

The site was excavated in three seasons, from 1962 till 1964, and proved to have been inhabited for a long time, from the 6th century B.C. to the 3rd or early 4th A.D.. This is the first broch in the Western Isles to have been explored since 1921 and is also the first to be found there which was built on top of an earlier settlement and the first to have produced objects belonging to its builders. A series of radiocarbon dates gave precision to the dating of the various phases of occupation.

Phase 1: the pre-broch settlements:

Radiocarbon dates show that the rocky knoll on which the broch was built was first inhabited in the late 6th or the 5th centuries B.C. when a wooden hut was built in the hollow on its summit (Phase 1A). This hut was evidently destroyed suddenly and partly burnt; many fragments of baked clay daub were found at one point still bearing the impressions of wooden wattling. There was also a heap of charred barley and, on another part of the hut floor, a shattered pottery urn, several bone implements and a lump of plastic yellow clay for pot making with a rib knife stuck into it. Subsequently (at some time in the 4th century B.C. judging from another radiocarbon date) the knoll was re-occupied though the hut of this period was not found. Two reddish midden deposits accumulated, one in the hollow on the summit of the knoll and one lower down nearer the sea. This second midden was later overridden by the broch's outer defensive wall and it yielded the two large restored pots as well as a bronze finger-ring.

Thus the Phase 1 deposits have provided a useful selection of artefacts and potsherds belonging to the inhabitants of the Hebrides in the 5th and 4th centuries B.C. and have made it possible for the first time to identify the material culture of the pre-broch inhabitants of the area. At least three different pottery styles can be seen which might represent three different population elements. The thick, very gritty pottery is characteristic of the inhabitants of the vitrified forts of the mainland of Scotland and should represent a westward extension of that culture. The small red vessel may show that people of Iron Age 'A' stock from eastern or southern England arrived at some stage while the smoother pots are those of the aboriginal inhabitants of Tiree.

Phase 2: the construction of the broch:

There may have been an interval when the knoll was uninhabited between the a seasonal refuge to the residence of probably a single family.

3rd century B.C. and the building of the broch in the mid 1st century B.C. In any case the builders cleared much of the site of rubbish down to bedrock and only the fact that some of the deposits of the earlier inhabitants were inside the hollow on the summit of the knoll saved them from destruction. The broch was skilfully built to take advantage of the natural features of the underlying rock. The entrance passage was aligned along a natural groove which was used as an overflow drain for the water tank in the central court. The deep cleft which bisected the rock knoll was used at the two points where it ran under the broch wall. On the south side the mural gallery was built wider and deeper where it crossed the cleft, to form an inhabitable chamber which produced many finds. On the north side it formed a deep cess pit at the end of the gallery. A circular guard chamber opened from the right side of the narrow, lintelled entrance passage which was also equipped with checks, pivot stone and bar-hole for the door.

Inside the wall gallery eleven steps remained of a stone stairway which originally ran up to the wallhead through perhaps three upper galleries. The wall may then have been 25 - 30 ft. high with a light wooden roof on top covering the central court. Around this court lower down there was a raised wooden floor about 6 ft. wide and 5 ft. above the floor; its outer edge rested on a ledge in the stone wall and the inner presumably on a ring of posts. Such a floor would have provided extra accomodation when the tower was occupied by the local community in times of danger. Primary floor packing deposits were found in the mural gallery - evening off inequalities in the rock - which produced pottery and other debris left by the builders of the broch. A new style of pottery appears with traces of influence of Iron Age B wares of southern England but there were also sherds in the native pre-broch style.

### Phase 3: the early use of the broch:

In the inner court a thick floor deposit was identified as having accumulated during the primary use of the broch. Light in colour, it contained large numbers of well preserved animal bones, many sherds of both the old native and the new broch-builders' pottery and many other artefacts including one piece of a Roman glass bowl dating to the period A.D. 160 - 250. The cleanliness of this floor - in marked contrast to later ones - and the presence of the cess pit in the mural gallery shows that the occupants of this period were well discip;ined in hygiene. This, the large quantities of occupation debris, the lack of a central fireplace, the raised wooden floor and the presence of a water tank, all suggest that in Phase 3A the broch was used as a communal refuge, and was inhabited by the whole local community only in times of danger. In Phase 3B the raised wooden floor was pulled down and a large rectangular hearth was laid in the centre of the court; a spread of peat ash from this extended over the whole interior on top of the floor deposits of Phase 3A. The function of the broch had evidently changed from that of a communal refuge to the residence of probably a single family.

One of the most important finds from Phase 3 deposits was a small copy of a bead-rimmed, eyebrow-ornamented bowl of the sort commonly used by the Iron Age B cultures of southern England in the 2nd century B.C. This strikingly confirms that influences from that area arrived in the Hebrides at about the time the broch was built, or shortly before, and resulted in the appearance of the broch-builders pottery style.

Phase 4: demolition and later occupation:

A thick layer of wind-blown earth in many parts of the mural gallery marked the point at which the broch had been deliberately pulled down in Iron Age times, to the extent that all the upper galleries were removed and the stone lintels taken off the ground gallery. A new lining was added to the wall of the central court and a low wooden roof was erected on this. Occupation continued for many years, perhaps a century, with the demolished broch serving as a farmhouse. There is no reason to suppose that the demolition was other than a peaceful event, undertaken to make the increasingly dilapidated broch tower safe for habitation.

A tremendous amount of material was recovered from the Phase 4 deposits in the outer court and show that a mixed farming economy -- cereal growing and cattle raising -- was practised at the site. Other activities of which traces were found included iron smelting, bronze casting, pot making, spinning and weaving, grinding grain on rotary querns and the collection of limpets from the rocky sea shores close at hand. For some reason this flourishing farm was suddenly abandoned, probably at the end of the 3rd century A.D. Several hundred years later a Norseman left a bone comb and some other equipment on the ruined site.

