



ENJOY THE YARROWS ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRAIL

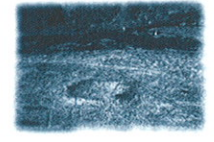
WALK THE YARROWS ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRAIL



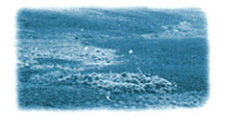
EIGHT SITES OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL INTEREST TO BEHOLD



SITE 1



SITE 2



SITE 3



SITE 4



SITE 5








SITE 6



SITE 7



SITE 8

-  This trail lies on a working farm. PLEASE respect the farmer's privacy and work by not taking photographs or drawing pictures of him, his family or his buildings, leaving gates and fences as you found them, and taking care not to disturb animals. Please do not bring dogs.
-  Respect the weather, which can change quickly! Have you got a waterproof?
-  Respect the countryside - take nothing but photographs, leave nothing but footprints. Keep to the path and use the stiles and gates provided. Please do not light fires - the heather and the peat can easily burn out of control.
-  Respect the estate and do not go on the trail when the 'Trail Closed' signs are displayed.
-  Respect the monuments and help to ensure that they survive for future generations to enjoy. They are protected by law and it is an offence to interfere with them.

The Yarrow Archaeological Trail is managed by the Highland Council Planning and Development Service, with the kind permission of the owner Mrs Islay MacLeod and tenant farmers, the Waugh's



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Nearby Sites: The Cairns of Get, The Hill o' Many Stanes, The Camster Cairns
These are all sign posted from the A9



WELCOME TO THE YARROWS ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRAIL

The Yarrows Archaeological Trail offers you the opportunity to explore a landscape full of archaeological sites, on which over three hundred generations of people have left their marks! The name Yarrows is thought to come from the Norse 'Yar-howe' meaning 'mound of the fish-traps', but the area had been settled long before Norse times.

The trail will take you on a walk back in time, visiting just some of the many sites in the area. The full circuit (about 2 miles or 4km) takes about two hours and requires a reasonably good level of fitness and suitable walking clothes and footwear. Some parts of the path may be rough, wet or slippery.

Of course, there is no need to complete the whole trail - if you prefer a shorter excursion, why not visit just the broch (site 1), or the cairns (site 8) above the farm?

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Yar-howe mound of the fish-traps

Most of the archaeological sites on this trail are Scheduled Ancient Monuments. This means that they are legally protected, and it is a criminal offence to disturb them. Do not add or take anything away from them, or move any stone. It is best not to clamber over them.

FOLLOW IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF OVER 300 GENERATIONS



Walk downhill from the car park, to the gate. Head for the next gate downhill on your left.

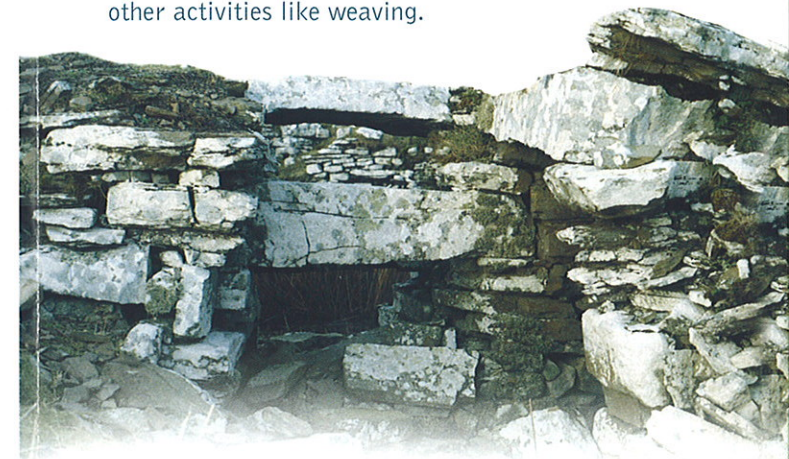
SITE 1 SOUTH YARROWS BROCH

Joseph Anderson excavated this in 1868. He wrote that “before we commenced excavation it was a grass covered mound, about 200 paces in circumference and 18-20 feet high.....”

You can see the remains of a circular broch tower surrounded by those of later buildings. Brochs were circular towers, and date to the later Iron Age (from about 200 BC to 200 AD). Originally much taller, the broch had thick windowless walls with only a single narrow entrance which can be seen on its east side. Inside this entrance, there is a guard cell. This chamber was provided so that the entrance could be watched, to keep out any unwelcome visitors. The hollow walls of the broch contained stairs giving access to upper floors, and

FOLLOW THE YARROWS ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRAIL

the wall tops. There would have been a timber roof of some sort. Inside the broch there would have been areas for sleeping, cooking, eating and other activities like weaving.



Agricultural and grazing land was the most precious resource for these people and was under pressure because of climatic change, causing neighbouring peoples to attack and raid each other. This is why brochs were so solidly built.

FOLLOW THE REST OF THE YARROWS ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRAIL USING THE ORIENTATION MAP OVERLEAF



FOLLOW THE YARROWS ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRAIL

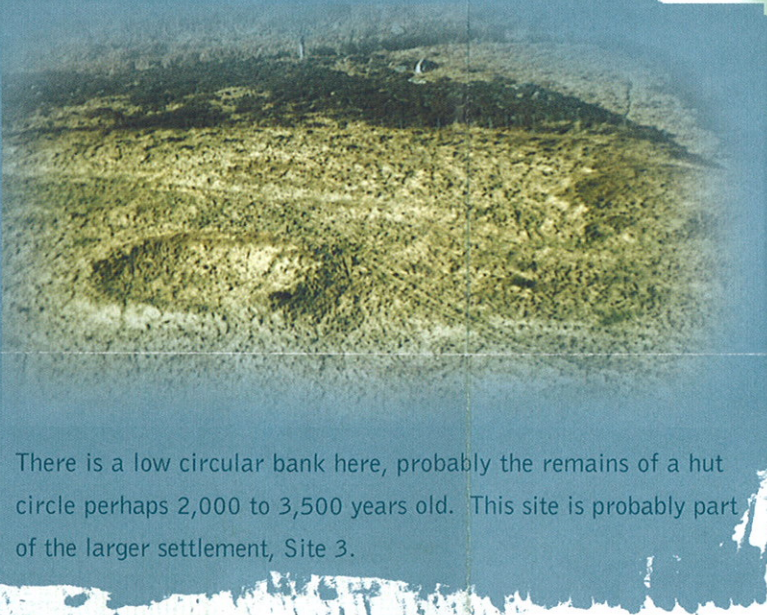
Around the broch are the remains of buildings built by the Picts a few hundred years later. These houses were built partially underground and are known locally as "wags", from the Gaelic for a little cave.

Joseph Anderson also found that the broch had been used for burials in the Middle Ages – close to these burials he found a brooch, roughly inscribed with ISVS NAZAR [ENVS], (Jesus of Nazareth) a common Christian inscription of the 13th and 14th centuries.

The broch is flooded because the loch is now a water reservoir. When people lived here, the water level was much lower and the inside of the broch was dry.

Return to the gate and follow the way-markers heading to your left across the field to...

SITE 2 HUT CIRCLE



There is a low circular bank here, probably the remains of a hut circle perhaps 2,000 to 3,500 years old. This site is probably part of the larger settlement, Site 3.

SITE 3 PREHISTORIC SETTLEMENT/FIELDS

A group of hut-circles, survive as a cluster of low, circular banks in a hollow beyond the fenceline. These were built at least 2,000 years ago and maybe even 3,500 years ago, during the periods known as the Bronze and Iron Ages. When complete a conical roof was supported upon a circular timber structure inside the low stone built wall. The

SITE 5 STANDING STONE

On the left of the path is a standing stone. Estate workers erected it in the 19th century, at the highest point on the boundary of the Thrumster Estate.



SITE 7 LONG CAIRN: SOUTH YARROWS SOUTH

This long cairn and the next one are over 5,000 years old and were built to bury the dead by the first farmers or "Neolithic" people. Joseph Anderson excavated them in 1865. This one seems to have been built originally as a round cairn before being enlarged to its present shape and size. The cairn consists of a burial chamber in three parts, built of massive slabs of Caithness flagstone and drystone walling. Over this is

the covering cairn, which simply consists of piled up stones. The cairn was entered through a narrow passageway leading from the edge of the cairn.

After the initial round cairn was built, it was lengthened, and "horns" were added to the ends, forming spaces which may have been used for rituals



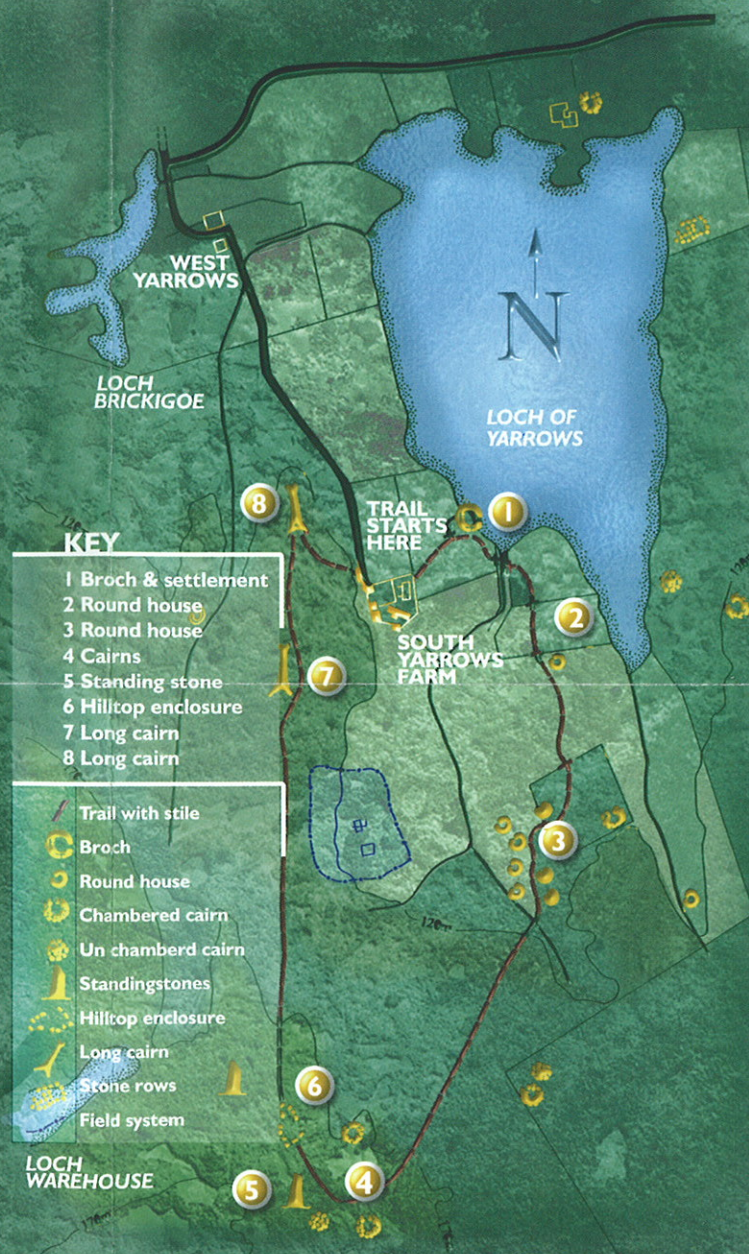
The people who built these cairns had domesticated livestock, and hunted deer. They were the first farmers and grew crops like wheat. They would also have fished to supplement their diet. More recent work on other similar cairns has revealed animal bones such as cattle, deer, sheep, pig, and dog. From human bones we find evidence of osteoarthritis, childhood measles, dental abscesses and malnutrition.

There is little evidence for their houses, which may have been built of wood. The well-known site of Skara Brae in Orkney is a domestic settlement dating to this period - there may be similar settlements in Caithness waiting to be discovered!

It seems that the cairns were repeatedly used over time, with new burials being added at intervals, and others perhaps removed. The entrance passageway would be blocked except when burials were being inserted or removed, and it is likely that only certain community members would be allowed to enter the cairn - perhaps only people who had the necessary knowledge of the appropriate rituals. It is suggested that people at this time may have taken part in some form of ancestor worship, with the bones of the ancestors being venerated and playing a key role in society.

SITE 8 LONG CAIRN: SOUTH YARROWS NORTH

Like South Yarrows South, this long cairn seems to have been used and reused over many centuries. Joseph



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SITE 3 PREHISTORIC SETTLEMENT/FIELDS

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Around the huts are numbers of small, stony mounds. These are simply piles of stones cleared from the land in order to grow crops known as "clearance cairns".

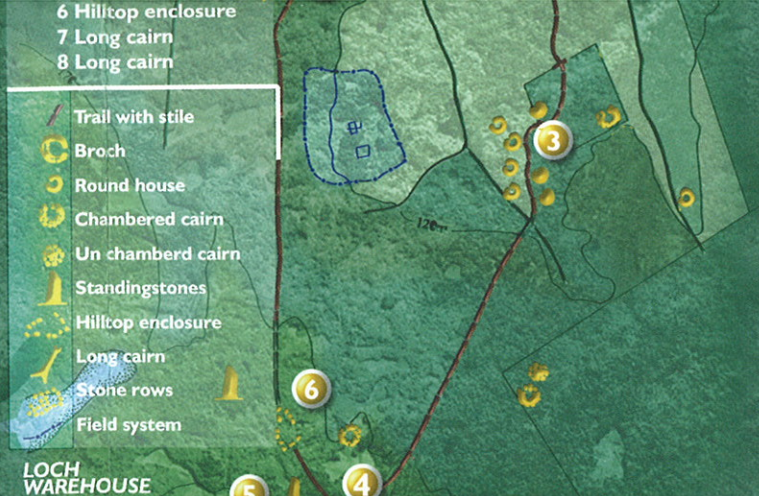
SITE 4 CAIRNS OF WAREHOUSE

Alexander Rhind spent the summer of 1853 excavating here. He found burials, pottery and flint items, but they have been lost over time. The cairns were probably built in the Neolithic period about 5,800 years ago, and were still in use until about 4,000 years ago. The construction of this type of monument would have demanded considerable effort by many people.

The cairn on the left of the path, has no obvious entrance or chambers, and it is probably more recent in date than others. It may date to the Bronze Age - perhaps built by the people living in the hut-circles.

Small modern cairns have been made on top of some of these sites. Please just leave these as you found them - do not add to them, or take anything away from them.

Walk along to...



SITE 6 HILLTOP ENCLOSURE

This naturally defensive position and the tumbled stones at the foot of the slope are likely to be all that remains of the ramparts of an Iron Age hillfort. The people would have lived in huts inside the walls of the fort. Some people think that these stones are natural fragments, but as the site has never been archaeologically excavated, we cannot be sure.



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SITE 8 LONG CAIRN: SOUTH YARROWS NORTH

Like South Yarrows South, this long cairn seems to have been used and reused over many centuries. Joseph Anderson's excavations found a cist (a stone built coffin) containing a burial, a necklace, and Bronze Age pottery about 2,700 to 4,400 years old. This was added to the cairn some time after its original construction, and represents a continuation in the use of the cairn for ritual purposes.

These cairns may seem mysterious to us today, but it is worth remembering that they were already over 3,000 years old when the broch on the loch side was built. For many centuries people have looked at and wondered about them. Gaelic names for cairns include sithean dubh (black hill of the fairies), reflecting stories of fairy folk living under the hills. It is said to be bad luck to upset them!

We hope that you have enjoyed this trail with just a few of the archaeological sites in Caithness. There are many more in Caithness waiting for your visit!

To find out about other sites to visit in Caithness, contact either the Highland Council Archaeology Unit or any of the Tourist Information Centres, Libraries or Highland Council Service Points in the area.