

Kirkwall to Westray

We hope you find these notes helpful and of interest to you while planning your sailing trip to Orkney. Please note they are not intended to be used for navigation

The quickest journey time from Kirkwall to Pierowall is on the ebb, leaving Kirkwall to cross the Westray Firth on the last of the ebb as by the time the tide is running N.E through Fersness and Weatherness sounds. It makes little difference to the journey times when leaving Kirkwall whether one goes out through Vasa or the Bouyed channel nearer Gairsay, Vasa probably best on the ebb, Bouyed best on the flood.

When crossing the Westray Firth if there is any westerly type weather it is advisable to keep well over to the Green Holmes and across to Seal Skerry on the west side of Eday. In westerly conditions, the further west one goes the worse the conditions are with a very rough edge of tide running from Seal Skerry to the SW corner of Rusk Holm and NW to Rull Noost off Wart Holm especially during the last 2 hours of the ebb. Best avoided. If conditions are not adverse let the tide carry you to the west of Rusk Holm and NE to Weatherness, this is the quickest route.

Fersness or Weatherness sounds can be used with the deeper water in Fersness. The tide in both places tends to run east for 4 hours and west for 8 hours. If sailing from Kirkwall during flood tide your journey time will be somewhat longer. If you go out through the Bouyed channel then steer for the Grand buoy off the south end of Egilsay. Keep in the back eddy that runs north along the east side of Egilsay right up to the Kili Holm.

At the corner of the Kili Holm you will meet a strong tide. If the weather is good you can crab across the Westray Firth by steering for Wart Holm then the point of Huro to pass well west of Rusk Holm. Other wise you can let the flood tide carry you close by the skerry on the SW side of Rusk Holm. If this is during the last part of the flood the tide will be running west through Fersness and Weatherness and there for against you from the south end of Rusk Holm. The tide is negligible once you are north of Weatherness.