

# HIGHLAND REGIONAL COUNCIL

# FIELD MONUMENTS



## ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES AND MONUMENTS RECORD

1 SITE CODE	H N D 2 7 S W 0 0 6
2 NGR	N D 2 3 3 2 7 2 1 0
3 QUAL	CE
6 SITE NAME	S T. J O H N ' S C H A P E L
10 GENERIC TYPE	CHAPEL + GRAVEYARD
14 PERIOD/DATE	EM = LM
15 DATING METHOD	TYP
18 SHAPE	RECTANGULAR
19 THREAT AND DATE	

4 DISTRICT	CAITHNESS	5 PARISH	DUNNET
7 AREA STATUS	SSSI	8 SITE STATUS	
9 REGIONAL STATUS		11 CONCORDANCE	OS ND 27 SW 6
12 FORM	STANDING STRUCTURE	13 DIMENSIONS	10.0m x 6.0m
16 RELATIONSHIP OF ELEMENTS		17 CONDITION	INCOMPLETE (OVERGROWN BUILDING FOUNDATIONS)

20 LAND USE	ENCLOSED LAND	21 GEOLOGY	
22 SOILS		23 VEGETATION	
24 HYDROLOGY/DRAINAGE		25 RELIEF	KNOLL
26 ASPECT	NW = N = NE	27 ALTITUDE	20 = 25m OD

28 EXCAVATION (EXCAVATOR: DATE: EXTENT: QUALITY)

29 BIBLIOGRAPHY (AUTHOR: DATE: TITLE: JOURNAL OR PUBLISHER: VOLUME: DETAIL)

1. ORDNANCE SURVEY: 1976: 1/10 000 MAP
2. RCAHMS: 1911: CAITHNESS INVENTORY: HMSO: p27, No. 79
3. BEATON, D: 1909: ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY OF CAITHNESS: : pp46-47
4. JOLLY, T: 1845: NEW STATISTICAL ACCOUNT: : p38

30 GROUND PLAN NO.		31 GROUND PHOTO NO.	
32 SLIDES NO.		33 HR. AP. NO.	
34 NMR. AP. NO.		35 OTHER AP. NO. SOURCE	
36 ARCHIVE AND LOCATION		38 SAMPLES	
37 GEOPHYSICAL SURVEY		40 NUMERICAL DATES: RANGE: LAB NO.	
39 PALYNOLOGY		42 MUSEUM/LOCATION	
41 SMALL FINDS		43 OTHER	

44 NAME & ADDRESS OF OWNER		45 ATTITUDE OF OWNER	
46 NAME & ADDRESS OF TENANT		47 ATTITUDE OF TENANT	

48 ACCESS & RESTRICTIONS

49 NAME & ADDRESS OF FINDER/RECORDER: DATE

50 RECORDER: DATE	FAM: 3.4.1986	51 CHECK: DATE	PB: 16.4.1986
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52 TEXT

"ND 2332 7210. St.John's Chapel (site of)." (1)

"St.John's Chapel is recognisable on a grassy knoll of slight elevation but the dimensions of the building are not ascertainable without excavation." (2) (3)

"According to Beaton, however, the line of the foundation can still be traced and there are indications of the burial ground. Jolly (4), whilst adding nothing concerning the chapel, states: 'St.John's Loch is much resorted to on the first Monday of May, August, November and February, Old Style, by invalids from all parts of the country. They walk round it, bathe, throw a piece of money in the water, and are out of sight of it by sunrise...'"

"Apart from one earthfast stone, the only trace of the chapel is a very slight grass-covered bank, 0.2m high, measuring 9.0m E-W by 5.0m transversely, situated on a grassy knoll, 0.8m high." (OSFI:RD:26.2.1965)

52./ "All that remains of St.John's Chapel is an indistinct turf-covered footing on a rise in rough pasture; it measures approx.10.0m long E-W by 6.0m broad. Several metres out from the W end of the chapel a small stretch of packed stone revealed by erosion could indicate a wall-line of the burial ground." (OSFI:JM:27.4.1982)

At the east end of St John's Loch is the site of the chapel of St John. The line of the foundation may still be traced, and there are indications of the burial-ground still to be seen. The site of the chapel is quite close to Corsback, and may be seen from the highway leading from Dunnet to John O'Groats. The older people hand down the tradition that unbaptised children were buried in the cemetery. This chapel was regarded with superstitious veneration by the people, as may be learned from the following quotations:—

"St John's Loch," says Rev. Thomas Jolly, writing in 1840, "is much resorted to on the first Monday of May, and the first Monday of August, November, and February, O.S., by invalids from all parts of the country. They walk round it, bathe, throw a piece of money into the water, and are out of sight of it by sunrise. Hypochondriacs and nervous people may sometimes feel better after this, from the power of imagination and exertion; but those seriously ill are of course the worse for it, and die occasionally by the road. The secret of the matter seems to be this: there was a Catholic chapel (St John's at the east end of the lake), to the waters of which the saint must have communicated virtuous qualities. The money is evidently the offering to the altar; hence the very worthy practice of curing the sick and enriching the church. After the Reformation, the practice of throwing the money into the loch would begin, it being impossible that the minister would instruct them to do so. It is astonishing that in these days such a superstitious rite should be continued; but so it is, and people who should know better have recourse to it. I do not think it does much good to the people in the parish; it seems most efficacious to those at a distance."<sup>1</sup> Brand, writing in 1701 of his visit to the County prior to that date, makes the following reference to the superstitions connected with this Loch:—

"As in Orkney and Zetland there were several old Chappels, which the superstitious Zealots did frequent, so is it likewise in Caithness. The Ministers told me there is one in Dunnet Parish, beside which there are about 60. Heaps of Stones, which the People coming to, take with them a Stone and throw it into the Heap, bowing themselves also thereunto. Nigh to it likewise there is a Loch called St John's Loch, concerning which there goes a fabulous Tradition, that on St Stephen's Day there was a pleasant Meadow in that place, where now the Loch is, and on St John's Day thereafter, it was turned into this Loch."<sup>2</sup>

