

SHETLAND

These islands provide a 'stack-rich' environment and lie 110 miles north of the



Scottish mainland. In the main they are treeless, windswept, peat-covered with many zawns or geos incised into their rocky coasts. They are also very remote from Britain being 200 miles north of Aberdeen. The nearest mainland town is Bergen in Norway and the 23,000 strong population see themselves as more Norwegian than

Scottish or British. Apparently Norwegian is taught in the schools.

The number of birds in Shetland is astonishing. Most of them are sea birds as no part of the group is more than three miles from the sea. It is estimated that in summer there are 30,000 gannets, 140,000 guillemots, 300,000 fulmars, 3,000 pairs of great skua and a quarter of a million puffins.

The main town is Lerwick to which a 14-hour ferry service operates from Aberdeen. (P&O Ferries, Aberdeen 572615, car and passenger service. Sailings each day except Sunday.) You can also fly if you are rich or have duped your company into paying the fare. It should be pointed out here that there are many features named as stacks on the OS Landranger maps. Where stacks have not yet been visited then the stack name will be in italics to signify that you are reading information based on deductions from the maps and other sources.

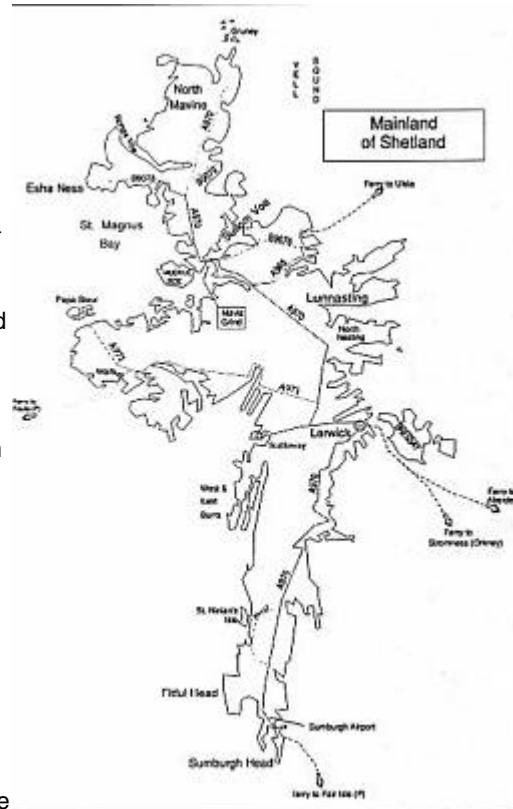
There are six main islands - Mainland, Yell, Unst, Fetlar, Bressay and Whalsay - included with the 15 inhabited islands. However there are over 100 islands in total and hundreds of islets. We will start with Mainland.

Mainland

Stack Rock

This is the main island of Shetland. Mainland has more stacks than any other island in Britain. Most of them are on the west coast of the island and many of them have not had a recorded ascent. For convenience the island has been divided up into areas as we journey round it. We will go round Mainland in a clockwise direction starting at the eleven o'clock position in an area called North Mavine.

It is known thus because it is north of Mavis Grind (pronounced "grinned"), the point where Mainland is almost cut in two by the sea.



Fetlar

The name means fat island referring to the relatively fertile soil. Fetlar is known for breeding the finest Shetland ponies in the islands. To get to Fetlar from Mainland you drive north from Lerwick on the A970, take the A968 at Hillside and go to Tofts Voe from where a car ferry takes 15 minutes to cross to Ullsta on the island of Yell. It is all well signposted. Continue along the A968 through Mid-Yell and go to Gutcher on the east coast. Here take a 1-hour ferry trip with your car to Oddsta on Fetlar. Go down a minor road southwards to Brough Lodge where you meet the B9068 which crosses the island from west to east.

Mountain Rescue: Call the emergency services on 999.

There are several stacks around the Fetlar coastline most of which can be reached in principle by walking north or south from the B9068 at the appropriate place. Starting at Brough Lodge we go round the island in a clockwise direction.

Stack of Birtier

MR: Sheet I 637946

On the north side of Fetlar is the Stack of Birrier. Go to it either by boat or by driving east along the B9088 to Southdale and then striking out north east across the island passing between Stackaberg hill and Skutes Water - a loch. Go over the ridge of Muckle 5cord, across the valley of Moorins and over Busta Hill. Go down on to the promontory to the east of this and the stack is on a fingery promontory off the west side of the main one.

Detailed access: Unknown.

First ascent: Unknown.

Stacks of Scambro

MR: Sheet 1 675919

There are three stacks here, apparently. Go to the eastern end of the B9088 and then head north up the track to Everland which is about a mile away. From here head north east and mount the hill of Baa-neap. North north east from here is the coast in under half a mile and the stacks should be clearly visible offshore.

Detailed access: Unknown, possibly a boat?

Scambro Stack 1

First ascent: Unknown.

Scambro Stack 2

First ascent: Unknown.

Scambro Stack 3

First ascent: Unknown.





Stack Rock

Furra Stacks

MR: Sheet 1 665887

Head south from the end of the B9088 to gain Funzie Bay. Follow the southern edge of this past the small island of Stany Holm and reach the stacks in about a mile from the road.

Detailed access: Looks like a low tide or short swim job.

First ascent: Unknown - may be unclimbed.

Horn of Ramsness

MR: Sheet 1 612870

This may be a stack. The name suggests so. It is on the extreme southern tip of Lamb Hoga, the big peninsula reaching south from Papil Water. Follow a track south west from Tresra to its end and then go about a mile due south to strike the coast by a small lochan with the 'stack' apparently accessible at low tide. You probably have to abseil down cliffs to reach the foreshore.

Detailed access: Unknown

First ascent: Unknown - may be unclimbed.

Stackan Longa

MR: Sheet 1 598886

On the south west side of Lamb Hoga peninsula. Go along the track as for the Horn of Ramsness and, at a place called The Dale where a footpath goes south east to the top of Gillis Field (100+ yards), go west south west for about a mile to the coast.

Detailed Access: Unknown but appears to be accessible at low tide.

First ascent: Unknown.

Bratta Stack

MR: Sheet 1 593899

A mile and a half north up the coast from Stackan Longa. Leave the track for Dale at a place called - (lifts and go west over the rise to the coast. It appears accessible from the shore.

Detailed access: Unknown.

First ascent: Unknown.

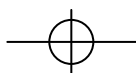
Stack of Grunnigeo

MR: Sheet 1 592902

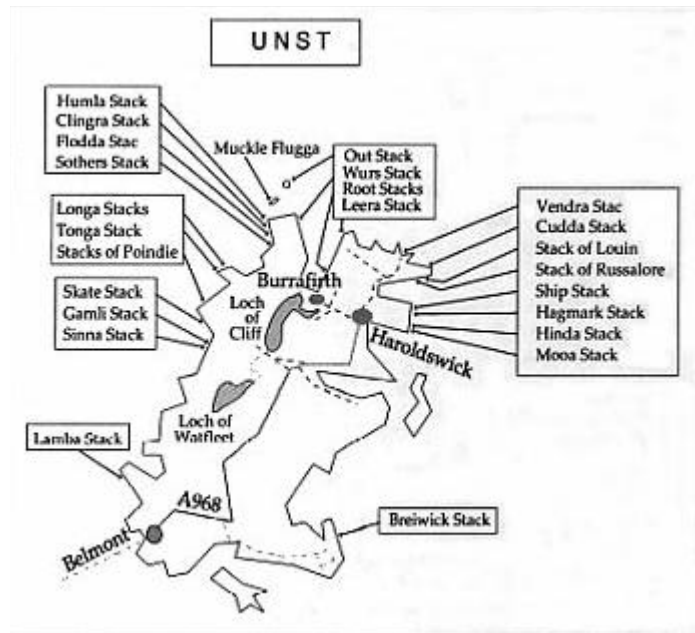
This stack is a short distance up the coast north from Bratta Stack. It is on the south side of a zawn, Grunnigeo, with a col between Lamb Hoga and Gallow Hill, known as the Scord of Grunnigeo, above it.

Detailed Access: Unknown but appears to be accessible without a boat.

First ascent: Unknown.



Unst



Quite a few stacks here - twenty five at least according to the Ordnance Survey map. Their height is not given and, in some cases, the actual item on the map that is called a stack is not clear. It could be an offshore islet or it might be a pinnacle rising from the shoreline of the coast. So the stacks could be interesting towers or ugly stumps. Because Unst is far away the likelihood is that many of them have not been climbed at all. In effect the notes below indicate areas to be explored.

Unst is reached by crossing by ferry from Mainland, as for Fetlar, to Gutcher on Yell. Here you take another but short ferry crossing north east to Belmont on Unst and then continue on the A968 to your destination. Like the rest of Shetland Unst has many bird colonies and Herma Ness is a nature reserve for that reason.

Mountain Rescue: Get to a telephone and call the coastguard or police.

We will go round Unst in a clockwise direction from Belmont:

Lamba Stack

MR: Sheet I 559 040

This stack is on the west coast of Unst 2 miles north of Belmont. Go up the A968 past the B9084 turning on the right, and continue for about a 1/2 mile to where a minor road goes west for Burragarth and Westing. Follow this for just over 1/2 a mile to a place



Stack Rock

where a track goes off left. It may be signed for standing stones. Follow the track for about $\frac{1}{2}$ a mile to its end past a small settlement called Liand. Then walk slightly north of west passing the Loch of Vigga on its north side and continuing west to strike the coastal cliffs. A small headland projects into Bluemull Sound and Lamba Stack is at its north west tip.

Detailed access: Descend the cliffs somehow. It appears from the map that low tide access is feasible.

First ascent: Unknown - may be unclimbed.

Burra Firth

The north of Unst is divided into two unequal parts along a north-south line by the long inlet of Burra Firth, the Loch of Cliff and, further inland in the same valley, the Loch of Watlee. The majority of Unst's stacks lie on the two sides of the peninsulas thus formed. Most are reached via the settlement of Burrafirth at the head of Burra Firth, one of the loveliest inlets in the Shetlands. Access is via the A968 north from Belmont and then going on to Ballista, just off the A968, for Sinna, Gamli and Skate Stacks. The western peninsula culminates in Herma Ness, a bird sanctuary, which has five stacks dotted around its sides.

Sinna Stack

MR: Sheet 1 580103

Go up the A968 past the Loch of Watlee to the first minor road going to Ballista. Take this, turn left at the fork and then go straight over the crossroads. Take the next right (about $\frac{1}{2}$ a mile) and then turn left at the t-junction. The road crosses the Burn of Mailland which feeds Loch Cliff and then climbs up the western side of the valley enclosing Loch Cliff. Ignore a track going off to the right and park the car. On your left (west) are two hills with a col between them.

Walk over the col, almost due west, and then head west south west downhill, cross a stream, continue in the same line uphill, cross another stream and the crest the slope in front of you and so reach the coast. The two islands and rocks that make up South Holms are offshore and Sinna Stack should be visible below you.

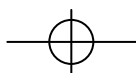
Detailed access: Unknown but low tide access looks possible once you have descended the cliff.

First ascent: Unknown - may be unclimbed.

Gamli Stack

MR: Sheet 1 581106

Head for the coast as for Sinna Stack but at the second stream, just a couple of hundred yards or so from the crest of the slope overlooking Sinna Stack, turn downstream and follow the water north west to the coast. Gamli Stack should now be visible northwards.





Detailed access: Unknown.

First ascent: Unknown - may be unclimbed.

Skate Stack

MR: Sheet 1 578117

Go to the col as for Sinna and Gamli Stacks but walk north west from it to go down the Dale Of Woodwick and its stream. It meets the coast at a little bay with the North Holms island and rock group offshore. You may be able to see Skate Stack from here as it about 1½ miles north west up the coast. Follow the coastline northwards until you reach the stack.

Detailed access: Unknown but low tide access might be feasible if you can get down the cliffs.

First ascent: Unknown - may be unclimbed.

The next group of stacks are approached by taking the A968 all the way to Haroldswick and then following the B9086 to Burraflrth (the settlement) and the neck of land between the Loch of Cliff and Burra Firth (the inlet). At the west side of this neck a track runs along the side of the valley. Park the car and then follow the directions for the individual stacks.

Stacks of Poindie

MR: Sheet 1 580139

There appear to be several stacks here with a boat or swim necessary to reach them. To reach them by land take the track running south west along the side of the valley from the neck of land between the Loch of Cliff and Burra Firth. It goes along the loch for a little way and then turns directly up the slope. Follow it to its end and continue trudging uphill for slightly over a mile to reach the top of Libbers Hill and tremendous views in all directions. Walk due west downhill to reach the coastal cliffs and the stacks.

Detailed access: Unknown but marine access suggests itself from a map inspection.

First ascent: Unknown - may be unclimbed.

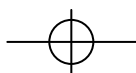
Tonga Stack

MR: Sheet 1 578149

This appears to be a quite large stack, a very small island possibly, off the south west tip of the Tonga headland. It may be feasible to swim to it but since Langa Stacks are nearby and also offshore a boat trip recommends itself. Determined walkers should park the car at Stackhoull - down the right turn at the t-junction after the end of the B9086. Cross the Herma Ness peninsula in a west north west direction and go to the south west tip of the small peninsula of Tonga. This is a walk of about 11/2 miles.

Detailed access: Unknown.

First ascent: Unknown - may be unclimbed.





Stack Rock

Longa Stacks

MR: Sheet I 581153

There appear to be three stacks here, all off the north west face of the Tonga peninsula. Access by boat seems best but a walking inspection is possible by getting to the headland as for Tonga Stack. Walk north east along the western coastline of Tonga until the stacks loom into sight.

Detailed access: Unknown but water will play an important part.

First ascent: Unknown - may be unclimbed.

The next set of stacks - from Sothers Stack to Wurs Stack - all lie around the north tip of Herma Ness and are reached on foot by walking up Herma Ness from Stackhoul near Burrafirth.

Kame Of Flouravoug

MR: Sheet 1 594168

This may be a stack. It lies about a $\frac{1}{4}$ mile offshore. The map is unclear as there is also a headland which could have the Kame adjacent to it. It may be worth exploring the coast for $\frac{1}{2}$ a mile south of Sothers Stack to see if other stacks exist.

Detailed access: By boat (!)

First ascent: Unknown - may be unclimbed.

Sothers Stack

MR: Sheet 1 601170

Go to Stackhoul after the end of the B9086 and continue for $\frac{3}{4}$ mile to just before the end of the road. Park the car, if you can, and walk up a short track going off to the left (north). It becomes a footpath and you continue along it for $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles to a flattish area called Sothers Brecks just before the path goes up the main slope of Hermaness Hill. Follow a stream, which drains a small lake, downhill to the north west. At the point where it flows into the sea a promontory juts into the sea to the south. Sothers Stack is on or by this promontory.

Detailed access: Unknown.

First ascent: Unknown - may be unclimbed.

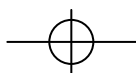
Flodda Stack

MR: Sheet I 599175

An offshore stack of considerable horizontal extent, enough, perhaps, for it to be a rocky islet, which is quite close to the mainland. Go to Sothers Brecks as for Sothers Stack and follow the stream downstream until at the cliff top. These cliffs extend to the north and this section of coast is called Humlataes. Follow it northwards for about $\frac{1}{2}$ a mile when the stack should be visible offshore with an island on its north side.

Detailed access: A longish swim or a boat from Burrafirth?

First ascent: Unknown - may be unclimbed.





Clingra Stack

MR: Sheet I 598177

A short distance north from Flodda Stack there are three small peninsulas with Clingra Stack apparently at the tip of the northernmost one. Walk along Humlataes as for Flodda Stack but continue past that until you reach the northern peninsula of the three. Walk out to the stack.

Detailed access: Unknown but appears feasible at low tide.

First ascent: Unknown - may be unclimbed.

Humla Stack

MR: Sheet I 599180

Just north of Clingra Stack another peninsula juts out from the coast between two islands - The Greing to the north and an unnamed one possessing a natural arch to the south. Humla Stack seems to be at the tip of this peninsula. Follow the coastline north from Clingra Stack for less than a 1/4 of a mile until you can walk out along the peninsula and so reach the stack.

Detailed access: Unknown but landward access appears possible.

First ascent: Unknown - may be unclimbed.

Wurs Stack is the next stack we come to on Herma Ness but, in order to preserve our clockwise integrity, Out Stack is described next. It and the next stack are possibly best reached by sailing from Burra Firth since that way you have to pass one stack to reach the other.

Out Stack

MR: Sheet 1 613203

Muckle Flugga is the most northerly point in Britain, being further north than some of Alaska. Out Stack is in the sea north of Muckle Flugga lighthouse off, in turn, Herma Ness on the northern coast. So it is the most northerly stack in the British Isles. The circumference of this rounded rocky lump is about a 1/2 mile and it is girdled by cliffs. Which is why it is also the home of hundreds, thousands of birds - huge skuas, guillemots, kittiwakes and gannets. It will be necessary to bring or charter a boat.

The nearest coast town is Burrafirth. Sail north up Burra Firth and out past Muckle Flugga keeping it to your west. Out Stack is about 5 miles from Burrafirth.

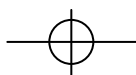
Detailed Access: Unknown but definitely by boat!

The stack has had many ascents over the years. No recorded ascents have been found.

First ascent: Unknown.

Wurs Stack

MR: Sheet 1 613203





Stack Rock

This is located on the east side of Herma Ness and you walk up to Sothers Brecks as for the previous Herma Ness stacks and then walk north east for about $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile to the coastal cliffs. The stack lies offshore at the edge of a small bay accompanied by three other rocky excrescences. It may be possible to swim to it. Alternatively take a boat from Burrafirth and sail $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles up Burra Firth to reach the stack. Detailed access: Unknown.

First ascent: Unknown - may be unclimbed.

Root Stacks

MR: Sheet I 616144

These stacks are near the head of Burra Firth. Take a very minor road from Burrafirth for Buddabreak just after a disused quarry on the right as you come near Burrafirth on the B9086. Go up this minor road for $\frac{1}{2}$ a mile and fork left to Buddabreak. Park the car and walk westwards following a stream to the sea. The two stacks will appear just to the north. One appears to be accessible at low tide; the other will need a swim or a boat being a few yards offshore.

Detailed access: Unknown.

First ascent: Unknown - may be unclimbed.

Leera Stack

MR: Sheet I 626175

Leera Stack is $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles to the north of Root Stacks at or near the tip of a small peninsula projecting into the east side of Burra Firth. Go up the A968 to Haroldswick and turn right onto the B9087. Follow this to a crossroads where there is a public telephone and turn left onto a minor road. Follow this for about 3 miles to a t-junction with two tracks.

This junction is to the east of Sothers Field with its two radio masts on the hill top. Take the left-hand track and go about $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile to where the track doubles back on itself. Park the vehicle and contour northwards around the slope of Saxa Vord then descend in a north north west direction to the small peninsula and the stack. In effect you keep in line with the track that you have just driven along.

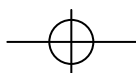
Detailed access: Unknown.

First ascent: Unknown - may be unclimbed.

Vendra Stacks

MR: Sheet I 656169

The coastline to the east of Burra Firth has many headlands and geos on it. The stacks are located on the eastern part of this headland near a track. Drive up to Haroldswick and take the B9087 as for Leera Stack. Go to its end at Kirkaton where there is a t-junction with two minor roads. Turn left and go round the coast of Nor Wick bay. The road climbs up a steep hill. Continue past a track off to the left and another minor road to the right. Go over a hill and down the other side to The Haa at





the Wick Of Skaw bay. Park the car here and walk north west for about $\frac{1}{2}$ a mile to the geo with Vendra Stacks on its eastern side.

Detailed access: Unknown and the number of stacks here is not known either.

First ascent: Unknown - may be unclimbed.

Cudda Stack

MR: Sheet I 673157

This one lies offshore in the middle of a small bay on the north side of Lamba Ness headland. You could reach it by sailing from Burrafirth or Haroldswick. It lies about $5\frac{1}{2}$ miles north from Haroldswick. It is also possible to drive to within a hundred yards of it by taking the minor road going right (east) on the way to Vendra Stacks after Nor Wick. This minor road runs out along the narrowing headland of Lamba Ness. Park at or near its end and walk back to the narrow point of the Ness with Cudda Stack lying in the cliff-encircled bay to the north.

Detailed access: Unknown.

First ascent: Unknown - may be unclimbed.

Stack of Louin

MR: Sheet 1 665153

On the south side of Lamba Ness there is a line of cliffs that form the northern limit of the bay of Nor Wick. Take the minor road running out along Lamba Ness, as for Cudda Stack, and park the car by a building about halfway to the headland. There is a very small bay or geo to the south and the stack is on the right-hand side of this (looking out to sea). The Stack of Russalore lies to the west.

Detailed access: Descend the cliffs to reach the stack. Low tide may be necessary.

First ascent: Unknown - may be unclimbed.

Stack of Russalore

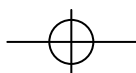
MR: Sheet 1 660153

This stack is about $\frac{1}{2}$ a mile west of the Stack of Loum. Take the same minor road and park the car by some buildings after about a $\frac{1}{4}$ mile. Walk south south east for another $\frac{1}{4}$ mile to the coastal cliffs and the stack.

Detailed access: Descend the cliffs and attain the stack . . . somehow.

First ascent: Unknown - may be unclimbed.

The next group of four stacks lie on, or rather off the very steep east fice of the Hill Of Clibberswick. This forms a headland between the bays of Nor Wick to the north and Harold's Wick to the south. The slopes of this headland are steep and horrible. They rise to over 500 feet on this headland so the stacks could be quite high. It looks to be classic stack geology with a $1\frac{1}{2}$ mile section of coast being pushed back by the sea leaving four stacks of harder rock behind. The nature of the rock on the headland indicates that the stack rock could be horrible too.





Stack Rock

Ship Stack

MR: Sheet 1 667133

Go to Haroldswick at the end of the A986 and then take a minor road to Clibberswick about $\frac{1}{2}$ a mile after the two radio towers. Park the car at the end of the road and hump your gear the $\frac{1}{4}$ miles uphill to the top of the Hill Of Clibberswick. Admire the view and then follow the high slopes northwards for about $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile to Ship Stack. Detailed access: The usual guesstimate! Get down the steep slopes somehow and attain the bottom of the stack with, perhaps, low tide being helpful.

First ascent: Unknown - may be unclimbed.

Hagmark Stack

MR: Sheet 1 665127

Lovely name! A $\frac{1}{4}$ mile to the south of Ship Stack at the base of a precipitous 450 feet slope lies this evicatively-named stack. Go to the summit of the Hill Of Clibberswick. Below you and on your left, looking out to sea, is a steep slope with Hagmark Stack standing a little way offshore.

Detailed access: Descend the cliff in stages, or use a very long abseil rope, and explore your way to the base of the stack. Usual low tide caveat.

First ascent: Unknown - may be unclimbed.

Hinda Stack

MR: Sheet 1 666126

This stack is $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile to the south of Hagmark Stack. Go to the summit of the Hill Of Clibberswick and follow the cliffs southwards gradually losing height until you reach a peninsula projecting eastwards into the sea. Here you should find the stack, located below cliffs a more amenable 350 feet high.

Detailed access: Descend the cliff and find the stack, hopefully, near the tip of the peninsula.

First ascent: Unknown - may be virgin.

Mooa Stack

MR: Sheet 1 665118

A $\frac{1}{4}$ mile south of Hinda Stack and so you continue walking south along the clifftop past that stack's peninsula until you reach a smaller peninsula which should have Mooa Stack at its south eastern tip.

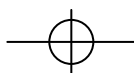
Detailed access: Descend the 200 foot high cliffs and, hopefully, find the stack.

First ascent: Unknown - may be virgin.

The next stack is all on its own in the south eastern part of Unst.

Breiwick Stack

MR: Sheet 1 639015

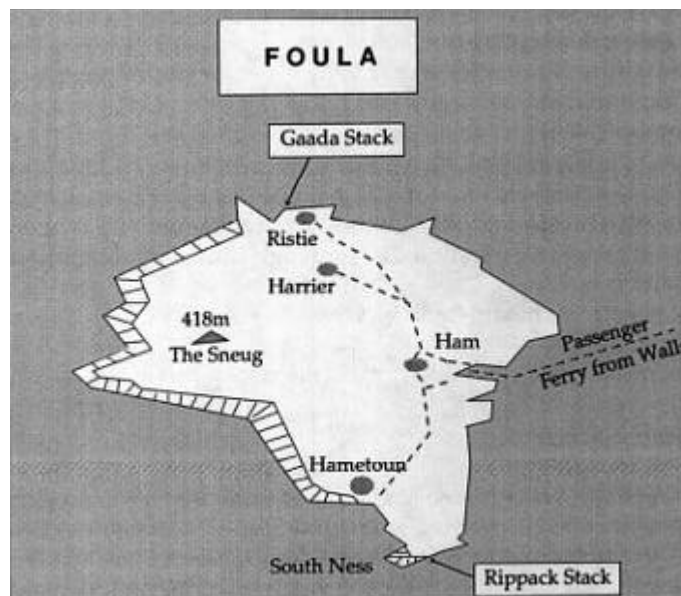




This appears to be a classic coastal stack jutting up from a rocky pavement which is exposed at low tide. Take the A968 from Belmont and turn right onto the B9084 to Uyeasound after about 1 $\frac{3}{4}$ miles. Follow the coast road eastwards through Clivocast and, two miles further on, Muness. Park your vehicle and walk north east skirting the Ham Of Muness inlet. The stack is on the eastern side of Ham Ness $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile after Muness. There are no cliffs on the coast by it according to the map.

Detailed access: Descend the slope to the shore and go across to the stack at low tide.

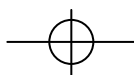
First ascent: No details so, perhaps, unclimbed.



Foula

Foula, pronounced 'Fulla', is a remote island in the Shetlands group being about twenty miles west of Mainland. The island features the Kame: wonderful 1000 foot high cliffs of old red sandstone reaching a maximum height of 1,237 feet. This is the second highest sea cliff in the British Isles after Conachair (1,569 feet) on St. Kilda. The Kame is an awesome precipice.

Foula can be cut off by bad weather, sometimes for weeks at a time, which is hard for its small but tenacious permanent population. Unless you can charter a helicopter, marine access is the only option. A ferry runs from Walls on Mainland.





Stack Rock

There are two stacks on the island's coast, one to the north and one to the south.

This suggests a day trip to knock them off. **Rippack Stack**

MR: Sheet 4 967364

From the ferry terminus settlement of Ham follow the track to Hametoun. From the end of the track stride south east over a small hill of 130 feet to the indented south east side of the South Ness headland. There could be three stacks here plus another two just to the south, one of which would be called Bonibrik.

Detailed access: Unknown.

First ascent: Unknown - may be unclimbed.

Gaada Stack

MR: Sheet 4 95416.

A spectacular arched stack resembling something like a detached version of Durdle Door. From Ham follow the track north and ignore the turning left for Harrier. Carry on to Ristie at the end of the track. From here Gaada Stack should be visible and will almost certainly require a boat or swim to get to it.

Detailed access: Unknown.

First ascent: Unknown but it has been climbed at least once. The details are not available.

