

s wi toil an pain,
gethe karn in uain,
asure's taen

Hawbies gain

good man getting up one
ious person parading his
ursuit, and succeeded in
which he took home with
a "meal-girnal". The first
to churn she was amazed.
y of butter produced. As
nation the horse-hair rope
associated with the matter.
when cut there flowed from
ch cream. But the cutting
ure churning brought no
same process has been
r simmon.

s, now long obsolete, were
lar days. Eel (Yule) and
inning of festivities which
until Candlemas. On New
I turned out to the ancient
ooting on New Year's day
most old customs. But in
t foot" formed quite an
esthies of the northerner.
or to a new job, or even
inary calling, some were
iving creature they met,
ccess.

ated by a dish of Scotch
ose was served in one large
whole company sat round
ok. On "Peace" Sunday
breakfast, and those who
heir "peace eggs" from the
is still kept up in the
is shorn of the glamour of
rowing all the shearing
e how many would stick in
any of the reapers would

week, and sometimes the couple were run into
expense which took them the greater part of their
married life to clear. To begin with, there was
the "cantrag" or cont. at night, then the house-to-
house visitation by the bride and bridegroom
giving "the bids". The ceremony proper began with
the "feet-washing" night, which preceded the
wedding day, and the feasting continued next day

THE SEVEN STONES AT RUSHIE GEO, SKIRZA HEAD

Long, long ago there was
always a threat of raids or
invasion so people were
usually on the alert. This
story was handed down by
my father from his
grandfather and I'm not sure
how long before that.

An old woman living in a
house beside the Broch near
the "Hole of the Head" saw
men climbing up the rock at
Eflie's Goe. She thought they
were raiders, but instead of
running for her life decided to
tackle them. She took off her
good knitted wool stocking
and put a fair sized stone in
the toe. She clobbered them
with this as they put their
heads over the brae.

They had no chance to explain that their ship had
gone on the rocks. A young lad was the last, and he
assured her he just wanted to get back home to his
folk in Aberdeen. She spared his life and was very
good to him and so too were the Freswick folk.
They gave the unfortunate sailors decent burials
on the little promontary at the head of Rushie Goe
and placed large stones to mark each grave. The
stones are there to this day.

The young lad hoped that the seas would turn up
the captain's iron box which had gold galore! A
pilot got him aboard a ship that was bound for



*Photo, James Rosie, Midtown, Freswick.
The Cairn can just be seen on the left*

Aberdeen and there is no need to tell of his
mother's joy.

Freswick with its grand sweep of bay, sandy
beaches and green fertile land has always been
attractive. The links is the site of, possibly, the
biggest Viking settlement in Caithness. Then as
now Freswick was aye being taken over!
Lizzie Cook, Skirza Head.

Footnote:- We checked and saw the seven
boulders which varied in size but were roughly

³ Caithness phrase, meaning: they would wish to
take away her luck. It also occurs in the
Caithness say 'Y' em at aysts e silk goon will get
the sleeve o't.
⁴ Work-animals.

⁵ "The bids" = invitations

Notes by John Mowat, Skirza and Glasgow.

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LEST WE FORGET

rectangular. There is moss and lichen growing over them and the grass is well up the sides, but they are all there, some of them just about six feet from the edge of the cliff.

James Rosie, Midtown, and John Hall, Skirza.

Ethel Dummett, Heatherbell Cottages, John O'Groats.

James T. Calder wrote "The Graves of the Mariners on Skirza Head" in "Sketches from John O'Groats in Prose and Verse," published 1842. It would seem from it that the ship was wrecked c.1742.

SKIRZA TO THE BIEL

Hole of the Head

Take the Skirza road to the last T-junction and to the right in front of you is Effie's Geo. Rushie Geo lies to the south of it and Skirza Head itself is to the south of that.

The rough stones which mark the sailor's graves are set at the head of Rushie Geo. On the headland between Rushie and Effie's Geo stands a Broch known locally as the "Mound". There is a well at the entrance to the "Mound". Dr Curle carried out excavations here in 1937-38 but now the site is very overgrown.

It cannot be over emphasised that VERY GREAT CARE must be taken when looking around here.

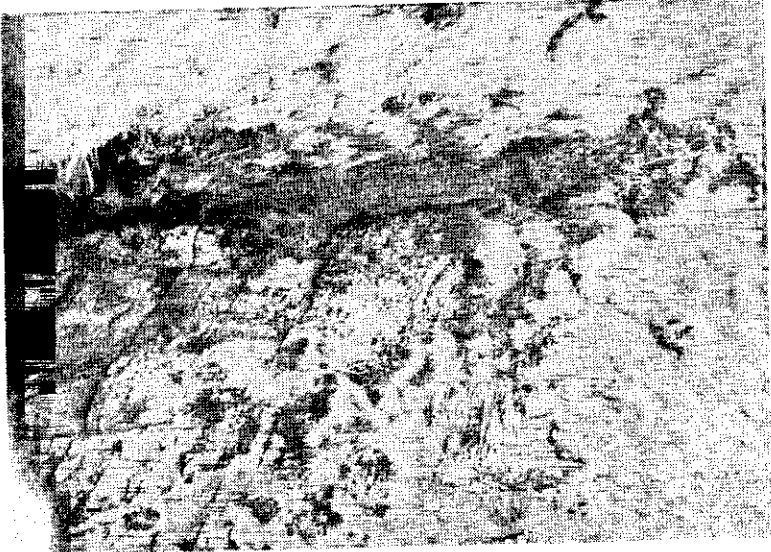
About 20-25 yards from the "Cairn" (built with stones from the Broch) is the "Hole of the Head" which must go down a depth of about 120 feet to the sea where there are three entrances to the "Hole".

It is an awesome and very dangerous hole and there is nothing to indicate its position until you are on it, and then you realise why so much care must be taken when approaching it. As far as I know it has never been fenced off but it is hoped this will be done soon.

Long ago a man with a one horse plough used to cultivate the ground around the "Hole" on that wee headland, and I never heard of anyone falling down the "Hole".

Effie's Goe is accessible with care, and near its mouth, one small entrance to the "Hole of the Head" can be seen at low water. It is supposed that McAlpine's purse containing a fortune is still at the bottom of the goe!

Next, it's north round the Bocht to the Long Goe, and it is said that from there a cave runs right into the Warth Hill!!! The slate quarry is just on the north side of the Long Geo bordering the Skirza quarry. Billy Sinclair has the quarry now, and it is hard to believe that the beautiful, cased



The House at Wife Geo showing coastguard shelter.

bottom is natural. It's a good level, and nature's work can be seen. The clay holes are lying just to quarry. Before the days of cement last war when it was unobtainable, clay was dug and ca houses and steadings.

Raised grassy topped hillocks ca the Freswick hill and it was that prey were trapped. The mound about two feet high with divots at or post driven into them. A road secured to the top of the post.

Hawks, falcons and eagles have for prey and a handy post where rest and view for movement on them. It was the game keepers grouse, pheasant and other in must have walked miles checking fresh bright green grassy topped up well against the heather.

At one time it was planned to take to John O'Groats round from Ski Last century the road was started standard width with ditches at however eventually dictated that over the Warth Hill was talk northwards over the end of Ski are on this road. George Angus this road for carting his peats and dig down three-four feet to a bottom road.

The "Railway" begins after the the track over the mires to Wife description because it looks like railway line. In the summer David lived at Skirza (the Cook's house on tethers at Wife Geo. The dist but in fog or in the dark considerable risk. It was Dav marker stones along a track on bridged the mire ditches. He c