

2. INTRODUCTION

2.1 The Lewis Coastal Chapel-sites Survey (LCCS)

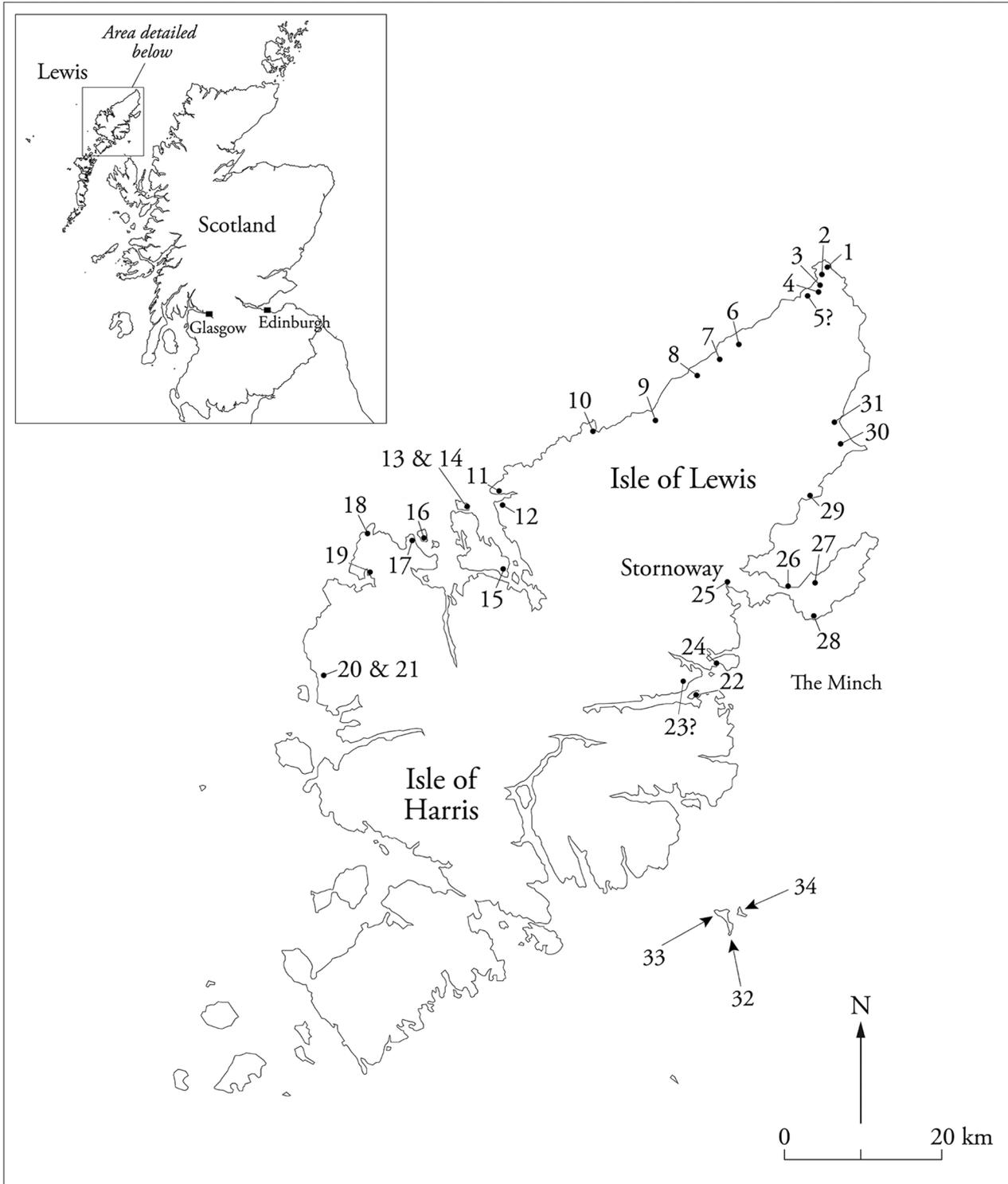
This paper reports the results of a survey and research project completed in Lewis over a decade ago, but the results have been revisited and checked in 2018/2019. The LCCS was set up in 2004 to record the archaeology of the chapel-sites on the Isle of Lewis in the Western Isles by surveying and studying the physical remains on the ground. Other than those surveyed by the RCAHMS in 1928, there has been little archaeological research focused on these fascinating sites, in contrast to the attention given to them by touring antiquarians, historians and naturalists. These interested travellers were drawn to describe, or at least name, the sites in written accounts of the natural history and ‘ancient relics’ they encountered in the Isles, in the 18th and 19th centuries (eg Martin Martin 1703; Hogg 1802–4 [1981]). They were also mentioned in passing by Captain John Dymes, who visited Lewis and whose report in 1630 described ‘worshipp of divers Sts. as doth appeare by their Chappells wch are yett to be seene ...’ (Mackenzie 1903: 592; full excerpt also cited in Stiùbhart 2015: 75), and also in the previous century there are references to a small number of chapels, and the parishes of Lewis, by Donald Monro, ‘Dean of the Isles’, who wrote the earliest surviving description of the Hebrides in 1549 (Monro 1549 [1994]; Munro 1961). However, other than these early accounts by visitors and later antiquarians, in Lewis there is a particular reliance on the archaeological remains when studying chapels, as there is a distinct lack of primary historical and sculptural evidence relating to them (Cant 1985; Armit 1996: 180–6; Abrams 2007; Thomas 2009). The LCCS attempted therefore to extend the archaeological recording of this group of sites. From the outset a wide approach was adopted that would link together all previous references to, and records of, these sites, including antiquarian and local historical research, local guidebooks, research by local history societies and other groups, and any ongoing archaeological survey work in Lewis that may have included chapel-sites. Walkover and targeted topographic and

geophysical surveys were then undertaken, and each site was described on the ground.

This report describes the results of these desktop studies and surveys undertaken in Lewis between 2004 and 2008. The author had previously been involved with the Viking and Early Settlement Archaeological Research Project (VESARP) at the University of Glasgow, which included work on the chapel-sites of Shetland (see Morris 2001 and references therein; Morris 2007; Morris & Barrowman with Brady 2008; Barrowman 2011). The work on Lewis built upon this work.

The chapel-sites of Lewis are a varied group in date, size and condition. The desktop study undertaken in the first year of the LCCS in 2004 identified 31 chapel-sites on the Lewis mainland, and six on the outlying islands (North Rona, Sula Sgeir, Flannan Isles and on the three islands in the Shiantis; see Table 1 below and Barrowman 2005). The majority of the chapel-sites identified were in a coastal location (Illus 1) and many were under threat from coastal erosion. There was considerable local historical interest in these sites, as demonstrated by the work of several local historians in the decade prior to the beginning of the project (Lawson 1991; MacLeod 1997; Robson 1991, 1997). At the end of the desktop research, a gazetteer summarising the results was produced, and each site was recorded and described, with management recommendations made, and an assessment of the cultural significance of each chapel-site and suggestions for future work (Barrowman 2005). Finally, five additional possible chapel-sites were also identified during the desktop research that had been surveyed by other projects, but were not confirmed as chapels (Sites 38–42; see 4.38–4.42 below).

In 2004 it proved unrealistic to attempt to complete walkover survey of all 42 identified sites as well as the desktop survey, and so 26, predominantly mainland Lewis, sites were prioritised in the time and funding remaining. Walkover survey of 24 of the 26 sites was successfully completed by the end of the 2004 season (the remaining two sites, Sites 24, An Teampall at Ranish, Lochs and 30, Teampall Mhìcheil, North Tolsta were visited in 2019). Plane table survey was completed of three of the six sites identified as warranting such survey (Sites 7, 12, 15), as the other three are Scheduled Ancient Monuments, had already been described



Illus 1 Location of chapel-sites on mainland Lewis and the Shiant

and measured, and were therefore of lower priority (Sites 1, 19, 29). During the desktop and walkover surveys in 2004, more-detailed topographic survey was recommended for eight sites. In 2005 detailed topographic survey of four of these sites was undertaken – Teampall Mhealastadh, Uig (Site no.

20), Taigh na Cailleachan Dubha, Uig (Site no. 21), Teampall Pheadair, Swainbost (Site no. 4) and the chapel-site of St Mary’s on Eilean an Tighe (formerly known as Eilean na Cille) on the Shiant Isles (Site no. 32) (Barrowman with Hooper 2006). It had been planned also to survey Site no. 33, Àirighean

Table 1 Lewis Coastal Chapel-sites gazetteer (*MR = Plan of building published by McGibbon & 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)

Site no.	Name	Location	NGR	Canmore ID	Type of survey undertaken by LCCS
1	Teampall Rònaidh/ Rònain	Eoropie, Ness	NB 5229 6542	4418	Walkover
2	Teampall Mholuaidh	Eoropie, Ness	NB 51928 65157	4419	Walkover. RCAHMS and *MR
3	Teampall Thòmais	Habost, Ness	NB 50728 64062	4435	Walkover
4	Teampall Pheadair	Swainbost, Ness	NB 50861 63812	4434	Walkover. EDM topographic survey Feb 2005
5	Teampall Chliamain	North Dell, Ness	NB 49 62?	4381	Walkover – unlocated
6	Teampall a' Chrò' Naomh	South Galson	NB 43282 59301	4346	Walkover. RCAHMS
7	Teampall Bhrighid	Melbost Borve	NB 40989 57313	4361	Walkover and plane table Feb 2005
8	Teampall Pheadair	Shader	NB 3792 5499	4265	Walkover. EDM and geophysical survey 2007/8
9	Teampall Mhuire	Barvas	NB 3530 5173	4282	Walkover – unlocated
10	Teampall Eòin	Bragar	NB 28833 48905	4191	Walkover. EDM topographic survey. RCAHMS
11	Teampall Chiarain	Laimishader, Carloway	NB 18602 42588	N/A	Walkover
12	Teampall Mhìcheil	Kirvig, Carloway	NB 194067 41847	4126	Walkover and plane table Feb 2005
13	Teampall Dhonain	Little Bernera	NB 1505 4073	4125	None
14	Teampall Mhìcheil	Little Bernera	NB 1505 4073	4125	None
15	Teampall Chirceaboist, St Macrel's	Kirkibost, Great Bernera	NB 19130 34628	4113	Walkover and plane table Feb 2005
16	Teampall Pheadair	Pabbay Mor	NB 10446 37699	4095	Walkover
17	Teampall Bhaltois	Valtos, Uig	NB 0891 3673	4012	Walkover

Site no.	Name	Location	NGR	Canmore ID	Type of survey undertaken by LCCS
18	Taigh a' Bheannaich	Aird Uig	NB 03872 37898	4028	Walkover. RCAHMS
19	Baile na Cille (Teampall Chrìosd)	Timsgarry, Uig	NB 04800 33870	4056	Walkover
20	Teampall Mhealastadh	Mealasta, Uig	NA 98983 24198	3981	Walkover and EDM topographic survey Feb 2005
21	Taigh nan Cailleachan Dubha	Mealasta, Uig	NA 99030 24181	3983	Walkover and EDM topographic survey Feb 2005
22	Teampall Chaluim Chille	Eilean Chaluim Chille, Lochs	NB 3858 2104	4233	Walkover. RCAHMS
23	An Teampall – St Pharaer?	Cathanais, Lochs	?NB 389 234	None	Unlocated
24	An Teampall	Ranish, Lochs	NB 399 248	280476	Walkover
25	Teampall Leannain	Stornoway	NB 4223 3280	4333	Unlocated – under modern buildings
26	Eaglais Chaluim Chille	Eye	NB 4846 3226	4308	Walkover. RCAHMS
27	Teampall Chùistein	Garrabost, Point	NB 5163 3355	4395	Walkover
28	Teampall Rubha Chirc	Bayble, Point	NB 50786 29213	4385	Walkover. LAHAG survey (Knott 2000c)
29	Teampall Aulaidh	Gress	NB 49020 41540	4337	Walkover
30	Teampall Mhicheil	North Tolsta	NB 5440 4801	4405	Walkover
31	Teampall Chaluim Chille	Garry?	NB?	None	Unlocated
Outer Isles sites					
32	Chapel on Eilean an Tighe	Shiants	NG 4183 9766	11411	Walkover and EDM topographic survey, May/June 2005
33	Àirighean na h-Annaid, Garbh Eilean	Shiants	NG 412 983/NG 411 983	11409	Walkover
34	Teampall Mhuire, Eilean Mhuire	Shiants	NG 4306 9860	11408	None

Site no.	Name	Location	NGR	Canmore ID	Type of survey undertaken by LCCS
35	North Rona – St Ronan's chapel and settlement	Ness	HW 8091 3235	1472	None. *MR, RCAHMS, Nisbet & Gailey 1960
36	Sula Sgeir – Sgeir an Teampuill/Tigh Beannaichte	Ness	HW 621 305	1470	None. *MR
37	Teampall Beannachadh	Flannan Isles, Uig	NA 7262 4684	3971	None. MR
Additional sites					
38	Dun Othail	Tolsta	NB 5425 5149	4416	None. McHardy et al 2009: 71–6
39	Luchruban	Butt of Lewis, Ness	NB 50781 66013	4420	None. McHardy et al 2009: 57–62
40	Cunndal	Eoropie, Ness	NB 5120 6563	224370	Walkover. RCAHMS
41	Eilean Fir Chrothair	Little Bernera	NB 1397 4191	270625	None
42	Pabbay Beag	Pabbay Mor, Uig	NB 09793 38873	280475	None

na h-Annaid on Garbh Eilean, Shiant Islands, but due to bad weather in May/June, it was not possible to access the site safely. This site has since been excavated by the Shiant Isles Project and is published online (Foster et al 2012). In 2008 detailed topographic survey was completed for two of the three remaining sites of highest priority – Teampall Pheadair, Shader (Site no. 8) and Teampall Eòin, Bragar (Site no. 10), with geophysical survey also completed for Teampall Pheadair, Shader. The results of the surveys have aided further interpretation of the rich archaeological remains at these fascinating sites, and have produced a baseline before they collapse or are further eroded (Barrowman 2008).

2.2 The Outer Isles (Sites 35–37): North Rona, Sula Sgeir and the Flannan Isles

There are four groups of offshore islands classed as belonging to Lewis: Rona (also called North Rona), Sula Sgeir, the Flannan Isles and the Shiant Islands. There were time and resources during the survey to visit

only one of these island groups, the Shiant Islands (see 2.1 'The Lewis Coastal Chapel-sites Survey' above). The desktop study in 2004 was tailored accordingly, and the other groups of outer islands were not included. Rona and Sula Sgeir are some distance from the Isle of Lewis (between 40 and 50 miles NNE of Ness), and the Flannan Isles are 20 miles off the west coast of Uig, Lewis. The Shiant Islands (Sites 32–34), however, are situated in the Minch, between Lewis and the Scottish mainland, and visiting the islands was made easier in that another archaeology project was in progress there, and resources could be pooled. In addition to this, North Rona and Sula Sgeir have been extensively photographed and written about, and in the case of North Rona, surveyed and recorded.

2.3 Additional sites (Sites 38–42)

Although during this phase of the project only known chapel-sites were researched, during the course of this research five additional sites were

identified as being potential early chapel or Early Christian sites. All of these sites had already been surveyed, excavated or recorded by other projects in Lewis and so were not included in the walkover or other surveys. However, they are included in the gazetteer (see Table 1) and are listed at the end as potential chapel-sites (see 4.35 'Additional sites' below).

2.4 Other work in the Western Isles

In 2001 Dr Barbara Crawford (University of St Andrews), Dr Ian Simpson (School of Environmental Sciences, University of Stirling) and Beverley Ballin Smith (then of GUARD, University of Glasgow) initiated the 'Papar Project', undertaking desk-based assessment, survey and soil studies of *papa* sites and place names in the north of Scotland, to investigate the factors behind the choice of locations for settlement by Early Christian communities (<http://www.paparproject.org.uk/introduction.html>). The fieldwork began in 2002 and included the location, identification and initial comparison of anthropogenic soils at Pabbay and Paible, Taransay, both in Harris. Midden deposits were identified adjacent to St Keith's chapel at Taransay, and at Bailenacille on Pabbay a deep topsoil was located beneath significant windblown sand adjacent to the Teampall Mhoire site (Crawford 2002; Ballin Smith et al 2003). A comparative study of settlement place names has also been undertaken as part of the project, which has, since the inception of the LCCS, studied three sites in Lewis – Pabay in Uig, which includes the chapel-site of Teampall Pheadair on Pabaigh Mor (see 4.16 'Site 16. Teampall Pheadair, Pabbay Mor' below; Site H1 <http://www.paparproject.org.uk/hebrides1.html>), Bayble in Point, which includes the chapel-site of Teampall Rubha Chirc (see 4.28 'Site 28. Teampall Rubha Chirc, Point' below; Site H6 <http://www.paparproject.org.uk/hebrides6.html>) and Pabanish on Little Bernera (Site H10 <http://www.paparproject.org.uk/hebrides10.html>). The results of the project are published on the project website, <http://www.paparproject.org.uk/introduction.html>.

While no other archaeological work on the chapel-sites has been undertaken in Lewis or Harris at time of going to press, research into the Duns

in South Uist and Benbecula identified a possible Early Christian and later Norse church at Loch Dun na Cille at Cille Pheadair, Eilean Buidhe, NF 7461 1905 (Raven & Shelley 2003), and a possible early monastic settlement at Pabbay, Loch Baghasdal, NF 7782 1947 (Raven 2003; see also Papar Project site H3 <http://www.paparproject.org.uk/hebrides3.html>). Excavation has been undertaken at Cille Donain, South Uist, where the site of the disused burial ground and church were identified, and other structures were also excavated (Fleming & Woolf 1993; Parker Pearson 1995). Structural, photographic, topographic and geophysical surveys have also been undertaken at the medieval ecclesiastical site at Howmore, South Uist (Reynolds et al 2004; Thacker 2015a). This site comprises the two medieval churches of Teampall Mhoire and Teampall Chaluim Chille, with a further, smaller chapel, Caibeul Dhubhgaill to the south of Teampall Mhoire, and the Clan Ranald burial enclosure, Caibeul Clann 'ic Ailean to the north-east of Teampall Chaluim Chille, as well as two post-medieval burial enclosures. The survey demonstrated that all four medieval buildings date to the 13th century and earlier, and were built on a natural mound.

Desk-based assessment, building recording and site surveys have also been undertaken at Howmore (Addyman 2000b), at Teampall na Trionaid, Carinish, North Uist (Addyman 2000c), Cille Donain, South Uist (Thacker 2015b) and at St Barr's church and the South Chapel of Cille Bharra, Barra (Lowe 2002).

2.5 A note on nomenclature

The Gaelic word *teampall* or *teampull* is literally translated as 'temple', but is usually used in Lewis to describe ruined pre-Reformation chapels, although the term *eaglais* (church) is sometimes used, especially for an upstanding ruin or church that was once a parish church (eg at Eaglais Chaluim Chille in Eye). *Taigh a' Bheannaich* (House of Blessing) is also found, particularly on more 'remote' sites (eg in Aird Uig, and on the Flannan Isles and Sula Sgeir). The place-name elements *cille* (cell/chapel/church) and *circ* (kirk/church) can also be found in associated place names (eg at Teampall Chrìosd in Baile na Cille, Uig and Teampall Rubha Chirc

in Point). Whereas the *teampall* name appears to be a universal term applied to all pre-19th-century churches/chapels, the other terms may be more specific (the place-name elements encountered in the names of the chapel-sites are discussed further in Barrowman forthcoming a). The English terms ‘chapel’ and ‘church’ are also used interchangeably in different sources. In this report, the term ‘chapel’

is used to denote where a small chapel or church building once stood, or stands in ruins. The larger, upstanding buildings are more often described as ‘churches’, especially those that were once head churches in a parish.

Gaelic names used in this report are italicised where they are used for the first time, and if there is an English equivalent, it is given afterwards.