be examined. Bradley differentiates between time as a *measured* entity and as an entity that is *experienced* (1998b: 86-7), drawing attention to Braudel's (1969) differentiation between time as measured by recurring environmental changes as well as by social events and significant personalities (*ibid.*: 87). These two significant strands of time perception cross, for instance, by means of traditions recurring in cyclic manners, where environmental and socially defined benchmarks interlace. As argued by Gosden, frequently recurring traditions and the maintenance of socially meaningful monuments within past societies are key indicators of an awareness of an ancient past (Gosden and Lock 1998: 2-11). Within the same volume, as well as in his later publication, *The Past in Prehistoric Societies*, Richard Bradley acknowledges not only an awareness of history in past societies, but also the ability to distinguish between the different monuments of these bygone societies (2002: 126). Bradley thereby builds this upon his argument that the need for creating links with the ancestors and the surrounding environment is a vital part of human existence, which he sees mirrored in the landscapes prehistoric people have left behind (2002: esp. chapters 2-4). Eva Thäte brings a similar theory forward from the context of medieval Sweden, by noting that people at Johannishus and Sannagård chose monuments "*closer to their own time*" rather than from a more distant past to bury their dead (2007b: 280). Even though this appears to be the opposite phenomenon in terms of treatment of more recent versus more ancient remains, it nevertheless underlines the overall awareness past societies had of elements from the past in the landscape as well as of different stages of age. Bradley's notion of "*landscapes of memory*" (2002: 33) illustrates a deeply rooted human motivation that applies to all human societies, from the prehistoric up to the present ones, where the selective choice of historical or mythological roots plays a key role. Whilst claims to supernatural ancestors are perhaps best known from the self-deification of early Roman dictators or the mythic lineage claimed by early Germanic rulers (Wallace-Hadrill 1971: 8, 14), Bradley underlines how the need for establishing a shared origin as a means of grounding oneself is a motivation shared across all strata of past societies, not limited to the ruling classes alone (Bradley 2002: 17). The core intention behind this phenomenon is establishing identity and social belonging across the ranks of societies rather than solely the legitimisation of power for high status individuals (see also Wilson 1975: 131; Steinsland 2008; Semple 2013), and is a phenomenon continuing into the present day (Omland 2008: 376). These two intentions, however, are similar in their core: The drive to ground oneself in the surrounding environment, which encompasses features left behind by ancestors or of assumed divine or supernatural origins, forms part of deeply rooted human motivations and plays a great role in people's everyday life and coping mechanisms (Semple 2013). Thäte, too, reiterates the need for individuals and groups - especially in times of significant socio-political change - to be able to link themselves to known traditions and strongholds of identity (2007b: 279; see also Hedeager 1992: 294) through the creation of direct links with the past for current situations. Crucially, the majority of scholars concur with the notion that reasons behind the re-use of places cannot be limited to one explanation (Thäte 2007b: 280; Semple 2009).

Material evidence for re-use and continuity

Many of Orkney's Norse sites incorporate earlier structures. Such activity largely manifests itself through *a)* secondary burials in ancient (abandoned) sites, and *b)* through the active continuation or takeover of pre-existing places that are still actively in use by other groups. A third option would include 'negative' activity, *c)* the avoidance of particular sites, however this is more challenging to determine archaeologically. It has already been discussed here (Chapter 1) and elsewhere (Graham-Campbell and Batey 1998: chp. 9; Leonard 2010: 56, 70) that much of Orkney's Norse activity can be observed at, or near, Iron Age sites. Examples include Howe, Stromness (Graham-Campbell 1998: 60), the Broch of Gurness (Batey 2002: 186; Armit 2003: 138), Pool, Sanday (Hunter *et al.* 1990), and the area of Birsay (Curle 1982; Griffiths 2006; Leonard 2010 and 2011). Adding further to this picture, the latest discovery of an Orcadian boat burial and a further inhumation with grave goods were discovered on the island of Papa Westray in 2015, both dating to the Norse period (Towrie 2015a and 2015b). Intriguingly, these burials were discovered in an area that also yielded Early- to Late Iron Age burials, indicating a cemetery that was in use for several centuries (Gibson cited in Towrie 2015b). Similarly, the boat burial at Scar, Sanday, was built over an existing stone structure – a stone cairn or possible boat noust – (Dalland 1992: 5; Dalland 1999: 24), as well as being partly set against an earlier stone wall, from which material was dated to the later Iron Age (calAD427-638) (Fig. 2.4). Such earlier activity is not always straightforward to detect (Leonard 2010: 70; for a West-Scandinavian parallel see Thäte 2007b: 276). Norse re-use of earlier prehistoric (Neolithic or Bronze Age) structures, however, is rare and tends to primarily occur in a secondary manner – that is, where earlier prehistoric structures show Iron Age use. Prior to the Norse occupation at Howe the Neolithic structure had already been re-used during the Iron Age as a souterrain (Ballin Smith 1994; MacKie 2002: 219). It is widely agreed that such activity was not merely utilitarian, but more likely to have been linked to beliefs within which subterranean spaces held a spiritual significance, particularly when regarding the otherwise impractical spatial layout of many sites (MacKie 2002: 219; Armit 2003: 111; Waddell 2014: 65). Adjacent to the chamber cairn of Quanterness an Atlantic roundhouse was built, and here, too, the chamber was re-used as a potential souterrain (MacKie 2002: 244; Armit 2003: 111). The SW coastal strip of Rousay is dense with sites ranging from the Neolithic to the Norse period, including several brochs (see Figs. 2.5, 2.6. and 2.7). Even earlier than these, the Neolithic chamber cairn of Maeshowe overlies at least two earlier prehistoric structures, including a potential house and possibly a stone circle (Challands *et al.* 2005: 242-4). This is an intriguing account of very early re-use activity, as well as signalling the continued importance of these places over a long time-span. Given the prominence of Maeshowe even today, the significance of this site perhaps never fully ceased (although the initial reasons for the site's importance are no longer known). It becomes prevalent that, whilst there are Norse adaptations to the nature of re-use, the phenomenon of gravitation towards older sites, their re-use and continuity, forms part of long-standing motivations towards places, likely as old as mankind (see esp. Edmonds 1999).

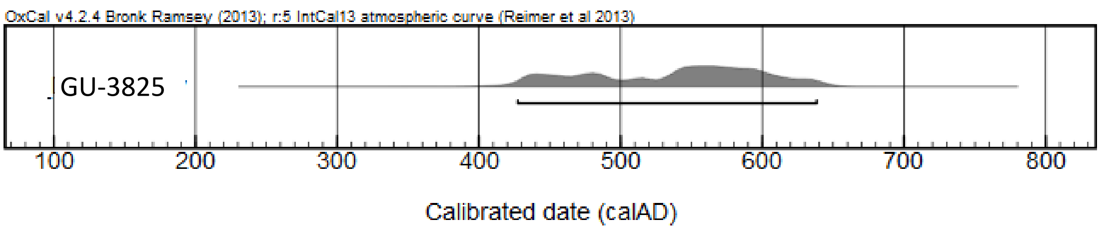


Fig. 2.4 Radiocarbon date, cattle bone from the rubble of the wall against which the Norse boat burial of Scar was set (after Dalland 1999: 25, 162).

Fig. 2.5 View along the SW coast of Rousay. Whilst the visible remains are from the 18th-century farm of Skaill, these were built directly over Norse farms. Note the prehistoric cairn of Midhowe (domed) in the far back. *Photo: Author*

Fig. 2.6 The stalled tomb of Midhowe (domed), with the broch of Midhowe directly behind, and the broch of North Howe (overgrown) further in the background. *Photo: Author*

Fig. 2.7 Midhowe Broch, an Iron Age addition to the prehistoric landscape of Rousay. The name implies an appearance as a mound during Norse times. *Photo: Author*.

A further important notion is that re-use and continuity is not limited to ancient sites alone, as it is also observed in agriculture. For instance, Sanday's prosperous cultivation of barley during the Norse period is likely to have been a direct continuation of a pre-existing, flourishing agronomy (Marwick 1952: 6; Owen and Dalland 1999: 5). In addition to this, petrological studies on pottery from the multi-period site at Pool, Sanday, suggest that the same local clay source was used from the Neolithic into the Norse period (Hunter *et al.* 1990: 188), and the long-standing use of red sandstone from Eday has already been mentioned in Chapter 1. Whilst the idea of a long-standing tradition could be highlighted in such cases, the practical element would seem equally – if not more – likely: if there is a good source of raw material, a functioning agricultural practice, and network for distribution, there is not much reason for a sudden disruption. Whilst there is a need to acknowledge the variety of reasons for re-use and continuation, a more intriguing question is whether there are ways to differentiate between motivations – practical or emotive – and whether there are clues in the tangible and intangible record that might substantiate this further.

2.2.3 The idealised past – risks and relevance.

The relevance of a selective approach to the past…

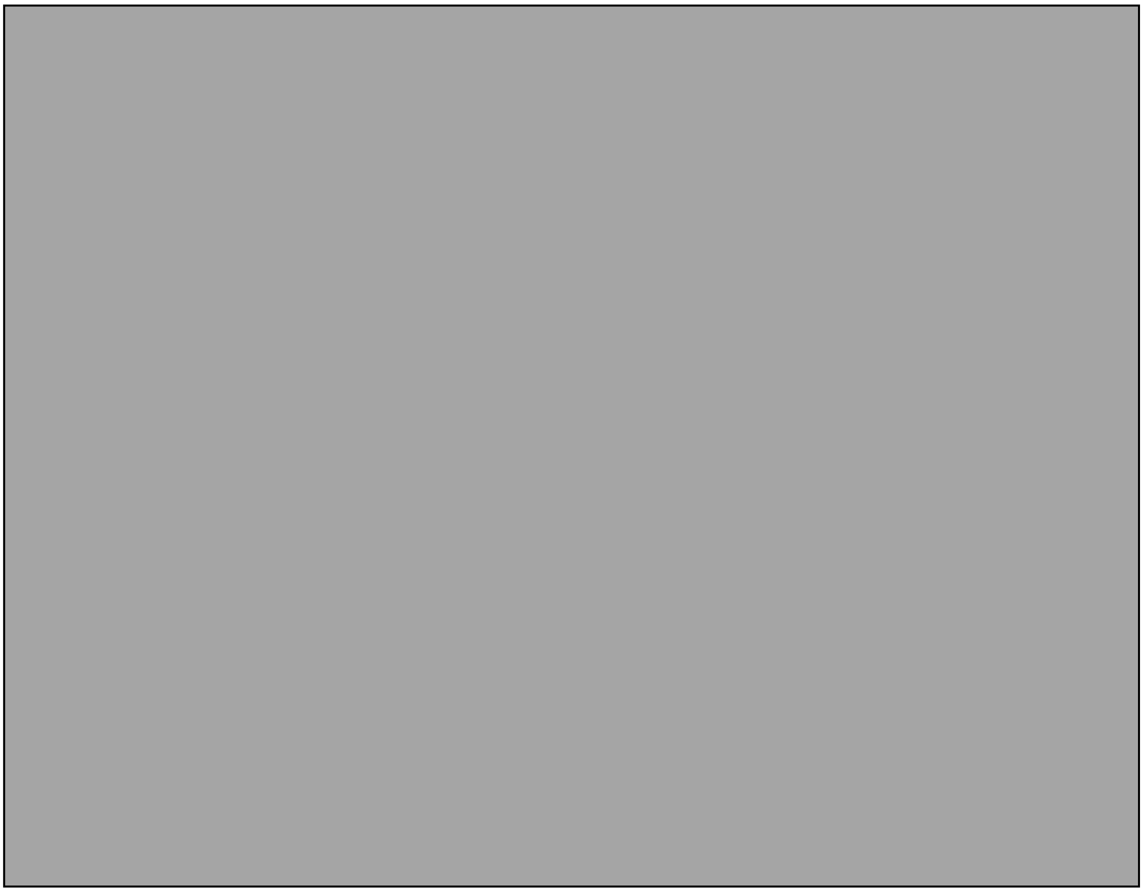


Fig. 2.8 'Vikings' in the streets of Kirkwall, August 2013, not an unusual sight for present-day Orkney and Shetland. *Photo: Author*

The relevance of an idealised, even a created, past is an issue of bygone as well as present-day societies (see *e.g.* Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983: 9; Thomson 2001: 445; Mitchell 2007: 154). Created pasts, whichever form they take, are not static (Semple and Sanmark 2010: 114). They inevitably vary over time up until a point at which they become re-invented again, a process during which their meaning might even completely invert (Gamboni 2001). Ashby's and Schofield's article *Hold the Heathen Hammer High* (2014), addressing 'Pagan' Metal bands and their links with aspects from the past, examines how even today the folk tales and concepts of Early Medieval Europe are maintained by re-invention and re-interpretation (2014: 16-7). Inevitably, this brings with it a selective choice of what aspects to represent and re-invent. The scrutinised accuracy of historic details is not of key importance for their present-day significance. Instead, highlighting those parts with which contemporaneous societies can identify is key in maintaining and nurturing interest in the past (*ibid.*). With this argument, Ashby and Schofield highlight a crucial point. As discussed above, creating links with the distant past through re-invention is not a novel phenomenon of our present-day society. Each re-invention of the past will have been filtered by the societal mindset of its time, either through deliberate agenda or unaware, yet nonetheless delivering a credible account to its audience (Veyne 1988: 103-4). In light of this, the past can be understood as 'renewable' to a degree, being re-written depending on the *Zeitgeist* of its time (*ibid.*; Holtorf 2005: 132; Fowler 2013: 241-2). Perhaps the idea of total accuracy even becomes (partly) redundant: the inevitable differences in the neurological composition of people from separate periods in time (this chapter, Section 2.1.2; see also Bloom 1997; Frog 2009a) would make it almost impossible to fully re-create an 'accurate' experience of the past.

Whilst I would prefer to be cautious in comparing the re-use of prehistoric monuments by the Norse and by post-medieval 'Druids' too closely, the latter do provide an intriguing picture of the ways people cope with remnants of an unknown past (Mitchell 2007: 156-7). Intriguingly, in spite of scientific explanations of ancient sites, a significant number of people still prefer to adhere to alternative means of interpretation (Rahtz 1993: 132; Mitchell 2007: 157). In accepting such views as alternatives to scholarly debates, they offer valuable insights into the deeply rooted emotive ways of coping with the unknown that have occupied mankind from the very beginning. Neo-Druidism is the best-known term associated with some of these present-day notions, although it would be a simplification to put all neo-pagan groups into one category (*cf.* Green 2002: 170). Prominent sites that have become linked with these customs are Stonehenge and Avebury, despite the lack of evidence for actual links with ancient druidism there. These are only two out of countless sites of importance (*cf.* Green 2002: 171-6). Notably, Neo-Druidism in itself is already several centuries old, with Druidic orders established in Britain and France during the 18th and 19th centuries (Green 2002: 147), with possible earlier activity, as indicated by an inscribed gravestone from Dijon, France, delivering a *terminus ante quem* for the term 'druids' of sometime before AD1624 (Green 2002: 142). Such activity has largely been viewed as a means of re-invigorating an area's cultural identity whilst being separate from Christianity (Green 2002: 143, 152-3). Megalithic monuments were focal points for traditional activities, and follies were constructed as a means of immersion into an idealised past (Green 2002: 145). Glastonbury Tor and Abbey are further notorious places with powerful effects on a large number of present-day pilgrims and those of preceding centuries (Rahtz 1993: 10, 42, 131-2; Green 2002: 170). The notably Christian nature of Glastonbury's mythology might be due to a very early arrival of Christianity there, as indicated by 5th- to 7th-century settlement evidence and Mediterranean pottery (Rahtz 1993: 55), perhaps representing ecclesiastical endeavours to extinguish 'pagan' customs considerably earlier than elsewhere.

A further notable re-invention of past customs is Up Helly Aa, Shetland's annual 'Viking'-themed festival. This event was founded in 1880 and does not claim to have any ancient roots even with Norse settlement in the Isles (Gazin-Schwartz and Holtorf: 1999: 12-3; Smith 2009-2016). Despite this, however, the festival can still be viewed as a creation of links with the Isles' Norse past by means that are comprehensible and enjoyable for present-day attendees. Over time an interest in this event has steadily grown not only among Shetlanders: an increasing number of people travel to Shetland specifically for the festival, leading to the inclusion of new traditions (*ibid.*) and the inclusion of official institutions in the procedures (Up Helly Aa Committee 2009-2016). Notably, the festival is now in its second century, with ancestors within living memory having taken part in previous proceedings (Smith 2009-2016). Consequently, the festival itself can be viewed as a historical tradition in its own right, rather than being solely about the idealised Norse. Events such as these demonstrate very clearly the on-going enthusiasm with which aspects of the past – especially a re-invented past – are embraced, and with likelihood forming an intrinsic part of human nature.

…and its risks

As shown above, claimed entitlements to a certain identity or heritage will usually remain relatively innocuous or even beneficial to groups or individuals, when kept within moderate boundaries. The flipside of this, however, also comes in various stages:

Romanticised views on the past can bear the risk of hindering, rather than progressing, social and/or political causes. An Orcadian example would be A. W. Johnston, best known as the founder of the *Viking Club* (now the *Viking Society for Northern Research*), who drew heavily on romanticised interpretations of the Norse and their legal organisation in the foundation of the *Udal League* (Thomson 1981: 151). This was to support Orkney crofters in their on-going struggles for rights and improved living conditions during the late 19th century (*ibid.*: 151-2). Johnston's approach, however fervent, was to no great avail, as his representations of the idealised Norse did not match the socio-political reality of the time and thus did not find the widespread support it needed (*ibid.*: 152).

The greatest downside of a re-appropriated past, however, is the risk of abuse on a bigger social scale: more recent history has witnessed several cases where claims of historical identity have taken severe and dangerous forms. This includes the abuse of selective identity in political propaganda and claims for ownership of geographical territory by Nazis and Neo-Nazis (Müller-Wille 1996; Schmidt and Halle 1999; Richards 2005: 123-4), or the destruction of the 12th-century Fantoft stavechurch out of "*heathen consciousness*" in 1992 (Pluskovski 2011: 1038). The abuse of cultural narratives for the same purpose goes hand in hand with this (Zipes 2006: 239). Whenever such links with chosen aspects from the past are made, they are selective re-inventions of a kind that suit the individuals or groups for personal, social or political purposes (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983: 9; Brendalsmo and Røthe 1992: 86), and are not a holistic representation of the subject.

2.3 SUMMARY

I have highlighted previous approaches to landscape experiences and re-use along with emphasising the necessity to strengthen theories concerning past mentalities. The much-debated concept of phenomenology in archaeological landscape studies has, despite its flaws, raised important issues regarding ways we can study and represent bygone mentalities. If anything, the varying quality of phenomenological approaches to past landscapes has led to a rigorous reconsideration of its use in archaeology. Crucially, the absence of surviving testaments to past attitudes should not be regarded as a *carte blanche* for speculations under the guise of scientific fact. Any such approaches, therefore, need to be substantiated by external sources to avoid conclusions that are either too imprecise ('ritual' without further deliberation) or (as demonstrated through the 'vicious circle', Section 2.1) detailed, yet largely speculative. Whilst neurological differences between present-day and past societies are an important factor to consider, this cannot be considered in-depth in this research. It is, however, raised as a suggestion to include such contributions in future studies of past landscape approaches.

This research aims to support the use of intangible sources that might encapsulate aspects of past mentalities. These include above all folkloric narratives and, to a lesser extent, place-names, although any questions linked with these go beyond the dichotomy between known written narratives and their oral predecessors in isolation. In the following chapters I wish to outline that, rather than taking the folk narratives themselves for granted, the reasons behind their creation need foremost attention. The expressions of past belief and knowledge that are encapsulated in folklore have also found their way into material culture (*e.g.* imagery on artefacts: Kaul *et al.* 1991; Waddell 2014: 42-3, 167; Brink 2007: 106), as well as in the more abstract expressions in runic inscriptions (Chapter 4). These are further indications of long-standing and ingrained cultural notions and beliefs that go far beyond mere entertaining stories. The necessity to maintain and create links with the past is a widespread phenomenon and plays a significant role in the way people's attitudes to ancient places are approached in this research.

The second part of the chapter has dealt with the phenomenon of site re-use and continuity. Whilst a factor present for Norse Orkney – especially at sites with Iron Age activity, where discernible – this, too, forms part of a deeply rooted behaviourism that has already been observed in various prehistoric societies (Section 2.2.2) and elsewhere in the world (see contributions to Bradley and Williams 1998 and to Aldrich and Wallis 2009). Such patterns of gravitation towards existing sites will have had both utilitarian and emotive reasons (Semple 2009; Thäte 2007a and 2007b), at times overlapping. These physical landmarks are reminders of past ideas and beliefs, whilst invoking incentives to connect with this past (Edmonds 1999: 134; Brink 2013: 35; Waddell 2014: 25). In the following chapters, it is Orkney's folklore that I will turn to for an examination of potentially encapsulated fragments of such bygone memories.

CHAPTER 3
ARCHAEOLOGICAL LANDSCAPES AND FOLKLORE

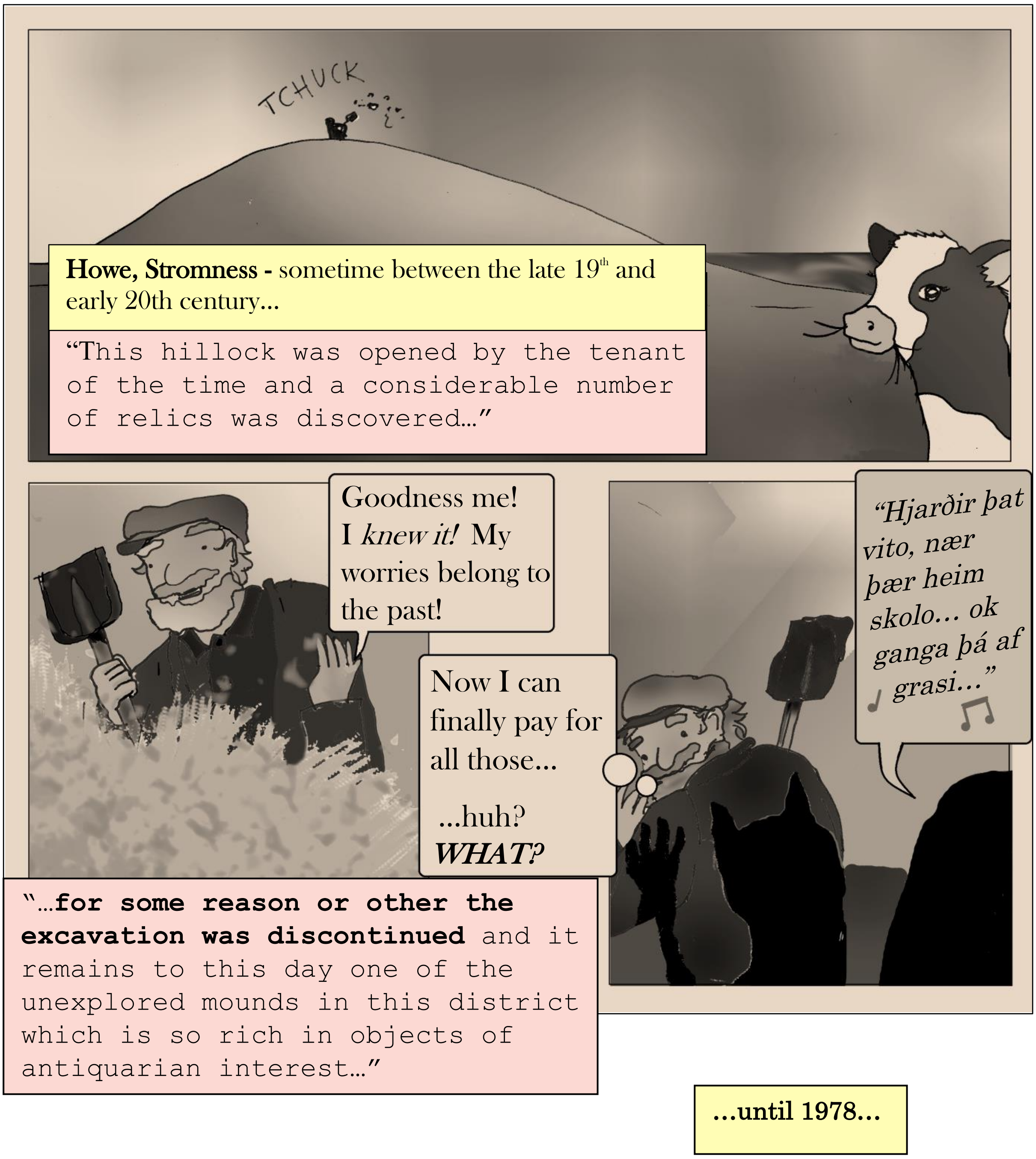


Plate 2 *Go home!* Based on and citing Marwick 1928: 121 (own emphasis in bold); Hávamál: 21 *("Cattle know when it is time to go home and then they leave their pasture…"*, translation by D. E. M. Clarke, 1923). All quotation marks indicate verbatim citations. See Chapter 8 for full citations and background information. *Drawn by the author.*

"THE INHABITANTS DON'T MUCH LIKE FINDING THESE BURIALS"

Eliza D'Oyley Burroughs (1898, cited in Reynolds 1985: 119)

Excavations at Howe, Stromness, in 1978 were interrupted by the peripheral gusts of an Atlantic hurricane, only shortly after the mound was opened (Tom Muir pers. comm. 2013). During this storm, a large part of the archaeological equipment and finds – including skeletal remains likely from a Norse burial in the upper stratum (Ballin Smith 1994: 120) – were scattered across the area. Adding to this, word in the streets and pubs of Orkney was that the excavation of the mound had led to the storm and its resulting chaos (Tom Muir pers. comm. 2013) – a phenomenon that repeated itself in 1997 following excavations at Crantit and subsequent deterioration of the weather (Muir 2003: 203-4). Importantly, it is not the events as such that make or maintain folklore – it is the on-going, active and collective creation of links between actions and events by people (Zipes 2010; Armstrong 2005: 2, 8; see also Childe 1951: 33). A belief fades away once it fails to address themes its audience relates to and consequently, an excavation will be an excavation, a storm will be a storm, yet no link will be drawn between the two.

In this chapter I will outline the value of including folklore into archaeological research in three key stages:

Myths and Minds: ***An exploration of the deeply rooted human motivations from which belief systems are likely to emerge (Section 3.2.1).***

Folklore is examined with the aim to shed light upon possible mentalities that might have influenced the perception and treatment of monuments. As part of this, the phenomenon of customs and beliefs as coping mechanisms will be discussed. Furthermore, it is necessary to highlight that the experience of such beliefs, whilst sharing some aspects, will always be an individual one, and that this has a direct influence on the way tales are told and remembered, and that tales consequently and inevitably vary and change whenever and wherever they are in circulation.

Oral tradition and cultural memory: ***Highlighting how tales can either change significantly or stay largely consistent over long periods of time (Section 3.2.2).***

In light of these changes, different ways are considered in which ancient elements can be detected in present-day folk narratives, before the tales themselves are examined in depth. The on-going adaptations and changes of tales are of key importance to this section. Tales develop along with and adapt to societies and their contemporaneous mentalities – a vital part of their survival (Zipes 2002: 7; Frog 2009a: 8, and 2015: 33; Hedeager 2011: 177) – whilst other elements of tales can remain consistent over very long periods of time (Christiansen 1968; Waddell 2014). Sometimes this means that narrative aspects are encapsulated in plot elements that are no longer understood (*cf.* Gomme 1908: 61). Various cases of Norwegian tales and their Orcadian counterparts illustrate how core elements in folk tales, as well as oral traditions concerning an existing place or historical person, can persist over several centuries, and even longer.

Exchange and isolation: ***A comparison of the key recurring themes in tales and their earliest recordings, paralleled with those from the Scandinavian world (Section 3.2.3).***
Building upon the previous stages, the finer details of tales can be examined. Elements rooted in medieval Nordic literature occur in folk tales from both Orkney and Scandinavia – especially concepts occurring in the *Edda* – and it is worthwhile examining the role particular elements play in these respective sources. However, it must also be borne in mind that influence is mutual and that elements travel back and forth (Frog 2015: 34), making it impossible to determine the wellspring or exact evolutionary route of various customs and beliefs.

3.1 WHY FOLKLORE?

3.1.1 Defining folklore

Throughout this research folk tales are not primarily examined for their contents, nor for their more ephemeral details. Doing so would take the existence of such narratives for granted, and would ignore the context from which they arise. Instead, the underlying motivations that led to their creation are of key interest. Such motivations are treated as intrinsically linked parts of past attitudes and beliefs of which core aspects survive into the present day (Gunnell 2014: 18-9).

Particular attention will be given to questions regarding a) *where the need to develop and maintain folk beliefs comes from* and b) *how the remaining traces of such narratives might represent past ways of coping with the inexplicable*. Prior to discussing its use in archaeological studies, I will establish – at least for the scope of this thesis – basic definitions of the terms ‘folklore’ and ‘myth’, bearing in mind that the definition of such terms has seen various changes over time (*e.g.* Veyne 1988: 51). The term ‘myth’ has its complications, as its definition varies between disciplines (Brink 2001: 78; Frog 2015: 35-6), overlapping with other genres (Schjødt 2004: 6). Furthermore, as noted by Amy Gazin-Schwartz, there is no universally recognised distinction between ‘myth’ and ‘folklore’, leading to these terms being used mostly as synonyms (2011: 65).

The term ‘folklore’ as used today in English was coined W. J. Thoms in 1846 (Gazin-Schwartz and Holtorf 1999: 8). In Gazin-Schwartz’s definition of the two terms, **folklore** encompasses “*oral traditions like stories, songs, oral histories and prayers, and also place names, traditional work practices, expressive arts, material culture, and traditions of ritual and belief*.” (2011: 64). **Myth** in this context is defined as “*the genre of folklore particularly concerned with sacred stories about cultural origins*” (*ibid.*; see also Lindow 2002: 1-2 and Clunies Ross 2008: 231, for concurring definitions), and is here used only in that context. The **fairy tale**, as defined by Jack Zipes, can be viewed as an adaptation of traditionally ingrained folklore into widely recognisable canons, prompted by the advent of print in the post-medieval period (2006: 1). Consequently, the term ‘fairy-tale’ – if at all used – is here regarded and treated as a later sub-category of folklore and not as a separate concept.

Importantly, the above are primarily definitions of English terminology – the terms used to denote such concepts have a different history of development in other languages, inevitably with varying dates of their first recorded use. This includes the term '*folk(e)tro*' in Scandinavian languages, signifying folk *belief* rather than *tales.* This linguistic expression alone already points towards a mentality in which such concepts played a much more profound role than mere stories. Importantly, the primary focus of this research is not on terminologies – most of which were applied retrospectively – but on the much older belief systems and deeply rooted motivations that underlie them. Once such notions and beliefs fade into the background, so do the means to fully describe them. Consequently, our contemporary terminology is insufficient to fully represent bygone concepts.

Whilst the terms 'folklore' and 'folk tales' are used throughout this thesis, these are, at appropriate points, replaced by '(folk) beliefs', '(folk) narratives' and 'customs'. This is to make use of a more neutral vocabulary that, depending on context, better reflects a time in which such narratives and customs had a significant role in society, and were not merely 'tales'. The term 'religion' is, wherever possible, avoided, since there is no scope in this thesis for the contextual definition it would require (see *e.g* Hultgård 1998: 715). Instead, the terms 'beliefs', 'customs' or 'narratives' – depending on context – are applied. Indeed, the absence of primary sources to provide any direct insight into the beliefs of the Norse period can easily lead to a simplified view, further compounded by the complex and non-linear nature of what survives of Norse mythology (Brink 2001: 79 and 2013: 34; Andrén 2011: 847; Schjødt 2014: 48). This lack of primary sources is largely due to the later establishment of written documents in Scandinavia, compared to elsewhere in Western Europe (Morris 1985: 210). Importantly, however, different strata of society are likely to have had their own focal point of belief, driven by their main pursuit in life (Raudvere 2008: 242), and the written records are relatively quiet about quotidian beliefs held by those who did not represent the upper stratum of society.

3.1.2 Folklore: Rejected and re-thought

The term 'folklore' has in the past acquired pejorative connotations, reinforced by its negative reception in academic circles in the later 19^{th} and mid-20^{th} century (Omland 2010: 31-6; Gunnell 2014: 22, 26). Especially during the 19^{th} century, romanticised views delivered unsubstantiated images of past societies (Wawn 2002), and the nationalist agendas of various states will have left a bitter aftertaste (Chapter 2). In addition to this, superficial dealings with the subject have led to unconvincing theories, cementing the bad reputation of folklore further (leading to the term "*fakelore*", as noted by Almqvist 1986: 189; see also Zipes 2006: 231).

In 19th-century Orkney the endeavour to maintain a connection with the industrial progress of the wider world added – at least on the surface of society – to a rejection of folk tales and traditional customs (Thomson 1981: 86 and 2001 (1986): 414-5; Firth 1995: 2-3). Intriguingly, however, whilst this would have perhaps been endorsed outwardly, the primary sources from that period suggest otherwise, indicating that the people of Orkney did maintain their traditional beliefs. The various records of alleged supernatural occurrences associated with excavations (*e.g.* Paterson 1833 and Petrie 1866, both cited in Marwick 1975: 40; Farrer 1862; Tait 1870: 528-9; Burroughs 1898 cited in Reynolds 1985: 116-23; Robertson 1991 citing Smith Leask's memory of Stenness in the 1860s, to name but a few), for instance, are in stark contradiction with the 'official' rejection of such beliefs. More prominently, Walter Traill Dennison (1825-1894), one of Orkney's leading writers on folklore and local customs, recorded folkloric beliefs and narratives not only despite their wider societal rejection (Firth 1995: 2), but also in the face of his own family's disregard of the subject (Muir 1995: 10). In doing so, Traill Dennison preserved a wealth of folktales and traditions for posterity, upon which subsequent local folklore studies could be built, as will be discussed in more detail below (Section 3.4). These records clearly indicate that such beliefs are persistent, forming an intrinsic part of people's everyday lives, and cannot be suddenly changed or omitted (Schjødt 2014: 50). Despite opponents of the subject, people recognised the value of preserving their beliefs and traditions for posterity. In any case, the fact that they were never fully extinguished is in itself a testament to their fundamental role in peoples' lives.

Looking beyond Orkney, the dichotomy between rejection and continuation of folklore during the 19th century concurs with the wider European atmosphere of the time. The brothers Grimm published selections of their collected tales – for example in *Kinder und Hausmärchen* (1807) and *Deutsche Sagen* (1816) – concurring with the wider European interest in the traditions and customs as potential sources on life the past (*e.g.* Omland 2010: 30). This interest in a romanticised past was not limited to academic literature alone, as various composite sketches and paintings by artist Caspar David Friedrich (1774-1840) demonstrate, depicting not only church and abbey ruins (Gaßner 2006a: 126-131, 135), but also megalithic monuments (Verwiebe 2006: 296; Gaßner 2006b: 333) (Fig. 3.1). Concurrently, the foundation of the *Folklore Fellows Communications* in Finland in 1910 (and still active today) represented a significant step towards the strengthening of folklore studies as an academic discipline. Especially the endeavour to classify and study motifs and tale types, for which Antti Aarne's work was essential, represented a crucial foundation upon which subsequent folkloric studies are built (See this chapter, Section 3.1.3). By the middle of the 19th century, however, an increasing demand for 'more scientific' means of research meant that folklore was no longer to be viewed as a key source (Thomas 1973: 29; Honko 1972: 10-11; Johnson 2010: 35; Omland 2010: 31). In Norway, folklore and traditional beliefs were rejected for more than half of the 19th century (Omland 2010: 31-3), until they were rediscovered at the beginning of the 20th century – albeit with a strong tendency to strengthen nationalist sentiments, rather than a critical assessment of their value (*ibid.* 36-7).

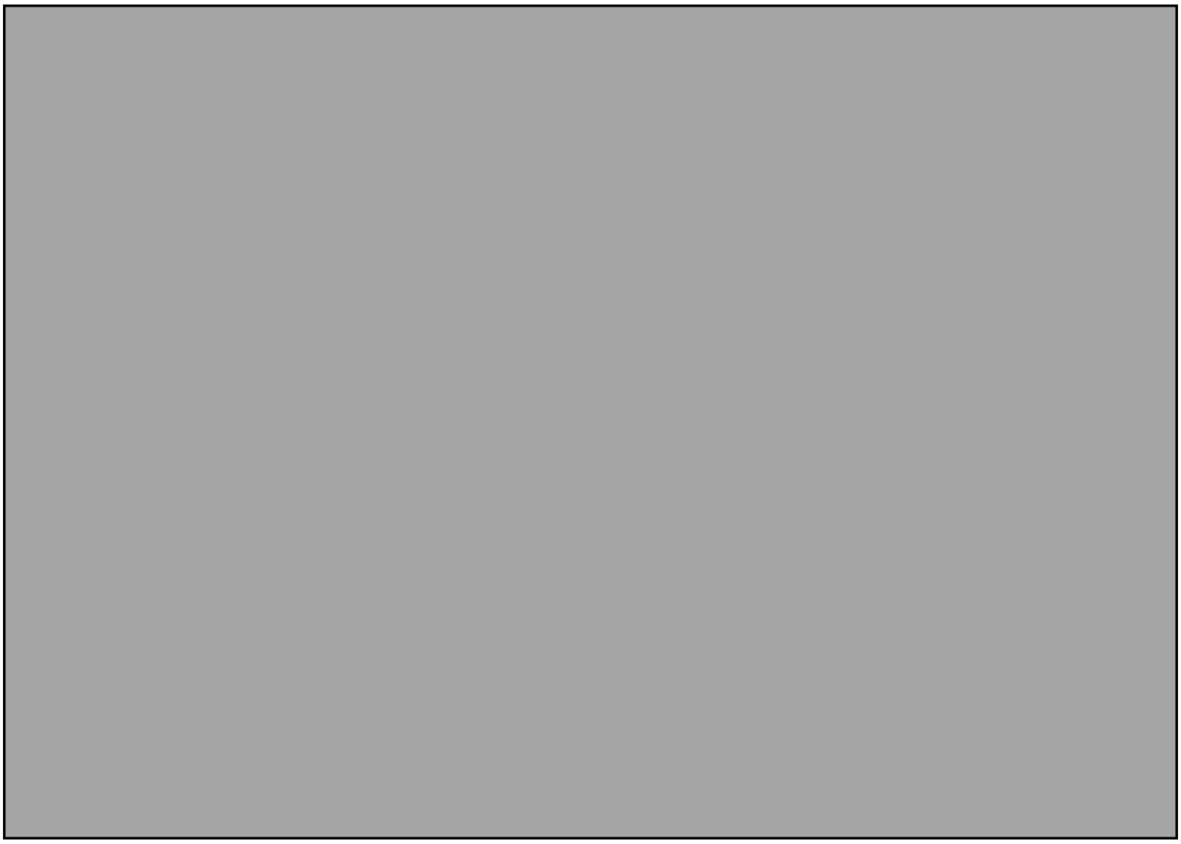


Fig. 3.1 Caspar David Friedrich's *Hünengrab im Schnee* (1807). Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden, Gallerie Neue Meister (Gaßner 2006: 296). An evocative illustration of the emotional effect of ancient monuments, even centuries or millennia after their initial construction.

The inclusion of folklore in archaeology, however, only became popular in more recent decades. The advent of processual 'New Archaeology' during the 1960s, as mentioned previously, widely rejected folk tales as sources, focusing strongly on the use of science and tangible data in archaeology (Burström 1999: 43; Johnson 2010: 26; Omland 2010: 37), whilst folklore was viewed as unreliable (although see Grinsell 1976). These sceptical voices have offered, and still offer, an academic challenge enabling scholars to sharpen their critical assessments in favour of the subject. A particularly strong argument in favour of using folkloric sources in studies of the Norse past was made by Jens-Peter Schjødt (2014) arguing that even later folkloric accounts can provide essential insights into past mentalities, whilst being no more and no less problematic than other sources (see also Heide 2013). Thompson asserts that the widely acknowledged and largely undisputed contributions of linguistics and philology in archaeology only underline the viability of using folklore in similar ways (2004: 339) – in fact, language and narratives are likely to have undergone similar evolutions (Frog 2015: 34). Having been subject to long-standing criticism and rejection, folklore has in recent years seen a renaissance under more critical consideration. Folk tales have been recognised as the mental remains of and different perspective on the past (Brink 2013: 33-54; Gazin-Schwartz and Holtorf 1999: 5; Gazin-Schwartz 2011: 65; Thompson 2004: 364; Downes *et al.* 2005; Omland 2010: 150; Muir and Richards 2013: 300; Gunnell 2014: 19; Waddell 2014). The work of Frog and Terry Gunnel has been crucial in establishing critical frameworks within which the use of folklore is not only justified, but actively encouraged. The project *Vägar til Midgård (Roads to Midgård: Norse religion in long-term perspectives)*, founded at the University of Lund in 2000, represents a fusion of archaeological, historical as well as modern alternative views on early Scandinavia, offering a platform for interdisciplinary work (*e.g.* Andrén *et al.* 2006). The founding of the *Retrospective Methods Network* (RMN) at the University of Helsinki in late 2009 has further contributed to such interdisciplinary dialogues. The combination of different sources is aimed at bridging gaps where individual subjects would otherwise meet their limit.

Whilst they are not accurate factual sources for detailed events or chronology, folk narratives do offer valuable insight into wider societal notions (Briggs 1971: ix; Thompson 2004: 338–9; Heide 2013: 87). The information encapsulated in narratives can add to our awareness that the use and perception of sites characteristic of archaeological periods continued even after their initial construction and use (O'Brien 2002:153-4, citing Barrett 1999; Semple 2009: 29). Places, monuments and objects are viewed as being strongly coloured by these tales and beliefs, as Cornelius Holtorf argues for the "*life-histories*" of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern's prehistoric monuments (2000-2008 and 2005: 83-5), whilst the continued use of culturally significant places have been highlighted by numerous scholars looking closely at examples not only from the British Isles or Scandinavia, but worldwide (*e.g.* Bradley and Williams 1998; Semple and Sanmark 2010; Mitchell: 2007: 153-4; Thäte 2007*a* and 2007*b*).

The value of folk narratives in archaeology has recently been explored in-depth by Professor John Waddell in the context of Celtic mythology and the archaeology of Ireland (2014). In this work, Waddell focuses on the prehistoric landscapes of Ireland and the remnants of myths that survive in cultural memory and in material culture. This includes artefacts, but also the spatial arrangement of burials (2014: 167), a concept also promoted by Lotte Hedeager with focus on the role of art (2012: 12). Waddell acknowledges the uncertainties as to which aspects of surviving tales may stem from prehistory and which ones are more likely to be later medieval additions (Waddell 2014: 5-6), and this is, as outlined previously, potentially the most-cited problem in the combination of folklore and archaeology. Even though a study seeking Norse influence on Orkney's narratives has the fortunate benefit of a much shorter non-literate period than a study looking into the depths of prehistory, a non-literate period is a non-literate period – however long or short – and this brings with it a degree of uncertainty. Surviving traces of past beliefs can further advance our view on ancient monuments, which are, as Waddell phrases it, "*enhanced by a complex mythic past*" (2014: 165). This is an important point: when argued carefully, a folkloric approach brings with it a great range of potential benefits that may shed light on human aspects of the past that material remains or later medieval literature alone cannot fully answer. Monuments were built for a reason; there were ideas behind their construction and ideas for their subsequent use and re-use, including multiple reinventions of their purpose (Bradley and Williams 1998; Richards 2004). From the way people react to certain buildings today – take any religious building as an example, or the house of a deceased personality, a royal building, or any other place that represents something crucial on a personal level – the direct connections between people and places will in cases have been profound (Gazin-Schwartz and Holtorf 1999: 17). In her doctoral thesis, Torun Zachrisson explores local folklore, runic inscriptions and the *Edda* to examine medieval perceptions towards buried treasure beyond the scope of archaeological findings on the subject (1998). The combination of these sources led Zachrisson to suggest that an intrinsic relationship existed between people and buried treasure. Fundamental beliefs concerning personal security and social reputation directed the ways in which people treated sites of potential treasure: Welfare was a finite resource, and goods were bound to particular people. Taking goods away that were not one's own – bound to somebody else – meant endangering oneself (1998: 45-6). This concurs with the notion of misfortune following the opening of mounds still present in folklore today.

Recent studies at the University of Lisbon have attempted to trace the earliest roots of several folktales by a study of shared aspects in Indo-European cultural evolution (Da Silva and Tehrani 2016). In this study, the focus was on "*Tales of Magic*" sourced from the ATU motif index (which will be outlined further on in this chapter), examined by language and tales from across Europe and Asia (see also d'Huy 2016). Consequently, folktales including *Beauty and the Beast*, *The Supernatural Helper (Rumpelstiltzkin)* or *The Devil and the Smith* are thought to be several thousands of years old, the latter potentially stemming from the Bronze Age, as suggested by Da Silva and Tehrani. This study is preceded by Tehrani's 2013 article *The Phylogeny of Little Red Riding Hood*, comprising a similar approach, also discussing the common ancestry of tales and its potential, as well as suggesting possible hybrids or combinations of different tale types, using phylogenetic reconstruction. Furthermore, this study reaffirmed an encouragement for further interdisciplinary dialogue (Tehrani 2013). Crucially, ideas themselves cannot be physically traced, which might add a weakness to their study. However, a phylogenetic approach helps to highlight the *potential* for concepts and values to be present in certain areas or societies at particular times. These studies can therefore be seen as a detailed reconstruction of a cast that allows us to get an idea of the potential shape of past beliefs, even though the exact details with which the cast was filled might not be fully restorable. Tehrani's and Da Silva's research is a valuable contribution to other retrospective methods, and offers avenues for further exploration. Studies focusing on genetic distributions have been undertaken in the field of archaeology (*e.g.* Jones and Renfrew 2004, with contributions therein), and a study combining findings of both disciplines might prove beneficial.

Parts of Tehrani's and Da Silva's discussion were challenged by John Lindow, who argued that a prehistoric word for 'smith' might not have existed in prehistory (cited in Samoray 2016). This, however, should not undermine the validity of Tehrani's and Da Silva's findings. After all, terminology is only an ephemeral means by which the audience is reached and by which concepts are made comprehensible, whilst the underlying concepts are the most important. The Bronze Age witnessed the advent of metalworking, a skill certainly not everybody would have possessed. A novel, and without doubt enigmatic, craft like this is likely to have been met with both wonder and fear, leading to narratives in which metal and metal-crafting is accredited with magical properties (see also Lück 2003: 198; Barndon 2006: 99-102; Hedeager 2011: 138-9). This would strengthen Da Silva's and Tehrani's argument. Over time, however, gradual change in societal environments is likely to have led to a shift of emphasis within narratives. Consequently, a once central plot element such as the significance of metal can over time fade into the background, with only a passing remark remaining in the narrative. This further underlines the secondary role of a particular vocabulary: Our definition of what a 'smith' is differs from that in bygone times, and the expression or terminology to denote a smith is indeed likely to have changed. In prehistory, therefore, the concept denoting the work and social impact of a smith is bound to have been of very different nature, its nomenclature merely of peripheral importance.

Certainly, the absence of physical evidence for early beliefs and narratives should by no means be taken as a *carte blanche* for subjective, uninformed interpretations – a similar issue to the problems arising with phenomenology (Chapter 2). The remaining sections of this chapter outline key ways of using folklore, and their application within the context of this research.

3.1.3 Using folklore

Folk tales do not appear *ex nihilo* only when actively told, nor are they simply cast aside once the narrative has finished. Like myths, they are "*extra-textual entities*" (Frog 2009b: 276) in that they can be documented in various forms of writing, yet are not depending on it. They are echoes of countless individual life experiences, drawing on an array of shared, universally recognisable emotions and experiences likely dating back as far as early mankind (Lévi-Strauss 1966: 16; Thompson 1977: 5; Almqvist 2005: 36). In order for folk tales to be useful for studies of the past, there is a need to differentiate between distraction and aid.

Hobsbawm speaks of "*invented tradition*" (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983: 1-14), largely rejecting the idea of long-standing continuity and memory. His focus, however, lies primarily on the way traditions appear outwardly – updated folksongs, a change in traditional dress – rather than their greater underlying motivation. The aspects Hobsbawm criticises are the more superficial details that are inevitably changed throughout their existence in order to survive (see *e.g.* Zipes 2002: 7; Hedeager 2011: 177). It can be argued that – whilst they can be obstructive when taken at face value, these are insufficient as markers for the value of folklore in research. This research does not focus on the tale (or its outer details) itself, but instead on its narrative undercurrents: The starting point of this research is the context in which a belief, perhaps a custom passed down by ancestors, appears to be the best way to explain a marvel, to cope with an unknown threat, or to persuade others (Honko 1972: 13-4). In this research, therefore, it would not suffice to re-iterate that the Norse on Orkney believed in trows (or ON *draugar*[3]) because they supposedly possessed supernatural abilities. Instead, the aim is to examine *why this mattered* to people. What drove people to address such beliefs – for instance through votive offerings on mounds? Why were attempts made to ward malicious spirits off with objects or actions that were believed to have protective 'powers'? It is not the details of the contents that are scrutinised in this research (see also Almqvist 1986: 193), in part because these would not be the most reliable aspects (*e.g.* Sveinsson 2003 (1940): 159) – but the motifs underlying their creation and evident upkeep over lengthy periods of time. Almqvist's suggestion of a possible Celtic motif underlying the notorious description of the Picts in the *Historia Norvegiæ*, is an intriguing example for the potential of such an approach: The enigmatic description of Picts dwelling underground and losing their strength by mid-day is a likely indicator that the Iron Age souterrains the Norse encountered were already abandoned, leading to the Pictish inhabitants being mythicised (Almqvist 1986: 192-3).

Of great value to a study of such underlying mentalities is a consultation of folkloric motifs and tale types. In brief, a *motif* is the smallest resilient component – a building block – of a narrative (Tab. 3.1), whilst a *tale type* is a combination of certain shared motifs whilst allowing for variations (*cf.* Dundes 1997: 195-6 and citations therein), based on the Aarne-Thompson-Uther (ATU) index. The importance of classifying motifs and tale types by overall plot rather than by outer detail (for instance, allowing for the mound-dweller to be a fairy, ghost, or trow, without this having any further consequence for the interpretation of the underlying plot) has been recognised (Dundes 1997: 197) and this is an approach that informs much of the interpretative framework in this research. The chief work of reference for folkloric motifs and tale types is Antti Aarne's *Verzeichnis derMärchentypen* (*The Types of the Folktale*), first written in 1910 and revised in 1928. This work was taken further by Stith Thompson in 1961 (1987: 5-6). Hans-Jörg Uther subsequently revised and expanded on these works (2004), leading to an expansive index which is marked with their initials, ATU (AT prior to Uther's contribution). Index entries generally comprise a letter, followed by numerals, in order to differentiate between different groups of narratives (*e.g.* "*Animal Tales*" or "*Tales of Magic"*; Aarne and Thompson 1987: 21, 88) (Tab. 3.1), encompassing tales "*of Europe, West Asia, and the Lands settled by These Peoples*", spanning a territory from Ireland to India (Thompson 1987: 7). Reidar Th. Christiansen further identified Migratory Legends (marked with 'ML' as category letters), narratives that are distributed over a large geographical radius, and therefore likely to have very early roots (Aarne and Thompson 1987: 7; see also Briggs 1971: vii). Country-specific motif indexes followed, expanding on the existing record. One of these – and a key work of reference for narrative motifs drawn on in this research– is Inger M. Boberg's *Motif Index of Early Icelandic Literature* (1966), which is based on Aarne and Thompson's index. The limits of motifs and tale types as a means of classification have been well established (Georges 1997), and these are very similar to the shortcomings of typology in archaeological studies. They do not provide exact or absolute results,

[3] There are different views on the etymological development of the word 'trow'. This is a matter I will return to in Section 3.4.

yet they are representative of wider notions and movements (Gazin-Schwartz and Holtorf 1999: 14-5). They are of great value as points of orientation and extraction of core underlying motivations, especially regarding the intangible nature of narratives.

Example of a motif	
V - Religion	**Overall category** (marked by capital letter)
V50 Prayer	**Sub-category** (refers to the letter of the overall category, followed by a number);
V52 Miraculous power of prayer	Variation of sub-category (if present);
V52.3 Prayer before battle brings victory V52.4 Objects supplied through prayer V52.8 Prayer brings death to enemy	*Additional variations of sub-category (if present), dividing the number of reference further. Technically, these contain other motifs and are therefore specific to their distribution area.*

Tab. 3.1 Example of a motif ("*Prayer*"), with further divisions, as set out by Inger M. Boberg (1966: 255), which is based on the Aarne-Thompson (AT) index. Sometimes only the motif is present, without sub-divisions.

Using Folklore in Archaeology?

There are various challenges in attempting to employ folklore in an archaeological context. To begin with, a tale is incorporeal and – unless written down physically – exists only as long as it is (re-)told and remembered. The already large written record is dwarfed by an even larger intangible record of preceding oral tradition (Kvideland and Sehmsdorf 1989: 138; Gunnell 2014: 18). As a result, the development of folk narratives cannot be traced and studied in the same way as it is possible for artefacts and structures. A valid analogy would perhaps be the problems arising with perishable material in acidic soil conditions: Those aspects of the narratives (and their underlying beliefs) that survive into the present day are, considering the entirety of bygone material, comparably small and have in addition to this seen countless alterations over time (for a succinct overview of principal types of changes see Thompson 1977: 434). This unknown quantity outweighs the known record by far. Secondly, whilst written records of folktales and Norse concepts can indeed be compared and traced, the earliest of these are usually significantly later than the early Norse period, stemming at the earliest only from later Norse times. Consequently, there is no apparent tangible evidence for the changes, additions or omissions a tale would have seen throughout its long-standing tradition.

The discussion above re-iterates the need for a careful methodology. In this section I wish to suggest ways to approach and apply folkloric records within archaeology, and which aspects are of less relevance. The key argument of this chapter is concerned with the way folk tales – including their present-day renditions – were and are created for a purpose much more profound than quaint 'superstition' or entertainment. As outlined above, undertaking a detailed examination of the outer narrative and descriptive details of a tale would take the tale itself for granted. Questioning the impulse from which folktales emerge is of more importance within an archaeological context. In Sections 2.2.1 and 2.2.2 I have outlined how monuments are subject to ever-changing meanings over time, depending on the society that interacts with it. The same applies to narratives and beliefs: A core narrative may remain largely consistent (a notion that will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 4), yet will have been received and reflected upon very differently between generations, geographical areas and even individuals (Frog 2015: 34). This is not only due to "*misreading*" (Bloom 1997) on its more general basis, but also to the different social norms between generations and geographical places. These differing perceptions cannot always be reconstructed in full, yet within a selection of individual case studies (Chapters 5 and 6) tales can be examined for their underlying intention. One crucial – yet not always recognisable – point in the development and survival of tales is the personal intention and cultural mentality of the storyteller, which can have an impact on the way tales are transmitted and received (Thompson 1977: 21). Tales can be explanatory, moralising, or – on a bigger social scale – politically influential to name but a few examples (Honko 1972: 12-4) and, crucially, a large sum of different intentions can merge over time. In sum, folk tales are not merely maintained for the purpose of entertainment. Instead, they are an "*indispensable ingredient of all culture*" (Malinowski 1926: 177), crucial in coping with those fundamental questions regarding life, death and our place in the world (Gomme 1908: 145; Thompson 1977: 389; Hedeager 2011: 26). Therefore, when using folk tales for archaeological research it is essential to not only look at their contents, but above all at the underlying intentions. The greatest challenge of this approach lies in finding the right path; one that allows some distance from present-day scholarly views on monuments and landscapes on the one hand, yet one that on the other hand still allows for a cogent argument with as solid a basis as possible. In light of this the foundations for this argument are outlined in the next sections.

3.2 THREE STAGES

3.2.1 Myths and Mentality

Since the ideas expressed in traditional folklore narratives differ greatly from the concepts of our present-day Western society, they are often viewed from a somewhat trivialising perspective (as discussed in 3.1.2). There is, however, a need to stress that the ways in which folk tales are expressed – *i.e.* the narrative guise they take – should only be considered within the context of their time and not as anything written for a present-day reader, to whom the means by which concepts are expressed would inevitably be alien. Moreover, we need to be cautious to not portray earlier societies from a too condescending perspective. Jesse Byock in his study of Viking Age Iceland (2001: 149-57) draws attention to the complex and proficient legal system established by the earliest, pre-literate Icelanders, and argues that this should give us sufficient grounds to credit them with the ability to cultivate a resilient narrative of socially significant events and personalities (Byock 2001: 156; for a similar argument see also Gunnell 2014: 21). This, whilst by no means excluding the inevitability of bias and change throughout the development of narratives, is to advocate a more balanced view, rather than a complete rejection. After all, the beliefs anchored in these narratives are timeless and are rooted within mankind even today, particularly those deeply rooted concerns of life, death and our place in the world (Fiske and Haslam 1997: 112). These initiate our behaviour today as much as it did in the distant past (Gazin-Schwartz and Holtorf 1999: 18).

The importance of being able to explain and control the world around us has seen wide scholarly acknowledgment (*e.g.* Semple 2013; Brink 2013: 34; Armstrong 2005: 4, 135; Cooney 1994: 41; Visted and Stigum 1952: 235) and it seems plausible to trace much of human behaviour throughout the ages back to this. This includes narratives and customs by which societies live and which change guise and content over time, but not purpose. Untestable methods are relied upon for reassurance as much in the present day as they would have in the past. This can range from prayers to personal rites, with the 'peace of mind' rather than actual proof of effectiveness playing a central role (Fiske and Haslam 2013; Thomas 1971: 113). Clearly determining the essential image of danger, however exaggerated or realistic, forms a further part of this, depending on the threats a society can relate to most (Gunnel cited in Booth 2015: 150). It is part of the human experience to realise the complexity of the world, and to find ever changing attempts to get as close as possible to an explanation of the unknown (Christiansen 1968: xix), or to ways of coping with otherwise unbearable events, such as death or environmental catastrophes. Finding a stable point in an otherwise ever-changing world forms part of our existence; in some societies, this is expressed more strongly than in others. Armstrong goes as far as arguing that most present day Western societies tend to supress and ridicule the urge of finding solace in traditional, non-rational concepts in order to cope with fundamental fears, yet by doing so create unhealthy civilisations within which this fear is instead channelled into acts of emotional detachment (2005: 135). Consequently, existing coping mechanisms can even become problematized and classified as mental health conditions, which can lead to them taking extreme form (Fiske and Haslam 2013). Armstrong's is a strong opinion in favour of the upkeep of traditional belief systems and touches upon a key factor: The beliefs from which folk narratives and traditions stem form an intrinsic part of our human nature.

A key Orcadian tale that evoked the idea of including folk tales in this research was that of the Dwarfie Stane on the southernmost island of Hoy (Fig. 3.2; *Canmore* ID 1597): The most remarkable characteristic of this tale is the fact that it appears to be tightly woven around key plot-points – with no attention to elaborate details – all of which serve as explanations for *every visible aspect of the monument*. There is not even an expansion on motivations behind the actions of the three giants that feature in this tale (*cf.* Black and Thomas 1994 (1903): 258), almost making the actors a mere 'means to an end' – the end being the manipulation of this boulder into its known exterior state. The two inner chambers are explained by the two giants living within the rock, whilst the boulder sealing the entrance is explained by a third giant, who locked the couple into the chamber. The hollow in the top of the monument is explained by the couple's attempt to break out of this trap (*ibid.*). Interestingly, this tale has no particular warning or morale – which sets it apart from several other tales – and seems to be merely explanatory in its purpose. The similarity of the glacial boulders in the area surrounding Dwarfie Stane to buildings is indeed striking. Not long ago a false Bed & Breakfast sign was taken away from a nearby boulder after misled visitors struggled through the marshy grounds towards the site, only to find a solid boulder with painted-on door and windows instead of a real cottage (staff at Hoy Visitor Centre pers. comm.) (Fig. 3.3). This demonstrates how even in the present day natural formations can still be mistaken for sights familiar to the eye. Therefore, several tales can perhaps be best viewed as a means of explaining enigmatic phenomena that would otherwise be frightening.

1 A giant and his wife live in a boulder
Explains the rock-cut boulder

2 The wife is pregnant
Explains the one rounded alcove

3 A third giant locks the couple into their home by blocking the frontal entrance
Explains the stone block at the entrance

4 The husband manages to beat a hole into the ceiling of the chamber, through which they can escape
Explains the hole in the ceiling (now no longer visible)

<u>Motif</u>
F451.4.1.12 *Dwarves living in stones*

Reflected in name only, not in the tale. Wallace (1701) records this name, however, before Sir Walter Scott added his narrative to this site.

Tab. 3.2 Dwarfie Stane – Overview of plot points (after Towrie 1996-2017m)

Fig. 3.2 The Dwarfie Stane, Hoy *Photo: Author*

Fig. 3.3 Decorated glacial boulder near the Dwarfie Stane, Hoy: not a real house, certainly not a Bed & Breakfast. *Photo: Author*

Linking the phenomena of religion and compulsive – or ‘ritualised’ – behaviour is not a novelty. Already over a century ago this was argued by J. G. Frazer, as cited in Freud, as follows: “*men mistook the order of their ideas for the order of nature, and hence imagined that the control which they have, or seem to have, over their thoughts, permitted them to exercise a corresponding control over things*” (*cf.* Freud 1940 (1913): 103). Despite its age and recurring archaic views on prehistoric society as “*primitives*”, Freud’s essay *Animismus, Magie und Allmacht der Gedanken* discusses the core issues that will be included in this thesis. Freud compiles an overview of philosophical attempts to make sense of the world, incorporating the views of inter alia Sophocles, Francis Bacon, David

Hume and Pliny, yet adding to this his own experience with patients suffering from neurotic disorders, much of which he finds to be comparable with the religious or ritualistic worldviews of past societies (*ibid.*: 93-122). Adding to this the views expressed in more recent psychological research, it becomes apparent that the core of Freud's views are still largely accepted: In the *Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease* Alan Page Fiske and Nick Haslam suggest that "*OCD* [Obsessive Compulsive Disorder] *may represent a pathological manifestation of a normal, basic, motivated capacity that ordinarily functions to integrate people into social systems. People perform cultural rituals to effect life-cycle transitions or changes in social status, to mark agricultural activities or calendrical cycles, to cure or interpret illnesses, to assure well-being or respond to misfortunes by restoring relationships with supernatural beings, and for a variety of other purposes that involve constituting or redressing social relationships*" (1997: 212). This view is backed by Pascal Boyer (2001: 272-5), with particular focus on the distinction between purity and pollution that can be made on a profane as well as on a 'religious' level (*ibid.*: 273; see also Sveinsson 2003 (1940): 151 on "*unclean*" places due to alleged hauntings and negative associations). From these observations can be inferred that deeply rooted motivations can take extreme shape, only the way in which these are expressed, and subsequently addressed, depends on the social context of the time. Similar to the issues raised in Chapter 2.1.2, further collaboration between psychology and studies of the past might be of benefit.

3.2.2 Oral tradition and cultural memory

In Section 3.1 I introduced several key problems concerning the use of folk tales in archaeology. This section deals in more detail with different ways in which surviving folktales have been maintained. I introduce a number of brief examples in order to underline ways in which tales can be used and understood, both with regard to their overall consistency or change over lengthy periods of time and the use of potentially datable aspects of contents when 'read between the lines'. The examples used here draw upon several aspects of Norse folklore and are not limited to monuments alone. Instead, the examples in this section were chosen considering their value to illustrate the argument about the ways in which folktales can be used and the clues we can obtain from them. The method applied to the case studies in Chapter 5 will be based on the framework discussed here.

Any research will inevitably be based upon tales that have seen changes and omissions; yet not all of these are equally limiting. The main problem with Orcadian folk tales is that most of them have been recorded no earlier than the 19th century and onwards (Muir 1998: 177-83) – with the exception of the aforementioned 16th-century recording of the Dwarfie Stane, yet even this tale is considerably late in the context of research that aims to obtain insight into mentalities from at least five centuries earlier. Tales claiming to have been told outside living memory (Muir 1998: 179; Tom Muir pers. comm; *Canmore* ID 306647; Christiansen 1968: 117) are intriguing, yet this kind of information is not always provided, and is also not necessarily always accurate. Tales, however, can comprise values and ideas now lost to a present-day reader.

Crucially, research into past mentalities should not lead to the misconception of folktales or other concepts being in an 'original' state at any point in time (Schjødt 2014: 45). The Norse period is a selected focus, and a point in time at which any customs and lore already reflect millennia of changing ideas, and omission of earlier concepts. Such changes are crucial for the survival of ideas, which can at times include replacing notions and elements that were once central to the narrative. As discussed elsewhere in this chapter the cultural memory of particular narratives is naturally fluid and, for the sake of a tale's survival, this is necessary in order to remain not only comprehensible, but also invested with meaning, to the audience of its time. Jack Zipes criticises the modern influence on traditional tales (Zipes 1994: 72-95), however it can be argued that such influence is necessary for the survival of tales for a present-day audience and, importantly, even at the time the brothers Grimm collected and published their tales, they were already likely to have seen much change from their earlier stages. Every version of a tale is the product of its time and informed by its ideological context (Honko 1989: 37; Frog 2015: 34). Tracing ancient elements in a narrative, however, requires a closer second glance at plot elements and at times this can only lead to further insights when some awareness of ancient cultural customs is present, whilst in other cases such narrative 'time-capsules' remain unrecognised (*cf.* Gomme: 1908: 61; MacCulloch 1993: 20). This hints at later influences, such as moral and religious values from a post-medieval time that would replace elements regarded as 'pagan', as well as at those remaining elements that might allude to a tale's earliest origins or influences, as already discussed above with regards to metal crafting in early societies.

The gradual Christian influence on ancient narratives, too, requires a brief consideration here. This begins already in Snorri's work, where ancient customs are written about from the author's Christian perspective (Krause 2010: 107); and culminates in various movements such as 17th-century Norwegian Pietism, which had a significant influence on variants of traditional narratives (Gunnell cited in Booth 2015: 152), to name but a few key impacts. Under a Christian influence the landscape is likely to have gradually lost its 'spiritual' composition in favour of selected places of Christian dedication (Brink 2013: 36). Such changes often succeed by introducing new beliefs under the guise of culturally ingrained ones (see contributions in Nilsson 1992). This is likely to have had a significant impact on narratives and how they survived into writing as well as in oral tradition. The incorporation of pre-Christian supernatural sprites into Christianity by being labelled under "*fallen angels*", for example, forms part of this (Kinahan 1983: 258; Kvideland and Sehmsdorf 2010: 205-6). Reidar Th. Christiansen published an extensive collection of Norwegian folktales in 1964 (re-published in 1968), including their sources and parallels. The relatively small number of *haugr*-folk tales in Christiansen's book indicate an influence of Christian thought, as the *haugr*-folk are described as created by God, even though they "*are not Christians [...]*". Christiansen, however, acknowledges the archaeological value of these entities and their survival in cultural memory (1968:

xxxix). Whilst in its essence a preservation of ancient elements that would have otherwise been lost – or forcefully removed from cultural memory – there is no guarantee that future generations would be able to disentangle all ancient elements, let alone comprehend them.

A large body of pre-existing oral traditions and beliefs would have been necessary to pave the way for written sagas and other written accounts (Gunnell 2014: 18). The presence of standing stones interpreted as petrified creatures – mostly dwarfs or giants – can be found in several Old Norse sources (esp. *Alvísmál* and *Hrímgerðarmál*; see also Sveinsson 2003 (1940): 72). Whilst these references cannot provide any certainty for the origin of single folktales, they are indeed useful with an eye towards the problem of later influence when treated like artefacts: Without necessarily understanding their mention within full context, they serve at least as evidence for the existence of certain concepts, materials, and notions. And in contrast to several non-literate artefacts, written sources can provide a more detailed illustration – or at least demonstration – of the presence of past cosmologies and ideologies. What survives nowadays as 'folk tales' is likely to encapsulate bygone beliefs and past expressions of identity (Gunnell 2014: 18-9). Whilst these narratives cannot reconstruct past beliefs in full (Briggs 1971: ix), there is a core of underlying mentalities that resonates. It therefore is the crucial information that can be inferred from reading 'between the lines' – the narrative undercurrent: ideational characteristics and motivations reflected in the 'point of view' from which a source is written – that is of importance for this research. This has the potential to deliver significant clues about some of the medieval Norse perceptions of the environment, including the naming of landscape features (Brink 2008a), the way certain places or monuments were treated, or how their existence could be best explained (Visted and Stigum 1952: 251; *e.g.* the place-name *Gýgjarspórsa* in Iceland, associating a lake to an ogress's footprint, indicating a long-standing belief in an otherworldly impact on this area, Sveinsson 2003: 72). In Scandinavia, several folk tales are known to have been built upon a basis of historical characters or places in spite of an otherwise mainly fictional content, and oral tradition has proven to be exceptionally strong in some cases (Gunnell 2014: 19; see also Warner 1990: 31 and Waddell 2014 for Irish examples). Further archaeological support for this phenomenon is present at several Scandinavian sites, confirming the use of the same cult site over several centuries and up to two millennia - such as Tissø, Denmark (Fabech 1999; Brink 2001: 105-7; see Waddell 2014 for Irish examples). Sites include Vendel, Uppland, Sweden, where Ottar's Hill is said to have been known by that name presumably for about 1400 years (Kvideland and Sehmsdorf 1989: 138). Upon excavation of this mound an opulent burial was found and subsequently attributed to Ottar Vendelkråka - King of the Ynglings (*ibid.*). It has been suggested that the full name and awareness of the King had vanished over time, yet the place-name has throughout the centuries maintained a record of what were once key events and associations in this area (*ibid.*). Whilst this case offers some components that would strengthen the theory – the name 'Vendelkråka' being a tempting indication considering the region – the same confidence cannot always be applied to all significant sites and their tentative links to significant past individuals. In any case, however, place-names are a crucial aspect of folkloric study as they aid in fixating a tale to a place (Brink 2013: 35). A further example of long-standing cultural memory and historic origin of tales stems from Denmark: In the township of Bølling a tale concerning two buried wagons containing gold had been preserved for presumably about 2000 years (Kvideland and Sehmsdorf 1989: 138): Two wagons were indeed excavated by Henry Pedersen between 1881 and 1883 and subsequently dated to the "*pre-Roman Iron Age*" (*ibid.,* citing Pedersen 1888). However, no gold could be obtained from this grave (*ibid.*). If correct, this too would represent a remarkable case of consistency in oral tradition. The reliability of such accounts would be much depending on existing sources *before* excavations in order to exclude the possibility of an addition of such narratives in more recent times. Nonetheless it can be concluded that there are cases of exceptionally consistent oral – and later written – traditions, indicating that the study of folk tales is not always entirely obscured by recent amendments (see also Muir 1995: 6-7; Gunnell 2014: 24). One of the tales recorded by Christiansen (1968) serves as a good case study that illustrates the notions of influence discussed above, and might help understanding the Orcadian record. It is illustrative of two extreme ways in which oral tradition can either change significantly or show notable consistency over the centuries. Here I will outline the notion of long-standing consistency and change of this narrative, whilst an examination of its development and potential links with Orkney will be returned to in more detail in Chapter 5.

The Drinking Horn stolen from the Huldre-volk at Vallerhaug (motif F352; migratory legend ML6045; see Chapter 5) was recorded in AD 1595 by Bishop Jens Nielson, who writes about a conversation he had with a farmer's wife about an event that, according to them, happened at their farm.[4] By 1595 this event was already a number of generations old (Christiansen 1968: 117; Visted and Stigum 1952: 111; Omland 2010: 141). It is not mentioned exactly how long ago the events were believed to have taken place, but at the time of Bishop Nielson's visit the drinking horn from the tale was already in the hands of a different farmer after a division of an inheritance (Christiansen 1968: 117). Given that this tale has several recorded parallel versions from centuries earlier and also later (Omland 2010: 141-4; Kvideland and Sehmsdorf 2010: 236-7), this 16th-century version is with little doubt one that is claimed by every narrator to be linked to their own land or lineage. A 13th-century version referred to by Leslie Grinsell (1936: 55) is set in North Burton, Yorkshire. An even older – and at present the oldest known (Lindow 1978: 102; Gunnell 2014: 29) – recording of a version of this tale stems from William of Newbury (albeit with a large banquet inside a barrow rather than a single mound-dweller: cited in Keighley 1850: 283-4; see also Haase 2008: 296). This rendition was written during the 12th century and known across Scandinavia, Germany and Scandinavian-settled Britain (Kvideland and Sehmsdorf 1988: 236; Harte 2009: 24-5), yet apparently excluding Iceland, Orkney and Shetland (Gunnell 2014: 29), although this is an issue that will be returned to in Chapter 5. Intriguingly, apart from occurrences in Scandinavian-settled areas within the Danelaw, this tale is otherwise exclusively known from Scandinavia (Harte 2009: 25), and Newbury might have obtained

[4] In Chapter 4 I discuss the phenomenon of re-invented origins in more detail.

this tale there (Grinsell 1976: 32; Lindahl *et al.* 2000: 125), where it might have already undergone various changes from a much earlier original that was known orally.

In this tale, a farmer named Gunder Giesemand rides past a mound, where he jokingly asks for a drink. A mound-dweller ("*draugr*", Christiansen 1968: 117) appears and throws a drinking horn after him. The hide and hair of the farmer's horse disintegrates where the drinking horn had touched it, yet the farmer arrives home safely, even though the drinking horn would now cause a stir whenever used (*ibid*.: 117-8). A version recorded in 1878 – henceforth referred to as 'outcome A' – shows remarkable similarities to the initial version, especially regarding the time elapsed since its recording by Nielson (see also Omland 2010: 141). These similarities include the place-names, the name of the farmer, and the main elements including the mound-dweller, the drinking horn – which is made out of gold in this version – and the disintegrating hair of the horse (*ibid*.: 119; for similar versions see Kvideland and Sehmsdorf 2010: 236-7; Furset 2011: 27). This version has the addition of a short chase which ends at "*Griviveien*", where the *draugr* terminates his chase (Christiansen 1968: 119). Presumably, "*Griviveien*" was a well-known place or landmark for the initial, local recipients of this tale, and is most likely to have been (a street name linked to) a church or other kind of sacred ground (*cf.* Furset 2011: 27), making it impossible for the *draugr* to continue his chase. An 1883 version – henceforth referred to as 'outcome B' - however, has little to do with the original: Instead of a drinking horn, the tale concerns a silver chalice which is to be brought to the church of Reins (Christiansen 1968: 120). The now nameless man is on skis whilst he is chased by a troll (not *draugr* anymore) from its mound (*ibid*.: 120-1). The original intention of the tale – a warning not to upset the mound-dwellers – now takes a background position in favour of the legend of how the chalice came to its church. Without the 1595 record of this tale, or its 1878 survival, it would demand a lot of imagination to trace the 1883 version back to its original elements, if possible at all.

The above example serves as an illustration for most surviving tales: whilst some tales have seen significant changes over time, there are also those that have stayed remarkably consistent over a long period. Unfortunately, there are no known written records to double check all of the 19th-century versions and it is likely that pivotal elements of several tales will have changed, much like outcome B demonstrates. On the other hand, outcome A proves that there are cases in which tales maintain a great number of original elements, with little to no elaboration. In both cases, particular core elements remain, even though they can be re-tailored to fit the new leading elements. This example additionally illustrates how much the survival of a tale's core depends on the listener and the way they re-tell the tale: Whilst one person would find one particular aspect significant and would place emphasis on it, a different person would do the same with a different aspect of the tale. One listener must have found the chase itself more important than the disintegrating hair of the horse, as the latter disappears whilst the chase remains – even though the chase did not exist in Nielsen's 1595 version. This shows that seemingly small changes, for the benefit of a particular audience perhaps, can find strong emphasis and can subsequently be taken forward in further versions, whilst original aspects get lost. This phenomenon is a still on-going one, considering the co-existence of more traditional fairy tales and new interpretations brought forward by renowned film companies. Whilst such new adaptations may not be welcomed by all audiences, adaptation and re-invention to suit new generations is the key to the survival of ancient tales (Zipes 2002: 7 and 2006; Hedeager 2011: 177). The oral and written tradition of narratives forms part of a process that is perpetually fluid, whilst core motifs remain. This results in an unknown quantity of individual versions and adaptations of one core narrative which, in itself, depends on the anxieties and needs of the social environment within which it is told and re-told (Zipes 2006). As a result of this, there is no complete record of folk tales and even a lifetime spent on collecting and comparing folktales would never lead to finding all tales, even of one single country.

3.2.3 Exchange and Isolation

In light of Orkney's links with Scandinavia, it has proved fruitful to compare aspects of Scandinavian folklore in order to gain a better understanding of the Orcadian records. This has also been useful with regards to tracing earlier origins of particular concepts and elements of tales for which no earlier Orcadian source can be found. Fortunately, numerous known Scandinavian records pre-date the Orcadian records (*e.g.* Christiansen 1968; Kvideland and Sehmsdorf 1989) and in cases the core of a tale can be traced back into, or have parallels with, Norse mythology. Through these records, it becomes obvious that the belief in mound-dwellers is not characteristic for Orkney alone. In the Norwegian examples the mound dweller is often referred to as '*draugr*' or as '*Huldre-folk*', the latter being often associated with hills or mountains independent from farmland, as well as associated with farm-mounds (*e.g.* Christiansen 1968: 88; 96-8). In addition, the term '*haugbui*' is not Orkney-specific, as the identical term is widely known from Norwegian folklore (Visted and Stigum 1971: 371). I would like to postulate that the presence of long-standing folkloric traditions and tales will have had an impact on the relationships between indigenous Orcadians and the influx of Norse settlers. This transcends any debate concerning conflict or peaceful relations between the Norse and Picts (Chapter 1), or indigenous Orcadians, as it is concerned with shared aspects of human mentality: beliefs and traditions. The presence of two similar, yet not congruent, mound-tale types may be an indication of two outwardly similar expressions of belief, whilst the underlying beliefs were indeed different. This may have represented a way to introduce new customs under the guise of pre-established customs (Hultgård 1992: 51; Finneran 2010: 12), whilst indigenous Orcadians may have been able to stick to known traditions whilst appearing to comply with new ideas. Importantly, there is a need for caution when disentangling strands of influence, and the relevance of such an approach depends much on the research context. Such separation of strands, and even terms such as 'syncretism', have seen justified criticism, especially due to the risks of simplified views on mentalities (or beliefs) thought to be in an original state at any point, whilst the autarky of hybrids is underacknowledged (Frog 2015: 34-5). Every belief system, or set of traditions, however characteristic for a society, is inevitably in a hybrid state. This is due to constant contact with the beliefs and concepts of other societies (*ibid.*; Schjødt 2014: 55). In the case of this research, however, the examination of potential Norse mentalities from Orkney's folklore requires, to a degree, the partial disentanglement of an existing record of narratives and their underlying concepts.

Folklore is not a phenomenon belonging solely to the past. Several of Orkney's mounds are still believed to be inhabited by otherworldly dwellers. In light of these beliefs permission to excavate is not granted everywhere, with the intention of keeping certain mounds undisturbed (Tom Muir and Siobhan Cooke pers. comm. 2013 and 2014). Where excavation does happen, any misfortune occurring afterwards is often attributed to the opening of the mound, as discussed earlier on in this chapter. These beliefs have striking parallels in Iceland and Norway throughout the past centuries, where mounds in particular are connected with sudden catastrophes such as storms or fire (Simpson 2004 (1972): 199; Østmo 1982: 5-6), and similar beliefs are known from the Isle of Man, Dartmoor and the Scilly Islands (Grinsell 1936: 51). In previous sections, it has been discussed why such links may be created. This section is aimed at creating an overview between folkloric links as known from Orkney and from the Norse world, in order to demonstrate the persistence of Scandinavian influence on Orkney's folkloric record.

Crucially, Orkney's folkloric record does not merely consist of Scandinavian tales brought to Orkney during settlement. Indeed, traveling and the formation of new, hybrid narratives (and concepts on a wider scale) is one aspect of a tale's development, yet events of merging, re-shaping and change have happened throughout a tale's history in multiple stages. The existence of such a great number of varieties of the same tale, as outlined previously, is testament to this. Crucially, this also means that the 'Norse' tale and the 'indigenous' tale are already the product of long-standing migrations, changes, omissions, misinterpretations and embellishments. Terry Gunnell raised the question as to why such strong links with mound folklore are present from Iceland, initially largely unsettled land and void of prehistoric burial mounds (Gunnell *forthcoming*). Possible answers might include a creation of an invented past by means of legends and folklore (see also Leonard 2011: 61; Sanmark and Semple 2012). Gunnell further suggests that several natural hillocks are likely to have resembled burial mounds and would have been treated as such by the earliest generations of Icelandic settlers (*ibid.;* see also Omland 2010: 117, 121, 143-4; Scarre 2011: 11). The glacial mounds known from Orkney as well as the known veneration of natural mounds in Norway (Robertson 1991: 266) would support this notion.

3.3 METHOD: HOW CAN FOLKLORE BE USED?

It is well established that early text sources cannot be used as neutral, informative documents in archaeology (Randsborg 2000: 212-3; 221; Moreland 2001: 22; Crawford 2013: 39, 42; Brink 2010: 34). However, even when these sources are not to be relied on word for word, they can still convey critically important information for what can be read *between the lines*. In spite of their inevitable bias text sources are, as discussed in Chapter 2, always a *terminus ante quem* for customs and ideas known by the time they were written down. In addition, the manner in which particular customs and ideas are described can provide further ideas about how these would have been perceived in the wider social context of their time: The laws prohibiting the veneration of mounds are a strong indicator that this was a strong part of society which was difficult to extinguish or replace (*cf.* the older *Gulaþingslǫg*, Gunnell 2014; *Guta Saga*, Brink 2001: 89; Semple 2010: 21 and 2013: 191-2). On a conceptual level, the presence of several post-medieval sources reporting the discovery of extremely long skeletons in burial mounds across England, Scotland (*e.g.* Grinsell 1936: 40; Sir Thomas Elyot 1538, cited in Piggott 1989: 49-50; unnamed 17th-century excavation report cited in Grinsell 1936: 41; Ben 1529), Germany (Temme 1840) and Norway (Peter Holm 1795 cited in Omland 2010: 172) indicate that the idea of otherworldly beings was a fairly common part of the prevailing *Zeitgeist* and required no further explanation or justification. Whilst ideas of this kind will not resonate with our present-day views, they will have formed past of past understandings. Beliefs of this kind are likely to stem from the discovery of various assembled skeletal remains of several individuals – an arrangement like this would not be unusual for prehistoric passage graves on Orkney (Davidson and Henshall 1989 on Quanterness and Isbister). When viewed in gloomy light these could easily be mistaken for one large individual, especially if only one skull is seen. In sum, for this thesis surviving textual sources and objects are both treated as artefacts. Through this it is intended to 'read between the lines' across the existing record. This entails not only to ask *what* is depicted or described, but *why in this particular way*.

Many non-literate objects or places carry depictions of people's beliefs and stories, ranging from the earliest cave paintings to any present-day illustration (*e.g.* Kaul *et al.* 1991). All material culture, including writing, originates from intangible, non-literate, ideas and beliefs can, in some cases, materialise indirectly through the presence of imagery, artefacts or structures and their arrangements or in imagery (Kaul *et al.* 1991; Moreland 2001: 35-8; Clunies Ross 2008: 231; Waddell 2014: 167; Frog 2015: 37). Material witnesses to times of cultural overlap and syncretism between Norse and Christian beliefs include the 9th-century cross from Bakewell, Derbyshire, featuring Norse imagery on one side and Christian symbolism on the other side (Bourne *et al.* 2011: 112) or the cross at Halton, Lancashire, depicting scenes from the *Völsunga Saga* (Ahrens 1982: 477). Such monuments represent a further material manifestation of a dialogue between two different strands of beliefs that without doubt will had an even greater record that only existed orally and was never shaped into material culture or written down. Above all, the presence of such 'hybrid' material culture demonstrates that it is essential to also allow for hybrid concepts that are not tangible, but are manifested in mentality and belief.

Furthermore, some forms of writing consist entirely of symbolic imagery, such as hieroglyphic Hittite to name but one example (*cf.* Renfrew 1987: 48). Runes fall into a separate category; not to be read the way one would read a Latin or present-day text source, yet not to be simplified as images either. Particular consideration needs to be given to the problems that come with their interpretation: during the multi-staged process of transliteration and subsequent translation into the language of the researcher a vast quantity of 'unwritten' meaning will inevitably become lost. Even the best translation between modern languages can still cause the initial intention of the original language to be lost. Whilst there is usually a suitable way to translate words alone; mentality, puns and wordplay that are characteristic to the original language, are often unable to cross the linguistic boundaries and their underlying mentality (Bourdieu 1977: 1; however, see Kessler 1995: 58-62 for creative ways around this problem). Bronislaw Malinowski emphasises how a spoken statement is intrinsically linked to its immediate context. Outside this context, a statement can only be partly understood, compounding the comprehension and 'translation' of ideas that have arisen from settings foreign to our own (1949: 306-7; see also Brink 2005: 34). Considering this, there is an even greater risk of "*misreading*" (Bloom 1997: 93-6) any characters[5], texts and imagery from the distant past (see also Bourdieu 1977: 1-2). Some depictions are clearer in their meaning than others and not all can be understood equally well by observers outside the circle of initial recipients. Nevertheless, all of them have in common that they are testament to the existence of tales and beliefs, be this on a narrative or a more informative level. Scandinavian prehistory is replete with non-literate objects that tell numerous – albeit mute - tales about life in the past. Amongst these are the Trundholm sun chariot, bracteates, jewellery, or the *gullgubber* found across Sweden, Denmark and Norway, to list but a few examples (Jensen 2013; Fig. 3.4). Such artefacts represent non-literate visualisations of stories that were known well enough to be depicted and understood by their contemporaries. Even the arrangement of burials and certain traditions with which grave-goods are placed form part of this as they allow insight into mental concepts concerned with death and possibly the afterlife (Waddell 2014: 167). At times this may also apply to the way living space was arranged in that it all forms part of this tangible, yet non-literate record of oral traditions and belief-steered customs. This does not automatically mean that the present-day researcher can understand the meaning of such depictions equally well. Likewise, the same caution must be applied to the ways in which old text sources are approached, as text is often taken for granted due to its familiar makeup (Gunnell 2014).

Fig. 3.4 The Trundholm Sun Chariot, an expression of Bronze Age cosmology (see Kristiansen and Larsson 2005: chp.6) © *Nationalmuseet*

[5] Terje Spurkland noted that runes should not be referred to as an 'alphabet' as this term strictly taken refers to the Greek symbols α and β (2009: 5). Whenever referred to runes in this thesis, it is preferred to use the term 'characters' rather than 'alphabet'. Whilst the same may apply to our own writing - strictly taken a set of Latin characters (letters) rather than an alphabet – this is not relevant to this discussion.

The issues discussed in this chapter are not isolated problems, but tie in with the aim to maintain and nurture interest in archaeology from a wider, heterogeneous audience. In the foreground of interest are usually questions concerning the way people lived their lives in the past and how this compares to known and familiar concepts. Including and piecing together the fragments of intangible sources, such as folklore and place-names, may have a beneficial impact on the dissemination of archaeology to a wider audience. This can aid to deliver theories about life in the past that draw from available clues rather than from a more subjective 'vicious circle' as critiqued in Chapter 2. This is primarily linked to the consideration of the 'human element' in addition to the archaeological and scientific material that is presented. The jovial saying "*when in doubt - it's ritual!*" as a last option when findings cannot be explained otherwise illustrates the need for archaeologists to understand their finds not only through the scientific and descriptive ways of our scholarship (Gazin-Schwartz 2001: 267; Waddell 2014: 4-5). As discussed in Chapter 2 there is an obvious wish to fill the void of the unknown bygone minds and ideas that underlie these materials. Labelling challenging finds as 'ritual' is in itself not problematic, but in order to substantiate any such statements it is necessary to connect the findings of each discipline. The key to finding ways in which archaeology, folklore and place-names can complement one another is to reconsider what questions are asked of each. Archaeology can offer insight into the details and chronology of events, whilst folklore can denote wider social movements (Gazin-Schwartz and Holtorf: 1999; Thompson 2004: 364; Gunnell 2014). Place-names, similar to folklore, can offer insight into past mentalities, whilst at the same time being able to fix these to points in the landscape (Leonard 2011: 50; Brink 2013: 35). In combination with written sources, some light can be shed upon potential motivations behind past customs and traditions, as Schjødt has demonstrated in his doctoral thesis (2004). In particular, this interdisciplinary approach aims to acknowledge that ideas and materiality are not separate entities - they are intrinsically linked in both being forged by human minds (Hedeager 2012: 12; Waddell 2014: 167). The combination of archaeological material and surviving traces of past mentalities can aid in generating a wider panorama of past mentality. This respects the fact that our present-day view of society should not be projected uncritically onto bygone eras (Gazin-Schwarz 2011: 66-7). Folkloric notions and customs are viewed as intrinsic – and practical – parts of everyday life in the past, as has been argued elsewhere (see esp. Thomas 1971; Gazin-Schwartz 2001: 266-7; Gunnell 2014: 18-9). Therefore, this research does not aim to *create*, but merely to acknowledge and reiterate the links between the material and the mental world that were already forged in the past.

3.4 ORKNEY’S FOLKLORE: A BRIEF REVIEW

Prior to further sources discussed in Chapter 4, the existing record of Orkney’s folklore will be outlined here. The aim of this is to present Orkney’s folkloric record as a starting point, with other sources serving as complementing material or offering alternative views. Following on from this, Chapter 4 will highlight ways in which they can be combined.

As already outlined in Chapter 1, this research has a core emphasis on the representation of ancient monuments in Orkney’s folkloric narratives. This means that not all of Orkney’s folkloric elements can be taken into account in the same depth, leaving various aspects undiscussed. Further notions that dominate the narratives of the Orkney islands include the Selkie Folk, mermaids, the Fin Folk and Sea Trows (*cf.* Muir 1998: XIV-XV), to name but a few. Whilst these folkloric elements also have Nordic links to varying degrees, this research focuses primarily on landscape perceptions. For this purpose, standing stones and mounds were deemed the most representative, with beings only considered when directly linked to aspects of the landscape – one example being the mound dweller, due to the intrinsic link with the landscape. As highlighted in Chapter 8, however, these undiscussed folkloric elements might offer valuable future research questions.

Following Walter Traill Dennison’s collection and recording of Orkney folklore and traditions (Section 3.1.2), a further significant part of the presently known record of Orcadian folk tales have been collected by George Marwick (1836-1912) during the late 19th and early 20th century, with succeeding records of Orkney and Shetland folklore based on his work (Irvine and Muir 2014: xix). Even though Marwick is said to have been respected for his extensive knowledge whilst alive, not much of his work was published until much later in his lifetime (*ibid.*). It seems therefore surprising that the recently published collection of Marwick’s work, edited by James M. Irvine and Tom Muir (2014), represents the first publication that comprises the entirety of Marwick’s known writing. Marwick’s mind was of an enthusiastic and ingenious nature, which on the downside led to somewhat far-fetched etymological interpretations – for instance his connections with ancient Egyptian gods in the discussion of Dwarfie Stane (*ibid.*: xix; 169-79). Importantly, however, he also recorded crucial and detailed descriptions of monuments that would have otherwise been lost, such as his detailed recordings of the Brough of Burwick (*ibid.*: 301). Whilst his work has been criticised (see *e.g.* Ernest Marwick 1975), his contribution to the preservation and understanding of Orcadian folklore is invaluable. A further early publication including Orcadian folklore is *Country Folklore Vol. III: Orkney & Shetland Islands*, collected by G.F. Black and edited by Northcote W. Thomas in 1903 (re-published in 1994). The advantage of this collection is that it comprises folkloric sources as recorded in their original language, such as Norn or Latin (including versions of Jo. Ben’s *Descriptios*) with little to no editorial changes. Intriguingly the editors in their foreword make no mention of George Marwick, who in 1903 would have been reasonably well-known within the field of Orcadian folklore.

In the first half of the 20^{th} century Ernest W. Marwick[6] continued George Marwick's work on the folklore of the Northern Isles (*e.g.* 1975). An essential source for his work is Robertson's *An Orkney Anthology* (1991), in which selected works of E. W. Marwick are collected. The *Anthology* also contains Marwick's article *Creatures of Orkney Legend and their Norse ancestry* (*ibid.* 257-78), which represents the first attempt to examine Norse influence on Orkney's folklore, meticulously recording both wider known Norwegian and Orcadian lore, as well as notable accounts of traditions from Orkney's recent centuries. E. W. Marwick's book on *The Folklore of Orkney and Shetland* (1975) comprises a detailed overview of the folklore of both archipelagos and he emphasises the links with Norwegian customs throughout. Marwick makes several plausible suggestions regarding the genesis of early Norwegian aspects of folklore into the surviving Orcadian record. As part of this he proposes a direct developmental link between the Norwegian troll and the Orcadian trow, whilst himself pointing out discrepancies in this connection (*ibid.*: 39; Muir 1998: XI; see below).

At present, Tom Muir, local to Orkney, is carrying out invaluable work on the preservation of folktales of Orkney, in addition to a recent publication on narratives with a potential Scandinavian origin (2015). Of particular value for on-going research on Orkney's tales is his book *The Mermaid Bride*, for which Muir has meticulously collected and studied surviving tales, their earliest known dates and their sources (Muir 1998: 177-183), bringing them together into one publication (1998). Having all these dates and sources in one place has proven highly valuable for this research, and also in comparison with Norwegian sources on similar tales. One key problem is that most of the surviving tales were recorded in the 19^{th} and 20^{th} centuries – with the exception of Jo Ben's Dwarfie Stane – yet through parallels with medieval records, analogous Norwegian tales and even mythological links some of these could be traced back several further centuries as will be discussed in more detail in Chapters 5 and 6. Such later written accounts can still be of great use (see also Schjødt 2014), and are treated as *termini ante quem* for notions that are likely to pre-date their written documentation. A further source of great value to Orkney's history, archaeology and folklore is Sigurd Towrie's extensive and award-winning website *www.orkneyjar.org*. Towrie himself is local to the islands and his website comprises an extensive record of local traditions, frequently updated in regular consultation with archaeologists, folklorists and other individuals. One shortcoming of this site is a lack of source acknowledgement or bibliography in most of his articles, making it impossible to follow up any references or to distinguish between Towrie's own views and those of others. Nonetheless, the site is an excellent source of information on both past and present Orkney and is the product of long-standing and on-going work, comprising earliest known sources concerning Orkney's past up until live updates from archaeological fieldwork and the latest news on discoveries across the archipelago.

These studies have resulted in a comprehensive record of Orcadian folklore, and the Norse links are well acknowledged. Various questions remain, however, concerning the nature of Norse influence

[6] George Marwick and Ernest W. Marwick were not directly related.

on Orkney's folklore, and to what degree Orkney's narratives and traditions can be regarded as Norse-influenced. The case studies in Chapters 5 and 6 will discuss these issues in more depth. A further matter of debate, however, is the use of Orkney-specific terminology, to which I will briefly turn here, prior to the use of these terms in the case studies.

At the heart of various interpretative problems lie issues of translation, especially regarding words that sound similar between two languages, whilst being different in meaning. This is an issue that will be returned to in Chapter 4, where similar phonetic issues in the development of place-names are briefly introduced. As mentioned above, E. W. Marwick suggests tentative links between the Norwegian troll and the Orcadian trow (1975: 39). It would, however, seem more likely that the term trow (and the entity it represents) derives from the ON *draugr* rather than troll, both phonetically as well as with regards to the way trows are represented in relevant narratives (see also Towrie 1996-2017a). This would also explain them being "*mixed up*" with fairies (Muir 1998: XI) – fairies in Orcadian folklore often take on the role of the mound-dwelling *draugar*. In fact, trolls in particular have little to no role in surviving Orcadian folklore, although the place-name Trolla Vattn, *troll water* (*Canmore* ID 182190) needs to be noted, as well as the survival of 'troll' as part of Shetland tongue (Marwick 1975: 33). This difference, however, is primarily of importance with regards to tracing phonetical influence between regions, whilst the distinction between particular entities would be misleading (Roberston 1991: 260-1; see also Chapters 5 and 6). Stith Thompson asserts that any kind of supernatural entity originates from the deeply rooted, ancient fear of the living dead (1977: 387), and the notion of fearing what is both unknown and unavoidable (the latter referring to death) is indeed plausible. It is possible that beliefs and customs brought over from Norway might have taken root in a different way, with some elements manifesting themselves in their new Orcadian context, merged with pre-existing concepts (Leonard 2011: 59), whilst other notions took more of a background role, regardless of their significance in Norwegian mentality. This might explain the comparably weak role of the sea-trow in Orcadian folklore (Marwick 1975: 30) as opposed to the significance of sea-*draugar* in Norwegian lore (Furset *et al.* 2011).

3.5 SUMMARY

As shown here, what is widely known as 'folk tales' represents much more than stories with a primary purpose of entertainment. Regardless, however, of their key purpose, they can encapsulate bygone memories of traditions and attitudes towards places, and can shed light onto aspects of past mentalities that complement areas illuminated by other studies. The various debates against the use of folklore, as well as remaining pejorative connotations, contributed to a more rigorous examination of its use and its shortcomings in scholarly work (Section 3.1.2). In turn, this has strengthened the subject, being increasingly recognised as a legitimate avenue of research.

It should be no surprise to find overlap and similarity between the core beliefs of Orkney and those elsewhere. Some of this can be due to polygenesis – the coincidental parallel evolution of similar, core ontological themes (Bottigheimer 2009: 367) – whilst in other cases mobility and contact will have enabled the exchange of relatable narratives and principles (Frog 2015: 34). As can already be inferred from this description, these two notions are separated only by a very fine line, on which Chapters 5 and 6 will elaborate further. The most useful elements of folklore are also the most challenging to obtain. As will be discussed in more detail in Chapters 5 and 6, narrative undercurrents are of primary value in that they might reveal underlying attitudes and motivations. The perseverance of core narratives and concepts can take various forms. As shown by the example of the *Stolen Drinking Horn* (ML 6045), a narrative can remain notably consistent over a lengthy timespan in one area (outcome A), whilst changing into an almost unrecognisable rendition elsewhere (outcome B). Moreover, any such discussions are based on the earliest appearance of such narratives in print, whilst theories concerning their possible development prior to their appearance in writing needs a more critical assessment.

Similar to artefacts, the initial appearance of narratives needs to be challenged, considering the context within which they would have been used and re-used. Much like looking at an Iron Age brooch and a 19th-century brooch, there is no sense in trying to find an explanation that suits both variants. Whilst seemingly the same in concept, both will have had very different societal roles at the time they were in active circulation, and for the later version to exist, previous variants have inevitably been copied, re-thought, rejected and built upon in a variety of ways. In sum, both represent different stages of an on-going development of a core concept through time.

CHAPTER 4: METHODS & SOURCES

A rich array of sources document aspects of Orkney's past from a variety of different angles. These documents range from Icelandic sagas, post-medieval writing and antiquarian investigations to more recent sources. All of these contribute to the study of Norse mentalities in various ways. This chapter examines the available sources on Norse Orkney, and their relevance for this research. The chapter opens with the discussion of a database, combining a range of data. The core of the database is based on data provided by the RCAHMS comprising 2958 sites, ranging from the Neolithic to the Medieval period and including a small number of post-medieval entries. This database is linked with the large on-line record, *Canmore*, through individual site IDs and an individual URL per site entry, to be visited and searched online.[1] Original site IDs have been kept and when referring to Orcadian sites in the text, the original *Canmore* ID is listed in brackets, for ease of finding the entry in the online *Canmore* database. Most entries come with concise (and at times extensive) descriptions of the site and an overview of any investigations, if undertaken. A large number of site entries come with further sources enabling in-depth research. That said, not all entries are equally detailed, and not all of them come with references. This is due to the nature of each site, their preservation and accessibility, and expertise of the person who entered the site into the database. The level of investigation, however, is the most crucial factor for the degree of detail of a site entry.

My MSt dissertation formed a 'pilot study' for this approach, yet a different direction was soon taken throughout the course of this research. My criticism in Chapter 2 concerning a 'vicious circle' of subjectivity in phenomenological landscape studies would appear somewhat hypocritical if I were to present a GIS-based landscape study comprising very similar shortcomings. My core criticism of phenomenological approaches in Chapter 2 concerned the unrepresentativeness of an observation mediated through a present-day viewer with an inevitable biographical and physical bias. In essence, however, analysing a 'Norse experience' of the landscape on the basis of known surviving sites projected onto maps compiled of recent topographical and geographical information would appear alarmingly similar. This argument is not to criticise the analytical use of GIS in general, but solely to underline that its use would not be viable for the aims of this research. The study undertaken by Leonard has demonstrated that there is great value to the use of GIS as an approach to Norse Orkney, as it allows for a good overview of potential patterns, which can subsequently be examined under combination of further sources (2010: 42-3 and 2011). Whilst a useful method in some studies, GIS as an analytical approach has clear limitations that would make it less viable for this research. Environmental changes, such as coastal erosion, changes in elevation or faunal developments will have changed the landscape to a significant degree between the first millennium AD and now. In addition to these natural impacts, social undertakings will have added further to the environment,

[1] https://canmore.org.uk/

including agricultural and political land use, as well as the construction and use of ephemeral structures that are no longer traceable, forming part of the unknown quantity of sites that are not listed in the database. Despite this, however, the database and its re-organisation proved to be beneficial in a variety of other ways. The final use of the database is outlined in brief below, whilst section 4.2 provides a more detailed discussion and historiography of other available sources, such as post-medieval sources, the *Orkneyinga Saga*, runic inscriptions and objects. Meanwhile, the eventual use of the database comprised the following three aspects: GIS distribution maps now serve as illustrative rather than as analytical tools. Also, the individual database entries are primarily used for reference and a consideration of place-names and, where present, folkloric connotations rather than as a basis for interpretation of spatial relations between Norse and prehistoric sites.

4.1 FROM DATASET TO LIVING LANDSCAPE

4.1.1 The database: Contents and re-organisation

Given the large number of Orkney's archaeological monuments it was important to obtain a systematic overview of sites, primarily to establish the overall context of sites, and to efficiently select relevant case studies. Whilst I had already used selected sites from data provided by RCAHMS for my MSt dissertation (Scholma 2012), for this thesis it was necessary to re-evaluate each individual database entry in order to establish its potential value for discussion. It was inevitable that not all sites would be relevant, making it necessary to exclude and reconsider a significant number of records in order to identify those sites of most potential relevance. In the process of this a distinction was made between the treatment of prehistoric and Norse sites respectively, reflecting the overall approach as outlined in Chapter 1. Whilst the Norse period sites are viewed from an archaeological point of view, prehistoric sites are treated as potential enigmatic components of the Norse landscape rather than as detached prehistoric monuments as informed by archaeology.

The selection of case studies rests on two pillars: A dataset comprising Orkney's archaeological sites and a study of relevant folklore. Firstly, the database was assessed and adapted for a contextual understanding of potentially relevant sites. Secondly, Orkney's site-related folklore and its wider Nordic parallels was studied in depth. The original data provided by RCHAMS provided a contextual overview of Orkney's archaeological sites from the Neolithic to the Norse (and several later sites). Awareness of such context is an essential starting point for the selection of case studies: it enables the examination of sites both individually and as part of a wider record, rather than a detached, isolated focus on individual sites only. Before this data could be used, however, there was a need to carefully assess and organise its contents. This primarily consisted of completing, where possible, over 1600 missing PERIOD-field entries; adding columns specific to this study; and omitting fields of no relevance. Added fields comprise a column on FOLKLORE, SITE REPRESENTATION, NOTES and VISIBILITY, and will be outlined in more detail below. Whilst providing an overview of relevant

Orcadian sites, the database alone did not suffice as a contextual framework for Orcadian folklore – simply because *Canmore* hosts entries on archaeological sites and buildings, and is not focused on folklore. A consideration of additional sources on Orcadian folklore and its Nordic parallels was therefore pertinent. This allowed to distinguish between widely known tale-site relationships and unique, singular cases. For this study, only cases with widespread parallels could be considered. The consultation of relevant folkloric literature was crucial in building a contextual understanding of Orkney's folklore, completing the physical overview.

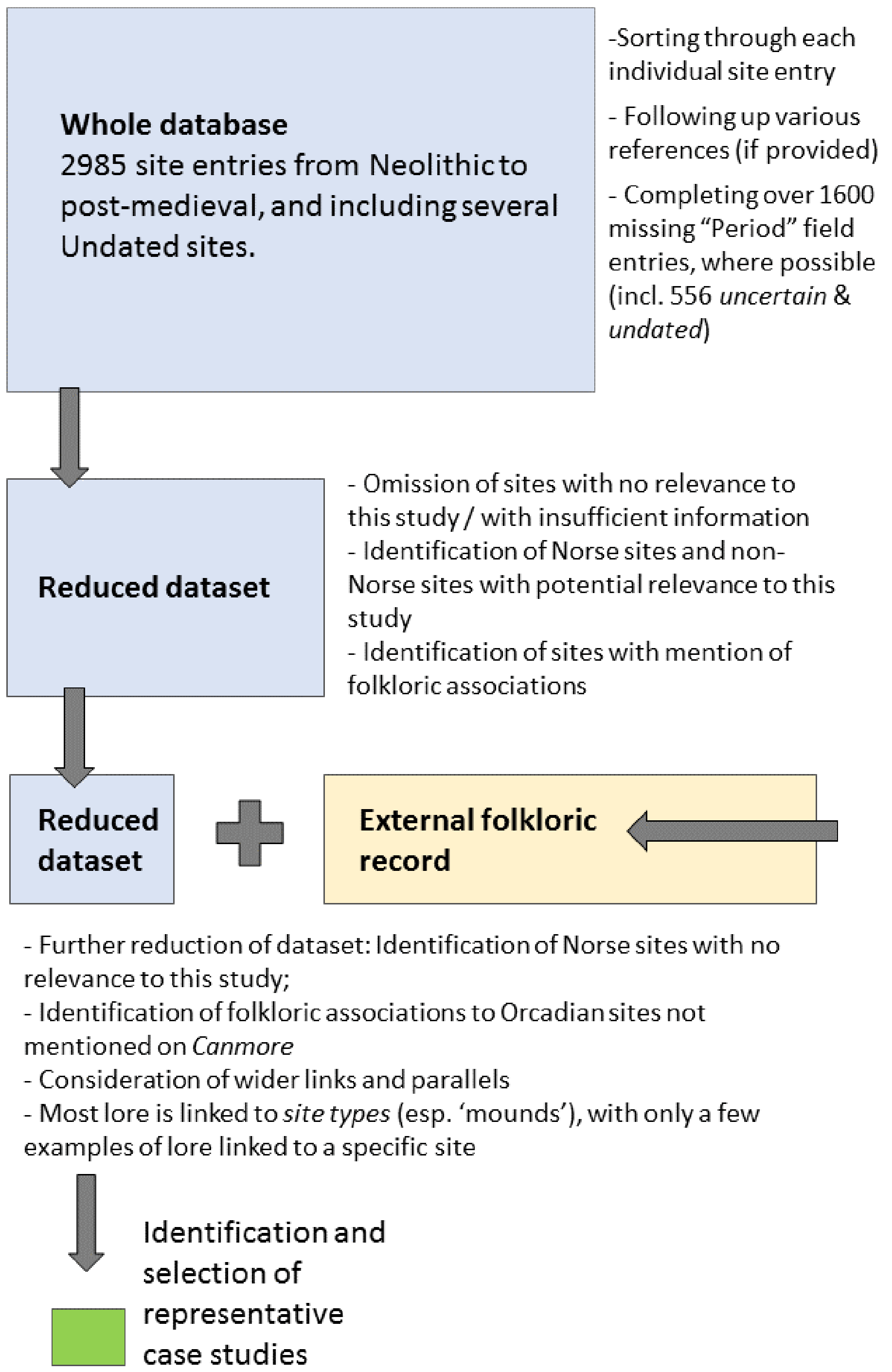


Fig. 4. 1
Process of Data organisation and evaluation

It is uncertain how many different viewpoints on ancient remains there would have been during the Norse period and how these would have been interpreted. In order to avoid simplification of this approach chosen prehistoric sites were examined individually depending on questions asked: sites with definite traces of re-use or continuity were treated differently from sites with no physical evidence for Norse interaction. Ultimately, out of the 2985 sites mentioned above, only 313 sites were deemed relevant to the study of the Norse period, yet with varying relevance to this study. Whilst depending on level of research and description, these entries furthermore range from stray finds to large scale sites. Even though not all of the 313 sites of Norse classification represented viable case studies in their own right, they do provide a crucial broader context within which the selected case studies are couched. The core benefit of this contextual awareness is to consider case studies not in isolation but as parts of the wider Orcadian landscape. As not every Orcadian site is equally well known, the dataset served as a valuable source for these informative, yet lesser known sites. An overall awareness of similarities and differences in site use and presence across the archipelago is crucial for contextualising the selected case studies. This includes a number of useful one-off examples and parallels on particular themes dealt with in the case studies, such as repaired standing stones or mounds that were opened at the top throughout the past centuries.

Whilst presenting a two-dimensional picture of the present-day landscape, entries in the database are not representative of the possible significance sites may have had during the Norse period. Frequently, sites of potential significance to this project were known from local tradition, yet no archaeological evidence survives. Similarly, sites of lesser importance during the Norse period may be attributed with more meaning simply because they are present today, or better preserved than other, once significant, sites. A further compounding issue were the missing period classifications in the respective database field. As mentioned above, for over 1600 site entries, the "PERIOD"-field was left blank, and these needed evaluating before the database could be examined for sites relevant to this study. In a very small number of cases, the omitted period specification was cited in the main description on *Canmore*. The majority of sites came with a site description and bibliographic references, from which an archaeological period could be identified. In addition to those sites of period classification, however, 556 further sites had to be labelled as 'undated' or 'uncertain', usually because the site entry was inconclusive (generally defined by a lack of literary sources, or of characteristic findings that would indicate a possible date range) or even left blank. Sites were labelled 'uncertain' when neither a date nor clear site descriptions or archaeological features were given; and 'undated' when site descriptions were given, yet without indication of a possible date. This could be due to imprecise grid references, poor or unrecorded investigations, unclear or missing antiquarian records, or from the loss of crucial artefacts, to which only unfounded allusions remain. This loss of data over time is inevitable for any archaeological research and consequently, the dataset can and should not be viewed as a complete representation of Norse activity on Orkney. There is a possibility of these 'uncertain' / 'undated' sites comprising Norse sites that have gone unrecognised, yet this is an inevitable problem.

Compounding this issue further, 29 sites were classified as ‘natural’, requiring further explanation. With 919 entries, mounds (consisting of 640 mounds, 228 cairns, and 123 barrows) are by far the largest component of the dataset; however, this calculation excludes any site of different classification (‘house’ or ‘structure’) that might have been grass-covered during the Norse period and therefore been perceived as a mound at the time. This large number of mound sites provided only a small number of representative sites. In general, mound-folklore is likely to be associated with the majority of mounds, recorded or not. In some cases, a site name alludes to such associations – for example the various occasions of “Fairy Knowe” (or “Brae”), *Canmore* IDs 2108, 2716 and 277488 – yet a specific record of a tale is missing for these and other sites. The case studies chosen for this research each have strong folkloric links that are well attested in literature. In light of their large number these require a slightly different approach, including the additional classification ‘natural’, applicable to those mounds that are not man-made, but believed to be glacial, for example. These natural sites might nonetheless have had perceptual value to the Norse, as can be paralleled with the veneration of both natural and artificial mounds in medieval Norway (Alcock 2003: 27; Lamb 1995: 82; Bradley 2017). The small number of ‘natural’ sites listed in the database, however, is not representative, as these primarily comprise accidental entries that were initially believed to be ancient sites. Naturally occurring mounds that might have been a focus of interest during the Norse period, yet which were instantly recognised as natural in the present day, for instance, will never have made it into the database. This also includes mounds that no longer exist at present, or have changed significantly, and are a currently fading living memory (*e.g. Canmore* IDs 1769, 1494).

Defining the “unknown quantity” of lost sites.

In the above discussion, the problem of an ‘unknown quantity’ of additional sites was raised – those sites that neither survive physically nor in collective memory. In order to adopt a more informed and contextualised approach to the interpretation of surviving sites it is necessary to outline the key types of site loss. Even a database containing every surviving archaeological site in an area contains just that: every *surviving* site. Any sites that have long been destroyed or weathered away naturally cannot be included, and the same applies to any natural site that might have been of importance, yet of which there is no mention in an archaeological database when no traces of human activity can be detected. Besides, apart from data loss due to imprecise investigation or recording, there are natural factors that have led to a significant reduction in sites between their construction and investigation in the present day: The use and re-use of places is a perpetually fluid and non-linear process, with ephemeral structures adjacent to long-standing ones. Only a few structures survive several centuries, and even less survive in the exact way they were built. Additional loss of archaeological material is caused by agriculture, as well as natural factors such as coastal erosion, gradual weathering or extreme environmental conditions such as storms, floods or fires. Furthermore, within this research the additional factor of non-archaeological – natural – sites needs to be considered. As mentioned above, the database contains 29 sites classified as ‘natural’. This, however, only represents an overview of sites that were initially mistaken for archaeological (and therefore entered into the database) and is not an exhaustive overview of all known natural mounds with potential for Norse activity. I illustrate this discussion with a hypothetical example: A prehistoric building overgrown with grass would count as a ‘man-made’ archaeological mound, regardless of whether this site was used - or venerated as mound - throughout subsequent centuries. At the same time, a nearby glacial mound might have held cultural significance for a number of decades during the Norse period, whilst leaving no archaeological trace as all votive offerings were perishable produce. The mound covering the prehistoric house will be included in the archaeological database upon investigation, whilst the natural mound will not be regarded as archaeologically significant. Albeit a fact that cannot be changed, the complex nature of how and why sites become lost must be acknowledged in order to see those that remain in their correct context.

Context

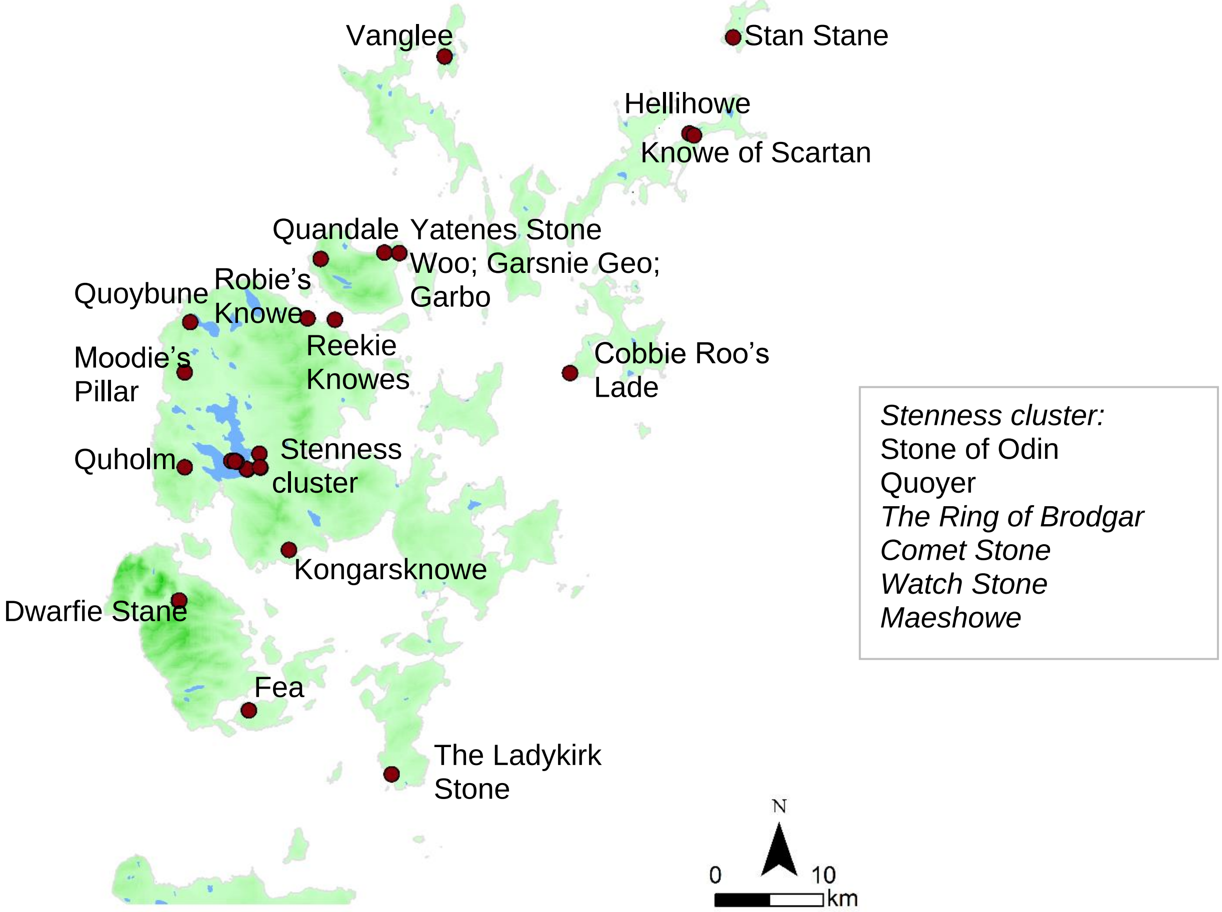
As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, the dataset served as a wider background for the selection of case studies. This provided a framework for comparison with other Orcadian sites, enabling an overall understanding of the selected sites within their Orcadian context.

Place-names

The database represents a rich source of place-names. This includes not only topographically descriptive or personal names, but also place-names of sites classified as ‘Neolithic’, ‘Bronze Age’, or even ‘natural’ that allude to their potential appearance within the Norse landscape. One element that recurs in particular is an indication of ‘mound’-association (most commonly containing *haugr* or *kumbl*, or derivatives thereof). This can include a site nowadays known as a structure, yet which must have been visible as an overgrown mound at the time it was named. Examples include – yet are not limited to – Howan Broch (possible broch, *Canmore* ID 2024); Howana Gruna (cairn, *Canmore* ID 2227) (both containing the element *haugr*), Cumbla Newgarth (barrow with cist, *Canmore* ID 1635) and Cummi Ness (broch, *Canmore* ID 1704) (both containing the element *kumbl*). Importantly, such names can preserve – or at least prolong – an awareness of structures that have been removed in recent centuries for cultivation, development, or simply through neglect (such as the possible broch structures at Howans, *Canmore* ID 1637). Site names with standing Stone references include the ON element *steinn* (*e.g.* Stenness; Stenso (Sandnes 2010: 155); or Stan Stane, *Canmore* ID 3692). Whilst caution needs to prevail to not assume a Norse origin for all of Orkney’s place-names, those that are indeed of antiquity can be valuable sources to aid our understanding of a Norse perception of the landscape. In cases of long-standing continuous use of place-names these can add to our understanding of a site (Brink 2008a and 2013: 37-8).

Folklore

20 entries in the original database contained references to folklore associated with particular places, and a further 9 were added to the database during this study (Map 4.1, Tab. 4.1). Whilst most of these can be substantiated further by other sources, a small number of them were uncertain references that were not referred to in this research. This was either because they were not linked to the site types discussed here, were deemed unique cases, or because their relevance to the Norse period was not clear (Tab. 4.1). A number of tales that are well-known and recorded elsewhere were not present in the database (for example those relating to Ring of Brodgar, *Canmore* ID 1696; and the Watchstone, *Canmore* ID 2096), yet were added as part of this study. The added 'FOLKLORE'-column allowed not only for a searchable overview of known site associations (including those added during this study), but also for further distinction between the representation of mounds and standing stones in various tales. The SITE REPRESENTATION field allows for a filtering of site-related folklore, indicated with "Y" (yes, the tale represents a site) or "N" (no, the tale does not represent a site), whilst the VISIBILITY column provides an overview of whether a site is still visible in the landscape (Y) or not (N). The NOTES-field allowed for a brief documentation of key points regarding the lore of a site, highlighting the way in which the sites are represented. Notes were made on identifiable characteristics of an 'internal' and an 'external' viewpoint on mounds (Chapter 5), but also the variety of roles played by megaliths (see also Chapter 6, table 6.1). A further factor is that the majority of tales are not fixed to a specific site. Whilst various standing stones do have a specific tale associated with them, the same cannot be said about most mounds. For instance, every prehistoric, natural, medieval or later mound, regardless of its contents, has the potential for folkloric associations, and it cannot be expected that all of these would have been recorded in writing, or added to *Canmore*. The widespread occurrence of *haugbui*- associations with mounds from both West Scandinavia and Orkney is indicative of a widespread folkloric association with mound sites (Marwick 1975: 41; Westwood and Kingshill 2009: 383), not all of which is remembered today for every site. The grand majority of the 919 "Mound" site entries, in spite of their potential, can thus not be given much weight in case study discussions for lack of evidence, or any evident memory of, such association. The overview presented here (Map 4.1 and Tab. 4.1) should therefore be regarded as a mere indicator of a much larger record of tales connected with sites in the past.



Map 4.1 Overview of folkloric associations fixed to existing sites. This is by no means an exhaustive overview, as not all Orcadian tales are fixed to a site. For ease of viewing, the cluster of sites in Stenness are mentioned in the legend. A closer view on the Stenness sites is provided in Chapter 6. See Tab. 4.1 for further information regarding sites displayed here.

The sites displayed in the above map are not fully reliable with regards to a tale's origin (an issue that will be returned to in Chapter 5). They are solely an overview of places that have a collective memory or a written account of associated tales as known presently. This is to a large degree due to the numerous cases of re-invented origins – or "*quasi-historical*" tales (Alver 1989: 137) – which is a common factor in tales and narratives across the world (see also Hedeager 2011: 227). As already discussed in Chapter 3.3.2, a key factor in a narrative's survival is its constant "*updating*" (Gunnell *forthcoming*) in order to remain relatable for the audience of its time (Honko 1989: 37; Zipes 2002: 7; Hedeager 2011: 177). One relevant case from Orkney is the *Hogboon of Hellihowe* (*e.g.* Muir 1998 and 2007): whilst linked with the existing (albeit now levelled) mound of Hellihowe on Sanday (Thomson 1999: 10-1), there are earlier Norwegian versions of this tale that are set in Norway (Kvideland and Sehmsdorf 2010: 246). This case study will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 5. Chapter 3.4 has already discussed other, more detailed and more relevant sources on Orkney's folklore. Whilst the database cannot be wholly representative of all folkloric associations with sites on Orkney, it provides an overview of a selection of tales and beliefs occurring in different areas of the archipelago, including a number of entries that are not well-known elsewhere.

Canmore ID	Site name	Description
1597	Dwarfie Stane, Hoy	Stone inhabited by giants (tale) / dwarfs (site name). Note the tale / name discrepancy
2705	Yatenes Stone, Rousay	Drinking Stone (tale) / Giant (name). Note the tale / name discrepancy
3616	Knowe of Scarton, Sanday	The Black Bridal of Scartan
2096	Watch Stone	**Drinking Stone**
2094	Maeshowe	**Mound dweller**
3488	Helliehow / "cot Brae"	**Mound-dweller**
1696	Ring of Brodgar	"*Reared in honour of the sun*", linked with Stones of Stenness. **Petrified giants**
2716	Woo, Rousay	Locally known as "*the Fairy Knowe*", without further information this can denote internal as well as external strand.
1784	Stane o'Quoybune / Wheebin	**Drinking Stone**
2851	Vanglee, Papa Westray	Possibly old farm mound, local memory of a leper living here.
1700	Comet Stone (Ring of Brodgar)	**Petrified giant**
1922	Hill of Cruaday, Sandwick; Moadies / Moodie's Pillar	Stone inanimate, yet memories of local traditions. Reports of votive offerings in 1892 (The Orkney Herald).
2128	Stone of Odin, Stenness	Stone inanimate, yet a key landmark imbued with tradition.
2108	Quoyer, Stenness	"*Fairy Knowe*", without further information this can denote internal as well as external strand.
2172	Robie's Knowe, Evie and Rendall	Place name and local tradition refer to a person possibly buried here.
2168	Reeky Knowes, Evie and Rendall	Location of signal fires into recent time. Age uncertain
2280	Quandale, Rousay	Folkloric links (unspecified) between this mound and nearby croft
3392	Cobbie Roo's Lade, Stronsay	Stones, "*dropped by Cobbie Row*" whilst building a passage between the islands of Shapinsay and Stronsay
277488	Kongarsknowe, Orphir Fairy Brae of Congasquoy, Congasquoy Hillock, Konger's Knowe	18^{th}- (or early 19^{th}-) century excavation stopped by local warnings. Place name indicates a mound and the surrounding field as linked to a king. Note the association with "*the old King's Highroad*".
2729	Garsnie Geo, Rousay	Treb dyke – "*regarded with superstition and ascribed to the 'trows'*", pre-dating the Norse activity in this area.
3617	Garbo, Rousay	Treb dyke – locally known as "*Trows Buil*"
306647	South Walls, Fea, Walls and Flotta	Mound, possibly prehistoric. Local knowledge of "*sacrifices*", used to be more elevated
295445	Quholm, Stromness	Stone ball, near the findspot of a "*witch's box*". Age unknown.

9565	Ladykirk stone, South Ronaldsay	Stone with "*footprints*"
3692	Stan Stane / Holland, North Ronaldsay	Tradition of visiting this standing stone on New Year's Day.
2634	Taversoe Tuick, Rousay	**Opening of Mond followed by local lore**
2638	Cubbie Roo's Burden, Rousay	Site name refers to origin myth

Tab. 4.1 Sites connected with a folkloric memory. Source: *Canmore*. Comments in bold were added by the author. The 'real' record of tales not associated to sites, or those that were not recorded in *Canmore*, is much larger than this.

4.2 EARLY HISTORIOGRAPHY OF ORKNEY.

4.2.1 The Sagas: Fact and Fiction

The reconstruction of Orkney's Norse past has relied to a large degree on the events described in the *Orkneyinga Saga*, subtitled *"the history of the Earls of Orkney"* (or ON *Jarlasögur*). This source is based upon an earlier prototype that was edited around AD 1200, when contemporary events were added to the saga; with further edits during the 13th century (Muir 2005; Barrett 2012: 12-3). Sagas as sources are continuously debated amongst scholars (*e.g.* Wainwright 1962: 118; Simek 2004: 75; Crawford 2013: 40-50; Jesch 2015: 73) and they remain challenging, mostly in light of the chronological scope they encompass, whilst mostly written at a much later dater than the earliest events described, and early versions are likely to have undergone major edits centuries after their authors died (Muir 2005). Therefore, sagas cannot be read in the same way as contemporary secondary sources, yet this should not lead to their complete omission (Barrett 2008: 412). Medieval documents are likely to document earlier, orally remembered, concepts (Sundqvist 2001: 645; Gunnell 2014: 18).

Whilst our usual perspective on the Norse is written "*by the losers – and* […] *not good losers*" (Williams 2013), the *Orkneyinga Saga*[2] follows the classical tradition of a history written (or at least commissioned) by the victors. As the subtitle "*The History of the Earls of Orkney*" already indicates, this is a 'top-down' source, being primarily concerned with high-status individuals. The Saga would disappoint as a source on daily life and traditions in Norse Orcadian society, as only very little light is shed on quotidian events or on the diversity of reasons for settlement on the islands – simply because this is not the primary aim of the Saga. It is unknown whether a final editor eliminated any such information, or elements of people's beliefs, in favour of a narrative focusing almost exclusively on the events and personalities of higher status. In a work claiming to be a 'history' of Orkney's Norse earls, however, questions arise with regards to the consistency of credible material. The opening chapters deal with events that occurred at least 2 centuries prior to the last edits, and the events concerning the 12th century and onwards are generally deemed more reliable (Barrett 2012: 12-3; Jesch 2015: 73). Intriguingly, the way in which Orkney's Norwegian connection is presented in the *Orkneyinga Saga* appears somewhat defensive, resembling an origin myth rather than a

[2] For ease of reading, the *Orkneyinga Saga* will for the remainder of this section be referred to as 'the Saga'.

historical account (*ibid.*). Claiming mythical Scandinavian origins by such elaborate means has been interpreted as an indication of instability and thus the need to justify such an identity (*ibid*.). Orkney's declining political position amidst the increasingly powerful realms of Scotland and Norway towards the end of the 12th century (Imsen 2003: 65-80) might have possibly played a role in this. The Saga could have served as a legitimisation of Norse political identity through a selective re-writing of history, with particular focus on mythical Norwegian ancestry of the Orcadian earls. In light of the uncertainties concerning the authors and dates – especially regarding the last edits – this will remain unresolved. Most of the information obtained from the Saga is therefore more likely to be a representation of 13th-century Orkney – and the 13th-century *idea* of 9th-century Orkney (Barrett 2008: 413 and 2012: 12) – than an accurate representation of situations before the final edits, although some information may have been kept or re-interpreted from the earlier documents. Crucially, also these remain the accounts of authors with particular agendas and perspectives. Even though no method is without flaw, one of the most fruitful ways of consulting saga material critically would be the combination of these with other surviving sources (Barrett 2008: 412).

Independent, however, from questions regarding the accuracy of events described in the Saga, the few snippets of information 'between the lines' are, where available, of primary use and interest to this research: chapter 8 of the Saga, for instance, not only mentions taxpaying farmers, but also distinguishes between wealthier farmers with estates and poorer farmers. Chapter 57 makes further reference to agriculture, including the presence of barley. In chapter 71, the area of Pierowall (ON: *Höfn*: 'harbour') is introduced along with reflections upon ideal sailing weather between particular islands, as well as the use of beacons. The latter concurs with various potential beacon sites recorded on *Canmore*, in addition to allusions to such in Orkney's place-names and in local memory (see Tab. 4.1), the documentation of beacons in the Saga is a beneficial clue. Furthermore, the Saga illustrates connections between the Norwegian ruling classes of its time and Orkney, therefore serving as an additional source of information and *terminus ante quem* for areas of Norse activity, particular social concepts, as well as the age of some place-names. A large number of the latter survive up to the present day, such as Deerness (*Dýrness*: 20), Hamna Voe (*Hafnarvágr*: 93) or Orphir (*Ørfjara*: 55, 67) to name but a few. Importantly, the Saga clearly is written for medieval readers, assuming the reader's familiarity with the environment and topography: some place-names mentioned in the Saga leave much room for exact interpretation from a present-day perspective: "*(…) Byrgisherad*" (31-2, 52, 56, 57, 98) could, for instance, refer to the Brough of Birsay specifically as well as to the entire parish of Birsay (Ritchie 1998: 6). This is with little doubt due to a less dense use of land in medieval Orkney, where more approximate specifications would have been sufficient to point out a location and known landmarks. The Saga is, however, firmly couched within the framework of a Norse presence on the islands that needs no further explanation – it is not a source offering any insight into why the islands were initially settled, or how far connections between Scandinavia and Orkney stretch back. Nor is there discussion of indigenous inhabitants and the way their views and settlement are perceived by the Norse. There is no distinction between 'Norse' and 'indigenous', even in the earlier chapters. This might, however, be due to the final edit at a time where the Norse had already been on Orkney for numerous generations, and no distinction was – or could – be made between those with Scandinavian or Orcadian lineage.

There are only few direct allusions to everyday beliefs (however, see Crawford 2013: 93-4 and Morris 2004 for a plausible suggestion of 'hidden' folkloric aspects in the *Orkneyinga Saga*). This might be linked to the *Zeitgeist* of the time the Saga was last edited and the commissioner's – or even the unknown author's own – societal views. Considering the edicts against mound veneration discussed in Chapter 3 it would also be probable that most non-Christian folkloric material present in earlier editions was perhaps edited out in later editions – most likely for political reason, or simply because the last editor did not deem it significant – yet this will never be more than speculation. Therefore, whilst the *Orkneyinga Saga* can be a useful source in studies of Norse Orkney in general, it offers only little insight into the quotidian attitudes towards the landscape that would be required for this research.

Finally, the Saga should be regarded as a product of its time, providing valuable representations of the enigmatic world of medieval Icelandic Norse ideology. Regardless of its exact historical accuracy it is still a primary – albeit amended – source, or better: A late Norse artefact. As already discussed, written sources serve as *termini ante quem* for the concepts they describe and, even though ideologies will have often changed by the time they were written about, they can still represent the remnants of long-standing concepts (O'Kelly 1982: 45; Sundqvist 2001: 645; Gunnell 2014: 18). Despite its flaws, the value of saga material as a contributor to research on Norse Orkney thus needs to be acknowledged. Importantly, however, sagas are insufficient when used as the only source to complement archaeological findings. This is primarily due to their largely political nature and the sparsity of information regarding everyday life and belief. Consequently, for this research more sources are needed in order to widen our angle on Norse Orcadian mentalities.

4.2.2 Jo. Ben: 14ft skeletons and vanished mounds

A further early – albeit somewhat enigmatic – source on past Orkney is Jo. Ben's *Descriptio Insularium Orchadiarum,* in which the otherwise unknown author describes key aspects of the entire archipelago following (or during) a visit sometime during the 16th century. The identity and full name of Ben remains an unsolved mystery, with John Bellenden, John Bonar, John Bain and Sir James Balfour as potential, yet unlikely authors (Hunter 1987). The National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh, holds three manuscripts, none of which are with confidence believed to be the original (*ibid.*; NLS librarian pers. comm.). The accuracy of these documents, therefore, is uncertain and it is possible that amendments to Ben's original text have been made at a later date. Towrie's English translation of all entries can be found online on his website *Orkneyjar*, based – with some amendments – on Rev. George Barry's (1806) edition of one of the Latin manuscripts from the Advocate's Library in Edinburgh (Towrie 1996-2017b). Alongside doubt about authorship, the assumed 1529 date of the source might also be inaccurate, with theories of this source being a backdated one (*ibid.*; Tom Muir pers. comm.). The reference to Noltland Castle being "*not yet completed*" (Towrie 1996-2017c) dates this source to at least the late 16th century with a degree of confidence, as work on Noltland Castle began around 1560 (Tom Muir pers. comm.; Muir 1998: 179; Towrie 1996-2017d). Ben's *Descriptio* is in its essence akin to the travel literature known from the Enlightenment period, albeit more abridged, and should perhaps be read as an early predecessor of such. It comprises shorter as well as longer entries in which personal observations made by the author are recorded. Ben mentions not only the environmental and ancient aspects of Orkney; there are also comments on encounters with locals and their beliefs, their history, battles, and their behaviour when intoxicated. Unfortunately – and somewhat contradicting its title – the *Descriptio* does not give much descriptive detail, and the overall purpose of the work remains unclear, other than as private travel notes. Where the author found aspects of his visits across the islands and parishes of Orkney noteworthy, a reference to these was made, yet is usually no longer than a sentence or two. It appears that much knowledge was assumed on the part of readers – if there ever were readers other than the unknown author in mind. Alternatively, Ben might have planned to return to these initial notes in order to elaborate further on them, yet if this was the case this was never completed.

Of particular value, however, is Ben's recording of the Dwarfie Stane – the oldest known record of an Orcadian folktale linked to a monument (Muir 1998; Jesch 2013) – along with other enigmatic references to local ideologies and customs, some of which are claimed to stem from outside living memory. In the Stenness section of the *Descriptio* Ben refers to a "*small hill*" near "*the lake*" – either the Harray Loch or the Loch of Stenness – in which he claims to have viewed a 14ft skeleton with money placed under the skull (Towrie 1996-2017i; Barry 1808: 445). Whether this hill refers to Maeshowe or a different, now levelled mound cannot be inferred from the text, and in Section 4.2.3 I will highlight further sources that demonstrate that this area has undergone much change even in recent centuries. Since there is no reference to Ben or an assistant breaking the hill open, the hill might have already been opened and was easily accessible, yet it is equally possible that this information was omitted to keep the entry concise.

Intriguingly, the majority of entries in Ben's *Descriptio* concern themselves with folkloric and enigmatic notions – such as the supernatural lights on the hills of Rousay (Towrie 1996-2017e), the specific remark that the inhabitants of Eynhallow have folkloric traditions strongly interwoven with their daily lives (Towrie 1996-2017f), and the note that inhabitants of Shapinsay venerate fairies and "*other wicked things*" (Towrie 1996-2017g). These notes are influenced by a 16th-century mentality, in which the presence of supernatural creatures and larger-than-life human skeletons (Towrie 1996-2017h and 1996-2017i) are common and need no justification, as discussed in Chapter 3. In spite of the uncertainties regarding the source's exact date or the enigma of the author's identity – neither of which are known in the case of several sagas – Ben's *Desriptio*, too, serves as an artefact of its time. Useful clues are offered both between the lines and directly.

Fig. 4.2 F. W. L. Thomas' map of Stenness (Thomas 1852).

For a further description of the islands I refer to James Wallace's *Account of the Islands of Orkney*, published in 1700, yet written sometime in the mid- or late- 17th century before Wallace's death in 1688. In this account, Wallace discusses not only the appearance of Orkney in more detail, but also its flora, its terrestrial as well as marine life (chapter II). The Dwarfie Stane sees an in-depth descriptive recording, however the folkloric association recorded by Ben is not mentioned (1700: 52). Instead, Wallace makes mention of the site believed to have been "*the residence of some melancholic hermit*" (*ibid.*, see also Brand 1701: 42 and 1703: 42), which might indicate that the association with the three giants as described in Ben was not necessarily as widely known as it is today.

4.2.3 From curiosity to methodology: The Age of Antiquarianism

Orkney's archaeology has been the focus of recorded scholarly research since the 19th century (Card 2005: 40; although earlier exceptions are mentioned throughout this thesis). This inevitably means that the excavation reports resulting from these early investigations – and the methods employed in excavation – are often viewed in a negative light from a present-day perspective (Childe 1931: 4; Ashmore 2003: 37; Thomas 2016: 29; although see Johnson 2010: 13). The techniques available nowadays to examine and date even the smallest samples could not be foreseen, as a result of which personal interest and individual level of scrutiny of each researcher would have been a deciding factor in what finds would have been kept and studied. Archaeology as a discipline was in its formative years, with a much less unified range of approaches to the material and its documentation. This ranges from imprecise recordings and lost artefacts to organised and detailed reports that are of use to the present-day reader (such as Petrie's contributions to Maeshowe's recordings (Davidson and Henshall 1989; Thomas 2016: 30); or Burroughs' description and interpretation of the Taiversoe Tuick finds: Reynolds 1985, see also Turner 1903). Due to the formative stage of Archaeology as a discipline and the absence of basic criteria for excavation practice the quality of a report would have depended much on the effort, skill and interest of each researcher. On the other hand, however, some of these earlier sources document observations that are now lost (see esp. George Marwick's description of the broch of Burwick in Muir and Irvine 2014). Consequently, antiquarian records are on the one hand valuable secondary sources, where they refer to otherwise unknown findings and observations, whilst in other cases the early investigations have obstructed rather than supported on-going research through imprecise writing or haphazard excavation and object handling.

Countless archaeological sites are likely to have been levelled over the past centuries without proper – or any – recording due to the rapid development of agriculture, as is noted already in 1849 (Card 2005: 41). Indeed, a great number of mounds across Orkney show overgrown signs of previous disturbance (*e.g. Canmore* IDs 1634; 1788; 9567 to name but a few) and it is likely that these are the remains of unrecorded investigations that pre-date today's standards of archaeological methods. Whilst antiquarian investigations are mostly frowned upon today due to their often imprecise methods, it remains important to acknowledge their contributions. This includes in particular the work of Henry Dryden, who provided detailed information on a number of sites and sought to conserve them (Card 2005: 42), and also George Petrie (*ibid.*; Childe 1931: 4), who re-examined several excavated sites and whose work was already relied upon by his contemporaries for use in their own investigations. James Farrer is another regularly occurring name in Orcadian archaeology, yet his methods of excavation and inconsistencies in his recording have earned him a negative reputation among archaeologists (Childe 1931: 4, Thomas 2016: 29).

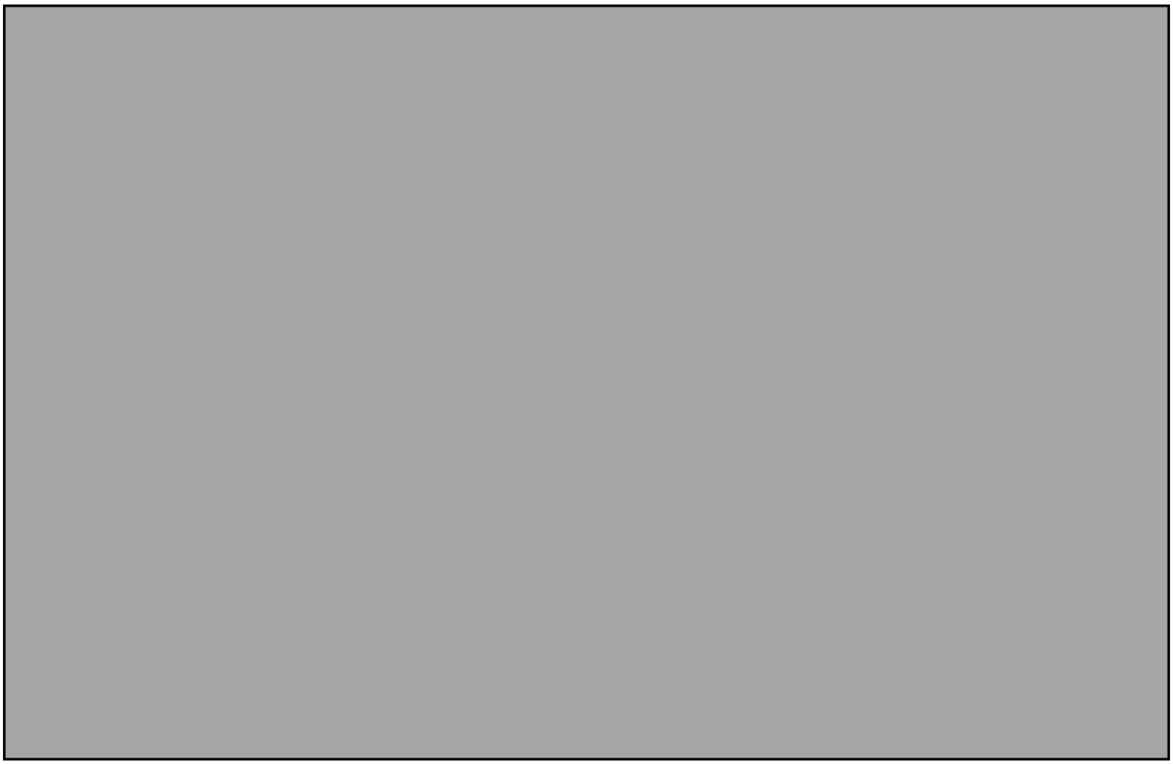


Fig. 4.3 Sir Joseph Banks' 1772 Stenness map. Note the quadrangular view onto what is likely to be the now levelled site of Big Howe (marked by inserted arrow), a further substantial mound that once formed part of the Stenness landscape. *Cf.* Map 4.1 and Fig. 4.1 *Image:* Card 2005: 41, *arrow added by the author*.

Of further notable interest from this age are the sketches, drawings and paintings that provide insights into the appearance of landscape at the time of their illustration, including their direct environment: F. W. L. Thomas' map of 1849 (Fig. 4.1) depicts several mounds near the edge of the Harray loch, whilst an OS entry of the same area in 1966 no longer shows them (*cf. Canmore* ID 2122). A 1772 map of Stenness by Sir Joseph Banks not only features the now forgotten name 'Circle of Loda' (instead of 'Brodgar'), it also applies the term "*crescent*" to what appears to be a semi-circular arrangement of the Stones of Stenness before their more recent partial reconstruction. Most intriguingly, however, both maps depict the potential broch of Big Howe, which was levelled in the early 20th century (*Canmore* ID 2118) (Figs. 4.1 and 4.2). Geophysical surveys of this area have indeed confirmed the presence of a substantial "*lightbulb shaped*" structure (Ovenden 2007: 145; see also Moore and Brend 2016 on further potential mounds in the Stenness area). Big Howe is likely to have been a prominent landmark up until it was levelled: the site is referred to as a "*large dilapidated tumulus*" by F. W. L. Thomas (1851: 102) and as "*The remains of a very large tumulus*" on his map of Stenness (Map 4.2). This site, as well as the potential other levelled mounds would also suit the rather broad description of the "*small hill*" near "*the lake*" mentioned by Ben (Section 4.2.2). These early sources can indicate archaeological material that is now no longer visible, and further illustrate long-standing and on-going changes in the landscape. They can, therefore, be useful complementary material in combination with other evidence. However, their value as independent sources has its limits, and a combination with other sources is needed to widen the spectrum of potential insights further.

4.3 CARVED INTO STONE AND MEMORY

4.3.1 Runes as sources for past mentalities?

Runic inscriptions are the only primary sources from Scandinavia before the earliest Norse written sources (Williams 2008: 281), bearing verbalised fragments of people's thoughts (Brink 2005: 99). Importantly, they differ from the written texts common to readers of the Latin script. The abundance of written text available today signifies a very different mentality towards the recording of information, providing an "*archive*" of externalised memory (Tilley 1991: 119; see also Goody 2000: 27). This contrasts not only with the comparably small number of people who were taught how to read or compose runic messages, but also the different material used (Hedeager 2011: 21). Primarily, there are constraints not only due to the surface upon which runes are carved, but also to the energy expenditure when compared to writing onto paper. Consequently, core messages are expressed significantly different from a text that is written onto paper. The carver of a runic message has less space and less time to include various details in comparison to the possibility to write a more elaborate text on the same subject. The restricted length of inscriptions adds weight to the messages contained therein – regardless of whether the messages are formal pieces of information or of more light-hearted nature. What they all have in common is that they contain matters that were important enough to afford the energy of being carved (Herschend 2001: 354). They were thus once in the forefront of someone's thoughts, and are therefore fragments of past mentalities.

In combination with archaeological evidence and site-related folklore, runes have the potential to add considerably to the study of past mentalities (see contributions to Düwel 1998), yet just like all other archaeological material discussed here they have their limits. One of the most important issues to acknowledge when studying runes is that the transliteration of runes is by no means straightforward – whilst it might be possible to transliterate words themselves, the entire mentality from which they were forged will never be fully grasped. Puns and wordplay known to the carvers and their immediate radius are lost, leaving various inscriptions only partly – if at all – understood. Here I will briefly outline the general value of runic inscriptions as a means to approach past mentalities, followed by a discussion of how Orkney's inscriptions fit into this.

For the following discussion, I have chosen to differentiate between "formal" and "informal" inscriptions. This is to underline differences in the mentalities that have shaped runic inscriptions in different areas. The most significant difference between formal and informal inscriptions is that the former are carved with the intention to be understood by a wider radius, therefore their messages are in most cases more explicitly expressed – sometimes additionally supported by imagery or overall arrangement of the runes. In the context of this chapter, "formal" rune-stones have been carved – or commissioned – with the intention of being seen by others, mostly to commemorate personalities of local or wider significance. Examples include. the formal 12th-century runestone at Harg, Uppland, Sweden (Ahrens 1982: 257); the unique stones at Jelling, Denmark (*e.g.* Jensen 2013: 984-5, 1045, 1059; Figs. 4.3. and 4.4) or the recently reinterpreted Swedish Rök runestone (Holmberg 2016: 65-106). Inscriptions here defined as "informal" are often more situational, which can compound our understanding of their message or intention (although see *e.g.* Barnes 2012: 111-3). The carvers themselves, and perhaps those in their immediate radius at the time, would have understood the motivations behind the carvings – a contemporary issue of debate, a reference to a person notorious to the immediate group, or a joke only known to a small circle of people – yet the majority of this immediate context is lost to the present-day reader (and perhaps already to anyone not immediately acquainted with the carver/s). Puns and wordplay that can no longer be understood, and which cannot be translated, is an issue that compounds this further. Whilst clues about past mentalities might still be present even in more cryptic inscriptions, without further contextual knowledge their messages are often enigmatic (*e.g.* Barnes 2012: 112; Scholma-Mason 2016: 45). This differentiation between "formal" and "informal" inscriptions is not to simplify what in reality will have been much more complex, bearing a variety of underlying motivations. Instead, the aim is to highlight key characteristics of Orkney's runes and how these fit into their broader Nordic context.

No formal rune-stones are known from Orkney, and the runic inscriptions found across the archipelago differ somewhat from those known from Scandinavia, as will be discussed in more detail in Section 4.3.2. The emphasis here, however, is not on the *ways* in which notions were expressed and materialised, but on *the notions themselves*, regardless of whether these are carved into stone, written on paper, or preserved in memory through folklore and place-names. Significant notions concerned with afterlife, the restless dead, and mound breaking are reflected in Scandinavian rune stones and runic inscriptions over several centuries, with noteworthy parallels surviving in folklore from Scandinavia and Orkney. Provided they are found in a secure context, the runic inscriptions from across the Nordic world act as testaments for the early presence of particular notions and beliefs that are not limited to one area only, and some of which might survive in folklore up until today. This, for instance, includes several runic inscriptions and picture stones from across Scandinavia and even England, depicting scenes otherwise only known in writing from medieval Iceland (Brink 2007: 106). As discussed in Chapter 3 the manner and frequency with which something is expressed can shed light on how strong a particular aspect was culturally ingrained, indicative of ancient roots (O'Kelly 1982: 45) - the reader of the message is familiar with the concept mentioned, needing no further explanation or justification.

For instance, the notion that mounds were associated with the afterlife has seen extensive scholarly discussion (*e.g.* Düwel 1978; Schwab 1998: 405; Kvideland and Sehmsdorf 2010: 11). They are primarily seen as a (temporary) abode for the revenant dead (Krause 1993: 59; Spurkland 2009), but also as perpetually haunted sites that become mythical over time, with on-going generations gradually losing the direct link with any known or remembered individuals buried in the mounds they see every day (Kvideland and Sehmsdorf 1989: 138). Across Scandinavia several runic inscriptions are known that refer to various aspects of mythology and belief (see e.g. Zachrisson 1998: 47-52), and the abundance of varying motifs do not necessarily render a linear image of Old Norse beliefs (Clunies Ross 2008: 232). There is, however, a noteworthy presence of runic inscriptions dealing with mound use and mound disturbance, covering not only wide geographical areas, but also stretching across several centuries. Several memorial rune-stones from across Scandinavia warn the passer-by to not interfere with the monument, with dates for very similar "mound-breaking"-messages ranging across 4 centuries (*cf.* examples in Düwel 1978 and McKinnell *et al.* 2004), which signifies a long-standing continuation of concepts that were widely understood (see also Zachrisson 1998: 47-53). Leading interpretations of the c.AD675 rune-stone at Björketorp, Blekinge, Sweden, indicate that whoever manipulates the monument will die in agony (McKinnell *et al.* 2004: 166). Similarly, the rune-stones at Glemminge (Skåne, Sweden; c.AD1000) (*ibid.*; Düwel 1978: 231), Saleby and Noleby (Västergötaland, Sweden; 10th-century and c. 600 respectively), Högstena (Västergötaland, c.AD1100) and Glavendrup (Fyn, Denmark; c. AD900-950) all indicate that the one who dares to disturb the monument will suffer mental anguish (McKinnell *et al.* 2004: 118; 167-8). Similar threats – albeit phrased slightly more enigmatically – were carved onto rune-stones at Skern 2 and Sønder Vinge 2 (both North Jutland, Denmark; c.AD1000) (*ibid.*: 169, 170). A threat akin to the aforementioned ones was also carved into the stone at Tryggevælde (Zealand, Denmark; c.AD900), yet this warning seems to refer only to the stone itself, unless the stone has become representative of the entire monument. Likewise, however, the 13th-century inscription at Hennøy III, Sogn og Fjordane, Norway, which refers to gold hidden "**i þessum steini**" / "*inside this stone*" (McKinnell *et al.* 2004: 130), might indicate that stones covering a burial (or another monument), where present, can be representative of the entire site.

In addition to these, several memorial rune-stones suggest to the deceased to enjoy, or make good use of, their mound or grave. At Nørre Nærå (Fyn, Denmark; c.AD900) it is instructed to (or by) **Þormundr** to **niąut kubls** (ON *"njót kumbls"*): "*use the mound well*" (Düwel 1978: 237; Nedoma 1998: 42; McKinnell 2004: 170). A very similar phrase was carved into a rune-stone at Gørlev (Zealand, Denmark) about a century earlier, placed immediately after a 16-character *fuþark* and between further lines of runic inscriptions (*ibid.*: 135). Key suggestions include that the initiative to "*make use of the grave*" was to keep the ghost of the deceased at peace in order to protect the living against *draugar* (*ibid.*). In any case, from inscriptions of this kind can be inferred that the concept of an afterlife – comprising a more detailed belief system which included potential actions by the deceased after death or burial – did not need much explanation for those reading the inscriptions.

The inscriptions assume knowledge on behalf of the reader or passer-by, suggesting that these concepts were widespread and culturally ingrained (see Chapter 3).

A further indication of an early Nordic belief in the restless dead can be found in the bog bodies from Northern Germany and Denmark, which have undergone post-mortem mutilation that would not have been of any practical use in a funerary context (Nedoma 1998: 40-1). Inscribed artefacts found *within* burials, and therefore not visible to passers-by, might further indicate that funerary inscriptions were not only to be read by potential grave robbers, but also by the (revenant) dead or other potential supernatural entities. Examples include the copper amulet from an early 9th-century grave at Ulvsunda, Västergötaland, which bears two inscriptions: one appears to be a charm to keep the revenant ghost of the buried individual at peace, whilst the second line wishes ill luck upon the robber (of the grave?) (*ibid.:* 171). Further runic inscriptions indicate a long-standing significance of the sun, including sunlight falling onto particular surfaces, or even the bodies of the deceased, as can also be inferred from early Icelandic literature (Boberg 1966: 97, especially motif E431.10). This is supported by potential sun-related runic inscriptions from Eggja, Norway (Jacobsen 1931: Pl. II; Krause and Jankuhn 1966), Sigtuna, Sweden (MacLeod and Mees 2006: 121) and potentially Kylver, Gotland, Sweden (Scholma-Mason 2016). The combination of these examples, both in literature and in inscriptions, portrays the consistency of strongly ingrained concepts over several centuries and covering a wide geographical area. This supports the idea that notions of this kind might have travelled across the Nordic world rather than being limited to isolated areas or periods (Gunnell 2014: 19). Importantly, the inscriptions discussed here indicate that concepts very similar to those observed in Norwegian and Orcadian folklore were widely present and known across Early Medieval Scandinavia, and likely earlier.

4.3.2 Orkney's Runes

Above I have briefly introduced the value of runic inscriptions as primary sources of past mentalities, although their encapsulated messages vary in clarity. Orkney has a variety of runic inscriptions, yet there are differences between the Orcadian and wider Scandinavian runic record. The absence of formal rune-stones across Orkney should not be too surprising given its cultural connections, as this custom never fully took root in Norway (Barnes 2012: 86). Barbara Crawford suggests that the absence of a long-standing familiarity with runic expression among early medieval Scots might have contributed to an earlier decline of this form of recording than elsewhere in Scandinavia (2013: 52). This decline does not mean that Orkney's runic inscriptions are of earlier date – in fact the majority of them appear to be later Norse, and many of them feature Christian content, as shown below – but instead that the use of runes across Orkney is of somewhat different nature compared to the majority of Scandinavian examples.

Any known Orcadian inscriptions are either on objects (such as the lead strip from Quoys, Deerness (*Canmore* ID 3030), or are found within structural contexts – often on re-used material (for example the inscribed flagstone slab within the Norse structure at Tuquoy (Owen and McKinnell 1989: 53-9) and the numerous inscriptions within Maeshowe (Farrer 1862; Barnes 1994). Various inscriptions appear to be out of their original context (*e.g.* OR22 and OR23, Barnes 2015: 144, 147). Runes have their limits when approaching past mentalities, especially when found outside of a clearly sealed (or otherwise datable) context (*e.g.* Thrane 1998: 219), and this is certainly a compounding issue for most of Orkney's runes (Bäcklund 2001: 38-9). Inscriptions of uncertain authenticity include the twig-runes inside the chamber cairn of Cuween that were identified and rejected by Judith Jesch in 1989 (Jesch 1991: 13; Barnes 1992: 39), and the debated inscriptions at the Ring of Brodgar (Barnes 2003: 4) to name but two Orcadian examples. Several Orcadian inscriptions have a Christian content, expressed both in Latin (*e.g.* OR23 Naversdale, including parts of the *Pater Noster*, Barnes 2015: 148-50 and possibly OR22 Quoys, Barnes 2015: 144-146) and in Scandinavian language (Barnes 1994: 186-90; OR10, Orphir, Barnes 1992: 40). These Christian inscriptions are intriguing testaments to a time in which Norse runes and the Christian faith intersected (see also Hultgård 1992: 81-94; Brink 2008b: 625-6), representing a further example of the merger of pagan elements within Christian monuments found elsewhere. Examples include the Danelaw crosses mentioned in Chapter 3, the Norse and Germanic saga-portrayals on Norwegian stave churches (*e.g.* Ahler 1982: 459-70), and on stone crosses of the Isle of Man (*ibid.*: 471-6; Wilson 2008: 80). Runes with Christian content demonstrate that syncretism does not only denote 'pagan' elements within an otherwise Christian context, but also *vice versa*.

On the whole, the more informal nature of most of the Orcadian runes has the effect that it is more challenging to extract any clues concerning their carvers' mentalities or the ideational context of their time. Various runes feature personal names (*cf.* Barnes 1992: 40), perhaps as a means of perpetuating their memory (Herschend 2001: 354). Those with Christian messages might perhaps cast some light on wider social changes (as discussed above), yet they remain silent regarding any individual motivations behind single carvings. Further examples of potentially informal runes include the Westness bone pin (OR12), which features an "*a*" carved three times (Barnes 1992: 40), for which a potential invocation of Aesir Gods has been suggested (Liestøl 1984: 232). Without further knowledge about the carver, or even a more confident find context, this might remain the most plausible explanation – perhaps along with the simple notion of someone trying out runic carving for the first time and choosing the first letter of their own name, or the name of a loved one. Other, even more challenging inscriptions include OR8 and OR9, both from Birsay, which are only partly legible (Barnes 1992: 40). This extends to several inscriptions inside Maeshowe, for example the inscriptions Nr.8 and Nr.12. Barnes notes that Nr.8 looks abraded, leaving it in a state too faint to read (Fig. 4.6). Whether this was deliberate, or even contemporary with the carver or not, is not sure (Barnes 1994: 86). The same questions arise with other potentially 'erased' inscriptions, including Nr. 12 (Fig. 4.5). Were the inscriptions 'erased' by the carver (or a contemporary), out of apprehension that the message might be read by others? Or is the abrasion the effect of the age of the inscriptions, accumulating factors such as weathering, and being continuously touched by visitors of the chamber

(Barnes 1994: 86)? Surface modifications pose significant challenges to our understanding and interpretation of carvings and their relation to their context, as they are a stratum of activity that cannot be defined or dated (Thomas 2016: 188).

Fig. 4.4 Maeshowe's inscription Nr.12, left illegible by abrasion (Barnes 1994: 108).

Fig. 4.5 Maeshowe inscription Nr. 8, also abraded. It is not sure whether this was deliberate or not, nor when this occurred (Barnes 1994: 87).

In contrast to aforementioned Scandinavian carvings (Section 4.3.1), Orkney's runes reveal comparably little 'between the lines' about the beliefs and underlying mentalities of the Orcadian Norse. A key factor here is the lack of runes from secure funerary contexts, or indeed more formal inscriptions. Whilst it is possible that some of Orkney's inscriptions are indeed originally from burial contexts, their often unstratified find spots leave too many questions unanswered. If there ever were burials with runes on Orkney, any indication of this being a general custom is now missing. More light on Norse Orkney's mentality could potentially be shed by looking further into those inscriptions that have to-date not been fully interpreted. The most important issue regarding Orkney's runic inscriptions, as shown here, is perhaps not restricted to their linguistic nature alone, but also to their materiality. On-going research comprising a physical examination of selected inscriptions intends to shed more light on a number of these open questions (Richards, Scholma-Mason and Beale *in prep.*).

4.4 ORKNEY'S PLACE-NAMES

Having discussed the use of folklore in this research, there is a need to outline how place-names can complement this approach. Orkney's place-names are invaluable and independent witnesses for the long-standing Norse presence across the islands (Wainwright 1962: 125). As outlined before, Orkney's place-names have been extensively studied over the past century (Chapter 1.3.1), and place-names do not form a major standalone part of this research. They are, however, viewed as important additional sources to complement the narratives discussed here: The way landmarks, areas and sites are represented in toponyms can reveal fragments of past attitudes (Brink 2008a and 2013: 37-8). Culturally ingrained names and words can aid our understanding of the changes that took place in the landscape, preserving information that would have otherwise been forgotten in the material record (Harte 2009: 17). Aspects of the landscape are encapsulated in place-names, providing indications for the appearance of places in the past, and representing a key factor in the remembrance and upkeep of oral traditions (Brink 2001: 81; Jesch 2015: 43).

Since the notion of underlying motivations are of key interest to this research, rather than their expressions, toponyms and folkloric narratives are treated as closely related parts of bygone perceptions. The degree of overlap between both demonstrates that the naming of places can at times stem from similar underlying motivations that also shaped the narratives and beliefs (Brink 2008a: 63-65), and in this research they are treated as interlinked. This includes not only place-names that appear to directly refer to an associated belief with a site (such as 'Howdis Knowe', interpreted by Hugh Marwick as ON *haug-þurs* / Norw. *haugtuss*: Marwick 1947: 69), but also the occurrence of those landscape features that dominated the naming of a site or area, therefore providing a glimpse into past perceptions (such as Stenness / ON *Steinnsness*: Mills 2011: 1249). Rather than repeating these insights in separate discussions, place-names and narratives feed into the discussions in combination. The choice of words to denote concepts and objects is not merely functional, but instead encapsulates an entire realm of associations and ideas (Lakoff 1990), and is therefore intrinsically linked with the concepts expressed in folklore. This includes the conservation of past attitudes towards a site in terminology (Thompson 2004: 17), or in place-names (Wainwright 1962: 120; Gunnell 2014: 19; Brink 2008a). For example, whilst the Irish term "*sí*" denotes the mound itself as well as the mound-dweller (Thompson 2004: 335), the Old Norse (and Icelandic) equivalent clearly distinguishes between the *haugr* and the *haugr-búi / -búinn* (*e.g.* Cleasby 1874: 241; MacCulloch 1993 (1948): 160; Muir 1998: XII) –the mound and its dweller as separate entities. One intriguing exception would be the term "*minni"*, denoting both the mound (McKinnell *et al.* 2004: 170; Düwel 1978: 242) as well as the commemorative toast to the ancestral spirits inside the mound (Gräslund 2001: 225). Whilst this might appear like a small matter on paper, the perceptive differences for those speaking the language, or communicating between languages, are significant.

When dealing with Orkney's place names, it is crucial to consider that the Norn language remained in use until c. the 18th century (Barnes 1998; Barret 2004: 215; Sandnes 2010). Various place-names on Orkney can be traced back to the Norse period, with the earliest traceable dates possibly stemming from around the 9th century (Crawford 2013: 101-3), yet several 'Norse' Orcadian place names will post-date the medieval period, and not all place-names of Orkney can be confidently dated. Norse-sounding names that post-date the medieval period are not unique to Orkney: Several *toft-/ tofta* place-names in Scania, Sweden, originated during the 19th century, perhaps linked to the creation of a nostalgic past (Thurston 2001: 198). Some place-names are known from medieval records as a testament to their age –the *Orkneyinga Saga* being a *terminus ante quem* for several names – whilst others are less certain. A great number of place-names have changed significantly over time and have, quite literally, become 'abraded', like a worn artefact or inscription. Orkney has had, to varying degrees, influence from Norwegian, Danish (Morris 1985: 210), French (Sandnes 2010: 335), and English / Scots, resulting in a diversity of loan-words and phonetic individualisms. Distortions (or better: "*evolutions*", Frog 2009a: 8 and 2015: 35) of place-names happen over time, especially under the governance of varying languages and dialects in one place over long periods. They are therefore an inevitable result of various individuals passing on what is heard, and certainly not everyone would know what words or names would look like written on paper. Such 'abraded' names can in many cases be regarded as a stronger indicator of age than a more obviously Norse-sounding name. The latter might have been applied to a site more recently, and has therefore not been as affected by the changes that can normally be expected in a name that has been in use for several centuries. Such gradual phonetic developments have the effect that the present-day name is not always obviously Norse – resulting in names such as Kirkwall (from ON *Kirkju-vágr,* recorded in AD 1329 as *Kirkiu uaghe*: Sandnes 2010: 298). The name's Norse origin – denoting a harbour or bay – has with the increasing influx of the Scots and English tongue gradually become associated with the English word 'wall', resulting in a name comprising seemingly familiar elements (Thomson 2001 (1986): 40). As outlined in Section 4.1.1, elements that recur particularly often in Orcadian place-names are references to mounds and stones, which can reveal clues about their former appearance (Section 4.1.1). A further number of Orkney's toponyms appears to serve a functional purpose – this can be land partitioning (East- / West; or Upper- / Nether-), geographical features (referring to the sea, gale force storms, steep slopes or sand: *cf.* Sandnes 2010); but also landmarks such as mounds (*e.g. há[u]gr* / *hus* / less frequently: *kumbla*), churches (*kirk*), þingsites, farms (*bolstaðr*, *sett[e]r*) or enclosures [*garðr*]) to name but a few (Wainwright 1962; Marwick 1947). Place-names from Orkney and the further Nordic world further indicate that supernatural forces were believed to be behind the creation of monumental sites – artificial as well as natural ones (Simpson 2004: 96-7; Scarre 2011: 10). It is even possible that place-names comprising such supernatural elements – for example 'troll', 'dwarf', or 'giant' – can be considered as *topographic* from a Norse point of view. I suggest this on the basis that such entities were regarded as part of the natural surroundings and credited with the ability to have impact on the environment (*e.g.* Ritchie 2003: 5; Sveinsson 2003: 72) (see discussion in Chapter 6), resulting in such place-names being not more unusual than names referring to storms, hills, or sources of water. Examples include the area of Dwarmo in Evie, Mainland, which Hugh Marwick plausibly interpreted as a derivative of ON *Dverg mál* – echo (see also Boberg 1966: 109, motif F451.2.8) – a phenomenon that has been attributed to this area (Robertson 1991: 265; Sandnes 2010: 188) – or the 'troll'-place-names of Orkney and Shetland (Sandnes 2010: 187, 253, 300; Marwick 1975: 33; Robertson 1991: 265). A further number of names, however, are more enigmatic, comprising possible personal names or meanings that are not fully restorable to our present-day understandings.

4.5 SUMMARY

A wide range of sources cast light upon aspects of Orkney's landscape at various points in time and from various angles. Whilst all of these angles are individually useful, the wider picture remains fragmented. A key observation that can be made when comparing the different sources discussed above is the ever-changing nature of the landscape, with memories of vanished sites preserved in early drawings, toponyms, and structural remains. This poses an issue in interpreting past landscapes, an issue already addressed in Chapter 2. The combination of old maps, site descriptions, and geophysical surveys in the Stenness area, for instance, have demonstrated that the landscape of Stenness alone has seen significant changes, having once hosted more monumental sites than are visible today. Such findings are crucial, as well-preserved sites might be credited with more roles in Norse times than they might have had, whilst other, once crucial, landmarks are overlooked since they are no longer physically present. A further observation that has arisen from the source material is that the mapping of sites, whilst useful in archaeological studies, have their limitations in folkloric studies, as not all site-type related narratives are fixed to a specific site. As shown in Section 4.1, a dataset of sites related to folklore can provide a contextual overview as well as a starting point, yet cannot be treated as exhaustive. As will be discussed in the case studies of Chapters 5 and 6, locally known sources in comparison with related narratives from other Norse-settled areas is key to our understanding of Norse Orcadian attitudes to ancient sites.

CHAPTER 5: CASE STUDIES – MOUNDS

5.1 OVERVIEW

Fig. 5.1 Entrance to the upper chamber of Taiverso Tuick, Rousay. *Photo: Author*

"TAKE ME WORD, FELLOW,
DROP WORKING IN MY HOUSE,
IF THOU DOESN'T,
MARK MY WORD, FELLOW,
IF THOU TAKES ANOTHER SHOVELFUL,
MARK ME WORDS
THOU WILL HAVE SIX OF THE CATTLE
DYING IN THY CORNYARD AT ONE TIME."

"AND IF THOU GOES ON
DOING ANY MORE WORK, FELLOW
MARK ME WORD, FELLOW,
THOU WILL THUS HAVE
SIX FUNERALS FROM THE HOUSE."

Citing '*The Trow's Curse*'
(Muir 1998: 126) (see also Tab. 5.5)

Physically, mounds are elevations comprising organic (and often inorganic) material, mostly – such as in the cases of Howe (Ballin Smith 1994) or the farm mounds on Sanday (Bertelsen and Lamb 1993: 547-8; Lowe 1998: 10; Dalland and Owen 1999: 12; Hunter 2007) – providing discernible strata of occupation, within which human impact throughout time can be traced relatively well (*e.g.* Bertelsen 1979). This, however, does not always apply, as the stratigraphic integrity and the strength of the available archaeological evidence varies between sites, be this due to poorly recorded excavations or environmental impact (*e.g.* the coastal threat at Scar, Sanday: Dalland and Owen 1999: 1-2). Mounds encompass a diverse array of types, including not only those that were purposely built – which, in itself, already took many different forms (Gansum and Oestigaard 2007: 64; Price 2010) – but also natural knolls; continuously developing settlement mounds (Bertelsen and Lamb 1993); and any ancient structure that has over time become overgrown and therefore has taken on the appearance of a mound. Indeed, the mound itself often only covers a monument or structure, rather than being intentionally built as a mound (Ingold 2010: 253-4, see also Hunter 1990: 192). Indeed, 'mound' is an umbrella term that can denote a wide range of sites and monuments. Even the grass-covered and unexcavated remains of any type of site will count as a mound, as does a range of natural features (Chapter 4). The mound, however, regardless of what it covers, can over time become a monument in its own right, detached from its initial use, depending on the person viewing it, and their cultural background (Thäte 2007b: 34; Frog 2009a; Brink 2013: 35; Leonard 2011). This includes, for example, a Norse familiarity with burial mounds and the likelihood of grass-covered monuments being interpreted as such (Harrison 2013: 49). The perception of mounds was not always preceded by knowledge of their contents – especially within the context of colonising a pre-existing landscape – leading to the veneration and use of both man-made and natural mounds, as well as both ancient mounds and those constructed within living memory (Robertson 1991: 266; Gunnell *forthcoming*).

Present-day Orkney is replete with mounds (see Chapter 4), many of which have remained untouched for a long period, primarily due to associated beliefs that the manipulation of ancient mounds bears the risk of bad luck (Tom Muir pers. comm.; Siobhan Cooke pers. comm.; Davidson and Henshall 1989: 63). This is akin to legends from Iceland (Christiansen 1968; Sveinsson 2003 (1940): 149; Gunnell *forthcoming*) and the protection of mounds in Norway for similar reasons (Omland 2010: 212). Other mound-sites, such as Helihowe on Sanday, have remained in memory largely due to their folkloric connotations, even though they are not physically present anymore. In this chapter I aim to discuss a variety of attitudes that might, at different points in time, have influenced the way mounds were perceived and how these representations relate to beliefs from the wider Norse settled world.

Finding tangible evidence for the disturbance of mounds is not always possible. First of all, evidence for secondary disturbance is usually more likely to be detected in more conspicuous monuments, where manipulation is more obvious (Capelle 1978: 198, 207-9). Examples include the robbing of the Oseberg ship burial (*ibid.*: 207) and mounds 1 and 2 at Sutton Hoo (Carver 2007: 10-1, 147) to numerous lesser known mounds on Orkney, where faint depressions are the only indication of disturbance at an unspecified time. These include the mounds of Stockan, Mainland (*Canmore* ID1641); Stanerandy, Mainland (*Canmore* ID 1794) or Cogar, Wasbister, Rousay (*Canmore* ID 2308), among others. Further uncertainty arises with regards to the number of times a site was visited or re-visited, as not all actions leave traces. In addition to this, the manipulation of material can provide the useful information *that* somebody was present at a certian place. As already discussed, however, questions concerning *who*, *why*, and often *how* are those left unanswered by material alone.

In Chapter 4 I have introduced the large database from which a representative selection of sites discussed in this chapter was chosen. Before I turn to the Orcadian case studies themselves, however, there is a need to outline the wider context of the changing nature of Norse attitudes towards mound breaking during the first and early second millennium AD.

5.1.1 Attitudes towards mounds: The West-Scandinavian context

Norse attitudes towards mounds have seen much discussion over the past two centuries, yielding various theories that might shed further light onto past attitudes towards such sites. This includes the notion of mound-breaking and the disturbance of older deposits, which used to be primarily regarded as a lack of respect for the dead and insensitivity towards earlier beliefs (*e.g.* Farrer 1862: 14; Brøgger

1917, cited in Brøgger 1945: 2[1]), yet is not longer viewed solely as such. On the whole, the disturbance of mounds would be the exception rather than the norm, as the archaeological record indicates both in Scandinavia (Brøgger 1945:1; Capelle 1978: 197-8, 210; Omland 2010: 68) and on Orkney. In fact, mound-breaking appears to be largely a phenomenon of recent centuries (Capelle 1978: 201; Myhre 1994: 73). Importantly, the discussion below is not to directly impose West-Scandinavian attitudes onto Norse Orcadian society, but instead to serve as a point of orientation and context. West-Scandinavian attitudes will have influenced Norse Orkney, along with other strands that reached Orkney from elsewhere, as well as concepts that were already pre-existing across the archipelago. Due to the largely West-Scandinavian background of the colonists, however, West-Scandinavian attitudes towards mounds are deemed the most likely parallel for Norse Orkney.

A recent overview of scholarly discussions regarding mound-breaking in Early Medieval South-West Norway has been compiled by Atle Omland, concisely filtering out four core intentions raised by earlier scholars (2010: 68-70) (Tab. 5.1):

Intention	***Dialogue between the living and the dead?***	***Sources***
Defamation of a politically opposed clan or family and robbing them of the dialogue with their ancestor/s.	Yes	Brendalsmo and Røthe 1992; Omland 2010: 68.
Necromancy: obtaining **objects that are charged with supernatural properties** derived from its dead owner.	Yes	*ibid.*; Brendalsmo and Røthe 1992; also referred to as "*dyrgrip*": Brøgger 1945: 35, 38-41.
Plundering for **material profit**	Not evident.	Brendalsmo and Røthe 1992; Omland 2010: 68.
The notion of *translatio*, suggesting a **re-burying / consecrating of the non-Christian dead** in a Christian fashion.	Not evident; the dead are of an unfamiliar belief.	*ibid.*, Capelle 1978: 210; Myhre 1994: 76-8.

Tab.5.1 A relevant selection of key scholarly interpretations regarding mound-breaking, as outlined by Omland (2010: 68-70).

The *translatio*- motive is unlikely to serve as a wider explanation (see also Staecker 2005), as numerous broken mounds still contain bodies, an issue discussed in more detail by Myhre (1994: 76-8). The notion as such is not improbable, yet can only be confirmed for a very small number of cases (*e.g.* Capelle 1978: 210; Omland 2010: 69). Crucially, it would be difficult to detect whether a Christian burial (with no grave goods) would have been derived from elsewhere without a thorough

[1] Brøgger himself revised his initial explanation, allowing for more motivations than mere disrespect (Brøgger 1945: 2-3).

scientific analysis of the bodily remains, or an examination for foreign soil. The frequency with which former ‘pagan’ places become consecrated by the Church as a means of ensuring spiritual safety (*e.g.* Korn 2005: 26, 138, 145; Robertson 1991: 299; Omland 2010: 192, 195-6) would lend some weight to the idea. An example includes Lisbjerg church, constructed over a locally significant, pre-Christian farmstead –perhaps as a strategic means of continuating ceremonies within the same site (Jeppesen and Madsen 1990). Still, the consecration of a site is an entirely different practice from the opening of a grave and the removal of human remains, and a direct comparison here might appear somewhat tenuous (although see Omland 2010: 69). This is, however, to illustrate that the notion of incorporating core aspects of an unfamiliar belief into familiar, trusted customs is ever-present. Perhaps this represents a means to control the unknown, and it is likely to have happened through smaller as well as larger scale actions (*ibid.*)[2].

The first three of the motifs listed above are not mutually exclusive and are all equally likely to have been the driving force behind mound-breaking at several points in time (Omland 2010: 69). Of particular interest are underlying attitudes towards the dead (and the grave), and whether these indicate different chronological stages: Omland highlights how the two first motivations, “*defamation*” and “*necromancy / dyrgrip*” are both built upon the notion of communications with the dead, whilst this cannot be asserted in cases of mound-breaking for a purely material gain (2010: 68) (Tab. 5.1). Based on burials from Nord-Trøndelag, Tranås, Karmøy, Fjaler and Vestfold (Norway), Brendalsmo and Røthe (1992) have suggested that the treatment of mounds has seen multiple changes over time, encompassing all of the above notions in a sequential development: Beginning before the 5th century AD with a dialogue between the mound-dweller and the living – for instance through votive offerings and related customs – attitudes would have gradually developed into a more acquisitive, one-sided exploit (Brendalsmo and Røthe 1992; see also Omland 2010: 69) or test of courage, by the Middle Ages (see also *ibid.*; Graham-Campbell and Batey 1998: 228; Thäte 2007b: 45; Klevnäs 2013: 4). Medieval laws appear to corroborate the idea of material profit from mound-breaking (Beck 1978: 223; Omland 2010: 96) and a gradual reduction of prestigious grave goods in later Norse burials is suggested to have served the purpose of making grave-robbing less appealing (Graham-Campbell and Batey 1998: 228). Material gain alone, however, is unlikely to have been the main driving force, and Klevnäs has suggested that the robbing of goods was believed to disarm the dead (2013: 83). Warnings against the revenant dead might have been a further crucial factor in the treatment of burial mounds (Capelle 1978: 209; Myhre 1994: 75; Klevnäs 2013: 25, 79-80). The negative effects of mound-breaking upon the reputation of those involved, as recorded in medieval literature, have seen increased discussion (Zachrisson 1998: 42; Omland 2010: 69-70). The runic evidence discussed in Chapter 4 supports the notion of a time in which the restless dead were to be kept at peace and graves to be left undisturbed (Düwel 1978; Nedoma 1998: 42; Krause 1993: 59; Brate 1922: 10-1; Spurkland 2009; MacLeod and Mees 2006: 220; McKinnell *et al.* 2004: 135, 170;

[2] For example, the crucial pagan centre Uppsala becoming the ecclesiastical capital of Sweden, or the Vatican being built on a site formerly used for the execution of Christians.

Scholma-Mason 2016: 52), although the reasons behind this might have varied over time. Various inscriptions would substantiate the idea of a time in which a dialogue with the mound and the dead was of high significance (see also Zachrisson 1998: 47-53). Furthermore, this might indicate that those folkloric accounts of dialogues with the mound-dweller and consequences of this relationship could have very early roots, potentially pre-dating – and including – the Early Norse period.

It appears that attitudes towards burial mounds and the dead has undergone a variety of changes throughout the first and early second millennium AD, and this variety is also reflected in various representations of mounds in folklore, as will be discussed later in this chapter. Brendalsmo and Røthe's argument is sensible in that it acknowledges the ever-changing nature of societies and their mentalities over time rather than settling for one explanation for a timeframe that spans several centuries. Potentially, there is a risk of generalisation when the idea of phases is relied upon too much, and they should not be treated as static boundaries. Importantly, the core intentions suggested by Brendalsmo and Røthe will not have taken the form of sudden *caesurae*. Instead, changes in attitudes need to be viewed as part of a gradual process, and are likely to have developed at their own pace depending on region. This applies in particular to differences between Orkney and West-Scndinavia (and other areas of Norse diaspora) at various points.

Albeit tentative, attitudes towards mounds might have formed part of a wider shift in societal attitudes, reflected in material culture and early documents, and likely also reflected in folklore. The latter is an issue that will be returned to later in this chapter and in Chapter 6. On the whole, I will argue that whilst some attitudes towards mounds might be an expression of Nordic[3] identity, not all folkloric associations with mounds are necessarily Scandinavian imports. Orkney's mound activity represents an "*oicotype"* (von Sydow 1977: 45-59) of wider Nordic coping mechanisms and beliefs in liminal spaces, and influence from other cultural strands is also considered.

5.1.2 Maeshowe – an ideal case study for re-use and continuity?

Fig. 5.2 The chamber cairn of Maeshowe, Stenness, Mainland. *Photo: Author*

[3] As outlined in Chapter 1 I apply the term 'Nordic' here in order to acknowledge not only elements from Scandinavia, but including the wider Scandinavian settled world.

Being a Neolithic chamber cairn (Renfrew 1979: 203) with Late Iron Age to Early Medieval radiocarbon dates (Ritchie 1996: 146; Fig. 5.4) and Norse runic inscriptions (Barnes 1994), this site should appear to have excellent potential as a unique case study of Norse attitudes towards ancient mounds. The findings from two separate stages of the Norse period would, ideally, even allow for a distinction between earlier and later Norse re-use of the site. However, the material from the inner chambers – excluding the various Norse and Neolithic carvings – is poorly recorded, and no tangible finds are known of today. Apart from an imprecise reference to "*a quantity of bones and teeth of a horse*" (Petrie cited in Davidson and Henshall 1989: 145) finds from inside the chambers were either lost soon after discovery, or were never recorded (*ibid.*, Challands *et al.* 2005: 246), and any existing excavation drawings remain silent about finds other than structural ones (or runic). Farrer mentions the removal of "*rubbish*" from the chamber without specifying further what the nature of this material was (Farrer 1862: 12), or how closely the fill was examined. Was it removed with the primary aim of getting to the floor level of the chamber quickly, or was there also an endeavour to search the soil for artefacts with a degree of scrutiny? Perhaps, however, not all the blame is to be pinned on Farrer's excavations: already in 1851 Thomas describes visible traces of unrecorded ventures into the mound, testified only by "*small heaps*" surrounding the site, as well as a "*huge mis-shapen mass upon the east side*" (1851: 111). This could suggest disturbance of the mound prior to 1861.

There are various theories that have attempted to tie together the existing clues into a more linear narrative:

1. A much-cited idea is that of an earlier (probably 9th-century) Norse burial that was subsequently robbed when the runes were carved (Ritchie 1996: 146). Runic inscriptions from the main chamber alluding to "*treasure*"[4] and "*great wealth*" (Barnes 1994: 192-7) are often cited to support this notion. Whilst it would be tempting to view the Maeshowe runes as informative primary sources, their antiquity alone does not justify this, especially due to their largely informal nature (Barnes 1994: 36).

2. On the grounds of their linguistic nature as well as datable concepts mentioned in various inscriptions, the majority of the inscriptions have been dated to the 12th century, probably of West Scandinavian background (Barnes 1994: 48-9). Direct links have subsequently been created between the runes and the events described in chapter 93 of the *Orkneyinga Saga*, Earl Harald's men seeking shelter in '*Orkahaugr*' (*e.g.* Towrie 1996-2017q; Sanmark 2012: 26; although see Barnes 1994: 35). Whilst this is chronologically probable, this theory would benefit from further substantiation.

[4]Links between the "*treasure*" alluded to in Maeshowe and the Skaill hoard have been suggested (Fergusson 1872: 253). The Skaill hoard is one of several Norse hoards from Orkney (Brundle 2005: 94-5)

3. Alexandra Sanmark has suggested that the amendmends made to the outer ditch and bank could be related to the use of the site as a *þing* (2012: 26), but it is not clear whether the earlier and the later Norse evidence from the site can at all be directly linked. Chapter 6, however, will return to the notion of a *þing*-site in the wider Stenness area.
4. Lastly, on the basis of the radiocarbon dates, it would be tempting to suggest that Maeshowe, like many other Norse sites, had a continuation of use from Late Iron Age into Norse times (Fig. 5.4). There is, however, little data to support a direct link, and thus caution should be expressed.

Fig. 5.3 The bank and ditch surrounding Maeshowe. Radioarbon dates suggest that this area was re-built sometime in the middle of the 1st millennium AD. *Photo: Author*

Whilst no overarching narrative for Maeshowe can be compiled, suggestions can be made for single excerpts of the monument's biography. There might, therefore, be more benefit in outlining the evidence we *do* have, albeit in isolation:

1. **Maeshowe was built in the Neolithic, probably around 2800BC** (Renfrew 1979: 203), potentially built over earlier structures, and will have been visible as a protruding landmark ever since, only the visibility from afar will have varied depending on other points in the landscape over time.

2. Childe recovered one (likely two) **secondary long cist(s)** from the East side of the mound covering the chamber. No datable bones were retrieved from these cists due to the acidic soil conditions in this area (Childe 1955: 167-8).

3. Samples from the bank surrounding the monument have yielded **three radiocarbon dates, covering the middle and later Iron Age, as well as one 9th-century (early Norse) date** (Fig. 5.4). These dates, however, are by no means definitive (Graham-Campbell and Batey 1998: 228), and even if they were more certain, three dates from the surrounding bank would be a thin basis for conclusions regarding the entire site.

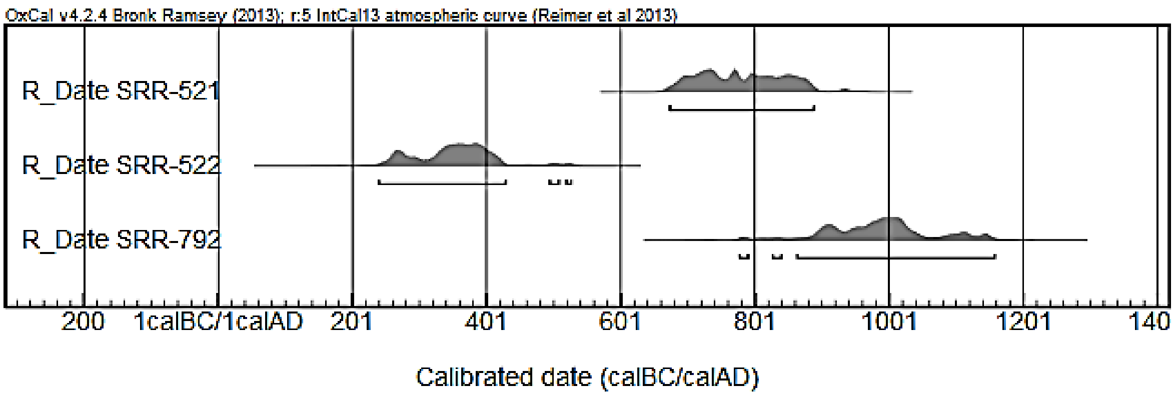


Fig. 5.4 Radiocarbon dates from Maeshowe's bank, potentially indicating later Iron Age and Norse activity at the site. Data derived from *Canmore* (ID 2094).

4. In the central chamber and inside the SW-side chamber **runic inscriptions** were carved, probably sometime around the 12th or 13th century (Barnes 1994 and 2012). As discussed before, these inscriptions likely indicate that the site was accessed by various people over an unknown (but probably short) timespan, rather than being carved in a one-off event.

In brief, Maeshowe illustrates the potential complexities involved in examining mounds, emphasising the various stages of a site's biography (Holtorf 2000-8). Importantly, not al of this can be tied together seamlessly. In Section 5.3.5 of this chapter I will discuss Maeshowe further under consideration of folkloric associations within a wider context of Norse mound perceptions.

5.2 FOLKLORE: TWO CORE STRANDS?

The second half of this chapter examines a variety of suggested 'strands' of Orkney's folklore. Potential problems with such an approach have briefly been outlined in 3.2.3 and there is a need to re-iterate at this point that this division into 'strands' is not to portray the present-day state of Orkney's folklore as a truncation (see also Frog 2009a: 7-8 and 2015). In being constantly influenced by other mentalities, the traditions and narratives from Orkney are as autarcic as those from elsewhere (*ibid.*: 34). In light of the research questions, however, highlighting potential Norse influences on

Orkney's mentality is a key objective. As part of this, a small degree of disentanglement is deemed necessary.

Mounds play a major role in Orcadian folklore, sharing several attributes with the wider Nordic world. The notably wide distribution of similar mound-lore across the Nordic world, combined with parallels in sagas and myths, as well as medieval edicts prohibiting their veneration (*e.g.* Brink 2013: 40), can be taken as indications of how deeply ingrained the concept of liminal mounds was in early Scandinavian mentality (*e.g.* Furset 2011). Consequently, such concepts will have travelled during Norse settlement, impacting colonised areas in the same way material culture left its footprint. This is further underlined by the strong presence of attitudes towards mounds in former Norse-settled areas such as Iceland (Sveinsson 2003; Gunnell 2014 and *forthcoming*), Orkney (*e.g.* Muir 1998: XII, 112, 125; Marwick 1975: 30), and by their echoes resounding even within the Danelaw and north-western Scotland (Stuart 1864: 256; Grinsell 1976; Harte 2009: 24, 25).

Therefore, all lore concerning mounds might be viewed as largely similar, which can easily lead to most of the Orcadian tales being attributed to Scandinavian influence. Clearly recognisable folkloric and etymological links between Orkney and the Nordic world go as far as shared vocabulary and similar motifs, many of which have parallels across Nordic folklore (as discussed in Chapter 3). A key factor that underlies this research, however, is that Orkney's folklore is not merely an import from the Scandinavian world: Apart from clearly apparent Nordic links there is at least one further key strand of influence, probably best described as Celtic (or perhaps Gaelic), due to its influences from pre-Norse Ireland and Scotland (Almqvist 1986; see also Foote 1986: 185). Primary sources from any of these strands themselves – be these inscriptions or written documents – remain notably silent about any cultural interface (Almqvist 1986: 192). I suggest that Orkney's folklore provides the chance to detect potential nuances from different strands of influence.

Indeed, mounds are widely viewed as liminal spaces, regardless of the cultural origin of its associated beliefs (*e.g.* Miller 2015). This has led to Orkney's mound-lore being largely viewed as monogenetic. Upon closer examination, however, the variances between mound-lore from different mentalities become more prevalent. Two particular types of behaviour towards mounds crystallise in Orkney's folklore. These two core strands – whilst similar on first glance – are likely to represent remnants of two different mentalities. Furthermore, whether consciously or not, different societal mentalities can result in several very different interpretations of one and the same image (Kaul *et al.* 1991: 7-8; 42; Frog 2009a), which might have added to this. There is no possibility to reconstruct the oldest origin nor the exact routes by which influence will have travelled (*cf.* Hedeager 2011; De Vries 1961: XXIII), yet it is these underlying differences in the approaches to mounds that I will turn to in this discussion.

The two core strands discernible in Orkney's mound-tales are defined as follows:

1) Mounds as **dwellings of the living dead**, or other spirits (*mound perceived largely from an external viewpoint*); and
2) Mounds as **a portal to a realm in which time and space behave differently** (*narrative focus lies primarily on the interior of the mound*).

For ease of division I have designated these strands as an 'external' and an 'internal' variant, based on the primary way in which the mound is perceived by the narrator or protagonist in the tale. This viewpoint perspective has the additional benefit of not being too hastily attributed to a 'culture' or country of origin. As I will discuss, however, there are indications for these strands to indeed represent different cultural mentalities. Their merging, however, might have begun in the distant past, as a result of which any suggestions made here are tentative.

In the **external** variant, mounds are viewed largely from an external viewpoint:[5] they house a spirit (of varying sort) and are approached in the context of votive offerings; funerary settings (see *e.g.* Stenberger 1977: 392; Muir 1998 and 2007), or even of flippant provocation of the mound-dweller (such as the 'stolen drinking horn': Christiansen 1968: 116-8; Omland 2010).

In the **internal** variant, the mound is, in addition to being a notable part of the landscape, also experienced from the inside. Often the mound becomes a portal to a realm in which time and space are distorted, as a result of which the protagonist can spend years inside an otherworld thinking they were only there for the duration of a feast or a dance (Muir 1998: 47-50 and 2003: 203; Lück 2003: 198; Lindahl *et al.* 2000: 124).

The mound as a dwelling of the dead (or farm spirit), and the custom of votive offerings at mounds, is a well-attested early Nordic concept likely to date back to at least the first millennium AD (Gräslund 2001: 225; Gunnell 2014), the mound playing an integral part in claims to land based upon ancestry (Robertson 1991: 266). As part of this, entrances to mounds could have been perceived as portals or doorways – Hem Eriksen highlights the potential importance of doorways as liminal spaces, representing the threshold between the realm of the dead and that of the living (Hem Eriksen 2013: 207). The concept of realms within the mound – and most of the narrative taking place inside the mound – as occurring in the 'internal' variant, is perhaps best known from Celtic areas, especially Ireland (Lindahl *et al.* 2000: 124; Waddell 2014: 62, 80). The aspect of time-distortion is intriguingly best known from Welsh (and perhaps Pictish) contexts rather than Irish, having led to the suggestion that this might be a survival of a very old motif (Bruford 1986: 174). These key aspects from the

[5] A fight or wrestling with the mound-dweller (or the dead in general) is widely known in Icelandic folktales (Beck 1978: 216; Myhre 1994: 74; Simpson 2004: 122) – yet, importantly, no time-distortions are mentioned.

‘internal’ strand play a comparably small part, if it is at all present, in Nordic folklore, although it is not entirely absent (see *e.g.* Visted and Stigum 1952), and elements of both the ‘internal’ and the ‘external’ strands are present in Orcadian narratives (Muir 1998: 108, 135). It is difficult to assert how and when these concepts crossed. Whilst it is not possible to disentangle these fully, the underlying differences that shape both narratives are of primary importance for this research, as these might aid our understanding of the different mentalities that once shaped Orkney’s perceptual landscape. One key point of argument is that these two underlying strands are indicative of two different influxes that were perhaps not initially linked. A Gaelic strand of influence (see also Bruford 1986: 174) is most likely to have played a primary role in the presence of this strand in Orkney (Almqvist 1986; Gunnell *forthcoming*; Harte 2009: 24-5; Semple 2009), generally fitting well into the Irish notion of underground realms covered by hillocks and mounds (Lindahl *et al.* 2000: 124). It is probable that a meeting of these different ideas already took place in (early) Norse times, if not before (Almqvist 1986: 206). It is perhaps not possible to define an exact origin point for this type of mound perception as it occurs almost globally (Lück 2003: 200; Miller 2015). By the time Norse and native Orcadian beliefs met, narrative compromise would have represented a likely means of allowing for the co-existence of different beliefs under a similar guise (Bruford 1986: 174). Crucially, both strands share in common an underlying belief according to which the dead continue to exist (Ahn 2001: 18) – a concept also welcomed by the Church, although in a different form – and a shared belief like this might have been a key contributor to exchange between Orcadian communities and the earliest Norse settlers, surpassing any macro-scale debates regarding peaceful or violent initial contacts.

Norse settlers as well as native Orcadian groups would have inevitably been mutually influenced by new ideas, including them in their own range of beliefs and notions. This allows for an individual development of strands that share the same core. For instance, a belief introduced to Orkney from West Scandinavian contrasted with a belief introduced to Orkney via Norse settlement in Iceland or Ireland, where perhaps slightly different ideas would have been picked up and developed. Such an expansion of customs and ideas will have resulted in various different routes of non-linear development and exchange of ideas, with branches of independently developing concepts, some of which will have reached Orkney from different angles simultaneously (O’Connor 2001: 251). Irish influence on Icelandic (*e.g.* Sveinsson 2003 (1940): 73, using the term “*Celtic”*; Simpson 2004: 57, 114) and early Scandinavian folklore (and *vice versa*) has seen ample scholarly discourse, the links between West Scandinavia and Ireland as a particular indicator that ideas will have travelled back and forth for a long period of time and at least during the Early Medieval period (Mills 2015: 144-5; Christiansen 1927 and 1930; see also Ó Catháin 2001). Potential remnants of Gaelic impact on a small number of Orkney’s place-names (Wainwright 1962: 105; Sandnes 2010: 220) underlines this further. Interesting, too, is the presence of mound-dweller theories in former Danelaw areas, down to striking similarities in the vocabulary used: The phenomenon of “*Hob Hurst’s House*” in Beeley, Derbyshire, is very likely to be an expatriate example of a Scandinavian mound dweller tale (Bourne *et al.* 2011: 112), and, similarly, the mound-dweller "*hob*" in Deepdale (*ibid*. 113). "*Hob*" is likely to represent a derivation of ON *haugbui* in a similar way it developed into "*hogboon*" on Orkney, depending on the ways in which these terms were passed down. The Danelaw examples might be able to provide a tentative window of time – between the 9th and 12th century – for a key phase during which a range of beliefs and customs might have taken root in Scandinavian settled areas, and a similar timeframe would apply to Orkney's earliest Scandinavian settlement. Terry Gunnell makes the intriguing suggestion that Scandinavian mound customs are likely to have taken root on Orkney before the 14th century, as contact between West Scandinavia, Orkney and Shetland will have largely broken off with the advent of the Black Death (Gunnell *forthcoming:*11). Furthermore, such a mutual absorption of ideas will not have always been forceful or even apparent – a degree of influence happens on a subconscious level, when core emotions and impulses to which most people relate are addressed (Semple 2013: 191). For example, by offering alternative means to ward off evil spirits (Kvideland and Sehmsdorf 2010: 66, 68-9, 87-8; Simpson 2004: 80-1, 91, 166) a range of Christian ideas and customs added what must have been welcome alternatives to a range of traditional coping mechanisms, the concept and the addressed problems being more important than the specific belief it belonged to. Various older concepts were in turn absorbed into Christian customs and narratives and continued under a different guise (Hultgård 1992: 57-8). This includes, for instance, the pagan predecessors of saints, or the more deliberate consecration of ancient sacred places (Korn 2005: 26, 138, 145; Robertson 1991: 299; Mitchell 2007: 163-5; Omland 2010: 192, 195-6). Syncretism – as well as the adaptation of narrative aspects on a more profane level (Zipes 2002: 7) – represents a crucial factor for the survival of deeply rooted concerns and customs (Hultgård 1992) and should not be viewed as truncations, but rather as organic development (Frog 2009a: 7-8). Whilst some parts of a new ideational framework might be welcomed, a complete *caesura*, where all known and familiar customs are given up, would be almost impossible to enforce on any society. In an ever-changing world, there is a need to maintain links with the past and the familiar, both in material and in conceptual ways.

In the following case studies, I aim to suggest ways to detect ancient elements in various surviving narratives and concepts. This includes a recognition of more recent additions, whilst highlighting that even these are the result of, and reactions to, long-standing concepts that have changed guise over time. Most of these case studies are discussed primarily from an 'external' view on mounds and their Scandinavian parallels, whilst allowing for the detection of aspects that are more likely linked to an 'internal' strand.

5.3 A 'RELATIVE CHRONOLOGY' OF CONCEPTS?

The abundance of different entities that are said to inhabit Orcadian mounds – depending on tale, storyteller and area - is not limited to fairies, hogboons (ON *haug-buínn*), dwarves, ghosts or the undead. West-Scandinavian mounds are haunted by a similar host of different spirits (see Omland 2010: 123-41, for a very detailed study of types of mound-dwellers). This can easily become a confusing and misleading factor – a problem that arises when dealing with the relationship between humans and 'supernatural' spirits in general (*cf.* Thäte 2007b: 35-6). *Confusing* because these entities can appear to be interchangeable, and *misleading* because these details can be credited with more importance than deserved. This research does not focus on the outer details of the narratives, but instead on their underlying meanings. To bring these meanings across to the audience of the time, the types of creatures, objects and structures will have inevitably changed, leading to an almost infinite record of different versions of one narrative. The embodiment and name of mound-dwelling spirits across various tales play primarily a supporting role, making the core intention of the narrative more comprehensible for the audience of its time by using creatures that are best known. The development of supernatural beings can often be traced back to deeply rooted fears concerning death and the unknown, including fear of the revenant dead (*cf.* Thompson 1977: 387). Such a development is likely to begin with buried ancestors, whose identity becomes forgotten over time, and who develop into otherworldly creatures that are a product of their time and area (Bartel 1982: 33, 40-1; Waddell 2014: 25). Pre-existing mounds on newly inhabited land would have been approached with similar attitudes, gradually developing a created past and associated beliefs (Thäte 2007b: 34; Leonard 2011; Brink 2013: 35). A partial exception to this - whilst forming part of these deeply rooted concerns- is the giant. Giants (or other large entities) serve an additional crucial purpose in explanatory myth, where a large creature is the best perceivable elucidation for the presence of large formations, monuments or even entire islands (Muir 1998: 10; Waddell 2005: 10-1; Brink 2013: 34-5). The physical presence of monoliths, stone circles, or outstanding natural formations would have offered more tangible 'evidence' for the existence of giants and other large entities (*Saxo Grammaticus* 3.1 in Friis-Jensen 2015: 19; Mayor 2011: 60-1, 128-9, 139, 141-2). In contrast, the presence of mound-dwellers remains largely conceptual with little to no physical evidence for the actual existence of such spirits. The importance of such beings connected to nature and daily survival has been widely understood as a vital part of Norse beliefs (Sanmark 2010: 159). The mound becomes a place where day-to-day emotions and questions are re-enforced, sometimes through coincidental events that 'confirm' the effectiveness of the dialogue with the site (*cf.* Robertson 1991: 267, footnote B). The relationship between people and mound-dwellers is thus manifested primarily through representing the perceived cause for natural catastrophes, illness, accident, or unexpected prosperity. Most tales will portray any such incidents as a direct consequence of human actions or even thoughts – the mound and its dweller representing a projection of people's culpability in daily life, and, importantly, an anchor point where at least a part of people's burdens are perceived to be lessened. Parallels of this in other contexts include the supposed direct effect of prayers (Saul 2009:

321), but also the idea of *sight* as a means of physically affecting (and, in turn, being physically affected by) what is seen (*e.g.* Giles 2007: 105-21). Notions of perceivedly 'contaminated' items and places have been discussed in Chapter 3, as have ideas concerning pre-emptive behaviour, such as votive offerings or the avoidance of areas, objects or actions at certain times. From this can be inferred that tales featuring mound-dwellers are above all about quotidian, sometimes moral, guidance rather than about the mound-dwelling spirits themselves. The spirit in the mound – whichever shape it takes – becomes a means to an end, the end being peace of mind or a sense of control – for instance a justification of particular behaviourisms, particular actions, or simply through an explanation of *why* things happened the way they did.

Research into the varying types of mound-dwellers might well lead to interesting results. In this research, however, the exact entity that dwells inside the mound is not of primary importance as it would distract from the core discussion. What *does* matter is that the mound is viewed as a liminal space; how this is acknowledged; and how people are expected – or advised – to deal with this. The *differences in human behaviour towards the monuments* discernible in tales are of key importance. These are more deeply ingrained in cultural attitudes than the outer details and are therefore more likely to provide information about possible nuances between past mentalities – be these separated in time or in geographical area. A detailed examination of types of mound-dwellers would not give us this insight. Crucially, however, this does not always mean that such underlying motivations have remained consistent in every case. As I wish to highlight in this discussion, various ideational changes over time will have almost inevitably changed the role of particular concepts within societies. Many well-known concepts are reactions to the ones that preceded them, even if their meaning becomes (almost wholly) inverted to suit the new *Zeitgeist* (Gamboni 2001; Schjødt 2014: 50). As already demonstrated in Chapter 4, however, underlying motivations can change at varying pace dependent upon the place and time in which they are retold, leading to a number of examples that remain less altered than others.

In the following case studies, I aim to demonstrate that there are ways to highlight potential ancient concepts in present day survivals of folk beliefs. The tales chosen as case studies are representative of various motifs present in Orkney's folklore and its wider links. The approach draws on a comparison of varying versions of the same narrative, where discernible. The focus is primarily on marking out underlying motivations that portray mounds as liminal spaces and, importantly, the attitude with which these are viewed. Given that Orkney's mound tales comprise narrative elements of both the 'internal' and the 'external' strand a contextualisation of the case studies with tales from surrounding areas is necessary. In light of the largely West-Scandinavian origin of Orkney's settlers, most emphasis will be given to analogies with Norwegian mound-lore (including that of other settled areas), although other influences are considered and highlighted.

With this approach, I aim to highlight how a focus on narrative undercurrents can aid in examining potential older roots of narrative variants known today, as well as the complexity of their 'survival'.

This entails an 'excavation' of narratives and their various 'layers' (see *e.g.* Chapter 3), and analogy with other narrative variants. Much like archaeological artefacts of varying durability and depending on soil conditions, these core elements have survived better in some cases, whereas they have become much altered over time in other cases, whilst some elements will have become lost. The aim of the following discussion is to contextualise known Orcadian mound-narratives and, albeit tentatively, to propose a possible chronological sequence, and highlight potential earlier versions of West Scandinavian variants.

5.3.1 Not all mound-dwellers are ancient?

Atle Omland has challenged the notion of ancient roots for a large number of mound-related narratives across Norway (2010). He raises important source critical issues, especially those regarding the reliability of various oral sources (Omland 2010: 42-3; 143). Omland is without doubt correct in that some variants of mound dweller narratives are indeed more recent than others, and that suggested folkloric ties to an exact site will also not always have ancient roots (2010: 122, 143). A number – perhaps even the majority – of the variants known today will post-date the Norse period and will have been added to the landscape retrospectively due to local knowledge (yet not necessarily an understanding of the bygone underlying motives) of such tales. I would, however, question his idea of landmarks and their folkloric connotations being "*arbitrarily chosen*" and placed onto a blank canvas (2010: 122).

Even a retrospective investment of meaning into a place would need to draw on concepts that the majority of people are familiar with if they are to take root successfully (Mitchell 2007: 153) Where they become well enough engrained to become mistaken for ancient, it is even more likely that such concepts are a response to something that pre-existed, rather than being created entirely *ex nihilo*. For example, for a portrayal of the mound and its dweller as the adversaries of the narrative, knowledge is assumed on part of the audience that these are taboo-areas or -concepts. This ties in with the aforementioned early legal sources prohibiting the veneration of pagan sites (Chapter 3) or their physical merging into later sites of a different ideology. In order for a concept to become taboo, or imbued with negative associations, it must have already played other roles in preceding times, potentially a popular role that now clashes with the institution that outlaws it (Gamboni 2001; Mitchell 2007: 153; Brink 2013: 40-1). This leads to an intangible "*stratigraphy*" of perceptions and ideas attached to a place (Schama 1995: 7), bearing similarities with sites that are re-used over long periods, and witnessing several ideational changes (*cf.* Semple 2013: 119-31). Crucially, Omland's argument remains convincing within the context of more recently influenced variants of folktales: in isolation, they indeed represent more recent narratives and a re-invention of local customs. Omland is therefore correct in highlighting that such associations cannot be linked to every site with the same confidence. His argument, however, cannot extend to those layers of narratives and beliefs that these later variants are built upon. In this research, these are viewed as palimpsests, much like the re-used sites many of the narratives deal with (Schama 1995: 7; Semple 2011: 758-9; see also Chapter 2), and that even the more recent versions are intrinsically linked with their predecessors – remembered or not. Importantly, however, in being palimpsests, tale types should perhaps be viewed as fluid entities, taking on motifs that are crucial to the area or time in which they are added, whilst previous motifs become redundant.

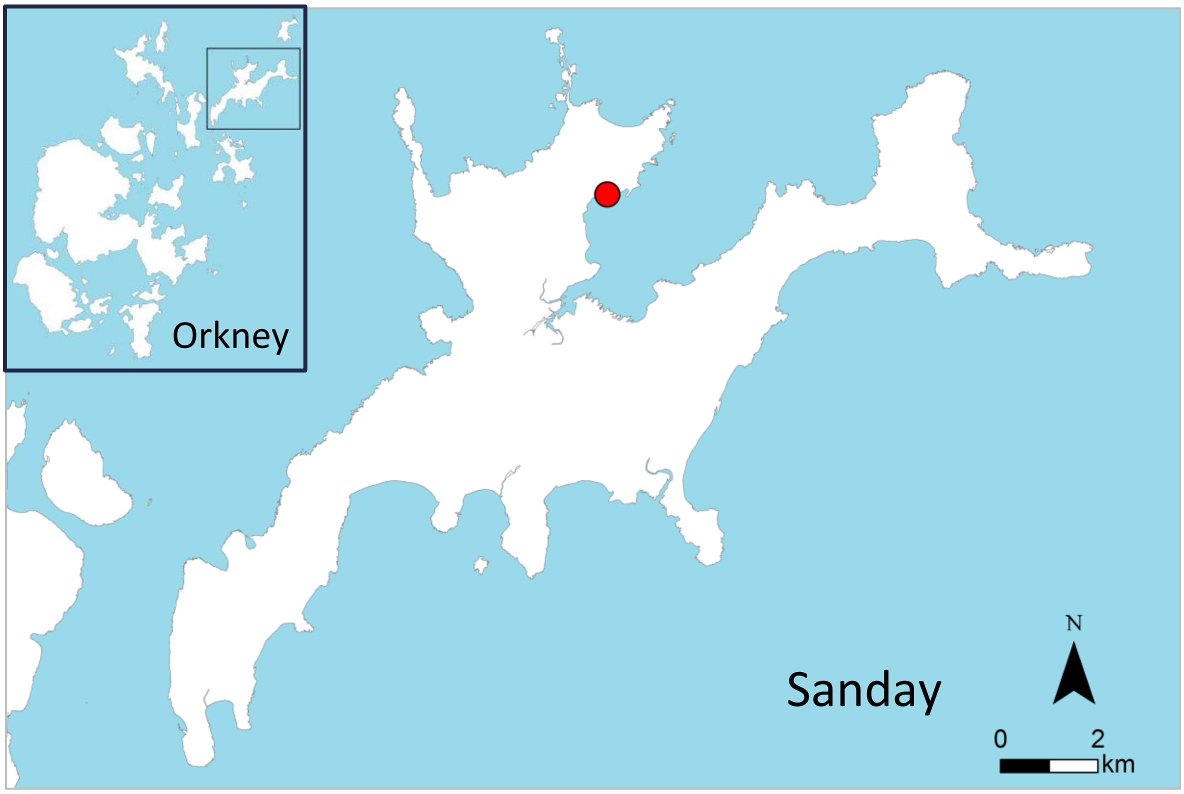
5.3.2 The Hogboon of Hellihowe: An Orcadian predecessor of ML6045?

Migratory Legend
ML6045 *Drinking Cup stolen from the Fairies* (Christiansen 1968: 271)
ML7010 *Revenge for being teased* (*ibid.*)
ML7020 *Vain attempt to escape a brownie / nisse* (Marwick 1975: 208; Kvideland and Sehmsdorf 2010: 425).
Motif
F352 *Theft of cup (drinking horn) from Fairies* (Christiansen 1968: 267)

Tab. 5.2 Key motifs and tale-types referred to in this discussion

The Hogboon of Hellihowe – Key plot points (after Muir 1998: 55-6 and 2007(2002)) 1. Farmer owns land with a mound. 2. Constructive dialogue between farmer and mound-dweller inhabiting the farm-mound has been maintained for generations (incl. votive offerings); 3. Arrival of a wife OR new generation of farmer (and family); negligence / disrespect towards mound-dweller; 4. Disrespect provokes mound-dweller; 5. Bad relationship between farmers and mound-dweller; 6. Farmers flee from their land to escape the mound-dweller; 7. During flight: Farmers notice that mound-dweller hides inside a vessel, following them; 8. Escape from mound-dweller futile.
Key motifs (all after Marwick 1975: 211): **F482** *Brownie (hogboy, hogboon)* **F482.3.1.1** *Farmer moves house to evade brownie, brownie 'flits' too* **F482.5.4** *Brownie does farm and household work* **F482.5.5** *Malicious / troublesome brownie* Tale type: **ML7020** *Vain attempt to Escape a Brownie* (Marwick 1975: 208).

Tab. 5.3 Summary of *The Hogboon of Hellihowe*, key plot points, motifs and tale type.



Map 5.1 Former location of the mound of Hellihowe on Sanday. Although unlikely to have originated there, the tale of the Hogboon of Hellihowe has kept an otherwise vanished mound on the map.

One of the most prominent Orcadian mound-dweller tales is that of the "*Hogboon of Hellihowe*" (Tab. 5.3), re-told in various renditions (*e.g.* Cutt 1979; Marwick 1975: 42), and revived more recently in particular through Tom Muir's renditions of this tale (1998: 55-6, and especially 2007). This tale is a good example of an 'external'-strand narrative. It portrays the fickleness of the mound-dweller and the high sense of responsibility felt by farmers towards the upkeep of traditions concerning the farm-mound in order to secure welfare and good harvest. The mound is perceived exclusively from the outside, only known to be inhabited by the farm spirit, yet the protagonists do not enter the mound. Regardless, however, of the strong links of this tale to the (now levelled) mound of Helliehowe[6] on Sanday (Map 5.1), it is unlikely to have originated there. The tale occurs in almost identical form in Norway (*The troublesome Haugbo*, Kvideland and Sehmsdorf 2010: 246), and variants of it occur in Yorkshire, Lincolnshire and Northumberland (*e.g. Walking to the Mail* by Lrd. Alfred Tennyson, cited in Marwick 1975: 42, see also section 5.1 of this chapter). A very similar German narrative from the 17th century, titled *Die Oseberger Zwerge (The Oseberg Dwarves)*[7] has been recorded by Jacob, Wilhelm and Herman Friedrich Grimm (1816: 55) and will be returned to later in this discussion.

The intriguing presence of this tale across Germanic and Nordic settled areas might indicate an early date of this tale. In the following discussion, I will argue that the *Hellihowe* tale might represent one

[6] Also known as Hellihow(e) and Cot Brae (RCAHMS *Canmore* ID 3488).
[7] "*Oseberg*" here refers to the Osenberg region (near Oldenburg) in Northern Germany, and not to the Norwegian Oseberg.

of the earlier forms of Orkney's mound-related narratives. This is based on the narrative undercurrents that navigate the tale: The central role of the farm mound and the importance of maintaining ancestral traditions in order to secure agricultural welfare are likely indications for an early formation of this narrative. These core elements are missing from several other variants of Orkney's mound-narratives, where the mound-dwellers and their fickle actions (or the daring behaviour of protagonists) take centre stage, yet the reasons for this are no longer included in the narrative. This disconnection might portray a later influence, whilst still representing a reaction to earlier variants. These might further add to the notion of a change in attitudes towards such sites sometime during the later first millennium AD, an issue that will be returned later in this chapter.

To support this argument, I will return to the *Drinking Horn* narrative introduced in Chapter 4. This example was chosen because of its strong prevalence in folklore – listed as Migratory Legend ML6045 (Tab. 5.2) – having a wide spectrum of narratives attributed to it across North and Northwest Europe, with varying motif-combinations, whilst representing an intriguing selection of mound-perceptions (*e.g.* Grimm 1816: 55; Christiansen 1968: 117; Kvideland and Sehmsdorf 2010: 236; Gunnell 2014: 29; and persisting into present day music, with Finntroll's song *Rösets Kung* (2013) re-using several of its motifs[8]). Within the wide range of ML6045 variants, the narrative spectrum ranges from a singular mound dweller and a largely external encounter with the mound (as most of the Scandinavian examples imply) to a large banquet or party inside the mound (*e.g.* Newbury's variant: Haase 2008: 296). Some renditions are very short (*e.g*. Kvideland and Sehmsdorf 2010: 246), others longer and more elaborate (*e.g*. Marwick 1975: 42). Further British renditions include various versions of *The Luck of Edenhall* (Briggs 1971: 304-5; Ashliman 2015) and various *Fairy Horn* (or *Cup*) variants occurring on the Isle of Man and in Cornwall (Ashliman 2012) and Gloucestershire (Grinsell 1936: 49; Briggs 1971: 233-4). In Sweden ML6045 is most prominently linked to the *Ljungby Horn och Pipa* (Lindow 1978: 102), and Germany a similar narrative is known as the *Oldenburger Wunderhorn*, also attributed to ML6045 (*ibid.*). Whilst Newbury's 12th-century account is deemed the oldest known variant (Chapter 3.2.2), the c.9th-century Old English poem *Beowulf* already contains the theft of a vessel from a mound, in the form of the goblet stolen from the dragon's barrow (lines 2207-2268). This, too, is followed by misfortune. Whilst this might be coincidental, and is mentioned here with caution, it is possible that the poem elaborates on an already widely known, much older, motif (Semple 2013: 146).

Over the large geographical area in which this narrative is known it has developed various locally specific "*oicotypes*" (von Sydow 1977) under various titles and of varying prominence. Some renditions have such a wide variety of motifs that it almost becomes a new tale-type. This especially

[8] The provocation of the mound-dweller and subsequent flight are central to the plot of *Rösets Kung*, as well as an adverse effect on the thieves' hair (the horse's hair disintegrates in several Norwegian variants). However, whilst the protagonists are introduced as "*thieves*", there is no mention of what was initially stolen and there is no mention of a vessel obtained from the mound. The everlasting effect of the encounter, however, is imprinted upon the protagonists.

includes those known across England, where some variants have several plot elements added (*e.g. The Luck of Edenhall*, above), or comprise aspects of the internal strand, as is the case for Newbury's rendition (*e.g.* Lindow 1978: 102-3). This can perhaps be best explained by the need to add locally known concepts to the plot to make it more relevant to its local and / or contemporaneous audience (Honko 1989: 37; Zipes 2002: 7; Hedeager 2011: 177). A merger with a pre-existing narrative from its area cannot be excluded. This is furthermore notable in outcome B (Chapter 3) variants, where evidently Christian elements have been added to provide a more positive ending, differing much from other variants where no notable Christian influence is evident. This wide array of variants and differences denotes the wide distribution of this concept and its regionally specific additions and / or ommissions. In light of the countless variants of this tale type and the wide range of added (or omitted) motifs, only a selection relevant to this research can be discussed here. Whilst the following discussion draws on existing tale-type and motif studies, the shortcomings of such an approach as a means of classification are widely known (see *e.g.* Georges 1997: 204) – akin to artefact typology, tale-type and motif classifications can serve as orientation, yet are not absolute. The discussion in this chapter, therefore, is by no means a definite conclusion, but instead a suggestion and an invitation for further debate.

Tales concerning the 'Stolen Drinking Horn' are generally seen as one of Norway's prime folkloric examples, both as a mound-related tale and as a tale to explain the presence of certain heirlooms in households (Omland 2010: 143) and, as it is often the case with local legends, in most varieties the narrator is certain as to the authenticity and origin of the story (*e.g.* Grimm 1816: 55; Christiansen 1964). Atle Omland – building on similar reservations expressed by Reidar Th. Christiansen – cautions against associating this tale too hastily with early Scandinavian mound veneration and argues that this tale only gained importance in Norway more recently as a means of interpreting national sites and artefacts (Omland 2010: 144). I concur with Omland's statement that the narrative, even in Bishop Nielson's AD1595 rendition (*e.g.* Christiansen 1964), is not as ancient as it might appear. Importantly, however, I wish to highlight that by 1595 – and even by Newbury's 12th-century variant – this tale was likely already a palimpsest, built upon multiple layers of reactions to older concepts. Considering this, Omland's argument is plausible when applied to the known variants of this tale, detached from their preceding layers, and their motifs regarded in isolation. I would, however, caution against excluding a preceding genesis of this narrative without further investigation.

Terry Gunnell notes that ML6045 appears to be absent from Orkney, Shetland and Iceland (2014: 29), and ML6045 (as is motif F352) is indeed missing from Marwick's index of tale types and motifs occurring in Orkney and Shetland folklore (*cf.* 1975: 208-12). Intriguingly, these are areas of largely Norwegian settlement, which would lend weight to Omland's assertion of a later establishment of this narrative across Norway. If correct, this would indicate that this variant of mound-narrative did not take root in Orkney during Norse settlement. This, in turn, would even mean that the narrative in this form does not stem from Norse Norway at all, as is proposed by Omland (2010: 143). On first glance, there is indeed no folktale from Orkney that bears much similarity to the *Drinking Horn* tale (or ML6045). There are plenty of accounts that caution against mound dwellers "*possessing great strength*" (Farrer 1862: 12), or causing disorder (Muir 1998 and 2007; Marwick 1975: 42, 208, 211; migratory legend ML7020 and motif F482.3.1.1). A migratory legend that is indeed listed for Orkney is ML7020, "*Vain attempt to escape a Brownie"* (Marwick 1975: 208; or "*nisse*": Kvideland and Sehmsdorf 2010: 425). There is, however, no Orcadian tale in which a drinking horn, or any other type of vessel, plays a central role in being stolen by – or attached to – the protagonist after provoking or irritating the mound-dweller. Before concluding this with confidence, however, there is a need to look past the narrative 'props' and to focus primarily on the underlying motivations of this narrative, including a consideration of the *primary role* of the (drinking-) vessel. Much attention has been paid to *the vessel itself as an object* – be this a drinking horn, a chalice, or the various alternative vessel types featured in other versions of ML6045 across its distribution area. This has distracted from its underlying essence. Perhaps the focus needs to be detached from the *item itself* that is carried away from the mound, and instead be given to *what this item represents*.

Focusing on the core plot points only (Tab. 5.4), the narratives of *The Hogboon of Hellihowe* (including its Norwegian counterpart, *The troublesome Haugbo*: Kvideland and Sehmsdorf 2010: 246; ML7020 and ML 7010, Tab. 5.2) and the Norwegian *Stolen Drinking Horn*-tales show intriguing parallels. Examining the essence of the narrative variants, there is strong reason to argue that there are more similarities between the *Hellihowe*-narrative and the *Drinking Horn*-narrative than are visible at face value. I would therefore suggest that ML6045 – and its focus on the stolen vessel (in varying form) – is perhaps a later development of earlier mound-narratives, much of which overlap with migratory legends ML7020 and ML7010 (Tab. 5.2, Tab. 5.4). Both migratory legend types have in common various motifs that concern respectful treatment of the farm spirit, or endeavours to escape bad luck as a consequence of behaviour towards the spirit. I would like to suggest that ML6045 contains the same key messages – respect towards the spirit and a vain attempt to flee from it – though now the vessel associated with the mound dweller, and the lasting effect it has on the protagonist, symbolises the mound-dweller and the inability to escape from it. Importantly, the following discussion is concerned with Orkney-specific developments of mound-narratives. As part of this, a link with ML6045 is suggested on the basis of parallels with Norwegian mound-lore. The discussion is not intended as a generalisation of ML6045 in the entirety of its distribution area.

The role of the mound differs between the two variants (Tab. 5.4): in the *Drinking Horn*-variants there is no apparent link between the mound and agricultural traditions. Instead, the mound is a somewhat detached entity – a landmark that is perhaps locally known and people are wary of. Yet it is, importantly, known as a liminal space in all variants, and caution is advised. All variants have furthermore in common a protagonist, who is largely ignorant towards the warnings concerning the mound – be these local legends or ancestral traditions – and how to behave towards it. The protagonist

THE HOGBOON OF HELLIHOWE (Orkney) THE TROUBLESOME HAUGBO (Norway) ML 7010; ML7020	THE STOLEN DRINKING HORN (Norwegian AD1595 version; o*utcome A* and o*utcome B*[9] versions) ML6045
Mound as a liminal space *(mound dweller known to be fickle, has the power over farm and farmer; caution suggested, long-standing traditions kept)*	**Mound as a liminal space** *(dweller(s) known to be fickle and have power over people's welfare; caution suggested)*
Mound dweller is treated with disrespect *(failure to bring votive offering; negligence of mound-dweller; provocation)*	**Mound dweller is treated with disrespect** *(provocation)*
The essence of the mound(-dweller) travels with the protagonist even after fleeing *(mound-dweller hiding inside a* tub *(Kvideland and Sehmsdorf 1988: 246) / a* kirn ***(****Muir 1998: 56; Muir 2007****)****).*	**The essence of the mound(-dweller) travels with the protagonist even after fleeing** *(object (*drinking horn / golden drinking horn / chalice*) from mound, filled with the mound-dweller's essence or spirit*)
Misfortune *Directly linked to vessel and its presence – mound-dweller reveals himself*	**Misfortune** *Directly attached to vessel and its presence – mound-dweller's essence presents itself* ***Addition:*** *In outcome B, the Church provides a safe area where the effects of the mound-dweller and any charged object from the mound have no impact. This is paralleled in other "Christian" versions, yet absent in variants with no clear Christian influence*.

Tab. 5.4 A contrast of the core narrative elements of *Hellihowe* / *Troublesome Haugbo* variants, and a Norwegian *Drinking Horn*-variants (of type ML6045).

then goes on to provoke the mound dweller. Whilst the nature of provocation varies between versions, the effect is much the same. At some point during this process something is either taken from the mound(-dweller), or attached to the protagonist by the mound-dweller. Even after having fled the scene, there is a realisation that the object obtained from the mound still contains its essence, a constant reminder of unwanted behaviour at the mound and the consequences of this. Hellihowe's

[9] As defined in Chapter 3.

mound-dweller, through hiding inside a vessel and attaching himself to the fleeing farmer, represents a strikingly similar concept.

Albeit tentatively, I would suggest on the basis of these core plot elements (Tab. 5.4) that Orkney's *Hogboon of Hellihowe* is likely to represent a further variant, perhaps a predecessor, of ML6045. The vessel in which the mound-dweller attaches himself to the farmer represent the 'cursed' vessel characteristic of ML6045-type tales, ML6045 perhaps representing a later variation of tales in which a stronger dialogue between people and mound(-dweller) is present. Further examples of tales in which the farm spirit is treated with disrespect, followed by revenge and ill fate have been published by Christiansen (1968: 140) and Kvideland and Sehsmdorf (2010: 241-3).

In order to underline this further, it is worth returning to the 17th century *Die Oseberger Zwerge (The Oseberg Dwarves*) (Grimm 1816: 55), set in the Osenberge region in Northern Germany, which is also the geographical backdrop for the *Oldenburger Wunderhorn*. [10] This tale, whilst being strikingly similar to the *Hogboon of Hellihowe*, has been attributed to the ML6045 type (*e.g.* Ashliman 2009-2012). The narrative of this variant is not tied to a drinking horn but to an old beer jug, a family heirloom. Similar to other variants of this narrative, the narrator claims to be certain about the tale's provenance. In 1653 the narrator hears this story from a "*100-year old innkeeper*" (Grimm 1816: 55; own translation), who, in turn, claims that the events happened during his grandfather's time (*ibid.*). A strong emphasis is placed on the importance of maintaining the family tradition of bringing freshly brewed beer to the farm mound in order to secure agricultural and general welfare. Payment, intriguingly, is described as coins of "*unknown, but good silver*" (Grimm 1816: 55, own translation). One day the young son has the task of bringing an offering of beer to the mound. The boy, however, is thirsty and drinks the beer himself, after which he falls asleep. As a result, the offer to the mound is not made, which has dire consequences of poverty and misfortune. In addition to this, the family's oldest beer jug is broken, which is seen as an additional cause for the general decline of the family's welfare that follows (*ibid.*). This jug does not have as strong a presence in the narrative as the Drinking Horn or Chalice in other ML6045 variants, yet perhaps one could argue that by drinking beer that was intended as an offering to the mound, something was indeed 'stolen' from the farm spirit, and in any case, this is a provocation. This same argument would apply to *Hellihowe,* as the decision to keep the food and drink to themselves (*cf.* Muir 1998: 55 and 2007), the farmers took something away from, and provoked, their farm spirits. The key motivation in this narrative, like in *Hellihowe*, is the on-going dialogue with the land and the expression of gratitude, and to not take good harvests for granted. Once complacency sets in, confidence in survival is even more challenged than before. Detached from any narrative embellishments – such as supernatural agents being responsible for prosperity or misfortune – the core of the narrative is a logical concern to ensure on-

[10] Whilst an interesting factor, I have already discussed in this chapter that even apparently clear links of folktales to existing map locations are not always reliable and cannot carry too much argumentative weight. Nonetheless, the occurrence of various renditions of ML6045 in this area is noteworthy.

going survival, whilst warning to not let idleness become hazardous. These underlying motives are essential, and whilst I am cautious to attribute these too hastily to even earlier societies, they do represent matters of survival and agriculture that would have held central significance within the earliest farming societies (*e.g.* Firth 1986: 151; Bradley 2003: 220-1; see also Zachrisson 1998: 45-6, 220-1).

Interim discussion

In this chapter, a connection has been suggested between migratory legends ML 7010, ML7020 and ML6045, at least for the Orcadian Norse context. ML 7010 (not listed for Orkney: Marwick 1975: 208) (Tab. 5.2) primarily concerns the mound-dweller's revenge for ill treatment (as seen in *The troublesome Haugbo*, Kvideland and Sehmsdorf 2010: 246), whilst ML 7020 contains this element and extends it with an unsuccessful attempt to flee the area and the mound-dweller. ML 6045 contains both, yet the object that symbolizes the mound-dweller's essence takes centre stage. The core plot points of the above examples, therefore, are notably similar (Tab. 5.4), yet the narrative focus has shifted. Rather than primarily serving the purpose of explaining the presence of an object in a household (Omland 2010: 143), the object holds the essence of the family's (or farm's) welfare, and therefore has symbolic value. ML6045 comprises a flight from a mound, yet one that is detached from a familiar farmland. Instead, it is a locally known mound, or one passed by during travels. The vessel obtained from the mound, however, might still encapsulate a direct link with the mound and its dweller, in essence also a "*vain attempt to flee*" (*cf*. Marwick 1975: 208; Kvideland and Sehmsdorf 2010: 425; Tab. 5.2 and 5.3). I would suggest that over time, the object itself became more important than the essence it contained. The vessel was no longer a prop to lend weight to the core message of the initial tale, but was increasingly given a greater role, whilst the mound and its dweller gradually became a mere backdrop. Omland's argument, therefore, that ML6045 is not as ancient as it seems, is concurred with, yet only when regarded in isolation. The underying motivations that led to the focus on the object central to ML6045 are discernible in tales such as the *Hogboon of Hellihowe*. This tale, therefore, is suggested to represent an early version, or even a predecessor, of ML6045 before the object took centre stage and the link of the mound with ancestral land (as opposed to being a site detached from personal association) became gradually lost. The peripheral location of Sanday (Map 5.1, see also Map 1.1) might have aided the preservation of concepts that would have changed at a quicker pace in more centrally located areas.

One intriguing detail in Grimm's *Oseberger Zwerge* is the enigmatic silver coins with which the farmers claim to be rewarded for their offerings (*cf.* Grimm 1816: 55). Even though there is no way to substantiate this idea in the case of this particular tale, it would seem very likely that these unknown, yet valuable silver coins (Grimm 1816: 55) – or other small artefacts in other narratives – are ploughed up stray finds, their surfacing perhaps coinciding with recently made offerings. Independent from this particular tale, this is a phenomenon likely to have occurred in various places, where the earth was opened and manipulated for agricultural or structural work. This is furthermore backed by the various finds of prehistoric arrowheads mistaken for 'elf shots' throughout the past (Marwick 1975: 43-5; Robertson 1991: 270; Hilts 2011). Whilst coincidental discoveries of artefacts in the present day can be explained by scholarly means, past societies would have had alternative ways of interpreting them. When objects emerge from the earth after having recently left offerings of food and drink, the assumption of a direct causal link does not seem too illogical.

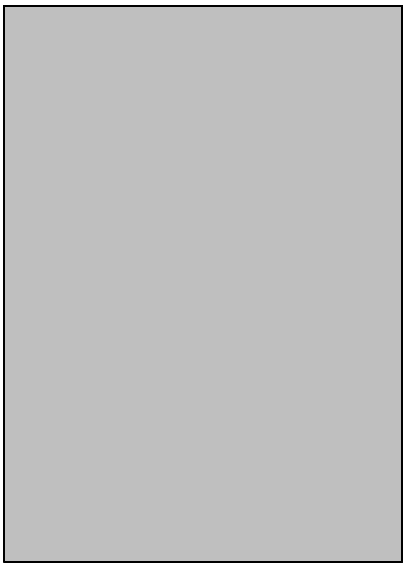


Fig. 5.5

19th-century example of an 'elf shot' re-used as an amulet.

Image © National Museum of Scotland, Edinburgh

5.3.3 The next stratum? Detachment from agriculture.

The Trow's Curse – Key plot points

1. Farmer owns land with a mound
2. Farmer decides to open the mound on his land
3. A creature / spirit appears and warns to not proceed with the excavations, makes threats to kill cattle as well as people if farmer were to proceed
4. Cattle and people die shortly after the mound is opened.

Key motifs

E235.6 *Ghost returns to punish disturber of grave* (Marwick 1975: 210)

Further general motifs from Orkney listed by Marwick (1975) that he does not link to this tale, although they do occur in the plot:

F482 *Brownie (hogboy, hogboon)*

F482.5.5 *Malicious / troublesome brownie*

F366 *Fairies harm Cattle*

Tab. 5.5 Summary of *The Trow's Curse*, key plot points (after Muir 1998: 125-6 and Marwick 1975: 41).

The Trow's Curse (Tab. 5.5) is another well-known mound-tale from Orkney (Muir 1998: 125-6), and a further example of the external strand. Despite the prominence of the *Hellihowe* tale, most present-day accounts of mound-dwellers are more similar to the *Trow's Curse* in that the core narrative revolves around the fickle mound-dweller who is not to be disturbed and whose mound is to be left alone (*ibid.*). In essence, this is the same core narrative that was recorded as recently as the 1990s, when archaeological excavations into mounds 'caused' extreme weather conditions and similar disorder (Howe and Crantit: see Chapter 3; but also Taiverso Tuick: Reynolds 1985: 119). The core of these narratives, too, is a remaining belief in mounds as liminal spaces coupled with warnings to not provoke misfortune, whilst any subsequent incidents are linked to the protagonists having ignored such warnings. *Why* such sites are deemed liminal spaces and dangerous is not necessarily clear, yet as the most recent versions show, such knowledge is not necessarily essential. The concept itself, by being common local knowledge, lends enough weight for it to be maintained. Whilst being similar on first glance, there is a significant difference in the ways in which the mound and its dweller are represented here in comparison to the *Hellihowe*-narrative. It is particularly intriguing that the aforementioned basic motifs – the constructive dialogue with the mound to ensure agricultural welfare – cannot be inferred from all mound-narratives, including the various Norwegian *Drinking Horn* tales (ML6045; Christiansen 1968: 117-21) or several similar mound-tales across the Nordic world, where the focus is not on the ties of the people to the land (with a mound-spirit as an agent), but instead on the mound-dweller and their fickle, trivial or even dangerous actions (the mound-spirit playing the key role). *The Trow's Curse* contains elements of agricultural awareness, yet the plot is not strung around these. In light of this, I wish to suggest that this represents a chronological 'stratum' of perceptions that were already informed by later attitudes towards mounds as liminal spaces, where the elemental relationship between people and the land had become gradually forgotten. A Christian influence on the burial mounds of Anglo-Saxon England has been suggested by Semple (2013: 191-2) and it is likely that similar ideological developments took place on Orkney, although not necessarily contemporaneously. Such attitudes are likely to post-date those motivations expressed – and perhaps encapsulated – in narratives of *Hellihowe*-type, where elemental issues of survival play a key role.

5.3.4 Under the 'Topsoil': Maeshowe's hogboy and scholarly research

I will now return to Maeshowe as a case study for a possibly even later stratum of mound perceptions, building further on the previous discussion. Having discussed the changes in the Stenness landscape in Chapter 4 (see also Chapter 6.2.3) it seems likely that Maeshowe, simply by being the most prominent mound in this area at present, has become the centre of scholarly attention regarding Norse activity in Stenness. As already noted in Section 5.1.2 of this chapter, however, Maeshowe has only very limited data from which to form a confident conclusion about its use and perception after its construction in prehistory. Even the presence of multiple runic inscriptions on the walls of the inner chambers does not clarify this picture much further. In this section I will argue that the hogboy-connotations with Maeshowe are likely to be more recent than they appear. Similar to the Norwegian examples discussed by Omland (2010) and the Orcadian cases discussed in the previous sections, however, even such recent associations are likely to build upon earlier connotations with mounds. Whether Maeshowe was ever imbued with earlier connotations prior to those known today, or whether the hogboy was attributed to the site at a later point, is unsure. The earliest secure written reference to Maeshowe housing a "*Hogboy*" stems from Farrer's 1861 report, and Anderson remarks on a "*Hogboy*" in 1886 (278). Ernest Marwick cites J. T. Smith-Leask recounting in 1931 that "*seventy years ago*" this district was replete with tales concerning the now forgotten "*Hug Boy*" (Robertson 1991: 267). In no selection of Orcadian folklore, however, is there a reference to a tale that *specifically* takes place at Maeshowe, which is intriguing given the prominence of this site – not only as a well-known monument, but also regarding its size and inter-visibility within the landscape.

Ernest Marwick in his 1975 discussion of mound-lore refers to Maeshowe only in the context of the site being a clever place to hide raiding loot, "*knowing that people in general had a horror of interfering with such places*" (1975: 39), therefore referring to Maeshowe more in passing as one of Orkney's many mounds that have the potential for being associated with mound-dweller lore (see also Robertson 1991: 266). No misfortune following the Maeshowe excavations by Farrer (1861), Childe (1954) or Renfrew (during the 1970s) has been recorded. There are, however, intuiguing references to what was found inside Maeshowe's chambers in two brief and anonymous articles from the 20th July 1861 in Orkney's local newspaper, *The Orcadian*, describing the finds of "*two female mummies*" along with a "*gentleman over ten feet long*" (Anon. 1861: 3) – sounding intriguingly similar to Jo. Ben's description of the large skeleton inside the "*small hill*" near "*the lake*" he claims to have seen (although no confident link can be made between these records), as well as the various similar accounts from 16th- and 17th-century Europe mentioned in Chapter 3. Intriguingly, the *Orcadian* article not only post-dates the majority of these accounts by at least 2 centuries, but also stems from a date during which Farrer's investigations were still on-going. The anonymous artice further states that the discovery was "*put under charge of a keeper*", allowing no viewing of the finds "*for less than a sixpence*" (*ibid.*). Apart from a passer-by who misunderstood discussions between the excavators – or perhaps exaggerated information for an exciting news story – not much sense can be made of this reference. Farrer, in any case, makes no mention of such a discovery in his report (1862). Furthermore, Petrie's documentation of only a small number of bones (*cf.* Davidson and Henshall 1989: 145) does not equate with the large, complete bodies claimed to have been spotted by the anonymous observer writing for *The Orcadian*. Sigurd Towrie explains it as the influence of local (albeit unspecified) folklore (Towrie 1996-2017j) and the answer might lie somewhere in the middle.

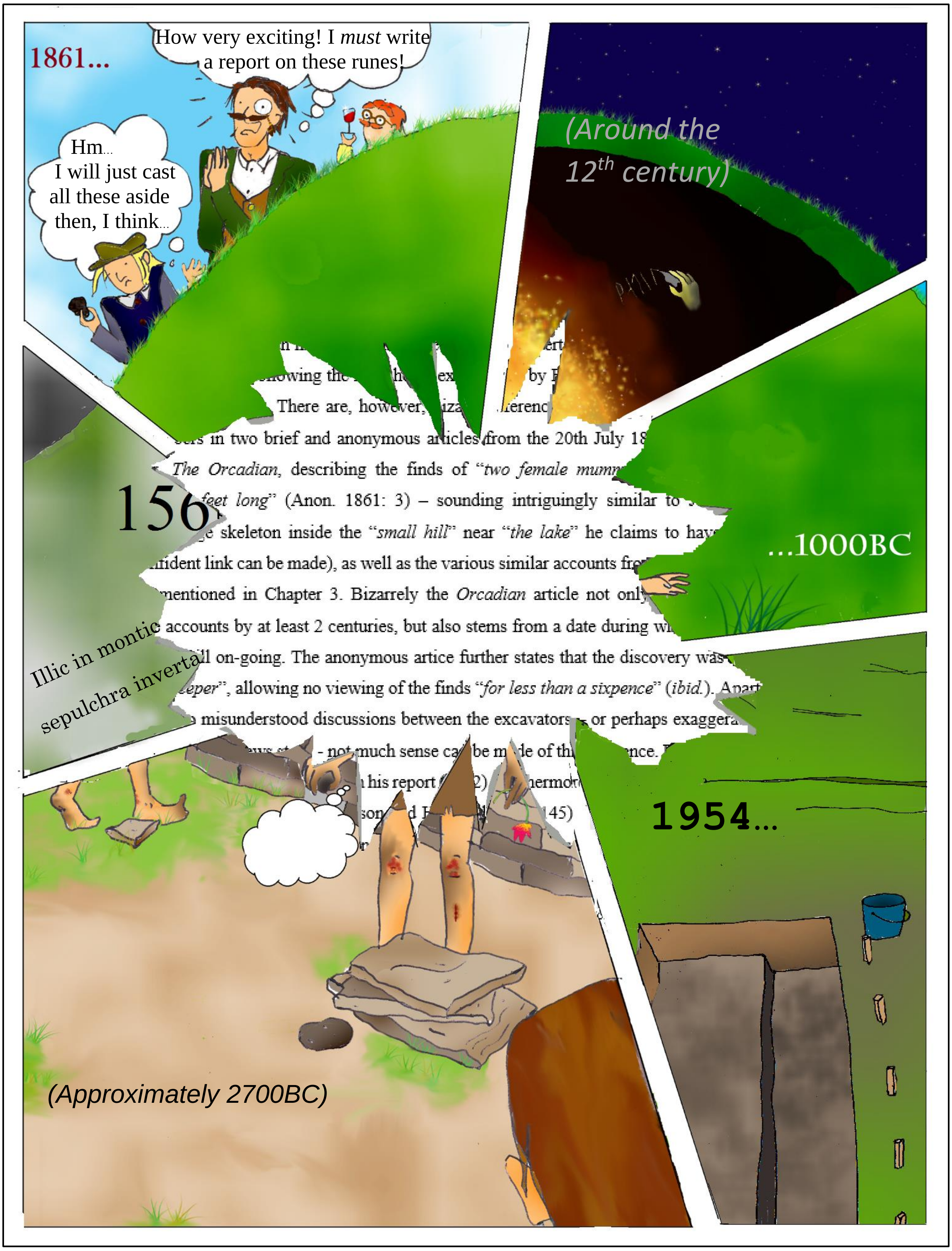


Plate 3 *Maeshowe: What we know so far….* The available clues concerning the site are kept separate by the missing data from the centre of the mound. See Chapter 8 for background information.
Drawn by the author.

The general sparsity of Maeshowe-related folklore sets the site apart from sites such as the Dwarfie Stane or Hellihowe, both of which have their own folkloric links, in the case of the latter the tale even surpasses the physical existence of the mound. The absence, however, of older written accounts mentioning Maeshowe specifically in the context of folklore, should not be a decisive factor – the absence of written sources does by no means indicate an absence of such beliefs and customs in general (*cf.* Niles 1999: 5; Schjødt 2014). Those folkloric connotations linked with Maeshowe into the 19th century might represent a reverberation, perhaps a *terminus ante quem*, of likely earlier folkloric associations with this site. Furthermore, the leading written records of Orcadian folklore that were published for a wider audience mostly stem from the 19th and early 20th century. This almost seamlessly takes over from both Smith Leask's and Farrer's encounters, which portray an image of Maeshowe being as strongly imbued with folkloric associations as various other sites. Perhaps the strong academic focus on Maeshowe from the late 19th century onwards overwrote any previously known folkloric associations with this site before they could survive into writing and subsequent memory – new, alternative means were offered to make sense of this site, albeit through scholarly interest rather than through local beliefs. The survival of folkloric associations with other sites might be due to the smaller scale of academic attention paid to them during the 19th and early 20th century, giving the existing tales more space within which they could continue to exist (see also Last 2010: 175). Ironically, the endeavour to keep various mound sites unexcavated is among the key factors that maintain the enigma of such sites. They are examples of sites where folkloric associations have not yet been replaced by scholarly investigations of the site.

Intriguingly, the lack of specific lore concerning Maeshowe is paralleled by the missing physical data from within the inner chambers. The only data available for direct activity within the mound are the various runic inscriptions. The presence of these in itself demonstrates that their carvers were not inhibited by narratives in which mound disturbance is followed by misfortune[11], as tales such as *The Trow's Curse* or several *Drinking Horn*-variants would imply. Neither, however, are the inscriptions representative of a constructive dialogue, as expressed in narratives such as *the Hogboon of Hellihowe*, *Die Oseberg Zwerge*, (and, to a degree, even in *The Trow's Curse*). Instead, the carvings appear to tie in with the suggested later medieval acquisitive, and perhaps daring, attitudes towards mounds represented in later Norse writing (Beck 1978: 215-6; Myhre 1994: 74). If the suggested 'relative chronology' of folkloric associations is plausible, this would lend further weight to the linguistic and runological interpretations that have placed these runes into c. the 12th century (Barnes 1994). The wider analogical scope of c.12th- to 13th-century mound-perceptions (*cf.* Omland 2010: 69; see Section 5.1.1) does seem to illustrate that there was a time in which mounds could be entered out of curiosity, as a dare, for political reasons, or to acquire grave goods, regardless of whether this was a frequent occurrence or not. The presence of the Maeshowe runes further underline the notion that mounds were not at all times avoided. Furthermore, whether deliberate or not, the Christian

[11] What the runes do not reveal, however, is whether their carvers can be seen as representative of their whole society, or whether this was a select group with an alternative mentality towards places and beliefs.

elements in a number of the Maeshowe carvings indicate that an ideological shift was already in process at the time they were carved, with Christian attitudes being prominent in Norse society, and strongly enough in the forefront of people's thoughts to be carved into stone. In whichever way Maeshowe was viewed and used in earlier Norse times any such earlier perceptions would have already been changed by the time the runes were carved. With this would have inevitably come a replacement of any 'pagan' attitudes that viewed mounds in a different – perhaps opposite – way. As discussed in the following Chapter, the foundation of the Stenness church in the 12th century might be linked to these. It remains uncertain when exactly the much-cited hogboy-connotations developed around Maeshowe, yet these are likely to have formed part of a general shift towards such narratives linked with Orkney's mounds, rather than representing a tale that developed independently at Maeshowe.

5.4 SUMMARY

This chapter has examined a selection of key themes in Orkney's mound folklore in contrast with Scandinavian parallels. Importantly, the focus is on Norse Orkney, which inevitably excludes similar mound-narratives from elsewhere in the world. This extends to the suggestions regarding the development of motifs and migratory legends – the case studies presented here are to be viewed within their Norse Orcadian context, whilst similar tale types and motifs elsewhere will have undergone very different development- and distribution processes. Whether the mentalities of Norse Orkney would have been largely parallel with those in West-Scandinavia, or whether differences in the societal environment would have delayed – or accelerated – developments of mound-perceptions cannot be stated here, yet would be an intriguing question to explore further.

In Section 5.2 of this chapter, I have suggested that there are two key strands discernible in Orcadian mound folklore. The 'internal' strand, where much of the narrative takes place inside the mound, including time- and space distortions, comprises various aspects of Gaelic (or even Celtic) narratives and myths (Bruford 1986: 174; Lindahl *et al.* 2000: 124; Waddell 2014: 62, 80). Whilst such 'internal' aspects might not have their roots in Scandinavia, it cannot be excluded that an interface of 'internal' and 'external' strand ideas would have been present on Norse Orkney. Furthermore, they are likely to have been encountered by Norse groups during their travels to Scotland, Ireland and parts of England. Norse influence on Orkney's narratives, however, is most clearly reflected in those tales of the 'external' strand, viewing the mound from the outside. The 'external' viewpoint connects local groups with the dead on the one hand (see also Gräslund 2001: 224-5), as well as with their own role in the upkeep of welfare (see also Zachrisson 1998: 54, 221). Since the overarching research questions are concerned with the Norse on Orkney, 'external' strand tales were given most attention in the case studies.

I have suggested that the *Hogboon of Hellihowe* represents one of the earliest mound-tales known from Orkney. This is primarily based on the central role of (agricultural) welfare and the efforts made for its maintenance, represented by the dialogue with the mound and its dweller. As discussed in Section 5.1.1, this is likely to reflect early Scandinavian attitudes towards mounds (Robertson 1991: 266; Zachrisson 1998: chp. 3; Gräslund 2001: 225; Omland 2010: 68-70). Those tales, in which the reasons behind caution around mounds is forgotten, are here suggested to be later variants. This is based on the idea that the relationship between people and mounds lost significance over time (Section 5.1.1), whilst the idea of a capricious mound-dweller remained. Today, the best-known stage of mound perception is that of avoidance and fear of the mound-dweller, even though the underlying reasons are no longer known nor relevant. This idea would furthermore be supported by the changing attitudes towards mounds suggested by Brendalsmo and Røthe (1992; see also Omland 2010: 68-70), suggesting an early phase of constructive dialogue between locals and the mounds in their area (*ibid.*; Section 5.1.1), followed by phases that appear to have lost part – yet not all – of the memory of such connections. Most mound-related narratives from Orkney appear to have cut off the former aspect: the mound-dweller is still known as a potentially dangerous entity, yet its role in people's day-to-day survival appears to have ceased. The peripheral location of Sanday might be an influencing factor in the preservation of ideas and customs.

These case studies have yielded new insights into Orkney's folklore and its role in understanding the past. Two different sides to mound perceptions on Norse Orkney have been identified and discussed here: Firstly, the notion of time-depth in Orkney's mound lore has highlighted changes in attitudes towards such sites. The majority of mound tales known today do not fully reflect their earlier Norse predecessors, although they are built upon them. Secondly, the notion of an 'internal' and an 'external' strand highlights that not all mound lore is necessarily of Scandinavian origin, and that an encounter of different views on such sites might have happened early on. These findings suggest local Orcadian characteristics, whilst casting further light onto Orkney's links to, and role within, the wider Norse diaspora.

CHAPTER 6: CASE STUDY - STANDING STONES

6.1 OVERVIEW

Fig. 6.1 The Ring of Brodgar by night. *Photo: Michael Copper, with permission.*

"THE FIDDLER PLAYED FAST AND FURIOUS
AND THE GIANTS' FEET TOOK UP THE TUNE AS THEY DANCED.
BUT IN ALL THEIR EXCITEMENT
THEY HAD FORGOTTEN TO KEEP A WATCH ON THE TIME
AND THE SUN ROSE ABOVE THE HORIZON.

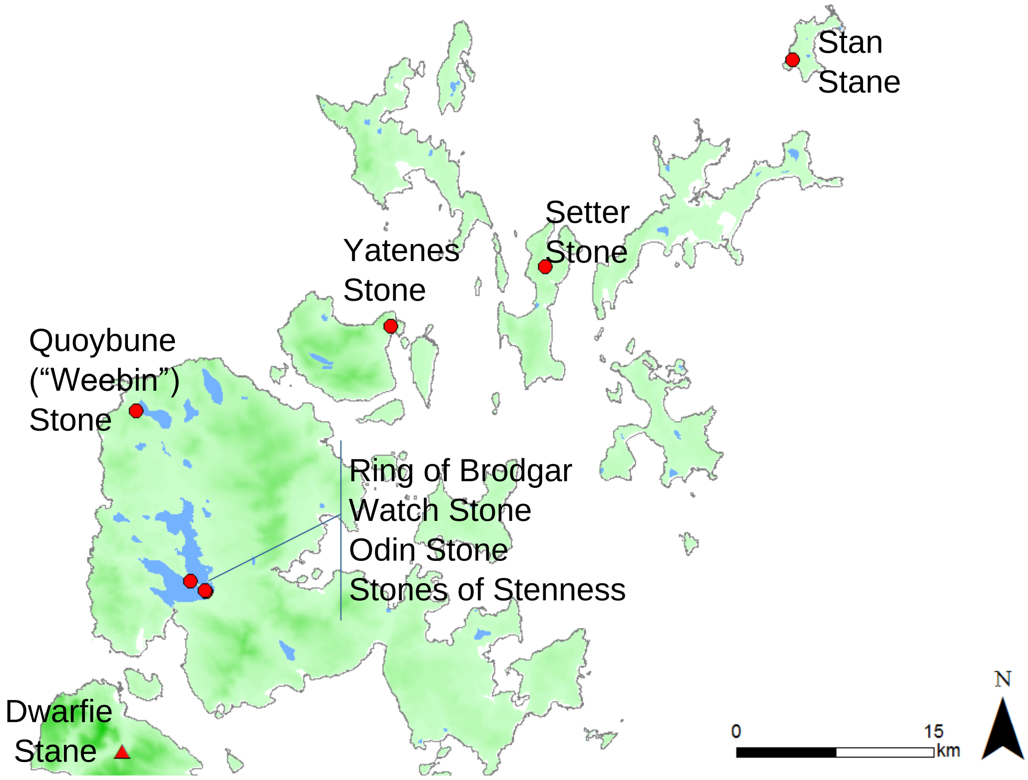
THE MUSIC STOPPED DEAD AND SILENCE REIGNED OVER THE LAND."

(Citing Muir and Richards 2013: 296)

As discussed in Chapter 5, there is a functional explanation for the purpose of mounds even in the context of a folktale: The mound is rationally recognised as a *house* (even if the inhabitants are supernatural spirits or the restless dead) or an *entrance*[1] (even if it leads to a different dimension). In contrast, the functional purpose of standing stones, especially stone circles, remain widely debated even today (for a ceremonial theory see esp. the work of Parker-Pearson; for a "*pars pro toto*" theory: Schmidt 2006: 251-2; Richards 2004; in addition to a wide range of alternative views, including supernatural intervention: Thompson 1977: 260; extra-terrestrials: Mitchell 2007: 156; or even ancient computing: Mohen 1989: 35-6). Whilst there are traces of activity at these places – for instance the pottery at the Stones of Stenness indicating larger-scale food preparation as well as consumption (Challands *et al.* 2005b: 223) – these finds remain silent about the reason behind the monumentality of such sites.

[1] For a study on the symbolic importance of doorways and thresholds in Medieval Scandinavia see Hem Eriksen 2013.

This enigma is clearly reflected in the way standing stones are represented in folklore: rather than being *inhabited* by the dead (or by other spirits), or used as the structural setting for a mythicized event, standing stones appear to be largely viewed as conscious beings in their own right –albeit with some exceptions, which will be discussed later in this chapter. Alternatively, they are viewed as the work (or remnants) of giants or other supernatural force (Muir 1998: 101; Kvideland and Sehmsdorf 2010: 303). Within the Scandinavian-settled world, such petrified entities commonly include – but are not limited to – *dwarves* (Grimm 1816; Zipes 2007: 924-932; Westwood and Kingshill 2009: 392), *giants* (Kvideland and Sehmsdorf 2010: 313; Muir 1998: 25-7; *Alvíssmál*: Sveinsson 2003 (1940): 72; Westwood and Kingshill 2009: 478; Marwick 1975: 32; Lindow 2014: 40-1; Krause 2010: 141-2), but can also be *trolls* (Kvideland and Sehmsdorf 2010: 312) or even *witches* (Hopp 1974). Lore concerning stones as the work or remnants of giants can range from stepping stones or bridges (Muir 1998: XIII; Marwick 1972: 177), the stone/s being thrown from a far distance (Thompson 1977: 239, 249; Black and Thomas 1994: 260; Omland 2010: 173), dropped by chance (Westwood and Kingshill 2009: 423) or even forming entire islands or hills (Muir 1998: 9-10; Westwood and Kingshill 2009: 352-3) and similar origin myth narratives can be found far beyond the Nordic world (*e.g.* Mayor 2011: 195-8 on Greek *Gigantomachy*). As already noted in Chapter 5, however, the type of entity featured in folktales is of minor relevance to this discussion. Of key interest is, as before, the narrative undercurrents and what these might reveal about past attitudes towards sites.



Map 6.1 Location of all standing stones mentioned in this chapter. See Map 6.2 for a close examination of the four Stenness sites.

Standing stones, both as individual monuments and grouped (stone circles) form the second key type of monument represented in narratives. The Orkney archipelago is replete with individual standing stones as well as two remaining stone circles on Mainland: The Ring of Brodgar (*Canmore* ID 1696) (Fig. 6.2) and the Stones of Stenness (Fig. 6.3) (*Canmore* ID 2105). These two circles overlook the Lochs of Harray and Stenness on either side of the Brodgar isthmus. Neither of these circles is complete today, with 4 stones remaining at Stenness (Challands *et al.* 2005: 218) and 27 (out of 60) at the Ring of Brodgar (Wickham-Jones 1998: 28).

Fig. 6.2 After Avebury, Wiltshire (331.6m), and Stanton Drew, Somerset (113m), **the Ring of Brodgar** (with a diameter of 103,6m) is the third largest known stone circle in Britain. *Photo: Author*

Fig. 6.3 The Stones of Stenness. *Photo: Author*

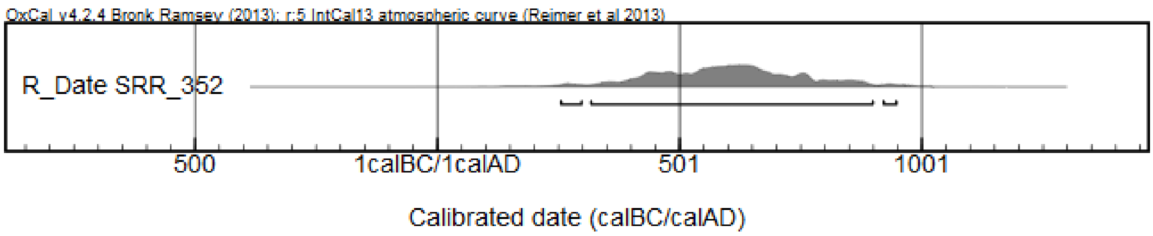


Fig. 6.4 Radiocarbon date from charcoal, taken from the centre of the ring (data from *Canmore* ID 2105).

What the Stones of Stenness looked like as a landmark throughout the Norse period – and what other landscape features factored in to the role of this site – is uncertain. The prehistory of this site has been extensively studied, with prehistoric pottery indicating a site of assembly and feasting (Challands *et al.* 2005: 223). Apart from eight[2] prehistoric radiocarbon dates this site generated one

[2] Five further prehistoric dates were withdrawn due to sample treatment problems (Sheridan 2006: 202).

charcoal date of the first millennium AD (Fig. 6.4), taken from a pit in the South of the circle's centre, indicating activity at this site between calAD100-1050 (SRR-352; re-calibrated in 2016 to calAD256-948 [95,4%]). The same pit also yielded grains and "*undiagnostic pottery*" (*Canmore* ID 2105; *cf.* Ritchie 1978). Regrettably the standard deviation of this sample is +/- 150 years, hindering the date range to be further refined. Regardless of the latter, however, even this wide date range between the 3rd and 10th century AD lies significantly later than all the other Stenness dates, all of which are Neolithic, indicating re-use of this site sometime during the 1st millennium AD.

Due to the protected wildlife inside the circle, the Ring of Brodgar has seen only little investigation, and the acidic soil conditions of the area add a further reason for why no finds are known from inside the circle (Nick Card pers. comm. 2010). The ditch has recently been dated to c.2600BC (Richards 2013: 112-3), confirming previous debates that had placed the site into the mid-3rd millennium BC in analogy with the Stones of Stenness and other stone circles elsewhere in Britain (Renfrew 1979: 209; Ritchie 1978: 21 and 1985: 124). Both stone circles have without doubt undergone various changes throughout the millennia. An information sign within the Ring of Brodgar documents a lightning strike that split one of the standing stones in two (Fig. 6.5). It is very likely that natural events like this – or quarrying for building material – have led to further loss of standing stones not only from both circles, but from across the archipelago, as has also been recorded for various other megalithic sites elsewhere in Britain (see *e.g.* Mitchell 2007: 82). Whilst the advent of new beliefs would be a welcome interpretation for the destruction or re-appropriation of such sites, it does not apply to all cases (see also Semple 2013: 8). Dispute among locals, for instance, was behind the destruction of the Odin Stone and two stones from the Stenness circle in 1814 (Robertson 1991: 312-3; Muir and Richards 2013: 299). The Odin Stone is known to have subsequently been broken up and partly re-used as a millstone (Robertson 1991: 309), yet resilient local memory has kept this megalith firmly on the Stenness map (see Map 6.2).

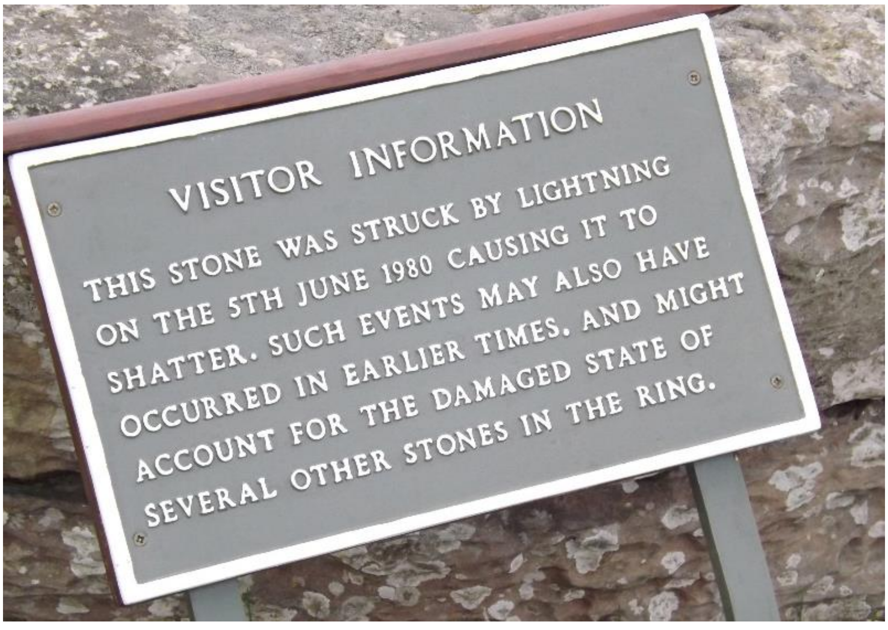


Fig. 6.5 The Ring of Brodgar, like various other sites, will have seen environmental as well as human impact throughout their existence.

Photo: Author

In contrast to this, the restauration of fallen or broken standing stones in more recent times has been observed at various sites (*e.g.* Holtorf 2000-8), including several Orcadian sites, such as Auskerry (*Canmore* ID 3281). Such curative efforts illustrate the cultural significance of such monuments – in past and present – albeit within changing societal contexts. This is further illustrated by the way stones remain in cultural memory even after their destruction. The aforementioned Odin Stone on Mainland (*e.g.* Thomas 1852: 101) would be the best-known case, yet this is also known from the Kethesgeo Stone, Stenness, which is recorded to have been taken away in 1890, yet is still in communal memory (Canmore ID 2129). A further example is the now destroyed Moodie's Pillar (also: 'Moadies Pillar') at the Hill of Cruaday, Sandwick. *The Orkney Herald* reports votive offerings being brought to this stone in 1892 (Canmore ID 1922) (Map 4.1). This name is intriguing as the 'Pillar'-element would indicate a tall standing stone, whilst an RCAHMS entry in 1946 reports that the stone was broken into two (*ibid.*). This either indicates that the stone must have been broken sometime between the late 19th century and 1946, or indeed that the stone was already broken for a longer period of time yet with the 'Pillar'-name still remaining as a remnant of it. In any case, standing stones are likely to have had a strong, varying cultural impact throughout the ages. Much as in the case of mounds, the veneration of stones as liminal places is probably best attested indirectly, especially in the various early medieval edicts from across Europe that tried to eliminate them (Semple 2010: 21). This includes records from Arles between AD443 and 452, Tours in AD567, Toledo in AD681 and 691, as well as in 9th-century Nantes (Grinsell 1976: 14). This clearly demonstrates widespread cultural connections with monoliths in various parts of Europe over a long period, and the fact that official efforts were made to extinguish these customs from a very early date further underlines how intrinsic and common these customs must have been. Much of this remains unchanged today, considering the wide range of interested parties that are continued to be drawn to standing stones. Above all, however, such examples further underline how much the landscape has changed over the past millennia, and that vanished sites will have once been invested with as much meaning as those sites that still survive.

Due to their inorganic nature, as well as being constantly exposed to the environment rather than in a secure context, standing stones are among the most challenging archaeological features to date, or interpret, with confidence. Their representation in Orkney's folklore is equally problematic and complex. Considering the parallels with Nordic mythology and folklore it would be tempting to focus only on those Nordic parallels and to overlook potential other influence. There is, however, much variation between the levels of Norse presence in different types of monolith lore, and there are cases where it appears to be almost entirely missing. Ignoring this would add further to a merging of concepts that were not originally linked and, in turn, would obscure any conclusions about Norse mentalities. Therefore, in order to examine Scandinavian impact on Orkney's standing stone lore, Orkney's record is also contrasted with known examples from across Britain. Further differences within Orkney's standing stone lore will be discussed for a more detailed examination of potential past networks and routes of influence.

6.2 REPRESENTATION IN FOLKLORE

6.2.1 Petrification

Fig. 6.6 One of the stones from the Ring of Brodgar.

The anthropomorphic appearance of various megaliths might have added to the idea of them being, or having once been, animate creatures.

Photo: Author

Norse mythology and early Icelandic literature are replete with accounts of people or entities who were turned to stone upon contact with sunlight at a (usually unspecified) point in the past. The motif of petrification by sunlight is recorded in Icelandic literature as early as the Edda and – indicated by the aforementioned artefacts and carvings - is likely to be preceded by a long-standing oral tradition (Boberg 1966: 97; motifs A974; F451.3.2.1.; F531.6.12.2; *Alvíssmál*; Andersson 2004: 179; Simpson 2004: 96-7; Visted and Stigum 1952: 251; Hrimgerd's petrification in the Eddic poem of Helgi, son of Hjörvarðr: Krause 2010: 141-2). Saxo Grammaticus as well as the *Historia Norwegie* refer to natural petrification processes over time in Iceland and Møre, Norway (Ekrem and Nortensen 2006: 55), which might have added further 'evidence' to the credibility of this concept.

On Orkney, the Ring of Brodgar is reputed to once have been a circle of dancing giants accompanied by a fiddler (the Comet Stone), who were turned to stone upon sunrise (Muir 1998: 27 and 2013: 296-9). Parallels from Shetland include Wester Skeld, supposedly once two plundering giants, "*immobilised by sun*" (Marwick 1975: 32), and the Haltadans stone circle, also petrified dancers (Marwick 1975: 60). On first glance, this might appear to be a direct equivalent of similar narratives known from Southern British sites – such as Long Meg and Her Daughters or the Rollright Stones – stone circles reputed to be groups of witches or dancers petrified as they breached Sabbath. However, comparing southern and northern British versions of stone circle associations, there is a difference in the conceptual tone of the tale that might be substantially more significant than it first appears. The petrification through sunlight is in the Southern versions replaced by a more Christian tone – petrification here represents a punishment for breaching Christian teachings rather than a symbol of safety from the revenant dead (*cf.* Bourne 2011: 44). Whilst a deceptively small difference on paper, this is indicative of significant underlying conceptual differences between two mentalities, be these apart in geographical origin or in time. Considering the long-standing cultural significance of the sun in funerary contexts across Scandinavia (Visted and Stigum 1952: 235-7) a tentative link presents itself between the petrification by sunlight in folklore and the occurrences of sun-related runic inscriptions and artefacts (Chapter 4.3.1). The former especially concerns those inscriptions that indicate consequences following contact with sunlight. Examples include the inscription at Eggja (8th century) – claiming that the stone has not been (or is not to be) affected by the sun (Jacobsen 1931; Jankuhn and Krause 1966; Brendalsmo and Røthe 1992: 92; Makvad 2003: 37-8); the amulet from Sigtuna, reading ON "*eyð þat skin!*" ("*destroy this, (?sun-) shine!*") (Nordén 1943: 154-70, cited in MacLeod and Mees 2006: 121); but also the suggested interpretation of Line A from Kylver, Gotland, as ON "*sol ljós*" ("*sun light*") (Scholma-Mason 2016: 49-50). Revenants (or ghosts) fearing sunlight in Icelandic narratives (Simpson 2004: 122, 136, 141) might further indicate an almost direct continuation of ancient beliefs concerning striking effects of the sun, on a literal as well as symbolic level. Whilst this record of tangible and early literate remains does not necessarily indicate a direct transmission from these notions into the petrified giants or dwarves from folklore, the coexistence of sun-related imagery and lore makes it very likely for a wide range of early and later Scandinavian unwritten narratives and beliefs to have directly been influenced by these deeply ingrained concepts.

In contrast, in later renditions of this motif the intention appears to be mostly concerned with punishment following breach of Christian conduct (*cf.* Wilhelm Grimm's *The Celebration of the Underground Creatures: A Norwegian Fairytale* in Zipes 2007: 924-33), or through the direct action of a Christian saint, mostly St. Olaf (*ibid.*; Visted and Stigum 1952: 251; Kvideland and Sehmsdorf 2010: 341), rather than protection against the revenant dead, as the earlier Nordic narratives seem to imply. Such a Christian influence on earlier narratives is reminiscent of ways in which familiar, ingrained concepts and beliefs continue under a new guise (*e.g.* Hultgård 1992: 50, 55). Intriguingly, in Norway St. Olaf is commonly attributed with the same power as the sun in dealing with evil spirits (Visted and Stigum 1952: 251; a phenomenon observed in the wider Nordic world: Lindow 2014: 41), adding further weight to the notion of a direct continuation of core concepts despite ideological and symbolic change on the outside.

In addition to this, there are similarities between the lore of these settled areas despite the geographical gap between Scandinavian-settled Scotland and the Danelaw: One example is the striking similarity between the lore concerning the Ring of Brodgar on Mainland Orkney and the Nine Ladies, Derbyshire. Both stone circles feature in folklore as a group of dancers with accompanying fiddler, although petrified through sunrise in the case of the Ring of Brodgar (*e.g.* Muir 1998: 27) and, in contrast, as penitence for dancing on a Sunday in the case of the Nine Ladies (Grinsell 1976: 56). Even though the Derbyshire variant of this tale has clear Christian influence it is likely that these tales have a common origin. There might, however, be a difference in the way both variants were introduced in various areas. Derbyshire, for instance, formed part of the Danelaw and such concepts might have been introduced during earlier medieval times – as with the noteworthy presence of Scandinavian mound-dweller lore and potential derivatives of ON *haugbúar* across these areas. Intriguingly, the Christian variant of the petrification motif occurs at stone circles in parts of Britain that lie outside the Danelaw, including Wales (incl. Anglesey), Cornwall and the Midlands (Grinsell 1976: 54-6), whilst Cumbria's stone circles – Long Meg and her Daughters being an outlier– are not known to be associated with the sun (Hutton 2001: 5). There is a remote possibility that such concepts might have reached the southern parts of England during the reign of King Cnut I as has been argued for other cultural aspects of Scandinavian diaspora (Jesch 2015: 75). However, it would be unlikely for the pre-Christian beliefs of a different country (and its mentality) to have such a significant impact on a Christian society if these were newly introduced as late as the 11th century. Local Christianity would have had too much authority by that point, and the remnants of foreign pre-Christian beliefs would not have been strong enough to take root on such a large scale by that point in time in a place with no prior attachment to these concepts. Grinsell attributes the distribution of these tales to word spread in church service from the 17th century onwards (1976: 56). This notion seems plausible, especially as we cannot assume that Christianity, despite its written doctrines, would have been entirely homogenous or static, especially with regards to the accommodation of earlier beliefs in various different regions (Schjødt 2014: 55). I would suggest that the areas outside the Danelaw were indeed introduced to these concepts already in the shape of Christian narratives, at a time where any 'pagan' Scandinavian connotations were no longer remembered and where, for example, the effects of daylight had long been replaced with the actions of Saints or God. In part, this might also apply to some Danelaw areas, yet this would require further research into individual areas and their associated sites. Grinsell's suggestion of the Church's involvement in changing views on standing stones is one of many possibilities (although see Semple 2013: chp. 5). In any case, it appears that one pre-Christian belief was replaced by what stemmed almost directly from a different pre-Christian mentality.

6.2.2 Drinking Stones

Individual standing stones on Rousay and Mainland Orkney are reputed to come to life on New Year's Eve (*hogmanay*) and drink from the nearest loch, a process human beings are not supposed to witness (Muir 1998: 25-6; Marwick 1975: 32). People who ignore this warning are either punished in retrospect by ill fate (Black and Thomas 1994 (1903): 3-4) or they are pre-empted from observing the stones at all by sudden coincidental events shortly beforehand (Muir 1998: 26). Known Orcadian sites associated with the lore of moving stones are the Stane o' Quoybune (or 'Weebin'), Birsay, Mainland (*Canmore* ID 1784) (Marwick 1975: 32; Muir 1998: 25-6, also recorded as a "*Druidical Stone*": Black and Thomas 1994 (1903): 3; Westwood and Kingshill 2009: 403), the Yetnasteen, Rousay (*Canmore* ID 2705) (Marwick 1975: 32; Muir 1998: 25-6), and the Watch Stone, Stenness,

Fig. 6.7 The Watch Stone and Odin Stone (with perforation), 1807. © RCAHMS

Mainland (*Canmore* ID 2096) (Muir 1998: 25-6). Intriguingly, Orkney is an outlier in hosting this tale. Whilst several accounts are known of across northern France and the southern parts of Britain (Grinsell 1976: 57-60; Mohen 1989: 16-7) there are no further narratives of this kind known from Scotland (incl. Shetland and the Western Isles) nor from former Danelaw areas (Grinsell 1976: 58), and neither are there sufficiently similar tales of drinking stones within Nordic folklore, mythology or Icelandic literature. There are Nordic motifs of a giant drinking up the ocean, or other large body of water (motifs A133.1; A928; F531.3.4; H1142.2; K82.1; Towrie 1996-2017r), yet the narrative emphasis throughout these is on the competitive element, the magnitude of drinking a large body of water dry. The mobile stone in Orcadian lore only drinks from the loch to "*quench its thirst*" (Muir 1998: 25), yet does not drink the loch dry to prove strength. There is a possibility that there was initially more emphasis on the competitive drinking, but there is no record of this. The narrative undercurrent as recorded for Orkney, therefore, is too different to suggest a direct link with the Nordic motifs, whilst the French examples offer a significantly closer parallel. Menhirs from La Bouëxière and Plouhinec both become mobile once a year, at midnight on Christmas, and it brings bad luck to witness this (Mohen 1989: 16-7). These represent almost exact parallels of the Orcadian drinking stones. This makes it even more intriguing that the three occurrences on Orkney are divided over two different islands, Mainland and Rousay. The suggestion has been made that these are the remnants of a pre-Norse belief (Towrie 1996-2017k), and this cannot be excluded. It would, however, beg the question of why there are no further examples across the entirety of Scotland or northern England. Alternatively, I would suggest that the three Orcadian cases are later imports, perhaps linked to isolated events of migration between the South of Britain (or northern France) and Orkney. The French influence on Scotland during the *Auld Alliance* between 1295 and 1560 might have resulted in a trickling of French concepts even into the furthest corners of Scotland (Sandnes 2010: 335), for instance through the movement of individual groups and a mutual influence of language and ideas (see also Frog 2015: 34). Importantly, this does not rule out the possibility that the imported tale itself already looked back on ancient continental origins. The fact that they are distributed over two different islands is peculiar, but could, again, perhaps be explained by individual settlement choices and mobility. The chronology of the above 'Drinking Stone'-references begs the question of whether there initially was only one site on Orkney with a 'Drinking Stone'-association, which would have spread to the two other areas as it gained popularity and, considering the various megaliths across Orkney, credibility. The 'Drinking Stone'-association with the Quoybune Stone, Birsay, is already recorded in 1884 (reprinted in 1903), whilst the other two megaliths are only mentioned in the literature of later decades (see above). Whilst it cannot be excluded that earlier associations of this kind were indeed attributed to the two other megaliths; it seems intriguing that these were not recorded. Perhaps this tale type spread to other sites after taking root. If this is probable, it would illustrate how even folkloric associations with sites are constantly in progress.

One 'false friend' at this point is the place name Yetnasteen (or Yatenes Stone) - ON *Jötunn / Jǫtna-steinn*, indicating an association with the giants from Norse mythology (Marwick 1947: 95; Towrie 1996-2017o). This association has also been applied to the Quoybune Stone (*e.g.* Towrie 1996-2017p). Importantly, however, Fergusson's 1884 account (reprinted in Black and Thomas 1994 (1903): 3) of the Quoybune Stone has a clear narrative emphasis on the enigma of the moving stone and the risk this poses to anyone witnessing it (*ibid.* 3-4). There is no mention of giants or any petrifying effect of sunlight. In fact, rather than being a petrified entity, the stone comes to life once a year (not turning into any other creature), and returns again to its usual spot, with any witnesses wondering whether their eyes had betrayed them or not (*ibid.*). There is, of course, a possibility of such information being simply left out or lost over time.[3] This, however, becomes less likely when considering the lack of evidence for 'Drinking Stones' in Scandinavian records and in other Scandinavian settled areas. The place-name Yetnasteen, therefore, might indicate that this site was named independently from its drinking-stone lore. It cannot be excluded that the name is linked with another giant-related narrative that is now lost, or perhaps became merged with the present-day narratives due to similarities with the motifs mentioned above – if this name stems from the Norse period. The Mainland site, Quoybune, has a topographical name (containing ON *kví*, field or enclosure), whilst the name Watch Stone, too, appears unrelated to the drinking-lore. In any case, the likelihood for Norse associations with the Ring of Brodgar (through sun-petrification, Section 6.2.1) cannot be seamlessly applied to the sites with a 'Drinking Stone' association. The absence of this tale type elsewhere in the study area might indicate that the Orcadian outliers were brought in from the South – Southern Britain and / or Northern France – perhaps already influenced by changing attitudes towards long-standing 'pagan' megalith veneration.

In notable contrast to the warnings to stay away from the moving stones, there are also records of monoliths being specifically visited on the first day of the year. One example is the Stan Stane, North

[3] This tale-type also occurs at the Rollright Stones, Oxfordshire, where it is prefaced with petrification. Given the very conglomerated nature of folklore concerning the Rollright Stones, however, it is likely that this case, too, is a later merge of lore that was not initially linked.

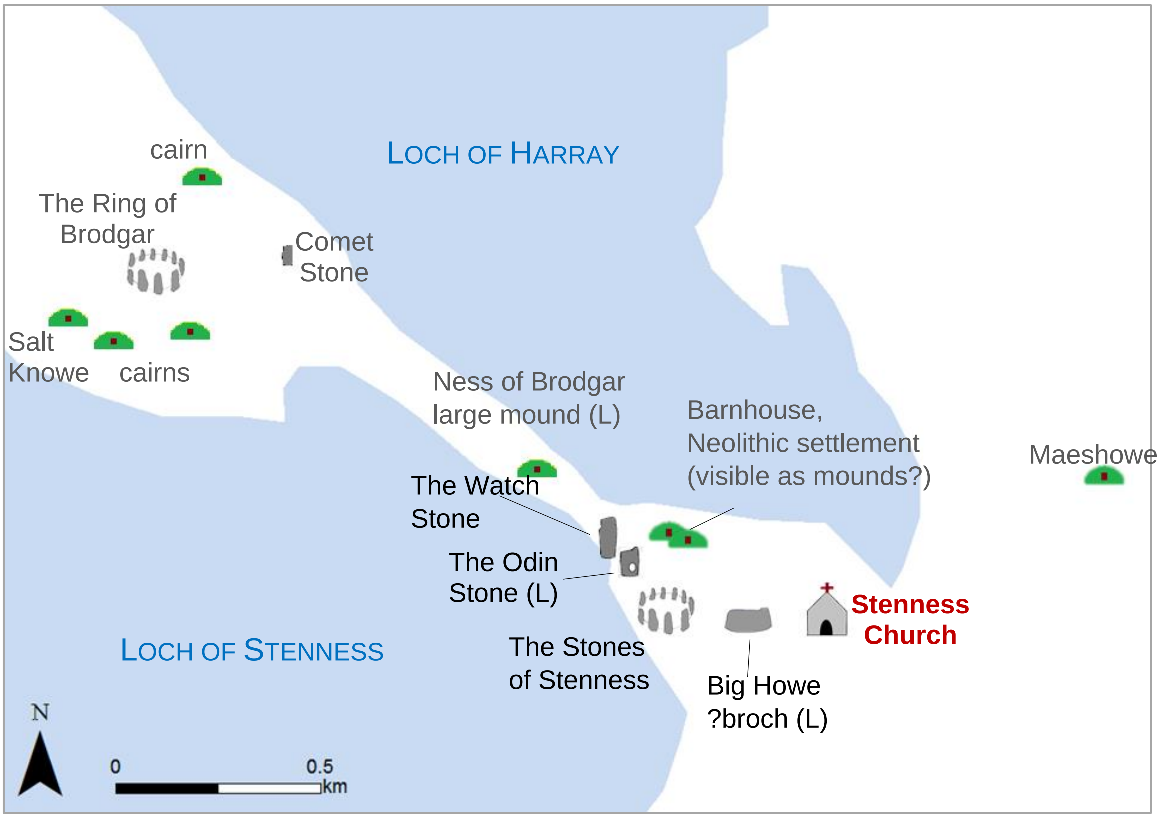
Ronaldsay (Black and Thomas 1994 (1903): 3; Rvd. Clouston cited in Towrie 1996-2017l). Intriguingly, North Ronaldsay is the northernmost of the inhabited islands, and – as argued for Hellihowe, Sanday (Chapter 5) – such a peripheral location might have sheltered the survival of customs that would have undergone more changes elsewhere. The Stones of Stenness are a further example in being a very likely continuation of this custom (Westwood and Kingshill 2009: 402-3; Marwick 1975: 60), only that the associated customs are now moved to the Stenness Church. This, however, will see further discussion in Section 6.2.3. Potentially, the custom of visiting selected monoliths on New Year's Day is a remnant of a pre-Christian custom that became banned (or incorporated into Christian customs) later (*e.g.* Grinsell 1976: 14; Bourne 2011: 44). A warning to not approach such sites might be a remnant of a time of ideological change, an endeavour to condemn long-standing activities at particular places. This can be misleading, since such narratives can easily be mistaken for being much older than they are (see Chapter 5). Crucially, Christianity – whilst being the best recorded example for the case of Orkney's ideological development – will not have been the only ideological conversion under which gradual changes happened. The advent of new customs and powerful ideologies that replace, invert, or re-invent, older ones are with little doubt as old as the social human (Edmonds 1999: 134, 142; Renfrew 2012: 138-9).

6.2.3 Exceptions

Shifting focus?

The Stones of Stenness, despite being a circle of tall megaliths, do not share known associations with giants, nor with petrification. In fact, folklore is intriguingly silent around this stone circle, apart from several enigmatic customs in the Stenness area as a whole, including feasts, dances, and wedding traditions (*e.g.* Marwick 1975: 60; Black and Thomas 1994 (1903): 2-3). The only known folkloric connotation of this site is that of the "*Temple of the Moon*" (Marwick 1975: 60; Black and Thomas 1903: 259), the antiquity of which is very uncertain despite associations with the god "*Wodden*" (Marwick 1975: 60). This begs the question of whether there was once a folkloric connotation with the Stones of Stenness that is now lost, and whether this site formed part of a larger radius within which significant focal points have shifted several times over the past millennium.

Of potential importance in this discussion is the Stenness Church – on this site since the 12th century (Map 6.2) – to which formalised focus might have shifted, whilst still encapsulating more ancient customs, perhaps as a means of controlling pre-existing customs, or because they could be adapted to Christian customs (see also Schjødt 2014: 51; Semple 2013: 191). The Stenness area is imbued with several traditions, including feasts lasting several days; meetings at New Year's Day; the settling of local disputes; marriages, and the swearing of oaths to name but a few (Marwick 1975: 59, 135; Black and Thomas 1994 (1903): 212-3; Gibbon 2012: 88-9). The Odin Stone (destroyed in 1814) added further to these, with sick infants and contractual handshakes being passed through its perforation (*ibid.*).



Map 6.2 Sites in the Stenness area. Sites with an (L) are now levelled / no longer visible. Did the Stenness Church (on the same site since the 12th century) take over customs and traditions that were before held at sites in its direct surroundings?

An intriguing, yet unknown factor, is the probable broch of Big Howe (Map 6.2) adding a further ancient component to this landscape. Since this site was levelled during the early 20th century, it is easy to overlook its potential past importance today (Chapter 4), and not much is known about how the site was used in the past. If this was indeed a broch, was it purpose-built, or incorporating an earlier, perhaps Neolithic, structure?[4] If it was not, was this site already overgrown with a large grass-mound by the time the Norse arrived? Was the site re-used, even re-built, during Norse times? Norse activity at this site would have been likely in either case – based on the gravitation of the Norse towards other Iron Age sites across Orkney (Chapters 1 and 2), and the presence of a large mound would have impacted Norse perception of this area (Chapter 5). F. W. L. Thomas refers to Olaf Tryggvarson's saga, recording the presence of a *brû* (ON bridge) in this area in AD970 (1852: 89)[5]. Suggestions have been made that the Stenness customs are the remnants of *þing*-activity, since the swearing of oaths, feasting and gathering are among the customs that survive there up to today (Gibbon 2012: 89; Sanmark 2012: 26). Regardless of whether Stenness would have hosted a *þing*, however, it would seem likely that any Norse traditions added to this area were already built upon earlier beliefs and traditions. As mentioned at the start of this chapter, investigations at the Stones of Stenness have yielded finds indicating larger-scale preparation and consumption of foods (Challands

[4] For other Iron Age sites re-using earlier prehistoric structures see Chapters 1.1.2, 1.2.1, and 2.2.2.
[5] He furthermore refers to a tradition of there being a "*palace*" in this area, near where Stenness Church stands now (*ibid.*).

et al. 2005: 223). Whilst not evidencing a direct continuation[6], these early finds do indicate that this area has witnessed social gatherings throughout the past millennia. This area might represent a palimpsest, with significant structures added to the landscape over time, each representative of their social context – the Stenness Church being the latest addition. Considering the promising results from geophysical surveys at Big Howe over the past years (Chapter 4), excavation at this site might prove fruitful to shed further light on potential Iron Age and Norse activity.

Dwarves and Giants

A further intriguing exception to all other known Orcadian tales is the Dwarfie Stane, Hoy (introduced in Chapter 3), in being described as a building made and inhabited by giants. In a separate account, the site is linked to a dwarf named Snorro (Towrie 1996-2017m), yet this is a more recent addition by Sir Walter Scott (Tom Muir pers. comm. 2016).[7] However, being an inhabited space rather than an animate entity does not portray the Dwarfie Stane tale any more akin to the mound-related lore. This tale consists of an entirely separate array of motifs, which appear to have more similarity with aspects of Norse mythology, such as the dwarves living in rocks (*cf. Kormaks Saga*; Ellis Davidson 1977: 28; Boberg 1966: 110). There is no apparent consequential essence; the entirety of the narrative appears to be of explanatory, or informative kind (*cf.* Honko 1972: 12-3) with no further elaboration of characters or their reasons for acting, nor does the narrative have any influence on or guiding role in the lives of its audience. Intriguingly, very similar narrative characteristics have been noted by Egeler (*forthcoming*) regarding the Dvergasteinn (also a 'Dwarf Stone' example) at Seiðisfjörður, Iceland. The narrative with which the Icelandic Dwarf Stone is imbued shows clear ecclesiastical influence (Egeler *forthcoming*), and its earliest known recordings stem from the 19th century (*ibid.*). As Egeler argues, any original narrative associations are likely to have already become lost (*ibid.*), and the same might be true in the case of the Orcadian Dwarfie Stane. The names of both sites are reminiscent of Norse mythology – dwarves dwelling in rocks – perhaps having in common a nomenclature in a more distant past (Ellis Davidson 1977: 28; Boberg 1966: 110, motif F451.4.1.12). An indication of successive perceptual layers is the contradiction of a dwarf-related name, whilst being known for its association with giants – the latter primarily due to Ben's enigmatic manuscript, the background (and source reliability) of which can only be speculated about. In any case, it seems likely that this is another example of a dichotomy between toponym and tale, perhaps indicating two out of several stages of a perceptive development of this tale.

[6] Although see Tab. 6.1, illustrating Iron Age activity within the Stones of Stenness.
[7] The site name, "*Dwarfie Stane*", is already recorded in 1701 by John Brand.

Fig. 6.8 Dwarfie Stane, Hoy, view onto the blocking stone from the inner chamber…
Photo: Author

Fig. 6.9 … and into the right alcove of the chamber, showing a stone 'pillow' with post-medieval inscriptions. *Photo: Author*

6.2.4 Are all stones giants?

In addition to the examples introduced above, not all standing stones on Orkney are viewed as (once) animate. There are associations of monoliths with the dead, not necessarily limited to post-mortem burials and their markers, but including the possibility of death occurring at – or by – the monolith. Similar to the phenomenon of the dead turning into nameless mound-dwellers, the identity of the dead buried under or near monoliths becomes forgotten over time, changing into elves (or other spirits) over succeeding generations (see Chapter 5.3). Ernest Marwick, albeit tentatively, recorded an intriguing tale associated with the Setter Stone, Eday (*Canmore* ID 3180), which might represent a remnant of an ancient memory. In this account, a laird's wife is crushed by a monolith during construction work, and the laird does not make any effort to save her life (*ibid.*; Robertson 1991: 308; Muir and Richards 2013: 298). Even though this tale is set in more recent times and associated with historical personalities, it is very likely that, like numerous others, it has much older roots (*ibid*.). Strikingly similar parallels of this tale also occur across south-east Scotland (Westwood and Kingshill 2009: 359) and England: A possible parallel is that of the man found under the Barber stone at Avebury, dated by the coins in his purse to sometime after AD1325 (Burl 1979: 39; Bourne 2011: 80). Even before the discovery of this body in 1938 by Keiller a collective memory of someone buried under one of the Avebury stones had remained. It was re-adapted locally multiple times, giving the incident a more recent setting each time: In 1712 a cobbler was said to have been killed by a falling monolith "*one Sunday*", and a 19th-century account claims a parish clerk was crushed by a tumbling monolith struck by lightning in 1728 (Burl 1979: 39-40). During the 15th century an edict was issued by the Bishop of Hereford against the idolisation of the Barber stone among other standing stones (Grinsell 1976: 14). It is likely that further oral, unrecorded predecessors existed up until a point where the actual incident was within living memory. Whether these intriguing accounts of local legend are linked specifically to the Barber Surgeon remains uncertain in light of inconclusive skeletal evidence,[8] yet this particular detail is not of key relevance: Tragic accidents during the construction and use of monoliths will undoubtedly have happened on several occasions, and it is likely that more than one of such tragedies will have survived in cultural memory in various places. Over time such sites will have become shrouded in legend, leading to supernatural beings inhabiting such spaces once the names of the dead are forgotten (Bartel 1982: 33). In accounts like these, the monoliths themselves are not represented as beings – there is no mention in these narratives of the monoliths crushing people wilfully. Natural catastrophes, and / or other people's neglect, are the cause, the stones are merely the means.

The most plausible Norse link with 'passive' standing stones would be the phenomenon of *bautastenar*, tall monoliths raised near roadsides to commemorate the dead (Krause 2010: 30; Price 2010: 125; *Hávamál* ***72***). The presence of tall individual monoliths in the landscape might have been reminiscent of these to a Norse viewpoint, although this notion can only be speculated upon. Intriguingly, the term "*bauta stones*" is used by F. W. L. Thomas to describe the monoliths of Orkney (1852: 102), yet whether this is a personal choice of word, or a term that was once more widely used on Orkney, is unsure. Recorded Norwegian encounters with stones are those in which the extrication and re-use of a stone brings bad luck over the one taking the stone. The dolmen monument at Skjeltorpdyssen, Østfold, Norway (dated to 3000BC by charcoal and wood) is an example linked to one of the few known Norwegian dolmen monuments (Østmo 1982). First investigated and excavated by Anders Lorange in 1872, Lorange came across locals warning him against extrication of material from the site. According to the locals, stone slabs from this site had been carried off by local farmers for their own re-use, which was followed by the death of these farmers within a week (Lorange in a private letter from 1872, cited in Østmo 1982: 5-6). Comparable associations with stone circles have been recorded for mainland Scotland (in Kincardineshire and Caithness, Westwood and Kingshill 2009: 294, 359-60), yet for Orkney this phenomenon is more reminiscent of narratives such as *The Trow's Curse* (Chapter 5). In Iceland, the idea of dangerous places extends from "*elf rocks*" to grassy areas and hillocks, connected with similar accounts of warnings against the use of such areas (Gunnell *forthcoming*). Such warnings not to take away parts of a monument might link back to notions from earlier times, where stones from a burial context were treated as if 'charged' with the essence of the buried dead (*e.g.* the 10th-century Glavendrup stone: Düwel 1978: 230-2), traces of which might persist even in the present day, with compulsive behaviour towards objects perceived as 'contaminated' (Chapter 3).

[8] The skeletal evidence from the Barber Surgeon remains inconclusive as to the extent to which the monolith was involved in his death (no name, British Archaeology 48, 1999).

	Representation	Examples
1	*Stones as previously **animate** or, alternatively, stones becoming mobile at selected times.*	Usually stone circles and singular standing stones (arch.: man-made sites, but smaller natural rock formations can be included); stones are claimed to have, or have once had, **a consciousness of their own**. **Ring of Brodgar:** Stones used to be creatures other than stones. **Yetnasteen / Watchstone / Quoybune:** Stones mobilise, yet no mention of changing into another creature.
2	*Stones (both animate and inanimate) **as remnants** left by / the work of / a past abode of giants (or other large entity)*	Rocks, boulders, structures, up to entire islands (arch.: natural sites, sometimes including man-made sites). The action of a supernatural entity leaving such remnants is usually in the past. Stones can **be remnants left by entity**, but **can also be the entity itself / its body part**. Often part of wider explanatory / origin myth.
3	*Inanimate, yet supernaturally charged stones (can extend to other site types)*	The stones themselves **are not alive nor explicitly known as supernatural entities (or as their work)**, yet they are supernaturally charged and can bring bad luck when approached too closely / not treated with respect / taken away from their original spot (arch.: natural and man-made sites). Rare on Orkney, where such associations are usually associated with **mounds**.

Tab. 6.1 Roles played by megaliths in various Orcadian narratives discussed here.

In the table above a variety of key characteristics are summarised. Categorising and labelling aspects of the past brings the risk of simplified, artificially imposed explanations, and dissection for dissection's sake is not an aim of this approach. Instead, I aim to highlight core views on stones that can be observed in Orkney's folklore. These highlight potential nuances in the underlying motivations for the creation of narratives – whether a tale has a direct influence on its recipients' lives, for instance though highlighting consequences of their (daily) actions (quotidian guidance), or whether a tale requires a more passive reception, being of primarily informative nature (explanatory tale or origin myth) (Tab. 6.1). All three have permeable boundaries and are not statically encased: An explanatory tale can also provide guidance, and without origin myths there would be no basis for any narrative. Furthermore, each category also accommodates tale-types that are likely to stem from different mentalities, as discussed in the previous sections. Whilst this research primarily focuses on those monuments now known to be man-made, a consideration of natural sites is crucial, as it forms part of the wider context (Omland 2010: 117). There does appear to be a tendency for man-made sites to fall primarily into categories 1 and 3 (Tab. 6.1) – perhaps simply because stone circles, and at times even single monoliths, have a distinctive 'deliberately placed' appearance, which sets them apart from most natural outcrops. A recognition of these as artificial, therefore, was already present in past minds, except that human beings were not necessarily initially credited with the ability to fulfil such tasks. As noted at the start of this chapter, megaliths still pose an interpretative challenge today, and this is echoed in what remains of past perceptions of such sites. Saxo Grammaticus asserts that the monumentality of megalithic structures is sufficient evidence for these being the creations of giants, since human hands alone would be incapable of such labour (*Saxo Grammaticus* 3.1 in Friis-Jensen 2015: 19). This early 13th-century opinion (for an Anglo-Saxon parallel *cf.* Lindahl *et al.* 2000: 122) is likely to have been echoed in preceding centuries. The representation of megaliths in Orcadian folklore concurs with these broader patterns in mostly representing them as petrified beings (Muir 1998: 25-7) and / or as the result of supernatural impact (*ibid.*: 9-10). The wide variety of different representations discussed in this chapter, however, demonstrates that Norse influence on such perceptions is challenging to define.

6.3 SUMMARY: STANDING STONES.

In this chapter I have discussed the representation of standing stones in Orkney's folklore and the challenges that arise when trying to examine potential Norse influence. In contrast to (various) mounds, standing stones offer little archaeological insight into their role during the Norse period. Datable material – mostly from underlying soil – would mostly yield the prehistoric date of their construction, and even the runic inscriptions from the Ring of Brodgar are of debatable authenticity (Barnes 2003: 4; Chapter 4). Identifying Norse impact on the representation of standing stones in Orcadian folklore is equally complex. An echo of West-Scandinavian giant lore resounds in Orkney's folklore, with giants playing a variety of different key roles in several folktales, whilst appearing in a small number of place-names (among which the Yatenes Stone). Crucially, however, the development of giant-folklore is challenging to define (Omland 2010: 169) and the various worldwide beliefs in extraordinarily large creatures (Mayor 2011 (2000): chapter 5) obscures the Norse Orcadian situation further. Much in line with this, Orkney's standing stones have a wide range of different connotations, not all of which is linked to giants (Sections 6.2.3 and 6.2.4). Yet even regarding those sites that are portrayed as petrified giants (or other large creature), there is a need to avoid placing all monolith-related lore into the same box when examining Norse influence (Sections 6.2.1 and 6.2.2).

Whilst it would be tempting to attribute all megaliths and their associated lore to the giants and dwarves of Norse mythology, Scandinavian influence can only be established with confidence in a number of cases. There are references to petrified entities in Icelandic Literature, including *Alvismál*, and *Hrimgerd* (in the Eddic poem of Helgi, son of Hjörvarðr; Andersson 2004: 179; Krause 2010:18-9; Lindow 2014: 40-1, 65) that are likely to look back on long-standing oral predecessors (Kvideland and Sehmsdorf 1989: 138; Gunnell 2014: 18), and some of these reverberate at Orcadian sites (Section 6.2.2). The overall parallels between standing stone lore and the Nordic world, however, are significantly more obscure than those discernible in mound-lore. It is likely that a great part of Orcadian megalith-lore is the result of a wide range of different influences. Narratives concerned with megaliths – especially origin myths – are an almost worldwide phenomenon, with as many differences as there are overlaps, and are likely to be the results of polygenesis (Section 6.1 and 6.2.1). Furthermore, the 'neo-pagan' movements from at least the 17th century onwards (Mitchell 2007; Green 2002: 145, 147) re-invented and re-created substantial parts of the megalithic past, whilst coinciding with the advent of print (Chapter 2). This is one of the key factors that makes it challenging to disentangle the ancient from the re-interpretation. Whilst place-names and other etymological clues represent important sources regarding the role of megaliths in Norse Orcadian society, there can be notable contrasts between a site's name and its representation in known folk lore (Section 6.2.1). As I have discussed here, what is encapsulated in Orkney's megalithic folklore is an amalgamation of narratives that have reached Orkney via various routes at varying points in time, in addition to aspects that are likely to have developed on the islands. This furthermore includes the inevitability of constantly changing associations with sites (6.2.3).

One observation made in this chapter is that of different strands of influence on megalith lore. Regardless of the possible antiquity of Orkney's 'Drinking Stones', there is no discernible link between these and the petrification folklore associated with the Ring of Brodgar. Whilst the latter can more confidently be linked with Scandinavian parallels, the same cannot be asserted for the former (Sections 6.2.1 and 6.2.2). It is important to note that even though we are dealing with similar types of monument, associated narratives and beliefs can vary. This includes the possibility of an ancient narrative remaining more resilient in certain places than in other places: whilst petrification tales might have once been attached to individual monoliths discussed here – for instance the Yatenes Stone / Yetnasteen, considering its name (Towrie 1996-2017o) – associated narratives might have changed over time, and not all previous associations would have been recorded. This ties in with the suggestion that the Stenness landscape, whilst having undergone significant physical changes (Section 6.2.3, see also Chapter 4), encapsulates a variety of potentially ancient traditions. Whilst Norse elements will have been added to this (Gibbon 2012: 89; Sanmark 2012: 26), these are likely to have added to and continued existing traditions in this area (Section 6.2.3). This research has only begun to disentangle the very ends of any strands of influence proposed here. Examining narrative undercurrents in tales (Chapter 3) has proven to be a fruitful means of identifying different attitudes towards sites. This approach has led to new suggestions for the Orcadian material, showing strong potential for further research into these and similar questions. The findings presented here have identified chronological as well as cultural differences in what might initially appear to be a largely homogenous record of tales. This is a crucial starting point for further research, whilst in itself offering new perspectives onto the Orcadian material. On a larger scale, this can add to our understanding of Orkney's role within wider networks, not only during the Norse period, but also before and after that.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

7.1 SUMMARY

"SUCH TALES PRESENT TO US PICTURES OF LONG DEPARTED AND UNLETTERED AGES; PICTURES OFTEN EXAGGERATED AND DISTORTED, ALWAYS BLURRED BY THE HANDS OF TIME, OR DISFIGURED BY THE ROUGH MEDIUM BY WHICH THEY HAVE BEEN TRANSMITTED"
(Walter Traill Dennison, cited in Muir 1995: 15)

This research set out to examine whether Orkney's folklore could aid our understanding of Norse mentalities towards the landscape where material evidence reaches its limits. Case studies were examined in their local setting as well as their connections to wider networks. This is the first study of its kind for Orkney, adding more broadly to a growing number of studies that combine folklore and archaeology internationally. Focusing on certain Orcadian sites and areas (Chapters 5 and 6) this study has highlighted regional characteristics as well as parallels in folkloric motifs and tale types from other Norse settled areas. This adds to our understanding of Norse Orkney itself, whilst also highlighting Orkney's role within the Norse diaspora further. On a local level I have examined the way in which the landscape was interwoven with daily life on Orkney, informing people's traditions and beliefs. A comprehensive study of Orcadian mound tales within their wider Nordic context led to a detection of potential time-depth, casting light onto the development of broader mound-perceptions over time. An examination of Orkney's standing stone tales led to the discovery of various potential routes of influence, along with different meanings, in a record of narratives that might first appear to be largely homogenous.

Chapter 1 introduced the study area and aspects of previous research into Norse Orkney. Extensive landscape studies, such as the *Birsay Bay Project* (e.g. Morris 1989) and the *Birsay-Skaill Landscape Archaeology Project* (Griffiths and Harrison 2011), combine a wide range of survey techniques and expert contributions on a wide range of finds. These form a crucial foundation for a wider understanding of Orkney's Norse settlement and the connections between various sites, adding to an increasingly thorough understanding of Orkney's physical landscape. Various societal aspects of Norse Orkney, however, as is demonstrated by the polarised debates regarding the Norse-Pictish relationship, cannot be illuminated by the study of physical material alone. Leonard's (2010 and 2011) combination of a GIS study of Norse and prehistoric sites with toponyms added a new angle to these studies, akin to the studies undertaken by Semple on Anglo-Saxon material (e.g 1998; 2003; 2013), or by Brink on Scandinavian toponyms within their landscape context (2008a). Folklore, however, whilst briefly considered, does not form a key component of Leonard's study.

In providing the first in-depth study of Orkney's folklore with a focus on past mentalities and archaeological context, this research complements these existing studies, whilst responding to calls for more inclusion of folklore material in Orkney's archaeology (Downes et al. 2005: 86; 125; Downes and Gibson 2013: 6, 20; see also Muir and Richards 2013: 300). The study applies methods from Folkloristics to archaeological material to detect broader perceptual patterns, adding a further layer of understanding onto these existing landscape studies.

Chapter 2 discussed previous approaches to past landscapes. A critical examination of phenomenology in archaeology formed part of this. Whilst flaws of phenomenological approaches need to be considered, the aim was to build on these previous studies and to add new suggestions for constructive ways around the problem of subjectivity. The 'vicious circle' of subjectivity was highlighted as a key flaw, primarily resulting from a viewer's personal ideas and impressions serving as almost the sole basis for landscape interpretation. In this research, the use of folklore is suggested as a means to break this circle of subjectivity and to provide more context for any scholarly interpretations of past experiences. By examining selected tales for their narrative undercurrents broader trends in perceptions were suggested (Chapters 3, 5, 6). Insights from this approach can add to a range of additional sources that serve as a means of orientation beyond the observer's perspective and the present-day landscape. The contribution of this research, however, is not to phenomenology alone. It is furthermore relevant to folklore studies, demonstrating how methods from folklore can be applied in archaeological research as a means of casting light onto past ideas.

Building on this, Chapter 3 introduced the value of folklore for archaeology. The use of folklore was presented as a key means of breaking the 'vicious circle' (Chapter 2) in that it considers the representation of sites and contains potential remnants of past mentalities towards the landscape, akin to their representation in place-names. Whilst place-names do not form a major part of this research, they are interwoven into the discussion at several points in order to reiterate their value as part of the same echo that also resounds in folklore, encapsulating ways in which the surroundings are perceived and described. They can contain significant clues that might add to our understanding of past mentalities, even if this understanding primarily consists of further – albeit refined – questions for future studies.

Chapter 4 provided an overview of key sources on Norse Orkney and their relevance to this study. A key source discussed is a large database, integrating data supplied by RCAHMS (now HES). This database formed the framework of the selected case studies, providing a contextual understanding of Orkney's sites as well as starting points for further research into potential case studies. Before the database could be used, however, there was a need to complete various missing period field entries, and add columns specific to this study. This included a determination of sites relevant to this research, and from these the most representative case studies were selected. Being a database of physical monuments, the database does not comprise all known Orcadian folklore associations, and only a small number of site entries on *Canmore* refer to them. Alongside the database, therefore, a consideration of Orcadian folklore and its Nordic parallels was pertinent, as this was the only way to differentiate between singular, unique cases and those with parallels across the wider Nordic world. Only the latter could be considered as representative case study material. Further sources included post-medieval and antiquarian reports, from which information 'between the lines' could be obtained, although these documents vary in reliability and preciseness. Most of these antiquarian sources, however, demonstrate that folklore was intrinsically linked with people's thoughts and interpretations even throughout more recent centuries. The runic evidence from Orkney, due to its largely 'informal' (Chapter 4.3) nature, and with many inscriptions from uncertain find contexts, could only marginally be linked with the tale types discussed in this research.

Essential to this research is a focus on the narrative undercurrents of tales, rather than their outward details. This is to enable insight into potential mentalities that might be encapsulated in these narratives. Importantly, this is not to say that the outer details are entirely unimportant – their examination might lead to significant results within the context of different research questions. For this research, however, they would not offer sufficient insight into the deeper strata of narratives and their underlying mentalities. An examination of the narrative undercurrents of selected tale types in Chapters 5 and 6 have led to new suggestions and questions regarding potential strands of influence, as well as a 'relative chronology' of the beliefs and ideas that might underlie such narratives. The key benefit of this approach is a raised awareness of seemingly subtle differences that might, in fact, conceal more striking differences – either with regards to chronology, place of origin, or both.

One key suggestion resulting from Chapter 5 is that the various mound-related tales on Orkney might represent different chronological stages. As discussed in Chapter 3, the individual development of a narrative in different areas can lead to very different outcomes and their preservation in print. One of these suggested stages, as highlighted in Chapter 5, indicates an intrinsic relationship between people and the land. An endeavour to maintain a respectful relationship with the spirits that dwell inside the mound to sustain life and welfare can be recognised through the actions of the protagonists. Further, probably later, variants still comprise a memory of mound dwellers, yet these are increasingly detached from the direct environment of the protagonist. Whilst bad luck still follows disrespectful behaviour, no memory remains in these narratives as to the underlying reasons for this. Whilst the majority of Orkney's mound-related beliefs appears to fall into the latter category, *The Hogboon of Hellihowe* is an intriguing potential example of the former. Whilst there is no way to assert with confidence that these represent chronological stages, it is noteworthy that the idea of maintaining a constructive dialogue with the mound and its dweller is also reflected in West-Scandinavian practices during the first half of the first millennium, as discussed by Omland (2010) and Brendalsmo and Røthe (1992). Runic inscriptions, as discussed in Chapter 4, add further to a record that indicates a determination to maintain peaceful relationships with the dead and locally known spirits (Zachrisson 1998). The notion of making mound disturbance less attractive in later Norse and medieval times (Graham-Campbell and Batey 1998: 228) might have added a layer of narratives onto the mound that deliberately exaggerates the risks of disturbing such sites.

Following on from this, I would suggest an Orcadian tie with migratory legend ML6045, although careful consideration is needed. I concur with Omland in arguing that ML6045 tales might not be as ancient as they might appear, and that they have indeed acquired a more retrospective role, namely the justification for the presence of certain objects in a Norwegian household (Omland 2010). However, I would like to add to this that it directly builds upon earlier concepts and narratives. Whilst *The Hogboon of Hellihowe* is indeed a variant of migratory legend ML7020 ("*vain attempt to Escape a Brownie*", *cf.* Marwick 1975: 208), ML6045 appears to represent an expanded version of this. The essence of the mound-dweller, perpetually kept inside the vessel obtained from the mound and causing chaos and bad luck in the home of the protagonist from there on, is in its narrative undercurrent similar – if not identical – to the mound-dweller hiding inside a vessel whilst the protagonist tries to flee (in vain). I would therefore suggest that migratory legend ML6045 builds upon earlier mound-tale-types and motifs – with the vessel obtaining more importance towards the later recorded renditions – and that the *Hogboon of Hellihowe* represents one of the earliest known Orcadian mound narratives. Within the boundaries of this research, this suggestion can only be made in its Orcadian context, including its Nordic links, yet not for the entirety of ML6045 in its wider distribution. Local adaptations and influence in other areas will have inevitably resulted in regionally specific developments for which this argument would perhaps not be valid.

In Chapter 6 I have discussed the representation of standing stones in Orkney's folklore, as well as a number of relevant exceptions and outliers. The role of megaliths in Orcadian folklore is a prominent one, and yet the roots of these tales are not easily disentangled. Unlike mounds, having a clearer Scandinavian link, standing stones are likely to represent the result of influence from various directions, as well as long-standing Orcadian memory. Importantly, whilst some of these narratives are likely to be very old, not all are as ancient as they might appear. The sun as a cause of petrification, for instance, is indeed likely to precede the notion of petrification through the action of a Christian saint (or God). Furthermore, I have argued that not all giant-representations necessarily stem from the same genesis. Whilst the notion of giants petrified by the sun has more likely Scandinavian links, there is not enough evidence to attribute drinking stone-lore to a Norse mentality. Instead, parallels with France are deemed more likely for the latter, based on various identical drinking stone folk tales across Northern France. Tentatively, the period of French influence under the *Auld Alliance* ($13^{th}$to 16^{th} century), considering its impact on language and mentality (cf. Sandnes 2010: 335) would be an intriguing possibility for a migration of this tale type.

In sum, both site types – standing stones and mounds – are imbued with connotations that can easily be regarded as homogenous: Avoidance of mounds due to fickle mound-dwellers, and giants linked to most standing stones. However, the case studies have shown that the narrative undercurrents reveal a potentially wide variety of influences. The disentanglement of strands has seen justified criticism (see especially Frog 2009a: 7-8 and 2015; Schjødt 2014: 55) and with this study it is not aimed to present Orkney's folklore as a mere "combination" or "truncation" of external notions. The nature of the research, however, called for a partial disentanglement of different influences on Orkney's narratives and traditions. The case studies in Chapters 5 and 6 demonstrate that, rather than a complete replacement of earlier notions, Orkney's folklore is likely to represent a combination of multiple influences from various points in time, and this is likely to reflect upon wider societal notions. Whilst some of these influences post-date the Norse period, others could be contemporaneous, and potentially older. The results of this research, whilst not presenting a final answer to debates regarding the relationship between Norse and co-existing groups, offer an alternative angle onto these and similar societal debates. The potential presence of pre- or non-Norse mentality is indicated particularly strongly in mound tales of the "internal strand" (Chapter 5).

7.1.1 Defining Norse Mentalities: Problems of chronology and connections

Throughout the course of this study a range of tales with potential Scandinavian influence were examined. Whilst Scandinavian parallels could be highlighted with sufficient confidence for several narratives, there were several further ones for which assumed Scandinavian links could not be confirmed. This particularly includes the 'internal' strand of mound-folklore, but also various standing stone related narratives, such as the drinking stones. Apart from Scandinavia, other parts of Britain and northern France were therefore detected as potential direct strands of influence. Some of these pre-date the Norse arrival, whilst others are likely to have been a later – medieval or even post-medieval – addition. As with various physical artefacts, tracing direct connections and points of origin is fraught with difficulty, and given the mutable and long standing nature of folklore caution is expressed in tracing direct links. The most compelling folkloric link with Scandinavia is that of the dialogue between people and mounds. Various Orcadian tales – including more recent ones linked to excavations – still portray the mound as a liminal place, with potentially dangerous effects once disturbed. The underlying stratum, however, in which the necessity of a 'positive' relationship with the mound was deemed crucial for agricultural and personal welfare, is often missing. Several variants have taken on aspects of the internal strand by adding a time and space-distortion inside the mound, which is more likely to have its earlier roots in Celtic narratives (Chapter 5), although an early influence on Nordic motifs is likely. As outlined above, *The Hogboon of Hellihowe* might represent an earlier stage of such mound narratives, showing clearer parallels with mound perceptions observed in early and pre-Norse Scandinavia, as discussed in Chapters 4 and 5. The Dwarfie Stane, whilst the associated tale cannot be attributed to any period with certainy, has a place-name that is paralleled in other parts of the Nordic world (Boberg 1966; Egeler *forthcoming*) and also here links with Norse myth are very probable.

Returning to the primary question of the relationship between the Orcadian tales and the Scandinavian world, it is accepted that these provide a valuable insight into the perception of Prehistoric monuments in Orkney during the Norse period. As mentioned above, however, intangible sources cannot be attributed to a context with the same confidence that is appropriate when dealing with tangible material. The suggestions brought forward in this research, therefore, are based upon the narrative undercurrents detectable in the narratives discussed and, to a degree, in toponyms. Such ingrained attitudes form part of the ‘cultural outlook’ people grew up and approached the ancient landscape of Orkney with. Importantly, the multiple generations of Norse Orkney would not have maintained the same attitudes, leading to several possibilities. As discussed in Chapter 3, it is likely for some attitudes to have seen more dramatic change, whilst others would have remained more consistent. This leads to a range of narratives known today, some of which might be significantly older than others. The pace and dynamics with which attitudes and concepts changed and evolved over time will have differed between areas. Similar to the preservation of tangible material, age is not always the deciding factor. This would corroborate the idea of attitudes that oscillated over time and perhaps even between areas. Maeshowe represents the clearest known example of a mound with clear evidence for later Norse disturbance, showing no signs of an on-going dialogue, nor of fear and avoidance. Perhaps the runes were a means of leaving a Norse marker in a place that was by that point already dominated by a Christian outlook. The Stenness church was built during the 12th century, coinciding with the date suggested for most of the runic inscriptions. As argued throughout this study there are a number of other factors involved which affect the perception of the landscape on a local basis, leading to locally specific *oicotypes* of attitudes and beliefs. These can be argued to represent the development of a diaspora-mentality, indicating overlap between local and newly introduced notions.

7.2 NEW QUESTIONS

As noted in Chapter 1, the aim was not to provide specific *answers* – instead, the intention was to refine the questions posed at the outset. This is particularly aimed at formulating new questions that might be useful for future studies in similar areas.

Initial research questions:

I. How can Folklore contribute to Archaeology as a means of approaching past mentalities?

II. Can we detect key Norse attitudes towards ancient sites on Orkney?

As discussed previously, Orkney’s folk narratives indicate the presence of various mentalities that imbued sites with different meanings at different points in time. A noteworthy phenomenon to illustrate this is that of discrepancy in folkloric association and toponym. Examples include the Yetnasteen Stone on Rousay, being associated with a drinking stone narrative, yet seemingly named after the Old Norse ‘giant’. A further example is that of the Dwarfie Stane, Hoy, a *Dvergasteinn-* / ‘dwarf stone’ name, yet widely known for its tale featuring three giants. This discrepancy can perhaps be best explained by various layers of associations with these sites throughout their existence (Schama 1996: 6-7), supported further by the differences between the way this site is recorded in early documents. Differences in the representation of mounds (and human behaviour towards them) add further to this, illustrated by tales *The Hogboon of Hellihowe* and *The Trow's Curse* (Chapter 5). The Stenness landscape might offer the most intriguing physical testament to this: a rich array of traditions is encapsulated in local lore, whilst a cluster of monumental sites from prehistory to the medieval (and post-medieval) period indicates gathering activity in this area over long periods of time, with changing focal points (Chapter 6). The three cases of 'Drinking Stone'-lore illustrate how associations with one site can spread to other, similar, sites in comparable landscape settings (Chapter 6). Importantly – bearing in mind the easy access to sources in the present-day – not all of these associations will have been known of at all times, leading to various ways in which such sites are understood.

All of these, however, illustrate the changing nature of meanings, some of which are likely to have lasted longer than others. Importantly, some of these meanings have been maintained for posterity simply because they survived into print, whilst preceding meanings of equally intrinsic nature have become forgotten. As discussed in Chapters 4, 5 and 6, associations of a legend with an existing place can be fickle: even if a medieval record claims to be linked to a certain place, there might be a depth of preceding oral traditions that originated elsewhere. In research of this kind there is therefore little benefit in trying to find a geographical wellspring for the tale types and motifs themselves. Instead, there is value in studying the motivations and beliefs these are likely to stem from, and the links this creates between past and present.

This research has suggested a possible chronology of such perceptions – in analogy with examples from the wider Nordic (and, to a lesser extent, Germanic and Celtic) world, although more research would be needed to consider this further. Inevitably, a 'chronology' compiled this way suffers flaws akin to various means of relative dating in archaeology. This, however, is inevitable for intangible material, as the world of perceptions and ideas cannot be studied in the same way as can physical evidence. Suggesting a (local) 'relative chronology', under consideration of wider networks as well as local developments, was therefore deemed the most viable way. As discussed in Chapters 3, 5 and 6, elements of similarity can be detected at a broader scale, having developed in regionally specific ways, reflecting local ideas and needs. This study has shown that the folklore of Orkney reflects close ties with the wider Norse diaspora, whilst remaining an autarkic component of these wider networks.

This study has cast light onto overall motivations, such as the changing nature of concepts and beliefs. On a larger scale, these include the varying notions of mound perceptions (Chapter 5), as well as perceptions of the wider landscape (Chapter 6). In addition to a study of Norse mentality, this research has also highlighted potential influence from elsewhere. This includes potential smaller-scale movements of ideas, such as the curious 'Drinking Stone'-outliers discussed in Chapter 6. This idea, whilst not directly linked to the Norse period, is nonetheless of importance, as it allows for a more nuanced view of Orkney's folklore: Not all standing stones are linked to the giants of Norse myth. The suggested continental links illustrate the need to approach seemingly similar material more critically, whilst adding further to a growing record of evidence for Orkney's wider networks, both on a material and on an intangible level.

Such in-depth analysis of Orkney's tales in relation to the physical landscape of the islands has not yet been undertaken, and this study offers new insights into areas of folklore as well as archaeology. As demonstrated in Chapter 6, changes in the Stenness landscape are reflected in the traditions of this area. Archaeological evidence for assembly in this area correlates with recorded traditions from Stenness over the past centuries. A further point that has become apparent in this research is that folklore is not only of aid for Archaeology, but also *vice versa*. By approaching folktales from an archaeological point of view, new suggestions were made that might be of benefit to scholars of folkloristics. This includes the definition of different 'contexts', each containing core narrative elements from which traces of a particular mentality can be extracted – indicative of influence from a particular time or place (Chapters 5.2 and 6.1); or suggestions regarding the date of narrative elements through the detection of *termini ante* and / or *post quem*. Such an approach to folklore has led to the proposal of a 'relative chronology' by which particular narratives might have reached (as well as originated on) the Orkneys (Chapters 5 and 6), but also the suggestion that the *Hogboon of Hellihowe* (Chapter 5.3.2) has potentially early links with West-Scandinavian tales. Such core narrative elements can be best detected when focusing solely on the narrative undercurrents.

As stated above, these insights have led to a refinement of the research questions set out at the start of this thesis. Norse Orcadian mentality cannot be summarised in one overarching narrative. Norse settlement covered several centuries and comprised a wide variety of social groups. The presence of 'hybrid' material culture (Leonard 2011; Jesch 2015: 200) evidences that intangible ideas, too, would have constantly been in exchange, leading to locally specific variants. Such perceptions inevitably changed over time, developing along with prevailing ideologies. The narratives discernible in folk tales, together with the narrative clues encapsulated in various place-names, seem to solidify this. As discussed in Chapter 5, a fear of the fickle mound-dweller was not the only way in which such sites were perceived, and the differences between various tale-types might represent different stages of mound-perception in the past. Chapter 6 discusses how Orkney's standing stones, whilst seemingly similar, are likely to have been imbued with a wide variety of very different meanings. Especially regarding megalith perceptions, Scandinavian influence is more challenging to define with confidence. 'Giant'-associations, too, are likely to have originated in various places, rather than being linked, although their associated narratives might appear similar.

The Norse period is, of course, merely a section of a much longer timeframe of continuous relationships between people and landscapes. I hope to have demonstrated that such relationships – comprising various investments of meaning into places and sites - are an intrinsic part of coping mechanisms and survival. One example includes the tale of *Dwarfie Stane*, where every plot point serves as an explanation of the monument, with no further narrative elements added. *The Hogboon of Hellihowe* is a further example, providing guidance regarding a constructive dialogue with the farm mound. Tales like *The Trow's Curse* primarily warn against mound-breaking. However, whilst such relationships are timeless, the outer details vary between areas and across time, taking on the characteristics of their immediate societal environment. This is potentially reflected in the different behaviour towards the mound in the latter two examples. During the Norse period alone attitudes towards the landscape are likely to have changed at various points, as discussed in Chapter 5.1.1, as a result of which there is no overarching answer for attitudes towards ancient sites. Given that the remaining evidence for Norse presence on Orkney is inevitably fragmented even a combination of all available sources will still result in various different 'snapshots', each representing a different point in time, and which are not necessarily directly linked. Importantly, however, a further key contribution archaeology can make to the field of Folkloristics entails the detection of strands of mentality, which might shed light onto potential cultural influences over time. These include not only the two key strands of mound perceptions, which are potentially indicative of Scandinavian as well as Gaelic beliefs (Chapter 6.1), but also the various giant-related narratives, and the important insight that these should not too hastily be attributed to Scandinavian influence only (Chapter 6.2.1 and 6.2.2).

Having set out with two key research questions (Chapter 1) it seems only appropriate to end with more questions. Having discussed Orkney in its wider context, some of these address the nature of Orkney-specific attitudes:

Questions arising from mound case studies:

Can we detect changes in predominant attitudes towards ancient sites throughout the Norse period, and how these might relate to the wider Scandinavian world? Did the suggested early 'phase' of dialogue between mound(-dweller) and people (outlined in Chapter 5.1.1) last longer on Orkney than it did in West Scandinavia, as a reaction to other beliefs present on Orkney? Or was it of shorter duration, for similar reasons? Was there a further phase of overlap between converted Norse and those, who adhered to the 'pagan' customs of their Scandinavian ancestors (as has been suggested for the Scar burial)? How did this relate to various native Orcadian groups, who themselves were in the process of conversion to Christianity, with varying adherence to their own ancient traditions (Chapters 2 and 6)? Is the presence of not only 'external', but also 'internal' mound-perceptions in tales indicative of different, pre-Norse, mound veneration, or is this a likely later a0ddition?

Questions arising from standing stone case studies:

Why is Norse influence on standing stone-perceptions so challenging to detect, compared to mound-perceptions? Were pre-Norse attitudes towards megaliths sufficiently intrinsic to the people of Orkney that any added Norse beliefs never fully took root (perhaps linked to the topographical differences highlighted in Chapter 1)? Or did the post-medieval 'neo pagan' ideas concerning standing stones 'overwrite' any Norse attitudes towards such sites (further aided by the advent and increase of print)?

7.3 VALUE FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This research has added to a growing number of studies that highlight the value of folklore as a means of approaching past mentalities, and which call for a greater focus on folklore in Orkney's archaeology (Downes *et al.* 2005: 86, 125; Downes and Gibson 2013: 6, 20). It has attempted to offer a starting point, with concluding questions that can be explored further in the Orcadian context.

A key contribution is the examination of various aspects of Orkney's folklore within the Orcadian landscape, combined with other intangible, as well as tangible, sources. Whilst the folklore, archaeology and toponyms of Orkney have seen in-depth studies individually, this research has brought these together into one discussion, providing several avenues for future research:

1) The study has trialled ways to examine potential Norse influence on Orcadian narratives. This particularly addresses questions regarding the roles of Orkney's monuments and their representation in folklore, and how this has both impacted on, as well as informed, landscape perceptions over time. As outlined in Chapter 5, a dissection of 'strands' of influence is not always endorsed. Within the particular aim of detecting Norse influence on Orkney's tales, however, a disentangling of the ends of such strands was necessary. This provides a starting point for future studies, not only within a Norse context, but also for scholars with an interest in other potential areas of influence highlighted in Chapters 5 and 6. The study of folklore in combination with archaeological and historical evidence can add a significant layer of understanding to our understanding not only of Orkney's past, but also of its role as a part of the Norse diaspora.

2) A further area of research could consider attitudes towards environmental creatures (or spirits), including natural features. The focus of this research has been on the representation of standing stones and mounds in tales, and there are various folkloric elements that have not been addressed. These include several 'supernatural' creatures, but also the wider scope of origin myths, that show clear links with West-Scandinavia and Iceland, whilst at the same time being adapted to the Orcadian landscape and mentality. The methodology adopted here might usefully be extended to the study of these folkloric elements that have not been discussed.

3) Future research could also take any of the case studies forward as individual projects. One aspect that would benefit from further work would be a greater focus on the 'internal strand': tales in which mounds are perceived from the inside rather than externally. This would have the benefit of not only examining potential ancient Orcadian traces (or links with wider Gaelic, or even Celtic, networks); it would also enable an evaluation of whether – or to what extent – these two strands can realistically be separated. Studies could, for instance, further examine potential questions of chronology in order to determine how much Gaelic influence

was already present during Norse times. Such a study would require a closer examination of Gaelic (if not Celtic) folkloric material, for which this study can provide a methodological model. Such insights could add substantially to our understanding of the Norse-Pictish relationship, where historical and archaeological material reaches its limits.

4) Within a more international approach, there would be value in further examining the potential ‘phases’ of mound perception, and how these chronologically relate between Norse Orkney and other Norse settled areas, especially West Scandinavia and Iceland. An interesting question to address is to what extent Norse Orcadian and West Scandinavian attitudes differed due to independent development and respective social context. Would differences in the ideological and societal framework of Orkney have led to a delay – or an acceleration – of particular attitudes towards mounds, compared to the West Scandinavian evidence?

5) With regards to landscape perceptions as a whole, the value of more collaboration with (or expert contributions from) the fields of neuroscience and psychology could prove fruitful (as demonstrated by Alpert 2008; Gosden 2008). This issue has been briefly raised in Chapter 2, along with the acknowledgment that this lies far outside the parameters of this study. Including more studies on the physicality of perception might present a beneficial means of further piercing the ‘vicious circle’, whilst providing an additional contextual layer for critical approaches to the landscape and past attitudes.

6) Overall, this approach can be applied more widely within archaeology and history. This can comprise other Norse colonies, but can also extend more broadly to other periods and societies. This study has demonstrated that research into the folklore of Orkney is not limited to the earliest written recordings of the tales. To obtain insight into potentially earlier traces of past thoughts, Orkney was studied within the context of a wider network. Ideas and traditions are constantly in exchange, and a consideration of Orkney’s direct network was essential for an understanding of Orkney on a local scale, and its role within this network.

Beyond that, all the sources employed for this research have in common that, regardless of their key purpose, they all refer to folklore, in one way or another. Be it a small number of references to associated lore in an otherwise monument-related database; a strong presence of lore and tradition in documents from times where folklore was generally discouraged; or the wide occurrence of narrative parallels across the Norse-settled world. Folklore, and the underlying beliefs it represents, forms a crucial and timeless part of humanity. This research adds to a growing number of studies that recognise the potential of folklore as an essential voice for scholarly debates, and as a further perspective onto the lives of past people.

"THAT IS A CIST!"

Plate 4 *"That is a Cist!"* Based on, and (all text in citation marks) citing Lady Eliza D'Oyley Burroughs' 1898 report on the discovery of Taversoe Tuick, published by Reynolds (1985).
See Chapter 8 for full citations and background information.
Drawn by the author.

Plate 4 *"That is a cist!"* (continued).

Thirty-seven years after Farrer received the warning concerning the '*Hogboy*' of Maeshowe (Plate 1, Prologue) the construction of a summer seat on the island of Rousay led to the unexpected discovery of a prehistoric tomb (Plate 4) – now known as Taversoe Tuick. News of this discovery had not only spread across Rousay "*within one hour*", but had also become exaggerated and linked to supernatural causes (Burroughs cited in Reynolds 1985: 119). Evidently, local lore was still in the forefront of people's thoughts, and played a key role in the way monuments were perceived. Both Farrer and Burroughs lived in a time of gradual overlap – they experienced the opening of a mound as something that evoked scholarly interest as well as local lore. Whilst these are seemingly contrasting responses, both emerge from the need and the will to cope with the unknown, and to explain the unusual. Both writers favoured a scholarly approach to their discoveries, yet nothing in their writing would indicate a pejorative view on the beliefs of the locals.

Importantly, however, by the 19th century the *reasons why* the spirits from the mound were to be feared, were no longer fully remembered. A distant memory of potential misfortune remained – largely unquestioned, perhaps, because of its prevalence in local mentality – and had become adapted to the views and needs of the time. It appears as if the earliest written documentations of such beliefs, however recent, have managed to capture a fading echo of what once were daily concerns. Whichever shape our associations with ancient sites take, they form an intrinsic part of human nature.

CHAPTER 8: POSTSCRIPTUM

8.1 WHY ILLUSTRATIONS?

Throughout this thesis I have used illustrations as a means of visualising selected encounters with mounds (Prologue; Chapters 3, 5, 7). Drawn images can be an effective way to reach a wider audience (Pope 2011: 35), and offer creative ways of expressing theories and facts. Elsewhere I have discussed the need to qualify the use of creative illustrations (Morgan and Scholma-Mason *forthcoming*), especially since criticism has arisen concerning scholarly discussions that are accompanied by jovial material with little relevance to the content (*e.g.* Bissette 2014). There is great potential for the use of creative illustrations in research when used appropriately, and, importantly, where a balance between entertainment and fact is kept. Illustrations have the benefit of quickly conveying key information that would otherwise need lengthy written descriptions and explanations, whilst at the same time serving as a "*visual abstract*" to promote research (Morgan and Scholma-Mason *forthcoming*). Above all, however, illustrations can bring across key points, often regardless of language or ability to read, as the expressions in illustrations can reveal much about their core message.

8.1.1 Scholarly context

Effective examples of a well-kept balance between fact and entertainment include illustrations by the late Anne Brundle (Fig. 8.3). These are occasionally published by Patricia Long on her *About Orkney* Facebook page (see also Ashby 2014). Brundle's illustrations depict scenes from Orkney, covering a broad timespan from the Mesolithic to the Medieval period, and demonstrate an effective combination of humour and thorough research. This makes the topics she portrays memorable, not only for those familiar with the subject.

Haggarty and Brockbank's graphic novel *Mezolith* (2010) is an evocative interpretation of Mesolithic life and beliefs, referencing existing finds, including a burial reminiscent of that from Bøgebakken, Vedbæk, incorporating swan-wings (Jensen 2013: 113). Whilst inevitably taking artistic license for various accounts, *Mezolith* portrays an impressive and emotive rendition of early prehistoric beliefs (8.1), striking a balance between the relatable and the enigmatic (see also Pope 2011: 34-6). In contrast to various other graphic illustrations, *Mezolith* is not humorous. Instead, the novel conveys a dark and enigmatic atmosphere with very little dialogue. It portrays key emotions, especially fear and wonder, which are universally comprehensible, regardless of language or ability to read.

Claus Deleuran's volumes of *Danmarks Historie for Folket* (1988-1995; new editions 2009-2010) span the creation of the earth up until the later medieval period and covers a much wider area than Denmark alone, although key focus is indeed on Denmark. Deleuran's graphic history books contain detailed artefact-illustrations along with engaging, and at times provocative, visualisations of historical and scientific accounts. These are evidently meticulously researched and, due to a strong sense of humour and wit, are both educational as well as thought-provoking (Fig. 8.2).

Fig. 8.1 Mesolithic hunting scene **(**Haggarty and Brockbank 2011: 17)

Fig. 8.2 "*Our first Art*" (Deleuran 2009 (1988): 42)

Fig. 8.3 A Mesolithic view on agriculture **(**drawn by Anne Brundle, with permission).

A further noteworthy combination of scholarly research and art is Edmonds' and Ferraby's *Stonework* (2013). This combination of visual art, poetry, onomatopoeia and narrative captures an emotive portrayal of stone working and landscape.

Whilst a very brief review, these examples highlight a selection of scholars, who have used creative illustrations to visualise aspects of their research and their interests. As shown by these three examples, factual knowledge can be conveyed through captivating images (*e.g.* Haggarty and Brockbank, Fig. 8.1), thought-provoking displays (*e.g.* Deleuran, Fig. 8.2), or a combination of fact and humour (*e.g.* Brundle, Fig. 8.3), all of which, in their own ways, create a lasting impression. This list of artists is not exhaustive, and, importantly, it is by no means intended to equate my own drawings with these works. The key aim of this review is to emphasise the value of creativity in research, and to add to an increasing record of scholarly arguments in its favour.

8.1.1 Drawing historical events and personalities

All the drawn narratives in this thesis are based on existing records of the events they portray. In all illustrations, text in citation marks are verbatim citations (see Tab. 8.1 for a full list of citations). Whilst I endeavoured to stay as much within the parameters of known facts as possible, a degree of speculation was inevitable. Whilst no key plot-bearing facts were invented (apart from Plate 2, as discussed below), artistic license had to be taken for the portrayal of most characters, their clothing and other surrounding details. An exception is "*That is a Cist!*" (Chapter 7), since various photographs of Lady Burroughs and her husband exist in the public domain. In contrast, published photographs of James Farrer are sparse – if at all available – and the closest I got to a photo of him is the large group-photo at Chedworth Roman Villa (Anon. 2014). As the excavation leader, he is likely to be one of the gentlemen in the front of the photograph, but this is by no means certain.

Drawing historical events and personalities has been beneficial to the overall research. This firstly required a distilling of concepts and narratives into a limited number of sketches, focusing on key elements only. Secondly, since the illustrations are based on source material artistic licence was possible, yet within clear limits. These two conditions resulted in a constant consideration and re-thinking of the most crucial aspects and how to represent them appropriately – a method that proved very useful in determining the core elements of narratives, as discussed and applied in Chapters 5 and 6. A further, unexpected, benefit of the illustrations was an engagement with the antiquarian reports and their writers on a level that differed from text-based research. When drawing a person, the decision needs to be made about the way they are represented; how any photographic (or other) evidence can feed into this; whether they are portrayed as amiable or not, and how their actions and decisions are depicted. Furthermore, any cited text or evidence-based action woven into the narrative influences the character's body language and their response to the portrayed situations. For example, there would have been enough reason to portray Farrer in a less sympathetic way, as he is widely reputed to have been haphazard in his methods and imprecise in his recording (*e.g.* Childe 1931: 4 Ashmore 2003: 37; Thomas 2016: 29). Instead, the decision was taken to portray him as somewhat overwhelmed with the unexpected discovery of the runes, leading to a neglect of documentation of other material. After all, the effort with which the runes were recorded, in addition to the consultation of a number of runic experts, deserves credit. Lady Burroughs, in contrast, is portrayed as attentive and much involved in the discovery of Taversoe Tuick. This is based on the observant and enthusiastic nature of her writing. Furthermore, she was the one who enquired about "*a bit of* (…) *rough circular building*" (cited in Reynolds 1985: 119) that had caught her attention, and which led to the discovery of the now well-known site.

Crucially, the historical personalities are not the focus of these illustrations – instead, focus is on the experiences people have (and have had) with Orkney's landscape and its richness of folkloric associations. There is an obvious 'modern' bias of these portrayals, as most of them are set during or after the 19th century, yet this is simply due to the fact that these are the accounts that have survived for posterity by being printed and – crucially – distributed and published. Others are still in living memory (1970's Howe or 1997's Crantit, for example). For similar encounters, earlier than these, folk tales might well be the best place to look.

8.2 A BRIEF NOTE ON THE DRAWN ILLUSTRATIONS

Plate 1 *Beware the Hogboy…* (Prologue)
This illustration is based upon James Farrer's report of Maeshowe, privately published in 1862 and summarising his fieldwork at Maeshowe during summer 1861. Text in citation marks denote direct citations from Farrer's report. Many thanks are owed to Dr. Tom Rendall, who provided the Orcadian dialect for the locals.

Fig. 8.4 A warning about the perils of excavating Maeshowe.

The conversation with the local Orcadian in the pub (Fig. 8.4) is based more freely on Farrer's footnote of local warnings concerning the "*Hogboy*", allegedly "*possessing great strength*" (Farrer 1862: 12, first footnote). He makes no mention of where he received this information, nor by whom. Artistic license was taken for the appearance of everyone featuring in this comic, including Farrer himself. The flamboyant red-haired companion is entirely fictional, as is the gentleman discovering the runes (although both take the place of several personalities Farrer mentions in his report, and the conversations he has are based upon those he describes). This decision was made to not overcomplicate the underlying narrative by introducing too many characters for such a short scene, and instead get the core message – introducing the reader to the impact of mound beliefs even in more recent times - across more concisely.

In the final two panels, I have shown the discovery of inscription Nr.1 (Farrer I), interpreted as "*þat er víkingr… þá kom undir hér til" /* "That is a Viking / *Vikingr* … then came underneath to this place" (Barnes 1994: 64) (Fig. 8.5). Farrer does not specify which of Maeshowe's carvings were discovered first, yet his description of them being "*high up on the walls of the building*" (Farrer 1862: 14) would make Nr.1 a likely candidate. The excavators opened the mound from the top (*ibid*.: 13), and the first of the inscriptions was discovered before the filling of the chamber was fully removed (*ibid.* 14).

Fig. 8.5 Inscription Nr.1, Maeshowe

Plate 2 ***Go home*** (Chapter 3)

Fig. 8.6 Excerpt from *Go Home!*

This illustration is set sometime before 1928 and is based on Marwick's report of Howe from that year. Apart from "*Many years ago*" and "*the tenant of the time*" (1928: 122) it is not possible to provide a more precise date. Out of all illustrations in this thesis this is the most fictitious one, being based on the single quote "*for some reason or other the excavation was discontinued*" (*ibid.*). No further explanation was given for the termination of this initial excavation, and the decision was made to fill the gap with an encounter akin to the warning expressed by the mound-dweller in *The Trow's Curse* (Chapter 5). Due to the lack of further information, no further plot points were added, leaving this one the shortest of the illustrations. The *Hávamál*-citation (stanza 21, Clarke 1923: 49) was deemed suitable due to its warning to 'leave the grass' and 'go home', in this case directed against the farmer disturbing the mound on his own land. The stanza in its entirety contains the advice to know the measure of one's own appetite (*ibid.*), here interpreted as the 'appetite' of curiosity. There are various conceivable reasons for the discontinuation of this initial excavation – fear of possible mound dwellers is one of them.

Plate 3 ***Maeshowe – What we know so far…*** (Chapter 5)

This plate portrays a selection of scenes throughout the history of Maeshowe. These are based upon the few available facts, such as the construction during the Neolithic, the carving of various runes, and their publication in 1862. The fragmented nature of each 'shard' is to avoid too much speculation in the representation of each of these scenes. The pictures are incomplete, as is the available data. For instance, the end of the date for Jo Ben.'s *Descriptio*-entry is deliberately cut off due to the uncertainties regarding its accuracy, as discussed in Chapter 4. Other than a foggy view on Stenness nothing is shown, simply because this entry cannot even be linked to Maeshowe with certainty, yet still renders an intriguing view on enigmatic encounters featuring a 'small hill' in Stenness (Chapter 4). Farrer is portrayed sometime shortly after the events presented in Plate 1 (Prologue; *cf.* above), captivated by the discovery of the runes, and therefore overlooking any other findings brought to his attention. The (fictional) young excavator has now given up on trying to notify Farrer of the small finds he and the other workers have come across. Whether things happened that way is speculative, as no finds apart from the bones (Petrie cited in Davidson and Henshall 1989) were ever mentioned.

Fig. 8.7 New discoveries. Continued from Plate 1.

The void in the centre of this page represents the absence of data from the inner chamber that would have otherwise likely aided in tying (some of) the clues surrounding this site together. Those aspects we do know about are disconnected pieces. The text in the middle is simply that of the next page in the thesis. This lack of data is, of course, true for countless archaeological sites. Maeshowe, however, portrays this void specifically well as it clashes with the site's international prominence and the abundance of confidently asserted theories concerning its past.

Further shards show a day during the construction of the chambers during the Neolithic, as well as Gordon Childe's 1954 trench in the East side of the mound. With regards to the carving of the runes, only the carving of inscription Nr.1 is shown (Fig. 8.8). The various runes mention names, places, actions and statements, yet despite their number and eloquence, they remain intriguingly silent about the identity or number of people involved,

Fig. 8.8 Maeshowe inscription Nr.1: The hand of the unknown carver.

and their motivations are also long forgotten. I wanted to avoid relying too much on the suggested links with the *Orkneyinga Saga* and, after much elimination, the only fact I could represent with confidence was *that* the runes were carved (the scene taking place at night was an artistic choice). The carving of inscription Nr.1 was chosen to link this illustration back to the opening illustration in the Prologue, which depicts their discovery.

Plate 4: "That is a Cist!" (Chapter 7)

Fig. 8.9 The discovery of the cists at Taversoe Tuick.

These two illustrated pages are based upon Lady Eliza D'Oyley Burrough's journal describing the discovery of Taversoe Tuick, Rousay, written in May 1898 and published in the *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* (Reynolds 1985).

Lady Burroughs' documentation of the finds is thorough – in sketches as well as in written description – and her interest in the discoveries was evidently serious. She notes useful observations regarding parts of the site and their purpose, and these were verified by archaeological investigations (Grant 1939: 159-60). Her husband, Lt-General Sir Frederick William Traill-Burroughs, is notorious for his much-troubled relationship with the Rousay crofters (Thomson 1981: esp. chapters 11-14). This brief narrative, however, has no space for focus on, or judgement of, these matters. Of primary interest is the dialogue between Lady Burroughs and one of the workers (whose appearance in the illustrations is entirely fictional) and the discovery of the cist (Fig. 8.9), as described by her in her report. The precise nature of her descriptions offered the chance of a more detailed (albeit abridged) illustration. Even the sudden thunderclap was described by her. The journal furthermore includes photographs upon which her appearance could be loosely based (1985: 116, 123), and her sketches of the site (*ibid.*: 117) provided a basis for the shape of the mound in the illustration, as well as various surrounding details (such as the hedgerow with gate at the site). The view in the background is my own photograph of the view over Eynhallow Sound from Taiverso Tuick, with more dramatic weather added, as described by Burroughs.

Above all, her documentation encapsulates a further encounter with a mound that resulted in vivid associations with the remnants of long passed-down memories and beliefs concerning such sites (*e.g.* the "*Picts whispering*" from underneath the cairn, Reynolds 1985: 119; but also the exaggeration of the story by islanders within one day, *ibid.*). Therefore, a further key element from her report I wished to capture in this illustration is the quick spread and embellishment of stories. In this case, a divine intervention had become attributed to the discovery of the site even within the same day (*ibid.*). This reflects narrative phenomena discussed in Chapter 3, and ties in with various other accounts of mound excavations that become a key topic of local debate. What all of them have in common is a tendency to prefer otherworldly explanations over the scientific or technical.

8.2.1 Table of citations

The illustrated narratives outlined above are based on a variety of reports and images, using verbatim citations at several points. Whilst several lines (without citation marks) are fictional, the following text passages are not my own. Spelling errors or abbreviations made by the respective authors were not corrected.

BEWARE THE HOGBOY (Prologue)	
Citation	***Source***
"Early in the month of July 1861 I was enabled to put in execution a scheme long contemplated."	Farrer, J. 1862, *Notice of runic inscriptions discovered during recent excavations in the Orkneys*, Printed for private circulation, 11
"commence operations" (…) "at once"	*Ibid.*
"The opinion that Maes-Howe was a sepulchral chamber appeared to be confirmed by local traditions."	*Ibid.* 12, first footnote.
"Hogboy"	*Ibid.*
"On Monday the 8th of July, a number of men proceeded with the work."	*Ibid.*, 13
"After a few days' labour the whole of the rubbish filling the chamber was removed…"	*Ibid.*, 14
"But long ere this was accomplished" (…) "keen eye" (…) "discovered the first of the runic inscriptions."	*Ibid.*

GO HOME! (Chapter 3)	
"This hillock was opened by the tenant of the time and a considerable number of relics was discovered."	Marwick, J. G. 1928, 'Notes on some relics from Orkney exhibited before the Society', in *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* ***62***, 121
"For some reason or other the excavation was discontinued and it remains to this day one of the unexplored mounds in this district which is so rich in objects of antiquarian interest."	*Ibid.*
"*Hjarðir þat vito, nær þær heim skolo,* *og ganga þá af grasi.*" Translation: "Cattle know when it is time to go home and then they leave their pasture." First line from *Hávamál*, 21, translated by D. E. M. Clarke.	Clarke, D. E. M. 1923 (ed.) *The Hávamál*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
MAESHOWE – WHAT WE KNOW SO FAR… (Chapter 5)	
"Stenhouse alia parochia est, ubi lacus magnus in circuitu 24 milliatia: Illic in monticulo prope lacum in sepulchre inventa sunt ossa unius viri, quæ quidem conjuncta fuere, et in longitudine 14 pedibus (…)" Translation: Stenhouse (Stenness) is another parish, wherein a large lake of 24-thousand paces in circuit: There, in a small hill near the lake, in a grave, the bones of one man are discovered, which are indeed linked together, and 14 feet ("*pedibus*") in length.	Jo. Ben cited in Barry, G. 1808, *History of the Orkney Islands. Including a view of their manners and customs of their ancient and modern inhabitants; their monuments of antiquity; their natural history, or mineral, botanical, and animal productions &c*, 2nd edition, with corrections and additions by the Rev. James Headrick, London, 445.

“THAT IS A CIST!” (Chapter 7)	
“There had been no word of anything but the ordinary loose stones being turned up.”	Lady Eliza Burroughs, private journal entry published in Reynolds, D. M., 1985, ‘How we found a tumulus; a story of the Orkney islands - The Journal of Lady Burroughs', *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries Scotland* ***115***, 119.
“You must make it larger!”	*Ibid.*
“I dinna know, Ma’m - we’ve come upon it just this minute.”	*Ibid.*
“That is a Cist!”	*Ibid.*
“An Angel whispered to our Lady that she was to open the Mound; there was a clap of thunder; one workman was picked up 50 yards from the spot, the other fainted, the Laird and the Lady turned pale.”	*Ibid.*
“Within an hour the news had spread round the island like lightning.”	*Ibid.*

Tab. 8.1 Table of citations used in the illustration.

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APPENDIX 1

Overview of Migratory Legends and motifs referred to in this thesis.

The variety of folkloric creatures are accepted as interchangeable without consequence for the narrative undercurrent (see Dundes 1997: 197; discussed in Chapter 3).

Motif	**Explanation**	**Source**	**Thesis Chapter**
A133.11	Giant God drinks lakes dry	Boberg 1966: 22	6
A974	Rocks from transformation of people to stone	Boberg 1966: 33	6
A928	Giant drinks up ocean	Boberg 1966: 32	6
E235.6	Ghost returns to punish disturber of grave	Marwick 1975: 210	5
E431.10	Corpse buried under stone so that sun will not shine on him again	Boberg 1966: 97	4
F352	Theft of cup (drinking horn) from Fairies	Christiansen 1968: 271	5
F366	Fairies harm Cattle	Marwick 1975: 210	5
F451	Dwarf	Boberg 1966: 108	3, 4, 6
F451.2.8	Voice of dwarfs (“*dvergmál*”, echo)	Boberg 1966: 109	4
F451.3.2.1	Dwarfs turn to stone at sunrise	Boberg 1966: 109	6
F451.4.1.12	Dwarves living in stones	Boberg 1966: 110	4, 5
F531.6.12.2	Sunlight turns giant or troll to stone	Boberg 1966: 121	6
F482	Brownie (hogboy, hogboon)	Marwick 1975: 211	5
F482.3.1.1	Farmer moves house to evade brownie, brownie ‘flits’ too	*Ibid.*	5
F482.5.4	Brownie does farm and household work	*Ibid.*	5

F482.5.5	Malicious/ troublesome brownie	*Ibid.*; Kvideland and Sehmsdorf 2010: 246	5
F531	Giant	Boberg 1966: 114	6
Migratory Legend			
ML 6045	Drinking Cup stolen from the Fairies	Christiansen 1968: 271	5
ML 7010	Revenge for being teased	*Ibid.*	5
ML 7020	Vain attempt to escape a brownie / nisse	Marwick 1975: 208; Kvideland and Sehmsdorf 2010: 425	5