
16 STAC MOR GARRABOST

16.1 Physical description and location (*illus 57*)

Stac Mor Garrabost (NGR: NB 4987 3310) is a roughly cylindrical stack, *c* 5m in diameter and 10m tall. It is located on the north-west side of the Eye peninsula 30m offshore from the landward cliff line, rising from a wave-cut platform which is exposed at low tide. The local geology is sedimentary, New Red Sandstone, forming conglomerate cliffs (**Burgess & Church 1997**, 355).

There are no obvious structures at first inspection.

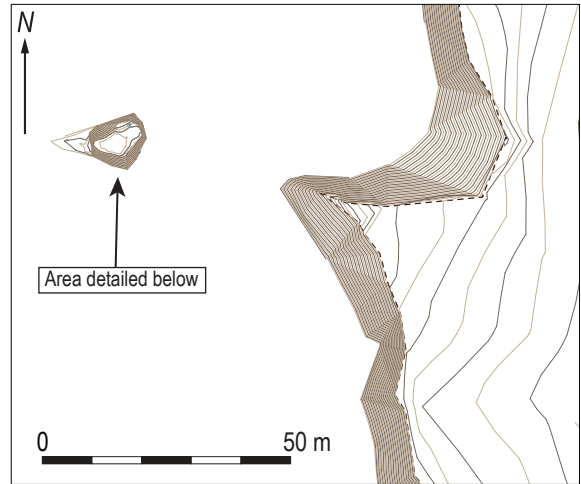
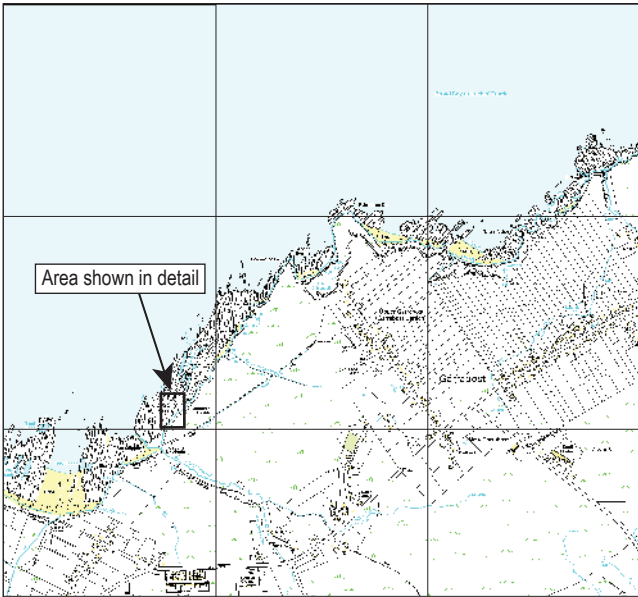
16.2 Erosion

The soft conglomerates of the area are suffering direct marine erosion from wave action (**Burgess & Church 1997**, 353). The stack was most likely larger in the past, as suggested by the use of the adjective *mor* (big), in the place name.



Illus 57 (above) Stac Mor Garrabost from the south

Illus 58 (opposite) Location map and topographic survey, Stac Mor Garrabost



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Illus 59 Wall on Stac Mor Garrabost from the north-west. Scale 0.3m long.

16.3 Access

Access was achieved via a steep but navigable path to the foreshore, and a walk across the rock platform at low tide. Access onto the stack from there was problematic, as none of the usual techniques could safely be used due to the crumbly nature of the conglomerate rock. Strong anchors could not be placed to enable safe climbing, so an alternative method had to be used. The problem was solved by throwing a weighted guide line over the whole stack, and pulling the usual double rope over and down to the other side. The ropes were then anchored by ropes stretched around the circumference of the base of the stack, above which a natural 'hip' ensured no slippage. When on the top of the stack, care had to be taken to stay on the opposite side of the plateau from that on which the ropes were anchored, however further ropes could be attached at any point around the base to safely enable full coverage of the stack.

16.4 Previous work

The site was identified as having a possible enclosure on it, by the Coastal Erosion Assessment, Lewis (Burgess & Church 1997, 351).

16.5 The survey

The top surface of the stack was covered by soil, up to 0.7m deep on the east side where it was exposed by an eroding scar and overgrown with a thick covering of grasses and sorrel. The summit was roughly flat (illus 58), with only one discernible topographic feature which may have been archaeological. This was a ledge descending spirally from the plateau for some 5m on the landward side; this is just visible as a dark band of vegetation to the left of the figure in illus 57. If this had been an access route in antiquity then the lower section has been lost to erosion.

A small section of drystone walling was discovered on the north-eastern, seaward face of the stack (illus 59). The wall was c 1m long, of two courses

in places and constructed from blocks of Lewisian gneiss, which stood out sharply from the conglomerate bedrock. These may have been sourced from the reef below the stack, where gneiss boulders can be found. The wall continued underneath the vegetation for at least 0.5m to the landward side of the stack and may also have continued to the opposite side but was insubstantial if present. Further gneiss blocks were present higher up the slope, which may have originally been part of a larger wall or revetment.

One small body sherd and a fragment of non-diag-

nostic pottery (see [Appendix 3](#)) were discovered in the soils immediately beneath the wall.

16.6 Discussion

Much like Stac na Cuibhig ([Section 8](#)), little interpretation can be made of the structural evidence at Stac Mor Garrabost. It is clear, however, that there once was a much larger site here which has suffered significant erosion due to the soft conglomerate rock of the stack.