

Case information

Case ID	300016776		
File Reference	AMH/1835/2/1		
Name of Site	Backies, Broch		
Local Authority	Highland Council		
National Grid Reference	NC 8345 0261		
Designation No. (if any)	SM1835		
Designation Type	Scheduled Monument	Current Category of Listing	N/A
Case Type	Amendment		
Received/Start Date	28/04/2015		
Decision Date	29/01/2016		

1. Decision

The monument was first scheduled in 1939 and the documentation does not conform to current standards. The assessment against the scheduling criteria (Scottish Historic Environment Policy, Annex 1) demonstrates that the monument continues to be of national importance. The decision is to update the entry in the Schedule as Backies, broch 300m N of Whitestone Croft.

2. Designation Background and Development Proposals

2.1 Designation Background

The monument was first scheduled 29 June 1939 and no previous amendment to the entry in the Schedule for this monument has taken place.

2.2 Development Proposals

N/A

3. Assessment

3.1 Assessment information

The site was visited on 28/04/2015 as part of the S18 Highland scheduling project.

3.2 Assessment against designation criteria

An assessment against the Scheduling criteria was carried out. (see **Annex A**). The monument was found to meet the criteria for scheduling.

The designation criteria are found in the Scottish Historic Environment Policy (SHEP), pp. 71-85. <http://www.historic-scotland.gov.uk/shep-dec2011.pdf>

3.3 Other considerations

N/A

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ANNEX A – Assessment Against the Scheduling Criteria*

Backies, broch 300m N of Whitestone Croft

1. Description

The monument is the remains of a broch, a type of complex Atlantic Roundhouse from which is a drystone dwelling dating to the Iron Age (between 600 BC and AD 400). It is visible as a large mound of stones set on a prominent knoll. The interior of the broch has been partly cleared of rubble and large areas of inner wall face are visible, incorporating openings leading to the entrance, intra-mural stair and a gallery. Beyond the broch tower are remains of an outer bank or wall, with parts of a further bank or wall beyond to the north-northwest and east-southeast. The monument occupies a knoll on a southwest facing slope overlooking the valley of the Golspie Burn standing 180m above sea level.

The broch tower has an external diameter of about 18.25m. The interior measures 8.24m in diameter and the wall is about 5m thick at the entrance on the W. Most of the entrance lintels remain in position and there are door checks about 3m in from the exterior. Opposite the entrance on the east side is the doorway to a mural cell or gallery. Another opening on the north side leads to an intramural stair that was visible in the early 20th century. Part of a gallery is also exposed on top of the broch wall. The interior wallface extends about 2.6m above the present floor level, the wall being built of flat stone slabs. The outer wallface is mostly obscured except at the opening of the entrance passage. There are traces of outbuildings between the broch tower and the outer wall which is about 12m distant.

The scheduled area is circular on plan with a diameter of 100m, centred on the broch, to include the remains described above and an area around them within which evidence relating to the monument's construction, use and abandonment is expected to survive, as shown in red on the accompanying map. The scheduling specifically excludes the above ground elements of post and wire fences. The monument was first scheduled in 1939, but the documentation does not meet current standards: the present amendment rectifies this.

2. Assessment Against the Scheduling Criteria (SHEP, 2011) pp71-73**

* This assessment is based on our current state of knowledge. It will form the basis of any new or updated scheduled monument record.

** A monument may be found to meet the scheduling criteria but in some circumstances may not be added to the Schedule. The purpose and implications of scheduling are issues that require to be taken into account when assessing monuments for scheduling. Scheduling may not be the only, or the most appropriate mechanism, to secure the future of all sites, even those that may otherwise meet the criteria.

Cultural significance

Characteristic	Assessment
Intrinsic	
Condition in which monument survives	<ul style="list-style-type: none">This broch is visible as a large mound of stones, with extensive areas of the internal wallface visible around the

	<p>hollow at the centre.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The interior was at least partially cleared in 1846, but no hearth is visible in contemporary sketches, suggesting that the primary floor level may still be intact. • The mound is in a relatively stable condition at present.
Archaeological, scientific, technological or other interest or research potential of the monument	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence from drawings made following the 1846 clearance suggests that the buried fabric of the broch has high potential to support future archaeological research. The walls contain features such as the mural stair to the north of the interior and mural cell to the E. Drawings and notebook annotations by the Danish archaeologist J J Worsaae (c.1846-7) indicate internal doorchecks within the passages leading to the mural stair and mural cell. Researchers have suggested such features are unknown from any other broch (MacKie, E W, 2007). This adds to the cultural significance of the monument. • Other buried evidence may comprise hearths and tanks, occupation and abandonment debris, and artefacts and ecofacts that can tell us about how people lived, their trade and exchange contacts and their social status. Worsaae's records do not mention a fireplace in the central court and it is possible that the primary floor level was not reached during the clearance and may be intact. • The survival of outer walls and banks as well-preserved upstanding features adds to the cultural significance of the monument. • This monument's high potential is amply demonstrated by recent excavations at other Caithness brochs, such as Nybster, and by the publication of investigations at Howe on Orkney, where a broch mound was found to preserve rich buried deposits (Ballin Smith, B (ed.) 1994).
Apparent developmental sequence of monument (either long or short may provide insights of importance)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are several indications of an extended development sequence. These include the clear traces of a secondary wall around the interior of the broch on the south side, which may imply the removal of the upper parts of the broch in favour of a low roof resting on the secondary wall. The remains of external structures may also derive from secondary use of the site. Some of the walls/banks visible outside the broch may derive from a fort or enclosure that predated the broch.
Original or subsequent functions of the monument and its parts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Broch towers were large, complex structures capable of accommodating either an extended family or a small community. The construction of brochs is often understood in terms of elite settlement. If so, the high number of brochs known in Caithness and Sutherland would indicate that they functioned as elite residences on a local scale.
Contextual	
Present rarity or representativeness of all or any part of the monument, assessed against knowledge of the archaeology of Scotland and of the region in which the monument occurs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brochs are a widespread class of monument across northern Scotland with notable concentrations in Caithness, Sutherland, Orkney, Shetland, the Western Isles and the northwest Highlands. • The excavation evidence for intra-mural features at Backies means we can be confident this was a hollow-walled broch tower, making this a good example of its class. The records of door checks in the passages to the stair and gallery suggest this broch may contain features that at time of

	writing have not been found in other brochs.
Relationship of the monument to other monuments of the same or related classes or period, or to features or monuments in the vicinity. (Particularly important for monuments forming part of a widespread but varied class)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The broch is one of several in the vicinity of Golspie and Brora. There is high potential for comparative study on a local and national scale to better understand the function of such monuments, their interrelationship and the significance of their placing within the landscape, in particular in relation to our understanding of Iron Age social hierarchy, changing settlement patterns and systems of inheritance.
Relationship of the monument and its parts with its wider landscape and setting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The monument occupies a prominent knoll on a southwest facing slope overlooking the valley of the Golspie Burn. It stands 180m above sea level; there are views to the west and northwest across and up the valley, and to the south and southeast towards the coast.
Associative	
Historical, cultural and social influences that have affected the form and fabric of the monument, and vice versa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Broch towers are part of the Atlantic tradition of complex stone-built roundhouses, but the broch tower can be seen as the pinnacle of this tradition. It is a highly recognisable form of Iron Age architecture which is particular to Scotland, especially northern Scotland.
Aesthetic attributes of the monument	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NA
Significance in the national consciousness or to people who use or have used the monument, or descendants of such people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NA
Associations the monument has with historical, traditional or artistic characters or events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The broch was under excavation in 1846, when the Danish archaeologist JJ Worsae visited. He made records during his visit and later had two drawings prepared for publication. Worsaae was the first archaeologist to excavate and use stratigraphy to confirm his compatriot Thomsen's Three-Age System.

Assessment of national importance

Criteria	Assessment
Its inherent capability or potential to make a significant addition to the understanding or appreciation of the past	This monument is of national importance because it can make a significant addition to our understanding of the past, in particular of Iron Age society in northern Scotland and the construction, use and development of brochs. It stands to just above the level of the first floor and preserves evidence for an intra-mural stair, galleries and other architectural features. The monument is an important component of the area's landscape and its importance is enhanced by its association with several other well-preserved brochs around Golspie and Brora. Sketches, notebooks and drawings deriving from the 1846 excavations enhance understanding of the form of the broch. This is a well-preserved example of a broch and its loss would diminish our ability to understand the development and use of brochs and their role in the Iron Age settlement pattern of northern Scotland.
Its retention of the structural, decorative or field characteristics of its kind to a marked degree	
Its contribution, or the contribution of its class, to today's landscape and/or the historic landscape	
The quality and extent of any documentation or association that adds to the understanding of the monument or its context	
The diminution of the potential of a particular class	

or classes of monument to contribute to an understanding of the past, should the monument be lost or damaged	
Its place in the national consciousness [a factor that may be considered in support of other factors]	

References

Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland:
<http://www.rcahms.gov.uk/canmore.html> CANMORE ID 6560.

Highland Council HER Reference: MHG 10886.

Ballin Smith, B (ed.) 1994, Howe, four millennia of Orkney Prehistory, Edinburgh, Society of Antiquaries of Scotland Monograph Series 9

Mackie, E W. (2007) The Roundhouses, Brochs and Wheelhouses of Atlantic Scotland c.700 BC-AD 500: architecture and material culture, the Northern and Southern Mainland and the Western Islands, BAR British series 444(II), 444(1), 2 V. Oxford. Page(s): 636-637.

RCAHMS. (1911a) The Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments and Constructions of Scotland. Second report and inventory of monuments and constructions in the county of Sutherland. Edinburgh. Page(s): 92-3, No. 272
