

The way now follows the wide arc of Sinclair bay passing Ackergill tower which stands tall at the southern end of the sands. This tower has been fully restored as is now an exclusive retreat hotel. John Keith, inherited the lands of Ackergill in 1354, from the Cheynes family. Ackergill Tower may have been built by his son, but was first mentioned in 1538. A young and beautiful caught the attention of John Keith. She was called Helen Gunn, who was abducted by John Keith. Legend has it that she flung herself, or fell, from the highest tower to escape her abductor's advances. Supposedly her ghost is still seen, wearing a long red rustling ball gown. This was in the late 14th or early 15th century and is said to have been the true beginning for all feuding between the Gunns and Keiths. This feuding led to the Battle of Champions in either 1478 or 1464, a judicial combat which led to a massacre of the Gunns by the Keiths at the chapel of St Tear (or Tayre) just east of the village.



Follow the beach around Sinclair Bay until you reach the harbour at Keiss. Built by a local man James Bremner in 1831, it was used to land herring. Now it is used only occasionally by the odd creel boat. The 3 story building at the harbour was a fish store where the fish were kept before they were shipped to market. Keiss has a shop and a hotel and further along the beach a new and an old castle. The

old castle is a tall, slim and elegant tower being a good example of Z-plan architecture of the late sixteenth century. The castle was eventually turned over to the Sinclairs of Dunbeath. They replaced it with the new Keiss Castle built in 1755 further from the cliff. The old castle is in ruinous state now while the new castle has been expanded over the years. It is now a private residence.



The rest of the walk up to the northern corner at Duncansby Head is an exhilarating walk along the tops of high cliffs with geos cutting deep into the land. Geos are formed when erosion wears down the cliff along a line of weakness

to form a hole called a notch. A notch is enlarged with repeated erosion, and when it becomes a bigger hollow space, it is then termed a sea cave. When more erosion takes place, the roof of the cave would collapse, forming a geo. A geo is long, deep and narrow inlet with steep vertical sides. There are numerous geos on the way up to Duncansby Head, but the best geological feature of all is reserved for the end of the cliff walk; the Duncansby stacks. The Stacks of Duncansby are some of the most impressive in the British Isles. The Great Stack is over 60 m high and rises above the summit of the adjacent cliffs.



The lighthouse at Duncansby head shines out over the Pentland Firth and South Ronaldsy, one of the Orkney Islands. Your journey is nearly over, with only a short walk over the hill to finish at John O' Groats. The town takes its name from Jan de Groot, a Dutchman who obtained a grant for the ferry from the Scottish mainland to Orkney, recently acquired from Norway, from King James IV in 1496. John o' Groats attracts large numbers of tourists from all across the world all year round. Not all commentary is good - in 2005 a popular tourist guide, Lonely Planet, described the village as a "seedy tourist trap" and in 2010 John o' Groats received a Carbuncle Award for being "Scotland's most dismal town. However there are plans afoot to improve the town and in a few years time the place will be a much more welcoming place; especially for the hundreds of people who walk and cycle from Landsend to complete the "Le Jog" end to end route from one end of the country to the other.



Sunset over the Orkney Islands