

# HIGHLAND REGIONAL COUNCIL



# FIELD MONUMENTS

## ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES AND MONUMENTS RECORD

1 SITE CODE		H	N	D	3	6	S	E	0	0	4	A
2 NGR	N	D	3	7	0	2	6	3	1	4	3 QUAL	
6 SITE NAME												
N	Y	B	S	T	E	R						

4 DISTRICT <b>CAITHNESS</b>			5 PARISH <b>WICK</b>			6 SITE NAME <b>N Y B S T E R</b>			
7 AREA STATUS		8 SITE STATUS <b>SCHEDULED</b>		9 REGIONAL STATUS		10 GENERIC TYPE <b>BROCH</b>			
11 CONCORDANCE <b>OS ND 36 SE 4</b>		12 FORM <b>STANDING STRUCTURE</b>		13 DIMENSIONS <b>INT. DIAMETER 7.1m</b>		14 PERIOD/DATE <b>IA</b>		15 DATING METHOD <b>TYP</b>	
16 RELATIONSHIP OF ELEMENTS			17 CONDITION <b>INCOMPLETE(OVERGROWN)</b>			18 SHAPE <b>CIRCULAR</b>		19 THREAT AND DATE	
20 LAND USE <b>BACKSHORE</b>				21 GEOLOGY				22 SOILS	23 VEGETATION
24 HYDROLOGY/DRAINAGE			25 RELIEF <b>PROMONTORY</b>			26 ASPECT <b>NE-E-SE</b>		27 ALTITUDE <b>10=15m OD</b>	

28 EXCAVATION (EXCAVATOR: DATE: EXTENT: QUALITY)	
1. TRESS-BARRY, SIR FRANCIS: 1900: INCOMPLETE: UNSCIENTIFIC	
29 BIBLIOGRAPHY (AUTHOR: DATE: TITLE: JOURNAL OR PUBLISHER: VOLUME: DETAIL)	
1. ORDNANCE SURVEY: 1973: 1/10,000 MAP	
2. YOUNG, A: 1964: PROC. SOC. ANT. SCOT.: VOL. 95: p184, No 15	
3. RCAHMS: 1911: CAITHNESS INVENTORY: HMSO: pp159-50, No 518 (PLAN)	
4. ROBERTSON, A: 1970: BRITANNIA: VOL. 1: TABLE 2	
5. LAMB, RG: 1980: IRON AGE PROM. FORTS IN THE NORTHERN ISLES: BAR 79: p75	
6. GOURLAY, R: 1981: DISCOVERY AND EXCAVATION IN SCOTLAND: CBA (SCOTLAND): p18	
7. BATEY, C: 1981: CAITHNESS COASTAL SURVEY: DURHAM U.P.: p66: WIC 91	
30 GROUND PLAN NO.	31 GROUND PHOTO NO. <b>87/4/6/25-27</b>
32 SLIDES NO.	33 HR. AP. NO.
34 NMR. AP. NO.	35 OTHER AP. NO.: SOURCE
36 ARCHIVE AND LOCATION	
37 GEOPHYSICAL SURVEY	38 SAMPLES
39 PALYNOLOGY	40 NUMERICAL DATES: RANGE: LAB NO.
41 SMALL FINDS	42 MUSEUM/LOCATION
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 <b>FAM: 2.6.1986</b>	51 CHECK: DATE <b>HAR: 12.6.1986</b>
52 TEXT			

"See continuation cards for text and folder for plan."

- 29.
8. HBM(SDD):1985:LIST OF SCHEDULED MONUMENTS
  9. SWANSON, CB:1985:TS UNPUBLISHED
  10. ORDNANCE SURVEY:1906:25" MAP
  11. ANDERSON, J:1901:PROC. SOC. ANT. SCOT.:VOL. 35:pp139-42
  12. JOHN O'GROAT JOURNAL(NEWSPAPER):26.9.1986

**NYBSTER BROCH, AUCKENGILL**

The broch at Nybster was excavated about 1900 by Sir Francis Tress Barry, who was also responsible for excavations at a large number of other such sites. His collaborator on many of the excavations was the artist and sculptor John Nicolson. Many of his drawings, and volumes of record photographs from the excavations along with objects and other memorabilia have been gathered together and presented to the public in the John Nicolson Museum at Auckengill.

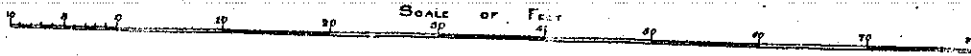
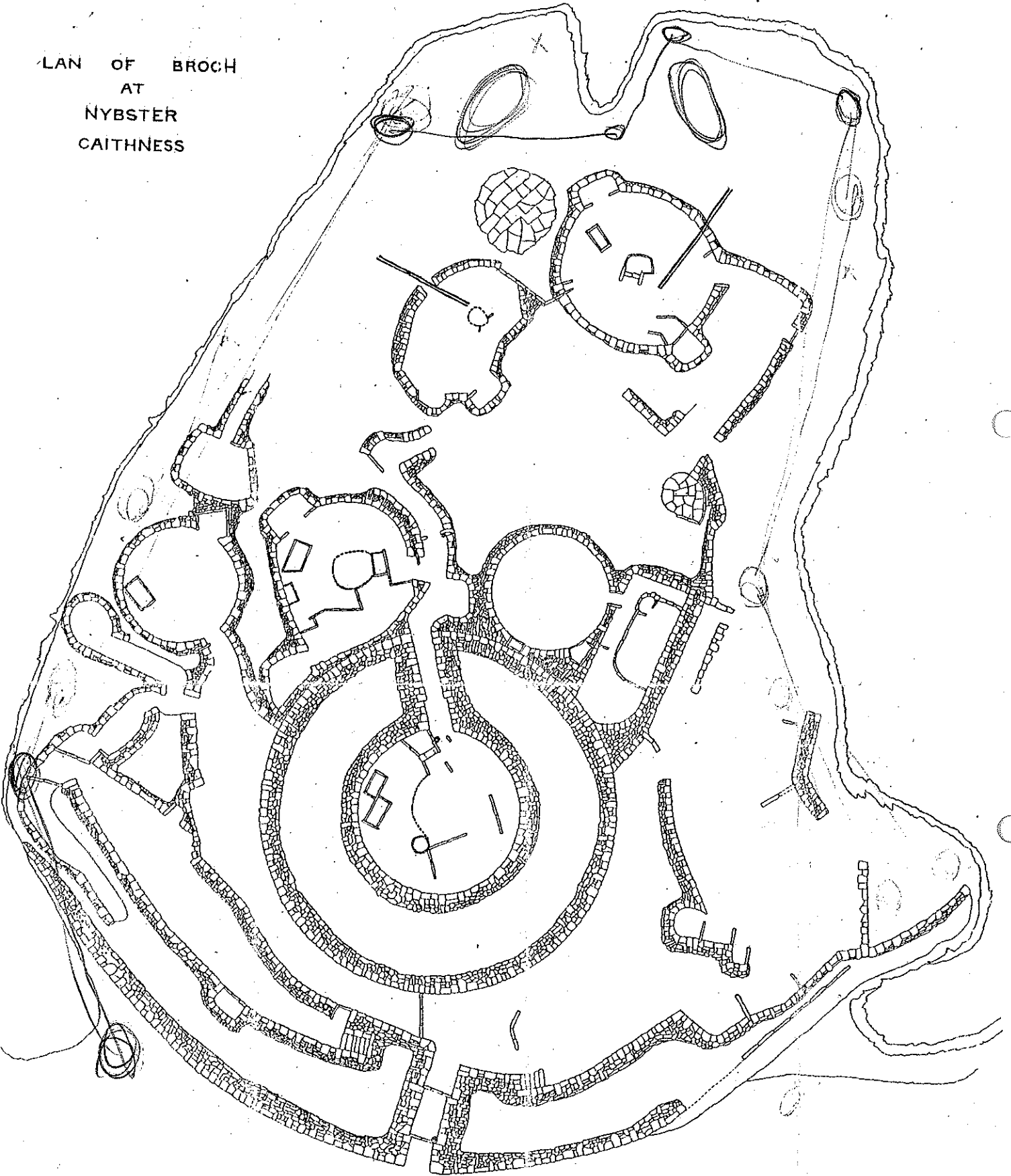
The broch is unusual in many ways. The inner court of the broch itself is extremely small (6.2m), although this compares with two other such sites at Skirza Head and Ness. While the entrance passage has the usual door check, there are no intramural cells or guard chambers. The wall is circular, between 4.2 and 5.0m in thickness. Excavation has revealed considerable evidence of additional buildings on the promontory within the protection of a massive cross-promontory wall - curiously without an external ditch. The buildings are circular or cellular in shape, and while there are none of the galleried structures attached to other brochs in Caithness, many of these structures are likely to date from the Pictish period.

Adjacent to the broch is the newly moved and reconstructed monument known as 'Mervyn's Tower'. Built by John Nicolson to commemorate Sir Francis Tress Barry, it was moved both to take it clear of the broch itself (it was based on one of Tress Barry's spoil heaps) and to save it from collapse.

The elegant and beautifully-drawn plan from the excavation is reproduced on the back of this sheet. Many of the details of structures revealed by excavation but now overgrown or invisible are clearly shown. Finds from the site included a long-handled bone comb; a bronze pin with annular head; several fragments of both rotary and saddle querns; and the decorated upper stone of a rotary quern with radial grooves and flutings.

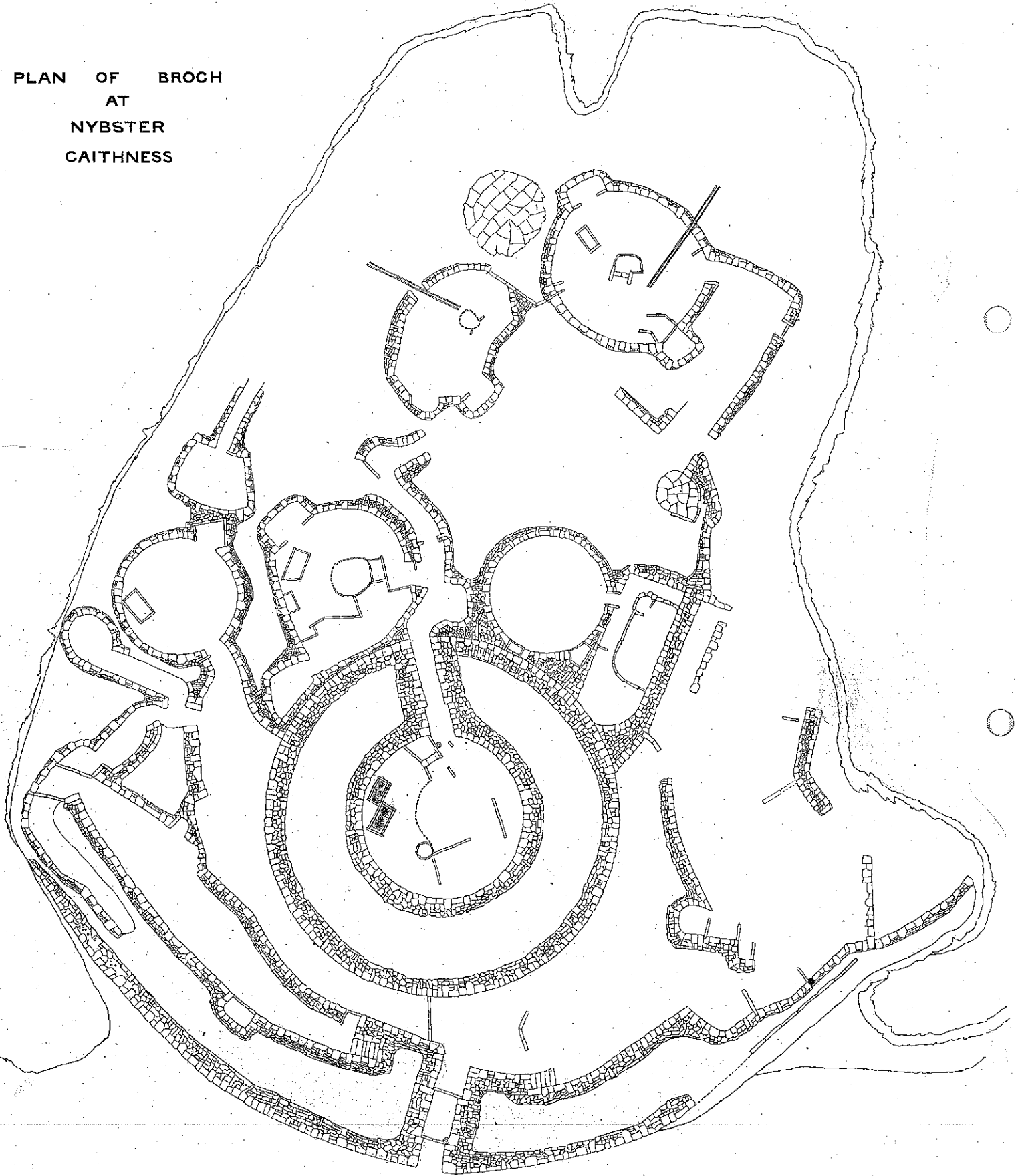
**Highland Regional Council**Department of  
Libraries and Leisure Services

PLAN OF BROCH  
AT  
NYBSTER  
CAITHNESS



N.B. plan drawn in 1890; broch not now so extensive as above


PLAN OF BROCH  
AT  
NYBSTER  
CAITHNESS



SCALE OF FEET  
0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80

29.
  8. HBM(SDD):1985:LIST OF SCHEDULED MONUMENTS
  9. SWANSON,CB:1985:TS UNPUBLISHED
  10. ORDNANCE SURVEY:1906:25" MAP
  11. ANDERSON,J:1901:PROC.SOC.ANT.SCOT.:VOL.35:pp139-42
  12. JOHN O'GROAT JOURNAL(NEWSPAPER):26.9.1986

NEG/SLIDE No:	87014	60215	DATE:	29/4/87	NGR:	N 037026314	QUAL:	CE
DISTRICT:	CAITHNESS	CODE:	2	PARISH:	WICK	CODE:	09	
SUBJECT KEYWORDS: "MERYNS TOWER" NYBSTER BROCH								
DETAIL:								
LOCATION: WICK								

SMR No:	H	N	D	3	6	S	E	0	0	4	A
 ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES AND MONUMENTS RECORD <b>PHOTOGRAPH</b>											
PHOTOGRAPHER:						COPYRIGHT:					
R.B. GOURLAY						H.R.C.					

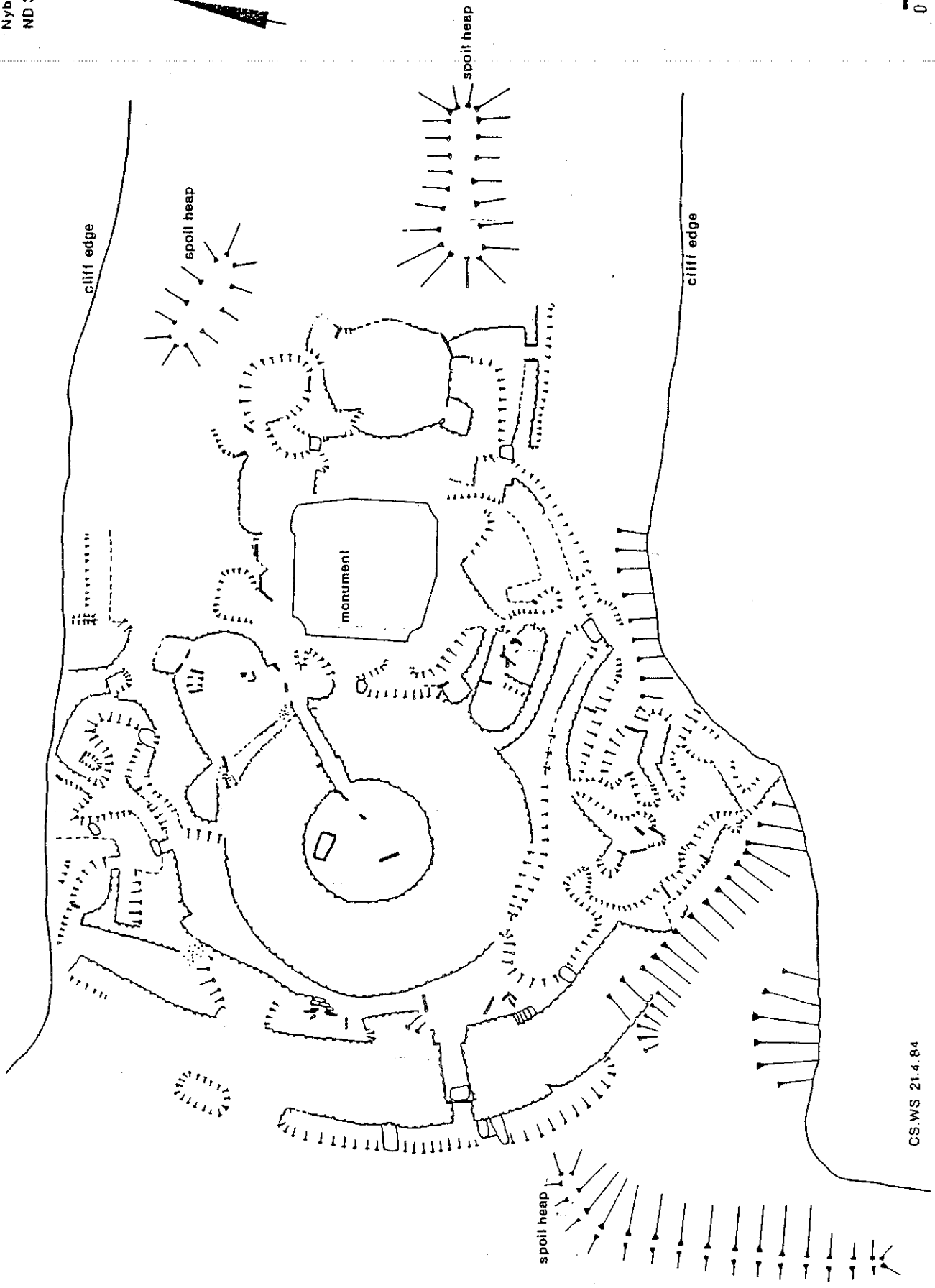


### Nybster

- Location*                      *On a cliff promontory 700m SE of the John Nicolson Museum*
- Access*                         *From the A9 by car or on foot, car park, path to broch*
- Ownership*                    *Mr Sutherland, Summerbank (?)*
- Interpretive*                 *(1) the site was excavated by Tress Barry*
- Potential*                     *(2) a considerable variety of detail is revealed*  
*(3) the broch occupies a cliff edge location, in contrast*  
*to the majority of Caithness brochs*  
*(4) there is a monument on the site built by John Nicolson*  
*to commemorate Tress Barry*
- Disadvantages*              *(1) the location is dangerous in that the remains of the*  
*broch complex extend right to the cliff edge*  
*(2) the monument on the site obscures a large part of the*  
*surrounding complex of buildings*



Nyabster  
ND 370631



CS.WS 21.4.84

(ND 3702 6314) Broch (NR)

(1)

Nybster Broch was excavated by Sir Francis Tress Barry about 1900, revealing neither guard chamber nor mural cells. It has an internal diameter of 23 ft and a wall thickness of 14 ft. In 1910 the maximum height of the walls was 5 ft 3 ins.

(2)

The broch is defended by a possibly later forework and the whole is fronted by a ditch about 20 ft wide which cuts off the promontory on which the broch stands. To seaward of the broch practically the whole promontory is covered by well-built out-buildings, oblong, circular, and irregular in plan.

(3)

Finds include a fragment of 2nd century Samian ware, as well as the more usual bone and stone objects.

Nybster Broch is as described and planned above.

Although there is no trace of a ditch cutting off the promontory, there are remains of secondary defensive banks and walls, probably contemporary with the broch forework. A modern monument to Sir Francis Tress Barry has been constructed immediately E of the broch, destroying several outbuildings. Two mounds at the seaward end of the promontory are probably excavation spoil heaps.

Resurveyed at 1:2500.

(OSFI:RD:14.9.1965)

Classification of Roman material.

(4)

A site of major significance in the study of the development of the broch in that it comprises the ground-galleried block-house of a pre-broch promontory fort, a solid-based broch, and a post-broch settlement.

The block-house, which displays broch-like features including a passage checked for two doors, is probably to be dated not much before the first century B C if not within it.

(5)

Several sherds of 'broch' pottery were recovered from the upcast from illicit digging within the broch interior. Finds with investigator.

(6)

A promontory broch with a ditch. In good condition due to recent renovation.

(7)

Nybster Broch is generally as described and planned by the previous authorities. The excavations were not back-filled and most of the walling is exposed, albeit heavily overgrown. The previous field investigator noted 'secondary defensive banks and walls' immediately W of the forework. These have been completely levelled, but they were almost certainly fairly modern, perhaps spoil heaps, as the RCAM did not plan them, and they formed no logical pattern with the broch and its outer defences. Published survey (1:2500) revised.

(OSFI:NKB:22.7.1982)

"Brough."

(10)

*Nybster Broch.*—The Nybster Broch is situated on the top of a high cliff-promontory projecting into the sea, which is about 60 yards in length and 40 yards wide at the landward end, narrowing to less than half that width at the seaward end. It has been cut off from the land by a ditch<sup>2</sup> nearly 20 feet wide drawn in a segment of a circle from the ravine at one side to that at the other. Immediately within the ditch, a well-built wall about 10 feet thick, increasing to about 15 feet in thickness in the middle, also crosses the landward end of the promontory in a segment of a circle with the convex side towards the land (fig. 20). Near the middle of the convexity (where the wall is thickest) is the entrance passage, 15 feet in length, through the thickness of the wall, 3 feet 6 inches in width at the outer opening, widening to 4 feet at a distance of 4½ feet inwards, where there are checks for a door, and widening again slightly at 12 feet from the entrance, where there are checks for a second door. On the inner side of the forework to the south of the entrance, part of the thickening of its wall ends in a stairway of which five steps remain from the level of the interior area to the present level of the top of the wall. A similar arrangement of steps to the north of the entrance give access to the level of the present height of the wall from the floor of the long chamber immediately behind the northern half of the wall. Whatever may have been the original height of the wall, these steps may have been designed to give the defenders easy access to the top of this forework from both sides for the purpose of defending the outer entrance.

Entering by this passage-way through the exterior defensive wall or forework, the broch stands immediately before you, but its entrance is placed on the opposite side from the entrance through the forework, and that side of the main building is surrounded by a congeries of out-buildings, oblong, circular and irregular in form, scattered over nearly the whole area of the promontory.

The broch consists of a circular wall 14 feet thick surrounding a central area of 23 feet in diameter. There is no scarcement. The entrance, which faces seaward, is scarcely more than 3 feet wide for a distance of 10 feet, where there are checks for a door, and the passage widens a few inches on either side for the remainder of its length. There is no guard-chamber, and no stair; in fact, no opening of any kind from the interior area, but as there is only about 4 feet of the height of the wall remaining, the entrance to the stairway may have been at a higher level. In the floor of the area towards the north side there are two of the cist-like constructions of four slabs which have been supposed to be fireplaces, though their large size makes them look more like tanks, one measuring 4 feet by 2 feet and 2 feet 5 inches deep; the other, 3 feet 3 inches by 2 feet 8 inches and 1 foot 4 inches deep.

The outbuildings around this broch occupy nearly the whole of the available surface of the promontory. Several of them are circular, and they are mostly all very well built. In the large circular outbuilding to the left of the entrance of the broch there is a tank-like construction or fireplace of four slabs in the floor 3 feet 9 inches in length by 2 feet 4 inches in breadth and 2 feet deep; and another near the wall, 2 feet long by 14 inches wide and 9 inches deep.

The articles found in this broch include a long-handled bone comb, several portions of quern stones and saddle querns, and an upper stone of a rotatory quern (fig. 21) ornamented with radial grooves or flutings, but without a central perforation.

<sup>2</sup> There has been some recent quarrying in the depression, which, however, I cannot help regarding as originally a ditch of fortification.



Fig. 21. Ornamented Quern from Nybster Broch.

*Nybyster Broch.*—The Nybyster Broch is situated on the top of a high cliff-promontory projecting into the sea, which is about 60 yards in length and 40 yards wide at the landward end, narrowing to less than half that width at the seaward end. It has been cut off from the land by a ditch<sup>2</sup> nearly 20 feet wide drawn in a segment of a circle from the ravine at one side to that at the other. Immediately within the ditch, a well-built wall about 10 feet thick, increasing to about 15 feet in thickness in the middle, also crosses the landward end of the promontory in a segment of a circle with the convex side towards the land (fig. 20). Near the middle of the convexity (where the wall is thickest) is the entrance passage, 15 feet in length, through the thickness of the wall, 3 feet 6 inches in width at the outer opening, widening to 4 feet at a distance of 4½ feet inwards, where there are checks for a door, and widening again slightly at 12 feet from the entrance, where there are checks for a second door. On the inner side of the forework to the south of the entrance, part of the thickening of its wall ends in a stairway of which five steps remain from the level of the interior area to the present level of the top of the wall. A similar arrangement of steps to the north of the entrance give access to the level of the present height of the wall from the floor of the long chamber immediately behind the northern half of the wall. Whatever may have been the original height of the wall, these steps may have been designed to give the defenders easy access to the top of this forework from both sides for the purpose of defending the outer entrance.

Entering by this passage-way through the exterior defensive wall or forework, the broch stands immediately before you, but its entrance is placed on the opposite side from the entrance through the forework, and that side of the main building is surrounded by a congeries of out-buildings, oblong, circular and irregular in form, scattered over nearly the whole area of the promontory.

The broch consists of a circular wall 14 feet thick surrounding a central area of 23 feet in diameter. There is no scarcement. The entrance, which faces seaward, is scarcely more than 3 feet wide for a distance of 10 feet, where there are checks for a door, and the passage widens a few inches on either side for the remainder of its length. There is no guard-chamber, and no stair; in fact, no opening of any kind from the interior area, but as there is only about 4 feet of the height of the wall remaining, the entrance to the stairway may have been at a higher level. In the floor of the area towards the north side there are two of the cist-like constructions of four slabs which have been supposed to be fireplaces, though their large size makes them look more like tanks, one measuring 4 feet by 2 feet and 2 feet 5 inches deep; the other, 3 feet 3 inches by 2 feet 8 inches and 1 foot 4 inches deep.

The outbuildings around this broch occupy nearly the whole of the available surface of the promontory. Several of them are circular, and they are mostly all very well built. In the large circular outbuilding to the left of the entrance of the broch there is a tank-like construction or fireplace of four slabs in the floor 3 feet 9 inches in length by 2 feet 4 inches in breadth and 2 feet deep; and another near the wall, 2 feet long by 14 inches wide and 9 inches deep.

The articles found in this broch include a long-handled bone comb, several portions of quern stones and saddle querns, and an upper stone of a rotatory quern (fig. 21) ornamented with radial grooves or flutings, but without a central perforation.

<sup>2</sup> There has been some recent quarrying in the depression, which, however, I cannot help regarding as originally a ditch of fortification.



Fig. 21. Ornamented Quern from Nybyster Broch.

518. *Broch, Nybster*.—The broch of Nybster (fig. 42) is situated on the top of a high cliff promontory about 60 yards in length and 40 yards in width at the landward end, narrowing to seaward. It has been cut off from the land by a ditch some 20' wide dug out across

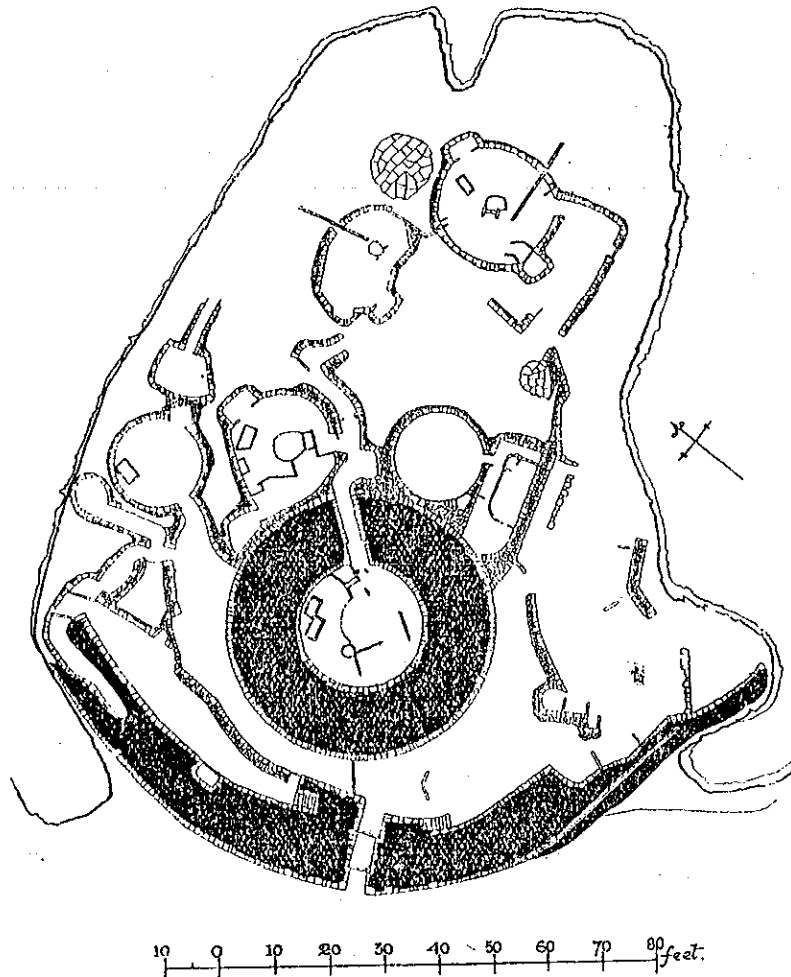


FIG. 42.—Broch, Nybster (No. 518); Ground-plan.

the landward end. The broch was excavated by the late Sir Francis Tress Barry. Immediately within the ditch a well-built wall about 10' in thickness, increasing to about 15' in the middle, also crosses the promontory in a segment of a circle with its convex side towards the land. Near the middle of the convexity (where the wall is thickest) is the entrance passage 15' in length through the thickness of the wall 3' 6" in width at the outer end, widening to 4' at a distance of 4½ inwards, where there are checks for a door. On the inner side of this forework, to the S. of the entrance, part of the thickening of the wall ends in a stairway, of which five steps remain from the level of the interior area to the present level of the top of the wall. A similar arrangement of steps to the N. of the entrance gives access to the present top of the wall from the floor of the long chamber immediately behind the northern half of the wall. Immediately in rear of this entrance through the forework stands the broch, which, however, is entered from the opposite or seaward side and is in that direction enclosed by a congeries of outbuildings, oblong, circular, and irregular in form, scattered over nearly the whole area of the promontory. The entrance to the broch is through a passage 14' in length, about 3' in width for the first 10', where there are checks for a door, and widening a few inches on either side for the remainder of its length. The stone in which the pivot of the door worked is still *in situ*. There is no guard chamber. The interior area measures 23' in diameter. There is no stair, but at 14' 6" from the inner end of the passage to the left on the inner face of the wall a filling or rebuilding with smaller stone, commencing 2' above the floor level and extending for a distance of 5', is distinctly visible. The greatest height of wall remaining is 5' 3". In the floor of the interior area towards the N. side there are two cist-like constructions formed of four slabs set on edge which have been supposed to be fireplaces. One measures 4' x 2' and 2' 5" deep; the other 3' 3" x 2' 8" and 1' 4" deep. Almost opposite the entrance towards the back is a small pit or well, squarish, about 1' 3" in diameter, but now only 1' 2" in depth. The original covering stone remains, and to keep it in position a notch has been cut in one side which fits over a pointed stone set firmly in the floor alongside.

A  
drain, lintelled over, passes out under the entrance passage. The  
outbuildings are well built.

### **Auckengill**

WORK on the proposed Nybster Broch/Mervyn's Tower project should get under way soon, according to a report before councillors this week. The district's special programmes committee heard that an archaeologist is to visit the site at the end of this month prior to work commencing.

Nybster

ND 3702 6314

Scheduled Site

- 1 Anderson J, 1900-01, 139
- 2 RCAHMS, 1911b, 159-160, no518
- 3 Young A, 1961-62, 184, no15
- 4 Caulfield S, 1977-78, 132, no 23
- 5 Lamb R, 1980, 20-21
- 6 Gourlay R, 1981, 18
- 7 Batey C, 1984, 66, WIC 091

Excavated in 1895-96 by Sir Francis Tress Barry, reported in Anderson J, 1900-01

Finds donated to National Museum, Proc Soc Antiq Scot 43, 1908-09, 14-15  
Photographic archive in Nicolson Museum (Caithness District Council),  
NMRS

This broch like the brochs at Skirza Head and Ness along the coast to the N is located on a cliff promontory with cliffs 15m high on either side. Erosion of the edge of the cliff has clearly taken place here as at the other two sites. The broch occupying a more or less central position on the promontory is unaffected but the surrounding buildings extend right to the cliff edge on either side where their incomplete appearance indicates that walls and floors have fallen over the cliff. At this broch there seems to have been a considerable amount of erosion even since the broch was excavated in the mid-1890s. The excavations extend right to the present cliff edge in situations where it would be impossible to work now because of the danger of either falling over the cliff or of the edge giving way. The plan made at the time of the excavation indicates that there was a good safety margin. The edge of the cliff on the N side would appear to have been cut back by possibly more than a metre in the last 100 years.

Behind the complex of buildings which has been revealed by excavation, the seaward side of the promontory as at Skirza Head and Ness shows no

trace of buildings under the tufted vegetation on its flat top, although it is possible that they may exist under the turf beyond where the excavation stopped short. The promontory extends further E than the excavation plan shows. Two large mounds beyond the complex of buildings on the promontory are likely to be spoil heaps from the excavation, as is a very long curving mound on the landward side of the complex to the S. There is a very large, roughly rectangular, tower immediately E of the broch apparently on top of a number of buildings. The tower commemorates Tress Barry and is built of stones from the site.

According to Anderson (1900-01) the promontory is cut off from the land by a ditch some 20ft (6.1m) wide drawn in the segment of a circle immediately outside the cross-promontory wall. The RCAHMS (1911b) possibly following Anderson's description also referred to a ditch, as did Batey (1984). This is most strange because there is no suggestion of a ditch whatsoever across the neck of the promontory, the only curving depression being the trench dug by Tress Barry to reveal the outer face of the massive cross-promontory wall. The absence of any ditch is also noted by the OS. The only depression outside the wall is in the extreme S of the promontory with the long mound identified as a spoil heap lying to the W of it. It may be that this hollow has been identified as a ditch but it does not curve across the width of the promontory, nor form the segment of a circle as described by Anderson.

The cross-promontory wall is a very substantial structure, 5m at its widest extent. Long stretches of its inner and outer faces have been revealed. As presently visible it does not block the width of the promontory, seeming to terminate in square ends about 1.5m from the cliff edge on the N side, and 8m on the S. The excavation plan shows the wall continuing to either cliff edge, but no longer as a solid block of masonry on the N, and as a narrower uneven wall on the S. It has been suggested that there is a gallery in the N part of the wall (Lamb 1980), but the excavation plan is unclear and the appearance of a gallery may be created on the plan by the depiction of an overlying revetment. However both on the excavation plan and on the new survey plan the wall is clearly a composite structure, its present appearance being the result of reconstructions and additions. It is impossible to decipher the separate phases by survey alone, but either or both of the two stairs at the rear



trace of buildings under the tufted vegetation on its flat top, although it is possible that they may exist under the turf beyond where the excavation stopped short. The promontory extends further E than the excavation plan shows. Two large mounds beyond the complex of buildings on the promontory are likely to be spoil heaps from the excavation, as is a very long curving mound on the landward side of the complex to the S. There is a very large, roughly rectangular, tower immediately E of the broch apparently on top of a number of buildings. The tower commemorates Tress Barry and is built of stones from the site.

According to Anderson (1900-01) the promontory is cut off from the land by a ditch some 20ft (6.1m) wide drawn in the segment of a circle immediately outside the cross-promontory wall. The RCAHMS (1911b) possibly following Anderson's description also referred to a ditch, as did Batey (1984). This is most strange because there is no suggestion of a ditch whatsoever across the neck of the promontory, the only curving depression being the trench dug by Tress Barry to reveal the outer face of the massive cross-promontory wall. The absence of any ditch is also noted by the OS. The only depression outside the wall is in the extreme S of the promontory with the long mound identified as a spoil heap lying to the W of it. It may be that this hollow has been identified as a ditch but it does not curve across the width of the promontory, nor form the segment of a circle as described by Anderson.

The cross-promontory wall is a very substantial structure, 5m at its widest extent. Long stretches of its inner and outer faces have been revealed. As presently visible it does not block the width of the promontory, seeming to terminate in square ends about 1.5m from the cliff edge on the N side, and 8m on the S. The excavation plan shows the wall continuing to either cliff edge, but no longer as a solid block of masonry on the N, and as a narrower uneven wall on the S. It has been suggested that there is a gallery in the N part of the wall (Lamb 1980), but the excavation plan is unclear and the appearance of a gallery may be created on the plan by the depiction of an overlying revetment. However both on the excavation plan and on the new survey plan the wall is clearly a composite structure, its present appearance being the result of reconstructions and additions. It is impossible to decipher the separate phases by survey alone, but either or both of the two stairs at the rear

of the wall may be additions. Only the S stair is now visible. It seems to have been added to the inner face, the stair block returning to the face at an angle, leaving an allowance for a door rebate.

The entrance through the massive cross-promontory wall is almost in the middle of the promontory. It is 5m long, 1m wide at the outer end and 1.7m at the inner. There are two sets of door checks with a sill stone set in the passage floor at the outer set. A very large slab lies on the floor behind the sill. The passage walls are well preserved standing over 1.5m high. On entering through the passage the outer face of the broch is encountered, 2.5m from the inner face of the outer wall on the S, but only 1m on the N where the N stair block is situated. It is notable that the entrance to the broch is not in line with the entrance through the cross-promontory wall. It is in fact in the NE, 150 degrees around from the line of the outer entrance. This seems an unusual arrangement in that the entrances of broch and outer wall are sometimes aligned, as at Ness and Crosskirk. There is no sign of a possible second entrance into the broch aligned with the outer passage, both the inner and outer faces of the broch being complete with no trace of straight joints indicating infill.

The intervening space between the cross-promontory wall and the broch is a maze of upright slabs, wall faces, and overgrown areas representing the remains of a number of buildings. No clear passage around to the broch entrance either to the N or to the S has been revealed by the excavation. To the N a narrow passage a metre wide at the N stair block, narrows to 0.5m in the NW, before widening again to 2.5m in the N. The way around to the broch entrance is then blocked by a number of cross-walls and curvilinear buildings. To the S turf covered mounds, which are possibly unexcavated areas, are encountered in the SW and the way to the broch entrance is blocked by what appears to be at least two oblong buildings, immediately ESE and SE of the broch wall. The better preserved of these buildings has been added to the outer face of the broch and is therefore a later construction. It is extremely difficult to make a pattern out of the many pieces of walling around the broch but the new survey plan seems to agree basically with the buildings shown somewhat stylistically on the excavation plan. The most striking feature in the remains of the external buildings is the number of upright slabs encountered. Some are obviously

the side slabs of tanks sunk into the ground. Others are panels at the square ends of walls, while yet others seem to be partitions. It is not at all certain that the buildings uncovered are necessarily all of the same period, although some are undoubtedly subsequent to the broch structure. It is unlikely that the natural ground surface was reached by Tress Barry in the area surrounding the broch. There may well therefore be a considerable stratigraphy remaining in the majority of the area.

The broch appears as a solid circle of masonry, 5m wide from SE to W, but narrowing to about 4.2m on the rest of its circumference where measurable. The entrance passage in the NE is through this narrower part of the wall. It is 0.6m wide at its outer end widening to 1.2m behind a single set of door checks before narrowing again to 0.7m. There are no other features visible in the broch wall, although the RCAHMS noted that at 14ft 6in (4.4m) to the left of the entrance there was a rebuilding with small stones commencing about 2ft (0.6m) above floor level. This was not apparent at the time of survey. The inner face of the broch survives 1.6m high.

The inner court is 6.2m NE/SW by 6.5m SE/NW. These diameters are similar to those at the two promontory brochs of Skirza Head and Ness. The excavation uncovered two cist-like slab constructions reported as being fireplaces, a small pit or well almost opposite the entrance towards the back with a cover stone in place; and a lintelled drain passing out through the entrance. In addition the excavation plan shows either long uprights or lengths of walling on the floor of the court. In the court now there are visible only some uprights, including one in the SW which is 1m long, and a setting of 4 slabs in the NE, probably forming a very large slab sided tank, 1.5m by 0.5m. Otherwise the floor of the broch is featureless.

Particular finds noted from this site (Anderson 1900-01, RCAHMS 1911b) were:

- a long handled bone comb;
- a bronze pin with a fixed annular head set on a short right angled projection from the stalk;
- several portions of rotary and saddle querns;
- an upper stone of a rotary quern ornamented with radial grooves and flutings, but without a central perforation; a large object of cetacean bone, with indications of friction, and having a number of small triangular indentations made with a tool on its surface.

the side slabs of tanks sunk into the ground. Others are panels at the square ends of walls, while yet others seem to be partitions. It is not at all certain that the buildings uncovered are necessarily all of the same period, although some are undoubtedly subsequent to the broch structure. It is unlikely that the natural ground surface was reached by Tress Barry in the area surrounding the broch. There may well therefore be a considerable stratigraphy remaining in the majority of the area.

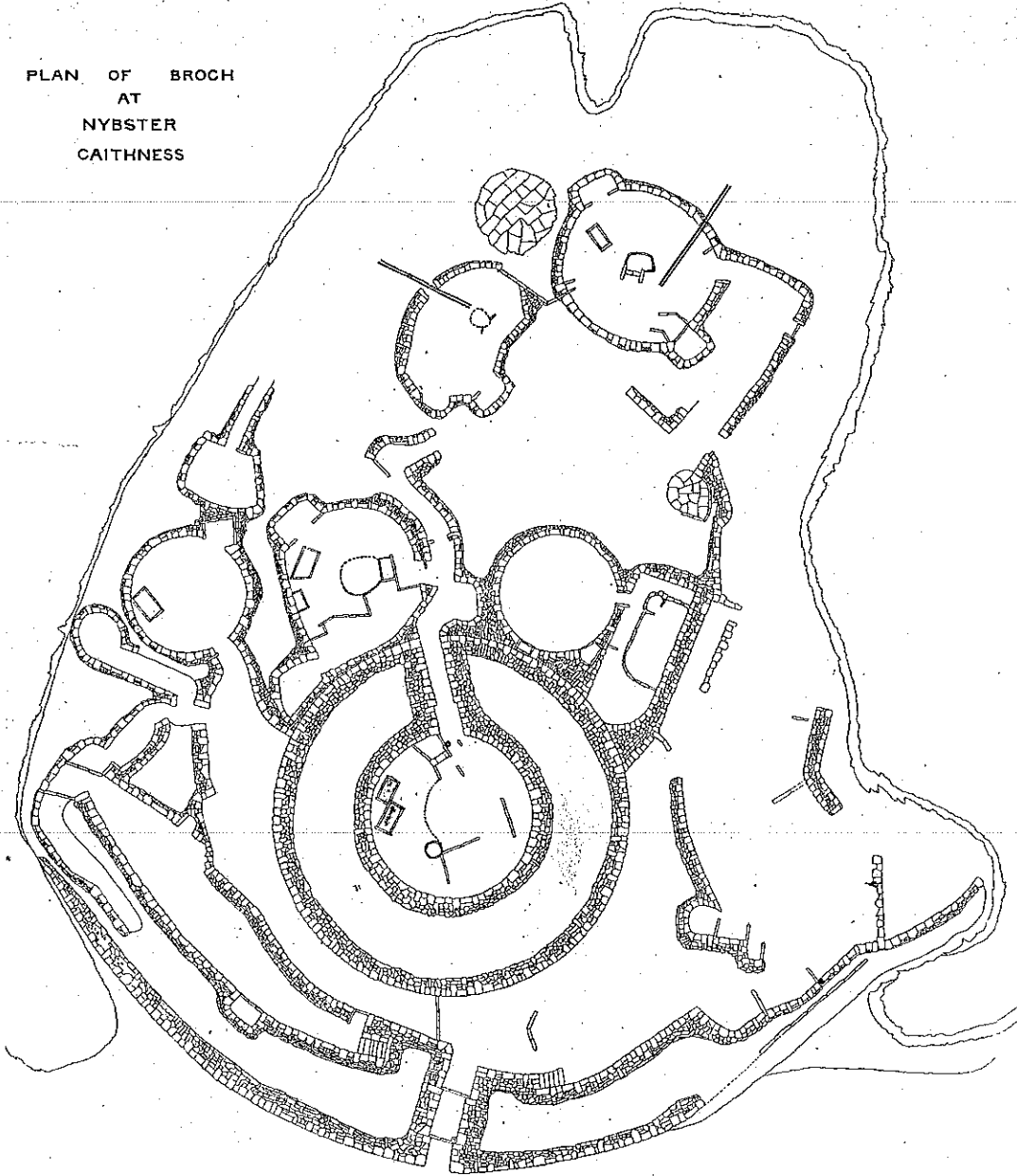
The broch appears as a solid circle of masonry, 5m wide from SE to W, but narrowing to about 4.2m on the rest of its circumference where measurable. The entrance passage in the NE is through this narrower part of the wall. It is 0.6m wide at its outer end widening to 1.2m behind a single set of door checks before narrowing again to 0.7m. There are no other features visible in the broch wall, although the RCAHMS noted that at 14ft 6in (4.4m) to the left of the entrance there was a rebuilding with small stones commencing about 2ft (0.6m) above floor level. This was not apparent at the time of survey. The inner face of the broch survives 1.6m high.

The inner court is 6.2m NE/SW by 6.5m SE/NW. These diameters are similar to those at the two promontory brochs of Skirza Head and Ness. The excavation uncovered two cist-like slab constructions reported as being fireplaces, a small pit or well almost opposite the entrance towards the back with a cover stone in place; and a lintelled drain passing out through the entrance. In addition the excavation plan shows either long uprights or lengths of walling on the floor of the court. In the court now there are visible only some uprights, including one in the SW which is 1m long, and a setting of 4 slabs in the NE, probably forming a very large slab sided tank, 1.5m by 0.5m. Otherwise the floor of the broch is featureless.

Particular finds noted from this site (Anderson 1900-01, RCAHMS 1911b) were:

- a long handled bone comb;
- a bronze pin with a fixed annular head set on a short right angled projection from the stalk;
- several portions of rotary and saddle querns;
- an upper stone of a rotary quern ornamented with radial grooves and flutings, but without a central perforation; a large object of cetacean bone, with indications of friction, and having a number of small triangular indentations made with a tool on its surface.

PLAN OF BROCH  
AT  
NYBSTER  
CAITHNESS



SCALE OF FEET  
0 10 20 30 40 50

# HIGHLAND REGIONAL COUNCIL



# ARTEFACTS

## ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES AND MONUMENTS RECORD

1 SITE CODE												
H	N	D	3	6	S	E	0	0	4	B		
2 NGR		3	7	0	2	6	3	1	4	3 QUAL		
N/D											CE	
6 SITE NAME												
N	Y	B	S	T	E	R	B	R	O	C	H	

4 DISTRICT	5 PARISH
CAITHNESS	WICK

8 CONCORDANCE	9 MUSEUM/LOCATION OF FIND(S)	10 ACCESSION NO.
os ND36SE 4	RMS(QUEEN STREET)	
NMR		

7 GENERIC TYPE	
POTTERY, SHERDS (SAMIAN) + STONE OBJECTS + BONE OBJECTS	
11 PERIOD/DATE	12 DATING METHOD
IA (RO)	TYP

13 FIND CIRCUMSTANCES	14 CONDITION
EXCAVATION OF BROCH	

15 EXCAVATOR AND DATE	16 EXCAVATION RECORD NO.
TRESS-BARRY: 1900	

17 LAND USE	18 GEOLOGY

19 SOILS	20 VEGETATION

21 HYDROLOGY/DRAINAGE	22 RELIEF	23 ASPECT	24 ALTITUDE

25 DETAILED DESCRIPTION/DIMENSIONS	
26 BIBLIOGRAPHY (AUTHOR: DATE: TITLE: JOURNAL OR PUBLISHER: VOLUME: DETAIL)	
1. RCAHMS: 1911: CAITHNESS INVENTORY: HMSO: pp159-60, NO. 518 2. ROBERTSON, A: 1970: BRITANNIA: VOL. 1: TABLE 2 3. GOURLAY, R: 1981: DISCOVERY AND EXCAVATION IN SCOTLAND: CBA (SCOT): p18 4. DONATIONS: 1908 PROC. SOC. ANT. SCOT.: VOL. 42: pp14-15	
27 GROUND PLAN NO.	28 GROUND PHOTO NO.
29 SLIDES NO.	30 HR. AP. NO.
31 NMR. AP. NO.	32 OTHER AP. NO.: SOURCE
33 ARCHIVE AND LOCATION	
34 GEOPHYSICAL SURVEY	35 SAMPLES
36 PALYNOLOGY	37 NUMERICAL DATES: RANGE: LAB NO.
38 OTHER	

39 NAME & ADDRESS OF OWNER	40 ATTITUDE OF OWNER

41 NAME & ADDRESS OF TENANT	42 ATTITUDE OF TENANT

43 ACCESS & RESTRICTIONS

44 NAME & ADDRESS OF FINDER/RECORDER: DATE	45 RECORDER: DATE	46 CHECK: DATE
	FAM: 3.6.1986	HAR: 6.1986.

47 TEXT
"Find include a fragment of 2nd century samian ware, as well as the more usual bone and stone objects." (1) "Classification of Roman material." (2) "Several sherds of 'Broch' pottery were recovered from the upcast form illicit digging within the broch interior. Finds with investigator." (3) "See over for text of (4)." 

*From Nybster Broch.*—Seven borers of bone, from  $6\frac{3}{4}$  inches to  $3\frac{7}{8}$  inches in length; weaving comb of bone,  $3\frac{7}{8}$  inches in length by  $1\frac{3}{4}$  inches in breadth, the handle ornamented with horizontal and diagonal incised lines; weaving comb,  $3\frac{3}{4}$  inches in length by  $1\frac{5}{8}$  inches in breadth, the handle ornamented with a large incised saltire; weaving comb,  $4\frac{3}{8}$  inches by  $1\frac{5}{8}$  inches, the butt end of the handle deeply notched; flat piece of bone,  $4\frac{1}{2}$  inches in length by an inch in width, rubbed to a sharp edge on one side; piece of bone,  $3\frac{7}{8}$  inches by  $1\frac{1}{2}$  inches, pierced near the ends and in the middle by three small circular holes, and with a circular projection an inch in diameter on one face; flat thin piece of bone,  $2\frac{1}{8}$  inches by  $\frac{5}{8}$  inch, with a circular perforation at each end; small bead of bone,  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch in diameter; skull of ox and antlers of red-deer; half of a small cup or lamp of stone; whorl of sandstone,  $1\frac{3}{4}$  inches in diameter; circular disc of sandstone, with roughly-made circular depression in the middle of one face; thin and well-shaped disc of slaty stone,  $3\frac{3}{4}$  inches in diameter, smoothed on both faces; disc of sandstone,  $3\frac{7}{8}$  inches in diameter, with an incomplete perforation  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch wide in centre; whetstone,  $2\frac{1}{8}$  inches in length by  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch in width, broken; oval vessel of sandstone,  $11\frac{1}{2}$  inches in length by  $7\frac{1}{2}$  inches in width and  $3\frac{1}{4}$  inches in depth; roundish vessel of sandstone,  $8\frac{1}{2}$  inches in length by  $7\frac{1}{4}$  inches in width and  $3\frac{5}{8}$  inches in depth; a fragment of decorated "Samian" ware; portion of a clay mould, with a tapering, square-sided hollow; two small cups or crucibles of reddish clay; a sample of grains of oats, partially calcined.

(4)