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**Loyalty, ‘localness’ and local identity
in the archaeological record,
with reference to work in the Isle of Lewis**

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Work)

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Abstract



Illus 1: Views of the west and east coasts of Lewis. ©Author

The published work included with this thesis explores the evidence for the existence of local identity and loyalty to place in the past, and how it can be recognised in the archaeological record. Two of the publications submitted involve the meticulous excavations undertaken on Dùn Èistean, a late medieval clan stronghold situated in Ness, Isle of Lewis (Barrowman 2015a; 2019), the third is the publication of a survey of the chapel-sites of Lewis (Barrowman 2020).

The lack of modern excavations of medieval sites in Lewis until recently has meant that research into the development of vernacular architecture in Lewis had been particularly limited. Similarly, the dearth of primary historical sources for Lewis prior to the 17th century has meant that the study of chapel-sites and church organisation in Lewis relies almost totally on archaeological work, of which there had been very little. The published work included in this thesis has therefore been transformative in identifying building features, techniques, and processes that had not previously been identified on a high-status late medieval site such as Dùn Èistean, or on ecclesiastical sites, which were fundamentally linked to the contemporary landscapes of power in which the clan strongholds like Dùn Èistean were situated (see Barrowman, C S 2015, 246–50; Stiùbhart 2015; Barrowman 2020, 121).

The Dùn Èistean excavations have also brought new vigour and perspectives to the study of local identity and culture during the medieval period. The layout of Dùn Èistean apes that of medieval castles seen elsewhere in the Western Isles, with a small keep or tower, ancillary buildings, and a defensive enclosure wall. However, the excavations identified that each constituent feature on the site was built in the local vernacular style, using local building methods and resources such as turf roofing, clay-bonded stonework, and solid earthen walls rather than imported materials and techniques.

It could be argued that Dùn Èistean was cut off and remote, its occupants lacking the contacts, influence, and resources of their mainland counterparts. This argument keys into traditional antiquarian views of Lewis as an inherently inaccessible, cultural backwater

(Barrowman 2019, 38). However, Dùn Èistean was in fact situated at the crux of the maritime trade and fishing routes that were operating in the late medieval period around Ireland and the west coast, across the north of Scotland and across northern Europe. The analysis of the results of the excavations has established that the site was fully engaged in the contemporary world of widespread contacts and influence (Barrowman 2019). It was also entangled in the conflicts abounding at a time of political chaos in Lewis, when the struggles between the Scottish Crown and the clans of the Hebrides, and in the infighting amongst the clans themselves, were particularly tumultuous (see MacCoinnich 2008; 2015a). Many of the buildings on the site were shown to have been in a constant state of re-building and adaption, probably occupied on a seasonal basis as a refuge as and when needed, and lead projectiles and gunflints were both used and made on the site. The fact that a strong local culture prevailed within this sphere of outside influences and politics, suggests that a degree of cultural autonomy existed in the Ness district at this time and confirms that a strong local identity can co-exist with engagement in the wider world (Barrowman 2015b).

When the results of the Dùn Èistean excavations and the Lewis Coastal Chapel-sites Survey are combined, it shows that the landscapes of belief and clanship were inextricably linked and evolving and were fundamentally grounded in the local culture and identity. An almost total lack of primary historical documents relating to the church in Lewis in the medieval period, coupled with very little archaeological research undertaken on the chapel-sites, has meant that our knowledge has been particularly limited. However, with the completion of the Lewis Coastal Chapel-sites Survey and the Dùn Èistean excavations together, it is becoming possible to identify hints of local culture and organisation, in the form of shared building methods between secular and ecclesiastical sites. The re-building and re-working of chapel buildings in a similar way to those on Dùn Èistean is also seen, with chapel buildings being re-purposed and re-used when cultural beliefs and religious organisation shifted.

When attempting to understand and study local identity, I have been privileged to be able to live and work in the landscape I am studying (Illus 1), to really live in and experience it, and the culture that has grown out of it, something that is not always available to the academic. Through my own personal experience of life in Lewis over the last twenty years, I have realised that in the past, as well as the present, the island was governed not by a sense of remoteness or an ‘otherness’, but by a strong local identity that came out of a shared culture, birthed from the land, and from shared practice, traditions, and language which is only now beginning to be eroded due to the decline of crofting in the area, and increasing globalization¹.

¹See for instance, discussion in Steger 2020; Tomlinson 1999.

Abstracts of works presented

Barrowman, R. C. with contributions from T B Ballin et al. 2015a Dùn Èistean, Ness: The Excavation of a Clan Stronghold. Acair, Ltd.: Stornoway. ISBN 9780861525393 (174,660 words)

This is the definitive publication of the results of several years of survey and excavation work on the small cliff stack of Dùn Èistean, the first modern excavations of a site of this type in the Western Isles. The excavations revealed the remains of a defended settlement that was repeatedly inhabited for short bursts of time, with evidence for conflict on site. A defensive perimeter wall, lookout tower, communal quarters and ancillary buildings, and a corn-drying kiln built from turf and stone were all excavated. This site is part of a long tradition of clan strongholds seen in the MacLeod lordship on the western seaboard of north-west Scotland. The book follows a multi-disciplinary approach that includes detailed archaeological analyses of the stratigraphy and deposits, and specialist artefactual, ecofactual and soils analysis alongside the historical evidence and oral traditions associated with the site, where an understanding of the political turmoil experienced between the islands and the mainland governmental authorities in Scotland in the 1500s and early 1600s AD is crucial to set the archaeological site in context. The location of Dùn Èistean on the coast of the Ness peninsula thrust out into the North Atlantic meant that it was situated in the busy sea routes around northern Britain and Europe. With views along the Lewis coast and across to the Scottish mainland, it would have been highly visible in a maritime world. The excavations on the site have revealed for the first time the economy, cultural connections and activities that were undertaken in the late medieval period before the assertion of the sovereignty of the Scottish Crown in the early 17th century.

**Barrowman, R C 2019 “A Cultural Backwater”: the “Localness” of Dùn Èistean, Ness and its Place in the Wider Maritime World of Northwest Scotland', in *Journal of the North Atlantic, Special Volume 12* (2019), 32–43. <https://doi.org/10.3721/037.012.sp1201>
<https://www.eaglehill.us/JONAonline2/access-pages/spec12/Barrowman-accesspage.shtml> (7,248 words)**

Rather than being situated in a ‘cultural backwater’, the occupants of the clan stronghold of Dùn Èistean were in touch with the sea trade and fishing routes across northern Scotland and were affected by the fallout from the political struggles of the times between the Scottish Crown and the clans of the Hebrides. This paper provides a resumé of the results of the excavations on the

site, focussing on the evidence for a population that maintained their own unique local identity, and how this fits with the location of the stronghold in the wider maritime world of north-west Scotland.

Barrowman, R C 2020 ‘Chapel-sites on the Isle of Lewis: Results of the Lewis Coastal Chapel-sites Survey’ Scottish Archaeological Internet Reports 88

<https://doi.org/10.9750/issn.2056-7421.2020.88>

(52,222 words)

This publication reports on the results of a project undertaken 2004–8 to record the archaeology of the coastal chapel-sites in Lewis. Due to a scarcity of surviving contemporary historical documentation relating to Lewis in the medieval period, archaeology has great potential to further investigate these sites. The publication pulls together previous antiquarian and local historical research, but also includes the results of the walkover and targeted topographic surveys. Over forty sites were identified, and the remains recorded at each site were varied. The distribution of most of the chapel-sites reflects the dominant coastal settlement pattern in Lewis - most are adjacent to, or within, areas of deserted post-medieval townships, and have been robbed to build later structures. A small number of sites that are away from areas of settlement were also robbed or adapted to build shieling huts. Without documentary evidence or excavation, the dating of these sites is problematic. Those traditionally thought to be Early Christian are situated on the outer isles where they have survived later development and remain relatively untouched. The rest range from between the 12th and the 17th centuries, and from small unicameral chapels and bicameral churches to larger, more upstanding buildings, some of which once served as parish churches.

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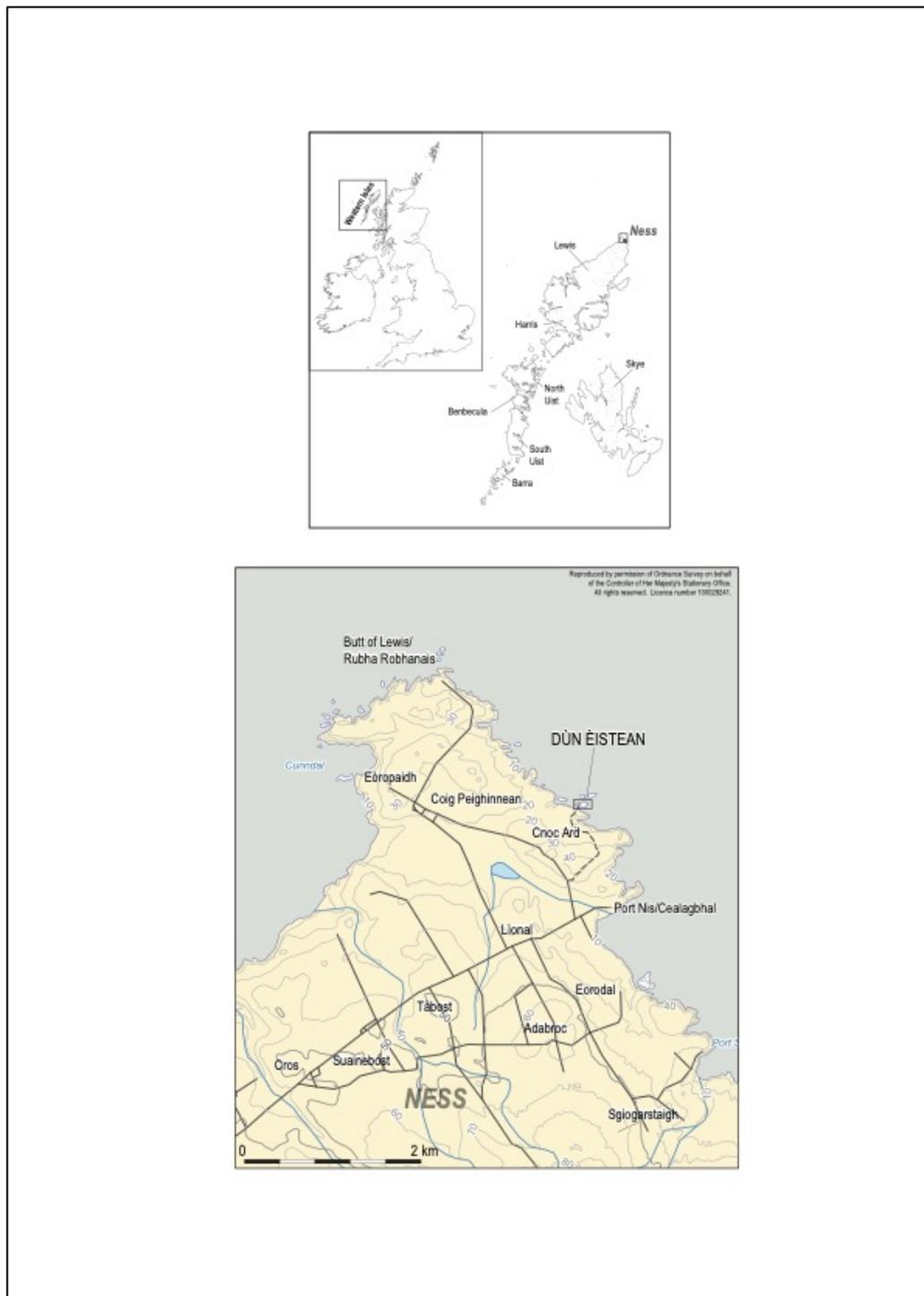
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1. Introduction

Situated off the north-west coast of Scotland, Lewis is the furthest north, and the largest, island in the chain known as the Outer Hebrides, or now more often, the Western Isles (Illus 2). The work included in this thesis covers Dùn Èistean, a cliff stack off the east coast of the district of Ness at the north end of Lewis, and chapel-sites surveyed around the coasts of Lewis (see Illus 10, below).



Illus 2 Location of Lewis and Dùn Èistean. From Barrowman 2015a, Illus 2.2

The published work centres on the medieval period, spanning the early medieval to the immediately post-medieval, 17th and 18th centuries. The medieval period is an understudied one in Lewis and Harris, due to an almost complete lack of any surviving primary historical documents, excavations of medieval sites, or upstanding early medieval, Norse or even medieval vernacular buildings (a situation very different to Orkney and Shetland for instance) (Armit 1996).

It is thought most likely that when the Norse landed on the shores of Lewis they encountered Picts, rather than Gaels. Whilst there is no early medieval stone sculpture surviving from mainland Lewis and Harris, Pictish Class I symbol stones have been found at Strome Shumanul, Benbecula and Pabbay, south of Barra (Fisher 2001, 106; 108). In addition to this, the discovery of ‘Kilphedir Kate’, a cist burial excavated from below a square cairn at Cille Pheadair in South Uist (Parker Pearson et al. 2018), and radiocarbon dated to 620-780 cal AD, and a square cairn discovered in advance of the building of the Berneray causeway (Downes and Badcock 1998) both suggest that the Western Isles were part of the Pictish Kingdom at this time. In their article on the surviving pre-Norse place names in the Outer Hebrides, Jennings and Kruse (2009) discuss Alcock’s identification of the ‘Peripheral Picts’ in the area of the Western Isles, with a split between the southern zone of the Gaelic-speaking kingdom of Dál Riata with its links to Ireland, and the northern zone, north of Ardnamurchan, which included the Outer Hebrides and Skye, which had closer links with the Northern Isles and Pictland and was presumably Pictish-speaking. It is likely that Gaelic would slowly have spread through this northern area however, and may have been the main language of the church as it spread from Ireland and the west (see Clancy 2021; forthcoming).

The Western Isles, or Sudreys, were on the western Viking sea route between Norway and Ireland, and after initial incursions into the islands, the Norse settled the islands and they were to become part of the Kingdom of Man and the Isles, with its inhabitants known as the *Gall-Ghàidheil*, or Foreigner Gaels, of mixed Scandinavian and Gaelic heritage. With the Treaty of Perth in 1266 however, the Hebrides were ceded to the Scottish crown, and Lewis became part of the Lordship of the Isles. During this time, the MacLeods (who along with many other Hebridean clans, claimed their ancestry from a Norse predecessor) successfully held their lands from the Earls of Ross, the Stewarts, the MacDonald Lords of the Isles and the Crown (Macdonald 1978 (1990), 23–4). However, when the Lordship finally collapsed in 1493, Lewis descended into political chaos in a period designated *Linn nan Creach*, Age of Raids, in Gaelic (see MacCoinnich 2015a, 41). At this time the MacLeods of Lewis were frequently in rebellion

against the Crown as the Scottish monarchs increasingly sought more control over the region. Rival clans, and factions within clans, competed with each other, and the Crown, for control, and the resulting tumultuous situation is partly what accounts for the lack of documents surviving for Lewis in the medieval period.

In later local tradition Dùn Èistean is considered to have been the stronghold of the clan Morrison at this time. Historians Aonghas MacCoinnich and Dòmhnall Uilleam Stiùbhart studied the historical background to Dùn Èistean and theirs is an invaluable part of the Dùn Èistean publication in placing the archaeology in context (MacCoinnich 2015a; Stiùbhart 2015). Both historians identified that the Morrisons were first known as the *britheamhan* or ‘brieve’ kindred, a family of hereditary judges in the historical record in the later 16th century, and at this time had a ‘kindly right’ to the lands of Ness within the MacLeod lordship. Stiùbhart also highlights the tradition that the whole north end of Ness was considered a sanctuary in the medieval period when the brieves operated under the jurisdiction of the MacLeods in the area (Stiùbhart 2015, 71–5). Dùn Èistean was in a strategic position, with views onto the busy seaways surrounding Ness, from the Scottish mainland and further south, and northwards to Orkney and west to Ireland and the west coast of Britain. Indeed, the MacLeod lordship itself was ‘trans-Minch’, encompassing both Lewis and the west coasts of Sutherland, Coigeach and Assynt on the Scottish mainland and parts of Skye (MacCoinnich 2015a, 48–50). MacCoinnich reminds us that as followers of the MacLeods, the Morrisons probably appeared in other areas of the Lordship and highlights the significance of rich fishing grounds around northern Scotland (MacCoinnich 2015a, 61–2; 2015b). At the end of this period, in 1598, the Scottish Crown attempted to establish a plantation of Fife noblemen and merchants (the ‘Fife Adventurers’) to subdue and ‘civilise’ the area and exploit these lucrative fishing grounds. This plan proved unsuccessful, and indeed exacerbated local unrest and infighting, until 1609, when the by now, weary, colonists sold out their rights to Lewis to the MacKenzies of Kintail, who held the island until the 19th century (MacCoinnich 2015a, 50–64).

Due to the almost complete lack of documentary evidence that pre-dates the 17th century, the study of the chapel-sites in Lewis is also an almost prehistoric one, with very little is known about church organisation on the ground, or even the parish system, prior to the 16th century. Due also to the scarcity of archaeological fieldwork on the chapel-sites in Lewis, the historical study of early Christianity and conversion in Lewis, and even the organisation, use, or date of most of the chapel-sites has largely relied on suggested comparisons with other areas and tended to concentrate on the development of the parish system elsewhere (Cant 1985; Woolf 2003; Abrams 2007; Thomas 2009). Very little is known about how the chapels on the island once

related to the landscape and settlements around them (e.g., Illus 3), and still less is known of their origins, as little extant early Christian or later stone sculpture has survived from there. Ian Fisher's gazetteer of the early medieval sculpture of the West Highlands and Islands, published by the RCAHMS in 2001 for instance, lists only two examples for Lewis, both from offshore islands (one from North Rona, and the other from *Eilean an Tighe* in the Shiants; Fisher 2001, 114–116, nos. 55 and 56), and this remains the case.



Illus 3 View of Teampall Chaluim Chille on Eilean Chaluim Chille, Loch Erisort, Lochs, Lewis.

Photograph © author

2. A personal reflection on local identity

Unusual as it is to do so, I feel I need to locate the reader in my own experience, as my research has been indelibly influenced by it. Due to a connection since childhood with the Isle of Lewis, islands always fascinated me as being potentially mysterious places, isolated and away from mainstream life. From when I was a year-old baby, my family would visit our holiday house in Ness, at the very northern tip of Lewis, every year. Consequently, as a child I experienced that different, strong culture that is threaded throughout the lives of those from Ness. Every summer I was confronted with the ‘localness’ of the community we holidayed in, and its cultural difference from anywhere else I had encountered. In those days the journey was an adventure of setting off with my parents and younger brother from eastern England with everything we needed for several weeks, driving through Edinburgh at midnight, single-track roads, mountains, ‘the big ferry’ and ‘the little ferry’, sleeping in the mainland ferry car park in our Renault 4. Then when we arrived the adventure continued, in a land and culture that was far removed from

our home for the rest of the year. No electrical sockets, just lights, no hot water, the only heating in our little unmodernised house being open peat fires, over which my parents hung kettles to boil, and my father's old scout pots full of soup to cook. And all in a land where people still spoke a different language (Gaelic), as mysterious sounding to my ears as I imagined the Elvish in the Lord of the Rings.



Illus 4 Tintagel Castle, Cornwall, 1998. © Chris Barrowman

The ‘other’ and the place ‘set apart’ was thus what originally attracted me to work with projects on islands whilst I was a Medieval Archaeology student at UCL. However, as I became involved through working on Dr Colleen Batey’s excavations on the Earl’s Bu in Orkney (Batey 1987; 2003; forthcoming a and b), I moved to work for the Viking and Early Settlement Archaeological Research Project (VESARP) at Glasgow University in the early 1990s after graduating to work on projects directed by Prof Christopher Morris, such as the Tintagel, Cornwall excavations (Illus 4) and the Shetland chapel-sites project (e.g., Morris 2001; Barrowman et al. 2007; Morris and Barrowman 2008).

I increasingly began to appreciate a different view of island life as reflected in the archaeological record when I subsequently directed a research project on St Ninian’s Isle, Shetland (Illus 5), the chapel-site that produced the famous St Ninian’s Isle treasure, which included a detailed study of the existing 1950s excavation archives from the site, as well as new survey and excavations there (Barrowman 2011). Through detailed analysis it was possible to challenge some previously-held assumptions concerning the populations that had used the site, perhaps the most significant of these being that the incoming Norse, far from wiping out the native, Pictish, presence, simply continued to use the site and adopted it as a sacred place, buried their dead there, and respected it as a special locale (Barrowman 2011, 207; Barrowman forthcoming a).



Illus 5 Chapel on St Ninian's Isle, Shetland, 2011. Photograph © author

When I moved with my family to live and work in Ness (Illus 6) my research and publications shifted to the archaeology of Lewis (in addition to included work see Barrowman 2007; 2008b; 2016; Barrowman & Innes 2009). Through directing the comprehensive excavations undertaken as part of the Dùn Èistean Archaeology Project, and the research and fieldwork for the Lewis Coastal Chapel-sites Survey, it began to be feasible to focus on how in the past the local population responded to the political events of the wider world in which they were embroiled. Through this work, above all was the importance of a detailed approach to the publication of excavations where all aspects of the excavation archive are studied, and where possible a multi-disciplinary approach is pursued, whether that be oral traditions, scientific analysis, history, or archaeology.



Illus 6 Eorodale, Lewis, 2001. © Chris Barrowman

A detailed and grounded approach is crucial in identifying the evidence in the archaeological record for loyalty to place, ‘localness’ and local identity in a past community. I was very fortunate in that being immersed in the local community was of great benefit to me when attempting to understand the local history and study of a site in the past, and the perspectives of the population around it on their own land and history.

3. The concept of local identity and loyalty to place on archaeological sites

The general lack of historical and even archaeological evidence for the medieval period in Lewis, has led to a situation where medieval housing and buildings were completely missing from interpretations, and the late 18th/19th century blackhouses and shielings in Lewis that antiquarians and early 20th century scholars found so fascinating (Illus 7), were often dubbed as survivals of a prehistoric mindset that had survived in such a ‘remote’ location (e.g. Curwen 1938; see also Poller, who supervised on the Dùn Èistean excavations and Ness Archaeological Landscape Survey; Poller 2012).



Illus 7 Late 19th century blackhouse ruin in Baile an Truiseil, 2007. Photograph © author

Fortunately, this ‘insidious cultural determinism’ (Oram 2017, 250) no longer prevails. The importance of intangible cultural heritage is now recognised by archaeologists (e.g., see Roberston 2009) and the local situation and population in which archaeological remains and

artefacts are located is given more importance (e.g., see Dalglish 2018). In general, there is an increasing recognition that an archaeologist's view of material remains can be completely different to that of someone living and working in a landscape.

Dr Sada Mire for instance, in the Guardian (31st October 2020;

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/oct/31/african-archaeologists-archaeology-europe-local-cultures>) writes in her article, *Here's why we need more African archaeologists*:

'I studied archaeology in Europe, and when I went back to Africa, I assumed that the methods I had learned applied universally. However, I quickly realised that locals had traditional ways of preserving their heritage. Their approach preserved **knowledge and skills** rather than objects or monuments...knowledge is passed on through oral culture, festivals, songs, poems, commemorations and casual conversations and observations. Heritage can be just as much about relationships and performance'. [my emphasis]

This appreciation that the archaeology of a culture is also borne out of shared knowledge and skills is beginning to be recognised in archaeological research. This is what I would describe as local identity. Local identity is not the same as 'community identity'. Community identity speaks to a construct, whereas local identity speaks to a people and place, and a loyalty to it. As Mac Sweeney says, in her study of community identity and archaeology from her work in Turkey, 'the experiences of sharing space and location provide a basis on which community identity can be built, but they are not sufficient in themselves to ensure that community identity will crystallize'. She goes on to state that there must be signs that people choose to celebrate 'a sense of collective "us-ness"' such as social practices that encourage a sense of social cohesion by bringing a community together and highlighting commonalities, and that therefore the existence of community identity can only be inferred if evidence can be found for enactments of community' (Mac Sweeney 2011, 44). Unlike community identity as defined by Mac Sweeney however, I would argue that local identity is not drummed up by shared social practices or shown in enactments of community in the archaeological record, it is borne from the ground up and evidenced in the material culture and ways of doing things. Local identity in the archaeological record is borne out of the shared land and history, and out of a shared knowledge and way of doing things, shared family ties and traditions and a loyalty to a place - where relationships have been made in a particular landscape that has irrevocably influenced them in a special way that is identifiably different from other landscapes. A subtle, but important difference.



Illus 8 Sea view of Dùn Èistean and the east coast of Lewis, looking across to Assynt on the Scottish mainland in February 2008. Photograph © author

Work on specific local identities in the past, as manifest in the archaeological evidence, is increasingly being pursued in recent research throughout the islands, UK and Europe (e.g., Boomert & Bright 2007; O’ Sullivan 2008; Mac Sweeney 2011; Lee 2015). For the medieval period, and especially relevant to Dùn Èistean, research into the localised style of late/post-medieval ‘Gaelic’ or ‘Galley’ castles of the Hebrides and Ireland locates them in the contemporary maritime landscape and local culture (e.g., Breen & Raven 2015; Loeber 2001; Martin 2017) (Illus 8). Thacker’s work on the mortar analysis of Hebridean castles and chapels for instance, has identified that locally made mortar techniques are present (Thacker 2020), whilst work in Ulster has shown that Hebridean builders there also imported local cultural building methods (Breen and Raven 2015; Loeber 2001, 298). The vernacular architecture of Lewis has also been researched through the history and culture of the landscape (Geddes 2006) and identified as varied and understudied. The research undertaken at Dùn Èistean comes at a crucial time, as it ascertains how local identity manifests and can then be recognised in the archaeological record and material culture.

4. An introduction to the Dùn Èistean Archaeology Project and the Lewis Coastal Chapel-sites Survey



Illus 9 Topographic survey plan of Dùn Èistean and features on mainland. From Barrowman 2015a, Illus 2.25

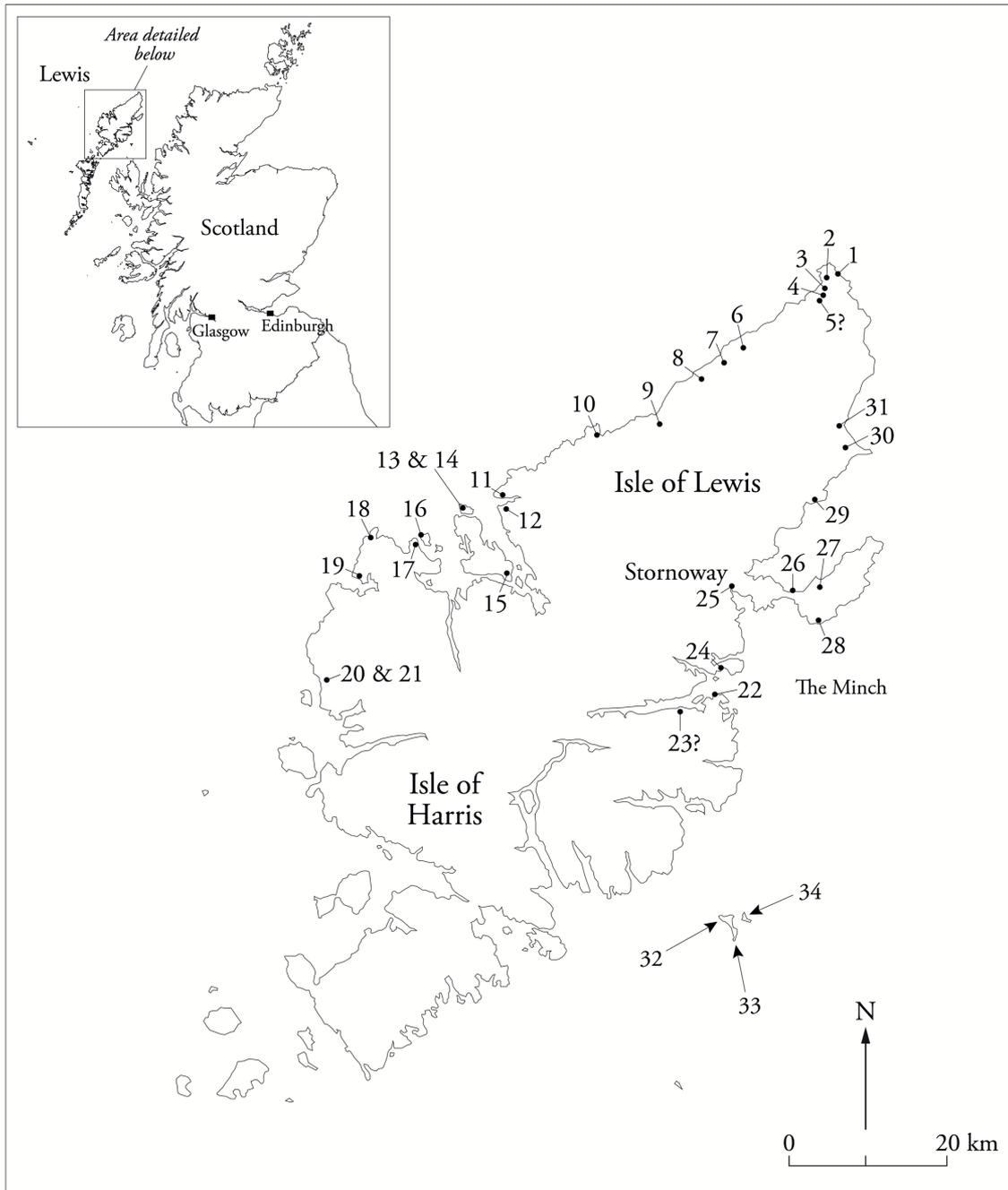
The excavations on Dùn Èistean were undertaken as part of the Dùn Èistean Archaeology Project (DEAP), set up by the then Western Isles archaeologist, Dr Mary MacLeod Rivett (2021), in

discussion with Dr John Raven, who himself had just completed research on the medieval landscape of Uist (Raven 2005). The DEAP adopted a multi-disciplinary approach and as well as the Dùn Èistean survey (Illus 9) and excavations, the project included a separate survey project undertaken across the Ness area, directed by Dr Chris Barrowman (Barrowman, C S 2015), and a Gaelic local oral tradition and place-names project directed by Dr Dòmhnall Uilleam Stiùbhart (Stiùbhart 2015; Comunn Eachdraidh Nis 2020). As post-excavation progressed, Dr Aonghas MacCoinnich contributed to the historical background of the period in the publication of the excavations (MacCoinnich 2015a; Stiùbhart 2015), particularly regarding the Clan Morrison, who are linked to Dùn Èistean in oral tradition. The DEAP excavations were completed in 2008 and published in 2015 (Barrowman 2015a). Dùn Èistean is unique in being the only clan stronghold in the Western Isles to have been subject to large-scale modern excavations, and this has made an important contribution to the study of late medieval/post-medieval Lewis.

The Lewis Coastal Chapel-sites Survey was set up in 2004, with fieldwork being conducted in the springs of 2004, 2005 and 2008. Very little is known about the archaeology of the chapel-sites on Lewis as none have been excavated, other than in a small scale, rescue context. The Royal Commission survey, published in 1928, was the only survey of the chapel-sites to have been undertaken, other than the architectural surveys of upstanding remains undertaken by Muir (1861) and MacGibbon & Ross (1896).

Due to this dearth of archaeological information, the Lewis Coastal Chapel-sites Survey (LCCS) was initiated in 2004 to research, record and survey known chapel-sites found around the coasts of Lewis as a baseline, in the face of increased coastal erosion (Illus 10). By necessity a wide approach was adopted that would link together all previous references to, and records of, the chapels, including in antiquarian and local historical research, and following this, a walkover survey was undertaken of each site, their condition and cultural significance assessed, and recommendations made as to the need for any further survey work. Based on this work, topographic and geophysical surveys were conducted at specific targeted sites in subsequent years between 2005 and 2008.

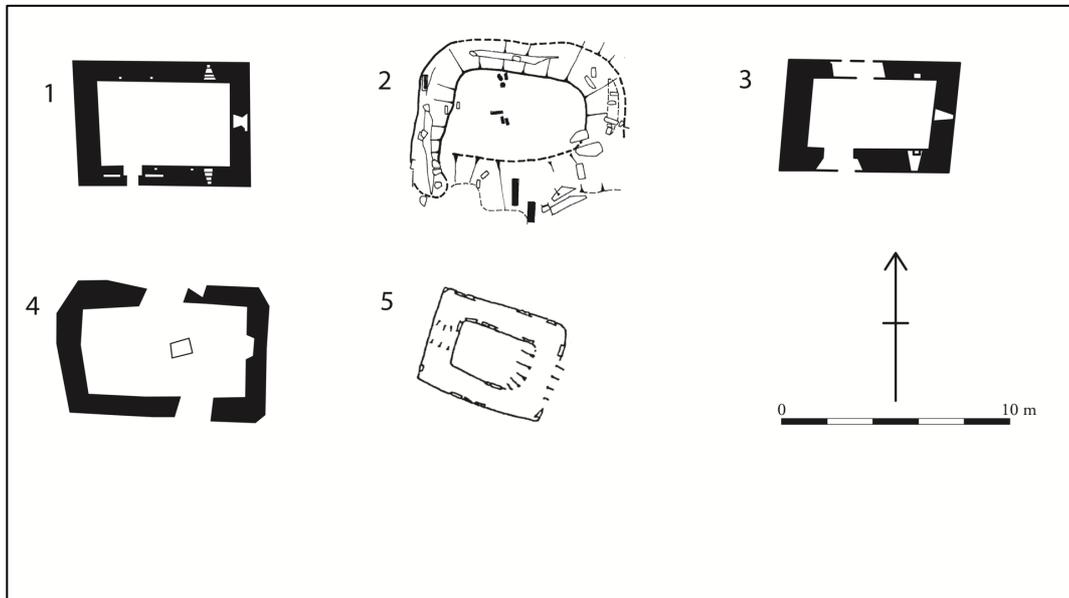
With the completion of the post-excavation and publication of the results of the Dùn Èistean excavation and the chapel-sites survey, it is now possible to start to build up a picture of the medieval landscape of Lewis, both the landscapes of belief and power, and the physical remains we might expect to find across the area, the common building techniques employed, and the also the identification of local techniques, knowledge and skills.



Illus 10 Location map of the 34 chapel-sites located on mainland Lewis and the Shiant Islands. From Barrowman 2020, 3, Illus 1

The detail of the chapel-sites research results and survey for each specific site is now published in the open access publication by the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland (Scottish Archaeological Internet Reports: Barrowman 2020), and a brief résumé of the results submitted on request as a case study for the publication, *Small Churches and Religious Landscapes in the Norse North Atlantic and Northern Europe c. 900–1300*, which had resulted from a session at the 24th Annual meeting of the EAA in Vilnius, Lithuania in 2016 and is to be published in

memory of Simun Arge (Barrowman forthcoming c). However, the next step is an analysis of the results, which will discuss the medieval ecclesiastical and secular landscapes of Lewis as informed by the research work of both projects (Barrowman forthcoming b; e.g. see Illus 11).



Illus 11 Comparative ground plans from Barrowman forthcoming b; 1. Teampall a' Chrò' Naomh, Galson; 2. Teampall Mhicheil, Kirvig, Carloway; 3. Taigh a' Bheannaich, Aird Uig; 4. Teampall Mhealastadh, Uig; 5. Teampall Rubha Chirc, Bayble, Point. © Barrowman forthcoming b, not to be reproduced without permission

5. Loyalty to place and 'localness' in Lewis: a strong identity and culture in a changing world of widespread contacts and influence



Illus 12 View of Dùn Èistean from the sea, from the east-south-east, sailing north. The tower on Dùn Èistean can be seen to the right of the photograph. Photograph © Chris Barrowman

5.1. The wider world and contacts within landscapes of political and ecclesiastical power

It is now generally recognised that whether we view the islands of western Scotland as remote and marginal, or interconnected and central, is purely a matter of perspective (Barrowman 2008a). Throughout history Scotland was part of a maritime world (Illus 12), whether the Iron Age ‘Atlantic province’, interconnected communities of early Christian missionaries, post-Roman trade routes along the west coasts of Britain and Ireland, Norse colonisation across the North Atlantic, or the medieval maritime Lordships of the west coast and Ireland (e.g., see McDonald 2017). In the late medieval and early modern periods, Ness was not in a “cultural backwater” (see above) but in a pivotal position in the middle of the sea-based trade and expedition routes that were in operation around the north end of the Isle of Lewis at the time (e.g., Cathcart 2019; Barrett & Gibbon 2015; Barrowman 2008a; MacCoinnich 2015b; Campbell 2019, 17–19; Horning 2019). Clan strongholds such as Dùn Èistean all demonstrate ‘a maritime orientation in which any distinction between island and mainland is largely irrelevant’ (McDonald 2017, 16) and this was certainly the case for the MacLeods of Lewis, in whose territory the site lay. The clan had control of both Lewis and the opposing mainland side of the Minch, crucial for an island clan in control of the treeless landscape of Lewis and requiring access to mainland woods for boat-building timber (see Stiùbhart 2017, 175–6).



Illus 13 Imported finds from Dùn Èistean: Shard of Venetian glass (commonly late 18th to early 19th, but this example possibly 16th century); James VI billon plack (1583–90); Elizabeth I silver sixpence (1580); neck sherd from a Cologne stoneware wine bottle or jug (late 16th century). From Barrowman 2015a, Illus 10.21; 10.27; 10.28; 10.18 respectively

Whilst excavated evidence exists for a strong local identity amongst the community inhabiting Dùn Èistean, this did not mean that they were not engaged in or affected by wider political events and networks of contacts that had their own effect on the Ness district at this time. A small assemblage of archaeological material from Dùn Èistean attests to these maritime trade routes and contacts in the late 16th/early 17th centuries. Conjoining sherds from the neck of a small stoneware wine bottle or jug from Cologne, a sherd of Venetian or Facon de Venise glass, a Scottish billon plack and an Elizabethan silver sixpence all hint at wider contacts, and engagement with other political and trading elites (Illus 13).

It seems that Dùn Èistean was also involved in, or at least affected by, the political struggles between the Scottish Crown and the Hebridean clans and between the clans themselves as they fought for control following the collapse of the Lordship in 1493, until the Scottish Crown gained control of Lewis after the MacKenzie takeover in 1610 (see MacCoinnich 2015a; Barrowman 2015a, 408–11). As outlined in the introduction above, whilst it is not possible to confirm that the Clan Morrison took refuge on the site (there are no contemporary historical documentary sources for the site), there is a strong oral tradition that it was a refuge for the clan. In any case, the archaeological evidence alone suggests that the site was caught up in conflict during the troubled 16th century. Assemblages of gunflints and lead projectiles (Ballin 2015; Ferguson 2015) were found on the site, as was evidence for the production of gunflints and musket balls/pistol shot at the hearth in the buildings. Everything that was needed for occupation on the small cliff stack was provided – a man-made pond dug out to collect fresh water, a corn-drying kiln to dry stored grain and possibly peat, a pottery clamp kiln, shelters with peat hearths, and the eating of barley, fish, and meat.



Illus 14 Collapsed stonework of the tower on Dùn Èistean showing the basal layer of collapse, including cornerstones. From Barrowman 2015a, 205, Illus 9.19

Evidence for the deliberate demolition of buildings found in the archaeological stratigraphy may also indicate unrest. Usually, the collapse and degradation deposits found in and around the abandoned structures were shown to have accumulated gradually. However, the collapsed stonework excavated from around the tower building was different, in that it was divided into two sharply defined and homogenous layers of stone rubble, corner and lintel stones, reflecting two distinct events (Illus 14). This suggests that the upper stone tower suffered a rapid and catastrophic collapse and may even have been deliberately slighted. In addition to this, soil micromorphological analysis from Structure F, a shelter on the east side of the site, at the top of a gully on the site named '*Palla na Biorlinn [sic]*', identified that its upper walls and roof collapsed while the structure was in use or only just abandoned. The possibility must at least be considered that these buildings were deliberately slighted (Barrowman 2015a, 204–5; 338; Barrowman 2019, 40).



Illus 15 Teampall Eoin, Bragar, Lewis, from east-north-east. From Barrowman 2020, Illus 39

During this troubled period of political unrest in Lewis there was an existing landscape of ecclesiastical power that was contemporary with the occupation of strongholds such as Dùn Èistean and other high-status sites (see Barrowman 2015a, 408–10; 414–6; 418–9). Of the over 40 chapel-sites recorded by the Lewis Coastal Chapel-sites Survey, many may date to the late medieval period. The remains vary from those associated with old settlements, some traditionally linked with other chapel-sites nearby, and others alone and isolated. The chapels themselves ranged from upstanding buildings still used for worship and ruined buildings in old graveyards

(e.g., Illus 15) to low grassy banks only just discernable beneath the turf or un-located and kept alive only in oral tradition. The survey was the first step towards defining the medieval archaeology of the ecclesiastical landscape of Lewis, exploring how it was influenced by both the wider world and the local culture in which the chapels were situated (Barrowman 2020). This included the identification of links between the sites and the later settlement landscape, the re-use of the chapel structures as shieling settlements, and links between the ecclesiastical landscape and the contemporary landscapes of political power (e.g., Barrowman 2020, 106–111, 121).



Illus 16 Teampall Mholuaidh, Eoropic, Ness. Photograph © author

Most of the chapel-sites that can be located are situated on, or very near, the coast, or else on a raised elevation visible from the sea and are often close to the location of medieval settlement and high-status, clan sites as recorded in local tradition. Gibbon's study of the earlier 12th century Orkney landscape of castles and church towers identifies that they were landmarks, situated on the coast, or on elevated ground visible from important sea-routes, and part of high-status medieval estates, which often incorporated settlement, a proprietorial chapel and fertile land (Gibbon 2017). From the survey of the Lewis chapel-sites, it seems clear that these indicators are also present. *Teampall Rònain* (St Ronan's), for instance, is situated at the north end and the highest point of the Ness peninsula and is visible for miles, both across land and sea (see Barrowman 2020, Site no.1, 11–12). It is also close by its probable successor, the later medieval church of *Teampall Mholuaidh* (St Moluag's; Illus 16), and a landscape thick with

‘clan’ sites in oral tradition (see below). There are many similar examples across Lewis – for instance, the medieval parish church and graveyard at *Eaglais Chaluim Chille* (St Columba’s; Barrowman 2020, Site 26, 98–105; Illus 17) on the north side of the Braighe spit across to the Aoidh peninsula on the east side of Lewis.

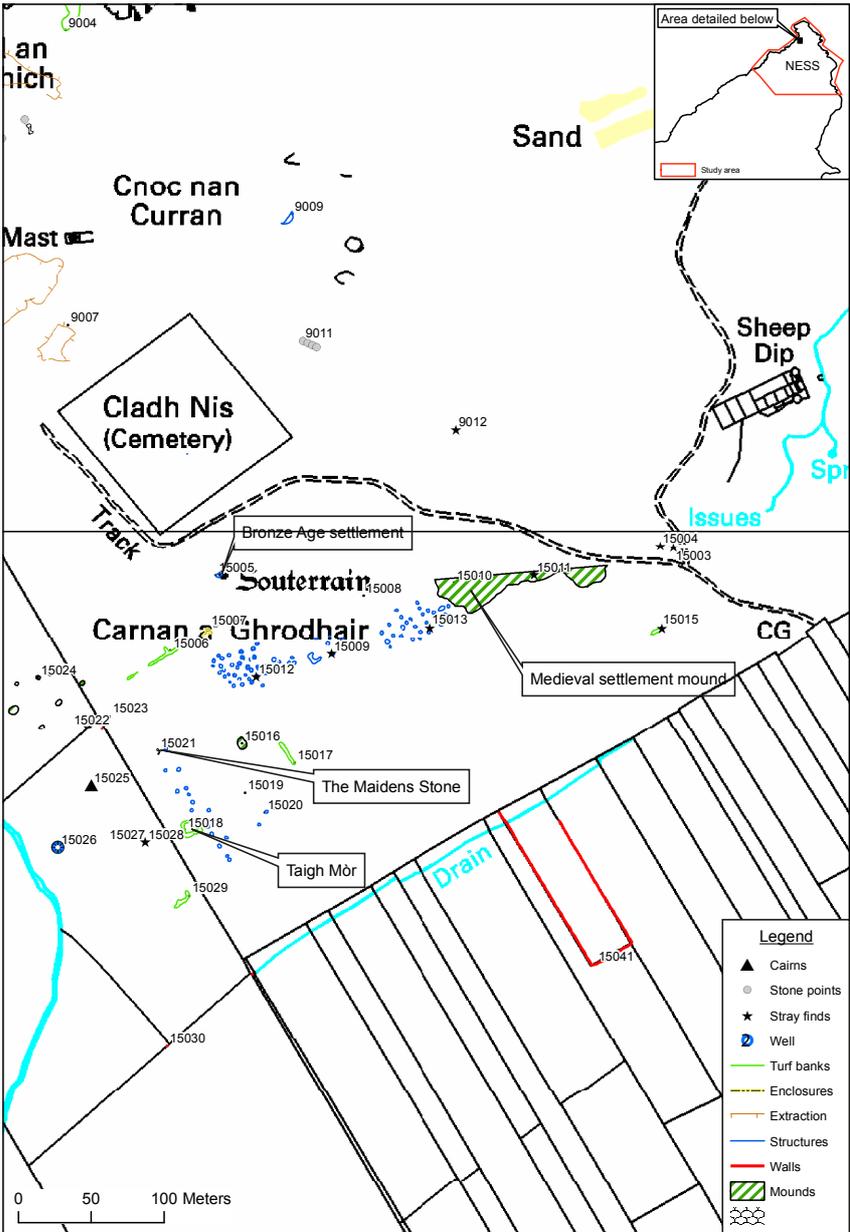


Illus 17 *Eaglais Chaluim Chille*, Eye, Lewis from the south-west. From Barrowman 2020, Illus 65

The site is visible from both the north and south seaward approaches to Sandwick and Stornoway, contains carved sculpture associated with the MacLeods (grave-slabs dating to the late 15th–16th centuries), and is close to *Teampall Rubha Chirc*, also known as *Taigh an t-Sagairt* (the Priest’s House), a probably earlier chapel-site high up on a headland near Bayble (or *Pabail*; see Crawford 2008, Site H1; Barrowman 2020, Site 28, 106–11; and below) and again highly visible from the seaward approach to Stornoway from the Minch. These are just two examples of a common theme that is seen throughout Lewis.

With the completion of the DEAP and associated archaeological survey of Ness (Barrowman, C S 2015) it has become possible in Ness at least to start to look at the chapel-sites in their landscape context. Martin Martin recorded that all the pre-Reformation churches and chapels on Lewis were once sanctuaries (Martin 1703, 28). However, Stiùbhart has since gone on to suggest that the whole north end of the island was considered a sanctuary, as corroborated on Blaeu’s mid-17th century atlas that marks Ness as *Ard Chombrick* (*‘Àird Chomraich’*, the

height/peninsula of the sanctuary; (Stiùbhart 2015, 73–4). Both Stiùbhart and Barrowman propose that the Gàrradh Dubh, a large turf dyke that separated the north-west end of Lewis from the rest of the island may be older than the 19th century (Barrowman, C S 2015, 46–7, 74, 153–4). Stiùbhart points out that it coincides with several place-names that incorporate the Gaelic ‘*crois*’ place-name element, which may record where this boundary would be crossed by pilgrims and those seeking refuge came into Ness, and that this was linked to the Clan Morrison’s role as hereditary judges there (Stiùbhart 2015, 71–2).



Illus 18 Ness Archaeological Landscape Survey of the area of Taigh Mòr, Habost. From Barrowman 2015a, 417, Illus 14.44

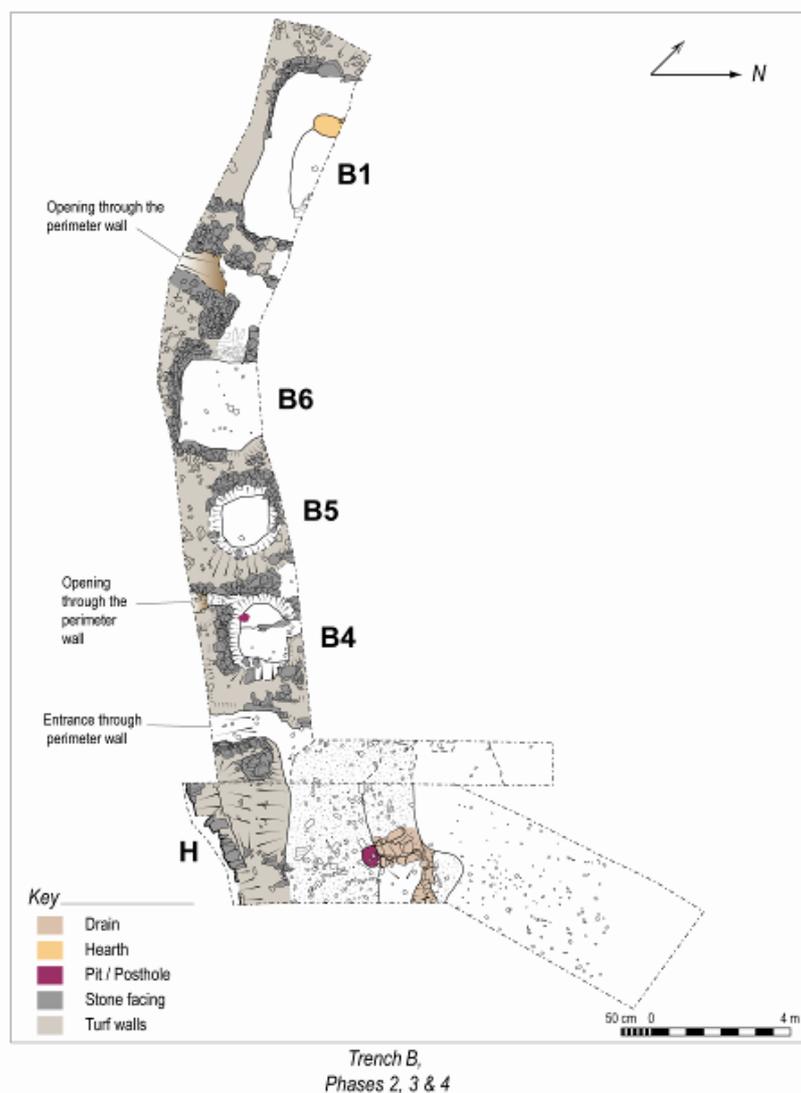
Further sites associated with the clans of Ness and recorded in local tradition include the footings of a building on the Habost machair south of Dùn Èistean, called *An Taigh Mòr* (the Big House), which is traditionally considered to be ‘*An Taigh a’ Bhrithheimh*’ or Brieve’s House, the place from which the *brithreamhan*, later Morrisons, would dispense justice. The building was recorded by the NALS in a landscape of enclosures, cultivation remains, settlement mounds and scatters of pottery (Barrowman, 2015, 416–8, see also Illus 18). This is an important identification, as little is known of the housing occupied by the ‘professional classes’ in the Gaeltachd (see Loeber 2001, 304, who discusses the housing of the brehons, physicians and so on in contemporary Ireland). Other sites that are traditionally associated with clans in the late medieval period are still visible in the Ness landscape, and this visibility has facilitated the survival of the tradition that is attached to them (i.e., there is a tangible thing in the landscape that can be referred to when the story is passed on, so locating it and facilitating the retention of the story (Barrowman 2015a, 416–7). They include *Cnoc a’ Chaisteal* (Hill of the Castle), considered in oral tradition to have been built by the first MacLeods of Lewis (MacCoinnich 2015a, 41, 68), and shown to contain evidence for metal-working and three sides of a possible rectangular building (Barrowman, C S 2015; 120–2, 249–50; Poller 2015); a zig-zag covered walkway leading up to an iron gate in a rampart before Teampall Mholuaidh in Eoropie (which became covered in sand in the 19th century); and *Cnoc Fianais*, a hillock above *Loch Stiapabhat*, just south of Dùn Èistean, where tradition has it that once judged and found guilty, MacLeod would condemn a man to death before removing him to the hillock of Bruga Frangais (*Bruga a’ Bhrangais*) in order to carry out the sentence (Stiùbhart 2015, 73; Comunn Eachdraidh Nis 2020, 48, 50, 56, 58).

5.2. The evidence for a strong local identity and culture expressed in the archaeology of medieval Lewis

As discussed in Barrowman 2015a (414–6), Dùn Èistean dates to the latter part of the 15th to early 17th centuries and is therefore situated at the end of a long tradition of clan strongholds and small towers that are found throughout the west Highlands, Hebrides, and Ireland (see Martin 2017; Oram 2017, 271–2; Outram & Batt 2015). Whether strictly speaking Dùn Èistean was a castle is debatable. Its layout is similar to medieval castles seen elsewhere in the Western Isles (e.g., Martin 2017 and papers therein; Dodgshon 2002; Miket & Roberts 1990), with a small keep or tower and ancillary buildings enclosed within a defensive enclosure wall (on the landward side; the sea cliffs were their own defence on the other). Dùn Èistean could therefore be classed as a galley-castle, as it is situated on the coast overlooking the Minch trade and

fishing routes and is linked to a particular clan in oral history. However, as Caldwell points out, ‘no convenient terminology has come down to us’ to describe the various forms of castles and towers that are found along the coasts of western Scotland (Caldwell 2017, 141).

The radiocarbon dating of the mid-15th to mid-17th centuries at the outside (Outram & Batt 2015) for the Dùn Èistean building fabric and occupation, sets it at the end not only of the use of the galley, but also the archer (Caldwell 2017, 143). Instead, the site belongs to a time when the bow was being replaced by firearms. This is confirmed by the recovery of the artillery and gunflints from the site (the gun flint assemblage being the earliest so far discovered in Britain; Ballin 2015) and the presence of lookout or gun loop openings through the enclosure wall at the gatehouse Structure B that guarded the landward access onto the stack (Barrowman 2015a, 116, 120–4; Illus 19).



Illus 19 Interpretation plan of Structure B showing cellular interconnecting buildings and entrance and openings through the perimeter wall. From Barrowman 2015a, Illus 5.2

It is also debatable as to whether there is a sufficient landing place near Dùn Èistean for it to be described as a galley-castle. There is a place-name on the east side of the site called variously ‘*Palla na biorlinn[sic]*’ by Captain Thomas in 1878 or ‘*Barra na birlinn*’ locally (see Comunn Eachdraidh Nis 2020, 52–3). This rocky gully down to the water is relatively accessible in comparison to the steep cliffs elsewhere on the site but is only landable in calmer sea conditions due to the many rocks that surround it.

The rocky coastline around Dùn Èistean itself presents a challenge to all except the most experienced of sailors, although the local knowledge and experience that would be needed to land on such a stack were in themselves a defence against outsiders (Barrowman 2015a, 399–400). Names collected by the Dùn Èistean history project and now published together with other place-names collections from North Lewis (Comunn Eachdraidh Nis 2020), do however include *Blianaisgeir*, a cove on the south side of *Firistein*, the headland opposite Dùn Èistean, which was used to haul up boats in the recent past. *Donnchadh Dholaidh Mairi* (Duncan Gillies) of Cnoc Ard reminisced in 2004:

Àite eile air an robh mise eòlach ’s e Blianaisgeir –... Bhiodh sinn a’ tighinn a-steach ann an sin – uaireannan bhiodh an oidhche ann – leis an iasg againn, air an glacadh leis an lìon-bheag. Bha e riatanach gu robh sinn a’ slaodadh na geòla suas air a’ mhol, air falbh bhon a’ mhuir. Bhiodh iad ag èigheach òrdughan oirnn – “Siuthadaibh thu a-nise a bhalachaibh, siuthadaibh, siuthadaibh, siuthadaibh a-nis.” Bha a h-uile duine a’ gabhail ris na h-òrdughan, a h-uile duine a’ slapragan nam bòtannan.

Another place I was familiar with was Blianaisgeir... We would come in there, sometimes after nightfall, with our haul of fish caught on the short-line. It was then necessary to draw the yawl up on to the shingle, clear of the sea. Instructions would be shouted out, urging us to, “Come on now boys, heave, heave, heave together now!” And all would comply with the instructions, squelching about in their wellington boots.

(Comunn Eachdraidh Nis 2020, 55, 58)



Illus 20 Elevation drawings of tower wall showing use of pinning stones. From Barrowman 2015a, Illus 9.15

A third feature of Dùn Èistean that ties it into other examples seen along the western Scottish and northern Irish coasts, particularly in Skye and the Western Isles, is the two-storey tower (e.g., see Miket & Roberts 1990; Salter 1995; Raven 2005, 335–361). However, where it can be determined, examples elsewhere were built from lime-mortared masonry, often with slate roofs, whereas the Dùn Èistean tower is built from turf and stone, with a stone or thatch roof, like the ancillary buildings on the site (Barrowman 2015a, 414–6; 2015b; 2019, 36–7). It also displays its own unique building method: The upper storey was built not from mortared masonry, but from clay-bonded stonework, and the lower storey comprised thick, solid earthen walls of mixed clay, ash and turf, with an outer skin of coursed drystone work of large stones, interspersed with lines of smaller pinning stones (Illus 20). This technique is more familiar in Lewis in later ‘blackhouses’, where inner and outer skins of stone were laid out and an inner fill of peat ash and clay gradually built up and then tamped down by stamping (e.g., see Walker & Macgregor 1996; Barrowman 2015a, 188–209). Soil micromorphological analysis on the wall core samples from the tower confirmed that this technique had in fact been used (McKenna & Simpson 2015; Illus 21).



Illus 21 Soils analysis kubiena tins in situ in section through tower wall, showing lower layers of tamped peat ash and clay. Photograph © author

In contrast, a survey of the wall-building techniques used in medieval high-status secular, and ecclesiastical sites elsewhere in the Western Isles has identified that lime-based mortars and imported stone dominate (see e.g., Thacker 2015; 2017; 2019; Barrowman 2020; MacPherson 2017). Whilst locally-made mortar and masonry techniques may have been used at these sites (the early 13th to late 14th century south-east range of Castle Camus in Skye for instance; Thacker 2020, 289–91), they still do not look out of place with all the other mortared, stone-built towers seen throughout the western seaboard from the 13th to 16th centuries. Work in Ireland by Breen and Raven (2015) at Kinbane Castle in County Antrim for instance identifies the reflection of different populations in the built architecture, as do Forsythe & McConkey’s work at Rathlin Island (2008), which identified local ‘Irish’ masons in the built work at this ‘Scottish’ castle site. However, the predominantly earth and clay-built techniques seen in the Dùn Èistean tower remain strikingly different, indeed unique.



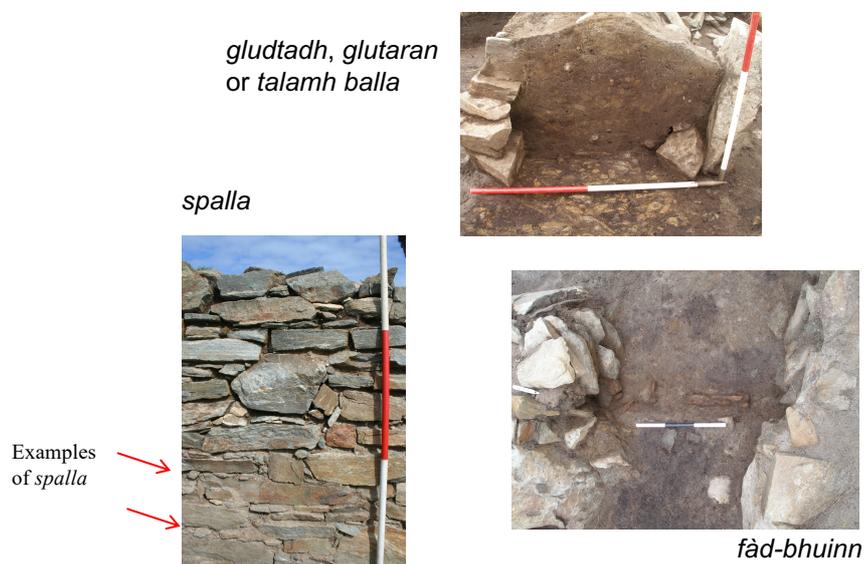
Illus 22 Structure F on Dùn Èistean. From Barrowman 2015a, Illus 8.7

The work at Dùn Èistean has shown that although we can look to styles of architecture and building techniques used on other comparable ‘castle’ sites, the local, vernacular architecture and culture of the area is as, if not more, relevant when analysing the built architecture in Lewis. The ancillary structures on Dùn Èistean (e.g., Illus 22 and 23) were more akin to those found in a late medieval rural settlement in the Hebrides (e.g., Armit 1997; Armit et al. 2008; Parker Pearson et al. 2004; Sharples 2019; Breen & Raven 2020), being built from low stone and earth or turf walls covered in a roof of thatch or turf over driftwood timbers. For this reason the term ‘defended medieval settlement’ has been sometimes used to describe Dùn Èistean, as it appears more like a settlement than a castle or defensive site in its architecture.



Illus 23 Excavating on the complicated rebuilt and modified turf and stone buildings on Structure D, from above north. From Barrowman 2015a, Illus 7.1

Soils analysis work showed that the sandy soils from the island were the main component in the wall cores of the structures on the site, and that different mixes of material were used between buildings and phases, suggesting that re-building and repairing of walls and buildings was an ongoing activity (McKenna & Simpson 2015). Two groups of buildings resemble small, interconnecting cellular huts like those seen in later shieling settlements in Lewis (e.g., Barrowman, C 2015, 98–100, 254–272; Comunn Eachdraidh Nis 2020, 333–384; and conglomerate buildings across the North Atlantic, e.g., Høegsberg 2009). Like these shielings, it is very likely that Dùn Èistean was occupied on a seasonal basis, probably during the better weather of the spring, summer, and autumn, as this was when trade and military expeditions took place (see McWhannell 2017). In part we can look to Gaelic Ireland for comparisons, where the Scots began to settle in Ulster in the 16th century. Here, whilst stone and mortar were also used to build coastal watchtowers, nearby ancillary buildings were often of turf and stone and occupied only seasonally in the monitoring and collection of taxes or levies from the fishing fleets working around the coasts of the Gaelic Lords’ territories (Loeber 2001; Naessens 2007; Breen & Raven 2015; Breen 2017; Raven 2017). Also, the evidence for short bursts of activity at Dùn Èistean, with buildings dismantled, repaired and up-cycled into new structures as and when needed is undoubtedly a reflection of its use as a stronghold in times of need.



Illus 24 Examples of building techniques for which there are Gaelic terms recorded in the 19th century but are seen in the late 15th to early 17th century buildings on Dùn Èistean. The earth wall, *talamh balla* of the corn-drying kiln Structure C; a pinning stone, *spalla*, used in the tower wall, Structure G; a stick or plank (this example identified as oak, probably driftwood), *fàd-bhuinn*, used in the doorway of Structure F. All photographs © author

A multi-disciplinary approach and real collaboration with local knowledge, is crucial to the furtherance of this field of study. The detailed analysis of the structures excavated on Dùn Èistean identified, for instance, that Gaelic names for many of the features seen in the 16th/early 17th century buildings could be identified in buildings from a couple of centuries later, as recorded by Catriona Mackie in her research into the 19th century blackhouses in Bragar (Mackie 2006) and in oral accounts (see for instance, Comunn Eachdraidh Nis 2020, 360). This could suggest that the building methods used in the 19th and early 20th centuries were local techniques and traditions that originated two or three centuries earlier. As outlined in Barrowman 2015a (394–5), some of these features are also seen in the excavated buildings on Dùn Èistean, such as ‘*glutadh*’, ‘*glutaran*’, or ‘*talamh balla*’, the inner sand or earth cavity in a wall, ‘*spalla*’ a small, wedge-shaped stone used in stonework (for both see Mackie 2006, 126–9), and *fàd-bhuinn* (literally, ‘sole-sod’), a name originating from when a grassy turf was used as a door step, but also used for a wooden step or stick laid across a door-way to keep out draughts (see NicAoidh 2000, 89) (Illus 24).

These examples demonstrate that in the 19th and early 20th centuries, there were certain ways of doing things, with every small detail having its own special Gaelic term. The evidence from the wider Dùn Èistean project suggests that techniques that were used in the medieval period - as excavated from the archaeological record – were also being used, and named, in the early modern vernacular architecture of Lewis. There are still very few excavated examples of medieval buildings in Lewis with which to compare, and more archaeological excavation is needed to research the development of the form of the Lewis house at this time (Barrowman 2015a, 392–8). At Dùn Èistean the evidence for the strength of local culture and identity in the late medieval period may reflect a degree of autonomy amongst the ruling elite (Barrowman 2015a, 394–5, 407–8; Barrowman 2019). Elsewhere it has been suggested that the communal system of agriculture, which underpinned clan society at this time, was created and maintained at the lowest, local level, rather than being a system imported or imposed from the top (Campbell 2010, 318). Perhaps the archaeology of Dùn Èistean reflects this *modus operandi* that existed in Lewis, where local culture informed the architecture of the community, and ways of doing things, rather than this being imposed from elsewhere.

Unlike the majority of ‘galley-castles’ in the Hebrides, which can be shown to be built on earlier fortifications or sites (Raven 2017, 132–3; Macniven 2017, 70), no Iron Age remains, or material were identified at Dùn Èistean despite the extensive excavations down to bedrock on several different areas of the site. Indeed, other than a small residual assemblage of flaked quartz (Ballin 2015, 248–9), no material earlier than the late medieval period was identified. The site

This church is one of the few upstanding medieval sites in Lewis, and ‘one of the most important centres of worship in Lewis during the late medieval period, the focus of a complex of temporal and ecclesiastical power alike’ (Stiùbhart 2015, 77; Barrowman 2020, Site 2: 13–18). A small-scale excavation around the outside of the church by Barber in 1977 revealed that it had been built onto the undisturbed clay subsoil without formal foundations (Barber 1981). Until Barber’s excavations the plinth was thought to have been added to the walls during the conservation of the building in 1912; see Barrowman 2020, 16). However, Barber’s excavations confirmed that the plinth was contemporary with the original church building.



Illus 26 Battered plinth at base of east wall of Teampall Mholuaidh, Ness. An original feature according to excavations (Barber 1981, 532). Photograph © Author

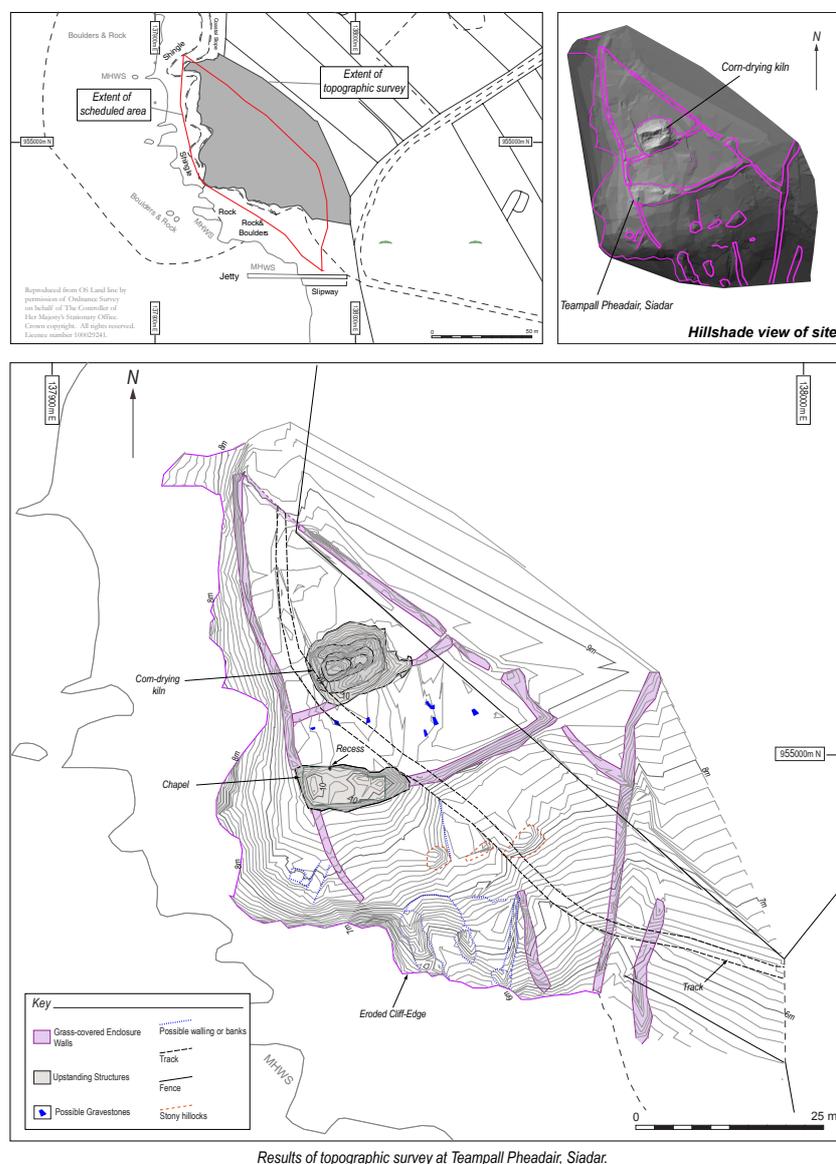
Whilst the battered plinth differs to the secular examples in that it is added to the basal wall courses, it fulfils the same function in that it provided stability by spreading the load of the massive stone walls across a wider area. St Moluag’s is traditionally considered to be the MacLeod’s church (Stiùbhart 2015, 77–8), and Barber compares the battered plinth to the north wall of the nave at *Tùr Mòr Chliamain* (St Clement’s) church in Rodel, Harris (Barber 1981, 532), which is also linked to the MacLeods. It is interesting that this technique was also used in building the tower on Dùn Èistean and other castles in the MacLeod lordship, such as Castle Maol in Skye, so belonging to both sacred and secular buildings in the MacLeod territories (Barrowman 2015a, 415–6).

A similarity in roofing materials used between the secular and ecclesiastical elite sites is also evident. There is also a local tradition that when timber was needed to roof Teampall Mholuaidh, St Moluag prayed for a roof, and one was found washed up on the beach at *Traigh Shanndaigh* (Eoropie sands) that fitted exactly. This tradition illustrates the scarcity of large roofing timbers, the use and re-use of wood and driftwood, and the value put on it in the medieval period. The recovery of iron rivets and other debris from the collapse layers in the buildings on Dùn Èistean, including the tower, suggests that the roof supports would also have been made from driftwood from old ship timbers and other jetsam (Barrowman 2015a, 393–4; Ramsay 2015). Likewise, the analysis of the botanical remains revealed that a combination of heathy turfs and/or straw with turfs was used as the underlayer of the roof covering with straw/heather as the upper weatherproofing layer, held down by netting or rope laid over the top (Ramsay 2015; see Walker & McGregor 1996, 10–16; NicAoidh 2000) for the buildings on Dùn Èistean, including the stone tower. A note in the Old Statistical Account records that the former parish church of *Teampall Pheadair* (St Peter’s; Illus 27), situated in the old graveyard in the same area of medieval settlement as An Taigh Mòr on the machair, was once ‘thatched with heath’ rather than the slates that one would expect for such a higher-status building, so once more, there are similarities here between the ecclesiastical and secular sites.



Illus 27 Teampall Pheadair, Swainbost, from the east. From Barrowman 2020, 21, Illus 7

The re-building and adaption of buildings, as evidenced on Dùn Èistean, also exists on many of the chapel-sites in Lewis, where stone was reused to build shieling settlements, or corn-drying kilns away from settlement. In Ness, on the coast near Teampall Pheadair, the site of the small pre-Reformation chapel of *Teampall Thòmais* (St Thomas'), is now only a hollow in the ground, and is traditionally thought to have been robbed to provide the stone for the new church (see Barrowman 2020, Site 3: 18–20). At Teampall Pheadair in Siadar on the west side of Lewis, the small, medieval, bicameral church, of which now only the footings remain, was robbed to build an adjacent corn-drying kiln, which is associated with the extensive post-medieval settlement remains that extend along that part of the coast (Barrowman 2020, Site 8: 34–6; see Illus 28).



Illus 28 Lewis Coastal Chapel-sites Survey, topographic survey of Teampall Pheadair, Shader.

From Barrowman 2020, 39, Illus 21

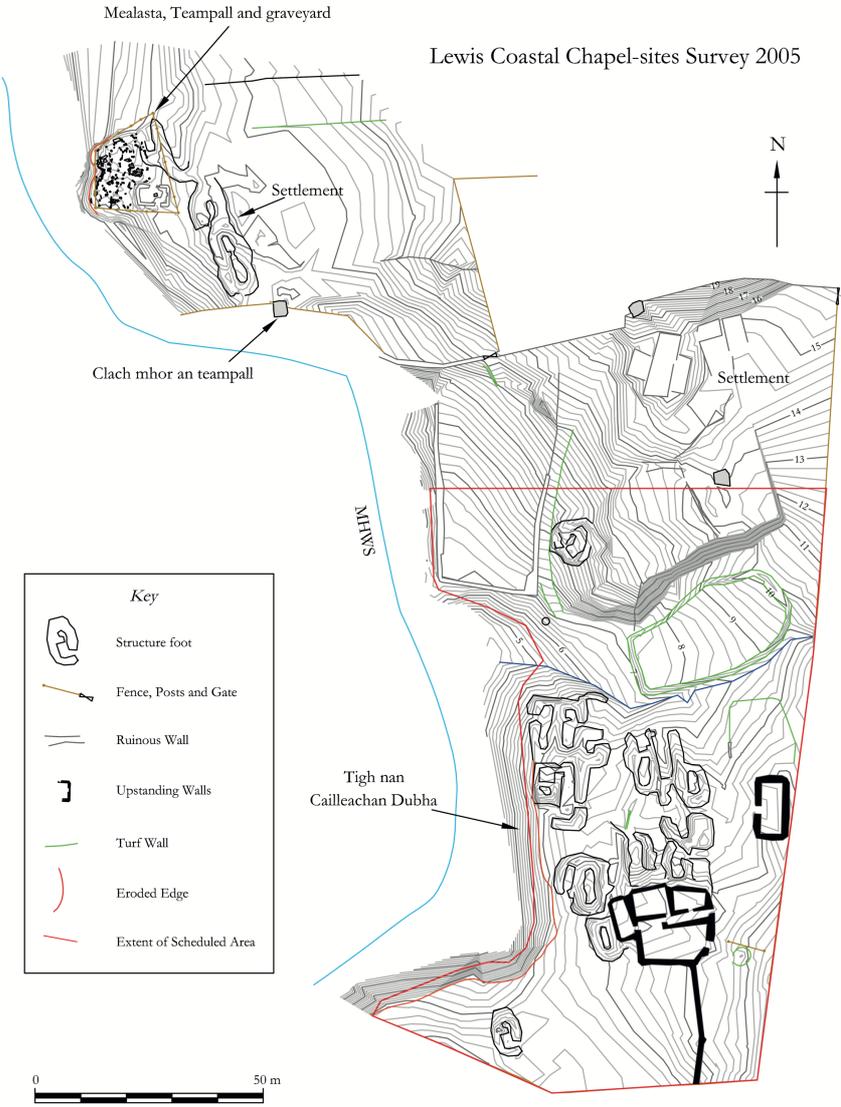
Similarly, at Teampall Rubha Chirc near Bayble on the east side of Lewis (Illus 29) the chapel building, which is situated in a small enclosure by the coast away from any signs of settlement, has been robbed to build shielings on the site. The shieling group that surrounds it includes a possible corn-drying kiln, and signs of cultivation. These layers of use are a tantalising hint at a deeper landscape where changes in belief and meaning are reflected in the built ecclesiastical archaeology of the island and are reminiscent of the persistent re-building and adaption of structures on settlements such as Dùn Èistean. As ecclesiastical organisations changed, old chapel buildings were reworked, and their significance dwindled into structures to be co-opted into new cultural contexts.



Illus 29 Teampall Rubha Chirc, Bayble, Point, from the north. Photograph © author

Due to the almost complete lack of surviving historical documents for medieval Lewis, the chapel-sites ‘are the scant remains of a major part of the island’s story for which history is largely silent’, and they therefore have the best potential to aid our understanding of the ecclesiastical landscape of pre-Reformation Lewis (Barrowman 2020, 126). Although only survey and desktop research were completed for each chapel-site in the LCCS, and no excavation undertaken, the resulting overview of the sites has begun to make possible a deeper study of the medieval landscapes of Lewis. The two examples of Teampall Mholuaidh and Teampall Pheadair cited above, because they are both in Ness, can be closely compared with structures found on Dùn Èistean because of the detailed, multi-disciplinary and local approach

taken. There is no doubt that if detailed and multi-disciplinary studies were undertaken of landscapes elsewhere in Lewis the Western Isles., similar comparisons could start to be made.



Illus 30 Topographic survey of Taigh nan Cailleachan dubha and Teampall Mhealastadh, Uig 2005. From Barrowman 2020, 90, Illus 61

Taigh nan Cailleachan Dubha, for instance, in Uig, at the south end of Lewis, as named in the Old Statistical Account, is associated with a nunnery due to the English translation of its name, House of the Black Women, although there is no reference in local tradition to the site

(Barrowman 2020, 88–9; MacLeod 1997, 29; see Illus 30). The site comprises the extensive remains of an old post-medieval settlement of well-preserved drystone, and stone and turf, buildings and enclosures, and is adjacent to the chapel-site and small graveyard of *Teampall Mhealastadh*. There is also a tradition that the Lewis chessmen were found here in a souterrain (for both sites see Barrowman 2020, 84–91; Sites 20 and 21).

Already there are similar projects - place-name and oral tradition surveys - being undertaken on Uist (<https://uistsaints.co.uk/early-christianity-in-uist/>), whilst Dr John Raven's work on late medieval Lordship landscape of Uist remains the most influential, archaeological survey of this period (Raven 2005). The archaeology of what remains of the Lewis chapel-sites, their various stages of decay, different sizes and situations in the landscape, all point to a rich history of changing identities and beliefs in Lewis from the early medieval to post-medieval periods. The identification in Lewis of potential shared building techniques between churches and high-status secular buildings, and the re-working of some chapel buildings into a domestic, secular context by the local population indicates that there was a specific local attitude to these sites, a reflection perhaps of a localness of approach to the changing political and power landscapes. Future work is needed not only in Lewis to build on the data set of sites now recorded, but also in other areas of the Western Isles, to identify which sites continued to be venerated and why, which were routinely dismantled and re-used, and their connection with and place in the contemporary landscapes of power, and what this can tell us about the local culture of the area in which they were situated.

6. Conclusion

The work presented here has concentrated on the evidence for loyalty to place and the 'localness' of a community in the past. It has contributed to a growing change of emphasis in the study of local identity in archaeology and has shown that the inhabitants of Lewis engaged with the wider political situation in which they were embroiled, partaking in it, yet maintaining a strong local culture and response to it, as reflected both in material culture, and in building techniques, across both ecclesiastical and secular sites. This has only been possible due to the multidisciplinary nature of the Dùn Èistean archaeology project.

The lack of modern excavations of medieval sites in Lewis until recently, and the dearth of primary historical sources for Lewis prior to the 17th century, has meant that the study of the ecclesiastical landscape and church organisation in Lewis in the medieval period has relied almost totally on archaeology, but due to a lack of excavation, on the archaeology of other areas

as compared to the few upstanding and identified remains from the area of Lewis itself. The Dùn Èistean excavations have been transformative in identifying building features, techniques, and processes on a high-status late medieval site, and the completion of the survey of the chapel-sites has made it possible to compare the two and begin to build up a picture within Lewis itself. The shared building methods and similarities between Dùn Èistean and some of the chapel-sites demonstrates that the landscapes of belief and local power were inextricably linked. Both were fundamentally grounded in local culture and identity, and not necessarily a result of imported building techniques or ways of doing things.

The results of the Dùn Èistean excavations, and the Lewis chapel-sites survey demonstrate that the ecclesiastical and secular archaeology of medieval Lewis fit together, with similar traits of widespread contacts, and strong local identity, present in both. A small assemblage of material culture of imported ceramics and coins recovered from Dùn Èistean indicate that Ness was not an isolated “cultural backwater” in the late medieval and early modern periods. In addition, a small collection of gunflints and lead projectiles from the site, evidence of deliberate collapse of some of the structures, and the presence of elements of a ‘galley castle’, all suggest the stronghold was caught up in the conflict and political intrigue of the troubled *Linn nan Creach* of the 16th and early 17th centuries. The position of Dùn Èistean on the east side of Lewis, overlooking the Scottish mainland and north and south along the Minch and the seaways around the north of Scotland is also an indicator of its importance as a potential lookout for the monitoring, and even control, of trade and fishing around the island.

In a similar fashion, most of the chapel-sites that can be located are situated on, or very near, the coast, or else on a raised elevation visible from the sea. They are also often close to the location of medieval settlement and high-status, clan sites as recorded in local tradition. Near to Dùn Èistean, *Teampall Rònain* (St Ronan’s), is situated at the north end and the highest point of the Ness peninsula and is visible for miles, both across land, and its probable successor, the medieval church of *Teampall Mholuaidh* (St Moluag’s), is situated in an area where many ‘clan’ sites associated with the MacLeods and the Morrisons are recorded in oral tradition. Here the multidisciplinary nature of the Dùn Èistean project comes to the fore. Taken with Stiùbhart’s suggestions that the whole north end of Lewis, as the territory of the Morrison brieves, was once considered a sanctuary, and his and Barrowman’s proposal that the *Gàrradh Dubh* turf dyke may have delineated that sanctuary and been crossed by pilgrims and those seeking refuge in Ness, these different aspects all start to build a fascinating picture of late medieval Lewis. The completion of the Lewis chapel-sites survey at the same time as excavated evidence from Dùn Èistean now makes it possible to look to other areas of ecclesiastical sites in Lewis that were

linked to contemporary landscapes of power. These include the medieval parish church and graveyard at *Eaglais Chaluim Chille* (St Columba's), visible from the seaward approaches to Lewis and Stornoway and containing carved sculpture associated with the MacLeods and nearby *Teampall Rubha Chirc*, a chapel-site high up on a headland near a settlement with a *papa* place-name and visible from the Minch for instance, to name just one part of the island where this pairing of sites is also evident. The two landscapes of secular and ecclesiastical power were clearly interlinked and not separated in the medieval period as they are now in the modern day.

However, whilst these sites were part of a wider world of organisation and influence, the Lewis secular and ecclesiastical sites retained a unique local flavour, as seen in the building techniques used on both Dùn Èistean and the chapel-sites, and in the unusual treatment of the ecclesiastical sites, which were dismantled and repurposed exactly like those on the Dùn when they went out of use. The building techniques used on Dùn Èistean were influenced by the local, vernacular architecture and culture of the area rather than similar high-status sites of small masonry and slate-roofed towers found further south in the Western Isles. The tower on Dùn Èistean was built using the tamping technique of clay and midden material between two outer courses of stonework, as seen in later blackhouses in Lewis, and topped with thatch rather than a slate roof, with the ancillary structures on the site also most similar to those that have been found in the few excavated late medieval rural buildings in the Hebrides, being built from low stone and earth or turf walls covered in a thatch or turf roof. The techniques that were used on Dùn Èistean in the late medieval period were also being used, and named, in the Gaelic language in early modern Lewis. Similarly, some of the building traditions used on the chapel-sites can be compared with those seen on Dùn Èistean, such as the use of a slight inwards batter that was recorded in the basal courses of the walls of the lookout tower, on later 19th century blackhouses in Lewis, in castles elsewhere in the former MacLeod lordship, and at *Teampall Mholuaidh* (St Moluag's) in Ness. Driftwood was also used as roofing timbers for the tower on Dùn Èistean, which was thatched or turfed, as were the other buildings on the site, and this is also seen in local traditions relating to a driftwood roof for *Teampall Mholuaidh*, and at *Teampall Pheadair* (St Peter's) which is recorded as being thatched with heather.

The re-building and adaption of buildings, as evidenced on Dùn Èistean, can also be identified from the survey of many of the chapel-sites. Shieling settlements, or corn-drying kilns, were built away from the main settlement using the building stone from abandoned chapels – not adapting the former chapel, but physically dismantling it and re-using the stone elsewhere, and new churches were built using the stone from old disused chapels. *Teampall Thòmais* (St Thomas') in Ness, now only a hollow in the ground, and is traditionally thought to have been

robbed to provide the stone for *Teampall Pheadair* (St Peter's) nearby, and at a different *Teampall Pheadair* further south along the west coast, the small, medieval, bicameral church, was robbed to build an adjacent corn-drying kiln. At *Teampall Rubha Chirc* on the east side of Lewis, and *Teampall Mhealastadh* on the west, the chapel building was used to build turf and stone shielings, or in the latter case, drystone buildings, nearby. With a lack of excavation it is not possible to explore these similar building features and traits in any further detail, but they all indicate that a strong local culture was present, a local identity borne out of shared knowledge and practice that resulted in a practical reuse of even ecclesiastical sites.

The published works included in this thesis have been transformative in demonstrating that local identity and culture can be recognised in the archaeological record across both the secular and ecclesiastical landscapes, using multidisciplinary and detailed analysis. The assumption that a strong local identity and culture is somehow insular or limiting in scope has also been successfully challenged. The published work confirms that engagement in a wider world of political intrigue, struggles, contacts and belief is entirely consistent with a strong local identity. This strong local identity did not exist because of comparison with another outside community (an 'us and them' mentality), but rather grew from the ground up, and resulted in a confidence to engage with the world outside. Local identity in the past was not deliberately fabricated, it was borne out of shared practice, conversations, history, family ties and traditions, that is, shared culture, knowledge and skills that originated from the people themselves, and their land.

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