

**BRAAL CASTLE, HALKIRK**

The ruins of Braal Castle sit on the west bank of the Thurso River near the village of Halkirk. The tower is a rectangular, rubble built structure, measuring internally about 10m square, and survives to the level of the top of the second storey. The roof features have all disappeared, to some extent due to the reduction of the wall top in recent years because of dangerous masonry.

The entrance is at first floor level, with the staircase within the wall thickness at the right hand side. The unvaulted basement had no external door and was lit by two narrow vertical loop-holes. On the first floor are deep, broad window recesses in the N and W walls. These are arched and furnished with stone seats. In the E wall are a fireplace and latrine, with a closet in the SW angle. There are no surviving floors.

The castle probably dates from the 14th century. In 1375 or 1376, King Robert II granted to his son David Stewart 'the Castle of Brathwell and all the lands thereof'. In 1452, King James II granted the lands of Brathwele to Admiral Sir George Crechtoun of Carnis. In 1457 the castle was in the possession of George, earl of Caithness, who along with several others, had a remission from Queen Mary for taking the Castle of Ackergill (N of Wick) for forcibly confining Sir Alexander Keith, the Captain, and John Skarlet, his servitor, in the place of Girnigo, Brawl, and other places.

Due to the dangerous condition of the building, and disturbance to the fabric through vandalism, the opening was closed off and access to the interior discontinued.



**Highland Regional Council**

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95. Braal Castle.

The ruins of Braal Castle are situated in rear of the present mansion, on the N bank of the Thurso River and about  $\frac{1}{2}$  m. NE of Halkirk. The tower is a rectangular rubble-built structure, measuring externally some 35' by 37', and existing to the level of the top of the second storey. The battlements and distinctive features of the roof have, however, disappeared. The walls are from 8' to 10' in thickness. The entrance door is on the first floor level through the SW angle, and just within it the staircase rises to the right in the thickness of the wall. The basement, which measures interiorly 20'9" x 18', has not been vaulted; has had no external door; and has been lighted by two narrow vertical loop-holes. On the first floor are deep broad window recesses in the N and W walls. They are arched, and furnished with stone seats, and measure 6' in width, 6'3" in depth, and 8'2" in height. In the E wall are a fireplace and garde-robe, and there is a closet in the SW angle. The floors have all fallen. The corbels of the first floor exist along one half of the S wall and are exceedingly broad, forming a pavement 3' to 4' across. The castle probably dates from the 14th century. In 1375 or 1376 King Robert II granted to his son David Stewart, created Earl Palatine of Stratherne, the Castle of Brathwell and all the lands thereof, inherited by Alexander of Ard in right of his mother Matilda of Stratherne, and resigned by him. In 1452, King James II granted the lands of Brathwele to Admiral Sir George Crechtoun of Carnis, on the resignation of Sir James Crechtoun of Frenndraucht and his wife. In 1547 the castle was in the possession of George, Earl of Caithness, who, along with several others, had remission from Queen Mary for taking the Castle of Ackergill and for forcibly confining Alexander Keith, the Captain, and John Skarlet, his servant, in the place of GirmiGO, Brawl and other places. The modern house adjoining the ruin was erected in 1856 on the vaults of an earlier mansion whose construction had not proceeded further.