

‘Remember the days of old, consider the years of many generations’: chapel-sites in the Isle of Lewis

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ABSTRACT

The study of chapel-sites in any part of north and west Britain and Ireland is not easy. Contemporary documentary references are rare, and archaeological work has traditionally been site-specific, with interpretations often contested. In Lewis, the northernmost island of the Outer Hebrides, or Western Isles, of Scotland, this situation is magnified due to an almost complete lack of any surviving historical documents relating to the island prior to the 17th century, and of any archaeological work other than ad hoc rescue work. As the first extensive survey of chapel-sites to be undertaken in Lewis, the completion and publication of the Lewis Coastal Chapel-sites Survey is therefore a crucially important starting point in the analysis of these understudied sites. The survey identified 37 known chapel-sites on the Lewis mainland and outlying islands, and thus testifies to a vibrant landscape of Christian belief from the early medieval period onwards. Since being published (Barrowman 2020) it has provided a baseline, to which this paper adds an overview and brief discussion of site distribution, building form, landscape setting, potential dating, relation of sites to place-names and local traditions, and the setting of chapel buildings within the local identity and culture of medieval Lewis. In common with the Hebrides as a whole, most chapel buildings in Lewis, where discernible, are single-chambered with a doorway in the south wall and a window in the east gable wall, and most have approximated length–breadth ratios of 1:1.5 or 1:1.6. The exceptions to this are the small chapels on the outlying islands of North Rona and the Flannans, and on one mainland site in Lewis situated on a high headland. Visible from the busy routeways around Lewis, associated with early place-names, it is suggested that these sites, while potentially early, were not secluded and remote from the world. The evidence within the suite of sites for Viking Age or Late Norse chapels is also explored, particularly those bicameral chapels built directly into mounds or areas of earlier material. Finally, the place of chapel-sites in the Lordship and beyond is discussed, with particular emphasis on local identity and tradition in the district of Ness at the north end of Lewis.

Remember the days of old, consider the years of many generations (Deuteronomy 32:7a)

BACKGROUND

Very little is known about the archaeology of the chapel-sites in Lewis. None have been excavated, other than in a small-scale, rescue context. Only

a selection is included in the Royal Commission survey published in 1928, and the architectural surveys by Muir (1861) and MacGibbon & Ross (1896) include only upstanding, if ruinous, buildings. In addition, very little primary

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historical evidence has survived in Lewis, and instead the study of early Christianity and conversion has largely relied upon comparisons with other areas (Cant 1985; Woolf 2003; Abrams 2007; Thomas 2009a). This is not helped by the near-absence of any surviving pre-Reformation Christian sculpture. Fisher's gazetteer of the early medieval sculpture of the West Highlands and Islands lists only two examples from Lewis, from the offshore islands of North Rona, and the Shiant, and 20 years later this remains the case (Fisher 2001: x, 11, 114–16, nos 55, 56). Thus, while our knowledge of the origins of the church in Scotland is woefully inadequate, even at the fundamental level of dating (Foster 2019: 36; citing Driscoll 2011: 270), still less is known about the origins or development of any of the chapel-sites in Lewis. To add to this situation, there has been a shortage of excavated evidence available for medieval Lewis in general, which has meant that the landscape and settlement that related to the chapel-sites remains largely unidentified. This can be compared, for instance, with South Uist, where archaeological research in the 1990s included an assessment of Cille Donnain on South Uist, with comparisons to other churches in the Hebrides and Northern Isles, and an extensive survey of the chapels at Howmore, South Uist (Fleming & Woolf 1993; Parker Pearson 1995; Parker Pearson et al 2004; Reynolds et al 2004) and the contemporary medieval landscape (Raven 2005).

That Christianity had arrived in the Western Isles by the 7th century and continued to be a presence in the Norse period is demonstrated by cross sculpture from the Uists and Barra, offshore islands around Harris, and North Rona in Lewis (Fisher 2001: 12, 105–16). The founding of monastic communities on the west coast of Scotland in the 6th and 7th centuries is documented, and chapel-sites on the Outer Isles around Lewis are traditionally considered to be eremitic monasteries founded by Irish missionaries from these sites (Fisher 2001: 2–3; Gannon & Geddes 2015: 47–8; Harman 1979). There is a lack of excavated evidence from Lewis to back this up, however, and North Rona is the only place where a corbelled structure and Early Christian

sculpture are found together, and even then, the two cannot be proved to be contemporary.

Following the formal conversion to Christianity of the Norse across the North Atlantic, including the Western Isles, the new Romanised diocese of Sodor or *Suðreyjar*, on Southern Isles, was established, which encompassed the Hebrides (including Lewis), Arran, Bute and the Isle of Man. There is little evidence for how the diocese was organised at this time, although it is generally thought that the regional centre was at Snizort in Skye, and there were probably four parishes in Lewis at Ness, Barvas, Eye and Uig (see Woolf 2003: 179–80), each with a head church (Cant 1973; 1975: 11; 1985). Other than this, little is known about conversion and the church in the Hebrides in the Viking Age as so little evidence survives, although Iona retained a bishop and continued as a place of pilgrimage, even for Norse rulers, into the 10th century (Cant 1985: 6; Crawford 1987: 118; Abrams 2007; Campbell & Maldonado 2020). In Lewis, the group of potentially Norse cruciform stones from North Rona (Fisher 2001: 17, 114–16) are the sole evidence for Christianity during the Viking Age.

A look to the Northern Isles, where more archaeological work has been carried out, is helpful, although not necessarily comparable, despite being part of the same diocese. As Abrams points out, because the Hebrides were an area of 'acute micropolitics ... quintessentially volatile, with power constantly shifting' (Abrams 2007: 181–2), the Scandinavians in the northern Hebrides may have engaged with Christians and Christian institutions differently than those in the Northern Isles (ibid: 187–8). Here work has increasingly emphasised continuity of Christianity through the Viking Age (see, for example, Morris 2004; Morris forthcoming; Brink 2004, 2012). Work at St Ninian's Isle in Shetland, for instance, has concluded that the early church building on the site, probably built in the 8th century, may have continued in use into the 9th or 10th centuries, with the site still considered a special place by the incoming Norse (Barrowman 2011: 199; 2023). Whether this process of continuity can also be seen in Lewis

cannot be determined by archaeology, due to lack of work, but Sharples, in his discussion of Cille Donnain on South Uist, the closest church to the excavated Norse farmstead at Bornais, concludes that in the Western Isles it seems likely that Norse ecclesiastical centres originated in the pre-Norse landscape and demonstrate a continuity of knowledge and Christian tradition across the Viking Age (Sharples 2020: 597; see also Fleming & Woolf 1993; Parker Pearson et al 2004: 159–60; Fleming 2012). The potential for continuity has also been explored in place-name studies (eg Graham-Campbell & Batey 1998: 41, 72; Jennings & Kruse 2005, 2009; Kruse 2005; Jennings 2013, 2016; Macniven 2014, 2015, 2023), and there are now suggestions that Gaelic, with its links to the early church in the Hebrides, survived as the official language of the church, with Gaelic saints adopted by the Scandinavian settlers (Clancy 2021, 2023).

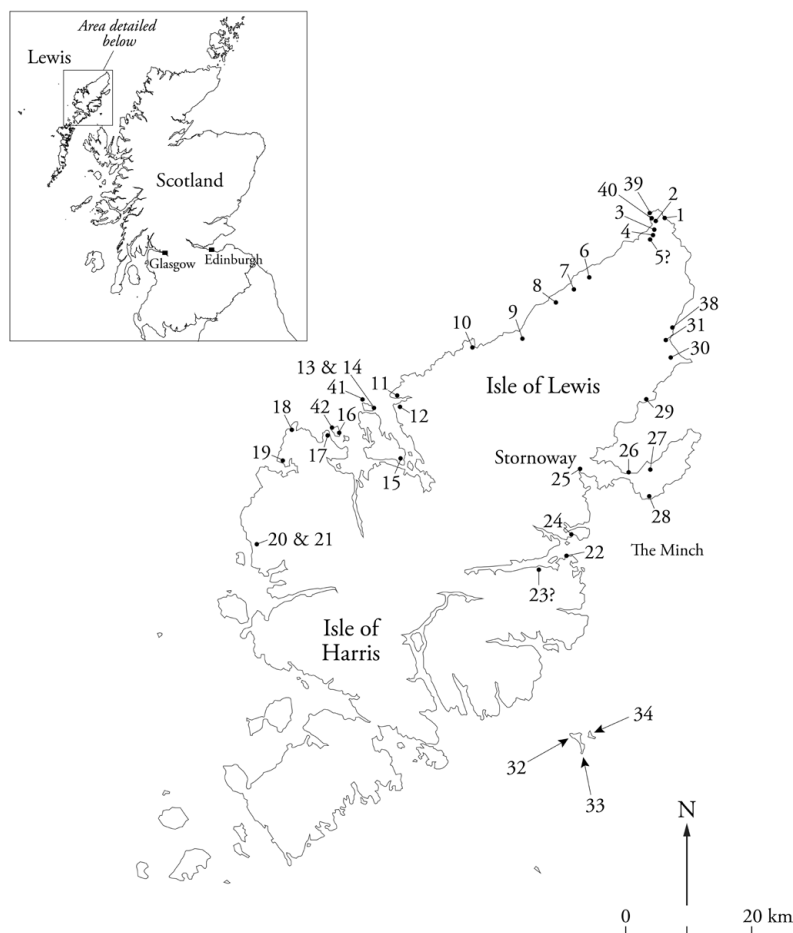
In 1153 the Norwegian archdiocese of Niðaróss (now Trondheim) was established, which extended across the kingdom of the Isles from Shetland and Orkney in the north, to the Isle of Man in the south (Cowan 1980: 15; Cant 1985; Woolf 2003: 174, 177; Caldwell 2014). After 1266 and the Treaty of Perth, when Norway recognised Scottish sovereignty over the Western Isles, there was a gradual shift away from Norway until the creation of the archbishopric of St Andrews in 1472, with Iona Abbey being the see of the bishop until 1498 (Thomas 2009b; 2014a: 258–60). During this time the stance of the Sodor bishops was influenced primarily by their local patrons rather than the papacy, and architectural monuments patronised by the Lords appeared throughout the Hebridean landscape (MacGregor 2014: 57). By the 1430s there were probably only two parishes in Lewis, with parish churches at Eaglais na h-Aoidhe (Eaglais Chaluim Chille), Eye (Site 26) and Teampall Chrìosd in Uig (Site 19) (Thomas 2009a: 73). Since the 14th century, Lewis's inhabitants had been required by ordinance of the bishop to attend the parish church on a weekly basis (see Thomas 2009a: 98), but how possible this was in an area of scattered settlements and winter storms, where the nearest parish church

could be 20 miles away by land or sea, is not known.

Following the forfeiture of the Lordship of the Isles to King James IV and the Scottish Crown in 1493, Lewis was plunged into a period of disorder commonly referred to as Linn nan Creach (Age of Raids; see MacCoinnich 2015a: 41). At this time Lewis descended into political chaos, infighting and violence that influenced all aspects of everyday life, political, and religious organisation, devastating the historical record for the island (MacCoinnich 2002: 134–5; 2015a; Stiùbhart 2006, 2015; R C Barrowman 2015). After 1499, and the annexation of Iona, Sodor and Argyll, there was a period of improvement and increased resources, with the rebuilding/repair of church buildings, such as Rodel in Harris, and possibly Teampall Mholuaidh, Ness (Site 2), often reputedly by clan chiefs (Lawson 1991; MacDonald 2014: 18–22). By the time of the Reformation there were four parishes in Lewis, with parish churches at Teampall Pheadair, Swainbost, Ness (Site 4), Teampall Mhuire, Barvas (Site 9), Teampall Chrìosd, Baile na Cille, Uig, and Eaglais na h-Aoidhe (Eaglais Chaluim Chille), Eye (see Illus 1). Between 1560 and 1722, when Seaforth MacKenzie forfeited his estate, this was then changed back to two larger parishes: Stornoway (centred on Eye) for the southern half of the island, and Barvas for the north (Monro [1549] 1774: 45; Martin 1703: 27–8; Mackenzie 1903: 524; Cowan 1967: 64, 136).

AN OVERVIEW OF THE RESULTS OF THE LEWIS COASTAL CHAPEL-SITES SURVEY

Within this historical framework, and in the face of a general lack of information concerning the chapels of Lewis, the Lewis Coastal Chapel-sites Survey (LCCS) was initiated as a baseline in 2004 to research, record and survey known chapel-sites, with targeted topographic and geophysical surveys at specific sites, using a methodology that built on previous work in Shetland by colleagues at the University of Glasgow (see Morris 2001, 2007; Morris & Barrowman 2008). The



ILLUS 1 Location map of chapel-sites surveyed by the Lewis Coastal Chapel-sites Survey: for key to numbers see Table 1 below. (Redrawn with Additional Sites 38–42 by Gillian Sneddon from Barrowman 2020: illus 1)

results of this survey are now an open access publication in the Scottish Archaeological Internet Reports (SAIR) by the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland (Barrowman 2020), and what follows here is an exploration of some of the main themes and findings. The page numbers from the SAIR report for every LCCS chapel-site are included in Table 1, and this may be referred to for full references for each site.

The LCCS was designed to assess the known chapel-sites around the coastline of Lewis (the survey at the time being governed by threats of coastal erosion); 37 chapel-sites were identified on the Lewis mainland and on outlying islands

(Illus 1 & 2: Table 1; Barrowman 2020). The term ‘chapel-site’ was used during the survey as a coverall for a site where a pre-19th-century church or chapel building had been recorded, whatever its size, form or condition, with each being given a site number (see Table 1). Added to these were five ‘additional sites’ – that is, those that have a known ecclesiastical connection but were not necessarily chapel-sites, and do not have an identifiable chapel building at the site.¹ There are no ‘known’ chapel-sites in the interior of Lewis, and although the LCCS concentrated on the coast, even if the survey had expanded into the moorland interior of the island, a chapel-site would be

difficult to identify without a known place-name, or local tradition. The remains of chapel buildings can be located at 22 sites, and are all divided into unicameral, bicameral or larger church buildings (Tables 2, 3 & 4). Of the remaining sites, one is a shieling with a Late Iron Age building below it (Site 33, Àirighean na h-Annaid, Garbh Eilean, Shianta), one is lost under modern development (Site 25, Teampall Leannain, Stornoway), a third is a settlement (Site 21, Taigh nan Cailleachan Dubha, Uig) associated with a nearby chapel-site, and five are now unlocated. In addition to these, the location of seven are known in local tradition but the chapel building is indiscernible on site (see Table 5).

SITE DISTRIBUTION

The coastal distribution of the chapel-sites largely reflects the pre-crofting settlement patterns around the island in areas of fertile land, near busy sea routes or sheltered bays. This corresponds to the distribution of parish churches and sculpture throughout the Hebrides (Fisher 2001: 8; Thomas 2009a: 138). Twenty sites are in, or adjacent to, deserted townships or shieling sites, and robbed to build the more recent buildings. Without excavation it is not possible to determine whether there was ever an earlier phase below the settlement at these sites that would have been contemporary with the chapel building while in use, although this would seem highly probable.

The 37 chapel-sites are distributed through three different areas of Lewis – those on the Outer Isles, 15 to 50 miles offshore from mainland Lewis (6), those on small islands around the Lewis coast (4), and those in Lewis itself (27) (see Illus 1 & 2). The Outer Isles were all once linked to parishes in mainland Lewis: North Rona and Sula Sgeir with Ness, the Shianta with Lochs, and the Flannans with Uig. All were used for sheep grazing and/or bird fowling, and other than Sula Sgeir, used to be inhabited, although it is still visited every year for the annual guga (young gannet) hunt, the men staying in the cluster of beehive fowling huts on the stack that have been used for generations (eg Beatty 1992;

MacGeoch et al 2010; Best & Mulville 2010). While these islands may seem very remote today, they were part of the busy seaways around Lewis in the medieval period, and the Flannans, Shianta and North Rona are green, fertile islands, still used for grazing until a couple of decades ago. In the late 16th century, it is recorded that North Rona could raise up to 60 men to fight for ‘McCloyd of the Lewes’, and five families were said to be living on the island until the end of the 17th century (Nisbet & Gailey 1962; Robson 1991: 21–3, 25–8; Harden 2013; Geddes 2017).

The mainland Lewis chapel-sites are concentrated in three main areas – the north and north-west coasts of Ness, the south-east coasts around Stornoway and Lochs, and the west coasts of Uig and the sea loch Loch Roag – roughly mirroring the extent of the medieval parishes of Lewis, and the areas of settlement and access to sea lochs and anchorages (see Illus 1). Although there are 11 chapel-sites that are unlocated, or at which there is no surviving chapel building, there is one unicameral chapel in Ness (Site 1: Teampall Rònaidh), one in Barvas (Site 6: Teampall a’ Chrò’ Naomh/nan Crò Naomh), three in Uig (Site 12: Teampall Mhicheil, Kirvig; Site 14: Teampall Mhicheil, Little Bernera; Site 20: Teampall Mhealastadh), and two in the Stornoway/Lochs area (Site 29: Teampall Aulaidh, Gress; Site 34: Teampall Mhuire, Shianta). Bicameral chapels are distributed between Ness (Site 7: Teampall Bhrighid, Borge; Site 8: Teampall Pheadair, Shader), Barvas (Site 10: Teampall Eòin, Bragar) and Uig (Site 16: Teampall Pheadair, Pabbay Mor). It is not known whether there were any bicameral chapels in the Stornoway/Lochs area, although there are so many unlocated or lost chapel-sites here that it is distinctly possible.

Thomas’s work on the chapels of the Hebrides divides the upstanding examples into dependent chapels, private chapels and locational or cult chapels, each reflecting their different functions within the ecclesiastical organisation (Thomas 2018; Thomas forthcoming). As in Orkney, where many later medieval parish churches probably originated as private chapels built for the needs of local high-status households, the fundamental practical unit for those living on and working the

TABLE 1

Lewis Coastal Chapel-sites Survey list of sites. (MR = Plan of building published by MacGibbon & Ross 1896–7; RCAHMS = Plan of building published by Royal Commission for the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland 1928; LAHAG = Lewis and Harris Archaeology Group). *Burial ground or settlement remains at site or within 300m

<i>LCCS site no.</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>English saint name/ equivalent</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>NGR</i>	<i>Canmore ID</i>	<i>Type of survey undertaken by LCCS</i>	<i>*Burial ground</i>	<i>*Nearby abandoned settlement visible</i>	<i>Barrowman (2020), SAIR 88 reference (page nos)</i>
1	Teampall Rònaidh/ Rònain	St Ronan's or Rònaidh	Eoropie, Ness	NB 5229 6542	4418	Walkover	No	No	11–12
2	Teampall Mholuaidh	St Moluag's	Eoropie, Ness	NB 51928 65157	4419	Walkover. RCAHMS and MR	Yes	No	13–18
3	Teampall Thòmais	St Thomas's	Habost, Ness	NB 50728 64062	4435	Walkover	Yes	No	18–20
4	Teampall Pheadair	St Peter's	Swainbost, Ness	NB 50861 63812	4434	Walkover. EDM topographic survey Feb 2005	Yes	Yes	20–6
5	Teampall Chliamain	St Clement's	North Dell, Ness	NB 49 62?	4381	Walkover: unlocated	N/A	N/A	27
6	Teampall a' Chrò' Naomh/nan Crò Naomh	Church of the Holy Cross, or Holy Heart/Blood	South Galson	NB 43282 59301	4346	Walkover. RCAHMS	Yes	Yes	27–32
7	Teampall Bhrighid	St Bridget's	Melbost Borve	NB 40989 57313	4361	Walkover and plane table Feb 2005	Yes	No	32–4
8	Teampall Pheadair	St Peter's	Shader	NB 3792 5499	4265	Walkover. EDM and geophysical survey 2007/8	Yes	Yes	34–46
9	Teampall Mhuire	St Mary's	Barvas	NB 3530 5173	4282	Walkover: unlocated	Yes	N/A	46–9
10	Teampall Eòin	St John's	Bragar	NB 28833 48905	4191	Walkover. EDM topographic survey. RCAHMS	Yes	Yes	49–59

TABLE 1
Continued

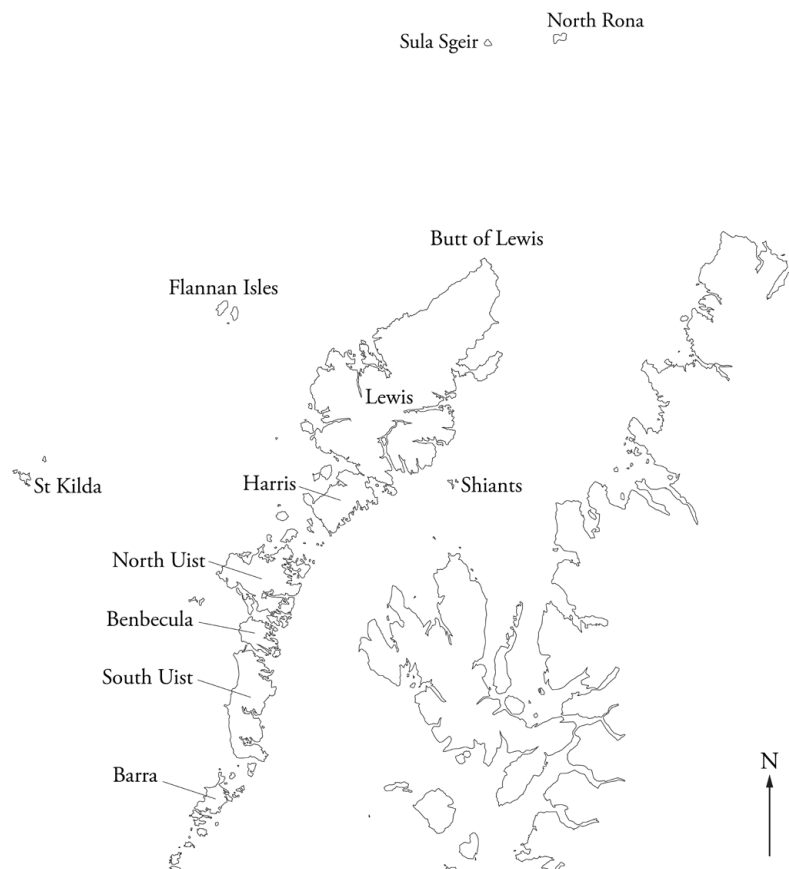
<i>LCCS site no.</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>English saint name/ equivalent</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>NGR</i>	<i>Canmore ID</i>	<i>Type of survey undertaken by LCCS</i>	<i>*Burial ground</i>	<i>*Nearby abandoned settlement visible</i>	<i>Barrowman (2020), SAIR 88 reference (page nos)</i>
11	Teampall Chiarain	St Kieran's	Laimishader, Carloway	NB 18602 42588	N/A	Walkover	No	Yes	59–62
12	Teampall Mhicheil	St Michael's	Kirvig, Carloway	NB 194067 41847	4126	Walkover and plane table Feb 2005	Yes	Yes	62–5
13	Teampall Dhonain	St Donan's	Little Bernera	NB 1505 4073	4125	Walkover but location unsure	N/A	N/A	65–9
14	Teampall Mhicheil	St Michael's	Little Bernera	NB 1505 4073	4125	Walkover	Yes	Yes	65–9
15	Teampall Chirceaboist, St Macrel's	St Macrel's	Kirkibost, Great Bernera	NB 19130 34628	4113	Walkover and plane table Feb 2005	No	Yes	69–73
16	Teampall Pheadair	St Peter's	Pabbay Mor	NB 10446 37699	4095	Walkover	Yes	Yes	73–5
17	Teampall Bhaltois		Valtos, Uig	NB 0891 3673	4012	Walkover	Yes	N/A	75–6
18	Taigh a' Bheannaich		Aird Uig	NB 03872 37898	4028	Walkover. RCAHMS	No	No	76–81
19	Baile na Cille (Teampall Chriosd)	St Christopher's	Timsгарry, Uig	NB 04800 33870	4056	Walkover	Yes	Yes	81–3
20	Teampall Mhealastadh	Possibly once dedicated to St Catan	Mealasta, Uig	NA 98983 24198	3981	Walkover and EDM topographic survey Feb 2005	Yes	Yes	84–7
21	Taigh nan Caillteachan Dubha		Mealasta, Uig	NA 99030 24181	3983	Walkover and EDM topographic survey Feb 2005	Yes	Yes	87–91
22	Teampall Chaluim Chille	St Columba's	Eilean Chaluim Chille, Lochs	NB 3858 2104	4233	Walkover. RCAHMS	Yes	Yes	91–5

TABLE 1
Continued

<i>LCCS site no.</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>English saint name/ equivalent</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>NGR</i>	<i>Canmore ID</i>	<i>Type of survey undertaken by LCCS</i>	<i>*Burial ground</i>	<i>*Nearby abandoned settlement visible</i>	<i>Barrowman (2020), SAIR 88 reference (page nos)</i>
23	St Pharaer?	St Pharaer's?	Cathanais, Suardail, Lochs	?NB 389 234	None	Unlocated	N/A	N/A	95
24	An Teampall		Ranish, Lochs	NB 399 248	280476	Walkover	Yes	Yes	95–6
25	Teampall Leannain	St Lennan's (possibly previously St Adarnan)	Stornoway	NB 4223 3280	4333	Under modern buildings	Yes but lost under later development	N/A	97–8
26	Eaglais Chaluim Chille/ Eaglais na h-Aoidhe	St Columba's (possibly previously St Catan)	Eye	NB 4846 3226	4308	Walkover	Yes	No – under modern settlement	98–105
27	Teampall Chuistein	St Constantine's	Garrahost, Point	NB 5163 3355	4395	Walkover	Only roughly located	Yes?	105
28	Teampall Rubha Chirc		Bayble, Point	NB 50786 29213	4385	Walkover. LAHAG survey (Knott 2000b)	No	No	106–11
29	Teampall Aulaidh	St Aula's	Gress	NB 49020 41540	4337	Walkover	Yes	No	111–13
30	Teampall Mhicheil	St Michael's	North Tolsta	NB 5440 4801	4405	Walkover – located but no remains	Yes	Yes	113–14
31	Teampall Chaluim Chille	St Columba's	Garry?	NB?	None	Unlocated	N/A	N/A	114
<i>Outer Isles sites</i>									
32	Chapel on Eilean an Tighe		Shiantas, Lochs	NG 4183 9766	11411	Walkover and EDM topographic survey May/June 2005	Yes	Yes	114–7

TABLE 1
Continued

<i>LCCS site no.</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>English saint name/ equivalent</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>NGR</i>	<i>Canmore ID</i>	<i>Type of survey undertaken by LCCS</i>	<i>*Burial ground</i>	<i>*Nearby abandoned settlement visible</i>	<i>Barrowman (2020), SAIR 88 reference (page nos)</i>
33	Àirighean na h-Annaid, Garbh Eilean		Shianta, Lochs	NG 412 983/ NG 411 983	11409	Walkover	No	Yes, ruined shieling settlement	117–20
34	Teampall Mhuire, Eilean Mhuire	St Mary's	Shianta, Lochs	NG 4306 9860	11408	None	No	Yes	120–1
35	North Rona – St Ronan's chapel and settlement	St Ronan's	North Rona, Ness	HW 8091 3235	1472	None. MR, RCAHMS, Nisbet & Gailey (1960)	Yes	Yes	–
36	Sula Sgeir – Sgeir an Teampuill/ Tigh Beannaichte		Sula Sgeir, Ness	HW 621 305	1470	None. MR	No	Shelters	–
37	Teampall Beannachadh	Also known as St Flann's	Flannan Isles, Uig	NA 7262 4684	3971	None. MR	No	Shelters nearby	–
<i>Additional sites</i>									
38	Dun Othail		Tolsta	NB 5425 5149	4416	None. McHardy <i>et al</i> 2009, 71–76	No	No	121
39	Luchruban		Butt of Lewis, Ness	NB 50781 66013	4420	None. McHardy <i>et al</i> 2009, 57–62	No	No	122
40	Cumndal		Eoropie, Ness	NB 5120 6563	224370	Walkover. RCAHMS	No	Shelters	122–3
41	Eilean Fir Chrothair		Little Bernera	NB 1397 4191	270625	None	No	Shelters	123
42	Pabbay Beag		Pabbay Mor, Uig	NB 09793 38873	280475	None	No	N/A	123



ILLUS 2 The Western Isles and the location of the Outer Isles around Lewis and Harris. (Drawing by Gillian Sneddon)

land was the township and the township unit, and the founding of dependent chapels, where distant communities were served in the sacraments, was probably likewise based on the township (Gibbon 2006: 234–5; 2007: 244–7; MacDonald 2014: 19). Ultimately, the lack of documentary evidence makes it hard to study the Lewis chapel-sites according to their function, although the distribution of the unicameral chapels compared with the location of parish churches suggests some may be dependent chapels. Six sites do not readily fit as either parish churches or dependent chapels: Teampall Mholuaidh in Ness (Site 2), a large medieval church, probably dating to the time of the Lordship and linked with MacLeod patronage; Teampall Chirceaboist, Bernera, Uig

(Site 15), which dates to the 19th century; Taigh a' Bheannaich, Aird Uig (Site 18) and Teampall Rubha Chirc, Bayble (Site 28), which are away from nearby settlement; Àirighean na h-Annaid on the Shiant, a shieling site with early medieval and Bronze Age/Iron Age buildings below it; and Taigh nan Cailleachan Dubha, Uig, an abandoned settlement traditionally thought to be a nunnery.

NAMING

Martin Martin is the first surviving source to list the Lewis chapel-sites in any systematic way and he lists only those chapels for which there is a saint's dedication (Martin 1703: 27). However, in the OS Name Books,² which were informed by

local Gaelic-speaking guides, the Gaelic generic term *teampall* (older spelling *teampull*, temple), was used for a chapel-site, some of which have no saint's dedication. The LCCS followed this, as does historian and native Lewisman Dr Finlay MacLeod, in his bilingual book *The Chapels in the Western Isles* (MacLeod 1997). The term *teampall* is found across the Western Isles, but particularly in Lewis, as opposed to the usual *cille* (church, churchyard; from Latin *cella*, cell, church; Nicolaisen 1976: 144). Exceptions include Eaglais Chaluim Chille, or Eaglais na h-Aoidhe, in Eye, from *eaglais* (church) *na h-aoidhe* (of the isthmus; Cox 2022, vol 2: 555–8), Sites 18, 36 and 37 which are known as Taigh a' Bheannaich/Tigh Beannaichte/Teampall Beannachadh from *taigh* (house) and *beannachd*, *beannachadh*, *beannaichte* (blessing/

blessings, blessed; grace; prayer), and Taigh nan Cailleachan Dubha, Mealasta, Uig, traditionally thought to be a nunnery, as *cailleach-dhubh* is the common term for nun in Gaelic (Cox 2022, vol 2: 921–4).

In Lewis the *cille* and *teampall* elements often appear together in the landscape, for example at Teampall Mhicheil, Kirvig, Carloway, where the nearby deserted settlement is called Baile an Teampaill (the village of the church), whereas the shore nearby is Mol na Cille (the pebble beach of the church; Cox 2022, vol 2: 475–8) (Illus 3). Similarly, at Teampall Pheadair, Pabbay Mor, Uig, is Loch an Teampuill, whereas Tràigh na Cille, Cnoc na Cille, and Sgeir na Cille, the beach, hill and skerry of the church respectively, are all found nearby (Cox 2005: 5). The *cille* element potentially pre-dates Scandinavian



ILLUS 3 Site 12, Teampall Mhicheil, Kirvig: View across Mol na Cille to Baile an Teampaill. (Photograph by Rachel C Barrowman)

domination in the Inner Hebrides and Argyll (Clancy 2023: 145–6; see also Nicolaisen 1976: 143), although Macniven has suggested that it proliferated as a result of the introduction of the parish network and re-Gaelicisation of Islay's namescape (Macniven 2015: 67–9; 2023). In the southern Hebrides, *cille* place-names are associated with saints' names, and Raven suggests that a change from *cille* to the term *teampall* may have originated with the Protestant tacksmen, who were imported to South Uist from Lewis and Skye and were most likely to be the place-name informants for antiquarian visitors to the islands (Raven 2005: 179). In Lewis the *cille* element is found only at Teampall Chrìosd in Baile na Cille, Uig, and in relation to chapel-sites dedicated to Calum Cille (St Columba), such as Teampall Chaluim Chille, Lochs (Site 22) and Eaglais Chaluim Chille, Eye. In Lewis, the 'overlying Gaelic filter' can complicate things when dealing with today's place-name material (Gammeltoft 2007: 493).

Place-name elements that either derive from the chapel-sites or appear in the names of nearby villages and landscape features, include *circ* (church, from ON *kirkja*), as seen at Teampall Chirceaboist, Bernera which derives its name from the township of Circeabost (ON *kirkjubólstað*, the farm of the church; Nicolaisen 1976: 109–11; Cox 2022, vol 2: 623–6). While the name does not preserve the Norse word order and use (for example, *Olafskirkja*), the identification of a possible Norse outdoor assembly or *thing* site (ON *þing*), Cnoc an Tìongalairidh, across the water in Loch a' Bhalie (a former sea inlet) is interesting in this regard (Cox 2002: 220; Sanmark 2017: 176–9; 2023). The Gaelic place-name element, *annaid*, suggested by Macdonald to be a 9th- to 10th-century term for an old church site where a church had been abandoned and replaced but not on the same site (Macdonald 1973: 139), occurs in Lewis in compound names, in common with the rest of Scotland (RCAHMS 1928: xiv; Clancy 1995; see also Taylor 1998: 7–8). Clancy suggests that the two occurrences studied by him in Lewis (Na h-Annaidean near Teampall Pheadair, Shader, and Àirighean na h-Annaid, Garbh Eilean, Shiantas) may have a more recent

derivation, given that Lewis is still a Gaelic-speaking area, referring simply to an old, ruined church (Clancy 1995: 111). However, the recovery of early medieval pottery from excavations of floor levels in a corbelled cell found below one of the later shieling huts at Àirighean na h-Annaid perhaps causes us to rethink this (Foster et al 2012). Further occurrences of the *annaid* element in Lewis are found on the shore near Teampall Pheadair and Teampall Thòmais in Ness (Site 3; MacLeod 1997: 16), and at Teampall Pheadair in Shader (ibid: 17). This latter chapel was also known locally as Eaglais Phàdraig, and it is generally thought that Teampall Pheadair is a later coinage, although there is no documentation to back this up. MacLeod records Creag Gille Phàdraig beside the chapel-site, Clach an t-Sagairt on the shore, and Tobar Anndrais (St Andrew's well) nearby (MacLeod 1997: 17; 2000: 28; Barrowman 2020: 36–7). Geophysical survey work by the LCCS showed that there are earlier structures below and to the south of this chapel-site in the eroding coastline from which Iron Age material has been recovered (Barrowman 2020: 37–40).

The ON term *papi* is also found in Lewis. Translated variously as 'hermit, monk' or 'cleric, priest' and formed in Old Norse but usually understood as a borrowing from the Old Irish *pápa*, this term was used by the incoming Norse to denote a place where native clerics or monks were encountered (Lamb 1995; B E Crawford 2002, 2005a, 2005b; Kruse 2005: 150; B E Crawford 2008; but see also Gammeltoft 2004). Barbara Crawford has identified eight *papa* sites in the Outer Hebrides, and highlights their position on sea routes, in strategically important seaways, and in areas of good agricultural land and therefore of value to the Vikings (Crawford 2002, 2005a, 2005b). The element is borrowed into Gaelic in Pabail (Bayble, from ON Papýli, 'the farm of the monks'; Cox 2022, vol 2: 825–30), situated in Point near the chapel-site Teampall Rubha Chirc (Knott 2000b). This site fits this pattern, being 'on the extremity of a very lofty promontory, and commanding a prospect of the channel between Lewis, Sky [sic], and the mainland of Scotland' (McKenzie



ILLUS 4 View looking south and south-west across the Minch from Site 28, Teampall Rubha Chirc. (Photograph by Rachel C Barrowman)

1792) (Illus 4). The *papa* element is also found on Pabbay Mor and Pabbay Beag, Uig, from ON Papey, '[the] island of the clerics [or hermits/monks]' (Cox 2005; 2022, vol 2: 825–6). Chapel-sites associated with these islands include Teampall Pheadair on Pabbay Mor and possibly the denuded remains of circular huts on Pabbay Beag (Additional Site 42). The third *papa* name in Lewis is also found in Loch Roag on Buaille Phabanais (from ON Papanes, 'the promontory of the clerics [or hermits/monks]'; Cox 2005; 2022, vol 2: 957–60), a small 'snout' of land (Muir 1861: 177; cited in MacLeod 1997: 22) on Little Bernera (Illus 5). Situated below the site of Teampall Mhicheil (Site 14) and traditionally where Teampall Dhonain (Site 13) is said to be located, there is, however, some confusion in secondary sources as to the location of both of these chapel-sites.

SAINTS' DEDICATIONS

Our knowledge of the saints' dedications for the chapel-sites in Lewis derives mainly from Martin Martin, who lists 27 (if 'Holy-Cross church' in Galson is counted as a dedication; Martin 1703: 17, 21, 26, 27–8, 28–9). There are three Peters, three Michaels, three Columbas, two Ronans and two Marys. Other saints represented are Bridget, Christopher, Clement, Constantine, Donan, Flannan, John, Kieran, Lennan, Moluag, Olaf and Thomas, with the less certain possibilities of Catan, Macrel and Pharaer. There is also a tradition that Teampall Leannain, Stornoway was dedicated to St Adamnan prior to the Reformation (Macaulay c 1984: 20). A study of the distribution of these names is not particularly instructive (see also <https://www.saintsplaces.gla.ac.uk/index.php>). The Ronan dedications are both found in



ILLUS 5 General view of Tràigh an Teampaill, Gob Buaille Phabanais, chapel and graveyard, Little Bernera, from the north-east. (Reproduced from Barrowman 2020: illus 44)

Ness in the north end of Lewis (one on North Rona), the three Michaels are all in the southern half in Uig and Tolsta, and the Columbas are all in the south-east Lochs/Stornoway area.

A church dedicated to an early medieval saint was not necessarily founded in the early Middle Ages (see for instance Crawford 1999; Clancy 2013). The Columba saint's cult was appropriated by the Hebridean Norse (Whyte 2017: 65–6; 2023), and popular early medieval cults such as Columba and Moluag continued to be venerated into, or were revived in, the later Middle Ages by kindreds to emphasise their hereditary rights (Thomas 2009a: 359; see also Taylor 1999: 35–8). Similarly, dedications to Olaf or Clement do not necessarily imply a Viking Age/Late Norse date (Abrams 2007: 177–8; and Illus 6). The earliest documentary reference to a Columba dedication is that of Eaglais na h-Aoidhe (Eaglais Chaluim Chille) in a Papal Bull from 1433 (Thomas 2009a: 73), although the recovery of a penannular brooch from the eroding coastline below the church demonstrates potential for earlier remains there

(Gibson 1934; MacKenzie 2015: 142–3). The recorded dedication may also not be the original dedication (as we saw with Teampall Pheadair in Shader, above).

For those chapel-sites without a surviving saint's dedication, five are named simply as a chapel, or after the settlement in which they are located (for example, Teampall Bhaltois, Uig, Site 17, or An Teampall, Ranish, Lochs, Site 24). The grassy footings of Teampall Mhealastadh (Illus 7) are said by Mackenzie (1919: 137–8) to have enclosed a shrine to St Catan, who he also believed founded Eaglais na h-Aoidhe in the 6th–7th century, although its location was confused with the adjacent Taigh nan Cailleachan Dubha by Muir (Monro 1797: 288; Muir 1861: 174–6; Mackinlay 1904: 105; Easson 1957: 130). The remaining examples without a dedication are denoted Taigh a' Bheannaich or similar, although Martin Martin refers to Teampall Beannachadh on the Flannans as St Flannan (Martin 1703: 17). The chapel-site of Àirighean na h-Annaid, Garbh Eilean, in the Shiantas, is a shieling settlement and Martin Martin makes no mention of a chapel



ILLUS 6 Site 29, Teampall Aulaidh, Gress, from the south. (Photograph by Rachel C Barrowman)



ILLUS 7 Site 20, Teampall Mhealastadh, Uig, from the north. (Reproduced from Barrowman 2020: illus 58)

here, stating in 1695 that Garbh Eilean was ‘only for pasturage’ (Martin 1703: 26).

It is interesting to note why Martin recorded only the chapels with dedications. The distribution of these non-dedicated chapels is not particularly informative, other than to note that apart from the example on Sula Sgeir, which is linked to Ness parish, all are situated in the southern half of Lewis: four are associated with nearby deserted settlements and two are not. Perhaps those without a surviving saint’s dedication had already gone out of living memory at the time of Martin’s visit at the end of the 17th century, or perhaps he paid attention only to those chapel-sites for which there was an associated saint’s name surviving.

LOCAL TRADITION

There is considerable potential for confusion and renaming in the local tradition, and this is perhaps best demonstrated by the example of Teampall Rònaidh in Eoropie, Ness. Known locally, and listed by Martin Martin, as Rònain (Martin 1703: 17; Comunn Eachdraidh Nis 2020: 23–34), in the OS Name Books (1853) it is recorded as also being known locally as Rònaidh, a tradition followed by the RCAHMS in 1914 and Mackenzie in 1919 (see Barrowman 2020: 12). This latter rendition may have occurred because the site became linked in oral tradition recorded in the latter half of the 19th century to the island of Rònaidh, or North Rona, where the other chapel-site of Teampall Rònain is found (Martin 1703: 21; Carmichael 1972: 126–7). In a wonderful story, as told by local man Angus Gunn, St Rònain came to Ness to convert the people and built a prayer house at Eoropie. However, he soon found he could get no peace because of their quarrelsome nature and so after praying to be removed from them, an angel came and told him to go down to the shore, where he found a sea creature was waiting for him. Taking nothing but his book satchel, Rònain climbed onto the creature, and they flew over the unusually calm sea to North Rona, where the saint built a prayer house where he could say his prayers in peace (Cox 2022, vol 2: 849). Just to confuse

matters, the earliest record of the chapel on North Rona by Monro in 1549 dedicates it to St Ronay (1774: 47) and Cox convincingly argues that the island would take the form Rónansøy, ‘Rònan’s Island’, which would yield Rònasaigh in Gaelic, if it were named after the saint, and that the name most likely derives from Hraunøy, ‘(the) boulder-pile island, (the) stony island’ (Cox 2022, vol 2: 847–56).

Local traditions can also be echoes of past practices associated with the chapel-sites. Buaille na Crois, in South Dell, for instance, is traditionally thought to be the field where pilgrims from the west side of Lewis on their way to visit the ‘ancient Temple’ at Eoropie (Teampall Mholuaidh) caught their first sight of it and so reverently knelt and crossed themselves (Stiùbhart 2015: 72; Comunn Eachdraidh Nis 2020: 227, 230, 236, 241). A similar story is told concerning the hill at Tom na Croise Nodha, on moorland inland from North Dell (Comunn Eachdraidh Nis 2020: 207, 210).

UNICAMERAL CHAPEL-SITES

Starting at the basic level where a building plan is discernible, the chapel-sites recorded by the LCCS can be put into three groups – small unicameral (single-chambered) buildings, small bicameral (two-chambered) buildings, and larger parish or head churches (Tables 2, 3, 4 & 5; Illus 8, 9, 10, 11 & 12). Most of the chapels in Lewis are small, unicameral buildings (Table 2), in keeping with the Hebrides as a whole (Thomas 2009a: 113). In Lewis this group includes those on the outlying islands of Eilean Mòr, Flannans (Teampall Beannachadh), Sula Sgeir (Tigh Beannaichte), Eilean Mhuire, Shiantas (Teampall Mhuire) and North Rona (Teampall Rònain), which has a later addition adapting it to a bicameral church. On the Lewis mainland, where dimensions can be discerned, the examples are all very similar, with a window in the east end, and doorway in the south wall, and some with niches at the east ends of the north and south walls (Table 2, Illus 8). Although no plan is available for Teampall Mhìcheil, Little Bernera, Teampall Chaluim Chille, Lochs, and Teampall

TABLE 2

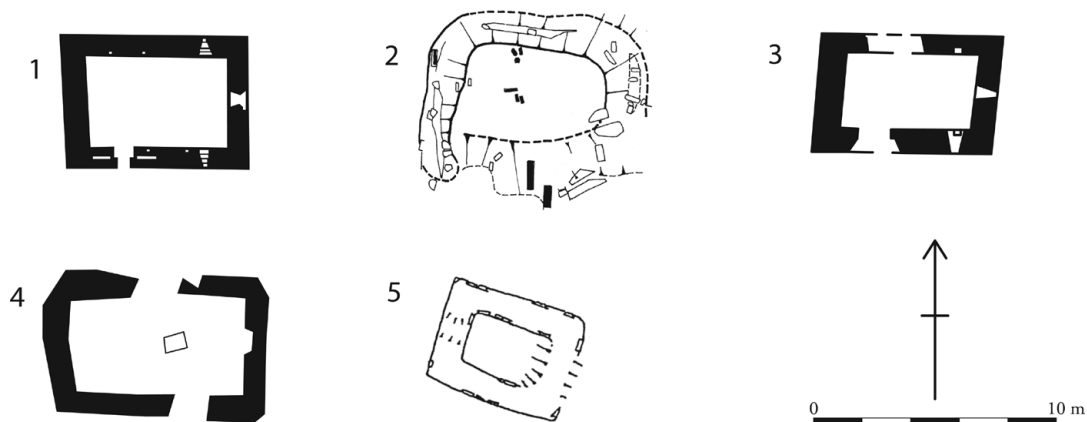
Unicameral chapel-sites at which the dimensions and length–breadth ratio of the chapel building can be discerned

<i>Site no.</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>External dimensions</i>	<i>Internal dimensions</i>	<i>Approx internal length–breadth ratio</i>
1	Teampall Rònaidh/ Rònain	Eoropie	<i>c</i> 6m × 3.7m		–
6	Teampall a' Chrò' Naomh/nan Crò Naomh	Galson	<i>c</i> 8m × 5.6m	<i>c</i> 5.7m × 3.8m	1.5:1
12	Teampall Mhicheil	Kirvig, Carloway		<i>c</i> 6m × 4m	1.5:1
14	Teampall Mhicheil	Little Bernera		<i>c</i> 6.3m × 3.2m	2:1
18	Taigh a' Bheannaich	Aird Uig	<i>c</i> 8m × 5m	6m × 3m	2:1
20	Teampall Mhealastadh	Mealasta	8m × 5.5m		–
22	Teampall Chaluim Chille	Eilean Chaluim Chille, Lochs	10.8m × 5.7m	9m × 4m	2.25:1
28	Teampall Rubha Chirc	Bayble, Point	5.7m × 4.8m	<i>c</i> 3.5m × 2.2m	1.6:1
29	Teampall Aulaidh	Gress		5.8m × 4.2m	1.4:1
34	Teampall Mhuire	Eilean Mhuire, Shiant Isles	7m × 5.6m	4.8m × 3.6m	1.3:1
<i>Outer Isles</i>					
35	St Ronan's chapel and settlement	North Rona	5.5m × 4m ('oratory')	3.4m × 2.1m ('oratory')	1.6:1
			6m × 5m ('chapel/nave')	4.3m × 3.5m ('chapel/nave')	1.2:1
36	Sgeir an Teampuill/ Tigh Beannaichte	Sula Sgeir		4.5m × 3m	1.5:1
37	Teampall Beannachadh	Flannan Isles		2.5m × 1.5m	1.6:1

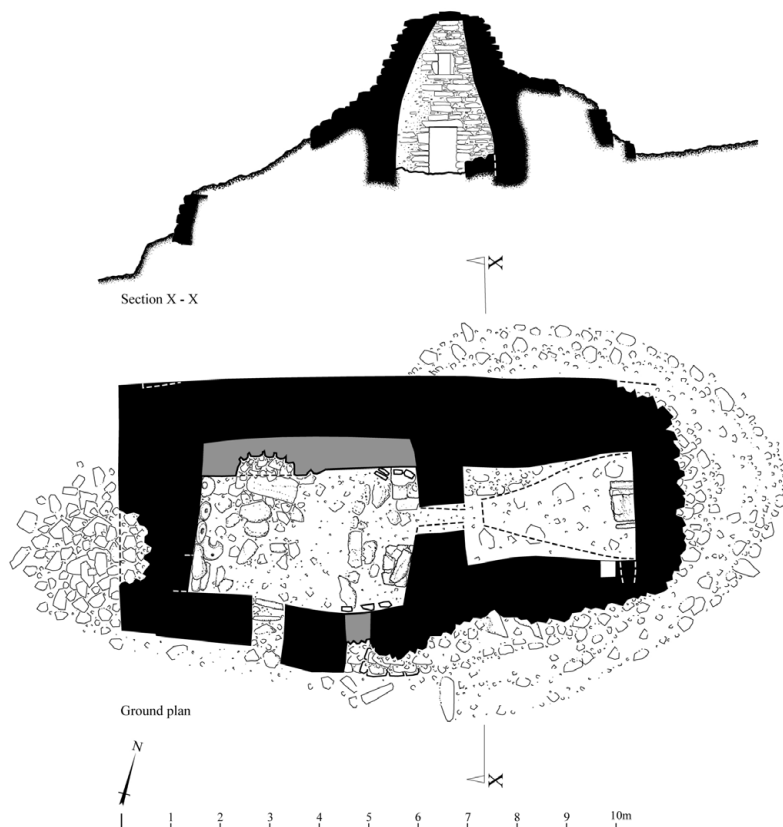
Aulaidh, Gress, their layout is similar. Teampall Rubha Chirc, Bayble, Point is rather smaller than the other unicameral examples, and comparable in layout to the small chapels on North Rona and the Flannans, which have a doorway in the west wall and window in the east (Illus 9 & 10).

The approximate rounded ratios for the unicameral chapels cluster roughly into two groups of around 1.5:1 and 2:1 length–breadth. Overall, the internal length–breadth ratio for most of the Lewis unicameral chapels sites is around 1.5:1, including that of the 'oratories' on North Rona

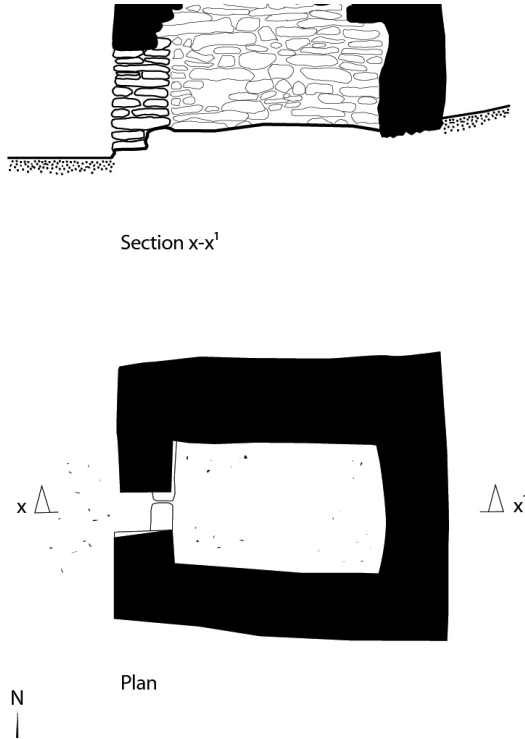
and the Flannans. This ratio has for many years been used to propose an early (ie pre-Viking) date for chapels in Ireland, the Isle of Man and the Hebrides, where 1.5:1 is thought to suggest an earlier, and 2:1 a later, date, after the RCAHMS proportions used for dating in the Argyll inventories, and work in Ireland (Thomas 2009a: 352; who cites Leask 1955: 49; see also Cubbon 1982: 275; Crawford 1987: 180–4; Raven 2005: 176). However, this is not a rule of thumb that can be followed in Lewis. Due to the differing states of preservation, available



ILLUS 8 Unicameral chapels: 1. Teampall a' Chrò' Naomh/nan Crò Naomh, Galson; 2. Teampall Mhicheil, Kirvig; 3. Taigh a' Bheannaich, Aird Uig; 4. Teampall Mhealastadh, Uig; 5. Teampall Rubha Chirc, Bayble. (Drawing by Gillian Sneddon)



ILLUS 9 Measured drawing of ground plan and section of Teampall Rònain from survey undertaken by the RCAHMS (2009). (DP 235034 © Crown Copyright: HES)

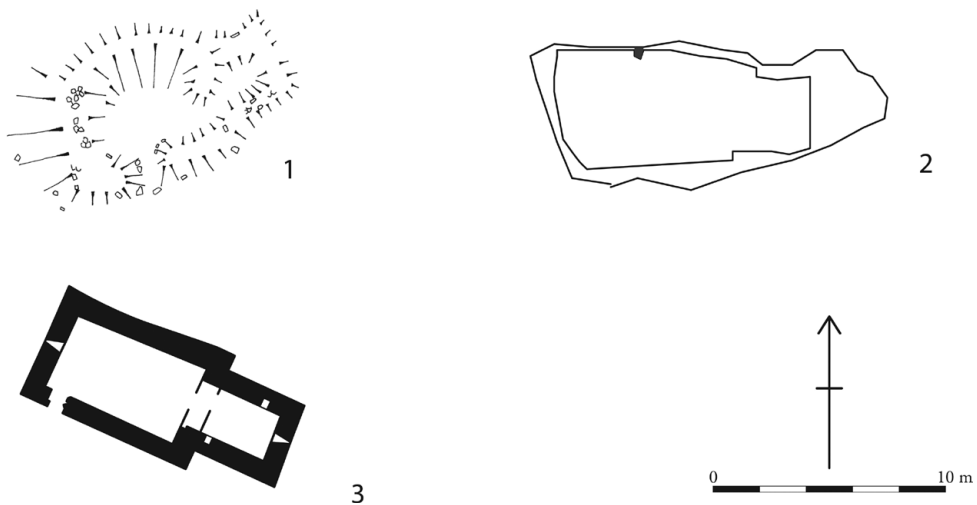


ILLUS 10 Measured drawing of ground plan and section of the chapel, Eilean Mor, Flannans, from survey undertaken by the RCAHMS (Geddes 2014). (DP 229582 © Crown Copyright: HES)

measurement and potential date, the range is disparate, from between 1.3:1 (Teampall Mhuire, Shianta, Site 34) to 2.25:1 (Teampall Chaluim Chille, Lochs), and many of the sites included in this group are probably late or post-medieval in date (eg Teampall Aulaidh, Gress; Teampall Chaluim Chille, Lochs). With the lack of any associated sculptural evidence from any site other than North Rona, the unicameral building form cannot therefore in itself be used to date chapel-sites in Lewis.

BICAMERAL CHAPEL-SITES

The second group of buildings identified are the small bicameral chapels that comprise a separate nave and small chancel (Table 3; Illus 11). Teampall Eòin, Bragar is ruinous but largely upstanding, whereas only the grassy footings of Teampall Pheadair, Shader, Teampall Bhrighid, Borge and Teampall Pheadair, Pabbay Mor are partially visible. While the dimensions of the chapel on Pabbay Mor are harder to discern on the ground and no plan is yet available, an approximation has been made in Table 3, and total internal areas in m² are calculated for each site, after Fleming & Woolf (1993: 349). It can be



ILLUS 11 Bicameral chapels: 1. Teampall Bhrighid, Borge; 2. Teampall Pheadair, Shader; 3. Teampall Eòin, Bragar. (Drawing by Gillian Sneddon)

TABLE 3

Bicameral chapel-sites' dimensions and total internal area. Measurement marked * includes the area under the now-fallen chancel arch, hence discrepancy with other measurements (eg Fleming & Woolf 1993: 349): $2.8\text{m} \times 2.1\text{m}$ chancel internal measurement, replicated by Thacker (2021: 39, table 3). Measurement marked ** was made onsite in 2008 during the LCCS topographic survey and accords with Thacker (2021), but not Fleming & Woolf (1993: 349), who instead record 3.4m

<i>Site no.</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>External dimensions</i>	<i>Internal dimensions</i>	<i>Total internal area</i>
7	Teampall Bhrighid	Melbost Borge	$9\text{m} \times 13.5\text{m}$	Divided into two parts measuring $c 5\text{m} \times 5.5\text{m}$ and $c 2\text{m} \times 2\text{m}$	31.5m^2
8	Teampall Pheadair	Shader	Overall $c 12\text{m} \times 6\text{m}$	Nave $c 5.6\text{m} \times 4.3\text{m}^{**}$, chancel $c 3\text{m} \times 3\text{m}$	33.08m^2
10	Teampall Eòin	Bragar	Overall $11.5\text{m} \times 5\text{m}$	Nave $6.1\text{m} \times 3.4\text{m}$, chancel $3.5\text{m} \times 2\text{m}^*$	27.74m^2
16	Teampall Pheadair	Pabbay Mor	Overall $c 10\text{m} \times c 5\text{m}$	Nave $c 6.3\text{m} \times 3.5\text{m}$, chancel $c 2.7\text{m} \times 3\text{m}$	30.15m^2
35	St Ronan's chapel – medieval reuse	North Rona		$3.4\text{m} \times 2.1\text{m}$ (oratory ?reused as chancel) $4.3\text{m} \times 3.5\text{m}$ (chapel ?reused as nave)	22.19m^2

seen from this that all four are closely comparable, with the total range being between 27.7m^2 and 33.08m^2 . Teampall Rònain on North Rona is also included in this group because in its present state it is a two-chambered building, although it differs from the other examples as it most likely comprises two separately built structures, and a look at the total area of the building also reveals that it is much smaller than the four examples above, being only 22.19m^2 (as also pointed out by Thacker 2021: 39; Illus 9).

LARGER CHURCHES

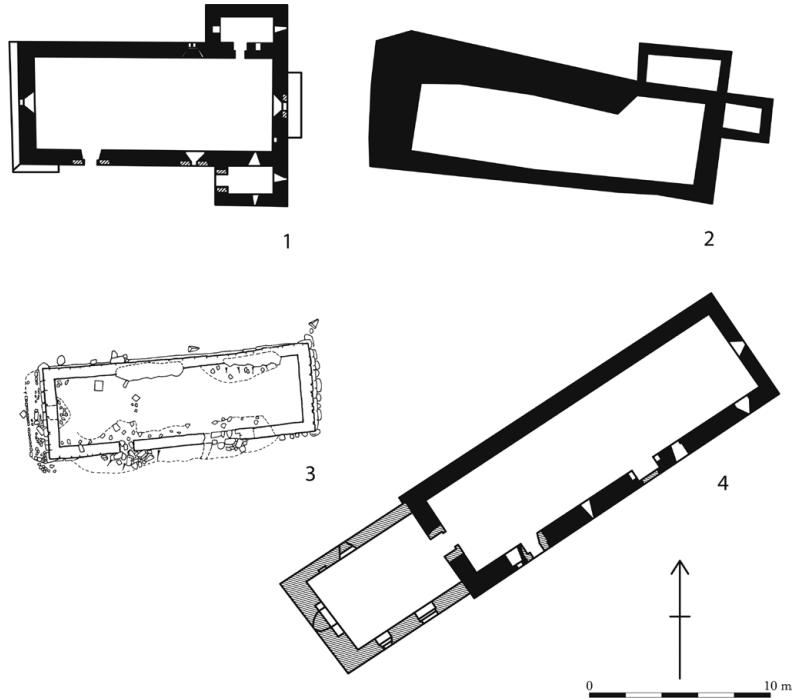
Two of the four larger churches, Teampall Pheadair, Swainbost, and Eaglais na h-Aoidhe (Eaglais Chaluim Chille), Eye were once parish churches (Table 4, Illus 12). Both are a simple rectangle in plan, which would have been divided internally into nave and chancel by a rood screen. Teampall Pheadair was re-roofed and restored in 1722 to become the meeting house for the new parish of Ness, perhaps favoured above the nearby church of Teampall Mholuaidh with its lordly and Episcopalian associations (MacCoinnich pers

comm; MacCoinnich 2015a: 64–6; Stiùbhart 2015: 79–80). Now only the east gable end is standing, to which later burial aisles have been added (see Illus 20). Eaglais na h-Aoidhe was probably originally built in the 14th century (RCAHMS 1928: 12–14, figs 39–40, 42–4) and still stands fully to gable height (Illus 13). It once had an entrance in the middle of the south wall, until it was blocked when a small extension was added to the west end in the late 15th/early 16th century or later, and a new doorway put in the south wall (Knott & Thacker 2011; Thacker 2015b: 94). Within the church are two grave slabs said to be dedicated to Roderick MacLeod (d 1498) and his daughter Margaret MacKinnon (d 1503).

The ruined large rectangular church building that is identified as Teampall Chirceaboist in several sources is partially upstanding and built from mortared masonry apart from the north wall, which is badly collapsed and rebuilt in drystone form. However, this building was built sometime after the end of the 18th century and before 1820, so cannot be 'St Macel in Kirkibost', as listed by Martin Martin at the

TABLE 4
Larger churches dimensions and total internal area

<i>Site no.</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>External dimensions</i>	<i>Internal dimensions</i>	<i>Total internal area</i>
2	Mholuaidh	Eoropie	14.8m × 6.8m (main part of the church)	Simple oblong 13.4m × 5.4m, with sacristy on N side and small chapel on S side	72.36 m ²
4	Teampall Pheadair	Swainbost machair	19m × 6.5m	Simple oblong c 15.5m × 4.5m	69.75m ²
15	Teampall Chirceaboist, St Macrel's	Kirkibost, Great Bernera	15m × 5m	Simple oblong 13.3m × 4.5m	53.2m ²
26	Eaglais Chaluim Chille/na h-Aoidhe	Eye	21m × 7m with western addition 8m × 6m	Simple oblong 18.8m × 5.2m, with western addition 7m × 5m	97.76m ²



ILLUS 12 Larger churches: 1. Teampall Mholuaidh, Eoropie; 2. Teampall Pheadair, Swainbost; 3. Teampall Chirceaboist, Bernera; 4. Eaglais na h-Aoidhe/Eaglais Chaluim Chille, Eye. (Drawing by Gillian Sneddon)

end of the 17th century (1703: 27). It is thought that Kirkibost was resettled towards the end of the 18th century when nearby Bosta ran out of peat, and that St Macrel's, as listed by Martin,

was not situated here, but in an ancient graveyard mound close to the old settlement inland (as seen on the 1st Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1854; Barrowman 2020: 72–3). This latter site is near



ILLUS 13 Site 26, Eaglais na h-Aoidhe (Eaglais Chaluim Chille), Eye, from the south-west. (Reproduced from Barrowman 2020: illus 65)

Loch Mharcoil, so perhaps ‘Macrel’ was derived from ‘Teampall Mharcoil’ (MacLeod 1997: 24).

The final large church, Teampall Mholuaidh, is the best-preserved medieval church in Lewis, and is variously thought to date to the 12th, 14th or 16th centuries (see Barrowman 2020: 15–18). It is a simple rectangular building, more squat in plan than either of the other three larger churches, with no chancel but with a small lean-to sacristy on the north-east side, and chapel on the south-east. It was still standing to roof height and unenclosed when it was restored and re-roofed in 1912 (Muir 1885: 43; MacGibbon & Ross 1896, vol 1: 99; see Barrowman 2020: 17), and is still used for worship today by the Episcopal Church. There are no obvious remains of a burial ground at the site, and tradition states that this was on the sandy machair at Eoropie, where burials have been found below modern-day houses (C S Barrowman 2015: 240–1).

Of the four larger churches, the largest in Lewis is Eaglais na h-Aoidhe (Eaglais Chaluim Chille) at 97.76m² and the smallest Teampall Chirceaboist, at 53.2m². Teampall Pheadair and Teampall Mholuaidh are 69.75m² and 72.36m² respectively (Table 4). None of these churches, however, is particularly large – the largest parish church in the diocese of Sodor being Teampall Mòr at Howmore on South Uist, which has an area of 161.6m² (Thomas 2009a: 113).

UNLOCATED OR UNIDENTIFIABLE CHAPEL-SITES

Two of the chapel-sites listed by Martin Martin remain unlocated, although St Pharaer (Site 23), is probably in the Leurbost area, Lochs and Teampall Chaluim Chille (Site 31), north of Stornoway on the east coast (see Barrowman 2020: 95, 114). A further seven chapel-sites

are roughly located. Teampall Mhuire, Barvas, Teampall Bhaltois, Valtos, Uig, and Teampall Mhicheil, Tolsta (Site 30) are all in graveyards, but their exact location is unknown. Teampall Chliamain, North Dell, Ness (Site 5), Teampall Chiarain, Laimishader (Site 11), and Teampall Chùistein, Garrabost (Site 27) are all in former areas of old settlement, with associated wells, that have been cleared in crofting activities. The site of Teampall Dhonain on Little Bernera is now unknown, but it is generally thought either to underlie a later burial aisle close to Teampall Mhicheil, to be on the low headland of Buile Phabanais below the chapel (MacLeod 1997: 22), or to lie across on the north-west side of the island.

Five sites can be located from remains on the ground, but their form is indiscernible.

Geophysical survey has confirmed that there is probably a building on the knoll where Teampall Thòmais, Habost is traditionally located (C S Barrowman 2015: 185). Teampall Leannain, Stornoway now lies under later buildings, but rescue excavation for development identified its position and associated graves (Knott 2000a). Teampall Chriosd, Baile na Cille; An Teampall, Ranish, Lochs; and Teampall Mhicheil, Kirvig are all now only indistinct raised rectangular areas within old, enclosed cemeteries overgrown with vegetation and covered in later grave markers (Illus 14). The chapel and burial ground on Eilean an Tighe, Shiant is said to be in the settlement area on the west side of the island where a possible cemetery mound has been identified (Nicolson 2001: 145; Barrowman 2020: 115–16).

TABLE 5
Unlocated, indiscernible chapel-sites and settlement sites

<i>Site no.</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Description</i>
3	Teampall Thòmais	Habost	Located but chapel building form indiscernible
5	Teampall Chliamain	North Dell	Chapel-site unlocated
9	Teampall Mhuire	Barvas	Chapel building unlocated
11	Teampall Chiarain	Laimishader, Carloway	Chapel building unlocated
13	Teampall Dhonain	Little Bernera	Chapel building unlocated
17	Teampall Bhaltois	Valtos	Chapel building unlocated
19	Baile na Cille (Teampall Chriosd)	Timsgarry	Located but chapel building form indiscernible
21	Taigh nan Cailleachan Dubha	Mealasta	This is a settlement – associated chapel found at Site 20
23	St Pharaer?	Cathanais, Suardail	Chapel-site unlocated
24	An Teampall	Ranish, Leurbost	Located but chapel building form indiscernible
25	Teampall Leannain	Stornoway	Located but site now lost under later development
27	Teampall Chùistein	Garrabost, Point	Chapel-site unlocated
30	Teampall Mhicheil	North Tolsta	Chapel-site unlocated
31	Teampall Chaluim Chille	Garry?	Chapel-site unlocated
32	Chapel on Eilean an Tighe	Shiant Isles, Lochs	Chapel building unlocated
33	Àirighean na h-Annaid, Garbh Eilean	Shiant Isles, Lochs	Shieling rather than chapel



ILLUS 14 Site 19, Baile na Cille, Uig, burial ground and site of Teampall Chriosd, looking south-east. (Photograph by Rachel C Barrowman)

BURIAL GROUNDS

Of the 33 located chapel-sites, 23 are situated either within burial grounds or within 300m of a burial ground, or possible burial ground. Out of the remaining ten sites, two are in the Shiantas, for which there was a burial ground on Eilean an Tighe (Site 32), two are on the Outer Isles (Sula Sgeir and the Flannans) and four are associated in local tradition with nearby burial grounds (Teampall Rònaidh/Rònain, Ness; Teampall Chiarain, Carloway; Teampall Dhonain, Little Bernera; and Teampall Chirceaboist, Great Bernera; Table 1). Only two therefore have no surviving association with a burial ground at all, Taigh a' Bheannaich, Aird Uig and Teampall Rubha Chirc, Bayble, Point. This is a higher proportion associated with burial grounds than in Skye, Coll and Tiree, where only 24 of 68 sites are associated with burial grounds (Thomas 2009a: 367). Work in Orkney concludes that

most sites with burial grounds are within 500m of the sea and within 300m of the nearest medieval settlement, easily accessed and built on the best land, whereas those without are more than 300m from the nearest settlement, and tend to be on less fertile ground and less accessible, with a higher proportion being on peninsulas and small islands (Gibbon 2007: 239). This certainly holds true with the Lewis examples, where the only two without evidence for nearby burial grounds or settlement are both on less fertile ground and on a peninsula or headland.

It is hard to date the burial grounds at chapel-sites in Lewis. Many of the graveyards continued in use into the 18th and 19th centuries, long after the abandonment of the chapel associated with them, and often soil was imported or piled up to accommodate further burials during their use. This includes graveyards found on the small islands around Lewis, such as at Teampall Mhìcheil, Little Bernera, used by the inhabitants

of Carloway, or Teampall Pheadair, Pabbay Mor, by Uig. According to the *New Statistical Account*, the only burial ground for Lochs was found at Teampall Chaluim Chille on Eilean Chaluim Chille, where the place-name Port nam Marbh, ‘the landing place of the dead’, on the north side of the island (Cox 2022, vol 2: 691–2), probably indicates that burial parties came ashore here from Keose and the north shore of Loch Erisort. Eventually these graveyards all went out of use in favour of those on mainland Lewis as inclement weather often hampered boat trips to the small island cemeteries.

Topographical surveys by the LCCS at Teampall Pheadair, Swainbost and Teampall Eòin, Bragar recorded thousands of densely packed unmarked headstones, or headstones and footstones, many reusing stone from the ruined church nearby, and clearly post-dating it where lines of gravestones are inserted across the wall footings (Illus 15). At Teampall Pheadair this

includes a sub-rectangular stone trough fragment, possibly a font, that has been reused as a grave marker (see Barrowman 2020: 25–6, illus 10). Several possible fonts have been removed from graveyards on the island and are often the only stone sculpture surviving from chapel-sites. Most are now unprovenanced, or lost, such as a stone font recorded by Muir in the graveyard at Teampall Mhealastadh in 1885, or from the graveyard at Teampall Chrìosd, Baile na Cille by the Ordnance Survey in 1969 (Barrowman 2020: 82, 88).

MEDIEVAL OR LATER ABANDONED SETTLEMENTS

Areas of abandoned settlement are visible at 18 of the Lewis chapel-sites (see Table 1). Teampall Eòin, for instance, is situated in a part of Bragar that has been studied as a type-site for developing settlement patterns in Lewis (Dodgshon



ILLUS 15 Site 10, Teampall Eòin, Bragar and burial ground from the north-east. (Photograph by Rachel C Barrowman)

1993), and as with other chapels in areas of deserted settlement, the chapel-site should be seen in this context, not as an isolated site. At other sites where little or nothing remains of the chapel building itself, the settlement associated with it is still extant. This includes the deserted township of Laimishader, near Borrowston, Carloway (Illus 16) and the site of Teampall Chiarain (Site 11), as suggested by the names Beannachadh Chiarain, Steagha [Stiogha] Chiarain, or Slighe Chiarain (Kieran's way), and Fuaran (or Tobar) Chiarain (Kieran's well) (Macaulay *c* 1984: 40; MacLeod 1997: 21–2; 2000: 34). Teampall Mhealastadh is adjacent to the site of Taigh nan Cailleachan Dubha, which despite the tradition that it is a nunnery, is described as Mealasta village in the OS Name Book for the First Edition map of 1854 (Book no. 29C, p 64). At Teampall Mhicheil, Kirvig, Carloway, the nearby post-medieval township takes its name from the old chapel (Baile an Teampaill), suggesting the name at least post-dates the chapel, if not the settlement.

Eight sites do not have any obvious settlement remains surviving within 300m of them, although Teampall Rònaidh and Teampall Mholuaidh are both near the settlement of Eoropie, Ness, under which earlier settlement has been found (see C S Barrowman 2015: 134–6). Similarly, Teampall Thòmais, Habost and Teampall a' Chrò' Naomh/nan Crò Naomh, Galson are in areas of pre-crofting settlement (Barrowman 2020: 30; C S Barrowman 2015: 174, 185). Older settlement was also once located near Teampall Bhrighid, Borve, Eaglais na h-Aoidhe (Eaglais Chaluim Chille), Eye, and Teampall Aulaidh, Gress, but this has now been cleared. Of the remaining two sites, Teampall Rubha Chirc, Bayble, has been repurposed into a shieling settlement and small area of cultivation beds, but is otherwise some distance, across moorland, from Bayble. Taigh a' Bheannaich, situated on a small headland in Aird Uig, is likewise far from the nearest settlement, although there was once a well at the site, Tobar a' Bheannachaidh (MacLeod 2000: 36; Illus 17). The chapel walls stand to 1.5m and the exterior



ILLUS 16 Looking eastwards across the deserted settlement of Laimishader, near Borrowston, Carloway, towards Slighe Chiarain and Site 11, Teampall Chiarain. (Photograph by Rachel C Barrowman)



ILLUS 17 Site 18, Taigh a' Bheannaich, Aird Uig, from the west, looking towards Aird Uig. (Photograph by Rachel C Barrowman)

and interior are covered in collapsed stone, implying that little stone has been taken from the building ruin. Denuded remains of small, circular structures are adjacent to the chapel building (Burgess et al 1998) that may have been robbed to build the chapel, or an extensive wall nearby that, with Loch a' Bheannaich, cuts off the peninsula from the landward side to the east (Barrowman 2020: 77), although this seems strange when there is so much naturally occurring stone in the locality.

DISCUSSION

POTENTIALLY EARLY CHAPEL-SITES

In the archaeological study of chapel-sites in Scotland, those identified as potentially early tend to be those from which datable Christian sculpture has survived, or that can be compared to other sites that have such sculpture present (Foster 2019). Due to the general lack

of surviving sculpture and historical documents from Lewis, any attempt at dating is challenging. The interpretative model of 'Early Christian' eremitic monasteries and the 'Celtic church' has in the past prevailed here, and sites suggested as early tend to be those that include corbelled structures and are considered remote. Often, the study of early churches has attempted 'to discover the elusive mystical "Celtic Christianity" among the aboriginal peoples who inhabited Europe's outermost fringes, untouched and uncorrupted by Roman Civilisation' (MacDonald 2013: 1), despite the fact that, as Meek points out, the early church in Ireland had synods, and the monasteries established by Columba had a hierarchy and organisation (Meek 2000; Clancy 2002; Meek 2015: 35). Since the 1990s the dominance, or even existence, of the 'Celtic church' has been questioned (eg see Davies 1992). The interpretation of several well-known chapel-sites as so-called 'Celtic Monasteries' (Radford 1962, 1983) is no longer supported in many cases, with a greater emphasis on Norse Christian chapels

and the broader North Atlantic context (eg Morris 1990, 1996; Barrett 2003). The Brough of Birsay, for instance, is now suggested to be a high-status secular centre prior to the Viking incursions, with a small chapel then established in the 10th century and the subsequent building of a new church for a monastery by the Earls in the 12th century (Morris 2021). Thirty years on, as Campbell and Maldonado identify, ‘The question of how to define early medieval monasticism and how to recognise a monastic, as opposed to other types of ecclesiastical settlement – or, indeed, secular settlement – has exercised archaeologists in particular’ (Campbell & Maldonado 2020: 35).

Seilg Mhichil (Skellig Michael) is considered the type-site in this interpretative model, a ‘tiny monastery’ on a cliff stack in County Kerry, containing ‘a bare half-dozen cells, two oratories, and a graveyard; the very remoteness [having] preserved all this, a religious fossil, in a rare state of near completeness’ (Thomas 1971: 44). Hebridean sites that are given an early date by comparison include Sgòr nam Bán-Naoimha (Cliff of the Holy Women), Canna, west of Skye, and St Kilda (Fisher 2001: 101, 113–14), and for Lewis, three chapel-sites on the Outer Isles (Sites 35–7): North Rona and Sula Sgeir 40 miles north-north-east of the Butt of Lewis, and Eilean Mòr in the Flannans about 18 miles off the west coast of Uig (see Illus 2). These islands could not be surveyed as part of the LCCS due to logistics and restricted budget, but they have been recorded by a succession of fascinated visitors (eg Monro [1549] 1774: 46–8; Martin 1703: 16–27; Muir 1861: 190–200; 1885: 80–96; Stewart 1933) and described in detail by the RCAHMS and others (MacGibbon & Ross 1896: 73–5; RCAHMS 1928: 3–4, figs 23–5; Nisbet & Gailey 1962; Robson 1991; RCAHMS 2009; Geddes 2017; Thacker 2021: 21–43).

Teampall Rònain on North Rona is situated in an enclosed graveyard immediately north of the abandoned settlement on the island (MacGibbon & Ross 1896: 73–4; RCAHMS 1928: 3–4, figs 23–5; Calhoun 2021: 217–27). A late 6th- to late 7th-century radiocarbon date from a deposit below the graveyard wall provides a *terminus post quem* for the wall of cal AD 570–670 and

supports occupation of the island at this time (SUERC-64462: cited in Thacker 2021: 33; see also Harden 2013). Teampall Rònain is suggested to be of two phases, the eastern chamber being a small, corbelled oratory of Irish type dating to the 7th or 8th centuries (see Illus 10), to which a small rectangular chapel was added to the west in the medieval period to adapt it into a little two-chambered church to serve the community on the island at the time (Nisbet & Gailey 1962: 109, 111; Fisher 2001: 114). Thacker, however, has recently reappraised this theory and suggests that a Viking Age date in the 11th century is more likely for the eastern chamber of the *teampall* and a later 12th- or 13th-century date for the western (Thacker 2013; 2021: 25–33, 36–9, 41, 59).

The North Rona carved stones were probably mainly burial markers, as they originated in the burial ground (Nisbet & Gailey 1962). Fisher parallels the simple cruciform stones with Skellig Michael (Fisher 2001: 11), and the group of small, roughly shaped crosses and disc-headed grave markers with examples from Iona and Hougharry, North Uist, and other sites on the Atlantic coast of Ireland (Fisher 2001: 17). The most elaborate, ‘the Rona Cross’, is now held in the museum at the Comunn Eachdraidh Nis (Ness Historical Society); (Fisher 2001: 17, 57, 115, fig 32). Two examples of sunken crosses may date to the 7th–9th centuries, one being found reused in the later chapel wall (Nisbet & Gailey 1962: 109; Fisher 2001: 114–15, fig 7). Some of the sculpture, including the Rona Cross, may be dated to the later 12th–13th-century Christian Norse period and is discussed further below (Nisbet & Gailey 1962: 109, 112; see below).

There is no sculptural evidence from the remaining two sites on the Outer Isles. The small beehive hut known as Tigh Beannaichte on Sula Sgeir, and the small corbelled building of Teampall Beannachadh, or St Flann’s Chapel, on Eilean Mòr in the Flannans (Illus 18) (Muir 1861: 180–2; Muir 1885: 98–9; MacGibbon & Ross 1896: 75–8; RCAHMS 1928: vi, 30, Figs 76–7; Nisbet 1958; Nisbet & Gailey 1962: 111) have both been repaired and rebuilt or dug into in places in the last couple of centuries, making it difficult to discern original features



ILLUS 18 Site 37, Teampall Beannachadh, or St Flann's Chapel, Eilean Mor, Flannans, from the west. (Photograph courtesy of Carol Knott)

(RCAHMS 1928: vi, 30; Nisbet 1958; Nisbet & Gailey 1962: 111). Tigh Beannaichte is a sub-rectangular, corbelled building, with a small, low doorway in the south wall and an altar and small window in the east end (Muir 1885: 98–9; Nisbet 1958), set on Sgeir an Teampuill on Sula Sgeir away from the other beehive shelters that are still used as shelters by fowlers up to the present day (Beatty 1992). Teampall Beannachadh on the Flannans has a doorway in the west, and is smaller than both Tighe Beannaichte and Teampall Rònain (see Table 2) (RCAHMS 1928: 30; RCAHMS 2009; Geddes 2014). It is debated in local tradition whether the structure on Sula Sgeir is indeed a chapel, or simply another fowlers' hut (Finlay MacLeod pers comm; Robson 1997: 42–9).

Several corbelled, or beehive, shelters used as shelters by fowlers or fishermen in Lewis for centuries are named in tradition as being blessed or monastic. However, in Lewis beehive structures were built and used right up to the 20th century, so it is a misnomer to simply date these

buildings as being 'early' due to their corbelled structure. The Bothann Clann 'ic Phàil (Bothies of the Clan MacPhail), are said to be the remains of monks' cells on the west side of Eilean Mòr, Flannans (Muir 1861: 181–2; 1885: 60; RCAHMS 1928: 30; Calhoun 2021: 237–43),³ which F W L Thomas likened to a building found on Luchruban, or Pigmies' Isle on the west coast of the Butt of Lewis (Additional Site 39; Cox 2022, vol 2: 693–6; Thomas 1869: 163, fig 13). Luchruban is included as an Early Christian site by Charles Thomas and others (eg MacGregor 1967: 178; Macdonald 1967: 210–11; Thomas 1971: 85–6), although excavations retrieved Neolithic pottery from the site (Mackenzie 1905: 252; RCAHMS 1928: 9–10, fig 37) and recent survey work suggests an Iron Age roundhouse overlying Neolithic remains (McHardy et al 2009: 57–62; C S Barrowman 2015: 158–9). Two groups of 19th-century fish curing huts nearby at Cunndal (Additional Site 40) are linked in local tradition with Luchruban and it has been suggested that they reused stonework

from an earlier monastic site, perhaps indicated by the nearby place-name Cnoc a' Bheannaich, although again locally it is held that this site is where outdoor preaching took place (Mackenzie 1905: 255–6; Robson 1997: 21–3; Burgess 1999: 100; 2003: 51; C S Barrowman 2015: 132–3, illus 6.46; Comunn Eachdraidh Nis 2020: 24, 26–7, 30–3). Similarly, in Uig, a small, corbelled beehive structure and other structures on Eilean Fir Chrothair, Little Bernera, are known locally as Am Beannachadh (Additional Site 41; Mackenzie 1904: 182–3; MacLeod 1997: 23; Crawford 2006: 184; Calhoun 2021: 244–7) and to the west potentially corbelled huts on Pabbay Beag have also been recorded (J Crawford 2008; Additional Site 42).

Without excavation little more can be said concerning the date of any of these sites. However, one of two similar structures has been excavated at Àirighean na h-Annaid, Garbh Eilean in the Shiantas, the footings of two circular huts enclosed by a D-shaped earth and stone bank that have been surveyed at the south end of a deserted shieling settlement (see Hooper 2006; Foster et al 2012). One of these structures has been excavated and dated to the Late Bronze Age to Late Iron Age, into which a small roundhouse, suggested by the excavator to have been corbelled, was later inserted that contained Pictish plain-ware pottery in its floor (Foster & Dagg 2008; Foster 2009; Foster et al 2012). Interestingly, the only other place in Lewis from which medieval sculpture has been found was the Shiantas, where a rounded sandstone pebble incised with an equal-armed cross within a circle was found face down in the floor of a post-medieval blackhouse on Eilean an Tighe (House Island), across the shingle bar from Garbh Eilean (Foster 2000). This incised pebble is very similar to examples from Inishmurray, Co. Sligo (Fisher 2001: 116) and clearly much older than the secondary context in which it was found. There is a chapel-site on Eilean an Tighe, where Muir records traces of a burial ground and small chapel (Muir 1885: 56), sketched by William Daniell in 1818, but the OS records that it was built of stones and mortar and is probably later medieval in date (see

Barrowman 2020: 115; Nicolson 2001: 144–7). By 1969 the chapel was unlocated.

The unicameral chapels found on the Lewis mainland are difficult to date, but as noted above, as far as can be discerned, several are very similar in approximate length–breadth ratio and plan. However, out of those for which a plan is available, Teampall Rubha Chirc remains the exception in the mainland Lewis group. The building has been robbed, but the hollows in the wall footings suggest there were openings in the east and west walls, rather than the south wall, making it comparable instead to the plan of the small chapels on North Rona and the Flannans (see Illus 8, no. 5 and Illus 9 & 10:). In addition to Teampall Rubha Chirc being near a *papa* place-name, handmade pottery decorated with impressions of a swivel-ring-headed pin of a type dated to the 7th to 9th centuries was also discovered at the site over a century ago (Stevenson 1955; Young 1955: 94; cited by B E Crawford 2008: Site H6, 4).

THE VIKING AGE AND LATE NORSE PERIODS

At present, the sole evidence for Christianity in Lewis in the Viking Age or Late Norse periods are cruciform stones from North Rona that are similar to stones from Iona, North Uist, Barra and elsewhere in the Hebrides and across the North Atlantic from Faroe and Norway (Fisher 2001: 17, 56–7, figs 31–2; 2005; 2010; 2011; Fisher pers comm May 2020). The only up-standing chapel in Lewis suggested as being potentially Late Norse is Teampall Mholuaidh, in Ness, which Simpson has dated to the 12th century by comparison with Garðar in Greenland (1961: 7–8). However, it seems more likely that this church belongs to the later period of the Lordship and it is discussed further below. Otherwise, it is the small bicameral chapels found across the Western and Northern Isles that are usually accorded a 12th-century or later Late Norse date (Fleming & Woolf 1993: 341–3, 349, appendix). At this time both island groups were under the archiepiscopal see of Niðaróss (now Trondheim), and a burst of ecclesiastical building took place across Argyll and the Isles (eg Cant 1975: 9–13, fig 2; McDonald 1997: 243).

As discussed above, the upstanding eastern chamber (or ‘oratory’) of Teampall Rònain on North Rona is now suggested to be potentially of Viking Age date into the 11th century, with an earlier predecessor below it (Thacker 2013, 2021). This is in part inspired by the phenomenon of Norse chapel-sites situated on the edges of, or directly over, Iron Age and early medieval sites that has been identified from excavations and survey in the Northern Isles, including those by the author at St Ninian’s Isle, Shetland (see Lowe 1987, 1998; Lamb 1995; Barrowman 2011). Excavations here have revealed that the bicameral chapel was originally a unicameral building, adjacent to a Christian Norse cemetery used up to the 11th to latter half of the 12th centuries (see Outram 2011; Barrowman 2011: 41–4, 114–16, 204–5). Below this unicameral chapel lay an 8th-century small church, with an accompanying long-cist cemetery which had in turn been built over a Late Iron Age settlement (Barrowman 2011: 35–121, 189–206; 2023). What this implies for the relationship of the chapel and settlement on North Rona must be examined further, although like most of the chapel-sites in Lewis, excavation in and around the chapel area is not appropriate due to the presence of burials.

In Lewis, the two chapel-sites that are built directly into mounds or areas of earlier material are both bicameral. Teampall Eòin in Bragar, the only upstanding example of a bicameral chapel on mainland Lewis, is built into the side of a large mound on the north-west side of the old graveyard, with the mound continuing to be built up around it due to the ongoing use of the site for burial after the church itself had been abandoned. Stray finds indicative of Iron Age settlement have been recovered from the coastal edges of this mound, and there are local stories of an underground passage and buildings being found when the graveyard was extended years ago (Barrowman 2020: 51–9). MacLeod also records that the chapel is known by two names: St John’s Chapel and Cill Sgàire, with Sgàire being a Norse personal name found in Lewis, and St John’s Chapel the newer, more Roman name (MacLeod 1997: 19). The upstanding building at Teampall Eòin, however, is suggested to be of

15th-century date (Muir 1885: 42; MacGibbon & Ross 1896: 5; RCAHMS 1928: 1), and single-phase, with shell-lime bonding and internal and external coating (Thacker 2015a: 57). Roofing slates reused as grave markers in the cemetery also suggest that it may have had a slate roof (Crawford 2007; see Barrowman 2020: illus 31, 32, 33), as compared with local traditions of heather thatch for Teampall Pheadair, Swainbost (R C Barrowman 2015: 393). The bicameral chapel Teampall Pheadair, Shader, now only grassy footings but comparable in layout to Teampall Eòin (see Illus 11; Table 3), also overlies Iron Age midden deposits and structures that have been surveyed eroding from the cliff below (Rennie 2020). The church building itself has been robbed in the post-medieval centuries, with the stone presumably being used to build the corn-drying kiln and enclosure walls nearby, although there are local traditions that lime for the chapel building was made on the site, and that there was a smithy built onto the enclosure.⁴

Two of the mainland Lewis unicameral chapels may also overlie earlier remains. Teampall a’ Chrò’ Naomh/nan Crò Naomh in Galson lies in a hollow in a raised area in the old cemetery, 250m west of a Late Iron Age to medieval settlement site and long-cist cemetery that has been eroding from the sandy coastline and excavated piecemeal between the 1920s and the late 1990s (see Barrowman 2020: 27–32; Illus 19). Teampall Aulaidh in Gress also stands in a hollow in a large sandy mound, although no Iron Age material has been recorded from this site, and small, unmarked, gravestones and rubble seen in the hollow clearly show that at least some of the material built up after the church had gone out of use (see Barrowman 2020: 112–13). Architectural analysis has also concluded that the upstanding chapel dates to the early 17th century, although Martin lists it as a pre-Reformation site (1703: 27; Thacker 2015b: 93–4).

LOCAL CULTURE AND IDENTITY: THE LORDSHIP OF THE ISLES TO 1493 AND BEYOND

The dominant culture in Lewis through the tumultuous Lordship of the Isles and into the Linn



ILLUS 19 Site 6, Teampall a' Chrò' Naomh/nan Crò Naomh, Galson, looking east towards eroding cliff line. (Photograph by Rachel C Barrowman)

nan Creach was one of kin-based alliances, with distinct local differences apparent between areas within the Lordship (McLeod 2004: 14–54; MacGregor 2014: 57; MacCoinnich 2015a: 41, 50–62; 2015b). Understanding local identity and culture in the past is therefore key to understanding the medieval archaeology of Lewis, including its chapel-sites. In addition to this, the modern construct of a separation between ‘secular’ and ‘religious’ life was unknown in the medieval centuries, and the founding and use of chapel-sites were therefore rooted in local culture and community. From the Viking Age onwards there had been ‘regionalities we do not at present understand’ where ‘Christianity was disseminated by men and women of local importance’ (Abrams 2007: 188, 189), and by the time of the Lordship, clergy in the Hebrides were overwhelmingly local, Gaelic-speakers with ties to the Lords and the leading kindreds. From the 13th century, when a little more is known of church organisation and function in Lewis, the Lords of the Isles had patronage of 41 parish churches and were able therefore to influence clerical

appointments and so reward particular kindreds (Thomas 2014b: 123). Probably because of the diocese’s perceived remoteness and poverty, and control by the patrons, the vast majority of clergy who gained benefices in Argyll and the Isles were Gaels indigenous to the locality, if not the actual parish (MacDonald 2014: 24–5; Thomas 2009a: 345).

All the parish churches in Lewis generated only small incomes by their benefices (the revenue attached to the clerical appointment; Thomas 2009a: 75–8). The only rectory in Lewis to have had a relatively high value was St Columba’s of Eye (Eaglais na h-Aoidhe). All the other churches in Lewis had a value of less than ten merks, St Christopher’s in Uig (Teampall Chrìosd) having the lowest at 0.5 merks sterling (Thomas 2014b: 138). The survival of the church fabric in Lewis was therefore essentially dependent, as elsewhere in the Isles, on patronage, and the importance of certain churches and their burial grounds was either due to, or reinforced by, their association with a particular clan (Thomas 2014a, 2014b). This is seen in Lewis at Eaglais

na h-Aoidhe and Teampall Mholuaidh, both traditionally considered to be under MacLeod patronage.

Each parish church in Lewis would have had a significant role as a focal point for the local community, where the laity were members of the Church from the cradle to the grave, from baptism as infants, attendance at mass on feast days, and burial within consecrated ground around the church (Thomas 2009a: 14, 96–100). However, there were also local dependent chapels which the lay people attended most regularly, and there was a proliferation of chapel building in the high and late Middle Ages in the Hebrides (Thomas 2009a: 351–2; 2018). The insular Norse land unit of the eyrisland or ‘ounceland’, later subdivided into pennylands, provided the basic unit throughout the period of the Lordship of the Isles, and contained all those local resources needed to support a community of a given size, including at least one chapel, agricultural resources, and fuel requirements such as peat banks (Raven 2005: 451; Macniven 2013: 76). It is possible, if the unicameral chapels are all medieval, that this model holds true also for Lewis, where, as we have seen above in the study of site distribution, there is a parish church and at least two unicameral churches in each parish on the island, even given that several are now unlocated. Thus, both the enactment of belief and the development of church organisation took place in and through the local culture and situation.

A brief study of the masonry of the upstanding chapels on mainland Lewis shows that the majority are built using the local masonry Type 3 technique, as classified by Caldwell and Ruckley (they define four types in total), where ‘blocks and split boulders are laid with gaps, filled up with copious quantities of pinnings, often forming panels little smaller than the main blocks themselves’ (Caldwell & Ruckley 2005: 101–2). They identify that Type 3 masonry is ubiquitous in the north of the Hebrides in the 14th and 15th centuries in domestic architecture, and this has subsequently been supported by excavations on Dùn Èistean, Ness, where the tower on the stronghold was built using Type 3 masonry (R C Barrowman 2015: 198–202, illus 9.15). A

precursory look at Taigh a’ Bheannaich, Aird Uig; Teampall Chaluim Chille, Lochs; Teampall Chirceaboist, Bernera; and possibly Teampall a’ Chrò’ Naomh/nan Crò Naomh, Galson suggests they are built of Type 3 masonry. Interestingly, the only upstanding bicameral chapel, Teampall Eòin in Bragar, does not appear to be built from Type 3 masonry, comprising instead Type 1 coursed blocks and boulders. The slight inwards batter used in the building of the lookout tower on Dùn Èistean, castles elsewhere in the former MacLeod Lordship, and later 19th-century blackhouses in Lewis is also used at Teampall Mholuaidh, suggesting the possibility of shared building traditions across the area (see R C Barrowman 2015: 191–203, 415–16; 2022).

Combined survey, excavation, and historical and place-names recording undertaken at the north end of Lewis has begun to make it possible to situate the chapel-sites in a contemporary landscape (C S Barrowman 2015; R C Barrowman 2015, 2020, 2022; Comunn Eachdraidh Nis 2020). This work builds on Martin’s statement that all churches and chapels were sanctuaries before the Reformation (Martin 1703: 28) and suggests that the whole of the Ness peninsula may have been considered a sanctuary in the late medieval period, as defined by the Gàrradh Dubh, a large turf dyke that separated the north-west end of Lewis from the rest of the island (Stiùbhart 2015: 71–4; C S Barrowman 2015: 46–7, 74, 153–4). At the north end of this sanctuary lies the medieval clan stronghold of Dùn Èistean, which is traditionally associated with the ‘Clan Morison’, the *britheamhan* (hereditary judges or brieves) for Lewis, who dispensed justice from ‘An Taigh Mòr’ or ‘An Taigh a’ Bhrithheimh’, nearby (MacCoinnich 2015a: 41; Stiùbhart 2015; R C Barrowman 2015, 2023). Survey of An Taigh Mòr, as well as other sites such as Cnoc a’ Chaisteal (Hill of the Castle), considered in oral tradition to have been built by the first MacLeods of Lewis, Cnoc Fianais, where tradition has it that once judged and found guilty, MacLeod would condemn a man to death, and Bruga Frangais (Bruga a’ Bhrangais), where the sentence was carried out, indicate a potent landscape of Lordly power in Ness (C S

Barrowman 2015: 120–2, 249–50, 416–18, Illus 18; Poller 2015; MacCoinnich 2015a: 41, 68; Stiùbhart 2015: 73; Comunn Eachdraidh Nis 2020: 48, 50, 56, 58).

Teampall Pheadair, Swainbost, the old parish church, its older predecessor, Teampall Thòmais, and Teampall Mholuaidh, traditionally described as ‘the Laird’s Church’, and its older predecessor, Teampall Rònaidh, are all situated within this landscape (Sites 1–4; McKenzie 1792: 291; MacGibbon & Ross 1896: 79–80, 95, 99; RCAHMS 1928: 2–3; Stiùbhart 2015: 77–8; Illus 20). This concentration is consistent with observations made in South Uist, where there is a strong correlation of chapel-sites and high-status sites during the Lordship (Raven 2005: 223–9), which in turn are highly visible from the sea and important maritime routeways (Thomas 2009a: 360–1). Other Lewis chapel-sites are in strategically important maritime locations, such as Teampall Chaluim Chille, situated on the tidal

island of Eilean Chaluim Chille at the mouth of Loch Erisort, where MacLeod of Lewis is said to have had an orchard and rights to good grazing and fishing in the mid-16th century (Monro [1549] 1774: 38–9; Burgess 2004; MacLeod Rivett 2021: 182–3).

The rebuilding and adaption of vernacular huts and buildings, as undertaken on Dùn Èistean, is also suggested at several chapel-sites, where the practical reuse of even the chapel building indicates a strong local culture and way of doing things (Barrowman 2022). These once-sacred buildings were not merely adapted, but in some cases were entirely dismantled. At Teampall Rubha Chirc on the south-east side of Lewis, and Teampall Mhealastadh on the south-west, the chapel building was used to build turf and stone shielings, or in the latter case, drystone buildings, nearby. At Teampall Pheadair, Shader, for instance, the chapel building was robbed to build an adjacent corn-drying kiln and enclosure



ILLUS 20 View looking north-west with Teampall Pheadair and the old graveyard in the foreground (Site 4), and the small hillock and site of Teampall Thòmais (Site 3) on the central horizon. (Photograph by Rachel C Barrowman)

walls. There are also traditions of new churches being built using the stone from old disused chapels, for instance, Teampall Thòmais in Ness, traditionally thought to have been robbed to provide the stone for Teampall Pheadair a few hundred metres away (Illus 20).

CONCLUSION

In the context of the medieval archaeology of north and west Britain and Ireland, the Lewis Coastal Chapel-sites Survey is of great value as a model for the establishment of a baseline of information on chapel-sites, in an area that has otherwise lacked any consistent archaeological survey and where documentary research is problematic (Barrowman 2020). As the first extensive survey of chapel-sites to be undertaken in the Western Isles, it has added greatly to our knowledge of medieval Lewis, through the study of site distribution, the range of sites and potential dating. As noted for the Hebrides as a whole, most of the chapel-sites in Lewis are unicameral, with a doorway in the south wall and a window in the east gable wall, and length–breadth ratios of 1:1.5 or 1:1.6. The exceptions in layout are the small chapels on North Rona and the Flannans, and at Teampall Rubha Chirc in Lewis, which have doorways in the west walls. The position of Teampall Rubha Chirc, with its nearby *papa* place-name, is situated on a highly visible headland overlooking the Minch, and like the Outer Isles sites, visible from the busy routeways around Lewis, and the recent suggestion that the earliest visible part of the chapel on North Rona is of 11th-century Viking Age date is interesting in this regard. Rather than these chapel-sites being indicative of the ‘Celtic church’, where simple chapels were thought to have been built in remote places, cut off from the world, perhaps they were just as likely to have been planted in visible areas to serve existing communities, including on the outer islands.

The Lewis chapels group is too disparate to make any firm conclusions as to date based on the unicameral plan alone, although the similarity of layout for all the mainland examples may suggest

they were originally of a similar date. At every site it is only the final phase of building that is now seen, and there is every possibility that there is a precursor below or incorporated into the visible chapel building remains. All the bicameral chapels are also closely comparable in size and plan, other than Teampall Rònain on North Rona, which is two-phased and has recently been reinterpreted as being of 12th/13th-century date. Several of the chapels are built over Iron Age settlement mounds, or in close proximity to earlier sites, a common phenomenon identified from Norse and medieval chapels in the Northern Isles, possibly suggesting that the visible remains may be just the final phase of chapel building on the site.

Place-name elements also hint at older sites, including where there are local traditions of an older saint’s dedication having been lost, or a former ancient church. The surviving saints’ dedications are testament to thriving pre-Reformation saints’ cults, most of which were appropriated by kindreds in the late medieval period to emphasise their hereditary rights. Local traditions can provide an idea of past practices and names, but several layers of stories and interpretations make for a confused picture in most cases. Local identity and culture are key to understanding the medieval archaeology of Lewis (see Barrowman 2022), where local chieftains and clans patronised parish churches, and local communities were probably served by their own small chapel. It is possible that many of the unicameral chapels functioned as dependent chapels at this time. As outlined above, the results of recent work in Ness allow us to start to analyse local culture and identity in medieval Lewis, as evident in the building techniques and traditions associated with these sites. As well as shared building techniques seen between church and vernacular buildings, the adaption/rebuilding and reuse of chapel-sites demonstrates that even once-sacred chapel buildings were often repurposed, including in the building of parish churches, and the patronage of them.

The concentration of the mainland Lewis chapel-sites appears to correspond to the medieval parishes, and almost all are on coastal, fertile

land, and within 300m of a deserted township and burial ground. Two sites are once again the exception – Teampall Rubha Chirc, Bayble, and Taigh a' Bheannaich, Aird Uig, both being situated away from settlement, with no evidence for a nearby burial ground, and on less fertile ground. However, the type of masonry used in the upstanding walls of Taigh a' Bheannaich, and the existence of a well nearby, suggest it may be later in date than Rubha Chirc, of which only the footings now survive. Above all, the LCCS has demonstrated the time-depth involved in this group of sites, that they are not all contemporary, or result from the same floruit of building, or even the same wave of conversion. However, the detail of the survey has now made it possible to compare building forms and plan within the group, distribution of sites, place-names and traditions, and to come to conclusions concerning date and function. The combination of the results of the LCCS with other archaeological work from parts of the island has also enabled some of the chapel-sites to be placed in a contemporary archaeological landscape, and demonstrates the continuing adaption, repair and rebuilding that took place at these fascinating sites, and their importance to the local community that they served.

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those believers who worshipped in these chapels many centuries ago.

NOTES

- 1 Subsequent to the completion of the LCCS my attention was drawn to 'Teampall Chanaiscadair', in Eireastadh, Uig, supposedly the site of an old church, but in fact a post-medieval township. Cox refers to the tradition that a boat crew was buried there following a drowning in 1775, and this may be the derivation of the *teampall* name (Cox 2022: 931–4).
- 2 Object Name Books of the Ordnance Survey (6-inch) 1850–3, Ross-shire, Isle of Lewis.
- 3 A holy water stoup is said to have originated from the Bothan, and a font from St Flann's chapel, both items being part of the collection of stone sculpture that was put into the newly renovated Teampall Mholuaidh by Canon Meaden when the church was restored in 1912 (Meaden 1921: 171).
- 4 This may be a confusion with the corn-drying kiln on the site, although it is interesting to note Rev Headrick's observations, made in letters to Lord Seaforth in 1800, that 'Clay-marl appears again in various places along the coast of Shadir, where it resumes a better quality, and seems connected with limestone' (Headrick 1800: 15–16, cited in Barrowman 2008: 11).

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