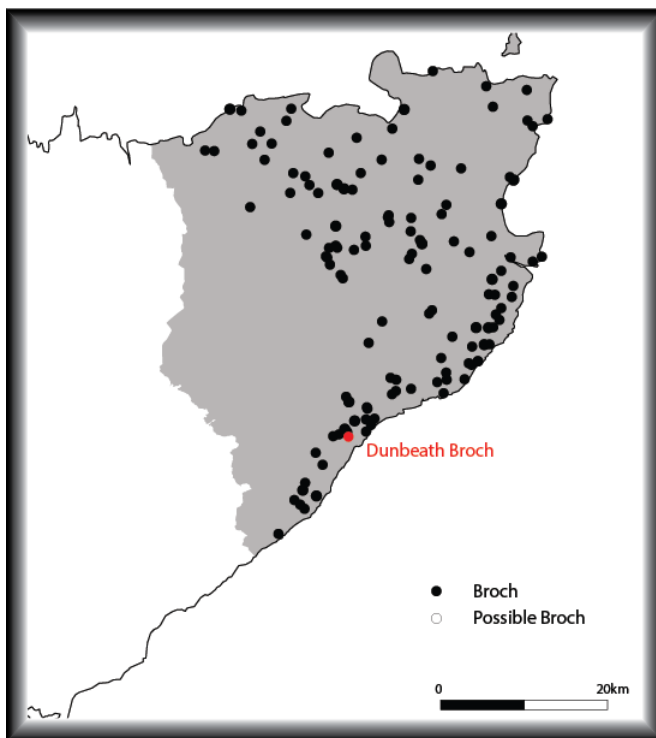


BROCHS IN CAITHNESS



With around 200 examples, Caithness has more brochs per square kilometre than anywhere else in Scotland. Certain areas show a remarkable density of distribution. Look at the many other brochs nearby and the scores clustered along the eastern coast of Caithness.

LEARN MORE ABOUT CAITHNESS' BROCHS



Caithness Broch Project is a local grass-roots charity working to promote and conserve our county's brochs. Find out more about their activities: thebrochproject.co.uk

[f](#) CaithnessBrochProject [t](#) TheBrochProject

VISIT DUNBEATH BROCH

Enjoy a short walk in lovely scenery to visit one of mainland Scotland's finest brochs.

Dunbeath Broch is accessed via a footpath which has steps in some places. The distance between the car park and the broch is around 750m.



There is a purpose-built car park at the Mill on the inland edge of Dunbeath. Turn off the A9 towards Dunbeath village and head downhill until you reach the carpark.

Follow the path on foot upstream along the river. Pass through the kissing-gate and cross the suspension footbridge over the Burn of Houstry, a tributary of the Dunbeath Water.

On the far side of the bridge, head through the gate straight ahead. This gives access to a short path that climbs up to what at first looks like a walled enclosure filled with trees. Inside the enclosure is Dunbeath Broch.

DUNBEATH BROCH ICON OF THE NORTH



Over 2000 years ago, impressive drystone structures called brochs were built across Caithness. Brochs are tall, imposing, circular towers with cells, stairs and galleries within their thick walls. Brochs have captured the imaginations of people for centuries. What were they used for? Who built them and why?

We now know that they were homes, places of refuge and status symbols. We know that some brochs were built before the Romans invaded Scotland and were reused and remodelled many centuries after they were first built, enduring symbols of power in the landscape for centuries.

Caithness has hundreds of brochs but at Dunbeath, we have one of the best examples in northern mainland Scotland

CHANGING FACES

Brochs had many ingenious architectural features. However, what you see now at Dunbeath Broch is not what it would have looked like when it was first built. Ever since it was abandoned, probably around a thousand years ago, people have returned to the site, rebuilding walls, taking the stone to build other buildings across the landscape and punching through walls to create new spaces.

Nature has also played a cruel hand: over the last two thousand years, parts of the walls have collapsed or become overgrown and hidden.



The broch prior to conservation work in the 1990s

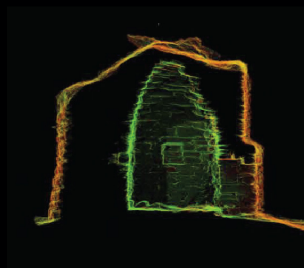


This leaflet was produced with support from LEADER and SSE



INTRA-MURAL CELL

Step into the intra-mural cell (below), accessed from inside the broch. Whilst most brochs have cells within their walls, the Dunbeath example is of an unusual form, suggesting it dates to a later period of remodelling.



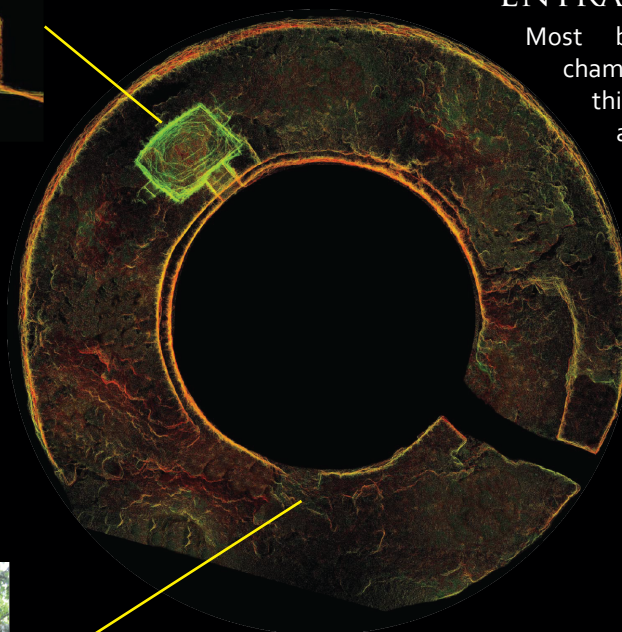
STAIRS

The stairs at Dunbeath broch have long since collapsed, but what may have been the entrance to the stair passage was uncovered during the consolidation of the monument (left). This is still visible but blocked with slabs set on edge.



ENTRANCE PASSAGE

Most brochs have small chambers within the thickness of the wall, accessed from the entrance passage, called 'guard cells'. You can see the well preserved corbelled dome of one on your right as you enter the broch (above); the in-filled remains of another can be seen on the left.



SCARCEMENT LEDGE

Look out for a ledge protruding from the interior wall. This would have supported the timbers forming the first floor of the broch.

INVESTIGATION & RESTORATION

The broch was first investigated in 1866 by W S T Sinclair of Dunbeath, who emptied the interior of rubble. This was one of the earliest excavations of a broch in Caithness, indeed Scotland.

Between 2016 and 2018, Dunbeath and Berriedale Community Council and the local community undertook a new programme of archaeological investigations and structural consolidations. The aim was to improve on-site interpretation and to encourage people to visit and enjoy the broch. This work by AOC Archaeology Group has made Dunbeath broch one of the more accessible and best-preserved monuments in Caithness.

Take time to wander around the interior. Look out for the entrance passage, the guard cells and the cells in the wall. Imagine what life would have been like over 2000 years ago. Step into the past.



Work at the broch has revealed a range of artefacts including a bone toggle (left) and a bone dice. These give us further clues into what people did in this area 2000 years ago; the dice tells us that the people living in Dunbeath enjoyed playing games. You can see these finds and many others at Dunbeath Heritage Museum.