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## Archaeology InSites



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### Hill O' Many Stanes Stone Row - Clyth, Caithness, Highland





## Stone rows, circles and settings

*Scotland has numerous Neolithic stone rows, circles and settings, the most famous of which consist of large upright monoliths like those found at Callanish on the Isle of Lewis; Nether Largie in Kilmartin Glen; Argyll or at the Ring of Brodgar and Stones of Stenness on mainland Orkney. However, there are other fascinating and lesser known examples which are interesting for qualities other than their dizzying heights.*

*I clearly remember the first time I heard about the Hilly O' Many Stanes during a lecture given by Dr Fraser Hunter of National Museums Scotland. He joked that the site should really be called the 'Hill O' Many Wee Stanes', which only truly made sense when I visited the site a few months later. Located less than half a mile from the coastal cliffs at Clyth at Caithness, the site sits atop a rocky knoll, the slopes of which are coated with miniature standing stones. The stones are small compared to the great standing stones found elsewhere in the country; the largest one stands just a mere metre in height.*





## Hill O' Many 'Wee' Stanes

*The stones were counted in 2003 and around 200 stones were recorded across the hilltop although earlier accounts suggest that originally there would have been many more. In 1871 around 250 stones were counted, but if the pattern was complete there may have been as many as 600. The stones have been laid out in at least 22 rows running from north to south, which fans out slightly towards the bottom of the slope. Each of the stones has been carefully placed and packed with smaller stones to help keep the stone upright. Stone rows like this one have only been found in the very north of mainland Scotland in the counties of Sutherland and Caithness.*

*The date of this site is uncertain, as it has never been excavated but archaeologists believe that it was likely constructed and used during the Neolithic or Bronze Age. What it was built for, who built it and for what purpose, remains a mystery. It may have been a gathering place, or a memorial, a religious or ceremonial centre or it may even relate to the stars. I often wonder though, if perhaps it served a function that we could only imagine in our wildest dreams. One thing is certain: the site would have taken time, effort and resources to construct, and therefore, must have been at one time a place of significance. What is even more remarkable is that for over 4000 years the residents of, and visitors to, the area have respected and protected the site and have ensured its survival.*

Maya Hoole - Archaeology InSites project manager



<https://canmore.org.uk/site/8604/hill-o-many-stanes-clyth>  
<http://portal.historicenvironment.scot/designation/SM90162>  
<http://her.highland.gov.uk/singleResult.aspx?uid=MHG2400>





## #ArchInSites

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