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Appendices

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1.0 Executive Summary

This report summarises the work undertaken by the National Trust for Scotland's St Kilda Archaeologist (SKA) from April 2010 - April 2011.

The on-island work comprised the supervision of two Work Parties in May, a Coastal Erosion Survey and the creation of a baseline of wooden stakes around Village Bay, a Graveyard Survey and Condition Report including excavation of a small grave for a new cremation burial, the Cleit Preservation Project (CPP), photographic recording of enclosures, Watching Briefs around the Manse, the Puff Inn and the Fuel Dump as well as various articles written for the Ranger Diary and the Museum. In addition many guided tours were given, and cover was provided for absent or temporary rangers. Two film crews visited in late summer, one from the BBC and the other independent, both interested in the 80th anniversary of the Evacuation. The SKA made and launched a mailboat for the occasion and was interviewed by both crews.

The off-island work comprised mostly of writing reports: conservation-maintenance for HS on the works in 2010, on the Graveyard Survey and recent activities and for Discovery and Excavation in Scotland on watching briefs and finds in 2010. In addition, reports have been produced summarising all excavations around House 6 in 2002-2007, the excavations around the Munitions Store 2006-2008 along with an article for the Kilda Mail. Finally a policy was created for dealing with archaeological finds from St Kilda. The large backlog of finds has now been rationalised according to the principles laid out in the new policy and is currently being prepared for the Treasure Trove process. In addition visits were made to Shawbost and Stornoway Primary Schools, Isle of Lewis, where children created comic strip story boards of legends and stories from St Kilda.

2.0 Introduction

In 2010 Ian McHardy held the post of St Kilda Archaeologist. The archaeological resource of St Kilda has had a full-time or seasonally dedicated staff member since 1996 and a report has been produced annually by the successive incumbents (Johnstone 1996a, 1998, 1999a, 2000a, 2000b; Taylor 2001; Bain 2002, 2003, 2005; Dennis 2005; 2006a, 2007), Geddes 2008/9 and Barret 2009/10).

The post of St Kilda Archaeologist is recognised in the current Management Agreement between the Trust and Historic Scotland (HS) as 'pivotal to the management of the prehistoric and historic structures of St Kilda' (2007, 11). The SKA is involved in a number of tasks including monitoring, guidance, conservation work, fieldwork and project supervision, and associated administrative tasks. The position is managed from Inverness by Susan Bain, Western Isles Manager for the Trust with archaeological advice and guidance from Jill Harden. The post is funded by the Trust and HS.

3.0 On-island work: April – September 2010

3.1 Work Party works

The on island work commenced with preparations for the two work parties followed by their supervision. Many varied tasks were undertaken, but the bulk of the work this year was Drain clearance, Dyke repairs and Cleit roof repairs. A total of 23 cleitean had either roof or walls repaired, 17 stretches of dyke were repaired and 23 lengths of drain – many over 100m in length – were cleared out. In addition, many odd jobs were

carried out around Village Bay, such as slate roof repairs on the Store and the Factor's House and re-painting of cottage roofs, the Gun and the "Welcome to St. Kilda" sign at the airport lounge. The full list of works completed can be found in the internal report "Report to HS on work done".

3.2 Coastal Erosion Monitoring

3.2.1 Introduction

The coastal erosion survey is an ongoing project to document the rate of erosion around Village Bay. This has been a regular occurrence since 1996 (Johnstone 1996a, 6-7, Johnstone 1999b; Bain 2002b, Dennis 2006B, Geddes 2008). A coherent methodology for the monitoring work was established in 1999, with specific areas of coastline labelled A – H and photographed regularly – see figure 1, below (Johnstone 1999b). The approach developed out of a specific concern about 'cliff erosion' of exposed soil profiles and related built structures and deposits in the north and east areas of Village Bay. A 'full' set of photographs, taken facing straight on to the eroding cliff from the beach, was produced in 1996, 1999, 2002, 2006 and 2008, and is supplemented each year by additional images taken if change is noted. This was repeated in 2010 and the results presented below.

The methodology graphically illustrates the problem but does nothing to quantify it in terms of measured loss in plan. It was also noted that gradual incremental change is difficult to pick up.

Therefore this year it was decided to create a baseline of wooden posts running around the bay (see figure 5, below) in addition to the photography, and produce scale drawings from these. This required Scheduled Monument Consent (SMC) from Historic Scotland (HS) – reference no. AMH/2276/1/4, case ID 201000690. The posts only covered areas A-E (see figure 1 & 5, below), although hopefully this will be extended in the future.

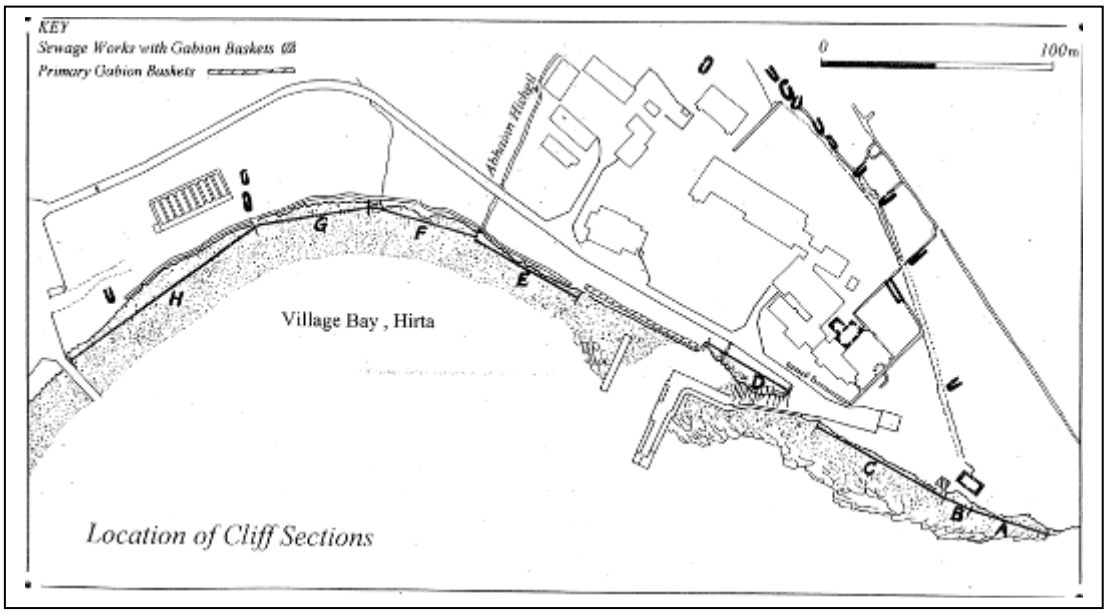

Figure 1: Coastal Erosion areas A-H, Village Bay

3.2.2 Results

The figures presented below are the photographs of the areas where change has occurred, in line with the existing methodology.

There were only two photographs in which change could be observed: CEP 15, see Figures 2a and 2b below, where a large stone had fallen out, and CEP 44, Figures 3a and 3b below, where the erosion scar looks bigger, although it is difficult to be sure and the impression may be a misperception resulting from higher vegetation in 2010. However, the discovery of probably prehistoric pottery (SFs 6,7,8) here would support the former interpretation, as these eroding sections were checked by Strat Halliday in 2009 whilst carrying out the recent RCAHMS survey (pers comm) and would therefore seem to have eroded since then.

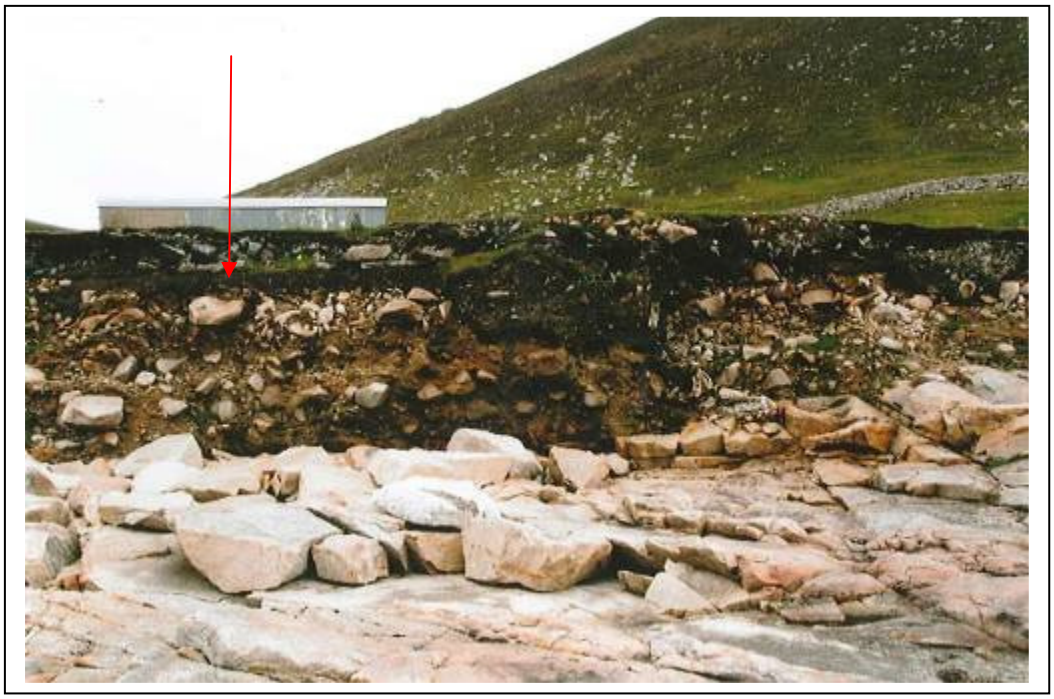

Figure 2a: Photograph CEP 15, area C in 2008

Figure 2b: Photograph CEP 15, area C with missing stone, 2010

Figure 3a: Photograph CEP 44, at the intersection of areas F and G, 2008

Figure 3b: the same area in 2010 - does this represent gradual erosion? Findspots of SFs 8, 7 & 6 shown left to right

Further to this and although the photos don't show significant change, it is clear that the area around the Storehouse and to its east – area 'A' - is also continuing to erode, as the discovery of pottery here (SFs 3,4 & 5) again suggests. The eroding sections were also checked by Strat Halliday whilst carrying out the recent RCAHMS survey in 2009 (pers comm) and would therefore seem to have eroded since then.

Most pressingly, there are only c1.5m of deposits left between the southeast corner of the Feather store and the boulder beach, which would seem little enough to disappear in a few severe winters given the right conditions.

The rate of change of this area could be ascertained by comparison with a survey which was undertaken in September 2002 by representatives of Scottish Natural Heritage and the University of Glasgow for SNH and the NTS (Lees 2002; Hansom 2003), but has never been repeated. The NTS does not have the equipment to do this in house.

Surprisingly, the rest of the monitored coastline did not appear to have noticeably eroded. This seems unlikely given the environment, and when the difficulty in interpreting photos 3a and 3b is considered, as well as the total absence of visible change at area A despite pottery being uncovered, it seems sensible to question the efficacy of the current methodology. This issue will be discussed in the recommendations section below.

3.2.3 St Brendan's

It cannot be ignored that the stretch of coast around St Brendan's, at the west extreme of the bay, is also actively eroding and important archaeological deposits are being destroyed. This has been noted by successive SKAs. Two re-fitting rim sherds of prehistoric pottery (SF1) were discovered there this year, eroding from a shoreline till cliff much the same as in Figure 3 but higher and with rock cliffs underneath. Specifically, these came from within the remains of an ancient dyke, running under the upstanding examples and likely to be part of the Early Christian Chapel complex that once existed here. More prehistoric pottery (SF 34) was discovered in a bank of the nearby burn, as well as a possible small quern (SF 35) both of which are further evidence of the rich potential of deposits in this area. It would seem sensible to monitor this area too, as well as draw and survey the edge. The main difficulty in doing this (and probably why it has never been done) is that you cannot stand on a beach underneath to photograph the eroding sections – there is no beach and the cliffs are too high.

3.2.4 Abhainn Ilishgill

Another issue which has and will continue to cause concern is the condition of the outlet of the Abhainn Illishgill to the shore. This 19th-century drystone structure is eroding from its foundations, most probably causing its complete collapse in the next few years if nothing is done. Careful examination of the photographs shows that no stones have slipped or slumped significantly since 2008, as far as can be told, but this would not seem reason enough to sideline the issue. If any one of the remaining foundation stones did move then the whole section – several tonnes of stone – could well collapse in one dramatic event. This danger makes any repair job very problematical, and it would seem the only available option would be to dismantle most of the overburdening wall to make it safe enough to access and repair the foundations.

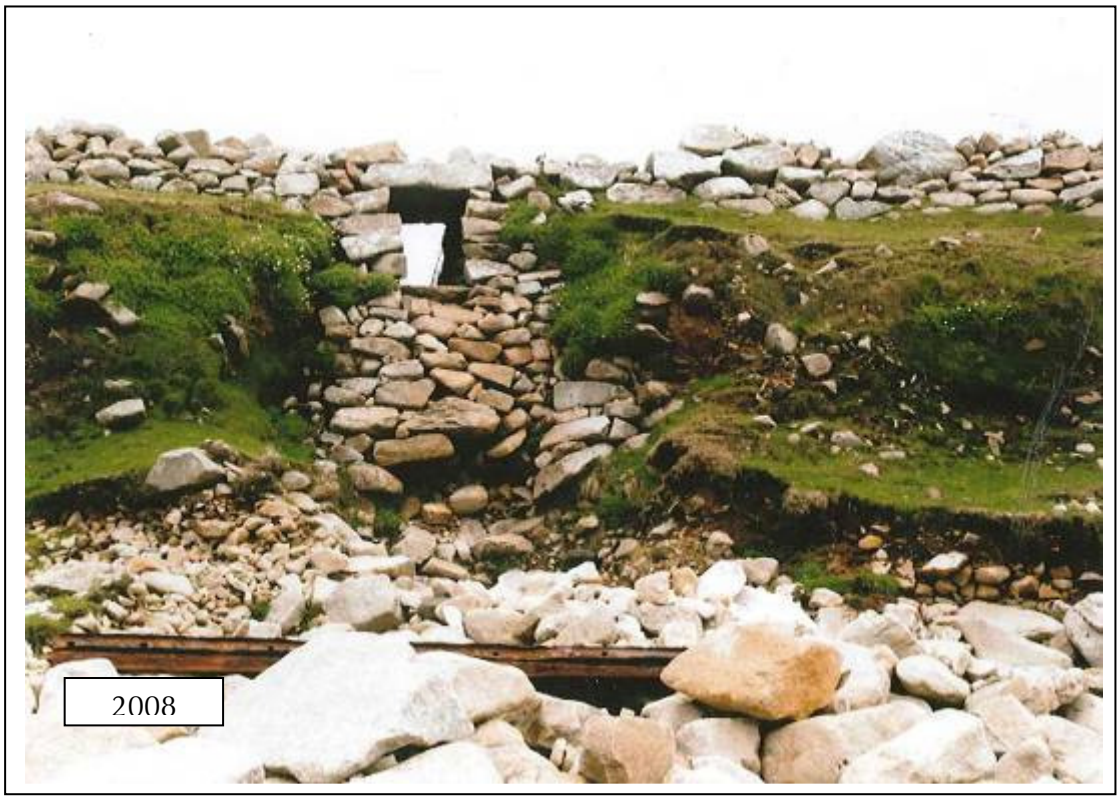

Figure 4a: The Abhainn Illishgill outlet to shore, 2008

Figure 4b: The Abhainn Illishgill outlet to shore, 2010

3.2.5 The survey pegs and drawings

A total of twelve pegs were set in place, roughly 30m apart, stretching from the eastern extremity of the bay where it meets the head dyke to near the outfall of the Abhainn Illishgill. A line was set up between each and scale plans drawn at 1:100, using this as a baseline. The angle between each of the pegs was taken, clockwise from due North starting at the western end, so that these plans can be accurately stitched together.

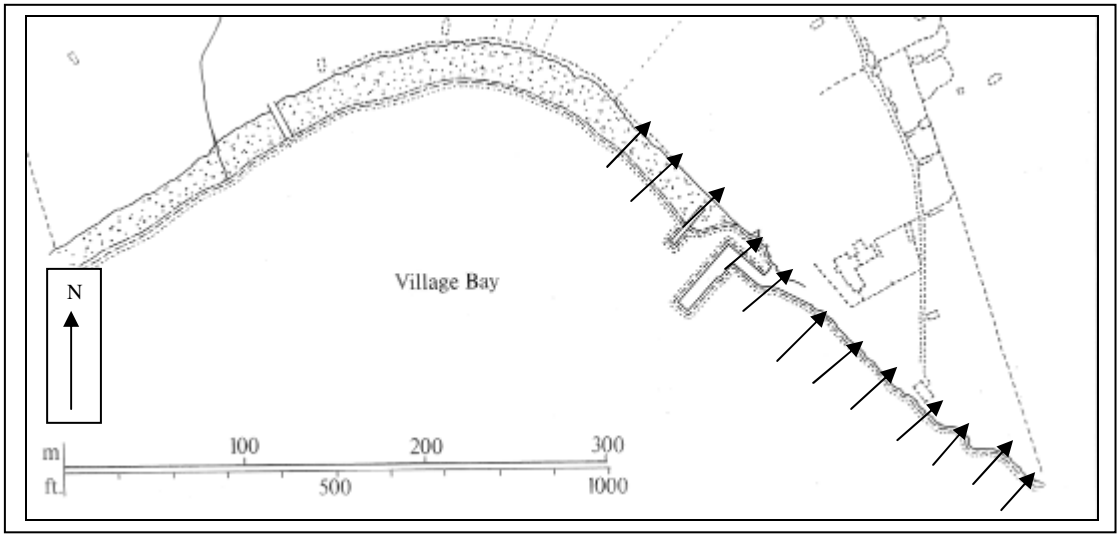

Figure 5: Location of baseline survey pegs for coastal erosion project

3.2.6 Discussion and Recommendations

The discovery of prehistoric pottery from two sections of coastline within the CEP area which have been checked by others recently would support the suspicion that the erosion is happening constantly in a subtle way. It is difficult (Figures 3a and 3b) or indeed impossible (as in area A) to pick this up using the existing photographic methodology. It seems that this method works well for discerning large scale sudden movements, but not so well for smaller incremental changes. Secondly, two significant upstanding structures are directly threatened: the 19th century dyke running along the shore, especially at the outfall of the Abhainn Illisgill, and the Storehouse itself in the not so distant future. The protection of these structures requires urgent attention. Thirdly, an area of in situ archaeological contexts around St Brendan's is also actively eroding and requires urgent attention.

These issues would seem to be the most pressing of all archaeological issues on Hirta, being of greater impact than the degradation of cleit roofs or even the condition of drystone walls. Unfortunately however, there does not seem to be a great deal that can be done to stop it, other than a large scale engineering project which would impact heavily on the look of the shore and would simply displace the problem. As a mitigating strategy, careful and regular monitoring and recording of any finds or features will at least ensure that the archaeological information is not being lost. This is however not possible at present along one of the most significant stretches of coastal deposits around St Brendan's, due to safety concerns. This is a situation where the use of a simple rope access system could facilitate the required tasks and would be practical and efficient.

Ultimately a 3-D topographical Digital Terrain Model (DTM) showing the cliff edge and the cliff profiles at various points, and updated every year, would be a much more accurate method. This could then be supplemented by photographs and drawings of eroding sections, features and finds as and when they are discovered.

3.3 The Graveyard Report

This was an update of Lorna Johnstone's 1996 Graveyard Report, much of which is still relevant. This year's was intended as a condition survey to monitor and assess any changes in the intervening years. The main outcome was that two stones in particular – gravestones 1 and 2 – were suffering from "weathering", no1 de-laminating and no2 crumbling around the edges. Gravestone no 1 is also leaning badly.

A new grave and stone has been added this year, for Mary Josephine Doyle, wife of the late Malcolm McDonald who was already buried in the graveyard. Mary's ashes were interred in a small hole excavated over Malcolm's grave on the 12th July. Details of the excavation can be found in the separate report.

3.4 The Cleit Preservation Project (CPP)

The CPP is an ongoing round of cleit monitoring which takes place every year. A total of 313 cleitean included in the project, and notes and photographs are made of any changes. The project builds on the work of Lorna Johnstone (1996b; 1998c) and particularly Mary Harman, whose survey, notes and photography form the basis of any understanding of these iconic structures.

Out of the 217 visited, **20, or 9.2%** were found to have suffered slight degradation of their turf roof (3, 6, 15, 19, 23, 28, 30, 48, 63, 68, 74, 443/442, 493, 543, 566/565, 790, 791 & 827); **10, or 4.6%** were found to have suffered from collapses of stonework – these range from major collapses, **2.76%,** (26, 63, 68, 998, 1000 and 1002) to no more than a few stones **1.84%** (104, 105, 805, 807). One cleit, 776, had actually improved, with grass re-covering a bare patch witnessed in the previous survey.

Of these 217 visited, 111 cleitean are within the head dyke. Of these, 11 **(or 9.9%)** had suffered decay of the turf roof, and 5 **(or 4.5%)** suffered some collapse (2.7% major,1.8% minor).

The breakdown of figures into within and without the head dyke may not be significant but is included for the following reason. It is a hypothesis of the current SKA that the vast majority of damage to cleitean occurs as a result of the sheep climbing over them to get to the grass on their roofs. Although sheep are all over the island there is a lot more activity within the head dyke – and the roofs are a lot grassier. Therefore the monitoring programme should show this up. However, the figures show that the proportions are roughly the same throughout the island, the turf roofs being only slightly more threatened within the head dyke than without, and collapse is slightly less likely within. Further years data would obviously be needed to come to any conclusions.

3.5 Enclosures

Enclosures 31, 32 and 33 (graveyard wall) were all recorded by photography according to the methodology agreed with Historic Scotland.

3.6 Watching Briefs

Watching briefs were undertaken in three areas in 2010. These have all been reported in Discovery and Excavation in Scotland (DES), 2010.

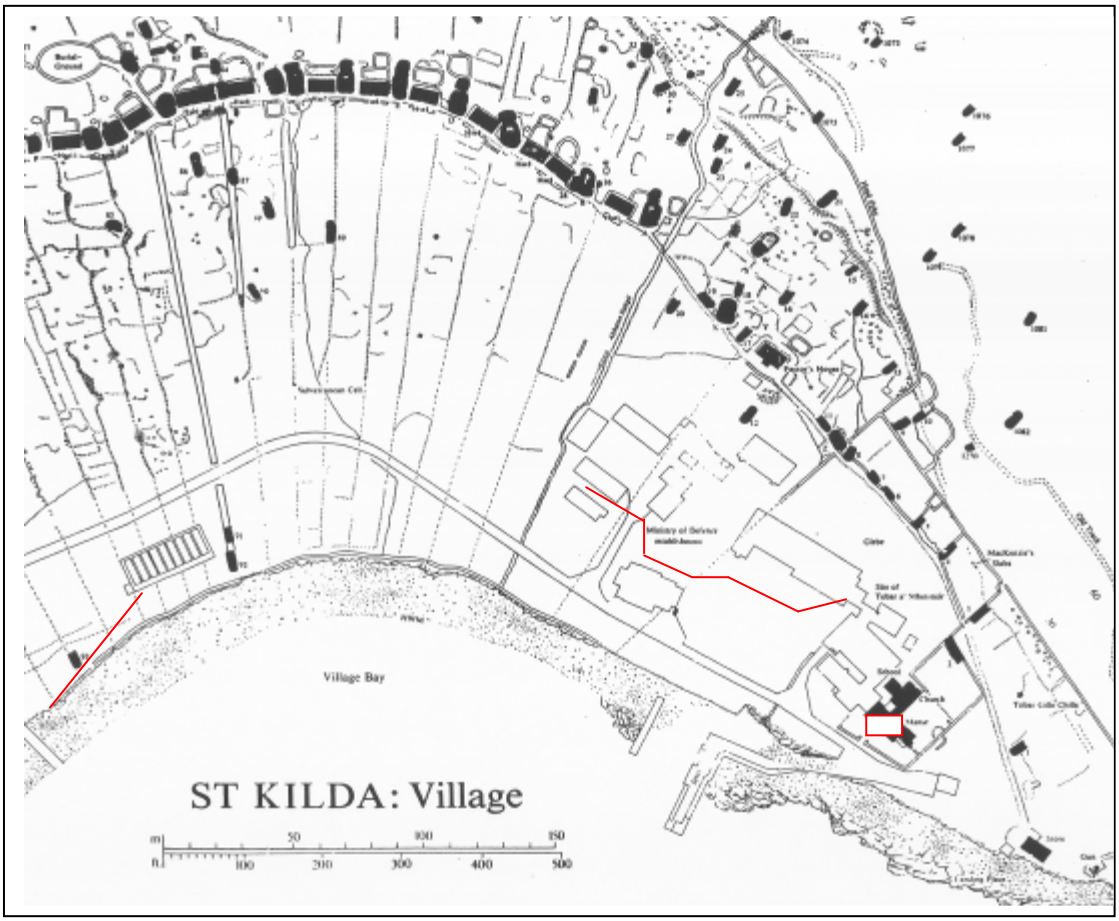

Figure 6: The three areas (shown in red) where watching briefs were undertaken in 2010

3.6.1 Watching brief 1

Three small areas had to be excavated in order to connect the modernised Manse to existing drains – see Figure 6, below. The deposits found under the turf and topsoil were exclusively recently re-deposited earth and rubble, containing modern rubbish such as plastic, glass, drain pipe, slate. Nothing of interest was recorded or recovered. This completed the work associated with the full recording, historic research and resulting conservation statement for the Manse (built 1827-8 and extended 1903), in advance of its refurbishment this year.

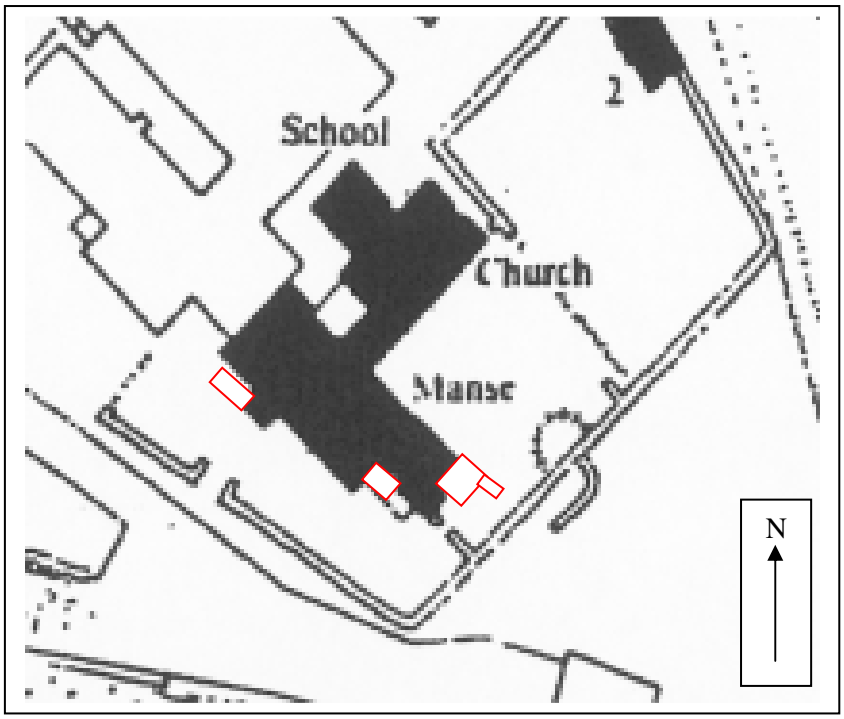

Figure 7: Manse watching briefs, in red

3.6.2 Watching brief 2

Heating ducts which formerly ran along the outside of the main building of the military base on St Kilda, immediately outside the "Puff Inn", required undergrounding. This necessitated a trench, c100m in length, 0.7m wide by 0.7-1m deep – see Figure 7, below. Most of the trench was excavated by mini-digger, and monitored by the SKA, whilst three areas required hand digging.

Deposits found beneath a 200-400mm thick turf and topsoil layer largely consisted of re-deposited rubble associated with the post-1957 military base. A concentration of porcelain, tiles and frosted glass in the southern 15m perhaps indicates the site of a washroom in this vicinity. One metre deep top soils to the north of this may be undisturbed but given the amount of activity in the area are more likely to be similarly re-deposited material from the construction of the present day Base. An undisturbed glacial deposit was observed 20m north of this, where the trench arcs towards the southwest, underlying the soils. Around 10m of this was uncovered. The last stretch of trench consisted again of re-deposited rubble associated with the base. No artefacts worthy of recovery were found.

Figure 8: The trench being excavated

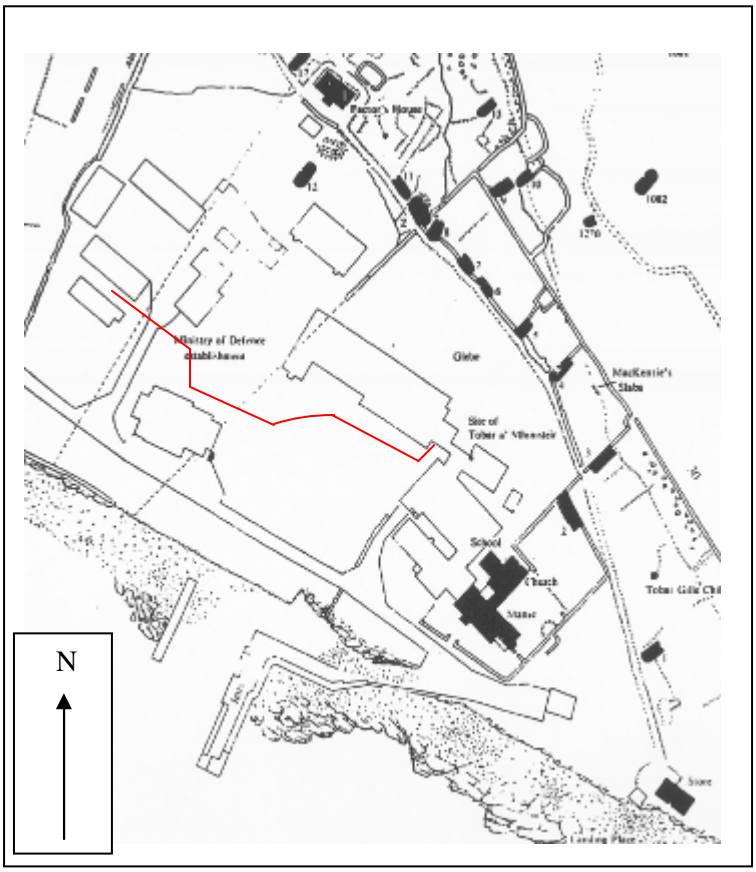

Figure 9: The Puff Inn watching brief, shown in red

3.6.3 Watching brief 3

A small section of pipe, from the diesel storage tanks to the LCL ramp, had grown over and required exposing. The pipe had been laid above ground, over re-deposited material from the early stages of the creation of the fuel store, so there was nothing of archaeological interest. See figure 9, below.

Figure 10: The LCL watching brief, pipeline in red

3.7 Finds

Some interesting archaeological discoveries were made over the summer; prehistoric pottery, grinding stones and heat shattered stones (these last were not retained) were found in the Abhainn Tobar Childar (all from south of the street, slightly more in the upper section) whilst clearing out silts (by WP2 members Alison Mosley and Iain Gordon); a thick, well-made sherd quite different from all others came from the drain in front of House 4 (WP1), a small piece of well rolled handmade pottery was found in a cleit roof (SKA), part of a quern, a large whetstone and a hoe blade came from emptying, cleaning and replacing the stones in the ditches behind the Museum (WP1) and House 1 (WP2), and also 7 examples of what turned out to be wooden stakes for laying out cables during the 1st World War were discovered in various places around the south of the island. WP member Graham Carter discovered a piece of what looks like silica- rich stone which appears to have re-touch around the edges, and could perhaps be a stone tool, near the top of Ruaival. Worked flint – possibly a scraper – was found in the Tobar Childar by the SKA.

Two re-fitting rim sherds of what looks like plain Iron Age pottery, another rim sherd of decorated unglazed pottery and a possible quern were all found in the St. Brendans area, as discussed in 3.2 above.

Another large basal sherd (SF 36) of what would seem to be Iron Age pottery was discovered in deposits at the base of the till cliff in Village Bay, within area F. At first it was thought that this raised the possibility that there were in-situ deposits in this area, but on closer examination and discussion with Strat Halliday and Jill Harden it was decided that it is more likely that these deposits have slumped from the soils above the cliff as the cliff has eroded.

These finds were all catalogued and stored in the artefact store in House 5. Much of the pottery was photographed. At the end of the season, the pottery, flint and worked stone from Ruaival were taken off island for study, but the larger stone tools and stakes etc were left on island in the artefact store. See Appendix 2 for a full finds list, and Appendix 1 for an article written about the finds for the Kilda Mail magazine. All these finds are due to be reported to via the Treasure Trove Secretariat.

It was also realised that a water course runs underneath the easternmost consumption dyke, as WP2 member Edward Acland (great great grandson of Sir Thomas Acland) noticed when cleaning out the nearby stretch of Abhainn Tobar Childar – indeed the water flowing under the dyke sounded more plentiful than that in the stream course. It is not known where this water exits its underground course, and although we considered a test with some kind of food dye, this was never attempted.

The slaters who came out to re-slate the roof of the Manse made an interesting discovery – one of the slates had the following writing on the underside "DJ Bayleaf, Stornoway, Slater" which unfortunately was not photographed before it was replaced on the roof. However, whilst reading through Sam Dennis's notebook (a previous SKA) the following entry was found:

4th July 2007
A story told by Tony Dalton, a passenger and soon to be new boss of the "Guideliner":

His uncle, DJ BAYLEAF from Stornoway, worked on St. Kilda as a roughcaster and slater in the 1960's. He worked on the jetty which involved collecting sand, blasting it dry with a blowtorch and mixing it with a special compound into large lego like blocks. The glue-y substance in the compound came from Germany, and all tools were simply useless at the end of the job. He also slated the sergeants mess – maybe a tile/slate still remains with his name on the underside. He also did some work in the Factors house, where, along with a friend, he found two bottles of communion wine. Despite being tempted to drink it they hid the bottles again, along with a note on a slate. They are now thought to be still under the wooden staircase at the rear of the building"
Tony Dalton,
York

Thanks very much to Tony Dalton, Dean Kennedy and Ronnie Morrison, the slaters from Ballachulish, for passing on the information.

A further discovery was made on Ruaival – another two rock shelters that were previously unrecorded. Further details of one these can be found in Appendix 1 (Kilda Mail article) and both will be added to the SMR in due course.

3.8 Visitors

An important part of the Trust staff workload is concerned with the management of visitors. Both of the Trust staff take some part in the various tasks which include: meeting visitors at the pier or helipad, manning the St Kilda Club shop, giving guided tours, answering specific queries and answering media queries.

Warden cover was patchy in the early part of the summer and so the SKA spent quite a lot of time either doing the job or training the temporary warden. A full time warden, Paul Sharman, was on island by 8th June.

The SKA took many guided walks, both for cruise ships and occasionally other interested visitors. Two film crews – one BBC, one Independent - and reporters from the Times newspaper all required SKA time for tours, interviews and filming.

4.0 Off island work

4.1 Reports

Most of the off-island winter work has consisted of writing reports – both of the work mentioned so far and further tasks, such as writing up previous excavations at both House 6 and the Munitions Store. A policy has been developed for the disposal of finds, of which there is a large collection in Balnain House, Inverness. These have also been made ready to enter the Treasure Trove process so that they can find their way to a museum. In addition a "Conservation Statement" for the Factors House has been started – at the time of writing this is still in preparation, as is a Project Design for the excavation and rebuild of the SE corner of Blackhouse B, which has become dangerously unstable.

4.2 Schools

Two primary schools in Lewis were visited as part of a SKA initiative of outreach and education. Several stories from St Kilda were chosen – The Mistress Stone; The eleven men trapped on Stac an Armin; Fearchar, Duigan and the Cailleach,; The Irish man who got shipwrecked at Geo nan Eirann; and the Uist vs Harris race for St Kilda - and retold to the pupils, after which comic strip representations of the stories were created. This seemed to be enjoyed by the pupils, and the results, in my opinion, are nothing less than brilliant.

5.0 Acknowledgements

The work of the SKA would not be possible without the financial support of Historic Scotland. Volunteers did the vast majority of the conservation work and their enthusiasm and hard work was much appreciated. Archaeological guidance was provided by Jill Harden and the post was managed by Susan Bain, both of whom aided me with ability and professionalism as I found my way. Invaluable logistical support and advice was provided by QinetiQ, Amey and ESS staff, not forgetting the friendship and the craic which was so utterly essential for surviving a summer on Kilda. This also applies to all the Manse contractors and of course the Sheep project, Mouse project and Seabird staff: Thanks to all.

6.0 Distribution List

This report has been sent to the following people/places:
Historic Scotland – two copies
RCAHMS
SNH S Uist
Trust office, Balnain House, Inverness
Trust head office, Hermiston Quay, Edinburgh
St Kilda – two copies
W Isles Archaeologist
Leabharlann nan Eilean, Stornoway

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St Kilda Mail article (forthcoming)

As you might expect, it was an unforgettable six months. If I had to choose one word to describe it, it would probably be 'intense'. Intensely good, intensely bad; intensely funny, intensely sad; intensely hot and sunny, intensely force 10 gale; intensely interesting, and, sometimes, dare I say it, even intensely dull. It seems to me that everything is intensified on Hiort.

Was it what I expected? In some small ways maybe, but in truth I don't think there is anything remotely like the experience that could give you an idea of what it is like, other than actually being there. Even in terms of small islands I'm sure Hiort is unique: no expectations are going to be able to cover it.

One of the things which blew the few expectations I did entertain away was the archaeology – and I was expecting a lot. Hiort is like some crazy, over-complicated rubicks cube for archaeologists. Traces of all the ages of human existence on the island are placed right on top of each other like a Russian doll, a palimpsest. The landscape at first sight is a ferocious onslaught of features, and only after weeks or months does it start to settle down into some kind of order. It is possible to walk over the same place hundreds of times and then one day spot something you had never seen before – not because you weren't taking things in, but because there is just so much to take in. The more you look the more you see. I'm sure years could be spent there and you would still be noticing things you hadn't seen before. This was an engaging experience. It felt like every time you went out you were going to find something, something new at least to you, and understand the place a little bit better – but only if you looked intently.

Before I went to Kilda I had mentioned to Jill Harden, an experienced Kildan archaeologist, my excitement at the prospect of learning about the archaeology and searching for new finds. I remember Jill's patient but long suffering smile as she explained the unlikelihood of finding anything new at all: thousands of people have scoured the island for traces of Kildan existence; it was likely that there would be very little to be found. Happily, however, this was not the case!

The first finds came from the coastal erosion survey – one of the most likely places to find things, as the ocean is eating away into soils containing traces of every age we have inhabited the island. In total, 10 sherds of (probably) pre-historic pottery were found from eroding shoreline deposits, including a beautiful big piece of base – see photo 1 or 2 below – likely to be Iron Age (c.500BC- 800AD), at least.

Photos 1 and 2 – the basal sherd

Next was the turn of the work party's. Nearly everyone found something. One of the best jobs for this was the drain clearance, as the drains silt up with material they have eroded from higher up the hill. WP1 did a sterling job of clearing drains and found countless broken hoe blades, hammer and grinder stones, a broken piece of saddle quern and fragments of leather shoes. Later, Kate Sheard found a tiny piece of prehistoric pottery in a cleit roof she was repairing.

WP2 got really into it, too. In the process of clearing drains Iain Gordon and Alison Mosley found 6 sherds of prehistoric pottery – possibly some kind of record, but that was not all. On the weekend before WP2 had arrived I had been wandering around the Mullach Sgar screes and come across a strange wooden post, octagonal in section with a point at one end, covered with a strip of rusty old iron – see photo 3, below. I called it a stake handle at the time as I had to call it something. Nobody seemed to know what it was and there was no record of anyone else finding them - It was a mystery. I showed Work Party 2 and we had a brain storm about what it could be – everything from a ploughshare to abseiling anchor was mooted. We even asked the entire Puff Inn on a quiz night if they had any ideas - not mentioning that we hadn't a clue ourselves...


Photograph 3 – 'stake' handle (scale = 30 cm)

Shortly after this, WP2 member and Kildan descendant Murdo Mclean found two more stakes, both exactly like the first, and again from the screes. Over the next few days we found five more, three from the screes and two on the way up to Mullach Geal. Then one evening WP member Erica Honning found yet another, this time near the top of Oiseval, causing great excitement, see photo 4, below. These locations had to be the key to figuring out what these things were.


Photo 4 – Erica Honning's Oiseval example

The Oiseval example did turn out to be the key, as we knew that there had been a look out post there during the 1st World War, as there was on Mullach Geal. A check through James Mackay's "Soldiering on St Kilda" confirmed that there had also originally been a look out on Ruaival. These look outs had started out communicating with the village by semaphore, but this was unpractical in bad weather and so cables were laid to each. At first they were going to lay a cable to Ruaival, but then decided to move it to Mullach Geal instead. Cables on Hiort are to this day laid out and anchored using wooden stakes – although today the stakes are a rather simple affair compared to these deluxe 1st World War models, which is interesting in itself. It was possible they had laid out the stakes in preparation for a cable to Ruaival which was never actually laid. Shortly after these tentative interpretations, Mary Harman, oracle of Kilda knowledge, got back from holiday and got in touch to say that she thought they were probably 1st World War stakes for laying cables, and that she had seen them but never written about them. Case closed! We had all had fun with the experience of their being new (well, new to us) finds out there to be found and especially the consequent process of detective work to figure out what they were.
Most spectacularly, on a walk to Ruaival Graeme Carter (WP2) spotted what he thought might be an arrowhead – see photo 5, below – and he might not be far off the truth. It is at least 'worked', as in shaped, and is of a sort of siliceous looking quartzite which certainly holds an edge. This means that is likely to have been a tool of some sort, used thousands of years ago. Further studies will be done and hopefully teach us much more about this discovery. Well done Graeme!


Photograph 5, Graeme's worked stone

It was sad to see the work parties go. One of the best aspects of the work parties for me was the bringing together of lots of different people with different areas of knowledge and experience. When all of these people are focused on the study of the one place it produces many insights and very interesting conversations.
However, there was now time to investigate another little mystery. In the story about the two murderers "Duigan and Fearchar Mhor" who convince the villagers to take refuge in the church before burning it down - with them in it, one Little Old Lady saw what was happening and hid away for months, waiting until the factor came so she could tell him what the two had done. She was said to have hid in a cave near Ruaival, and the Ordnance Survey map has a cave called Uamh Cailleach Beag Ruaival, or The Cave of the Little Old Lady of Ruaival, marked upon it. However the cave is a big, open sea cave. There is no where dry to shelter within it, and on top of that it is virtually impossible to get to it from dry land. Of course, the story could well be more myth than historical truth, as there are variations of the same story – entire congregations burnt alive after being trapped in their Church - from all over the highlands. Or maybe the story was so old that the cave or even the sea level had changed. Even so, I thought it all a bit strange.
It was with great excitement then that I read of a different location for the cave in Donald John Gillies book "The Truth about St Kilda", which was launched this summer. Donald John describes a place on the east side of Ruaival, with an excellent view of the sea approach to Hiort, and also of the village. He describes taking tourists there in his youth, before the evacuation. The cave marked upon the OS maps as Uamh Cailleach Bheag Ruaival would certainly not fit this description, so I determined to search Ruaival for Donald's cave. Sure enough a rock shelter (a space under a large rock which has been given rough walls) was located which fits the description admirably. Inside there were cut peats, providing evidence that this shelter was definitely used at some point. There are many such shelters on Hiort, but this one was not previously known or recorded. We are endebted to Donald John.


Photo 6 – The real Uamh Cailleach Beag Ruaival?

However, the story doesn't finish there. Shortly afterwards the Royal Commission surveyors came out to the island. They have recently finished surveying Hiort to provide an accurate and definitive record of everything there, so they were interested to see one they had missed. One member of the party got behind on the way up, and consequently was not shown where the shelter was. We tried to explain to him when we passed him on our way down, but it was quite difficult – as I'm sure many readers know Ruaival is an exceedingly large pile of big rocks. Later that evening, we met up and he explained that he'd found the shelter – but when we looked at the photos he'd taken it was clearly a different shelter than the one we had meant. It also had a little wall and cut peats. So, thanks to Donald John, we now know of two new rock shelters on Ruaival.
The shelter (s) may have been where the Cailleach stayed, if she ever existed, or may just have been where Kildans took shelter from the rain whilst working in the area. An interesting and somewhat co-incidental possibility raised by the earlier summers experiences is that the shelters were used by the 1st World War look out sentries whilst they were on duty.

There was one other find of the summer. One fine evening myself and the Ranger were strolling around the village when we came to the spring called Tobar Childar – the main water supply for the village in the past. Gazing idly into its crystal waters I saw the unmistakable hue of a piece of flint, sitting on the bottom amongst the gravel. I reached in to retrieve it, momentarily obstructing the view and causing a panic that it might disappear back into the gravel if I picked up the wrong stone by mistake... but I grabbed it and pulled it out and there it was; a beautifully coloured yellowy brown flint flake, hewn from a rounded pebble and reworked around the edges, probably during the creation of a tool such as a scraper.

Photo 7 & 8 -The flint in the Tobar Childar

Photos 9 & 10 - The flint

Although use of flint carried on in some places into the Iron Age (c.500BC-800AD) and later it is likely to be much older – generally speaking flint use declined after the adoption of metal in the Bronze Age (c2000-500BC). We will have a better idea of its age after we get it looked at by a specialist, but it is likely to be either Neolithic (c4000-2000BC) or Bronze Age. Pebbles of flint wash up very occasionally along the west coast of the Hebrides, originating from sediment deposits dumped upon what is now the continental shelf by the last ice age. However, as St Kilda is in deep water close to the edge of the continental shelf it is unlikely to have washed up here – it is more likely to have been brought here by early settlers as part of a tool kit for survival. These pebbles are usually quite small and unsuitable for creating an arrowhead, so it seems more likely that this flake was struck off during the creation of a scraper. This particular tool is generally used for preparing hides to be used as clothing, so the flint also implies that there was already livestock such as sheep on the island – Soay sheep perhaps? There has always been debate as to whether these sheep were brought over by native Hebridean people (perhaps as early as the Neolithic as they are thought to be a 'Neolithic' breed) or introduced by the Vikings (c800-1266AD), as 'Soay' means sheep island in Norse. The flint doesn't prove anything but certainly helps to build the case for early introduction by Hebridean people.

Also, the findspot is interesting. We know that in later periods, especially the Iron Age and Medieval, springs were sacred, and often the site of votive offerings – offerings perhaps to the 'spirit' of the spring. Such spirits would form the basis of what would be classed 'Animistic' religion – in which the world is animated by spirits which exist everywhere (such as Fairies and Brownies). Indeed, Martin Martin records in 1697 that the inhabitants of Hiort believe that "spirits are embodied... in rocks, hills and wherever they list in an instant", which is almost by definition Animistic. Of course by this time they were also Christian but older practices often continue alongside or mixed in with Christianity. We also know that springs were very important to the Kildians in particular, and not just for quenching thirst. Tobar Nam Buaidh (the well of virtues or of excellent qualities) in Gleann Mor to the north of Hiort was renowned for its health giving qualities, and continued to be important, even sacred, through into the era of Presbyterianism - it was revered as the place where Rev Dr John MacDonald "The Apostle of the North" first landed and took sustenance from the island. Mary Harman records that the people made small offerings to it even in relatively recent times – and indeed there is still a pretty little bell hung on a ribbon there to this day.

Another, mystical spring was called Tobar na h-oige (the well of youth). The story goes:

Once upon a time an old fellow, in going up Connagher with a sheep on his back, observed a well which he had never seen or heard before. The water looked like cream, and was so tempting, that he knelt down and took a hearty drink. To his surprise all the infirmities of age immediately left him, and all the vigour and activity of youth returned. He laid down the sheep to mark the spot, and ran down the hill to tell his neighbours. But when he came up again neither sheep nor well were to be found, nor has anyone been able to find the Tobar na h-oige to this day. Some say that if he had left a small bit of iron (*i.e. a modern day votive offering?*) at the well – a brog with a tacket in it would have done quite well – the fairies would have been unable to take back their gift.
(Harman, 1997, p236)

Springs are revered throughout the Hebrides and beyond, and often have religious as well as health giving associations – as Finlay McLeod's book "The healing wells of Lewis" documents. Given then the importance of springs in folklore it is not too much of a stretch to imagine a similar reason behind this piece of flint ending up in the Tobar Childar, back in the distant, fairy filled, past.

My experience on Hiort has lead to a number of observations. Even though there is so much written about St. Kilda, we know precious little about the thousands of years that people lived here before writing ever came about, a period which probably represents the majority of human beings' time in the islands. However, Hiort is drip feeding us her secrets, bit by bit, summer by summer. There *are* many questions yet to be answered, and it seems the clues to those questions are still there, in the soils and rocks, waiting to be discovered, or given up.

Much thanks are due to all the work party members, cooks and leaders and also, by no means least, all of the base staff and all of the Manse contractors - all of whom helped to make it such a memorable summer..

Appendix 2: Finds Register

Small Find Number	On or off island?	Description	Location	Date and Finder
1		Pot – 2 re-fitting rim sherds – IA?	ST Brendans, NF 09855, 98418, alt.36m, acc. 6m	SKA/IM, 01-05-10
2		Quartz	As above	As above
3		2 rolled body sherds	Featherstore – see coastal erosion report	SKA/IM
4		2 rolled body sherds	As above	SKA/IM
5		1 rim sherd	As above	SKA's girlfriend Laura Maynard 03-05-10
6		1 rolled body sherd	NF 10168, 99144 alt.13m, acc.8m see also coastal erosion report	SKA/IM
7		1 rolled body sherd	As above	SKA/IM
8		2 rolled body sherds	As above	SKA/IM
9		Quartz	As above	SKA/IM
10		Fuel residues c10 pieces	As above	SKA/IM
11		1 rolled body sherd	Cleit 81 turf roof, east end	WP1- KS
12		1 rolled body sherd	Tobar Childar stream, south of street NF 10131, 99317, acc.5m	WP2 – IG
13		1 rolled body sherd	As above, but NF 10144, 99217, acc.5m	WP2 – IG
14		3 rolled body sherds	As above, but NF 10138 99268, acc. 8m	WP2 – AM
15		Body sherd – Hebridean??	NW drain at front of house 4	WP1
16		Quartz – not local?	As above	WP1
17		Hammerstone	West drain of house 5	WP1
18		Hammerstone	Tobar Childar stream, north of street	WP1
19		Burnt grinder stone	As above	WP1
20		Hammer-and-Grinder stone ? poss. Hafted	As above	WP1
21		Grinder, large	Drain behind museum	WP1
22		Granophyre hoe blade?	As above	WP1
23		Whetstone? 4 pieces	As above	WP1
24		Quern, small part of	Drain behind house 1	WP2 – IG
25		Dolerite Hoe	As above	WP2 – IG
26		Hammerstone – very large	As above	WP2 – RA

27		'spade' handle	STB, NF 09777, 98498, alt.69m, acc.7m	SKA/IM
28		'spade' handle with iron fitting	NF 09718, 98867, alt.91m, acc.8m	SKA/IM 01-05-10
29		'spade' handle	NF 09740, 98871, alt.68m, acc.8m	WP2 – Murdo Mcleod
30		'spade' handle	NF 09737, 98872, alt.73m, acc.7m	SKA/IM 29-05-10
31		Leather shoes – 2 water filled bags	Drain south of house 14	WP2 – RA
32		Silica rich, worked? stone	Ruaval, summit area	WP2 – GC
33		Flint, worked	Tobar Childar, source NF 10057, 99503 Alt.62m, acc.6m	SKA/IM 07-06-10
34		Rim sherd, prehistoric	ST Brendans, stream bank, East NF 09737, 98368 Alt.62m, acc.7m	SKA/IM 10-06-10
35		Possible Quern/Mortar?	St Brendans stream bed NF 09720, 98376 Alt.58, acc.8m	SKA/IM 10-06-10
36		Basal sherd, prehistoric	Shoreline, NF 10219, 99122 Alt.10m (? Probably less) acc.7m	SKA/IM 01-07-10
37		'spade' handle with iron fitting	Cnoc a' Bheanaichta, NF ??	SKA/IM 29-06-10
37		Plastic hair comb – 1950's?	The road, c100m down from quarry	SKA/ IM 29-07-10
38		'spade' handle	Cleit between Cleitean 735 and 568 but not marked on map, NF 09246, 99299 Alt. 229m, acc.6m.	SKA/IM 29-07-10
39		Scree structure – possibly recorded by GUARD or RC already	Mullach Sgar screes NF 09732, 98875 Alt.77m, acc. 8m	SKA/IM 29-05-10
40		'spade' handle	Oiseval, NF 10809, 99201. Alt.267m, acc.7m	WP2 - Erica Honning
41		Iron tent peg	Heating pipe trench, near Generator building (found in spoil)	Lachie ? Balfour Beatty
42		Broken hoe blade – or grave digging implement?	Under gravestone 3a	SKA/IM 11-07-10

Key – VB = Village Bay
STB = St. Brendans
alt. = altitutude
acc. = accuracy
WP1/WP2 = work party 1 or 2

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Policy for the management of archaeological finds from St Kilda

"Few projects retain all finds from all archaeological deposits. Unstratified material, for instance, may have little archaeological significance, while some particular types of finds, such as fragmented slate roofing material, can be recorded on site or in post-excavation and not retained in the final archive"
(Brown, D.H. 2007, *"Archaeological Archives – A guide to best practice in creation, compilation, transfer and curation"* p29)

1.0 Summary

A vast collection of 19th and 20th century material salvaged from St Kilda after the evacuation is currently stored in the Museum Nan Eilean in Stornoway, Lewis. Museum Nan Eilean also curates all of the finds from Norman Emery's excavations of 1986-1989 and has been allocated the material from all of GUARDs 1991-2003 excavations.
However, in addition to this resource, the Trust's Archaeologists have taken off-island a quantity of material recovered from watching briefs, trial trenching and work party activities over the last ten years. Most of the finds have come from the topsoil. The rest are from late 19th/20th century contexts. It is temporarily stored at Balnain House, Inverness.
This material is currently being processed so that it can be allocated to a registered museum through the Treasure Trove process, so that it is accessible to all and available for study. However, the material includes large quantities of 'mundane and repetitive evidence' (as described in IFA Standard and Guidance for archaeological materials 2008, 3.4.3) which, following discussions within and outwith the Trust, it has been agreed is not appropriate for retention (see Brown, D.H., 2007, pp.26, 29 and also IFA Standard and Guidance for archaeological archives, Annex 1: checklist for archive 2009). This material will be returned to the island for re-burial.
A sampling strategy has been put in place so that any repetitive or mundane evidence, particularly from topsoil and later 19th/20th century contexts, is not brought off island again but returned to the ground when backfilling.

2.0 General Selection Strategy

It has been decided that, as in an excavation, a representative sample of certain less significant, mundane or repetitive materials per depositional context be kept, and the rest returned to the ground when backfilling.
Most of the material in question originates from topsoil and is therefore unstratified. However, even though topsoil is one context over the whole island, the geographical spread of material within topsoil could be relevant to future study and so each intervention (eg a watching brief) within the topsoil will be treated separately. If there are specific concentrations within the topsoil or along a linear watching brief then these will be noted and sampled separately too.
This sampling will not apply to complete or near complete objects or one-off finds in walls, etc. The latter are normally recorded by photography and measurement and returned to their find location. Only when the find is particularly unusual is it retained, taken off-island,

studied and then dealt with through the Treasure Trove process. The same process will be applied to complete or almost complete objects found during interventions.

3.0 Specific selection strategies

3.1 Iron Objects

Only recognisable iron objects will be retained. If there are many examples of a recognisable item from one context – such as nails – then a small sample of these will be selected and kept.

3.2 Zinc
One representative piece of zinc will be kept per context.

3.3 Ceramics

3.3.1 Only diagnostic glazed sherds will be kept, and if there is an excessively large amount of any particular type, a smaller representative sample kept, per context. However if a quantity of non-diagnostic and diagnostic clearly come from the same vessel then these will all be kept. The rest will be weighed and photographed and returned to the ground.

3.3.2 Prehistoric or handmade, un-glazed pottery will all be retained.

3.4 Glass
Every recognisably diagnostic piece of glass will be kept, per context. However where there is a large repetition of similar material from one context then a smaller amount will be retained and the rest returned to the ground following weighing and photographing. It seems sensible that well-preserved examples of any particular glass should be kept, even if repetitive.

3.5 Bone
Bone may be of interest to long term studies of the ecology of the island, and amenable to scientific analysis such as in genetic studies. Accordingly it will all be kept.

3.6 Leather
Where large or recognisable sections of leather objects survive these willbe retained. However, where there are large amounts of unrecognisable pieces of leather, only a small representative sample will be kept from each context. The assemblages will be weighed and photographed before being returned to the ground.

3.7 Bitumen
Bitumen will not be retained.

3.8 Stone
All worked stone will be retained.

3.9 Plastic
Plastic will not be retained.

3.10 Shell
A small sample of shell will be kept from each context.

All other categories of find will be decided on a case by case basis, following the general principles laid out in section 2.0, above.

4.0 The Treasure Trove process

The retained material will then be submitted to the Treasure Trove Panel for allocation to a registered museum.

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