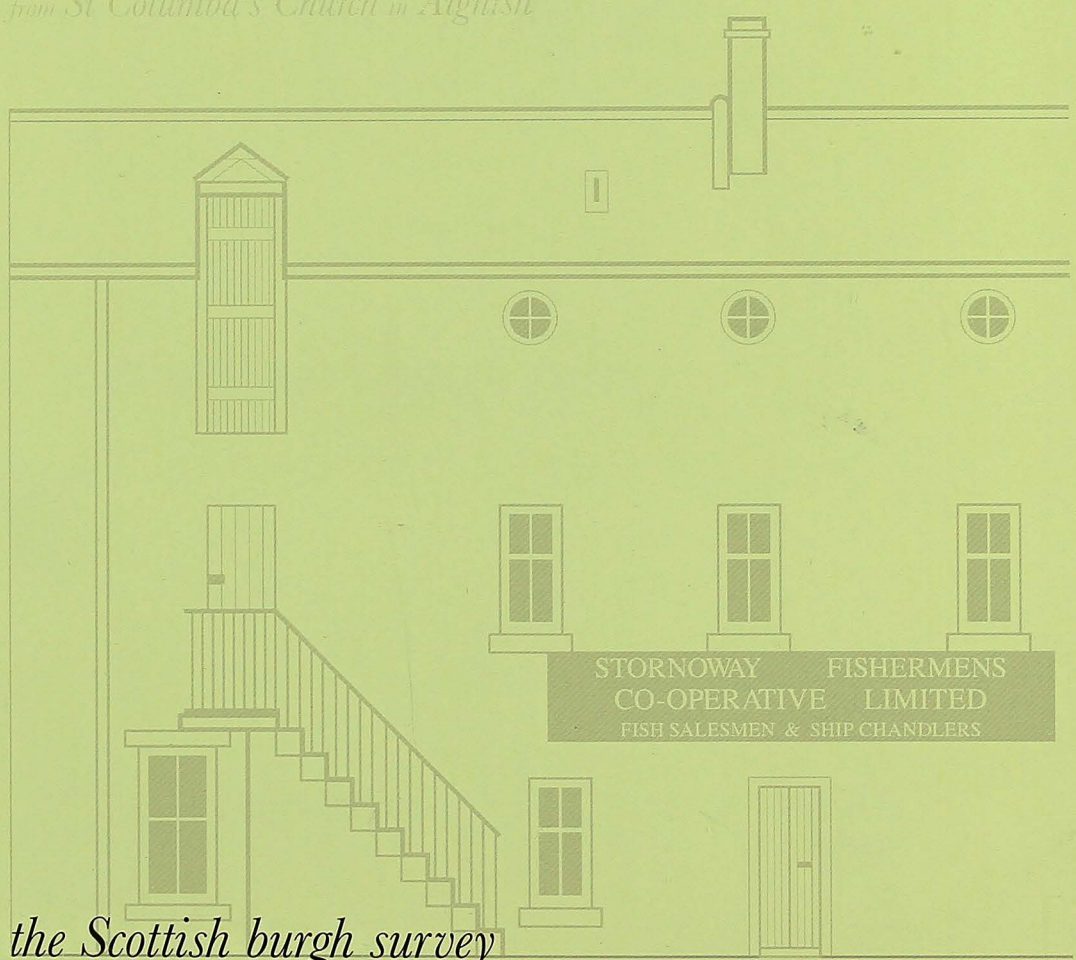
Historic Stornoway

E Patricia **Dennison**

Russel **Coleman**

Grave slab of *Roderick MacLeod*
from *St Columba's Church in Aignish*



the Scottish burgh survey

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the archaeological implications of development

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APS	*The Acts of the Parliaments of Scotland*, edd T Thomson & C Innes (Edinburgh, 1814–75).
Cowan & Easson	I B Cowan & D E Easson (edd), *Medieval Religious Houses: Scotland* (Glasgow, 1964).
CSP Scot	*Calendar of the State Papers relating to Scotland*, edd J Bain *et al* (Edinburgh, 1898–).
DES	*Discovery and Excavation in Scotland.*
ER	*The Exchequer Rolls of Scotland*, 23 vols, edd J Stuart *et al* (Edinburgh, 1878–1908).
HMSO	Her Majesty's Stationery Office.
Groome, *Gazetteer*	*Ordnance Gazetteer of Scotland*, 6 vols, ed Francis Groome (Edinburgh, 1886).
NMRS	National Monuments Record of Scotland.
NSA	*The New Statistical Account of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1845).
OSA	*The Statistical Account of Scotland, 1791–1799*, ed Sir John Sinclair. New Edition, edd I R Grant & D J Withrington (Wakefield, 1973).
PRO	Public Record Office, London.
PSAS	*Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland.*
RCAHMS	Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland.
RCRB	*Extracts from the Records of the Convention of Royal Burghs of Scotland*, 7 vols, ed J D Marwick (Edinburgh, 1870–1918).
RMS	*The Register of the Great Seal of Scotland*, 11 vols, edd J M Thomson *et al* (Edinburgh, 1882–1914).
RPC	*The Register of the Privy Council of Scotland*, 14 vols, edd J H Burton *et al* (Edinburgh, 1877–).
RSS	*Register of the Privy Seal of Scotland (Registrum Secreti Sigilli Regum Scotorum)*, 8 vols, edd M Livingstone *et al* (Edinburgh, 1908).
SHS	Scottish History Society.
SRO	Scottish Record Office, Edinburgh.
SSPCK	Society in Scotland for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge.
SUAT	Scottish Urban Archaeological Trust.
TA	*Accounts of the Lord High Treasurer of Scotland*, 13 vols, edd T Dickson *et al* (Edinburgh, 1877–).

The Centre for Scottish Urban History is indebted to a number of people for their assistance and advice.

Mr Jamie Hepburn for his guided trip and interesting insights into Stornoway's historic past; **Mr Frank Thompson** of the Stornoway Historical Society for his initial comments and kind gift; and **Mr John and Mrs Kathy Paterson** not only for an informative conversation, but also for welcome coffee and shortbread on a drenching wet day. We would also like to acknowledge the kindness and assistance of all the staff and, in particular, Mr Bob Eaves and Mr David Fowler of **Leabharlann nan Eilean**; and also of Mr Richard Langhorne and his team at **Museum nan Eilean**.

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We are grateful to **Leabharlann nan Eilean** for their help in obtaining copies of **figures 8 & 10**.

The origins of the burgh of Stornoway can be traced back to the foundation of a castle there in the twelfth century, although there is evidence for activity in the area going back to the prehistoric period. The town has the natural advantage of a sheltered, safe harbour which, over the centuries, has attracted Viking travellers, later Swedish ship-builders, would-be colonists from mainland Scotland, and Dutch and English fishing fleets. Stornoway's development capitalised on its natural assets: during the time of Sir James Matheson, shipping was assisted by the building of a new lighthouse at Arnish Point; fish-curing houses were set up, encouraging the fish market to flourish; and a steam-boat quay was established offering services to Poolewe and Glasgow. These initial steps led to Stornoway's emergence as an important ship-building town and a centre for deep-sea mariners. Its strategic importance is reflected in the emergency coastal battery which was built on Arnish Point to protect the bay area during World War II. Today Stornoway is an all-purpose port; around the bay are slip-way installations, marine engineering sheds, fish-processing factories, sea-rescue services and roll-on/roll-off ferry services. Stornoway still depends on the sea for its existence, but it has been transformed from the small settlement which first clustered on and around the Point.

Historic Stornoway is one of a series of reports on the historic burghs of Scotland—known collectively as the **Scottish Burgh Survey**—all of which have been commissioned by **Historic Scotland** and its predecessors. The main aim of the survey is to identify those areas of the present and historic burgh which are of archaeological interest and therefore require sensitive treatment in the event of any proposed development or other ground disturbance. It is designed primarily as a manual for the use of local authorities and archaeological curators. However, as an essential prerequisite to this assessment of the archaeological implications of development, it also describes and illustrates the geography and topography of the town, its known archaeology and history, its historic standing buildings and the origins of its street names—all of which will be of interest to the wider public, be they inhabitant, visitor or student.

Historic Stornoway was prepared for Historic Scotland within the **Centre for Scottish Urban History**, under the supervision of its Director, Dr E Patricia Dennison. The Centre is part of the Department of Scottish History, University of Edinburgh. Dr Dennison and Mr Russel Coleman, of the **Scottish Urban Archaeological Trust**, are co-authors of the report; Mr Kevin Hicks, of the **Centre for Field Archaeology**, University of Edinburgh, is cartographer and illustrator. Mr Robin Macpherson and Dr Alan MacDonald of the Department of Scottish History acted as research assistants; assistance was also received from Mr Jim McCormack and Mr Dean Jacobs, both postgraduates in the Department of Scottish History. The project is supervised by the Head of the Department, Professor Michael Lynch, and managed for Historic Scotland by Ms Olwyn Owen, Inspector of Ancient Monuments, who is also general editor of the series.

The research on historic Stornoway was carried out during September and October 1995. This survey was entirely funded by Historic Scotland with help from the Centre for Scottish Urban History. The report has been published with financial assistance from Comhairle nan Eilean and Historic Scotland. Further copies may be obtained from **Scottish Cultural Press**, Unit 14, Leith Walk Business Centre, 130 Leith Walk, Edinburgh, EH6 5DT.

Historic Scotland
March 1997

the Scottish burgh survey

summary

1 Use the colour-coded map **figure 24** (foldout at the back of the book) and/or the **general index** to locate a particular site (normally the site of a development proposal).

2 **Green areas** (light and dark green) are designated as potentially archaeologically sensitive. If the site is in a green area, it is possible that a proposal involving ground disturbance may encounter archaeological remains. Seek appropriate archaeological advice as early as possible.

3 Use the map on p 42 **figure 16** to determine into which area of the burgh the site falls (one of Areas 1–2), and turn to the relevant area in the area by area assessment for a fuller account (pp 43–60).

4 Use the **general index** and, if appropriate, the listing of **street names** (pp 69–71) for rapid access to information specific to a site, street or named feature of the town.

step 1

As a working manual, the first point of reference is the colour-coded map on the foldout at the back of the book **figure 24**.

The **green areas** (light and dark green) are **potentially archaeologically sensitive** and may retain significant sub-surface archaeological information. *Consultation should take place with the local authority archaeologist, where any development proposal or enquiry involving ground disturbance is being considered*, including car parks, road schemes, environmental improvements, landscaping and drainage schemes, as well as the usual range of development and re-development proposals in built-up areas. There is no necessity for a consultation where ground disturbance is not in prospect, such as applications for change of use of a building. There may, however, be a requirement to obtain *planning permission* or, in the case of a listed building, *listed building consent* or, if demolition works are proposed within a conservation area, *conservation area consent*. In such instances, early consultation with the staff of the local authority planning department will always be helpful.

If in doubt whether consultation is necessary, please refer to the local authority archaeologist and the local authority planning department. It is important to note that sub-surface disturbance within historic standing buildings may also affect archaeological remains, and that some standing buildings may retain archaeological features within their structures. Please seek advice as required.

There are no Scheduled Ancient Monuments in the historic core of Stornoway, but there are several within a few kilometres of the town (the nearest are the Gallows Hill chambered cairn and the Arnish Point gun emplacements **figure 1**), and many more in the Western Isles. Under the provisions of the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979 all development proposals which affect Scheduled Ancient Monuments require the prior written consent of the Secretary of State (Scheduled Monument Consent) in addition to any planning permission required. These provisions are administered on behalf of the Secretary of State by Historic Scotland. **All applications for planning permission which affect either the site or setting of a Scheduled Ancient Monument (red area) must be referred to Historic Scotland**, acting for the Secretary of State in terms of Section 15(j)(v) of the Town and Country Planning (General Development Procedure) (Scotland) Order 1992 and Section 5(e) of its Amendment (No 2) Order 1994. *All enquiries regarding prospective development proposals in or adjacent to Scheduled Ancient Monuments should be referred to Historic Scotland for advice as early as possible.*

step 2

In this new series of burgh surveys, each survey has been organised locationally, in order to assist speedy consultation on any proposed development site. In the case of Stornoway, the historic core of the town has been divided into two arbitrary areas, Areas 1–2, which are shown on the plan on p 42 **figure 16**. The second step for the user, then, is to consult this plan and to determine into which area a specific enquiry falls.

step 3

Each area is assessed individually in the **area by area assessment** (pp 43–60). The commentary for each area is prefaced with a detailed plan of that area. Archaeological, historical, geographical and geological factors of particular relevance to the area are all discussed, and an assessment of the archaeological potential is made. For ease of reference, even if a dividing line between areas is shown as the middle of a street, discussion of the area includes any elements within the street up to the opposite frontage. The importance of an integrated approach to the historical and archaeological information is implicit in the design of this report: the history and archaeology are presented together on each page rather than consecutively.

This integrated, area-based approach has involved some repetition of information in the area by area assessment, in order that users are not required to cross-reference more than necessary when dealing with a specific enquiry. Although such repetition would not be normal in a work of interest to the general public, it was felt that it would be permissible here in order to facilitate the work of primary users: local authority planners and other curators of the archaeological resource.

historic standing buildings

historic buildings reinforces the above sections by providing basic historical and architectural information about the historic standing buildings of the town; where relevant, it also provides the area location and an assessment of the archaeological potential of specific buildings. *It should always be borne in mind that historic standing buildings may also contain archaeological remains, both beneath their floors and within their structures.* Some of these buildings may be listed and consequently subject to listed building control. Where listed buildings contain, or may contain, architecturally or archaeologically significant building fabric, the planning authority is obliged to make efforts to ensure that this is preserved and not adversely affected by proposed building works.

objectives for future fieldwork and research

Any report of this nature cannot be definitive. During its preparation, a series of archaeological and historical objectives for future fieldwork and research have been identified; these are listed at pp 65–7. They will be of particular interest to urban historians and archaeologists, and to those responsible for management of the archaeological resource in historic Stornoway.

referencing

The report contains a comprehensive **general index** as well as a listing of **street names** giving basic historical information and, where relevant, area location. A **bibliography** and a **glossary** of technical terms have also been included.

The data accumulated during preparation of this survey and draft copies of the completed work, as well as all unpublished reports of any small-scale excavations and watching briefs, are housed in the National Monuments Record, John Sinclair House,

16 Bernard Terrace, Edinburgh EH8 9NX, telephone *0131* 662 1456, facsimile *0131* 662 1477/1499.

full reference to this report

Dennison, E P and Coleman, R 1997 *Historic Stornoway: the archaeological implications of development*, published by Historic Scotland in association with Scottish Cultural Press, Edinburgh (Scottish Burgh Survey 1997).

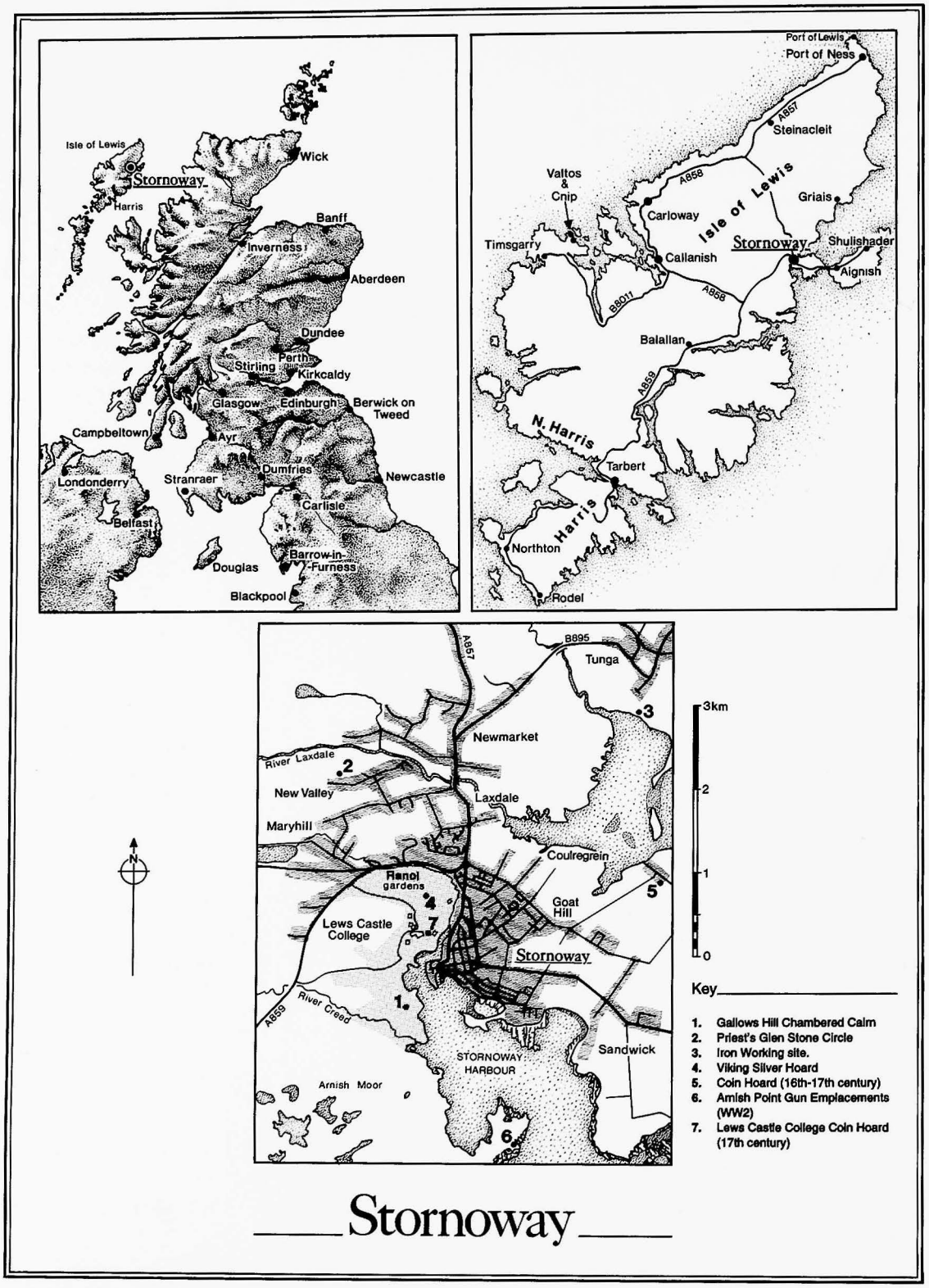


figure 1
Location of Stornoway

Stornoway: its site and setting

geography

Stornoway is situated on the north-east coast of Lewis, the largest of the many islands that make up the Western Isles **figure 1**. Stornoway is the only major town in these islands, and has a population of some 6,000.[1] A natural sea-port, sheltered in all weathers and accessible at all tides, Stornoway has over a mile of quayage **figure 2**.[2] The town is also the main commercial and shopping centre for Lewis and Harris, serving 75 per cent of the population of the Outer Hebrides.[3]

Lewis is approximately 75 km in length and 52 km across at its widest point. Harris, to the south end of the island, is separated from Lewis by a solid range of hills; together, the two are known as the Long Island. There is a regular ferry service from Stornoway across the North Minch to Ullapool on the mainland. From Tarbert in Harris, there are also ferry services to Uig in Skye and Lochmaddy in North Uist. There are regular flights to Stornoway from Glasgow and Inverness, as well as inter-island flights to Barra and Benbecula.

Crofting, agriculture, fishing, fish farming, fish processing, quarrying and tourism are the principal economic activities of the region, together with other smaller scale manufacture, notably Harris Tweed cloth.[4] The Comhairle nan Eilean (Western Isles Council) is the largest employer in the region, accounting for over 37 per cent of all employment.[5] Alongside the more traditional industries, newer high technology companies are being attracted to the Western Isles. Natural medicines and pharmaceutical products, for example, are manufactured at Callanish, and the expansion of Gaelic television broadcasting has encouraged independent production companies to set up in Stornoway.[6]

The Comhairle nan Eilean (Western Isles Islands Council), a single-tier Local Authority, was established in 1975 in the reorganisation of Scottish local government. Prior to 1975, the Western Isles were governed from the mainland (being part of Ross and Cromarty).[7] In the local government reorganisation of April 1996, the council remained unchanged but altered its name to Western Isles Council (the Gaelic form remains the same).

geology

The remarkable twisted and contorted rocks of the Western Isles are among the oldest in the world, having formed as the Earth's crust was cooling over 3000 million years ago. In comparatively recent times, the mountain ridges and U-shaped valleys of Harris and the upland parts of Lewis and the Uists were sculpted by a local ice-cap to produce the smoothed, rock-exposed landscape now visible.[8] This landscape is one of sharp contrasts: the coastline, for example, can be startlingly varied. Miles of steep cliffs where the sea-floor drops sharply to deep water contrast with gently sloping coastlines, shallow bays and spectacular white sandy beaches.[9] The moving ice also carved deep U-shaped valleys and corries (steep-sided depressions scooped out of the hillsides).[10] The movement of the ice can be seen even today as scratch marks on rock outcrops. The rise in sea-level after the melting of the glaciers also resulted in 'drowned landscapes', where the sea has penetrated inland, filling valleys and leaving submerged hill-tops as small islands.[11]

soils, agriculture and climate

After the Ice Age, from about 10,000 BC, vegetation began to grow. It eventually included a number of species of trees rarely seen on the islands today, such as birch, alder, willow and Scots pine.[12] In time, the climate became cooler and wetter and the soil conditions altered. Where the rainfall is higher than the loss of water through drainage and evaporation, the soil becomes permanently waterlogged and dead vegetation fails to rot completely.[13] In time, this waterlogged soil and dead plant formed a blanket of peat. A

figure 2
Stornoway from the air
1988 © Crown Copyright: MOD

shallow skin of peat now overlies much of the Western Isles, with deeper deposits in wetter hollows and basins. The peat does have its uses, being commonly utilised as fuel.

Along the Atlantic coastline the shells and skeletons of the sea-creatures that fed off the fertile, shallow coastal sea were ground down to fine white sand, creating long beaches and coastal dunes.[14] The fine white sand was also blown inland to form a flat sandy coastal plain known as the machair.[15] The liming effect of the sand has produced a fertile environment for wildlife and agriculture. Fertilised with seaweed and cropped on a rotational basis, this narrow strip of land has been worked by generations of crofters.

Subsistence crofting agriculture predominates in the Western Isles, with over 6,000 individual crofts.[16] Most are part-time or spare-time units with small-scale low-input/low-output agricultural production. The main activity is the production of lambs for sale to the mainland, together with the growing of at least part of the fodder required for livestock. There are some full-time farms and some cattle herds for beef production, but herd sizes are generally small.[17]

Fishing remains a significant industry in the Western Isles, presently employing around 10 per cent of the working population.[18] Shellfish have become the most important source of income, notably prawns, scallops, lobster and crabs, most of which are exported to markets in mainland Scotland, England and continental Europe. In the past, various species of whitefish were important to the local economy, notably herring in the early 1900s, but as a result of diversification and restructuring of the fishing fleet, more vessels are now pursuing alternative species of fish.[19]

In recent years, the abundance of sea and fresh water lochs, estimated at over 6,000, has played an increasingly important role in the economy of the islands. Salmon farming requires access to both salt and fresh water and the pollution-free lochs of the Western Isles are in great demand. Fish processing, and ancillary activities such as ice-making,

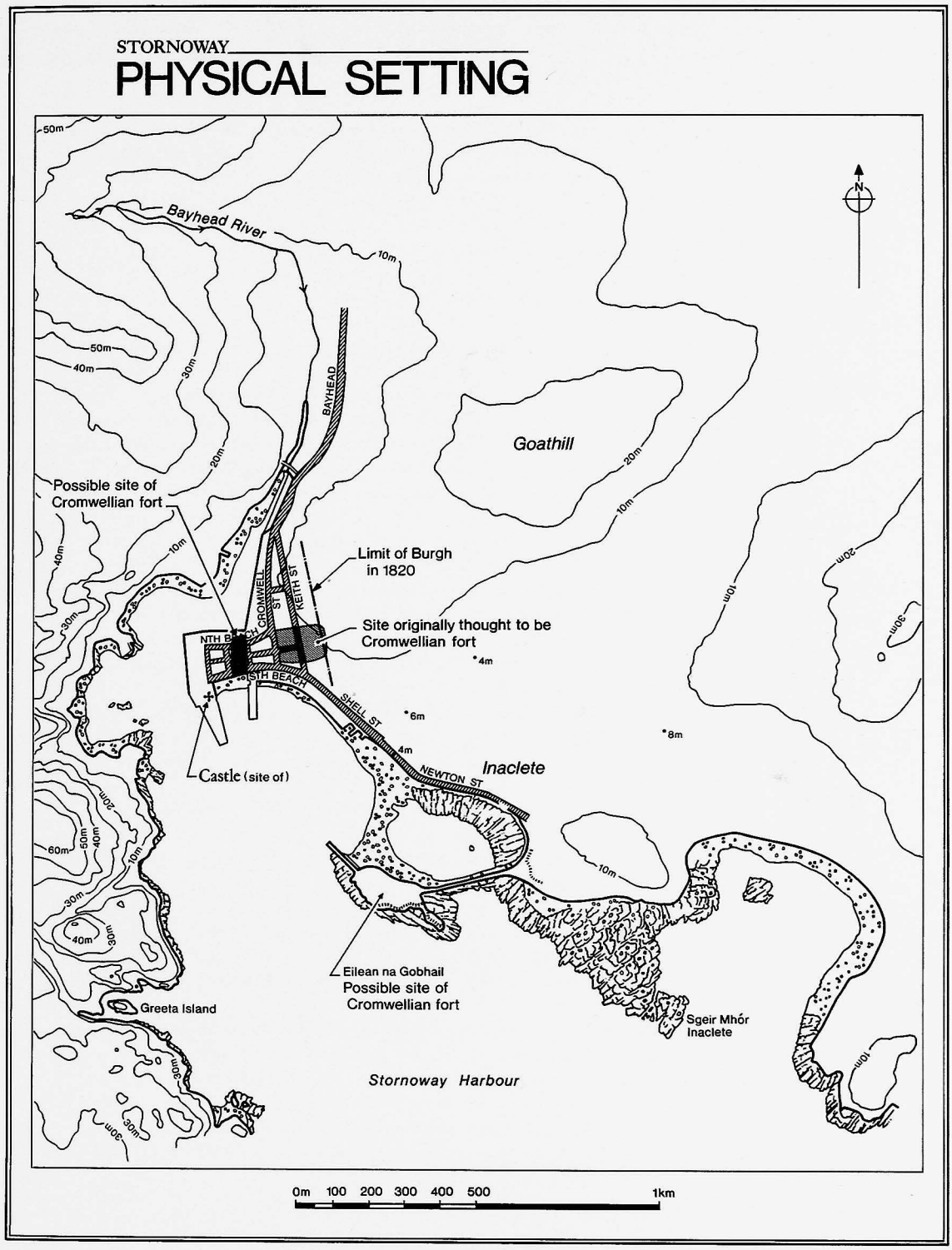


figure 3
The physical setting of Stornoway

administration and marketing, have concentrated around Stornoway and Castlebay in Barra.[20] After the boom years of the 1980s, when there were over fifty companies operating, the industry is now in the hands of a few large operators.[21] Wild salmon and brown trout are common in many of the lochs, attracting anglers from all over the world.

The climate of the Western Isles is generally milder than that of the adjacent mainland, with the drier air of the European land mass mixing with the wetter air of the Atlantic Ocean in a zone around the islands.[22] The interplay of these air currents does,

however, produce a changeable climate. The low-lying nature of much of the landscape means that, although there are few weeks in the year without some rainfall, most of it is deposited on the more mountainous mainland. Severe frosts are uncommon and, although snow falls in winter, it rarely lies for more than a few days. The North Atlantic Drift, a current of warm water originating in the Caribbean, also ensures a moderate climate as well as relatively warm sea water.[24]

topography and morphology of the burgh

The historic (medieval) core of Stornoway is confined to a narrow promontory from which Point Street, the main east to west thoroughfare, derives its name. Jutting out into the bay, the peninsula blocks the approach to the Bayhead River, creating a naturally sheltered harbour **figure 3**. Stornoway lies on the east side of the bay, where the land is generally flatter and lower-lying than the surrounding area. The promontory lies between 3 and 4 m OD, with Kenneth Street and James Street marking the approximate line of the 10 m contour as the land rises gradually north-eastwards towards Goathill. In contrast, the land on the west side of the bay rises up steeply from the coast to around 60 m OD.

Point Street divides the promontory in two, and is flanked by North Beach and South Beach respectively. Quay Street, Castle Street and Bank Street cut Point Street at right angles, linking North and South Beach. Built sometime between the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries, the castle stood on a skerry at the south-western tip of the promontory, and at high tide was cut off from the mainland (*see* **figure 7**). The remains of the castle were still visible in the late nineteenth century, and the skerry now lies under the car ferry terminal. Early settlement is likely to have been attracted by the security that the castle provided and, therefore, was probably confined to the headland. The natural constraints of the site meant that settlement could expand only eastwards. Cromwell Street, now one of the busiest streets in the town, may represent the first addition to the early core settlement. Even by the early nineteenth century, the town remained fairly small with Kenneth Street marking the eastern edge of settlement. This former boundary of the town has been preserved in the layout of the building plots and is clearly visible on a detailed plan of the town as a distinct north–south line midway between Kenneth Street and Keith Street (*see* **figure 17**).

Settlement had also strung out northwards towards the mouth of the Bayhead River and southwards along what is now Shell Street. The northern suburb became known as Bayhead and the southern suburb as Inaclete (later Newtown). There may also have been settlement on Goathill and in what is now the grounds of Lews Castle, although no trace of either survives today.

The townscape has changed considerably over the last 150 years as the two harbours have been developed to meet new demands. Land has been reclaimed for quayage along North Beach and South Beach, and a large tract of land has been reclaimed west of Cromwell Street (Cromwell Street Quay), where originally the sea shore extended up to Cromwell Street itself. Land continues to be reclaimed, with construction of a new quayside along South Beach in progress, and proposals for infill between King Edward Wharf and No 2 Wharf.

notes

1 F Rennie, *The Western Isles: Islands at Work* (Western Isles Islands Council, Lewis, nd), 3.
2 Anon, *Stornoway in the Lews* (Stornoway Town Council, Edinburgh, 1963), 13.
3 Rennie, *The Western Isles: Islands at Work*, 3.
4 *Ibid*, 3.
5 *Ibid*, 3.
6 *Ibid*, 13.
7 *Ibid*, 9.
8 F Rennie, *The Western Isles: Natural Environment* (Western Isles Islands Council, Lewis, nd), 2.

9 *Ibid*, 4.
10 *Ibid*, 5.
11 *Ibid*, 4.
12 *Ibid*, 8.
13 *Ibid*, 3.
14 *Ibid*, 6.
15 *Ibid*, 6.
16 Rennie, *The Western Isles: Islands at Work*, 4.
17 *Ibid*, 4.
18 *Ibid*, 5.
19 *Ibid*, 4.
20 *Ibid*, 6.
21 *Ibid*, 6.
22 Rennie, *The Western Isles: Natural Environment*, 7.
23 *Ibid*, 7.

To date, no archaeological work has been undertaken within the medieval core of Stornoway. Further afield, however, a wide range of prehistoric and historic sites and finds has been recorded from around the burgh, summarised in the **area by area assessment** (*see* pp 43–60). A basic introduction to the prehistory and early history of the area has been included in order to place the sites and finds in context and to provide a broader framework within which to study the origins of the medieval burgh.

prehistory

The settlement of Scotland began around 7,000 BC against a background of complex climatic fluctuations and rising and falling ocean levels. This was the Mesolithic period (literally meaning the Middle Stone Age), when much of Scotland was covered in dense woodland which supported a rich variety of game, particularly red deer. The few known settlements of this age known in Scotland tend to cluster along the coastline and river banks. These communities exploited the sea for fish and shellfish, followed the herds of woodland game through the seasons and supplemented their diet with wild plants and berries. Unfortunately, their semi-nomadic existence has left little trace in the landscape. The earliest human settlement so far discovered in Scotland is on the island of Rum, south of Skye. A group of hunters made their home here around 9,000 years ago at the head of Loch Scresort, a sheltered sea-loch. Within a thousand years, people were also living on Islay, Jura and Arran, and in the area where Oban now stands.[1]

Relatively few settlement sites have been found to date, but shell middens and stone and flint tools are common finds along former rivers and coastlines. On the island of Oronsay, for example, five large mounds of discarded shells are clearly visible above the old shoreline. These middens contain rich deposits of bone, shell and other domestic refuse and provide a valuable insight into the lifestyle of the early island communities.[2]

There have been no Mesolithic discoveries on Lewis so far, but evidence from pollen cores across the Callanish peninsula has indicated a reduction of the birch woodland and an increase in heather heathland and grasslands at this time. This small-scale change in the environment could be the result of human interference and may indicate a nearby settlement, as yet undiscovered.[3]

Around 3,500 BC, people began to live a more settled existence in response to changes in the environment, including more favourable soil conditions, and to ideas introduced from continental Europe. Large areas of woodland were cleared, partly by burning and partly by cutting down trees with stone axes, livestock was kept and the land was farmed for crops. A number of examples of the sort of tools that were used in clearing the woodland have been found in and around Stornoway. The most interesting are the three stone axes found near Newmarket. Discovered in a layer of peat, there is a suggestion that the axes were originally contained within a bag, which had since rotted away. Elsewhere in Lewis an axehead, made of a rock-type found in Antrim and still attached to its haft of hawthorn wood, was found at Shulishader, and five axes were found at Loch Airigh na Ceardaich, near Balallan, two of which were of a Perthshire stone.[4] The more elaborate of the many axes, such as the Shulishader find, may have been intended more for prestige or ceremonial purposes than for functional use. This indicates that there was a growing elite in society capable of long-distance trade.[5]

The gradual accumulation of peat has largely obscured all traces of the early farm settlements of these Neolithic (New Stone Age) peoples. One such site, however, has been discovered at Northton in Harris (national grid reference NF 975 912: Scheduled Ancient Monument).[6] Here excavations revealed a group of small, oval, stone-built houses among the sand dunes. Household refuse, in the form of broken pottery and midden material, was also found spread over the adjacent fields.

The landscape, however, still bears testament to the presence of these early farming communities in the form of burial mounds. Ritual is strongly evident in the lives of these groups in their treatment of the dead, who were buried in monumental tombs. These communal cairns (stone-built) or barrows (constructed of wood and turf) sometimes

contained large numbers of burials. The types of burial monument vary considerably from region to region, no doubt reflecting regional traditions and perhaps the origins of the communities which used them.[7] The tombs probably became a focus for ritual where elaborate ceremonies took place, perhaps in celebration of ancestors.

The most common type of burial mound found in the Western Isles is the passage grave.[8] These were built in several stages, with a chamber and passage being constructed first. A small circular cairn was then raised around the chamber, just large enough to support a corbelled roof which was erected over the chamber but resting on the cairn itself. A kerb then encircled the cairn, with the space between the two filled in, eventually burying the cairn. Sometimes a façade was added, possibly even after burial had ceased. A number of these cairns can be seen in Lewis, two of them in the care of Historic Scotland; a small chambered cairn lying within the stone circle at Callanish (Calanais: NB 213 330), and a second example at Steinacleit (NB 396 541), near Shader at the north end of the island.[9] Closer to Stornoway, a large chambered cairn has been discovered at Cnoc na Croich (Gallows Hill: NB 417 323) in the grounds of Lews Castle **figure 1**. This cairn is a Scheduled Ancient Monument.

By about 2,500 BC, the tradition of monumental tombs was in decline in Scotland and new types of monument were being erected, such as stone circles which incorporated an awareness of the rising and setting of the sun and moon in their design.[10] There are a large number of stone circles and standing stones in the Western Isles, some of which can be seen within a few kilometres of Stornoway. Priest's Glen stone circle (NB 411 352)[11] and Benside stone setting (NB 413 357), for example, are relatively small, but Tursachan Calanais (the Standing Stones of Callanish), on the west coast of Lewis (NB 213 330)[12], is one of the most spectacular of these sites anywhere in Britain. It was only in 1857, when over 1.5 m of peat had been cleared from the site, that the full extent of the stones was fully exposed for the first time in three thousand years.

Around 2,000 BC, a new trend was emerging of single grave burials, in marked contrast to the earlier monumental tombs, which could contain large numbers of burials: this trend continued into the subsequent Bronze Age. These single burials often contained personal possessions, placed in the grave—perhaps for the afterlife—by relatives or others taking part in the funeral ceremony. They have also been interpreted as reflecting the position of the individual within the overall social hierarchy. At 'Tursachan' (Cnoc Ceann), Lewis (NB 222 326), there is an example of a simple Bronze Age cairn. Here, a circular setting of tall, thin slabs surrounds a small cairn. It may have been excavated at some time in the past but, unfortunately, no records were kept.[13] This site is a Scheduled Ancient Monument (under the name Ceann a'Gharaodh). The Bronze Age was also marked by the introduction and development of new styles of pottery (for example, Beakers, Food Vessel Urns and Cinerary Urns, many of which accompanied burials), unenclosed settlements and metal-working.

By the late Bronze Age and early Iron Age, settlements—rather than funerary monuments—begin to dominate the archaeological landscape in Scotland. These include numerous fortified settlements, ranging from large hillforts to enclosed villages and isolated single family dwellings. The end of the Bronze Age, around 600 BC, was a time of considerable change. Iron tools and, increasingly, weapons begin to appear in the archaeological record. Although less defensive types of settlements also existed in the Iron Age, society seems generally to have been more competitive, with the emergence of tribal groups perhaps competing for territory and natural resources.[14]

The blanket of peat that began forming on the uplands around 1,500 BC gradually extended downhill. The effect was to concentrate settlement on the coastal fringes where competition for resources and productive agricultural land must have intensified. Whereas evidence for Bronze Age settlement in the Western Isles is virtually absent from the archaeological record, over a hundred fortified sites from the Iron Age have been identified.[15] Natural cliff-top promontories and small islands in lochs were the first sites to be occupied. Atlantic roundhouses, a collective name for structures variously described as brochs, duns etc, originated as fairly simple, solid roundhouses. Over time, their defences

were strengthened and made more elaborate. From this emerged the classic monument of the Scottish Iron Age in the north and west—the broch tower. Essentially, these were roundhouses with hollow dry-stone walls, superimposed galleries and linking stairs, a single narrow entrance and a tapering profile.[16] Archaeological research on the diet of broch dwellers suggests that some of these sites may represent the high status dwellings of the local leaders. One of the finest examples of a broch tower in Scotland can be seen in Lewis (Dun Carloway: NB 189 412, in the care of Historic Scotland). It still stands to approximately its original height of 9 metres, and the collapse of part of its walling exposes a typical cross-section of the double-skinned wall and internal galleries.[17] Settlements known as crannogs, man-made islands in lochs, are also found, for example at Loch Arnish near Stornoway (NB 423 302: Scheduled Ancient Monument).

The need for defence seems to have lessened by about AD 150 and a new form of roundhouse emerged, the wheelhouse.[18] It comprised a circular outer wall, providing a large open space with radial internal sub-divisions. Except for a few examples in Shetland, the wheelhouse is unique to the Western Isles. The recently excavated wheelhouse at Cnip, Uig (Lewis: NB 098 366), showed that they were elegant structures and provided comfortable accommodation for the inhabitants.[19]

Other types of sites, of a less defensive nature, are also known from this period, including simple oval and circular huts. Another distinctive building form is the souterrain, two examples of which have been found near Stornoway, at Gress (NB 491 415) and Gress Lodge (NB 494 419).[20] A typical souterrain comprises a curving, stone-built underground passage or gallery, roofed with either stone slabs or timbers. These underground passages were not used for accommodation, but for storage.

The date of the demise of the broch and the dun, and the end of the Iron Age, is difficult to determine precisely, and both types of site are known to have been occupied into the medieval period.[21]

the early historic period

Major changes in the political and religious organisation of Scotland followed the withdrawal of the Romans in the third century AD, when four distinct territorial groupings or kingdoms appear in the historical and archaeological record. The mainland (except Argyll) and islands north of the Forth and Clyde estuaries were inhabited by the Picts. The Picts were not a 'new' people but merely an amalgamation of indigenous Iron Age tribes. This amalgamation began in the third century AD. Strathclyde was home to the Britons, whose capital lay on the north side of the Clyde at Alcluith (Dumbarton Rock); and on their north-western border, in Argyll, were the Scots. They had arrived from Ireland (traditionally in the fifth century AD), and by the following century had established the kingdom of Dalriada. In later times, the Anglian kings of Northumbria came to control much of south-east Scotland.

It was the Scots who eventually dominated, but not until the mid ninth century AD, when Kenneth mac Alpin established royal, political and cultural supremacy over the Pictish kingdom. In the Western Isles, however, the situation was different, as the Viking raids on the islands which had begun around the end of the eighth century were followed by a phase of intensive Norse settlement from about AD 840[22] (*see* the Norse settlement).

There is evidence for Early Historic settlements in the Western Isles, mostly from the machair area. The majority of these settlements occupied former wheelhouse sites, for example at Cnip in Lewis and the Udal in North Uist (NF 825 783).[23] There is seldom any evidence for a break in occupation at these sites between the Iron Age and the Early Historic periods, and at a few sites—such as Cnip—there is evidence of direct continuity.[24] Some brochs also continued to be occupied, with cellular constructions being erected on the sites, for example at Loch na Berie, Lewis (NN 103 351: Scheduled Ancient Monument).[25] Presently unique among Western Isles sites of this period is Eilean Olabhat in North Uist, which has produced a small specialist metal-working workshop along with various phases of occupation (NF 747 753: Scheduled Ancient Monument).[26] Burials of

figure 4
St Columba's Church, Aignish

the Early Historic period are few, but four cists were uncovered by beach erosion at Galson in Lewis in 1984 and 1985 (NB 437 594). Two of these cists were excavated, revealing the skeletons of a young woman and a man; both appeared to have suffered back pain caused by heavy work.[27]

There is little evidence for pre-Christian beliefs during this period, but a few Pictish symbol stones are known in the Western Isles, for example the stone from Pabbay, south of Barra (NL 607 874: Scheduled Ancient Monument).[28] These stones are all Class I stones, ie decorated with a variety of recurrent symbols and lacking overt Christian motifs. Such stones are generally thought to have emerged around the sixth century AD and to have been superseded by the Christian Class II stones shortly thereafter. Interestingly, the Western Isles stones all share a symbol in common, the so-called crescent and V-rod.[29]

The conversion of the Western Isles to Christianity was begun by Columba in the later sixth century from his base at Iona, and was progressed by later monks working from Iona and other monasteries before the end of the seventh century AD. Christianity is likely to have made an impact on the Western Isles from this period. In the Western Isles, remains of churches securely datable before the Viking raids are rare, although it is likely that some may lie beneath later medieval chapels and graveyards.[30] St Aula's Church, Griais (NB 490 416; Scheduled Ancient Monument)[31] and St Columba's Church, Aignish (NB 485 323; Scheduled Ancient Monument; **figure 4**),[32] both near Stornoway, for example, may have been built over earlier religious foundations. The best preserved sites of this period are to be found on the more remote islands, such as St Ronan's Chapel (Scheduled Ancient Monument), on the deserted island of Rona, 72 km off the Butt of Lewis. Here can be found one of the most complete groups of ecclesiastical buildings of the early Christian period to survive anywhere in Scotland. The hermitage comprises a small, two-chambered chapel set within an oval cemetery enclosure. It seems likely that the hermitage was abandoned around AD 800, when Viking raids began to affect the Western Isles. The island was resettled in the twelfth or thirteenth century, although its new inhabitants were laymen, not monks; these settlers were responsible for the three groups of sunken corbelled buildings and well-preserved open field system that are still visible.

Norse settlement

In the last decade of the eighth century AD, Viking raids began to affect the north-west coasts of Scotland and the north of Ireland.[33] Within fifty years, however, the Vikings had begun to settle in the islands that the Norse knew as *Sudreyar*, or 'Southern Isles', to distinguish them from the *Nordreyar* or Northern Isles (Orkney and Shetland). By about AD 1000 at the latest, the Norse settlers of Britain and Ireland had abandoned paganism and accepted Christianity. By the end of the eleventh century, the Western Isles formed part of the Norse kingdom of Man and the Isles, which was in turn dependent on the King of Norway. A revolt against the King of Man by Somerled mac Gille-Brigde, a Celto-Norse ruler of Lorn (Argyll), wrested control of the islands south of Ardnamurchan Point.

Somerled's defeat by Malcolm IV's army in 1164 and the splitting of his inheritance provided the Scottish king with an opportunity to extend his own authority into the islands of Argyll, but Skye and the Western Isles remained subject to Norway.[34] With troops drawn from the Western Isles and Skye, the Norse under King Haakon IV tried to retake Kintyre and Bute from the Scots. The campaign was a failure and the battle of Largs in 1263 decided nothing.[35] On his way back to Bergen, Haakon died of disease in Kirkwall. Norse influence in the Western Isles finally ended with the Treaty of Perth in 1266, whereby the entire kingdom of Man and the Isles was ceded to Alexander III by Magnus, King Haakon's successor.[36]

In the absence of known sites, place names of Lewis provide a clue to the possible extent of Norse settlement;[37] ninety-nine out of the 126 village names are of Scandinavian origin, and a further nine contain Norse elements.[38] The mainland Celts referred to the Western Isles as *Innse Gall*, or 'the Islands of the Foreigners', and although few Scandinavian settlements have been discovered in the Western Isles, their grave sites are more commonly found. Initially, they worshipped pagan gods such as Thor and Odin, and, in the graves, the bodies of the dead were often accompanied by a range of weapons, ornaments and domestic items, for use in the afterlife. A wealthy female burial, for example, one of several Viking graves discovered at Valtos in Lewis (NB 086 364), contained a ringed pin, a set of glass beads, a knife, sickle, whetstone and needle case, a matching buckle and strap-end, and a pair of typically Viking bronze 'tortoise' brooches (which can be seen in Stornoway Museum). Similar pairs of brooches have also been found on Barra and St Kilda. Graves and coin hoards are the most common finds, but perhaps the most famous discovery is the twelfth-century Lewis Chessmen, found by a crofter in 1831 in a stone cist in a sand dune at Uig Bay (NB 042 323).[39] There were at least ninety-three items, consisting of seventy-eight chessmen, fourteen draughtsmen and a belt buckle, all carved from walrus ivory. The hoard represents four chess sets, but with one knight, four rooks and forty-five pawns missing. Traces of colour on the pieces showed that some were originally stained dark red to distinguish one player's pieces from another's. The sets have been dated to the mid twelfth century from the style of the chair backs of the kings, queens and some of the bishops, which are comparable with carvings on Norwegian churches and on the doorways of Ely Cathedral in Cambridgeshire, east England. The sets were probably made in Norway but how they came to be hidden in a sand dune at Uig will never be known; the collection may have been concealed during a time of trouble, after which the owner either failed to return or could not re-locate the hiding place. Part of the hoard was recently on temporary loan to Stornoway Museum, attracting considerable interest.

The possibility that a Norse settlement, perhaps in the form of a trading post, however small or temporary, once existed on the site that later became Stornoway can be confirmed only by future archaeological finds. Stornoway certainly provided all the resources necessary for a Norse settlement—fresh water from the Bayhead River, the safest anchorage on the island (protected by a sand bar), and a strip of relatively flat land on which to beach boats. The recent chance find of a Viking Age silver hoard, deposited in the grounds of Lews Castle in the first half of the eleventh century (see pp 51–2), suggests that a Norse settlement in this area is a distinct possibility.

medieval settlement

Evidence for medieval settlement is also curiously absent from the documented archaeological landscape of Lewis. Duns and brochs may have been occupied into the medieval period, but otherwise there are no known settlement sites. Recent excavations on Islay, at Finlaggan (NR 388 680; Scheduled Ancient Monument), have shown that settlement persisted at this island-loch site from the late thirteenth century until the end of the sixteenth century.[40]

This was a high status site, since the council of the Lords of the Isles was probably held there, but it does give a useful indication of the nature of medieval settlement in the

islands. The Finlaggan main island was artificially enlarged and protected against the water from the late thirteenth century onwards. A hall was then constructed and also, possibly, a chapel. The rest of the island was packed with small timber or turf and stone-walled buildings, laid out regularly and connected by a network of paved roads. A food preparation area was also identified near the hall. By the end of the fifteenth century or in the early sixteenth, the hall and the cemetery fell into disuse and a number of other houses either collapsed or were demolished. In the sixteenth century, houses and barns were erected all over the island, creating quite a substantial settlement. This was not so well ordered as before, having apparently no road network and randomly placed buildings. One gable-ended house and associated barn may have belonged to an individual of substance, possibly the crown tenant of Finlaggan. This second phase of settlement was relatively short-lived and did not continue into the following century.

Examples of this type of loch-side or loch-island settlement also exist in the Western Isles, which were also within the control of the Lordship of the Isles. They include Dun Aonais in Loch Aonghais (NF 856 738)[41] and Dun Ban in Loch Caravat (NF 859 567; Scheduled Ancient Monument)[42] (both in North Uist) and Dun Mhic Leoid (Castle Sinclair) which is situated on an islet in Loch Tangusdale on Barra (NL 647 996; Scheduled Ancient Monument).[43] However, without a more complete understanding of medieval rural settlement, the origins and functions of Stornoway and the complex relationship between town and countryside will remain unclear.

the MacLeods and Stornoway

1266 saw the end of Norse control, when Lewis, along with the other Western Isles, was ceded to the King of Scots by the Treaty of Perth. During the early centuries of rule by Scottish kings, the MacLeod chiefs of Lewis were steadily gaining in importance, holding their lands successively from the earls of Ross, the Stewarts, the Lords of the Isles and the crown.[44] There is uncertainty as to the progenitors of the MacLeods. The traditional view is that Leod was a descendant of the house of Man, who married a descendant of Rollo, first duke of Normandy. Their offspring were Tormod and Torquil, who on their father's death received the clan lands in Skye and Harris (Tormod) and Lewis, Raasay and parts of the north-west mainland (Torquil). It has been argued, however, that in fact Tormod and Torquil were great-granduncle and great-grandnephew, descended from Olvir the Unruly, a Viking of the sagas, who held sway in Caithness in 1135. Leod and his son Tormod held parts of Skye and Harris, but Lewis was held by a family of Nicolsons. Murdoch MacLeod married a daughter of the chief of the Nicolsons, and on his drowning (accidental or otherwise) his lands passed to the MacLeods.[45] Whatever the truth of their origins, the successors of Torquil MacLeod held Lewis and Raasay.

A measure of their status was reflected in the establishment of a castle at Stornoway, a spot that had been favoured as a sheltered place to encamp by at least as early as the twelfth century by Olav, King of Man, Islay, Mull and all isles south of Ardnamurchan **figure 5**.[46] How early this MacLeod stronghold was established is unclear, although some commentators on the island hold that the castle was originally built by the Nicolsons in the twelfth century.[47] 'Ane Descriptione of Certaine Pairts of the Highlands of Scotland', written probably in the seventeenth century, describes it as 'builded of ancient be [the] Inhabitants and Superiors of Lewis'.[48] There is nothing to confirm this, however, either in documentary sources or archaeological finds. Whether there was a pre-existing medieval or Norse settlement in this area is also uncertain, although the natural small harbour, protected by the peninsula, would probably have attracted fishermen and seafarers. The fortified MacLeod residence would have proved a focal point for settlement; not only would it have offered a measure of security to dwellings clustering beside it, but also the residents of the castle would have looked to their humbler neighbours for services and supplies. Equally unclear is the derivation of the name of Stornoway. According to the *Old Statistical Account*, the place name comes from the settlement being on the nose or point (Gaelic, *sron*) of the bay.[49] Another theory, however, is that Stornoway means the 'Bay of Steering', from the Norse *steornadh*;[50] or, from the same root, 'Anchor Bay'.[51]

figure 5
J Blaeu's map of Lewis, *'Leogus et Haraia'* 1657

Little is known of the early history of the MacLeods in Lewis, but the island certainly attracted the attention of the crown from the thirteenth century. In 1292, Lewis was included in the abortive sheriffdom of Skye erected by John Balliol. His son, Edward Balliol, an English puppet, granted it in 1335 to John, Lord of the Isles. The latter then made a personal submission to Edward III of England at Perth;[52] and in 1344 David II granted it, once more, to John, Lord of the Isles. Robert II, however, favoured his son Alexander Stewart and Euphemia Ross in 1382/3 with the island.[53] By the early years of the sixteenth century a picture emerges of the clan chief frequently involved in battle, not only with the crown, but also with his own relations. The then Torquil MacLeod, for example, praised in the *Book of the Dean of Lismore* for his courage and loyalty,[54] supported the cause of his wife's nephew, Donald Dubh, to regain the Lordship of the Isles, in opposition to the crown. The expedition led by James IV to punish the rebellious chiefs failed to gain the submission of the chief of Lewis, but the second punitive attack, led by the Earl of Huntly in 1506, resulted in the capture and destruction of Stornoway Castle.[55] Torquil MacLeod was heard of no more. The fate of the local people is, likewise, unrecorded. The commissioning two years later of Ranald Alanson of Clanranald, bishop of Caithness, and Alexander MacLeod of Dunvegan to let to approved tenants, for five years, the lands of Lewis and Waternish forfeited by Torquil MacLeod[56] suggests that some of the erstwhile MacLeod tenants, who would have included settlers at Stornoway, may have been displaced. The restoration of the MacLeod lands and castle of Stornoway to Malcolm, brother of Torquil, in 1511, and their establishment, by James IV, as the free barony of Lewis might have brought more settled times,[57] but for the internal disputes of the MacLeod family, which lasted most of the century.[58]

The crown also had other problems with the MacLeods of Lewis. The *Exchequer Rolls* indicate that the crown had certain difficulties in raising its dues from its distant subjects.[59] Ruaridh (Ruari, Roderick, Rory) MacLeod was the tenth chief of Lewis, ruling from 1539 to 1595. His involvement in disturbances in the Hebrides resulted in summonses of treason against him and others in 1540. These were reinforced by an expedition of twelve ships 'well equipped with artillery', led by James V himself. MacLeod, along with other chiefs, was taken prisoner. Whether or not he was kept captive at Edinburgh is unclear; but he was soon once more in favour, the king granting to MacLeod and his fiancée, Barbara Stewart, daughter of Lord Avondale, the lands, island and barony of Lewis, with the castle (which MacLeod had resigned) and erecting it once more into the free barony of Lewis.[60] This proposed marriage would have repercussions for the MacLeods of Lewis, as Ruaridh MacLeod's first wife, whom he was now divorcing, was Janet MacKenzie, daughter of John MacKenzie, 9th Chief of Kintail.

James V's intention in visiting the Hebrides seems to have been primarily to bring the somewhat lawless clan chiefs under control. The divergent cultures of the Hebrides and lowland Scotland were tellingly revealed in the fact that Ruaridh MacLeod, along with seventeen other chiefs, was incapable of signing his own name in 1545; by then, most lowland nobles could do so.[61] There may, however, have been another factor of interest for the king. It was claimed in 1549 by 'an impartial hand' that his main aim was to examine the state of the fisheries and 'to enquire fully into the abuses and violence committed by the English, especially the merchants of London who carried on a considerable fishery at the time on these coasts and in other northern parts of the German ocean'. It was further stated that this illicit trade, conducted by Lübeckers and Englishmen, was encroaching on Scottish rights. Whether this was so is unclear; but it would have been natural that James V, who had already visited these waters in 1536, would wish to protect the Scottish fishings; and he was sufficiently interested in the islands to have a complete survey prepared of the north-western coast by Alexander Lindsay, pilot on the 1540 expedition.[62] Frenchmen and Dutchmen are known to have been fishing these waters from the fifteenth century,[63] and perhaps also Spaniards.[64] Fishing rights were to remain a matter of contention for Stornoway for centuries; but it is possible that foreign fishermen were tolerated, or even encouraged, by the Lewis men to settle by Stornoway's protective natural harbour.[65]

Ruaridh MacLeod's divorce of Janet MacKenzie was followed by his disinheritance of her son, Torquil Conanach, who MacLeod denied was his. Decades of internal dissension, much amongst the illegitimate sons of MacLeod, were to follow, with various members of the family gaining control of the castle of Stornoway.[66] During one of the assaults on Ruaridh MacLeod, in 1585, all the writs and charters pertinent to Lewis were seized from Stornoway Castle by Torquil Conanach;[67] they were then handed to Kenneth MacKenzie of Kintail. In spite of being, at times, a prisoner in his own castle, Ruaridh MacLeod remained an important force for his sons to reckon with until his death. A manuscript of 1595 referred to him as 'an old man famous for the massacring of his own kinsmen'; and in the same year Dennis Campbell, the dean of Limerick, wrote: 'old M'Clod Lewis, by reason of many treacheries committed by himself against his kinsmen, inviting many of them upon a time to his house, and causing them to be killed at table, entertained such intestine broils and dissensions in his country, that I suppose he could neither help his friends nor annoy his enemies abroad'.[68] In 1596, after the death of Ruaridh MacLeod, James VI granted the barony, castle of Stornoway and MacLeod lands to Torquil Conanach, his heirs and assignees.[69] But this was not to be the start of settled times for either the MacLeods or Lewis. Torquil Conanach's rights to Ruaridh MacLeod's lands was disputed by Torquil Dubh MacLeod, the elder of Ruaridh's two sons by his third wife, the daughter of MacLean of Duart.[70] This dispute was made irrelevant by an Act of 1597: all who owned, or presumed to own, land in the Highlands and Islands were to present themselves before the Lords of the Exchequer by 15 May 1598 with documentary evidence of ownership and surety for future good behaviour. Those who failed to comply would be declared forfeit.[71] Despite the fact that Torquil Conanach had received a charter confirming his title to the Lewis lands just a few years earlier,[72] he either failed to appear with the documents or James VI decided to over-ride his claims; whatever the reason, the Lewis lands were declared forfeit.[73]

Torquil Dubh MacLeod had no access to any of the Lewis documents, and was therefore unable to press his own claim.[74] James VI had now succeeded in his aim of having Lewis available for his projected scheme of lowland colonisation of the Western Isles.

The island of Lewis, however, was still an object of contention, possibly due to its alleged natural wealth. For example, a report published sometime in the previous two decades stated that

> *This Ile of Lewis is very profitable and fertile alswell of corns as all kind of bestiall wild fowl and fishes, and speciallie of beir, sua that thair will grow commonlie 20, 18, or at leist 16 bolls yeirlie eftir ilk bolls sawing. It is 40lb. land of auld extent and payis yeirlie 18 score chalders of victuall, 58 score of ky, 32 score of wedderis, and ane great quantitie of fisches.*[75]

Praise indeed, but whether factually correct is less certain. An account of 1540 probably more fairly assessed the agricultural potential of the island: 'In this country is peit mossland at the sea coste, and the place where he wins his peits this yiere there be sown his corne the next yiere; after that he guidds it weill with seaware'.[76] But the earlier report, exaggerated or otherwise, may have attracted the covetousness of others. The Admiral of Scotland, Francis Stewart, Earl Bothwell, may have been one of those attracted by the island's prospects. In July 1590 he was offered a grant of land in Lewis, in return for his lordship of Liddesdale on the Scottish/English border; the earl accepted the exchange so long as King James VI could put him in peaceful possession. As the king did not consider this viable at the time, the deal fell through.[77]

A few years later, however, in 1598, after Lewis had been forfeited by the MacLeods, the island was granted by the king to a group of men from Fife. The ostensible reason was that they would not merely colonise, but, more importantly, civilise the island at their own expense. The native population, replaced by these Lowlanders, was to be transported to the mainland. In exchange, these Fife Adventurers were to receive Lewis, Rona and

Trotternish in Skye rent free for seven years and, thereafter, a rental of barley was to be paid for Lewis and Rona and cash for Trotternish.[78]

In late October 1598 the Adventurers, including Robert Durie, minister of Anstruther,[79] a number of artisans and about 600 mercenaries, with all the baggage and equipment necessary for a plantation, landed at Stornoway. A number of disappointments awaited them. The island was not as fertile as claimed; supplies were inadequate; many died from cold and lack of housing;[80] and they faced the concerted opposition of Ruaridh MacLeod's surviving illegitimate sons, the two half-brothers, Neil and Murdo MacLeod—the erstwhile chief, Torquil Dubh MacLeod, having been treacherously delivered to Torquil Conanach and MacKenzie of Kintail two years previously, and executed by them.[81] After only two months, one of the Fife leaders, James Learmonth of Balcomie, set off to return home to Fife, only to be captured by Murdo MacLeod; he was released a year later on the promise of a ransom and died in Orkney.[82] The two MacLeod brothers, however, displayed as little loyalty to each other as had their predecessors. Murdo was betrayed, handed over to the authorities, tried at St Andrews and executed for resisting the settlers.[83]

With Neil MacLeod apparently friendly, the Fifers were now in a position to begin building. Islanders who promised obedience to their new overlords were allocated land. How much construction work was achieved is unclear, but reports of a 'prettie town' at Stornoway would suggest that the Fifers, with local co-operation, established a more than adequate settlement.[84] Precisely where this settlement was, and the nature of its layout, are unknown, although it is probably safe to assume that it was close to the sheltered bay and the castle. Whether the dwellings were of the traditional black house style or of lowland design is not clear. It was probably unlikely that the gentlemen adventurers would have wished to stay in lodgings as humble as black houses; and a reference in the *Records of the Privy Council* in 1607 to the houses of the 'gentlemen portioners of Lewis', some of which were demolished by the islanders at this time, while others were maintained as 'houssis of weir' and were fortified with men and armour, would suggest dwellings of some substance.[85] Unish House at Waternish in Skye, built in 1605 by the Fife Adventurers, although later extended and finally abandoned around 1914, still retains some of the character and reveals the quality of its original eight rooms; it probably had much in common with the Stornoway dwellings.[86] Historical sources suggest that a fort was constructed at Holm (NB 442 305), but no evidence for this can be seen on the ground or from the air. It is not clear whether the Adventurers established a church in Stornoway. The presence of a minister in their company would suggest that this had, at least, been their intention. It is unlikely that there had been a church in Stornoway prior to this. The parish church, dedicated to St Columba, was at some distance from the Stornoway settlement, at Aignish **figure 4**. It was here that the MacLeods were buried in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. One grave-slab still to be seen in the church may be that of Roderick MacLeod, who died around 1498 **figure 6**.[87] The minister of Gairloch, Farquhar McRae, was sent in 1610 to Lewis since, it was claimed, 'its inhabitants were strangers to the Gospel', which suggests little had been achieved.[88] At least one synod of Argyll, however, was held at Stornoway, by Mr John Lessely—'pretended bishope of the yles'—between 1628 and 1633, which might suggest some sort of church building in the town.[89] The fact that ministers were claiming, as late as the end of the seventeenth century, that they were still fighting superstitions and were only just beginning to succeed in dissuading the people from such practices as pouring ale into the sea at Hallowe'en and calling on Shoney to send the seaware to manure their fields, would imply not much change in their beliefs from the tenth century. The ministers' statements, however, may represent little more than an attempt to justify their presence on an island that had been largely neglected following the Reformation in 1560.[90]

It was not long before Neil MacLeod and Sir James Spens of Wormiston were quarrelling and the short-lived peace was over. MacKenzie of Kintail seized the opportunity to exacerbate events. He released from captivity Norman MacLeod, the brother of the deceased Torquil Dubh, in the hope that the islanders would rally to his

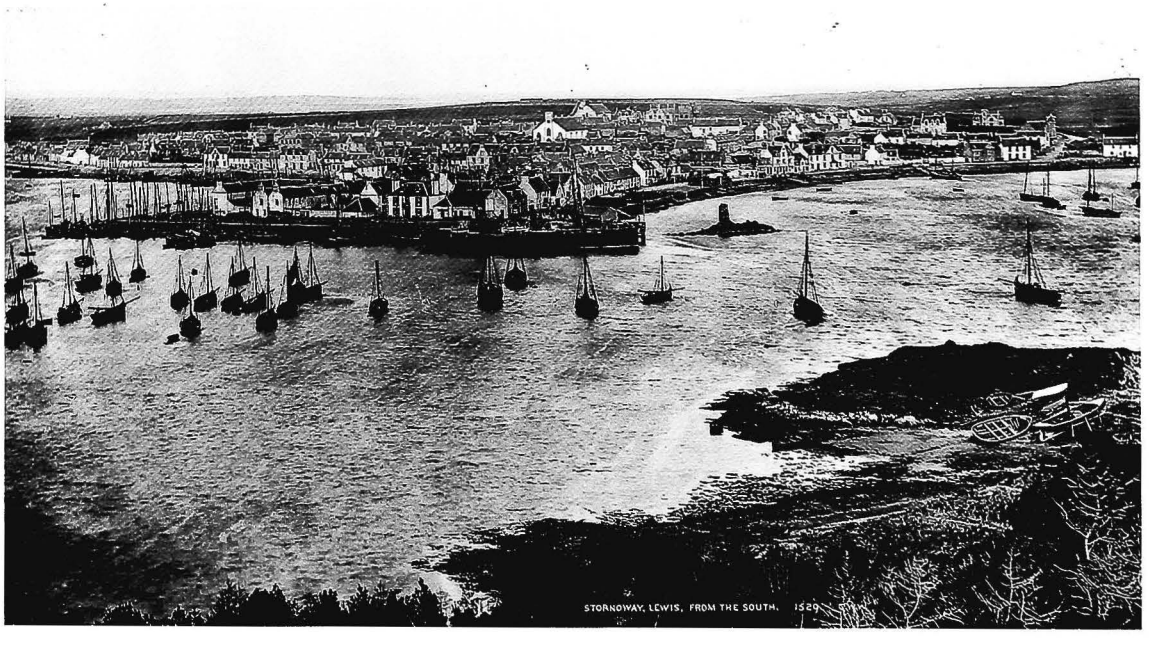
figure 6
Grave-slab of Roderick (VII) MacLeod (died *c* 1498), St Columba's Church, Aignish

side, which they did. The settlement at Stornoway was attacked and burned; and all the settlers who survived were taken captive. After eight months imprisonment they were released on condition that they left the island for ever and that the islanders would receive a pardon from the king for all past misdemeanours.[91] Sir James Spens and Thomas Monypenny of Kinkell were kept as hostages.[92]

For a short while Norman MacLeod ruled the island, although his position was never secure. In July 1602, James VI, who had no intention of pardoning the islanders for offences against the settlers, issued instructions for a muster of all men between sixteen and sixty in the shires of Aberdeen, Banff, Nairn, Inverness, Caithness, Orkney and Shetland to equip themselves for the re-conquest of the island. This invasion failed to materialise, as did a muster the following year intended to destroy completely 'sic ane tyrannous byke of rebellious lymmaris'. It was not until 1605 that a successful invasion took Lewis. Norman MacLeod went to London with a safe conduct, but was subsequently imprisoned without trial in the tolbooth at Edinburgh until 1615.[93] When he was released he went to Holland, where he died.[94]

In the meantime, MacKenzie of Kintail seized his opportunity. The settlers were disheartened at their lack of progress and opted to abandon the venture. MacKenzie, on the basis of the conveyance of the island to him by Torquil Conanach and with the assistance of the Lord Chancellor of Scotland, gifted the island to himself under the great seal. His success was short-lived. James VI made MacKenzie resign the island to the crown. The rights were then, in 1607, transferred to the three remaining colonists—Lord Balmerino, Sir James Spens and Sir George Hay. They were put in possession of the lands and barony of Lewis, with all its appurtenances, the right of patronage to churches, the castle of Stornoway with twenty merklands of land and all mineral rights. The 'villam' or township of Stornoway, along with the castle **figure 7**, was erected into a free burgh of barony, its inhabitants having the right to buy and sell, have a market cross, a weekly market and two fairs, and exact tolls from those attending; they might also, with the advice of their burgh superiors, elect bailies and other officers.[95]

figure 7
Stornoway harbour (before the pier), with ruins of the castle, in the nineteenth century



In 1609, to support the colonisation of Lewis and assist in the capture of Neil MacLeod, a muster of men from the northern counties was transported to the island. Balmerino appears to have lost heart in the venture. His share of rights to Lewis were forfeit and granted to Hay.[96] The capture of a shipload of essential provisions by Neil MacLeod, secretly helped by MacKenzie, brought the colonists into extremely straitened circumstances. The new muster was dismissed and Hay and Spens returned to Fife to seek support and supplies, leaving a small force to guard Stornoway Castle.[97] Neil MacLeod, with a determined party of followers, took the castle and dispatched the survivors back to Fife.[98] Sir George Hay and Sir James Spens sold their titles to the island to MacKenzie in 1610 for 10,000 merks.[99] So ended the attempt to colonise Lewis.

Neil MacLeod fled to Bearasay (or Birsay), at the mouth of West Loch Roag, and then surrendered to his kinsman, Rory Mor MacLeod of Skye, in Harris. The privy council ordered Rory Mor MacLeod to bring Neil to Edinburgh. He was hanged at the market cross and his head placed above the Netherbow port in April 1613. The MacLeod rule in Lewis was ended, not by lowland colonisation, but by treachery and internal family feuds. A Gaelic poet assessed them: *'S e mo bharail air Clann Leoid, gur cosmhuil iad ri poir an uisge. An te is sine, mas i is mo, ithis i an te is oige dhiubh'* (It is my opinion of Clan Leod, that they are like pikes in water. The oldest of them, if the larger, eats the younger.)[100]

the Mackenzies and Stornoway

Kenneth, Lord MacKenzie of Kintail, received Lewis in 1610, one year before his death. He was succeeded by his son who, being a minor, was placed under the tutelage of his uncle Rory, the Tutor of Kintail. Resistance from the MacLeods continued, but in 1613 the last MacLeod stronghold, Stornoway Castle, fell to the Mackenzies, despite the fact that in the previous century it had withstood both the Earl of Argyll (in 1554) and the Adventurers.[101] There is a tradition, however, that the Mackenzies did not live in the castle, but at Seaforth Head, on Loch Seaforth, before Seaforth Lodge was built on the other side of the bay from Stornoway.[102] The Mackenzies soon placed their kinsfolk as tacksmen in tracts of Lewis land. In their turn, they leased to sub-tenants, who did all the work on the land and were often treated as inferiors. This form of land tenure lasted throughout the Mackenzie regime; and local opinion is firm that the majority of the crofters were ruthlessly exploited by the system.

The settlement at Stornoway, however, was to see some advantages from the Mackenzie rule. In 1628, Colin Mackenzie, first earl of Seaforth, received royal permission to erect Stornoway into a royal burgh. There was rapid disapproval from the Convention of Royal Burghs on a number of counts. Some of these counts were inconsistent: it was alleged that all the burghs of the north, but in particular Inverness and Tain, would be harmed by the competition; however, it was also claimed that as Stornoway was so remote, illegal goods might be imported there. Other propositions were dubious: for instance, it was claimed that, because Stornoway was not royal property, it could not become a royal burgh. Other claims followed: the fishing burghs in the rest of Scotland, such as in Fife, would suffer if fish were to be traded directly with Stornoway; the rest of Scotland would be excluded from fishing in the Stornoway region; and the introduction of foreigners in fishing and trading was detrimental to Scotland as a whole.[103]

This last point was a reference to 'Hollanderis', or Dutchmen, to whom Seaforth had already granted fishing rights in Lewis waters. It was of sufficient import for the Edinburgh town council to note, in September 1630, that in Stornoway 'the work thair does proceid in the plantatioun of strangers'.[104] By February 1630, concern in Edinburgh was such that when the provost and bailies of the town explained to a council meeting the prejudice that would be caused, by the erection of Stornoway into a royal burgh, to the country, to burghs in general and to Edinburgh in particular, they agreed that they would initiate a plantation themselves, instead of Dutchmen, and pay any expenses necessary for procuring a withdrawal of the king's signature and a confirmation of the right of Scotland's burghs to take over this venture.[105] Within five months the king had withdrawn

his approval; the burghs began to consider their alternative plantation and whether they would permit Englishmen also to settle in Lewis and fish, subject always to Scots law.[106] It was noted, however, that the 'Flemings', that is the Dutchmen or Hollanders, were still in Lewis and 'transportes all the necessars of the cuntrey, to the gritt hurt thairof'.[107]

The constitutional status of Stornoway likewise remained an unsettled matter. In 1637 Charles I confirmed to George, earl of Seaforth, and his heirs male the barony of Lewis and the castle of Stornoway, but reserved to himself the burgh with its twenty merklands.[108] While ratifying the infeftment of Seaforth in Lewis in 1641, the crown again reserved to itself not only the burgh, but also the castle, haven, port and sufficient land beside the burgh 'for making of plantation and accommodation of houses and yards for planters together with pasture . . . for the accommodation and association of the . . . fishings'. It was also stated that the town was to 'be erected be our said soveran Lord in ane free burghe royall For reduceing of the inhabitants of the said Ile of Lewis to civilitie and for increase of policie within the same Ile'.[109] National and personal politics intervened and in 1649 Hugh Hamilton, a merchant burgess of Edinburgh, was granted all the Seaforth lands, which included the castle and burgh of Stornoway with its twenty merklands.[110] Nine years later the Protector, Oliver Cromwell, bestowed these same lands on another Edinburgh merchant, George Logan, while recognising that these had been the properties of the deceased George, earl of Seaforth, but forfeit by him to the deceased Robert Logan, in payment of a debt of £59,405 Scots.[111]

The vexed matter of who had the right to fish in Scottish waters, and whether Stornoway was acting in a fashion that was detrimental to Scotland's interests, were issues that were to be raised on a number of occasions into the eighteenth century.[112] Seaforth's encouragement of Dutchmen probably had benefits for the Lewis men. It is believed that they passed on their fishing techniques to the locals; and some Dutchmen, in spite of supposed banishment, may have stayed and settled in Stornoway.[113]

In 1632, the Company of the General Fishery of Great Britain and Ireland received its charter from Charles I. One of its first tasks was to remove all strangers, or foreigners, who fished in the isles, especially in Lewis and Shetland. Seaforth was to be charged with failure to bring foreigners in his lands to retribution; and those foreigners who had traded illegally and failed to pay customs duties were to be penalised and surety taken for future good conduct. The partners in the new venture were to become naturalised Scots, thus avoiding any difficulties that legislation placed against non-Scots. The first branch of the corporation to establish itself in Lewis was under the leadership of Lord Portland, Lord Treasurer. Another association, headed by the Earl of Pembroke and Montgomery, also established a station on the island.

George, earl of Seaforth, who succeeded his brother Colin in 1633, co-operated with the venture by imposing no charges on the Englishmen and by claiming that he accepted no foreigners within his lands. Attitudes to the new incomers, however, were not so cordial in other quarters. In 1635, Yarmouth merchants placed complaints against Oliver Mouat of Stornoway and his brother-in-law, John Mackay. While seeking Yarmouth men to come on a fishing trip to Lewis, Mackay attempted to hijack a ship. Once back in Stornoway, after a further dispute, Mouat and Mackay seized a ship, forced the owner at gunpoint to cede rights to the ship and then locked him in Mouat's house for seven weeks.[114] Eight years later, Mouat was once again the centre of dispute. He maintained that he had bought a ship in 1641 but that its previous owner, one Cob, appeared in Stornoway a year later with a letter from the king to the effect that the ship had been stolen; Cob had, therefore, authority not only to seize the ship, but also authority to 'apprehend all other shippes and goods comming and going to the Lewes, North Yles and Orknay'. Dubious of the authenticity of Cob's papers, Seaforth took matters into his own hands and impounded the ship pending judgement.[115]

Lowland fishermen who had monopolised the best fishings around Lewis also resented the English intrusion and objected to the royal colours flying from Stornoway Castle; and incidents such as raising the flag of the Duke of Lennox beside the royal one, the seizure of an association boat, wrecked in Stornoway harbour, and its cargo by Lowlanders and

harassment of English fishermen and stealing their equipment by native Lewis men, on the pretext of payment of dues owed to highland chiefs, did not make for co-operation between all parties. The privy council, in response to pressure from the king, issued an instruction that there was to be no more molestation of the English, they were to be protected in their rights and Seaforth, amongst others, was to ensure their peace.[116] Lack of evidence of further complaints by the English suggests that this policy may have been successful. Documentary evidence seems to indicate that profits were not as great as might have been wished and that by 1638–9 there was some financial embarrassment for the royal fisheries. The English association was still in Lewis in 1640; but little more is heard of it. The disorder of the Civil War that was about to begin probably ended the English experiment.[117]

Something of the physical appearance of Stornoway in the first half of the seventeenth century can be surmised. An influx of Fife Adventurers, followed by Dutchmen, and then the establishment of an English colony, must have had a profound effect on the native settlement clustered near the castle. It is believed that the first formally laid out street was one running east–west along the spine of the promontory that divided the inner and outer harbour, approximately on the line of modern Point Street. Running back from the street frontage were burgage plots, with dwellings on the foreland and space for vegetable plots, storage of fishing tackle and, perhaps, animal rearing in the backlands. These plots were bounded at the rear by back lanes, which would ultimately become built up as streets, later called North Beach and South Beach **figure 3**. How far this development had proceeded by the middle of the seventeenth century is unclear. It is known that a market cross stood in the town by 1636, but its location is uncertain. That it was called the market cross of the castle of Stornoway might suggest that it stood near the castle.[118] The ambitious proposals, at the outset of the English venture, that ten pieces of ordnance should be supplied by the king for a fort at Stornoway, and that six acres of land were to be set aside at Deptford for preparation of dwellings and workshops for those colonising Lewis, may not have come to fruition.[119] Yet it is probable that such buildings would have been needed whether made in Deptford or Stornoway; and, if constructed, they would have brought significant change to the townscape. The majority of the housing, however, would still have been of the traditional black house style, with walls 'of similar width to Tiree, thicker than Tarbert and thicker still than Barra'.[120]

Soon after, one (or possibly two) forts were to dominate the town. These were erected on the instruction of Colonel Lilburne, Commander-in-Chief of the Commonwealth government in Scotland in 1653. A number of Cromwellian troops under the leadership of Colonel Cobbett landed in the same year, with the intention of preventing Stornoway becoming a Dutch base and of putting the new Earl of Seaforth, Kenneth Mackenzie, the third earl, in his place for his royalist sympathies, which he seems to have inherited from his more vacillating predecessor, George Mackenzie (who died in 1651). It is said that the local people fled to the hills, but returned on the promise of leniency by Cobbett.[121]

No explicit evidence, either of these forts or of the castle, which was also garrisoned (and must have been repaired since 1613), now remains; but a well said to have been sunk for the benefit of the Commonwealth troops near the junction of South Beach and Kenneth Street was still visible in the early twentieth century.[122] One fortification was apparently sited on Goat Island, just offshore from Stornoway **figure 8**. Lilburne informed Cromwell on 5 July 1653 that Seaforth was 'resolute for the king and is fortifying a small island near Stornoway'. This might equally apply to both the small island on which the castle stood and to Goat Island. Later that year, Goat Island was occupied by Commonwealth troops.[123]

The other Cromwellian fort was beside the township itself. The latter's precise position is not known, although it seems reasonable to assume that it stood at the east end, or neck, of the Point. The place name Battery Point may derive from this fort, although it is more likely that it refers to the later Victorian Naval Volunteer establishment which stood there. Lilburne described the Cromwellian fort as a 'fort in an island which is almost

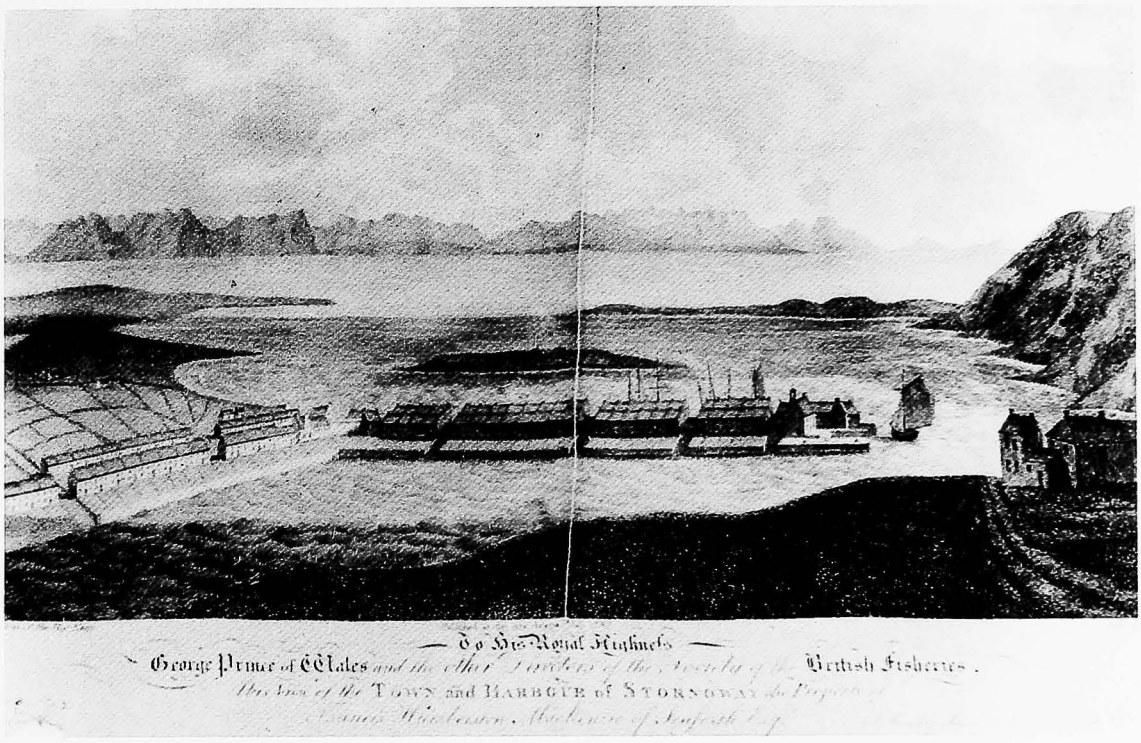


figure 8
The town and harbour of Stornoway, showing Goat Island and Seaforth Lodge, from the *Old Statistical Account* 1793

inviroined by the sea', which would be consistent with a site on the Point peninsula.[124] It would have been strategically placed to protect the township and, surely more importantly, the harbour. There is a tradition that the irregular building line at the site of the townhouse **figure 21** (*see* p 50) is on the alignment of the north-west angle of the fort,[125] but this probably places the fort too far to the east. It is interesting that the peninsula should have been referred to as an 'island' in the sixteenth century. Until early in the twentieth century, the Point was cut off from the rest of Stornoway at very high tides. It is said that the first parish church in Stornoway, dedicated to St Lennan,[126] stood half way between low tide and high tide. This also helps to locate the Cromwellian fort, since it assimilated the church within its fortifications.[127]

A plan purporting to be the Cromwellian fort, 'the ground plan of the fortification at Stornoway upon Lewis Island', dating apparently to 1653, gives some detail of its establishment **figure 9**. A 'manor house' was enclosed. This may have been an existing feature, related to the earlier fisheries. A church, presumably that which was being built by Colin Mackenzie, first earl of Seaforth, in 1630, functioned as a dormitory for 200 soldiers. There were store houses 'two or three loft high', probably also a relic from the fisheries, and a brew-house. The plan also suggests that the fort was protected by the sea, with possibly flooded fields to the north, on two sides, which would mean that it did not stand further inland than the neck of the Point; it was also flanked by trenches, twenty feet wide and fifteen feet deep, on the two landward sides. Two draw wells are depicted, one inside the fort and the other to the east. The fort on the island is also portrayed, as is the castle; interestingly, it is shown as having a causeway linking it to the mainland.[128]

Early in 1654, 300 or 400 supporters of Seaforth, under the command of Seaforth himself and Norman MacLeod of Raasay, attacked the Cromwellian garrison. A move was first made against the troops billeted in the town itself. It is said that they removed their possessions into the fort for safety and then fired their houses.[129] This might suggest that the majority, if not all, of the town dwellings were thatched with straw or heather. The attack had little success, largely because of the lack of artillery. In retaliation, the Seaforth men were slaughtered. The Cromwellian soldiers were assisted in this by the 'old natives', which probably means the MacLeods, who still had not come to terms with Mackenzie domination.[130] It was not to be long, however, before the occupying forces

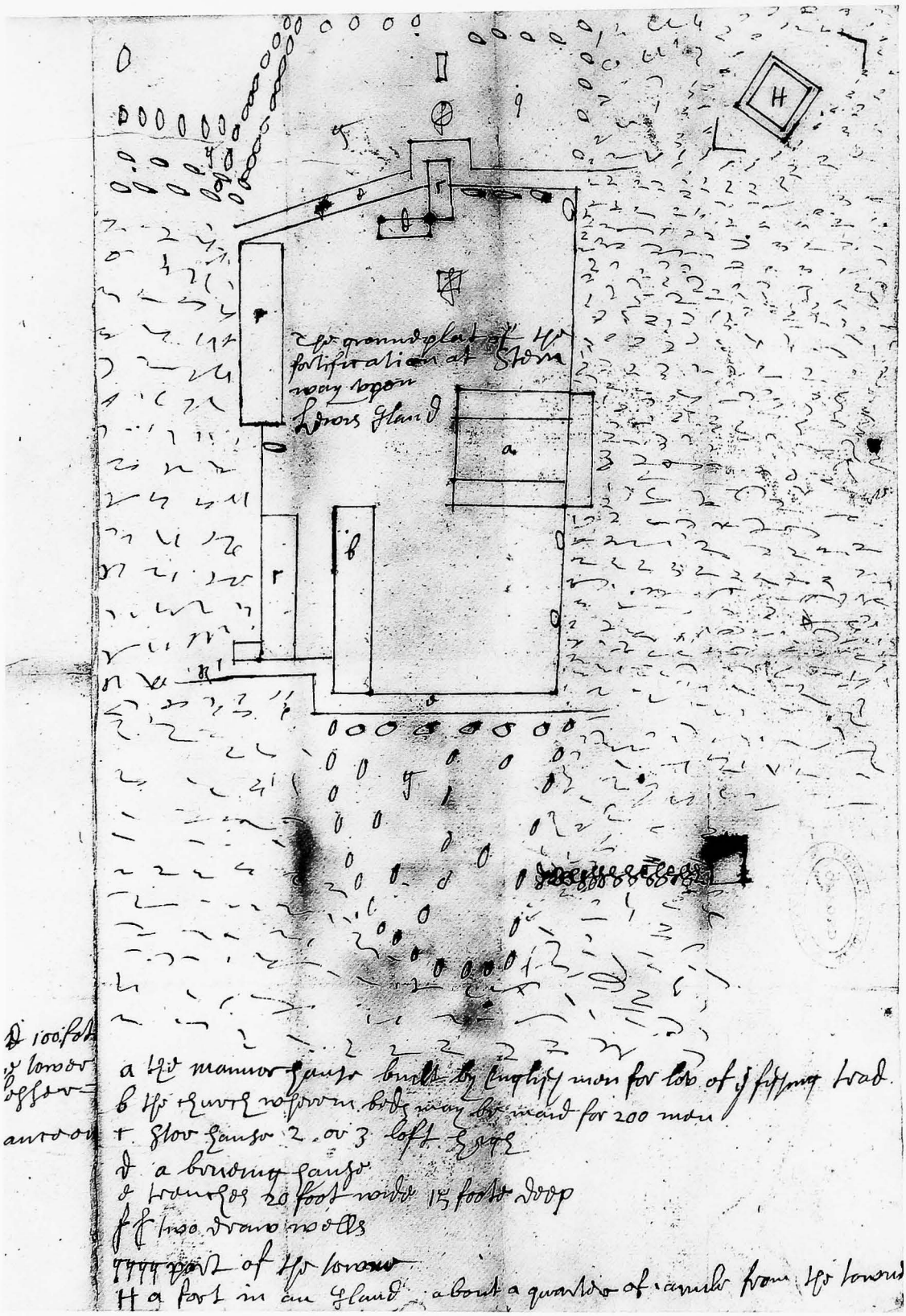


figure 9
Plan of Cromwellian fort
c 1653

were withdrawn. Before their departure, the castle of Stornoway was once again destroyed. The fort too was, perhaps, destroyed. The island of Lewis was declared forfeit, Seaforth being excluded from Cromwell's Act of Grace and Pardon. On submission, Seaforth was imprisoned, but released after the Restoration of 1660.[131]

Lilburne had complained to Cromwell that, although Stornoway was 'the best' harbour in the Outer Hebrides, there was no timber, nor any decent building stone. Presumably the destruction of the forts and castle would have left the townspeople with a useful quarry for building material. A late seventeenth-century description of parts of the Highlands spoke of the castle of Stornoway 'lately brokne doun by the English garisone in Cromvels tyme'. One innovation, however, had arrived: 'the people formerlie inclined to rudeness and barbarity [were] reduced to civilitie, much understanding and knowledge by the flourishing schooll planted and maintainned by the [earls of Seaforth]'.[132] But life on the island, as a whole, was not always peaceful and civilised. In 1689, it was felt that the minister Kenneth Morrison 'was well suited to repress the turmoil between Papists and Protestants'—he 'carried a sword by his side when walking from his manse at Tong to his church on Sundays, and the church door was guarded by two men with drawn swords'.[133]

Martin Martin, visiting *c* 1695, commented that Stornoway 'consists of about sixty families; there are some houses of entertainment in it, as also a church and a school, in which Latin and English are taught. The steward of the Lewis hath his residence in this village'.[134] Although clearly not a large settlement, the impression is one of improvement over the previous century. Thomas Tucker's report of 1656 had been more dismissive; for him, the Western Isles were mere 'places mangled with many arms of the Westerne Sea . . . destitute of all trade, being a countrey stored with cattell, craggie hills, and rockes, and planted with the ancient Scotts or wilde Irish, whose garbe and language they doe still retayne amongst them'. He did not bother to visit.[135]

There had been a further attempt at settling Dutchmen in Lewis after the Restoration. It was said in the late nineteenth century that the Dutch settlers 'so much improved the inhabitants in the fishing-trade during the small time of their abode there [in Stornoway], that they still exceed all those of the neighbouring isles and continent'.[136] This was high praise, considering that the comment appeared in a book about Musselburgh, the successful east-coast fishing port. In spite of the wealth of fishing towns on the east coast of Scotland, in the late seventeenth century Stornoway men were exporting fish to Leith.[137]

The Seaforth attachment to the Stuart cause led to the fourth earl, Kenneth, exiling himself with James VII and II in 1688 to France and, later, to Ireland. For his loyalty to the Jacobite cause, he was created Marquis of Seaforth and Lord Fortrose,[138] but on his return to Scotland, he was imprisoned. He ultimately died in France in 1701.[139] Kenneth's son, William, was perhaps one of the firmest Seaforth Jacobites. Having spent most of his youth in France, he was involved in the 1715 rising; he fought at Sheriffmuir and in consequence forfeited his estates and honours, but escaped from Lewis to France. Four years later, he was back at Seaforth Lodge **figure 8**. This was the family residence, built in the late seventeenth century across the bay from Stornoway town, on the site of the present Lews Castle **figure 1**. From here, the abortive 1719 Glenshiel rising was planned;[140] as a consequence, William Mackenzie was, once again, forced into exile in France until pardoned by George I, when he returned to Lewis.[141] A coin hoard, consisting of 120 coins, has been found *c* 90 m from the site of Seaforth Lodge (NB 421 332); the coins ranged in date from Elizabeth I of England to Charles II, with the four latest dating to 1669, but a later date of deposition is probable.[142]

There are occasional clues to the lives of the ordinary people of Stornoway in the early part of the eighteenth century. The correspondence of Bailie John Steuart of Inverness, for example, instructed representatives from as far afield as London to go to Stornoway to purchase dried cod and ling. He also gave orders, in 1725, that one Donald Macintyre should take a cargo of 800 bolls of meal to Stornoway for sale, although he doubted that a market would be found there. Four years later, on 2 May 1729, in a letter

to one William Simson, he gave an interesting insight into conditions in Stornoway: 'I was assured yesterday by some Gentleman of the name of McKenzie that there is nixt to famine at Stornoway and Lews island, the people have sown non this year, but have eaten all their seed; so if there was some carfull lad to goe along with the shipp and to call at Stornoway, I doubt not might sell a good dale of meall for raidy money at any price.'[143]

Kenneth Mackenzie, who inherited the Seaforth estates from his father in 1740, was known as Lord Fortrose, and would have been sixth Earl of Seaforth but for his father's attainder. A member of parliament for twenty years, he spent most of his time in London and showed little interest in island affairs. Even the financial support of the parish school that had been maintained by his predecessors, in spite of their heavy political involvement, ceased. His Hanoverian sympathies probably go far to explain the cool reception Prince Charles Edward Stuart received in the island after his defeat at Culloden in 1746. The islanders may have had greater leanings to the Jacobite cause: the prince was not betrayed, despite a reward of £30,000. However, the inhabitants of Stornoway refused to let him enter the town or to board a vessel hired to take him to Orkney.[144]

The living conditions of the Stornoway people at this time are difficult to establish. An English visitor to the town in the mid eighteenth century claimed that the houses, or huts, were miserably built, thatched with straw and heather and 'bound down with ropes made of the same material'.[145] If this was a fair assessment, it would suggest little improvement from the previous century. The evidence of the average rent (whether annual or twice yearly) of a mere 3s 4d per dwelling might confirm this.[146]

By 1773, a different picture emerges. Both the townspeople and Kenneth Mackenzie (newly re-created Earl of Seaforth in the peerage of Ireland, and properly seventh earl)[147] were concerned for the improvement of the town and its amenities. A petition was raised to establish a new market and public well at a prominent site in the centre of town; and to provide better access by the opening up of a new thoroughfare, Kenneth Street, 'for the conveniency of all the inhabitants'.[148] It appears that the site of the market cross was to be moved to the centre of settlement. Whether the cross until this point stood near the castle is unproven (*see* p 24). It is probable that its first site was beside the castle and that it was subsequently shifted to a more open and accessible location. Equally unclear is whether this proposed move was the first one.

Documentary evidence suggests that North Beach and South Beach were still merely back lanes to Point Street, although Cross Lane (later Bank Street) and Oliver Street (later Cromwell Street) were already well established.[149] By 1780, Bute Street and Kenneth Street had been opened up. Another thoroughfare, known as Theurech Street, is also mentioned in contemporary records. This street is no longer known and its alignment is uncertain.[150] There was a tolbooth standing at this time. It is reputed to have stood on the site of the later townhouse.[151] A pier was also under construction during the 1760s and 1770s.[152]

In 1778, Kenneth Mackenzie, earl of Seaforth in the Irish peerage as explained above, who was also a member of parliament and a prominent Hanoverian, raised the 78th Regiment of Foot, later the 72nd, often called the Seaforth Highlanders. Military recruiting was a money-making activity, especially the recruitment of a line regiment such as this. Of the 1,130 men, 500 came from the Seaforth estates, including Stornoway. The Seaforth family fortunes, however, had dwindled over the decades since their period of support of the Jacobites. The Earl of Seaforth, before departing for India and dying on passage in 1781, sold his estates (including Lewis) to his cousin, Thomas Mackenzie. He was also not to survive long, dying in India while commanding the Seaforth Highlanders in 1783. His brother, Francis Humberston Mackenzie, inherited,[153] and was created Lord Seaforth and Baron Mackenzie of Kintail in 1797.

It has been claimed that Francis Humberston Mackenzie, Lord Seaforth, was the first of the family to attempt to alleviate the lot of the islanders, rather than viewing them simply as a source of revenue and military manpower. It has, however, also been claimed that he, in his turn, virtually 'denuded the island of its male population' by recruitment

of soldiers.[154] It was said that, soon after he inherited, he came to terms with 'the folly as well as the inhumanity of lending out the people of his island to imperious tacksmen for the purpose of raising fortunes to themselves on the ruins of the unfortunate sub-tenants'.[155] Although he considered methods of ridding the island of tacksmen, the system was too well established, with too many vested interests supporting it, and he was unsuccessful.

Lord Seaforth and his wife spent considerably more time in Lewis than their predecessors, even though he held the governorship of Barbados for a time. Lady Seaforth set up instruction for the Lewis women in spinning, knitting and weaving; and in 1791, Lord Seaforth commenced the first road-making scheme on the island, with four miles being completed in six years.[156] He also seems to have taken an active interest in both the fishing and kelp industries. He was described in 1796 as 'a gentleman universally known for benevolence and public spirit'.[157]

John Knox of the British Fisheries Society visited Lewis in 1786. The British Fisheries had an interest in settlement and had been active in planning villages, for example at Ullapool in the 1780s. Knox's comments on the town of Stornoway are interesting. It was, he said, 'being rebuilt with houses of stone, lime and slate' and had a 'handsome appearance'. 'One wing or street [was] built on a narrow peninsula that [stretched] out a considerable way into the bay' and added 'greatly to the beauty of the landscape'. This would suggest that the back lanes to Point Street had not yet been formalised into the streets later to be called North Beach and South Beach. Knox did, however, note that the 'noble port [was] without a key; and it appeared still more strange, when [he] was informed that £12–£15,000 had been granted several years [previously], by the trustees at Edinburgh for building a sufficient key, and even that [was] so much out of repair, and for raising cottages for fishermen along the shores of the island.' The lack of an adequate quay was such that vessels loaded and unloaded upon the beach, or in the bay, by means of small boats. This would suggest that the pier under construction in the previous decade had not been completed. There was apparently also a proposal afoot to build a new church in the town. Knox clearly approved. He felt that 'when the church and spire shall be built, with a small spire also upon the town house, and other ornaments which Seaforth's fertile imagination may easily conceive, this place will merit the pencil of the first landscape painter in the kingdom'.[158] The church, in fact, was completed by 1794.[159]

A paper given to the Highland Society of Scotland in 1790 commented on the initiative and perseverance of the Stornoway people. Although twenty-five or thirty years previously, all fish was exported in hired vessels, by 1790 they could 'show in their harbour, in the fishing time, upward of thirty sail of stout handsome vessels, from twenty to seventy tons burden, all their own property'.[160] It had also been noted by Knox, the representative of the British Fisheries Society, that Stornoway was one of the largest fish-exporting ports on the western seaboard, sending some 23,000 barrels of herring south each year.[161] Stornoway fishermen were clearly taking advantage of the markets opened up by the Act of Union of 1707.[162]

It would appear that the fishermen were not the only industrious members of society. In 1772, the incorporated trades of Stornoway—smiths, tailors, weavers, carpenters, wrights, coopers, shoemakers, masons, dyers and hecklers—had registered their armorial ensigns with the Lord Lyon. The only other burgh to have done this was Aberdeen, which suggests not only an established craft sub-structure in Stornoway, but also local pride.[163] By 1796, the tradesmen were listed as eleven joiners, four masons, seven carpenters, two smiths, eleven tailors, sixteen shoemakers, thirteen weavers, two turners or wheelwrights, four gardeners, eight shopkeepers and five innkeepers. There was also an annual cattle tryst held beside Stornoway, which would have needed some casual labour.[164] By the end of the eighteenth century, Stornoway would appear to have made significant advances since the time of Martin Martin's visit in the late seventeenth century, when the community consisted of a mere sixty families. Now the population was increasing. According to the *Old Statistical Account*, there were 1,812 people in Stornoway in 1755, and this was to increase to 2,639 by 1796.[165]

The Highland Society paper of 1790, mentioned above, noted of the people of Stornoway and their town

> *their town is a pattern of neatness and cleanliness; and when a stranger enters their convenient mansions, he will have set before him a piece of well-dressed Highland mutton, some choice fish, and a bottle of port, the produce of the hospitable landlord's industry. To the everlasting credit of these industrious fishers and merchants, it falls to be recorded, that they have made their pleasant hamlet rise into view, and display upwards of a hundred slated houses, beside inferior ones, from their gain from the sea.*

It was, perhaps, not surprising to hear this kind of comment from a Society devoted to 'Improvement'. This picture of modest prosperity was reinforced, however, when Heron visited a few years later. He saw Stornoway as 'a flourishing town' and 'daily increasing'. He, too, commented on the 'fishing busses' belonging to it, its customs house and post office—which had, in fact, been in existence prior to 1782[166]—and its trade in fish, kelp, oil, feathers and skins.[167] There was also a townhouse,[168] perhaps the same building as the tolbooth mentioned above (see p 28).

By 1796, there were two schools in the town. The parochial school had forty pupils, and the master had an assistant, as well as a rent-free house with a garden. The SSPCK school cared for 129 pupils. The schoolmaster's house had recently been built of stone and lime, wholly at Mackenzie's expense. There was also a spinning school, run in a slated house with a garden; and an assembly room.[169] The numbers attending school in Stornoway would suggest a rapidly increasing level of literacy and a positive attempt to bring the island in line with mainland standards, which was not uncommon in this period. In 1767, for example, one Donald MacDonald was found guilty of bigamy. He was not permitted to remain on Lewis, but transported to a plantation in America.[170]

Considerable improvement had clearly been made to the built fabric of the town. The date of the first establishment of the customs house in the town is unclear. There appears to have been one standing in 1737, when the commissioners to the Convention of Royal Burghs were pressing for its removal from Stornoway to Lochbroom.[171] It would seem that this pressure was successful; in 1757 and 1758 the commissioners had changed their minds, bemoaning the lack of a customs house at Stornoway. They also recommended that in time of war, to protect Britain's trading interests, six or eight guns should be erected at government cost at the port of Stornoway (as well as at Peterhead and Stromness), since this was a harbour 'to which ships of great value often resort'.[172] By 1759, the annual committee of the Convention decided to go so far as to apply to the Treasury to 'beg' that it allocate funds for a customs house at Stornoway.[173] By 1773, Stornoway was seen as being of greater importance than Lochbroom, as in this year Archibald MacDonnell requested bailiary powers to supervise fishing between Lochbroom and Mull, which was 'rather far from the nearest official in Stornoway'.[174]

The homes of the ordinary people in Stornoway varied in structure and comfort. 'Building works on old castle of Stornoway' in 1790 might suggest not restoration of the castle, but robbing of stone for other purposes, including the construction of houses.[175] It was said that 'the houses [were] built at a considerable cost, because all the materials [were] imported, the stones not excepted'. In consequence, rents were higher than in most other places in the Western Isles, being between £15 and £25 per annum.[176] This would seem a greatly inflated figure, compared with the 1753 rents, when the whole town's rental was valued at a mere £20 11s 2d (*see* p 28); presumably this was a reflection of improved housing. By 1796, there were sixty-seven slated houses, twenty-six of which had been built in the previous twelve years. Twenty or more houses with thatched roofs, but substantially built, flanked the bay where it narrowed in the north-west of the town; and in the north there were still, in spite of improvements, a great number of 'miserable thatched huts, occupied by sailors, fishers and other people with their families'. They were in the process of moving to the east of the town, having already constructed thatched homes along the

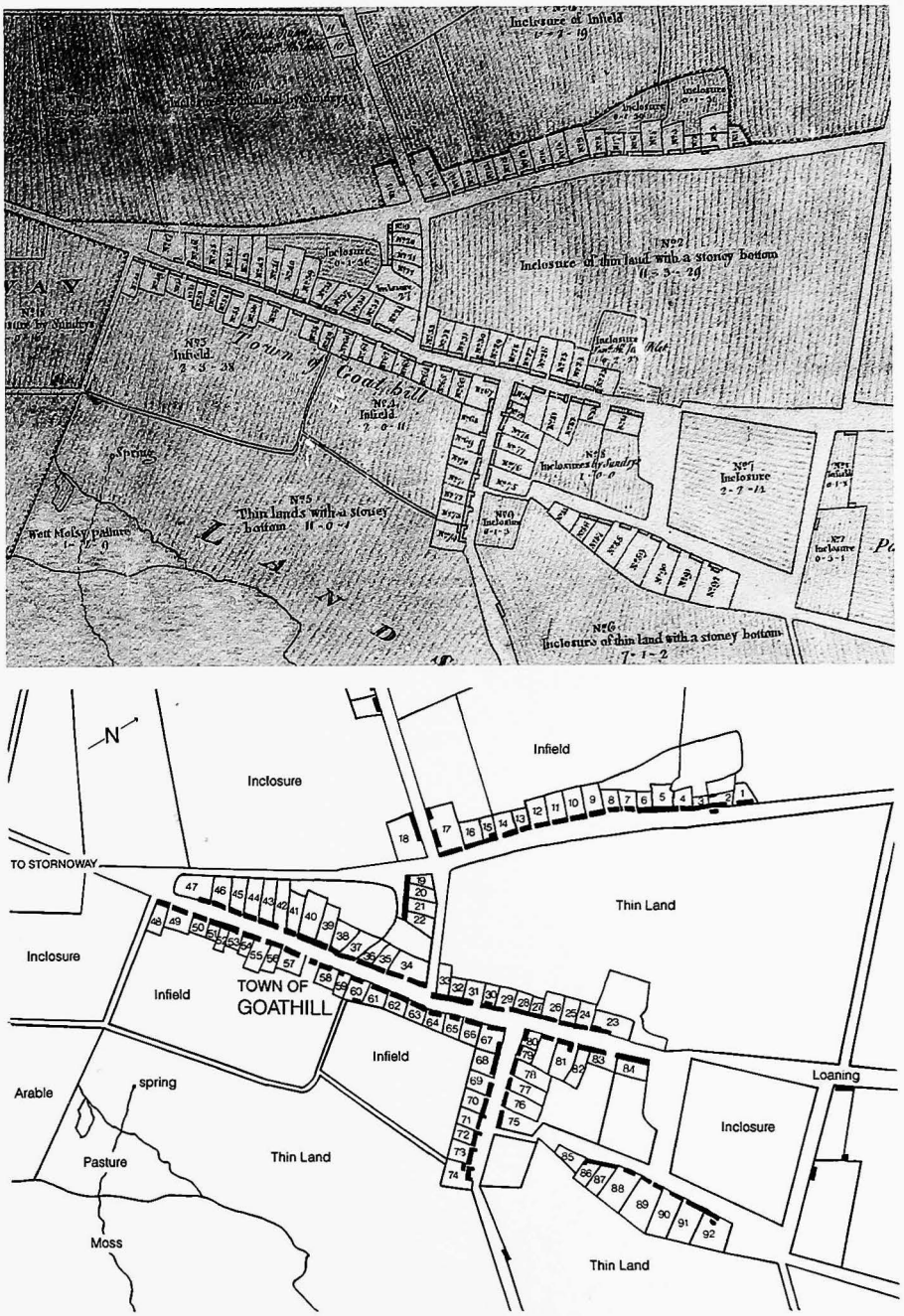


figure 10
above Plan of Goathill township, based on, *below*, *A Plan of the Harbour, Bay and Town of Stornaway . . . Belonging Hereditably to Francis Humberston Mackenzie*, 1785

shore line of the bay. To assist this relocation, Mackenzie of Seaforth gave one guinea to each family.[177]

There is further evidence of relocation during this time. Whether this was a shift that genuinely benefited the local populace or whether it was more truly a 'clearance' is uncertain, as eviction was a common hazard in the latter part of the eighteenth century.[178] Cartographic evidence in the Stornoway Library gives a unique insight into a settlement on the outskirts of the town, at Goathill **figure 10**. A map drawn in 1785, to delineate the harbour bay and town of Stornoway, clearly shows a township of ninety-two plots of land, with associated dwellings. The irregularity of the plots, both in shape and size, and the road and field patterns imply that this was, indeed, a settled township. Further Gaelic references to the township at Knocknagour also hint at a thriving community in the late eighteenth century.[179] However, by the time John Wood had, himself, surveyed the town and produced his plan of Stornoway in 1821, settlement at Goathill seems to have

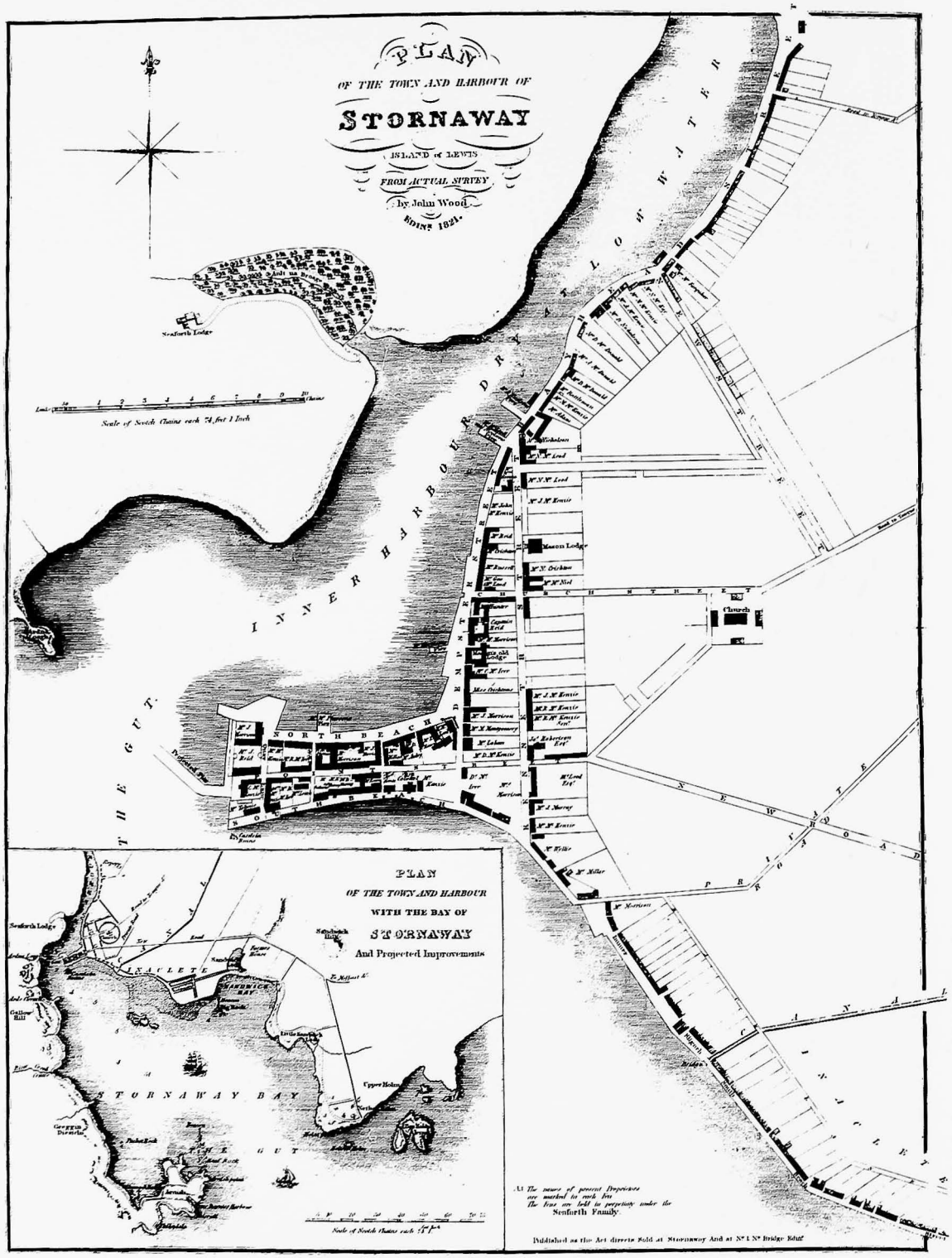


figure 11
Plan of the town and harbour of Stornaway, by John Wood 1821

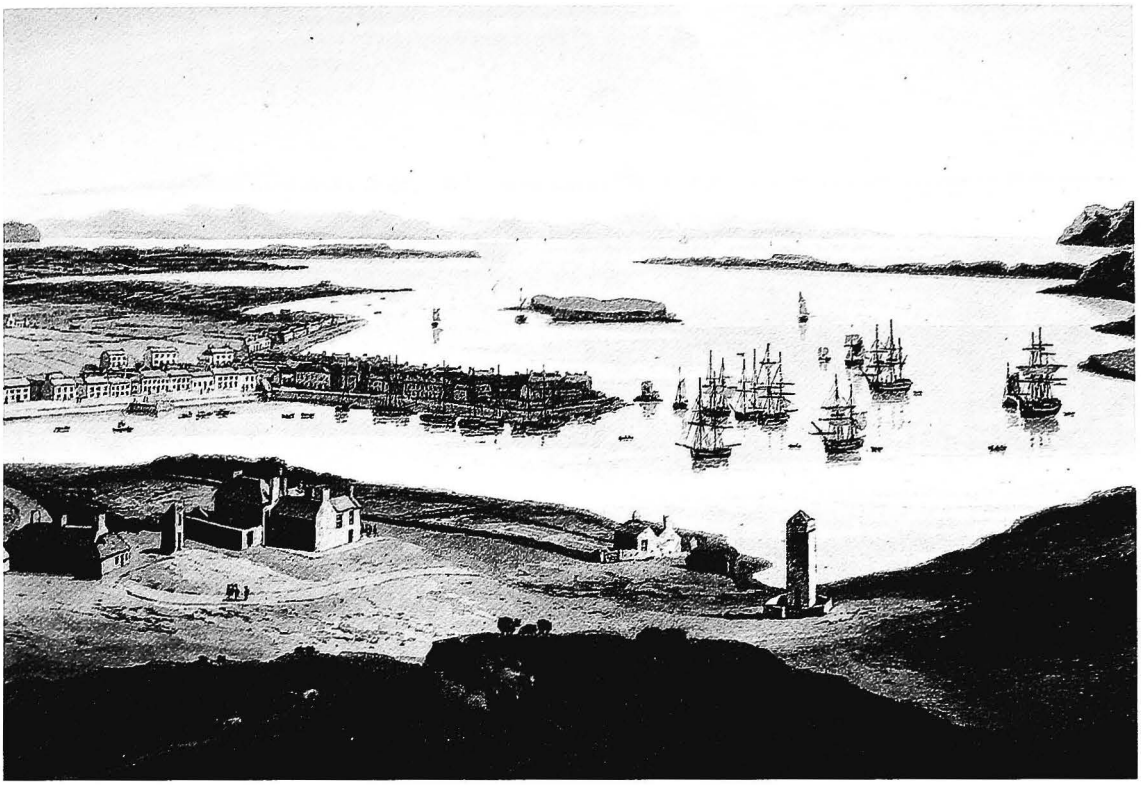


figure 12
Stornaway in 1819

disappeared **figure 11**. He was concentrating on the harbour area of the town, however, and it may be just possible that outlying districts were omitted. But by 1846, when the Admiralty surveyed, their plan included settlement outside the central core of the town. Goathill township did not exist; in its place were enclosed fields.

It would certainly appear that a measure of clearance was taking place in the area around Stornoway. Local tradition speaks also of settlement at Ranal. Some form of settlement in this area is delineated by ruins on the 1785 map. Other than the mill to the east of Ranal Hill, it does not appear on any nineteenth-century map. Whether it died out naturally, or was also a victim of clearance (perhaps because it was too close to Seaforth Lodge), is uncertain.[180]

An interesting feature on John Wood's plan is a ditch, still known locally as the canal. Its appearance suggests that this was man-made; its alignment would imply that it may have been constructed to drain the 'wet, mossy land' by Goathill, noted on the 1785 map. Such drainage was often a forerunner to the process of enclosure. Wood's plan also includes an ambitious proposal for an extended layout to the town. This was to have focused on the parish church, which was to be encircled by roadways; these were to radiate north-west to Bayhead and eastwards and southwards to the outer limits of Inaclete. It may have been that Seaforth had similar pretensions to other island and highland landowners, whose planned towns may still be seen in such places as Bowmore and Inveraray. In the event, little of this scheme materialised and the nineteenth-century plan of Stornoway that was to emerge later adopted a grid pattern (*see* p 63).

There is no doubt that Stornoway underwent radical topographical and, perhaps, economic and cultural change during the latter years of the eighteenth century and in the early nineteenth century **figure 12**. The attitude of the local people contributed greatly to this evolution. Francis Humberston Mackenzie, Lord Seaforth, had plans for Stornoway that could not be achieved, through lack of resources; any negative attitude, however, should be seen in the context of an island that had been treated by its owners as a place to be at best ignored and, more usually, exploited.

Lord Seaforth was succeeded by his daughter in 1815; the (possibly fictitious) sixteenth-century Brahan seer's prophecy that all Seaforth's sons would predecease him had already been fulfilled. The potentially far-sighted management of the entailed estates by the Hon Mrs Stewart Mackenzie (as she became known) was hindered by lack of finance, the

increasing failure of the kelp industry, famine and extreme poverty amongst the people. She did, however, establish five Sabbath schools in Stornoway, a female school where poor children were taught English, Gaelic, writing and needlework, and a Sabbath evening school for the instruction of female servants.[181]

Her encouragement of the new evangelical preaching, which commenced with the arrival in Uig of Alexander MacLeod, the first minister who was not a member of the 'Moderate' party in the kirk, was to have profound effects on the island. Stornoway retained a Moderate minister, rather than 'religious clergy', and there was a drift away from the town church. The Stornoway minister, John Cameron, had a difficult task, having to preach not only at Stornoway, but also at Knock and Back; his manse was in Tong. About 1839, St Peter's Episcopal Church was built, across the road from the future Free Church seminary and school on Francis Street. Further dissension resulted after the Disruption of 1843 and the emergence of the Free Church. Cameron of Stornoway remained within the Established Church, but lost most of his congregation. The town was then without a minister for some time, until the Free Church minister, the Rev Duncan Macgregor, was appointed in 1849. A further Free Church was later established in Stornoway. The Free Church on Kenneth Street and the Free Church Seminary and school on Francis Street, with St Peter's Episcopal Church across the road from the latter, are still standing (*see* p 62).

By 1824 all of Lewis, apart from the parish of Stornoway, had been sold by auction in Edinburgh.[182] The following year the burgh of Stornoway was granted a charter by the Mackenzies, permitting the feuars and the burgesses to elect nine of their number to function as burgh bailies (two in number), a treasurer and six councillors, a right that had technically belonged to the townspeople since the seventeenth century (*see* p 21).[183] Nineteen years later, in 1844, the purchase of the island of Lewis by Mr James Matheson for £190,000 was to have a far-reaching effect on the town.[184]

the Mathesons and Stornoway

Initially, the town reaped great benefits from James Matheson's purchase of Lewis, some of which may still be seen to this day. Many of the improvements that Matheson effected resulted from the fact that he was not reliant on Lewis for his income. One of the first significant improvements was to the harbour facilities. Nineteenth-century maps show the extensive building works that resulted from Matheson investment. The Big Quay at the north-west end of North Beach, attached to the Macpherson and Mackenzie Quays; the New Quay at the west end of South Beach; and the Esplanade Quay at the end of the Point, connecting the other two quays, were all erected at James Matheson's expense. Enterprising local men also built their own small quays, such as Christie's Quay on the south shore, constructed largely to land the supplies for the new Matheson residence under construction in the 1840s. Water and gas companies were also established. Education in the town improved: a 'ragged' school for the poorer children of Stornoway was set up; and the Industrial Female School, still standing in Keith Street (*see* p 62), was established in 1848 by the Mathesons, probably with help from the Highland Society, to assist employment.

The townscape was to develop radically during this period. Unlike the Seaforth proposals, as seen on John Wood's plan (**figure 11**; *see* p 33), the expansion of the town in the later nineteenth century was more to a grid design, expanding eastwards to what were then the limits of the town at Matheson Road. An interesting feature, some of which is still extant, is the high stone wall to the west of Matheson Road. This is said to have been erected by the Mathesons.[185] Their drive from disembarkment at the harbour, encircling the town by Matheson Road, to the lodge of their newly built stately home, Lews Castle, was now afforded a measure of privacy **figures 13 & 14.**[186]

This wall shows another side to the Matheson attitude, which was revealed early in their ownership. By 1847, the building of their castle had commenced, on the site of the old Seaforth Lodge. To ensure sufficient privacy and adequate policies around the castle,

figure 13
Lews Castle Lodge

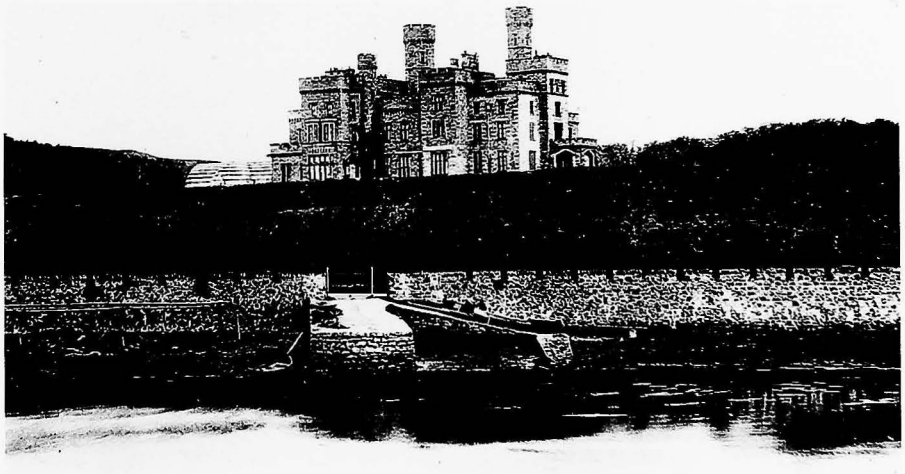


figure 14
Lews Castle

any remaining settlement in the vicinity was removed **figure 14**. The Stornoway people had been accustomed to wintering their cattle in the area between the harbour, the Creed River and Lochs Road. This was now enclosed and afforested.[187]

The early years of Matheson ownership, however, seem to have been times of improvement, in the real sense of the word, for the Stornoway people. Famine and hardship were commonplace on the island. In 1836, for example, it was reckoned that 700 head of stock, including horses, and thousands of sheep had died as a result of the harsh winter and spring. Scarcely any new-born lambs had survived. A fund was raised in Edinburgh to provide meal and potatoes for the islanders, since 'the island [was] reduced to a state of dearth and desolation that [was] heart-rending to contemplate'.[188] Matheson assisted the islanders during the famine years of 1845–50. Tenants were employed during the first three years of famine with work on building roads, quays, dykes and trenching. This, of course, was also of benefit to the owner. But free transport was also offered on Mathieson's boat, *Mary Jane*, to the Lowlands for anyone prepared to migrate temporarily to work on specific projects; and oatmeal was imported, as well as potatoes, and sold at

25 per cent of the real cost to the tenants, debited to their rentals due, which could later be paid in cash or labour. In the following few years, much of the meal was supplied by the Highland Relief Board to the proprietors of the Western Isles, including Lewis. Most of this was then handed on, in exchange for labour. The owners rather than the crofters stood to gain most from the scheme, as improvement to their land came at the cost of very cheap labour.

A further measure that was intended to improve the land resulted from the Drainage Act of 1846. Indeed, 890 acres were cleared for cultivation under this scheme. When there was an allocation of this land between 1849 and 1851, the crofters gained less than half this acreage as supplement to their existing crofts or as new crofts. The majority was allocated to the farms.[189]

In spite of the investment of Matheson and the labour of the Lewis people, a major catastrophe seemed imminent. Government assistance was requested to organise emigration to the colonies. This was not too unusual a prospect for the islanders; a number were employed in the Hudson's Bay Company throughout much of the nineteenth century,[190] and emigration had been a solution for hardship since the previous century.[191] Amongst their numbers was Alexander Mackenzie, the Canadian explorer, who was twelve years old when he left Stornoway in 1774.

The attitude of Matheson is clear. He wrote that the inhabitants were still 'so helpless and so incapable of earning a livelihood' in spite of the 'large alms that have, for some years, been expended in every mode that was considered the most conducive in placing them in a position to maintain themselves from the fruits of their labour'.[192] Some relief was gained, however, by the growing Caithness fishery. (Matheson, reputedly, rejected the advice of his factor, John Munro Mackenzie, to invest personally in the fishing industry for Stornoway.)[193] At least one member of a family went annually to Caithness, returning with between £2 and £4 per man in the 1850s. By 1876, this had reached a minimum of £7.[194] A number also opted for emigration, with apparently generous assistance from Matheson. Between 1851 and 1855, 1,772 emigrated, a policy encouraged, although not financed, by the government.[195] Unlike most areas in the highlands, where population peaked in the period 1841–61, that of Lewis did not peak until 1911. This was not only a result of the growth of Stornoway following the late, but rapid, development of the herring industry[196] in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; it was also an aftermath of the rural policy in the island earlier in the nineteenth century, when crofters found themselves squeezed out of land, with resulting congestion, subdivision of crofts and the creation of a large class of landless cottars.[197]

It is clear that the crofters suffered more than the people of Stornoway. Not all factors were oppressive, but those that were had the crofters at their mercy, and the constant squeezing of the crofters out of their land resources brought much bitterness and hardship.[198] Although Matheson's investments were probably out of all proportion to the returns which he could expect, there was also the prospect of some financial gain for him. Of £99,720 spent on building of houses and land reclamation, for example, none went to the crofting houses. The £11,000 laid out on emigration was partially recouped by the increased rentals from the new farms, established on several cleared townships.[199] His schemes for work for the islanders brought him cheap labour.

Stornoway town developed greatly in the nineteenth century. By 1845, there were several good quays along North Beach and 200 ships could anchor at one time in the bay.[200] Forty years later, the harbour had a good stone pier, quays and breast walls; the patent slip was capable of accommodating ships of 1,000 tons. There were seven harbour commissioners.[201] The town inevitably expanded to meet this growing harbourage. It now consisted of 'ten fairly well-built streets with a number of straggling suburbs', with a good public hall that contained a news room, a public library, a meeting room for the masonic lodge **figure 23**, a drill hall, a court house, a prison, a customs house (Amity House) **figure 19**, a sailors' home, a dispensary, a head post office, branches of the British Linen Company, the Caledonian and the National Banks, agencies of nineteen insurance companies and several good hotels.[202] There were also eighteen places licensed to sell

figure 15
Fish market, nineteenth century

liquor, four of which were 'respectable'—the Royal Oak, the Crown, the Star and the New Inn. The others were shops of 'miscellaneous', 'the pest of the morals of the people'.[203]

Whether the progress of Stornoway was resented by other islanders is unclear. A Lewis man, born in 1891, wrote: *The crofting areas were suspicious of the burghers of Stornoway, for if one looks at their names in the rent rolls one can see Mackenzies, Munros, Lees, Crichtons, Maclennans, Macivers and Macraes—all the names that came over with Seaforth in 1610 or from the south, and these were their descendants doing themselves proudly with their slated houses and their own shipping in the harbour—while they were crouching in their black bothies, and keeping life together on a diet of brochan and barley bread. Even in my own youth old women at Uig hissed in a venomous tone when I mentioned any of these surnames, 'Na Tailich ghranda'—showing that the old bitternesses of the MacLeods, Macaulays and Macdonalds had not quite disappeared.*[204]

Stornoway had always attracted others to its favourable site, whether it was the Vikings, later Swedish boat-builders, the Fife Adventurers, Dutch and English fishers, its rural neighbours, (such as those who forded the bay from the Shoe Burn, to attend the Stornoway market), or over-powerful landlords. It was this natural advantage—geographical location, with a sheltered, safe harbour—on which the town would capitalise. Shipping was assisted by the new lighthouse at Arnish Point; fish-curing houses were set up and the fish market flourished **figure 15**; a steam-boat quay was established and a service to Poolewe and, later, to Glasgow was set up. These were merely the initial steps, taken in the time of Sir James Matheson, that would see Stornoway emerge as an important ship-building town and a centre for deep-sea mariners. This importance is reflected in the emergency coastal battery built on Arnish Point (NB 431 305) to protect the area of the bay during the Second World War; this battery is now a Scheduled Ancient Monument. Stornoway is now an all-purpose port, with on-shore bunkering, chandlery and storage services, that in 1992 attracted 1,000 vessel movements, excluding fishing craft. Around the bay are slip-way installations, marine engineering sheds, fish-processing factories, sea-rescue services and roll-on/roll-off ferry services. Stornoway still depends on the sea, but it has been transformed from the small settlement which first clustered on and around the Point.

notes

1 C Wickham-Jones, *Scotland's First Settlers* (London, 1994).
2 *Ibid*, 78.
3 *Ibid*, 61.
4 G Ritchie & M Harman, *Exploring Scotland's Heritage: Argyll and the Western Isles* (Edinburgh, 1990), 11.
5 P J Ashmore, *Calanais: The Standing Stones* (Lewis, 1995), 9.
6 N Fojut, D Pringle & B Walker, *The Ancient Monuments of the Western Isles* (Edinburgh, 1994), 8.
7 T Darvill, *Prehistoric Britain* (London, 1987), 63–4.
8 Fojut *et al*, *The Ancient Monuments of the Western Isles*, 10.
9 RCAHMS, *Ninth Report with Inventory of Monuments and Constructions in the Outer Hebrides, Skye and the*

Small Isles (Edinburgh, 1928), no 89, 24–27 (Callanish) and no 17, 7–8 (Steinacleit).

10 Darvill, *Prehistoric Britain*, 75.

11 RCAHMS, *Ninth Report*, no 56, 16.

12 *Ibid*, no 89, 24–27.

13 *Ibid*, no 90, 27.

14 *Ibid*, 103; I Armit, *The Archaeology of Skye and the Western Isles* (Edinburgh, 1996), Chapter 6.

15 Fojut *et al*, *The Ancient Monuments of the Western Isles*, 16; I Armit, *The Later Prehistory of the Western Isles of Scotland* (Oxford, 1992).

16 Fojut *et al*, *The Ancient Monuments of the Western Isles*, 17; Armit, *The Archaeology of Skye and the Western Isles*, Chapter 7.

17 RCAHMS, *Ninth Report*, no 68, 18–20.

18 Fojut *et al*, *The Ancient Monuments of the Western Isles*, 18; Armit, *The Archaeology of Skye and the Western Isles*, Chapter 8.

19 I Armit (ed), *Beyond the Brochs* (Edinburgh, 1990).

20 RCAHMS, *Ninth Report*, no 58, 17.

21 Fojut *et al*, *The Ancient Monuments of the Western Isles*, 19.

22 *Ibid*, 26.

23 RCAHMS, *Ninth Report*, no 273, 89–90.

24 Armit, *The Archaeology of Skye and the Western Isles*, 162.

25 *Ibid*, 167; RCAHMS, *Ninth Report*, no 69, 20.

26 Armit, *The Archaeology of Skye and the Western Isles*, 173; RCAHMS, *Ninth Report*, no 180, 56.

27 Armit, *The Archaeology of Skye and the Western Isles*, 182.

28 RCAHMS, *Ninth Report*, no 438, 126.

29 Armit, *The Archaeology of Skye and the Western Isles*, 180.

30 Fojut *et al*, *The Ancient Monuments of the Western Isles*, 22.

31 RCAHMS, *Ninth Report*, no 45, 14.

32 *Ibid*, no 43, 12.

33 The terminology for this period can be confusing but, in its strictest sense, a Viking was a Scandinavian warrior, from Norway, Sweden or Denmark, who embarked on sea-borne raids. As settlement in Atlantic Scotland was Norse, a domesticated Viking was a Norseman. For a full account of the Scandinavian settlement in Scotland and the terminology *see* B E Crawford, *Scandinavian Scotland* (Leicester, 1987).

34 Fojut *et al*, *The Ancient Monuments of the Western Isles*, 27–8.

35 For a detailed account of the life of Haakon IV *see* E J Cowan, 'Norwegian sunset—Scottish dawn: Hakon IV and Alexander III', in N H Reid (ed), *Scotland in the Reign of Alexander III, 1249–1286* (Edinburgh, 1990).

36 R I Lustig, 'The Treaty of Perth: a re-examination', *Scottish Historical Review*, lviii (1979).

37 We are grateful to Mr James Shaw Grant for drawing our attention to the fact that it has been shown, on other islands, that place names with settlement or navigational implications are normally Norse, and place names with a purely domestic significance are often Gaelic, though there are exceptions.

38 For a full discussion of the place name evidence *see* W F H Nicolaisen, 'Scandinavian Names', in *Scottish Place-Names: Their Study and Significance* (London, 1976).

39 A Ritchie, *Viking Scotland* (London, 1993), 106–7.

40 D Caldwell, *Finlaggan, Islay: A Preliminary Report on the Archaeological Project by the National Museums of Scotland 1989–93* (Edinburgh, 1993), 25.

41 RCAHMS, *Ninth Report*, no 213, 68–9.

42 *Ibid*, no 307, 95.

43 *Ibid*, no 440, 129; Fojut *et al*, *The Ancient Monuments of the Western Isles*, 33.

44 A MacKenzie, *History of the MacLeods* (Inverness, 1889), 285.

45 J S Grant, *Discovering Lewis and Harris* (Edinburgh, 1987), 7.

46 J R N MacPhail (ed), *Highland Papers*, 4 vols (SHS, 1914), i, 6–7.

47 Grant, *Discovering Lewis and Harris*, 16.

48 'Ane Descriptione of Certaine Pairts of the Highlands of Scotland', in W Macfarlane, *Geographical Collections Relating to Scotland*, ed A Mitchell, 3 vols (SHS, 1906–8), ii, 184.

49 *OSA*, xx, 18.

50 A Mather (ed), *Third Statistical Account* (Edinburgh, 1987), xiii, 429.

51 W C MacKenzie, *The Book of the Lews* (Paisley, 1919), 27.

52 I F Grant, *The Lordship of the Isles* (Edinburgh, 1935), 174.

53 MacKenzie, *History of the MacLeods*, 285.

54 W J Watson (ed), *Scottish Verse from the Book of the Dean of Lismore* (Edinburgh, 1937), 56.

55 D Macdonald, *Lewis: A History of the Island* (Edinburgh, 1983), 24.

56 C Innes (ed), *Origines Parochiales*, 2 vols (Edinburgh, 1854), ii, 382.

57 *RMS*, ii, no 3578.

58 *See* Macdonald, *Lewis*, 25–7, for details.

59 *ER*, xvii, 758–9.

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178 SRO, GD 427/48, for example, lists eviction orders.

179 SRO, GD 427/209/4, 3 March 1777, for example.

180 We have benefited from discussions on this point with Mr Sandy Matheson and Mr Jamie Hepburn, both of Stornoway. One other local tradition is that Ranal was cleared in the mid nineteenth century by James Matheson.

181 *Inverness Courier*, 27/1/1830.

182 *Inverness Courier*, 17/3/1825.

183 Anderson, *Stornoway and Its Charter*, *passim.*

184 Macdonald, *Lewis*, 37–8.

185 An alternative oral tradition, provided by Mr James Shaw Grant, is that the wall was erected to mark the boundary of the feus behind. It was hidden from those travelling on the road by a fine avenue of trees.

186 We have benefited from discussions with Mr Jamie Hepburn on these points.

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195 Macdonald, *Lewis*, 42.

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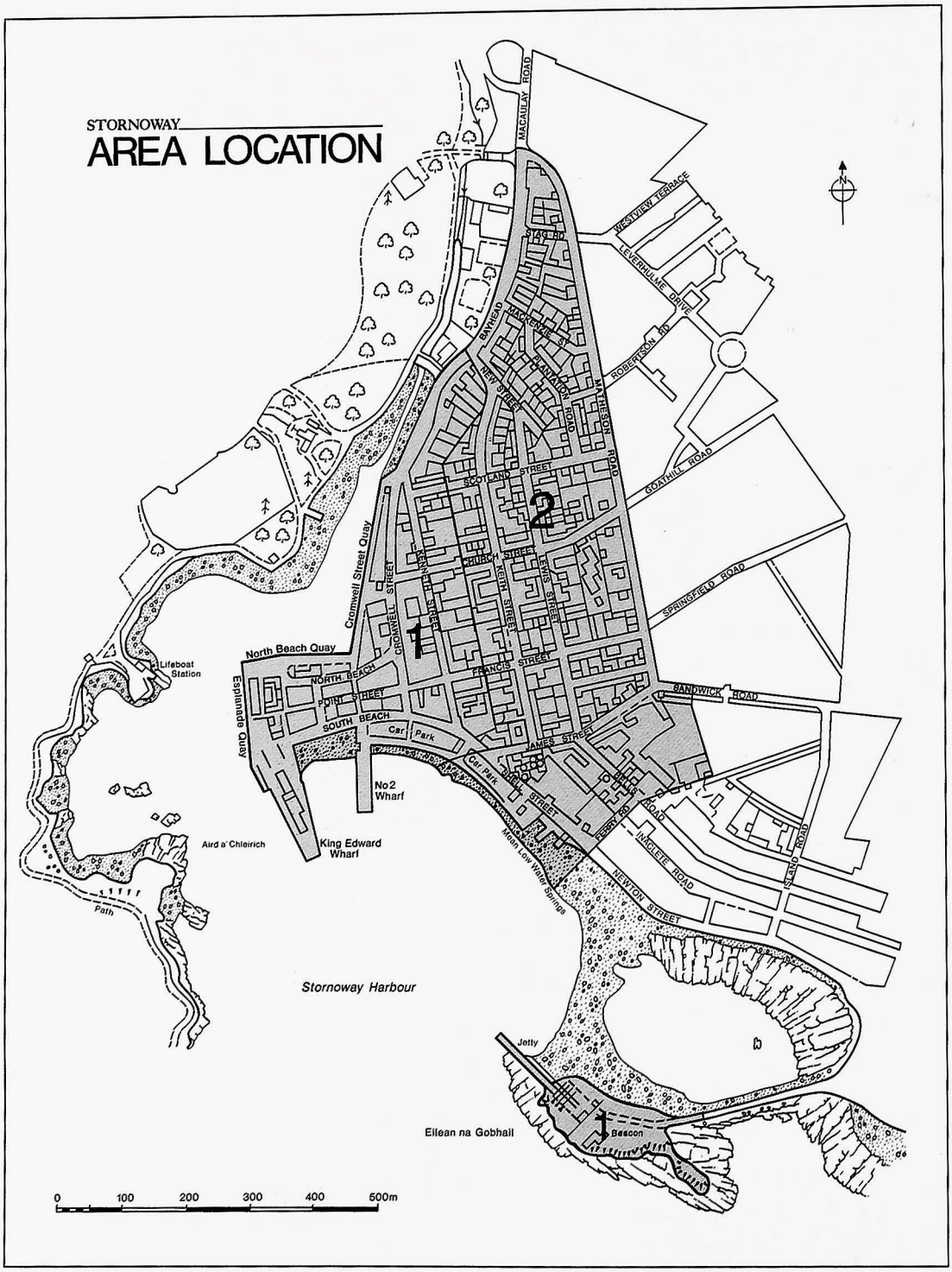

figure 16
Area location map

introduction

Stornoway has been divided into two arbitrary areas for the purposes of this study **figure 16**. The historic (medieval) core of the burgh and part of the suburb of Bayhead are contained within Area 1. The archaeological implications of development in Area 1 are considerable, and therefore it has been described in much more detail than Area 2. The mid nineteenth-century eastward expansion of the town is contained within Area 2.

area 1

Bayhead/Cromwell Street Quay/North Beach Quay/Esplanade Quay/King Edward Wharf/South Beach Quay/James Street/rear of properties, east of Kenneth Street/New Street/Goat Island **figure 17**

description

The historic (medieval) core of the town is confined to a small, narrow peninsula from which Point Street, the main east to west thoroughfare, derives its name. The townscape has changed considerably over the last two centuries as the two harbours, the Inner and Outer Harbours, have been developed to meet new demands. Along South Beach, much land has been reclaimed for quayage, and continues to be reclaimed. In the Inner Harbour, Cromwell Street Quay has also been built on reclaimed land, where originally the sea shore extended up to Cromwell Street itself **figure 18.**

future development

The most recent local plan (Broadbay Local Plan: Consultative Draft, endorsed in 1995) contains a number of development proposals for the historic (medieval) core of the town which will have a considerable impact and wide-ranging implications for Stornoway's archaeological heritage. These include the infilling of an area of the Bayhead River/ Inner Harbour in order to create a new site suitable for mixed development. The Louise Carnegie site in Kenneth Street, the largest single gap site in the town, currently in use as a car park **X**, is to be developed (primarily for retail purposes) and similarly the former bus station site on Cromwell Quay **D**.

The largest development proposal concerns the site occupied by Maritime Buildings, the ferry marshalling area, Amity House **C figure 19**, the Old Sail Loft/Commercial Hotel and Fishermen's Co-op Cold Store **B figure 20**. This has been earmarked for an arts centre and performance space, maritime museum and public library, together with ancillary commercial and residential developments. Infilling between piers Nos 1 and 2 to provide additional parking has also been proposed.

Goat Island **J** is a busy working area and development would also be expected here from time to time.

archaeological potential

Area 1 is the more archaeologically sensitive of the two areas under study; its boundaries have been designed to incorporate the late eighteenth-century limits of the town. Land reclamation along North and South Beach, and the addition of Cromwell Street Quay, all in the later nineteenth century, have to an extent obscured the medieval town plan. Due to the lack of any archaeological work to date, and with only a few chance finds recorded (two stone axes and a wooden trough, found somewhere in or around the town), only general comments can be made about the archaeological potential of Stornoway.

Buildings situated in the core of the medieval burgh were almost certainly constructed on the site of, or directly over, earlier buildings, in a sequence possibly going back to the

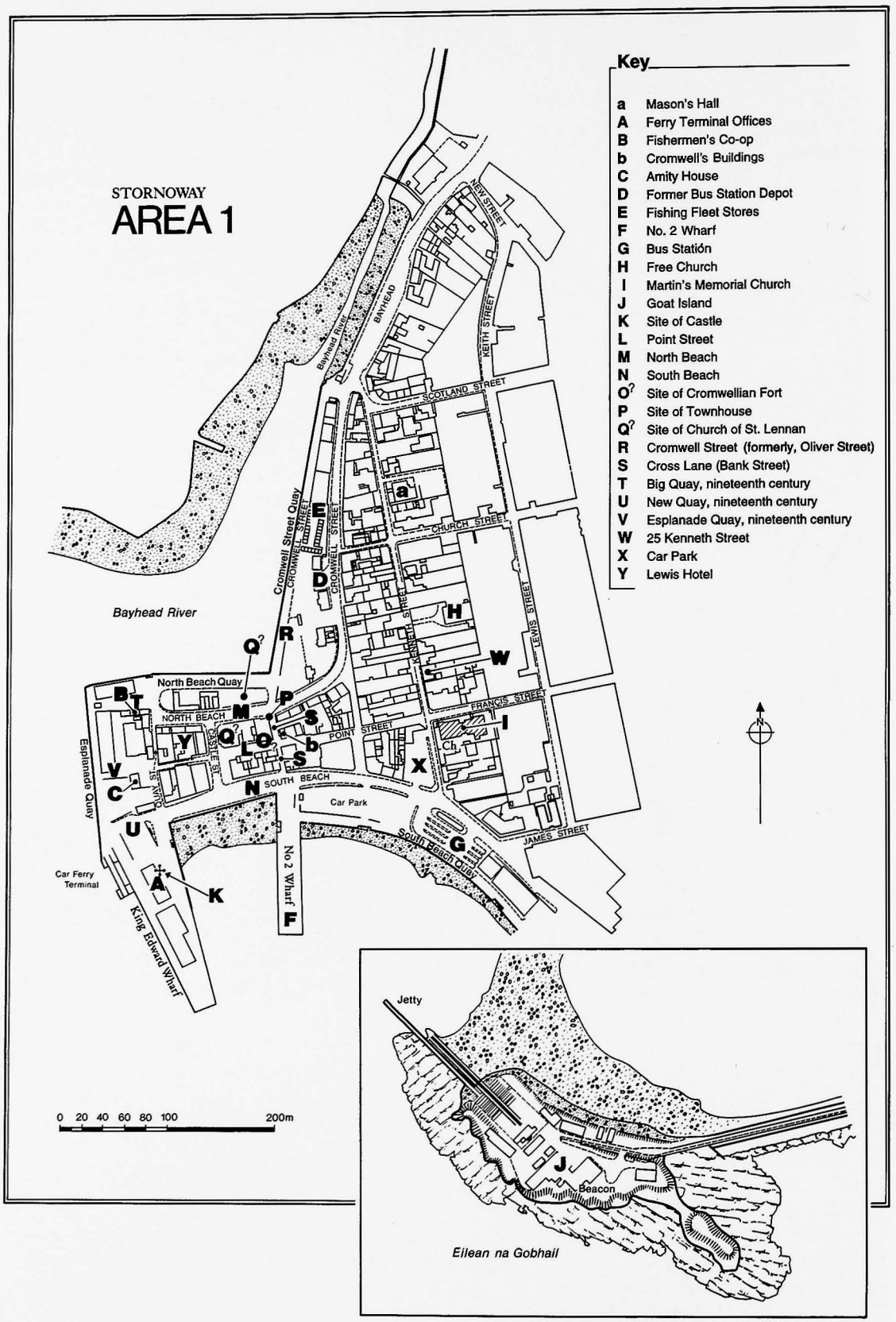

figure 17
Area 1

figure 18
Site of Cromwell Street Quay in the nineteenth century

figure 19
Amity House in 1994–5

The area west and south-west of Quay Street, which includes King Edward Wharf (also known as No 1 pier) and Esplanade Quay, is still very much a working harbour area associated with the car ferry terminal and the Stornoway fishing fleet. Large warehouses and the Art Deco office **A** of the ferry company line King Edward Wharf. To the north, along Esplanade Quay, are more stores and warehouses, including the interesting

archaeology

medieval period and continuing up to the present day. Although there has been no opportunity to examine any of the street frontages in Stornoway, evidence of earlier, possibly medieval, structures may be expected, sealed beneath eighteenth- or nineteenth-century standing buildings.

Nineteenth-century buildings may also incorporate earlier structures. These may be represented by floor surfaces and other features associated with earlier phases of occupation, sealed beneath the modern floor levels, or survive as structural elements, such

figure 20
Fisherman's Co-operative in 1994–5

Stornoway Fishermen's Co-operative building **B figure 20**, but in general, this area looks rather run down in appearance. Amity House **C figure 19**, formerly the Customs House (now on the east side of Quay Street), is now the offices of the Pier and Harbour Commission and stands slightly isolated, set back from the waterfront. The west end of Point Street can still be defined but is now largely open space.

North Beach Quay is again a busy working area, servicing the fishing fleet, with a fuel depot and an L-plan block of small stores and offices set back from the waterfront. The east end of North Beach Quay and much of Cromwell Street Quay has been set aside for car parking, with the occasional development. Immediately to the north is the vacant site of the old bus station **D**, since transferred to South Beach Quay **G**. Lining the northern end of the quay are dozens of small, uniform concrete sheds laid out in a rectangular plan and used by the fishing fleet as offices and stores **E**. A single wooden shed still stands at the very northern end of the quay, and may have served the same purposes.

South Beach Quay is predominantly open townscape, with space set aside for car parking and the bus station. The No 2 wharf **F** is still in operation but does not appear to be heavily used. Land continues to be reclaimed along this stretch of coast, and from the bus station **G** eastward to approximately Ferry Road (Area 2), a new quayside is being constructed.

The two main thoroughfares in the town are Point Street and Cromwell Street. The pedestrianised Point Street divides the headland in two, flanked by North Beach and South Beach. Quay Street, Castle Street and Bank Street cut across Point Street and link North Beach and South Beach. Hotels and public houses mainly line the quaysides, with some private residences along the west end of North Beach. The north side of Point Street, between Quay Street and Castle Street, contains some seemingly old and

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as earlier walls that have been reused as foundations. Similarly, buildings which have more than one phase of construction may have earlier structural features sealed within the fabric itself, hidden by later additions.

Two of the earliest known sites in Stornoway are the castle and the church of St Lennan. The castle was built on a skerry which now lies under the ferry terminal **K**, and traces of it were still easily visible in the late nineteenth century **figure 7**. The remains can still be seen at low tide beneath the concrete-pillared jetty beside the ferry terminal. Little is known of the castle architecturally, but it is likely to have been similar in plan and form to Kisimul on Barra. This mid fifteenth-century castle was also built on a rocky island, though some distance from the shore. It comprised a rectangular, three-storey tower house set in one corner of a pentagonal enclosure. The tower originally stood alone, with the enclosing curtain wall constructed slightly later. A hall was built up against the internal

extremely dilapidated-looking buildings, but much alteration over the years has masked their outward appearance.

Residential buildings begin to the east of Cromwell Street. Kenneth Street comprises a mixture of private housing, the occasional business premises and two churches. Also of interest, the remnants of former property boundaries survive as stretches of dry-stone walling in between more modern buildings. Mid-way along the street, and set back from the street frontage, is the Free Church **H**, while at the southern end of the street, at the junction of Francis Street and Kenneth Street, is Martin's Memorial Church **I**.

Goat Island **J** is now reached from the mainland by an artificial causeway, constructed in the late 1940s at the same time as improvements were made to King Edward Wharf. A slipway was also built on the island and is now in much demand as a boat-repair yard.

historical background

The first medieval castle at Stornoway was perhaps built by the MacLeods. How early the stronghold was established is unclear, although some commentators on the island hold that the castle was originally built by the Nicolsons, in the twelfth century. In the later Middle Ages, the castle stood on a small island, just off the peninsula of Stornoway; given that this was an ideally defensible location, it is possible that this was always the site of the castle **K**.

Whether there was a pre-existing medieval settlement in this area is uncertain, but the natural small harbour, protected by the peninsula, would probably have attracted fishers and seafarers. The fortified MacLeod residence would have proved a focal point for settlement; not only would it have offered a measure of security to dwellings clustering beside it, but the residents of the castle would also have looked to their humbler neighbours for services and supplies.

The castle was attacked on a number of occasions, but not always successfully. However, the punitive attack led by the Earl of Huntly in 1506 to quell the Western Isles resulted in the capture and destruction of Stornoway Castle, although it was soon repaired and back in the hands of the MacLeods.

At the end of the sixteenth century, the island was granted by King James VI to a group of men from Fife. The ostensible reason was that they would not merely colonise, but, more importantly, civilise the island at their own expense. In late October 1598 the Adventurers, as they were called, landed at Stornoway. A number of disappointments awaited them. The island was not as fertile as claimed; supplies were inadequate; many died from cold and lack of housing; and they faced the concerted opposition of the two half-brothers, Neil and Murdo MacLeod. Once opposition from Murdo MacLeod was overcome (over a year later), and with Neil MacLeod now apparently friendly, the Fifers were in a position to begin building. Islanders who promised obedience to their new overlords were allocated land. How much construction work was achieved is unclear, but

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reports of a 'prettie town' at Stornoway would suggest that the Fifers, with local co-

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face of the curtain wall and later buildings, including a kitchen range and a watchman's house, were added in the sixteenth century.

The church dedicated to St Lennan is thought to have been built in the early seventeenth century. Nothing is visible today, and the site, which lies on North Beach **Q**, has since been developed as a street frontage. Traces of the church may be preserved either below the present-day ground level or, alternatively, may have been incorporated in later buildings on the site. An associated graveyard would also be expected in this area.

In other Scottish towns, archaeological excavations have revealed street frontages as the most promising for preservation of archaeological deposits, in spite of the problem of cellarage. Recent excavations in Perth, Dunfermline and Arbroath have also shown that the width and alignment of the main streets in the burghs may have changed over the centuries. Earlier cobbled street surfaces and contemporary buildings may therefore be

operation, established a more than adequate settlement. Precisely where this settlement was, and the nature of its layout, are unknown, although it is probably safe to assume that it was close to the sheltered bay and the castle. Whether the dwellings were of the traditional black house style or of Lowland design is not clear. It was unlikely that the gentlemen adventurers would have wished to stay in lodgings as humble as black houses; and a reference in the *Records of the Privy Council* in 1607 to the houses of the 'gentlemen portioners of Lewis', some of which were demolished by the islanders at this time, while others were maintained as 'houssis of weir' and fortified with men and armour, would suggest dwellings of some substance. Unish House at Waternish in Skye, built in 1605 by the Fife Adventurers, although later extended and finally abandoned around 1914, still retains some of the character and reveals the quality of its original eight rooms; it probably had much in common with the Stornoway dwellings.

It is not clear whether the Adventurers established a church in Stornoway. The presence of a minister in their company would suggest that this had, at least, been their intention. It is unlikely that there had been a church in Stornoway prior to this.

In 1607, James VI transferred all rights in Lewis to the three remaining colonists—Lord Balmerino, Sir James Spens and Sir George Hay. They were, as a result, in possession of the lands and barony of Lewis, with all its appurtenances, the right of patronage to churches, the castle of Stornoway with twenty merklands of land and all mineral rights. The 'villam' or township of Stornoway, along with the castle, was erected into a free burgh of barony, its inhabitants having the right to buy and sell, have a market cross, a weekly market and two fairs, and exact tolls from those attending; they might also, with the advice of their burgh superiors, elect bailies and other officers.

Stornoway Castle was variously held by the Adventurers and the MacLeods, but in 1613 (by which time it was the last MacLeod stronghold) it fell to the Mackenzies; this was in spite of the fact that in the previous century it had withstood both the Earl of Argyll (in 1554) and the Adventurers. In 1637, Charles I confirmed to George, earl of Seaforth and his heirs male the barony of Lewis and the castle of Stornoway, but reserved to himself the burgh with its twenty merklands. While ratifying the infeftment of Seaforth in Lewis in 1641 the crown again reserved to itself not only the burgh, but also the castle, haven, port and sufficient land beside the burgh 'for making of plantation and accommodation of houses and yards for planters together with pasture . . . for the accommodation and association of the . . . fishings'. It was also stated that the town was to 'be erected be our said soveran Lord in ane free burghe royall For reduceing of the inhabitants of the said Ile of Lewis to civilitie and for increase of policie within the same Ile'. National and personal politics intervened and in 1649 Hugh Hamilton, a merchant burgess of Edinburgh, was granted all the Seaforth lands, which included the castle and burgh of Stornoway with its twenty merklands. Nine years later the Protector, Oliver Cromwell, bestowed these same lands on another Edinburgh merchant, George Logan, while recognising that these had

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preserved up to three or four metres behind the line of the modern street frontage. The potential for medieval archaeological levels, particularly earlier buildings, being preserved beneath present-day standing buildings is likely to be concentrated along Point Street and Cromwell Street. Any archaeological levels are likely to be at relatively shallow depths, given the area's low height above sea-level.

Similarly, any proposed ground disturbance in the surviving streets and wynds themselves (for instance, for essential repairs, access to services, or environmental improvements) should also be monitored routinely, because the remains of important features of the medieval townscape—the market cross, tron and wells, of which no archaeological evidence has yet been found—may be sealed beneath them.

Along North and South Beach **M & N**, the modern street frontage has developed over what were the ends of the burgage plots that extended back from Point Street. Here, property boundaries, rubbish pits, middens, garden soils and workshops—the types of features commonly found in such plots—would be expected to lie beneath later street frontages.

figure 21
Merchant's Coffee House, previously the site of the townhouse

been the properties of the deceased George, earl of Seaforth, but forfeit by him to the deceased Robert Logan, in payment of a debt of £59,405 Scots.

The physical appearance of Stornoway in the first half of the seventeenth century can only be conjectured. An influx of Fife Adventurers followed by Dutchmen, and then the establishment of an English colony, must have had a profound effect on the native settlement clustered near the castle. It is believed that the first formally laid out street was one running east-west along the spine of the promontory that divided the inner and outer harbour, approximately on the line of modern Point Street **L**. Running back from the street frontage were burgage plots, with dwellings on the foreland and space for vegetable plots, storage of fishing tackle and, perhaps, animal rearing in the backlands. These plots were bounded at the rear by back lanes, which would ultimately become built up as streets, later called North Beach **M** and South Beach **N**. How far this development had proceeded by the middle of the seventeenth century is unclear. It is known that a market cross stood in the town by 1636, but its location is uncertain. It was called the market cross of the castle of Stornoway, which might suggest that it stood near to the castle. Although it is possible that some pre-prepared housing may have been erected by the colonists, the majority of the housing would still have been of the traditional black house style, with walls 'of similar width to Tiree, thicker than Tarbert and thicker still than Barra'.

history

By the middle of the century, two forts were to dominate the town. These were erected on the instruction of Colonel Lilburne, Commander-in-Chief of the Commonwealth

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The name of Cromwell Street **R** is a useful reminder of the fort built here in the seventeenth century (*see* pp 24-5). The exact location remains unclear, despite the existence of a plan **figure 9**, but it would appear to have been sited close to the edge of town **O**. Cromwell Street has been postulated as its easternmost limit, which was marked by a ditch. Within the fort were a range of buildings, including a dormitory or barracks, store houses, a brew-house, and two wells (one situated in the fort, the other just outside), contained within a complex defended by ditches on the east and west sides measuring '20 feet wide, 15 feet deep'. The barracks was in fact an existing church converted for use by the soldiers, while a 'manor-house', also enclosed within the fort and probably used by the officers, is thought to have been built by either the Dutch or English fishing fleets for their Stornoway manager.

There are two possible locations for this fort, either to the west or to the east of Cromwell Street. If the former is correct, it may be defined by Bank Street, Cromwell Street, North and South Beach (*see* **figure 3**). If it is the latter, the present street pattern is

government in Scotland in 1653. A number of Cromwellian troops under the leadership of Colonel Cobbett landed in the same year. No evidence of either of these forts, or of the castle, which was also garrisoned (and must have been repaired since 1613), now remains; but a well, reputedly sunk for the benefit of the Commonwealth troops near the junction of South Beach and Kenneth Street, was still visible in the early twentieth century. One fortification was apparently sited on Goat Island, just offshore from Stornoway **J figure 8**. Lilburne informed Cromwell on 5 July 1653 that Seaforth was 'resolute for the king and is fortifying a small island near Stornoway'. This might equally apply to both the small island on which the castle **K** stood and to Goat Island. Later that year, Goat Island was occupied by Commonwealth troops.

The other Cromwellian fort was beside the township itself. The latter's precise position is not known, although it seems reasonable to assume that it stood at the east end, or neck, of the Point **O** (*see also* **figure 3**). The place name Battery Point may derive from this fort, although it is more likely that it refers to the later Victorian Naval Volunteer Establishment which stood there. Lilburne described it as a 'fort in an island which is almost invironed by the sea', which would be consistent with a site on the Point peninsula. It would be strategically placed to protect the township and, surely more importantly, the harbour. There is a tradition that the irregular building line at the site of the townhouse **P figure 21** (*see also* p 61) is on the alignment of the north-west angle of the fort, but this probably places the fort too far to the east. It is interesting that the peninsula should have been referred to as an 'island' in the sixteenth century. Until early in the twentieth century, the Point was cut off from the rest of Stornoway at very high tides. It is said that the first parish church in Stornoway, dedicated to St Lennan, stood half way between low tide and high tide **Q**. This also helps to locate the Cromwellian fort, since it assimilated the church within its fortifications (*see* p 25).

A plan purporting to be the Cromwellian fort, 'the ground plan of the fortification at Stornoway upon Lewis Island', dating apparently to 1653, gives some detail of its establishment **figure 9**. A 'manor house' was enclosed. This may have been an existing feature, related to the earlier fisheries. A church, presumably that which was being built by Colin Mackenzie, first earl of Seaforth, in 1630, functioned as a dormitory for 200 soldiers. There were store houses 'two or three loft high', probably also a relic from the fisheries, and a brew-house. The plan also suggests that the fort was protected by the sea, with possibly flooded fields to the north, on two sides, which would mean that it did not stand further inland than the neck of the Point; it was also flanked by trenches, twenty feet wide and fifteen feet deep on the two landward sides. Two draw wells are depicted, one inside the fort, the other to the east. The fort on the island is also portrayed, as is the castle; interestingly, it is shown as having a causeway linking it to the mainland.

Early in 1654, 300 or 400 supporters of Seaforth, under the command of Seaforth himself and Norman MacLeod of Raasay, attacked the Cromwellian garrison. A move was first made against the troops billeted in the town itself. It is said that they removed their possessions into the fort for safety and then fired their houses. This might suggest

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that many of the town dwellings were thatched with straw or heather. The attack had little

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less of a guide. The fact that existing buildings were taken over and converted by the soldiers suggests it was close to the town, and indeed some of the soldiers were garrisoned in the town itself. The plan also shows the town to the east and west of the fort, and water to the north and south. Both would be unlikely if the fort lay to the east of Cromwell Street. Another clue is the curious angle of the building on the corner of North Beach and Cromwell Street (now Merchant's Coffee House **figure 21**). It appears to 'fossilise' the angle of the north-east corner of the fort as shown on the plan.

After it was abandoned the fort must have provided a convenient quarry for the townspeople but, nonetheless, the remains of the fort itself, and of the wider defensive complex, may still survive below ground and structural elements may have been incorporated within the fabric of later buildings in the area.

success, largely because of the lack of artillery. It was not to be long, however, before the occupying forces were withdrawn. Before their departure, the castle of Stornoway was once again destroyed; perhaps so too was the fort.

Lilburne had complained to Cromwell that, although Stornoway was 'the best' harbour in the Outer Hebrides, there was no timber, nor any decent building stone. Presumably the destruction of the forts and castle would have left the townspeople with a useful quarry for building material.

Martin Martin, visiting *c* 1695, commented that Stornoway 'consists of about sixty families; there are some houses of entertainment in it, as also a church and a school, in which Latin and English are taught. The steward of the Lewis hath his residence in this village'. The siting of the school and houses of entertainment is uncertain, although the approximate site of the early church, dedicated to St Lennan, is known by oral tradition **Q**. Although clearly not a large settlement, the impression is that it was more established than a century previously, but in all probability it spread little beyond the peninsula and the line of Cromwell Street **R**.

An English visitor to the town in the mid eighteenth century claimed that the houses, or huts, were miserably built, thatched with straw and heather and 'bound down with ropes made of the same material'. If this was a fair assessment, it would suggest little improvement from the previous century. The evidence of the average rent (whether annual or twice yearly) of a mere 3s 4d per dwelling might confirm this.

Documentary evidence suggests that North Beach **M** and South Beach **N** were still merely back lanes to Point Street, although Cross Lane (later Bank Street) **S** and Oliver Street (later Cromwell Street) **R** were already well established. John Knox of the British Fisheries Society visited Lewis in 1786. His comments on the town of Stornoway are interesting. It was, he said, 'being rebuilt with houses of stone, lime and slate' and had a 'handsome appearance'. 'One wing or street [was] built on a narrow peninsula that [stretched] out a considerable way into the bay' and added 'greatly to the beauty of the landscape'. This would suggest that the back lanes to Point Street had not even yet been formalised into the streets later to be called North Beach and South Beach. Knox did, however, note that the 'noble port [was] without a key; and it appeared still more strange, when [he] was informed that £12-£15,000 had been granted several years [previously], by the trustees at Edinburgh for building a sufficient key, and even that [was] so much out of repair, and for raising cottages for fishermen along the shores of the island.' The lack of an adequate quay was such that vessels loaded and unloaded upon the beach, or in the bay, by means of small boats. It is known, however, that a quay was under construction in the 1760s and 1770s. This evidence perhaps suggests that the work was never completed.

Knox also noted that there was a townhouse. This stood on the corner of North Beach and Cromwell Street **P figure 21**. It may have occupied the site of the earlier tolbooth, but no evidence to verify this has been found. There was also by this time a post office and a customs house. The latter had, in fact, been in existence for some considerable time, but its status had been precarious. The date of the first establishment of the customs house in the town is unclear. There appears to have been one standing in 1737, when the

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Goat Island (Eilean na Gobhail) was supposedly home to a second Cromwellian fort **J figure 8**, probably chosen to guard the entrance into the harbour. There is also a suggestion that a slightly earlier fort existed here prior to that. No trace of any defensive structure is visible today, but small, semi-circular stone foundations could be seen earlier this century. Any developments on the island should therefore be carefully monitored.

The recent discovery of a Viking silver hoard near Lews Castle is a reminder of the Norse presence on the island. The silver hoard weighed 263 g and was composed almost entirely of 'hack silver' (silver arm rings cut into smaller pieces to be used in exchange transactions), wrapped in cloth and buried in a cattle horn. No Norse settlements have been discovered to date, and most finds have been concentrated along the western part of the island. Stornoway, however, possessed all the attributes that Viking settlements

commissioners to the Convention of Royal Burghs were pressing for its removal from Stornoway to Lochbroom. It would seem that this pressure was successful; in 1757 and 1758 the commissioners had changed their minds, bemoaning the lack of a customs house at Stornoway. They also recommended that in time of war, to protect Britain's trading interests, six or eight guns should be erected at government cost at the port of Stornoway (as well as at Peterhead and Stromness), since this was a harbour 'to which ships of great value often resort'. By 1759, the annual committee of the Convention decided to go so far as to apply to the Treasury to 'beg' that it allocate funds for a customs house at Stornoway. By 1773, Stornoway was seen as of greater importance than Lochbroom, as in this year Archibald MacDonnell requested bailiary powers to supervise fishing between Lochbroom and Mull, which was 'rather far from the nearest official in Stornoway'.

The homes of the ordinary people in Stornoway varied in structure and comfort. 'Building works on old castle of Stornoway' in 1790 might suggest not restoration of the castle but robbing of stone for other purposes, possibly including the construction of houses. It was said that 'the houses [were] built at a considerable cost, because all the materials [were] imported, the stones not excepted'. In consequence, rents were higher than in most other places in the Western Isles, being between £15 and £25 per annum. This would seem a greatly inflated figure, compared with the 1753 rents, when the whole town's rental was valued at a mere £20 11s 2d; presumably this was a reflection of improved housing.

history

It is clear that the town was expanding by the turn of the century. By 1796, there were sixty-seven slated houses, twenty-six of which had been built in the previous twelve years.

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archaeology

required—a safe anchorage protected by a sand bar and beaches to drag their boats up onto and fresh water from the Bayhead River. It is therefore a distinct possibility that Viking Age archaeological remains may be discovered here some time in the future.

Stornoway's success has depended on its harbour. The natural shoreline has been altered considerably and is largely a product of the late nineteenth century, when many of the wharves and quays were first constructed. The harbour, however, has been in use for much longer, possibly from as early as the Viking Age, and evidence of earlier waterfront

Twenty or more houses with thatched roofs, but substantially built, flanked the bay where it narrowed in the north-west of the town; and in the north there were still, in spite of improvements, a great number of 'miserable thatched huts, occupied by sailors, fishers and other people with their families'. They were in the process of moving to the east of the town, however, having already constructed thatched homes along the shore line of the bay. To assist this relocation, Mackenzie of Seaforth gave one guinea to each family.

The nineteenth century was to see vast changes in this area of the town. Contemporary maps show the extensive building works that resulted from Matheson investment. The Big Quay **T** at the north-west end of North Beach, attached to the Macpherson and Mackenzie Quays; the New Quay **U** at the west end of South Beach; and the Esplanade Quay **V** at the end of the Point, connecting the other two quays, were all erected at James Matheson's expense. Enterprising local men also built their own small quays, such as Christie's Quay on the south shore, constructed largely to land the supplies for the new Matheson residence under construction in the 1840s. Water and gas companies were also established (*see* **area 2**). Shipping was assisted by the new lighthouse at Arnish Point; Amity House was built **C figure 19**; fish-curing houses were set up and the fish market flourished **figure 15**; a fishermen's co-operative building was erected **B figure 20**; a steam-boat quay was established and a service to Poolewe and, later, to Glasgow was set up. These were merely the initial steps, taken in the time of Sir James Matheson, that would see this historic core of Stornoway emerge as an important ship-

history building port and a centre for deep-sea mariners.

archaeology structures, wharves, warehouses and jetties may still survive, either below or incorporated into later structures. The process of land reclamation continues and even today there are plans to extend the South Beach Quay by infilling between Piers Nos 1 and 2. Any further works on existing quays and wharves which involve ground disturbance should be monitored archaeologically. Evidence of former waterfronts and associated structures may still be preserved and would provide invaluable information, not only about the harbour and maritime industry, but also about the development of Stornoway as a town.

figure 22
Area 2

area 2

Bayhead/Matheson Road/Sandwick Road/Seaforth Hotel/Riggs Road/Ferry Road/South Beach Quay **figure 22**

description

This area takes in the suburb of Bayhead, and the eastward expansion of the town between the late eighteenth and early twentieth centuries. The principal streets follow a north-to-south and east-to-west grid pattern and comprise Keith Street, Lewis Street, Matheson Road, Francis Street, Church Street and Scotland Street. This area is largely residential and contains some fine examples of period housing. Matheson Road is also interesting for its display of garden railings which, owing to potential difficulties in their transportation to help the war effort, managed to survive the Second World War. All the major Scottish foundries are represented, their names being cast into the designs.

A number of churches are also located in Area 2, most of which were built in the mid nineteenth century. The exception is the parish church on the corner of Church Street and Lewis Street **A**. Built in 1794, it originally stood alone at the foot of Goathill, overlooking the town, before it was engulfed by expansion in the mid nineteenth century.

South of James Street, the character of the town changes from residential to industrial. Here, warehouses from the earlier part of this century mingle with newer industries, such as the petro-chemical plant on the corner of James Street and Shell Street. Shell Street, currently the scene of major land reclamation, is also home to a few remaining kippering sheds. One such example, opposite the Presto supermarket, is dated 1887 by a plaque on the wall above the main entrance **B**. The Seaforth Hotel **C**, one of the largest in Stornoway, is situated on the south side of James Street.

future development

The most recent local plan (Broadbay Local Plan: Consultative Draft, endorsed in 1995) contains a number of development proposals for this area. These include environmental improvements for business sites along James Street, an extension to the Seaforth Hotel, housing developments at Keith Street, Church Street and Lewis Street and the redevelopment of the existing library site **O**.

archaeological potential

Area 2 is outwith the medieval core of the town and is therefore less archaeologically sensitive to development. The most sensitive area is likely to be that where there are remains of the Cromwellian fort. The exact location of this site remains uncertain. The western limit was traditionally thought to have been defined by Cromwell Street, but this view does not seem to be sustainable (*see* pp 24–5). If it had been to the east of Cromwell Street, it might have extended into the south-western corner of Area 2, with perhaps James Street as its southern limit and extending as far as Keith Street. The northern limit of the fort appears to have been on the line of North Beach. The contemporary plan made of the fort **figure 9**, although not to scale, shows a barrack block, storehouses and one, or possibly two, wells as being in this area. A defensive ditch, some '20 feet wide, 15 feet deep', also marked the eastern limit of the fort. Remains of the fort may still survive below the present ground level and, although providing a useful quarry for the town, structural features may equally have been preserved, incorporated into the fabric of later buildings. Even though it is thought that the fort was probably not in this area, its possible location here should be borne in mind.

Another archaeologically sensitive area is Bayhead. Although little is known about it, this settlement is shown on maps dating from the late eighteenth century but may be earlier, with houses clustered along the eastern edge of the roadway (Bayhead).

historical background

This area developed from the late eighteenth century as a natural extension to the historic core of the town, on the peninsula. John Knox of the British Fisheries Society visited Lewis in 1786. His comments on the town of Stornoway are interesting. It was, he said, 'being rebuilt with houses of stone, lime and slate' and had a 'handsome appearance'. 'One wing or street [was] built on a narrow peninsula that [stretched] out a considerable way into the bay' and added 'greatly to the beauty of the landscape'. This was a reference to the Point (*see* **area 1**) He noted, also, that there was a proposal afoot to build a new church in the town. Knox clearly approved. He felt that 'when the church and spire shall be built with a small spire also upon the town house, and other ornaments which Seaforth's fertile imagination may easily conceive, this place will merit the pencil of the first landscape painter in the kingdom'. This was the church built eight years later, in 1794 **A**.

By the end of the eighteenth century, Stornoway would appear to have made significant advances since the time of Martin Martin's visit in the late seventeenth century, when the community consisted of a mere sixty families. The population was increasing. According to the *Old Statistical Account*, there were 1,812 people in Stornoway in 1755; and this was to increase to 2,639 by 1796.

A paper given to the Highland Society of Scotland in 1790 spoke of the 'industrious fishers and merchants' of the town. They had 'made their pleasant hamlet rise into view, and display[ed] upwards of a hundred slated houses, beside inferior ones, from their gain from the sea'. This picture of modest prosperity was reinforced when Heron visited a few years later. He saw Stornoway as 'a flourishing town' and 'daily increasing'.

By 1796, there were two schools in the town. The parochial school had forty pupils; and the master had an assistant, as well as a rent-free house with a garden. The SSPCK school cared for 129 pupils. The schoolmaster's house had been recently built, of stone and lime. There was also a spinning school, run in a slated house with a garden. The siting of these buildings is not clear, but they may have been in the expanding suburb to the east of Kenneth Street.

There were also, by this time, sixty-seven slated houses, twenty-six of which had been built in the previous twelve years. Twenty or more houses with thatched roofs, but substantially built, flanked the bay where it narrowed in the north-west of the town; and in the north there were still, in spite of improvements, a great number of 'miserable thatched huts, occupied by sailors, fishers and other people with their families'. They were in the process of moving to the east of the town, however, having already constructed thatched homes along the shoreline of the bay. This probably means that settlement was stretching southwards, hugging the shoreline. To assist this relocation, Mackenzie of Seaforth gave one guinea to each family.

An interesting feature on John Wood's plan of 1821 **figure 11** is a ditch, still known locally as 'the Canal' **D**. Its appearance suggests that this was man-made; and its alignment would imply that it may have been constructed to drain the 'wet, mossy land' by Goathill, noted on a map of 1785 **figure 10**. Such drainage is often a forerunner to the process of enclosure. Wood's plan also includes an ambitious proposal for an extended layout to the town. This was to have focused on the parish church, which was to be encircled by roadways; these were to radiate north-west to Bayhead and eastwards and southwards to

history

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archaeology

Of the many churches in Area 2, all are of mid nineteenth-century or slightly later date, with one exception. The old parish church (St Columba's) **A** on the corner of Church Street and Lewis Street was originally constructed in 1794. It was much repaired in 1831, and extended and remodelled in 1884–5. Although development here is unlikely, environmental improvements and the installation of new services, for example, are likely to occur from time to time. Monitoring of this type of work may reveal traces of the original ground plan and enable a fuller understanding of the development of one of the older churches in Stornoway.

figure 23
The Masonic Lodge in 1973

the outer limits of Inaclete. It may have been that Seaforth had similar pretensions to other island and highland landowners, whose planned towns may still be seen in places such as Bowmore and Inveraray. In the event, little of this scheme materialised and the nineteenth-century plan of Stornoway that was to emerge later adopted a grid pattern, as can be clearly seen in the plan of Area 2.

The Hon Mrs Stewart Mackenzie established five Sabbath schools in Stornoway in the early nineteenth century; a female school where poor children were taught English, Gaelic, writing and needlework; and a Sabbath evening school for the instruction of female servants. Where these were sited is not known. Her encouragement of the new evangelical preaching, which commenced with the arrival in Uig of the first non-Moderate minister, Alexander MacLeod, was to have profound effects on the island. Stornoway retained a Moderate minister, rather than 'religious clergy'; and there was a drift away from the town church. The Stornoway minister, John Cameron, had a difficult task, having to preach not only at Stornoway, but also at Knock and Back; his manse was in Tong. St Peter's Episcopal Church was built about 1839, across the road from the future Free Church seminary and school on Francis Street. Further dissension resulted after the Disruption in 1843 and the emergence of the Free Church. Cameron of Stornoway remained in the Established Church, but lost most of his congregation. The town was then without a minister for some time, until the Free Church minister, the Rev Duncan Macgregor, was appointed in 1849. A further Free Church was later established in Stornoway. The Free Church on Kenneth Street and the Free Church **E** and seminary school **F** on Francis Street, with St Peter's Episcopal Church **G** across the road from the latter, are still standing (*see* pp 62–3).

During the time of James Matheson (*see* pp 34–7) water and gas companies were also established **H**. Education in the town improved: a 'ragged' school for the poorer children of Stornoway was set up; and the Industrial Female School **I**, still standing in Keith Street (*see* pp 62–3), was established in 1848 by the Mathesons, probably with help from the Highland Society, to assist employment. This standing building is interesting not only as a social comment on nineteenth-century Stornoway, but is also of topographical note, standing as it does in a key position in the nineteenth-century grid pattern of the townscape.

The town was to develop radically during this period. Unlike the Seaforth proposals, as seen on John Wood's plan (*see* p 33), the expansion of the town in the later nineteenth century was more to a grid design, expanding eastwards to what were then the limits of the town at Matheson Road **J**. An interesting feature, some of which is still extant, is the high stone wall to the west of Matheson Road. This is said to have been erected by the Mathesons. Their drive from disembarkment at the harbour, encircling the town by

Matheson Road, to the lodge of their newly-built stately home, Lews Castle **K**, was now afforded a measure of privacy **figure 13**.

The town inevitably expanded to meet the growing harbourage; and indeed, the Patent Slip **L**, sited in Area 2, was capable of accommodating ships of 1,000 tons. Stornoway now consisted of 'ten fairly well-built streets with a number of straggling suburbs', with a good public hall that contained a news room, a public library, a meeting room, a masonic lodge **figure 23**, a drill hall, a court house, a prison **M**, a customs house (Amity House) **figure 19**, a sailors' home, a dispensary, a head post office, branches of the British Linen Company, the Caledonian and the National Banks, agencies of nineteen insurance companies and several good hotels. It also had eighteen places licensed to sell liquor, four of which were 'respectable'— the Royal Oak, the Crown, the Star and the New Inn; the others were shops of 'miscellaneous', 'the pest of the morals of the people'.

the archaeological potential of Stornoway a summary **figure 24**

an overview

The overall potential for the survival of archaeological deposits within the medieval core of Stornoway is difficult to define, given the scantness of present evidence. Nevertheless, routine monitoring and excavations in many other Scottish towns, especially Perth and Aberdeen but also in some smaller towns, have demonstrated that medieval and later archaeological remains often survive beneath the modern town. Therefore, the site of any proposed ground disturbance or development along the main street frontages in the historic section of Stornoway must be accorded a high archaeological priority, and arrangements made for the site to be assessed, monitored and, if necessary, excavated in advance of the development scheme. Similarly, any proposed ground disturbance of the surviving streets and wynds themselves (for instance, for essential repairs, access to services, or environmental improvements) should also be monitored routinely, because the remains of important features of the medieval townscape of which no archaeological evidence has yet been found—the market cross, tolbooth, tron and wells—may be sealed beneath them.

To date, no opportunity has been taken to undertake archaeological investigation in Stornoway. Of necessity therefore, this assessment of the archaeological potential has been made without evidence from archaeological work in the town. Thus, the conclusions and recommendations expressed here should be regarded as provisional; this survey will require periodic review in the light of results from any future campaigns of archaeological fieldwork (assessment, monitoring and excavation), and from other types of sub-surface investigations.

It is important to stress that the survey was limited to the core of historic (medieval) Stornoway. There is a recognised, though unquantifiable, potential for the discovery of prehistoric and early historic (especially Norse) archaeological remains, both within and outwith the confines of the historic burgh. Settlement is also known at Goathill and within the grounds of Lews Castle. This potential is *not* shown on **figure 24.**

Finally, the potential for archaeological features and deposits to be preserved both beneath the floors and within the structures of historic standing buildings in Stornoway (pp 61–3) must not be forgotten. The archaeological potential of Stornoway's standing buildings is *not* shown on **figure 24**, but the potential of individual buildings is considered in the next section.

Turning to the specific areas of Stornoway (as identified in this survey), documentary and cartographic evidence have demonstrated the archaeological potential of Area 1, clearly the area most sensitive to new development. Area 2 contains more recent settlement, but isolated sites of interest are contained within this area: the Cromwellian fort, for example, may have extended to here.

figure 24 distinguishes between areas of known potential (shaded green) and unknown potential (shaded lighter green). **All green areas should be treated as potentially archaeologically sensitive.** There are no Scheduled Ancient Monuments (monuments protected by law) within the historic core of Stornoway.

area 1

This area incorporates the core of the late medieval settlement, centred on the headland, and the eastward expansion of the town pre-dating the nineteenth century. The lack of any previous archaeological work, together with the absence of any chance finds, makes an accurate assessment difficult, but enough is known both historically and from archaeological work in other Scottish medieval towns to suggest that medieval deposits are likely to be preserved beneath the street frontages of Point Street and Cromwell Street. North and South Beach were later additions to the town plan, but preserved beneath the present street frontages may be traces of the burgage plots over which they were built.

The present day coastline is a relatively recent development, the original coastline being much nearer North and South Beach. The remains of former waterfronts may therefore be preserved further inland, perhaps with associated wharves, warehouses and jetties. Any early waterfront would be an exciting discovery archaeologically.

The exact location of the Cromwellian fort is not clear but the evidence suggests that it lay on the headland, west of Cromwell Street (*see* **figure 3**). Within it was a range of buildings, the remains of which may lie below the present ground level, and structural elements may have been incorporated into the fabric of later buildings.

Finally, the possibility that a Norse settlement, however temporary, once existed in Stornoway should not be forgotten.

area 2

This area is largely mid nineteenth century in date and therefore archaeologically less significant. The Cromwellian fort is thought to have been sited west of Cromwell Street, but there is a possibility that it lay further east, in Area 2.

Area 2 also incorporates part of Bayhead, a settlement which was in place at least by the late eighteenth century and of which relatively little is known.

historic buildings and their archaeological potential

No historic buildings from the medieval period remain standing in Stornoway. Other than the castle **figure 7**, which is now under the ferry terminal, most buildings would, in the Middle Ages, probably have been of one of the black house types, still to be seen in parts of Lewis; those erected in the medieval period, by the very nature of their construction, are unlikely to have survived as standing buildings to the present time. Seventeenth-century buildings have also disappeared, although Unish House at Waternish, Skye, first constructed in 1605 by the Fife Adventurers, may reveal clues to the type of quality building in Stornoway in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries (*see* pp 19–20).

It is possible that there are remnants of eighteenth-century dwellings subsumed within nineteenth-century houses and public buildings now standing. It was common practice to 'modernise' more substantial earlier buildings in the nineteenth century, but as Stornoway has retained not only its probable early seventeenth-century alignment of the main street (Point Street) (*see* pp 24–5), but also its regular, almost grid-pattern, development thereafter, many of the nineteenth-century buildings may incorporate earlier structures. These may survive as floor surfaces and other features associated with earlier phases of occupation, sealed beneath the modern floor levels, or as structural elements, such as walls that have been reused as foundations. Similarly, buildings which have more than one phase of construction may have earlier structural features sealed within the fabric itself, hidden by later additions.

Buildings situated in the core of the medieval burgh were almost certainly constructed on the site of, or directly over, earlier buildings, a sequence possibly going back to the medieval period and continuing up to the present day. Although there has been no opportunity to examine any of the street frontages in Stornoway, evidence of earlier, possibly medieval structures may be expected, sealed beneath eighteenth- or nineteenth-century standing buildings such as *16–18 Cromwell Street*, sometimes called the Townhouse and now functioning as Merchant's Coffee House **figure 21**. Possibly on the site of the earlier tolbooth, this three-storeyed building, with attic, sits in a skewed position, reminiscent, by tradition, of the tolbooth. Above the ground-floor modern façade, many nineteenth-century features indicate the quality of workmanship of that time.

Cromwell's Building on the corner of Cromwell Street and Francis Street has first-floor window lintels and decoration reminiscent of Amity House **figure 19**, built in 1820 x 1840 (*see* p 62), but its wall-head gable with attic window rather suggests a late eighteenth-century construction. The nearby *33–35 Cromwell Street* block, two storeyed and attic, with a symmetrical three-bay front and centre wall-head gable, may also be of a late eighteenth-century date and retains many early nineteenth-century features, although the upper storey has been inappropriately reglazed. *25 Kenneth Street*, although displaying certain mid nineteenth-century features, may have been of very late eighteenth-century origin and retains much of its original character, both within the house and in its backlands, where there are sympathetic extensions. Little else remains in the town as a reminder of eighteenth-century Stornoway.

The name of Cromwell Street is a useful reminder of the *fort* built here in the seventeenth century (*see also* pp 24–5). The exact location remains unclear, despite the existence of a plan **figure 9**, but it would appear to have been sited close to the edge of town. Cromwell Street has been postulated as its western limit, which was marked by a ditch; it is more likely that the boundary lay to the west of Cromwell Street, on the headland itself. Within the fort were a range of buildings, including a dormitory or barracks, store houses, a brew-house, and two wells (one was situated in the fort, the other just outside). The barracks were in fact an existing church converted for use by the soldiers, while a 'manor-house', also enclosed within the fort and probably used by the officers, is thought to have been built by either the Dutch or English fishing fleets for their Stornoway manager. The remains of these buildings, and of the wider defensive complex, may still survive below ground, and structural elements may have been incorporated within the fabric of later buildings in the area. Its possible location is shown in **figure 3**.

A number of buildings testify to Stornoway's standing in the nineteenth century. Most notable is *Amity House* **figure 19**. A two-storeyed, three-bayed building, it was probably built as the Customs House sometime between 1820 and 1840. On its western elevation, its first floor windows are substantially higher that those on the ground floor, which may suggest that, from the outset, this section of the building was intended for office use. The exterior retains many original features, such as the entrance door and porch and the decoration around the first-floor windows, which may also be noted on Cromwell's Building (*see* p 61). The interior cornice plasterwork is also a fine example of quality workmanship.

In other Scottish towns, recent excavations have revealed street frontages as the most promising for preservation of archaeological deposits, in spite of the problem of cellarage. Recent excavations in Perth, Dunfermline and Arbroath have also shown that the width and alignment of the main streets in the burghs have changed over the centuries. Earlier cobbled street surfaces and contemporary buildings may therefore be preserved up to three or four metres behind the line of the modern street frontage. The potential for medieval archaeological levels, and particularly for earlier buildings, being preserved beneath present-day standing buildings is likely to be concentrated along Point Street and Cromwell Street. Along North and South Beach, however, the modern street frontage has developed over what were the ends of the burgage plots that extended back from Point Street. Here, property boundaries, rubbish pits, middens, garden soils and workshops—the types of features commonly found in such plots—would be expected to lie beneath later street frontages.

At the end of South Beach, the *Star Inn* is a much altered building but is a reminder, in spite of modern additions such as dormers, of the typical frontage to the once busy sea-front thoroughfare.

Nearby, on North Beach Quay, is a potentially attractive *warehouse* (the Fishermen's Co-operative building) **figure 20**, reminiscent of Stornoway's important fishing and maritime role in the early nineteenth century. Apparently first built with five bays, there is now an addition of a further three; all, however, fit the symmetry of the building, which still retains its central forestair and loft doorway in the five-bay range. Attached and facing east is a *dwelling house*, also in poor condition but worthy of renovation, since it is one of the few remaining nineteenth-century standing buildings in this central core of the town.

The *Lewis Hotel*, on North Beach, was once an imposing building, indicative of the numbers of visitors and travellers who came to the island. Its ground plan is significant. Situated in what is thought to be the original central core of the historic town, it may incorporate an earlier building within its nineteenth-century shell. Now somewhat dilapidated, it is for sale (1995). Abutting it, *8 North Beach*, a plain two-storeyed building, is an early nineteenth-century dwelling house. Also in poor condition is *6/7 North Beach*. This two-storeyed block, with an attic, is probably of early nineteenth-century origin, typical of many of the buildings that once clustered in this busy area.

Nos 25, 27 and 29 Francis Street form an attractive symmetrical group of relatively small, early to mid nineteenth-century houses. Each is two-storeyed, with centre doors and harled and slated roofs. Across the road, *36, 38 and 40 Francis Street* are also typical of the mid nineteenth-century dwellings in Stornoway, in spite of the modern alterations.

Two other buildings in this street are reminders of Stornoway's historic past. The present museum was formerly the *Free Church Seminary* and *school*. The block to the west is single-storeyed, possibly of the mid nineteenth century, with later nineteenth-century additions; it functioned as a church. The building to the east has mullioned windows, six close-spaced bipartites at the ground level and those at the first floor with gabled heads rising above the eaves. The entire property is still surrounded by a low boundary wall with spiked, cast-iron railings. On the other side of the road is the *Episcopal Church*, erected probably in 1839. Containing many interesting nineteenth-century features, it houses a bell, said to be inscribed with *Te Deum Laudamus 1631*. The tradition is that this was the town bell. If so, it was probably originally housed in the seventeenth-century tolbooth.

On Keith Street there still stands the *Industrial Female School*. Of interest architecturally, a single-storeyed building, rubble-built with sash windows, it is perhaps more significant as an

historical landmark in the town. It is placed strategically in a key position on the geometrically laid out street grid of what was then an expanding town. It is also one of the few remaining symbols of the 'improvements' effected in Lewis by the Mathesons (*see* pp 34–6). Although possibly partly financially supported by the Highland Society, it was erected by the Mathesons in 1848 to assist employment and bears the memorial stone 'Industrial Female School, Erected by, Mary Jane Matheson, 1848'.

A number of buildings on Kenneth Street are reminders of nineteenth-century Stornoway. The *Free Church* is a rectangular Gothic-style building, with a central double doorway in the gable and a gallery window over its clock. Along the road, the *Masonic Hall* **figure 23** is an early to mid nineteenth-century construction of late Georgian style. Its flat, symmetrical front has five bays with a central door. The boundary wall still retains its original railings, other than where these were removed to provide a vehicular access, and the overthrow entrance arch is unusual, if not unique, in the Western Isles.

No 29 Kenneth Street, as *no* 25, discussed above, is a two-storeyed dwelling with an attic. The dormer windows have been reglazed, but the building retains much of its early nineteenth-century character. Further along the road, two adjoining properties are also of early nineteenth-century origin. That on the left, *no 71 Kenneth Street*, has a recessed panel door with a decorative rectangular fanlight and sash windows with twelve-pane glazing. That on the right, *nos 67–69 Kenneth Street*, although somewhat altered, perhaps having been raised by some masonry courses, and with modern glazing, still retains its original front door feature.

Lewis Street courthouse and *jail* and their supporting buildings, now in the process of redevelopment, were built in two phases, the earliest dating from *c* 1840. Later additions may include the prison yard, to the east: the high security wall in the prison yard is clear testimony to its original function. *St Columba's Old Parish Church*, nearby, retains little of its original late eighteenth-century character, having undergone alterations as early as 1831, additions in 1885 and later substantial changes. Although development here is unlikely, environmental improvements, for example the insertion of new services, are more likely. Monitoring of this type of work may reveal traces of the original ground plan and enable a fuller understanding of the development of one of the oldest churches in Stornoway.

The *High Church* on the corner of Matheson Road and Goathill Road is a further example of a deliberate plantation on the grid plan, standing as it does fronting Matheson Road. Indeed, many of the properties along this street, and their supporting boundary walls and railings, still retain their classic nineteenth-century features. They delineate the extent of the town in the mid to later nineteenth century, designed as they were to line the circuitous approach road from the harbour to the *lodge house and castle of Lews* **figures 13–14.**

Lews Castle **figure 14** was built in 1848 for the Mathesons on the site of the former Seaforth Lodge **figure 8.** It is one of the grandest of the few standing mansions in the Western Isles. A design of Charles Wilson of Glasgow, it consists of a three-storeyed main block with battlemented towers, the central tower functioning as a heating duct. Seaforth Lodge was demolished and the tenants cleared from the grounds. Evidence of this little known settlement, and indeed Seaforth Lodge itself, may survive here below ground or, in the case of the lodge, possibly incorporated into the fabric of the castle. Any building works within the castle may reveal traces of the earlier lodge, and landscaping and the insertion of new services may uncover remains of the former settlement in the grounds. The recent discovery of a Norse silver hoard in the grounds of Lews Castle suggests that other Norse remains may be discovered by chance during works in this area.

suggested avenues for further work

pp 65–67

Documentation relating to the medieval period and the sixteenth century is not extensive. Questions as to the **nature and form of settlement** in this period are often, as a result, not fully answered. The exact site of the early market cross, the first church in Stornoway (dedicated to St Lennan), and the first tolbooth, for example, are all unknown. Likewise the form of settlement prior to the arrival of the Fife Adventurers and the 'prettie town' that they set up are also unclear. While little written evidence has been found for the early township, a further avenue for research which may prove fruitful would be an assessment of the **private papers of the gentlemen involved** in this late sixteenth-century attempted plantation of Stornoway.

archaeological objectives for the future

Preparation of the Stornoway burgh survey has highlighted a number of directions for future archaeological work. These can be broadly divided into management objectives, priorities for future fieldwork, and other areas which merit research in the future. Any such list cannot be exhaustive but it should cover the main areas of concern in the foreseeable future.

management objectives

1 Wherever possible, it is important to monitor the impact of any development (in its broadest sense) on the potential archaeological resource (the **green areas** on **figure 24**). This will require the routine provision of site-specific desk-based assessments, through to watching briefs, trial excavations and, where necessary, controlled excavation, post-excavation analysis and publication. Over time, the cumulative results will 'calibrate' this assessment of the archaeological potential of the burgh, providing evidence about the burgh's origins, and its physical, economic and social development through the centuries.

2 Developments should similarly be monitored to shed more light on the prehistory of Stornoway and on its function in the Norse sphere of influence.

3 The degree and nature of cellarage along the main streets were not systematically examined during preparation of this report. More accurate information would be most useful to managers/curators of the archaeological resource in assessing the archaeological potential of these and other street frontages in the historic burgh.

4 Engineers' boreholes offer a convenient glimpse of the depth and nature of sub-surface deposits, man-made or not, ancient and modern. It would be useful if the results obtained from engineers' boreholes in and around the core of the historic burgh could be gradually collected and collated. It can be difficult to assess all borehole results, especially those in the hands of private contractors, and it might be worth considering mechanisms by which such information could more easily (and preferably routinely) be made available to managers/curators of the archaeological resource.

5 Opportunities should continue to be taken to increase public awareness of the potential archaeological interest of Stornoway, both generally and within and beneath standing buildings in the historic core.

6 Periodic review and updating of this Survey would be desirable to take account of the results of any future archaeological work, and of the comprehensive

The plan purporting to be that of the Cromwellian fort is interesting **figure 9**, offering many clues to the **nature of the Commonwealth occupation**. Further evidence is necessary in order to locate precisely not only this fort, but also that on Goat Island. An assessment of **state papers in PRO, London**, was not undertaken for this Survey, but might prove fruitful at some stage in the future.

A clearer picture emerges from the eighteenth century. The **Gillanders of Highfield papers** have been used extensively for this Survey. They would, however, merit further detailed research. The **Smythe of Methven Muniments** and the **Seaforth Papers** have all been assessed. The former (SRO, GD 190/3/152) contains information on Stornoway's trading activities during the period 1661-75, and would also merit more detailed consideration.

history

Considerable time was spent researching the **disappearance of the settlement at Goathill** in the late eighteenth century. The **Seaforth Papers** were thought to hold clues to this

archaeology

collection and collation of other types of sub-surface investigations, eg engineers' boreholes, systematic survey of cellarage on the main street frontages etc. In particular, the colour-coded map **figure 24** should be revised and re-issued at regular intervals.

7 Management of the archaeological resource of Stornoway, and indeed of the Western Isles as a whole, requires access to a local Sites and Monuments Record (SMR), ideally maintained by a local authority archaeologist.

priorities for future fieldwork

In the absence of any previous archaeological work in Stornoway, the priorities for future archaeological fieldwork are fairly rudimentary. However, the following priorities should be borne in mind during preparations of future project designs:

1 Ascertain the date and nature of the earliest settlement in Stornoway, and determine whether a settlement existed here prior to the construction of the castle.

2 Define the limits of any pre-burghal settlement.

3 Locate the precise sites of the castle and St Lennan's Church.

4 Define the limits of the medieval burgh and the character and date of any burgh boundaries.

5 Locate important features of the medieval townscape—including the tolbooth, market cross, tron and wells—of which no archaeological evidence has yet been found.

6 Recover any evidence for waterfront structures, such as quays, wharves and associated buildings, and deposits.

previously unnoted township, but no information was found in our assessment. Further detailed assessment of this source material is essential, not only in an attempt to throw light on the status of Goathill itself, but also to explain, for example, the vast increase in house rentals in the second half of the eighteenth century.

Other **primary source material** pertinent to Stornoway is also deposited at SRO and should be assessed if a fuller understanding of the town is to be gained. Further afield, there would appear to be at least one source of information on Stornoway in Sweden. It is uncertain how extensive or useful such a source would be, but it is another avenue which could be explored.

No attempt was made to use **secondary source material written in Gaelic.** No study of Stornoway can be complete without this important evidence. Likewise, a greater understanding of the Norse period could be gained by a deeper assessment of **saga evidence** than was possible for this Survey.

history

archaeology

7 Identify any sequence of planning in the layout and expansion of the burgh, and determine any variations in street alignment and width.

8 Assess the nature and function of the burgage plots in the burgh.

9 Ascertain the nature of outlying settlements on Goathill and within the grounds of what is now Lews Castle.

10 Determine the location, plan and layout of the Cromwellian forts: one situated in Stornoway, the other on Goat Island (Eilean na Gobhail).

11 Locate outlying settlements along Goathill Road and within the grounds of Lews Castle. Lews Castle also stands on the site of Seaforth Lodge, the remains of which may be preserved below, or have been incorporated within, the present building.

areas for future archaeological research

1 A **reconstruction of the layout, extent and physical setting of the burgh** would be useful for our understanding of the development of the burgh. This would be particularly useful when assessing the impact of future development and in presenting the current state of knowledge.

2 From prehistory to the present day, Stornoway has been dependent on the sea. This has provided important links, not only with the other islands and the mainland, but also with Scandinavia and north-western Europe. **Evidence of trade** may be preserved in the form of pottery and other finds, analysis of which could allow a fuller understanding of trading networks and the local economy.

street names

pp 69–71

Bank Street *Area 1*
This narrow street links North and South Beach and crosses Point Street. Its name may reflect the slight rise in ground level as the shoreline shelves down to the water on either side of Point Street. An alternative derivation may be from the nineteenth-century bank that still stands on the intersection of Bank Street and North Beach.

Bayhead *Areas 1 & 2*
Probably an ancient trackway into the bay area, this road skirts along the eastern edge of the Bayhead River as it empties into the bay. Settlement was attracted here and, at least by the late eighteenth century, a sizeable community had developed, strung out along the roadside.

Castle Street *Area 1*
This was named after the castle that stood on a skerry off the south-west corner of the promontory **figure 7** on which the town is sited. The castle was probably built some time between the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries. Castle Street also links North and South Beach, cutting across Point Street.

Church Street *Areas 1 & 2*
This street led from the north end of the town to St Columba's Old Parish Church at the corner of Church Street and Lewis Street. The church, built in 1794 and much repaired in 1831, predates Lewis Street and initially stood on the lower slope of Goathill, overlooking the town until the mid nineteenth century.

Cromwell Street *Area 1*
Named in a court case of 1769, it originally appears to have been known as Dempster Street at its northern end. At some point, the name was changed to Oliver Street for its whole length, but this quickly reverted to Cromwell Street in the first half of the nineteenth century. The confusion stems from Captain Benjamin Oliver and Oliver Cromwell. Captain Oliver was commander of the ship *Prince of Wales*, sent to suppress smuggling in the Hebrides in 1807. He was at the centre of an English enclave in Stornoway and was present as a guest when the foundation stone was laid at Lews Castle in 1841. (His name is still preserved in Oliver's Brae on the outskirts of the town.) Cromwell Street was renamed after Oliver Cromwell, during whose protectorate, one or possibly two, forts were built in Stornoway **figure 9.** The street itself may mark the western or, more probably, the eastern ditch of the mainland fort (*see* pp 24–5).

Ferry Road *Area 2*
Situated on the edge of the industrial area of town, this street was probably named after the ferry service which operates between Stornoway and the mainland.

Francis Street *Areas 1 & 2*
A characteristic Mackenzie Christian name. The Mackenzies ousted the MacLeods and in 1610 added Lewis to their extensive mainland estates. Francis Humberston Mackenzie was first Earl of Seaforth.

Goathill Road

Area 2
This road links Goathill and the town and possibly marks the route of an older trackway. A cartographic source refers to a settlement on Goathill, but whether it ever existed is unclear (*see* pp 31–3).

James Street

Areas 1 & 2
A characteristic Mackenzie Christian name. The Mackenzies ousted the MacLeods and in 1610 added Lewis to their extensive mainland estates. Alternatively, it may have been named after James Keith (*see also* Keith Street).

Keith Street

Area 2
Keith Street commemorates George and James Keith. They were associated with William MacKenzie, fifth earl of Seaforth, in the abortive Jacobite rising of 1719. The Keiths fled to the continent, where James served in the armies of Spain and Russia. He was made field marshal by Frederick the Great of Prussia. George, the hereditary Earl Marischal of Scotland, became Frederick the Great's ambassador in Paris.

Kenneth Street

Area 1
A characteristic Mackenzie Christian name. The Mackenzies ousted the MacLeods and in 1610 added Lewis to their extensive mainland estates. In 1773, Kenneth Mackenzie, first earl of Seaforth in the peerage of Ireland (and properly seventh earl of Seaforth), backed proposals to introduce new amenities to the town, such as a better market place and well. Included in these plans was a new thoroughfare, to be called Kenneth Street. At some point, it was also known as Proby Street.

Lewis Street

Area 2
This street was named after the island.

Mackenzie Street

Area 2
The MacKenzies ousted the MacLeods and in 1610 added Lewis to their extensive mainland estates.

Matheson Road

Area 2
Matheson Road was named after Sir James Matheson, who purchased the island in 1844 from the Seaforth trustees. He built Lews Castle **figures 13–14**, work beginning in 1847, after first clearing tenants from the grounds of Seaforth Lodge and enclosing what had been common grazing **figure 8**. Unpopular with the local inhabitants, he also constructed a high stone wall along the west side of Matheson Road, so that he could not be seen entering and leaving his estate (*see* pp 34–6).

New Street

Area 2
New Street was constructed during Sir James Matheson's nineteenth-century improvements to the town plan (*see* Matheson Road), from which it received its name.

North Beach

Area 1
There has been considerable land reclamation along the north

side of the inner harbour, and now North Beach stands set back from the waterfront. Originally, houses on North Beach would have looked out onto a beach.

Plantation Road

Area 2
There are two views as to the derivation of this street name. There were several attempts to colonise Lewis for political and commercial reasons, most notably by the Fife Adventurers in the late sixteenth century, who attempted to 'plant' a colony. Another possible origin of the name is the row of trees planted by Lady Matheson in the mid nineteenth century.

Point Street

Area 1
Probably the earliest street in the town, Point Street runs along the spine of a narrow promontory, or point, from which it is named. It also separates the two harbours, the inner harbour to the north and the outer harbour to the south.

Proby Street

Area 1
Proby Street was an earlier (or possibly alternative) name for Kenneth Street and originates from the last Lady Seaforth. She was the daughter of Dr Baptist Proby, dean of Lichfield.

Quay Street

Area 1
Quay Street runs across the western tip of the natural promontory on which Stornoway stands. Its name reflects its position, with North Beach Quay to the north and South Street Quay to the south. This is still the administrative centre of the fishing industry, with Amity House **figure 19**, the former Harbour Offices, on the west side of the street (now the Pier and Harbour Commission), and Customs and Excise on the east side.

Shell Street

Area 2
Shell Street skirts along the south coastline, linking the town centre with the settlement at Inaclete, renamed Newtown. Industrial works and warehouses predominate in Newtown. Spinning mills for the Harris Tweed industry and kippering sheds were concentrated here, but now lie derelict.

South Beach

Area 1
There has been considerable land reclamation along the south side of the outer harbour and now South Beach stands set back from the waterfront. Originally, houses on South Beach would have looked out onto a beach.

Stag Road

Area 2
The stag was the crest of the Mackenzies, and is said to recall the story of the chief who saved his king from an angry stag.

S

artefacts	Objects made by human workmanship.
backlands	The area to the rear of the burgage plot behind the dwelling house on the frontage. Originally intended for growing produce and keeping animals; site of wells and midden heaps. Eventually housed working premises of craftsmen and poorer members of burgh society.
bailies	Burgh officers who performed routine administration.
bloomery	Iron works.
boundaries	*see* burgage plot
broch tower	A round stone tower of Iron Age date, with double walls and internal galleries.
burgage plot	A division of land, often of regular size (having been measured out by liners), allocated to a burgess. Once built on, it contained the burgage house on the frontage (*see* frontage) and a backland (*see* backland). In time, with pressure for space, the plots were often subdivided—repletion. Plots were bounded by ditches, wattle fences or stone walls.
burgess	Person who enjoys the privileges and responsibilities of the freedom of the burgh.
busses	Herring and mackerel fishing boats
cists	Stone-lined graves.
corbelling	A technique whereby stones project out from a wall to support the weight of the roof.
crannog	An artificial loch-island dwelling.
documentary sources	Written evidence, primary sources being the original documents.
dun	A fortified enclosure, often sited on a cliff-top promontory or a loch-island.
façade	Finished face of a building.
ferrous	Material containing iron.
frontage	Front part of burgage plot nearest the street, on which the dwelling was usually built.
hecklers	Flax combers
hinterland	Rural area around a burgh, to which the burgh looked for economic and agricultural support; hinterland was likewise dependent on burgh market.
hoard	A collection of material (normally coins and metalwork) deposited in the ground, often buried for safe-keeping but never recovered.

in situ	An archaeological term describing layers of soil or features undisturbed by later activity.
lazy beds	Ridges raised by digging out the soil from furrows either side to build a deeper seed bed for growing crops.
machair	Flat or low-lying coastal strip of land where windblown shell sand has created a fertile environment.
megaliths	Large stones used as monuments or in the construction of monuments, for example stone circles.
merk	13s 4d, two-thirds of £ Scots.
midden	Rubbish heaps consisting mainly of food debris and other waste products, often found in the backlands of medieval properties.
monolith	A single block of stone erected as a pillar.
natural	Undisturbed sub-soil or bedrock.
pagan	A follower of any (especially polytheistic) pre-Christian religion.
prehistory	Period of human history before the advent of writing.
radiocarbon	A technique commonly used in archaeology to date organic materials. On dating death, the carbon-14 content of all living organisms decays at a fixed rate over time, whilst the proportion of ordinary carbon (carbon-12) remains fixed. The carbon-14 in a dead sample can thus be measured against the ordinary carbon, and an estimate of the time of death can be determined.
sherd	Fragment of pottery.
skerry	Outcrop of rock jutting out into the sea.
souterrain	A stone-built, often curving, underground passage used for storage purposes.
tack	Lease or tenancy.
tacksman	One who holds land by tack.
tolbooth	The most important secular building; meeting place of burgh council; collection post for market tolls; often housed town gaol.
townhouse	Principal modern civic building.
urban nucleus	Original site(s) from which town developed.
vennel	Alley; narrow lane.
wheelhouse	A circular, stone-built dwelling with partitions radiating out from a central space.

Scottish Record Office
EH69/12/1 Inverness-shire Hearth Tax.
GD9/3 British Fishery Society.
GD46 Seaforth Papers.
GD190 Smythe of Methven Muniments.
GD427 Gillanders of Highfield Papers.

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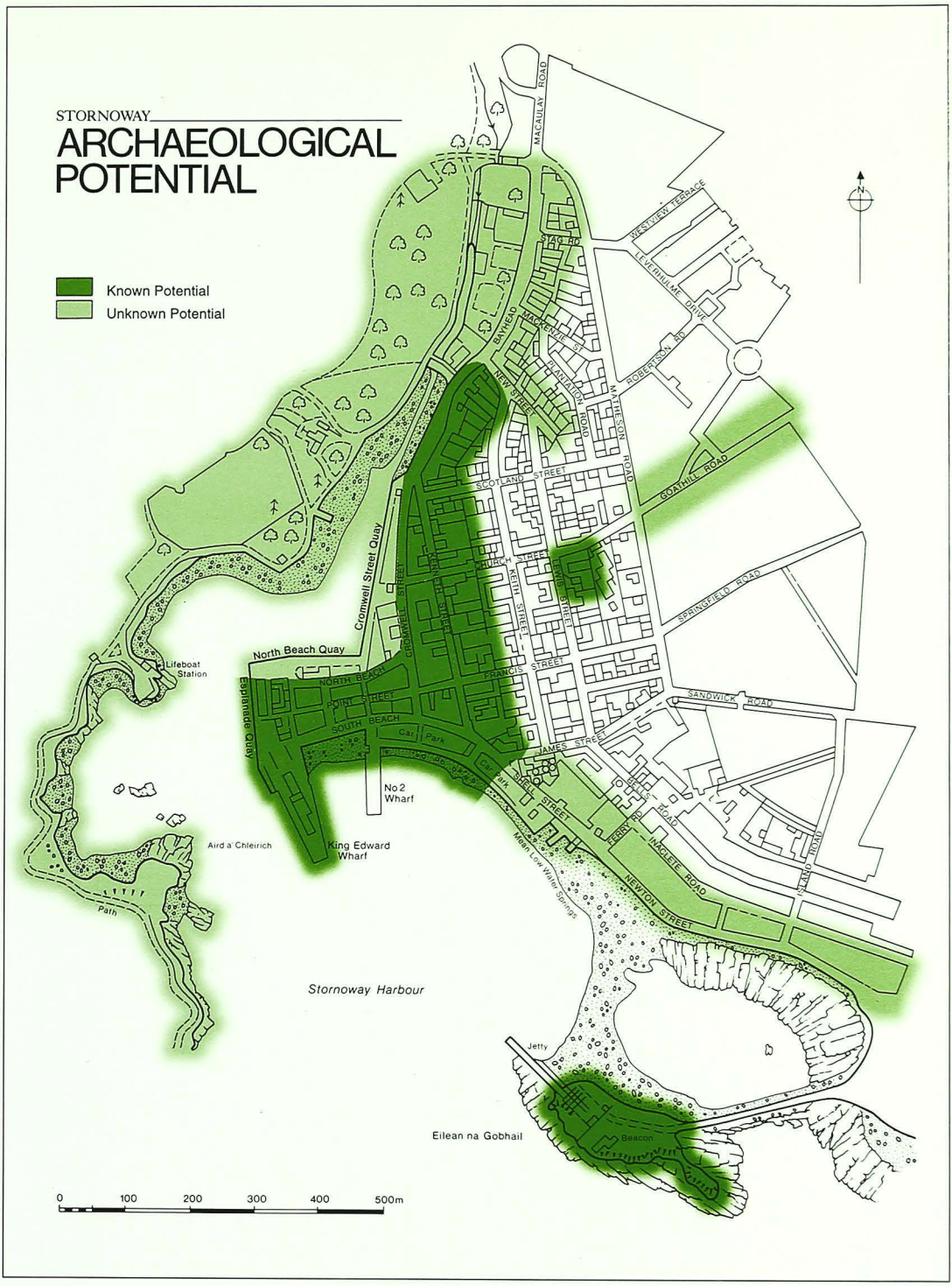

figure 24
The archaeological potential of Stornoway

Historic Stornoway

Historic Stornoway is a fascinating study of the town's history and archaeology, from its medieval origins as a small settlement clustered on and around the Point, up to the nineteenth century. Its favourable location has always attracted others—be they Vikings, later Swedish boat-builders, the Fife Adventurers, Dutch and English fishers, rural neighbours or over-powerful landlords. Stornoway has depended on the sea throughout its history, as it still does today.

This book is part of the **Scottish burgh survey**—a series designed to identify which areas of Scotland's historic burghs are of archaeological interest.

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