



The National Trust
for Scotland

St Kilda Archaeologist's Annual Report 2004



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CONTENTS

1.0 Executive Summary	page 2
2.0 Introduction	page 2
3.0 Winter 2003/2004	page 2
4.0 The 2004 Season	page 2
5.0 Winter 2004/2005	page 9
6.0 The 2005 Season	page 10
7.0 Acknowledgements	page 10

Appendix 1 – Coastal Erosion Assessment

Appendix 2 – Bracken Survey

Appendix 3 – Summary of House 6 Excavation

Appendix 4 – Survey of Nesting Birds in Structures

Appendix 5 – Dry Burn Repairs

1.0 Executive Summary

This report summarises the work undertaken on the island by The National Trust for Scotland St Kilda Archaeologist in the summer of 2004 and off island during the winter of 2003-2004. During the summer there were six work parties, four undertaking conservation work and two involved in archaeological excavation. The conservation work parties carried out a number of tasks under archaeological supervision that included repairing cleit roofs and walls, investigating and re-cutting the drains and participating in routine monitoring, all as approved/agreed with Historic Scotland through the Management Agreement. The archaeological work parties, under the supervision of GUARD, undertook exploratory work within the village area around the souterrain. A number of cruise ships and smaller vessels visited with a total of approximately 1500 visitors, around 600 of whom came on guided walks. Other work included carrying out a brief coastal erosion survey in Village Bay, a survey of nesting birds within structures, a survey of the extent and density of bracken and an excavation around House 6 in advance of drainage works. Work carried out over the winter included cataloguing a number of the prints and glass plates held in The National Trust for Scotland photo library, managing the web-site including the launch of www.hiort.org.uk, the Gaelic language version of www.kilda.org.uk.

2.0 Introduction

The post of St Kilda Archaeologist in 2004 was held by Susan Bain, the post was managed from the NTS Highlands and Islands Office in Inverness, with archaeological advice from Jill Harden, NTS Highlands and Islands Archaeologist.

3.0 Winter 2003/2004

The main task over the winter was the production of reports: the *Annual Report 2003*, which included a coastal erosion assessment and the results of trial trenching of Blackhouse X, *A Watching Brief on a Water-pipe Trench*, that reported on the results of the digging of a trench across Village Bay and *Drains and Drainage on St Kilda* that discussed the drainage works that had been carried out the previous summer.

A major task over the winter months was the production of a database of the archive images held by the NTS. To date over 700 images have been added to the database; these include all the glass plates held at Central Office in Edinburgh and the majority of the black & white prints. The database includes information on the date of each image, the identity of the people in it, as well as identifying individual buildings. This database will be developed to produce a resource that can be used by many disciplines, but will be particularly effective in cultural resource management (see section 4.4 viii below)

The remaining time was spent managing the web-site, ensuring that information was updated and sourcing funding and translators in order to develop and launch www.hiort.org.uk – the Gaelic language version of www.kilda.org.uk. Time was also spent with the Education Officer for the NTS Highlands and Islands discussing content for kids pages on the web-site.

4.0 The 2004 Season

4.1 Coastal Erosion

A rapid survey of the coastline in Village Bay was carried out in May. The coastline was observed/monitored using photographs from the last full coastal erosion survey in 2002 and

walkover survey in 2003 as a reference. Sections were only re-photographed if changes were noted (see Appendix 1). The results showed little significant change since the previous year.

4.2 Cleit Preservation Project

This year Work Party members helped in the monitoring of cleits within the Cleit Preservation Project. Armed with existing photos and a checklist, a minimum of two people were sent out to look for any changes to the structure of the cleits. Any change was reported back to the St Kilda Archaeologist who would then re-visit the cleit to make a written and photographic record. Using volunteers for monitoring greatly increased the number of cleits visited; 117 cleits outwith the village area were visited, nine cleits showed some change since the last visit, only three, 288, 479 and 933 exhibited major change, the remaining six had slight changes with the loss of one or two stones or slight turf loss from the roof. Where possible a complete photographic record has now been made of all cleits within the Cleit Preservation Project. A few such as Cleit 1261 on Oiseval are located in such positions that it would be too dangerous to try to photograph certain aspects.

Cleits visited in 2004:

110 125 137 280	482 483 484 485	802 803 804 805	1023 1024 1040
281 282 283 285	486 487 488 492	806 807 808 809	1042 1043 1044
288 340 344 346	493 500 530 536	810 811 812 813	1046 1047 1048
348 354 355 393	543 554 555 565	814 815 823 826	1049 1053 1111
401 402 405 409	568 574 582 606	827 832 844 866	1146 1215 1231
421 422 429 432	613 735 736 743	901 916 917 933	1259 1261
437 443 444 445	790 791 795 797	942 964 985 986	
446 477 479 480	798 799 800 801	1000 1008 1021	

Cleits showing slight change:

536 565 568
1040 1042

Cleits showing major change:

288 479 933

The collapse of corner C/D of Cleit 479 in Gleann Mor had been noted in 2002 and was already due to be repaired this summer, however the complete collapse of side C had occurred over the winter. Therefore the repair was a little more substantial than first planned. Cleit 933 is the ‘cleit at the end of the world’, sadly this cleit has now slumped and the entrance is blocked by lintel stones.



Cleit 288C – in 1998



Cleit 288C – in 2004



a



b



c

a – Cleit 479, side C in 2002

*b- Cleit 479, side C in 2004
before repairs*

*c – Cleit 479, side C in 2004
after repair*



Cleit 933 side A in 1999



Cleit 933 side A in 2004

4.3 Dyke Survey

The photographic survey of the drystone walls of Village Bay area was continued, with section C of the Head Dyke being completed. Technical problems with the digital camera unfortunately meant that this was the only section completed this season.

4.4 Work Parties

During the 12 weeks of the summer when there are work parties on the island a great deal of the Archaeologist's time is spent working with them. This year, as always, they were an enthusiastic and hard working bunch with a range of skills that could be adapted and used on St Kilda. The following repairs were carried out under archaeological supervision:

Cleits:

16, side C
 55, side C
 88 side D
 105, side C
 120, side B
 479, sides C & D
 92, corner C/D
 513, corner A/B
 799, lintel
 900

Walls etc

A 3m section of head-dyke in section E (behind house 6)
 A small collapse in the dyke in front of house 10
 Two small collapses to the Consumption Dyke

- ii) Repairs to the turf roofs were carried out on cleits 21, 39, 54, 64 and 67. A small part of the roof of Cleit 16, above side C was removed to facilitate the re-build of the wall. Once the wall was rebuilt a small patch repair of the roof was carried out. These cleits were all watered on a regular basis between their repair and July-thereafter the weather obviated the need for further watering.
- iii) Rubble was removed from House 9 and Blackhouse F (to repair the Dry Burn)
- iv) Open field drains and box drains around the village were also cleared of silt and vegetation:
- from House 14 to the firepond;
 - from House 13 to junction with main drain from House 14;
 - from Blackhouse R to junction of main drain;
 - around Calum Mor's House to link with the stretch cleared last year. Most of this stretch just had to be cleared of vegetation but small stretches had to be cleared using a spade.
- v) Work was also carried out to maintain the drains around the 1860s houses.
- House 1 - the plastic pipe that ran along the west gable was removed and replaced with a length of flexicoil.
 - Houses 4 & 5 - silt and vegetation were cleared from the existing stone drains.
 - House 6 - the area behind the house was cleared of silt and vegetation as part of an archaeological excavation and a slate and rubble drain inserted (see Appendix 2 for further information)
 - House 15 - vegetation was removed from along the entire back wall and a narrow channel was cut parallel to the east wall to a maximum depth of 120mm, a depth that ensured no archaeologically sensitive deposits were disturbed.
- vi) Work party members plotted the location and style of visible cables within the village area.
- vii) Work party members assisted the St Kilda Archaeologist in completing a survey of the spread and extent of bracken within Village Bay (see Appendix 3).
- viii) Work party members undertook a survey of nesting birds within the structures of Village Bay (see Appendix 4).
- ix) A number of 'archive' photographs of St Kilda were taken onto the island this

summer. Work party members helped identify the location of each shot and then a comparison photograph was taken. This has helped identify buildings in photographs and will form part of a database of information on each building.



Finding the location of old pictures was a task most work party members thoroughly enjoyed. The information gained can tell us a lot about a building's history, from occupation through decay and repair.

x) Work not carried out:

- Repointing - the repointing of Houses 12, 13 and 14 was not carried out this year as the stone mason was unable to come to St Kilda.
- House 6 drain - a drain was not inserted along the west gable as the drain along the back wall would not flow into it.
- Cleit 288 – repair not carried out due to lack of time, this cleit may possibly have a Leach's petrel nest and currently has two nest boxes in it (see 3.6 below). Any repair should take due consideration of this.
- Graveyard stile - the stile was not replaced this year, as there was some doubt it was necessary. However a further informal survey of use revealed that the existing stile is awkward to use and can hinder access to the graveyard. The existing stile was sketched and photographed.

4.5 GUARD Excavations

This year Glasgow University Archaeological Research Division with assistance from work parties 4 and 5 carried out geophysical survey and limited excavation around the souterrain or Tigh an t-Sithiche (House of the Fairies). Initial results are encouraging; the geophysical survey showed that both resistivity and magnetometry produce good results - revealing subsurface features - whilst the excavation trenches exposed significant undisturbed archaeological deposits. A number of stone tools and sherds of handmade pottery were recovered from the topsoil suggesting that further diagnostic artefacts remain *in situ*. Claire Deacon from the Department of Soil Science, University of Aberdeen worked closely with the GUARD team and concentrated her efforts within the same areas.

4.6 Other works

4.6.1 Petrel nest boxes - JNCC

Twenty-five nest boxes were placed within cleits around the Lover's Stone. These wooden boxes, with a plastic access tunnel, were designed to encourage Leach's petrels (*Oceanodroma leucorhoa*) to nest in them so that information on their nesting habits could be

recorded. The boxes were installed under archaeological supervision by Ian Mitchell and Matt Parsons from the JNCC. All the boxes are easily accessed from the entrance to the cleit, minimising the chances of any accidental damage. The roofs of the boxes were weighted with beach pebbles, easily distinguished from the stone used to build the cleits. Unfortunately no birds took up residence this year so the nest boxes remained in situ.

Location and number of boxes in cleits:

285 - 1	290 - 2	295 - 2	303 - 2
287 - 1	291 - 1	298 - 1	304 - 2
288 - 2	292 - 1	299 - 2	305 - 1
289 - 2	294 - 1	302 - 2	306 - 1
			307 - 1

4.6.2 Soil Sampling – University of Aberdeen

As part of a programme of ongoing research into the soils of remote Scottish islands, Claire Deacon, a research assistant from the University of Aberdeen Department of Plant and Soil Science, spent 18 days on Hirta taking a series of soil samples from within the village. A number of samples were taken from the area covered by the geophysical survey and excavation trenches. Further samples were taken from within enclosures and planticrues as well as from what had been open fields. Claire worked closely with the GUARD team and was assisted by a work party member.

4.6.3 Manuport Survey – University of Lampeter

Professor Andrew Fleming spent over two weeks on Hirta plotting the occurrence of stone manuports and artefacts within the built structures of Village Bay. He was joined for part of the time by Dr. Anne Clarke, an expert on prehistoric stone tools. During this work a fine example of a trough quern was identified by Professor Fleming lying on the foreshore at the base of the heap of stones at the end of Coastal Erosion section F. Because of the vulnerability of this to damage or loss the quern was removed and is now temporarily stored in House 5 (STK04 sf 006).

4.6.4 Dry Burn Repairs

Dry-stone work contractors, Jim Ramsay and Nick Aitken, carried out repairs to the sides and base of the Dry Burn in Village Bay (see Appendix 5).

4.6.5 St Kilda Soay Sheep Project

Throughout the summer members of the St Kilda Soay Sheep Project were on Hirta as usual. As the annual catch involves setting up nets and runs across Village Bay it is important that there was liaison between the archaeologist and project members. The project leaders ensured that all their staff were aware of the issues and conditions of the Scheduled Monument Consent and ensured that the catch was carried out with no disturbance to the monuments.

4.6.6 Visits

- ***Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland*** - Steve Boyle and Alex Hale from the RCAHMS spent 5 days on Hirta visiting sites. Both have extensive field experience in the Western Isles, including Mingulay, and it was a useful exercise to accompany them to sites which have parallels elsewhere and to discuss the nature, function and possible date of features.

- **Historic Scotland** – Chris Barrowman, the HS Monument Warden made a 3 day visit to Hirta in September to check the Scheduled Areas and discuss the monitoring system used by Historic Scotland.
- **Glasgow Museums** – Helen Avenell from the Kelvingrove Museum made a 3 day visit to Hirta to research the new permanent display planned for Kelvingrove Museum.
- **National Trust for Scotland** – Robin Turner (NTS) and Professor Peter Fowler, cultural landscape consultant, visited Hirta in September for 3 days in order to discuss the comparability of the cultural landscape of St Kilda with other World Heritage Site cultural landscapes in advance of submitting this comparison to the World Heritage Site committee.

4.6.7 Miscellaneous

- **Finds** - An area of thatch material was noted within the wall of Blackhouse F. The thatch was composed of several layers of organic material and had visible fragments of an organic (heather?) rope within it. The thatch was photographed in situ.

The blackened strands of twisted rope can be seen clearly amongst a fibrous layer, interpreted as thatch.



- A number of other artefacts were noted during works over the summer, all were recorded in the field notebook, some were kept and given a small find number. These included a fragment of whetstone found in one of the soil sample pits behind House 2 (sf 003) and a body sherd of hand made pottery eroded from the roof of Tigh na Banaghaisgeich in Gleann Mor (STK04 sf 010).
- A complete list of all the artefacts stored within Houses 5 & 6 was completed in advance of a number of them being packed up and sent to the NTS Highlands and Islands Office.
- **Survey** - A sketch plan of the area around the church and schoolroom was completed, this showed the slopes and spot heights on the ground around the church and manse (field notebook 2004, page 10 & 11). This should aid in remedying the drainage problem around this area.
- Scaled sketches of the exterior of the Munition Store door and the modern graveyard stile were completed in advance of repairs.

- **New discoveries** - A building platform on the west side of An Lag was noted by Alex Hale and Steve Boyle from the RCAHMS. The platform is approximately 13m x 3m and cut into the slope. The edges are defined by large stone slabs set upright, the southwest end being overlain by a later enclosure.

Slabs set upright define a building platform in An Lag.



4.7 Island Relations

As in previous years QinetiQ and Eurest staff continued to provide essential support to the St Kilda Archaeologist, not only providing accommodation and food but also the occasional lift up to the top of the hill; they provided storage for various boxes and materials and also provided the essential safety back up for lone working.

QinetiQ staff ensured that the St Kilda Archaeologist was consulted over issues which might have been of concern, including: the cleaning out of the burn that runs beside the loading bay; the replacement of cables at the rear of Red Square; the removal of telecommunication cables around the 'Sig Shack' and the removal of cables from the top of the hill along the roadside.

4.8 Staff Relations

The post of Ranger on St Kilda this year was held by Natalie McCall, who arrived at the end of April. Some time was spent with Natalie, showing her the island sites and walks and going through the village in some detail. There was close liaison on certain issues of concern to both such as work party schedules and guided walks. Natalie assisted in a number of tasks where an extra pair of hands was needed and this was reciprocated in kind.

4.9 Education

Guided walks were offered to cruise ships, contractors, researchers and staff. Eleven guided walks were given for cruise ships and all work parties were given an extended guided walk through the village. Three television companies visited St Kilda this year: Lion TV for Channel 5, Circamedia for Grampian & STV and an independent Belgian production company. Time was spent with all three companies.

The web-site was updated from St Kilda this year including the new feature of a 'Rangers' Diary' that gave regular updates on island life.

5.0 Winter 2004/2005

It is anticipated that the winter season off island will be spent -

- Assisting in the production of a submission to the World Heritage Committee in support of the application for St Kilda to be inscribed as a World Heritage site for its cultural landscape
- Producing this annual report
- Liaising with NTS staff for the forthcoming 75th anniversary of the evacuation of the island
- Co-ordinating updates and improvements to the web-site
- Inputting further entries to the photographic database
- Writing articles for St Kilda Mail and NTS Archaeology Bulletin
- Producing additional information sheets for the museum
- Producing an internal report reviewing the 2003 upgrade of the St Kilda museum
- Installing and developing a familiarisation with MapInfo GIS software
- Using the Trust's property by property archaeological SMR Access database to input data

6.0 2005 Season

6.1 Cleit Preservation Programme

The routine monitoring of the cleits in the Cleit Preservation Project will continue. Work party members participated in this monitoring for the first time in 2004, this proved so successful that it is proposed to continue using work party members this year.

6.2 Work Parties

The St Kilda Archaeologist will provide advice and guidance to the work party leaders as required. When necessary and appropriate members of the work party will be seconded to work with the St Kilda Archaeologist. The Archaeologist will also provide advice and support to the professional staff that organise the archaeology work parties for the NTS.

6.3 House Drains and Drainage

The open field drains will continue to be cleared out as appropriate. Drainage works around the manse are proposed by QinetiQ, details of which are not available at the time of writing. It is proposed that drainage around the church and schoolroom will be arranged to fit in with QinetiQ's proposals. The capped stone drain along the west side of House 6 will be cleared of silt.

6.4 Rubble Removal

Rubble will continue to be removed from identified areas.

6.5 Coastal Erosion

A walkover survey of the coastline in Village Bay will be undertaken in order to assess any erosion and its impact on archaeological deposits and structures.

6.6 Dyke Survey

Work will continue on the photography and recording of the head dyke around Village Bay

6.7 Historic Photos

The project to re-take 'same view' photographs and identify structures and changes will be continued.

6.8 Excavation

The artefacts recovered from House 6 excavations shall be catalogued and a report produced (see Appendix 1).

6.9 Turf Roof Research

The St Kilda Archaeologist has gained a Churchill Fellowship to study methods of turf roof construction. A 5 week study tour will be undertaken and a report produced.

7.0 Acknowledgements

I should like to give thanks to everyone who generously offered advice and support this year: Natalie MacCall, St Kilda Ranger; Jill Blair, Jill Harden and Glyn Young, NTS Highlands and Islands Office; the staff of QinetiQ, Eurest and Movecon; all the work party leaders, cooks and members of the 2004 work parties; Sally Foster, Historic Scotland; Lorna Innes, GUARD (former St Kilda Archaeologist); Robin Turner, NTS Head of Archaeology, Bob Will & Olivia Lelong from GUARD, Ian Mitchell and Matt Parsons from the JNCC.

Appendix 1 – Coastal Erosion Assessment

Methodology

A full coastal erosion survey of Village Bay was carried out in 2002 (Bain 2002) and a rapid walkover survey in 2003 which was repeated in 2004. Photographs were taken only where change was noted.

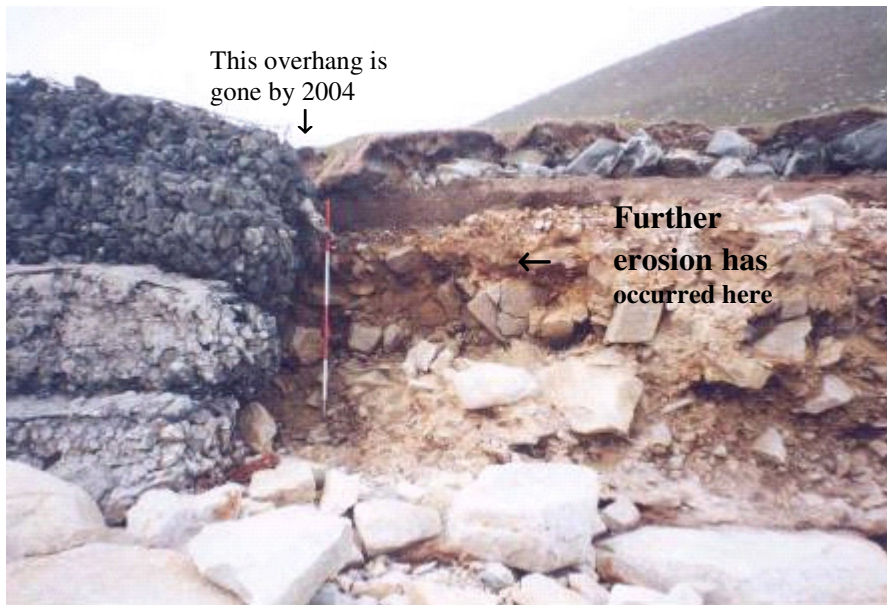
Results

Section A

Section A does not appear to have suffered any noticeable erosion since last year. Unfortunately two of the three timber pegs that had been placed 1m from the cliff edge in the 1990s and which were re-measured every year, are now missing.

Section C

Some further erosion has occurred around the east end of the gabion baskets. Material has been deposited at the west end of the gabion baskets, possibly protecting this area from further undermining.



*Coastal erosion section C
2002 (STK02 9/36)*



*The same section in 2004
(STK04 1/31a)*

Section C cont.



Coastal erosion section C 2002 (STK02 10/23)



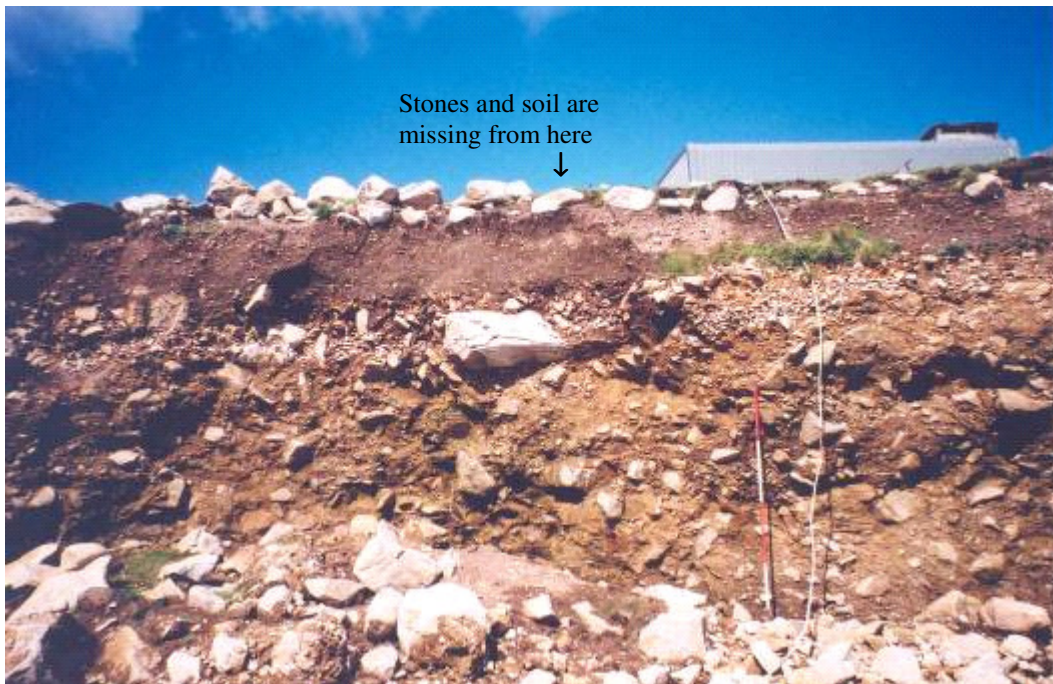
The same section in 2004 (STK04 1/32a). Debris has been deposited in front of the hole under the slipway, hopefully delaying further erosion

Section E

Further changes were noted in section E. Section E is directly to the west of the main gabion baskets and stretches as far as the Abhainn Illishgill (Dry Burn). There is scouring of deposits at the west end of the gabion baskets. Stones have been lost from the seaward dyke and soil has also gone from the cliff face.



Coastal erosion section E 2002 (STK02 11/8)



The same section in 2004 (STK04 1/35a)

Section F

Section F extends from the Abhainn Illishgill (Dry Burn) to a large mound of stones against the cliff face. Some slight erosion with loss of vegetation was noted in the area to the west of the burn.



*Coastal erosion section F
2002 (STK02 12/28)*



*The same section in 2004
(STK02 2/1a)*

Conclusion

The coastal erosion survey of Village Bay this year showed only minor changes since last year. The main areas of change were in sections C and E. The winter of 2003-2004 was mild with few storms driving into the bay.

Bibliography

Bain, S 2002 *Village Bay, St Kilda Coastal Erosion Survey* Internal NTS Report

Appendix 2 – Bracken Survey

Introduction

‘Bracken is a management issue on archaeological and historic sites as it is an aggressive coloniser, which has a vigorous and destructive rhizome system: it destroys and reduces the significance of subsurface archaeological evidence...and it obscures sites.’ (TAN 17 1999:1) Bracken occurs across the main island of Hirta with particular concentrations in Village Bay. Because of its impact on the archaeological record it is important that the spread and density of the bracken is monitored in order to make appropriate management decisions. The occurrence of bracken has been noted in Village Bay for over 100 years but it was not until 1963 that a survey was done of its extent; this survey was repeated in 1997 (Huntly 2002). In those 35 years the bracken had spread considerably and was now present throughout the northwest of the Village Bay area, with a large patch to the south of Lady Granges House and a smaller patch to the south of House 1.

Methodology

In the summer of 2003 and 2004 the area was re-surveyed by work party members under the supervision of the NTS Archaeologist using the same methodology as Huntly. This was done by splitting the Village Bay area into sections and walking back and forth across each section. Pin flags were placed at the extent of the bracken patch; this information was then transcribed in the field onto a map of the area. Work party members were also asked to note the density of the bracken, where fronds forming more than 75% of the vegetation cover notified ‘dominance’. The information on these field maps was then transcribed onto a single map of the Village Bay area using the phase 1 habitat survey conventions, where presence of bracken is denoted by terracotta crosses and dominance by terracotta infill.



Most of the fronds are very small but in sheltered areas, such as planticrues, they can reach over 1.2m in height and form a dense monoculture.

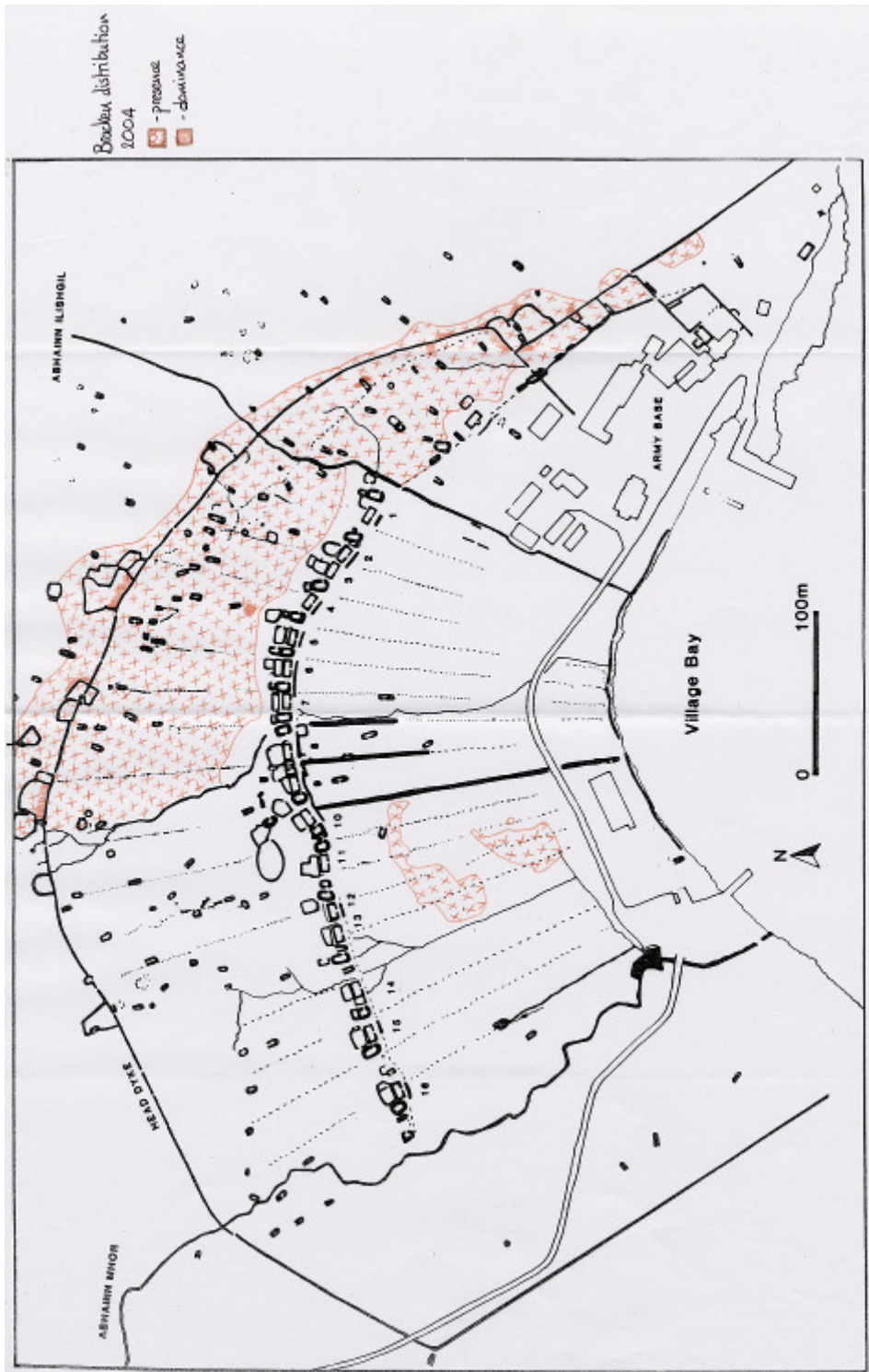
Results

The bracken does not appear to have spread since the last survey in 1997; the density was not marked on Huntley's map. Neither patch has 'jumped' the burns that bound them to the west. The two outlying patches (not marked on accompanying map) on the pro tallus ridge of Connachair and to the north of the Bull's House appear to be the same as in 1997.

Bibliography

Huntley, JP 2002 *St Kilda: environmental research* Forthcoming

TAN 17 1999 *Bracken and Archaeology* HMSO Edinburgh



Appendix 3 – Summary of Excavation around House 6

Executive Summary

In order to construct a rubble drain to prevent House 6 from flooding a total excavation of the area between the back wall of House 6 and the revetment wall for the garden area was carried out. A series of deposits dating from the late 19th century onwards were removed. A large number of artefacts dating from the occupation of the house between 1860 and 1925 were recovered.

History

House 6 was built as part of a redevelopment and improvement to all the housing on St Kilda. Construction was begun in 1860 and, when finished, 16 new houses were strung out along the main street. All the 1860s houses conform to a broadly similar plan: a 10m x 5m single storey house, built of mortared rubble masonry; internally wooden partitions divided the space into two rooms and a back room. Before 1860 this particular plot was occupied by a blackhouse (Blackhouse F) and an associated cleit which had to be demolished to build the new house. From the mid-1880s House 6 was occupied by Angus and Annie Gillies. When they both died in the mid-1920s the house remained unoccupied. Initial repairs to consolidate the building were carried out after the NTS took over the island in 1957. An archaeological excavation of the interior of the house was carried out by Norman Emery in 1990 prior to the re-roofing and renovation which began in 1994. Further excavation was carried out against the exterior of the west wall in 2002 and 2003 by the St Kilda Archaeologist.

Methodology

The excavation area was the entire space between the back wall of House 6 and the revetment wall for the garden area to the north. In effect the area to be excavated was 10.5m long x 0.5m wide. This was a very awkward space in which to work, and in order to avoid trampling of open areas, the area was excavated in short sections (0.75-1m), beginning in the middle and working towards either end. This meant that a maximum of only two people could excavate at any one time. Each section was fully excavated and recorded before the next section was begun.

Results

Despite being over 10m long the excavation trench revealed a uniformity of deposits. Below the turf and topsoil was a mid-brown gritty loam (001) containing frequent mortar patches and bitumous blobs, this layer also contained modern material and is interpreted as being a deposit associated with the re-roofing and renovation of the house in the 1990s. This overlay a black slightly silty layer with visible fibrous patches (002) that occurred along the entire length of the trench but was quite patchy and varied in depth from 10mm- 60mm. This layer was also distinguished by the quantity of zinc sheeting recovered from it, although a large fragment of tarred roof felt was also noted. Underneath this layer was a moderately compact mid-brown fine sandy silt (003) that occurred over the entire width and length of the trench, lapping against both the garden and house walls. This layer contained a large number of artefacts dating from the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The removal of this layer exposed occasional patches of bitumous blobs within a fine silty matrix (005) lying on top of a compact yellow-brown gritty layer (004). Both the garden and house wall were built on top of layer 004.

Conclusion

The initial results from this excavation suggest that the deposits were laid down over a relatively short period of time from around the 1880s to the 1990s. When House 6 was constructed the builders cut into the natural slope to create a flat platform, building both the house and garden wall on a compact natural layer (004). The area between the back wall of the house and the garden wall would have acted as a simple soakaway but no evidence for any

type of drain was recovered. This area appears to have been routinely cleaned out after the house was first built, as the bitumous blobs immediately overlying this layer were probably deposited when the roofs were changed from zinc sheeting to tarred felt around the 1880s. At some point after this, probably in the later years of the occupation of the house or after the Gillies's died, the area was allowed to silt up and became a dumping area for household rubbish. All the artefacts recovered from deposit 003 appear to date from the late 19th –early 20th century. They are predominantly domestic artefacts and include sherds of glass and pottery, fragments of leather as well as complete shoes, fragments of cast iron cooking pots and a number of nails. There were also items associated with agriculture, including a fragment of whetstone and a scythe blade. Straw and feathers were also noted within the matrix of this deposit suggesting that this area had become a midden. The occurrence of sooted zinc sheeting and roof felt above this layer is indicative of the post-evacuation phase and presumably represents the natural decay of the surrounding buildings. Fragments of zinc sheeting which were used as roofing on the blackhouses would have blown off each winter and easily become stuck in this narrow area. The patches of mortar and blobs of bitumen in the upper layer are the evidence of the work undertaken on the house in the later 20th century. NTS work parties consolidated and then restored the house, work which involved raking loose mortar out of joints and reroofing with felt and tar.

A fuller report on the excavations around House 6 carried out in 2003 and 2004 will be produced.

Bibliography

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Emery, N 1996 *Excavations on Hirta* HMSO Edinburgh

Appendix 4 – Survey of Nesting Birds in Structures

A survey was undertaken within the village area to determine the number of birds nesting within structures. Two species were identified for the survey, the fulmar (*Fulmarus glacialis*) and the storm petrel (*Hydrobates pelagicus*). The information gained from this survey will be useful in planning future repairs and management of the structures. It may also be useful in establishing whether numbers of birds are decreasing or increasing.

Fulmars are large birds that normally nest on cliff ledges but will utilise any safe site, including cleit roofs and their interiors. The location of fulmar nests was easily noted visually because although they don't build much of a nest the parents are reluctant to leave it. Therefore the continued presence of a fulmar at the same place was taken to denote a nest whilst later in the season the presence of the egg or chick confirmed this.

Storm petrels are a much smaller bird which nest within walls, sometimes in small burrows and swap over nesting duties during the hours of darkness. It is therefore difficult to see and find their nests. However nesting birds will respond to a recording of another petrel and so a tape recording of a storm petrel was played around every cleit and blackhouse within the village. As the birds do not always respond no response does not necessarily denote no nest present. In order to obtain more relevant results all sites were visited at least three times.

Although all buildings within the village were visited only those with a nesting bird are listed below:

Structure	fulmar	petrel	Comments
Cleit 44	roof		
Cleit 51	roof		
Cleit 53	roof		
Cleit 61	roof		
Cleit 63			
Cleit 64	inside		
Cleit 70	inside	A/B	
Cleit 73	inside		
Cleit 74	roof		
Cleit 86		C/B	
Cleit 94	roof		
Cleit 95	inside		
Cleit 97	roof / inside		
Cleit 101	roof		
Cleit 103	inside		
Cleit 115		A/B	
Cleit 153		✓	At southeast end of wall of enclosure
Cleit 167		B	
Blackhouse V		North end	2 separate
Head dyke		✓	20m from SW end
Head dyke		✓	By MacKenzies slabs
Head dyke		✓	110m from SE end , directly above cleit 1

Appendix 5 – Dry Burn Repairs

Introduction

The Abhainn Illishgill or Dry Burn carries the water from An Lag Bho'n Tuath to the sea. As the name suggests the burn can sometimes have little or no water in it, however after heavy rainfall it can become a raging torrent. In the nineteenth century the sides and bottom of the burn were lined with stone to control and direct the fluctuating water flow. However the effects of years of water flow have scoured out holes in the sides and base and erosion was occurring along the banks. In particular the area where the burn passes under the head dyke was causing concern as loss of stone from the revetted banks was jeopardizing the structure above.

Methodology

Professional dry-stane dykers, Jim Ramsay and Nick Aitken, were contracted to undertake the work on the Dry Burn and were to spend at least a week on Hirta. They were assisted by work party members and photographic recording was carried out by the St Kilda Archaeologist as well as by Nick Aitken.

The sides and base were to be reinstated using dislodged material. If further stone or earth was required then stone piles within Houses 9, 16 and Blackhouse F had been identified as suitable sources.

A light touch approach was adopted to repair the revetting walls and base; to repair as much as necessary and as little as possible. The intention was that the finished work would protect the banks and base from further erosion but not look as if it was newly constructed.



Jim Ramsay and Nick Aitken move dislodged material

Results

Work was begun at the head dyke crossing and continued downstream to where the burn falls over the cliff edge.

The most challenging piece of work was the repair under the head dyke. The head dyke crosses over the gully that carries the Dry Burn, the sides of which had been scoured by the water flow. A number of stones were missing, thereby compromising the structure above. At first it was unclear if the entire stretch of head dyke at this point would have to be dismantled. However, the repairs were carried out with the removal of only a few stones from the dyke and they were replaced in their original positions. Loose stones from within the burn and stones from House 9 and Blackhouse F were used to build up the revetment walls on both the west and east sides.



The Dry Burn as it crosses under the Head Dyke



The Dry Burn with the revetment wall on the west side repaired



The base of the burn was relined



Work continued downstream, rebuilding sides and re-creating a flat base in order to create a sound channel for the water flow and to prevent scouring