HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT SCOTLAND | ÀRAINNEACHD EACHDRAIDHEIL ALBA

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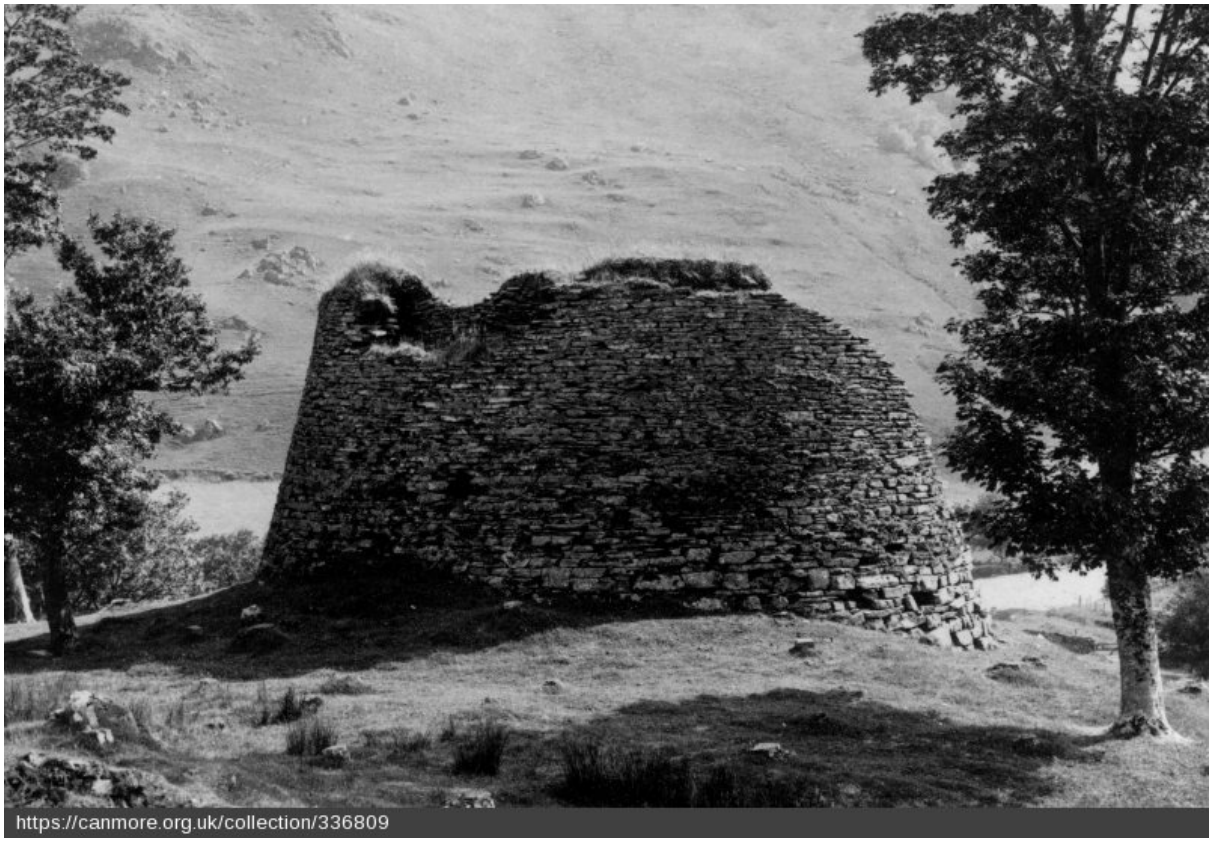
STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

DUN TRODDAN



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Historic Environment Scotland – Scottish Charity No. SC045925
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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

DUN TRODDAN

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1. SUMMARY

1.1 Introduction

The tall-standing remains of Dun Troddan broch are situated on a level platform overlooking the valley floor of Gleann Beag, Kyle. The well-preserved broch of Dun Telve lies only 500 metres to the west.

Duns Telve and Troddan were both taken into State care in 1885 under a Guardianship agreement.

The site, which is unstaffed, is reached by a single-track road from the village of Glenelg, and the pair of brochs are often collectively referred to as the 'Glenelg Brochs'.

Visitor numbers are not currently counted, but were estimated at 1,200 for 2018-2019.

1.2 Statement of Significance

Brochs are an Iron Age phenomenon; they were first constructed (on current evidence) at a date between 400 and 200 BC and are a prehistoric building type unique to Scotland. They are typified by a circular internal ground plan with massive drystone walls capable of rising to tower-like heights. The largest among them are believed to have been the tallest prehistoric stone structures in North Western Europe, though very few have survived to any great height.

Dun Troddan is of national importance as one of the tallest-standing brochs. Its remaining structure, much reduced in historic times, still stands up to 7.6 metres tall for about one third of its circumference, making it the fourth-tallest surviving broch (after **Mousa**[1] in Shetland, the nearby **Dun Telve**, and **Dun Carloway** in Lewis). It is thus one of a small group of examples upon which inferences can be based regarding the uppermost structure, and possible roofing, of brochs.

No direct dating evidence has emerged so far for Dun Troddan, but on analogy with more recently excavated sites, a date of construction in the last few centuries BC seems most likely. It is not known if Dun Troddan was

[1] Throughout the text, site names in **bold** are managed by Historic Environment Scotland and are publicly accessible. Access information can be found at: www.historicenvironment.scot/visit-a-place/

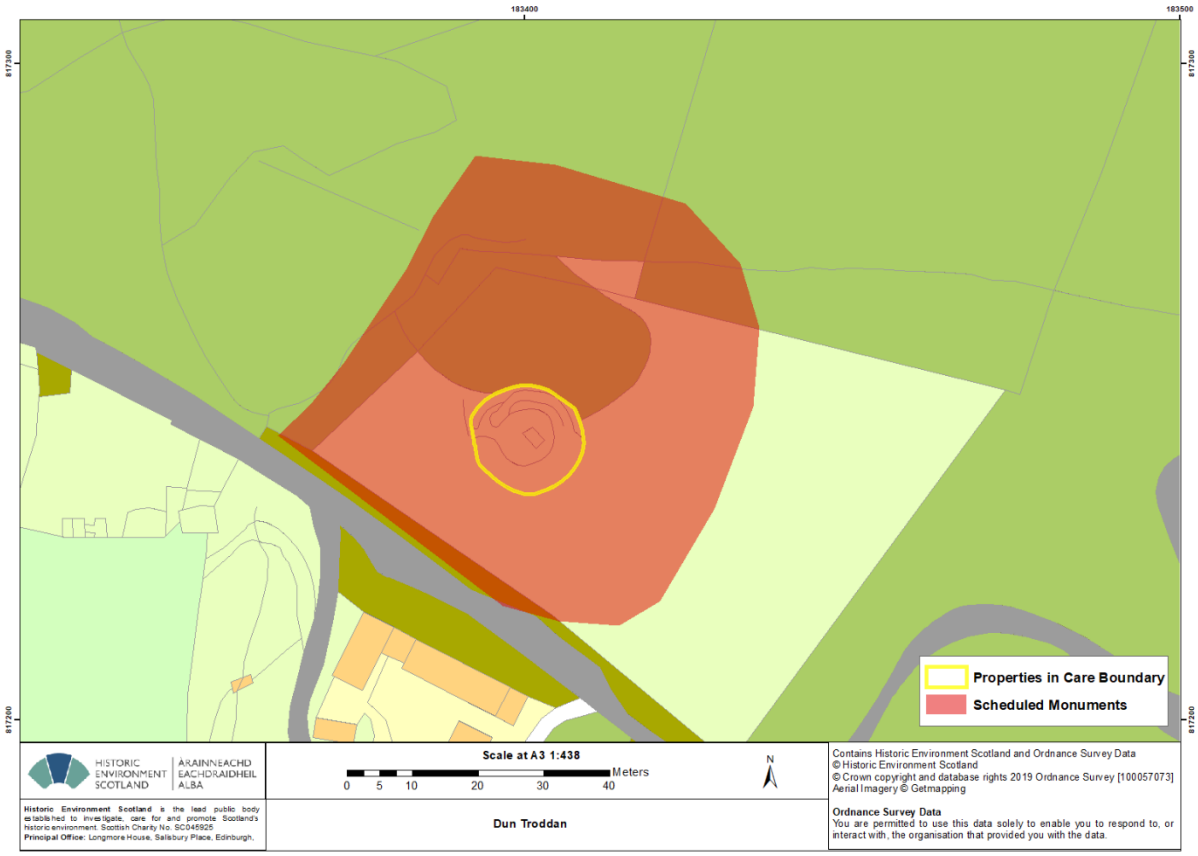
built before or after the nearby Dun Telve, but the occupation of the two almost certainly overlapped.

Limited excavations in 1920 revealed post-holes indicative of a ring of stout posts within the broch's interior space, concentric with the walls. This has been adduced as evidence that brochs originally held substantial wooden structures; perhaps raised floors and/or roofs. Recent research has, however, suggested the post-ring observed in 1920 may not have been embedded in the original ground level within the broch. Yet the possibility remains that this could *still* have been an original design feature, with the excavated remains representing a later replacement.

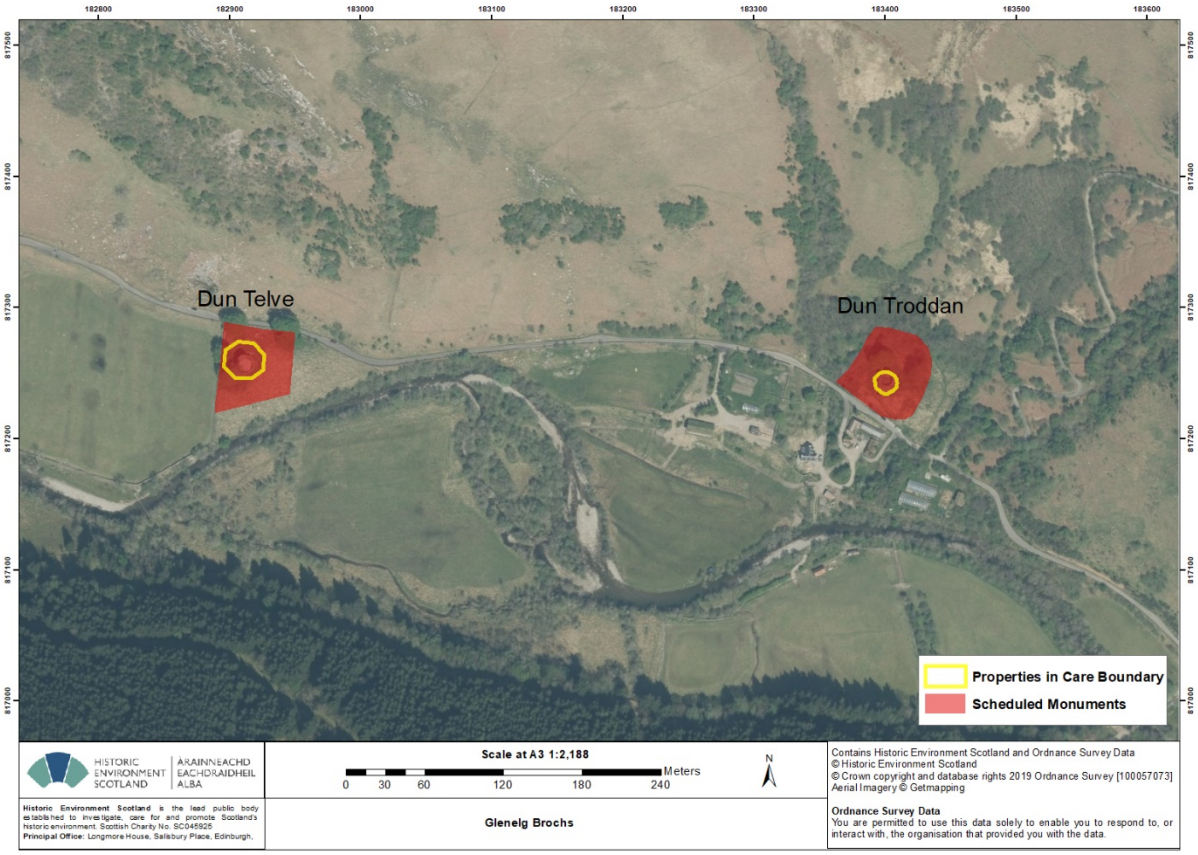
Key aspects of Dun Troddan's significance include:

- The remarkable height of the surviving structure, particularly the surviving details of the upper parts of the double-skinned broch wall.
- The evidence for a ring of substantial posts within the broch, which has implications for our understanding of how brochs were fitted out internally, either originally or subsequently.
- Located on the mainland and close by a road it is relatively straightforward to access (compared, say, to Mousa); this allows a firsthand appreciation of the scale of the structure.
- The history of antiquarian and archaeological investigation at the site.
- The small but interesting finds assemblage.
- The potential for surviving archaeological deposits.
- 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. Its close proximity to a very similar broch has to be accommodated into any such theories.
- Its use and presentation as an Ancient Monument – Dun Troddan was taken into State care in 1885, making it one of the earliest Guardianship monuments.

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.



Dun Troddan scheduled area and PIC boundary, for illustrative purposes only. For further images, see Appendix 2



Location of Dun Troddan and Dun Telve – the 'Glenelg Brochs'.

2. ASSESSMENT OF VALUES

2.1 Background

2.11 Introduction - 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, a single narrow entrance passage, a staircase within the wall thickness, stacked voids and tower form). Dating evidence is scarce, and most reliable dates relate to periods of occupation rather than construction.

However, recent radiocarbon dates from sites in South Uist and Shetland (sampled within walls or beneath the structure) indicate construction before 100 BC and between 200 and 400 BC respectively.[2] 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 acknowledged as one of the only building types unique to Scotland; their remains occur most frequently in the north and west, and 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 known sites meet the definition for broch used here, though there may be many more which might 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.

The distribution, location and frequency of brochs varies markedly between different regions. The two Glenelg Brochs (along with the nearby Dun Grugaig, a galleried dun which shares several broch-like architectural features) occupy an outlying position in the generally sparse distribution of brochs on western mainland Scotland. Brochs are mainly concentrated to the north and west of the adjacent Isle of Skye, while they are almost absent on the mainland for a considerable distance to the south, until Argyll and its islands are reached.

[2] Parker Pearson and Sharples 1999, 355: Dockrill et al 2015, 59-60

2.12 Descriptive Overview

Dun Troddan stands on small rocky knoll overlooking the flat floor of a small valley. It has a clear view of a second broch, Dun Telve, which stands about 500 metres away down the valley, to the west.

Dun Troddan is 18.4 metres in average external diameter and 8.5 metres internally. The interior is almost perfectly circular, the exterior slightly less so. The entrance passage, from the south-west, does not align with the central point of the broch, and is unusually narrow at its outer end. To the left of the passage a "guard chamber" opens off just inwards from the remains of the seating for a door. Inward from the door-check, A bar-hole survives only on the left-hand side of the passage, suggesting the right-hand side of the entrance passage has been partly rebuilt.

Within the broch, a single entrance off the northern side of the central space gives access to an elongated chamber. From the right-hand end of which a stair which rises clockwise within the wall thickness to a level landing. The stair may originally have continued up towards the top of the wall.

Only the northern part of the wall now survives above head-high, reaching a height of about 7.6 metres above ground level. Above the solidly-built lowest level, the wall is double-skinned and contains the remains of three superimposed galleries, with slight traces of a fourth above. The gallery walls converge as they rise, but less so than at nearby Dun Telve. Away from this high section, the majority of the broch's wall circuit survives to less than two metres tall.

An elongated vertical aperture, or "void" occurs in the inner wall-face directly above the entrance to the stair-foot chamber. This connects the galleries within the wall to the interior space and extends to the top of the surviving wall. A second, similar void runs upwards from a point in line with the floor of the third gallery. Traces of a third void may survive in the walling which now forms the outermost edge of the surviving high portion of the broch.

At the same level as the first gallery floor, a corbelled ledge or "scarcement" runs around the interior wall-face. This may have supported the edge of a raised wooden floor. Excavations in 1920 revealed an internal ring of post-holes, concentric with the broch wall.

Outside the broch's entrance is a small paved platform, while to the north of the broch an area of hummocky ground may conceal the remains of external structures.

There are currently two interpretation panels providing information for visitors, one by the roadside and one on site.

The finds from excavations in 1920 are in the National Museum of Scotland collections in Edinburgh[3].

2.13 Antiquarian interest and early descriptions

Dun Troddan, along with Dun Telve, attracted attention from travellers and early antiquarians. This was particularly true after the area was linked to the military road network, in the years after the 1715 Jacobite Rising, by the construction of the road from Glenshiel over the Mam Ratagan pass.

Alexander Gordon visited in 1720 and his description[4] is particularly valuable, since both brochs appear to have been much more complete at that date, still standing tall around more of their circuits. He said that the broch stood 33 feet (9.9 metres) tall, presumably above some thickness of internal or external rubble, and that "Castle Troddan" was "by far the most entire of any in that Country". The illustration accompanying Gordon's account shows most of the circuit of Dun Troddan still standing tall, with a ragged aperture corresponding to the entrance.

Thomas Pennant visited in 1772, and provided a more detailed description[5]. Although this is not so detailed as that provided for Dun Telve, it is clear that much of the tall-standing structure had been lost in the intervening years. It is possible (though not mentioned by Pennant) that, like Dun Telve, Dun Troddan was quarried in 1722 for stone to build Bernera Barracks[6].

Both Gordon's and Pennant's descriptions are open to a range of interpretations[7], but it is clear that, in 1720, Dun Troddan stood considerably taller and more complete around its entire circuit – indeed, at this date it was probably second only to Mousa in surviving height. Even at Pennant's time, the broch wall still standing tall for almost half of its circuit, whereas by the time it was recorded by Dryden in 1872, over two-thirds had been reduced to little more than head height.

It is also clear that the interiors of both brochs were filled with rubble to at least the level of the first gallery floor (about 2.5 metres above ground

[3] The catalogue can be searched at: https://www.nms.ac.uk/explore-our-collections/search-our-collections/

[4] Gordon 1726, 216-8 [Quoted extensively in MacKie 2007, 1404-5]

[5] Pennant 1774 [Quoted extensively in MacKie 2007, 1405]

[6] Tabraham and Grove 1995, 62

[7] Discussed in Graham 1947 and MacKie 2007, 860-1 – estimates for the height of Dun Troddan in 1720 have ranged up to 12.2 metres above the surrounding natural ground level. (Note that MacKie's application of Pennant's tale of the purloining of stone in 1722 to Dun Troddan as well as to Dun Telve is not supported by Pennant's text – though this does not necessarily mean that such damage did not take place at Dun Troddan.)

level). By the time of Dryden's drawings[8], the interior fill of Dun Troddan had been reduced slightly, to about 1.5 metres in depth in the centre, and 2 metres around the edges.

2.14 Clearance, structural consolidation, excavation and later work

In 1885 the landowner passed the Glenelg Brochs into State care under a Guardianship agreement, at least partly in recognition of structural problems, particularly at Dun Telve. While no written record has been located of any pre-20th century repair works, photographs taken in 1897 by Erskine Beveridge[9] clearly show that Dun Troddan, like Dun Telve, had recently been repaired with crudely applied cement. Presumably this was done shortly after the sites came into state care in 1885. It is also possible that the area of walling at the outer end of the entrance passage was rebuilt then, rather than in antiquity – this might account for the unusual narrowness of the outer passage and its squint alignment: certainly the outer stonework on the north side of the entrance passage appears not to be bonded into the massive wall behind it.

These measures were not revisited until 1916-20, when the stonework was more thoughtfully consolidated under the supervision of J. Wilson Paterson, the Office of Works's senior Architect. This work seems to have involved digging down around the inner wall-face to facilitate the consolidation of the stonework, the emptying of the entrance passage and the provision of a step up to the interior, as well as a gravel path around the inner wall-face. These works were essentially completed by 1919, when Donaldson visited:

"Several years after [in 1919 or 1920], on returning to Glenelg, I saw this perfect restoration [of Dun Telve] completed, as well as that of the second broch [Dun Troddan], untouched when I had previously seen it [in 1914]; and whenever I think of these fascinating works of art, the delight which I experienced in hovering about them at once returns to me."[10]

Unfortunately, the consolidation work had progressed to an advanced stage before Alexander Curle, Keeper of the National Museum of

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[8] Sir Henry Dryden visited in 1871, 1872 and 1873. In 1872 he made his drawings of Dun Troddan – which he called Castle Troddan – returning to finalise these in 1873. He later prepared watercolour sketches of both brochs (1876) based on his drawings. His originals were deposited with the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland but, unlike those of many other broch sites which appeared in the Society's occasional series *Archaeologia Scotica*, the depictions of Duns Telve and Troddan do not seem to have been published until much later.

[9] Photographs in National Record of the Historic Environment – examples included in Appendix 2

[10] Donaldson 1921, 214 [dates added by Noel Fojut: 1914 is certain, 1919 probable – based partly based on internal evidence and partly on J T Dunbar's 1979 biographical sketch: *'Herself' – The Life and Photographs of M E M Donaldson*. Edinburgh (Blackwood).]

Antiquities of Scotland, (who had earlier published a description of the newly-consolidated Dun Telve[11]) had the opportunity to excavate a portion of the internal deposits, which seems to have been carefully preserved for him to explore. By the time he arrived on site for the final season of works in 1920, he was dealing with a "floating" set of deposits, isolated from the inner wall-face by a wall-chasing trench dug by the workmen of the Office of Works – what Curle described as "a heap of soil which remained in the centre of the courtyard measuring some 9 feet by 7 feet, and 4 feet in height"[12]. Immediately to the north of this, a rectangular hearth had already been cleared, lying at a lower level than the "heap", and set on what Curle understood to be the gravel subsoil.

Curle had the workmen dig systematically through the remaining deposits, excavating these in horizontal layers since no clear stratification could be observed. In the uppermost levels he noted traces of numerous fires of wood and peat, not set in formal hearths. Halfway down, he came on the remains of a rectangular, stone-edged and stone-lined hearth under a layer of peat ash, and immediately below it a further, even better-made, example. The northern parts of both had been destroyed in the earlier digging, but they lay partly above the hearth which had already been cleared before Curle's arrival on site. The top hearth lay at right angles to the one below, which itself was set at 45 degrees to the bottom-most one. Curle's interpretation was of several relatively short-lived phases of occupation, followed by a long period in which the centre of the now-ruined broch was used as an occasional camp-site. It is worth noting that Curle did not remove these deposits entirely, stopping at the level of the second hearth he had uncovered[13].

Relatively few finds were made: a small number of shaped objects of stone and bone, a fragment of the upper stone of a rotary quern, seven spindle whorls of stone, a single glass bead and a sizeable number of egg-shaped pebbles (which were interpreted as missiles. Unusually for a broch site "There was not a trace of pottery."[14] Curle interpreted the paucity of finds as implying that the site was not occupied for any extended period of time.

Towards the end of his time on site, Curle examined the remaining lower deposits just inside the inner end of the entrance passage and uncovered a layer of discoloured soil which, on further excavation, appeared to be a drain leading towards a stone-line pit, which he originally thought might be a sump for water drainage.

"After a night's reflection, however, the presence of the flags in the bottom gave the clue, and I returned to the broch, found the centre, took a radius from there to the pit, and drew out a circle with the point of a pick on the

[11] Curle 1916
[12] Curle 1921, 87-8
[13] See Appendix 2 for image of superimposed heaths
[14] Curle 1921, 92

surface. On this line… we struck a pit. Thereafter, either on or to one side or the other of the line of circumference we located ten others."[15]

Remarkably, several of these holes contained "spongy matter" which in one (sealed by a flat stone) was what, by its fibrous character, was identified as decayed wood. So far as is known, none of this material was retained, which was unfortunate: it is not known if it was entirely removed, but in any case, is unlikely to have survived a century of exposure to oxidation.

Curle interpreted these post-holes as evidence for a ring of posts which had supported the inner edge of an annular, inward-sloping roof whose upper edge had been supported on the scarcement ledge: he imagined a circular inner space as having been left unroofed. He suggested that the supposed drain which had led him to the first pit was actually a decayed horizontal timber, perhaps the sill of a door giving access to the unroofed central space, and posited a lightly-built wooden wall linking the posts, and screening the unroofed space from the ring-shaped roofed running around inside the broch's stone tower. Despite the very cramped and low accommodation this arrangement would have offered, he does not seem to have considered a raised floor or a roof higher in the broch tower: consideration of such features was only advanced much later, notably by Graham in 1947[16].

His belief that the post-ring was set into the natural ground surface underlying the broch, led to Curle's certainty that the wooden fittings were an original feature, inserted as soon as the stone walls of the broch had been erected. Recent archaeological examination of the floor of the area passage, "guard chamber" and eastern part of broch courtyard has suggested that Curle may not have been correct in interpreting the level in which he revealed the post ring as being the natural ground surface: his statement that he left deposits unexcavated also seems to argue against this. It may well be that the 1920 post-ring was not set into the natural ground surface but into accumulated deposits lying above it[17]. However, it remains entirely possible that there was an original post-ring at a lower level: if so, traces of this might still survive at a lower level beneath the deposits which Curle left unexcavated.

Since the large-scale consolidation exercise completed in 1920, occasional repairs have been undertaken when necessary, including rebuilding of sections of wall-face (including some cement grouting), individual stone replacement and work to maintain the turf capping on the wall-head. Scaffolding has been erected on several occasions to allow inspection and, where necessary, consolidation to the upper sections of the wall. Where

[15] Curle 1921, 90-1
[16] Graham 1947
[17] Kirkdale Archaeology 2013; Romankiewicz and Ralston 2012; Romankiewicz and Ralston in press

shattered stones have had to be replaced, this has been done on a "like-for-like" basis.

The main threat to the integrity of the site is the accidental displacement of stones by visitors clambering onto the structure.

2.2 Evidential Values

The evidential value of Dun Troddan 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.

Dun Troddan is a good example of a "solid-based" broch of smaller-than-average diameter and with thicker walls than is the norm – these factors may indicate that it originally stood taller than most brochs. As it stands, it is the fourth-tallest of all surviving brochs. Its plan shows broad similarities to other brochs in the Western Highlands and Skye, for example elongated "guard chamber" and wall-foot chambers, but interestingly it is rather different from its close neighbour, Dun Telve, most notably in having the "guard chamber" set to the left-hand side of the entrance passage looking inwards, whereas at Dun Telve this lies to the right.

While recognising that upstanding structural remains have been slightly altered in detail during various episodes of conservation, particularly around the external entrance, there is no evidence that the structure has been so modified as to be unrepresentative of the original.

It can be argued that Dun Troddan's primary importance derives from four factors:

1. The discovery, in 1920, of a ring of post-holes set in the floor of the internal space, which remains one of the clearest examples of such a feature despite many more recent excavations. This has been cited in many attempts to suggest the form of the wooden internal structures which are believed to have been built within the stone towers of brochs.
2. The survival of a sufficiently large section of its upper walling to near-original height. This allows the visitor to gain a clear impression of how impressive brochs must have been when newly built, and also contains architectural details which are rarely preserved (due to the paucity of tall-standing brochs) and which have been, and continue to be, of great importance in theories about the origin, development and functioning of brochs. The proportions and character of the surviving high-standing walling at Dun Troddan are not greatly dissimilar to the only near-complete broch, Mousa in Shetland, but contrast with the few other tall-surviving broch fragments (Dun

Telve, Dun Carloway and Dun Dornaigil) in which the hollow wall narrows more sharply as height is gained. This similarity suggests that, while Mousa remains at the extreme end of the spectrum of broch architecture, it was not entirely isolated in its characteristics of having a small diameter and particularly massive wall thickness.

3. The proven survival of apparently undisturbed deposits within the broch, which has the potential to yield evidence through excavation and other forms of investigation.
4. The proximity of Dun Troddan to a second broch, Dun Telve, which has to be accommodated by theories about the purposes and societal significance of brochs.

In addition, as with all brochs, much may be preserved beneath the massive wall of the broch. Accessing the area below the broch's footprint would be very challenging, but there is a (small) chance it could reveal evidence to date the broch's construction: securely-contexted construction dates for brochs remain rare and thus of high value.

The finds from the 1920 excavations largely lack any meaningful stratigraphic context, but all seem likely to date to a time well after the broch's construction and first use. One aspect of the assemblage was emphasised by Curle in 1920: no pottery was recovered. Given the volume of deposits removed, this is indeed noteworthy and remains difficult to explain[18]. One possibility is that the assemblage was derived from deposits laid down after the broch had ceased to be lived in permanently – being heavy and fragile, pottery would be less likely to have formed part of the equipment of transient occupants "squatting" within the partly-ruined broch

Otherwise, the small number of stone and bone objects recovered, and a single piece of iron (possibly a nail) are not particularly unusual or informative.

- The broken rotary quern-stone is of interest, since it has been suggested that the change to rotary querns happened relatively late in the middle Iron Age, but in the absence of a secure context its explanatory value is limited.
- A number of stone lamps are made from local micaceous schist, as are the seven spindle-whorls.

[18] MacKie 2007, 976 illustrates items found in Dun Telve, Dun Troddan and Caisteail Grugaig, but accidentally attributes at least two objects to the wrong sites: a pottery rim sherd (numbered 10) and a fragment of decorated steatite bowl (numbered 11) – both are from Dun Telve according to the National Museums catalogue, not Dun Troddan.

2.3 Historical values
2.31 Archaeological narratives and interpretations

The primary historical importance of Dun Troddan, as with all brochs, is its ability to contribute to evidence-based narratives describing how society in Iron Age northern Scotland may have operated, and changed, during the middle Iron Age. It also offers evidence to support considerations of how that society related to its own heritage, in respect of re-using sites.

At the centre of such narratives, 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. However, due to its great surviving height and architectural details, Dun Troddan has long occupied a particularly prominent place in broch studies.

Its most interesting structural features are:

1. The post-ring found in 1920 during excavations in the broch's central space: which has been variously interpreted as a support for the outer edge of a conical thatched roof, a raised floor or a combination of both – more widely, it is one of the key pieces of evidence behind the generally-held belief that all brochs housed elaborate wooden internal structures.

2. The way in which the galleries in the hollow wall reduce relatively slightly in width, much more like the tallest-surviving broch (Mousa) as compared with the other tall-surviving broch fragments (Dun Telve, Dun Carloway, Dun Dornaigil): this has significance for the height of typical brochs and also for the arrangements at the wall-head, including roofing.

The possible significance of these features is discussed further below (under 2.4 Architectural and Artistic values).

The location of Dun Troddan, within 500 metres of a second broch at Dun Telve, has long excited comment. However, small clusters of brochs are not particularly unusual: there is a group of 3 within similarly close distance at Midhowe in Rousay, Orkney; there are 4 within similar range of each other at Keiss in Caithness and also 4 at only slightly greater distance apart at the southern end of Shetland, including that at Jarlshof. It is not impossible that such clusters are sequential, with only one broch inhabited at any one time, but this would contradict current thinking on the appearance and

adoption of the broch form, and also seems unlikely given the sheer effort involved in assembling stone and building. That said, the current theory which favours most brochs being built over a limited time-span[19] has not been proven, and may never be. In any case, the existence of broch clusters such as that at Glenelg constrains how brochs can be interpreted.

As has been remarked, Gleann Beag is not particularly promising in agricultural terms[20]. It is possible that the unusual concentration of sites is related to an ancient routeway leading from the interior to and from the short crossing to Skye at the Kylerhea narrows. In post-Medieval times, young cattle reared on Skye were swum across the narrows and then driven overland to markets in central Scotland, often resting at Glenelg village before passing through the glen, across a low watershed to the head of Loch Hourn and then inland. This practice had largely ceased by in the mid-19th century, being replaced by shorter droves towards shipping points and, in later times, railheads. It is not impossible that, during the Iron Age, the glen already served as a routeway. This might have given the inhabitants of the brochs a potential source of wealth, in supplying, or exacting tribute from, travellers. (The much later location of the Hanoverian barracks at Glenelg after the 1715 and 1719 Jacobite Risings similarly recognised the strategic importance of controlling an important locality, where sea and land routes met.)

2.32 Folklore and traditional narratives

A traditional Gaelic rhyme cited in Gordon's 1726 account explains the neighbouring sites at Glenelg as forts built and possessed by brothers[21]:

"My four sons, a fair clan
I left in one strath:
My Malcolm, my lovely Chonil,
My Tellve, my Troddan."

Taking this at face value, Chonil may be associated with the galleried dun further up the glen, now called Dun Grugaig. Malcolm (*Chalman* in Gaelic) would be represented by Caisteal Chalamain, the remains of a small fort or dun on a high point overlooking the lower strath and with a clear view out to the sea. Dun Telve, Dun Troddan and Caisteal Chalamain are inter-visible.

[19] Barber 2018
[20] Curle 1921
[21] Gordon 1726 cites the verse, translated from the Gaelic by a Mr MacLeod. (In 1722, Glenelg was still part of the estates of the MacLeods of Harris and Dunvegan.)

The *Statistical Account* of 1845[22] records a tradition that the Glenelg brochs were constructed by a pair of giants, and that the two structures were connected by a subterranean passage which also provided access to the neighbouring river. A further story, collected by Young from a local resident in the late 1950s, tells that the stones used to build the two brochs were passed from hand to hand from a quarry further up the glen, and that their route could be followed by a trail of chippings[23]. Some of the blocks weigh well over a ton!

2.4 Architectural and artistic values

The details of broch architecture have been much studied and discussed (see Appendix 4 for an extended account).

Dun Troddan is smaller than average in diameter and more massive than average in terms of its wall-thickness as a proportion of total diameter. Its internal space is almost perfectly circular on plan. It falls into the category of solid-based brochs, which are somewhat less frequent in the west compared to ground galleried brochs. This has been read by some as suggesting a colonisation of Glenelg by incomers from the north, but this would be stretching the evidence too far. In fact, the somewhat elongated plan of the "guard chamber" and the stair-foot chamber may hint at affinities with the ground-galleried form more typical to this area.

As noted above, Dun Troddan's excavated central post-ring tall and surviving wall section display features which make it of particular interest in efforts to understand broch architecture.

As the hollow wall rises upwards, the intra-mural galleries reduce in width more gradually than is the case at Mousa. This renders all three surviving galleries in the wall capable of use as passageways around the inside of the structure, or as storage space. It also holds open the possibility that Dun Troddan, like Mousa (but unlike Dun Telve, Dun Carloway and Dun Troddan) retained its double-skinned structure to the top, and may even have carried a narrow wall-head walkway. It is very different in this from nearby Dun Telve, where the galleries narrow to the point of vanishing, joining to form a single wall at the top of the fifth gallery. In the absence of the uppermost portion of Dun Troddan's walls, this remains speculation. It is, however, likely that the primary reason for such galleries within broch walls is as a structural device, intended to spread the load and reduce the

[22] *A*ccessible at: https://stataccscot.edina.ac.uk/static/statacc/dist/viewer/nsa-vol14-Parish_record_for_Glenelg_in_the_county_of_Inverness_in_volume_14_of_account_2/
[23] Young 1962, 198.

volume of stonework required, and that the details of the upper structure were to a degree incidental.

The post-ring found in 1920 was clear and neatly laid out in plan. There can be little doubt that it contained stout timber posts capable of supporting a substantial structure. Along with Curle's interpretation of it as an original construction feature of the broch, it made its way instantly into the developing understanding of brochs. It was seen as irrefutable confirmation that all brochs contained wooden structures; a hypothesis which had already been advanced, based on architectural features. Over time, a small number of other brochs revealed analogous post-rings, though none quite so convincing as that at Dun Troddan.

Opinions on the nature of those structures has changed over time: Curle favoured an open-centred, inward-sloping roof, with its upper edge resting on the scarcement ledge. Later interpretations tended towards more complexity, with the scarcement level seen as supporting a raised floor (still annular) and the posts rising through this towards an annular, inward-sloping roof at a higher level – the reconstructions favoured by Hamilton took this form[24]. The idea of a conical roof with no central space (with or without a raised wooden floor) began to be considered seriously in the 1940s, notably by Graham[25]. By then it had been observed that the wooden prehistoric roundhouses excavated further to the south seemed to have had no central light-well, and also that more recent dwellings in northern Scotland had neither windows nor roof-lights. This view of the broch as simply a wooden roundhouse with an elaborate stone casing reached its fullest expression in the early 1980s[26]. Modern interpretations favour conical roofs set either within the tower or with their edges resting on the top of the wall[27].

During a re-evaluation supported by limited excavation at Dun Troddan in 2013, it was observed that the post-ring, so important to general theories of broch internal arrangements, was almost certainly set into deposits which post-dated the building of the broch rather than being an original feature. This has yet to filter into wider broch studies.

It remains the case that certain surviving features within the stone architecture of brochs support the presence of now-vanished internal fittings. It can be argued that the presence of a substantial internal wooden structure, built or rebuilt within a broch some years after the broch's construction might imply an original structure of similar style. For the time being we remain less certain about the original internal fitments of brochs than we were before 2013. It may be that an original post-ring contemporary with the construction of Dun Troddan survives lower down

[24] Hamilton 1956 and 1968
[25] Graham 1947
[26] Barrett 1981
[27] E.g. Armit 2003, 72

within the broch's surviving internal deposits: investigation of this possibility, (ideally through non-intrusive geophysical survey) may yet clarify matters.

2.41 Design

The internal ground plan of Dun Troddan is a near-perfect circle, which argues in favour of brochs all being built to a standardised plan. Brochs seem to display regional styles, though the significance of this is not clear[28]. In that sense, Dun Telve and Dun Troddan, in their general appearance and relatively solid proportions, have led some observers to suggest that they would be more at home further north and east. Dun Troddan, in particular, seems more "Mousa-like" in its basal proportions than almost all other western brochs.

It has been suggested that the construction of solid-based brochs arose from a desire to make the tower taller than was easily achieved with a ground galleried plan: thus ambition, rather than origin, may be the key to the choice of plan. This would tend, however, to place solid-based brochs later in time than ground galleried brochs, perhaps with the most massively built (and tallest surviving) brochs built last of all. This idea, formerly vigorously argued by MacKie[29], is currently less favoured, and it is not supported by the current dating evidence for brochs of different plan forms, though admittedly this is limited.

2.42 Construction

The broch is constructed of a mixture of large and small blocks of metamorphic gneiss and schist, all available quite locally. The latter weathers much more rapidly. Due to its slabby character, schist has been preferred for lintels. Much of the stone appears to have been quarried for the construction of the broch rather than gathered in the form of glacially transported boulders. The apparent randomness of the material gives the stonework a rather inelegant appearance, though the large blocks incorporated in it are impressive: the broch is well constructed within the limitations of the available material[30].

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[28] MacKie 1965 (and later publications) explores broch "styles" and metrics in depth

[29] MacKie 1965

[30] Young 1962, 187 refers to "rather careless choice of material" at Tevle, and the same might apply at Troddan – this seems unnecessarily harsh, as many brochs in the west had to make the best of geology which did not offer the most promising building stone. It has been suggested that the deliberate incorporation of very particularly large blocks in the facing of the broch may be a deliberate design choice, intended to impress (Tanja Romankiewicz, personal communication and in Romankiewicz 2011).

2.43 Artists' representations

A selection of images of Dun Troddan is included in Appendix 2.

The illustration of Dun Troddan which appears in Gordon's Tour is one of the earliest known depictions of a broch: although it is somewhat schematic, it is recognisably Dun Troddan, and illustrates just how much of the structure was soon to be lost. Pennant also provided illustrations (prepared by Moses Williams), helpfully placing the depictions in the same plate as Dun Telve[31]: the change from Gordon's illustration is stark.

Thereafter, the next clear depictions appear to be those made in 1872 and 1873 by Sir Henry Dryden. His carefully measured and hand-coloured plans, elevations and sections form a very informative baseline against which the broch as consolidated in 1914 can be compared.

Some good early photographic images of Dun Troddan exist, notably those taken by Erskine Beveridge in or around 1897.

No instances have come to note of the use of Dun Troddan as the inspiration for creative artworks.

2.5 Landscape and aesthetic values

Dun Telve and Dun Troddan are particularly attractive monuments, and well worth the journey to visit, the last part of which is over single-track roads. There is a sense that any visit is a voyage of discovery, as it necessitates a steep and twisting drive over the Mam Ratagan pass from Glenshiel, with spectacular views toward the head of Loch Duich and the rugged Five Sisters mountain ridge, or a crossing (Easter to October) on the small privately-operated vehicle ferry from Kylerhea in Skye to Glenelg pier, or both.

The location of the brochs, in their steep-sided and well-wooded glen, has been appreciated by visitors since the start of antiquarian interest. Even the normally sober archaeologist Alexander Curle was moved:

"There can be few if any more beautiful valleys in the West Highlands of Scotland than that of Gleann Beag. It is not a broad glen, and the restricted meadowland on its floor, through which a little river meanders, could never have maintained a large population. The steep sides as they rise to the higher level of the moorland are clothed with a natural growth of hazel and alder, the haunt of numerous buzzards, which soaring upward fill the air with their harsh laughter-like cries…"[32]

[31] See illustration included in Appendix 2
[32] Curle 1921, 83

The setting has changed little in the years following Curle's sketch of bucolic bliss. The single-track road which gives access to the glen ends a few miles above the broch, so traffic consists largely of the very few local residents plus visitors to the brochs. On fine summer days, the available parking spaces can fill quickly, but even then, it unusual to have to walk any great distance to Dun Troddan.

Dun Troddan appears slightly tucked away, on a low platform at the foot of a steep hillside against a background of trees. (It is worth noting that photographs taken at the end of the 19th century show a markedly less wooded landscape.) Its elevated setting, seen from immediately below, emphasises its defensive potential, in contrast to the flat site of Dun Telve. From Dun Troddan, Dun Telve can be seen down-valley.

The site is also photogenic from the air, and oblique aerial views of various dates have been published and are held in the National Record of the Historic Environment. Appendix 2 contains an example.

2.6 Natural heritage values

The land around Dun Troddan is not currently designated for the protection of species or habitats[33].

Visitors to the site will park at the foot of a short grassy slope, with a steep narrow path leading up to the broch. The short climb is rewarded by a view over the valley floor (now entirely given over to grazing and hay meadow, but formerly cultivated) and the wooded slopes beyond. Nearby farm buildings are largely hidden by trees, and some newer buildings have been provided with living grass roofs.

A range of typical woodland edge and meadowland birds will make themselves seen or heard, according to season. In early summer the call of the cuckoo *Cuculus canorus* can often be heard, as well as that of the skylark *Alaudia arvensis*. Common buzzards *Buteo buteo* are frequently seen overhead, and more rarely peregrines *Falco peregrinus*. Eagles are not infrequently seen flying high above the glen, both golden eagle *Aquila chrysaetos* and the white-tailed, or sea, eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla*.

The only mammals likely to be seen on site are rabbits *Oryctolagus cuniculus,* although deer may be encountered nearby in the early morning or late evening (both red deer *Cervus elaphus* and roe deer *Capreolus capreolus*).

[33] SNH website, visited 26 August 2019

2.7 Contemporary/use values

Much of the value of the Glenelg Brochs for contemporary communities lies in their pleasant site and surroundings, and as a destination for those interested in Scotland's prehistoric heritage. The effort required to reach them offer something of a "safe adventure". They are a popular side-visit with visitors taking the seasonal ferry to/from Skye.

They are valued by local residents as elements of the area's rich heritage, and also for their role in attracting tourists as potential customers: a seasonal cafe operates in Gleann Beag itself, a short distance up-valley from Dun Troddan, while Glenelg village supports year-round facilities: a shop, several bed and breakfast establishments and an inn with restaurant and accommodation.

Images of both brochs have been widely used in specialist archaeological guides and general reference works, and feature in general guidebooks. They have also appeared in television programmes.

On-site interpretation is provided by simple interpretation boards. The route to the site from the roadside car-parking space is short and steep, and can be slippery in snow or frosty conditions. On-line reviews are largely positive highlighting: the amazing state of preservation; ingenuity of the builders; views and atmosphere. Many also note visits to the other associated sites in the glen.

3. MAJOR GAPS IN UNDERSTANDING

There are a wide range of unanswered questions surrounding brochs in general, despite two centuries of excavation, study and theorising (see Appendix 4). Dun Troddan has already contributed to the existing body of broch knowledge, but retains the potential to contribute further. That said, its history of disturbance and consolidation means that it would not necessarily be the first choice of broch site to investigate in search of additional knowledge about brochs in general.

Nonetheless, Dun Troddan retains some potential to address the following questions, most of which might be asked in similar terms about any broch:

- When were brochs first constructed, and how did they relate to pre-existing architecture and settlement patterns?
- Was the broch built by or for incomers, or was it created by the existing holders of the site? Due to extensive excavation in and around the broch, this might be difficult to answer: evidence might take the form of distinct differences in the 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.

- How does the broch structure at Dun Troddan relate to the construction date and pre-construction history of other local brochs? This cannot be addressed without answers to the previous questions, and also dating evidence from more brochs.
- Is what we see at Dun Troddan today representative of what was built? While the remains seem not to have been radically altered in the course of excavation and consolidation, there do appear to have been a number of minor changes to the stonework of the broch[34] - though less so than at Dun Telve.
- What structures occupied the interior of brochs? Dun Troddan has provided evidence for wooden internal structures, arguably the finest such evidence from any broch site. While recent re-appraisal has suggested that this evidence may not relate to the primary construction and use of the broch, it remains important, and the site retains the potential for this aspect to be further explored.
- What can be said about the social and territorial organisation of those who lived at Dun Troddan? Much can be said, but little can be proved – like most brochs, it offers mute testimony rather than substantive evidence. Most researchers would support the existence of an elite within Iron Age society, who would have directed the activity of each group (including the building of brochs) 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. In the case of Dun Troddan, such narratives must account for the close local cluster of Iron Age sites that may have been in use at the same.
- How did the people associated with brochs survive day to day, in terms of subsistence? We know from excavations in various locations that farming was the main source of food and probably of wealth throughout this period, although Dun Troddan itself has produced little evidence of such activity, except for artefacts associated with grain processing (querns) and spinning (spindle whorls). 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

[34] MacKie 2007, 856-861

in the landscape. In the case of the Glenelg Brochs, it is possible that cattle-rearing, and possibly trading, may have been particularly important elements of the subsistence package. However, this would be difficult to confirm or deny with existing research techniques, and must remain a supposition.

More general questions remain, regarding:

- The appearance of the roof and upper levels of this and other brochs.
- The social organisation of those building and using the broch, and how they disposed of their dead.
- The nature and appearance of the contemporary landscape and vegetation surrounding the broch.
- A more precise chronology: excavation has determined the sequence of construction, and that the internal timber structure does not appear to be primary, but no scientific dates currently exist.

4. ASSOCIATED PROPERTIES

4.1 Associated properties managed by HES

- Dun Telve (broch, Highland) – only 500 metres away from Dun Troddan
- Mousa (broch, Shetland)
- Carn Liath (broch, Highland)
- Clickimin (broch and associated remains, Shetland)
- Dun Carloway (broch, Western Isles)
- Dun Dornaigil (broch, Highland)
- Dun Beag (broch, Highland)
- Edin's Hall (hillfort, broch and settlement, Scottish Borders)
- Gurness (broch and associated remains, Orkney)
- Jarlshof (broch and associated remains, Shetland)
- Midhowe (broch and associated remains, Orkney)
- Ness of Burgi (fort, Shetland)

4.2 Other associated sites

There are, at time of writing, no restrictions on visiting the privately-owned galleried dun of Dun Grugaig[35]. This is a small sub-rectangular stone-built fortification with some features also found in brochs. The site lies higher up Gleann Beag and involves a walk of about one kilometre up the track from

[35] https://canmore.org.uk/site/11772/dun-grugaig-glenelg

the gate which marks the end of the public road, and then a short walk across rough grassland. The dun is perched on the edge of a steep wooded slope: care should be taken.

Also worth visiting while in this part of Scotland is the broch of Caisteal Grugaig[36] [37]. This lies on publicly-owned forest land overlooking the junction of the (sea) Lochs Alsh, Long and Duich. Access is along a track which leads a further 1.5 kilometres from the end of the narrow public road from Ratagan to Totaig[38].

Visitors to these sites should pay attention to any signage and requests, and observe the Scottish Outdoor Access Code. Dogs should be kept under close control.

5. KEYWORDS

Broch; Iron Age; Intra-mural stair; Guard chamber; Entrance passage; Galleries; Scarcement; Roofing

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[36] https://canmore.org.uk/site/11812/caisteal-grugaig

[37] *Grugaig* occurs in the names of several Highland sites – it is a Gaelic word meaning grim / forbidding.

[38] https://forestryandland.gov.scot/learn/heritage/prehistoric-sites/caisteal-grugaig-broch accessed 27 August 2019

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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.

Further Resources

Canmore ID: 11797
Site Number: NG81NW 6
NGR: NG 83400 17244

Scheduled monument description (with Dun Telve):
http://portal.historicenvironment.scot/designation/SM90152

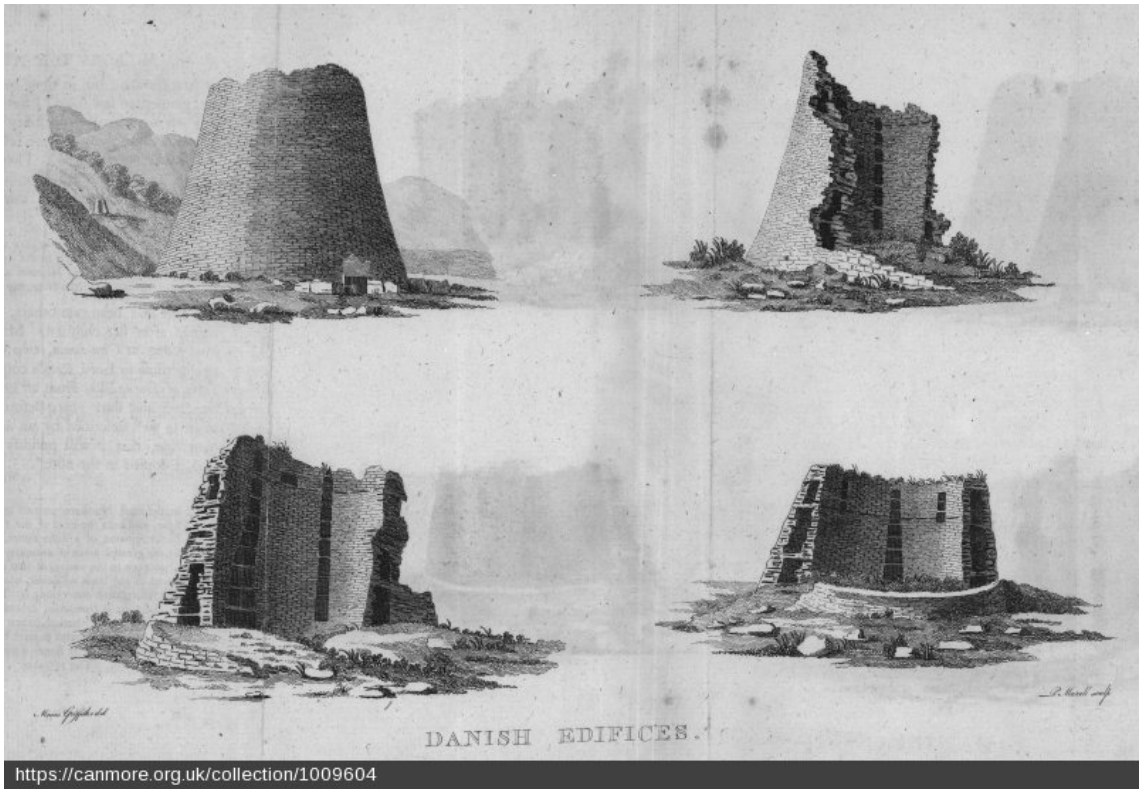
APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: TIMELINE

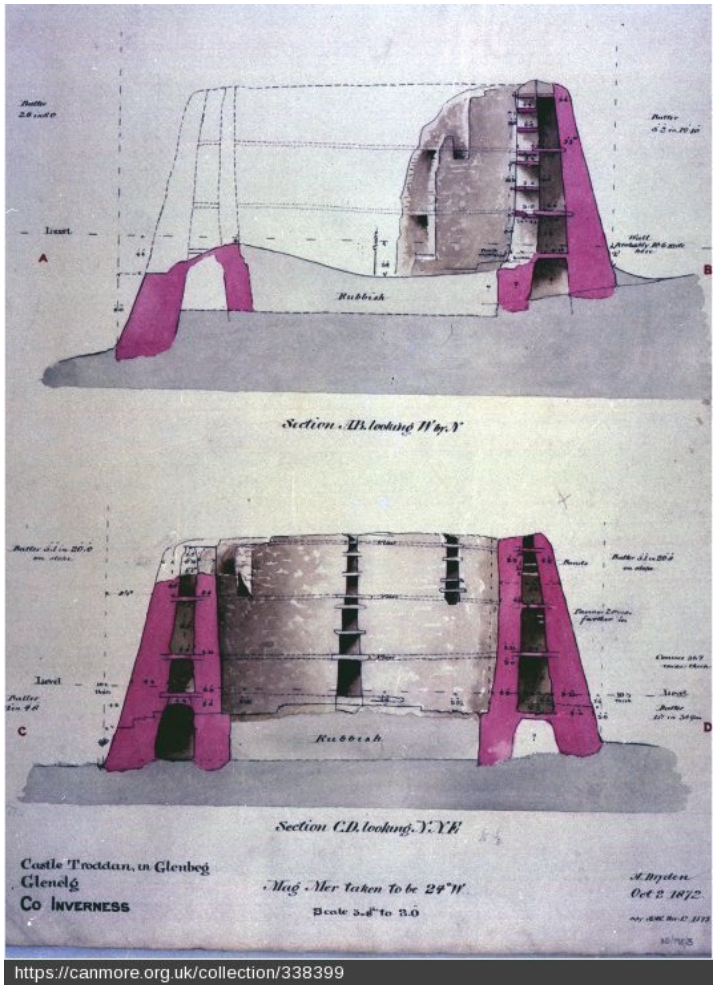
Iron Age (mid) - 1	Construction of broch.
Iron Age (mid) - 2	Re-fitting and repeated occupation of broch interior. The evidence for a circular wooden structure inside the broch is now attributed to this phase, rather than being seen as an original feature of the broch as built.
Iron Age (mid-late)	Use of the partially ruined structure as an occasional shelter.
1720	Visit by Gordon.
1772	Visit by Pennant.
1871-3	Visits by Dryden: measured drawings made 1872 and 1873 (see Appendix 2).
c. 1872	Possibly some unrecorded repair/rebuilding, especially at the outer end of the entrance passage.
1885	Site taken into State care under Guardianship agreement.
1916-20	Clearance of interior and exterior areas, supervised excavation of a small part of the internal deposits in 1920. Extensive consolidation.
Various dates in 20th century	Stonework repairs and refreshment of signage on several occasions.
c.2010	New signage.
2013	Limited re-excavation of entrance passage, "guard chamber" and part of the interior, to permit improvement of access – re-evaluation of internal sequence.

APPENDIX 2: IMAGES

Sketch of Dun Troddan (based on Gordon's Tour, 1726)



Engravings of Dun Telve and Dun Troddan from Pennant's Tour, 1774



https://canmore.org.uk/collection/338399

Cross section drawing by Dryden 1872/3


https://canmore.org.uk/collection/1142521

1897 photograph by Erskine Beveridge – with early cement repairs clearly visible on right

1897 photograph by Erskine Beveridge

1920s excavations showing superimposed hearths: note depth of deposits

Vertical aerial view: Dun Telve near top of frame, left of centre, Dun Troddan towards bottom, left of centre

Distant view showing position on hillside ledge

Entrance from outside

Interior, showing scarcement

Eastern end of high-surviving wall, showing gallery levels: the smooth stonework on the inner wall may represent the last traces of a vertical void in the masonry.

APPENDIX 3: DUN TRODDAN: DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Dun Troddan, together with nearby Dun Telve, are often referred to collectively as the Glenelg Brochs.

The impressive remains of Dun Troddan stand on a small rocky knoll, a short distance above the floor of the small valley of Gleann Beag. The broch commands the flat ground below it: its longer-distance views up-valley are restricted, but down-valley it looks towards, and beyond, the neighbouring broch of **Dun Telve**, which stands about 500 metres away.

In former times, the valley offered a routeway linking the interior of this part of the West Highlands to the coast and the narrowest crossing to Skye: this may be significant in the siting of the two brochs and two other Iron Age forts in Gleann Beag's lower reaches.

Only the northern part of the broch's wall now survives above head-height, reaching about 7.6 metres above ground level. Above the solidly-built lowest level, the wall is double-skinned and contains the remains of three superimposed galleries, with slight traces of a fourth above. The gallery walls converge with height, but less so than at nearby Dun Telve: all three surviving galleries are wide enough to have served as passageways within the broch's hollow wall. The majority of the broch's wall circuit survives to a much lower height, standing less than two metres tall.

Within the broch, a single entrance off the north-north-west side of the central space gives access to an elongated chamber, from the right-hand end of which a stair rises clockwise within the wall thickness to a level landing. The stair may originally have continued up towards the top of the wall.

An elongated vertical aperture, or void, occurs in the inner wall-face directly above the entrance to the stair-foot chamber. Spanned by lintels, this connects the galleries within the wall to the interior space and extends to the top of the surviving wall. A second, similar void runs upwards from a point in line with the floor of the third gallery. Traces of a third void survive in the walling which now forms the outermost edge of the surviving high portion of the broch.

At the same level as the first gallery floor, a corbelled ledge or "scarcement" runs around the interior wall-face. This may have supported the edge of a raised wooden floor. Excavations in 1920 revealed an internal ring of post-holes, concentric with the broch wall.

Outside the broch's entrance is a small, paved platform extending part-way around the outer wall-face. An area of hummocky ground just to the north of the broch may represent the unexcavated remains of external structures.

There are currently two interpretation panels providing information for visitors, one by the roadside and one on site.

The finds from excavations in 1920 are in the National Museum of Scotland collections in Edinburgh.

APPENDIX 4: APPENDIX 4: BROCHS: THEORIES AND INTERPRETATIONS

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."[39]

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"[40].

[39] Dryden 1872, 200
[40] MacKie 2002, 1-2

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 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.

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" [41], 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[42]. And in the Western Isles and wider Gaelic-speaking area, the term "broch" was not used locally, even though the Old Norse root "borg" appears as

[41] Oram et al, 5

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

"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[43], 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.[44] 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[45]. Additional "possible" sites continue to be added, and in some cases demonstrated to be brochs[46]. 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 Troddan** ,**Telve** 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[47]. 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[48].

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[49].

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"

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[43] Armit 2003
[44] Barber 2018
[45] E.g. Cloddie Knowe, trial trenched in 1988 (MacKie 2002 p 82)
[46] 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)
[47] Scott 1947
[48] Graham 1947a and 1947b
[49] MacKie 2002, 1-2

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)[50]. 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[51]. Fojut (sceptically) and most recently Romankiewicz (more optimistically) are among those who have recently published on possible roofing structures[52].

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)[53] and Leckie (Stirlingshire)[54], these cannot conclusively be confirmed as having been constructed at the same time as the brochs[55]. The need for caution is emphasised by the substantial post-rings found at Buchlyvie (Stirlingshire)[56] and **Càrn Liath** (Highland – Sutherland)[57] which in both cases can be shown to relate to pre-broch roundhouses[58].

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.[59] 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[60].

Broch origins

The date and antecedents of brochs have been pushed progressively earlier. The idea that brochs were built by the Danes or Vikings[61] persisted for some decades, despite the outright rejection of this idea by Scandinavian antiquarians as early as 1852[62]. The alternative view, that they were built by the native population as watch-towers against the Vikings, was also popular[63] 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

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[50] Curle 1921, 90-92
[51] For example that by Alan Braby, widely reproduced, e.g. in Armit and Fojut 1998, 15
[52] Fojut 2005b, 194-6; Romankiewicz 2016, 17-19
[53] Curle 1921, 90-92
[54] MacKie 2007, 1312-3 (see also MacKie 2016 for more detailed account)
[55] Fojut 2005b, 192-3
[56] Main 1989, 296-302
[57] Love 1989, 165
[58] In this respect, the conjectural plans offered by MacKie for Dun Carloway are perhaps unhelpful. MacKie 2007, 1204
[59] Fojut 2005b, 196-9
[60] Smith 2016, 15
[61] Fergusson 1877, 630-9
[62] Worsaae 1852, 233
[63] Stuart 1857, 191-2

termed the Iron Age and constructed at a time when the Romans were actively expanding their Empire, further south[64].

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[65], and led to the dominance of various "diffusionist" models, in which brochs were seen as the strongholds of an incoming elite[66]. 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.[67]

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[68] 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[69], although not with all commentators. Stewart in 1956 was typically concise in this respect with regard to his homeland:

"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."*[70]

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[64] Anderson 1883
[65] Childe 1935
[66] Scott, 1948
[67] Hamilton 1968, 51
[68] Clarke 1971
[69] RCAHMS 1946 (visited/written 1930), 48-55
[70] Stewart 1956, 15

The older, alternative view, that brochs were a unique local invention, began to be revived in the 1950s, notably in Shetland[71]. 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[72]. 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.[73]

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[74].

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[75]. 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)[76]. 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[77], although these possessed few, if any, of the classic defining features of brochs.[78] Nonetheless, this led some to believe that brochs might go back as early as 600 BC[79].

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

[71] O'Neill 1954
[72] Stewart 1956, 15-16
[73] Stewart 1956, 15
[74] Fojut 1981, 226-7
[75] MacKie 1992: also MacKie 2007, 1094,
[76] Lamb 1980, Fojut 1981
[77] Hedges and Bell 1980, Hedges 1987
[78] Armit 1990 p 195
[79] Fojut 1981, p 34

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[80].

The radiocarbon dating of the construction of a fully-formed Shetland broch to the period 400 – 200 BC, at Old Scatness in southern Mainland[81], 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[82].

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[83]. 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[84].

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.

MacKie's recent suggestion that brochs were invented first in the north, possibly even in Shetland, and then later reinvented in the west[85] seems improbable, and the scenario suggested by Parker Pearson and collaborators more likely[86], 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).

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[80] Parker Pearson et al 1996; Sharples 1998
[81] Dockrill et al 2015, 168-171
[82] MacKie 2008
[83] Smith, 2014, 4
[84] Fojut 1989, especially 29-31 (first discussed in unpublished PhD thesis 1980)
[85] MacKie 2008, 272
[86] Parker Pearson et al 1996, 58-62

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"[87]), 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[88].

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[89]. **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 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.

How special are brochs, and what was their purpose?

Many writers, including MacKie[90] and more recently Barber[91], 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

[87] John Barber pers. comm. August 2018
[88] Barber 2018
[89] MacKie 2007, 1314-5 (See MacKie 2016 for more detailed discussion)
[90] MacKie 1965
[91] Barber 2018

towers so far as geology would allow. MacKie posited a "professional" architect cadre[92] while Barber has recently pointed to the engineering knowledge involved in constructing so close to the physical limits of buildability[93].

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[94]. Armit developed the idea of the "Simple" and "Complex Atlantic Roundhouses" to emphasise similarities within a larger class of approximately circular structures[95], 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[96], though to refer to such a wide range of structures as brochs seems unhelpful[97].

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[98], 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.)[99]

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[100], through one of embattled local communities seeking to defend themselves against raiders or invaders[101], 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[102]. 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[103] 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

[92] MacKie 1965
[93] Barber 2018
[94] Barrett 1981, 207-17
[95] Armit 1991
[96] Romankiewicz 2011
[97] Romankiewicz 2016
[98] Armit 2005b
[99] Barber 2018
[100] Scott 1947, 1948
[101] O'Neill
[102] Hingley 1992, 19; Dockrill 1998, 493-7 et passim; Armit 1996, 129-130
[103] Smith 2014

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."[104] 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 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[105].

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,

[104] Stuart 1857, 192
[105] Fojut 1982a

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.

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[106] [107] [108] 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"[109]. But neither question has yet been answered conclusively.

[106] Hedges and Bell 1980
[107] Armit 2003
[108] Most recently, Romankiewicz 2016.
[109] Stewart 1956, 21