

5. CONCLUSION

Analysis and discussion of the results of the survey is reserved for an accompanying print paper in the *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* (see Barrowman forthcoming a), but a few general observations in relation to our knowledge of the archaeology of the medieval church in Lewis and the Western Isles can be made here.

The distribution of the majority of the chapel-sites reflects, in the main, the dominant pre-crofting coastal settlement pattern in Lewis, as most are in, or adjacent to, deserted post-medieval townships, and all are on or near the coast. It is possible that these townships may have their roots in the medieval period or earlier, but this is difficult to unravel without excavation. Often the upstanding ruins and associated field walls and cultivation systems are clearly post-medieval, some used within living memory as sheep fanks, but the structures reuse stones from older buildings on the site, including the ruined chapel itself. Such township sites identified during the survey include those at Teampall Chiarain, Laimishader (Site 11), Teampall Pheadair, Shader (Site 8), Teampall Mhealastadh and Taigh nan Cailleachan Dubha (Sites 20 and 21) in Uig, Teampall Chaluum Chille on Eilean Chaluum Chille (Site 22) and Teampall Pheadair, Swainbost (Site 4), where the old road and cultivation ridges are seen nearby, to name just a few. It is impossible in these cases, without excavation, to determine whether there was ever settlement contemporary with the chapel. In the case of Teampall Pheadair in Swainbost, which was the parish church for Ness, the building was built after the Reformation. But even in this case, there is the site of an older, smaller, chapel nearby (Teampall Thòmais; St. Thomas's), which local tradition holds was robbed in order to build the new church of St Peter's. At other sites, such as Teampall Mhìcheil (Site 12), the nearby post-medieval township takes its name from the old chapel (in this case, Baile an Teampaill), suggesting that the name at least post-dates the chapel.

There are also sites on or near the coast that have been robbed and adapted to build temporary shieling huts away from areas of settlement. These include Site 18 (Taigh a' Bheannaich, Aird Uig), Site 28 (Teampall Rubha Chirc, Point) and Site 33 (Àirighean na h-Annaid, Garbh Eilean in the

Shiants). Unusually, one of these has been excavated – Àirighean na h-Annaid on Garbh Eilean, and, most excitingly, one of two stone-built round huts within the enclosure at the site has been identified as a Late Bronze Age to Late Iron Age roundhouse, into which were built early medieval stone corbel roofed huts, containing Pictish plain-ware pottery (Foster et al 2012). Following abandonment in the early medieval period, the huts were reused as shieling huts around a millennium later in the 18th century. This gives us a glimpse into the potential of similar sites. For instance, at Taigh a' Bheannaich in Aird Uig on the west coast of Lewis, there is no associated enclosure, but there are the ephemeral remains of possible huts near the chapel, and the chapel is situated on a wide coastal promontory that is divided from coast to coast inland by a loch (Loch a' Bheannaich) and a stone and turf wall, which cuts it off from the landscape of Aird Uig. At Teampall Rubha Chirc in Point, as well as the small, rectangular chapel, there are the remains of five shieling huts and a possible corn-drying kiln within an enclosure wall, all of which have reused the stone from the ruined chapel.

Those sites found on the outer isles of Lewis are traditionally considered to be Early Christian. Due to their location, these sites have survived relatively untouched by later development. The chapel and oratory on North Rona (Site 35; MacGibbon & Ross 1896: 73–4; RCAHMS 1928: 3–4, figs 23–25; Nisbet & Gailey 1960; Robson 1991; 1997: 27–41; MacLeod 1997: 38–9; Fisher 2001: 3, 11, 114–16), and Tigh Beannaichte on Sula Sgeir (MacGibbon & Ross 1896: 75–6; RCAHMS 1928, Site 36; MacLeod 1997: 40; Robson 1997: 42–9), are both *c* 40 miles NNE of the Butt of Lewis, and Teampall Beannachadh on Eilean Mòr in the Flannan Isles (Site 37: MacGibbon & Ross 1896: 77–8; RCAHMS 1928: 30, figs 76–77; MacLeod 1997: 42) is *c* 18 miles off the west coast of Uig. Unfortunately, these sites could not be visited or surveyed by the LCCS due to the logistics associated with their being offshore and requiring a larger budget to survey. They have, however, been visited and described by antiquarians and visitors (eg Muir 1861; 1885; Stewart 1933) as well as the RCAHMS and OS, and the settlement and churchyard area of North Rona has been surveyed more recently (Nisbet & Gailey 1960). The oval enclosure and

corbelled oratory on North Rona is said to date to the 7th or 8th centuries and there are 12 examples of carved stones of local gneiss on the island, most of which are simple cruciform stones, some bearing crosslets, and all in various degrees of preservation. These stones probably originated as burial markers and most of them were found in the burial ground to the north and west of the chapel, where at least 25 headstones were identified (Nisbet & Gailey 1960: 109, 112; Fisher 2001: 114–15, no. 55). Fisher cites comparisons both to early 7th- to 9th-century Irish examples, as well as later 11th- to 13th-century examples from North Uist, Iona and Unst in Shetland, as well as Norway itself (Fisher 2001: 17). On Eilean Mòr in the Flannan Isles at Teampall Beannachadh or St Flann's Chapel, a small oratory, very similar to the oratory on North Rona and to Irish examples such as Skellig Michael, can also be dated by analogy to the 7th or 8th centuries, and similar corbelled buildings used for fowling on Sula Sgeir, c 7 miles west of North Rona, include one situated on *Sgeir an Teampuill* and identified as Tigh Beannaichte (Muir 1885: 98–9).

A second group that may be attributed to an early date are those associated with early place names. This includes the *papa* place name, derived from the Norse word *papa* for priests (eg Pabbay, or Papay, meaning 'island of the priests', and Papil, deriving from 'settlement of the priests'). These names imply that there were already 'priests' on the island when the Norse arrived and are evidence for contact between the two peoples. The Papar Project directed by Dr Barbara Crawford has researched the history, archaeology and soils of these sites, with the aim of exploring the relationship between the native Christians found on the islands at this time and the incoming Norse who named them (Crawford 2002; 2005). There are three examples of such sites on Lewis, all associated with chapel-sites. Teampall Rubha Chirc, discussed above (Site 28), is on a small promontory near Bayble (derived from 'Papil') in Point. Teampall Pheadair (Site 16) is on the island of Pabbay Mor on the west side of Lewis, in Loch Roag (where there is also a Pabay Beag). A third site is also found in Loch Roag on a small headland called *Pabanis* (derived from *papa-nes*, 'the headland of the papar') at the south-east corner of the island of Little Bernera, adjacent to the sites of Teampall Mhicheil and Teampall Dhonain (Sites 13 and

14). Sites associated with the ancient Gaelic word for church, *annaid*, may also be contenders for an earlier date (see Macdonald 1973; Clancy 1995). These include *Cnoc na Annaid* or *na h-Annaidean*, near Teampall Pheadair, Swainbost (Site 4), *Rubha na h-Annaid* near Teampall Pheadair, Shader (Site 8) and *Àirighean na h-Annaid* on Garbh Eilean in the Shianta (Site 33) (see above; MacLeod 1997: 15, 17, 41).

The chapel-sites on mainland Lewis are in a range of different conditions. Many survive only as low grassy banks, but are still discernible as either unicameral, such as Teampall Rònaidh, Eoropie (Site 1), or bicameral, with a nave and chancel, eg Teampall Bhrìghid, Borve (Site 7) or Teampall Pheadair, Shader (Site 8). These latter two examples are comparable in dimensions, but also in that there are suggestions of earlier remains surveyed from below them, as also at the ruinous, but partially upstanding, Teampall Eòin in Bragar (Site 10). In the Northern Isles, where excavations have taken place, similar medieval chapels have been shown to overlie Norse and Late Iron Age structures and/or burials (eg St Ninian's Isle, Shetland, see Small et al 1973; Barrowman 2011; and St Boniface, Papa Westray, Orkney, see Lowe 1998). While none of the sites in Lewis has been excavated, the presence of mounds and midden material at Sites 8 and 10 suggests there may be earlier sites below the chapel building (see further discussion in Barrowman forthcoming a and b).

Of those Lewis chapel-sites where stonework is evident, some are partially upstanding ruins, as at Taigh a' Bheannaich, Aird Uig (Site 18) and Teampall Aulaidh, Gress (Site 29) whereas others are only low mounds of rubble, often in small graveyards, eg Teampall Chrìosd, Baile na Cille, Uig (Site 19) and Teampall Mhìcheil, Kirvig (Site 12). In contrast to this, a small group of chapels are larger, partially upstanding and served once as head churches of a parish, eg Teampall Pheadair, Swainbost (Site 4) and Eaglais na h-Aoidhe (Site 26). The partially upstanding Teampall Eòin, Bragar (Site 10), gives a clearer indication of how the smaller, bicameral churches once looked, as do the single-chambered churches such as Teampall a' Chrò' Naomh, South Galson (Site 6). The best-preserved church building is the 12th–14th-century Teampall Mholuaidh (St Moluag's church,

Site 2), which is a listed building and still in use by the Scottish Episcopal Church. In addition to these sites, four of the chapel-sites are now unlocated (Sites 5, 9, 23, 31) and survive only in local tradition.

The majority of the chapel-sites identified in Lewis are of high cultural significance. Only one pre-Reformation church is still upstanding and roofed in the whole island (Site 2, Teampall Mholuaidh), while Site 26, Eaglais na h-Aoidhe, is upstanding to gable height, and houses late medieval carved grave-slabs in the newly roofed west end. The rest are at best ruinous buildings, and at worst uneven grassy mounds or banks. There is considerable oral

tradition in some cases of the more recent history of these sites, but there is very little known about them prior to the 16th century and this lack of knowledge enhances the significance of them as archaeological sites. The Lewis Coastal Chapel-sites Survey has recorded through desktop research, topographic survey and geophysical survey the most threatened chapel-sites before further damage from coastal erosion, but further excavation is needed. These sites are the scant remains of a major part of the island's story for which history is largely silent, and they therefore have great potential to open up our understanding of this aspect of pre-Reformation Lewis.