

Copy

NO 24 W 001

R Gourlay

647

30.4.87

RJ ASHMORE  
Historic Buildings and Monuments  
Scottish Development Department  
20 Prandon Street  
EDINBURGH EH3 5DX

Dear Patrick

SOUTH YARROWS BROCH

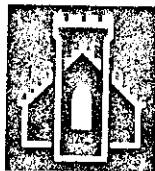
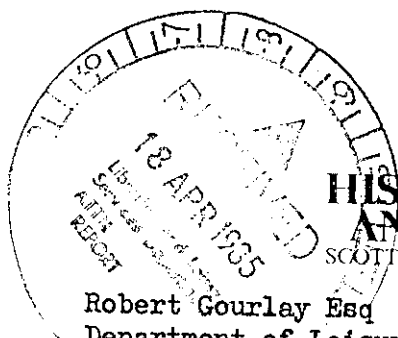
You will recall Mr Naugh, the farrer at South Yarrows, and his request of some year's standing to have a hole filled in at the broch which has caused him the loss of two lambs. This is to let you know that I have now covered over the hole, which leads into part of the intramural passage at floor level on the W side, and turfed it over. Hopefully, this will deter visitors from again opening it up to gain access.

The opening was blocked with loose slabs from the loch edge, and overlaid with turf cut in the adjoining field. Hopefully this will soon knit and become inconspicuous. Mr Naugh is delighted, and will let me know if this becomes reopened - in which case a more permanent blocking may be required. I enclose a photograph of the blocked and concealed area for your files.

Regards

Robert Gourlay  
Archaeologist

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**HISTORIC BUILDINGS  
AND MONUMENTS**  
SCOTTISH DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

Robert Gourlay Esq  
Department of Leisure & Recreation  
Highland Regional Council  
Council Buildings  
Glenurquhart Road  
INVERNESS  
IV3 5NX

16 April 1985

Dear Robert

LOCH OF YARROW, BROCH

In 1982 you promised to investigate the possibility of using an MSC team to fill in open chambers at this broch and to fence it off. I would be grateful if you could let me know whether there is any prospect of a local initiative to make the site safe. When we looked at it earlier this month it seemed to be in the same state as it has been for the last few years: a hazard to stock.

All good wishes.

*Patrick*

Patrick Ashmore

R Gourlay

447

12.6.85

Mrs J Campbell  
Depute Chief Executive  
Caithness District Council  
County Buildings  
Market Square  
WICK  
Caithness

Dear Mrs Campbell

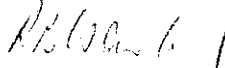
BROCH, LOCH OF YARROWS

There has been some concern expressed by the farmer at South Yarrows, and by the Historic Buildings and Monuments Inspectorate, of the danger to stock posed by open chambers at this site. These holes are partly caused by falling masonry, and partly by visitors removing blocking material which had already been placed in the chambers for this very reason. I now wonder whether perhaps something could be done about this, perhaps through local MSC personnel? I should think that I would be available to visit the site and give guidance as to how this might best be done. There is no shortage of material available for this purpose.

I would appreciate your thoughts on this matter. The broch is one frequently visited by visitors to the county, and the farmer has no objections to visitors at all, but the hazard to his stock is a real one.

With thanks

Yours sincerely

  
Robert Gourlay  
Archaeologist

copy



2000 NC 45 NW

# HISTORIC BUILDINGS AND MONUMENTS

HERITAGE SERVICES DEPARTMENT  
100, Queen's Road, Edinburgh  
Tel: 0703 272100

Robert Gourlay Esq  
Regional Archaeologist  
Highland Regional Council  
Glenurquhart Road  
Inverness

28 November 1986

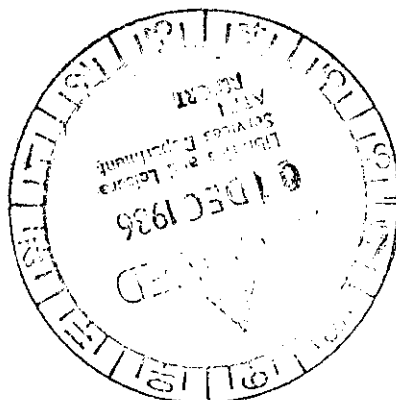
Dear Robert

Mrs Sandeman has written again about proposed organised group visits Smoo cave pointing out that 3000 visitors will cause damage to the midden. Highland Regional Council's planning committee have apparently been asked to approve a licence or franchise for the operation (Northern Times, 31 October 1986).

I have not seen the site, but I understand Mrs Sandeman's point is that all visitors must pass over the midden to explore the cave. The thought occurs to me that the best protection against the feet of visitors would be to install a layer of clay over the midden. Duckboarding is not viable; it would be too vulnerable to vandals. A clay cover would not solve the problem of erosion by the stream, but I would be interested to hear your reactions to this suggestion. The problem is one for the owner to sort out or not sort out as he or she sees fit and scheduling would not change that position, but I hope to visit Smoo next year to consider whether it merits scheduling (accounts of it make it seem a likely candidate).

All good wishes

PATRICK ASHMORE



R Gourlay

447

10.12.86

PJ Ashmore  
Historic Buildings and Monuments  
Scottish Development Department  
20 Brandon Street  
EDINBURGH EH3 5DX

Dear Patrick

SPOO CAVE

Your comments and Mrs Sandeman's fears noted. I will discuss this further with the officials concerned and investigate the possibility of taking up your suggestion of a clay capping for the midden. However, I think it would be sensible to monitor the site for this year to establish wear patterns before taking further action, as I think this may be less of a problem than Mrs Sandeman envisages. I will, of course, keep you informed.

On the merits of the site for scheduling, I would suggest that it is eminently suitable, and of prime importance. Nevertheless, in view of the now established use of the cave as a visitor attraction, excavation seems likely to be a far better long-term solution than merely scheduling. The site is also due, shortly, to come into Regional ownership, and I think you can take it that we would assume responsibility for the safety of the midden. We might discuss the possibility of excavation, designed both to learn more about the site, and to prepare it for long-term consolidation and protection. Clay is not the solution - both the stream in sppte and high spring tides wash over it. Duckboarding is possible, and installations of this kind are not subject to vandalism in this area. Any penetration of the midden by uprights could be archaeologically supervised and would, in any event, be limited.

Yours sincerely

*RG*

*RG*

Robert Gourlay  
Archaeologist