

Another odyssey in Orkney

Sally Cunis (October 2002)

I say another one, because Angie Lake has done a similar trip, and wrote an article for the magazine in which she described her travellings and extensive dowsing. Some of my dowsing findings correlated with hers, and some of them didn't!

I travelled up in Persephone, my new (to me) camper-van, staying overnight en-route in various interesting and scenic spots. I visited (and dowsed) the temple devoted to Mithras on Hadrian's Wall, revisited the Hill o' Many Stanes, where the extraordinary fan-shaped arrangement of stones seemed to be a continuous circuit of energy, plus looking at Dunkeld Cathedral and Cartmel Priory near Lake Windemere. I caught the ferry which regularly ploughs its way across the North Sea from Gill's Bay, near John o' Groats, to St. Margaret's Hope, on Mainland Orkney. My aim was to see the Ring of Brodgar, the standing stones of Stenness, Maes Howe, and Skara Brae.

The scenery on Orkney is wild, windswept, and unspoilt. Purple heather, wide skies and silver seas were home to vast numbers of sea birds - fulmars, skuas, gulls, and the puffins who unfortunately disappeared back to sea a week or two before I arrived. I saw dolphins one morning cavorting in the bay near Stromness, and found a colony of seals who sounded as though they were singing - magical!

The Ring of Brodgar is indeed beautiful, a vast circle of impressive stones, with dowsing links to other sites in the area, including the Comet stone, an "outrider" stone which was extremely active from a dowsing point of view. A local guide told me that it was so called because the Halle-Bop comet could be seen over the top of the stone from the centre of the circle every two (or was it three?) thousand years. Mmm, quite a thought.

Maes Howe is an extraordinary chambered "tomb", a fabulous construction of corbelled stones built around 2700 BC. Viking raiders have left graffiti on some of the uprights, the largest collections of runic writing so far found in the world. Standing quietly inside reminded me of once standing inside the Great Pyramid of Giza, the same sense of timelessness pervaded. The Stone Age village of Skara Brae, situated at one end of Skailles Bay, was another wonder, as was the Barnhouse settlement, near the Ring of Brodgar. I could imagine living in either place, within sight and sound of the sea and the Old Man of Hoy across the water, and decided that the ancient people knew a thing or two about location, location!

If you can imagine a circular tower with steps climbing up within its walls, then try to imagine this: a "tower" which goes down into the ground, stone steps leading down to a small circular area at the bottom. This was Mine Howe, and a very strange place it was. I "asked" several questions with my pendulum as to its purpose, and the only "yes" I received was to my asking whether this affected the Earth energies. Well, I suppose everything affects earth energies, when you think about it.

Meeting up with my brother and his family (not pre-arranged) within twenty minutes of arriving on Orkney was a wonderful bonus to my holiday. We camped side by side, shared huge suppers and vast quantities of tea and Orkney whisky, and took another ferry over to Westray for the beaches and the surf. Local people are a delight, friendly

and generous. Nobody seemed to mind that we camped near a beach; as there are only two camp sites on Orkney and they do get a bit busy in August, I suppose that could be the reason.

There is a strength about the Orkney people, and I think it is much to do with the landscape and the not very easy way of life. There is a strong Nordic influence, not surprising in view of their ancient Viking “visitors”, and they and the Orkney Islands in general have a very different feel to the rest of Scotland. I can’t wait to go back, and perhaps another time to spend longer in these magical islands. I came away feeling enriched and strengthened by my time there, and the memories of the stones, the scenery and the wildlife, will stay with me for a long time to come.