HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT SCOTLAND | ÀRAINNEACHD EACHDRAIDHEIL ALBA

Property in Care (PIC) ID:	PIC144
Designations:	Scheduled Monument (SM90134)
Taken into State care:	1887 (Guardianship)
Last Reviewed:	2019

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

EDIN'S HALL BROCH

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HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT SCOTLAND
STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

EDIN'S HALL BROCH

CONTENTS

1 Summary

1.1 Introduction

Edin's Hall is an Iron Age monument, which comprises an early Iron Age hillfort, a middle Iron Age broch and a middle to late Iron Age settlement. It was taken into State care in 1887 under a Guardianship agreement.

The site stands on a rise, overlooking the Whiteadder Water to the north. The monument is unstaffed, and is reached along a 2km waymarked route from a parking area just off the A6112 Duns to Grantshouse road.

1.2 Statement of significance

Edin's Hall is of significance primarily as one of the best-preserved examples of a broch (or at least a broch-like structure) in southern Scotland. This location sets it outwith the main distribution pattern of brochs and it gains additional importance by virtue of being sited within an earlier hillfort.

Brochs are unique to Scotland and are massive drystone towers with a circular ground plan, of late Iron Age date. Brochs began to be constructed (on current evidence) at a date between 400 and 200 BC.

No direct dating evidence has emerged so far to date the broch at Edin's Hall: on analogy with some other southern brochs, a date in the second century AD has been proposed. The structure is an extreme example in terms of dimensions, with the largest diameter of any known broch-like structure. (While it possesses the intra-mural chambers and stairway typical of brochs, it has been suggested that Edin's Hall is so far from the norm that it should not be regarded as a broch.)

In addition to the broch, the site contains the remains of a multiple-ditched fort of early Iron Age date (which seems to long predate the broch) and a long-lived open settlement of roundhouses, which appears to originate shortly before the construction of the broch and to have continued in use afterwards. This combination of different types of Iron Age construction adds to the importance of Edin's Hall.

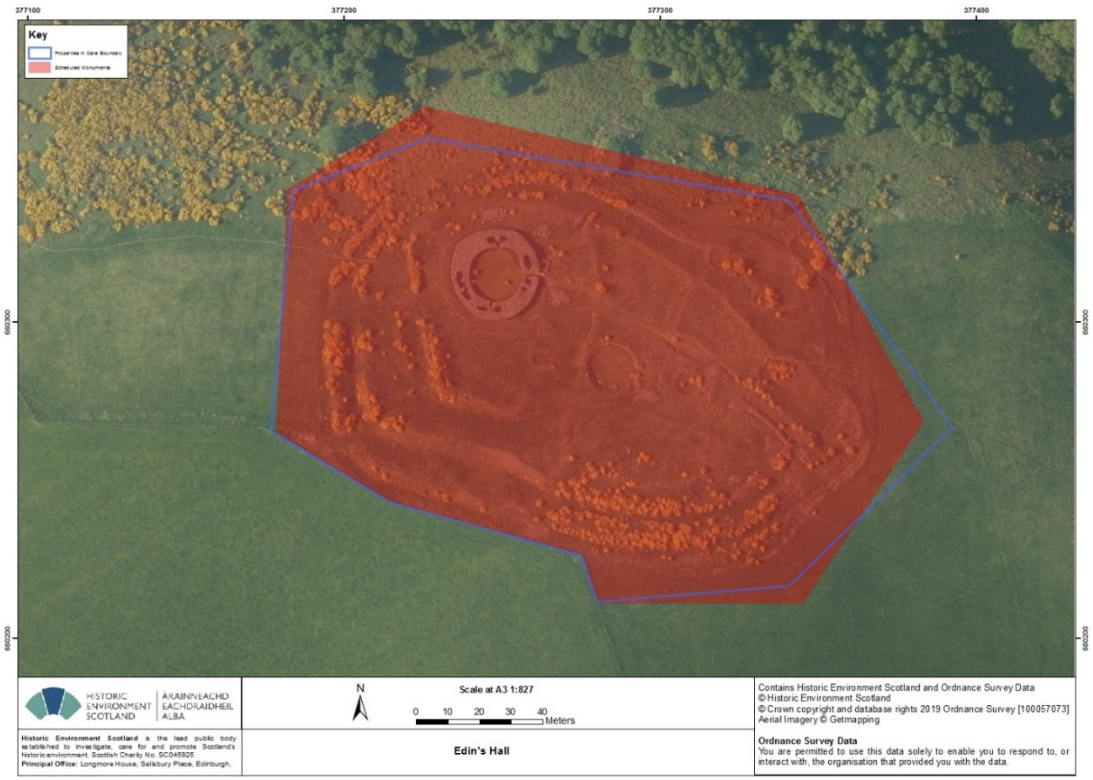
Key aspects of the site's significance include the following:

- The presence on one site of three superimposed and very different forms of Iron Age occupation, with some evidence of relative chronology.
- The unusual plan form of the broch itself.
- The existence of a broch in an area far from the heartland of that monument type.
- Its context, siting and relationship to other archaeological and landscape features as compared with other broch sites; the degree to which it typifies, or is exceptional to, the generality of brochs and how it has been referenced in developing theories of Iron Age architecture,

society and economy, and in particular theories about the role of the small number of brochs in southern Scotland.

- Its use and presentation as an Ancient Monument: Edin's Hall was among the earlier properties to be formally taken into State care (in 1887).

The following pages give a fuller background to the site and go on to discuss the various aspects of its significance. A range of Appendices includes an overview of Brochs – Theories and Interpretations at Appendix 4.



Scheduled Area and Property in Care Boundary of Edin's Hall, for illustrative purposes only. For more images see Appendix 2.

2 Assessment of values

2.1 Background

Introduction to Brochs

Brochs have been the subject of much study and attempts to understand them have given rise to numerous theories about their genesis, purpose, context and relationships to other Iron Age structures. The best-preserved examples are striking and distinctive sights.

Broch towers are characterised by their conformity to certain design elements which make them seem a very cohesive group (near-circular ground plan, hollow or galleried wall construction, single narrow entrance passage, staircase within the wall thickness, stacked voids, tower form). Dating

evidence is scarce and most reliable dates relate to periods of occupation rather than necessarily of construction. However, recent radiocarbon dates from sites in South Uist and Shetland (sampled within walls or under the structure) indicate construction before 100 BC and between 200 and 400 BC respectively.[1] It is generally thought that the small number of brochs in the Scottish Lowlands and Southern Uplands are late examples, and some at least seem to have been built in the second century AD.

Brochs are a building type unique to Scotland; their remains occur most frequently in the north and west, rarely in the south. As it is not known how many brochs were built, much depends upon survival rates and upon adequate investigation. Estimates for potential broch sites range from 150 – 600 sites; however most have not been investigated, and criteria for assessing the sites vary. It is generally agreed that about 80 sites currently identified meet the definition for broch used here, though there may be many more which might yet be proven, if sufficiently investigated.

There are many competing theories as to the social context which gave rise to brochs, and their use and meanings for Iron Age society. As yet there are no agreed conclusions, and a fuller account of these themes is given at Appendix 4.

While the typical image of a broch is that of the tower, the type example being that of Mousa in Shetland, Edin's Hall is at the opposite end of the spectrum of broch dimensions. In fact it is so different from Mousa that there is some doubt if it should be classed as a broch at all. The internal space of Edin's Hall would accommodate the entire diameter of Mousa with space to spare. There is general agreement that Edin's Hall never rose to a great height and that it was probably not fully roofed under a single span. Further divergences from the broch norm are that its internal courtyard departs considerably from the circular – more so than almost every other site classed as a broch – and that the external wall-face (what survives of it) appears to stand vertical rather than being battered (sloping inwards in the manner of a buttress). Early depictions confirm this is an original feature, not a result of consolidation. These features have led to the broch at Edin's Hill being described as "a late, outsize, crude copy of the broch tradition."[2]

The distribution, location and frequency of brochs varies markedly between different regions. There are very few brochs in the south of Scotland: in the area of Scottish Borders: Torwoodlee, Bow and Edin's Hall are the only known examples. They are exceptions in an area where the norm is hillforts. These and other enclosed settlements characterise the early and middle Iron Age, with lightly enclosed or open settlements appearing to follow later. The underlying hillfort at Edin's Hall is entirely typical of local Iron Age enclosed settlements. The appearance of a few brochs in this landscape, and the fact that the construction of some excavated examples seems to have been taking place at the same time as brochs were being abandoned in their northern

[1] Parker Pearson and Sharples 1999, 355; Dockrill et al 2015, 59-60
[2] MacKie 2007, 1325

heartland, has given rise to much theorising, generally involving interaction with the Roman presence in 2nd century south Scotland. Appendix 3 explores this further.

The presence of medieval copper mines only 1.4 kilometres to the east, and the discovery in the 1990s of two substantial copper ingots concealed within the broch's stair-foot chamber, have led to the suggestion that the local copper deposits were worked in prehistoric times, with the broch at Edin's Hall representing an architectural statement by those who controlled a lucrative mineral industry[3].

Descriptive overview
Edin's Hall occupies a slight rise on a northward-sloping hillside at about 200m above sea-level, overlooking a winding river valley.

The earliest features visible are ditches and ramparts of a hillfort, enclosing an oval area 135m east-west by 75m north-south with an entrance gap on the south-west side. The north side, where the slope is steepest, lacks an outer ditch. A stone-built broch – or a structure with strong similarities to one – stands within the western end of the enclosed area. The broch's walls stand no more than 1.5m tall. Its interior is accessed via a narrow passage through the 5m-thick wall. Two chambers in the wall thickness open into the entrance passage, and there are three further chambers in the wall thickness, accessed from within the broch. The surviving steps of a stone stair are located in the southernmost of these chambers.

The eastern part of the fort, contains a settlement consisting of a number of circular houses and small, sub-rectangular enclosures. This partly overlies the fort's eastern defences. The largest house at over 14m across, is set almost in the centre of the site.

Antiquarian interest[4]
There are a number of late 18th and early 19th-century references to Edin's Hall. While these are rather hard to follow, they suggest that the site was deteriorating steadily due to the robbing of stone to build field walls. A survey was made of the site in 1793 and the same surveyor described the site again in 1834. These documents appear not to have survived into the present day.

Clearance and structural consolidation
The owner of the Abbey St Bathans estate, George Turnbull (1792-1855) had taken an interest in the site, and wrote a description which was published posthumously in 1857, referencing the earlier survey[5]. The local antiquarian society pressed for action to protect the site and, with the aid of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, helped to raise funds to fence it and to have it "cleared", as was the custom of the day[6]. This was done in 1869-70 under the

[3] Dunwell 1999, 352
[4] This and other parts of this Statement draw liberally upon Dunwell 1999.
[5] Turnbull 1857
[6] Stuart 1871

supervision of John Turnbull (1820-91), who had inherited the estate from his father George[7]. Excavations also took place in subsequent years, possibly within the settlement to the east of the broch: no detailed record of these has been found.

In 1882 the site was scheduled (as the term was originally understood), being named on the Schedule to the Ancient Monuments Protection Act which was passed on 18 August 1882. This original Schedule to the Act named two dozen Scottish monuments, which in addition to Edin's Hall included the brochs of **Mousa**, **Clickimin**, **Dun Telve**, **Dun Troddan** and Dun Dornadilla, aka **Dun Dornaigil**. The site was then taken into State care through a guardianship agreement with the landowner in 1887. Between 1887 and 1906, the walls of the broch were partly rebuilt by the Office of Works. No record of this work has been found, and the only drawing in the early files appears to date to before the 1869-70 clearance of the site. This shows the wallhead as less even than today. The inference must be that the consolidation of the stonework involved evening-up the wallhead, but not markedly raising it. The interior was also cleared afresh at this time, completing Turnbull's work. The site had already acquired its present-day appearance by 1906 when it was visited by the Royal Commission, and has been maintained in that state since[8].

In the 1980s, concern grew over the steady attrition of archaeological evidence on important sites due to the burrowing of rabbits. Edin's Hall was one of several sites selected for action, and in 1996 Historic Scotland commissioned excavations directed by Andrew Dunwell to establish the extent of damage: this involved surface mapping and trial trenching, and also gave an opportunity to explore the extent of surviving deposits and to examine the make-up of the ramparts and ditches[9]. This was followed by erection of rabbit-proof fencing to the south of the site.

In recent years the entire structure has been recorded by terrestrial laser scanning combined with high-quality photographic coverage as part of the Rae Project. This provides an objective digital record which will underpin future site management and conservation works as required.

2.2 Evidential values

The evidential value of Edin's Hall is exceptionally high for what its constructional details, physical fabric, location and setting can tell us about settlement during the Iron Age; and for its potential to yield further information through ongoing research.

The primary importance of Edin's Hall lies in the fact that it combines a variety of Iron Age structures more usually found in discrete contexts, and that this combination is capable of further exploration because only a small proportion

[7] Turnbull 1881
[8] RCAHMS 1909 and 1915
[9] Dunwell 1999

of the site has been excavated. The opportunity to examine these elements in conjunction with each other is extremely unusual: the combination of fort, broch-like structure and open settlement is a rare one, matched by only a handful of sites in Scotland (Laws of Monifieth near Dundee, Dun Skeig in Argyll and possibly Drumcarrow in Fife; all have some similarities though none of these sites possess structures as well-preserved as Edin's Hall).

The basic sequence at Edin's Hall, of the broch being markedly later than the fort, with the origins of the open settlement contemporary with or even slightly earlier than the broch, is known to be an over-simplification, based on surface appearances and very limited excavation apart from within the broch. There appear to be multiple phases within the history of the fort's defences, while the open settlement has at least three phases. There may well be traces of earlier habitations associated with the fort. While the broch has been more completely examined, there is evidence to suggest that the primary floor of this structure may not have been reached during excavation (the paving reported by Turnbull on the north-east quadrant of the interior may be later than the broch's construction), and there is also recent evidence that early deposits survive within the wall chambers.

The sequence of clearing, excavation and repair of the broch have been described above. While it is clear that the broch at Edin's Hall has undergone significant change in recent times, only a small part of the site (perhaps 5%) has been examined in any detail.

The areas of greatest archaeological potential within the area in State care are likely to be:

- The entire circuit of the fort's defences and its interior, including the area below the broch, which may not have been excavated to its full depth. The ditch fills and cross-sectional make-up of the ramparts are likely to hold evidence which would allow the history of the fort to be amplified, and it is possible that the eastern portion of the fort's interior has been buried by later structures and deposits associated with the open settlement.
- Within and around the broch, deposits are known to survive, perhaps more patchily, which might allow its relationship to the fort to be explored more fully.
- Beneath the wall of the broch, which appears to be of large stones forming a basal course or plinth, but without any foundation trench. While accessing the area below the wall foot would be very challenging, it is not impossible that evidence for construction-contemporary activity might be preserved there and could add to the very small corpus of broch construction dates.
- The sub-rectangular enclosure bank to south and west of the broch may contain or seal evidence allowing its date to be established, and in particular to test the assertion that it is associated with the broch.
- The houses and enclosure walls of the open settlement remain largely unexcavated: there should be evidence within and below these to

elucidate the history of this phase of the site's use more fully, and possibly to extend it back in time to the period when the fort was constructed.

Because the broch at Edin's Hall is such an unusual structure in terms of its constructional detail and its dimensions it will always tend to be regarded as atypical and exceptional. If it is accepted as a broch, its location on a pre-existing Iron Age defensive site appears to be unique among known southern brochs, with the possible exception of Drumcarrow in Fife.

The evidence of a possible source of local wealth (and, by implication, power) hinted at by the discovery of copper ingots is a rare example of non-subsistence evidence: in general, the evidence from broch sites is of subsistence activities and in some cases small-scale metal-working, rather than large-scale industrial production. (It has been suggested that the ingots might relate to the heavy bronze arm-rings which appear to come into fashion in the early centuries AD. While the ingots were concealed within the broch, there is no evidence that this was done while the broch was still occupied: it may be that this could be tested by targeted excavation.)

2.3 Historical values

The primary historical importance of Edin's Hall is its ability to contribute to evidence-based narratives of how Iron Age Scotland changed over time, apparently from an early period when forts and impressive ditched defensive enclosures were the norm, to a late period when settlement seems to have been more open, bounded by stock-proof but not defensive enclosures.
In this long story, the appearance of the broch is a particular source of fascination. Brochs are such striking and singular structures that it remains a constant frustration that, despite an abundance of theory and interpretation (see Appendix 4), we do not actually know much for certain about who built these structures or why. Consequently, their value for the development of explanatory narratives is a collective one. No individual broch, however closely investigated, would be capable of answering all of the questions which might be posed, and for many purposes data from a large number of sites is necessary.

Edin's Hall, whether or not it is strictly speaking a broch, has been linked to a variety of narratives about modes of interaction between native and Roman populations, and by extension to narratives about how and why brochs came to be built in southern Scotland. While it has been repeatedly observed that Edin's Hall is a very exceptional broch, or broch-like structure, it is however reasonable to expect it to be accommodated within these narratives: even those most critical of its classification as a broch are prepared to concede that its builders had a broch in mind (even though they might not actually have seen one)[10].

[10] MacKie 2007, 1325

Given that we are dealing with prehistory, our understanding of the nature of the society and circumstance that gave rise to the various structures at Edin's Hall are largely conjectural and will remain so. So far as can be gleaned from excavated finds, the material culture of the Iron Age does change over time, in parallel with changes in the typical structures being built at any part the period (which spans almost 1000 years). In southern Scotland there seems to be a steady move from an early focus on extensive cattle-raising (associated with forts) towards a more mixed farming system with a larger arable component in the middle and later Iron Age. At the same time, it has been suggested that the scale of social organisation becomes wider over time, with the emergence of area chiefdoms towards the end of the period, arising out of earlier systems in which territorial units were smaller and social stratification was less pronounced. What is visible on site at Edin's Hall would not contradict this grand narrative, but equally does not require it: society was doubtless more complex and each site would have had its own particular "biography", affected by local circumstances. Only the aggregation of many such site biographies can produce narratives which have any chance of approaching accuracy. To that extent, Edin's Hall simply offers one contribution towards a collective understanding which requires consideration of many sites in use at similar dates, and to their wider landscapes: nonetheless, the evidence and known potential it offers is an important contribution.

Historic Associational values

The name "Edin's Hall" also appears as "Woden's" and "Odin's" Hall. While it has been supposed to refer the ruler Edwin, whose name also attaches to Edinburgh, several 19th-century accounts suggest the more likely derivation is from Etin, a legendary giant who stole livestock and indulged in cannibalism[11].

[11] Etin features in a widespread folk-tale in northern Britain and Ireland, which appears in many variants, some of which overlap significantly with "Jack and the Beanstalk":
'According to one local legend, it was said that the area was inhabited by a giant called Etin or Edin. He had three heads and was blamed for the loss of cattle, sheep and people. Many tried to kill him, only to fail miserably. Eventually three brothers attempted to try to kill the giant, but they each decided to try separately. As the first brother left, he gave the others a knife which he said would shine if all was well, but would rust if he was in danger. The lad set off and came to the giant's broch. The giant decided to ask the boy questions about Scottish history - none of which he could answer. The giant then turned the boy to stone. The second brother noticed the knife had rusted, and set off to find him. The outcome was the same for him, and he too was turned to stone. Then the third brother decided he had to find the other two. On the road, the third lad met a poor old woman, with whom he shared his food. She told him many stories about Scottish history, and from a bag she took out a large bundle which she told the boy to use if he was in danger. When the lad arrived at the broch, the giant pulled him in and before eating him, asked him questions about Scottish history. This time the brother was able to answer the questions. The giant, somewhat surprised, was going to kill the boy anyway. But the lad pulled out a double-headed axe from the old woman's bundle. Bringing it down on the giant, he severed all three heads at once. The two brothers were then restored, as were all the other missing people.'
(Joyce Miller, 2000, See also Lang, A., (ed) 1889 *The Blue Fairy Book*. London (Longmans, Green & Co.)

In the 1780s the Earl of Wemyss, then owner of the Abbey St Bathans estate, built the Retreat, a small country lodge set in the deep valley of the Whiteadder, which is visible from Edin's Hall. It is perhaps possible that the circular plan of this house references the broch at Edin's Hall[12].

In the early 1800s John Turnbull of Duns acquired the estate. John, like his son George Turnbull and grandson John Turnbull –who respectively arranged for the site to be surveyed and then excavated – was a successful solicitor in Edinburgh. John (senior) and more so George moved in the same social circles as many of the early Scottish antiquarians (such as Sir Walter Scott). John (junior) continued even more strongly in this tradition.

2.4 Architectural and artistic values

The details of broch architecture have been much studied and discussed (see Appendix 4 for an extended account). Given **Mousa** as the template against which other brochs are compared, Edin's Hall is as far from being a typical broch as could be imagined.

The origin and emergence of the broch, with its distinctive architectural features, have long provoked strongly polarised debate, principally between those who argue for a long, gradual process of experimentation across a wide range of structural types culminating in tower brochs such as **Dun Carloway** and Mousa (in which case these might be very late examples) and those who argue for the appearance of the broch tower as an act of creative inspiration (in which case Mousa and perhaps Dun Carloway might be early examples). The features which brochs share with other types of structure, such as blockhouses (in Shetland) and galleried duns (in western Scotland) have been explained by some as ancestral stages towards the broch tower, while others regard them as later borrowings from the broch architecture. Therefore, the relative construction dates of all of these different classes of structure is a key gap in knowledge: much more data is needed from more sites. That said, both northern and western schools of thought concur that, once perfected, the broch phenomenon spread rapidly, with brochs swiftly being erected in most suitable locations within their regional landscapes. Against that northern backdrop, there is something close to total agreement that the small number of brochs in southern Scotland, including Edin's Hall, are late examples and are in some way associated with the period of native-Roman contact in the second century AD. In this respect, it is worth noting that Edin's Hall is markedly different from the other southern brochs, which tend to be of fairly uniform dimensions: it may well be a one-off structure, informed by broch architecture but not seeking to replicate it.

[12] The Retreat is a most unusual, circular-plan house built for the Earl of Wemyss (Francis Charteris), and generally thought to have been his country seat; a hunting lodge with separate flanking wings providing stabling, kennels and staff quarters. Writing in the 1790s, Rev. John Sked noted that the house "...was built by his Lordship about 12 years ago, upon his estate at Blackerstone..." https://portal.historicenvironment.scot/designation/LB1971

Design
The ground plan of the whole site at Edin's Hall displays several aspects of design which are of interest both in themselves and in combination.
The early fort is set on the edge of a steep scarp, with a D-shaped bivallate defence (twin-ditches and intervening ramparts) giving way on the steep edge to what seems to be a univallate defence. This is a typical arrangement in this region (which is usually referred to as the Tyne/Forth province) and falls into the category of scarp-edge sites noted by Macinnes[13].

The impression from surface evidence is that the western part of the fort's interior was flattened in preparation for the construction of the broch-like structure, but this has not been proven by excavation. Whether or not this occurred, there was clearly a decision not to site the broch centrally within the enclosed space. The observation by Dunwell in 1996 that the largest of the houses of the open settlement might actually pre-date the broch could help to explain this, if the highest status-house within the site was retained in use while the broch was built.

Finally, Dunwell has drawn attention to the orientation of the entrances of the circular structures, including the broch: of the 11 which can be determined, all point towards the east, ranging from north-east through east, south-east to south[14]. None point west. This accords with observations of prehistoric roundhouses throughout Britain, and has been linked to patterns of deposition within excavated examples to suggest that life within such houses was both functionally and ritually structured[15].

Construction
The fort ditches are excavated into glacial deposits, a mix of clay, sand and gravel. It is not clear whether the ditches reach down to bedrock in places, but this seems likely. The ramparts consist of dumped material from the ditch-digging, overlying a turf layer which represents the pre-fort ground surface. Both inner and outer ramparts have slight traces of a retaining wall on their lower outer faces. The internal walls and the foundations of the circular houses are of stone, and may represent an original mixture of stone and turf construction.

The broch is constructed of large irregular blocks of mixed igneous and sedimentary stone: with the exception of a few larger slabs, this is probably derived from material available within the glacial deposits rather than the result of quarrying. Few stones show any sign of working on their faces. The stones are generally rough-surfaced and tough: few show signs of recent breakage. Smaller stone pinnings between the larger blocks are probably the result of consolidation rather than original. The visible wall-core appears to be of rubble.

[13] Macinnes 1984, 181
[14] Dunwell 1999, 349
[15] Parker-Pearson et al 1996

The vertical outer face of the broch wall is an unusual constructional feature and might be suspect, but early drawings show it to be an original feature: it is more usual for broch outer wall-faces to have a slight backward slope, or a "batter". This absence of batter would have made it difficult to carry the wall to as great a height as might otherwise have been possible, and all the signs are that the broch at Edin's Hall never stood much above three metres high. The foot of the broch wall is markedly uneven, and on the north side dips lower as it passes over an underlying hollow: this suggests that the levelling of the site prior to its construction was only approximate.

Recent studies have identified some of the engineering complexities and solutions in tower broch structures, which have led to a greater appreciation of their importance as architecture[16], but it has to be said that Edin's Hall's broch is far from typical and would never have been a tower in any meaningful sense.

Artists' representations
No instances are known of the use of Edin's Hall as the inspiration of creative artworks, with known depictions consisting of record drawings and simple sketches.

The earliest image of Edin's Hall appears to be a sketch of the broch dating from about 1869, possibly drawn just before excavation began[17]. The 19th-century accounts are accompanied by simple measured drawings[18]. The Royal Commission plans of 1906 appeared in the first Inventory published by that body and are relatively basic compared with later volumes[19]. A later survey undertaken by RCAHMS (1951-5) omits some features thought to be later. The site was re-surveyed in 1996 by Dunwell and colleagues, and the overall site plan and schematic plan are published along with the results of the trial excavations[20].

2.5 Landscape and aesthetic values

Edin's Hall is an attractive site, as is the approach on foot, which initially follows the southern bank of the Whiteadder Water. Early in the walk, the route crosses the Whiteadder on a narrow wooden footbridge; the former copper mines are located nearby, and are on private ground.

The setting of the site, perched on the edge of a steep slope running down to the river, affords sweeping views over the surrounding landscape, which is one mainly composed of "Improved" farmland with small woodland plantations, rising to rough grazing with larger conifer plantations to the south-west, where the hillfort of Cockburn Law overlooks the scene.

[16] Barber 2018
[17] Dunwell 1999, 306
[18] Turnbull 1857; Turnbull 1881
[19] RCAHMS 1915
[20] Dunwell 1999, 310 and 315

The site is most photogenic from the air, and oblique aerial views of various dates have been published and are held in HES collections (both ex-RCAHMS and ex-HS collections). Appendix 2 contains an example.

2.6 Natural heritage values

The area around Edin's Hall is not covered by natural heritage designation[21]. Visitors to the site pass through a varied landscape of mixed arable and grazing land as well as coniferous and deciduous plantations, with adjacent moorland, so a variety of birdlife is usually present, with the singing of skylarks *Alaudia arvensis* common during spring and early summer.
Roe deer *Capreolus*, badger *Meles* and otter *Lutra* are the large mammals inhabiting the landscape, which they do in reasonable numbers although only occasional deer are likely to be seen by visitors. Rabbit *Oryctolagus cuniculus* and hare *Lepus capensis* are frequently seen.

2.7 Contemporary/use values

For contemporary communities, much of the value of Edin's Hall lies in its pleasant site and surroundings, and it is valued by local residents and visitors as much for the enjoyable walk as for its heritage value and as a tourist site. Aerial photographic images of the site have been used widely in archaeological reference works and also in general guidebooks to the area. Although the site is well-known locally, it does not (unlike some other brochs) act as a symbol for the local community. Nonetheless, it can reasonably be asserted that Edin's Hall makes some contribution to the local economy through visitor spending in the area.

It offers health and well-being benefits to visitors who make the walk, which takes about 45 minutes each way and offers moderate exercise.
On-site interpretation is provided by simple interpretation boards, and the route to the site is way-marked by metal direction posts.

3 Major gaps in understanding

Despite two centuries of excavation, study and theorising (see Appendix 4) there are a wide range of unanswered questions surrounding brochs in general, however, Edin's Hall is so exceptional in plan and location that it is not best-placed to provide answers to these. Even within the smaller group of brochs in southern Scotland, it sits somewhat apart. However, the site is well-placed to contribute to understanding of the range of Iron Age settlement types occurring in south-east Scotland, and how these might relate to each other in function and in time.

[21] SNH website (accessed 25 February 2019)

This key gaps in our understanding of Edin's Hall in this context are summarised below, which seeks to assess how far the site itself might make future contributions towards addressing these gaps:

- When were the different elements of the site constructed, and did their use overlap? Superficially, it looks as if the fort long preceded the broch and also the open settlement, with the latter possibly beginning before the broch was built, and continuing after it was abandoned. However, it seems inherently unlikely that the site was totally abandoned after the fort phase and then re-occupied in the early centuries AD. There is a strong likelihood that further investigations of the largely unexcavated interior and outer defences would reveal a much more complex and near-continuous sequence of occupation.
- Was the broch built by or for incomers, or was it created by the existing holders of the site? Due to extensive 19th-century excavation in and around the broch, this might be difficult to answer: evidence might take the form of distinct differences in the character of artefacts firmly associated with the broch as opposed to what came before. Simply identifying deposits of the appropriate date(s) would be challenging but perhaps not impossible, though it would require extensive excavation in, around, and possibly below the broch.
- How does the broch structure at Edin's Hall relate to the construction date and pre-construction history of other southern brochs? This cannot be addressed without answers to the previous question, and also dating evidence from more brochs. The absence of any definite Roman artefacts from Edin's Hall sets it apart from other brochs which have been excavated in southern Scotland (Torwoodlee, Buchlyvie and Leckie). A number of other brochs have produced evidence for immediately pre-broch activity, including massive wooden roundhouses (notably Càrn Liath in east Sutherland and Buchlyvie in Stirlingshire). Nor does Edin's Hall sit well alongside examples of brochs and broch-like structures built on the remains of very much earlier sites, including Neolithic chambered tombs (Clettraval in the Western Isles; Howe, Swandro, Quanterness and Pierowall in Orkney).
- How well does what we see at Edin's Hall today represent what was built? There is no evidence to suggest that the structural elements visible on site have been radically altered in the course of excavation and consolidation. As such, Edin's Hall survives very much as it has come down to us over two millennia; weathered and reduced by natural processes, and by a short period during which stone was taken from the broch for wall-building in the late 18th and early 19th centuries.
- What can be said about the social and territorial organisation of those who lived at Edin's Hall? A great deal can be said, but little can be proved. Most would support the existence of an elite within Iron Age society, who would have directed the activity of each group and conducted relationships with neighbouring groups and perhaps further

afield. It has been suggested that this evolved into a “chiefdom” type of society, perhaps analogous to later Highland clans, with a chief and a few senior individuals leading a “client group” bound by kinship ties, living in multiple locations across a substantial area of land.

- And how did they survive day to day, in terms of subsistence? Farming was the main source of food and probably of wealth throughout this period, although Edin’s Hall is remarkable due to the presence of evidence that nearby copper deposits were being worked in the Iron Age, and that the site had a direct connection to this activity. There is some evidence to suggest that farming was more heavily based on ranch-style cattle-raising in the earlier part of the Iron Age and gradually acquired a larger arable component as time went by, but this is by no means proven to be universal. Each site would have had its own particular mix of resources, largely determined by its location in the landscape. Edin’s Hall almost certainly contains sufficient undisturbed deposits to permit a much more detailed examination of its environmental and economic history than has so far been achieved: such work would contribute both to understanding the story of Edin’s Hall itself and to improving our understanding of Iron Age society.

Additionally, as a structure which attracted early antiquarian attention and was later to become one of the earliest Properties in Care in Scotland, Edin’s Hall has potential to offer evidence towards more recent questions, including:

- Does Edin’s Hall illustrate how conservation philosophy and practice have developed over time, especially for drystone prehistoric constructions? Undoubtedly; like a number of other sites, Edin’s Hall represents a record of changing practice, each generation working to the best of current standards only to be criticised by following generations. Thus, the “heroic” early excavation and consolidation involved a substantial degree of rebuilding of details, the raking out of material between the masonry and the insertion of small pinning stones: all actions justified in their time and largely regretted later. Yet they may have saved the structure for us to enjoy: we cannot know what would have happened otherwise.

- Is more information available regarding the initial Scheduling of Edin’s Hall and the background to its being taken into care, including records of early Ministry of Works activity in the form of images or documents which could help piece together the site’s conservation history more fully?

- Does Edin’s Hall illustrate changing patterns of archaeological theory? The site tends to be regarded as an awkward outlier in wider broch studies, and even within the study of the small group of southern brochs it does not fit well, with no Roman period finds. It does, however, serve to illustrate the continuing habit of archaeologists to

concentrate on particular classes of site: this is well-indicated by the simple fact that the site is usually called “Edin’s Hall broch” when it contains both a fort and an open settlement which are just as significant in their own ways, but which belong to classes of monument which have not attracted so much study or captured the public imagination in the same way as have brochs.

4 Associated properties

Associated properties managed by HES

- Mousa (broch, Shetland)
- Clickimin (broch and associated remains, Shetland)
- Jarlshof (broch and associated remains, Shetland)
- Ness of Burgi (fort, Shetland)
- Gurness (broch and associated remains, Orkney)
- Midhowe (broch and associated remains, Orkney)
- Dun Carloway (broch, Western Isles)
- Càrn Liath (broch, Highland)
- Dun Dornaigil (broch, Highland)
- Dun Beag (broch, Highland)
- Dun Telve (broch, Highland)
- Dun Troddan (broch, Highland)
- Castlelaw fort (hillfort, Midlothian)
- Brown Caterthun and White Caterthun (hillforts, Angus)

Other associated sites

There are many Iron Age forts and settlements in south-east Scotland and north-east England, as well as a few other broch sites. The examples listed below are not in State care:

- Torwoodlee (broch, Scottish Borders – now rather overgrown)
- Bow (broch, Scottish Borders – structure ruinous but a splendid view)
- Cockburn Law (fort, Scottish Borders – overlooks Edin’s Hall from the south-west)
- Eildon Hill North (large fort – possibly very early, Scottish Borders)
- White Castle (typical small fort, East Lothian)
- Traprain Law (large fort, East Lothian – famous for discovery of late Roman period silver hoard)
- Yeavering Bell (large fort, Northumberland – stone-built wall encloses large area)

5 Keywords

Hill fort: Broch; Settlement; Iron Age; Intra-mural stair; Batter; Guard cell; Entrance passage; Copper mining

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Note: Footnotes throughout the text offer page numbers where appropriate. If no page number is given, this indicates that reference is being made to the general thrust of the publication cited rather than a specific point of detail.

Appendices

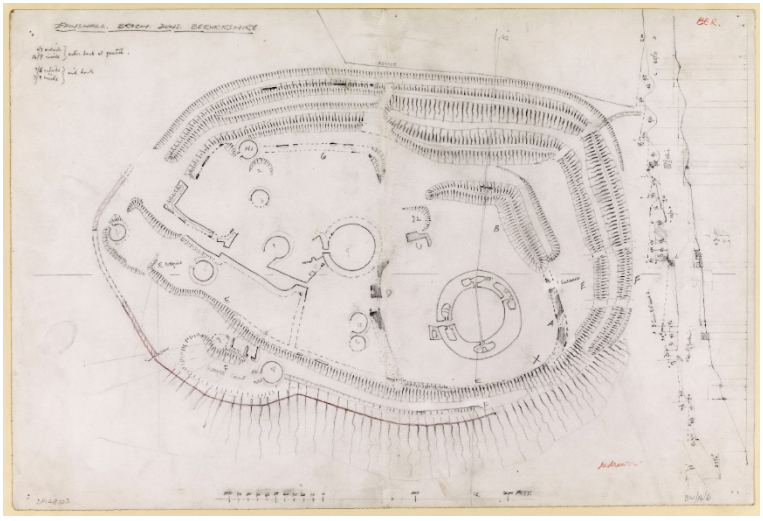
Appendix 1 – Timeline

Iron Age (early)	Construction of hillfort (perhaps around 500 BC).
Iron Age (mid)	Construction of broch and enclosure wall (possibly in 2nd century AD).
Iron Age (mid-late)	Hillfort ramparts reduced on east side, settlement of circular houses and small enclosures, partly over eastern ramparts of fort.
Iron Age or Medieval	Copper mining at Elba, just over 1 kilometre to east. Ingots hidden in floor of broch chamber.
1793	Survey by Blackadder.
1834	Description by Blackadder.
1857	Description and plan published by George Turnbull.
1869-70 (and later)	Excavation by John Turnbull.
1887	State care: under a Guardianship agreement, the State (Office of Works) takes on all responsibility for maintaining the broch and for providing access and interpretation, though title to the land remains with the proprietor.
19th/20th century	Between 1887 and 1906, Office of Works staff undertake final clearance of the broch and consolidation work to wall of broch, including rebuilding of upper parts of the wall. No detailed records have been located.

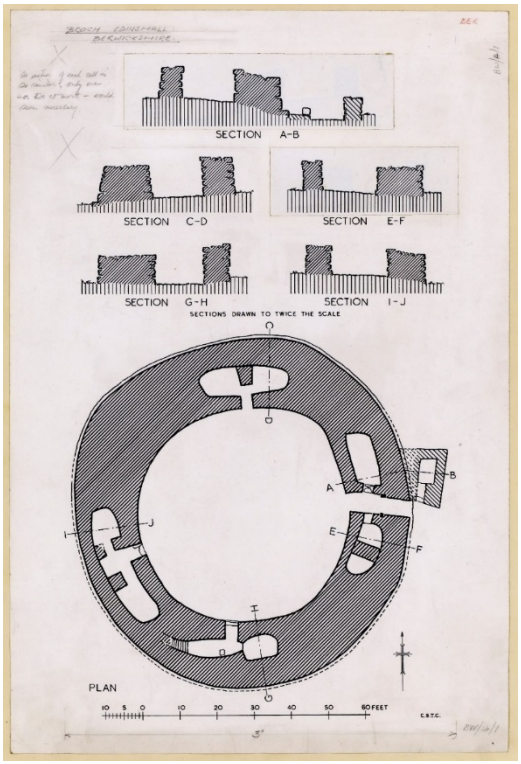
1906	Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments and Constructions of Scotland investigators visit, photograph and prepare measured drawings – published 1909 (revised and issued as Inventory for Berwickshire in 1915).
?1930s onwards:	Waymark signs and stiles erected in walls and fences, information board on site – regularly renewed since then.
1996	Survey and trial excavations to assess damage caused by rabbit infestation. New fencing erected.
21st century	Terrestrial Laser Scanning as part of the Rae Project.

Appendix 2 – Images

SC 1071113 © Crown copyright: HES. Site in light snow – aerial



DP 148103 © Crown Copyright: HES. RCAHMS survey of whole site 1950



DP 148098 © Crown Copyright: HES. RCAHMS 1950 broch plan and sections (unpublished)

Edin's Hall broch

Edin’s Hall broch entrance and guard cell

Edin’s Hall aerial from south-west

Appendix 3 – Edin's Hall, Detailed Description

Edin's Hall occupies a slight rise on a northward-sloping hillside, overlooked to the south west by the large hillfort on Cockburn Law. To the north, it commands a sweeping view up and down the valley of the Whiteadder Water, which drains towards the North Sea, emptying into the Tweed just east of Berwick. The river valley would have offered an early route from northern Northumberland through to the Lothian plain.

The earliest features visible on site are the twin ditches and intervening ramparts of a hillfort, these enclose an oval area 135m east-west by 75m north-south: there is an entrance gap on the south-west side. The ditches and banks vary in profile, and probably represent a structure which was modified on more than one occasion. On the north side, where the natural slope is steepest, there is no outer ditch. The western end of the fort seems to have been partly flattened before the building of the broch there, and traces of an enclosure south and west of the broch may represent an outer enclosure wall of similar date to the broch.

The broch stands within the western end of the fort, surviving only to about 1.5m high. Its stone wall has been thoroughly consolidated. The broch's interior is accessed via a narrow passage through the wall, which averages about 5.5m thick. Two chambers in the wall thickness open into the entrance passage, one from each side. In addition, there are three chambers in the wall thickness which are accessed from the broch's interior space or courtyard. The lowest steps of a stone stair rise within the chamber on the south side of the broch. All three of these chambers are larger than is typical for brochs. Outside the broch is a stone-walled enclosure which appears to relate to the broch, and may have been built at the same time.

Later than the fort, and until 1996 assumed to be later than the broch, is a settlement consisting of a number of circular houses and small, sub-rectangular enclosures which occupies the eastern half of the fort's interior and partly overlies the eastern defences. What appears to be the earliest, and the largest, of these circular houses is the one nearest to the broch, which is much larger in diameter than the others, at over 14m across. In 1996 it was demonstrated that the enclosure believed to be associated with the broch abuts against this house, making the house earlier than the enclosure wall and, by implication, the broch. Assuming the enclosure around the broch is contemporary with it, then the open settlement spans a period (at least) from just before the broch, to well after it.

Appendix 4 – Brochs: theories and interpretations

a) Defining brochs

For the purpose of this and other similar documents, the term "broch" is used to refer to what some researchers have called "fully formed" or "tower" brochs.

There is no way of knowing exactly how many such structures once stood to heights approaching Mousa's 13 metres plus, only that the visible surviving remains of many sites do not rule this out.

Dryden first attempted to define brochs in 1872:
"A broch is a circular tower formed of wall 10 to 16f thick at the base, enclosing a court from 24 to 38f diameter, with one entrance from the outside into the court. The usual thickness of wall is about 15f, and the usual diameter of the court about 28f. All were in outline truncated cones – that is, the outside of the wall "batters" or inclines inwards. The wall is also decreased in thickness towards the top by set-offs inside. The chambers of the broch proper are in the thickness of the walls, but there are usually partitions in the court of later construction. The original height of these towers of course varied, and except Mousa, we have no broch more than 20f high, but Mousa is still 40f high and was somewhat more. No mortar was used in them, but probably the chinks were stopped with moss or mud just as in modern Shetland cottages."[22]

There have been a number of definitions over intervening years, of which, that by MacKie in 1965, refreshed in 2002, remains the most influential. MacKie offered a tight definition of brochs, to distinguish them from other drystone structures of broadly similar date. For MacKie, for a structure to be classed as a broch required five essential characteristics which must all occur in combination: (1) a circular ground-plan, (2) a thick wall, (3) large size, (4) a ledge (or scarcement) on its inside wall face and (5) at least one "hollow wall feature" from a list of four: (5a) an upper gallery (that is, a hollow wall at a level higher than the ground level), (5b) a chamber over the entrance passage, (5c) a void or voids in the inner wall-face and (5d) an intra-mural stair at an upper level.

MacKie noted that some "classic" features of brochs, such as their narrow and well-built entrance passages, occur in other types of structure. He also excluded from broch-defining characteristics the possession of a hollow wall at the ground level only, and also the possession of a stair which starts at ground level unless it rises to a much higher level.

As MacKie noted, relatively few of the c.600 sites referred to as brochs can be shown to possess this set of features, and he proposed that "probable" brochs could be defined as possessing features (1) to (4) but not demonstrably possessing any of the hollow wall features, with possible brochs having "no diagnostic features exposed but which seem likely from their situation to be brochs"[23].

The features of MacKie's "brochs" and "probable brochs" are known to be present at no more than 15 percent of the 600-plus suggested broch sites in Scotland, and there is no knowing how many of the remainder might, or might not, reveal such features on excavation. This means that Scotland is known to

[22] Dryden 1872, 200
[23] MacKie 2002, 1-2

possess at least 80 brochs but could in fact possess many more, not to mention sites lost or destroyed over the centuries before antiquarian interest. Stepping back from technical structural definitions, it is common practice, where a broch has proved on excavation to be surrounded by a complex of smaller structures and sometimes also by outer walls and ditches, to refer to the entire site simply as a broch – Edin's Hall falls into this category, where the broch acts as signifier for a larger and more complex site.

Brochs are unique to Scotland, and one of Scotland's few "endemic" prehistoric architectural forms. Their greatest concentration is in Orkney, Shetland, Caithness and East Sutherland, with more examples scattered rather more thinly across the Western Isles, Skye and the adjacent mainland. Edin's Hall is one of the few examples located outside the Highlands and Islands.

b) A brief account of broch studies

Brochs have been the subject of more research and discussion than perhaps any other type of ancient monument. It is necessary to review these antiquarian and archaeological debates in some detail, because the significance of Mousa (and other brochs in State care) lies to a considerable extent in how each site offers, or could offer, evidence in support of competing definitions of "broch-ness" and towards competing narratives about the origins, date, nature and purpose of these enigmatic sites. The outcome of a huge amount of study appears to be that very few of the key questions about brochs have been resolved, while at the same time new and even less answerable questions have been stimulated. All narratives rely to some extent on assumptions, and the most which can be hoped is that these are made explicit.

The word "broch" was being used by antiquarians alongside "brough", "burgh" and "Picts' House / Castle" by the early 1800s, and the "broch" spelling was formally adopted by the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland in the early 1870s, though older usages lingered for a generation. Initially it signified a structure which was either, like Mousa, a tall-standing tower, or which had a lower height but showed sufficient structural detail for its similarity with surviving tall-standing examples to be asserted with confidence.

It is worth noting in passing that "broch" does not seem to have been in popular usage for this class of structure: the only pre-1800 use of "broch" was in relation to the town of Fraserburgh, where Scotland's first planned "new town" was created in the late 1500s and early 1600s, and referred to as "Fraser's broch" or "Fraser's burgh" [24], suggesting that broch was a northern synonym for burgh. The nickname Broch is still in popular use today, especially in local newspapers, where it allows for a larger typeface and more striking headlines than does Fraserburgh[25]. And in the Western Isles and wider Gaelic-speaking area, the term "broch" was not used locally, even

[24] Oram et al, 5

[25] One memorable headline from the Press and Journal, in 1980: "Broch man told lies to gain credit"

though the Old Norse root “borg” appears as “barp”- and “borve” in many place-names. The word dùn, a generic Gaelic word for fort, was used exclusively for all man-made prehistoric sites which appeared to be of a defensive nature.

As archaeological research and fieldwork progressed, the number of “possible” broch sites has risen to about 600[26], although as time passed, the majority of sites so designated were usually no more than large grass-covered mounds of masonry of approximately the right dimensions, which in their physical appearance and siting appeared to informed observers less like a large burial cairn and more like a broch – a rather unsatisfactory approach, but one which persists in modern research.

A recent estimate is that only about 150 of 600+ “possible” broch sites show any details of built masonry at all, with about half of these, 70 or 80, either surviving as towers or showing sufficient structural evidence to suggest they could once have achieved such a height.[27] That said, when “possible” broch sites have been tested by full or partial excavation, or otherwise disturbed, they do prove more often than not to reveal features allowing them to be counted as brochs[28]. Additional “possible” sites continue to be added, and in some cases demonstrated to be brochs[29]. In summary, Scotland has at least 80 brochs, but may have many more.

It has been accepted from the early days of serious study that few other brochs had ever stood quite as tall as **Mousa** and the other partially surviving towers such as **Duns Telve**, **Troddan** and **Carloway**, though views vary radically as to just how many were towers at all. Scott in 1947 argued that only a dozen or so tall towers had ever existed across Scotland, with the rest simple solidly built low-rise farmhouses[30]. Graham immediately disputed this, based on data from Royal Commission surveys, and his view, that the majority of brochs were tall enough to be imposing, if not as lofty as Mousa, has tended to prevail since then[31].

Attempts to define “true” or “tower” brochs as distinct from a wider class of drystone forts and duns have tended to centre on the presence of specific constructional features: near-circular ground plan, hollow or galleried wall construction, single narrow entrance passage, staircase within the wall thickness, a wall thick enough to have supported a sufficient height to act as a defence, etcetera[32].

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[26] Armit 2003
[27] Barber 2018
[28] E.g. Cloddie Knowe, trial trenched in 1988 (MacKie 2002 p 82)
[29] E.g. Channerwick, revealed in winter 2013/14 http://scharp.co.uk/shoredig-projects/channerwick-broch/ accessed 6 September 2018 (illustration also shows Mousa used as the archetype of a broch)
[30] Scott 1947
[31] Graham 1947a and 1947b
[32] MacKie 2002, 1-2

Although early commentators tended to agree that brochs were originally unroofed towers, over time, opinion has shifted to the extent that most commentators, while disagreeing about details, accept that brochs contained significant internal fittings, typically including one or more raised floors and some form of a roof, and that timber was the major component of these "now vanished" elements. However, such features are in all cases inferred, based on what makes best sense of surviving stone-built features, such as scarcement ledges. Initially, it was suggested that broch roofs were "obviously" annular, lean-to structures leaving the centre for the inner space open to the sky (for light and smoke to escape)[33]. More recently, broch reconstructions have tended to feature conical roofs sitting on the wall-head or just below it, with the weight taken by stout posts[34]. Fojut (sceptically) and most recently Romankiewicz (more optimistically) are among those who have recently published on possible roofing structures[35].

Physical evidence for such features is extremely rare amongst excavated broch sites, and even at the only two brochs where evidence of really substantial floor-set timber posts has been found, **Dun Troddan** (Highland)[36] and Leckie (Stirlingshire)[37], these cannot conclusively be confirmed as having been constructed at the same time as the brochs[38]. The need for caution is emphasised by the substantial post-rings found at Buchlyvie (Stirlingshire)[39] and Càrn Liath (Highland – Sutherland)[40] which in both cases can be shown to relate to pre-broch roundhouses[41].

If all brochs were indeed fitted out in timber, this would have interesting implications for wider relationships and poses the question of how quality timber for construction was obtained by those living in relatively treeless areas such as Shetland or the Western Isles.[42] The earlier view, that brochs as first constructed were not intended to be roofed, still has adherents, who offer an alternative view of brochs as a network of defensive lookout towers built in response to the threat of raiding or invasion. Smith has recently re-opened this debate by suggesting that Mousa and some other (although not all) brochs were never intended to be roofed[43].

c) Broch origins

The date and antecedents of brochs have been pushed progressively earlier. The idea that brochs were built by the Danes or Vikings[44] persisted for some

[33] Curle 1921, 90-92
[34] For example that by Alan Braby, widely reproduced, e.g. in Armit and Fojut 1998, 15
[35] Fojut 2005b, 194-6; Romankiewicz 2016, 17-19
[36] Curle 1921, 90-92
[37] MacKie 2007, 1312-3 (see also MacKie 2016 for more detailed account)
[38] Fojut 2005b, 192-3
[39] Main 1989, 296-302
[40] Love 1989, 165
[41] In this respect, the conjectural plans offered by MacKie for Dun Carloway are perhaps unhelpful. MacKie 2007, 1204
[42] Fojut 2005b, 196-9
[43] Smith 2016, 15
[44] Fergusson 1877, 630-9

decades, despite the outright rejection of this idea by Scandinavian antiquarians as early as 1852[45]. The alternative view, that they were built by the native population as watch-towers against the Vikings, was also popular[46] and led to them being called “Picts’ House” or “Pictish Castle”. However, by the 1880s, it had become generally accepted that brochs were somewhat earlier, dating to what had come to be termed the Iron Age and constructed at a time when the Romans were actively expanding their Empire, further south[47].

As the discipline of archaeology developed, and in the absence of direct dating evidence, efforts were made to fit brochs into wider perspectives. The idea of a series of “cliff castles” along the west coast of Britain, originating in Cornwall and gradually spreading north as they increased in architectural sophistication and complexity, was proposed[48], and led to the dominance of various “diffusionist” models, in which brochs were seen as the strongholds of an incoming elite[49]. Elaborate “family trees” of Iron Age fortification across western Europe were drawn up, culminating in the broch, and these carried some influence well into the 1980s.[50]

The discovery, in excavated broch sites, of some types of artefacts with similarities to those found in southern England and Brittany was held to support this idea, with any thought that their presence might have arisen through trade being rejected. Clarke and others warned that many of the artefact types cited were much more broadly distributed and in some cases near-ubiquitous[51] in the middle Iron Age, and could not be relied upon to demonstrate large-scale invasion. That said, most would accept that there were contacts between Iron Age communities living along the European north-western seaboard, so ideas might have been shared, and individuals may have moved from area to area.

The observation has been made that brochs are unlikely to have arisen locally in north and west Scotland because the preceding local Bronze Age seems poor, but this may well be a mis-reading of the evidence: a lack of monumental building does not necessarily imply an impoverished culture. The fundamental problems for the immigration/invasion hypothesis as an explanation for the appearance of brochs, are (a) why the arrival of people from an area which held no structures anything like brochs should lead to their construction in their new homeland, and (b) why the limited amount of “exotic” pottery which is held to mark their arrival in the area (supposedly at Clickimin) might not have been obtained by trade or by gift exchange.

The idea that brochs were built by “warlike chieftains” to “overawe a subject population”, remained popular[52], although not with all commentators. Stewart in 1956 was typically concise in this respect with regard to his homeland:

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[45] Worsaae 1852, 233
[46] Stuart 1857, 191-2
[47] Anderson 1883
[48] Childe 1935
[49] Scott, 1948
[50] Hamilton 1968, 51
[51] Clarke 1971
[52] RCAHMS 1946 (visited/written 1930), 48-55

"Shetland at its best had two feudal castles, and all the local lairds of later times (very small fry *indeed) would not have added up to the fraction of her hundred brochs, so it is useless to think of a lord controlling a group of serfs… We have a form of life based on a group much larger than the family, and a communal effort to meet some unprecedented sort of danger."*[53]

The older, alternative view, that brochs were a unique local invention, began to be revived in the 1950s, notably in Shetland[54]. Broad contemporaneity with the Roman presence was still supported, but now with the added idea of brochs as refuges against slave-raiding, possibly by the Romans or by war-bands selling slaves into the Roman Empire. The persistence of immigration, if not invasion, as a stimulus was maintained, with the invention of brochs, probably in Orkney, by a "mixed" population[55]. At the same time, the idea was revived that brochs were built over a very short period and then abandoned or converted into non-defensive structures.[56]

The period of broch construction was still assumed to be in the last century BC and the first century AD (largely on the basis of a few Roman artefacts found in and around brochs). This theory allowed for several centuries of experimentation to "perfect" the broch, wherever it first emerged in its ultimate expression as a tower, although there was a tendency to push this date a little earlier, perhaps into the second or third century BC, with an increasing preference for local invention over external inspiration. There was general agreement that brochs as well-built as Mousa came late in any sequence of structures[57].

The search for the architectural antecedents of brochs produced two competing theories. A 'western origin' school saw brochs developing from simpler D-shaped enclosures with some broch features which occur in Skye and the neighbouring mainland, and which MacKie termed semi-brochs, via the "ground galleried" brochs of the west into the "solid-based" brochs of the north[58]. A competing northern origin school of opinion saw brochs arising in Orkney or Caithness (or even in Shetland, where a small number of so-called "blockhouse forts" contain broch-like features, such as wall-base cells, stairways and scarcement ledges)[59]. Dating evidence emerged in Orkney during the early 1980s for a few thick-walled roundhouses (such as that at Bu, near Stromness, dating to 600 – 500 BC) which some claimed as forerunners to brochs[60], although these possessed few, if any, of the classic defining features of brochs.[61] Nonetheless, this led some to believe that brochs might go back as early as 600 BC[62].

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[53] Stewart 1956, 15
[54] O'Neill 1954
[55] Stewart 1956, 15-16
[56] Stewart 1956, 15
[57] Fojut 1981, 226-7
[58] MacKie 1992: also MacKie 2007, 1094,
[59] Lamb 1980, Fojut 1981
[60] Hedges and Bell 1980, Hedges 1987
[61] Armit 1990 p 195
[62] Fojut 1981, p 34

Until recently there have been few secure radiocarbon dates for the actual construction of brochs, since few excavators had dug under their massive walls. Almost all dates from broch sites related to deposits within and around them, and almost by definition later than the construction of the brochs on each site – and usually later by an unknowable length of time. This changed with the dating of Dun Vulan (South Uist) from carbonised grain within the matrix of the wall. Taken with other material nearby, this suggested a construction date in the late 2nd or the 1st century BC. Slightly less securely, the construction of a broch at Upper Scalloway (Shetland) appeared to have taken place in the 1st century AD[63].

The radiocarbon dating of the construction of a fully-formed Shetland broch to the period 400 – 200 BC, at Old Scatness in southern Mainland[64], has forced a radical re-thinking of broch origins. The date, from well-stratified animal bone which was fresh at the time of its burial and lay directly under the well-built primary wall of the broch, has confirmed the growing suspicions that brochs were a considerably earlier development than had generally been supposed, at least in the north.

This has not entirely banished an attachment to the idea of immigration as a stimulus for changes in society which led to the appearance of brochs, although its continuing adherents now place the hypothetical arrival of the supposed highly skilled incomers into northern Scotland much earlier, perhaps even at the start of the local Iron Age (around 700 – 600 BC), the new date MacKie has suggested the arrival of the supposed high-status southern immigrants to Shetland[65].

The arguments for this are problematic in the extreme, due to the disturbed nature of the structures and deposits at Clickimin, which Hamilton largely failed to take into account[66]. At Clickimin, key pottery forms with internally fluted rims and sometimes black burnished exteriors, were held by both Hamilton and MacKie to mark the arrival of southern immigrants well before the broch was constructed. It was suggested as early as 1980 that these particular forms of pottery appear not before, but in fact well after, the building of the broch at Clickimin and probably elsewhere in Shetland[67].

This interpretation has now gained strong support from the extensive excavations at Old Scatness, where these pottery characteristics consistently appear from the 1st century BC onwards – long after the construction of the broch. A similar date has been ascribed to comparable pottery at Dun Vulan in South Uist. This change – which may or may not mark the arrival of incoming settlers – is therefore no longer relevant in terms of dating the first appearance of brochs, either in Shetland or in the Western Isles.

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[63] Parker Pearson et al 1996; Sharples 1998
[64] Dockrill et al 2015, 168-171
[65] MacKie 2008
[66] Smith, 2014, 4
[67] Fojut 1989, especially 29-31 (first discussed in unpublished PhD thesis 1980)

MacKie's recent suggestion that brochs were invented first in the north, possibly even in Shetland, and then later reinvented in the west[68] seems improbable, and the scenario suggested by Parker Pearson and collaborators more likely[69], with the broch tower invented in the north and only spreading to (or being adopted in) the west considerably later. This is consistent with the fact that in the west brochs are fewer in number and occur interspersed with other small stone forts which were unlikely to have stood as tall. The dating evidence from Clachtoll broch in West Sutherland, currently (2018) under investigation, should shed light on this, occupying as it does what might be seen as a step on the journey from north to west (or vice versa).

Reinforced by the new dating evidence, and following detailed architectural and engineering analysis, plus his own work at Thrumster broch and other sites in Caithness, Barber has suggested that, in the north at least, "classic", "fully-formed" or "tower" brochs such as Mousa may in fact all be of relatively early date and built over a short span of time short duration ("perhaps only a single, say 35 year, generation…in the early fourth century BC"[70]), often being reduced in height not long after their construction and in some cases incorporated as the cores of more extensive settlements. This latter phase of conversion Barber sees, with many caveats, as being already underway in Caithness by 200 BC and continuing perhaps until AD 200[71].

So, while the date of origin for some brochs has been pushed earlier, there remains good evidence that some were still being built around the turn of the millennia in Shetland, and possibly built for the first time then in the west. There is also some evidence which may suggest direct contact with the 1st – 2nd century AD Roman occupying forces in central Scotland on the part of the inhabitants of Leckie in Stirlingshire, one of the "outlying" brochs which have always proved problematic to fit into the mainstream of broch theories. These have tended to be regarded as among the very last brochs to be built, and the broch at Leckie appeared to have been recently built at the time of the suggested Roman contact[72]. Edin's Hall falls into this grouping geographically, but has not so far produced demonstrably Roman artefactual material.

The wide span of dates now available suggests that the narrative which best fits the evidence is that the broch was a successful structural form which was first developed in the north, where it was quickly built in sizeable numbers. Brochs continued to be built in the north in appropriate circumstances over several centuries, and the architectural form was adopted further afield in later centuries. The artefactual evidence from Dun Vulan does not suggest the Western Isles were colonised in force from the north, being instead more consistent with limited contact. The idea that Shetland may have been taken

[68] MacKie 2008, 272
[69] Parker Pearson et al 1996, 58-62
[70] John Barber pers. comm. August 2018
[71] Barber 2018
[72] MacKie 2007, 1314-5 (See MacKie 2016 for more detailed discussion)

over by Orcadian broch-builders, as floated by Stewart in 1956, similarly lacks artefactual support. But this returns us to the core of the problem; that we still have next to no excavated evidence for Iron Age culture at the point of broch building, but only from later centuries.

That is probably as much interpretation as the available evidence can currently support, and debate will continue as to exactly what the "appropriate circumstances" were which made building a broch a suitable response.

d) How special are brochs, and what was their purpose?
Many writers, including MacKie[73] and more recently Barber[74], have emphasised the combination of architectural features which they felt pointed towards what Barber has termed "canonicity" – the intention of the builders of each broch to conform to a model which was clearly defined closely resembled other such towers so far as geology would allow. MacKie posited a "professional" architect cadre[75] while Barber has recently pointed to the engineering knowledge involved in constructing so close to the physical limits of buildability[76].

Others have seen brochs simply as one end of a much wider spectrum of enclosed drystone structures which were all intended to serve the same broad purpose, presumed to be that of a defensible and impressive dwelling[77]. Armit developed the idea of the "Simple" and "Complex Atlantic Roundhouses" to emphasise similarities within a larger class of approximately circular structures[78], while Romankiewicz has since taken this further to include all thick-walled structures, regardless of plan form, which contained intra-mural spaces and could have been roofed[79], though to refer to such a wide range of structures as brochs seems unhelpful[80].

These contrasting views are interwoven with debate and with assumptions about how brochs "worked" in practical and social terms: about whether they represented the communal homes of whole communities or only of landlords or chieftains; whether they were defensive at all, or solely intended to demonstrate status[81], and also about how and when the tower form emerged: possibly early and as a brilliant stroke of creative genius, or possibly late and as the product of a gradual process of experimentation. (Although, as Barber has recently observed, the frequent use of the term "evolution" is inappropriate in a Darwinian sense – ideas may evolve but structures cannot.)[82]

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[73] MacKie 1965
[74] Barber 2018
[75] MacKie 1965
[76] Barber 2018
[77] Barrett 1981, 207-17
[78] Armit 1991
[79] Romankiewicz 2011
[80] Romankiewicz 2016
[81] Armit 2005b
[82] Barber 2018

e) Brochs and Iron Age society

A further source of continuing debate has been the nature of contemporary society, ranging from early visions of a near-feudal society with immigrant overlords and their armed warriors living in brochs and levying rent and other support from subservient native, peasant farmers[83], through one of embattled local communities seeking to defend themselves against raiders or invaders[84], to one of peaceable, hierarchical farming communities building brochs not for defence at all, but as a symbol of their possession of the land, their prestige, and safe storage of accumulated wealth in the form of surplus grain[85]. Several commentators have observed that many brochs occupy locations where large-scale arable agriculture seems unlikely to have been any more viable in the Iron Age than it would be today[86] and the assumption of grain surplus is not certain.

Almost all of the dated evidence for life in and around brochs relates to their occupation in primary and subsequent forms, and not to their construction, and this is likely to remain the case. We have no way of knowing whether society at the precise time brochs were built was similar to that in subsequent centuries, from which most of our excavated evidence derives.
The explanation for the regional distribution pattern of brochs probably lies in the nature of Iron Age 'tribal' groupings, but there is insufficient evidence to provide a satisfactory explanation. The types of artefact found in broch excavations also occur on non-broch sites and also beyond the so-called "Broch Province", and brochs do not appear in some adjacent areas where physical conditions suggest they might, for example, in mid and south Argyll or Arran.In short, brochs do not align with a single distinctive "material culture". Stuart in 1857 expressed things pithily: "there must have been something peculiar in the circumstances of the inhabitants to have given rise to these peculiar erections."[87] We are still far from understanding what this peculiarity might have been.

It seems likely that each broch represents the work of a substantial community, larger than a single extended family, which controlled a distinct area of land (and perhaps sea) and that the broch represented a visible token of their possession, willingness to defend that holding, and the social status of the group or at least its leaders. People must also have continued to make their living from the land and sea, so access to resources would have been a constant concern. However, how their society was organised is not self-evident, and the unanswered question remains: what combination of circumstances led to the building of a broch?

So far as can be ascertained from excavated evidence, Iron Age society at the time of the brochs appears to have been relatively "flat"; composed of largely self-sufficient groups, which over time became associated into wider regional

[83] Scott 1947, 1948
[84] O'Neill
[85] Hingley 1992, 19; Dockrill 1998, 493-7 et passim; Armit 1996, 129-130
[86] Smith 2014
[87] Stuart 1857, 192

groupings that might loosely be termed “chiefdoms”. These various groups doubtless interacted, both productively (trade, social exchange and agreed marriage) and negatively (raiding to steal livestock and perhaps to take prisoners, and even to take over territory). Brochs presumably provided enough defensibility to offer a degree of deterrence against the less desirable forms of interaction which might be expected locally, though they would not have withstood prolonged siege warfare – which in itself says much about how the builders perceived their wider world.

It is possible to imagine economic models for communities living in and around brochs, and while this might have been possible in the more favoured parts of Orkney or Caithness (both of which exported grain in late medieval times), neither the Western Isles or Shetland seem likely to have been able to support a subsistence economy founded principally on the cultivation of grain, though what grain could be produced would have been a valuable resource. Reliance on pastoralism and on the use of coastal and marine resources would have balanced such an economy more broadly, especially if exchange or barter operated between nearby communities with access to different resource bases[88].

However, the feasibility of theoretical economic models is inter-twined with the particular model of social structure which is assumed. Primitive communalism, client-elite relationships, inter-group collectivities (very close to a chiefdom society), a proto-feudal or even a full-blown feudal system have all been suggested at various times. Each would have made subtly, sometimes radically, different demands upon the resources available. The sole indisputable fact remains that each broch must have been built by a locally-available workforce, sustained by locally-available resources for at least as long as it took to build.

Once built, brochs may well have served a variety of functions, or at least acted as bases for a mix of activities which varied widely from site to site and from time to time. Some brochs went on to become the cores of more extensive settlements, while others seem to have been abandoned not long after they were constructed. Many brochs undoubtedly served as farmhouses in later years, but whether any brochs were built primarily as farmhouses is likely to remain an open question. It is hard to escape the impression, especially when standing next to a broch such as Mousa or Dun Carloway, that brochs were originally defensive, if only in that they were intended to offer outward vantage, impress the viewer and suggest the invulnerability of their possessors, and that thoughts of agrarian domesticity were not paramount in their builders’ minds. On the other hand, the broch at Edin’s Hall gives much more of an impression of having been influenced by broch architecture but remaining rooted in a different tradition of very large wooden roundhouses – though if Edin’s Hall’s “broch” was roofed, which has been doubted, it would have been one of the largest roundhouses ever identified in northern Britain.

[88] Fojut 1982a

f) Conclusion

In conclusion, despite two centuries of study, most of the basic facts about brochs, beyond physical measurements of surviving structures, remain conjectural, with interpretations usually based upon a very small sample of evidence, selectively interpreted, fitted to “off-the-shelf” social models. The revision of explanatory narratives will continue as new evidence emerges and as old evidence is reviewed: every few years brings another brave attempt to present a unified and coherent account of the issues discussed here[89] [90] [91] only to see each effort, rather than unifying the field of study, simply add fresh fuel to debate.

It remains true, as Stewart sagely remarked in 1956, that “it is easier to guess why the broch came into being than how”[92]. But neither question has yet been answered conclusively.

[89] Hedges and Bell 1980
[90] Armit 2003
[91] Most recently, Romankiewicz 2016.
[92] Stewart 1956, 21