

4 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

4.1 Research design

The pilot study undertaken in 2003 looked at a variety of different sites including inter-tidal sea stacks, a promontory site and an inland cave site, all requiring ropes for access. An unsurveyed stretch of isolated coast was also walked by the team during the pilot study. Although all of these were valid research avenues, it was decided that the project team's time and experience could be spent more productively if the target sites were more selectively defined.

In order to make full use of the team's experience, it was decided that the project would only survey coastal sites that had access difficulties (Barrowman & McHardy 2005, 7–8), ie those inter-tidal or promontory sites that could only be accessed safely through the use of ropes. Although many promontory sites may require ropes to enable a safe environment for activities such as survey, they are often easy to access and do not require rope access skills to do so. Conversely, offshore sea stacks or islands have special access difficulties of which the team had little experience, and these were therefore excluded from the study.

However, there are hundreds if not thousands of promontories, tiny peninsulas, rocks and stacks along the coast of Lewis, many of which could

possibly qualify for such an investigation. Many of these were named in the past, and a large proportion still retain those names. The majority probably have no structural remains on them, but were used in some way – even just as land/seascape identifiers – attesting to the importance of the coast in people's lives. A compilation of *stac* place names taken from the Ordnance Survey 1:10,000 scale maps (including the Ordnance Survey 1st edition series) along the c 450km stretch of Lewis coast from Uig to Stornoway, which had been surveyed by CEAL (Burgess & Church 1997) found a total of 70 named stacks (see table 1, including their Gaelic translations). The majority of these had no structural remains on them, but the exercise demonstrated the frequency of the place-name element.

It was therefore decided that only inter-tidal or coastal promontory sites with access difficulties, and known but unsurveyed archaeological structures (whether having a '*stac*' name or not), fell within the scope of the STAC project.

Using these criteria, 13 sites in total were suitable for further study (illus 1 and table 2). One of these sites had already been surveyed – Dun Eistean (Barrowman & Driscoll 2000), and on another the structural evidence was natural rather than anthropogenic (Stac na Beirgh – a potentially significant

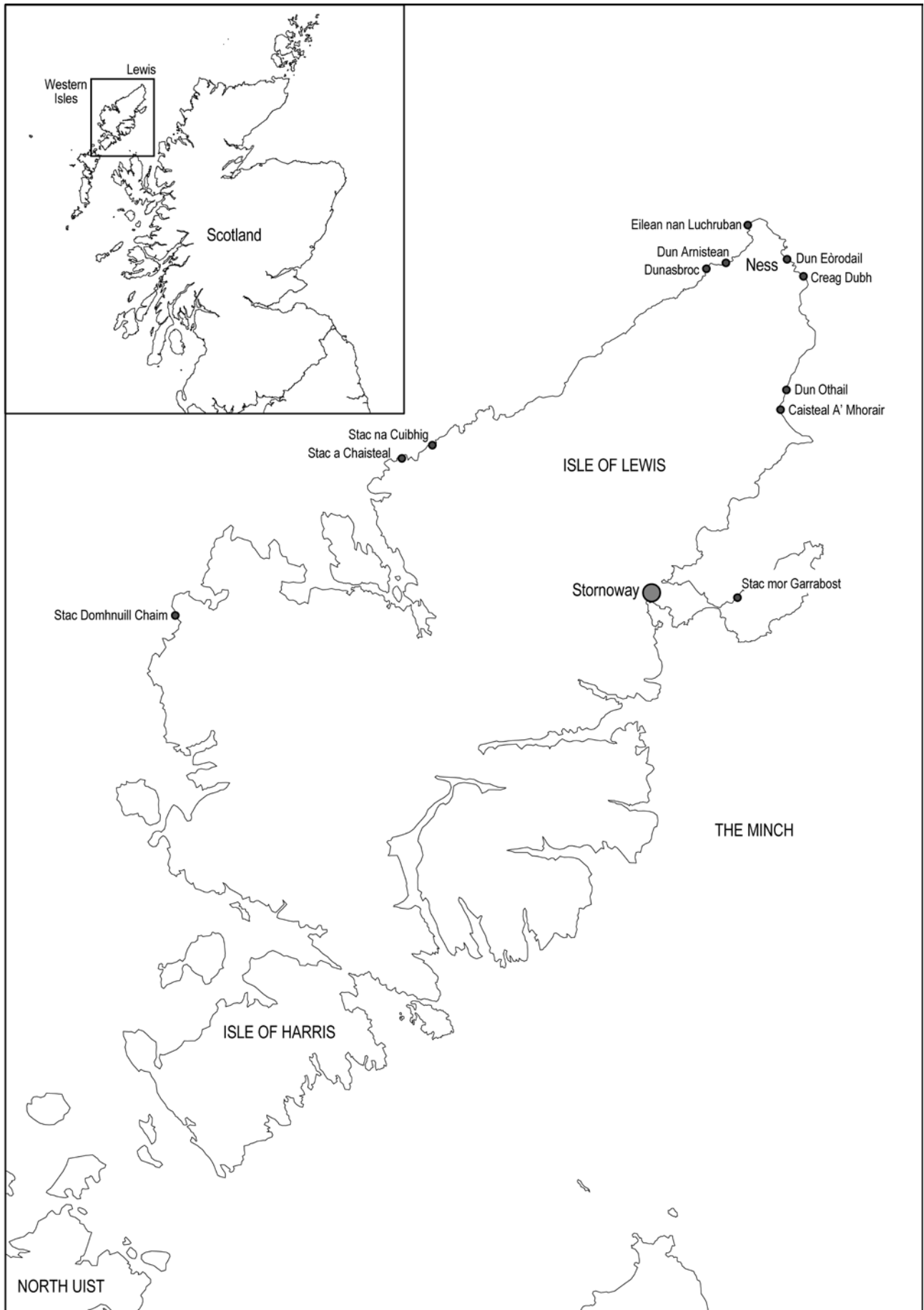
Table 2 Suitable sites for survey

Name	Location	NGR	Eastings	Northings	Access (AD/SAD)*	Archaeology (Y/N/U)†	Erosion assessment (% estimate of surface area eroding‡)
Stac a Chaisteil*	Carloway	NB	20200	45500	AD	Y	60%
Dun Arnistean*	Ness	NB	48850	62675	AD	Y	75%
Dun Eistean*	Ness	NB	53500	65100	AD	Y	30%
Dun Eòradail*	Ness	NB	54300	63000	AD	Y	10%
Dunasbroc*	Ness	NB	47100	62000	AD	Y	30%
Luchruban*	Ness	NB	50750	66000	AD	Y	10%
Caisteal a Mhorair*	North Tolsta	NB	53670	49700	AD	Y	20%
Dun Othail*	North Tolsta	NB	54200	51500	AD	Y	5%
Stac mor Garrabost	Point	NB	49776	33130	SAD	Y	50%
Stac Domhnuill Chaim*	Uig	NB	00190	31500	AD	Y	50%
Stac na Beirgh	Uig	NB	03060	35970	AD	Y?	60%
Stacan Chuibhig	Dalbeg	NB	22930	46560	AD	Y?	40%

* surveyed previously (Barrowman and Driscoll 2000; Barrowman, McHardy and MacLeod 2004)

† AD Access difficulties/ SAD Special access difficulties; † Y/N/U Yes/No/Uncertain

‡ Percentage based on an average assessment of amount of erosion relative to surface area of stack, 50% suggesting whole circumference eroding.



Illus 1 Location map of stack sites investigated on Lewis

name nonetheless, see [Section 6.6](#) on Stac Domhnuill Chaim). This left eleven stacks to investigate; Stac Domhnuill Chaim, Stac a' Chaisteal, Stac an Cuibhig,

Dun Arnistean, Dunasbroc, Luchruban, Dun Eòradail, Creag Dubh, Dun Othail, Caisteal a' Mhorair and Stac Mor Garrabost.