

Excavations at the Ness of Brodgar - the true Heart of Neolithic Orkney

Mr Nick Card



7.30 p.m 10th December, 2014

Biography

Nick Card has worked widely throughout Britain since graduating from Glasgow University with an MA Honours Archaeology. He first worked in Orkney as a student and latterly as a post graduate research assistant. Falling in love with the islands he permanently moved there 25 years ago. Over the last 15 years he has managed a wide range of projects for the Orkney Archaeological Trust and latterly for the Orkney Research Centre for Archaeology that he helped establish at Orkney College University of Highlands and Islands.

Since the inscription of the Heart of Neolithic Orkney World Heritage Site Nick has been heavily involved in research and fieldwork relating to the sites: as director of the excavations at Bookan Chambered Tomb and the Neolithic complex on the Ness of Brodgar; as co-ordinator of the geophysics programme; and as a major contributor to the Research Agenda. His interests lie in all aspects of the prehistory of the Highlands and Islands and has also co-directed the excavations of the extensive Bronze Age cemetery at the Knowes of TroTTY, and the enigmatic Iron Age ritual complex of Mine Howe.

He is a Member of Heart of Neolithic Orkney World Heritage Site Research Committee; an Honorary Research Fellow of the University of the Highlands and Islands; Chair of the Orkney Archaeology Society; and Vice-president of the American Friends of the Ness of Brodgar.

Abstract

In Orkney it is said that if you scratch its surface it bleeds archaeology! This is nowhere truer than in the Heart of Neolithic Orkney World Heritage Site that is renowned for some of the most iconic prehistoric monuments of Atlantic Europe: the great stone circles of the Ring of Brodgar and the Stones of Stenness; Maeshowe a massive chambered tomb; and the exceptionally well preserved village of Skara Brae.

Recent research and excavation in this area is radicalising our views of this period 5,000 years ago. In particular the stunning discovery of a complex at the Ness of Brodgar that was enclosed within a large walled precinct, and is shedding new light on how this landscape was used and developed. The Ness structures are not only magnificent in their scale, complexity and symmetry but were also decorated with colour and one of the largest assemblages of Neolithic artwork. In its heyday the Ness may have been the very hub of this monumental landscape.