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# LEWIS COASTAL CHAPEL-SITES SURVEY: TOPOGRAPHIC SURVEY 2005



A Glasgow University Viking and Early Settlement Archaeological Research Project  
undertaken with funding from  
Historic Scotland  
and  
University of Glasgow

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*Cover Plate:*

*Structure M, Tigh nan Cailleachan Dubha, Uig. Taken by Gary Tompsett*

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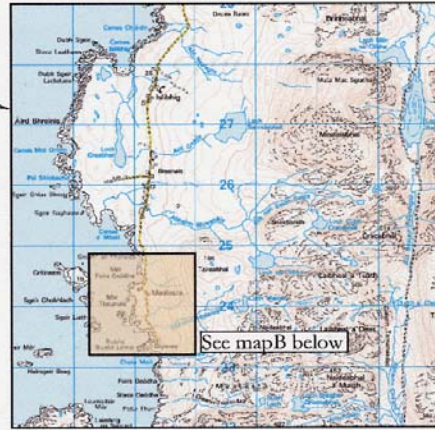
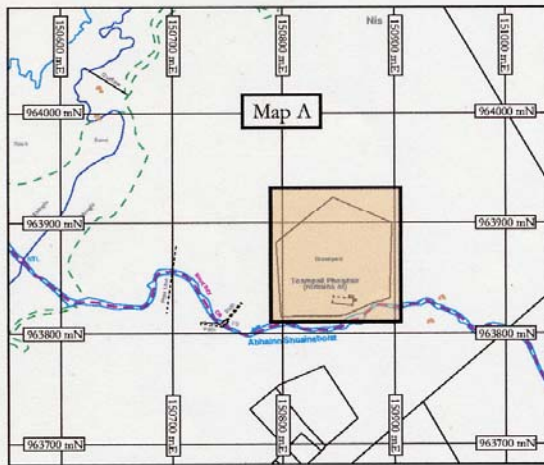
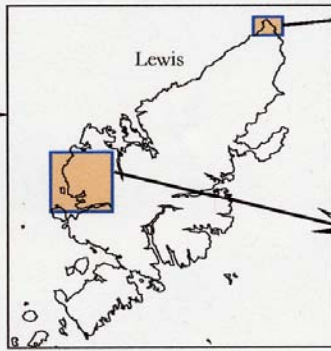
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LEWIS COASTAL  
CHAPEL-SITES SURVEY:  
TOPOGRAPHIC SURVEY 2005

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With  
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Project 2004  
Lewis Coastal Chapel-sites  
Topographic Surveys 2005



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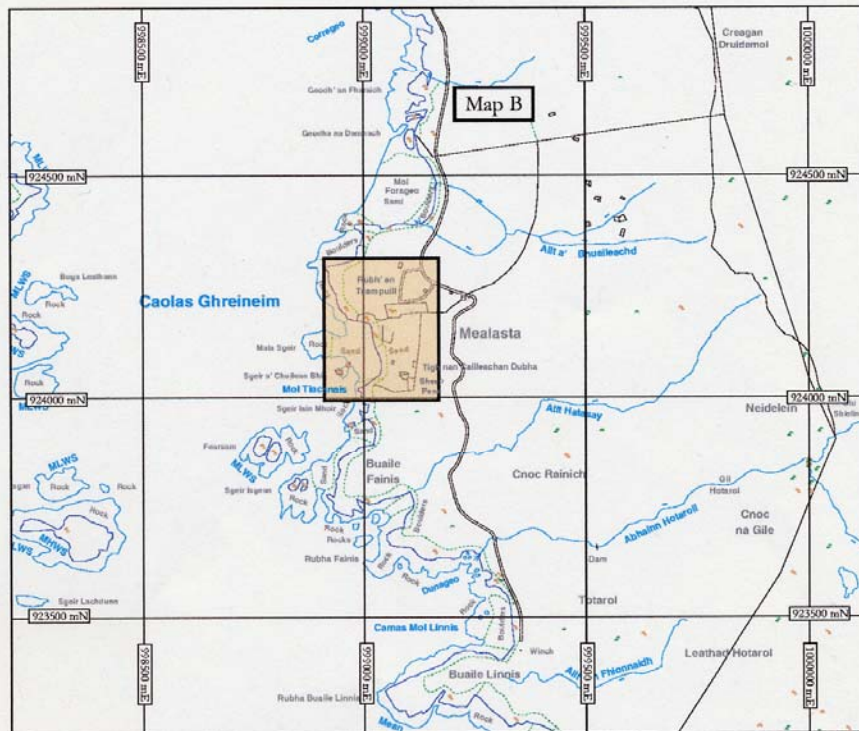


Figure 1:  
Site Locations

## 1.0 Summary

This report describes the results of topographic surveys undertaken for the second year of the Lewis Coastal Chapel-sites Survey (LCCS) on four chapel-sites on the Isle of Lewis in 2005. Desktop study undertaken in the first year (2004) of the LCCS identified thirty-seven recorded and five potential chapel-sites in Lewis and its outlying islands, and this was followed up with walkover survey of sixteen sites and plane table survey of three sites. However, further, more detailed topographic survey was recommended for eight sites, and this prompted the work in 2005. In February detailed topographic survey of three sites was undertaken: Teampall Pheadair, Suainebost (Site no 4), Teampall Mhealastadh, Uig (Site no 20) and Tigh na Cailleachan Dubha, Uig (Site no 21). In May - June 2005 topographic survey of the chapel-site of St Mary's on Eilean an Tighe, Shiant Islands (formerly known as Eilean na Cille) on the Shiant Islands (Site no 32) was also undertaken with joint funding from the Shiant Islands Project (SHIP).

## 2.0 Introduction

The desktop study undertaken in the first year of the Lewis Coastal Chapel-sites survey (LCCS) identified thirty-seven chapel sites in Lewis and its outlying islands (see Table 1 below and Barrowman 2005). In addition to this five potential chapel-sites were identified during the desktop survey (Site nos 38-42).

In 2004 it proved unrealistic to attempt to complete walkover survey of all thirty-seven identified sites as well as the desk top survey, and so seventeen sites were prioritised in the time remaining. Walkover survey of sixteen of the seventeen sites was successfully completed by the end of the 2004 season (all except site no 24, An Teampall at Rànais, Lochs).

Plane table survey was completed of three of the six sites identified as warranting such survey (Site nos 7, 12, 15) – the three remaining are Scheduled Ancient Monuments, have already been described and measured, and were therefore of lower priority (Site nos 1, 19, 29).

During the desktop and walkover surveys in 2004, more-detailed topographic survey was recommended for eight sites (Site nos 4, 8, 11, 18, 20, 21, 32, 33). In 2005 detailed topographic survey of four of these sites was undertaken – Teampall Mhealastadh, Uig (Site no 20), Tigh na Cailleachan Dubha, Uig (Site no 21), Teampall Pheadair, Suainebost (Site no 4) and the chapel-site of St Mary's on Eilean an Tighe (formerly known as Eilean na Cille) on the Shiant Islands (Site no 32). It had been planned to also survey Site no 33, Airighean na h-Annaid on Garbh Eilean, Shiant Islands, but due to bad weather in May/June, it was not possible to access the site safely.

This report details the topographic survey work undertaken at Sites 4, 20 and 21 in February 2005 (Figure 1), and on the Shiant Isles in May/June 2005. A copy is lodged with the Historic Scotland (two copies), the Western Isles archaeologist, the SMR, the NMRS, Museum nan Eilean in Stornoway and Stornoway Library, and a short report has been submitted to DES.

## 3.0 Research Priorities 2005

Out of the eight sites recommended for further survey (above), Sites 4, 20, 21, 32 and 33 were prioritised for the following reasons:

- Taigh nan Cailleachan Dubha in Uig (Site no 21) is recorded (and scheduled) as an early Christian site (a nunnery). However, it was shown during the 2004 LCCS survey to be an extensive, probably medieval and/or post-medieval, settlement. There has been no survey of this site and so it was prioritised for survey in 2005.
- A more likely contender for an early chapel site is Teampall Mhealastadh (Site no 20) immediately to the north of Site no 21 and possibly attached to this settlement. It is located in an old and coastally-eroding enclosed graveyard of small unmarked graves. It has been recommended that the scheduled area at Site no 21 is extended to cover this

chapel site. There has been no survey of this site and it was therefore prioritised for topographic survey in 2005.

- Teampall Pheadair in Suainebost, Ness (Site no 4) is a medieval church site, once the parish church of Ness, and identified during the desktop and walkover surveys of 2004 as being an important site in the ecclesiastical history of Lewis. The local community is at present working to produce a conservation plan for the site, to try to consolidate the last remaining gable end of the building and to enhance the surrounding graveyard area. The latter has recently been the subject of extensive historical research by the local community through the local historical society, Comunn Eachdraidh Nis. This site was identified as being of high priority for topographic survey, the result of which will aid the local community, and also record this previously un-surveyed building and graveyard.
- During ongoing excavation and plane table work on the Shiant Islands by the Shiant Islands Project (SHIP; Foster 2005), at the chapel site on Eilean an Tighe (Site no 32) and the Annaid site on Garbh Eilean (Site no 33) there has not been any topographic survey so electronic total station survey was identified as being of highest priority before further excavation is undertaken.

Of the eight sites recommended for further, more detailed survey, four are now outstanding:

1. Teampall Pheadair, in Siader, Ness (Site no 8),
2. Teampall Chiarain, Liamsiader, Carloway (Site no 11),
3. Taigh a'Bheannaich, Aird Uig (Site no 18),
4. Airighean na h-Annaid, Garbh Eilean, Shiant Islands (Site no 33).

Of these four, Site no 8 is of the highest priority as it is imminently threatened by coastal erosion. Site no 33 had been planned for 2005 but due to bad weather in May/June the site was not accessible.

Since the 2004 desktop and walkover surveys additional information continues to be gathered and Cladh Mhuire, Barabhas was visited in an attempt to locate the chapel site (Site no 9). This information has been added to the Lewis Coastal Chapel-sites gazetteer and is reproduced and updated below in Table 1:

Table 1: 2005 Lewis Coastal Chapel-sites Gazetteer

<i>Ainm (Name)</i>	<i>LCCS Site No</i>	<i>Baile (Village)</i>	<i>NGR</i>	<i>NMRS no</i>	<i>Walkover Date</i>	<i>Scheduled?</i>	<i>Tobar/Fuaran (well)</i>	<i>Planned Already? (*MR = McGibbon and Ross)</i>	<i>Type of Survey Recommended</i>	<i>Recommended Survey Completed?</i>
Teampall Rònain	1	Eoropie	NB 5229 6542	NB56NW 2	None	Yes: SAM no 5354	Tobar Rònain NB 518 649	No	Plane table and geophysics	To be undertaken by another project (NALS)
Teampall Mholuidh	2	Eoropie	NB 51928 65157	NB56NW 3	None	Category A listed no 6603	Ditto	Yes – *MR; RCAHMS	None	N/A
Teampall Thòmais	3	Swainbost machair	NB 50728 64062	NB56SW 3	28/05/04	No	None	No	Possibly geophysics	To be undertaken by another project (NALS)
Teampall Pheadair	4	Swainbost machair	NB 50861 63812	NB56SW 2	March 04 28/05/04	Yes: SAM no 5359	None	No	EDM survey of church and burial ground	Yes: Feb 2005
Teampall Chliamain	5	Arnistean	NB 49 62?	NB46SE 3	Not located	No	Tobar Chliamain NB 490 624	Unlocated	Unlocated	N/A
Teampall nan CròNaomh	6	Galson	NB 43282 59301	NB45NW 1	28/05/04	Yes: SAM no 3945	None	Yes – RCAHMS	None	N/A
Teampall Bhrighid	7	Melbost	NB 40989 57313	NB45NW 5	30/04/04	No	Tobar Bhrighde NB 411 574	No	Plane table	Yes: Feb 2005
Teampall Pheadair	8	Siader	NB 3792 5499	NB35SE 10	Visited to check erosion	Yes: SAM no 5341	Fuaran an Dèididh NB 381 554	No	EDM of pre-crofting settlement and chapel	No
Teampall Mhuire	9	Barvas	NB 353 517	NB35SE 7	10/05/05	No	None	No	None	N/A
Teampall Eòin	10	Port More, Bragar	NB 28833 48905	NB24NE 3	No	Yes: SAM no 3926	Fuaran Buaile Dhòmhnail NB 289 486	Yes – RCAHMS	None	N/A
Teampall Chiarain	11	Liamsiader, Carloway	NB 18602 42588	NB14SE 3	17/09/04 08/11/04	No	Tobar Chiarain NB 194 428	No	EDM of chapel and settlement	No



Table 1: 2005 Lewis Coastal Chapel-sites Gazetteer (cont)

<i>Ainm (Name)</i>	<i>LCCS Site No</i>	<i>Baile (Village)</i>	<i>NGR</i>	<i>NMRS no</i>	<i>Walkover Date</i>	<i>Scheduled?</i>	<i>Tobar/Fuaran (well)</i>	<i>Planned Already? (*MR = McGibbon and Ross)</i>	<i>Type of Survey Recommended</i>	<i>Recommended Survey Completed?</i>
Teampall Mhicheil	12	Cirbhig, Carloway	NB 194067 41847	NB14SE 6	March 04, 25-26/2/05	No	None	No	Plane table	Yes: Feb 2005
Teampall Dhonain	13	Little Bernera	NB 1505 4073	NB14SE 5	No	Yes: SAM no 11088	None	No	-	N/A
Teampall Mhicheil	14	Little Bernera	NB 1505 4073	NB14SE 5	No	Yes: SAM no 11088	None	No	-	N/A
Teampall Chirceboist, St Macra's	15	Circebost, Great Bernera	NB 19130 34628	NB13SE 3	23/02/05	Yes: SAM no 5236	None	No	Plane table survey	Yes: Feb 2005
Teampall Pheadair	16	Pabbay Mòr	NB 10446 37699	NB13NW 1	No	Yes: SAM no 11087	None	No	-	N/A
Teampall Bhaltois	17	Valtos	?NB 089 367	NB03NE 2	22/09/04	No	None	No	Not located	N/A
Taigh a'Bheannaich	18	Aird Uig	NB 03872 37898	NB03NW 1	23/09/04	Yes: SAM no 5390	Tobar a'Bheannachaidh NB 038 378	Yes – MR; RCAHMS	Landscape survey with EDM	No
Baile na Cille (Teampall Chrìosd)	19	Timsgarry/ Crowlista	NB 04800 33870	NB03SW 2	22/09/04	Yes: SAM no 5363	Fuaran Bhaile na Cille NB 047 338	No	Plane table survey	No
Teampall Mhealastadh	20	Mealasta	NA 98983 24198	NA92SE 1	24/09/04	No	None	No	EDM of Teampall, burial ground and settlement	Yes: Feb 2005
Taigh nan Cailleachan Dubha	21	Mealasta	NA 990 243	NA92SE 3	22/07/04	Yes: SAM no 5712	None	No	EDM of settlement	Yes: Feb 2005
Teampall Chaluim Chille	22	Eilean Chaluim Chille, Crobeag	NB 3858 2104	NB32SE 1	No	Yes: SAM no 5345	None	Yes – Chris Burgess	None	N/A

Table 1: 2005 Lewis Coastal Chapel-sites Gazetteer (cont)

<i>Ainm (Name)</i>	<i>LCCS Site No</i>	<i>Baile (Village)</i>	<i>NGR</i>	<i>NMRS no</i>	<i>Walkover Date</i>	<i>Scheduled?</i>	<i>Tobar/Fuaran (well)</i>	<i>Planned Already? (*MR = McGibbon and Ross)</i>	<i>Type of Survey Recommended</i>	<i>Recommended Survey Completed?</i>
An Teampall – St Pharaer?	23	Cathanais – Suardal?	?NB 389 234	None	Not located	No	None	No	Not located	N/A
An Teampall	24	Rànais, Leurbost	NB 399 248	None	No	No	None	No	None	N/A
Teampall Leannain	25	Stornoway	NB 423 328	NB43SW 8	Under modern buildings	No	None	No	None	N/A
Eaglais Chaluim Chille	26	Aoidhe	NB 485 323	NB43SE 5	20/09/04	Yes: SAM no 1684	None?	Yes – RCAHMS	None	N/A
Teampall Chùistein	27	Garrabost, Point	?NB 516 335	NB53SW 4	20/09/04	No	Tobar Chùisden NB 514 337	No	None	N/A
Teampall Rubha Chirc	28	Gob a'chearc, Point	NB 50786 29213	NB52NW 1	13/12/04	Yes: SAM no 5333	None?	Yes - DES	Trial trench excavation	No
Teampall Aulaidh	29	Griais	NB 49020 41540	NB44SE 3	No	Yes: SAM no 5343	None?	No	Plane table of chapel	No
Teampall Mhicheil	30	Tolstadh bho Thuath	NB 5440 4801	NB54NW 1	No	No	None?	No	Not located	N/A
Teampall Chaluim Chille	31	Garry?	NB?	None	Not located	No	None	No	Not located	N/A
<i>Outer Isles</i>										
Chapel on Eilean an Tighe, Shiantas	32	Lochs	NG 4183 9766	NG49NW 4	6-8/8/04	Sites visited	?	No	Topographic EDM survey	Yes: May/June 2005
Airighean na h-Annaid, Garbh Eilean, Shiantas	33	Lochs	NG 412 983	NG49NW 2	6-8/8/04	Sites visited	?	No	Topographic EDM survey	No

Table 1: 2005 Lewis Coastal Chapel-sites Gazetteer (cont)

<i>Ainm (Name)</i>	<i>LCCS Site No</i>	<i>Baile (Village)</i>	<i>NGR</i>	<i>NMRS no</i>	<i>Walkover Date</i>	<i>Scheduled?</i>	<i>Tobar/Fuaran (well)</i>	<i>Planned Already? (*MR = McGibbon and Ross)</i>	<i>Type of Survey Recommended</i>	<i>Recommended Survey Completed?</i>
Teampall Mhuire, Eilean Mhuire, Shiantas	34	Lochs	NG 4306 9860	NG49NW 1	6-8/8/04	No	?	No	None	N/A
Rona – St Ronan’s church and settlement	35	Ness	*HW 8091 3235	HW83SW 1	No	Yes: SAM no 1683	?	Yes – MR; RCAHMS; DES 1958	-	N/A
Sula Sgeir – Sgeir an Teamphill/Tigh Beannaichte	36	Ness	*HW 621 305	HW62SW 1	No	No	?	MR	-	N/A
Teampall Beannachadh, Flannan Isles	37	Uig	NA 7262 4684	NA74NW 1	No		?	MR	-	N/A
<i>Additional Sites Identified</i>										
Dun Othail	38	Tolstadh	NB5425 5149	NB55SW 1	No	Yes: SAM no 5455	None		None – already surveyed by STAC	N/A
Luchraban	39	Rubha Gob	NB 50781 66013	NB56NW 1	No	Yes: SAM no 5878	None	No	None – already surveyed by STAC	N/A
Cunndal	40	Eoropie		NB56NW 27	No	No	None	Yes – RCAHMS 1928	-	N/A
Eilean Fir Chrothair	41	Uig, near Bernera	NB 1397 4191	NB14SW 18	No	No	?	No	-	N/A
Pabay Beag	42	Pabay Mor, Uig	NB 09793 38873	None	No	No	?	No	-	N/A

## 4.0 Site 4: Teampall Pheadair and An Seann Cladh, Suainebost Topographic Survey 2005

### 4.1 Background Summary from 2004 Desktop and Walkover Surveys

The following descriptions are reproduced from the 2004/5 report to set the context for the topographic survey.

The church of 'St Peter in Shanabost' is listed by Martin Martin (1703, 27). The Statistical Account of Scotland 1791-99, Parish of Barvas (Rev Donald MacDonald) states "There are two places of worship in the parish.....The one in the district of Ness, about 12 computed miles from the manse, an old Popish church, called St Peter's, was enlarged and rebuilt last year; it is thatched with heath." A new parliamentary church was built at Cross in the late 1820s and the building was probably finally abandoned then. Twenty years later the Ordnance Survey found it in decay" (Stat Acc Scot 1845, 141; Robson 1997, 69).

This site is identified from the Ordnance Survey (OS) First Edition map and in the OS Name Books, Book No 3A, pages 27 - 28, it is described as "The ruins of a church situated on the margin of Amhainn Shaineboist. Attached to it is a graveyard which is the only one in the district of Ness. Three of its walls are still standing, but the fourth has partly fallen in. Formerly it was the parish church of Ness and became a ruin in 1829. It is said to have been built in 1756 and to have derived its name from its first pastor, but when it was first erected is unknown." MacGibbon and Ross (1896, vol 1, 83) also describe the ruined building, as do the RCAHMS when they visited the site on 14 July 1914. The OS visited the site on 13 June 1969 when the site at NB 5084 6382 was found to survive "as a rectangular hollow oriented E-W, choked with vegetation and bounded by the greater part of the east gable (not the west, as described by the Commission), c 5.0 m of the N wall, and the footings of most of the south wall. It measures 19.0 m by 6.0 m externally, with walls 0.8 m thick. Two late grave enclosures are built against the east gable and the surviving part of the north wall. The burial ground is still in occasional use."

Finlay MacLeod (1997) records that "Between it and the shore is a place called 'Na h-Annaidean' and 'Cnoc an Annaid'. 'Annaid' is an ancient name for a church location. This name also is found in Shader, close to St Peter's Chapel, and on Killegray in the Sound of Harris, and in Eilean Garbh on the Shiant's." The ancient Gaelic 'Annaid' name is also discussed by the RCAHMS in relation to the Shiant Islands and Siader in Leiw's, but the name here in Suainebost is not mentioned (RCAHMS xiv).

The burials in the cemetery at Teampull Pheadair continued regularly even after 1922 when the present Habost graveyard, to the north, came into use. Recent work by the Comunn Eachdraidh Nis and the Habost cemetery committee has resulted in a book, *An Seann Chladh*, which records the memorial stones in the Swainbost old cemetery. In this book, it is estimated that the graveyard accommodates upwards of 4,000 graves, out of which only 114 bear inscribed memorials (some from the Iolaire disaster), all other markers being of rough stone (Campbell 2004). The earliest decipherable tombstone (of Alexander Murray) is dated to 1857. It is also recorded in this book that the original teampall was around 30 feet in length, being extended to the west to 63 feet when it was renovated in 1795. Extracts from a feasibility study by the architects, Simpson and Brown, for conservation work on the Teampall is also included in this volume (p10-13).

LCCS walkover survey site description 2004:

This church is located at NB 50861 63812 and is as described in the Ordnance Survey visit of 1969, although the time of year of the OS visit (June) would have meant that the surveyor could not have seen the full extent of the wall footings that are visible during the winter when the vegetation has died down. The church foundations when seen in the winter measure between 18 and 19 m externally E-W, and 6 m N-S. The east gable end is standing to a height of around 5 m with vegetation growing on the top of the walls. It is constructed from rough stones and mortar. There are signs of erosion of the mortar in the wall and vegetation growing in the wall cracks. The window lintel is cracked and a timber prop has been put into place to prevent further collapse. There have been repairs to the wall of the northern burial lair, the eastern lair is in better condition.

The whole site is choked with Butterbur from mid to late March until October or November every year. This invasive plant grows in sandy soil on disturbed ground and the flowers appear before the leaves in spring. The walkover at this site was conducted in February, but a second visit was made in May, by which time the Butter bur (*gallan*) was above knee height and totally obscured all the unmarked gravestones and the foundations of the church. The areas away from the church are free of *gallan* but covered by grassy tussocks, which do not die down in winter, and obscure the rows of unmarked gravestones.

The graveyard is enclosed by a wall, and is a polygonal shape, measuring overall around 105 m E-W and around 88 m N-S. There are thousands of low, rough, un-marked gravestones in the cemetery, organised around a system of N-S rows of closely-packed what appear to be head and foot stones. Many of these stones would have been taken from the then ruinous church building. The rows continue over the wall foundations of the church and into the interior, and some at least must therefore post-date the ruination of the building. It is very difficult to discern different phases of burial at this site, especially in the areas that are covered by grassy tussocks, even in winter. Each grave appears to have head and foot stones, and smaller graves attest to infant burials. There is a group of these together, c17 m west of the west wall of the lair on the north side of the church. One of the burial stones in this group includes an incomplete, sub-rectangular stone bowl (font?) incorporated into the ground surface. The mid-nineteenth century onwards, inscribed memorial stones (114 in total) were not recorded during the walkover as these have already been fully described, recorded and researched by Normal Smith in 'An Seann Cladh' (2004). There are many memorial stones to those lost in the First World War and the Iolaire tragedy in 1919.

There are irregular, grassy raised areas within the graveyard, at the south west corner and along the west side, the latter being revetted by a drystone wall. There are burials within both of these areas. Immediately to the east is a hollow area devoid of burials, parallel to the west wall where the sand has been eroded, or dug, away.

On the opposite (south) side of the Abhainn Shaineboist (Swainbost river) the old system of feannagan (lazy beds) on the sloping can be clearly seen, as can the remains of the pre-crofting settlement of Swainbost that Teampall Pheadair would have served, and the old coastal track.

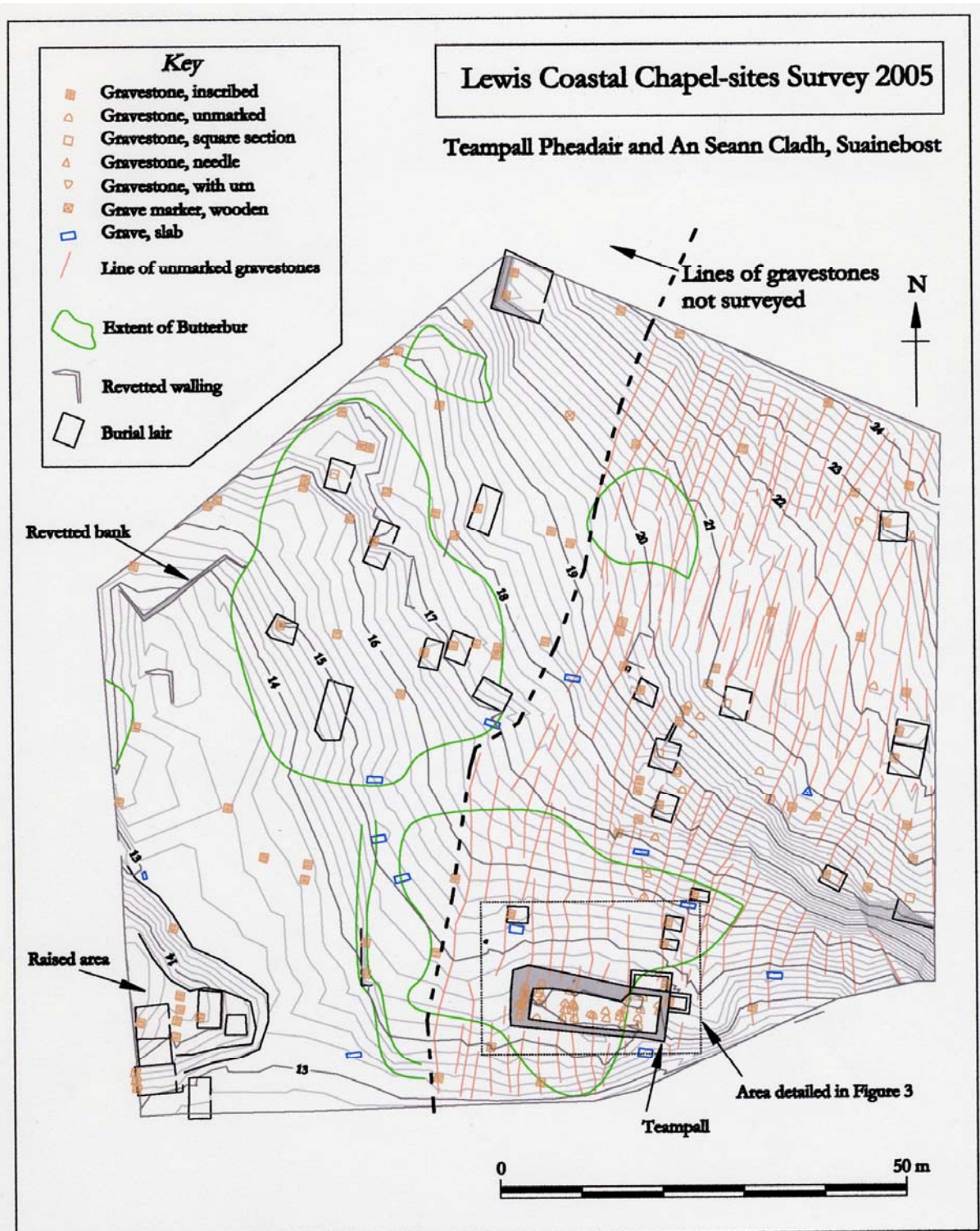
## 4.2 Methodology

All topographical features at the site were surveyed, as well as the archaeological remains. The entire graveyard area was surveyed, including any walls and banks and other features, and the foundations of the church building. As many as possible of the unmarked gravestones (estimated at between two and three thousand) were surveyed in order to record the layout of the old cemetery. It should be noted that even in the depths of winter a large part of this cemetery is covered by thick tussocks of grass which obscures the layout of parts of the burial stones. It was decided therefore to concentrate on the inscribed gravestones and the burial lairs, and to plot as many as possible of the *lines* of unmarked gravestones, rather than the position of every single stone. In this way over half of the unmarked gravestone alignments were recorded, and the inscriptions on the memorial stones recorded on a plan of the graveyard (Smith 2004, in *An Seann Cladh*) can be connected to the LCCS 2005 topographic survey.

The survey was carried out using a Leica EDM total station from a single station set-up. Data was logged electronically, downloaded to Liscad v 2.02 for processing and exported to Autocad and Adobe Illustrator for map production.

The landowners, common grazings clerks and owner/occupiers were all informed before the work began at the site. The survey team met up with a member of the Cemetery Committee at Teampall Pheadair before work began.

The survey took place in February 2005 before the year's Butterbur foliage had grown, and was undertaken by Gary Tompsett and Caitlin Evans.

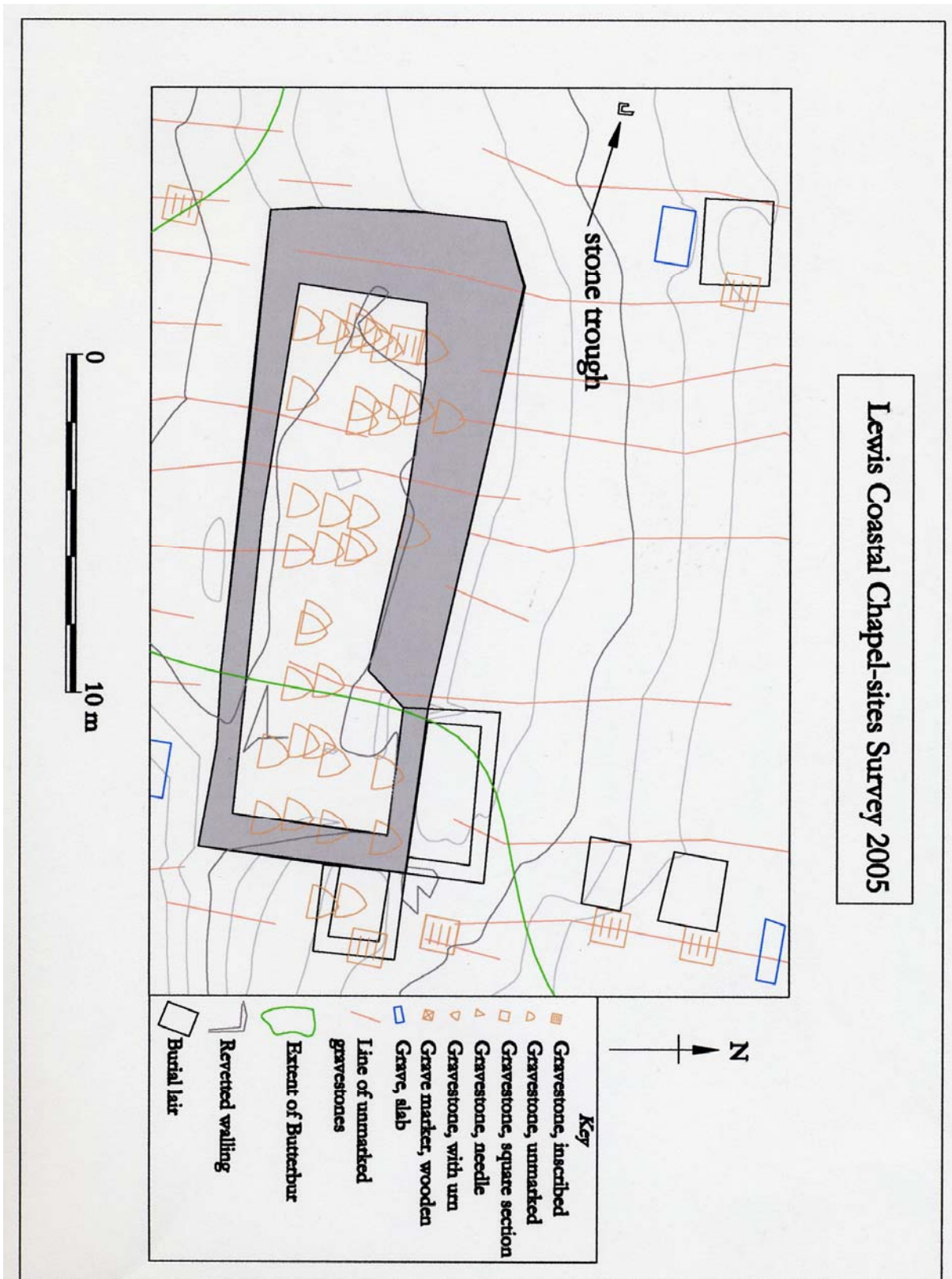


**Figure 2:**  
Teampall Pheadair and An Seann Cladh, Suainebost

### 4.3 Results

The results from the survey are reproduced in Figures 2 to 3. The overall survey of Teampall Pheadair and An Seann Cladh is shown in Figure 2. Twenty-seven burial enclosures, or lairs, were recorded, as were the 114 inscribed gravestones, which were distinguished between plain inscribed gravestones, square section gravestones, needle-shaped monuments, gravestones with urn, graves slabs and a wooden grave marker. It is thought that between two and three thousand small, rough, unmarked gravestones are present in

the cemetery, in alignments reflecting possibly foot as well as head stones. The number of stones far outweighed the time available for survey, and so only the alignments of stones were recorded. By the end of the survey over half of the alignments had been recorded, covering the east side of the graveyard where the density of stones is thickest.



**Figure 3:**  
Area of detail around Teampall Pheadair

A revetted bank standing between 0.85 and 1 m high and defining two sides of a rectangular area of 12 m x 5 m adjacent to the wall on the north-west side of the graveyard, was also recorded, in addition to a further raised, roughly triangular area or spur in the south-west corner, 30 m x 17 m maximum extent, raised up to 1 m from the surrounding graveyard. The area 50 m x 25 m immediately between these two features on the south-west side of the graveyard, adjacent to the western gateway into the cladh, is relatively level with very little invasive vegetation other than grass, and it contains less gravestones. It has the appearance of having been scoured or hollowed out, and if this is the case, this process may have been connected to the formation of the raised areas. The low area was particularly devoid of gravestones at the western gateway into the cladh. The raised spur in the south-west corner is densely packed with both burial lairs and marked and un-marked grave stones. From the inscriptions in this area it is possible that it was reserved for those families of particular standing in the community (see memorial stones 58 to 65 in *An Seann Cladh*). The inscriptions in the rectangular raised area to the north and mentioned above give less of a clue as to the reason for its revetment.

Teampall Pheadair, as described in sources cited in the desktop above, is located at the south side of the cemetery, and is illustrated in detail in Figure 3. A density of inscribed stones was noted inside the ruined building, and also of unmarked stones, that are set over the tops of the ruined walls and clearly post-date it. A broken sub-rectangular small stone trough or font was also noted during the walkover survey in 2004, and plotted on the topographic survey (Figure 3). It had been incorporated into an area of infant burials (designated as such by the small size indicated by head and foot stones). The ruined church walls on the west and north sides were visible as uneven stone banks just below the topsoil. These are completely obscured by vegetation for most of the year. The ruined wall on the south side is more defined – the east and part of the north walls are still standing.

## 5.0 Site 20: Teampall Mhealastadh and Site 21: Tigh nan Cailleachan Dubha, Mealastadh, Uig Topographic Survey 2005

The following descriptions are reproduced from the 2004/5 report to set the context for the topographic survey.

### 5.1 *Background Summary from 2004 Desktop and Walkover Surveys*

The Reverend Hugh Monro in the Statistical Account 1791-9 (288) refers to “At Melista are the remains of a nunnery, called still in the language of the country, Teah na n cailichan dou, or The house of the old black women”. The site is identified from the OS1 and in the ONB, Books No 78 and 87, which state that a number of chess-men were found here about 70 years ago (ie c 1780) and that they were sold to a society of Antiquaries in Edinburgh. This is presumably confusion with the find of chess-men from Uig Bay. The RCAHMS visited the site on 18 June 1914 and describe “All trace of this nunnery (“house of the black women”) is obliterated, the site being occupied by a sheep fank, which doubtless has absorbed the stones.”

Teampall Mhealastadh is identified from the OS First Edition map and in the OS Name Books, Book No 29C, page 64, it is described as: “an old graveyard in the village of Mealasta.....There has never been a church or any other kind of meeting house in or about this place as far as can be ascertained.” Also near to the site is ‘Cladh mhor an Teampuill’, an irregular, large rock in the graveyard of Mealastadh, and ‘Rubh’an Teampuill’ nearby. However, the RCAHMS visited the site on 18 June 1914 and describe “About 200 yards west of the Mealsita farmhouse, on a rocky point on the south of the promontory Rudh’an Teampuill, rising only some 20 feet above high-water mark, are the foundations of an oblong church, measuring externally 25 feet in length and 15 feet, 8 inches in breadth, with the wall 2 feet 8 inches thick and orientated south of east and north of west. Between the church and the sea is a small burying ground.”

Mackenzie records that “At Mealista, Uig, there was a shrine to St Catan (see Teampall na h-Aoidh), near which has been found the remains of a nunnery, locally known as the ‘house of



the black old women). (Mackenzie 1919, 137-8). The OS visited the site on 30 June 1969 when it was found “The graveyard, unenclosed and no longer in use, is at NA 9897 2421. Unable to locate any remains of the church described by RCAHMS in an area which has been utilized by wartime military structures. No further information regarding the ‘Shrine of St Catan’. Thirty years later the chapel complex and cemetery were identified on the coastal erosion survey 1996 (Burgess and Church 1997).

The OS visited the Tigh nan Cailleachan Dubha on 30 June 1969 when it was found that “The name applies to the remains of a typical black house structure oriented N to S measuring 11.2 m x 4.6 m internally within walls 1.3 m thick. There is still a strong local tradition regarding this site. Macleod however, records that “Strangely there is no reference in oral tradition to Taigh nan Cailleachan Dubha – only the name and location. In Lewis one often spoke of the distance along the west coast by saying ‘From the House of the Black Women in Uig to Taihg Mholuidh in Eoropic.’” (Macleod 1997, 29).

LCCS walkover survey site description:

When Site no 21 was visited it was clear that despite its name and the stories associated with it, it is a large Medieval or later deserted settlement, with associated enclosures and field systems, and is very well-preserved. Parts of the building remains have been adapted for use as a sheep fank. However, the majority of the site is upstanding, and in good condition. As with Laimisiader in Carloway (Site 11), the site is too complex to record in a walkover or plane table survey. It requires a topographic survey of the entire settlement, and in this case, incorporating Site 20, Teampall Mhealastadh and its graveyard, to the north, with which this site is undoubtedly connected. The settlement at Tigh nan Cailleachan Dubha has been scheduled due to the ecclesiastical link suggested by the name ‘House of the Black Women’.

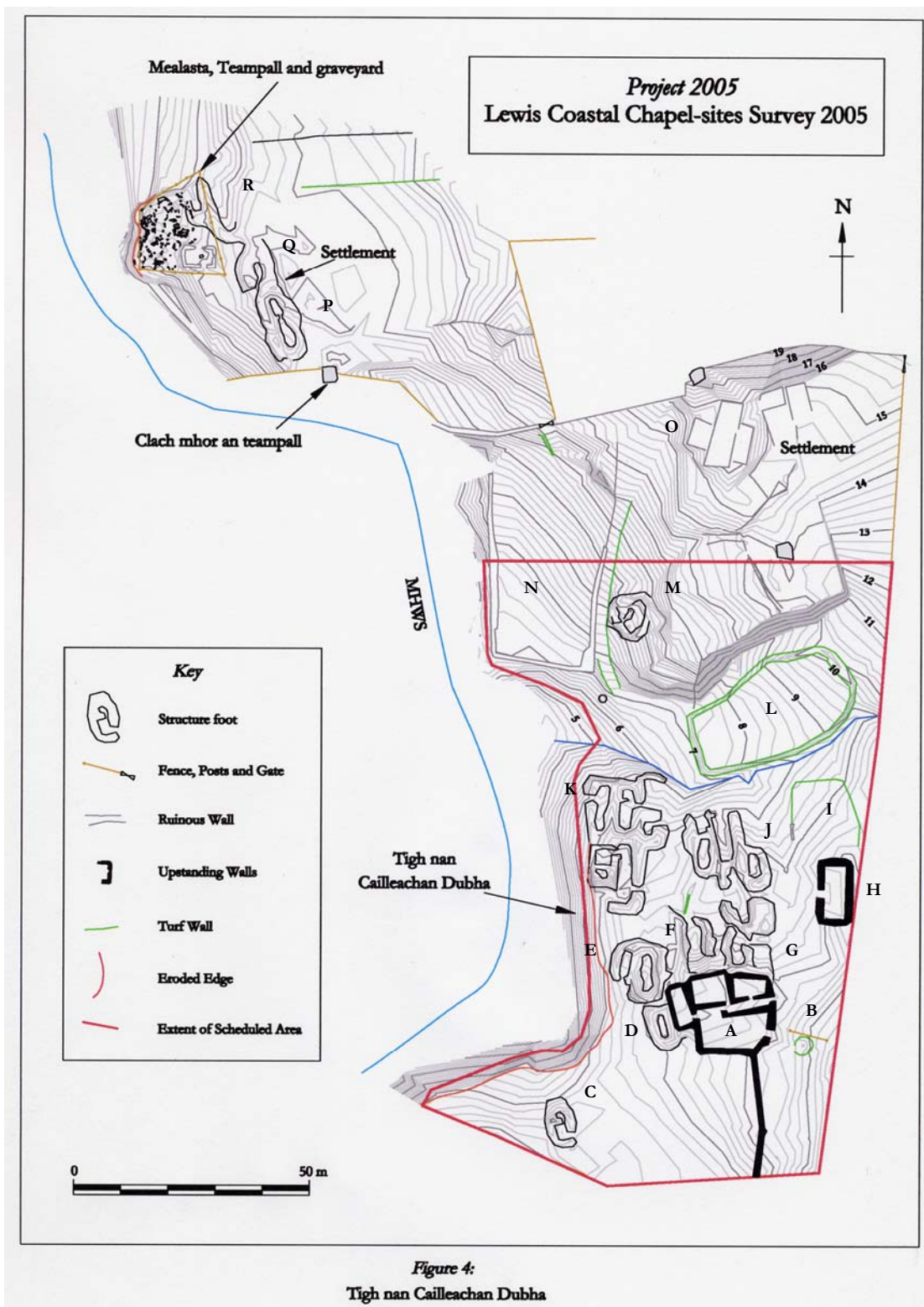
Teampall Mhealastadh is located at NA 98983 24198 in a small graveyard at the edge of the coast, and adjacent to the remains of at least four later buildings of an old settlement. The graveyard comprises an irregular grassy raised area on a natural rocky area, just south of the point ‘Rubha an Teampail’. The graveyard is roughly 20 m N-S by 10 m E-W and is enclosed by a revetting bank on the west, south and north sides. The east side has been obscured by the addition of later buildings, the west side is cut by an eroding cliff line. At least two, two-part, later structures are situated at the east side of the graveyard (centred on NA 98994 24194), aligned N-S, and immediately adjacent to the east chapel wall. To the north of the chapel, and adjacent to it, is a further building aligned N-S at NA 98988 24205. The Teampall building is in the SW corner of the graveyard, and measures 8 m E-W and 5.5 m N-S externally. The walls are visible as low, grassy banks, with occasional stonework apparent, especially at the doorway in the south wall. There is a possible window or second doorway in the north wall, almost opposite. The doorway in the south wall is around 1 m wide, and the walls of the Teampall are about 1 m wide, from bottom of bank on either side. The graveyard was once fenced off, but the fence is now collapsed.

All the gravestones in the graveyard bar one are low, rough, unmarked stones of around 0.3 m high on average. There are lines of gravestones N-S across the graveyard, with what appears to be head and foot stones. Many of the gravestones are now just below the turf, but there appeared to be at least five rows of burials, with 46 stones in each row on average. North of the NE corner of the Teampall is a setting of 12 stones, including three large stones, in a sub-circular arrangement, 2 m N-S by 2.5 m E-W. The one inscribed stone is lying flat on the north side of the graveyard. The inscription is now almost illegible.

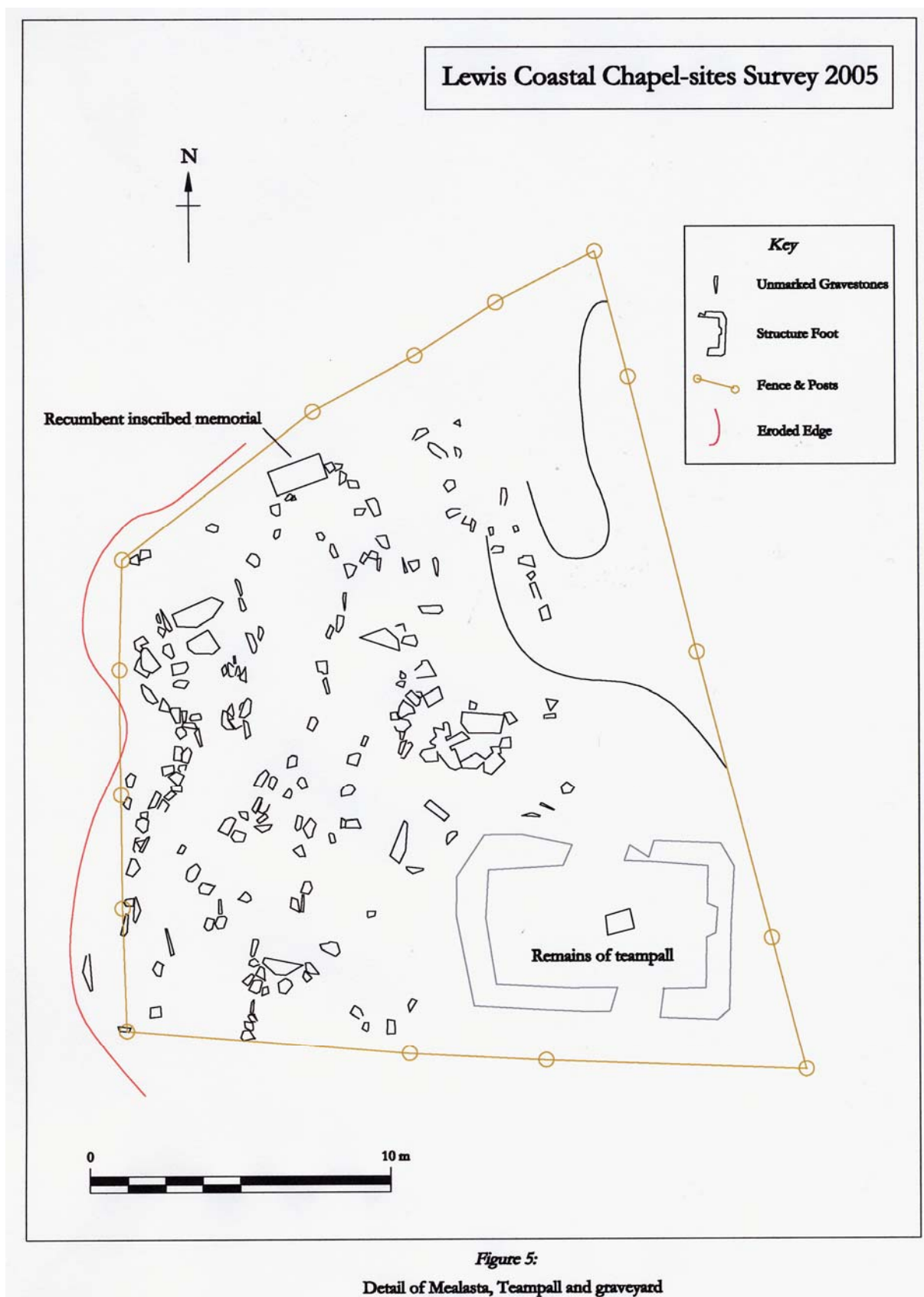
Cladh Mhor an Teampuill was located as described in the Ordnance Survey. It is located at the south end of the building remains at the east of the Teampall site.

## 5.2 *Methodology*

Tigh nan Cailleachan Dubha is an extensive medieval or later settlement, with earlier structures below the settlement and later sheep fanks adapted from the stone structures. The entire scheduled area was surveyed, and also the area immediately to the north of the scheduled area, where further structures are evident. The chapel and burial ground at Teampall Mhealastadh to the north, and also the ruined structures of a settlement to the east of Rubha an Teampail were also surveyed.



The topographic surveys were carried out by Gary Tompsett and Caitlin Evans using a Leica EDM total station, using a network of several stations. Data was processed as in 3.2 above. The landowners, common grazings clerks and owner/occupiers were all informed before the work began at each site. The survey team met up with representatives of the Comunn Eachdraidh Uig at the site beforehand.



### 5.3 Results

The survey results are presented in Figures 4 and 5. The remains of a complex of several buildings were surveyed in the scheduled area at Site no 21, all in close proximity to each other, including a later upstanding sheep fank modified from the ruined buildings (A), a circular turf structure (B), an stone and turf structure (C), largely well-preserved stone and

turf buildings (D to G) surrounding structure A, an upstanding building (H) and enclosure (I) on the east side of the area, two large structures (J) and (K), in the centre and west of the settlement, with up to four compartments each, one re-used as a drying kiln. To the north of the burn are two enclosures (L and N), and a further eroded turf structure (M). To the north of this, outwith the scheduled area, are the further remains of upstanding structures (O).

The largest structure (A) lies to the south of the site, and is composed of a series of upstanding stone structures now modified and used as a sheep fank. It has five compartments, all of which are c 1.2 m lower than the surrounding ground surface. 6 m from the south east corner of this structure is a small circular turf-walled structure (B) 4 m in diameter and eroded. 30 m from the south west corner of structure A is a small turf and stone structure (C) 10 m x 6 m externally. Immediately to the west of structure A is a sunken rectangular structure (D) measuring approximately 7 x 4 m externally. The walls are turf covered and low. Abutting this is a further turf and stone walled structure (E) measuring 14 x 10 m. The less well-preserved remains of at least two other structures (F and G) lie to the east of this - these cover an overall area measuring 20 x 15 m. These structures sit closely to the west and north of the sheep pen.

The upstanding stone walls of a larger house (H) lie 10 m to the east. This is partially collapsed and stone rubble lies around. This building measures 14 x 7 m externally. A low turf wall encloses an area (I) to the north of this building, with an overall internal measurement of 15 x 12 m.

Two further turf and stone walled structures lie to the west. The first (J) has at least four compartments, and an overall external measurement of 15 m square. Again to the west of this are the remains of a larger turf and stone walled structure (K) measuring 30 x 18 m overall. This structure has at least four compartments, with the later reuse of one as a corn-drying kiln (Dave Roberts pers com).

The burn passes to the north of these structures, and on the other side there is a large turf walled enclosure (L). This encloses a low lying area of ground which is sheltered to the north by a rock outcrop and higher ground. Large boulders sit to the north east of this higher area, and there is a small slumped and eroded turf structure (M) to the west. This is circular in plan, and measures 10 m in diameter. A further, large stone walled rectangular enclosure (N) lies to the west of this, measuring approximately 45 x 20 m.

North of this lie further remains of upstanding settlement (O) immediately south of the fence line, and the teampall and graveyard are 100 m to the north west.

The graveyard and remains of the teampall are contained within a fenced area 21 m x 22 m maximum. The graveyard is defined by a revetment wall on the south, west and north sides, and the west edge (the shore) is eroding significantly. The teampall is situated at the south east corner of the area, the teampall footings now visible as low eroded grassy banks, with stonework protruding through the turf in places, as described in full during the walkover (see above). The graveyard comprises all un-marked stones, bar one example of an inscribed recumbent grave marker on the north side of the site (Figure 5). The rows of grave stones are less regimented than those in Teampall Pheadair in Suainebost. To the east of the graveyard, and partially overlying it, are low grassy banks and hollows representing the remains of three adjacent turf and stone structures (P, Q and R) measuring 45 m overall in length, and up to 10 m wide. Structure P at the south end has two compartments and lies immediately to the north of Clach Mhor an teampall.

## 6.0 The Shiant Islands Sites 32 (Eilean an Tighe) and 33 (Airighean na h-Annaid, Garbh Eilean), Topographic Survey 2005

by Janet Hooper

### 6.1 *Background*

On each of the three principal islands - Eilean an Tighe, Eilean Garbh and Eilean Mhuire - making up the Shiantas group, there are traditions of a chapel site and the islands as whole are considered to be sacred (Daniell 1820, 54). Although the islands have been briefly described by visitors from Martin Martin onwards, there is clearly considerable confusion in the names given to each of the three islands and to the possible ecclesiastical remains on each. Little attention has been paid to the islands in more recent times, until the then owner's desire to learn more about them resulted in an ongoing archaeological project led by Pat Foster which began in 2000.

On Eilean Mhuire, which is slightly separated from the other two islands, are the stone footings of what is usually assumed to be a medieval chapel dedicated to St Mary. Eilean Mhuire is the most fertile of the three islands and the outlines of a number of turf buildings, which are potentially medieval in date, can be seen on the flat plateau close to the chapel. The identification of this site as the chapel dedicated to the Virgin relies on the equation of Eilean Mhuire with Martin's Island-More (Nicholson 2002, 144). However, Eilean an Tighe, the most southerly of the three islands, was known as Eilean na Cille prior to the nineteenth century and a sketch by William Daniell, dated 1818, shows the stone footings of a chapel, which he calls St Mary's, in a position which can be clearly identified as being close to that of the later cottage in the lower of the two settlement areas on the island (Figure 6).



*Plate 1:*

*Sketch by William Daniell (1818) showing St Mary's Chapel.*

A number of twentieth century visitors to the islands record the existence of burials in the vicinity of this area of settlement and the low mound which lies just to the north of the present bothy, has been identified as a possible cemetery mound (Nicholson 2002, 145; Foster 2004).

On the OS First edition map the name, Annat, usually associated with the site of an early medieval church, is given to one of the two settlement areas on Garbh Eilean. Annat lies on the south west side of the island, in a sheltered hollow at the base of the valley which divides the island roughly in half. This area is enclosed within a substantial D-shaped earth and stone bank, which recalls those surrounding early medieval monastic sites; within this enclosure are the footings of two roundhouses, lying to one side of a later bank and the area has clearly been occupied over a long period.

Archaeological survey and excavation has been ongoing on Eilean an Tighe and Garbh Eilean, which are connected by a spit, under the direction of Pat Foster since 2000 (Foster 2000; 2001; 2004; Foster and Hooper 2005). Following an initial walkover survey, all the

sites were catalogued, described, photographed and, where appropriate, surveyed using a plane table. As a result of this work, it was recognised that the black rat population of the islands was causing considerable damage to the archaeological resource. The upstanding remains of buildings provide shelter for the rats, which are, as a result, causing considerable damage by burrowing into the walls. In consequence, excavation has been targeted on a number of sites. Within the upper settlement area on Eilean an Tighe, a cross-inscribed pillow stone was discovered upside down in the floor levels of the largest blackhouse, the sequence for which now extends from the Iron Age through to the eighteenth century. At Annat, one of the two substantial circular structures has now been excavated to below the level of the upstanding walls. This structure has provided evidence for occupation, which on the basis of the ceramic evidence, seems to extend from the Iron Age through to the early medieval period. Finds have included glass beads and spindle whorls, although nothing as yet to positively confirm the possible early medieval ecclesiastical connotations of the place-name. Smaller scale exploratory excavation has been undertaken on a range of other structures, while in the lower settlement area on Eilean an Tighe, buildings known to be used by lobstermen after the permanent settlement on the islands ended in 1901, have been cleared of modern rubbish down to their occupation levels. Initial environmental sampling has also been carried out and nearly all the sites so far identified have now been recorded with a Garmin 12 hand-held GPS. However, no topographic survey has so far been undertaken and this was an essential next stage in the project, that was undertaken under the auspices of the Lewis Coastal Chapel-sites Survey during the 2005 excavation season from 28 May - 25 June.

## 6.2 Methodology

The individual settlement areas on Eilean an Tighe are relatively small and discrete and could be recorded without the need to establish complicated traverses. In areas where there were few archaeological remains, additional points were taken to ensure that the topography could be re-created accurately. The data was typed up and downloaded into LISCAD for reduction into planimetric form. This enabled an overall map of each settlement area to be produced and a contour model created. This plot was then taken into AUTOCAD to facilitate the addition of further detail (for example, site numbers) and other artwork.

The survey results will also provide a means of documenting the current condition of the remains as a benchmark against which ongoing damage by the black rat population can be measured. A framework of fixed survey points was established to enable the survey to be extended in the future, as well as to help in locating excavation trenches.

The logistical difficulties of working on an uninhabited group of islands without power to some degree determined the areas to be targeted during this phase of survey. As Eilean Garbh is attached by a spit to Eilean an Tighe, personnel and equipment can be got across to Annat, although since this involves a 300 ft climb up a gully, this was dependent on good weather. The individual settlement areas on Eilean an Tighe and at Annat are, however, relatively small and discrete and could be recorded without the need to establish complicated traverses. A generator was hired for the duration of the survey to enable maximum use of the EDM during the week which it is on the island. This enabled the data to be downloaded at the end of each day and proved adequate to keep the total station batteries charged, as well as those of the laptop (and mobile phones). In reality, even getting the equipment across to Annat proved something that could only be tackled when good weather could be guaranteed - in particular dry conditions underfoot. Damage to the base of the path complicates carrying heavy and bulky equipment onto Garbh Eilean, while the spit proved to be now cut off twice a day during high spring tides, for as much as three hours at a time. Following another wet year, it is felt that a boat would make survey at Annat much easier. This would also apply to the settlement area over the arch at Bagh and, of course, to Eilean Mhuire. In spite of the difficulties experienced during this season, it is to be hoped that in the future the survey can be extended to the other principal settlement areas on all three islands, and that - through the use of a sub-1 m GPS system - all the sites on the islands can be located with reference to Ordnance Survey data.

Copies of the survey have been submitted to the various archives and DES and will also be included on the Shiantis Isles website ([www.shiantisles.net](http://www.shiantisles.net)).

### 6.3 *Results*

Although it was originally intended to have the total station only for a week, the extra hire charges did not approach the costs of getting it on and off the island and it was decided that, since the machine turned out to be available, keeping it for the month was a better use of resources. Given that last minute problems in copying software meant that all the data had to be hand recorded, the fact that the machine did not have to be returned turned out to be of enormous benefit; this not only compensated for the poor weather conditions during June and Cathy's limited mobility, but the time which had to be taken each day to plot out the results in order to check them. Ultimately, the fact that the survey could be done at all owes an enormous amount to Cathy's determination to stand on her bad leg for hours at a time and, given these circumstances, her patience and accuracy in writing down thousands of readings.

Although originally intended to focus on two of the three areas on the Shiantas which have either physical or documentary evidence for ecclesiastical remains of potentially early medieval date - the lower settlement area on Eilean an Tighe and the area within the enclosure at Annat on Garbh Eilean - the issues outlined above meant that the focus became the upper, as well as the lower settlement area, on Eilean an Tighe. All archaeological features were plotted, the locations of the excavation trenches and test pits recorded and the extent of coastal erosion around the cottage documented. The current survey results will complement the original plane table surveys, as many of the buildings are far better defined following excavation. The archaeological work already undertaken on the Shiantas has suggested the high archaeological potential of both the lower settlement area on Eilean an Tighe and of Annat on Garbh Eilean.





## 7.0 Conclusion and Recommendations for Future Work

The results of the topographic surveys undertaken for the LCCS in 2005 have demonstrated the complexity of, and successfully recorded the structures found at, Sites 4, 20 and 21.

At Site 4, Teampall Pheadair (St Peter's) in Suainebost, the footings of the church walls were recorded by the survey whilst the vegetation had died down, and methodology for the recording of the gravestones was designed to record the different types of memorial so that location of inscribed memorials could be tied in with the record of the inscriptions themselves (in *An Seann Cladh*). In addition to these, other previously unrecorded features were surveyed – a raised area in the south-west corner of the cladh, a revetted bank on the west side, and a broken stone bowl or font (?stoop) that was identified during the walkover in 2004 (see 4.1 above and Barrowman 2005, 17).

The survey of Sites 20, Teampall Mhealastadh (the Mealasta chapel), and 21, Tigh nan Cailleachan Dubha (translated literally as House of the black women), recorded for the first time an accurate plan of the extensive remains at these sites. Site 21 is an extensive medieval or later rural settlement, comprising up to fifteen groups of structures, varying from drystone buildings, to small turf huts, with accompanying enclosures and banks. Although this site has been recorded (and scheduled) as an ecclesiastical site in the past (due to suggestions that the name refers to a nunnery here (see 5.1 and Barrowman, 2005, 55), it is more likely to be a secular settlement, and it is Site 20, the footings of the small teampall and accompanying graveyard of unmarked stones to the north-west that has the ecclesiastical connexion. Apart from the probable incorrect interpretation of the remains at Site 21, the site is also at risk from coastal erosion, the eroding cliff edge being less than 5 metres from the nearest structure evident on the site, and midden material eroding from the cliff section. Unfortunately this midden material has been added to last century and modern dumps of rubbish are also evident.

At Site 20, Teampall Mhealastadh, the erosion is a more direct and pressing threat, being extensive and immediate. Although the footings of the teampall itself are around 10 metres from the cliff edge, the west edge of the small graveyard is actively eroding at the low cliff situated over the rocky foreshore.

During the fieldwork season of the Shiant Islands Project (SHIP) in June 2005, topographic survey was undertaken of one of the chapel sites on the islands, under the aegis of the Lewis Coastal Chapel-sites Survey. Personal injury and stormy weather conditions prevented the undertaking of a survey of Site 33, Airighean na h-Annaid on Garbh Eilean. However, survey was successfully completed of the settlement area on Eilean an Tighe, which includes the possible chapel site, Site 32. This survey has enabled the SHIP team to test methodologies, and despite technical hitches, has demonstrated that the organization and funds needed to enable electrical equipment to be charged and used on the island, are worth the return.

Four sites recommended for topographic survey after the initial desktop and walkover survey programme completed in 2004/5 are still outstanding. These include Site 8, Teampall Pheadair, Siadar; Site 11, Teampall Chiarain, Limsiadar; Site 18, Taigh a'Bheannaich, Aird Uig and Site 33, Airighean na h-Annaid, Garbh Eilean on the Shiant Islands. Of these four sites, Site 8 is of the highest priority as it is actively eroding. It is recommended that this site be topographically surveyed and assessed in 2007.

## 8.0 Acknowledgements

I am grateful to Gary Tompsett and Caitlin Evans, who worked over and above to complete the surveys of Sites 4, 20 and 21, in the time and funds allowed. Also to John Arthur, GUARD, who produced the drawings to such a high standard. Thanks also to Janet Hooper and Cathy Dagg who completed the Shiant Site 32 survey in extremely testing conditions and to Janet for producing the drawing. The report was desktop published by Jen Cochrane, GUARD.

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