

Improving the History Trail on Skomer Island by Hannah Andrews

Skomer Long Term Volunteer (3/04/2016 - 15/07/2016)

Being a Long Term Volunteer on Skomer Island involves many different duties, one of which is carrying out your own personal research project. I chose to investigate the island's history and help develop a new history trail. The idea that I would be living alongside amazing wildlife *and* archeology was a huge draw. It is rare that one gets to combine their passions, but developing a new history trail on Skomer allowed me to do exactly that.

In June I joined archaeologists Toby Driver and Louise Barker (Aberystwyth University) on a tour around some of the island's most important historical sites. As well as the more obvious ones we investigated some more subtle features. Huge boulders visible on ridge lines - those that we assume were moved there by natural forces - may well have been placed there by human hands, possibly as symbols of ritual importance. Skomer's visible history is amongst the best in the British Isles - even during the summer, with the bracken and the Red Campion growing high around the structures, you can still see their outlines in many of the fields. Spring and autumn, however, remain the best times to see Skomer's history and if you walk along the main track between North Haven and the Farm in the evening, when the light is low, you can see prehistoric field boundaries in North Valley.

Using the knowledge gained from Toby and Louise I developed a new history trail to help introduce some of these structures to the general public. Having selected four key sites (Wick Round House, Wick Stream, Harold Stone and The Lime Kilns), I have put together the text for some signs that will be placed at each of these locations. These will help to explain the role they played in Skomer's mysterious history, and will enable visitors to find out more about the island's past. In time, it would be wonderful to be able to expand the trail.

Although the wildlife out here is undoubtedly amazing - Skomer has a whole other dimension to it. In my eyes, uncovering its history has given it a new depth of meaning. It's incredible to think that humans have been living and working here for up to 5,000 years.



Monitoring Razorbills at Bull Hole



Mysterious hut circle at Green Pond