'Mo Rùn am Fearann' – 'My Love is the Land': Gaelic Landscapes of the 18th and 19th Centuries

Kevin James Grant
M.A. (University of Glasgow)
MLitt (University of Glasgow)

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Archaeology
School of Humanities
College of Arts
University of Glasgow

October, 2016

'Mo Rùn am Fearann' – 'My Love is the Land'
Kevin Grant

for Rosie.

Image (Grant 1960: 45).© Birlinn.

Abstract

The period of the 18th and 19th centuries was one of great change in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland. Improvement, the Jacobite Rebellions, and the Clearances transformed its communities and landscapes. These events have rightly been a focus of research. However, archaeological approaches have often sought simply to illustrate these processes, rather than create new narratives about life in the past. The resulting picture of the period can over-emphasise economic change whilst failing to reflect the richness and variety of everyday life.

This thesis aims to suggest a new approach to the place and period, one which addresses matters often ignored in previous work. Whilst it has an archaeological sensibility, it draws on ideas from outside archaeology, such as landscape theory and on Gaelic oral tradition, an underused resource, to create a novel and broad-based approach to the period. An important part of the method is a synchronic approach that seeks to reconstruct the experience of the landscape at very particular times, engaging fully with the everyday experience of landscape rather than grand historical narratives. Two Hebridean case studies are utilised: Hiort (St Kilda) and Loch Aoineart, South Uist. Thematic discussions drawn from these landscapes are intended as critical assessments of the efficacy of the approach, as well as new narratives about life in the past in themselves.

The thesis concludes by comparing the two case studies, reflecting on the merits of the approach, discussing recurrent themes in the work, and considering its wider context and implications. It is concluded that taking a novel approach to the case study landscapes can create narratives that often contrast or expand upon those produced by previous scholars, allow for a more detailed consideration of everyday life in the period, and open up new areas for archaeological enquiry. The extensive and critical use of evidence from Gaelic oral tradition is highlighted as crucial in understanding life and society in the period. The thesis questions the utility of grand historical narratives as a framework for archaeological study of post-medieval Gaeldom and suggests that our understanding of the past is best served by approaching the evidence in ways which allows for many different voices and stories from the past to emerge.

‘Mo Rùn am Fearann’ – ‘My Love is the Land’
Kevin Grant

Table of Contents

List of Figures

Author's Note – Conventions on the use of Gaelic

The use of Scottish Gaelic (*Gàidhlig*) in English academic texts presents difficulties for both native-speaking Gaelic scholars and non-Gaelic-speaking researchers and academics alike. While these difficulties are discussed in more detail in section three, this note outlines the basic spelling and orthographic conventions used in this thesis. They are based on recent historical work in the subject area by a Gaelic-speaking author (MacCoinnich 2015: XX), the SQA Gaelic Orthographic Conventions (SQA 2009), and style guidelines used by the University of Glasgow (University of Glasgow 2014).

In general, place-names are given in Gaelic as they appear on the most recent editions of the Ordnance Survey maps of the areas. On occasions when this convention is not followed comments will appear in the text explaining why. Names for wider regions and large islands (ie the Highlands, Hebrides, South Uist) are given in English as they refer to broadly understood present-day regional boundaries or have such currency within the wider literature that to do otherwise would be confusing. Gaelic collective nouns are used for groups of people as they have no English equivalents. Thus a person from Hiort is referred to as *Hiortach*, plural *Hiortaich*, or an inhabitant of South Uist (Uibhist a Deas), *Deasach*, plural *Deasaich*. Where Gaelic names or patronymics for individuals are known these will be preferred; otherwise the anglicised spellings which appear in primary sources are used. Similarly, well-understood anglicised forms of names of clans are used; i.e. Clanranald not Chlann Raghnaill.

There are occasions within the 'narrative passages' of this thesis (which appear in italics) where English translations for place-names are used in place of the Gaelic originals. This is not intended as a slight to Gaelic but as a device that is intended to allow the English-speaking reader to appreciate that many place-names had a clearly-apparent or descriptive meaning when used by Gaelic speakers, and to communicate those meanings.

When citing from Gaelic sources the original Gaelic will be given first. All direct quotations will be rendered as they appear in the original source.

Acknowledgements

There are many people who deserve thanks for their support and patience during the preparation of this thesis. It is hoped that those who are not named individually know who they are and that they are appreciated.

It is perhaps inevitable that a PhD candidate who undertakes research part-time over several years will have many people to acknowledge, but I start with my employers. After all, they paid the bills. I would like to extend my thanks to the management of Waitrose Byres Road, particularly Jen Metcalfe, who were flexible in allowing me time to undertake my research and go on extended fieldwork. Thanks are due to the staff of the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland, from whom I learned a great deal. I would particularly like to mention Alex Hale, George Geddes, and all the regulars in 'the tearoom' for good cheer and advice, and for allowing me to benefit from their many years of experience in Scottish Archaeology. George was also a great help in relation to Hiort, both in bringing this thesis together and in a professional capacity. I am very grateful to Eve Boyle for taking me under her wing at the commission and making my time there fun as well as instructive.

Susan Bain of the National Trust for Scotland was not only supportive but flexible regarding my working arrangements as St Kilda Archaeologist, and this was instrumental in allowing the thesis to progress. Jill Harden deserves a double debt of gratitude for her help and support both in my professional life and in my research. I am very grateful to Jill for turning her keen editorial eye to a draft of this thesis, as well as the many thousands of words she has been generous enough to comment on over my three years at the NTS. My colleagues Paul Sharman and Gina Prior should be thanked for their interest and encouragement during three long summers on Hoirt. QinetiQ and their contractors should be thanked for the vital logistical support that makes all work on Hiort possible.

My supervisors, Chris Dalglish and Martin MacGregor, deserve particular thanks for investing so much time reading, editing, commenting, and encouraging. I particularly appreciate their understanding regarding my various work commitments, and for being game about some of the less conventional elements of my approach! I regard myself as being very fortunate in having two relaxed,

Author's Declaration

I declare that, except where explicit reference is made to the contribution of others, that this thesis is the result of my own work and has not been submitted for any other degree at the University of Glasgow or any other institution.

Kevin James Grant

03/06/2016

1. Prologue

Oran do 'n Mhorairne

Fonn

Se ho' ro' mo rùn am fearann

Se ho' ro' mo rùn am fearann

Mo ghaol a Mhorairne bhòidheach

Far an robh mi òg 'nam leanabh.

An oidhche roimhe bha mi bruadar

Mar a b'àbhaist bhith'n Rath-h-Uaighe

Ach nuair dhùisg mi bha na fhuair mi

Cho fhada bhuam is a tha a'ghealach.

A Mhorairne bhòidheach chliùteach

Far am biodh an òigridh shunndach

Ceòl 's dannsadh air gach ùrlar

Aig Bliadhn' ùir 's aig fèill 's aig banais.

Gu'r liuthad feasgar grinn a bha sinn

Taobh Loch-Teacuis, sinn na'r pàisdeann

Sinn gu aotrom aoidheil , càirdeil

O! b'e siud na làithean maiseach.

Tha Clann Aonghais air am fuadach

Cha'n eil duine 's an lethir shuas an

Ach clachan is ballaichean fuara

Suaicheantas na tìm chaidh seachad.

Gu'r bòidheach tha dà thaobh Loch Suaineart

Sròn an t-Sìthain grianach uaine

Laudail, an Gleann, 's Rath h-Uaighe

Far an robh Dotair Ruadh na leanabh.

Far an t-sìthein chì sibh còmhla

Gach ceann loch 's gach eilean bòidheach

Beinn Shianta gheal bho'n eòinein
Tìr a'bhainne 'n fheòir, 'san Earrach.

Bu bhoidheach sealladh feasgar samhraidh
Àiridh Aonghais 's e fo shòbhraich
Acha-Phorsa 's Acha-Gamhna
Le'n crodh-laoigh na gleann 's an Earrach.

Thoiribh sealladh far a'bhràighe
Ard-Torr-nis gu ceann Loch Aluin
Cill-Fhiorntuinn, an Druim-Fionn, 's Lun-Ban
Stuaidhean uaibhreach àrd Dhun-Ghallain.

Is uisge fallain glan Bheinn Iadain
Ruith gu Loch nam bradan lìonmhor
Bric 's na geàrra abhainn s'iad gan iasgach
Suas gu crìochan Acha-Raithnich.

Fionn-Airidh nan uaislean ainmeil
Ris an tric robh Bhàn-Rìgh seanchas
Cha robh teaghlach riamh an Albainn
Dhèanadh an searmoin ann an crannaig.

Na'm biodh ceartas aig luchd cosnaidh
'S gun na h-uachdaran bhith cho moiteil
O 's mi nach fhàgadh tìr an t-soisgeil
Airson fortan rìoghachd aineol.

Soraidh bhuam thar chuan do m'chairdean
Do m'luchd dùthcha 's gach Commun Gàidhlig
Nàile! a chì 's nach fhaic gu brath mi,
Guma 'slàn 's mo mhìltean beannachd.

A Song to Morvern
Chorus
E ho ro, my Love is the Land,

E ho ro, my Love is the Land,
My love is Beautiful Morvern,
where I was a young lad.

The night before I was dreaming
as usual to be in Rahoy
but when I woke up what I found
was as far away as is the moon.

O famous beautiful Morvern,
where the young would be happy,
let music and singing be on every floor
at New Year, at a fair and at a wedding.

How many wonderful evenings we had
at the side of Loch Teacuis. We as infants
were highly hospitable and friendly.
O, those were beautiful days.

The MacInneses have been expelled.
There are no people in slope at Suasan,
only stones and cold walls,
an emblem of the time which has passed.

How beautiful are the two sides of Loch Sunart.
Sunny and green were Strontian,
Laudale, Glen and Rahoy,
where Doctor Ruadh was a child.

Beyond Strontian you will see together
each loch end and each beautiful island
Ben Hiant is white with little birds
It is a land of milk and grass in spring

It was beautiful on a summer evening:
the view of Angus's sheiling and it under primroses,

Achadh Forsa , and Achadh nan Gabhna

with their herd of calves in its glen in Spring.

Take a view down from the top of

Ardtornish to the end of Loch Aline,

Cill-Fhionntuinn, Dun Fhionnairidh, Lun-Ban,

and the high proud pinacles of Dungallain.

There is healthy clean water running from Ben Iadain

to the loch, abundant in salmon and fishing trout

and running in the short river

up to the boundaries of Achranich.

In Fiunary of the famous nobility there was

frequently a queen of gossip and there was

never a Scottish family who would

do their sermon in a pulpit.

If working people had had some rights

and had lacked land owners who were so proud,

O it's me who would not have left the land of the gospel

for some good luck in an unknown kingdom.

Farewell from me over the ocean to my friends,

to my country people and to each Gaelic group

Whether we meet or not and forever

May you be well and my thousands of blessings.

Translations after Barr, 2010 and Griogair Labhruidh, 2007

2. Introduction

This thesis emerged from a sense of disjunction between two personal interests: the history and archaeology of post-medieval Highland Scotland, and its Gaelic oral tradition. Much of the literature on the place and period seemed to reflect abstracted economic histories and grand historical meta-narratives like Improvement, Clearance, and the emergence of Capitalism but not the richness of experience to be found in the oral tradition, or the many different voices and experiences reflected in the songs, poems, and stories which survive. This thesis argues that much of the previous archaeological work on the place and period is dominated by these paradigms and narratives. The resulting accounts often homogenise the communities of the past as victims of overarching historical trends, foregoing detailed consideration of daily life in the landscape in order to illustrate wider historical process. This thesis attempts to address this issue by achieving two key aims:

- To formulate a new approach to the study of the place and period which advances knowledge and understanding of the lived experience of the landscape

- To demonstrate and critically assess the approach by applying it to two case study areas.

The research draws on various aspects of landscape theory and on Gaelic oral tradition to create a theoretical and methodological approach based around the three key themes of embodiment, practice, and narrative. The approach is then applied to two Hebridean case studies, creating novel and evocative narratives about the past which often contrast or expand upon accounts previously produced by historians and archaeologists working in these areas. Finally, the thesis ends by considering the efficacy of the approach and the wider implications for the study of post-medieval Scotland, reflecting on wider themes within the work and possible future research directions.

Broadly speaking, the locale under discussion is Scotland's *Gàidhealtachd*, the traditionally Gaelic-speaking areas of the country, rendered in English as 'Gaeldom'. In contemporary Scotland, the Gaelic language has retreated to

parts of the West Highlands and the Hebrides, and is also spoken by significant diasporas in Glasgow and Britain's former colonies overseas. However, in the post-medieval period, Gaelic was the first language of most of the population of the Highlands and Islands of Scotland. Today the term *Gàidhealtachd* is often used interchangeably with these geographical regions where the language was traditionally spoken (Grant 2014: 30). The 18th and 19th centuries, the period under discussion in this thesis, was a time of significant change for the communities of the Highlands. These changes were complex, and detailed discussions of them can be found elsewhere in the large corpus of literature on the topic (e.g. Devine 1994; Devine 2006; Dodgshon 1998; Hunter 1976; MacInnes 1996). What is presented next is a brief overview of the nature of life and society in the period which is intended to give a basic context to the material discussed in this thesis.

At the start of the 18th century, most Gaels lived in small nucleated agricultural settlements known as *bailtean* (sing. *baile*), sometimes rendered as 'townships' in English (Dodgshon 1998: 25-40; Grant 1960: 35-65). These *bailtean* typically comprised a few byre-dwellings, homes in which families and their cattle lived under one roof in winter, and were clustered in the centre of an unenclosed agricultural landscape. The land was traditionally divided by run-rig, a system whereby land is periodically reallocated by lot. The best agricultural land, the infield, would be enclosed within a large boundary known as a head dyke, which was used to keep grazing cattle away from the crops during spring and summer. Outwith this infield area lay grazings, enclosures, and outfield areas of marginal ground which were perhaps occasionally cultivated. Deep rigs known as *feannagan* (or by the pejorative term 'lazy-beds' in English), were often used to cultivate crops in these marginal areas. Beyond the immediate vicinity of the *baile,* usually in nearby hills or glens, lay sheilings, temporary transhumance settlements where cattle were taken during the summer to keep them away from the arable grounds during the crucial growing season. The frontispiece to this thesis depicts a typical Highland *baile* and its agricultural and pastoral lands.

The communities of the *Gàidhealtachd* were part of a clan society in which all social classes were bound to each other by mutual ties of obligation and responsibility (Grant 1960: 15-35; MacInnes 2006c: 1-29). At the bottom of this

society were the cottars: landless labourers. Often itinerant, they were not tied to the land and would have had few possessions. Above them were the ordinary farmers of the *bailtean*, tenants and sub-tenants, undertaking subsistence agriculture and using cattle and dairy products to pay rent or for export. The tacksmen, or *fir baile*, were drawn from the nobility of the clan and sub-rented their land to the tenants and sub-tenants. In exchange, tenants would pay rent to the tacksmen, usually in kind rather than in cash. The tacksman held the rental of his land, his tack, from the chief or higher nobility of the clan and, in return, paid rental to the chief and was responsible for providing man-power, drawn from his tenantry, during times of conflict. The chiefs supported a retinue of professionals such as warriors, doctors, musicians, poets, and lawyers, offering traditional hospitality, and supporting the whole of society in times of the failure of crops, other economic stresses, or conflict. This is the 'traditional' shape of the clan system.

By the 18th century, the relationship between the clan elite and those working the land was moving away from this traditional model, a process that had begun as early as the start of the 17th century (Dodgshon 1998; MacInnes 1996). Increasingly, many of the elite sought to monetise rents which had previously been paid in kind. Over time, chiefs came to see their lands more as legally-owned estates than as feudal holdings governed by traditional hereditary rights. By the 18th century, English-speaking estate managers known as factors had become as common a part of the Highland elite as the tacksmen drawn from the Gaelic-speaking nobility. Attempts to increase the cash yield of the lands led to Improvement, a movement seeking to increase agricultural productivity and promote rural industries such as fishing and the production of commodities for export such as kelp. Large farmsteads were created in some areas, while elsewhere communal forms of land-ownership like run-rig were swept away in favour of creating small individually tenanted farms called crofts. These crofts were intended to be too small to meet the subsistence needs of the family, encouraging tenants to work for the estate. Eventually, the grazing of sheep came to be seen as the most profitable way to use the land in many parts of Scotland, and as a result, huge numbers of people were evicted from their lands to make way for sheep runs in a complex process which came to be known as the Clearances (Cameron 2001). In the 18th and 19th centuries, political and

economic events in the wider British Isles were also exerting a strong influence in the region; the Act of Union in 1707 and several Jacobite rebellions all played a part, as did the potato famine of 1846, which sparked a tide of emigration. As a result, the landscape of 1850 was substantially different to that of a century earlier. The *bailtean* had been largely swept from the Glens, replaced in many places by sheep and a handful of shepherds, their populations cleared off the land and moved to the coasts, the industrial cities of the South, or Britain's colonies across the globe. What agriculture remained was largely in the form of crofting townships or large improved farms. The case studies presented in this thesis occur around the start of the 19th century, when many of the historical processes discussed were rapidly changing Highland society.

The nature of these changes and the importance of various factors in driving them forms a large part of the historical treatment of the period (Devine 1994, 2006; Dodgshon 1998; Hunter 1976; MacInnes 1996). The great meta-narratives of the Jacobite Rebellions, the Union, Empire, Improvement, and Clearance dominate. This is perhaps no surprise given their importance in shaping both life at the time and modern conceptions of Scottish society today. However, as will be discussed in chapter 3, many modern archaeological approaches to the period have been dominated by a concern for these paradigms and meta-narratives, often serving simply to illustrate them rather than to create new and nuanced views of life in the past. Many of these accounts share problematic elements of historical approaches; in seeking to create models of long-term change, they create a homogenising view of Gaelic society in which individuals are lumped into simplistic groups and categories. The means of agricultural production, and the elite of Gaelic society and their ideologies, such as Improvement, have tended to be over-emphasised, and the experiences of everyday life for ordinary people are rarely a focus of study. Archaeological approaches to the period, as well as over-relying on narratives from economic history and historical geography, have tended to be empirical in their approach. Many theoretical developments in wider archaeology have made little impact on the archaeological study of the post-medieval Highlands and Islands. On the rare occasion where these more nuanced approaches have been taken, thought-provoking narratives about the past have emerged. Both archaeological and historical approaches have rarely engaged with the extensive evidence from the

Gaelic oral tradition, meaning that the richness and variety of experience expressed within it has not frequently been reflected in scholarly accounts.

In order to address the perceived short-comings of many previous narratives, this thesis sets out to develop a new approach to the place and period. It will draw on theoretical concepts of landscape from archaeology and other disciplines as the basis of an approach which focuses on the lived experience of everyday life rather than on the established meta-narratives of history. There are three broad themes within the approach: embodiment, practice, and narrative. The first theme includes approaches to landscape which view it as a matter of emergent, lived, and individual experience. Under the theme of practice are theoretical approaches to landscape which focus on routine practice such as taskscape, as well as the practices of microhistory and phenomenology. These methods are intended to draw the discussion up to the level of the community, giving a wider context than the individual engagements which form the focus of the first theme. Narrative is the concept that draws together the other themes, providing a framework for interrogating the evidence and drawing themes and stories from the landscape, as well as the means through which to express them. Key methodological aspects of the approach are the integration of material from the Gaelic oral tradition and a synchronic approach which seeks to examine the experience of landscape over very short timescales, such as in a particular year or a particular decade.

In order to assess the effectiveness of the approach, it was applied to two case studies. The archipelago of Hiort, commonly known in English as St Kilda, is discussed first. The name 'St Kilda' was only appended to the islands by outsiders at the very end of the 16th century as the result of cartographic errors (Fleming 2005: 27-9). The islands have never been known as anything but Hiort in the Gaelic which was the first language of its inhabitants from at least the medieval period, and of many of those who live and work there today. 'Hiort' is therefore used in this thesis in the place of the more common St Kilda on the basis that any account of the islands should adopt the name which was meaningful to its inhabitants, not an appellation imposed and used by outsiders. In addition, the use of the name Hiort is also intended to distance this thesis from many of the previous approaches to the archipelago and its community which, as will be discussed, are highly problematic. The second case study is the

deeply-indented sea-loch of Loch Aoineart, on the east coast of the island of South Uist. Both case studies are in the Outer Hebrides, an island chain which lies off the west coast of Scotland. The approach, as will be applied to the case studies, is presented in six thematic discussion sections which consider particular themes in the landscape to create narratives about life in the past. These sections are also intended to be self-critical, considering the effectiveness of the approach and comparing the resulting narratives to those which have emerged from previous work.

The thesis is structured in the following way. Chapter 3 comprises an extended discussion of the overall approach. It begins with a brief historiography of the archaeological study of the post-medieval Highlands and Islands (3.1.1), followed by a critical assessment of previous work which makes the case for the need for a new approach (3.1.2). The relevant theoretical concepts of landscape to be discussed throughout the thesis are then outlined (3.2). Then the approach taken in this thesis is outlined in detail (3.3). Chapter 4 comprises two introductions to the case study areas which outline their location, character, and the nature of the archaeological, historical, and oral traditional evidence for each. Chapter 5 comprises the main discussion chapter of the thesis, in which the approach is applied to the case studies. Six thematic discussion sections are included within this chapter, alternating between Hiort and Loch Aoineart. Each section discusses a particular theme in the landscape whilst also critically reflecting on the approach taken and the character of the resulting narrative in contrast to previous work. Chapter 6 comprises a short discussion and conclusion which compares and contrasts the two case studies, reflects on recurring themes in the work, considers the usefulness of historical meta-narratives to studies of everyday life in the past, places the research in its wider context, and suggests possible future directions for research. The epilogue (7) reflects on the fate of the communities and landscapes of the case studies in the generations after the period discussed in detail in this thesis.

3. Approach

3.1 Previous Approaches

The purpose of this section is to critically examine previous approaches to the study of post-medieval Gaeldom, defining areas which have rarely been addressed or where new approaches are needed. In doing so, the case will be made for the necessity for a new approach, one that draws new narratives from the wealth of material available in the historical and archaeological record. The study of the post-medieval landscape of the Highlands and Islands has its beginnings in the 19th century, and remains an important sub-discipline of Scottish Archaeology today. A number of good critical reviews already exist (Dalglish 2002; Govan 2003; Morrison 2000), the most recent of which emerged from research undertaken in preparing this thesis (Bezant and Grant 2016). A blow-by-blow recounting of the emergence and development of the sub-discipline is therefore not given here. However, the origins of the discipline are crucial to understanding theoretical approaches to the subject. Therefore a very brief history is given below to introduce the key concepts and place today's discipline in its historical context.

3.1.1 Post-Medieval Archaeology of Gaeldom – A Historiography

Some of Scotland's first antiquarians studied post-medieval archaeological remains and folklore in the Hebrides (Muir and Thomas 1860; Thomas 1857), but this was not 'post-medieval archaeology'. These structures were viewed through a theoretical lens which saw in-use vernacular buildings in the Highlands and Islands as prehistoric survivors, a 'past in the present' (Curwen 1938; Mitchell 1865). The later 19th and early 20th centuries saw antiquarians and tourists flock to the Western Isles to see this supposed ethnographic parallel of Britain's prehistoric past. Local people were happy to oblige, creating new forms of hand-made pottery which met the expectations of visitors expecting to see a place out of time (Cheape 1993). As we shall see, this strange Lost-World-cum-Compton-MacKenzie view of Hebridean life would reach spectacular heights on Hiort, a place which is still viewed through this lens by many people today (MacDonald 2001). Two key concepts from this period had a fundamental influence on the studies that followed. The first is that of stadialism: the

Enlightenment idea that man progressed in stages from 'savage' to civilised (the apogee of which is modern Western civilization) and that different contemporary peoples could be situated at different stages along this path. In a Scottish context, this view was used to suggest that Gaels were a backward people not yet advanced to the same stage as other people in Britain, creating a link between what was then present-day ethnography and the study of prehistory (Dalglish 2002: 477-8). The second, and connected, idea is that Gaeldom was perceived to have been unchanged for generations, perhaps even thousands of years, meaning that the post-medieval landscape and way of life was projected, unchanging, into distant prehistory (Bezant and Grant 2016: 5-7; Dalglish 2002: 478-9).

In the early 20th century, the link with ethnography continued as the Highlands and Islands became the subject of 'folk life' studies, an ethnographic movement concerned with preserving or recording a way of life which was perceived to be rapidly changing or even disappearing (Dalglish 2002: 481-4). This period saw seminal ethnographic accounts of early 20th century rural life published (Fenton 1976; Grant 1924, 1960) in the wake of frantic collecting of vernacular objects across the country. Although certainly based on less ethnocentric and racialised theoretical underpinnings than the antiquarian approaches that came before, Folk Life studies still tended to view late 19th-and-early-20th-century ways of life as ancient (Bezant and Grant 2016: 5). Folk Life recognised change: in fact it was the documentation of fast-disappearing traditions in the face of perceived sudden changes to life in rural contexts that was its *raison d'etre*. However, change was seen as something that only happened in the modern period and as a simple move from the 'traditional' to the 'modern'. The past itself was not seen as a locale in which change and dynamism occurred (Dalglish 2002: 484-5; Geddes and Grant 2015: 160-1). In the 20th century a 'folk-lore' or 'ethnographic' approach also developed in parallel to that of Folk Life. It could be said to stem from the ethnographic work of Celticists and folklorists in the later 19th century (e.g. Campbell 1902; Carmichael 1971; MacDonald 1991) and developed in the work of key organisations such as the Anthropological and Folklore Society of Scotland and the Folk-Lore Society in the 20th century. An important event was the founding of the School of Scottish Studies in 1950, which throughout the 70s and 80s undertook and large, set-piece, regional

research studies and extensive collecting of oral tradition (e.g. Cregeen 1998; Cregeen and MacKenzie 1987). It also taught many students through first a one-year course, then a full four-year undergraduate degree which began in the late 80s. Many of its staff, such as Eric Cregeen, worked tirelessly to preserve and promote the oral tradition (Fenton and MacKay 2013: 54-6). The work of the School of Scottish Studies has been diverse and has had influences outside the discipline of Oral History: staff member Ian Crawford spent decades excavating the Udal site in North Uist (Crawford 1986).

The modern archaeological study of post-medieval rural Scotland emerged from the University of Glasgow in the 1960s. It began not in the Department of Archaeology, which was yet to be formed, but from historical geography (Bezant and Grant 2016: 7). This approach has remained influential (Dodgshon 1980, 1993, 1998, 2000; Whittington 1973), with settlement patterns remaining a key focus of study (Atkinson 2010; Campbell 2009). When the first modern empirical work began (i.e Fairhurst 1960), the curtain was finally thrown back to reveal that the 18th and 19th century landscape of the Highlands and Islands was a post-medieval configuration that was not particularly ancient. This suddenly opened up a huge gap in archaeological understandings of the rural landscape which stretched from the Iron Age to the 17th or 18th centuries. The quest to repopulate these 'missing centuries' with new archaeological understandings and models was the key focus of the discipline until the 1990s (Bezant and Grant 2016: 7-8). The next four decades of study can be seen as an empirical data-gathering exercise which included research excavations (Atkinson *et al*. 2005; Fairhurst 1967-8), landscape survey (RCAHMS 1990, 1994, 2007; RCAHMS and Historic Scotland 2002), and occasionally integrated interdisciplinary research (Boyle 2003; Turner 2003). By the millennium, this work had met with some success, addressing empirical concerns about identifying early post-medieval and medieval evidence in the archaeological landscape (Govan 2003) and resulting in the significantly improved body of knowledge we have on these subjects today (Atkinson 2010; Dalglish 2011).

The 21st century has seen the archaeological study of the post-medieval Highlands move away from these empirical concerns to more wide-ranging studies of landscape, vernacular architecture, and material culture, as well as attempts to integrate the study of post-medieval Scotland into the wider

international project of world historical archaeology (Bezant and Grant 2016: 12-3). In the following critical thematic discussion previous work will be considered in further detail, but in general terms it is important to consider the discipline's origins in archaeology's antiquarian past, the influence of historical geography, and the fact that almost all of the archaeological work which has been undertaken to date has been from an empirical theoretical standpoint.

3.1.2 Post-Medieval Archaeology of Gaeldom – A Critique

The post-medieval period in Scotland has always had a high resonance in the public imagination, both for its 'romantic' qualities (Donnachie and Whatley 1992; Withers 1992) and for its relevance to contemporary political issues around identity, memory, Clearance, and land reform (Bezant and Grant 2016: 25; Dalglish 2010; Jones 2011, 2012). It is perhaps no surprise then that many archaeologists have been reliant on narratives from more developed discussions in the disciplines of history and geography. These focus on the grand historical meta-narratives of the 18th and 19th centuries such as Improvement, Clearance, the Jacobite rebellions, the collapse of clanship and the emergence of the crofting landscape. The focus on these historical processes and events has often lead to understandings of the landscape that may be appropriate to the "big history' paradigms of the disciplines that created them' but that 'serve poorly the needs of the archaeologist' (Campbell 2009: 315). Many archaeological approaches have focused on attempting to understand how the physical and socio-economic pattern of the post-medieval Highland landscape, which is relatively well-presenced in the archaeological record, may have developed from an earlier, much less understood medieval one (Govan 2003). A further significant area of study is how this landscape was transformed in many areas by Improvement, usually with a focus on how such change within the landscape was influenced by the elite, and attempts to trace archaeologically how such changes may have been implemented on the ground (Boyle 2003). As a result of this, the role of archaeology has become largely to undertake data-gathering exercises to furnish debates developed elsewhere. Its role has been not in *producing* histories, but in *illustrating* them (Dalglish 2002: 488-91).

An epistemological timidity, an absence of everyday life

The lack of confidently archaeological approaches to the period has been termed an 'epistemological timidity' (Campbell 2009: 318), and has at worst resulted in the adoption of 'uncritically accepted narratives created and defined in another disciplinary context without reference to the relevant archaeological material they apparently wish to elucidate' (Dalglish 2002: 476). One consequence of this is that very few theoretical developments in archaeology have made any impact in the sub-discipline. Around the millennium, a few short papers which explored some of these ideas in a post-medieval Scottish context appeared (Given 2004; Lelong 2000; Symonds 1999b, 2000; Webster 1999), but since then there appears to have been few attempts to engage with approaches which place human experience in the past at the forefront of archaeological studies (perhaps with the exception of Le Beau 2011). However, this problem is not restricted to the study of the post-medieval Highlands and Islands. A recent review paper has argued that across the UK, many studies of the rural landscape have failed to engage with wider theoretical developments, and indeed with many understandings of landscape that go beyond empirical ideas originating in the 50s and 60s (Bezant and Grant 2016). While largely 'empirical' approaches remain so dominant, it is perhaps no surprise that even when detailed and critical archaeological studies occur, they serve only to discuss and elucidate historical meta-narratives (Boyle 2003), or explore ground already well-travelled by historians (Lelong 2000).

One example of this is the noticeable lack of discussions of everyday life in the past in accounts of the period. Although settlement patterns (Campbell 2009; Dodgshon 1993, 2000), vernacular architecture (Mackie 2006, 2008) and material culture (Gazin-Schwartz 2001; Webster 1999), have all been foci of research into post-medieval life in Highland and Island Scotland, this discussion has been framed around change influenced by historical factors, not on everyday life and experience. Considerations of settlement patterns have generally focused on how these changed or 'evolved' in response to changing national circumstances such as Improvement (Caird 1989; Dodgshon 1993, 2000). Discussions of vernacular architecture (Mackie 2006, 2008) and material culture (Webster 1999) have focused upon how Highland communities reacted to outside technological and cultural influences. Almost all archaeological accounts which

consider the experiential aspects of daily life and routine practice in Highland landscapes (Given 2004: chapter 8; Lelong 2000; Symonds 1999b), then contrast or follow these narratives with a consideration of the ending of these ways of life by macro-historical processes like Clearance or Improvement. This is not intended as a criticism of these works; their intention is to examine the historical processes of change and the experience of those who lived through them, a task which they often address in a highly evocative and effective manner. Rather, these examples show how the overarching historical meta-narratives of the period have drawn otherwise novel archaeological approaches into addressing these pre-existing narratives, rather than forming archaeological reconstructions or narratives about the experiences of everyday life and landscape in their own right.

An Elite Focus, a Homogenised Society

A natural consequence of the paradigms which frame discussion of the post-medieval Highlands and Islands is that scholarship tends to focus on the actions of the elite such as the landlords and tacksmen (who were largely literate and are disproportionally represented in documentary sources), rather than the lives of the majority of society. Occasionally this forms a picture of post-medieval Gaeldom as:

> 'the only period where the individual is given no credit in determining and performing their own actions. While prehistorians can conceive of structures as varied as Neolithic funerary monuments and Iron Age brochs as being constructed by ties of cooperation and mutual obligation, it seems that the post-medieval descendants of these builders were incapable of planting crops without explicit direction from their social betters' (Campbell 2009: 318).

Models which foreground 'feudal ideas' as the principal force in shaping the landscape (Campbell 2009: 318) are deeply problematic and often do not represent well the nature of the archaeological landscape (as highlighted by Boyle 2003; Campbell 2009; Geddes and Grant 2015). Indeed, many historical ideologies such as Improvement which emphasise 'the individual and private property, did not exist outside of specific social conditions' (Dalglish 2001: 3). Therefore in using the language of the elite, we are projecting their world view

onto the landscape and wider society in a way which may not reflect historical reality. There have been few studies that have really sought to understand the motivations that drove ordinary individuals to make the decisions that contributed greatly to forming the landscape. A further issue has been that many approaches have foregrounded change over time in an attempt to understand the grand historical meta-narratives of the period. This has occasionally resulted in overtly teleological understandings (e.g Dodgshon 2000) which attempt to explain the process of grand historical change at the expense of understandings of the local and the specific. Only very occasionally have studies been made which attempt to interpret and understand life in one location at one particular time. Where this has taken place, nuanced and thought-provoking papers have emerged (Lelong 2000; Symonds 1999b, 2000; Webster 1999).

Ultimately, this has been a highly homogenising trend in the discipline. A research focus on ideas of Improvement by historians and geographers (Dodgshon 1993; Hunter 1976; Meek 1995) has created a research environment that often has a disproportionate focus on methods of agriculture and Improvement. As a result of this, Highland society sometimes appears 'categorised solely by the method of agricultural production' (Campbell 2009: 317). The binary opposites that pervade these paradigms; landlord/tenant, Improvement/pre-Improvement, pro-Jacobite/pro-government, have reduced ordinary Highland people to a homogenous group. These two-dimensional characterisations present a Highlands where 'all people approach society at large with the same understanding of the world, [one which] does not allow for social difference and conflict'(Dalglish 2002: 492).

Romantic Influence and Lack of Gaelic Viewpoint
A romanticising influence has also served to prop up this homogenising trend. Historically, many approaches to the Highlands were coloured by a romantic view of the place and period, such as ideas of the sublime in the 18th century and 'tartanry' in the 19th (MacDonald 2001; Withers 1992). The ultimate product of these approaches is a shortbread-tin view of a Highland village:

'the little old man puffing his pipe, the little old lady spinning at the
wheel... all intimately attached to their bright stone-built thatched
cottage and their friends and neighbours in the cozy sun swept village,
some labouring away in the fields which surround their huddled village,
some fishing in the loch nearby' (MacKay 1988: 110).

This view painted Gaelic-speaking peoples as a homogenous group, tragic but
noble victims of modernity who were undone by the coming of the modern
world. Much contemporary archaeological research into this period is subsumed
into these narratives by the wider public (Jones 2011, 2012). This is particularly
true on Hiort (MacDonald 2001), and it is only very recently that such narratives
have begun to be unpicked there (Fleming 2005; Geddes and Gannon 2015;
Geddes and Grant 2015).

It is perhaps as the result of a backlash to Romanticism that Gaelic culture and
oral tradition have rarely been a focus of research, with such material
occasionally being 'dismissed by archaeologists as fairy stories and romantic
nonsense' (MacKay 1988: 110). But this has also been homogenising in its effects,
as it has ignored a key source of evidence which can aid in understanding the
variety of experience within the Gaelic-speaking world. Without this evidence,
archaeologists have failed to recognise the significance of myth, culture and
language which created distinctive ways in which Gaels viewed their place in the
world and the landscape (Grant 2014; Newton 2009).

This lack of engagement with Gaelic oral tradition has led to descriptions of life
which can be dry and devoid of any sense of everyday experience. These are in
contrast with the romance and colour which comes through strongly in Gaelic
sources (Grant 2014; Newton 2000, 2009). Where Gaelic culture has been
considered, more nuanced and useful understandings of landscape have
emerged, but this has often still been in the service of understanding historical
narratives such as Improvement, the emergence of capitalism, the land struggle,
and long-term change in the Highlands (Dalglish 2003: 156; Lelong 2000;
Symonds 2000).

Counter-currents

The difficulty in reconciling the grand historical events of the period, such as Improvement, with everyday practice has been a concern of several studies (Campbell 2009; Dalglish 2003). Campbell's (2009) excellent examination of crofting townships sought to move discussions away from relationships between tenants and landlords to seek to understand change at the scale of individual townships, coming to the conclusion that such settlements were 'in reality a series of separate cooperative endeavours based around the family groups who lived [in them]' (Campbell 2009: 326). Dalglish's examination of how routine practice governed change within the landscape also touches on the issue of scale by examining how large-scale processes such as Improvement and modernity can be understood through the actions of individuals within the landscape (Dalglish 2003). Both Given (2004), in his study of the archaeology of colonised peoples, and Adamson (2014), in his examination of commercialism in the post-medieval Highlands, sought to understand how the experience of ordinary people tied in with wider processes of change. A recent study of settlement on Hiort drew on an empirical approach to consider the character of landscape and settlement use in the mid-19th century, revealing a complex system of social and familial organisation within the landscape (Geddes and Grant 2015). These studies all address the issue of society being viewed as homogenous by historical understandings of the period. They all provide models which allow for social difference and conflict at all levels of the social scale, as well as examining how these can be revealed through landscape.

In a short paper entitled *The Prospect of the Sea,* Olivia Lelong (2000) provided an antidote to the colourless archaeological examinations of historical events typical of many approaches to the post-medieval *Gàidhealtachd* (Atkinson 2000, 2010; Boyle 2003; Dodgshon 1993, 1998; Fairhurst 1960; RCAHMS and Historic Scotland 2002). In this evocative paper she describes the disjunction which may have been felt by Gaels who were forcibly moved from their native inland settlements in Strathnaver, Sutherland, to coastal areas to the north of the county. Lelong describes the previous lives of the evicted tenants in phenomenological terms, placing the experience of the people within the landscape first:

'the broad Naver flowing along its relatively narrow bottom, the terraces and morains which create more intimate spaces within the confines of the Strath; its sides rising gently to a broad plateau. They moved around it in their daily and seasonal routines, along known and long-established paths…'(Lelong 2000: 219)

She also describes the deep knowledge of the landscape built up by these communities over many generations about the cycles of the seasons, the crops and the wildlife, the timing of communal acts of labour and festivals, and the meaning and history of landscape features; aspects of the landscape which could be understood only through the eyes of those individuals who lived and worked in it (Lelong 2000: 220-2). This paper has all the hallmarks of an embodied, almost phenomenological approach, with its focus on lived experience and the materiality of the landscape and the experience of inhabiting it. However, it contains no explicit discussion of theory, making it perhaps another victim of Campbell's 'epistemological timidity'.

Around the same period as Lelong's paper was published, a small body of work emerged which included oral tradition and could be described as an 'historical ethnography' approach (Gazin-Schwartz 2001; Symonds 1999a). These papers were supplemented by considerations of vernacular architecture (Fraser 2000; Mackie 2006, 2008) and material culture (Webster 1999) which foregrounded Gaelic culture and historical perspectives gleaned from local oral tradition. Given's (2004) *Archaeology of the Colonized* used oral traditional knowledge about Highland landscapes of illegal whisky distilling in an international study of the archaeology of colonialism. Most of these approaches employed local oral tradition to illustrate local narratives of change in the post-medieval period – changes which were part of the wider historical narratives. They all act as examples of the far more nuanced, rich, and evocative archaeological understandings of landscape and experience which can be created when a confident and theoretically mature archaeology is combined with even a small amount of material from Gaelic oral tradition. The promise of these approaches has as yet not been fulfilled. It is argued that a need remains to build on these approaches in an extended study of post-medieval Gaeldom that seeks to move beyond simply illustrating the pre-existing meta-narratives of history and historical geography.

The later 20th century also saw counter-currents emerge outside archaeology in other disciplines concerned with the post-medieval Highlands and Islands. This eclectic collection of authors and researchers have produced a corpus of material which put the oral tradition and cultural issues at the centre of their understandings of the past, something that has often put them at odds with the wider narratives of their respective disciplines. This school is defined more by a list of their proponents than any single discipline or organisation. Authors include those with backgrounds in material culture, museums, and folk-life, such as Hugh Cheape (Cheape 1993, 1995, 2010) and Alexander Fenton (Fenton 1986, 1987; Fenton and MacKay 2013); Celticists such as Willie Matheson, Eric Cregeen and Matthew Dziennik (Cregeen 1998; Dziennik 2015; Matheson 1938, 1972); and geographers such as James Caird (Caird 1979, 1989). Many, such as Ian Crawford (Crawford 1962, 1967, 1986) produced work which seems to span several disciplines. Often, proponents of this school of thought broke new ground and challenged pre-existing narratives in their respective fields.

A good example would be the work of Gaelic-speaking historian Donald Meek (Meek 1990, 1995, 2003), whose work on the Gaelic poetry of the Clearances was the first in four decades to attempt to understand this historical process through the Gaelic oral tradition (Kidd 2000: 188). Meek sought to encourage historians to engage with Gaelic material, and particularly to use it as a source through which to understand the tumultuous events of the 19th century which loom so large in historical meta-narratives. He criticised those who considered the tradition unreliable and romanticised, arguing that it was in many cases 'an on-the-spot record of how certain significant events and personalities were viewed … not mere window-dressing' (Meek 1990: 1). He was not alone in attempting to bring Gaelic voices into historical understandings of the place and period. Hugh Cheape, in arguing for the better understanding and integration of Gaelic song in histories of the Clearances, characterised narratives about Highland history in which Gaels were viewed as passive and without a voice as the 'enormous condescension of history' (Cheape 1995: 85). A common theme in papers by historians of this school is the attempt to address concerns by their colleagues that the oral tradition was 'unreliable' as source material. Two seminal papers in this tradition are detailed local studies of genealogies in North and South Uist (Cregeen 1998; Matheson 1972) in which the authors attempt to show the

veracity of the oral tradition by 'ground-truthing' it against historical sources while also drawing attention to the additional material available only in the oral tradition. These accounts often created a picture of the past which sharply contrasted those drawn from documentary sources alone. Despite these voices calling for a greater engagement with the oral tradition in Highland histories, by the millennium, mainstream historians were still being condemned for a failure to 'view the history of Gaelic-Speakers from a Gaelic perspective'(Kidd 2000: 188). Although these counter-currents emerged in disciplines other than archaeology they form an important part of its wider context. This thesis joins this small group of voices in arguing that many historical and archaeological accounts fail to engage fully with the oral tradition and in doing so reflect poorly the experiences and attitudes of Gaels in the past. An important theme in such approaches is that they represent attempts to combine different disciplines, such as archaeology, ethnography, history, Celtic studies, and geography. While it is hard to imagine any one individual who could represent all of these adequately, this thesis is aligned with the school of thought in that it draws influences from a broad range of disciplines concerned with the study of the place and period.

The archaeological study of post-medieval Gaeldom is now in its third century. It has developed from antiquarian beginnings to become a small but well-established sub-discipline. Over the years, there has been some high-quality empirical work which has included extensive surveys and excavation. In the 19th century, the sub-discipline laboured under the misapprehension that the post-medieval Highlands and Islands were an ancient past-in-the-present, a fossilised survivor of European pre-history. Today, it is well recognised that this is not the case and in the 21st century archaeologists have attempted to develop more nuanced and complex understandings of life in the period. However, perhaps partly due to the antiquarian, economic history, and geography background to the sub-discipline they have often retained an empirical bent which fails to reflect the more varied theoretical approaches used within wider contemporary archaeology. Many archaeological accounts have often served merely to illustrate pre-existing meta-narratives developed in other disciplines rather than developing novel archaeological viewpoints of life in the past. In doing so they have been overly-concerned with the elite of society and, by using simplistic

models which fit 'big history' paradigms, they have presented a homogenised view of society which does not reflect the variety of experience in the past. A backlash against romanticism has resulted in a lack of engagement with oral tradition (although this is an issue which extends beyond archaeology to other disciplines) and few accounts give descriptions of everyday life in the Highlands. Where there have been counter-currents to traditional narratives they have demonstrated that significant new ground can be broken and that archaeology has a unique contribution to make to the study of the place and period.

Outside archaeology, in history, ethnography, and Celtic studies, a small number of voices have advocated using Gaelic oral tradition and culture to understand the *Gàidhealtachd* from a Gaelic perspective. Although they have often 'been ploughing a somewhat lonely furrow' (Kidd 2000: 188), they present novel and insightful accounts of the past which contrast or complement those which are found in the wider literature. Due to the drawbacks to the study of the period, and because novel approaches have shown that we can significantly extend our understanding of life in the past, it is argued that a new approach is needed. The challenge in creating this new approach was in attempting to avoid the pitfalls in previous work whilst also taking inspiration from others who are also working to create new narratives of the period. This often required bridging the gap between varied approaches and, indeed, disciplines. A key concept which was particularly useful was that of 'landscape'. As has already been suggested elsewhere (Bezant and Grant 2016) it is often conspicuously absent from archaeological studies of the post-medieval landscape, despite its currency in other sub-disciplines of archaeology.

3.2   Concepts of Landscape

This thesis is a work of landscape archaeology, a 'complex field that refuses to be disciplined' (Hicks and Hauser 2007), founded on an equally complex concept: landscape. There is a multitude of understandings of landscape across many academic disciplines. In the following section, some of the approaches to and understandings of landscape which will be explored during this thesis are briefly outlined. This section does not comprise an in-depth history of landscape theory as developed and applied in archaeology, although the historiography of some concepts will be discussed; rather it gives the theoretical framework of

landscape within which this thesis is situated. No one approach to landscape is considered to be complete or superior. Instead, several concepts of landscape are used, with the intention that the most appropriate approach to the specific themes and case studies will be selected from a suite of theoretical and methodological tools.

Although 'landscape' has been a concern of antiquarians since at least as early as the 18th century (Gillings 2010; Mendyk 1986), 'landscape archaeology' did not emerge as a distinct sub-discipline within archaeology until the 1970s. Archaeologists drawing on earlier work in the fields of local history and historical geography (such as Hoskins 1955) began to create an approach which saw as its key concern not just sites, or even their immediate context, but the history and character of the wider landscape as a whole (eg Aston and Rowley 1974). These first forms of landscape archaeology were characterised by the study of the interactions between humans and their environment, particularly through examining the palimpsest of human activity which was seen to 'overlie' the landscape. In theoretical terms, these forms of landscape archaeology often take a 'common sense' or 'intuitive' approach, by which is meant an empirical one (Aston and Rowley 1974: 14-5; Greene 1995: 51) which suggests that overt discussion of theory is not needed or desirable (Fleming 2006). These empirical underpinnings can be still be seen in many of the seminal studies of landscape archaeology (Fleming 1988, 1998, 2005; Hodges 1991; Rackham 1987; RCAHMS 1990, 1994; Rippon 2012). A further strand of landscape archaeology in this period, theoretically situated in the processualist and scientific approaches of the 'New Archaeology', examined the ways in which the environment influenced large-scale socio-economic trends at a landscape level (eg Aston 1985).

From the 1990s, drawing on earlier critiques from geography and elsewhere about the Cartesian and vision-centric ways in which landscape is often viewed in western thought (Cosgrove 1984; Cosgrove and Daniels 1988), archaeologists began to critique current landscape archaeology, arguing that it reduced the role of agency and experience and presented landscape simply as a neutral and visual blank canvas or backdrop for human activity rather than something more cultural and complex in character (Thomas 1993b). These arguments took place as part of the emergence of the post-processual movement in archaeology (Johnson 1999: chapter 7), and led to a profusion of understandings of the

nature of landscape within archaeology. It is in these more human-and-experience-centred approaches to landscape that this thesis has its theoretical roots. The varied concepts of landscape which underlie the approach taken in this thesis will be considered under three broad themes: embodiment, practice, and narrative.

3.2.1 Embodiment

'Landscape, in short, is not a totality that you or anyone else can look at, it is rather the world in which we stand taking up a point of view on our surroundings. And it is within the context of this attentive involvement in the landscape that the human imagination gets to work in fashioning ideas about it.' (Ingold 2000: 207)

Within this theme are discussed concepts of landscape which place the lived, embodied experience of the individual or community as central to the creation and experience of landscape. Most of these approaches emerged from critiques of Cartesian understandings about the nature of being and experience, and they often have common origins. The discussion begins with phenomenology. Materiality, a suite of theoretical approaches with a concern for the material world and how it is experienced, is discussed next. A consideration of non-representational theory, drawn from human geography, finishes this theme.

Phenomenology and Materiality

Phenomenology, a philosophical movement concerned with the 'manner in which people experience and understand the world' (Tilley 1994: 11), originated in the works of the philosophers Merleau-Ponty (1962) and Heidegger (1996) in the mid-20th century. Within archaeology, phenomenological engagements, which are primarily from the point of view of a subject or agent, opened up possibilities for a number of new ways of interpreting and understanding the past. These range from the descriptive landscape phenomenology of Chris Tilley (1994, 2004a, 2004b), to new considerations of the nature of time and identity (Ingold 2000; Thomas 1996), and 'hyper-interpretive' approaches which use techniques such as photography and narrative to understand and present the nature of the lived experience of people in the past (Edmonds and Seaborne 2001; Given 2004).

The phenomenological approach put forward by Tilley (1994) draws particularly on the work of the philosopher Heidegger who proposed that meaning and consciousness are created through the interaction between the human body and the environment; 'perceptual consciousness is not just a matter of thought about the world, but stems from bodily presence and bodily orientation in relation to it' (Tilley 1994: 14). Tilley used this concept to create an archaeology where the way in which people experienced landscapes in the past was understood at least in part by physical interaction and 'dwelling' in these landscapes in the present. His approach is summarised by Barret and Ko (2009) as comprising three main assertions:

'1. The archaeological record cannot be understood without a human presence. Meaning arises in a human engagement with material conditions.
2. The body is the medium through which this engagement occurs.
3. By using his or her own body as the medium of engagement, the archaeologist can encounter a past being-in-the-world, and, in doing so, grasp the meaning of the archaeological record.'(Barret and Ko 2009: 280)

One of the key methods employed in Tilley's early engagements with phenomenology was walking. He would walk prehistoric monuments noting observations about the experience of his embodied engagement with the landscape. Drawing on this experience he attempted to demonstrate 'long-term continuities and changes in the relationships between populations and the land'(Tilley 1994: 71). This included considering the positioning of archaeological sites within the landscape, the nature of the terrain, and the intervisibility of natural and archaeological features. Later, Tilley's engagements with the landscape became not only tactile and embodied but also symbolic and metaphorical in nature (Tilley 2004b), and he appears to have distanced himself from the third point in the above summary (Tilley 2004a: 225).

Although influential, Tilley's approach to phenomenology in archaeology has come under sustained criticism for theoretical reasons. Barret and Ko (2009) criticized Tilley's use of phenomenology by arguing that it departs from its original philosophical underpinnings in crucial ways, and that this 'lack of precision in the chosen approach shields the entire phenomenological programme in archaeology from any scrutiny of its theoretical basis'(Barret and

Ko 2009: 279). Another criticism of the approach used by Tilley is the inherent suggestion that the body today is the same as the body in the past; that 'we and the people of the past share carnal bodies' (Tilley 2004b: 201). This ignores the large amount of archaeological and anthropological theory concerning the nature of the body as not simply a biological object but the product of social relations and cultural values (see Douglas 1996; Featherstone *et al.* 1991; Foucault 1977; Thomas 1996). From a purely physiological standpoint, a further criticism is that there are many types of body: male, female, old and young, fit and infirm. There is also little room in Tilley's account for the cultural or historical situation of the agent or body in the landsape, resulting in agents in the landscape being reduced to 'all-purpose humans from the past, politically correct but culturally neutered' (Fleming 2006: 276).

Although the fine points of phenomenological theory have been critiqued in print (Barret and Ko 2009), the overall approach has have received 'little or no critical response from traditional or mainstream landscape archaeologists' (Fleming 2006: 268), although arguably this is true of much of post-processual archaeology as a whole (Greene 1995: 172-3). Where criticisms have been levelled from this quarter, they often focus on methodological concerns such as a lack of consideration of taphonomic factors which influence the survival of the elements and features of the landscape of the past in the present (Brück 2005: 51; Fleming 2006: 274) or a concern that Tilley's interpretations of prehistoric monuments fail to account for the long periods of time between phases of construction which are often found in prehistoric monuments and landscapes. In addition, Tilley's examinations of sites through his own embodied engagements necessarily do not draw on a wide range of comparative sites. This has lead critics to brand it a 'non-contextual' approach, which isolates the research zones from other contemporary sites in Britain and says little about wider geographical areas or aspects of life in prehistory (Fleming 2006: 275).

Tilley's phenomenological landscape archaeology is therefore highly problematic, but it has been no less influential for all that (Wylie 2007: 169-77). His approach to phenomenology was just one of several in archaeology (Ingold 2000; Thomas 1993a, 1996), but has influenced and been developed by many archaeologists since, not least by Tilley himself (Bender et al. 2007; Buchli and Tilley 2002; Tilley 2004a). Around a decade after the first emergence of a

phenomenological landscape archaeology, the same sorts of embodied theoretical approaches came to be applied to the area of material culture. It is from this area of research that there developed the next element of theory to be discussed, that of materiality.

Materiality emerged as an area of interest in archaeology in the late 1990s and by the mid-2000s was a key theoretical concept (Renfrew 2005: 159-63). It emerged from a concern that some phenomenological approaches were so concerned with the lived experience of individuals that they pushed the material world into the background (Crossland 2010: 391). It also critiqued traditional empirical studies of objects and assemblages which viewed objects as purely functional, and 'textual' understandings of objects which tended to see them as carriers of meaning and symbolism rather than embodied aspects of the world in their own right (Buchli 1995). The approaches to materiality that emerged from this critique are diverse and divergent, although at the most basic level they are archaeologies which seek to understand objects in ways that 'move beyond simplistic readings of things as either purely functional or deeply symbolic' (Meskell 2005: 2). Archaeologies of materiality have been concerned with the role objects play in maintaining and creating identities (O'Connor and Cooney 2010: XXI; Tilley 2004a), material agency (Miller 2005), objects in the context of Bourdieu's (1977) concepts of habitus and praxis (Miller and Tilley 1996), and engagements with the material properties of objects themselves (Ingold 2007), to name a few. The full breadth of approaches to materiality can be best understood by looking at some of the many collections of writing on the subject (Boivin 2008; Graves-Brown 2000; Hicks and Beaudry 2010; Meskell 2005; O'Connor et al. 2010).

Materiality is a concept that has largely been applied to material culture, and there is relatively little work directly concerning landscape. Despite this it forms an important part of many current archaeological understandings of embodied engagements with the world within which much of this approach is situated. The extensive writings on materiality may inform considerations of bodily engagement with materials in the landscape, and the relationships between things and people, and indeed things and things, which is an important part of daily tasks and activities.

Non-representational theory and affect

Tilley's landscape phenomenology and materiality both developed in archaeology during the late 1990s and 2000s, but they are part of a wider movement across several disciplines that emerge from the same theoretical concerns. If these varied approaches could be said to have anything in common, it would be that they were part of a movement away from the study of the economic, environmental, social, and cultural aspects of landscape toward understandings based on embodied experience (Barnes and Ducan 1992). Within cultural geography, one of the ways in which this movement manifested itself was non-representational theory (NRT). Although originally put forward by Thrift (Thrift 1996, 1997, 1999) as a critique of New Geography, drawing from the work of Ingold (Ingold 2000), discourse has developed to include use of a wide range of theories and resources from various disciplines, opening up new areas for discussion and introducing new techniques (Wylie 2007: 164). It began as a challenge to geographers to go beyond understandings of the landscape based on representations of social relationships, to understand the lived, sensory aspects of experience. Non-representational theory is therefore not a didactic singular approach 'but an umbrella term for diverse work that seeks better to cope with our self-evidently more-than-human, more-than-textual, multisensual worlds' (Lorimer 2005: 83).

One aspect of non-representational geography which is concerned with embodied experience is the concept of affect. Emerging from the work of Deleuze and Guattari (1988, 1994), affect is a concept which has been widely used in geography, cultural, and political theory, since the 1990s. However, the concept appears hard to define. Indeed, some have suggested this ambiguity may be significant in itself (Lorimer 2008: 551-2). In the broadest sense, affect relates to the 'non-rational or more-than-rational aspects of life…domains of experience that are more-than-subjective and yet at the same time formative of senses of…self and landscape' (Wylie 2007: 214). An idea that is particularly significant for archaeology is that one can write about and experience affect through walking (Wylie 2005). The concept of affect has been little explored to date in the arena of archaeology and, as with phenomenology, there is not yet a clear understanding of the relationship between affects experienced by those by

the present-day archaeologist and geographer, and those experienced by individuals in the past.

Criticisms of embodied approaches

As well as specific critiques of individual theories, there are broader critiques of all such embodied approaches. One such criticism is that they are often characterised by romanticism (Wylie 2007: 181-3) and that there is frequently a focus on pre-modern and non-Western rural ways of life. A focus on a romanticised past can be traced back to the origins of phenomenology in Merleau-Ponty, when he talks of a 'primitive contact with the world' (Merleau-Ponty 1962: xi). These ideas can implicitly support the ethnocentric idea that non-Western views of the world equate with non-modern ones. The Western-centric idea that non-Western, non-cartesian ways of seeing the world are primitive or backward is also reflected in the 19th and 20th century stadialist approaches to history and cultures, where non-Western societies are judged according to their supposed place along a path of development based on European history. Interestingly, stadialist and romanticising ideas have been a fundamental part of historical approaches to the post-medieval Highlands and Islands, as we have seen.

A further general critique of many phenomenological and embodied approaches is that they have been largely 'individualistic' in their character, in that they focus on the lived experience of the individual. This is in contrast with many other theoretical approaches such as Marxist archaeologies which focus on the study of praxis and social and economic change, and which allow archaeologists to come to know and critique the modern world, and indeed to take political action within it (McGuire 2006). Similarly, there is a concern that embodied approaches signal a retreat from decades of 'progress' in terms of understanding the effects of society, gender, and power on individual experience and action (Nash 1996, 2000; Wylie 2007: 181).

One area that embodied approaches do not fully explore is the idea that human experience is in itself historically constituted and socially embedded, and that we are therefore unable to perceive the landscape around us without interpreting it within our own cultural and historical frameworks (see Ingold 2000; Thomas 2004). If this is indeed the case, then the exercise of inhabiting a

landscape today, moving through it and trying to glean understanding about how people experienced landscape in the past, is a futile venture. The relationship of the phenomenological experience of present-day archaeologists to the experiences of people in the past has perhaps never been reconciled (Fleming 2006). Another concern of the use of such embodied approaches in archaeology is that by their individual nature they perhaps do not tell us about wider socio-economic trends occurring in the past, or indeed address changes in society which occur over long periods of time, or in extremely wide areas (Fleming 2006: 276-9). The approach taken in this thesis draws inspiration from previous attempts to study past landscapes in terms of their embodied experience, but seeks to address some of the fundamental criticisms of embodied approaches by making them part of a method which draws on a wider range of complementary theories and practices.

3.2.2 Practice

The concepts and approaches to landscape explored in this section, although often concerned with embodied experience, have a different focus. They are concerned either with routine practice in the past, or are themselves practices rather than theoretical movements. Three ideas will be discussed: psychogeography, taskscape and microhistory. Pyschogeography is, like phenomenology, a practice concerned with embodied engagements with the landscape, particularly walking. Taskscape focuses on how routine practice creates the landscape by inscribing the environment with human activity and meaning. Microhistory is a historical practice which focusses on the small, the local, and the specific with the intention of revealing aspects of life not unearthed by the study of overarching historical trends.

Psychogeography

Psychogeography, although over fifty years old, remains a somewhat challenging concept to define. Although identified as 'a practice, not a field' (Self 2013), it is associated with a wide range of theory and literature. It is 'the meeting point of a number of ideas and traditions with interwoven histories' (Coverley 2006: 11). Although the term originally emerged in the 1950s in the work of Guy Debord (1981: 5), it has also come to encompass understandings of the work of far earlier thinkers and authors such as William Blake, Baudelaire, and Defoe

(Coverley 2006: 10-3). Psychogeography is generally perceived as several distinct movements or phases of activity rather than as a single body of work. Paradigms include the detached and idle *flâneur* of 19th century Paris 'intoxicated' by movement through the modern urban environment (Coverley 2006: 58); surrealist, dadaist, and avant-garde notions of automatism applied to extended walking and drifting (Breton 1972: 14); gothic and occult reimaginings and re-enchantments of urban spaces (Home 1997; Sinclair 1998); and subversive understandings of contemporary suburban post-industrial and inner-city landscapes (Pinder 2011; Self 2013; Sinclair 2002).

Despite a reasonable body of literature on the subject, aside from works by the purported practitioners of the subject themselves there are few sources which offer a synthesis of the nature or practice of psychogeography. Within archaeology, there have been very few formal considerations of psychogeography outside of online blogs (Petts 2011), informal unpublished papers (Perrin 2013), or conference sessions (Brophy and Cummings 2013). These limited discussions perhaps signal psychogeography may be of some interest to and utility to archaeologists.

Within the diverse theory, literature, and practice which may be termed psychogeography, there are some key themes which can be identified. An interest in the urban and suburban has been a dominant aspect of psychogeography since its inception, to the extent that it has been described as 'a tale of two cities, London and Paris' (Coverley 2006: 11) and 'a means of exploring the behavioural impact of urban place' (Coverley 2006: 10). Psychogeography also attempts to reveal the 'reality' and enchantment behind the modern built environment (Self 2013: 61). A concern with the modern world and the nature of urban dwelling is not particularly useful to research in a pre-Improvement rural context, but a focus on walking, and on expressing the findings of perambulatory engagements with landscape is.

Walking and movement play a key role in psychogeography, which has been described as 'the practice of traversing the field that geographers statically survey…musings garnered *á pied*' (Self 2013: 4). The nature of walking in psychogeography is best expressed through the concept *derivé*, a technique of the subversive wandering of an environment, simultaneously noting how 'the

areas traversed resonate with particular moods and ambiences' (Coverley 2006: 96). This idea of producing data through walking and engaging with a landscape and then communicating that engagement to others is best described in a 'beginners guide' to psychogeography:

> 'Unfold a street map of London, place a glass, rim down, anywhere on the map, and draw round its edge. Pick up the map, go out into the city, and walk the circle, keeping as close as you can to the curve. Record the experience as you go, in whatever medium you favour: film, photograph, manuscript, tape…complete the circle, and the record ends. Walking makes for content; footage for footage.' (Macfarlane 2005)

Although the core idea of walking across the landscape and recording one's experiences is common to phenomenology and psychogeography, the focus on modern urban landscapes in the latter distinctly contrasts with the romanticised pre-modern, and non-Western landscapes which are often the subject of the former. Walking is a key method of both psychogeography and phenomenology, but there are key differences of 'intent'. While the walking of Tilley's phenomenology sought to discover past being-in-the-world, psychogeographical walking seems to subvert the everyday experience by seeing beyond the normal world and unveiling new and sometimes enchanted landscapes.

Another, less discussed tradition within psychogeography is that of 'internalised mental travelling' (Coverley 2006: 66-8) known as *robinsonner* - 'to let the mind wander or to travel mentally' (Sturrock 1990: 37). The term *robinsonner* is derived from the eponymous character in Daniel Defoe's Robinson Crusoe. Whilst psychogeography is perhaps best known for its concept of *derivé*, this does not need to take the form of physical passage across the landscape. It can, through the concept of *robinsonner*, be a mental travelling. A recent article on psychogeography by Will Self (2013) uses a strange combination of this mental seven-league-boot travelling both across the physical landscape, and across a landscape of history and ideas, to explore the psychogeography of 20th century Scotland.

A further common strand across psychogeography is the idea of re-enchanting landscapes, of seeing something which is obscured and hidden, frequently mystical, often from the past:

> 'We moved within a closed landscape whose landmarks constantly draw us toward the past. Certain shifting angles, certain receding perspectives, allow us to glimpse original conceptions of space, but this situation remains fragmentary. It must be found in the magical locales of fairy tales…'
> (Knabb 1981: 1-2)

Psychogeography may give us a way to understand the mystical and the unusual, literally the language of fairy tales, through its concern with seeing what lies behind the everyday, its aim of seeking to 'replace our mundane and sterile experiences with a magician's awareness of the wonders that surround us' (Coverley 2006: 84). In addition to this sense of re-enchantment, there is often a sense in which the lines between past and present are blurred, that the past and present are in a dynamic relationship. Many psychogeographical accounts of London are concerned with evoking a mysterious idea of the past (Sinclair 1998).

Psychogeography is a diverse and complex set of practices, bound together by little more than a concern for movement and for creative, subversive experiences of landscape, a set of tools which aim to reveal a secretive, enchanted landscape. Although psychogeography has much in common with many of the theoretical strands discussed here, its subversive nature adds a unique viewpoint and a suite of methods and practices to the archaeologist's toolbox.

Taskscape

Taskscape tries to unify, though a phenomenological perspective, the concepts of landscape and temporality, by considering the impact of routine practice in forming and shaping the landscape. The theory argues that landscapes, like human beings, are not static; they are continually evolving and changing through time. The human element of this landscape unfolds as people go about their lives: 'human life is a process that involves the passage of time and…this life-process is also the process of formation of the landscapes in which people have lived' (Ingold 1993:153). People and communities 'carry forward the process of

social life' (Ingold 1993: 157) through tasks and routine practice. Tasks are any activity carried out by an agent in the landscape; this includes travelling, working, resting and all the activities which constitute the act of dwelling and living in the environment. Ingold argues, drawing on the phenomenological work of Merleau-Ponty (1962), that it is through enacting tasks that we experience the temporal aspects of dwelling, creating and effecting notions of time (Ingold 1993: 159). The totality of these tasks within the landscape makes up the taskscape. Although an interesting and distinctive approach to landscape and time from a phenomenological approach, taskscape is perhaps particularly useful to archaeologists as it deals with time and with tangible traces of human activity in the landscape.

The theory also suggests that there is a reflexive relationship between agents in the landscape and the taskscape: 'the taskscape must be populated with beings who are themselves agents, and who reciprocally 'act back' in the process of their own dwelling. In other words, the taskscape exists not just as activity but as interactivity' (Ingold 1993: 183). Paths are a particularly evocative example of this; paths and tracks encourage regular patterns of movement within the landscape, but they are also created by that movement. An enticing thought for the archaeologist is that the taskscape of the past can be discovered by understanding the evidence of such tasks which is physically inscribed on the landscape.

Taskscape as a form of engagement with phenomenological thought is less individualistic than those previously discussed in that it is concerned with the social as well as the individual. Ingold stresses firmly that he sees all tasks as being engaged in the social :'one of the outstanding features of human technical practices lies in their embeddedness in the current of sociality' (Ingold 1993: 158). Whilst individual tasks can be seen as phenomenological acts of dwelling, they are also intertwined with the many other tasks and activities which make up the taskscape. This social aspect of the taskscape is the way in which by 'watching, listening, perhaps even touching...[we] continuously feel each other's presence in the social environment' (Ingold 1993: 160). For this reason, taskscape, although ultimately emerging from individual embodied engagements, reconciles the actions of the individual and the wider social world through focussing on the practice of communities at a landscape level.

Microhistory

The practice of microhistory, emerging in History in the 1970s, comes from a very different place to taskscape in terms of its theoretical background, but it too sees understanding and examining human activity and behaviour as the way to gain wider knowledge about landscape, life, and society. Microhistory is not a codified discipline, but rather a style of work, a practice (Walton et al. 2008: 4). Within what is a broad school of approaches, 'the unifying principle of all microhistorical research is the belief that microscopic observation will reveal factors previously unobserved' (Levi 2001: 101). The concept of 'thick description', first put forward by Clifford Geertz (1973), is a key idea underpinning microhistory. Clifford Geertz's (1973) much celebrated and oft-quoted study of a raid on an illegal cockfight he witnessed in Bali in the 1970's sought to examine a particular event in minute detail, exploring not only the event itself but the cultural subtext and social context of the raid and the effect on those involved. The resulting 'thick description' aimed to reveal much wider truths about society and culture through a detailed examination of this single event. Microhistories attempt this exercise on events in the past, trying to understand the broad and general through focusing on the specific and the minute. Thus we see a detailed examination of the life of a provincial clog maker, almost unknown to history, revealing insights into the lived experience of the political turmoil in 19th-century France (Corbin 2001) and the contrasting fortunes of two New England merchants in the 18th century as a study of class and social status at the top of post-revolutionary American society (Beaudry 2008).

In archaeology, the microhistorical approach seems to have found particularly fertile ground in post-medieval contexts (Wilkie 2004; Yentsch 1994), where the relatively greater amount of documentary evidence allows for detailed analysis. Indeed, finding novel routes and trajectories through a huge collection of historical and archival material is a key aspect of microhistory. Such approaches hold the possibility of constructing alternative narratives. The specific events, objects, or people under detailed discussion act like 'a magnetic field passed through iron filings', simultaneously revealing and arranging new narratives from history (Walton *et al*. 2008: 5). This sense of working from the specific to the general can be subversive of conventional histories, as it is 'attempting to

comprehend how people in the past construed their experiences rather than how those people fit into preconceived analytical structures' (Beaudry 2008: 176), and so it is of obvious utility in a study like this, which seeks to create alternative narratives to those of historical models.

3.2.3 Narrative

'That archaeological writing is storytelling is a commonplace observance by now, although it continues to be resisted… even archaeologists most sympathetic to this point have for the most part overlooked the storytelling that is purely internal to our discipline and that precedes the formalization of stories in lectures, books, museum exhibitions, videos, or electronic media.' (Joyce 2002: 4-5)

Storytelling in Archaeology

In a sense, 'all archaeological writing is narrative' (Given 2004: 20). We create narratives as archaeologists simply by using a chronological approach or by structuring an academic argument. However, since the 1990s, there have been some archaeologists who have begun to employ narrative in a way which is more akin to storytelling, through fictionalised accounts of experiences in the past. Although by no means ubiquitous as a technique, there is a body of work advocating and practising forms of storytelling in various parts of archaeology (Chadwick 2004; Deetz 1998; Pluciennik 1999; Praetzellis 1998), and seeking to understand the nature of narrative in archaeology, in all its various forms, as an important part of theory and practice (Joyce 2006). It is certainly a more widely-accepted part of archaeology today than it once was; demonstrably 'not an 'indulgence' on the part of a conceited author, or 'light relief' to spice up an otherwise tedious text' (Given 2004: 21).There is a wide spectrum of use of narrative in archaeology, from largely traditional academic texts which have an unusually strong focus on evocative language, description, and personal experience (Deetz 1977; Edmonds and Seaborne 2001; Lelong 2000), to texts which employ narrative 'vignettes' to illustrate wider points within an academic volume (Given 2004; Grimble 1979) and those which abandon academic traditions almost entirely in favour of 'fictionalised' storytelling (Beaudry 1998; Praetzellis *et al*. 1997). It is also worth considering that historical fiction with a high degree of concern for historical accuracy and painstaking research (e.g. the

work of novelist Patrick O'Brien, whose non-fiction works include biographies of Picasso and Joseph Banks) arguably lies at the extreme end of this spectrum.

The use of storytelling and narrative in archaeology is particularly prevalent in historical archaeology, often in contexts where there are groups who are perceived as 'disenfranchised', such as in post-colonial environments (Deetz 1998; Given 2004; Praetzellis *et al.* 1997). This is perhaps because one of the strengths of a narrative approach is its ability to recognise a large variety of experience in the past. Narrative can use characters old and young, of different genders and social standings to present a view of the landscape from what may be a broader variety of agents than those who can be presenced by the historical and archaeological record. This is not to say that narrative can give voice to the voiceless, an idea that has been described as colonialist in itself; rather, 'we can use narratives to imagine a lost perspective, form new questions and stimulate new thought' (Given 2004: 23).

Acknowledging that there is a multiplicity of experience in landscape, dependent on gender, age and social status, and of course by routine practice, is also to acknowledge that attempting to reconstruct a landscape in its entirety is not possible. A more useful approach is to acknowledge that 'people, groups and communities have their own trajectories through landscape and society' (Given 2004: 21). These individual and collective trajectories through the landscape not only create it, as explored in the idea of taskscape (Ingold 1993), but are more in keeping with the lived experience of individuals, in contrast with globalised historical trends and events. This method of using narratives to create 'trajectories' through the past and stimulate new meanings and questions has obvious parallels with microhistory which often seems to lie somewhere between the evocative descriptions of fiction and the more analytical approach of archaeology; it requires 'a dash of imagination', but unlike fiction it 'cleaves closely to the evidence...', and 'weave[s] together the various strands of evidence into strong cables of inference' (Beaudry 2008: 177). For these approaches, narrative is 'an apparatus for the production of meaning rather than... only a vehicle for the transmission of information' (White 1987: 42).

Storytelling as landscape, landscape as representation

A less-discussed aspect of Tilley's early phenomenological work is his ideas around narrative. In a very brief chapter at the beginning of *A Phenomenology of Landscape*, Tilley suggested that 'narrative emplotment can easily be claimed to have ontological significance for human existence, to be as universal as language itself' (Tilley 1994: 32). He suggests that narrative is so ubiquitous in human lives and society because it reflects our own understandings of our place in the world, it 'is a means of understanding and describing the world in relation to agency' (Tilley 1994: 32). Tilley himself uses narrative mainly as a way of describing his experiences as he passes through a landscape, using a style that is very much 'you go round the corner, turn left and you'll see…' (Tilley 1994: 32). Tilley's problematic suggestion that his own narrative experience may relate to that of individuals in the past aside, his evocative accounts do allow the reader to imagine and understand *a* past, an exercise which can be helpful to us in comprehending what we see in archaeological and historical evidence. Even Fleming, one of Tilley's biggest critics, saw promise in the use of narrative:

> 'if they [the authors] give us the 'evidence' and garnish it with the traditional hints, conjectures, and anthropologically-based insights, we may well find that we can develop a clearer feel for the Otherness of the past, horrors and all, in the freedom of our own imaginings' (Fleming 2006: 276).

Psychogeography too shares the view of narrative as a particularly authentic and powerful way of revealing and presenting ideas, suggesting that it is 'the novelist rather than the theoretician who is best able to capture the relationship between the urban environment and human behaviour' (Coverley 2006: 116). Indeed, psychogeography can be seen as a literary tradition. Microhistory too has a literary bent. Drawing on the work of Tolstoy in an introduction to the subject, Walton et al. suggest microhistory is a literary aesthetic, an 'orientation', as much as anything else (Walton *et al*. 2008: 4). A sense of the importance of storytelling, possibly even its innateness to human experience, is a strong thread running through much of the theory concerned with embodied experience of landscape which had been discussed so far.

Storytelling is a fluid experience in which narrative exists in a relationship between the teller and audience. People react emotionally to events and

characters, draw different meanings, and contextualise the story in terms of their own experience and identity. This complex relationship is perhaps what Chris Tilley was hinting at when he suggested that the relationship between space and place is related to *story* (Tilley 1994: 33). In storytelling, characters within the narratives are often the agents through which meanings are communicated, but the listeners also exercise their agency in creating understandings and meanings of their own. An analogy could be made between this relationship and some understandings of landscape. The act of dwelling within the landscape serves to form and create both the landscape and the agent; 'the world emerges with its properties alongside the emergence of the perceiver as person'(Ingold 2000: 168). Storytelling then may be an appropriate method of exploring landscapes in a way which is in keeping with aspects of contemporary thought about landscape, as it can be at once phenomenological, representational, and performative in nature.

Landscape itself has been seen as a text, a representation, of other aspects of human culture and society: 'nature, identity, space, place, the body and so on' (Wylie 2007: 163). In this model, landscape is something to be 'read', understood as a projection of social and individual values on the environment. It was in response to such an idea of landscape that non-representational geography first emerged as a focus of study, believing that the physicality of embodied experience with landscape had often become obscured by an obsession with landscape as a representation. However, non-representational theory holds a firm belief in the 'actuality of representation' (Dewsbury et al. 2002: 438): that representations are of and in the landscape, they are themselves embodied and performative. Indeed an alternative term to non-representational theory is 'more-than-representational' (Lorimer 2005). So while phenomenologically-derived ideas such as affect are a key focus of non-representational theory, it also explores representational aspects of landscape which reflect concepts such as culture, power, gender, and the body. Non-representational theory may provide a good framework in which to understand how particular forms of representations, such as narratives, form part of the embodied practice of everyday life. It allows for the use of both narratives from the past, such as stories from oral tradition, and for narrative and storytelling to be interpretive: methods through which to explore the landscape.

3.3 Approach

In section 3.1, the case was made for a new approach to the archaeology of the post-medieval Highlands and Islands. This approach is confidently archaeological in character, drawing first and foremost from the evidence in the landscape, not from the paradigms of history. It seeks to shift the focus away from the elite to consider how all parts of society lived in, experienced, and shaped the landscape. That is not to say that the important historical events of the period, such as Improvement and Clearance, will be ignored. The approach also intends to create a more nuanced view of Gaelic society where varied experiences are possible and where power is in flux across the social scale, not held by a unified elite in opposition to the homogenous mass below it. It will draw extensively on evidence from the Gaelic oral tradition which people used to make sense of and communicate understandings of their experience and the landscape. The concepts of landscape discussed in the previous section form the theoretical basis of the approach. In the following section, the approach is outlined in detail, drawing on the three themes of embodiment, practice, and narrative.

3.3.1 Embodiment

The approach to landscape in this thesis includes several theories which put embodied encounters at the heart of understanding how it is created and experienced. As has already been discussed in section 3.2, a number of general criticisms can be made of all these approaches. One is the problem of linking the embodied experiences and 'affects' of today to those experienced by people in the past, an idea that has been critiqued for theoretical, methodological, and taphonomic reasons. Aside from the challenges of reconstructing past environments, it has not been shown how the present-day archaeologist can understand the bodily experience of someone in the past when that body is both physically, culturally, and socially different and when experience of the landscape is similarly historically constituted. This has led to archaeologists populating past landscapes with culturally neutered agents who act in ways that reduce them simply to physical engagements with the environment. The challenge is to devise a methodology which takes the strength of embodied approaches, understanding the physicality of engagement with the world, while addressing as far as possible their weaknesses.

In theoretical terms, one of the key ways the approach used in this research diverges from that of Chris Tilley (1994) is in disagreeing with the suggestion that by engaging with the landscape in the present day the archaeologist can experience a past being-in-the-world and so 'live' or understand the experience of an individual in the past (Barret and Ko 2009: 280). Within the methodology of this thesis, the purpose of embodied engagement with the landscape is not to experience the past directly, but to glean experiential information from the present-day landscape which can later be used to furnish a narrative about life in the past. This experiential evidence will be gained through engagement with the landscape, primarily through walking, a practice that has extensive historical, philosophical, and theoretical connections with embodied approaches to landscape such as Tilley's phenomenology, psychogeography, and non-representational theory amongst others (Solnit 2001; Wylie 2005: 325). Route-walking has been a significant method employed in the research for this thesis. This involves walking a known route from the past landscape in order to consider the embodied experience of it, not walking to interpret the archaeological record. This is a search for the 'affects' of non-representational geography, not the 'results' of Tilley's phenomenological engagements with the landscape. Drawing from materiality, the approach will also be concerned with the tactile, embodied experience of the landscape and the objects within it, particularly flora and fauna. The information gleaned from this experiential, embodied fieldwork is not intended as an end in itself, but rather as part of the information that will eventually come together to construct narratives about life in the past.

The approach also intends to address some of the methodological difficulties with the use of embodied approaches in archaeology. Two strong criticisms of such approaches, particularly Tilley's, is that agents in the past are not historically and culturally constituted, and that the appearance and character of the landscape in the past cannot be known (Fleming 2006: 274-5). One method used to address the first point is to attempt to examine past archaeological landscapes during a very narrow and specific period of historical time, and in a very specific place and cultural setting. This thesis will not attempt to consider the possible 'prehistoric' or even 'pre-Improvement' experience; these ideas are by definition too broad to be considered embodied lived experiences of the past,

which must necessarily be of the moment. This thesis intends to imagine the landscape at a very specific time, within a generation or a single year or season, allowing for the account to be historically and culturally situated. This also approach addresses the second concern with using embodied approaches to understand past landscapes: an inability to be sure of the physical nature of the landscape in the past. This of course, relies on case studies where the sources provide sufficient information to do so.

For prehistory, it may be impossible to understand the nature of the ground-cover, the flaura and fauna that make up what Tilley called 'the skin of the land', even with extensive environmental analysis (Tilley 1994: 73). In some cases it may not even be possible to be sure of large geological landscape features (Fleming 2006: 274). However, this is not necessarily the case for the post-medieval period. The comparatively extensive and varied evidence base for the post-medieval landscape may not allow us to construct it in every detail, but it does often allow us to be more certain about the character and appearance of it. We may say that a route was in use at a certain time, this dwelling was thatched and inhabited by two families, that slope grew crops in the summer. In this way we may begin to consider the embodied experience of the past in a way which is more than a general consideration of the experience of the basic geography of the landscape, and it can be rooted in well-established historical fact. We may even be able to pinpoint certain experiences historically. For example, the historical evidence suggests that on Hiort, fulmar eggs were not eaten in the earlier 19th century, but were by the middle of the century (Harman 1997: 208) and so we can situate the embodied experience surrounding the eating of these eggs *temporally*, as well as geographically, imbuing them with their proper historical context.

For the prehistoric landscape archaeologist, the cultural associations within the landscape can only be a matter of, at best, educated guesswork. Not so for the post-medievalist. The nature of society and culture within Gaeldom in the 18th and 19th century, although complex and requiring further research, is a matter of historical record: travellers' accounts in English (Boswell 1785; Bray 1986; Burt 1974; Martin 1703) and collections of stories and song from the oral tradition of the period (Black 2001; Meek 2003; Ó Baoill 1994) sit alongside modern scholarly works on the subject (MacInnes 2006b, 2006c, 2006d; Newton

2009). While again an extremely incomplete record, it does allow us to culturally contextualise some embodied experiences in past landscapes. We can say, for example, that the fulmar has cultural associations with courtship (chapter 5.1), or that the experience of looking out to sea was a metaphor for loss in Gaelic culture (chapter 5.4). So too can we historically contextualise past people and communities, bearing in mind the way in which individual life-histories and past experiences shape how people experience the landscape. One particularly striking example (Ferguson 2006: 95) is a poem recorded by a collector on Hiort in the 1830s in which the author describes recognising the spadework of her husband within the peats placed on the hearth. This example provides us with experiential evidence that could never be gathered by modern-day field work. The archaeologist passing a peat bank may understand its function but will never recognise a loved one in the marks left by the *tairsgeir*, the peat-cutting spade. We can consider the experiences of the past then not from the viewpoint of the bland everyman so disparaged by Fleming (Fleming 2006: 276), but as the embodied actions of historically and culturally contextualised agents.

The key challenge of the approach then becomes undertaking sufficient historical and archaeological research to be able to reconstruct, confidently, elements of the lived experience of past landscapes. The classic methodological techniques of embodied approaches, such as walking, touching, and observing the affects of the landscape on the body, can then be used to illustrate these known past activities with evocative experiential evidence.

Narratives about the past which are based on closely and historically contextualised accounts of embodied experience may be by their very nature subversive of the 'big history' paradigms of previous approaches to the subject. By definition, an embodied experience must be of a particular place and moment, unlike a generalised account of an historical process such as Improvement. An abstract historical paradigm which explains change over generations is not something which is physically experienced; digging a new ditch or being evicted from your dwelling is. It is hoped then that an embodied approach, carefully culturally and historically contextualised, will create understandings of the events of the past which come first from the landscape and from the experiences of those within it, and then may be developed to facilitate considerations of wider historical change and national trends and

developments, rather than drawing first on historical paradigms and then attempting to explain the evidence through the lens of these pre-existing narratives.

3.3.2 Practice

As has already been discussed, embodied approaches have been criticised for being too local and individualistic and so not exploring wider social, cultural or political aspects of life. Concepts of landscape which consider routine practice allow the research to supplement narratives about individual engagement with the landscape with the more social aspects of the interactions between people, tasks and objects within it. Routine practice draws in the landscape beyond the experience of one individual, encompassing the network of activities within the wider communal experience.

Pre-Improvement Gaeldom was a largely agricultural society, in which people tended to live in small nucleated settlements surrounded by their arable land and, further out, most of the other lands and resources they would need for subsistence (Dodgshon 2002: 25-32). The 'landscape' could be defined, in a way, by the pattern of routine practice within which the community was regularly engaged: frequent work in the unenclosed fields surrounding the dwellings, the centre of their world; further away the outfield, grazing for animals and areas of periodic cultivation; on the open moor or lower slopes above, the peatbanks created by generations of peat-cutting for fuel; in the hills, the summer sheiling where cattle were taken as part of a pattern of annual transhumance. It would be within the limit of these familiar routine tasks that most of the community would spend almost all of their time. This is not, of course, to say that the communities in these small highland townships were not caught up in much wider regional, even international processes of trade, power, and practice; and consideration of these wider links is an important part of this thesis. Rather, the local landscape of routine tasks presents a geographical scope which is both narrow, making historic landscape reconstruction achievable, and suitably fluid, allowing for wider considerations. To a large degree, routine practice has also bounded the studies in this approach temporally. The aim of considering the landscape in as narrow a time period as possible is necessarily dependent on the availability of historical evidence, but in the case of the South Uist case study,

the narratives are also temporally bounded by routine practice too. The period under discussion, a generation or so at the start of the 19th century, is naturally defined by the unique practices and experiences of that short-lived period of boom in the kelp trade.

Routine practice does not simply form a good basis upon which to define, temporally and geographically, the case studies in this thesis. Considering routine practice in the past is a key way in which narratives are formed about past landscape and experience. Ingold's (1993) theory of taskscape is a natural friend to the archaeologist. His idea that the landscape is created through routine practice, the tasks which are regularly undertaken by the community, is attractive as it is these very tasks which leave the greatest archaeological traces. One-off, transient events often leave little or no trace in the archaeological record, whereas those which are repeated time and time again are literally inscribed in the landscape; think of the deep track left in a busy place through repeated use. Much of the primary archaeological research in this thesis consists of understanding and interpreting the evidence of the taskscape, moving from physical remains to narratives about routine, repeated, embodied practice. In the context of post-medieval communities in Gaeldom, these activities are the annual tasks of subsistence and industry: farming, fishing, dwelling, and gathering and processing resources to pay the rent. However, by focusing only on these physical acts of routine practice, it would be easy to fall into the trap of creating a dry, economic account of life where working people become a homogenous mass, gears in a machine of economic history. Within the approach presented here, consideration is also given to the individual social and cultural aspects of routine experience. These include the metaphorical significance of certain objects and activities, the social make-up of those who are included and excluded, and the biographies of people and their tasks in the recent history of the community.

Routine practice is, then, a key aspect of how past landscapes are reconstructed in this thesis. It is the evidence of routine practice which most survives in the archaeological record and which is then interpreted to furnish wider narratives about the landscape. Discussions of routine practices in a landscape are an excellent way of showing how the archaeological record is interpreted and giving a basic framework for understanding how landscapes operated. It is no mistake

then that the first discussion of each case study is a close consideration of a particular set of routine tasks in the landscape.

The *practice* of the approach used here draws on the theory and method outlined in section 3.2. The practice of microhistory is a key part of the approach, not least as it works well within the already narrow temporal and geographical scope of the case studies. Microhistory encourages us to turn the lens onto the small, and the specific: the opposite of the great historical paradigms which encourage the creation of wider models and the identification of global trends. The challenge of microhistory is of 'polishing a lens capable of the deeper depth of field necessary to bring worlds at once small and grand into full relief' (Walton *et al*. 2008: 12). In practice, this means detailed landscape reconstruction to reveal compelling narratives which may throw light on wider trends. Walking is also a key practice in this thesis. As already discussed, it draws together many theoretical traditions related to embodied practice, but it too is something practical that can be done, a way in which to probe and investigate the landscape. The practice of walking and travelling does not need to involve muddy boots. Where the physicality of past landscapes is harder to engage with, the idea of mental travelling from psychogeography, *robinsonner,* is used as a practical method of exploring the intangible landscape of culture and myth. It should be stressed that narrative, the next theme under discussion, is also a form of practice. In the approach used in this research, the creating of narratives, and the inclusion and examination of narratives from the past, is also an important part of the method.

3.3.3 Narrative

Within the approach, embodied engagements with the landscape form a key part of drawing experiential evidence from the environment and considering lived, individual experience. Considering routine practice places these individual engagements into the wider social world of the community, with its repeated communal and individual acts and practices, its biography, and landscape of cultural meaning. But it is the narrative aspect of the approach which ties together the information gleaned from the other two themes into useful accounts which shed light on past experiences and upon wider considerations about landscape and society. As well as informing multiple sections of

archaeological 'storytelling', narrative guides the final form of this thesis, shaping its structure, form, and overall aesthetic. On a more basic level, this approach also draws heavily on the narrative of the post-medieval past in a literal sense, incorporating the stories and songs of Gaelic oral tradition. Drawing on the culture of the people under study and using mediums of expression they would have understood is also an important interpretive tool.

Narratives from the Oral Tradition

At a practical level, the use of Scottish Gaelic (*Gàidhlig*) sources in an English academic text is challenging, particularly for myself as a non-Gaelic-speaking author. These challenges range beyond the prosaic difficulties of ensuring consistency of spelling discussed in the note at the start of this thesis, to more difficult issues of colonialism and the place of Gaelic in contemporary Scottish society. Although there have been significant advances in the place and recognition of Gaelic in public life such as in Gaelic-medium education, in Scotland's Parliament, and in the centres of Gaelic scholarship in our universities and colleges, 'Scotland's overall relationship with its Gaelic dimension remains ambivalent and, as yet, unresolved' (MacLean and Dorgan 2002: 3). It is certainly not the remit of this thesis to tackle these issues, but what follows is a brief discussion of the approach to the language and its oral tradition within this thesis.

The place of the oral tradition within Gaelic society, the surviving resource, and the possibilities for its use in archaeology have already been explored in a paper which stemmed from early research as part of this thesis (Grant 2014). Song and story were a ubiquitous part of everyday life in the post-medieval *Gàidhealtachd*. They were a constant soundtrack and the main form of education, entertainment, and social commentary during meetings called *cèilidhean* (singular *cèilidh*) which occurred regularly in all Highland communities (Carmichael 1900: xxii-xxiv). At the higher end of the social scale the oral tradition was employed in the praise and dispraise of the elite, in propagandising, and providing entertainment through prose tales and heroic ballads (Gillies 1987). This high-status classical tradition in the courts of the elite lay at one end of a spectrum that included comedic songs in the vernacular by *bàird baile,* village bards (Cregeen and MacKenzie 1987), songs of serious social commentary that circulated across the *Gàidhealtachd* through word of

mouth and, by the 18th century, published collections of song in Gaelic by literate and illiterate composers alike (Grant 2014: 31-3; MacGregor 2002). The tradition is extensive and varied, but on the whole, the vast majority of it was intended to be *performed*. The words 'song' and 'poem' are used interchangeably in this thesis, but this is an artefact of the nature of the material in the present rather than any formal separation of the two in the past. It also reflects a changing trend within Gaelic culture from performance towards reading that reflects changes in the nature of Gaelic-speaking communities in the 20th century. As South Uist poet Dhòmhnaill Ailein Dhòmhnaill na Bainich reflected, 'once we wrote songs to be sung, now we write poems to be read' (MacDhòmhnaill 2001: XX). In reality, almost all of the 'poems' we have are likely to have been performed as songs, although there was probably a spectrum between poetry and song just as there is a spectrum between orality and literature (MacInnes 2006a; Newton 2009: 83). Within this thesis, I have often approached this difficult issue by placing the words of the tradition in the mouths of characters in the landscape, attempting to show that it was intended to be performed and had a physical and social context.

Whilst undoubtedly the great majority of the tradition has been lost, a significant portion survives, and for those without Gaelic there is now a good body of translated scholarly works on the topic (Black 2001; Clancy 1998; Cregeen 1998; Grimble 1979; Kidd 2007; Meek 2003; Newton 1999, 2009; Ó Baoill 1994) which complement 20th-century collections of oral tradition with translations (e.g.Shaw 2007; Shaw 1977). However, this still means working with translations, and this is inherently problematic. Most significantly, the elements of rhyming and metre in the original Gaelic are almost entirely lost, although these can often be recovered in part through the detailed notes on the poems which appear in almost all modern edited collections of translations (for example, the detailed discussion of the structure of *Mìosan na Bliadhna* in Black 2000: XVII-XVIII). Although an appreciation of these aspects of songs and poems would be ideal, in this landscape-level study the broad meaning and specific activities, places, objects, and people discussed within the material are the most pertinent aspects, although these too can be lost through translation. Even within edited works (e.g.MacLean and Dorgan 2002: 6), translations often range from literal, near-direct, prose translations to poems in English loosely based on

the original works. Translations can therefore be startlingly different from each other and from the intended meaning and character of the Gaelic original. This is particularly true of Victorian or early 20th-century translations. For example, Alasdair MacMhaighstir Alasdair's epic sea poem *Birlinn Chlann Raghnaill,* which is an important source for chapters 5.4 and 5.6, has an early 20th-century translation that is wildly different from the original and is essentially a typical poem of the period loosely based on the subject matter (MacDonald 1924). Another translation is fairly direct with some attempt to present some poetic characteristics in English, written by a Gaelic-speaking academic with accompanying notes (Black 2001: 203). A third interpretation is an evocative and exciting interpretation by the Scots poet Hugh MacDiarmid (who was not a Gaelic-speaker) translated with the help of Gaelic poet Somhairle MacGill-Eain (MacDiarmid 1978), and a fourth is a modern reimagining of the text which lies somewhere between (or indeed fluctuates between) a total reworking and a literal translation (Riach 2015). In these cases, the approach is to consult all translations available, favouring that which has the clearest accompanying notes and cleaves closest to the original. In addition, Gaelic dictionaries (Dwelly 1993; Mark 2003; Robertson and MacDonald 2004) were consulted where necessary to attempt to bring further insight and clarity into translations. The Gaelic original text is also given where extended passages of oral tradition are discussed to allow others to make their own interpretations of the source material.

It is also to be considered that the mere fact of the reader or listener being a native Gaelic-speaker does not on its own open up the worlds of meaning and imagery within many of these historic works. A modern Gaelic-speaker is not likely to understand much of the contextual information, symbolic imagery, or even linguistic nuance which the author intended when the work was composed, perhaps centuries before. Just as modern English-speakers require extended notes to understand the work of Shakespeare, so might a modern Gaelic-speaker require further knowledge to understand much post-medieval Gaelic poetry. 20th-century Gaelic poet Somhairle MacGille-Eain (Sorley MacLean), bemoaned the state of the language in 1943: 'exact shades of its meanings not to be found in any of its dictionaries and dialectically varying enormously (what chance of the appreciation of the overtones of poetry, except among a handful?)'(McLean 1943 in Haldane 2007: 47). Although his prediction of the language being extinct

'in a generation or two' (Haldane 2007: 47) did not come to pass, it is worth considering how much the language may have changed. Is it reasonable to expect a 21st-century Gaelic-speaker to understand much of the linguistic nuance even of 20th-century Gaelic poetry that MacGille-Eain suggests was largely lost by the 1940s?

One must also consider that for any historical source, knowledge of local and historical context is likely to be essential to understanding the content. Much of the Gaelic poetry and song which survives today is deeply political and social in content; the work of some of the most famous Gaelic poets such as Alasdair MacMhaighstir Alasdair, Màiri Mhòr nan Òran, and Rob Donn (and many others, see Black 2001; Meek 2003) is steeped in the national and local politics of the moment. A basic understanding of the politics and society of the relevant period is an essential requirement for understanding the meaning of the oral traditional record. It is suggested then that, whilst certainly desirable, being a Gaelic-speaker does not grant the ability to understand 18th or 19th century tradition; perhaps more importantly, not speaking Gaelic does not bar the researcher from gaining useful insight into the past from the oral tradition. This thesis will employ a critical approach to the material which draws on extensive research on the subject (Grant 2014) to allow for the sensitive use of material which has been largely absent from previous historical accounts of the period.

Archaeological Storytelling

Narratives are used in several key ways in this thesis. At the most basic, they are used as a form of historical evidence, but they also form important narrative frameworks around which are based extended discussions of the experience of landscapes in the past. In section 5.4, a Gaelic poem about the passing of the seasons on South Uist is used to frame a wider narrative about the marine environment and its seasonality. Each verse of the poem, about a different season, precedes a discussion of the character of the landscape at that time of year. Frequently, passages of fictional narrative also appear in the text as an important part of communicating ideas about the past, and driving and framing discussion. Sometimes, as in section 5.6, these serve as introductory material, outlining the themes to be explored in the chapter in what is hoped is a thought-provoking and evocative manner. Elsewhere, as in section 5.4, the fictional narrative is the 'finished product' of the chapter, bringing together all the forms

of evidence from the landscape and the various topics discussed in a synthesis that then makes a wider point about the experience of the landscape. More commonly (section 5.1, 5.2 and 5.5), narrative sections intersperse the text, creating a framework within which more a traditional academic argument is woven and explored. The intent of such narrative passages is to explore new viewpoints in ways which differ from traditional academic discourse. Historical themes and paradigms such as Improvement or Clearance are narratives in themselves, so the use of narrative as a means of making sense of the past is not novel. It is rather the forms of narrative which are being used, songs and stories from the oral tradition and fiction - which are novel. It is hoped that these forms of narrative do not encourage traditional causal and deterministic historical meta-narratives, but tell stories which encourage a vision of the world as 'messy, incoherent, and ruled by contingencies and indeterminacy' (Pluciennik 1999: 659).

This thesis, as a finished product, has been created with the intent that it should operate as a single narrative, both presenting stories about the past landscapes of the case studies and acting as an academic narrative about how archaeologists choose to create understandings of the past. The idea of narrative has been fundamental to many of the decisions about the final form of this thesis. It informs the structuring of the six main discussion sections focussed around the two case study areas. The sections alternate between the two case studies, structured to present a narrative flow of ideas which runs through both, starting with more specialised discussions of fowling and kelping respectively in the first two sections, and gradually addressing wider and more complex ideas of society and power, building in complexity as the reader's knowledge of the case studies increases. The decision to structure the section this way, rather than dealing with each case study in turn, was driven by the idea of narrative and the pleasing progression of ideas and images one would hope to find in a good story, which should serve to make the academic argument of the thesis more evocative and convincing.

Narrative too was a guiding principle in considering how theory will be used in this thesis. If we take the image of a well-made piece of furniture, one would not expect the final piece to be covered in visible toolmarks. This is the approach of this thesis to the use of theory; it will be kept, where possible,

separate from the final 'polished' products of narratives. Although each main discussion chapter discusses the theory and approach that was used to create the narratives within it, these are used 'softly'; the marks of their use do not show through in the landscape narratives of case studies. That is not to say, however, that there is not a strong relationship between the overall approach and the final narratives. The theories and practices explored under the theme of embodiment and practice are used to create the initial shape of the landscape in the past, pared down to a narrow geographical and temporal focus, whilst also informing the narratives within the landscape which are selected for final study. The evidence base for the case studies naturally presents areas and themes which can be more easily explored in detail, but the theoretical concerns of embodiment, practice, and narrative which are key to the approach also inform what themes and narratives will be selected out of the partially reconstructed past landscape for further discussion. In this way the case study landscapes, and their body of historical and archaeological evidence, are in a reflexive relationship with the underlying theory and approach to this thesis. It is from this relationship that the final form of the narratives emerges.

This thesis is intended to create a coherent argument, an original academic narrative. But it also represents an attempt to create an overarching narrative, with a certain aesthetic. The prologue and epilogue sections, coupled with many of the images and quotations throughout the text, are intended to bind the thesis together into a coherent narrative with a distinctive 'feel' of its own. The intention here is to ensure that as well as achieving the aim of creating and appraising a new approach to the study of the post-medieval Highlands and Islands, the thesis operates in its own novel way of communicating narrative about life and landscape in the past. This approach is not simply an effort to spice up boring text or to provide an outlet for unfulfilled ambition as a writer of fiction. It is a crucial part of an approach which seeks to put narrative at the heart of the project of exploring the experience of landscape in the past.

4. Introduction to the Case Studies

Having made the case for a new approach to the post-medieval Highlands and Islands which seeks to create new narratives about life in the past, and outlined the theoretical and methodological models which have been used to do so, the discussion will now turn to the case study landscapes. This short chapter provides the wider context for the narratives that follow in chapter 5, while also explaining why these case studies were deemed suitable for this research. The geographical location, general character, and brief history of each of the case studies are outlined. In addition, a critical appraisal of previous archaeological and historical approaches to the landscapes appears here. This serves to show that many previous accounts of these specific landscapes exhibit some general problems, already discussed, that characterise many approaches to the wider place and period.

4.1 Hiort

Geographical Setting

The archipelago of Hiort, known in English as St Kilda, lies 46 miles west of the Outer Hebrides, which themselves lie off the west coast of Scotland (Scottish Executive 2003). Today, the islands are owned by the National Trust for Scotland and have been designated a dual World Heritage Site, inscribed for both their natural and cultural values - the only such site in the UK and at the time of writing one of only 32 in the world. The archipelago comprises four main islands - Hirte, Sòthaigh, Boraraigh and Dùn - and a collection of skerries and sea stacs, one of which, Stac an Àrmainn, is the tallest in the British Isles. In geographical terms at least, the islands lie in splendid isolation. From the high places on this volcanic archipelago, on most days the observer will see a disc of sea unbroken by land in any direction. In better conditions, perhaps one day in three, the hills of South Uist are visible (Figure 4.2.1), and occasionally the entirety of the Hebridean island chain lies strung across half the horizon, from Barra Head in the south to Ness in the north.
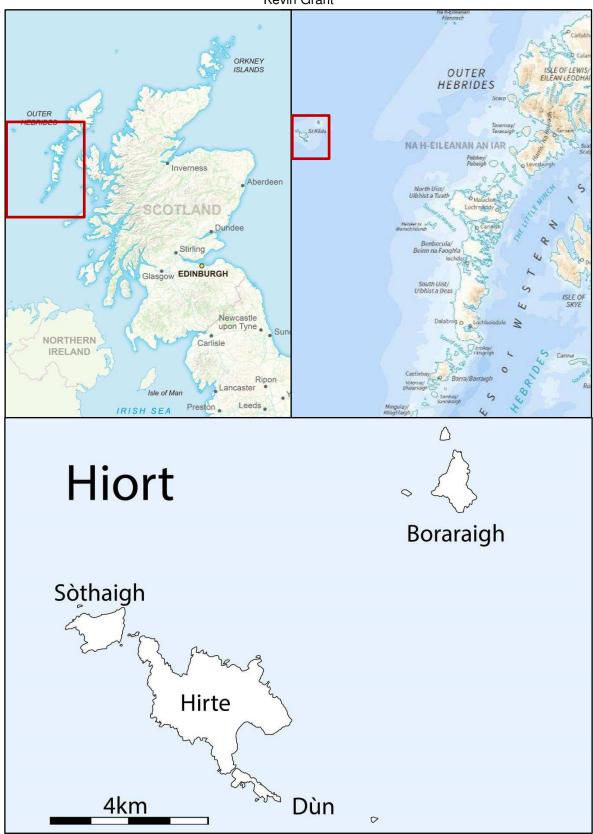
Figure 4.1.1. Location map of the archipelago of Hiort, also showing its main islands. K. Grant, contains OS data © Crown copyright and database right (2016).
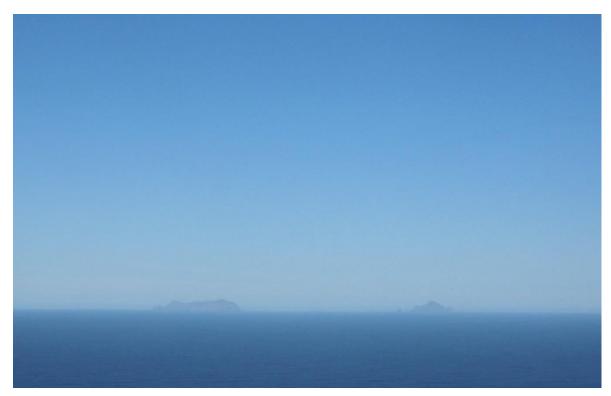
Figure 4.1.2. Approaching the archipelago of Hiort from the west. The largest island, Hirte, is on the left, with Dùn and Sòthaigh lying just to the south and north respectively. On the right, the island of Boraraigh stands surrounded by its dramatic sea stacks. © K. Grant.

Hirte, the largest island, has probably always been the focus of settlement (Geddes and Gannon 2015: 7). Dùn, a long, tall, thin island, is connected to Hirte at its southernmost point by rocks exposed at low tide. Sòthaigh lies just off the north-west of Hirte, separated by a narrow channel filled with sea stacs and fast tidal currents. Boraraigh lies a few kilometres to the north-east, surrounded by sea stacs. Hirte is roughly bisected by a ridge which defines two glens, each with a sheltered sea-loch. To the north lies An Gleann Mòr, a boggy glen exposed to the worst of the winter gales. To the south lies Village Bay (its Gaelic name is not known – the Gaelic name given on the most recent OS maps is simply a direct translation of an anachronistic English one). It is this southern glen that is the most iconic, home to the remains of the island's 19th-and-20th century settlement, and to a Ministry of Defence (MoD) base today. It forms a natural bowl which opens to the south east, enclosing a body of water which local Gaelic-speaking boat operators call 'the loch'. The original Gaelic name of this body is not known – Gaelic names on recent OS maps are anachronisms which are not recorded historically (Harman 1997: Appendix 2). Within this glen lie the extensive remains of a crofting settlement dating to the 19th and 20th centuries. A head dyke encloses much of the arable land which is bisected east-west by a roughly-built street along which the remains of houses and croft buildings can be seen. An MoD facility dating to the 1950s lies at the eastern end

of the village, where an early 19th-century church and manse survive, along with an 18th-century storehouse and a 19th-century jetty (Figure 4.1.3). Outside Village Bay, the most prominent concentration of remains is the sheiling site in An Gleann Mòr once known as An Àirigh Mhòr, the Big Sheiling (Harman 1997: 326). *Cleitean* (singular *cleit*), are small stone-built multi-purpose storage huts unique to these islands. There are over 1300 of them scattered across the archipelago making them a prominent landscape feature (Gannon and Geddes 2015: 89).

Figure 4.1.3. Village Bay, Hirte, seen from the east, the 'street', with its 19th-and-20th-century settlement remains, can be seen near the centre of the image. The modern MoD facility can be seen in the centre left. © K. Grant.

Hiort – Themes in History

Archaeological evidence on the islands shows that people have been interacting with them for thousands of years (their prehistory is best described in Fleming 2005; Gannon and Geddes 2015; Harden and Lelong 2011). References to the islands are scarce in the documentary record until the late 16th century, but the small amount of archaeology that can be attributed to the high and late medieval periods (Harden and Lelong 2011: 184-6) appears to suggest that the way of life on the islands was not dramatically different from elsewhere in the Western Isles, or indeed on the other lands overseen by the MacLeods, who were

overlords of the islands. In the 17th century, documentary references suggest that settlement was restricted to a single nucleated township in Village Bay (Harden and Lelong 2011: 188). It was previously thought that 19th-century reordering of the landscape utterly destroyed the preceding *baile*, but recent archaeological work suggests that this was not the case, opening up the possibility for a greater understanding of pre-Improvement Hiort (Fleming 2003; Geddes and Gannon 2015: 74-6). It is from this period that an increasing number of travellers' accounts become available. What began as a trickle of visitors in the 17th century (Martin 1703; Munro 1999) was by the 19th century a flood (Brougham 1871; Buchan 1727; Campbell 1799; MacAulay 1764; MacGillivray 1842; MacLean 1838; MacLeod 1814; Milner 1848; Seton 1878).

Engagement by the islanders in the wider political events of the 18th century was comparable to the experience of their fellow Gaels in the rest of the Outer Hebrides. The *Hiortaich* had little involvement with the Jacobite uprisings, but this was probably more in keeping with the wider low level of Hebridean manpower engaged in the conflict than any particular remoteness or insularity (MacKillop 2012: 20). Three landings by government troops in 1746 searching for the fugitive Charles Edward Stuart demonstrate that the islands were by no means cut off from political events in the rest of the nation. Recruiting took place from Hiort during the Seven Years War (MacKillop 2012: 24), and if parallels can be drawn with the rest of the Western Isles, the British Army and Navy are likely to have remained part of life from that point on. Indeed, the MoD remains an integral part of life in both the Uists and Hiort today.

In the 1830s, in parallel with the changes occurring elsewhere in the West Highlands and Islands (Hunter 1976), the nucleated settlement was swept away in favour of an 'Improved' crofting landscape with blackhouses aligned along a 'street' with long, linear, individual crofts running perpendicular to it (Fleming 2005: 128-9; Geddes and Gannon 2015: chapter 6). This generation of 1830s blackhouses was replaced by a newer generation of mortared, gable-ended, houses in the 1860s, this time aligned facing 'the street' rather than end-on as the blackhouses had been. The 19th century also saw the *Hiortaich* engage with developing markets on the mainland by adapting their fowling activities to harvest sea-birds and their products, such as eggs and feathers, suitable for export and, later in the century, increasing their output of tweed (Fleming 2005:

33). From the last quarter of the 19th century, more regular and dependable steamer traffic increased economic opportunities through export and increasingly, tourism (Geddes and Gannon 2015: chapter 6; Harman 1997: 119-20).

The First World War brought not only a shelling by a U-boat of the island's wireless station, but also an opportunity for the young men of the island to see more of the world and a significant increase in contact with outsiders for those who remained. Although the population of the island had been fairly steady since the 1850s (Harman 1997: 124), the period after the war saw dramatic depopulation as many of the young left to marry off-island, to seek a better quality of life, or to avoid serious privations brought about by poor harvests and changing export markets (Harman 1997: 122; Steel 1965: 193-8). In 1930, with the population at a mere 36, the *Hiortach* petitioned to be evacuated from the island. This took place on the 19th of August 1930, leaving Hiort uninhabited for the first time in hundreds of years.

This vacancy was short-lived however, as the first 'scientific' expedition to the islands after evacuation took place in 1931, with five returning *Hiortaich* accompanying Oxford lecturers and students (Fleming 2005: 187) for the season. The 1930s saw a fairly steady stream of visitors, naturalists, tourists, and *Hiortaich* who returned during the summer to take up their former occupations, despite the island being nominally a bird sanctuary (Fleming 2005: 190; Geddes and Gannon 2015: chapter 7; Steel 1965: 123). The military installation which dominates much of the east end of Village Bay today was constructed in 1957 as part of a missile testing range, and remains the source of all the utilities on Hirte, making the current use of the island practicable. By the time the islands were granted dual World Heritage Site status in 2005, life on Hiort had already settled into a fairly stable summer season of research, conservation, and tourism, with a smaller occupation during the winter comprised solely of defence contractors QinetiQ.

Hiort – A Critical Historiography

Until recently, the story of Hiort in the modern period seemed clear-cut. By the 19th century when George Seton (1878) published the first popular general

account, the islands had already been of wide interest in Britain for 200 years. Building on the numerous publications about the islands that already existed (e.g. Atkinson 2001; Campbell 1799; MacAulay 1764; Sands 1877; Sands 1878), Seton summarised a popular consensus: Hiort was a unique and static past-in-the-present peopled by a noble, but backward, race of hardy 'aboriginal' people. These people happily conformed to Victorian racial stereotypes and fashionable stadial understandings of human history and 'development' (Curwen 1938; Dalglish 2002: 477-81; Fleming 2005: 4-6). The story of Hiort fitted readily into many significant ideologies of the day such as the sublime, romantic notions of the Scottish nation, evangelical Protestantism, and Empire. This is probably no accident; it has been argued, convincingly, that Hiort played a key role in *forming and producing* many of these ideologies, not simply as a theoretical victim of them (MacDonald 2001).

In the 20th century, less than a decade after the construction of a British Army facility on the islands (codenamed Operation Hardrock), a young journalist, Tom Steel, published what remains the iconic account of the island's history, *The Life and Death of St. Kilda* (Steel 1965). Drawing on post-evacuation ideas from human geography and elsewhere (MacGregor 1960), it added to the already well-entrenched story a narrative that life on the islands was dominated by isolation and the struggle for survival, and that the evacuation of the archipelago was as a result of the 'failure' of a backward and unique (even utopian) society to adapt to the increasingly encroaching outside world. The story was turned into a classical tragedy: a tale of decline and fall that remains both readable and popular. This meta-narrative, referred to by Fleming (2005: chapter 1) as 'the Hardrock Consensus', formed the basis of almost all the popular publications that followed (Ferguson 2006; Hutchinson 2014; MacLean 1977; Quine 1988; Quine and Baxter 1994; Small 1979; The Nature Conservancy Council 1998).

Aside from the teleology required in creating a history which had to lead inexorably to a known, tragic, 'end', there were serious issues with the archaeological interpretations of the landscape upon which the narrative was based. Work for RCAHMS between 1924 and 1964 presented a sober interpretation of the archaeological record that, in many ways, is very similar to the interpretation put forward by later more comprehensive works by the same body in both 1984 (Stell and Harman 1988) and 2015 (Gannon and Geddes 2015).

Work by RCAHMS and Ministry of Works Inspector Roy Ritchie saw in Hiort a classic, if unusually well-preserved, crofting landscape supplemented by an unusually rich historical record (Gannon and Geddes 2015: 21). Working in parallel and independently were a number of individuals who were significantly less qualified to produce narratives about life on the islands in the past. At best these interpretations were not well situated in terms of their regional context or were environmentally deterministic. A study by geographer Donald MacGregor saw the entire way of life on Hiort as dominated by a particularly severe climate (MacGregor 1960), an interpretation which had seemingly little understanding of the relative normalcy of the climate of Hiort in the region, nor the equally, if not more, isolated islands and communities nearby, such as North Rona. At worst, these interpretations were damagingly fanciful. A particularly striking example comes from naturalists John Morton Boyd and Kenneth Williamson who commented of the sheiling site in An Gleann Mòr 'could it be (we often wondered) that this, the remotest glen in all Scotland, on the very brink of Europe, once cradled a forgotten culture?' (Boyd and Williamson 1960: 67). Unfortunately it was these ultimately naive ideas, at odds with contemporary understandings of the archaeology, that informed both the influential Steel and many other writers (Geddes and Gannon 2015: 22). Looking back, it often appears that many chose to draw from these more fantastic interpretations as they presented exciting narratives that more readily fitted with pre-existing romantic and historical notions of the Hebrides, than the more dry (though sound) interpretations put forward by archaeologists.

While some archaeologists have accepted these narratives uncritically (Emery 1996), most modern archaeological work on Hiort has seen the Hardrock Consensus increasingly challenged. The publication of the ethnographic reference work *An Isle Called Hirte* (Harman 1997), based on a PhD, was an important milestone as it was by far the most comprehensive bringing-together of the available evidence on the archipelago to date. It is complemented by an exhaustive summary of historical and documentary evidence in the form of a door-stoppingly comprehensive publication by Michael Robson in 2005. The early 2000s saw the first publications which explicitly challenged the Hardrock Consensus and examined its origins (Fleming 2005; MacDonald 2001), and archaeological fieldwork which has significantly improved our understanding of

the islands' prehistory (Harden and Lelong 2011). Finally, in 2015 RCAHMS published the results of extensive survey and research in what is certainly the most comprehensive, reliable, and thoroughly well-contextualised account so far (Geddes and Gannon 2015). The counter-narrative which has recently been so well represented by the RCAHMS volume, in addition to critiquing past approaches, has sought to place the island much more firmly in its regional context, conceptualising Hiort not as a place of uniqueness and isolation but as a fairly typical Hebridean community that was well-connected to regional cultural and social systems and emerging national economic and political ideologies. This counter-narrative has increasingly gained traction in academic contexts (Fleming 1999a, 2003, 2005; Gannon and Geddes 2015; Geddes and Grant 2015; Geddes and Watterson 2013; Harden and Lelong 2011) and in in-house reports within the National Trust for Scotland (Geddes 2011), but it remains to be seen if it will filter through to the popular texts read by tourists and the wider public.

Thus, at time of writing, the historiography of the archipelago is in limbo. The dominant narrative of Hiort found in historic and contemporary popular publications, shared and shored up by the public imagination, coexists uncomfortably with a small counter-narrative known only to a small group of professionals. Consequentially any new narratives of Hiort history and archaeology (including those which appear later in this volume) appear unnecessarily iconoclastic and controversial, and must be necessarily dualistic, existing in opposition to the old one. It is notable too that the voices of the *Hiortiach* themselves are largely absent from these accounts, existing in only one published work (Gillies 2010) and in the tape recordings of the School of Scottish Studies.

Hiort – An Ideal Case Study

It is hoped it has already become apparent why Hiort makes an ideal case study for the thesis. It has extremely extensive and varied evidence-base, which ranges from good archaeological remains, to travellers' accounts, oral tradition, and extensive secondary historical considerations. It has been remarked that despite the fact that the size of the archipelago is comparable to that of Heathrow airport, it is probably one of the most extensively written-about landscapes in the world (Fleming 2005: 1). The oral tradition in particular is well-published, well-documented (Ferguson 2006) and demonstrably fairly

typical of the region (Harman 1997: 230). It comes from a number of sources, including ministers on the islands, scholarly outsiders with an interest in oral tradition, and the publication of songs for a popular audience. Many of the poems can be traced to specific periods through close study of their publication dates and means of transmission (Harman 1997: 238). The oral tradition provides an interesting foil to the accounts by outsiders which make up so much of the evidence, but has been rarely used in previous studies of the islands. This represents an important opportunity to demonstrate the worth of the tradition in supplementing existing narratives and creating new ones. Another reason the case study was so attractive was that, at a relatively early stage of this research, I was offered, and accepted, the role of St Kilda Archaeologist for the National Trust for Scotland. This post allowed me to inhabit the landscape for three seasons, giving me an unprecedented opportunity to undertake fieldwork of various kinds.

The most important reason that Hiort acts as an ideal case study is that it is a microcosm of the study of the post-medieval Highlands and Islands. Like the rest of the Highlands and Islands, if not more so, it suffers the legacy of 19th-century traditions which used stadialist and romantic narratives to understand the past. Later studies were dominated by empirical approaches which occurred largely outside the wider developments of archaeology, particularly of a theoretically mature landscape archaeology. On Hiort, perhaps more than anywhere else, all the evidence has been subservient to furnishing a historical narrative of isolation, victimhood, tragedy, and uniqueness which has emerged from disciplines other than archaeology. That Hiort is ripe for a new approach is evidenced by the small counter-current of publications from the mid-2000s which have sought to unpick the dominant historical meta-narratives of previous approaches to the islands (Fleming 2005; Geddes and Gannon 2015; Harden and Lelong 2011; MacDonald 2001). Hiort therefore represents an excellent opportunity to show that a novel approach can create new narratives about the past even in a landscape which has already seen extensive research. Most importantly, as has been remarked elsewhere in print, in untangling the problematic narrative around Hiort, we can also shed light on past landscapes in the wider region and the character of previous historical and archaeological approaches to them (Geddes and Grant 2015: 159-61).

The physical character of Hirte as a small island makes it ideal for a localised landscape study, whilst the rich evidence-base allows for focusing down to a specific period. This was achieved by considering the available evidence after a detailed literature review of Hiort had been undertaken. The first two decades of the 19th century presented themselves as particularly appropriate as they predate the major reorganisation of the landscape in the 1830s (Fleming 2005: 128-38). This would place the discussion firmly in the period of the pre-Improvement settlement described by Fleming (Fleming 2003), a settlement which has been rarely considered or described by previous work. There are also a number of travellers' accounts dating to this period (Brougham 1871; Campbell 1802; Campbell 1799; MacCulloch 1819, 1824; MacLeod 1814; Robson 2005) and from a generation before (MacAulay 1764) and a generation or two later (MacGillivray 1842; Milner 1848) which provide context. In addition, the largest collection of oral tradition from Hiort was compiled in the 1830s (MacKenzie 1905, 1906) some of which had also been collected and published a generation before, proving their currency in the intervening period (Campbell 1802). 1812 was chosen as the focus of study as the first useful images of life on Hiort, a series of watercolours, date to that year (Acland 1981). It should be noted that this thesis presents an essentially fictional 1812, an evocation of how events may have transpired in that year based on available evidence for the cultural and historical context: one that in most respects could probably have taken place in any of the years in that decade, or perhaps in that generation.

4.2   Tìr a' Mhurain – Loch Aoineart

Figure 4.2.1. The Mountains of South Uist, seen from Hirte. Levenis, Hiort in foreground. © K. Grant.

'An t-eilean uain' bàidheil `s e cuartaicht' le sàile,

Bidh nuallan an làin anns na bàigh air gach taobh:

Tha `n Cuan an-Iar mun cuairt air le gairge an uabhais,

Toirt bàirlinn tha cruaidh dhuinn nuair ghluaiseas a` ghaoth;

Toirt beairteas gu `chòrsa, toirt feamainn do na cròicean,

Toirt pailteas de bheòshlaint is stòras is maoin –

Tha eunlaith a' tàmh ann, tha biadh do'n cuid àil ann,

Tha `n t-seamrag as àille a' fàs air na raoin

The loving green island that's surrounded by brine,

The roar of the tide fills the bays on each side:

The Atlantic surrounds it with its appalling ferocity,

Giving us harsh warning when the wind begins to move;

Bringing wealth to its coast, and seaweed to the rocks,

Bringing plenty of livelihood and money and wealth –

Birds make their nests there, there's food for their brood there,

And the loveliest clover grows on the fields'

- *Eilean Uibhist*, Dòmhnall Aonghais Bhàin (2000: 36-8)

Geographical Setting

'The Uists' comprise much of the southern half of Innse Gall, known in English as the Outer Hebrides or Western Isles, a long chain of islands scattered in a rough north-south arc off Scotland's west coast. The archipelago is a collection of hundreds of islands from Berneray (Beàrnaraigh) in the south to Rubha

Robhanais, the Butt of Lewis, in the north. Scattered around the main chain of islands is a handful of smaller once-inhabited islands such as Hiort in the west and Sula Sgeir and Rònaigh (North Rona) to the extreme north. The group, often collectively known as 'the Uists' in English and Uibhist in Gaelic, has three main inhabited islands: South Uist, Uibhist a Deas, with its high mountains and rugged sealochs; its northern counterpart North Uist, Uibhist a Tuath, contrastingly flat and boggy; and, linking the two, Beinn 'a Fhaoghla, Benbecula, with its white beaches, tidal flats, and post-war causeways. Today, as in the 18th and 19th centuries, the islands are divided by religion, with South Uist and Barra to the south being predominantly Catholic and Benbecula and all the Hebridean islands to the north being Protestant.

The largest of these islands is South Uist. Sprinkled liberally with small lochs and lochans, from the air it appears more water than land. It can be split longitudinally into three zones of distinctive character: in the west the land meets sea in fertile *machair* (a flat, fertile, sandy grassland), high dunes, beaches of white sand, and crystal-clear shallow waters; to the east high mountains plunge into deep sea-lochs; between these is a ribbon of blacklands, peaty ground pockmarked with lochans, that is home to much of the present-day settlement (Parker Pearson *et al*. 2004: 9). It is the fertility of the *machair* and blacklands to which South Uist owes its Gaelic epithet - Tìr a' Mhurain; Land of the Marram-Grass. Its northern sister is known as Tìr an Eòrna, Land of Barley (Dòmhnall Aonghais Bhàin 2000: XV).

South Uist – Themes in History

South Uist has been selected as a case study in large part due to its rich historical and archaeological evidence base. Human occupation of the Hebrides began as early the 8th millennium BC (Benjamin *et al*. 2014: 408) and, thanks largely to work undertaken from the late 1980s onwards as part of the Sheffield Environmental and Archaeological Research Campaign in the Hebrides (SEARCH) project, there has been extensive archaeological investigation which illuminates the story of human occupation of the islands from prehistory to the present day (Branigan and Foster 2000, 2002; Parker Pearson 2012; Parker Pearson *et al*. 2004; Parker Pearson and Zvelebil 2014; Sharples 2005). This recent work builds upon an impressive history of antiquarian and 20th-century
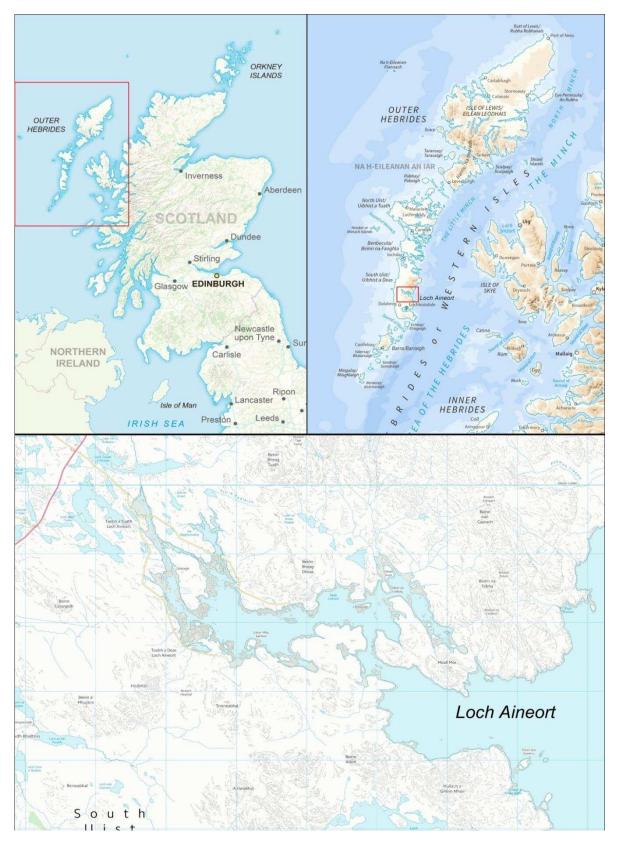
Figure 4.2.2. Location map of Loch Aoineart, Uist. K. Grant, Mapping data contains OS data © Crown copyright and database right (2016).

interest, survey, and excavation in the area (Carmichael 1884; Crawford 1986; RCAHMS 1928; The Carmichael Watson Project 2013; Thomas 1857, 1860, 1870). This extensive archaeological work, combined with documentary resources such

as the New and Old Statistical Accounts (MacLean 1841; Munro 1799), estate records and letters (Blackadder 1800), official state documents such as census records and legal papers (the contents and nature of these are well-summarised in MacLean 1989, 2012), cartographic sources (Bald 1805a, 1805b, 1829; Caird 1989), travellers' accounts (many of which are summarised in Bray 1986), and general historical accounts (Caird 1979; Gregory 1881; MacDonald and MacDonald 1904; MacKenzie 1903; MacLean 1984), means that South Uist has a relatively nuanced and well-travelled historiography. Detailed treatises on the condition of agriculture in the Hebrides by improvers (MacDonald 1811; Walker 1980), coupled with information from the Statistical Accounts, provide an excellent foundation for an analysis of the islands' agricultural economy to be created (Smith 2012). In addition to this, the 19th-and-20th-century Gaelic culture of the island is unusually well-recorded due to the work of Margaret Fay Shaw, John Lorne Campbell, and others in collecting oral tradition both in South Uist and from émigrés in Canada (Bennet 1996; Campbell 1860; Campbell 1999; Carmichael 1971; MacDonald 1991; MacLellan 1997; Shaw 1977). The existence of many prominent traditional bards in the community in the 20th century with published and translated work is also unusual and provides insight into more contemporary Gaelic views of the Uists (Dòmhnall Aonghais Bhàin 2000; Dòmhnall Ruadh Choruna 1969; Mac an t-Saoir 1968; MacDhòmhnaill 2001; MacDonald 1999).

Clear dominant narratives emerge about post-medieval South Uist from these sources. These are common to the historiography of Gaelic Scotland: Improvement, Jacobitism, the pitting of tenant against landlord, and Clearance. These regional or national narratives are represented by local characters and events. The fortunes of Clann Raghnaill (known in English as the MacDonalds of Clanranald), and their chiefs, known in Gaelic by their patronymic Mac 'ic Ailein, play a central role. Since the early 17th century, Mac 'ic Ailein had been based at Tobha Beag (MacLean 1989: 11), in the centre of the Uists and close to the ancient ecclesiastical centre of Tobha Mòr. In the 18th and 19th century, the estate was administered from Baile na Cailleach, known in English as Nunton, on Benbecula (Parker Pearson *et al.* 2004: 154-68). Clanranald was staunchly Jacobite; one chief was killed at Sheriffmuir in 1715 (Parker Pearson *et al.* 2004: 177) and after the 1745 rebellion Prince Charles Edward Stuart was briefly in

hiding at Coradail, just north over the hills from Loch Aoineart, from whence he was eventually spirited away to France in a plot masterminded by Clanranald's wife (MacLean 1989: 13-4).

The end of the 18th century saw a population boom which the island's economy of the time struggled to support (Parker Pearson *et al.* 2004: 172-4). Economic hardship, and wide-spread famine and ill-health, combined with attractive prospects for gaining land through military service (MacKillop 2012) and the ever present possibility of religious intolerance (Bumstead 1982: 366; Parker Pearson *et al.* 2004: 175), served to encourage emigration, which had become a 'fever' by 1800 (MacLean 2012: 359). A brief boom in the kelp industry brought on by the Napoleonic Wars had a transformative effect on the way of life and pattern of landholding as Clanranald sought to maximise profits from the estate (MacLean 2012: 368; Parker Pearson *et al.* 2004: 173). However, the collapse in the price of kelp almost immediately after the close of that conflict brought changes in economy that sparked Clearance and a surge in emigration, some of which was forced (Napier Commission 1884: 698-749). This emigration became wholesale exodus after the potato famine of 1846 brought desolation and starvation (Devine 1988: 1-57; MacLean 2012: 368-9; Parker Pearson *et al.* 2004: 174-5). This created a diaspora in Canada, in particular Nova Scotia and the island of Cape Breton (Dunn 2003; McLean 1991; Symonds 1999a), where Gaelic culture and language survives to the present day (Bennet 1996; Kennedy 2002; Shaw 2007).

This connection with Canada is also reflected in the collections of prose, poetry, and song from South Uist as some was recorded in Canada in the 20th century (Shaw 1977). One of the most famous songs in praise of the Uists, *Moladh Uibhist,* belongs to this category of emigrant song. It romantically remembers a land full of handsome youths, plenty, and nobility, contrasting it favourably with the cold of Manitoba (Shaw 1977: 79). This rose-tinted image is itself in contrast with accounts of starvation, misery, exploitation, and marginalisation that the people of South Uist experienced in the 19th and early 20th century (MacLean 1989, 2012; MacLellan 1997; Napier Commission 1884). The romanticised ideal of a land of plenty presented in 'Uist patriotism' (Dòmhnall Aonghais Bhàin 2000: XV) is set against a backdrop of tales of Bonnie Prince Charlie, the nobility

and/or rapaciousness of Clanranald and the tragedy of emigration and Clearance. These are the dominant narratives of South Uist's history.

Narrowing the Study: Loch Aoineart's Early 19th-Century Landscape

Loch Aoineart, a deep sea loch on the east side of South Uist, is striking for its natural beauty, ruggedness, and isolation. The quiet there today belies the population and vibrancy of this loch in the past. It was once the principal port of the Uists, a powerhouse of Clanranald, complete with a tax-house, cart road, and inn. The ruins of numerous dwellings, jetties, and platforms are testament to comings and goings in the past (MacLean 2012: 365; Moreland and MacLean 2012; Parker Pearson *et al.* 2004: 172-3).

Figure 4.2.3. Bàgh a' Ghlinn Mhòir, at the mouth of Loch Aoineart. Andrew Bicket and George Geddes, OHCCMAPP project, in foreground. © K. Grant.

Due to its significance in the past and striking archaeological landscape it is perhaps no surprise that the shores of Loch Aoineart have received significant archaeological attention. An oblique reference was made in a gazetteer of post-medieval archaeological fieldwork to Ian Crawford surveying five townships on Loch Aoineart which were reported to be of 18th century or earlier origin. Unfortunately these surveys remain unpublished and un-located save for a few field notes (Hurst 1968: 183). More recently, during the SEARCH project, an extended review of documentary evidence and a place-name study were undertaken (MacLean 1989), followed by recently published survey (Moreland and MacLean 2012; Raven 2012), excavation (Moreland *et al.* 2012), and

historical synthesis and analysis (MacLean 2012). Well over 200 archaeological sites were recorded as part of the survey (Moreland and MacLean 2012: 84), the vast majority of which were post-medieval in date and relate to dwelling, farming, fishing, or kelping (Moreland and MacLean 2012: 100-16). More recent work on the lochside as part of the Outer Hebrides Coastal Community Marine Archaeology Pilot Project (OHCCMAPP) in which, fortuitously, the author took part in a professional capacity, discovered further sites related to marine resource exploitation (Benjamin *et al.* 2014).

This archaeological research has generated a rich and detailed data-set which provides a foundation for further work. Synthesising the survey work undertaken in the late 1980s and early 1990s, John Moreland of SEARCH noted that an absence of dating evidence from the survey meant that, even with evidence from nearby comparative sites, it was extremely difficult to tell the story of the people who lived there (Moreland and MacLean 2012: 93). Any attempt to do so, he argued, 'ran the risk of creating a 'past as palimpsest', 'our inability to prise apart these layers [of evidence from different periods]...to situate our 19th-century inhabitant in the world they inherited means we run the risk of creating for them an ahistorical present' (Moreland and MacLean 2012: 93).

Previous studies have been narrowly archaeological in focus (Moreland and MacLean 2012; Moreland *et al.* 2012), and there has been no clear connection between these archaeological investigations and the detailed historical and place-name studies (MacLean 1989, 2012). Although there are indeed significant challenges in prising apart the many layers of landscape in Loch Aoineart, through a detailed examination of the documentary and, particularly, the cartographic evidence, some specific structures and places can be securely dated. This detailed analysis will provide fixed places and events which will anchor the narratives about life in the landscape of Loch Aoineart presented below.

In accordance with the methodology discussed, the available forms of evidence were reviewed in order to select a narrow period of time in which to frame discussion. In the case of Loch Aoineart this is the first and second decades of the 19th century. Several very specific sources converge on this period. A group

of surveys by William Bald on behalf of the local landowners published in 1805 (Bald 1805a: 62-79; 1805b, 1829; Caird 1989) captured a snapshot of the landscape (Moreland and MacLean 2012: 93). The Old Statistical Account (in this case written in 1794) (Munro 1799) provides some context, although much may have changed in the ensuing decade. MacDonald's *General View of the Agriculture of the Hebrides* of 1811 is particularly informative with regard to agricultural practice. Unfortunately, primary documentary evidence from before 1840 is scarce due to the loss of parish records in a shipwreck, the loss of Clanranald records in a fire, and the dispersal of the estate records due to the administrative centre of the estate moving several times in the 18th and 19th centuries (MacLean 2012: 359). Despite this, fragmentary evidence from the Clanranald Papers (NRS GD201) and others elsewhere in the National Records of Scotland concerning the kelping industry in Loch Aoineart in the early part of the 19th century provide invaluable insight into the lives, landscape, and politics of the period. A collection of correspondence belonging to the then factor Robert Brown (NRAS2177/1508-1512) dating to 1800 and 1802 which relates to the kelping trade in Loch Aoineart, is a particular historical gem, located today in the private archives of the Duke of Hamilton. The report of the Napier Commission (Napier Commission 1884), although some 70 years later, provides some historical context which covers the period of expansion in the kelp trade, although there are few references to Loch Aoineart itself (Napier Commission 1884: 698). The oral historical record for this period is also rich. A Gaelic song, *Marbhrann Do Dh'Fhear Àirigh Mhuillin* (Lament for the Tacksman of Milton), first recorded in the later 19th century, records the accidental drowning of a local tacksman in the loch in 1809. In addition, the culturally significant Gaelic poem, *Birlinn Chlann Raghnaill* (the Galley of Clanranald) by the Jacobite propagandist poet Alasdair MacMhaistir Alasdair is partly set in the loch (Bray 1986: 122; Grant 2014: 37-9). Although this poem was written in the 18th century, it provides important clues about the loch itself and its possible use in the period, and is a significant part of the later cultural landscape.

It is hoped that Moreland's concerns may in some way be addressed in this thesis. This will be done not by presenting the 'ahistorical present' of an empirical historic meta-narrative, but by considering historically and culturally

contextualised narratives about life on Loch Aoineart in the opening decade of the 19th century.

5. Gaelic Landscapes of the 18th and 19th Centuries

The six sections that follow are intended to demonstrate the approach formulated in chapter 3, showing how it was applied to the case study landscapes of Hiort and Loch Aoineart. Each draws on a reconstruction of the historic landscape at a particular time, in both cases the first two decades of the 19th century, created through detailed study of the archaeological and historical record. In each section a particular theme, narrative, or aspect of the landscape is focussed on, with clear discussion of how the approach described drew out these themes from the landscape and brought together the available evidence to create the narratives which are presented. The earlier sections have a more narrow focus and tend to contain more detailed explanation of how the archaeological and historical sources were used, clearly demonstrating how the historic landscapes were 're-constructed'. The discussions gradually broaden, building on the previous sections to discuss increasingly wide themes. The sections alternate between each case study.

These sections are intended to be self-critical, assessing the utility of various landscape theories and methods, and the approach as a whole. Throughout, they are compared and contrasted with previous approaches in order to assess how the approach used in this thesis differs from that taken by others. In the conclusion which follows there is a wider critical assessment of the approach drawing on the evidence of the narratives presented in this chapter, which also considers wider implications for the broader study of post-medieval archaeology. Several key themes about life and landscape in the period emerge across the case studies. These are also considered further in the conclusions, and suggested as areas for future research.

5.1 Hiort - The Fulmar Hunt

The Fulmar Fatten

Around the middle of August 1812, in a week in which the armed forces of King George III seized Madrid from the French and Fort Detroit from the Americans, and lost the frigate Guerrière *to the USS* Constitution, *the King's subjects in another remote corner of his empire are engaged in a more modest conflict of their own. The source of this conflict is the carcass of a fulmar.*

Around fifty men are gathered to the south of the small township which nestles in the centre of the fertile land on the loch side of Hirte. Many, clustered in the small clear area which functions as the 'town square', are engaged animatedly in discussion. Others lean lazily around the east-facing doors of turf and stone dwellings - out of the prevailing south-westerly breeze they chat to their friends and family or simply stare out to sea. Groups of women, returning from An Glenn Mòr and the milking, wait impatiently for the outcome. Absent-mindedly, young Effie MacCrimmon quietly hums one of the songs she has been learning:

*'A Sheachd Beannachd nan càirdean
'S a lon làidir na feuma,
The mo chuid-s' de na h-eunaibh
Anns na neulaibh ag èigheach.*

*Tha mo chuid-s' de na h-uighibh
Aig a' bhuidhinn as treubhaich;
Sann thall ann an Sòdhaigh
Dh'fhàg mi 'n t-òganach gleusta*

*The seven blessings of your relations
And the strong useful climbing-rope,
My share of the birds
Are calling from the skies.*

*My share of the eggs
Will belong to the strongest gatherers.
It was in Soay yonder
That I left the fine lad'*
(Ferguson 2006: 67)

It is the birds in the sky, the rope, and the gatherer that are under discussion. August the 12th, the traditional date of the start of the fulmar hunt, is four days past. The women have remained all day in the Village grinding grain, only a few making the daily milking trips over to the Glen; the ropes have been checked and the rods prepared, but the birds have been late in fattening this

year. The men are arguing over whether the hunt should begin or if it should be left another couple of days. There's the crops to be thinking of, the fishing, the cheese-making and the ongoing harvest of the young gannet, the guga. *Delaying the fulmar hunt could put any of these at risk, but starting too early could make the hunt less productive, jeopardising the rent payments. The men pass around the fulmar carcass, gently feeling its breastbone to try to assess the fatty deposits there. It will be fattest a few days before it fledges, and will be easy pickings while it still inhabits the nest. Timing is crucial.*

Suddenly, the arguing, gesticulating and cross-talking of the men seems to subside, and a group walks back to the people waiting by the houses:

'It's the ropes we will be wanting!'

***

Introduction

In this section, the topic of seabird fowling is explored. This practice – that is, the gathering of seabirds and their products such as feathers, eggs, and oil – has come to be seen as a crucial element of life on Hiort; the idea of seabird fowling as an unusual and extreme subsistence activity is a key pillar of the 'Hardrock Consensus'. Fowling has been conceived of as a set pattern of activity which was part of a 'unique and unchanging way of life' that had continued on Hiort for perhaps 'over two thousand years' (Steel 1965: 25). Although seabird fowling featured prominently in early historical travellers' accounts (Martin 1703; Moray 1677/8), as tourism and public interest in the island developed from the 18th century onwards, many sensationalised accounts of seabird hunting emerged:

> 'Undoubtedly these [fowling trips on cliffs] are stupendous adventures, and equal to anything in the feats of chivalry… two noted heroes were drawn from among all the ablest men of the community; one of them fixed himself on a craggy shelf…he began to play his gambols; he hung merrily, and laughed very heartily' (MacAulay 1764: 184).

Such descriptions form a large part of many 18th-and-19th-century accounts of Hiort, often at the expense of discussing other aspects of life. Clayton Atkinson

wrote of March to November during his visit in 1831 that because of 'their dependency on the capture of sea fowl for their support, all their energies of body and mind are centred in that subject, and scarcely any of their regulations extend to anything else' (Atkinson 2001: 45). This idea of a life devoted in its entirety to fowling seems to neglect the fact that the months in question also saw activities such as manuring, planting, harvest, lambing, milking, plucking of sheep, and haymaking (Harman 1997: 186), through which the *Hiortaich* gathered other commodities with which to pay their rents and feed themselves and their families (Harman 1997: 100).

The Life and Death of St Kilda (Steel 1965), includes a chapter entitled 'Bird People' which in many ways set the tone for post-evacuation understandings of fowling and of Hiort as a whole (Fleming 1999b). Drawing on the often problematic work of geographers and naturalists who studied the archipelago after its evacuation, Steel supplemented the already sensationalised accounts of the 19th and 18th centuries with a narrative arguing that life on Hiort was dominated by a unique and ultimately unsuccessful struggle for survival (Fleming 2005: Chapter 1). Within this narrative, fowling was seen as a subsistence activity born out of a futile battle between man and the supposedly unusually harsh nature of Hiort (Steel 1965: 9-10). Fowling practice was conceived of as a set pattern of activities which, apart from nostalgic references to 'the early days' (Steel 1965: 64), was 'unique and unchanging' (Steel 1965: 25). Although Steel and others writing in a similar vein do show some understanding of change, such as from gannet to fulmar as the main target of fowling in the mid-18th century, such change tends to be cast as very much as exceptional (Steel 1965: 57). These accounts, mirroring those of previous centuries, particularly emphasise the fowling expeditions made by men to the outlying sea stacs and the nearby island of Boraraigh. These trips, lasting generally a week or two, have been regarded as an adventurous, masculine activity central to prestige and maintenance of position, discrete from everyday farming practices, both by modern archaeological commentators (Fleming 2005: 102) and in popular publications (MacLean 1977: 102). Both travellers' accounts and secondary literature on the practice of fowling have generally been highly gendered. Where women and girls are mentioned, it is usually in a supporting role or as a noteworthy or as an unusual occurrence (Steel 1965: 62-4).

Such views of fowling on Hiort have been challenged by more recent scholarship. Recent synthesis of the documentary and archaeological material (Harman 1997; Robson 2005) allows much more detailed chronologies of life and practice on the islands to be developed than was the case previously. The chapter on seabird fowling in Harman's work (1997) is perhaps most striking in that it highlights the variety of fowling practice and how it changed through time. Although useful, this picture of a highly dynamic and varied set of practices, supplemented by later ecological work (Love 2004), mixes information from all periods, making it extremely difficult to imagine the experience of fowling at any one time. Even in these more factually sound and contextualised understandings of fowling, there is still a sense that it is 'something apart'; never do we see fowling situated within the wider landscape and way of life, or indeed within the conditions existing on Hirte at any particular time.

In a sense, discussions of seabird fowling on the islands are a microcosm of studies of both Hiort and the wider post-medieval period in the Highlands and Islands. There has been a strong influence of historical meta-narrative – in this case ideas of uniqueness, isolation, changelessness, and the collapse of a perceived aboriginal, outdated and even utopian way of life when impacted by 'modern society' (perhaps most fully and overtly expressed in MacLean 1977). A lack of engagement with Gaelic voices and culture has served to prop up these views. There is also little sense in which any discussion of fowling is grounded in the landscape or in personal experience: few discussions of fowling have engaged at all with the historic landscape, drawn on landscape theory, or made use of the archaeological evidence itself. Ultimately, such approaches have homogenised the people and activities involved, ossifying a particular view of a practice which can be shown to have been varied and dynamic while also preventing any coherent understanding of the lived experience of seabird fowling at any one time. It is precisely the way in which fowling has been examined in the past which makes it an attractive case study.

An examination of the sources for seabird fowling shows that there is sufficient evidence to allow for a more detailed discussion of the practice to take place. From the first detailed travellers' accounts, fowling on Hiort has been a focus of discussion, be it a description of the visiting steward feasting on 'wild reistit foullis' (Munro 1999: 329) in the 16th century, or Martin Martin's descriptions of

both the seabird populations themselves and fowling practice (e.g Martin 1999:
241). More detailed accounts of fowling emerge after it was witnessed by
travellers in the years 1677 (Moray 1677/8) and 1758 (MacAulay 1764), with
evidence in travellers' accounts increasing in number dramatically throughout
the 19th century. The first useful sketches of the islands were undertaken during
a visit in 1812 (Acland 1981) and include images of fowling on the cliffs of
Conachair, which were supplemented by evocative watercolours around 1831
(Atkinson 2001), Figure 5.1.3 is an example. Accounts of fowling based on oral
testimony largely describe practice in the early 20th century and can be found in
several publications (MacLean 1977; Quine 1988; Quine and Baxter 1994; Steel
1965), although, as we shall see below, it is likely that fowling in this period was
unrepresentative of practice in the 18th and 19th centuries.

In addition to these historical accounts, there are also surviving objects. Seabird
fowling necessitated a distinctive suite of material culture including ropes,
snares and rods, examples of which still exist in museums in Scotland and
elsewhere (Harman 1997: 213). There is also a significant body of Gaelic poems
from Hiort related to fowling, or to be specific, the associated human cost
(Campbell 1802; Ferguson 2006: 238; Harman 1997; MacKenzie 1906), but these
have not been previously used in any sustained discussion of fowling. The place-
name resource on Hiort is also particularly rich (Coats 1990; Mathieson 1928),
with many place-names related directly or indirectly to fowling. In addition to
these sources, there is a rich archaeological landscape associated with fowling
including *cleitean*, rock shelters, and bothies (Gannon and Geddes 2015: 84-9).

There is also evidence concerning fowling from the wider North Atlantic region.
Around the same period as popular descriptions of life on Hiort were being
published which characterised fowling as a unique and unusual practice
(MacLean 1977; Steel 1965), seabird fowling began to be examined from a 'Folk
Life' perspective. An impressively comprehensive paper in *Folk Life* (Baldwin
1974) brought together a large amount of information on practices of seabird
fowling in the wider north-western Atlantic. In classic folk life style (highly
reminiscent of the work of I.F Grant), the study has a wealth of detail from
different places and periods, complete with distribution maps, hand-drawn
representations of material culture, and occasionally tangential comments on
myth, legend, and cultural association. Again, the technical approach of

synthesising varied material makes it very challenging to imagine practice at any particular time or place. Nevertheless, one of the strengths of this approach is its recognition that seabird fowling was a widespread practice in the region (Islands Book Trust 2004).

The opening paragraph to this section does not refer to the Napoleonic wars simply to set the scene in a provocative way. Seabird fowling on Hiort in the first few years of the 19th century was intimately connected with that conflict – fulmar and puffin feathers, when fumigated, were immune to lice and bed-bugs, and many tons (literally, Harman 1997: 100) from Hiort found their way into the hands of the British Government to make mattresses for the army in the early 19th century (Steel 1965: 70). It is surely no coincidence that feathers comprised only one small part of the rents paid by the *Hiortaich* near the start of the conflict and almost the entirety at its close (Harman 1997: 100). Focussing on this specific period, we begin to see the idea of fowling as a subsistence activity as a problematic one. Even within such a short time period, the sources demonstrate the varied range of practices which make up fowling. Thus to create a compelling and detailed narrative drawn from lived experience it was necessary to narrow the study further. A single species, fulmar, makes a particularly illuminating case study. The fulmar hunt was unusual in that it had to be undertaken within a very narrow timeframe. Fulmar, unlike most seabirds on the archipelago, will lay only one egg per season. For this reason, the harvesting of young fulmar in their prime just before fledging could not be staggered by the management of egg-taking, as with gannets on the stacs (Harman 1997: 210). The hunt of the fulmar therefore seems to present an opportunity to gain an understanding of an event which is temporally discrete, an aim of the overall approach in this thesis, but can also be set into the wider context of the yearly cycle of fowling, fishing, and agriculture. A key difference between the fulmar hunt and the perhaps better-known guga hunts of the stacs is that far from taking place in an isolated and dangerous location, most of the fowling took place on Hirte itself, where historically fulmar were particularly common on 'the north west side' (Atkinson 2001: 52). Fulmar are also easy to encounter today on Hirte, although there is no real way of knowing how present-day numbers compare to those in the early 19th century.

Drawing on the available evidence and Ingold's (Ingold 1993) theory of taskscape as a tool to understand the archaeological landscape, an account of the fulmar hunt of 1812 on Hiort is now presented. Narrative will also be a key tool through which to explore the landscape and communicate understandings of it. In particular, Grimble's (1979) *The World of Rob Donn* should be acknowledged as an inspiration for this section, as it borrows from his technique of interspersing Gaelic poetry with traditional academic narrative to travel through the landscape. This approach is supplemented by passages of fictional narrative, particularly inspired by the work of Given (2004). The routes and locations described in the text are illustrated best in the fold-out map of Hiort which accompanies this thesis.

The Fowling Party Gathers

The decision to begin the fowling is by no means the end of the discussion. As the men disperse throughout the mucky byways of the township, between the smoking and smelly dwellings, a commotion spreads through the settlement: in each house, the fowling gear is being gathered. From most or all houses fowling rods are taken down from their places between the arching timber crucks supporting the roofs, their owners coughing in the thick smoke that also gathers there. Some families carefully collect their heirlooms: ropes of sheep and cow hide, as old as their fathers. Gradually, the community returns to the square: first those who are empty handed (they will collect the young fulmar by hand alone) and then those weighed down with gear. Dogs, excitable and knowing they will soon be put to use, run between the legs of the villagers pursued by curses. Cats look on lazily. Children stand with their mothers holding baskets and creels, wondering if they will be heading with the fowlers today or down in the fields ensuring the birds and beasts stay off the crops, and tending the ponies. Thick mist lies, as it so often does, in a blanket above the Village, obscuring the hills and cliffs. The rocks will be slippery. Several worried mothers, grandmothers or wives will seek a blessing for the fowlers from Minister McLeod before the day is out.

SINGLE - NOOSED SNARES

1 St Kilda   – rod and wire noose
            (National Trust for Scotland – ?late 1920s)
2 Sula Sgeir – rod and horse-hair noose
            (after MacGeoch 1954)
3 Sula Sgeir – rod and iron jaw
            (after MacGeoch 1954)
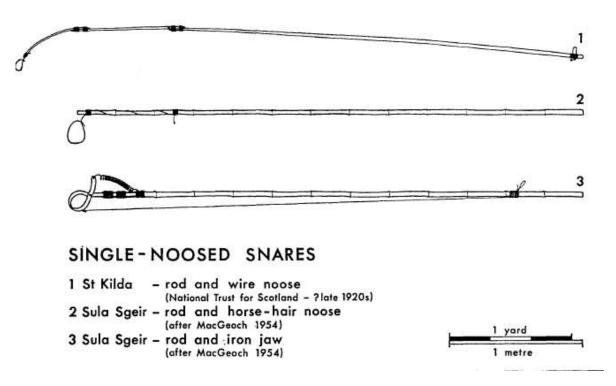
Figure 5.1.1. Fowling rods, one of a number of tools used during fowling such as nets, snares, clubs, and bare hands (Baldwin 1974: 80) © 1974 Routledge.

Figure 5.1.2. The hills above Village Bay obscured by mist. Cleitean visible on right. © K Grant.

Passionate wrangling begins amongst the gathering below the village. Although their lots on the cliffs are already set for two years, the boundaries of each lot

and the marks to be made for each share must be argued, asserted, and agreed. No utopian communal activity this; each foot of the cliffs is meted out by lot, each share will be counted and allocated. The place-names along the cliffs are invoked in conversation to reaffirm fowling rights: the upper promontory, the cleft of the blankets, Donald's skerry, the shingle at the cleft of the skerry… Many of these places are descriptive, or based on well-known stories, while the foreign names of others, given in a time before the Gaelic language was heard on Hirte, still label places known in minute detail to those doling out shares.

No longer in formal parliament now, the discussion is joined by the women of the Village, who will guard the allotted cliffs and shares of their family as vociferously as the men. Others mend creels and baskets, or prepare meals for the hungry fowlers to eat upon their return. The sound of the waves accompanies all like a gentle murmur, rolling cobbles on the beach occasionally click-clacking like the carding combs of the winter weaving.

***

One of the primary areas of activity during fowling was the settlement itself. Despite being the focus of community life on Hirte for several generations, this settlement was only very recently identified on the ground (Fleming 2003; 2005: 133-6). The image overleaf (figure 5.1.1) shows an 1812 sketch of the Village and the same location today. It is from here that any discussion of fowling should start, and it was from here that a possible fowling route was walked on the 16th of August 2013. Many of the observations in the narrative sections above related to sight, sound, and environment such as the wind, mist, and sea, are modelled on the 'affects' experienced during this fieldwork.

This social space below the Village represents in its way an important element of the fowling taskscape. This area, presumably outwith the cultivation which must have surrounded the settlement (Harman 1997: 197-203), appears flat and muddy in sketches by Acland in 1812, perhaps evidence of the repeated practice of meeting, discussing and preparing trips for various activities. It is not clear how old the tradition of the famous Hiort 'parliament' may be, although Atkinson appears to have observed something like it in the 1830s (Atkinson 2001: 44), and Martin, writing over a hundred years before, saw formal meetings

segregated by gender (Martin 1999: 277). Formal meetings in the village would be necessary to arrange communal activities, but probably also saw significant negotiations – particularly to do with sharing of fowling produce and other commodities. The exact system of allotting fowls and fowling cliffs varied dramatically across time and across bird species (Harman 1997: 209). Whilst gannets from the stacs were divided equally among families in the 1820s (Kennedy 1932: 286), the cliffs of Hirte were strictly divided by lot, and in proportion to the share of arable land held by each family (MacAulay 1764: 187-8). Such a system is likely to have caused continuous wrangling and negotiation despite re-allotment of shares every three years, and may even have acted to cement inequality – those with the greatest amount of arable were given the greatest amount of fowling cliffs (MacAulay 1764: 187-8).

In the wider context of social life in the township of Hirte, privacy appears to have been valued to some degree, as is evidenced by the practice of using door locks as early as the 18th century (Campbell 1799: 29; Fleming 2005: 111-3; MacCulloch 1819). Significant levels of inequality were also recorded on Hirte from the first accounts until the 20th century (Harman 1997: 132-6). With this in mind, negotiation in the social space for the fulmar hunt would not represent simple organising of communal activity, but would be a compromise between each family acting to balance their own interests and the needs of the wider community. The open space below the Village then represents an integral part of the taskscape of the township. Many of the routine tasks would have been organised and negotiated from here and many of the same arguments and conversations may have been repeated year after year. The physical remains of these many activities are slight – the presence of a small flat area and the slight suggestion of an exposed space in a 19th century sketch.

The tools of the fulmar hunt would also reside in the township itself during most of the year. An account from 1824 notes that fowling equipment was suspended from the roofs of the dwellings (Clarke 1824: 357) when not in use. However in the case of the fulmar hunt, little equipment was used as fledgling fulmar can be taken easily by hand (Baldwin 1974: 69,70,1). The equipment used for the
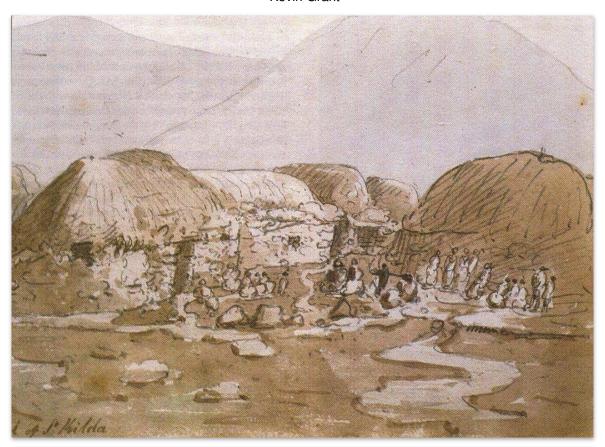
Figure 5.1.3. Evidence for the pre-Improvement *baile*. Above, a small gathering at the south end of the pre-Improvement settlement, Sketched by Thomas Acland in 1812, reproduced with the kind permission of Devon Archives and Local Studies Service and the National Trust. Below, the same space as it looks today – note how the upright rocks and building platforms match exactly. After Fleming (2005: Figure 65), who identified the location © K.Grant.

fulmar hunt would have been distinctive from that used during other fowling activities, all adding to the unique character of the event. Many of the place-names on the cliffs would have been associated with specific fowling episodes and been rich in meaning.

From the Village, the fowlers would have been able to take many routes to the fowling grounds. What follows presents a narrative of a possible route from the Village to the cliffs of Conachair.

Heading to the fowling spot

The fowling party begins moving through the Village, surrounded by the smells of home. The familiar scent of unwashed people and acrid peatsmoke underlies the seasonal scents of late August: the newly-returned cattle, the sharp tang of boiling guga *(the first harvest of the season), and the first catch of the newly-arrived mackerel. Walking gently uphill the party of several dozen men, women and children emerge from the rear of the township, crossing the burn across the small bridge by the washing tanks, where one of those staying behind roughly plunges a worn blanket under the cool water.*

With the chatter of the township still in their ears the fowlers pass along a narrow track within the extensive fields which surround the Village. Barley, waist high and rippling wave-like in the breeze, is nearly due to be harvested, with the oats just showing signs of ripening and the potatoes sprouting green from the dark soil. The small rig-and-furrow fields and the interspersed crops give the area surrounding the Village a patchwork look. The number of these fields held by each family will be reflected in the fowling areas allocated on the cliffs above; they are a reminder of who will share in the spoils of the hunt. As the group continues to slog uphill towards the Hollow to the North a young man takes up an old courting song as seasonal as the hunt itself.

Bhuam chas-chrom bhuam chas-dhìreach,

Bhuam gach mìs is cìob is uan;

Suas mo lon, nuas mo rioba –

Chuala mis'an guga sa chuan!

Buidheachas dhan Tì, thàine na gugachan,

Thàine 's na h·eòin mhòra cuide riu';

Cailin dubh ciar-dubh bò sa chrò

Away the bent-spade, away the straight spade,

away each goat and sheep and lamb;

Bring up my rope, bring down my snare –

I have heard the gannet in the ocean!

Thanks be to God, the young birds are come,

Accompanied by the mature birds;

Dark dusky maid, a cow in the fold.

The women in the party join, swelling the sound of singing as they repeat the chorus:

….Cailin dubh ciar-dubh bò sa chrò!

Na h·eòin a' tighinn, Cluinneam an Ceòl!

Na h·eòin a' tighinn, Cluinneam an Ceòl!

…Dark dusky maid, a cow in the fold!

The birds are approaching, let me hear their music!

The birds are approaching, let me hear their music!

(Ferguson 2006: 182)

Weaving their way through the small cultivation plots, the fowling party passes through the head dyke and into the outfield. The ground is hard and boulder-strewn below their feet now, scalped by generations of peat cutting. Hearing a cackle of laughter from the Village, the fowlers turn their heads to home. From here the entire Village can be seen, smoke rising from its many roofs, and those left behind can still be recognised, getting on with the day's work. As the fowlers continue down into the hollow, for the first time the Village is no longer visible and the sea is a mere whisper – a landscape of cleitean is wreathed in mist. They continue on and work their way up the row of cleitean that leads to the Cleft of the Edge and Shoe Cleft. The freshly taken fowl will

later be taken back this way, either to the village or to be stored in the

cleitean the fowling party pass as they trudge up the heather-covered hill.

***

Figure 5.1.4. Views mentioned in the text. Above, looking back toward the village from the the slopes to the north-east. In 1812, the settlement would be clustered roughly in the centre of the image. Below, cresting the ridge that defines the hollow of An Lag. © K. Grant.

Figure 5.1.5. Views mentioned in the text. Above, '*Cleit* Street', a linear alignment of *Cleitean* that probably marks a habitual route from An Lag to the fowling cliffs above. Below, looking back down along Cleit Street toward An Lag. The location of the Village is obscured by the topography and the hills behind by mist. *Cleit* in foreground. © K. Grant.

On Hirte today, evidence can still be found of the routes which were regularly used, often marked out by *cleitean*. The example shown above, recently named 'cleit street', is particularly evocative. This linear arrangement of *cleitean* leads to the clifftop at what is now called 'the Gap', ending in locations where two distinct place-names are recorded. Geò na h-Eige or Bearradh na h-Eige, the Cleft or Precipice of the Edge, seems a natural place to begin fowling expeditions, and Geò a' Bhròige, Shoe or Hoof Cleft, is named for the small stac on the cliffs nearby named Am Broige, the Shoe. The building of these cleits on the route would have subsequently encouraged repeated movement along it, as well as serving as a series of depots in which the birds could be stored and taken back in instalments. It is an excellent piece of evidence for the past taskscape. This part of the route occupies a landscape which is in many ways distinctly associated with fowling. The upper slopes of An Lag Bho'n Tuath, the Hollow to the North, show no evidence of ever having been cultivated like the lower areas and so the most predominant features here are the many *cleitean* which dot the landscape.

The first part of the route, from the settlement to An Lag, is very different in character to the upper slopes. Today, the route crosses the remains of levelled improved croftlands with their regular land divisions. This makes it hard to envisage the area as it would have been in 1812: bountiful run-rig fields. However, some limited evidence does remain. Fleming, as part of his re-discovery of the pre-Improvement township on Hirte, identified a number of interesting features on the north-east edge of the Village (Fleming 2003: 133) – the route the imagined fowlers take in the above narrative. The features include a broad revetted approach or entrance heading due north, and nearby a small 'bridge' across Tobair Childa Burn (this is a modern vernacular name as the original Gaelic name is not known), and a stone built tank, perhaps used for washing or dyeing (Fleming 2003: 137). Both are pictured overleaf (Figure 5.1.6).

A landscape comprising unenclosed run-rig fields must have required trackways, formal and informal, to allow the movement of people and cattle between the fields with their vulnerable unenclosed crops. A number of such tracks have

Figure 5.1.6. Features to the rear of the pre-Improvement *baile*. Clockwise from below; possible relic trackway north-east of the present Village, bridge and tank on the north-east edge of the pre-Improvement township, track or 'entrance' to the north of the pre-improvement township © K. Grant. The locations of these features are marked on the accompanying fold-out map.

been recorded during surveys on Hiort (Stell and Harman 1988), although these are difficult to interpret amongst the many banks and cultivation plots and their date and function are contested (Fleming 2005: 51-4). During attempts to interpret the archaeological and historical evidence to reconstruct a fowling route inscribed on the landscape through routine activity, a landscape feature which may be the remains of a narrow trackway from the pre-Improvement settlement was identified. It is now subsumed within a croft boundary from the 1830s - it is probably this fortuitous placement along the later boundary which preserved the feature itself, which can be seen in figure 5.1.6. Such landscape features are the physical elements of the taskscape which involved movement along the proposed route, and it was by 'joining these dots' of these features that it was possible to suggest a route that could be walked and experienced.

Walking along this route, there were many affects upon the body which could be observed in the classic 'phenomenological' routine of route-walking employed by Tilley (1994, 2004b). Many of these observations have found their way into the narrative above: the sloping ground, the scalped hard earth of An Lag Bho'n Tuath, hearing voices and talk from the Village, and the sound of the sea. What was distinctly absent however was a sense of seasonality, of culture, of task-based specificity of movement and activity. These broader, more-than-physical, more-than subjective senses of the seasonality of the landscape in those first weeks of August perhaps have more in common with the notion of affect from non-representational theory. This attempt to reconstruct this seasonality was completed by selecting very specific and seasonal elements of the early August landscape. The well-known avian and agricultural calendars of Hiort (Harman 1997: 210, 186 respectively) and the cycles of marine life in the surrounding seas (Love 2009: 247) were an important starting point. Drawing information from this documentary evidence allowed me to consider landscape affects which cannot be seen, smelt, or felt in the landscape today. In addition, there are cultural elements of the taskscape which are not physically inscribed on the ground as features, but are perhaps *culturally* inscribed. The Gaelic poetry of Hiort is in many senses highly seasonal and task-oriented in the objects and activities it describes. These poems can themselves be thought of as an element of the taskscape – they were composed with the memory of routine practice and

experience in mind, and were probably repeated at the same times of year and in the same places, becoming part of the tasks with which they were associated.

The Harvest

To the sound of low conversation, the fowling party trudge the last few feet to the clifftop. The first turbulence of the updraft from the cliffs below can be felt now and with it wafts the distinctive sickly sharp-sweet smell of fulmar. The dogs, nosing this scent before their fellow fowlers, rush excitedly toward the cliffs, forced to return shamefaced, low-tailed, by the commanding shouts of their owners. The dogs wait impatiently with the fitter of the fowlers who are first to arrive at the Cleft of the Edge. As the last of the fowling party arrives, small family groups form and gesture toward their appointed fowling cliffs. A few fulmar, appearing indignant, pop into view above the cliff edge where they have been blown, blustering, by strong upward gusts. The Cleft of the Edge is perfect for scouting the fowling; the view is usually clear to the north and south where the cliffs of Conachair and Oiseval can be seen, although not so today as a thick blanket of mist smothers the hills on either side. The first few men and women to arrive nip over the precipitous edge onto the thin ledges below, examining their avian harvest.

The first young fulmar, grabbed and killed by hand, are handed to those waiting above. This will be the last chance to confirm the fulmar are ready before the fowling begins in earnest.

The distinctive scent of the fulmar arrests the nostrils of those passing around these first carcasses, but the skillful harvesting of the fowlers mean they haven't yet vomited out their foul-smelling oil. Just a week or two ago, the fulmar were little grey puff-balls, helpless and shivering, improbably exposed and inedibly fatty. Over a few days, watched by a succession of considering members of the community, the fulmar shed their down and become scaly and sullen, resting in the spoor of their own maturing.

It is at this stage, when only a remnant of the tufty down remains, that the fulmar is at its greatest weight but still unable to fly - defenceless apart from the spouting of its vomit.
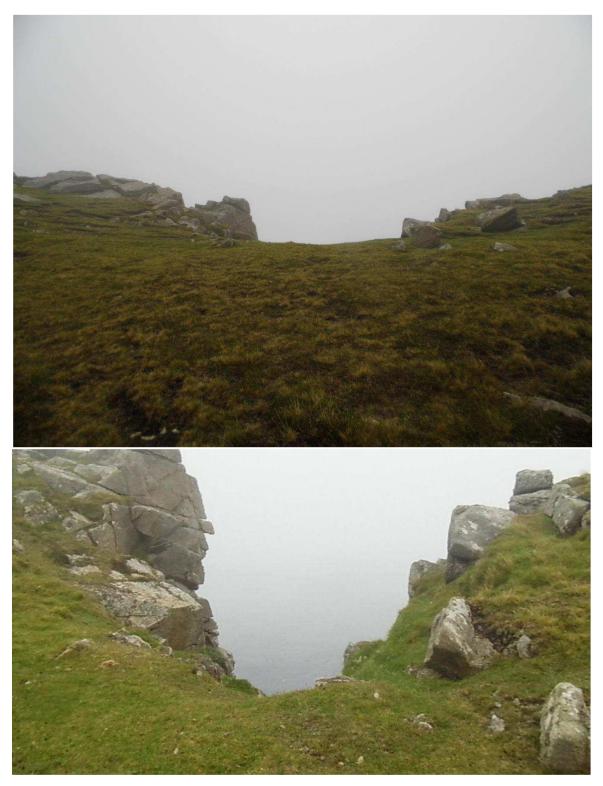
Figure 5.1.7. Bearradh/Geò na h-Eige, the Cleft or Precipice of the Edge, known today in English as 'the Gap'. © K. Grant.

Figure 5.1.8. The fulmar chick, was photographed above on the 2nd of August 2013, and below, on the 18th, just a few days before fledging. © K. Grant.

Now the fowling can begin in earnest. Family groups begin to disperse along the cliffs, heading to the well-known landmarks which bound their own clearly-defined fowling areas. Along the cliffsides, men and women begin descending: some, without ropes, onto narrow stone and earth ledges, others with ropes wrapped around their waists and supported by huddled groups on the cliff edge. The scent of fulmar oil builds as the fowlers grab the young fulmar from their nests, careful to catch them unawares before they project their precious oil. Often however, they will fail, and soon everyone is covered in viscous orange stink.

Bundles of fowls ascend to those waiting at the top of the cliffs, often children or the elderly. Fowling rods, ropes, and baskets work back down the cliffs, responding to requests from those below who need to stretch a little further, descend a little lower, or carry a little more. Careful piles of fulmar begin to form, kept separate from those belonging to others. Children and others sit between the piles, carefully 'milking' the dead and limp fulmar of their oil, filling the bladders and gannet stomachs full of this precious commodity.

Occasionally, those fowling the cliffs return to the tops seeking rest from the intense concentration and exertion of grasping and balancing on the unseen cliffs below. Lost in his own world, a young man plucks the best of his catch, ready to present it to his sweetheart later; under his breath he hums the courtship song:

Is tu mo luran, is tu mo leannan,
Thug thu thùs dhomh 'm fulmair meala!
Cailin dubh ciar-dubh…

M' eudail thusa, mo lur 's mo shealgair,
Thug thu 'n-dè dhomh 'n sùl 's an gearrbhall
Cailin dubh ciar-dubh…

You're my lovely lad, you're my sweetheart
The first to give me the honeyed fulmar!
Dark dusky maid…

You're my treasure, my hero and my hunter,

Yesterday you gave me the gannet and the auk,

Dark dusky maid…

(Ferguson 2006: 185)

Absorbed in his task and his thoughts, he doesn't notice the older men and women watching him, sharing amused glances – his intention is transparent and familiar to them. He looks up, noticing all eyes turned towards him, soliciting a hearty laugh at his expense. He blushes, self-conscious.

***

The practical side of physically collecting seabirds, seabird products, and eggs, is fairly well understood from a technical viewpoint. On Hiort, numerous writers have left documentary evidence which has informed general accounts (Steel 1965: chapter 4) and been synthesised as an area of study in itself (Harman 1997: 205-24). Seabird fowling in the Northwest Atlantic region, where it was once a common feature of life in many communities, has also been a focus of study (Baldwin 1974, 2004; Love 2004). A common feature of these studies is that they have been very much 'from the cliff edge down' – they focus on the immediate act of collection of the seabirds and the associated techniques and artefacts. There are, however, significant elements of the task itself which remain underexplored. Whilst men, women, children of both sexes, and dogs went down the cliffs (Baldwin 1974: 74-5; Ferguson 2006: 92; Harman 1997: 211, 6), those who remained at the cliff-tops also played an extremely significant role.

MacAulay, writing in 1746, spoke of the fulmar season as 'the term at which the tenant takes possession of his farm [meaning his share of the fowling cliffs], and this fowl may be properly enough called the first fruits of it' (MacAulay 1764: 147). The tightly controlled ownership of cliff shares described previously, based on shares of arable land, would have been enforced first when the fowlers reached the cliffs and took possession of the ground by working it. This sense of tenancy, although discussed and agreed upon in the Village below, would have taken on a tangibility as the first fowlers and their families descended onto the

fowling grounds. Those down the ropes on the cliff would necessarily be unable to take part in these discussions and so it would have been up to those above to ensure rules were strictly obeyed. MacAulay goes on to observe that 'the smallest encroachment on a St Kildan's property in these rocks is by an ancient custom severely punished' (MacAulay 1764: 147). Those who remained at the clifftops must have played a crucial role in making sure such forms were observed.

As well as organising the catch and processing the fulmar, those at the top of the cliff would have been able to engage in conversation and banter in a way that those concentrating down the cliffs could not. Although they have left no physical trace today, by considering the oral traditional evidence and the social aspects of fowling at the clifftops, this aspect of practice can be considered. Social interaction between these groups on the cliff edge would have almost certainly included song, as it was a ubiquitous feature of daily life across Gaeldom and as such working songs make up so a large part of the surviving tradition (Newton 2009: 254). For Hiort specifically, most of the songs which survive from the 17th century onwards contain birds as a motif, and many are specifically about fowling, including nine elegies for those killed in accidents (Ferguson 2006: 237-44; Harman 1997), although it seems unlikely those inauspicious songs would be sung on the clifftops. These songs and poems must have drawn from experience within the landscape. Across Gaeldom, there are examples of songs and melodies drawn from birds themselves, such as an Argyllshire song sung in many areas of the Highlands and Islands which mimics the sounds of a swan (Newton 2009: 247). The earliest known recorded words to a port-à-beul (Gaelic mouth music) were recorded from Hiort, and concern a conversation between birds (Newton 2009: 243). Martin Martin observed music being played on Hiort which mimicked birdsong (Martin 1703: 71-2). Such forms of expression were informed by the sensory and social experience of fowling, but also formed part of the experience. These repeated conversations and cultural practices also form part of the fowling taskscape.

Timing is crucial for many seabird fowling expeditions. The collection of guga (juvenile gannet) and fulmar must take place within a very small window when the birds are at their fattest before fledging (Harman 1997: 207; Love 2004; Robinson 2005). There is little in the literature, however, which describes how

the *Hiortaich* would have judged the best time to begin the hunt. Several sources describe a traditional date of August the 12th for the fulmar hunt (Harman 1997; MacLean 1977; Robinson 2005), but the fledging and hatching times of many seabirds are not constant year-on-year, so they must have been closely observed. In an absence of clear knowledge of how this was undertaken, two fulmar nests very close to the Village were observed daily. In doing so, it was found that like many other seabirds on Hiort in 2013 the fulmar were late (Prior 2013). On the 12th, they remained fat and downy, nowhere near fledging. The young fulmar did not appear to be at their optimum weight until the 20th. This kind of observation and discussion must have been an important part of timing the hunt, and one presumes that the Hiortaich must have observed fulmars in known nests in the days leading up to the hunt. Observing the nests, one is able to obtain a sense of the bird as experienced: the distinctive smell, its behaviour, and the changing texture and colour of its feathers. These experiences fed into the narrative above but also comprise an important aspect of fowling largely absent from the literature.

The Season Closes

A week later, a small group is again gathered in front of the township nestling in the centre of Village Bay. Footsore, aching, and yawning, they are processing the fulmar. Feathers billow like snow, blown by the sea wind back into the Village to cluster on the mucky ground between the dwellings. These feathers are the escapees; the rest are being gathered and baled by others weaving amongst those plucking in the evening sunshine. There is little singing now; everyone is exhausted and intent on bringing the season to a close. The intense and pervasive stink of fulmar oil is everywhere, but the fowlers don't notice it – it has been in their nostrils continually since the hunt began.

Gazing up from her task, an older woman recognises the gait of her daughter as she walks heavily laden through a narrow track south of the Village. The crops she walks between are now fully ripe, a sign that the next arduous task of the season awaits. She approaches the monolithic stone-built store. With its wooden door, battened windows, and tile roof it looks incongruous in a landscape of small earth dwellings and open fields. Despite this, upon

Figure 5.1.9. The Storehouse, Hirte. The 'non-vernacular' building on the island, it lies toward the south-eastern edge of the loch. Above, the front elevation, from the south-west. Below, the south gable and rear, from the south-east. © NTS.

entering the interior of the store it still smells, like the Village, of late autumn. Of fulmar.

She adds her bales of feathers to the growing stacks resting on the cobble floor. This is what the last few days have been about. The rent will be paid, and the community will turn to gathering the crops that will feed them through the winter when the birds leave, until spring when they return again.

***

The storehouse, built near the end of the 18th century, perhaps first as a factor's house but latterly to house the rents paid to MacLeod (Geddes 2015; Harman 1997: 102), is not really the final part of the fulmar hunt on Hiort. The fulmar feathers and oil, sold on at a handsome profit by MacLeod, would eventually find their way into the hands of customers throughout Britain and further afield. However, the act of sorting the end products of the fulmar hunt draws this narrative of fowling to a close.

Discussion

The narrative presented above was concerned with a very specific event, the fulmar hunt, which lasted only a few days. Even in examining this one event, only some of the available evidence was discussed. The route of the narrative through the landscape selected the types of information which would be best suited to furnish it, but was also directed towards some of the best available evidence. In this sense, using narrative as a vehicle for discussion seemed to be a truly reflexive method.

In creating this narrative, several forms of evidence were drawn upon. From the landscape, archaeological structures provided evidence for past taskscapes, allowing the suggestion of a plausible route. Walking and experiencing this route drew out some affects created by being in and moving through the landscape that were then used to furnish the narrative. Documentary evidence allowed for the reconstruction of parts of the landscape and its character at a very specific time of year. The oral historical record was used to provide examples of the cultural taskscape: of the poems and songs that shaped, and were shaped by, experience during routine tasks. Combining all of these sources allowed for a

very restricted and focused, but highly detailed narrative to be formed about fowling - a very specific trajectory through the landscape and the lives of those working within it.

The narrative formed from tracing this trajectory through the landscape and through the available evidence differs sharply in some ways from previous narratives about fowling on Hiort. The most striking and perhaps surprising difference is that the actual act of fowling, of actually taking the bird from the nest, features little in this account. This is perhaps indicative of a view of seabird fowling not as a specific act or activity, but rather as a highly seasonalised pattern of movements and tasks across the landscape, involving people, animals, objects, and culture, that is just one of a number of processes occurring concurrently in the landscape. Focussing on the fulmar hunt it quickly becomes apparent that this particular harvest was distinctive in character from other fowling activities. It required different tools and tasks to others, but it also occurred when other tasks and elements of the landscape combined to create a distinctive seasonal experience which would differ from other fowling expeditions. The specific rules for ownership of fowls and fowling grounds during the fulmar hunt as opposed to other bird species held in common would have necessitated different social iterations, and the hunt had its own suite of associated culture. Previous studies of fowling as a discrete activity or as a 'practice' (i.e from a 'folk life' perspective) homogenise many differing and specific activities within the landscape connected to fowling. The fulmar hunt on Hiort illustrates how varied and heterogeneous fowling activities could be by drawing out the distinctiveness of just one fowling event.

The narrative above breaks with the historical meta-narratives in several ways. From a social perspective, it presents a view of communally undertaken activities which is not utopian or egalitarian (contra MacLean 1977), but rather a carefully negotiated cooperative endeavour between competing and unequal groups. This sense of the social organisation and experience of the fulmar hunt appears to be strongly in keeping with Campbell's (2009) suggestion that crofting communities in fact operated at the level of small groups such as families rather than as one communitarian unit, or as directed by a tacksman or ground officer (Campbell 2009: 326). An emphasis on the fulmar hunt as being driven by external markets and being largely for the payment of rents stands in contrast

with the historical meta-narratives present in the 'Hardrock Consensus', where seabird fowling is seen as a desperate act of subsistence undertaken by an impoverished and isolated community.

Finally, the narrative, by looking beyond what went on over the cliff edge, draws in much more of the landscape of Hiort. The varied ways in which many people were involved in the fowling becomes apparent. Many of the most crucial activities took place not down a rope, but in the heart of the settlement where the contributions of those not able, inclined, or selected to catch the fulmar took place. By drawing in the wider landscape, the fulmar hunt and fowling as a whole can be more easily seen as just one suite of tasks, culture and activity which comprise the physical and cultural taskscape of Hirte.

5.2 Loch Aoineart - The Kelp Industry

Introduction

In June 1799, a small group of representatives of South Uist's elite called witnesses to give an account of their behaviour. These proceedings were overseen by the factor of Clanranald, his kelp surveyor, local tacksmen (Clanranald's immediate subordinates in the clan structure), and the local minister, George Munro. The subject of the hearings was 'the destruction of Clanranald's kelp shores' at Loch Baghasdail, caused by local people harvesting seaweed for manuring. The 'copy proof' of the proceedings, now lodged in the National Records of Scotland, is an evocative piece of evidence which illustrates the significant changes which took place in South Uist at the start of the 19th century, changes which would transform the landscape of Loch Aoineart.

A few years before attending the hearings at Àird Mhìcheil and Nunton in June 1799, the Rev. George Munro had contributed to the Statistical Account of Scotland. His account of the economy of the Uists echoes closely that of a generation before: a mixed economy of many kinds of crops, animals, and agricultural practices, with the main exports being a mix of cattle, fish, and kelp (Walker 1980: 73-82). Munro wrote his account in 1794, but parts of it were already out of date at the time of its publication in 1799. He mentions the practice of the processing of seaweed to produce kelp, but suggests that 'the price of kelp… for a great number of years, is considerably fallen in its value' (Munro 1799: 294). This would all change with the outbreak of the Napoleonic Wars, which cut off the traditional source of barilla or potash, an important industrial alkali used in the production of glass and chemicals. This immediately turned kelp, an analogous industrial product, from a small part of the island's local economy to a nationally important, much-needed and sought-after resource (MacLean 2012: 368; Parker Pearson *et al.* 2004: 173).

The price of kelp was intimately tied to the course of the Wars. Indeed, at the exact moment that the estate managers were taking witness statements in Àird Mhìcheil to secure the precious seaweed used for kelping, fellow-Scot Lord Keith was capturing a French fleet off Toulon (William 1822: 262) probably with the aid of Hebridean seamen (MacKillop 2012: 28). Those who could benefit from the Wars acted quickly. Within a few months of the hearings, a surveyor employed

to examine agriculture in North Uist suggested that ' … with very few exceptions the whole ought to be let out in small farms for the encouragement of the people who carry out the business of making Kelp, which is the first object of the landlord here' (Blackadder 1800: 131). The equivalent survey of South Uist, undertaken by William Bald and published in 1805, immediately preceded a change in landholding for parts of Loch Aoineart before 1810 (GD201/6/44). These resulted in the selling of 'pendicles'; parcels of land created from common grazings and allocated to a sole tenant in a form of land-holding intended primarily to increase kelp yields (MacLean 2012: 367, 77). These pendicles themselves would soon be swept away as 'lotting' of land, essentially creating proto-crofts, began in the mid-1810s (Caird 1979: 505) but this did not stop them being profitable in the meantime. By the beginning of the 19th century, kelp manufacture made up 'at least half of the total rents to the proprietors' (MacDonald 1811: 405), giving an average of £4589 per year to Clanranald's estate alone between 1816 and 1820 (GD201/6/44).

Even during this period of rapid change it was recognised by visitors and land-owners alike that this extreme 'prosecuting' of kelp manufacture was totally unsustainable. The scale of kelping was resulting in 'neglect of the real agriculture…and the condition of the great body of people'(MacDonald 1811: 790). While recognising this, agricultural improver James MacDonald also saw no clear way out of the situation: 'kelp manufacture is, in the interim, so profitable to the proprietors, and maintains such a number of the Hebridean population, that to stop it is impossible' (MacDonald 1811: 790). For this short period at the start of the 19th century, the landscape of Loch Aoineart was utterly dominated by the kelp trade.

Archaeological research undertaken as part of the SEARCH project generated a rich and detailed data-set which provides a foundation for the study of the kelping landscape. Surveys of the eastern part of the lochside recorded 245 sites, almost exclusively dwellings and features related to marine and kelping activities (Figure 5.2.1). Many of these structures are difficult to date but it is likely that most comprise the remains of the relatively short-lived kelping taskscape of the earlier 19th century (MacLean 2012: 368). As well as imprinting itself permanently in the landscape of Loch Aoineart, the kelp industry created new relationships, tasks, patterns of movement and land-use, and new

experiences. These were no less significant to those who lived through them by being short-lived. This chapter seeks to explore the experience of the kelping landscape in Loch Aoineart in the first and second decades of the 19th century. However, the nature of the evidence for South Uist is markedly different to Hiort. There is far less evidence as a whole but particularly less documentary and 'ethnographic' information, meaning that much of the archaeological evidence is difficult to date closely. As a result, in this section, and indeed the Loch Aoineart case study as a whole, significantly more attention is given to interpreting and examining the archaeological evidence in detail than was necessary for Hiort. The dynamic situation in this part of the Hebrides around 1800 means that even land holding is difficult to follow and understand, let alone the complex effects of emigration, volunteering and impressment in the armed forces, the ups and downs of the kelp price, and the fluctuating climate (MacLean 2012: 367-8). However, previous studies have been narrowly archaeological in focus (Moreland and MacLean 2012; Moreland *et al.* 2012) and there has often not been a clear connection between these archaeological investigations and the detailed historical and place-name studies (MacLean 1989, 2012), or indeed an attempt to link the landscape to oral tradition and a wider cultural context.

Although it is well-recognised that the kelp-trade was highly significant across the Western Highlands and Islands, and for the Clanranald estate in particular (Gray 1951: 200-1), it has received little archaeological attention. In common with many aspects of life in the post-medieval Highlands and Islands, previous approaches have drawn on an economic history perspective (Bumstead 2005; Gray 1951; Rymer 1974). First-hand accounts, which are to be found occasionally in the later oral tradition (i.e. in MacDhòmhnaill 2001), have not previously been considered in this context, and yet provide an important resource when considering the experience of kelping. A lyrical account of kelping on Orkney at the very end of the 19th century based on first-hand observation (Robertson 1909) is interesting and evocative but its later date, somewhat romanticised nature, and the different traditions on Orkney, render it not particularly useful for understanding kelping in the Hebrides at the start of the century.
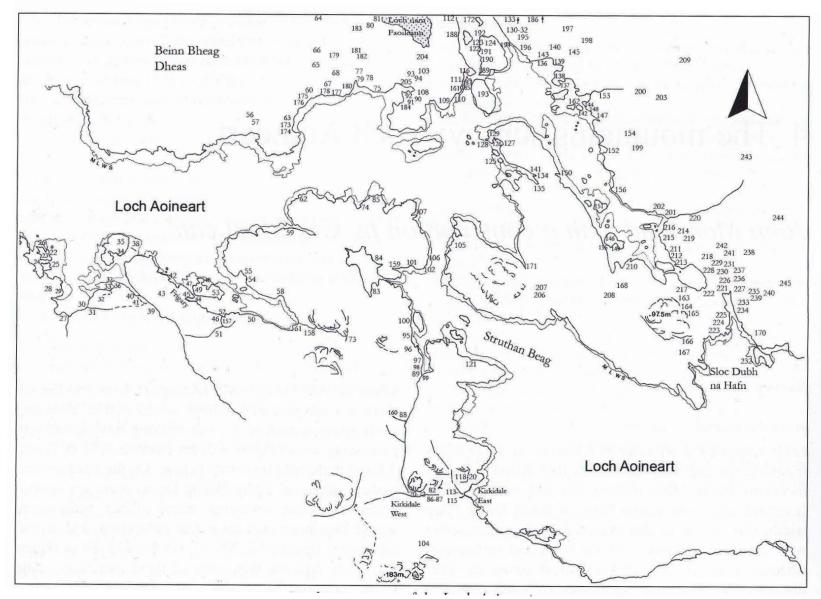
Figure 5.2.1. Sites identified during landscape survey by the SEARCH project in 1989-1993. Each number marks a site visited during the survey (Moreland and MacLean 2012: 84). Many of the areas discussed in the text are toward the head of the loch, west of the area depicted in this image. © John Moreland

Nevertheless, some descriptions of the experience and sensory elements associated with kelping tasks are very useful. Despite this evidence and previous approaches to the topic, no concerted attempt to formulate an archaeological approach to kelping has been undertaken in Scotland (although an archaeological account for the practice on the Northern Irish islands does exist (Forsythe 2006)). The account presented below is therefore the first extended archaeological account of a kelping landscape in Scotland.

This section aims to demonstrate that by following the methodology outlined in chapter 3, which has a very narrow focus temporally and geographically and considers taskscape and narrative, it is possible to draw out aspects of this short-term kelping landscape from the archaeological evidence. It is further argued that through close reading of the archaeological and documentary evidence, and a consideration of oral tradition and evidence, it is possible to situate an imagined early 19th-century kelping community within a historically and culturally contextualised interpretation of the landscape. This interpretation has a basis in archaeological evidence, but also draws on evocative and tactile descriptions and imagination to create a narrative snapshot of life in Loch Aoineart's kelping landscape.

The Kelpers Gather

A cottar walks, barefoot, along the long kelp track to Loch Aoineart. *The track stretches toward the head of the loch before him, forming hollows in the low hummocks which rise here and there in a largely flat landscape of peat banks and small lochans. Smoke can been seen ahead, where the settlements of Taigh a' Mhàil and Poltoran lie nestled in gullies by the shore. Taigh a' Mhàil, where once local rents were collected to be taken off by sea, lies at the end of the kelping track upon which goods and labour ebb and flow from* Loch Aoineart *to Ormacleit (Moreland and MacLean 2012: 52). Calbhaigh Island rises from the loch ahead, dotted with houses surrounded by rich agricultural land. The hillside of Calbhaigh is alive with people, lighting fires, shouting, waving sticks, and trying all the techniques they can think of in their war against the hungry geese which threaten local crops in mid-summer (Walker 1980: 79).*

Figure 5.2.2. The remains of the old kelp track can be seen as a linear depression in the foreground. The modern road overlies the track beyond the bend which can be seen in the midde of the image. © K. Grant.

There are many on the road. All are heavily laden, carrying almost all of their meagre belongings with them on what has become an annual flit to the east.

***

Formal roads, particularly those capable of taking a cart, were rare in the Hebrides at the start of the 19th century. One commentator, although mentioning that some few miles of roads had been built in North Uist, suggested that 'it will be long… before the Hebrides can afford to make one fourth of the quantity of roads which they require' (MacDonald 1811: 520). The construction of the kelp road is of a typical character for the place and period, being a combination of the removal of peat until a solid foundation is revealed and then the laying of gravels and small stones, depending on the local topography (MacDonald 1811: 521). Although this road, built in in 1799 (MacLean 1989: 5), is narrow by today's standards and relatively ephemeral in places, it was regarded as a good road even forty years after its construction (MacLean 1841: 195). Although the relatively early date of the road does make it of some interest generally in terms of the improvement of communications in the Western Isles, the track, and its associated tasks and movements, provides an interesting case study of the kelp trade.

Its west-east route describes a pattern of movement which arose almost entirely as a consequence of kelping. There were two methods of procuring seaweed for making kelp: collecting small amounts of seaweed that wash up all year round ('cast ware'), particularly as a result of winter storms and on the sandy west coast; and actively cutting seaweed ('cut ware') from the rocks in the sheltered and rocky bays of the east during summer, when it is in bloom (MacLean 2012: 367). Although several species of seaweed were harvested, these fall into two main categories, commonly referred to as 'black ware' and 'yellow ware'. The former is that generally cut and considered more valuable for kelping with the latter cast ashore, collected, and widely used in manuring (MacDonald 1811; Rymer 1974: 146; Smith 2012: 409). The very nature of these strategies for collecting seaweed created a system of west-east transhumance from the arable lands of the west to the rocky shores of Loch Aoineart in the east (MacLean 2012: 367). The kelping season for cut ware, or 'black-ware' (*Feamainn Dhubh*) had a relatively similar pattern right across the Uists in the early 19th century. The main season ran from the middle of June to the middle of August, and at its opening large numbers of people moved to the shores of the loch to take advantage of the abundant seaweed resources (Rymer 1974: 147). Permanent settlements along the sea lochs of South Uist had been relatively uncommon

Figure 5.2.3. Satellite imagery showing the old Kelp Road as it leaves south Loch Aoineart. It can be seen running from the sharp bend in the modern road in the lower right of the image, toward Loch a' Clachain then closely following its southern bank, before weaving between the lochans toward the top left corner of the image. Map Data © Google, Getmap plc.

in the 18th century (Caird 1979: 506). In Loch Aoineart, occupation may have been restricted largely to the flatter land toward the head of the loch and consisted in part of specialists and craftsmen supporting the export economy of the thriving port there. The kelp boom meant that coastal land in the east now commanded a premium for the collection of seaweed and its processing into kelp – an activity that required vast amounts of seasonal labour (MacLean 2012: 366-7). Despite the importance of Loch Aoineart as a principal port, and particularly a place for exporting fish in the 18th century (Walker 1980: 81) a road suitable for wheeled traffic was not built until the kelping boom, when one was built under the direction of Clanranald's elite (NRAS2177/1508-10), to facilitate new east-west routes and tasks in the landscape. The kelp road's west-east route therefore presents a shift in focus from a 'seaward' looking landscape of exports to one of mass annual movement from the arable lands of the west to the kelping shores of the east and back.

Kelping required the movement of large amounts of material, people, and their belongings, often by the small, stocky ponies which were abundant on the Uists (MacDonald 1811: 406,800-1; Munro 1799: 4). This movement occurred during the summer harvesting and processing of sea ware, when materials would be moved from landing places to kelp kilns and drying areas, usually by the shore; and in the winter and spring when fields were manured using collected and dried seaweeds. For most people, the experience of the kelp road would have been one of seasonal labouring tasks associated almost entirely with kelping and the movements of those working it. The agricultural season – cultivating land, managing crop and livestock, the harvest - had to be undertaken in just a few weeks between kelping activities, or even at the same time, perhaps taking advantage of the days between low spring tides (MacLean 2012: 367). This would have meant constant movement along the kelp road. This new west-east route represents the seasonal taskscape of the middle district of South Uist in those first years of the 19th century, when the kelping was at its height.

The Kelpers Settle

Weary after a long trudge along the north side of the loch, weaving between the crop fields and the black feannagan with their green potatoes sprouting, the cottar arrives on the small patch of shore by the burn's outlet, and lays down his pack. He inspects the slumped form of his old hut. It is collapsed; its

earthy form and turf roof making it look like an over-grown dung-heap. As always, the winter storms have washed over what will be his summer dwelling. Seaweed, shells, mud, and pebbles overlie the lumpy mounds of his four feannagan although some of his potatoes, planted in spring, are showing through the sea-borne debris. After he repairs his hut and stores his tools, he will turn to the feannagan and rescue what crops he can – these will need to sustain him as the summer comes to its end. For the moment, he is warm at least in the June sun; perhaps he will sleep on dry heather tonight.

<div align="center">***</div>

On the northern shore of the loch, in the warren of small channels, islands, and tidal bays east of the site of the inn at Àirigh nam Ban, is a small headland, named 'ru clack' on Bald's map of 1805. The name appears on no other map, suggesting abandonment significantly before the Ordnance Survey first edition of the 1870s. Another given spelling is 'Runaclach' (Moreland and MacLean 2012: 91) suggesting a poor phonetic rendering of what is probably Rubha nan Clach, the Headland of the Rock or Stone (Dwelly 1993: 200). On this small headland Bald depicted a single rectangular structure with a small enclosure. The remains of this structure are plainly visible today on the headland and survive as the stone footings of a substantial sub-rectangular building. The enclosure marked by Bald is not apparent but an area of vegetation growth suggestive of agriculture can be seen on the ground and in satellite images, similar in size and form to that area.

These remains are typical of a Hebridean blackhouse and compare well with structures of 18th and 19th century dates found across the Hebrides and excavated by SEARCH at places nearby such as Frigary on the south shore of Loch Aoineart (Moreland and MacLean 2012: 85) and Bornais to the west (Parker Pearson *et al.* 2012). This dwelling, depicted as unroofed by the Ordnance Survey in the 1870s, was almost certainly that occupied by 'Widow Currie', from at least 1810 (GD201/6/44) when the land was recorded as one of three 'Lower Bornish Pendicles'.

Mrs Currie is recorded as having paid a substantial rent of £11 in 1813, and exported as much as two tons of kelp in 1813. Contemporary sources suggest that it takes anywhere between ten and twenty tons of seaweed to make one ton of kelp, with an average being 18 (MacDonald 1811: 803). To have paid this rent and produced this amount of kelp strongly suggests that 'Widow Currie' employed sub-tenants. During fieldwork in 2015, a site was identified which seems like a good candidate for the home of a kelping sub-tenant of Rubha nan Clach.

Figure 5.2.4. Extract of Bald's map of 1805. Àirigh nam Ban, the location of the Inn, is on the left of the image, 'Ru Clack' is on the small headland east of Allt Alasary, where the single red structure with its enclosure can be seen. Original deposited at the National Records of Scotland, RHP38151.

At the sheltered outlet of the small burn called 'Allt Alisary', around 100m from the blackhouse remains on Rubha nan Clach, is a tiny patch of flat ground so close to the coast that it was depicted as foreshore by the Ordnance Survey. This area must almost certainly be submerged during winter storm surges. On this small patch of ground lie the well-preserved footings of a small building measuring around 2.5m by 1.75m. The character of the remains, which contain little stone, suggest this was a turf-built structure. Generally such a structure by a small burn would be immediately identified as a sheiling hut – except that it is sited not in the uplands but exceptionally close to the shore near what was

Figure 5.2.5. Looking west from Rubha nan Clach to Àirigh nam Ban. The stony feature on the headland in the foreground of the feature is the structure depicted by Bald on Rubha nan Clach. © K. Grant.

once agricultural land. On a tiny flat area of almost-marine grass, just to the west of the hut, is a small patch of *feannagan,* cultivation ridges probably created to grow potatoes. This tiny site, with its small hut and patch of cultivation is indeed like a sheiling. It is a temporary transhumance settlement, but for the movement of seasonal kelpers, not of cattle. It was probably occupied by a kelp worker, perhaps temporarily sited here during the spring and summer before he returned to agricultural land to the west to work his crops, or by a landless cottar whose entire belongings may have been little more than this small hut and four *feannagan*. This site represents the kelping landscape at the bottom of the social scale; on the edge, both literally and figuratively.

For many, the first task of the kelping season would have been to carry everything they would need along the kelp road from the arable lands in the west to the site of their small kelping hut in Loch Aoineart. They would then need to repair or rebuild their hut to make it fit for habitation (Rymer 1974: 147). It would need to store the tools used in kelping and all the objects needed for everyday life such as food, clothing, eating utensils, pottery and equipment for working the *feannagan*, all of which would have to be carried from the west coast. All this before the back-breaking labour of the season could even begin.

Figure 5.2.6. The kelpers' bothy at Allt Altisary. Lying remarkably close to the coast, it comprises a rectangular structure, with either a small 'porch', or perhaps a lean-to or storage area on its western edge. A tiny patch of *feannagan* lies on the shore. © K. Grant.

The Seaweed is Cut

It is low tide. Dawn on what will be a long summer's day. The lengthy morning twilight of mid-summer illuminates a well-worn ship at anchor in the muddy bay. The ship and its crew are mostly abed, although a pair of orange glows at the rail illuminate the sleepy faces of the watchmen smoking their pipes. The picture ashore is very different. Scores of people squelch around in the thick marine muck on all sides. They scramble over the large exposed tidal rocks covered in deep layers of slippery strands of yellow-ware. Bare wet feet stumble across the sharp barnacled rocks which lie unseen beneath the thick mat of seaweed. Around these large rocks, the people cut and slice the weed with a sawing motion, whilst others tie heather rope around the densest areas. The muck of the bay is covered in a criss-cross of footprints weaving between the narrow channels of deeper water. Their creators, cold, wet, and shivering, wait for the sun to rise and give some much-needed warmth.

Some of those around the shore are huddled in small groups. Their voices can be heard in the clear morning air as they gesticulate toward the key kelping grounds. They are negotiating, planning, arguing, conscious that the tide is on the turn. Here and there, boats are being made ready, nousts are being cleared, and creels are filling. Amongst the poorly clothed, barefoot, and already muddy mass of the kelpers is the odd fine jacket, expensive hat, or clean pair of shoes. These adorn the tacksmen and factors, and their underlings, the ground officers and kelp surveyors. Some of the kelpers meet these people with greetings and familiar smiles, others avoid their gaze and simply wish to get on with their work without their interference.

As the tide begins to turn, the kelpers return ashore for a quick meal, and to prepare for the rest of the day's industry.

***

The act of cutting sea-weed itself leaves no real archaeological evidence, but gleaning as much evidence as possible from documentary sources, we may consider aspects of what took place. Generally, ware was cut from specific areas or specific rocks on a two or three-year cycle (MacDonald 1811: 802; Rymer 1974: 147), so one must assume that a period of negotiation and organisation

took place whereby each newly arrived kelper or local resident decided where ware should be harvested. Often, the relationships among these people may have been new, as much a product of the kelp trade as the huts by the shore, or perhaps they were based on earlier relationships created during cutting seawares for manure. A generation later, population increase and poverty brought large-scale changes for landholding, crowding people on the land and resulting in squatting on common ground – the Napier Commission report for South Uist is redolent of the social tension and conflict caused by people being thrust together by economic circumstances (Napier Commission 1884: 713-4). It may be that those already on the loch resented what had been common ground being given to sub-tenants, or the influx of cottars into the landscape each summer. Although there is no way of knowing exactly what these relationships were, we can be certain that a new social landscape also accompanied the kelp boom.

A detailed and well-established knowledge of the topography, character and ownership of local seaweed is attested to strongly in the depositions on 'the destruction of Clanranald's kelp shores' of 1799, with individuals recounting exactly which type of weed was cut, where, when, and how often. A specific mention of 'the big rock of Lineclate' (GD201/1/313 1799: 8), provides a very rare glimpse of how specific aspects of the landscape were discussed in relation to these specific tasks. This highly regulated nature of seaweed shores was repeated in the west where watchmen were appointed to look out for seaware being washed up after storms and ensure the correct allocation of seaweed and shoreline (Smith 2012: 391). In Orkney in the later 19th century, particularly complex rules were recorded which tied good kelp shores to the rents paid by each tenant. These rules were said to be 'an inexhaustible source of quarrel' (Robertson 1909: 230). The statements in 'the destruction of Clanranald's kelp shores' certainly attest to the quarrels caused both between and within different elements of the island's society. Frequently heather rope was used to mark out the areas where kelp would be cut (Rymer 1974: 147). This aided in bringing it ashore but perhaps also acted to ensure that the correct areas of ware were being cut by the correct people.

Seaware would be cut at low tide using a small sickle-like tool named a corran (Dwelly 1993: 255), notched to give a saw-like effect, and would be tied using

heather rope so as to form a raft as the tide came in and floated the cut mass of weed (MacDonald 1811: 802; Smith 2012: 390). The weed would then be landed using the ropes or small boats and the process of transforming it into kelp could begin.

The Seaweed is Landed

On a tiny flat headland, by a small family dwelling on the south of the loch in the heat of midday, men grunt as they drag a huge raft of kelp ashore using heather ropes, standing knee-deep in the cold loch. The raft is guided into a small landing stage. In the landscape around this scene the fires of kilns pour steamy grey smoke into the skies, and the dark yellow-brown of kelp is spreading like a blanket across the few flat areas that surround the loch to dry in the sun. Small beds of feannagan surround and are interspersed between these drying floors, the potatoes within already sprouting. Women carrying creels of weed scurry across the lochside while carts ply back and forth along the new cart road, and boats weave across the bay.

The large raft of kelp is now being broken up with forks, collected from the small squat turf house just a few footsteps from the shore. Creels are being loaded and the weed is being piled on the slope just above the house, laid alongside the seaweed which has already had a few days of drying in the sun. Creels of wet seaweed are refilled with dry weed, returning to the shore and to a pile behind the house, next to the stone-lined kiln where the fire is already being kindled. The day's main meal has not yet been eaten, but backs ache, hands are blistered, and cold, wet, overworked joints throb.

Just to the north of Taigh a' Mhàil , on the south shore of the loch, are the particularly well-preserved remains of what is interpreted as a kelping 'pendicle', typical of those to be found along the coast on Loch Aoineart (Figure 5.2.7). Nestled on a small nub of land with inlets on either side are the well-preserved remains of a blackhouse of late 19th century date. It is depicted on the OS map of 1874 and its good state of preservation, the presence of mortar, and an integrated gable-end fireplace are typical of later improved blackhouses (Grant 1960: chapter 7). By the revision of the first edition OS map around the turn of the 20th century, this blackhouse is depicted as unroofed. The modern croft house stands just to the west. Surrounding this modern building can be

found the remains of earlier structures comprising a tiny settlement of unknown name, not depicted by Bald and so probably post-dating his survey of 1805. They were, however, already so denuded as to be not depicted at all on the first edition Ordnance Survey map of 1876, when relatively well-preserved unroofed structures were depicted but ruinous remains less than 1 foot high were not (RCAHMS and Historic Scotland 2002: 14-5). The cartographic evidence therefore probably dates this settlement to the early to middle 19th century. The remains on the site suggest that all the stages of seaweed gathering and processing may have taken place here, in addition to its being the home for a small family of kelpers.
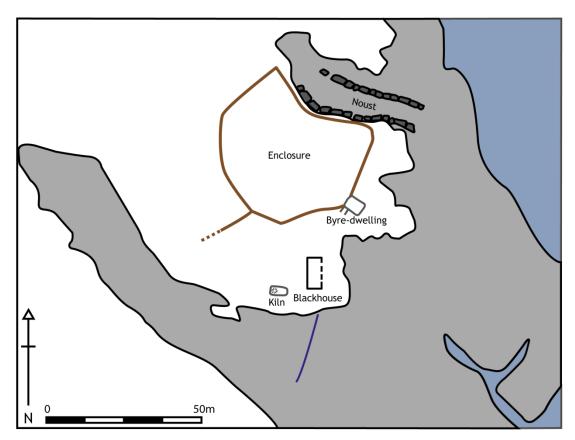
Figure 5.2.7. Sketch plan of kelpers' settlement north of Taigh a' Mhàil.© K. Grant.

The well-preserved footings of an 'L-shaped' building of vernacular construction can be seen immediately by the shore. The building is of dry stone, its walls noticeably less well-built and neat than the later blackhouse nearby (Figure 5.2.8), their low height and character perhaps suggesting turf may have made up a significant component of the building's fabric. It is slightly dug in to a natural hillock to the west and built around a large boulder toward its eastern end. The construction of vernacular buildings around earthfast natural boulders is a common feature both on Loch Aoineart and across the Highlands more generally, and is evocative of the way in which structures were built from a minute

knowledge of the local microtopography. The structure is comprised of a larger room with an entrance opening north, onto the loch. More ephemeral remains on the south end of the building suggest a square structure appended to this wall which may have been entered from inside the main room as well as from outside to the east. The character of the remains of this second structure is different, perhaps indicative of turf-only construction. This second room is interpreted as a possible storage room or lean-to.

This 'L-shaped' form is markedly different from the typical shape of a Highland byre-dwelling or Hebridean blackhouse which are traditionally larger, longer, and composed of either a long single room or a long single range, with human occupation at one end and room for cattle at the other. Evidence for sub-divisions or drains within these structures is also common. Structures of this more traditional form can be found just a stone's throw away on the island of Calbhaigh and at Frigary, which was excavated during the SEARCH project (Moreland and MacLean 2012: 85). It is suggested that the 'L-shaped' form of the
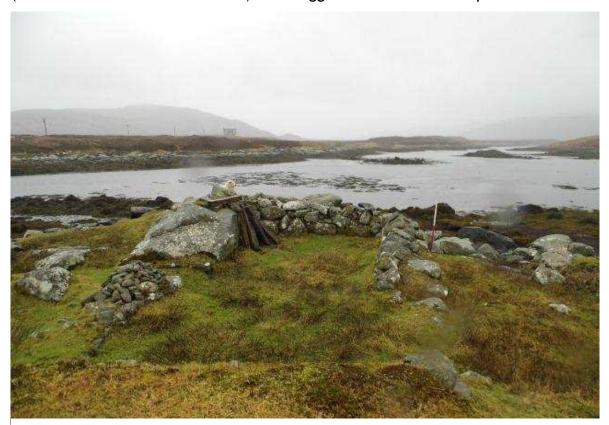
Figure 5.2.8. Remains of building at Taigh a' Mhàil depicted on Bald's map of 1805. © K. Grant.

main dwelling does not represent the traditional blackhouse byre-dwelling of a Hebridean 'crofter' where there is space present for cattle to reside in the winter, but rather represents a dwelling for a family engaged largely in kelp-

making, perhaps with a small parcel of land for cultivating some subsistence crops – probably potatoes, which from the kelp boom onwards became almost the only crop grown by many tenants (MacLean 2012: 368). It is notable that where 'L-shaped' buildings are depicted on Bald, they occur almost always directly by the coast and on their own, with most buildings in the more agricultural areas being depicted as rectangular and occurring in small clusters.

A small circular feature partly visible on the ground and depicted on the first edition OS map, but more easily appreciated from satellite images, suggests a small enclosure or kaleyard where some cultivation took place. Where there is substantial cultivation, Bald indicates this by using tints, hachuring, or even by depicting enclosures. The lack of any depiction here suggests that the land may have been common grazing in 1805 or had only small-scale agricultural use of an unimproved character. On the opposite side of the small isthmus of land, a

Figure 5.2.9. *Cairidh* **(fish trap) at unnamed settlement north of Taigh a' Mhàil. The possible kelp kiln can be seen in the foreground. © K. Grant.**

linear stone fishtrap or *cairidh* (pl. *cairidhean*), very prominent at low-tide when the site was visited, can be seen, closing off a small tidal inlet and the outflow of a small burn. These *cairidhean* are ubiquitous in the landscape and will be discussed further in section 5.4.

The dwelling, cultivation enclosure and *cairidh* are typical of a small subsistence settlement, probably suitable only for a small family or cottar. However, further evidence on the site is highly suggestive of kelp processing. The position of the main dwelling, immediately adjacent to the sea and sheltered on a tiny flat area

Figure 5.2.10. Landing place or noust at Taigh a' Mhàil. © K. Grant.

of land is suggestive, giving a sense of the settlement being 'marine' in character that is reinforced by other nearby structures. A few footsteps from the front door of the main building is an informal landing area, comprised of a cleared slipway where natural boulders have been removed, and defined by lines of stones on either side. This feature is likely to represent either a noust for a small boat or a kelp landing area. Numerous methods were employed to move heavy loads of seaweed: large ships, small boats, carts, and creels on the backs of women (Smith 2012: 390-1). A common method on the east coast was to tie and cut seaweed at low tide and tie it together to create a raft which would float as the tide came in and could then be pulled or towed to shore and landed (MacDonald 1811: 802; MacLean 2012: 367; Rymer 1974: 390). This required cleared areas for landing and processing of the kelp, often where small boats could also be brought ashore. Seaweed 'traps' were also used (Moreland and

MacLean 2012: 98); small dry stone structures designed to hold the kelp before it was brought ashore. They are a very common feature around the loch although there is not one at Taigh a' Mhàil. The weed would then be landed using the ropes or small boats and the process of transforming it into kelp could begin. The first stage was to dry the seaweed by laying it on flat ground in the sun or in piles which were frequently turned. Finding a sufficiently large piece of flat, uncultivated, ground in mid-summer in Loch Aoineart must have been a challenge.

The acts of cutting, moving and spreading the seaweed leave little or no archaeological evidence, although some insights into the experience of this work can be gleaned from local culture. The first-hand oral tradition of the area is relatively silent on the matter of kelping, although two songs by the 20th century poet Dòmhnaill Iain MacDhòmhnaill refer to the act of collecting seaweed. MacDhòmhnaill was born just a couple of miles north-west of Loch Aoineart in 1919, and was steeped in South Uist culture from his youth – his father was a famous *seanchaidh* or storyteller, and he was nephew to the renowned poet Dòmhnall Ruadh Phàislig, the Paisley Bard (Innes 2001: vii). Aspects of his accounts of kelping probably come in part from personal experience of collecting seaweed for manuring, but perhaps they are also based on local traditions and stories of kelping in the century previous to his birth. His song *Oran an Fheamnaidh, the Seaweed Gatherers*, is an extremely evocative account of the physical act of collecting seaweed:

'Ochòin, a chiallain, gur mi tha cianail
'S mi `n seo gam riasladh am beul na Cròice;
An todhar fiadhaich `s e doirbh a lìonadh,
`S chan eil sa Chrìosdachd na spìonadh ròin` às.

Nuair nì mi `n gràpa chur sìos lem shàil ann,
Bidh snìomh air cnàmhan mun teàrn e òirleach
`S nuair gheibh mi `m bàrr - `s chan ann gun spàirn dhomh –
An truaighe snàthl' bhios a' sàs na mheòirean

Mum faigh mi dìol dheth `s a' chairt a lìonadh,
Mo mheòirean piante gun sian ach tòchadh;

Thig stàbh na liathaig am bàrr lem spìonadh,

`S gur ann mum bheul a bhios a crìoch a' bhòidse

`S e mhadainn choirb-fuar le gaoith `s le stoirm

A bhith trial a dh'fheamnadh thug searbh-bhlas dhòmhs' air;

Alas, my friend, I am forlorn

Struggling here at the mouth of the Croic;

This tangled seaweed so hard to load,

There's none in Christendom could pluck a strand.

When I drive the fork down with my heel,

My bones are wrenched ere it sinks an inch;

When I lift it – not without straining –

Not the poorest strand left on the tines.

Before I have enough to fill the cart

My fingers ache – nothing but blisters;

When the leafy tangle yields to my heaving,

It ends up in my face.

Biting cold mornings with wind and storm

Soured my taste for collecting seaweed;'

(MacDhòmhnaill 2001: 83)

This description of seaweed collecting as a heavy, back-breaking, cold, and repetitive task is extremely tactile and speaks for itself. There are few other first-hand accounts of the activity, although Isobel Grant noted that the effects of the cold and wet of seaweed cutting on rheumatism were particularly severe (Grant 1960: 211; MacLeod 2012: 90). Of the six pendicles on the loch for which kelping records are found in the National Records of Scotland, the amount of kelp sold in the year 1813 ranged between two and six tons per tenant, with perhaps around 24 tonnes being sold in total. If we multiply this amount by 18, the amount of tons of seaweed suggested by MacDonald (1811: 803) as the average to produce one ton of kelp, the scale of the operation becomes apparent. In the space of probably only two months in 1813, in the relatively

small area of land on the shores of Loch Aoineart comprising the Lower Bornish pendicles, well over 400 tonnes of seaweed had to be cut, brought ashore, moved, and dried. The amount of labour involved in simply reaching the stage of preparing to process the seaweed in kilns was vast.

The cutting and lifting of the seaweed was of course only one part of the process; the next and equally laborious task was burning it. This process has left some imprint in the archaeological record.

The Seaweed is Burned

Deep red spouts of flame erupt from the smouldering mass of seaweed which is now burning in the stone-lined kiln to the rear of the house. Coughing in the smoke which the breeze whips around, two men continue to lift seaweed with their forks on to the pile in the kiln; its small strands falling between the tines, and each forkful is disappointingly small. The hours of hissing, smoking, and popping go by as the seaweed burns – but this is not to say that the family of kelpers are resting. They remain busy, flitting between their feannagan, the house, and the shore, where they prepare for the cutting at the next tide. As the flames die down, the occupants of the small hut stir the ashy remnants of the weed using long hooks: a backbreaking job, mixing the heavy, thick, sticky mass at arms-length, the heat of the kiln sapping the strength from their tired bodies. At length, the day's labour is over and those who can return to the turf-built house, stooping with tired backs through the uneven, narrow door for well needed rest. The kelp cools.

***

Figure 5.2.11. Possible kelp kiln. A later drystone structure overlies the western end, possibly a small hut or storage space. Beneath lie the remains of a thin sub-rectangular structure cut into the natural bank © K. Grant.

On the east side of the settlement at Taigh a' Mhàil are the remains of a small but complex drystone structure. Against the western end of the structure lies a relatively intact sub-square feature, possibly a small hut or pen. The 'fresh' and intact character of the stonework suggests relatively recent use in comparison with the less well-preserved features nearby. The stones comprising this feature may have been robbed from the earlier dwelling – a small heap of robbed stone piled neatly on the wall of the dwelling suggests recent re-use of stone. However, below this fairly neat drystone addition is the much more ephemeral remains of a longer, informally built structure dug into a bank on the west and north sides and bounded by large natural earthfast boulders at three corners.

This structure, apparently open-ended at the seaward side, is interpreted here as being the remains of a kelp kiln. Such sites are found across the West of Scotland, although only 60 are recorded in Canmore. The general shape and form of the structure is comparable with many of those sites, and is strikingly similar to those archaeologically surveyed on Rathlin and Tory islands in Northern Ireland (Forsythe 2006: 223-4).

After the seaweed was sufficiently dry to burn, it would be forked into the kilns, which could take the form of long trenches or stone-lined pits (Forsythe 2006; MacDonald 1811: 802; Rymer 1974: 148). It was perhaps at this stage that the kelp was sorted through to remove sand, rocks, and other debris that would lower the price, and was checked over by the factors, ground officers, and kelp factors to prevent these impurities entering the kilns; it would be too late once the seaweed was fired. Inevitably, some debris from the hastily built kilns would always become mixed with the finished product. The burning could take up to a day, depending on the weather conditions and the dryness of the kelp, and required constant watching, and stirring (MacDonald 1811: 802-3; Rymer 1974: 148).

During this process the kelp would be stirred using a special 'Kelping-Iron', a long wooden pole with an iron hook on the end, described by MacDonald on South Uist in 1811 and still in use

Figure 5.2.12. A kelping iron (Grant 1960: 211).

there just before the Second World War (Grant 1960: 211; MacDonald 1811: 803). It is probably no accident that Robertson's description of this hot, hard, work appears to contain allusions to the fires of hell (Robertson 1909: 236). The plumes of steamy white smoke must have comprised a significant landscape feature; a painting by William Daniell of early 19th-century Mull shows smoke along the coastline, probably from kelp burning (MacLeod 2012: Plate 32). Towards the end of the firing, the ashes of the seaweed formed a thick slurry, and were covered up to prevent rain ingress whilst it dried. The need for reasonable weather conditions both during the burning and cooling of the kelp must have added an extra tension to the process, as weather conditions change frequently in the Hebrides, even in mid-summer. Remembering that it could take as much as 20 tons of seaweed to make a single ton of kelp (MacDonald 1811: 803) and bearing in mind that this is probably a 'dry' weight (the wet weeds before drying would surely weigh considerably more), then the quantities of material to be moved and labour involved must have been great. After cooling, the seaweed has been transformed into kelp: a slab-like, solid or molten mass resembling slag, lava, stone, or even glass depending on the seaweed and the nature of the burning (MacDonald 1811: 802; Robertson 1909: 241; Rymer 1974: 148). It had to be smashed up into manageable chunks as it set to allow it to be moved after it solidified. The final stage of the process was no easier, and promised little reward.

The Kelp is Weighed and Sold

A boat lies tethered on the small landing stage in the full light of day, piled high with slabs of grey, glassy kelp. The family stand, bonnets in hand, as the kelp officer inspects the products of their labour. The tacksman, Bornais, in his own rough working clothes now, gazes anxiously across the choppy loch to the ship waiting at anchor. There is negotiation, argument over the purity of the kelp, weighing. At last a price is agreed upon, and a small mark is made in the rough accounts the kelp officer has in his hands. Tired, but cheery, the kelp officer and the tacksman, aided by the boat's crew, push off. The family stand exhausted, faces blackened from the smoke, their expressions vacant. This season's kelp will, yet again, not cover their rent. They put their bonnets back on.

***

Now the kelp was be weighed and removed to the vessels which would transport it for sale on the mainland. The kelp would be inspected, an amount deducted for impurities, and a price agreed. This may then be set against the rents of the labourers. It seems likely that the tacksmen, factors, ground-officers, and kelp-officers of the estate would have been closely involved in this process. A key piece of evidence for this comes from Gaelic song, from the elegy to Aonghas Òg Àirigh Mhillinn, or Angus MacDonald, tacksman of Milton, who drowned in 1809 when his boat, carrying kelp to a waiting ship, capsized in Loch Aoineort (see section 5.6). It is no surprise that the local tacksman should wish to be involved and to supervise the shipping of kelp – it was these local elites who stood to profit, often making far more money in the boom years from kelp than the land they controlled could ever make through agriculture (MacDonald 1811: 803). As for the tenants of the land themselves, they would make nothing from their labours. The money made from selling the kelp to their superiors in the local hierarchy was set against their rents, which it invariably failed to cover. For all six tenants of the Lower Bornish pendicles on Loch Aoineort, this meant increasing debts year on year, for the entire second decade of the 19th century (GD201/6/44). Life here was precarious - an apologetic handwritten note appears after the rental records of the Lower Bornish pendicles for 1813 to explain a substantial reduction in kelp profits from the previous year: 'the difference arises from the following tenants having deserted this land from poverty owing to having lost their cattle and horses in the spring of 1812' (GD201/6/44). It is worth considering also that these tenants were by no means at the bottom of the social and economic scale – the lot of their sub-tenants and cottars is likely to have been even worse, though not accounted for in official state records.

The memory of the early 19th century as being one of great suffering and difficulty for the community comes through strongly in Gaelic accounts of kelping from around a hundred years later:

'Chunnaic mise sibh ri saothair dhuais-ghoirt,
A' togail stàbh an iomall fliuch an làin
A' slaodadh feamainn loibht' à staca cruaidh-rag
`S ur fallas-gruaidh a' measgadh ris an t-sàl

B' e dán gun fhortan dhuibh a dheilbh ur crannchur,

Chuir beò sibh ann an aimsir a bha cruaidh

Air eilean mara bha gun iochd na ghnùis dhuibh,

`S aig iomadh uair a dhiùlt ur cumail suas

I saw you [the author's forefathers] at your thankless toil,

Gathering tangle by the tide's wet edge,

Dragging rotting seaweed from stubborn stack,

Your brow-sweat mingling with the brine...

A luckless fate shaped your destiny

That set your lives in a time so hard,

In an island that showed no compassion

And often failed to grant a livelihood' *(MacDhòmhnaill 2001: 195)*

The Napier Commission witness statements almost seventy years later also recall this period as one of great hardship and difficulty, particularly as the kelp trade collapsed (Napier Commission 1884: 698-749). It is remembered as so brutal that the poem *The Seaweed Gatherers* uses the difficulty of collecting seaweed as an allegory for the suffering of the Gaelic people in the 19th and 20th centuries as a whole (MacDhòmhnaill 2001: 83-5). While undoubtedly these accounts are looking back to the distant past, as described above, the cold figures of the rentals for the Lower Bornish pendicles confirm this as a time when life was precarious and there was little reward for the hard work of the kelpers along the coasts. It seems reasonable to surmise without risk of being teleological that people must have known that their backbreaking labour would produce little or no benefit for themselves, only allowing them to continue a challenging existence, their debts mounting, with little hope of change. This sense of desperation must be considered a key part of the kelping landscape, just as it is a key theme in the experience of crofters in this period (Hunter 1976). A knowledge of others losing land and tenure, of mounting debt, of communities being set against each other by the interests of the local elite, must have been as frequently present as the smoke of the kelp kilns, or any other part of the process that dominated the landscape in those first years of the 19th century.

Conclusion

The account of a kelping landscape above comes from a very close reading of the archaeological and documentary evidence. It did not set out to describe all the sites in the landscape or to see the body of archaeological evidence as a whole. Rather, it focussed on a small number of sites which could be confidently dated to the period of kelping. The function of these sites could be understood through the very character of the archaeological remains, and in many cases this allowed consideration to be given to the activities that would have taken place there.

The small hut at Rubha nan Clach, which one would identify as a sheiling were it not for its location so close to the shore, can only be interpreted as a kelping hut. The site could also be dated through cartographic evidence as going out of use in the early 19th century, further suggesting it as part of the short-lived kelping landscape of that time. The unnamed site north of Taigh a' Mhàil was more difficult to date through cartographic evidence. Despite a more difficult chronology, the character of the archaeological remains clearly described the function of the site. It comprised a single small dwelling, probably of turf-and-stone construction and with a possible second room or small lean-to, lying immediately adjacent to the coast. A very small patch of land defined by the ephemeral remains of a turf-built enclosure and a nearby fish-trap provide evidence for basic-small scale subsistence farming and fishing on the site. The small kelp landing stage and evidence of a kelp-kiln complete the site. This site matches a typical kelping pendicle of the early 19th century, which is described as having 'one or two permanent dwellings with associated structures for household subsistence farming' (MacLean 2012: 367).

These two small sites, when closely examined, provided significant amounts of archaeological evidence. This was combined with experiential observations of the site taken during fieldwork, accounts from the local oral tradition, first-hand testimonies, and secondary sources describing the process of kelping, to create a narrative of kelping that was grounded in these specific places, and within the wider physical and cultural landscape. It is argued that by focussing down on these specific sites, and on the small number of years within which the kelping landscape operated, and drawing from a small number of excellent archaeological examples, it has been possible to imagine the experience of those living and working the landscape without creating an ethnographic present

where parts of the landscape which may date to different periods are thrust together in an attempt to make a coherent whole. It is hoped therefore that this account addresses the concerns of Moreland, who considered attempting to understand the lives of those in this complex landscape extremely difficult due to a lack of dating evidence creating a 'past as palimpsest' where 'we run the risk of creating for them [people in the past] an ahistorical present' (Moreland and MacLean 2012: 93).

In creating the above narrative, the first coherent, extended archaeological account of a Scottish kelping landscape has been produced. It is worth considering why this has not been attempted before. The kelp boom in Scotland was extremely short-lived. The end of the Napoleonic War in 1815 resulted in relaxations on import restrictions of industrial products, leading to increasing desperation and economic collapse on South Uist by 1822. Before long the estate was sold. Forced emigration and hunger were widespread even before *'a'
bhliadhna a dh'fhalbh am buntáta'* – 'the year the potato departed' (Meek 2003: 421), which saw starving children haunting the roads of the Uists when the tide of emigration became a tsunami (MacLean 2012: 368). It is perhaps as a result of the mid-19th century being a period of such rapid change that kelping has not been well-served as a topic. The big history paradigms of the post-medieval Highlands focus on long-term changes such as Improvement, preferring to consider the grand questions of how the Highlands became what they are today over centuries. These recognise the significance of the kelp boom and bust but tend to treat it in a somewhat teleological fashion; as a staging post in a long-term downward spiral which seems inevitable with hindsight. In doing so, they forget that it was an important aspect of the experience of life in the past in its own right. Rather than being just a small local part of a longer, national story, the landscape and way of life described above was the experience of tens of thousands of people across the Western Highlands and Islands of Scotland for the best part of a generation, and it is certainly worthy of sustained study. The kelp boom on South Uist therefore stands as a metaphor for many parts of Highland history. In seeking out the grand narratives, many smaller, local, and distinctive landscapes and narratives are subsumed within a larger historical whole, and the experience of everyday life fades into the background.

During the course of researching this topic is has been impossible to remain unaffected by the utter misery, the desperation, and hardship of this period on South Uist. It pours forth from the oral tradition, the estate records, and the landscape itself. If some sense of that misery has come through in this text then the author is unapologetic. The suffering experienced by the people of Loch Aoineart in those years was exceptional even by the standards of what was a brutally hard way of life. This sense of emotion rarely comes through in dry archaeological gazetteers of sites and features in the landscape. This chapter has sought to give some impression of the experience of life as a kelper in Loch Aoineart in those hard years, and it is hoped that it has succeeded in fostering empathy with those involved, rather than the sense of romanticised tragedy which is so often a part of Highland history. In chapter 5.4, which also focusses on South Uist, the descriptions of the landscape given here are built upon to consider the wider context of the marine landscape and ways of life within which kelping took place. But as some antidote to the misery of the hard life of the kelpers, this chapter ends with the words of Dòmhnaill Iain MacDhòmhnaill:

'B' e dán gun fhortan dhuibh a dheilbh ur crannchur,
Chuir beò sibh ann an aimsir a bha cruaidh
Air eilean mara bha gun iochd na ghnùis dhuibh,
`S aig iomadh uair a dhiùlt ur cumail suas

Ach thug sibh buaidh tro èiginn chruaidh na h-ànrachd,
Cha d' lagaich meirg na fàillinn riamh ur dùil;
Cha d' dhìrich sibh gu inbhe àrd san fhàradh,
Ach beairteach dh' fhàs an gràsan Rìgh nan Dùl.

Chunnaic mis' an t-Hàllan `s an Àird Mhìcheil,
Ur n-ainmean air an cuimhneachadh air clàir;
Ur duslach measgaichte ri dust ur sinnsir –
Cha mhist' an t-eilean sibhs' bhith ann a' cnàmh

A luckless fate shaped your destiny
That set your lives in a time so hard,
In an island that showed no compassion
And often failed to grant a livelihood

But you won through dire straits of hardship,

Failure's tarnish never dimmer your hopes;

You did not reach the ladder's highest rung,

But in the grace of God above grew rich

I saw you in Hallan and Ardmicheal *[local burial grounds]*,

Your names remembered there on stone;

Your ashes mingling with your forebears' dust,

The island none the worse that you decay in it'

 (MacDhòmhnaill 2001: 195)

5.3 Hiort - Seeing the Unusual

'One of the words for 'poet' in Gaelic is *fili*. According to accepted
opinion, it is connected with the root of a verb 'to see': the *fili* was
originally a *seer*.' (MacInnes 2006d: 443)

Within post-medieval Gaelic culture there was a rich seam of belief which was
concerned with the uncanny, the supernatural, the second sight, and the
otherworld. Within the oral tradition there is a strong sense of *enchantment* – a
sense in which the world of the Other was part of everyday life and the
landscape. Such topics have long been a focus of scholarship, from tales of the
otherworld in the much contested *Ossian* (MacPherson 1996), to academic works
of Gaelic scholars (Black 2005; MacInnes 2006b, 2006d) and archaeological
considerations of folklore and belief (Gazin-Schwartz 2001; Gazin-Schwartz and
Holtorf 1999). Discussions of second sight, religious experiences, witchcraft, and
supernatural beings have also been a frequent feature of Gaelic tradition from
the medieval period to the 20th century, both in poetry (Black 2001; Clancy
1998; Meek 2003) and in prose and song (Bruford and MacDonald 1994) which
include charms and incantations (e.g. Carmichael 1971). Attempting to
understand how all of these beliefs intersect, and their relationships with
various forms of Christianity, has been a focus of study by historians and
Celticists (Kirk 1998; MacInnes 2006c; Meek 2000).

A difficulty in approaching much of this material is recognising a pervasive meta-
narrative of 'Gaelic exceptionalism' which colours many perceptions about
belief in the Highlands. This narrative suggests that belief (including both
Catholic and Protestant Christianity) in the Highlands and Islands was unique and
characterised by pagan survivals – a perception which allows Gaels to 'play their
accustomed role of aberrant foils to Anglophone orthodoxy' (MacGregor 2014:
55). The suggestion that Christian Gaels retained a whiff of paganism into the
modern period, which can be found in much of the literature regarding Hiort,
can in fact be traced to the 16th and 17th century when saving Gaels from their
perceived backwardness was used as an excuse for colonialist actions in Gaeldom
by Lowland Scots (MacGregor 2014: 68-70). The challenge then in this chapter is
to show that belief, folklore, and the otherworld were a ubiquitous part of life
and an important part of the way in which Gaels perceived and experienced

their environment without resorting to the simplistic narratives to be found in much of the literature.

Although there has been significant scholarly work into this area of life in Gaeldom, it is rare that archaeologists or historians have sought to place such experiences into the landscape. In this section, the landscape of the supernatural and the unusual on Hirte will be explored through a narrative which also acts as a critique of how such topics have been understood by archaeologists and historians in the past. It is argued that what is lacking is a sense of an *enchanted* landscape, inhabited by the unusual and the otherworldly as much as it is by the everyday taskscape. It is also suggested that a landscape approach presents an alternative view which reflects the complexity of belief we see in Gaelic sources and scholarship and subverts simplistic models which see Gaelic belief as 'exceptional'. It will do so by experimenting with the practice of psychogeography.

Psychogeography, Robinsonner, and Narrative.

Psychogeography is, in a sense, a natural approach to take when trying to explore the enchantment of everyday landscapes. As discussed in chapter 3, psychogeography is concerned with the effects of landscape and environment on experience, but particularly with taking subversive routes through landscape which reveal new or hidden experiences. However, psychogeography has largely been practised in relation to modern, urban landscapes, and there have so far been very few published archaeological engagements which use psychogeography to engage with past landscapes (Brophy and Cummings 2013; Perrin 2013; Petts 2011).

Psychogeography's most famous method is that of the *derivé*, a subversive wandering through landscapes which ignores the commonly-taken paths and routes in order to discover different views of landscape. The difficulty, shared with Tilley's (1994) phenomenology is: how does the experience of a contemporary landscape relate to that of the past? A *dèrive* through the contemporary landscape of Hiort could quite easily interact with no traces of the pre-Improvement landscape, and even if it did, how can the contemporary experience of crossing the 6-inch high grass-grown remains of a dwelling inform any experience of such a structure when it was in use? To attempt to resolve this

issue the psychogeographical idea of *robinsonner* – of mental travelling – is drawn upon. This section seeks to combine the experiences of the present day landscape with a *dèrive* through the re-imagined landscape of the past. It draws most on the psychogeographical account by Will Self (2013) of the post-industrial landscape of the Central Belt of Scotland. Like him, I have attempted an imagined *dèrive* across the landscape, pursuing a route which is not built on routine patterns of movement or routes used in the past but which moves across the landscape in a way which creates or reveals unexpected encounters with the uncanny and unusual. This will provide the narrative which structures the discussion – travelling a subversive route through the past landscape which intersects with the other-worldy in an attempt to reveal material about belief and folklore.

Following in the tradition of psychogeography, this section will, more than any other, also refer to the modern landscape, engaging in a psychogeographical tradition of seeing landscapes in ways which blur past and present. However the focus will be, as with the Hiort case study as a whole, on the landscape as it was around 1812. Fictional narrative will not play a part in this section. This is a natural consequence of *dèrive* – as it attempts to subvert everyday movement it would be counter-productive to present a narrative based on the experience of any particular routine practice, even that from the past. The trajectory through the landscape will therefore be an imagined route of ideas and associations, which also takes a line through the physical landscape, from the centre of the *baile* to the outfield and the more distant parts of Hirte. However, this route does intersect occasionally with commonly used routes in the past, revealing how the landscape of the unusual was intertwined with routine practices and the yearly round of activities which were central to life on Hiort. As a final thought, there is a tradition within psychogeography which is inherently playful, coming from avant-garde traditions (Breton 1972: 14). It is suggested that the idea of using *robinsonner*, a theory based on Robinson Crusoe, to examine the 'desert' island of Hirte is playful enough to qualify as part of that psychogeographical tradition.

The Unusual

The aspects of landscape discussed in this chapter (and indeed elsewhere in this thesis) could be described as religion, ritual, superstition, mysticism, folk belief,

witchcraft, or the supernatural. However, to a great extent these terms do not reflect the nature of belief in many pre-modern societies where 'no absolute boundaries were believed to exist between the supernatural and the natural; indeed, the natural world was conceived as a direct manifestation of supernatural order' (Newton 2009: 203-4). The English word 'supernatural' now exists in Gaelic as the modern composite word 'os-*nàdarra*', but traditionally such experiences were referred to as '*ana-ghnàthaiche*', meaning 'unusual or extraordinary' (Newton 2009: 203-4). It is *unusual*, an English equivalent of this Gaelic term, which is used here as a catch-all for this wide range of beliefs and practices. The unusual here will be that that which is not everyday, or is more-than-everyday - activities, beliefs, and locations that, while often interconnected with everyday tasks and ubiquitous in the landscape, have an element which is beyond the usual, the prosaic, the tasks required simply for economic success and survival.

On Hiort itself, there is a wide range of evidence for the unusual aspects of life. Best summarised in the work of Mary Harman (1997: 227-66), these originate from travellers' accounts (Buchan 1727: e.g; Campbell 1799; MacAulay 1764; Martin 1999), historical collections of poetry and prose from the period (Alexander 1877; Campbell 1802; MacKenzie 1906; MacKenzie 1911), and recorded oral tradition (Ferguson 2006). Place names also provide many clues to the unusual aspects of the landscape (Coats 1990; Mathieson 1928). Michael Robson's (2005) work is particularly useful for considering religious life on the islands. It is from these sources that the basic information on this discussion of Hirte will be drawn. Perhaps due to the richness of this resource, all of the 'classic' popular texts pertaining to Hiort contain a chapter on 'legends' or 'beliefs' (e.g. Fleming 2005; MacLean 1977; Steel 1965). Frequently, these present the traditions of the *Hiortaich* as unique, aboriginal, or strange, native to a supposedly isolated community – an idea which was disproved comprehensively by Harman (1997: 230). Throughout this section, these popular narratives about belief on Hiort are examined and challenged.

Death and the Unusual - the Graveyard

Our journey begins at a prominent feature in the centre of the semi-ruinous settlement of Village Bay today - the graveyard. Today it is comprised of a large oval wall enclosing a burial ground with evocative 18th, 19th, and 20th-century

grave markers. A focal point for tourism, it is an essential visit during modern-day pilgrimage to the islands. An earlier church and graveyard stood here during the visit of Martin Martin over 300 years ago. It is discussed in his account of his visit to the island; an account that created much of the mythology the present-day tourists come to experience (MacDonald 2001). During the first few decades of the 19th century the graveyard was also a focus for numerous often apparently conflicting practices concerned with belief, the past, and everyday experience, making it an excellent point at which to begin our journey through the *unusual* landscape of Hirte.

There is little evidence now of the small church and burial ground of the early 19th century and before, which lies beneath the well-maintained graveyard with its substantial dry stone wall of the 1830s (Fleming 2005: 22,130). Despite the lack of direct archaeological evidence of the earlier structure today, documentary sources tell us that the graveyard once played host to suite of religious and ritual beliefs and practices. In a time when infant mortality and disease probably meant that death could be said to be a part of everyday experience, deaths were marked by the community with a sharp break in normality – 'when one dies, they give a cry through the whole island, that all people at work, whether in a field or mountain, may thereupon come home' (Buchan 1727: 34). All ordinary work ceased (Harman 1997: 138), and the landscape was given over to the observance of ritual, religion, and the *unusual*.

Keening would have wrung across Village Bay in the days between death and the internment in the graveyard (Seton 1878: 301). This practice often involved the raising of hideous cries and the tearing of the hair. The church in its various flavours seems to have had a complex relationship with keening, but official disapproval did not discourage Gaels from continuing the practice in many areas into the 19th century (Newton 2009: 183-4). Keening seems to have occurred on Hiort at the occasion of death and as part of a ritual procession, known elsewhere as the *coronach*, aspects of which seem to have survived later on Hiort than elsewhere. The funerals of the 1810s and 20s on Hirte featuring the events described below may have been some of the last of their kind anywhere in Gaeldom (Newton 2009: 183-4). In the 1830s the minister Neil MacKenzie observed a procession carrying the dead around the settlement *deiseil*, sunwise, before the burial (quoted in Seton 1878: 301). A sunwise march around the edge

of the settlement, along the fringes of the arable lands of unenclosed fields, drew in the agricultural landscape of Village Bay, the produce of which played a key part of later ritual in the burial ground. As was common in many areas of the Highlands in the 18th century, feasting accompanied aspects of the wake and the burial itself (Newton 2006: 182). Many women spent this break in the normal routine grinding and baking, whilst the men went to the hills to gather sheep for the feast, often those belonging to the dead person (Harman 1997: 139). This practice was the same as for a wedding, offering a strange circularity to the rituals surrounding the key moments of life. The activities of the people and the food and drink produced came together in the burial ground at the time of burial and accompanied the sunwise procession of keening.

Here, in the shadow of the ruinous chapel of Christ Church (its original Gaelic name is not known), a Presbyterian burial took place: 'as interring the corps they are so mindful of Mortality, Judgement, and a future Life, they all draw to a side, take off their bonnets... and say prayers; therein humbly craving that the

Figure 5.3.1. The graveyard on Hirte today, which is likely to overlie and incorporate the earlier burial ground, and to have been the site of Christ Church. © K. Grant.

Lord would prepare them for that state' (Buchan 1727: 34). Immediately after this service, the gathered community sat down in the burial ground to feast

(MacLean 1838: 19). In the 1830s, and indeed probably before and after, it was
the family of the deceased who supplied the food for the feast prompting the
minister to comment that 'those who have lost many relatives have been much
reduced by this foolish custom' (MacLean 1838: 19).

Within Gaeldom, the burial itself did not mark the end of the journey for the
deceased. There was a widespread belief across Gaeldom in the post-medieval
period that the dead remained in burial places 'malevolently watching the
living' (MacInnes 2006c: 432), and that the most recent person to be buried
would be forced to guard the churchyard's 'community of the dead' until
relieved by the next burial. So strong was this belief that there are stories of
occasions 'when two funerals happened to take place on the same day, [and] the
two sets of mourners made great efforts, even including a physical struggle, to
get their corpse buried first' (Grant 1960: 367). Gaelic beliefs about the dead
were complex. An early 20th-century Gaelic clergymen stated that his flock
believed in Christian salvation or damnation after death, the death of the body
as that of the death of an animal, and that the lingering dead within the
churchyard remained part of the landscape of the living, seemingly without any
sense that these were contradictory or mutually exclusive (MacInnes 2006c:
432). Although there are not specific accounts of such beliefs on Hiort, there are
many accounts of the dead foreshadowing their own end in the form of
doppelgangers, and notions that the deceased played a part in experiences of
the second sight, ideas which were openly supported by the minister Lachlan
MacLeod at the start of the 19th century (Harman 1997: 228; Robson 2005: 239).

The example of the landscape of ritual, death, and unusual beliefs surrounding
the graveyard shows how folklore, ritual, practical issues such as food and drink,
Presbyterian teachings, and beliefs in the otherworld and the second sight all
combine to create an unusual landscape of the dead, a landscape which focussed
on, but was not limited to, the graveyard. Contrast this, perhaps, to other
accounts of the graveyard of Hiort which seem to be a microcosm of the way
such topics have been covered in the history and archaeology of Gaeldom.
Often, this has been steeped in an obscuring romanticism. In Charles Maclean's
(1977) popular account of life on Hiort, a chapter on 'death, legends, and
beliefs' is presaged by an atmospheric gothic description of the island's
graveyard worthy of M.R. James: 'the only place on the island where the past

keeps constant vigil over the present' (MacLean 1977: 45). The complex landscape of the *unusual* surrounding the graveyard is explained through the lens of the more general assertion that the *Hiortaich* 'in common with other Celtic peoples' were seen to be 'superstitious' and harbouring 'primitive religious beliefs' from 'pre-Christian times' (MacLean 1977: 146-9). This stands in contrast with the account above in which 'traditional', Presbyterian, and otherworldly beliefs co-exist. In the later 17th century, Gaelic scholar and minister Robert Kirk used the otherworld as a way of *evidencing* the reality of a Christian God. Interestingly, Kirk was heavily involved in the publication of the first Gaelic bible, and was supported in his work by physicist and chemist Robert Boyle, an early member of the Royal Society, who also undertook research on the second sight and the world of the fairies (Hunter 2001: 2-21). Kirk's approach was not unique: late-17th century traveller Martin Martin also took this sceptical, almost scientific approach to the various otherworldly events which were recounted to him in his travels across the Highlands and indeed, on Hiort (Martin 1703, 1999). This demonstrates that far from Gaeldom having a unique or primitive form of Christianity, many beliefs which would now be considered 'pagan' coexisted with devout Christianity, and indeed with contemporary ideas of reason and natural philosophy across Britain. Simplistic and pejorative interpretations of belief within Gaeldom are relatively common, and serve to support other widespread binary oppositions in historical meta-narrative such as between traditional and modern, Jacobite and Hanoverian (MacInnes 2006c: 433; Newton 2009: 205-7).

Our journey through the ritual and *unusual* landscape of the graveyard and death on Hiort seems to suggest an altogether more complex milieu of beliefs and practices, between which there were no clear-cut divisions or oppositions. This enchanted aspect of the landscape lies beneath the present-day graveyard, with all its Victorian romantic connotations and melancholic significance to contemporary tourists.

Michaelmas, Church, and the Fairies

Fasting in a time of plenty. This is how the *Hiortaich* celebrated the feast of Michaelmas, one of the old 'quarter-days', in the opening decades of the 19th century (Campbell 1799: 25). The surrounding practices were situated in or near the *baile* that was the centre of everyday life. In the 18th century there was

feasting, the eating of the *strùan* bread, horse racing, and merriment across the Highlands on the 29th of September (Grant 1960: 358), including on Hiort (Harman 1997: 227). Occasionally, perhaps, a *Hiortach* would rise early and stand on Clach an Eòlais, the foretelling stone, which stood close to the graveyard: standing on this stone early on the first day of the quarter would reveal the events of the whole quarter through the gift of the second sight (Harman 1997: 228).

In the early 19th century the *Hiortaich* marked Michaelmas, the day of the archangel, by fasting literally surrounded by their harvest of sea-fowl and grain from the fields, and bundles of freshly-caught fish. By the early 19th century the ruinous condition of the medieval churches meant the absence of a formal place of worship. Meetings are described as having taken place in the 'Village Barn'; either a communal building possibly situated near the graveyard or the Storehouse. It is not known which (Harman 1997: 248; Robson 2005: 253). Both were places of agriculture and plenty, and would have played host to the day's hungry prayer meeting. The *Hiortaich,* perhaps encouraged by Lachlan Macleod, the minister on Hirte from 1785 to 1822 (Robson 2005: 231-57), fasted in memory of St Michael the Archangel, who led the angelic forces of God to victory against Lucifer. The angels who remained neutral in the conflict were cursed, 'sentenced to dwell in the hidden places of the earth until the end of time' (MacInnes 2006b: 462), where they waited to tempt the unsuspecting. The *sìthichean,* a term usually translated as 'the fairies', were not the creatures which the word fairy in English conjures up. One tradition of belief actually suggested they were angels who had chosen to join neither God nor Lucifer at the time of his rebellion (MacInnes 2006c: 462). If this be accepted, then belief in the *sìthichean* was in origin a Christian belief, based on the very same ideas that the *Hiortaich* would commemorate on Michaelmas with their minister by fasting. It is worth noting that there were always several interpretations as to the place of the *sìthichean* within the religions and cosmology of Gaeldom, which often changed dynamically across time, situation, and location (Newton 2009: 221). The *sìthichean* are reminders that many aspects of the unusual landscape such as folk beliefs and tales of otherworldly encounters occupy a complex and dynamic space between traditional folk practice, religion, and wider trends of belief across Europe.

The World of the Sìthichean

The graveyard and the formal activites of the Kirk were focused near the centre of the *baile* and its fields and gardens. We move now away, towards the outfield and the grazings beyond, and the landscape of the *sìthichean*, the fairies. A tale recorded on Hiort in the mid-19th century describes an encounter that took place on the way to Oiseval, when Donald and John were going to catch sheep. They heard a churning coming from a mysterious green hillock. John shouted towards
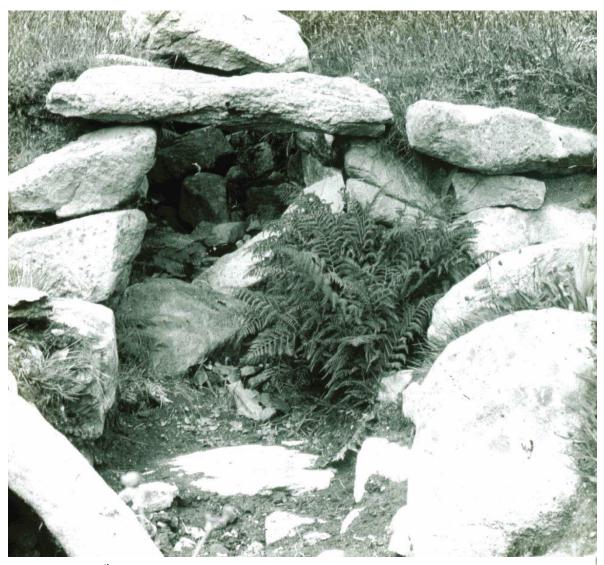
Figure 5.3.2. 19th century image of the entrance to the souterrain, known by the *Hiortaich* as *Tigh an t-Sithiche*, the House of the Fairy. Photograph reproduced courtesy of the National Trust for Scotland.

the hillock for a drink when a woman in a green robe emerged and offered one to the men. John, changing his mind, wouldn't take it, while Donald did, saying he would take it with God's blessing. Continuing on their hunt, John was punished for refusing the drink by plunging from the cliffs, while Donald lived to a ripe old age, rewarded for his piety (summarised from a version in Harman 1997: 234).

Such mysterious green hillocks appear to have been common across Hirte. One, supposedly near An Lag, was home to a water-bull, and at another in front of the *baile*, a woman's infant was nearly replaced by a changeling (Harman 1997: 235). These mounds have not survived in the landscape as they were all swept away during agricultural improvements in the 1830s. Minister Neil McKenzie, writing at the time, described numerous small earth-and-stone mounds containing what sound like cists, which were known as '*cnocan shìthichean*', fairy mounds (MacKenzie 1911). These mounds, which we might interpret today as burial mounds (the cist of one is still extant), had a very different significance in the past. They were closely associated with the *sìthichean*; indeed, one interpretation of the origin of the word *sìth* (also spelled *sidh*) may mean 'the folk of the hill' (MacInnes 2006b: 462). Many burial mounds and other structures we would now see as being man-made were explained as the remnants of activity by the *sìthichean*. For example, the souterrain, not discovered until the 1840s, was known as *Taigh an t-Sìthiche,* 'House of the Fairy' (discussed in Fleming 2005: 46-7). However the *sìthichean* were not regarded as a past people. The common suggestion that beliefs and ideas about the *sìthichean* were preserved cultural memories of a real-life past people, perhaps the Picts, is a later imposition largely invented by Victorian and later antiquarians (MacInnes 2006b: 463). Rather, the *sìthichean* inhabited the landscape, but perhaps in a different way to those who lived and worked in it. They were perceived to live somewhere where time was different or suspended – 'sacred time' as opposed to the 'profane time' of everyday life and experience. This is perhaps how the *sìthichean* could at once be real characters in the landscape, the subject of tales about the past, explanations for ancient landscape features, and allegories for the land of the dead (MacInnes 2006b: 465).

Crossing the Boundary – The *Baile* and the Outfield

Travelling further still from the centre of the settlement and its formal spaces of religious practice, through the fringes of the arable land, skirted by the transient homes of the fairies, we reach the boundary between the outfield and the hill-land. Often in the study of post-medieval Gaeldom, binary distinctions have often proved unhelpful. However, it appears that there was a binary opposition drawn between the improved land of the infield and the outfield and

moorland, although this opposition was much more complex than suggested by the agricultural definitions of historical geographers.

Isobel Grant, writing from her experience of collecting Gaelic traditions in the early 20th century, claimed that many of the economic terms used by archaeologists and historians to describe the landscape, such as run-rig, were rarely used by Gaels working the land (a view confirmed by Carmichael (1884: 451)). According to Grant, she often 'heard individual rigs called *imirean* and the nearest equivalent to 'infield' and 'outfield' were *talamh traibhta* [treabhta in modern orthography], ploughed land, and *talamh bàn*, fallow land'(Grant 1960: 90). The word *bàn* also means fair or white in Gaelic, as well as devoid of people, and a church may be described as *bàn* if it has no incumbent minister (Kidd 2011: Pers Comm.). It may be that the translation of it as 'fallow' fails to recognise how that space was truly viewed by those describing it. Such places would have had important cultural and personal associations.

Encounters with the *sìthichean* described on Hiort in the 18th and 19th centuries, although often occurring in shifting locations which cannot be found again or which appear only in certain specific circumstances, tend to occur around the boundaries of the settlement area (Harman 1997: 233-6). People commonly observed rituals when crossing these boundaries, such as taking a piece of iron from the *baile* to allow safe return in case of an encounter with the *sìthichean* (MacInnes 2006b: 475). Uncultivated areas in particular were associated with otherworldly beings. This association is so strong that 18th-and-19th-century commentaries from across Gaeldom saw increased improvement of the landscape as a form of 'habitat loss' for supernatural beings and mythical creatures (Newton 2009: 325). The *cailleach,* an old woman, witch, or mother-goddess figure is associated in Gaelic tradition with places outside the domesticated sphere of the *baile* or infield areas (Newton 2009: 227-31). On Hirte she is associated with *Uamh Cailleach Bheag Ruaibhal*, the Cave of the Old Woman of Ruaival. She features in a tale reported from Hiort from the 17th to the 20th centuries about the burning of the population in the church. This story is found in many places in the West of Scotland (Harman 1997: 230), and is a good example of how wider regional traditions become associated with local legends and landscape features. The sea too was often considered a wilderness, and it was also associated with the Otherworld (MacInnes 2006b: 475). On Hiort,

Fleming (2004) discussed a skerry off the island of Dùn named for the son of the King of Lochlann, a place simultaneously perceived to be Norway and an otherworldly Kingdom of the Sea. The cultural associations with the sea will be discussed in detail in the next section (5.4).

On the edge of the outfield to the north west of the *baile* we encounter an old route uphill towards Am Blaid and across into An Gleann Mòr. For all that this was a commonly used route it appears to have been an area which was largely uncultivated, and several locations in this area are associated with the unusual. An Abhainn Mhòr, the Big Burn, forms a natural barrier between the western part of the settlement area and the cliffs and hills which bisect the island. Only in a few places can it easily be crossed, particularly when moving cattle, due to its enclosure by a steep-sided ravine. Moving across a marginal area with extensive evidence for the removal of peat, across what must once have been the northwestern edge of the infield cultivated land, and crossing An Abhainn Mhòr, the modern traveller encounters one of the few known surviving landmarks of the early 19th century otherworldly landscape. On a platform created by peat-stripping around it on all sides lies a large grey dolerite boulder, known as Clach a' Bhainne – 'the Milk Stone'.

This large freestanding boulder, with a natural bowl on its upper surface, was used to leave an offering of milk for the *Gruagach*, the long-haired one, often translated as or equated with the 'brownie' of Scots tradition. References about how and when this ritual was carried out on Hiort are vague (Harman 1997: 228), but such milk stones occur across the Highlands. Libations of milk left for the *Gruagach* were commonly thought to maintain the health of the herd which provided it (Newton 2009: 234). The stone lies along the route which was probably taken with the cattle to the sheilings in An Gleann Mòr in the 18th century and before. By the early 19th century the route was walked daily by the women to milk the cows kept on the other side of the island during the summer months (Buchanan 1793: 136; Campbell 1799: 24). This ritual, with its location on the boundary between the outfield areas and the uncultivated areas beyond, is a clear example of wider beliefs about the crossing of boundaries, both physical and unusual.

Its setting was clearly significant, as several locations associated with the unusual are described in this area in different periods. Travellers Martin (1703) and MacAulay (1764: 88-9) described an area by Clach a' Bhainne, known as Lèana nan Ortha (modern orthography), the Plain of Spells. In this area, cattle were blessed with 'salt, water and fire' (MacAulay 1764: 89) when they were

Figure 5.3.3. The Milk or Gruagach Stone, looking west toward Am Blaid and the route over to An Gleann Mhòr. © K. Grant.

moved between grazing areas. Although MacAulay's account of this area is detailed, it is, like his account as a whole, written for a classically-educated audience. He claims that the *Hiortaich* believed that such rituals 'conjured away, so they fondly thought, the power of fascinations, the malignity of elves and the vengeance of every evil genius' (MacAulay 1764: 89). It is important to note that Lèana nan Ortha is not referred to in any sources after MacAulay and may well have been out of use in the 1810s and 20s, perhaps because sheiling practice had ceased for economic reasons (Buchanan 1793: 136; Campbell 1799: 24). Drawing parallels from elsewhere in the Highlands and Islands, the blessing of cattle with salt and fire and the preservation of cattle from malign intentions are part of a wide set of beliefs surrounding cattle across the Highlands. These include beings from the Gaelic otherworld interfering with cattle, and wider

European unusual beliefs such as curses being put on cattle through witchcraft and the evil eye (Campbell 1902: 65-7; Grant 1960: 66-7, 138-9).

Cattle, Society, and the Unusual

It is perhaps no surprise that many beliefs in the unusual focus around cattle, as they played such an important role in the economic life of post-medieval Highland communities. Clach a' Bhainne and Lèana nan Ortha represent an important intersection between the economic, the social, and the unusual – they lie in an area which is at once a practicable route from one place to the other and a space on the broad boundary between the slightly less ordered landscape of the outfield and grazings and the domesticated sphere of the *baile*. Moving further away from the *baile*, with the cattle, over Am Blaid to An Gleann Mòr, we enter a far less managed area of the landscape. In the earlier 18th century, An Gleann Mòr was the location of the sheiling ground with its annual round of activity and cultural practice, but by the early 19th century this practice had been abandoned. Instead, the cattle were left in the glen and attended daily by travelling over the hill (Buchanan 1793: 136; Campbell 1799: 24). Such secluded areas, often associated with beliefs in the *unusual* in Gaeldom, were also places where illicit encounters occurred outside the strict social norms of the *baile* both in poetry and in reality. 'In such places lovers celebrate their clandestine meetings or their illicit relationships. The *baile* is governed by social conventions, social control. In the wilderness the conventions are subverted' (MacInnes 2006b: 475).

There is evidence that such illicit encounters occurred on Hiort. A poem said to refer to a love affair across social classes in 1799 (Harman 1997: 240), suggests the negative social effects of such an event within a small community, and the desire to be away and out of sight:

'Beul sìos air luchd na farchluais;
Luchd nam breug, chan iad as fhasa –
'S mi gu siùbh 'leadh fad' air astar
Dh'èisteachd cantanas do bheòil

Eavesdroppers are such pests;

The tellers of lies are no easier to bear –

I would happily travel far

To listen to your words' (Ferguson 2006: 102)

Figure 5.3.4. The view from Am Blaid down into An Gleann Mòr. A line of several *cleitean* visible in the photograph is likely to mark the habitually used route © K Grant.

Cattle have long been associated with love and elopements within Gaeldom, perhaps due to the system of cattle dowries or tochers in earlier times, and it was not uncommon for Gaelic poetry to use animals as coded talk for individuals and relationships (Newton 2009: 139). Many beliefs in the unusual, from the belief in doppelgangers and changelings to pregnancies occurring due to interaction with characters from the underworld, have been interpreted as socially necessary ways of coming to terms with human behaviour and difficult situations. For example, Kirk session registers from the 18th century Highlands record formal charity being given to 'changelings', probably a euphemism for the disabled or the illegitimate (Newton 2009: 225). In this case, as with illicit love affairs and trysts, beliefs in the *unusual* may have played a key role in allowing socially and psychologically difficult events to become normalised.

However, viewing such beliefs in the *unusual* as simply functional or psychological symbols and social mechanisms is problematic in itself (MacInnes

2006b: 467-2). This approach has perhaps added to the 'de-enchantment' of the landscape by reducing coded symbols and beliefs to simple functional social tools. However, in examining the relationship between the infield, cultivated areas, and the less-managed landscape beyond, the significance of areas of crossing between boundaries, and the focus of beliefs in the unusual around socially and economically important everyday aspects of life such as cattle, we have seen that there is a relationship between real-world concerns and locales and beliefs in the *unusual*.

The Well of Virtues

To complete our mental journey, we must travel into An Gleann Mòr, following the route marked by a line of *cleitean,* visible manifestations of the routine movement between the two locales. We pass into invisibility from the settlement on the east side of Hirte, down past the former sheiling grounds, with their associations with uncultivated ground, cattle, and the host of unusual beliefs which surround them. At the very bottom of An Gleann Mòr, in a secluded spot out of sight of the rest of the glen, lies a site that was a significant part of the *unusual* landscape of Hiort and of the wider Hebrides: Tobar nam Buaidh, the Well of Virtues. The well is one of at least seven on Hiort known through oral tradition and place-names (Ferguson 2006: 73), although only Tobar nam Buaidh is recorded as having a wider regional significance. The water from the well was thought to cure many ailments. If a visitor left an offering of pins, needles, or rusty nails and made an 'address [to] the 'genius of place'', they could be healed (MacAulay 1764: 95). Small offerings can still be found at this well, left by adventurous tourists. Any people making the fairly arduous journey to the well today are recreating historical practice. In the mid-18th century the well was already attracting visitors from Harris (MacAulay 1764: 94) and elsewhere 'almost annually' (Fleming 2005: 74). Although the Rev. MacAulay saw this practice as 'pagan' and 'papish' (MacAulay 1764: 94-6), Neil MacKenzie, minister from 1830 to 1843 made it the subject of a vocational hymn which acted 'as a metaphor for the healing powers of the Gospel and of God's love':

'*Tobar nam buadh tha shuas sa ghleannan,*
Neo-thruaillidh, fallainn do stòr;
Chuala mi 'm fuaim mus d'fhuair mi faisg ort-
Gur fuaran gast' thu tha beò

A' sruthadh bho chàrn tha àirde chreagach

Do làn co-fhreagradh gach uair;

Mur tig ort crith-thalmhainn a spealgas creagan,

Chan fhalbh thu 'm feast gu Là Luain.

An tobar tha fìorghlan,aotrom,soilleir,

Gun aon nì doilleir fo d'ghruaidh,

Tha sìor shruthadh sìos a-riamh bhon chruinnicheadh

Riamh air fearann 's air cuan

O Well of Virtues up in the glen,

Pure and health-giving is your store;

I heard your murmur ere I drew near –

Most generous fountain in existence.

Flowing from a hill tall and rocky

With water abundant and inexhaustible;

Even in a rock-splitting earthquake

You will not fail, never to the world's end.

The well that is pure, light and bright,

Unblemished, under your canopy,

Since the Creation flowing down

Continuously over land and sea' (Ferguson 2006: 75).

The poem by MacKenzie is an example of how an individual could re-interpret or change the meaning of the *unusual*, and the landscape. Key individuals such as the minister played an important role in the landscape of the *unusual*, both as a

Figure 5.3.5. The Well of Virtues today looking south, with the sea behind. The age of the structure itself is not known © K. Grant.

focal point for religious belief in themselves, and as agents in forming beliefs. No consideration of the landscape of the *unusual* could be complete without further consideration of characters such as the minister. In the early years of the 19th century, the post was held by Lachlan Macleod, a man who wielded both spiritual and secular power and who was paid a stipend which must have matched the tacksman's rent in many years (Harman 1997: 100; MacCulloch 1824: 89). We will never know what the *Hiortaich* felt about the spiritual guidance offered by this minister, whom visitors found 'not very prepossessing' (Harman 1997: 248). Macleod was, in the early 19th century, a constant headache to his funders, the SSPCK, and was frequently off-island (Robson 2005: 250). Some visitors found his belief in the second sight and love of snuff and music unbecoming in a Kirk minister (Robson 2005: 255, 39). He was probably a man with significant everyday power, perhaps fulfilling part of the traditional role of the ground officer or *maor* (Carmichael 1884: 216) who negotiated with the tacksman or factor (Harman 1997: 99). Certainly he had economic power,

enough to have had slaves and business interests in the West Indies (Robson 2005: 248). Perhaps he was the butt of a multi-denominational widespread tradition of 'anti-clerical lore' within Gaeldom (MacInnes 2006c: 435), which remembers the avarice of the clergy in the saying 'a childless man is as grasping as seven priests' (MacInnes 2006c: 435). No matter what his abilities or reputation, Macleod occupied a significant place in the landscape of belief on Hirte, but without the formal church or manse of later incumbents as a grand formal focus for his power, he perhaps had to compete with other powerful supernatural forces for the attentions of his flock. It is perhaps with this sense of competition that Neil MacKenzie thought to turn the 'papish' rituals of Tobar nam Buaidh to his own ends in his devotional poem, although equally he may simply have been inspired by it to write about the power of faith and the unfailing bounty of God's love.

The End of the Journey

During our mental journey across the physical landscape of Hirte, from the core of the settlement in Village Bay to the distant holy well of Glenn Mhòr, we have also crossed a complex landscape of belief and the *unusual*. There are boundaries to be crossed, some physical or temporal, others unseen and symbolic, and foci of belief in the landscape where many factors intersect: belief, religion, the everyday, the social. All of these encounters, places, and beliefs in the landscape are dynamic, and can be affected by the actions of individuals just as the landscape acts on the individuals inhabiting it.

In the section above, a psychogeographical journey which combines movement in the physical and imagined past landscapes of Hirte, was undertaken in an attempt at re-enchanting the landscape with the supernatural and unusual. The account travelled from the centre of the *baile* to the more distant location of An Gleann Mòr, following a loose route and a loose association of ideas. Psychogeography was also selected for extended use in this section in particular as it often seeks to explore the landscape of the uncanny. The impermanent and shifting nature of this landscape meant it required a somewhat different approach to those utilised in other sections. A narrative drawing on the ideas of *robisonner* and *dèrive* did not need to strictly conform to the norms of an academic argument, such as the ordered progression of ideas and argument and the exclusion of 'irrelevant' material. An account of mental travelling allows a

freedom to produce an account of the *unusual* where interlinking ideas can be followed like thread across the landscape. The traditional difficulty of connecting modern-day psychogeographical engagements with the landscape and past experience was resolved by using psychogeography not primarily as a method of engaging with the present day landscape (although fed in to the final narrative), but as a narrative device – a way of creating a trajectory through a past landscape of the mind. These threads of association and connection included a consideration on the importance of cattle to the community, certainly a well-travelled topic in the scholarship of post-medieval Gaeldom (Adamson 2014; Dodgshon 1998). However, the movement of cattle was treated not as economic history, but used as narrative device through which to consider the mental, cultural and symbolic significance of cattle and the associated routes and tasks in the landscape. If the ideas in this chapter occasionally seem disjointed, this is the structural effect of a theoretical approach which follows not a traditional academic narrative but which attempts to subvert the landscape in a psychogeographical manner, seeking to reveal new ideas and viewpoints.

One of the benefits of taking a landscape approach is that it breaks, to some degree, the neat lines which are often drawn between different aspects of the unusual. In almost all the seminal books on Hiort (Fleming 2005; Harman 1997; MacLean 1977; Steel 1965), many aspects of the unusual from different periods are lumped together into a single chapter, giving no sense of any specific time or place. This creates the temporal equivalent of a decontextualized 'everyman', an all-purpose 'past' which is, in fact, an ethnographic present; a 'past' which exists only to be contrasted with 'modernity'. Such a view reinforces a historical meta-narrative of change as something that happens only in the modern era; Gaels and their beliefs are perceived as static where the rest of the world experiences change. By drawing from the landscape, albeit from an imagined but historically and archaeologically structured one, it was necessary to pick and choose only the small number of beliefs that can be tied to the specific period under question. An example of this can be found by contrasting other accounts with that presented here. Some of the most 'iconic' features of the unusual landscape of Hirte do not appear at all. Famous structures such as the 'Amazon's House' and 'Calum Mòr's' house' (Geddes 2011; Harman 1997: 228-9) which

appear in every textbook and on every leaflet, do not form part of this discussion because they are anachronistic to it. Stories about the Amazon's House were collected only by Martin (1703) during his visit in the late 1690's and never again, and Calum Mòr's house only appears to have become associated with folklore in the later 19th century (Geddes 2011: 51). This is not to say that unusual beliefs recorded before and after the period of the early 19th century have not been discussed, but where they were, it was made explicit that there had been a change over time. The psychogeographical tradition of seeing the past in the present provides a useful vehicle for introducing such ideas into the narrative.

The approach was intended to reflect the blurred lines between what are often viewed as very discrete categories of belief; pagan and Christian, sacred and secular. This has resulted in overly-simplified and ethnocentric views, such as the comments about the 'primitive' beliefs of Celtic peoples found in MacLean (1977: 45). Such sharp distinctions are not reflected in primary Gaelic evidence nor in nuanced discussions by Gaelic scholars (MacInnes 2006b, 2006c; Newton 1997). Unfortunately, contemporary archaeologists too have presented problematic views about the *unusual*. In *Winds of Change* (Harden and Lelong 2011), a publication based on the results of archaeological fieldwork on Hirte in the late 1990s and 2000s, a discussion of the 'sacred landscape' appears to group together Iron Age ritual practice and post-medieval beliefs such as Clach a' Bhainne or the blessing of cattle to ward off the evil eye. Categorising them both as 'pre-Christian... remnant[s] of ancient beliefs [that] survived the introduction of Christianity to St Kilda in the later first millennium AD' (Harden and Lelong 2011: 177). In this case a number of what may well be relatively short-lived and dynamic post-medieval beliefs which were part of a devoutly Christian belief system are presented as 'pre-Christian' alongside ritual evidence from prehistory. We see a similar approach in the recent publication by RCAHMS where the 'Christian' landscape is contrasted with the 'traditional' (Geddes and Gannon 2015: 141) in a way that suggests opposition rather than the incorporation of many ideas within the broad Christian tradition of post-medieval Hirte. It is hoped that the approach taken above allows for the discussion of many aspects of belief and the *unusual* in the landscape that is more akin to the complexity of everyday experience in the past. This has been

an attempt to heed the warning given by John MacInnes: '… we should be aware that we are dealing here, as elsewhere in Gaelic tradition, not with static but with dynamic systems of belief which change through the ages… there are many complexities and sometimes apparent contradictions' (MacInnes 2006b: 464).

That is not to say that all archaeological approaches to the topic have adhered to the problematic pre-existing narratives around the subject. Archaeologist Amy Gazin-Schwartz's work in the area of folklore and archaeology in Scotland has been highly critical of the way in which archaeologists have often put the ritual and the everyday in opposition. Co-author of a seminal edited volume on the relationship between folklore and archaeology (Gazin-Schwartz and Holtorf 1999), she has also written on the relationship between material culture, ritual, and everyday life (Gazin-Schwartz 2001) in Scotland and elsewhere. Gazin-Schwartz and Lelong's (2005: 278) call for a more nuanced understanding of the ritual and the functional in material culture attempted to demonstrate the complex ways that the social, the everyday, and the unusual intersect. James Symonds, in *Songs Remembered in Exile* (Symonds 1999b), presented a discussion of aspects of the South Uist landscape recorded in local oral tradition including several unusu*l* elements such as spirits, the second sight, and sun-wise motion. These examples framed Symonds' call for an approach to the archaeology of the recent past based on 'historical ethnography' (Symonds 1999b: 125). These examples are drawn from papers encouraging a better relationship between archaeology and folklore rather than from studies of particular landscapes. The approach they advocate has rarely been applied to any case studies or formed a part of extended research and so engagement with such subjects within the archaeological study of the place and period remains generally poor. This narrative of the *unusual* from Hiort presents the idea put forward by others that new approaches to understanding culture and belief in post-medieval Gaeldom are required, as well as suggesting a possible way forward.

To examine the *unusual* in the landscape of Hiort is also to examine the wider historical meta-narratives about the archipelago, and by extension, Gaeldom. One of the key themes of the 'Hardrock Consensus' is the idea of a static, unique, and ancient way of life, which was negatively impacted by external and opposing 'modern' influences. In this paradigm, an ancient, native 'pre-Christian' body of belief is destroyed by a totally oppositional external

Christianity (Steel 1965: 98). This section challenges these ideas by taking a more nuanced approach which recognises that belief in in post-medieval Gaeldom was itself dynamic and incorporated a far wider range of beliefs than is suggested by a narrow historical caricature of the 'dour' Presbyterian. This narrative also aimed to demonstrate that beliefs in the *unusual* are not only *in* and *of* the landscape but so pervasive and critically interlinked with different aspects of life and society that it is hard to see how one could consider a landscape in Gaeldom without addressing its enchanted nature. This section has sought to show that by drawing from the landscape, and from a specific time and place, the *unusual* can be placed into a historical and culturally contextualised landscape, and that the complex and nuanced world of the unusual requires an approach which is less rigid than its representation within traditional academic narrative: one that seeks to re-enchant the landscapes of the past.

5.4   Loch Aoineart – The Marine Landscape

'Gum beannaicheadh Dia long Chlann Raghnaill

A' chiad là do chaidh air sàile,

E fèin `s a thrèin-fhir da caitheamh,

Trèin a chuaidh thar maitheas chàich.

Gum beannaich an Coimh-dhia naomh

An iùnnrais, anal nan speur,

Gun sguabte garbhlach na mara,

G' ar tarraing gu cala rèidh.

Athair, a chruthaich an fhairge

`S gach gaoth a shèideas às gach àird,

Beannaich ar caol-bhàirc `s ar gaisgich,

`S cum i fhèin `s a gasraidh slàn.

May God bless Clanranald's ship the first day it

went to sea, itself and the strong men driving it,

warriors who went beyond the excellence of the rest.

May the sacred Lord bless the storm, the breath of the

stars, and may the stony river bed of the sea not be hit

and may he pull us to a smooth harbour.

O Father, you who formed the ocean and every wind

that blows from every direction, bless our narrow bark

and our champion heroes and keep herself and her crew in good health.'

- From *Birlinn Chlann Raghnaill, the Galley of Clanranald*, Alasdair Mac

Mhaighstir Alasdair (Barr 2010)

With the words of this blessing, Clanranald's galley began its journey down Loch

Aoineart in the mid-18th century. On St Brigid's day, the 1st of February, after

the worst of the winter storms, it had been moved from the small naturally

sheltered inlet where, in 2012, a local crofter informed me it was secured during

winter. The vessel, crewed by 'Himself' and his 'heroes surpassing all others' excellence' (Black 2001: 472), would be immortalised in verse by Clanranald's cousin, the poet and Jacobite propagandist Alasdair Mac Mhaighstir Alasdair, in what would be the first 'epic' of Gaelic literature (Black 2001: 470) and possibly 'the greatest sea poem written in the British Isles' (Bray 1986: 1936). Or rather, it would be invented by the poet. The journey recounted in the poem is imaginary, created in the mind of the bard in the mid-18th century as an allegory for the Gaels weathering the storms of the Jacobite risings and uniting with their fellows across the sea in Ireland (Black 2001: 469-75). The fictional nature of the vessel and its voyage has not prevented its location in Loch Aoineart from becoming a source of pride for my local informant and many *Deasaich*. A poem recounting stories in the early 20th century *cèilidh* houses of South Uist remembers the tale of Clanranald's galley as one told amongst those of the sheilings, ghosts and fairies, and *'Cogadh Mòr a' Cheusair'* – ' the Great War of the Kaiser' (Dòmhnall Aonghais Bhàin 2000: 68-73).

Tales, imagery, and symbolism related to the sea are ubiquitous in Gaelic poetry (Maclean 1985: 83-105), giving us valuable insights into how the sea and the marine were perceived in Gaelic culture. These range from high status praise poems which see the ship as a prestige object and a symbol of the ship of state (Black 2001: 471), to a large corpus of song and verse in the vernacular about drownings, to which both Hiort and Loch Aoineart have added some good examples (Ferguson 2006; MacDonald 1999: 161-7; Shaw 1977: 102-5). As with most other elements of the Gaelic landscape, the otherworld and the unusual were also present in the seascape. The land under the waves, '*Tìr Fo Thuinn*', was perceived to be literally another world where everything on land had a counterpart (Maclean 1985: 99). Tradition suggested the sea was also occasionally stalked by monsters and shape-shifters (Fleming 2004; 2005: 117; MacInnes 2006b; Newton 2009). Perhaps like all British peoples, a long tradition of seafaring in Gaeldom has meant the very language is permeated with expressions relating to the sea. To give just a single example; '*Eathar ùr is seana chreagan*' ('a new boat and old rocks') is an expression translated as meaning 'youthful folly will flounder' (LearnGaelic 2015) and it is 'suggestive of a thousand tragedies beyond the mere literal translation'(Dwelly 1993: 387). In post-medieval Gaeldom, where only a small section of society was literate, many

expressions in the language drawn from the landscape and everyday experience may have held a much more immediate and apparent meaning than many figures of speech in modern English. To put it more simply, the expression 'a new boat and old rocks' means far more to an individual who has witnessed what a hidden reef can do to a small boat in a choppy loch than to someone who has not. These cultural associations and images from the oral tradition are key sources for this case study, where they will be integrated with evidence from the rich archaeological and historical record.

Many of the place-names around Loch Aoineart are marine in character and offer their own insights into how the landscape and seascape were used and inhabited. Within the archaeological landscape of Loch Aoineart, a large proportion of visible features relate to the sea, including the remains of the kelp industry previously discussed in section 5.2 and numerous small nousts, bait-holes, and *cairidhean*, fish-traps. Beyond these features on the shore, there would have been few, if any, locations in the early-19th-century landscape, with its settlement clustered along the water's edge, where the sea was not the dominant aspect of the experiential landscape. Its capricious and sometimes unpredictable rhythms ran alongside those of the land with its annual procession of agricultural tasks.

Most of the components of the marine landscape of Gaeldom have received some formal academic attention. Like the kelp industry, both fish-traps and bait-holes have been the subject of technical papers which often discuss practices from various times and places together, creating a descriptive account of the practice in the style of folk-life studies. Fishing and exploitation of the marine environment have also been the subject of descriptive technical papers, whilst within Gaelic studies, the cultural place of the sea has been considered. However, with the notable exception of Lelong (2000: 220-3) there have been few attempts to draw together these disparate elements to consider the experience of inhabiting a marine landscape with all its interconnected aspects. Within wider archaeology, maritime archaeology is increasingly taking on the concerns and approaches of landscape archaeology to consider the 'maritime cultural landscape'(Robinson 2013: 2.1). These maritime landscape studies or seascape studies aim to consider all aspects of human interaction with the marine environment, including the cultural and intangible aspects (Westerdahl

2011). In 2003, an edition of World Archaeology (35) was published dedicated to seascapes, indicating that the idea of the marine environment as being part of 'landscape' was now widely accepted within archaeology (Robinson 2013: 2.1). Within the wider sub-discipline of international Historical Archaeology at least, 'landscape' has been an established part of maritime archaeology for almost two decades (Flatman and Staniforth 2006: 172-4).This chapter will bring together these various strands of scholarship to present a nuanced account of life in Loch Aoineart's marine landscape in the first two decades of the 19th century.

Within the wider thesis, the main purpose of this chapter is methodological. In comparison to Hiort, there is relatively little documentary and oral historical evidence for early-19th century South Uist, and even less which refers specifically to the marine aspects of the landscape, or to Loch Aoineart specifically. The chapter will, like its predecessors, examine the particular landscape of Loch Aoineart at a very specific period, but will also show that by anchoring the discussion in known points of reference, sources from the wider historical record and from Gaelic oral tradition may be drawn on to present a more detailed narrative than could be created purely by drawing on the small amount of evidence from Loch Aoineart itself. As with previous chapters, taskscape and microhistorical approaches are drawn upon to create an extended landscape of everyday activity from the close study of particular archaeological sites. By considering archaeological evidence on the lochside, this section discusses aspects of daily life in the marine environment, referring to Gaelic culture and oral tradition where possible. Finally, together these aspects of the environment are drawn into a narrative about life in the marine landscape of Loch Aoineart.

Loch Aoineart's Boat Nousts and its Vessels

The tidal zone of Loch Aoineart is littered with marine features. Amongst these structures, boat nousts are probably the most common. There are many structures around the loch designed to be landing places for boats. These range from the substantial wharf at Port Skeig, marked on Bald's map of 1805, which was probably large enough to load ocean-going vessels, to two small parallel lines of stones on the beach at Eilean Dubh. At the sheltered anchorage at Bàgh Lathach, a substantial breakwater encloses a small harbour where today a yacht lies careened above a gently-sloping beach. Elsewhere, around the lochside,

piles of stones augment natural hollows in the loch to create slips where boats may be pulled up; above are often found places where they could then be secured above the high tide-line. Numerous terms are used in English to describe this varied set of features, including port, jetty, pier, and slipway (Moreland and MacLean 2012: 91-4), just as there are many words in Gaelic which describe subtle differences between various kinds of harbours (Dwelly 1993: 155). For many of the smaller, more vernacular structures, the term noust, an Orcadian word of Norse origin, seems more appropriate. Traditionally, nousts (also spelled naust or noost) are covered or uncovered boat shelters of Norse date and origin with associated slipways (classic examples can be found in Bowman 1990). However, the term is now often used as a catch-all for small vernacular boat shelters across coastal Scotland, many of which are of 19th or 20th century date (e.g. Benjamin *et al*. 2014: 416; Geddes 2015: 6). Figure 5.4.1 overleaf gives some idea of the range of these structures around the loch. The larger, more formal, structures are difficult to date as only Port Skeig is depicted on historic maps, and none of these features are displayed on modern OS mapping – surprising given that some of them are substantial enough to contain a yacht or two today. The smaller, more vernacular structures would probably never be shown on any maps, and are too small and commonplace to be recorded in any historical sources. However, the sheer number of harbours and anchorages across the Hebrides in the early 19th century was worthy of comment in contemporary accounts: 'these coasts, amounting to three thousand nine hundred and fifty miles in length, contain a vast number of harbours of every description' (MacDonald 1811: 55-6). Although in theory, some such structures could date to the Norse period, their close association with the kelping landscape, such as the landing-place already discussed near Taigh a' Mhàil, suggest that many must date to the 18th and 19th centuries.

The exact nature of the vessels that used these anchorages is hard to ascertain, although ships and boats were numerous in the Hebrides of the early 19th century. In his *A General View of the Agriculture of the Hebrides or Western Islands of Scotland,* MacDonald, with typical exactitude, states that the fisheries and kelp trade of the Hebrides used '2562 boats and vessels of every description and for some months in the year 10,500 sailors' (MacDonald 1811: 538). Dwelly's Gaelic dictionary lists nearly 40 different kinds of vessel (not including different

regional words for each), ranging from *long,* a square-rigged vessel of three or four masts, to *slaod uisge,* a simple raft (Dwelly 1993: 78). It seems likely that a broad range of these vessels was at one time used in Loch Aoineart. In comments on the text of a recent reworking of *Birlinn Chlann Raghnaill*, Alan Riach (2015), draws attention to the fact that the word *Birlinn*, suggestive of a later medieval galley like that used by the Lords of the Isles, only became appended to the poem's title in the late Victorian period. He further notes that the word *birlinn* is used only once, where the words *long* and *bairc* are used three times and *iubhrach* once (Riach 2015: 2). All three of these words suggest a post-medieval square-rigged or fore-and-aft rigged vessel, such as a cutter or sloop (Dwelly 1993: 79). The technical language of the poem is also more consistent with 18th century vessels than a *birlinn* (Riach 2015: 2). This suggests that rather than harking back to the ancient galleys of the days of the Lords of the Isles, vessels that would have been unknown in the 18th century, the poet was drawing on his own experience of contemporary vessels, using terms that listeners would understand and could readily imagine. The text of the poem suggests not only an expectation of a degree of technical knowledge and language in the poet's audience, but also that a variety of substantial, modern, ocean-going vessels were present in Loch Aoineart. The significance of these larger vessels will be considered in more detail in section 5.6.

It was in ferrying kelp to one of these larger vessels that Aonghas Òg Àirigh Mhuillinn, tacksman of a nearby township, lost his life, as is recorded in the poem *Marbhrann do dh'fear Àirigh Mhuillinn:*

'Ach bha an uair air a cumail,
Bha gaoth is sruth mar an ciand' an
A chuir thairis an t-eathar,
Mo chreach! Mu leathach an lìonaidh

Figure 5.4.1. Four boat nousts around Loch Aoineart. © K. Grant.

'The appointed hour was kept, the wind and tide were both there to overturn the vessel, alas, about the middle of the flood-tide' (Shaw 1977: 103)

Although we must of course consider poetic license, the choice of the word '*eathar*' for the vessel may allow us to consider the sorts of vessels used on the loch for the task. The word suggests a small boat, with a pointed stern (LearnGaelic 2015; Mark 2003: 253), a description that seems to match that of the *sgoth* - the archetypal Hebridean open boat. These vessels were pointed at both ends, and could range up to 11m in length with a maximum crew of six or seven (Cerón-Carrasco 2011: 61-2). *Sgothan (pl.)* were used extensively for fishing in Lewis in the 19th century as they were large and sturdy enough to brave the seas around the Hebrides but could also be hauled up or landed easily on a beach. Such a vessel can be seen in a later 19th-century archive image from Hiort (Cerón-Carrasco 2011: 61) and was probably that which was used for fishing the waters around the archipelago and communicating with the rest of the Hebrides (Harman 1997: 267-4). *Sgothan* or similar vessels would be ideal for the loading of ships in Loch Aoineort: they had plenty of storage space, could take a reasonably large crew (the *gillean* or lads also mentioned in the poem), and were sturdy enough to navigate the rocks and currents of the loch and venture outside to meet vessels waiting at its mouth, unable to enter the narrow channel. Such a vessel would be beyond the financial reach of any individual tenant, and was perhaps brought to the loch, removed from its place of storage, and hired or crewed for the kelping by the local elite such as ill-fated *Aonghas Òg*. For ordinary *Deasaich*, if they had a boat at all it was likely to be a *geòla*, or yawl, small open boats used for inshore fishing across the Northern and Western Isles, usually crewed by two or three (Cerón-Carrasco 2011: 61-2).

It is hard to assess how many vessels may have been in Loch Aoineart on a regular basis. The earliest census returns, of 1841, list a fisherman at Àirigh nam Ban and a boat builder in a location that is unfortunately illegible, but appears to be somewhere near Poltorran and Calbhaigh on the south side of the loch, with a further boat builder listed as living at Àird Bhuidhe toward the mouth of the loch in 1851. There are no larger or more distinctive nousts or slipways in these areas, suggesting that these men were not working from purpose-built boat-sheds or slipways, but from structures in the local vernacular tradition. The Gaelic phrase '*eathar anns a' bruthaich*' meaning a vessel secured in winter

quarters (LearnGaelic 2015), literally means a vessel on the ascent, slope, acclivity, or brae (Dwelly 1993: 132); such vessels are 'pulled up' for storage during winter, rather than stored in a boathouse. The natural harbour on the north end of the island of Calbhaigh which lies toward the head of the loch (Fig. 2), augmented by a small breakwater, is large enough to accommodate several vessels, certainly big enough to take *sgothan,* and has flat ledges where vessels could be pulled up. One of these ledges appears to have been slightly cut away to increase the space. Conceivably such a location would be suitable for a boat-builder or fisherman, or as a winter store for a number of boats used by the inhabitants of the islands.

At the much more modest end of the scale, a small noust in a tidal cove just north-west of Eilean Dubh on the north side of the loch (Figure 5.4.3) comprises two lines of boulders defining an area of stony beach which has been cleared of large stones, giving it the appearance of a 'landing strip'. Ethnographic accounts from the 19th century in Lewis suggest that fishermen preferred beaching vessels on shingle beaches as it made the task easier (Cerón-Carrasco 2011). This boat noust creates a small clear artificial beach where all large angular stones have been removed, leaving rounded shingle which could be used to roll a boat up. A small nook in the shoreline at the end of the noust would allow easy pulling-up. The structure was photographed at low-tide, but at higher tides the line of boulders would clearly mark this safe landing place. This small, ingenious, but everyday noust would likely be no more than the work of half an hour for a boat's crew of two or three to build, and is typical of most of the nousts around the loch – redolent of everyday use of the loch by small boats whose crew knew every aspect of the microtopography of the lochside.

Danger, Navigation, Placenames, and Seamarks

The boat nousts of Loch Aoineart are the only archaeological evidence we have for the fleet of vessels that must once have plied the loch and been a large part of people's lives. They speak of the moments when these vessels of the sea met the land. The experience of using and manning the vessels on the water itself is more difficult to extract from the landscape – but through drawing on place-names and the local oral tradition, we may gain some insights.

Figure 5.4.2. A natural anchoring place on the island of Calbhaigh at low tide. A stone breakwater, seaweed covered, can be seen projecting out into the mouth of the small inlet. Flat shelves can be seen on either side suitable for the pulling up of a boat. Natural depressions in the peat may have been augmented to allow them to act as nousts – the area clear of heather in the right-hand foreground of the image is one example. © K. Grant.

Figure 5.4.3. Boat noust north west of Eilean Dubh, at low tide. © K. Grant.

The seas around the Hebrides are capricious, and the decision to launch boats was probably not taken lightly. Making a living from the sea was always more risky than agriculture (Cerón-Carrasco 2011: 61). In Loch Aoineart, the oral tradition is particularly rich in terms of drownings and marine disasters, from the near-loss of the Galley of Clanranald, to the death of Aonghas Òg in 1809, into the 20th century. In 1937, three men were drowned when fishing in Loch Aoineart (MacDonald 1999: 218). Although the poem was written well over a hundred years after the period under discussion, it is notable for revisiting the classic themes and images of such poems in lament of those who died at sea from previous centuries (Maclean 1985: 96-9). Namely, the tragedy of young life cut off in its prime, the unexpectedness of such incidents, the sense of loss for those left behind, and the apparent cruelty and indifference of the sea:

'Chan ionann sin is fear a shlànt'
A' dole air àrain lòin,
`S a chùl a chur ri dhachaigh bhlàth
Le aoibhneas, gràdh is ceòl;
Gun smaointinn dhaibh `n àm dealachaidh
Air beannachd no air pòig,
Is cuing a' bhàis a' teannachadh
Na h-analach na shròin.

O chuain gun bhàidh, nach gabh thu fois
`S nach leig thu osnadh throm;
Dèan gàirdeachas ri daoine bochd
A dh'fhàg thu noch cho lom;
Creach thu an seann duine bha liath
Is an cìocharan beag fann,
Is bidh do ghàie dhaibh na phian
An cian a bhois iad ann'

[After describing the death of a person in bed after a long illness]
That is not at all like a man in full health,
Going to look for food,
And leaving his happy home
Full of joy, love and music;

Without even thinking of a blessing
Or a kiss at time of parting,
While death's yoke was already constricting
The breath of life in his nostrils.

O merciless ocean, why don't you take some rest
And take a deep breath of repose;
You can rejoice over the unhappy people
Whom you have caused tonight to be bereft;
You dispossessed the grey-haired old man
And the helpless infant at the breast
And the sound of your laughter will be a source of pain for them
As long as they live.' (MacDonald 1999: 165-7)

Drownings were so common, both in reality and in the oral tradition, that the image of looking out to sea for a lost boat became an indication of tragedy, disquiet, and anguish, even if it had nothing to do with drowning (Maclean 1985: 96-7). This sense of risk and danger must have often been present during day-to-day activities, although of course this should be counterbalanced against the skill and familiarity with boats that many of the people living round the loch must have had. It is also likely that the influx of people from the arable lands to the west caused by kelping meant that people with a limited familiarity with boats and activity on the water would also have been present, increasing the risks.

One of the ways in which this risk was managed was through careful navigation. In the rough and unpredictable waters of the Hebrides, particularly in the rock and skerry-strewn channels of Loch Aoineart, a detailed knowledge of the marine landscape (in this case literally the physical landscape beneath the sea's surface) was essential to remain safe. *Birlinn Chlann Raghnaill* contains an extended passage describing the role of each member of the crew, and has this to say about a look-out who would serve as navigator:

Dh' òrdaicheadh don toiseach fear-eòlais.
Eireadh màirnealach `na sheasamh
Suas don toiseach

`S dèanadh e dhuinn eòlas seasmhach
Cala a choisneas,

Sealladh e an ceithir àirdean
Cian an adhair,
`S innseadh e do dh'fhear na stiùireadh
`S math a gabhail,

Glacadh e comharra-tìre
Le sàr shùil-bheachd,
On `s esan as dia gach sìde
Is reul-iùil duinn.

Look-out is ordered to the front.
Let a mariner rise up at the front and let him set up for
us reliable information about reaching a harbour.

Let him look at the four directions far away in the sky
and let him tell the steering man to keep progressing
well.

Let him catch land marks with real visual observation,
Because he is a full weather-god for us and a guiding
star.' (Barr 2010: 7)

The translation of *fear-eòlais* as 'look-out' is probably not correct. While *fear*
certainly means a man, *eòlais* translates as knowledge, intelligence, or
familiarity (Dwelly 1993: 394; Mark 2003: 263). Clearly this is not someone
looking for danger, but someone who is already knowledgeable and familiar with
the dangers: a *pilot*, not a lookout. On South Uist, *Birlinn Chlann Raghnaill* is
actually known as Clanranald's '*Sgiobaireachd*' or *navigation* (Black 2001: 470).
Perhaps this is unsurprising as local tradition suggests that in earlier times Loch
Aoineart was used as a base for piracy by Clanranald as the entrance required
detailed knowledge to navigate (Moreland and MacLean 2012: 96). The two
names represent starkly different understandings of the poem. The *Birlinn* is an
ancient bardic symbol of the prestige of the Lords of the Isles appended to the

poem during the romantic Victorian period, while the *Sgiobaireachd* is a technical achievement of seafaring which a Uist audience would fully understand and appreciate, knowing the waters in question.

One of the key ways in which this knowledge about the marine landscape was understood and transmitted is through place-names. The Gaelic language has a huge number of topographic terms for coastal and marine features, many of which are loan words from Norse, or place-names adopted and adapted by Gaels (Murray 2014: 77-84). Loch Aoineart's place-names are no exception (Moreland and MacLean 2012). A substantial number of place-names were translated during work by local historian Gill MacLean in the late 1980s and early 1990s (MacLean 1989), while others can be translated easily using Gaelic dictionaries (Dwelly 1993; Mark 2003). Even a brief study reveals that a majority of Loch Aoineart's known place names are at least partly marine in character (Figure 5.4.4; Figure 5.4.5). Some of these relate purely to marine features and would clearly be of aid to navigators. Sruthan Beag, which can be translated as the small channel, flow, or run, is just that: the only entrance to the loch which narrows to a treacherous channel where the tide rushes on either side of the ebb. The headland bordering it to the north is named for this channel: Rubha nan Sruthan, the Headland of the Channel. One can imagine that it is this headland that Clanranald's vessel negotiated in its navigation to the sailing place:

'Cuiribh fuidhibh an rudh' ud,
Le fallas-mhailghean a' sruthadh
`S togaibh seòl rith' o Uibhist nan cràdh-ghèadh.

Pass that headland with sweat running from the
eyebrows and lift up sails for her away from Uist of
the shelldrake birds.' (Barr 2010: 5)
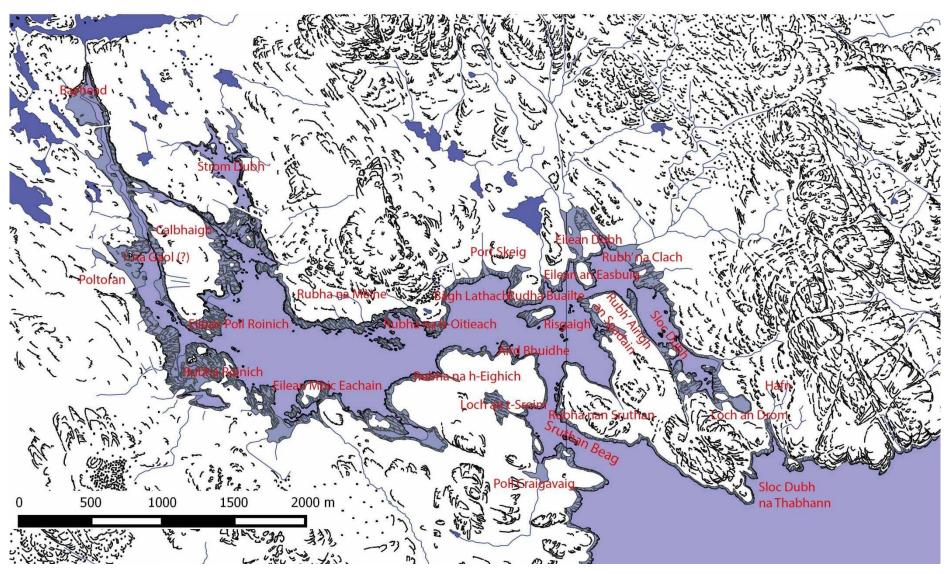
Figure 5.4.4. Map of Loch Aoineart with selected place-names in Gaelic. Contains OS data © Crown copyright [and database right] 2015.
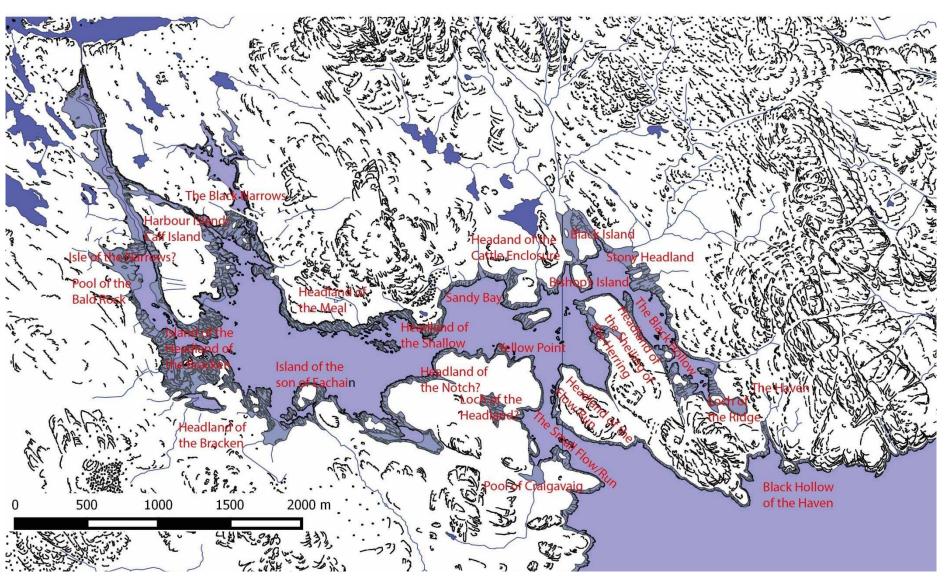
Figure 5.4.5. Map of Loch Aoineart with selected place-names. Translations are those in (Moreland and MacLean 2012) with others translated by author using Gaelic dictionaries (Dwelly 1993; Mark 2003). Contains OS data © Crown copyright [and database right] 2015.

Other place-names also refer to navigational hazards: Rubha na Oitireach is a rendering of Rubha na Oitire, the Headland or Ridge in the Sea (Dwelly 1993: 708). The latter is a term which truly sums up Loch Aoineart's landscape – often both of the sea and the land. Bàgh Lathach describes a muddy bay. This reference to the surface beneath the water is perhaps intended to convey what purchase an anchor may find there, a common aspect of Gaelic marine place-names (Murray 2014: 78). *Poll* is a common part of a place-name and implies a pool of deep water (Dwelly 1993: 730), perhaps where larger vessels can be sure of a reasonable depth below their keels. *Sloc* similarly implies a pool, hollow, or crevice as we see in Sloc Dubh, the Black Hollow. *Port* in Gaelic is, as in English, a harbour or anchorage although smaller than that implied in the English language (Murray 2014: 79). Then there is a procession of headlands, or *rubhaichean*, with their descriptive names; Rubha Roinich, Headland of the Bracken, Rubha Àird Bhuidhe, the High Yellow Point, Rubha nan Clach, Headland of the Stones, easily recognised from the sea as each is weathered. On both Lewis and Barra there was a long tradition documented in the 19th and 20th centuries of navigating by using sea-marks or land-marks, a system whereby positions at sea are worked out by aligning certain features on the shore such as prominent headlands. Such sea-marks were so widely known and understood that on Barra they were used to apportion the sea, run-rig fashion, to different fisherman (Cerón-Carrasco 2011: 65-6; MacDonald 1811: 792). In this manner even the off-shore waters were navigated with reference to the land and its place-names.

Not all the names are directly related to the sea of course, many stem from stories and biographies of local people and places, or from in-jokes. In 2012, a local crofter and fisherman pointed out a feature in the rocks of the Sruthan Beag comprised of two round white coloured rocks with water running between them called the 'Moon na Cailleach', *cailleach* being Gaelic for an old woman or crone and Moon being the English verb for flashing one's hindquarters. The feature was so named because it looked like the white arse of an old woman urinating outside at night! Rubh' Àirigh an Sgadain, Headland of the Sheiling of the Herring, records both the previous use of the area as a sheiling and local knowledge of the fishing there. Hafn, a Norse place name, meaning haven, is the traditional sailing place where vessels waited for favourable conditions to put to

the open sea and is generally regarded as the sailing place mentioned in *Birlinn Chlann Raghnaill* (Moreland and MacLean 2012: 90). The small sheltered inlet there named Sloc Dubh na Thabhann, the Black Pool of Hafn, suggests a deep pool where good, safe anchorage could be found. It is here that Clanranald's vessel leaves our story:

Dh'iomair iad an sin i gu ionad-seòlaidh
`S an sin nuair thàrr iad an t-seòlaid
Gu fìor ghasda
Shaor iad na sia ràimh dheuga
Steach roimh `m bacaibh;
Sgathadh grad iad shìos r' a sliasaid
Sheachnadh bhac-bhrèid;

They rowed her then into the sailing area.
That is when they changed really well into sailing.
They freed up the sixteen oars into the oar-rests.
They leaped off down towards the stern and they avoided
the belaying pins. (Barr 2010: 5)

Alasdair Mac Mhaighstir Alasdair also provided us with experiential evidence of what it was like to sail the waters of Loch Aoineart. Such evocative evidence speaks for itself and requires little comment or analysis to inform our understanding of experiencing its marine landscape:

Sparras a' bhirlinn le sèitrich
Roimh gach fuar-ghleann,
Sgoltadh na bòc-thuinne beucaich
Le saidh chruaidh chruim,
Dh' iomaineas beanntainean bèisteil
Roimh `dà ghualainn.

Hùgan le cuan, nuallan gàireach,
Heig air chnagaibh,
Faram le bras-ghaoir na bàirlinn
Ris na maidibh,

Ràimh gam pianadh 's balgain fhal' air

Bois gach fuirbidh,

Na suinn làidir, gharbha, thoirteil

'S coip-gheal iomradh,

… drive the birlinn with snorting through every cold sea-glen,

cleaving the roaring swelling

waves with a hard and very bent prow and driving

beastly rollers in front of the two bows.

There were whackings and laughing roars and

swishings on its thole-pins, a loud noise with sudden

throbbing cries of the billows surging against the

timbers.

Oars were torturing them and there were blisters of

blood on the palms of every strong man, the strong,

rough and fruitful heroes of the foam-white rowing. (Barr 2010: 3)

Working the Inter-tidal Zone – Bait-holes and Fish-traps.

So far in this discussion, we have focussed on the 'fully' marine aspects of the

sea, the boats and the place-names through which the oceans were navigated.

Such an idea is well summarised in the Gaelic description of the sea as *'cuan*

sruthach nan ròd', 'the streaming ocean of the roadways' (MacInnes 2006b:

469). Equally, however, many of Loch Aoineart's people were crofters and

farmers, people of the land who were also in a sense inter-tidal, acting along

the shore's edge. Here, we find more obvious archaeological traces in the

landscape.

In several areas around the loch-side we find rock-cut or ground bowls on rocky

outcrops by the shore. These features, which exist in their hundreds across the

Hebrides, are *tuill-sollaidh* or bait-holes, called in South Uist Gaelic *pollagan*

(MacDonald 1991: 196). Within these hollows whelks, cockles, and other shellfish

were ground up for use as bait (Smith 2012: 398; The Carmichael Watson Project

2012). These holes are generally to be found near *carraigean (pl.):* rocks jutting

out into the sea used in *creagaireachd,* or crag-fishing (Dwelly 1993: 170; The

Carmichael Watson Project 2012). In this practice short fishing lines, or more commonly nets or baskets known as *tàbhan* (sing. *tàbh*), were used to catch fish swimming close to the shore. Commonly, *tàbhan* would be lowered down on a rod into an underwater hollow beneath the *carraig,* then bait, crushed in the bait-holes, would be scattered to draw fish into the net (Cerón-Carrasco 2011: 60; Fenton 1978: 538). One of the advantages of crag-fishing is that it is a form of fishing adapted to the meanest understanding and a lack of specialist materials and expertise. This may have made it ideal for kelpers or crofters who needed to be able to fish occasionally for subsistence.

Some such surface fishing probably always took place at a low level. Oil for household lamps was often sourced from saithe, one of the most abundant species caught from the shore (Cerón-Carrasco 2011: 69; Smith 2012: 398), but *creagaireachd* may have been particularly associated with occasions when food was scarce, just as it is in the Northern Isles (Fenton 1978: 533). In the Hebrides, ethnologist Alexander Carmichael recorded a tradition that bait-holes were created by the wife of one of the Lords of the Isles to allow the poor to fish during a time of need (The Carmichael Watson Project 2012). Thirty years after the period under discussion, the minister of South Uist saw crowds of the poor picking cockles, which comprised one of the only sources of food available in years of scarcity (MacLean 1841: 187). There is another reason that such fishing may have often been a 'last resort'. Within Gaeldom, a highly stratified society, concepts of nobility and status also extended to foods. Game and imported goods were viewed as high-status, dairy products and oats as a staples and tubers, shellfish, and scavengers as low-status. The eating of shellfish was considered so shameful that in Gaelic song and poetry to assert that someone ate shellfish was well-understood to be an insult. The expression '*tha e air a dhol don fhaochaig'*- 'he has gone to the whelk-shell' meant that someone was being stingy or uncharitable (Newton 2009: 185-6). We may therefore see these baitholes not, perhaps, as evidence of fishermen choosing to actively engage in sourcing food from the sea, but people of the land being forced, out of desperation and perhaps even with shame, to try to gain any food they could to sustain themselves and their families. Flounder-fishing on mud flats using a spear and one's feet to feel for flounders, recorded on South Uist at the start of

the 20th century (Smith 2012: 398), also probably fits into this category of marine activity.

Bait-holes themselves are surprisingly substantial. Due to the number of holes and their size and depth it seems highly unlikely that they were created simply
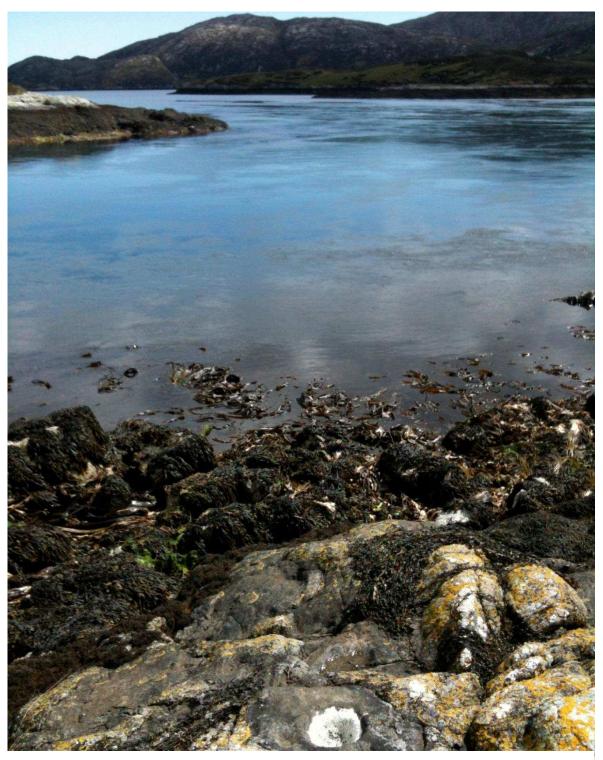
Figure 5.4.6. Tuill Sollaidh, bait-holes, on Sruthan Beag, Loch Aoineart. The largest, in the immediate foreground, is highlighted by the white moss within it. © Creative Commons 4.0.

Figure 5.4.7. *Cairidhean* **or fish-traps around Loch Aoineart. In each example the traps comprise linear dry stone banks which are exposed at low tide © K. Grant.**

by erosion from pounding bait; these features were clearly created intentionally. Their character led many antiquarians to question their use and attribute them to prehistory (Mann 1921-2; Sands 1881: 459), despite the fact that they were still being used for fishing as part of what was clearly a long-held tradition. One reason why these *pollagan* are so well-made and prominent is that they may have expressed proprietary rights. Certainly, this is recorded in the Northern Isles where there are records of arguments over rights to fishing rocks (Fenton 1978: 533). There are few places on Loch Aoineart where one can fish safely from rocks into relatively deep water. As we have seen in the study of both South Uist's kelp industry and in fowling on Hiort, rights to resources were very carefully allocated and fiercely defended. The method of allocating fishing rights to various areas of sea on Barra already discussed was reputedly created by the chief in an attempt to prevent 'frequent disputes and quarrels' (MacDonald 1811: 791). It is therefore not unreasonable to think that the labour of creating these bait-holes was an attempt to assert or defend rights to crag-fishing, or at the very least of marking the best spots.

Another piece of landscape evidence that is found in the inter-tidal zone in numbers equalling even that of nousts, is that of fish-traps, or *cairidhean*. Fish-traps of various kinds are found around the coasts of the Highlands and Lowlands (where they are known in Scots as 'yairs') and can date from the medieval period to the 20th century. They have received archaeological attention in the form of papers which are technical in character and discuss them as a monument type or technology: listing the various forms, methods of use and construction, whilst also providing a history of the technology (Bannerman and Jones 1999; Bathgate 1949; Benjamin *et al*. 2014; Dawson 2004; Hale 2004). As a result, the structures are relatively well-understood, although the need for further multi-disciplinary work including the use of ethnographic evidence is highlighted (Benjamin *et al*. 2014: 416; Hale 2004: 126). Creating (often competing) typologies of their forms has been a particular focus of almost every archaeological study from the 1940s (Bathgate 1949) to the present (Bannerman and Jones 1999; Benjamin *et al*. 2014). As noted by Benjamin et al. (2014), as with all vernacular structures the nature of fish-traps is partly governed by the availability of materials and the nature of the local environment. In Loch Aoineart, almost all of the examples encountered fit the pattern of large,

crescent-shaped barriers blocking natural narrows along the coast: at river-mouths, near islands, and at the mouth of tidal inlets (Figure 5.4.7). These were constructed of stones gathered locally heaped up, occasionally with openings in the centre. Examples of several such structures in Loch Aoineart can be seen in Figure 5.4.7, and, although each is unique, in general they fit a pattern which is very common in the Western Isles (Benjamin *et al.* 2014: 411).

As with many dry stone vernacular structures, *cairidhean* can be hard to date. However, on Loch Aoineart, their close proximity and association with sites which appear to be associated with kelping, such as at Calbhaigh or Taigh a' Mhàil, and their sheer ubiquity, probably date many of them to the kelping period, when the number of people living on the lochside was at its greatest. The way in which these traps were used is relatively well documented. They are usually aligned so that a pool is created in the interior as the tide ebbs. This pool traps fish which have come inshore at high tide to feed, or fish moving up and down burns and streams during spawning. These fish may be actively caught by the trap if it has a timber or wattle component or a sluice which may contain a basket or net, or they may be collected from the pool using nets (Benjamin *et al.* 2014: 415). The same woven baskets called *tàbhan* used in crag-fishing could probably be of use here too (Cerón-Carrasco 2011: 60). It should be noted that the organic components of the traps rarely survive outside sheltered firths (Hale 2004: 124), although during fieldwork at Hairteabhagh, South Uist in 2012, the author observed a threadbare pile of nets of synthetic material resting by a hook near a narrow channel that was clearly used in the later 20th century to create a static trap. These structures were often multi-purpose, creating habitats for mussels, crabs, and lobsters (Benjamin *et al.* 2014: 416), which would have provided a welcome additional source of food. They also frequently appear to act as causeways. Small inhabited islands, such as Eilean Dubh, are linked to the mainland by fish-traps, providing access to places which could otherwise only be reached at low-tide or by boat.

Although the use of these traps is understood in basic terms, only briefly in one study (Dawson 2004) is any consideration given as to how they affected the daily life of those who used them. Such fish traps are not entirely static: when in use, they have to be tended on every tide if the catch is to be secured. Where baskets or nets are used, if the catch is left it is likely to spoil or be taken by

seals or other animals, possibly damaging the nets. As well as these mammals, other people could also be unwelcome visitors as they could poach from or damage the trap. It is therefore not surprising that on Loch Aoineart and elsewhere *cairidhean* are generally found sited immediately below dwellings, where they can be observed and easily worked (Dawson 2004: 22). Maintaining and repairing nets and wooden components made of relatively flimsy organic materials must have been a significant component of the task of actively working them, while stone components might tend to wash away, spread, or sink into the mud over time (Dawson 2004: 37). Unlike large fishtraps in the firths of the east and south of Scotland (Hale 2004), there are no known documentary or historical sources which describe how these small structures were owned or how their produce was shared, although we know that estates often had control over resources as small as a single mussel bed (Lelong 2000: 220). We must assume, as with all the resources discussed so far, that these structures were owned and rights to their use were restricted, negotiated, and defended. In all likelihood the rights belonged to those in nearby dwellings who were tenants or sub-tenants of the land and may have had rights to use the shore; or perhaps to cottars or kelpers who had arranged a share of the catch or a right of use in return for their labour. Fish traps should not be thought of static monuments in the landscape, but as evidence of a taskscape of fishing from the land that had its own workforce, chores, relationships, and rhythms.

The Rhythms of the Sea and of the Land

It should also be remembered that all the marine aspects of the landscape, with their routine tasks and practices, took place alongside those of the land itself. As discussed in previous chapters, seasonality was crucially important for a people who drew most of their sustenance from their immediate environment. They were, like all farmers, dependant on the passing of the seasons for their crops and for securing feed for their livestock. Additionally the people of Loch Aoineart were dependent on the movements of marine life as fish moved inshore to spawn or juvenile fish stayed close inshore as they matured (Figure 5.4.8). Add to this the kelping season, when during a few short weeks the money had to be made to pay their rent, and a busy yearly cycle of labour is established. Given that seasonality was so important to crofters, it is perhaps no surprise that *Deasaich* bards Dòmhnall Aonghais Bhàin and Iain MacDhòmhnaill both made

poems on the course of the crofter's year in the early 20th century landscape (Dòmhnall Aonghais Bhàin 2000: 44-53; MacDhòmhnaill 2001: 282-3). While we cannot equate life in the early 20th century with that of the 19th, their accounts of the changing weather, often ferocious in winter, and the seasons of plenty and dearth provide an evocative commentary in authentically South Uist voices.

As the seasons turn so do the festivals, saints' days, and red-letter days. The sailing of *Birlinn Chlann Raghnaill* on Latha Féill Brìghde, St Brigid's day, has been seen an unlikely time to sail, the weather still being poor. However the date had a symbolic resonance as a celebration of renewal and fertility, as the year's first labours of manuring, ploughing, and sowing began (Black 2001: 473). It is interesting to note that the Barra fisherman allocated their fishing grounds on St Brigid's day (MacDonald 1811: 792), so perhaps this day also symbolically marked the re-opening of the seaways as the storms of winter began to abate. We should not forget that the sea brought more than annual rhythms. It brought the daily rhythms of the tide, essential for navigating by boat and crossing the mud and rocks at low water, as well as drawing fish into the fishtraps. The moon brought neap and spring tides that provided further opportunities to explore, fish, and build along the shore.

Calbhaigh – The Maritime *Baile*

To complete this discussion of the seascape of Loch Aoineart, many of the elements featured so far are drawn together by placing them into the landscape through a case study on the island of Calbhaigh. This small island lies mid-channel toward the head of the loch, and contains the full range of archaeological evidence to be found – dwellings, agricultural remains, nousts, and fish-traps. In 1805 the island was split between Bornais and Clanranald, and in 1841 was home to seven households (MacLean 2012: 92). The settlements on the islands can be dated with some confidence as the remains match those depicted on Bald's map of 1805 almost exactly (Figure 5.4.9).

The remains lie toward the centre of the island, on a ridge which runs roughly north-south, and constitutes a particularly good example of settlement on Loch

Species	Size range (cm)	Habitat (juvenile)	Habitat (Adult)	Spawning Season	Possible Fishing Method for juvenile specimens	Possible Fishing Method for adult specimens
Cod	up to 150cm	Shallow water/ close inshore	Inshore and offshore/ depths down to 600m	February to April	Line from craig-seats, poke net (*tabh*)	Trailing line from craig seats. Lines from boats
Saithe	up to 100cm	Shallow water close inshore among rocks	Shallow and deep water	January to April	Poke nets (*tabh*), lines from craig seats	Lines from craig seats or boats
Pollack	up to 130cm	Shallow water close inshore among rocks	Shallow and deep water	January to April	Poke nets (*tabh*), lines from craig seats	Lines from craig seats or boats
Haddock	up to 100cm	Mainly offshore	Offshore depth from 10 to 450m	January to June	Lines from boats	Lines from boats
Ling	up to 100cm	Shallow water	Offshore/depths down to 400m	March to July	Lines from craig seats or boats inshore	Lines from boats offshore
Conger	up to 150cm	Inshore	Inshore	Summer in Sargaso & Mediterrenean Seas	Lines from boats	Lines from boats
Wrasse	up to 30cm	Argal zone on rocky coast	Argal zone on rocky coast	June to August	Lines from craig seats or boats inshore	Lines from craig seats or boats inshore
Red sea bream	up to 50cm	Coastal areas in shallow waters	Offshore banks in deeper waters down to 700m	November to February	Lines from boats	Lines from boats
Herring	up to 40cm	Pelagic, depths down to 250m	Pelagic, depths down to 250m	February to April in Norwegian coast	Nets from boats, inshore fish traps	Nets from boats, inshore fish traps
Mackerel	up tp 50cm	Pelagic, coastal waters	Pelagic, coastal waters	May to June	Lines from craig seats or boats	Lines from craig seats or boats
Salmon	up to 150cm	Freshwater then estuarine to acclimatise to salinity in sea	Open sea and freshwaters	Spawning migrations from sea into freshwater June to November	Lines from boats	Lines from boats, nets and fish traps

Figure 5.4.8. Breeding cycle, and methods of capture of commonly-caught fish species, from (Cerón-Carrasco 2011: 70). © Ruby Cerón-Carrasco

Aoineart. A large byre-dwelling lies on the highest point of Calbhaigh (Figure 5.4.11) with open views across to the south of the loch with its kelp road, and east toward the dog-leg in the loch that leads to the substantial anchorage of Bàgh Lathach by the inn at Àirigh nam Ban, and ultimately the open sea through the channel of Sruthan Beag. Standing outside one could easily survey the myriad comings-and-goings of the busy loch. The remains of rectilinear enclosures can still be seen around the building.
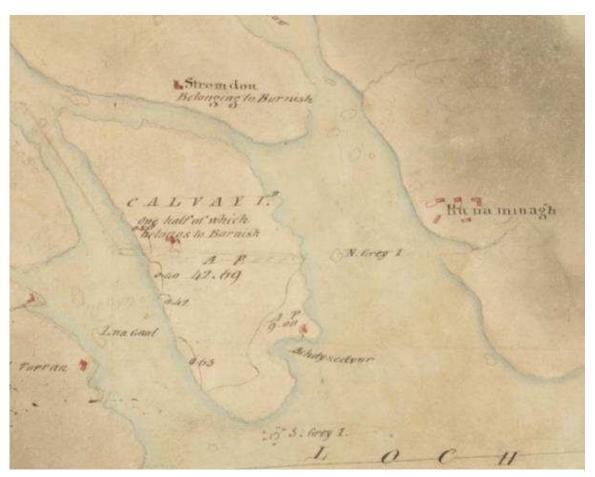
Figure 5.4.9. Calbhaigh (rendered Calvay), as depicted on Bald's map of 1805. Original deposited at the National Records of Scotland, RHP38151.

Peat banks lie inland. Downslope, semi-circular incursions of cultivation remains cut into the heather-topped peat, with their original surrounding turf dykes clearly visible on the ground via Google Earth, remarkably similar to their depiction on Bald (Figure 5.4.10). A natural inlet further down is augmented by dry stone walls to make a very sheltered noust. A second, smaller noust is nearby. The island is accessible by land only at the north end across a rocky causeway incorporating a tiny islet. It is useable only at low tide and, even when it can be crossed, the causeway is slippery and rock strewn. Burdens could not be carried across here and access must always have been primarily by boat. Fish

traps and seaweed traps related to kelping can be found in various areas around the island.

The narrative that follows draws on the local tradition of poems describing the seasons of the year (MacDhòmhnaill 2001: 282-3) and the landscape of Calbhaigh, a tiny island in a truly marine environment, to create an impression of the environment and its annual rhythms.

Fonn ag ùrachadh còta
Deise bheò-bhileach ùrar;
Siol a' choirce `s an eòrna
Pailt a' pòsadh ri ùir ann;
Uain air bearraidh a' leumnaich,
Cuach a' gleusadh a ciùil ann –
*Dealbh an eilein san **earrach**,*
Bho fhaoilteach greannach air dùsgadh

Land renewing its mantle,
Fresh new-leaved coat,
Seeds of barley and oats
In plenty bonding with the earth,
Lambs leaping on slopes,
Cuckoo pitching its call –
Picture of the island in **spring**,
Woken from Harsh winter

Figure 5.4.10. Satellite image of settlement on Calbhaigh. The sub-rectangular dwelling can be seen surrounded by a green area of enriched soil. A rectangular enclosure can also be seen, as depicted on Bald. To the west, a natural inlet is augmented by stone walls to form a natural harbour. Map data: Google, Getmap plc

Figure 5.4.11. The byre-dwelling on the top of Calbhaigh Island, looking northwest, Taigh a' Mháil lies approximately where the roofless building can be seen on the opposite shore. © K. Grant.

St Brigid's day and the grey seasoned wood of the family sgoth is being brushed and tarred in the sheltered hollow of the harbour. The stern of the vessel rests on the upper fringe of shingle where the beach meets the yellow-green salty grass of the shoreline. The turf dykes stand black against the hill-side freshly renewed before the black earth is turned in preparation for sowing. A yawl shoots into the harbour as the tide reaches its ebb, rocking as the crew jump out, skilfully beaching their boat as its prow kisses the clear strip of small rounded stones. In the distance, the oars of a small sgoth break the water's surface unevenly. It is its first voyage of the year: the cod may be in.

Hours later, and the exposed mud and rocks are a scene of great activity at a spring low tide. Cairidhean are being made ready and repaired; the women, their skirts hiked high above the cloying mud, seek flounders. The popping of seaweed drying in the meagre sunlight can be heard on all sides.

<p align="center">***</p>

Aileadh cùbhraidh thar luibhean
Air machair buidhe nam blàth-fhlùr;
Monmhar cagrach na tuinne
Gu binn a' sruthladh ri tràigh ghil;
Soillse grèine a' lasadh
Leacan casa sna h-àirdean –
*Dealbh an eilein san **t-samhradh**,*
Clachag neamhnaid san fhàinne

Fragrant scent of herbs
On *machair* yellow with blossom,
Murmuring whisper of the waves
Sweetly rolling to white sands,
Sunshine highlighting
Steep sides of the bens
Picture of the island in **summer**,
A pearl set in a ring.

The women and children are at the sheiling with the cattle. All around, the loch glimmers and glistens like glass, reflecting the hills around, dappled by ever-changing patches of sunlight and cloud-shadow. The crops are growing now and the black soil can not be seen between their shoots. Many of the men of the settlement are also gone: the glimmer of sails can be seen far to the west, beyond the snaking channel of the loch, towards the open sea. The fishing is in full-flow. There is little to do in the fields but keep off the geese, and the rest of the men and boys are sitting in the summer sun making and mending tàbhan. *On the tide they will wade out across the slippery sharp rocks and place their nets. At the close of day they will return herding the slippery wet grey-green* saithe *into their nets, to be gutted and smoked to fill bellies until harvest comes. The better part of the day they will spend above their house, cutting peats with their neighbours, sweating and breathing hard as the midges bite.*

Figure 5.4.12. Freshly made turf dyke, North Loch Aoineart, 2011 © K. Grant

Diasan torrach a' crathadh,

Barr abaich a' luasgadh;

Raoide, dlòth agus adag

A' feitheamh dachaigh nan cruachan;

Feur a' grèidheadh air àilean,

Sprèidh shàsaicht' air buaile –

Dealbh an eilein san fhogar

An comann othail na **buana**.

Grain-laden ears swaying,

Ripe crops rippling,

Cut corn, sheaf and stook

Waiting their place in the stack,

Hay drying on the meadow,

Well-fed cattle in folds –

Picture of the island in autumn

In busy fellowship of the **harvest.**

Tired, grey faces. Few have time for much sleep in these unmercifully long days. The sky is filled with columns of grey, steamy, smoke from the burning of kelp. Most of the crops are now in, but the few inhabitants who can be spared from the kelp kilns are sorting the last of the ricks. Tàbhan have already been set in the fish traps and the kelpers struggle to stir the kelp slurry in time to collect the catch. Across the choppy channel, a family can be seen, lines in hand, fishing from the rocks. Their black, earth-built, summer kelping hut lies just above the shore, one of many. As a child gleefully pounds limpets with a round stone another collects them from the rocks, knocking them off with a practised sharp blow. Their father sits staring emptily at the end of his line where it goes below the water to the pool below. He is not too tired to be envious of those collecting their crops on Calbhaigh.

<p style="text-align:center">***</p>

Fairg' a' bristeadh ri creagan,
Sruth tro fheadain a' bùirich;
Fead na h-ioma-ghaothaich ghreannaich
Tro gach bealach a' smùideadh;
Sad na mara ga shiabadh
Bho bharraibh sìor-gheal nam brùchd-thonn –
Dealbh an eilein sa **gheamhradh**
A' cath ri reanntachd nan dùilean

Seas breaking on the rocks,

Currents roaring through channels,

Howl of fierce winds

Blasting through every gap,

Sea-spray being swept

From white crests of breakers –

picture of the island in **winter**

Battling the element's tyranny

A gloomy cèilidh in the dark interior of the byre-house on the top of the hill. Exposed though it is to the gusts and lashing rain that can be heard outside, it is warm, if smoky, inside. It has been two days since the household spoke to anyone off the island. The storm surges, currents and waves of winter making the channels impassable by boats and the causeway across the rocks unthinkable. This is of no concern to the family inside; this is the hungry season after Christmas. There is little to do. They spend much of their time indoors, sharing heat, stories, and songs. When the weather clears somewhat they look back west in the direction of the machair. All is quiet; few people can be seen moving around. They are waiting for the cycle to begin again.

***

Conclusion

What has been presented here is an attempt to create an integrated narrative of life in the marine landscape which draws together historical and archaeological evidence and considerations of cultural and personal experience from the oral tradition. The narrative above demonstrates that by focussing on the specific in the landscape, both temporally and geographically, it is possible to draw in a broad range of contextualising material which is authentic to the place and time in question, or at least to the cultural milieu which the Gaels of Loch Aoineart inhabited. By drawing upon the oral tradition, the thoughts and words of those who knew and inhabited the landscape have been given a central place in the narrative – even if they can only be poorly understood by the modern reader.

The account above contrasts interestingly with a brief consideration by Olivia Lelong (2000: 220-3) of engagements with the marine environment. She described the contrasting experience of life in inland Strathnaver to that of life on the north coast experienced by Gaels forcibly cleared from the interior to the shore. In that account, Lelong eloquently expresses the sense of dislocation and lack of familiarity of a people of the land becoming suddenly and utterly

dependent on the sea. In contrast to this situation, the people of Loch Aoineart came from a tradition of engaging with the seas that surround the Hebrides on all sides. However, even here, it could be said that life was never truly marine; all aspects of daily life lay somewhere on a spectrum from being entirely on the land to entirely of the sea, with a foot in both being common. Individuals too lay along this spectrum, their engagement with the sea dependent on their status, wealth, and personal circumstances. Thus the experience of these Gaels along the coast was not one which is totally distinctive or unique compared to those who made their living solely by the land; rather it was an adjunct, a set of tasks and experiences both unique to the sea and intimately interconnected with the rhythms of the land. Lelong suggests that water differs from land in the key fact that one cannot make a mark upon it; it cannot be inscribed with the scars of the plough like the land, but swallows up all man-made objects placed within it (Lelong 2000: 222). However, it is argued here that the sea is also deeply inscribed with cultural memory, symbolism, and geographical and toponymic understandings. Many of these understandings come from the land, such as place-names which project meaning into the waters around them through the knowledge needed for navigation. There are other elements of the marine landscape which are wholly of the sea – the experience of rowing a boat in a storm, the knowledge of the fish that live only far from the coast, the stories of the beings that inhabit the otherworld beneath the waves. These elements, while not *physically* marking the landscape, are inscribed just as deeply within Gaelic culture and communal memory.

5.5 Hiort – Am Baile

In general, narratives about everyday life have been relatively rare in archaeological approaches to the post-medieval Highlands and Islands. As a result, there has been no extended consideration of the experience of living and dwelling within the dominant form of settlement in the period, the *baile*, often referred to in English as the 'township' (Carmichael 1884: 213; Dodgshon 2002: 25-7). The *baile* tends to have been approached from a viewpoint of settlement patterns (Dodgshon 1980, 2000) or vernacular architecture (Mackie 2006, 2008), drawing from such evidence in an attempt to illustrate the historical meta-narratives of the period or indeed, to critique them (Campbell 2009; Geddes and Grant 2015). One area where the lived experience of the *baile* has been considered is at open air museums such as the Highland Folk Museum (Figure 5.5.5), Newtonmore; the Arnol Blackhouse, Lewis (Holden 2004); or Auchindrain, Argyll. This is perhaps unsurprising as these museums tend to come from a folk-life tradition which, in its own eclectic manner, has always had a focus on everyday life (Fenton 1976, 1987; Grant 1960). The exhibits, however, tend to suffer from some of the same problems as the theoretical tradition from which they emerge: they create an ethnographic, 'traditional', 'every-past' which is set in opposition to modernity. In these narratives there is no sense in which the past itself was dynamic and that change occurred to people's ways of life and landscape.

On Hiort in particular, housing and vernacular architecture have been a focal point of discussion; the advent of improved housing in the 1860s is seen as a key turning point in the wider narrative of the islands' community. The improved houses are consistently compared unfavourably with earlier vernacular dwellings. Sources focus on the drawbacks of the new housing (MacLean 1977: 141-2; Steel 1965: 75-6), conveniently ignoring the fact that they were larger, lighter, cleaner, healthier, better furnished, probably required less maintenance than those that had come before, and had significantly more living-space despite a similar footprint (Gannon and Geddes 2015: 103-7; Harman 1997: 108,50). By taking an overly-negative view of improved housing and giving a romanticised account of 'traditional' dwellings, housing can be used to prop up a cornerstone of the 'Hardrock Consensus': that pre-Improvement Hiort was a utopian idyll

Figure 5.5.1. The Highland Folk Museum in Kingussie presents some impression of an 18th-century Highland baile, based loosely on excavations at nearby Easter Raitts (Lelong and Wood 2000) ©Wikicommons

brought low by the coming of a modernity which must necessarily be bad. In this narrative, nothing 'new' can be perceived to be positive, including improved housing (Fleming 2005: Chapter 1; MacLean 1977). So, despite the fact that the buildings and townships of the Gaeldom before Improvement have been an important part of the literature surrounding the place and period, often forming and challenging the historical meta-narratives, there are few narratives about everyday life within them. This means that arguably the most cohesive descriptions of life in the *bailtean* are to be found in fiction of the late Victorian period and early 20th century (Gunn 1969 [1941]; Munro 1994, 2004; Stevenson 2007 [1886]). There is, however, a significant resource from which to create a more confidently archaeological narrative about life in these communities.

Travellers' accounts from across the Highlands and Islands have left us a number of descriptions of settlements there in the later 18th and early 19th century (Boswell 1785; Bray 1986; Clarke 1824; Hogg 1986; Johnson 1775; Pennant 1998). Hiort is particularly well-served in this regard (Atkinson 2001; Brougham 1871; Campbell 1799; Clarke 1824; MacAulay 1764; Martin 1999). These accounts must be understood critically of course. Their biases vary widely from overtly

pejorative 'outsider' perceptions fanned by anti-Scottish and anti-Gaelic sentiment (Brougham 1871; Johnson 1775; Newton 2009: 3-4), to accounts from within Gaelic society based on more directly embedded experiences but displaying a paternalistic, Improving attitude (MacKenzie 1911). Within the surviving oral tradition, 'everyday life' is an infrequent feature, with descriptions of the household and the *baile* appearing only peripherally. Even then, these tend to be about the trappings of elite households, not of the ordinary sub-tenant or cottar (Black 2001: 526). Where exiled or absent Gaelic poets turned their thoughts towards home these tended to be romantic or nostalgic discussions of the lost landscapes and people of their youth (e.g Meek 2003: 6-36), not of the drudgery of everyday life. It is hard to say whether this reflects the true nature of the tradition as it was lived or the mechanisms of survival, such as the interests of those who collected it (Grant 2014: 31-4). First-hand prose accounts of everyday life do appear in the 20th century (MacLellan 1997; NicDhòmhnaill 2009), along with vernacular poetry about daily life (e.g. Dòmhnall Aonghais Bhàin 2000; MacDhòmhnaill 2001), but these reflect the post-Improvement landscape in the late 19th or early 20th century, and, while providing some insights into experience and culture, are likely to be of limited use in considering the *baile* in the 18th century. The archaeological evidence of pre-Improvement settlement is relatively rich, both in terms of landscape survey (Boyle 2003; Cowley and Harrison 2001; RCAHMS 1990, 1994) and excavations (Atkinson *et al.* 2005; Lelong 2007; Lelong and Wood 2000; MacGregor *et al.* 1999). On Hiort specifically, the features which comprise evidence for the pre-Improvement settlement were surveyed in the 1980s (Stell and Harman 1988) but not identified as such until the 2000s (Fleming 2003; 2005: 133-8). Recent re-appraisal and survey by RCAHMS, aided in part by the author, has refined the interpretation of the physical remains of the settlement (Geddes and Gannon 2015: 75-9) and yet beyond a brief discussion by Fleming (2005: 133-8) there is no extended account of the experience of life there.

This section brings together varied forms of evidence about life in the pre-Improvement *baile,* drawing from the particularly well-documented example of Hiort. In doing so a part of the landscape of Hiort that is little explored is examined, and how such an account may inform or contradict wider historical meta-narratives is considered. A microhistory approach will be used, drawing on

multiple sources to create a temporally and geographically specific account of the landscape of Hiort. I will again focus on the period around 1812, attempting to reconstruct the landscape as it was around that time. This should allow the *baile* and its community to have an internal history within the narrative which reflects the dynamism of the landscape on Hiort in the pre-Improvement period. To this will be added considerations of experiential aspects of the landscape, drawing on theories of affect and phenomenological approaches. By building on these a 'thick description' of the experience of landscape will be attempted. The microhistorical approach of this section draws in particular on Clifford Geertz (1973), who, in his seminal account of a Balinese cockfight, sought to describe 'its immediate dramatic shape, its metaphoric content, and its social context.' (Geertz 1973: 444). The account which follows is structured around these three categories and journey from the hinterland of the settlement to the hearthside of a specific building within it. The section ends with a wider consideration of Gaelic cultural perceptions of the landscape and how this may affect our understandings of life in the past on Hiort and within the wider *Gàidhealtachd*.

'…its immediate dramatic shape…'

It is February. In the sharp moon-and-star-light of a late winter's evening the baile lies clustered amongst the quiet fields. A rough track meanders through the low buildings which smoke in the dim light (MacAulay 1764: 42). They lie in no particular arrangement, each building taking advantage of the available space, shelter, and underlying topography (Clarke 1824: 534; Gannon and Geddes 2015: 74-6). To the rear of the Village, an old woman is carefully returning from the well, cold, hungry, and arthritic. Walking alongside her companionably is a motley pack of mongrel dogs, no two the same (Clarke 1824: 366). She walks down the track carefully picking her way across the stepping stones which lie where the mud is deepest (Clarke 1824: 354-5). Weaving between the buildings, many of which hum with low conversation and the occasional lowing of cattle, she sees a dimly lit face peering out of a house while adjusting the smoke hole (Clarke 1824: 351-2) – it nods in silent greeting. Approaching her family home she hears the murmuring of the occupants within. A slight glow can be seen around the poorly sealed doors and roof. Stones hang around the edge of the thatching. Even in the moonlight, the thatching looks

tired; frayed, lumpy, and blackened. With the coming of spring the inner layer will be spread on the fields and the outer layer reset as the summer roof (Harman 1997: 147). Putting down her bucket she wrestles with the door mechanism (Harman 1997: 162-3), and enters.

Stooping through the narrow door she finds a cacophony of sound, smell, and dimly seen visions. Upon an uneven floor freshly spread with dry peat-ash and layers of heather, also destined for spring's manuring (Clarke 1824: 352; Ferguson 2006: 93; Harman 1997: 94; MacKenzie 1911: 9), the small peat-fire glows. A fug of peatsmoke, humid warmth, and the smell of cattle and unwashed bodies is itself overwhelmed by the scent of fulmar oil. It comes from the thick tendrils of black smoke rising from stone crusie lamps (Grant 1960: 181-3), from the full bladders of oil hanging from the roof, from the bodies of those who use it as an ointment for their arthritis, and from the clothes of the people themselves (Clarke 1824: 354). The warmth and shelter is welcome after the cold winds and freezing mud outside. Navigating past the rough stone fallan *which separates the cattle from the people and dogs, a cramped living space is entered. The entry of the old woman excites the dogs, their agitation spreading to the cattle, providing a greeting of noises from people and animals alike (Harman 1997: 147).*

Image has been removed due to copyright restrictions

Figure 5.5.2. A sketch of unknown provenance showing the pre-Improvement settlement. It is thought to date to around 1800 (Robson 2005: frontispeice). © Michael Robson

Within this single room the deep deposits on the floor, built up since it was last cleared to manure the fields, make the space even more cramped. Above, the

height of earth on the floor mean it is not comfortable to stand in many places (even if there was not a thick blanket of smoke) and below, manure heaps in the byre-end and lumpy and uneven deposits in the living space make movement clumsy and uncomfortable (Harman 1997: 146). The sparse furnishings further crowd the room. Dangling from the roof, the paraphernalia of fowling: ropes, rods, snares (Clarke 1824: 353), alongside horse tack and other agricultural implements. Resting by the peat fire in hand-made crogain, *earthenware pots, milk is warming (Will et al. 2007: 41). From a large iron pot a rich broth of grains and mutton is being served to the gathered family. Given that this is the hungry time at the end of winter, this is a rich meal. For the past few years, there has been no payment of foodstuffs to make to the tacksman (Robson 2005: 247,71) so meat, grains, and milk are back on the menu. A portion of this broth, though small, is particularly welcome to those who remember the dark years when the tacksman took as his due almost all food but the birds of the sky and the meagre fruits of the sea (Clarke 1824: 253).*

The evening meal interrupts quiet conversations and everyday activities. A futile attempt to scrape the last grains of powdery tobacco from a cow-hide snuff box is abandoned. Its owner has been frugal, eking out this luxury since it arrived with last summer's visitors (Acland 1981: 50) *but there is not likely to be more until May (Robson 2005: 272). Two children's faces peer from the dark depths of a* crùb, *a wall bed, where they lie in the comfort of blankets and straw (Harman 1997: 145-7). Quietly, two eager students are practising their English; their teacher, the minister, has been absent for months, but practice makes perfect (Robson 2005: 250-1). In the gloom, bare feet and shoes can be seen below the smoke; long plaid trousers and particoloured shawls provide some colour amongst the earthy browns and sooty blacks. Carefully made bonnets and caps adorn each head (Clarke 1824: 356). As the bowls are cleared away, several people, men and women, settle down to mending and making clothing. A spindle whorl, made from a broken fragment of* crogan *(Will et al. 2007: 37), begins to dance as the gathered group settle in to* cèilidh.

<div align="center">***</div>

There is, in many senses, ample evidence of many kinds to put together a basic, generalised, account of life in a Highland township of the early 19th century

(Fairhurst 1960; Grant 1960: Chapter 3). The narrative above is not an attempt to create a generalised account, it is a microhistorical study of a specific building in the specific locale of Hiort in the winter of 1812/13. The citations have been left in the text above to give some idea as to the fine level of detail which can be gleaned from the extensive literature on Hiort. These have been used to sketch out 'the immediate dramatic shape'(Geertz 1973: 444) of the settlement, and ultimately the very building that will play host to a consideration of a small winter *cèilidh* on Hirte. Before moving on to consider the metaphorical and social aspects of this event, the way in which a microhistorical approach has been used to create a historically situated and detailed account of the pre-Improvement *baile* is discussed.

The evidence for pre-Improvement settlement on Hirte, although only recently identified (Fleming 2003), is now relatively well understood. The recent discovery of historic sketches (Atkinson 2001: Chapter 3; Fleming 2005: 136; Robson 2005: frontispiece) allow us to consider the form of settlement and its general appearance and character (Figure 5.5.2). In this chapter, the surviving earthworks which represent the settlement (Gannon and Geddes 2015: 74-6), alongside very limited survey and excavation data (Will *et al.* 2007), allows one specific dwelling to be considered (Figure 5.5.4 and structure H in Figure 5.5.3). This ovoid structure, at the south end of the settlement, can be seen in Acland's sketch of the pre-Improvement *baile* – precisely dating this structure as in use in 1812 (Fleming 2005: 125). During excavations within this building, fragments of *crogain,* hand-made earthenware pottery, were found, as well as a spindle whorl made from a broken fragment of the same (Will *et al.* 2007: 41). Both of these details furnish the above narrative. It is a testament to the extensive evidence base for Hiort that it is possible to create in such detail the immediate dramatic shape of the settlement and of this particular building.

A microhistorical approach allows for the narrative to be be furnished with details which are true to the general period (perhaps within a generation), as well as a consideration of chronological events within a very limited period of time. For example, the presence of English-speakers on the island is attested to by Clarke, around ten years before this account is set (Clarke 1824: 348), as is the description of clothing and of the snuff-boxes (Clarke 1824: 257). Much of the description of the interior of the dwellings comes from the Rev. MacKenzie,

writing in the very early 1830s (MacKenzie 1911). To these general accounts have been added 'historical' detail – such as the fact that the minister, Lachlan Macleod was absent from the island in the winter of 1812 (Robson 2005: 251) attending to various affairs that included his slaves in the West Indies – a fact that subverts an idea of Gaels in remote places such as Hiort as 'victims' or non-participants in Empire (Robson 2005: 248). Clarke (1824: 252) and others (Harman 1997: 99-100) described a particularly rapacious tacksman, William MacNeil, in the years around 1800 whose unreasonable demands caused serious deprivation on Hiort. Only the intervention of the courts could prise the tack off him in the end. This resulted in a suspension of the tacksman system for a short period which included 1812 (Robson 2005: 271). This microhistorical detail of the greatly improved economic position in 1812 compared to just a few years before is shown in the above narrative through the improved diet of the population. This is contrasted with the memory of those in 1812 of the poor fare of the previous decade (Clarke 1824: 253). The description of the eating of seaweed during these poor times (Clarke 1824: 355), may have been a clear sign of a marker of poverty, as described in the previous discussion of the marine on South Uist. Similarly, the inclusion of horse tack in the account is highly specific to the period: within a generation, there would be no horses left on the island (Harman 1997: 194)

The narrative above, furnished by the detail and imagination of microhistory, as well as considerations of the affects on people experiencing this setting, represents the immediate dramatic shape of the settlement in winter 1812. In the following section the 'thick description' will be furthered by a consideration of the 'metaphorical content': how the places, structures, and objects in the landscape would have been perceived culturally.

Figure 5.5.3. The archaeological evidence for the pre-Improvement settlement. The structures marked in red are thought to relate to the pre-improvement settlement that underlies the 19th-century blackhouses and cottages which are such an iconic part of the landscape of Hiort today. (Gannon and Geddes 2015: 74) © HES SC1492743. A simplified interpretation of this figure appears as a cut-away on the accompanying fold-out map.

Figure 5.5.4. Evidence for the specific building referred to in the text. Left, basic sketch plan of building and location of trench: the stone settings which likely represent the remains of *crùba*, wall beds, can be seen (Will et al. 2007: figure 13). Above, the ephemeral remains of the building today. A low ovoid earthwork can be seen extending under the consumption dyke in the middle ground. The ranging pole in the foreground is on the right-hand outer edge of the structure © K. Grant.

'…its metaphoric content…'

The agricultural landscape of *Hiort*, with its carefully shared-out unenclosed fields and neat enclosures, would have been imbued with multiple meanings and memories by those who inhabited it. As well as personal feelings, attachments and memories specific to individuals, there may be ways of seeing and understanding such a landscape which were distinctively Gaelic. While the concept of landscape itself and ideas of the romantic and sublime can be traced to Enlightenment thought (Johnson 2007; MacDonald 2001), it is clear that complex notions about landscape existed in Gaeldom long before this. One example is of nature and the landscape as a mother figure, as exemplified in a poem from Strathglass, composed around 1800, where the poet laments his removal from his land. In a dialogue between the poet and the land the poet laments 'twenty-four years: that is the time I have fed on your milk' to which the land replies 'what is bothering my child that I raised without experiencing dearth?' (Newton 2009: 294). Ideas of life and landscape where people and nature are intertwined are a common theme within Gaelic poetry from the medieval period (Tymoczko 1983: 26) through poems in vernacular Gaelic of the 18th (Black 2001), 19th (Meek 2003), and 20th centuries (Dòmhnall Aonghais Bhàin 2000; MacDhòmhnaill 2001; MacGill-Eain 1999).

One way of explaining this view of how Gaels saw the world has been that the nature/culture dichotomy was not as strong in Gaelic culture as it was in many other agricultural societies. Certainly, the existence of totemistic beliefs suggest a more fluid boundary between people and nature (Grant 2014: 42; Newton 2009: 322). However, there may be a romanticising element to this suggestion and some examples of this thought, at least as expressed by Newton, appear very problematic: 'although Gaelic culture went through the agricultural revolution millennia ago, many of the general features of the Palaeolithic world view regarding nature and humankind's relationship to it survived to a surprising degree'(Newton 2009: 288). The suggestion of cultural continuity from the Palaeolithic in Scotland is unsustainable from an archaeological point of view, but it is also reminiscent of that key aspect of the historical meta-narrative – the idea that Gaelic society was ancient and unchanging before the arrival of the outside world *forced* change upon it. The ideal of the Gaelic view of landscape

being based on ideas dating to before the adoption of agriculture is challenged
by accounts of their attitude to place:

> 'If a highlander would show you a fine prospect, he does not lead you to
> the torrent and the romantic rock glen, to the storm-beaten precipice or
> the cloud-capt mountain. It is to the strath covered with hamlets and
> cultivation, or to the extended tract of fertile lowlands where the
> luxuriance of vegetation and wood depends on the exertions of human
> labour' (MacCulloch 1824: 88)

The way in which landscape of Hirte may have been 'read' metaphorically given
here seems to suggest the idea of landscape as something imbued with, and
indeed inseparable from, cultural meaning and human experience, rather than
representing a fluidity between people and nature. The collapse of this
relationship between the land and its people brought about by clearance,
Improvement and emigration is an important theme in the Gaelic oral tradition
(Meek 2003: 6-64, 342-95), and in understanding these processes themselves
(Hunter 1976; Meek 1995).

Within the corpus of surviving literature from Hiort, there are several very clear
and striking uses of landscape as metaphor. An elegy for two *Hiortaich* killed
when fowling suggests that the souls of the dead will find peace in *Gleannan na
Saorsa,* 'the Glen of Freedom' (Ferguson 2006: 89). Repeatedly, the inability to
climb the 'steep grassy ben' appears as a motif for loss (Ferguson 2006: 90, 5),
simultaneously evoking the embodied experience of climbing the steep hills of
Hirte and using a well-understood metaphor found throughout Gaeldom (Newton
2009: 312-4). Another very common metaphorical aspect of landscape within
Gaeldom was that the land would flourish under rightful leadership and wither
without it (Newton 2009: 235-8). Returning to the microhistorical account of
Hirte at the start of the 19th century, this would have been literally true. The
extreme demands of the tacksman William MacNeil had an effect on agricultural
practice. At the end of the 18th century he claimed all of the milk on the island
to make butter and cheese which resulted in the suspending of sheiling practice
with most of the cattle remaining close to the *baile* through the summer
(Harman 1997: 187). After MacNeil was finally replaced, the great change in the
nature of rental payments would have resulted in significant changes to

agriculture on Hirte as the community returned to previous practice and certain practices became economically viable again. In this case, the community would see that the order of the landscape and the beasts and crops on it had changed and improved as a direct result of a change to the 'leadership' of the island. This would have been literally true and in keeping with a metaphorical understanding of the connection between land and its leaders which was held across Gaeldom (Newton 2009: 312-4).

Looking down on the settlement the view would have been of a man-made landscape, with ordered fields, square enclosures, and paths and tracks radiating out toward the fowling grounds and the grazings. But as well as the obvious cultivated nature of the physical landscape, it must also have been overlain with place-names. Although some place-names are recorded as early as the 17th century (Martin 1999), those that survive are mostly known from an Admiralty survey of 1909 and Mathieson's map of 1927. Unusually, the Ordnance Survey did not undertake a survey until 1967 (Harman 1997: 34-5), depriving us of the OS name books which record place-names and their sources elsewhere. Perhaps due to the maritime nature of these early maps, there is a particular focus on those names relating to cliffs and marine features, and an apparent bias against place-names within and around the settlement. However, in order to live and work in the landscape, particularly during the complicated allocation of land through run-rig, there must have been a complex patchwork of place-names. The level of detail in which the landscape was known and named is borne out in wider Gaelic tradition. The language has an extremely complex and large vocabulary for describing landscape features (Murray 2014) and many Gaelic poems and songs use this to advantage, at times displaying 'topomania' (Sheeran 1988: 192). There is no way of knowing the specific place-names of Hiort but drawing on those we do know, they are likely to have been a mix of descriptive terms and names associated with local tales, traditions, or histories. But perhaps the more banal aspects of the everyday landscape were associated with people; it is common practice in the *Gàidhealtachd* today to refer to a house by the name of one of its occupants (Cox 2002). It may be that certain fields and buildings had these personal associations. A house may have been Taigh Ruairidh or Taigh Màiri Nighean Sheamais, just as we have the name Taigh Chaluim Mhòir surviving on Hirte from the 19th century (Harman 1997: 233).

A further enigma is how *cleitean* were referred to and named. Although our understanding of these structures has greatly improved in recent years (Geddes and Watterson 2013), this aspect remains unknown as of over 1300 *cleitean* on the archipelago, names survive for only two, both related to folkloric traditions (Geddes and Watterson 2013: 106). As such structures were part of everyday routine practice, and held goods that had to be carefully shared and claimed, there must have been some form of naming system associated with them. Although we will never know the mundane micro-detail of place-names within the landscape they would have been spread across the islands in a metaphorical blanket, inscribing meaning and memory, and in regular use through routine practice. They would have made a significant contribution to how people and landscape were perceived: 'the Gaelic sense of place is one in which communal history is embedded in the place-names attached to landscape features' (Newton 2009: 301).

As to the settlement itself, its very form can be considered a metaphor for community life. Although earlier documentary evidence suggests that the settlement may have had several 'streets' or some kind of linear arrangement, accounts and sketches from around 1812 suggest that the settlement was more 'organic' in character, with a nucleus of buildings arranged on different alignments (Harman 1997: 142-3). This conforms to the present day archaeological evidence, and indeed, with comparable communities elsewhere in the Hebrides, such as Pabbay (Gannon and Geddes 2015: 74-6). Stuart Campbell (2009) has argued that settlement patterns in the Hebrides represent dynamic relationships occurring below that of the factor or landowner. Rather than seeing change in settlement form as evidence of long-term historical events, he argues that settlement form was the result of an ongoing process of negotiation between separate competing family units (Campbell 2009: 236). A recent paper examining the landscape of Hirte in the 1860s, has found evidence supporting this proposition (Geddes and Grant 2015). Through examining the archaeological, documentary, and cartographic evidence, it is clear that a number of factors, such as familial ties, routine practice, competition, co-operation, negotiation, and the limitations of the physical landscape, all combined to create a complex and dynamic system of landscape use in the crofting *baile* (Geddes and Grant 2015). In the earlier pre-Improvement

township, with regular reallocation of land by lot and a less rigid settlement form than the crofts which followed, this process may have been even more dynamic. Therefore the form of the settlement itself would embody the nature of the community through its buildings: the memory of an argument over land-use here, the hastily built widower's house there. Each building would have had associated memories, perhaps even active conflict or resentment surrounding the use of land or a disputed boundary. Thus an inhabitant of the baile could read the settlement form as a physical metaphor of the community's history, whether recent, within living memory, or more remote, passed down through oral tradition.

Finally, upon entering the settlement itself, each byre-dwelling would have been imbued with symbolic and metaphorical significance. Although Clarke suggested that 'the construction of their dwelling-houses differs from that of all the Western Islands…' (Clarke 1824: 351), all the other evidence seems to suggests the buildings within the baile would have been familiar across the Gàidhealtachd of the period, although with significant regional differences (Grant 1960: chapter 7). Constructed of some combination of turf and stone, with a thatch roof of barley resting on turf, then on the crucks or 'roof trees', the buildings were of natural materials which were highly perishable and needed frequent replacement. The yearly replacing of the roofs and the spreading of the thatch on the fields described previously is only one example. As with the structure of the building itself, almost all the material culture within would have been perishable. Upon excavation of such structures, often all that is found is a smudge where the hearth may have been, and some unimpressive low banks (Atkinson *et al.* 2005; Will *et al.* 2007). Although many contemporary writers were very critical of such buildings, it is generally accepted that they were created in true vernacular tradition 'to withstand the severe local conditions by means of the limited local materials that were available to them [the community] and their own unspecialised skills' (Grant 1960: 141). In addition, such buildings were also part of a complex cycle of materials, processes, and labour within the Highland economy (Figure 5.5.5). The roofs absorbed peat smoke, making them excellent fertiliser for the fields, while sharing the space with cattle allowed underfed people and animals to share warmth. These structures may well have been understood as a process to an extent greater than

we would view our own dwellings today. While it is certainly important to consider such structures as a process, a relationship between people, materials, and the landscape, that is not to say that a byre-dwelling can be regarded almost as a 'natural' object (Grant 2014: 43), an idea which, upon reflection, probably owes more to the romanticised idea of Gaels being more 'of nature' than other people, than to how Gaels may have viewed and 'read' their own dwellings.

These structures were deeply cultural pieces of technology. Although no detailed descriptions survive from Hiort, early 20th century ethnologists

Image has been removed due to copyright restrictions
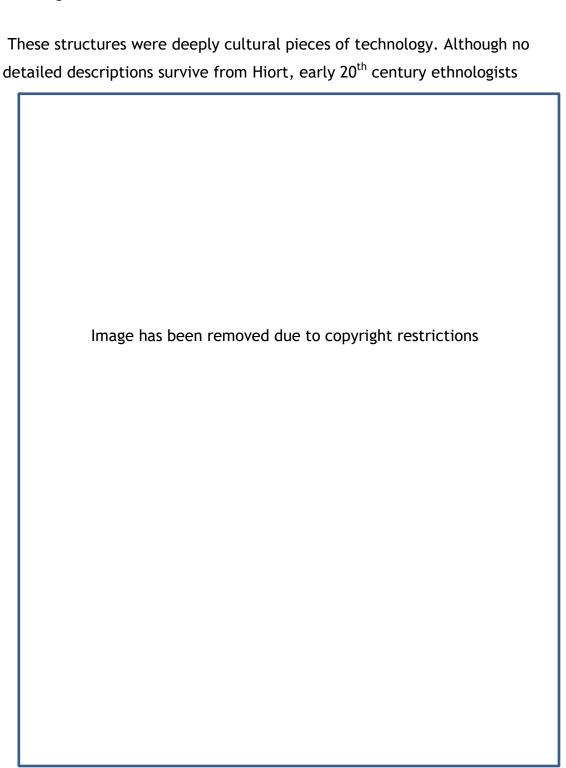
Figure 5.5.5. A model of the relationship between the people of Hiort and their environment (Harman 1997: 17). ©Mary Harman

collected a wealth of technical detail elsewhere on all aspects of house building from turf wall building and flooring to roofing (Fenton 1968, 1976; Grant 1960). The smallest parts of the roofs were named and understood in a technical sense. For example, in Skye, Harris, and Lewis, ropes were passed back and forth across the roof and secured using stone weights (a practice also attested to on Hirte (Harman 1997: 144)), with the rope finally being secured to a projecting stick known as the *maide feannaig*, the Raven's Stick (Grant 1960: 160). Many of these technical details also had metaphorical qualities. On South Uist, women who stood on the walls of houses to harangue their husbands were known as *pìobairean nan tobhtaichean* – the pipers of the wall-heads (Grant 1960: 144). Such buildings are an example of the complex interplay between landscape, culture, and everyday life. They were, on the one hand an on-going process in the landscape and the community, but they were regarded with a deeply technical eye as manufactured objects – with their own cultural and social associations.

'…its social context'

Back within the smoky gathering in the dwelling at the south end of the baile on Hirte, *the family sit surrounded by their household belongings. It takes both people and objects to make a household, as is recounted in the old story:*

'Mo Bhean `s mo Phàisdean,
Mo chaise `s mo ghogan ìme,
Mo mhic `s mo nigheanan
`S mo chisteachan mòra mine,
Mo chìr `s mo chàrdan
An snàmh `s a' chuigeal
Mo bhò `s a' buarach
`S na cuachan bainne
Eich `s na h-iallan
Cliabhan `s cinnean
`S an talamh `cur roimhe…

My wife and my children,
My cheese and my butter-keg,
My sons and my daughters,

My big chests of meal,

My comb and my wool-cards,

Thread and distaff,

My cow and the fetter,

Horses and traces,

Harrows and hoard,

And the soil,

breaking before it…' (Newton 2009: 224)

Their heirlooms, means to acquire food and comfort, and the family itself, lie below the crucks or 'roof-trees'. The old ridge-beam gleams black in the smokey roof space. Above, black soot-filled raindrops, snighe, *can be heard pattering onto the earth floor (Grant 1960: 151). The family rest around the fire, which is constantly burning and around which their lives literally revolve. The old man of the house proposes the traditional toast – ' to your roof tree' (Grant 1960: 149) and drinks warm, healing, milk from a hand-made* crogan *(Cheape 1993). However, all is not well beneath the crucks of this house.*

There has been a death, common in the winter, the time of hunger (Fleming 2005: 120), but it is not this that is creating tension amongst those gathered in the smoke tonight. The re-allocation of the deceased man's share, undertaken in front of the men of the community with the ground-officer foremost, has not been fortuitous for the younger son of the family – he remains for now a cottar, a landless labourer.

As the old woman's hands warm she drops and spins the spindle-whorl gracefully, singing:

'Cas na caora Hiortaich, ò!
Hiortaich, Hiortaich, Hiortaich, ò!
Cas na caora Hiortaich, ò!
B' e siud aˋ chas bha sgiobalta.

Siud aˋchaora bha grinn,
Dh'fhàsadh an dath air a druim.

Chan iarradh i crotal no sùith

Ach snìomh na clòimh gu briogaisean

A leg of the Hiortaich Ewe, O!

Hiortaich, Hiortaich, Hiortaich, O!

A leg of the Hiortaich, O!

What a speedy leg it was

What a wonderful ewe she was,

Colour growing naturally on her back

No need for lichen-dye nor for soot –

Just spin the wool into trousers' (Ferguson 2006: 33)

This is not one of the grand cèilidhean *of the summer, when the factor and his retinue will bring whisky, marriages will take place, and dancing and story-telling will involve the whole community in the factor's house down at the landing place (Harman 1997: 102) and go on until dawn (Clarke 1824: 360). Then the conversations will be around the wider world - war with the French (Clarke 1824: 349), perhaps worries over the impressment taking place on the neighbouring Hebrides (MacKillop 2012). This is the quiet everyday meeting of the family. The concerns, though mundane, are no less important to the well-being of the family and the wider community.*

The mood is understandably subdued, and the cèilidh *commences with a lament for the loss of the dead man and the pain and hardship this will bring to his family and his house:*

'Ach, Rìgh, `s goirt mo thuireadh –

Ged `s goirt, `s èiginn dhomh fhulang,

Ged dh'fhalbh mo chraobh mhullaich fèin

Oh lord, painful is my lament –

But however painful, I must suffer it,

Though I've lost my ridge-beam'

(Ferguson 2006: 92)

A short blessing is then haltingly read from one of the store of religious books
provided for the island (Robson 2005: 153,249-50). In the absence of the
minister, these books and whatever his pupils can remember of the catechist is
all the religion that can be provided. The young man who has been denied the
chance of his own land and household continues to sulk. Directing it towards
him, his mother sings another mourning song:

'Chaidh mi 'n iomall nan càirdean

'S tha mis' an-dràst' gun chùl-taice:

'S gur mairg a nì bun às an t-saoghal,

Ged chinneadh caoraich is mairt leis

B' fheàrr bhith tric air na glùinibh

Gul an ùrnaigh bheir ceart leis

Na bhith le moit no le àrdan –

Chuir Dia mu làr e,'s b'e cheart sin

I avoided my relations

and am now without support:

Pity the person who depends (only) on worldly goods,

Though prosperous with sheep and cattle.

Better that he often kneels

To pray with contrite sincerity

Than to be conceited and proud –

For god will lay him low and rightly so.'

 (Ferguson 2006: 91)

Taking up the theme, his grandmother, in a reedy voice, sings another of the
large store of mourning songs, again directing it at the brooding youth:

'Làmh dhèanamh an stà,

Thoirt an fhraoch chum an lair,

Cha bhiodh tu ad thàmh

'S cha b'fhurast' leat

Ormsa thàinig a' chlaoidh;
'S cha b' e roinn chur am mhaoin
Seo tha mise ga caoidh
Gu muladach

The hand that was ever busy,
Who'd fetch heather as floor-cover,
And always found idleness
Difficult to bear.

I am exhausted;
It is not the division of worldly goods
that I grieve
so forlornly' (Ferguson 2006: 94)

He flushes, angry at the transparent way his family are seeking to pressure him.
Rising quickly, he storms out of the house. Perhaps solitude will help him come
to terms with another disappointment.

The *cèilidh* is a well-discussed and indeed well-known aspect of social life in the *Gàidhealtachd*. Modern Gaels remembering the *cèilidhean* of their youth in the early 20th century have recalled the *cèilidh* as a versatile community institution that fulfilled needs now served by books, newspapers, films, radio, and television (Thomson 1994: 281). The most popular conception of a *cèilidh* is perhaps of a large semi-formal gathering where heroic ballads and poetry were recited alongside humorous or satirical poems concerning local people and events, perhaps with music and dancing, evocatively described by Alexander Carmichael (Carmichael 1900: xxii-xxiv). Such events, although very culturally different, continue to be a fairly regular part of social life on Hiort today. Undoubtedly *cèilidhean* of this sort occurred on Hiort and were witnessed by many travellers (Campbell 1799; Clarke 1824: 359-60) alongside other 'community theatricals' which, in various periods, marked certain points in the year (Fleming 2005: 118). But these were the exceptions, taking place during the annual visit (or visits) (Robson 2005: 272) of the tacksman or factor, or when other visitors came. *Cèilidh* translates as a 'visiting', and is generally taken to mean formal community wide-gatherings, although it can simply mean the

visiting by one person to another at night. It would have been the nightly familial gathering that made up the bulk of social experience in the evenings in the *baile*. The account above is an attempt to consider one of these everyday gatherings which would have taken place within the culturally and metaphorically loaded surroundings of the family home.

Even within this localised familiar gathering, a wide store of communal and individual culture would have been performed. Some of these performances may have come from books. Gaelic society has always had a literate component (Grant 2014: 35). On Hiort the minister had a small number of students at the start of the 19th century and a store of religious books for teaching purposes (Robson 2005: 249-51). However any content from these was likely to have been performed aloud alongside orally-known traditions. It is important to note that 'orality and literacy operate along a spectrum in which form and content, performer and audience, are deeply intertwined' (Newton 2009: 83). The *cèilidh* can be considered a kind of performance, but perhaps a more useful idea is that of a 'focussed gathering' (Goffman 1961: 9-10):

> 'A set of persons engrossed in a common flow of activity and relating to one another in terms of that flow. Such gatherings meet and disperse; the participants in them fluctuate; the activity that focusses them is discrete – a particulate process that reoccurs rather than a continuous one that endures. They take their form from the situation that evokes them, the floor on which they are placed…' (Geertz 1973: 424)

The *cèilidh,* as a focussed gathering, is not a continuous enduring condition taken up from one night to the next, but rather a recurring process of distinctive and particular engagements and activities between individuals, formed by the surroundings, situations, and personalities of those involved. It is therefore unsurprising that so many of the known songs and poems from Hiort contain allusions and metaphors that relate to the home, the place of their performance, such as the loss of the ridge-beam as a metaphor for losing a loved one, or the inclusion of mundane details like the spreading of heather on the floor in a poem mourning a death (Ferguson 2006: 94-2).The oral tradition, the people, objects and homes operated within a flow of activity: the metaphorical content and symbolism of people, objects, and landscape informed the content

and performance in a *cèilidh,* just as the symbols and motifs of oral culture informed understandings of the surrounding landscape.

Conclusions

The narrative above aims to present a complex view of many facets of experience and community life, drawing from many different forms of evidence, and it is hoped that this very complexity is thought-provoking: perhaps all the more so as it draws from the small number of reflections on the landscape which can be found in the surviving evidence. The changes which occurred in the brief period discussed are significant in terms of wider narratives in the study of the post-medieval Highlands and Islands, but attention is also drawn to the fact that change, after it is experienced, leaves individual feelings and memories in the minds of those involved. While a fairly straight-forward empirical consideration of the evidence allows for a general description of the *baile* and its buildings, a microhistorical approach gives particular shape and chronological detail. The account above has a specific historical setting of winter 1812/13. By taking a microhistorical approach it has been possible to be specific about this setting and furnish it with detail, giving the narrative an internal history. This internal history allows for the possibility of *memory,* of circumstances being given meaning by engaging with what came before.

The period before the mid-19th century has been traditionally ill-served in the popular general accounts of Hiort (MacLean 1977; Steel 1965), where it is given little internal chronology. It is presented as a near-mystical period in which timeless traditional tales float in a world that appears largely unchanging and ancient. This is particularly apparent before the 19th century when many accounts were highly sensationalised, and written for an elite, classically educated audience (MacAulay 1764; Martin 1703). More recently, extremely detailed archival research has led to chronological accounts of this period appearing (Lawson 1993; Robson 2005: chapters 8-9). When used in conjunction with contemporary travellers' accounts (Brougham 1871; Campbell 1799; Clarke 1824; MacKenzie 1911) a detailed consideration of life in the period, as given above, can be created. This narrative subverts a view of life on Hiort where activities which occurred centuries apart are recounted as if they happened at the same time, creating an unchanging mythical past which is, in fact, like the

Highlands themselves, a constructed ethnographic present (Geddes and Grant 2015; Withers 1992).

Many elite visitors from the 18th century onwards would have viewed the Highland landscape as a dramatic example of the sublime. These wealthy travellers from the outside saw the landscape through a romantic all-seeing gaze which, through using the correct jargon and the expression of a carefully prescribed set of behaviours and manners, would express their intellectual and social prestige (Johnson 2007: 22-4). This cultural and metaphoric reading of the landscape by outsiders produced accounts which compared fowlers to the classical heroes of antiquity (MacAulay 1764: 184); the gentlemanly pursuit of 'sublime seeking' was a subject of ridicule even in its own time (MacDonald 2001; Robson 2005: 378). This view of Hiort is relatively well understood, and it has even been argued that the islands played a key role in forming many of these ideas and cementing them in Scottish national consciousness (MacDonald 2001). How the *Hiortaich* may have understood the landscape is much more difficult to ascertain, although the surviving songs from the island are an important aid in considering this issue.

It is a truism to suggest that people imbue the landscapes they are part of with meaning and memory. What is perhaps more difficult is to draw from specific metaphorical and symbolic contexts a coherent world view. As a result, this section has not sought to do so. However, it is clear from what has been discussed that however the landscape was viewed, it clearly contrasted with the 'outsider's' view. This contrast perhaps suggests there was something different and distinctive, if not homogenous, as to how the *Hiortaich* and wider Gaeldom experienced and conceived of the world. This section has been critical of attempts to construct a world view of Gaeldom purely through themes within the oral tradition, for example the idea that Gaelic society exhibited less distinction between man and nature. Although this is a common feature in poetry, we must always be aware of 'the fact that nature imagery can be used for rhetorical purposes without necessarily reflecting Gaelic aesthetics of nature' (Newton 2009: 317). We have seen that the landscape was deeply imbued with cultural and social meanings but it should not be assumed that these were set against experiential or 'natural' conceptions of the landscape, or that the two were mutually exclusive.

A 'reading' of the metaphorical and cultural environment does not supersede or override the lived, embodied, experience of the landscape and its affects. As suggested by non-representational theory (NRT), the landscape is experienced both experientially and culturally and these are not mutually exclusive. NRT, whilst drawing from phenomenological approaches (Ingold 1993, 2000) which consider embodiment, practice, and the importance of dwelling in creating experience and meaning, retains an interest in the social and cultural worlds of codes, symbols, and norms (Wylie 2007: 163-4). In this sense NRT allows for multiple conceptions of landscape and experience: it allows us to consider the 'body *and* society, culture *and* nature, thought *and* action, representation *and* practice'(Wylie 2007: 164). Microhistory, like NRT, is concerned not only with experience, but with how such experiences were given meaning: it is based on a 'concern for the immediacy of experience and for the meanings attributed to it by real people' (Beaudry 2008: 176). It is hoped that the study above contributes to this multi-layered consideration of life in the landscape.

In the imagined example of the *baile* on Hirte, a thick description of an evening within one of its dwellings has explored how this social process operated in relation to family and community tensions. The concept of family is in many ways crucial for understanding the landscape of the Highlands and Islands (Newton 2009: 169-71). This should, in a sense, be obvious, but historical narratives have tended to emphasise combative relationships between groups of people (such as tenants vs landlords) that reduce people on the land to a homogenous mass within which there is a single understanding of the world and no social difference or conflict (Dalglish 2002: 492). Romantic tendencies have also perhaps emphasised larger political entities such as 'the clan', but in everyday life it seems likely such large-scale 'kin-group' ideals meant little. It would be the relationships of family and heritage within the immediate community which mattered. Within the family and community a person would have been known first by their familiar family name or nickname, then perhaps second by their patronymic name of familial ancestry, then finally (and probably occasionally) with an 'official' first and second name given to those outside the community. This formal name could be the name of the local 'clan', but wasn't necessarily so and the form of name given to outsiders could be fluid and changeable (Newton 2009: 166-9). On Hiort, the literature has tended to

emphasise the community as a single body, set apart from the outside world (particularly MacLean 1977).

Recent work, following on from a discussion of settlement form by Stuart Campbell (2009), has seen evidence that *the family*, and competition between and within families, had a key role in shaping the landscape of Hirte in the later 19th century (Geddes and Grant 2015). The paper, which was partially the result of research undertaken for this thesis, presented a close study of inheritance on Hirte in the 1860s, drawing from an unusual cartographic source (Sharbau 1858) and an excellent genealogical study (Lawson 1993). After the emigration of six families in 1852, one of the vacant plots was occupied by the son and future son-in-law of a powerful member of the community, two were occupied by close relations of the emigrants, and the remainder had, after being temporarily occupied by distant relations of previous tenants, become common ground (Geddes and Grant 2015: 154-6). The mechanisms of inheritance showed that a complex relationship of kinship ties by blood and marriage, both near and distant, and the relative power of particular families and the wider needs of the community played a key role in how the landscape was occupied, worked, and developed over time. The study also suggested that the layout of buildings in the 1860s along an improved street did not necessarily suggest a communal experience. Rather it was suggested it was one of discrete crofts occupied by extended families with layouts that were intended to be at least partly private and inward-looking (Geddes and Grant 2015: 157-8). Although each croft appears similar today, each would have had distinct identities based on the occupying families and their complex kinship ties. In concluding, the paper suggested that 'we need to recognise a more subtle and dynamic relationship between the community and their landscape, one with the family at the centre' (Geddes and Grant 2015: 159).

Finally, it is worth stating that the account above is based on wider perceptions of the experience and landscape, drawn from many sources. What we are never likely to be able to understand is how each individual experienced the landscape and how they conceived of themselves and their community in a unique way, although surely their thoughts and words preserved in the tradition are as close as we can get. However, that is not to say that the importance of individual experience should not be continually emphasised and considered. It is these

small-scale and individual considerations of landscape - those of the people that inhabited the dwellings and settlements of places like Hiort- as well as the experience of family and household that may have been key experiential, cultural, and social units of life within Gaeldom. Our understanding of these intimate personal landscapes is always likely to be hazy, like the sight of dimly-lit figures moving around in the smoke of a peat fire.

5.6   Loch Aoineart – The Landscape of Power

A man trudges along the rough track to Loch Aoineart. The track stretches toward the head of the loch before him, forming hollows in the low hummocks which rise here and there in a largely flat landscape of peat banks and small lochans. Smoke can be seen ahead, where the settlements of Taigh a' Mhàil and Poltoran lie nestled in inlets by the shore. Taigh a' Mhàil, where once local rents were collected to be taken off by sea, lies at the end of the kelping track upon which goods and labour ebb and flow from Loch Aoineart to Ormacleit (Moreland and MacLean 2012: 52).

From here, the man heads north, between small lochans, across wet sands, and over rocky causeways (a quicker route at low tide), towards the string of settlements along the deeply indented north shore of the loch. Passing through the cluster of houses at Rudha na Mèine, 'Headland of the Meal', with its richly cultivated headland, he continues west, heading toward the inn at Àirigh nam Ban. It stands on the hillside looking out to sea, where the Delight *can be seen, its crew busy about its rigging. The sloop stands in close enough for the chatter of two crewmen to be heard as they inspect an anchor with a broken fluke, although their English words are understood little by the few who can overhear them. The inn is striking with its chimneys, windows, and shining slate roof. It is here, with the publican (Moreland and MacLean 2012: 91), that the man's errand lies.*

The interior of the inn, though dark and damp, is spacious, bright, and smoke-free in comparison to his own home. The gable fireplaces naturally gather the visitors round them, even in late June. Stone and turf benches line the walls, and green bottles and imported glazed jugs lie here and there. He exchanges a few words of business with the publican, passing on letters from the estate's agents at Nunton, and leaving more letters to be given to those arriving from both land and sea in the next few days. He has another reason for calling in today – he has heard disturbing news.

Twice in the past week, men of Loch Baghasdail to the south have been summoned before the most important representatives of Mac 'ic Ailein. They

had been directed to make the long march down the machair track to the presence of Robert Brown, 'Baron Baillie' for the estate (and perhaps more importantly, its factor). These men, all neighbours and men of Loch Baghasdail, were accused of illegally cutting seaware, thereby damaging Mac 'ic Ailein's valuable kelp shores. Also present was the man who instigated the proceedings: Donald Chisholm, kelp surveyor to Clanranald (GD201/1/313).

Listening intently, the small audience hears how one-by-one the men were called in front of this group of powerful men and were questioned about their involvement in cutting kelp around the loch. All protested they were doing as they always had done – cutting seaware for use as manure. Each word of their testimonies was taken under oath, written down, later to be translated into English and signed in front of witnesses (GD201/1/313: 8). At the mention of another witness, Rev. George Munro, there was a general grumble. The Minister is a powerful man despite the fact that only one in seven Deasaich are Protestant (Munro 1799: 238).

'The walls of hell are built from the skulls of ministers they say' said the publican thoughtfully.

'Aye, and how can that be, since hell was built long before there was any word of such a thing as a minister?r' replied one of the visiting men (MacLean 1984: 507). After a pause a question was put to the labourer: 'so what did they say, the men of Loch Baghasdail?'- the labourer recounted all he had heard and understood. As others from the local townships heard the news throughout the day, all looked anxious. The local people worriedly exchanged theories about what this meant for the kelping, their tenancies, the loch. Although many conflicting theories were advanced, there was one general consensus: it did not bode well.
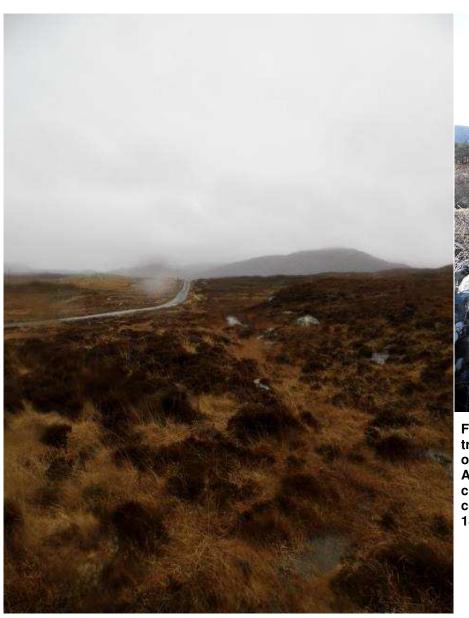
Figure 5.6.1. Locations mentioned in the text. Left: The remains of the old kelp track can be seen as a linear depression in the foreground. The modern road overlies the track beyond the bend which can be seen in the middle of the image. Above: The west internal gable of the Inn. The fireplace and gable with internal chimney can be seen. The structure is large and substantially built. Its mortared construction is in contrast with both smaller more vernacular buildings of likely 18th-century date and smaller mortared buildings of later periods © K. Grant.

Introduction

In the archives of the Duke of Hamilton, now accessible through the National Register of Archives for Scotland, are four bundles of letters which give a rare insight into the daily life of the individual who, perhaps more than any other, controlled the landscape of Loch Aoineart and the fates of those who worked and lived there (NRAS2177/1508-10; NRAS2177/15012). The letters reflect the business of Robert Brown, factor for Clanranald in South Uist, from July to October 1800, with a further small bundle of correspondence from 1802. This period covers the entirety of a single kelping season, which for Mr Brown included arranging ships to pick up the finished product, working with an agent to see where it might be sold, ensuring that the season was going to plan and that the work was overseen by his trusted agents, making sure the kelp was loaded on the appropriate ships, and finally ensuring he was properly paid and seeing to the tax associated with the annual kelping windfall. Alongside all this was the abundance of activities which take up the time of a factor. Brown was an important and busy man, often receiving several letters a day from members of the local elite and from agents and acquaintances across the Islands and Highlands, and from Greenock, Glasgow, Hull, Edinburgh and beyond. In what must have been one of the busiest times of his year, July, Robert Brown fell victim to a fever that put his life in danger, soliciting letters of concern from friends, family, and professional contacts alike, who urged him to 'take care of yourself… [and] do not let business interfere with your direct recovery' (NRAS2177/1508-10). These papers represent some of the most detailed and in-depth archival evidence for the day-to-day running of the early 19th-century kelp industry known in Scotland.

So far in this thesis, there has been very little direct discussion of the elite of society. This section presents an archaeological investigation of the landscape of Loch Aoineart which considers how the day-to-day administration of the elite of Clanranald shaped the lives and landscapes of Loch Aoineart in the early years of the 19th century. In doing so, it demonstrates how the method advocated in this thesis may be applied to understanding the elite of Gaelic society. Archival sources left by them in English are examined, but these are placed in the context of a temporally-situated landscape archaeology. As in the previous chapters the approach will draw on microhistory, taskscape, and, where

possible, oral tradition, and it will focus on the evidence for everyday experience. The chapter will begin with a 'thick description' of the kelping 'tribunals' held in 1799, which will also serve to introduce the key people in the landscape. Discussions will then travel across the landscape of South Uist, starting at the focus of power at the west end of the kelp road and moving east to Loch Aoineart, considering how the powerful people of the estate lived in the landscape, and how their power was made manifest. The complex and subtle gradations of status and power within the loch's community will also be discussed.

The Copy and Precognition as to the Destruction of Loch Baghasdail's Kelp Shores, June 1799

The meetings in June 1799 concerning the unauthorised use of kelp have been considered briefly in section 5.2 in relation to the kelp trade but they also provide an interesting case study in considering power relationships on South Uist. For the men of Loch Baghasdail, even attending the meetings would have meant the loss of a day or two's labour in the middle of summer, summoned as they were first to Àird Mhìcheil, a distance of some ten miles, and then a week later to Baile nan Cailleach, known in English as Nunton, a distance of 25 miles which included the crossing of a dangerous ford. These weary men would have been brought before almost the entire elite of South Uist society, and a consideration of those who attended the hearings gives valuable insight into the Clanranald estate and the powerful men who ran it.

The first hearing, at Àird Mhìcheil, was called by Donald Chisholm, the estate's kelp surveyor for South Uist. Chisholm was directly involved in many aspects of the kelp industry, overseeing the loading of ships in Loch Aoineart from where he wrote a note informing Brown that 100 tons of kelp had been loaded aboard in September 1800. Robert Brown was also present. Although usually styled in his correspondence as 'Factor for Clanranald', he chose to appear on record as 'Baron Baillie' (a form of magistrate) on this occasion, possibly to lend the event more weight. Brown, based largely at Nunton in Benbecula, was a man of some means. His annual salary of £270 was substantial enough but was presumably supplemented in other ways; the cost of several deliveries of groceries from Edinburgh over the summer of 1800 to Brown would have quickly eroded this income. The itemised bills from these groceries show that Brown was supplied

with a wide range of victuals: several types of tobacco, casks of brandy, sugar, and Jamaica rum, as well as imported 'homeware' such as goblets, candles, ceramics, and ladles. This way of life would have set him far above the ordinary person.

Two local tacksmen were also present. The first, Aonghas Òg Àirigh Mhuilinn, or Angus MacDonald of Milton as he signed in English as witness, was a local tacksman directly involved in kelping – indeed he was drowned ferrying kelp in Loch Aoineart ten years later (Shaw 1977: 105). John MacDonald, *Fear* Bhornais, tacksman of Bornish, a further signatory, was a major tenant who resided in a substantial farmstead excavated by SEARCH in 1996 (Parker Pearson *et al.* 2012: 328). As tacksman of Upper Bornish he sub-let most of the southern shores of Loch Aoineart to the east, holding his tack from Mac 'ic Ailein, his superior in clan society. These tacksmen were, in contrast with the other witnesses to the proceedings, drawn from the *daoine-uaisle*, the Gaelic-speaking nobility of the clan (Newton 2009: 126). The tacksmen may have been affected by the outcome, but their presence would add official weight to proceedings, as they represented the clan in their traditional feudal role over their tenants. The third witness for the estate was John Butter, 'factor for kelp', who died just a year later in 1800 (NRAS2177/1508-10). George Munro the minister was also present as a witness, and signed beside each deponent's 'mark' (made in place of a signature by illiterate people). This suggests, perhaps, that he was perceived to have some role as independent witness for the deponents. However given that, in his estimation, six out of seven of the people in his parish were Catholic (Munro 1799: 238), he must have been simply another establishment figure to most to the ordinary people there. In 1800 he was working with Robert Brown to become a local Justice of the Peace (NRAS2177/1508-10). The second meeting, at Nunton on the 24th of June, was witnessed only by estate officials, with no tacksmen being present. This is perhaps unsurprising given that it was taking place in the administrative centre of the estate. Robert Brown was joined by his kelp surveyor Chisholm (who would stand in for him during his long illness in 1800), factor for kelp John Butter and Donald Ferguson. Ferguson fulfilled the role of 'ground officer' or *maor*, for which he received a salary of £30 annually as opposed to Brown's £270 (GD201/6/39). Despite his low salary, letters from 1800 show Ferguson at Greenock and Edinburgh undertaking kelping-related

business, and he was clearly a fairly senior figure, standing in during Brown's illness and dealing with substantial sums of money at times (NRAS2177/1508-10). Ferguson may have had an assistant; documents suggest that a role of 'under-ground officer' existed, salaried at £5 a year, although no one is named in this position (GD201/6/39).

All of these men's lives were deeply entwined, as is apparent in the flow of correspondence among them. All were dependent on Mac 'ic Ailein , whether as their employer in the case of Brown, or their feudal superior in the case of the tacksmen, Bornais and Àirigh Mhuilinn. Their relationships were not purely official however. The affection among these individuals can be easily seen in the letters of concern that arrived from almost all of them during Robert Brown's illness. However, the letters also suggest a clear hierarchy and sense of social obligation. Almost all the letters from local tacksmen to Brown ask favours of one kind or another (NRAS2177/1508-10). Often, favours being asked of Brown by the tacksmen were not for themselves but for their tenants. In July 1800 Alexander MacDonald of Peighinn nan Aoireann, a local tacksman, sent a letter to Brown asking that Neil MacIsaac, one of his tenants, be loaned money to buy a horse: 'you would have a very good chance of being paid as well as any other arrears due by him as he says he has three tons kelp already made. The man is certainly amongst the most honest and industrious … so that people ought to give him all manner of encouragement' (NRAS2177/1508-10).

The social obligations and granting of favours seen in the correspondence are classic examples of the functioning of clan society: each social layer interceding with the one above on behalf of the one below, whilst also pushing forward its own interests. Brown, although an 'outsider' and an estate official rather than a member of the clan nobility, occupied a senior role within a web of relationships where each individual exchanged favours and interest with various contacts. In July 1800, a John Buchanan wrote from Edinburgh to Robert Brown asking him to 'remember I made you an Admiral, I hope of the RED' [original emphasis] (NRAS2177/1508-10). It is not clear what the relationship between Buchanan and Brown was, although they were both deeply involved in the kelp industry, and the style of their letters suggests long acquaintance. The letter was sent shortly after Brown's appointment as factor, and it may be that Buchanan is implying that he had some role in Brown's securing it. The letter's stress on an 'Admiral

of the Red' refers to the position of Admiral of the Fleet, the most senior position in the Royal Navy (National Museum of the Royal Navy 2014). In the same letter Buchanan urges Brown to remember that 'kelp is our sheet anchor' (NRAS2177/1508-10 1800), a naval expression meaning 'a person or thing to be relied upon in times of emergency' (CED 2003). There is a pleasing symmetry to the fact that whilst the Gaelic of those working the kelp coasts was suffused with marine expressions, the English of their 'betters' in the social system appears to have been equally marine.

In a more literal sense, the navy and the army were an ever-present part of life on the Isles. John MacDonald of Bornais, John Butter, and Ranald MacDonald of Baghasdail all acted as company captains in the local Volunteer Militia in the late 1790s (MacKillop 2012: 30-1). Thus two of the men who signed as witnesses to the meetings in 1799 were captains of local volunteer regiments as was the complainant, Baghasdail. These positions brought wealth, power, and connections. In 1795, John Butter was paid the impressive sum of £325 for his role in recruiting and commanding 63 men, while local tacksman Bornais received £163 pounds for forming a regiment from his tenants in 1798 (MacKillop 2012: 30). Such volunteering was popular in the Western Isles as it allowed the men to earn a steady income while also remaining in their townships. In 1795, 392 men attempted to enlist in Barra for 63 volunteer positions (MacKillop 2012: 30). This must have given Bornais additional power over his tenants in Loch Aoineart, not only in the sense that he was their military commander, but also as he would be able to influence who might be able to access a widely-desired opportunity. In general, military connections would have been handy to have around: when in 1800 Robert Brown's brother asked him to find a place for a soldier who had served with him on the continent (NRAS2177/1508-10), Brown could probably have used his connections to place the man in a good job on the estate or in the Volunteers, or both. These connections were also good for business. It was lobbying by merchants and landlords that ensured a permanent naval presence in the Western Isles to protect their shipping from capture by hostile forces or privateers at the turn of the 19th century (MacKillop 2012: 29).

It has been necessary to give a brief outline of the connections and relationships of power that existed among these men. However, they were also part of the landscape: in the absence of Mac 'ic Ailean himself, who in all likelihood rarely

visited the area (MacDonald 1811: 791), these locally-powerful men represented the more distant centralised power of the estate and the clan, and through their military connections, the British state. The rest of this section attempts to place this power within the landscape to understand how it was wielded and experienced during everyday life. The kelp road provides a natural focus around which to begin this discussion.

The Kelp Road and Power

We have already considered the annual movements of kelping east-west from the coast to Loch Aoineart, but this road, built in 1800 under the direction of the men already mentioned (NRAS2177/1508-10), also connected Loch Aoineart to the north-south axis of movement along the *machair* track. South Uist, with its steep hills and numerous small lochs, is not easily navigable by land: the kelp track itself winds between these small bodies of water, snaking toward Loch Aoineart. On the Atlantic coast, the narrow band of *machair* between the blacklands and coast provides a naturally flat, firm, and easily navigable route. This main route north-south, which is marked on Bald's map of 1805, links important locations in the landscape.

The western terminus of the kelp road was the crumbling edifice of Ormacleit castle (Moreland *et al*. 2012: 92). The castle (Figure 5.6.2), built as a grand mansion in 1707, burned to the ground in 1715, supposedly on the same night that its inhabitant, then clan chief, was fatally wounded at the battle of Sheriffmuir. Shortly thereafter the seat of the clan was moved north, to Benbecula. However, Ormacleit may have retained some significance into the 19th century. The manor, with its associated steadings, is depicted on Bald's map, and even as a ruin would have been a prominent landmark, visible for miles. It is larger, grander, and altogether different in character to any other structures in the landscape. Even after burning, its French limestone quoins and the remains of its polished schist roof would have been impressive (Sharples 2005: 176). The taking of witness statements regarding the destruction of Clanranald's kelp shores at nearby Àird Mhìcheil suggests that this area of the island retained some importance even after the burning of the castle. Within the archive of Robert Brown's correspondence, several letters from Donald Chisholm, the kelp surveyor and frequent stand-in for Brown, are dated from 'Ardmichael', the English rendering of Àird Mhicheil, so it may be that Chisholm

Figure 5.6.2. The seats of Clanranald power. Above: The frontage of Ormacleit Castle, taken in 2011. The building remains impressive despite having been ruinous for almost three hundred years. The castle is surrounded by steadings, one of which has been recently renovated as a dwelling – thus the somewhat incongruous appearance of a wheeliebin. Below: Nunton House, central office of the Clanranald estate at the start of the 19th century, now a bunkhouse © K. Grant.

had a residence here where the first hearing took place.

Following the road north, across the fords at low tide to Benbecula, one would eventually reach Nunton House. A substantial building in classic 18th-century style with its neat rows of large symmetrical windows, Nunton House would have been as equally imposing as Ormacleit in the setting of the 18th-and-19th-century landscape. The power of Mac 'ic Ailein projected from Nunton House in many ways, and this would have included traffic along the roads that eventually led to Loch Aoineart. In an age of e-mails and instant electronic communication, it takes a visit to the archives to remind us of the *physicality* of communication in the past. In the bundles of Robert Brown's correspondence there are neat, carefully folded letters sealed with wax wafers, battered dog-eared and dirty covers which speak of dusty roads and greasy pockets, letters from the mainland which must have run the gauntlet of the Minch avoiding 'sea hazard and capture' (NRAS2177/1508-10), and hastily written notes scratched out as ships lay waiting at Leith, Greenock, Hull. A very common category of letter to Brown begins with the phrase 'this will be handed to you by...' followed often by the name of the captain of a vessel. Frequently several such letters are dated on the same day, suggesting a constant procession of men arriving, letters in hand, to wherever Robert Brown or his agents happened to be. It is important to consider that these communications were not private and abstracted expressions of power: they were of and in the landscape. Communication was constantly flowing back and forth along the road: letter carriers, perhaps mounted, visible expressions of the estate and its network of power, there for all to see.

Many of the captains, tacksmen, and estate officials plodding the *machair* track would have been known to the communities they passed through and others on the road. The contents of such letters may also have been known by the communities at times, as there is evidence that ordinary people frequently asked the tacksmen to write letters to the estate on their behalf (NRAS2177/1508-10). Gaelic society has always had a literate component. Many of the men already mentioned are good examples: all would be literate in English to a high degree, and some at least, particularly the tacksmen, must have been bi-lingual. This ability to mediate between the oral, Gaelic world, and the written, English world, of the estate offices, ships' captains, and Edinburgh agents was another way in which they could wield power for good or ill. The

importance of this ability to mediate between the Gaelic and English worlds is best expressed by Alexander Carmichael in his description of the role of *maor* or ground officer, which could equally apply to any of Clanranald's estate elite:

> 'On large properties the *maor* is practically a sub-factor... Where the factor is a non-Gaelic speaking man…the people look on the *maor* with suspicion, 'the tongue of the people being then 'in another man's mouth', as one of themselves graphically said to me, they know not what the *maor* says or leaves unsaid concerning them' (Carmichael 1884: 452)

Thus, while the letters which passed along the roads of Loch Aoineart were not always moving on behalf of the elite alone, they were still under their control.

In the area where the kelp road from Loch Aoineart met the *machair* track a complex junction existed. This confluence of roads around the township of Bornais would have been a busy place where local people engaged in managing stock and farming would have mixed with those coming and going from the port and the kelping in Loch Aineort and estate traffic going to the estate offices and home of Mac 'ic Ailein at Nunton in Benbecula. The traffic here would have reflected the constantly changing tasks, routes, and movements in a landscape increasingly devoted to a monoculture of kelping (MacLean 2012: 368). This location was also the home of John MacDonald of Bornais, local tacksman and Captain of the local Volunteers, and his home may have been a prominent place for local people, associated as it was with this powerful man who through his connections represented Robert Brown, the kelp surveyors, and ultimately Mac 'ic Ailein himself. In this way all the business of coming and going to Loch Aoineart would have been within the gaze of the tacksman who controlled the land. The roads allowed not only easier movement across the landscape; they brought much of it within easy reach and surveillance of the powerful men within it.

The Inn at Àirigh Nam Ban

Ormacleit Castle continues to dominate the skyline of the Middle District of South Uist today, just as it must have done at the start of the 19th century. Walking along the kelp road from there, east to Loch Aoineart, the next impressive building would be the inn at Àirigh nam Ban, on the north side of the

loch (Figure 5.6.3). Like the byre-dwellings and enclosures which surround it, it is of local stone, but unlike these the walls are formally coursed, with particular care and attention in the doorways and windows. Mortar is clearly visible within the construction of the building and the remains of a gable and fireplace can be seen in its west end. The huge amount of collapsed rubble within is testament to the original height of its walls and gables. Local tradition that this building was once an inn is so strong that it is known locally as 'the pub' (Moreland and MacLean 2012: 108). The building lies within the holding of Bornais, for which no archive survives, but the mention of a 'publican' living here in the 1841 census lends credence to this suggestion. Local tradition also asserts that the building was known as 'An Taigh Geal' meaning 'The White House', a common name given to houses of a more formal, mainland type to differentiate them from the local vernacular 'Taigh Dubh' or blackhouse. This large imposing structure is said to have had windows and a chimney, and been slated (Moreland and MacLean 2012: 91). It would have been all the more impressive when we consider the byre-dwellings standing nearby. The stone-built blackhouse commonly associated with 19th-century island life, with its double-skinned walls with an earthen core, was probably a later development, perhaps even associated with the relatively easier times of the later 19th century. Prior to this most buildings, including those whose remains lie around the inn, were likely to have been largely turf-built (Fraser 2000: 380).

While it is fairly easy to imagine the outside appearance of the inn, it is more difficult to consider the experience of being within it, although we can safely assume that like most interior spaces of the period it was dark and smoky by today's standards. However, the presence of chimneys, windows, and perhaps a formal ceiling, would have rendered it a relatively bright and clean experience compared to the interior of the other domestic dwellings on the loch. Only one inn of a similar date has been excavated: Taigh Caol, set next to a drovers route near Strachur, Argyll (Bailie and Adamson 2015). It is interesting to think that, like the inn at Àirigh nam Ban, it was sited next to a transit route which was part of a wide-ranging network of economic activity – droving by road at Taigh Caol and kelping by ship in Loch Aoineart. The relatively well-attested date of the inn at Taigh Caol, in use until the end of the 18th century, makes it an interesting comparator. Although a relatively modest building, the finds of bottle glass,

Figure 5.6.3. The inn at Àiridh nam Ban. Top: Looking south-east across Loch Aoineart from within. Bottom, the western gable, showing remains of a fireplace. © K. Grant.

gunflints, imported glasswares and pottery (some of high status), and locally-made vernacular objects suggested use by all social classes, including the elite (Bailie and Adamson 2015: 15-6). The suggestion of a possible sleeping space with a bench or bed, and the presence of decorative horse tack, support the building's suggested use as an inn (Bailie and Adamson 2015: 13-5). Although it is not suggested that this is a direct comparator for the inn on Loch Aoineart, it paints an evocative picture. We can imagine an interior, lighter than those of the nearby homes, adorned with an imported material culture of glasswares and pottery that may have included special objects held back for the best customers, perhaps even capable of furnishing the rum, wine, or tobacco that Robert Brown ordered frequently from the mainland. Sleeping spaces for overnight stays and tethers for horses complete the picture of a busy focus of movement and stopping-off point where many of the tasks of South Uist's landscape came together. The experience of this building, with its unusual architecture and material culture, would have set it apart from everyday life for most people, making it a physical manifestation of the islands' powerful and wealthy elite.

In the early 19th century, this association with the elite would probably be most apparent in who these travellers and visitors *were*. Although the inn may well have been used by local people (in the 1690s Martin Martin visited one on North Uist that was little more than a drinking den (1999: 57)), it is unlikely that any strangers or travellers could have been visiting the people who lived or worked on the land; any relatives visiting would surely have stayed in the dwellings of family members. Robert Brown's correspondence provides interesting clues as to the inn's likely clientele. In summer 1800 the vessels *Friendship*, *Margaret*, *Endeavour*, *Delight*, and *Jean* all arrived to collect kelp at least once, their captains coming ashore to hand formal letters to Brown or his colleagues instructing them to load kelp. Whilst these ships' captains and crews may have slept aboard, it is not unreasonable to think that some of them may also have frequented the local inn, taking advantage of food and drink at least, if not also accommodation. The estate's agents, constantly travelling around Clanranald's lands during the summer season from where they wrote frequently to Brown from various locations, may have also chosen to stay here occasionally. The distances between the kelping areas and the island's power centres are not

inconsiderable, and Hebridean weather was doubtless as capricious then as it is now, meaning overnight stays must have occurred. We should also consider the *waiting* involved in sail-powered travel. It is easy for the modern reader, used to timetables and schedules, to forget that ships could be forced to remain in port for days on end awaiting favourable winds. When Aonghas Òg, tacksman of Àirigh Mhuilinn, wrote to Brown in summer 1800 that he was travelling to Edinburgh with the first fair weather (NRAS2177/1508-10), this meant more than simply boarding a ship at an allotted time. It probably meant heading to Loch Aoineart when the weather seemed clement or he had heard word of a ship sailing, being sure to arrive there in good time before the appropriate tide, and perhaps waiting to be allowed to board. If the weather was not suitable then he would presumably have to wait a tide or two or for sailing conditions to improve. It is not difficult to imagine the inn in these circumstances operating as a glorified waiting room. Whilst the building itself was undoubtedly impressive, it is the people who used it, and the tasks they were undertaking when doing so, that made the inn a nexus of power in the landscape.

Clanranald's Sloops and Port Skeig

During the summer months, the view across the loch must have been dominated by the masts of the ships that regularly frequented it. It is well-established that Loch Aoineart was South Uist's principal harbour for much of the post-medieval period (Parker Pearson *et al.* 2004: 133), but this has been an abstract idea in much of the discussion so far, which has been restricted to the small traditional vessels used by the people who worked the loch. The much more substantial ships that used the harbour are well-attested in the correspondence of Robert Brown, which names several of the vessels and contains a note from his kelp surveyor indicating that he oversaw the loading of 100 tons of kelp in the loch in 1800, when he signed a pre-printed receipt as the vessel lay 'riding at anchor in the harbour of Loch Eynort'(NRAS2177/1508-10). Robert Brown's correspondence names the vessels, their destinations, and captains, which allows further details on the ships to be found within Lloyd's Register of Shipping of that year (Lloyd's 1800). The register is a stark reminder of the extent of Britain's maritime trade in the period. For example, there are no less than 54 vessels of the name *Friendship* alone (Lloyd's 1800: 152-4), making it challenging to identify the *Friendship* that was moored in Loch Aoineart briefly

in summer 1800. Only two examples are discussed here as they are the only two which can be securely identified.

The *Delight*, of 57 tons, and the *Jean*, 62 tons, were both sloops: single decked, single-masted, fore-and-aft rig rigged vessels commonly used in the early 19th century for transporting goods in inland waters. Both were fairly new – only four and two years old respectively - and operated primarily out of Leith. They were presumably sound vessels as they both received the highest 'A1' rating by Lloyds, making them a safe proposition in terms of insurance at least (Lloyd's 1800: 100, 205). Though small compared to naval vessels or transatlantic traders of the day, they were significantly bigger than the vernacular open boats of the Hebrides such as the *sgoth* or *geòla,* and were capable of making long voyages. The vessels that left Loch Aoineart with a cargo of kelp in summer were destined for Liverpool, Newcastle, Leith, and Hull, voyages which would require traversing the dangerous waters of the Minch and, in the case of the latter three, undertaking a circumnavigation around the north of Scotland: the opening of the Caledonian Canal was still decades away. Figure 5.6.6 shows a sloop operating in the waters off Hull, and gives a good impression of the scale and size of the *Delight* and *Jean*. Such vessels in Loch Aoineart were symbols of the economic and 'political' power of the estate.

The vessels were there only through the personal business connections of Robert Brown, which he exercised through extensive correspondence with his agent Robert Anderson in Edinburgh, the man who arranged buyers and ships for the island's kelp. On at least one occasion Brown himself arranged for two small sloops (about half the tonnage of those already mentioned) to come from Greenock when Anderson could not arrange shipping, demonstrating he had his own connections and contacts to draw on (NRAS2177/1508-10). Such large vessels were 'visitors' rather than inhabitants of the landscape, crewed largely by outsiders. Although in all likelihood some of the men of the islands may have served upon such large vessels at times (MacDonald 1811: 539), they were still of an order of magnitude larger than anything they themselves could hope to own. The connections these vessels represent, those of the wider world, were beyond most ordinary people: monolingual and illiterate, they could wield little power in the English-speaking mercantile world. It was for the local elite to mediate between them, the kelp producers, and the world of the elite that would most

Figure 5.6.4. Humber Sloop 'Harry' ©National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, London.

benefit from their labours. Sloops such as the *Delight* were in some ways a real-life *Birlinn Chlann Raghnaill*: the image used in the poem of a ship was a widely-known allegory for the power of the clan, with the chief holding the tiller (Black 2001: 471), whilst it has already been suggested that the technical language may refer not to a Birlinn but to a ship resembling the sloops that frequented the loch in summer 1800 (Riach 2015: 2).

Despite the economic, social, and cultural significance of what must have been large and impressive vessels, they are likely to have left no archaeological traces in the landscape. There are however, some other representations of marine power to be found. Àirigh nam Ban lies on a slope just above the anchorage at Bàgh Lathach, where any vessels at anchor would have been highly visible, perhaps even within hailing distance. Folk memory of the area recorded by Alexander Carmichael in the 19th century certainly seems to support the idea that a 'fine anchorage' was in the area (Carmichael 1884: 460). Today, there is a small formal harbour surrounded by a breakwater. This is of unknown date but appears 20th century in character. Just to the east lie the remains of a port, the only one marked on Bald, called Port Skeig (Figure 5.6.5). It is on the coast within Bàgh Lathach, sheltered behind Rubha Bhuailte, the Headland of the Cattle Enclosure, and occupies a shallow inlet at the mouth of a burn of

unknown name. Today, the remains of a large stone-built wharf can be seen, where a yacht was pulled up in spring 2015 (Figure 5.6.6). The wharf itself is a substantial construction, built of dry stone and wood, and against it lies a large flat area where loading of materials could have taken place. It is significantly larger than any of the other nousts and small vernacular harbours nearby, and would have taken substantial labour to build, beyond that which could be mustered by one individual or family. Robert Brown's correspondence suggests that the harbour on the island of Eigg, also within the bounds of Mac 'ic Ailein's domain, was maintained by extracting a set number of days of labour from the local tenants as part of their rent (NRAS2177/1508-10). Perhaps some similar arrangement was made to construct and maintain Port Skeig, although since it lies on Bornais land there is no known archival evidence which would support or refute this. Figure 5.6.6 was taken at low tide; at high tide several feet of water cover a silty bottom free of rocks. This would have rendered it suitable for the loading of the local *sgothan* or *Geolaichean,* but also of any boats which acted as tenders to the sloops. Indeed, with their shallow draughts, some of these sloops may have been able to lay alongside at high tide; particularly those smaller ones from Greenock, less than half the size of the *Delight* and *Jean*, which both had draughts of less than 10 feet. Port Skeig is therefore an excellent candidate for a substantial kelp wharf. It would have been a physical manifestation of the power of the local elite's investment in and control of the kelp trade and the landscape of Loch Aoineart, perhaps even built by the hands of the inhabitants of the loch as part of their rent.
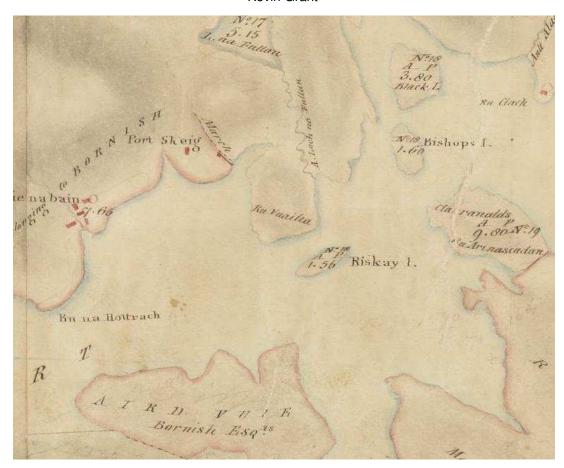
Figure 5.6.5. Extract from Bald's map of 1805 showing Port Skeig in context. The settlement cluster of five buildings and an enclosure near the left-hand edge is Àirigh nam Ban. Original deposited at the National Records of Scotland, RHP38151.

Figure 5.6.6. Port Skeig as photographed in 2015. A substantial wharf can be seen where the modern yacht is visible © K. Grant.

North Loch Aoineart: Power in the Landscape

Port Skeig, the inn at Àirigh Nam Ban, and the kelp road are very clear indicators of how the local elite's power was represented in the landscape. However, there are also more subtle examples within the landscape of north Loch Aoineart which hint at the complex gradation of status and power on the lochside. The area surrounding Àirigh Nam Ban and Port Skeig contains archaeological evidence which suggests a far more permanent and long-standing way of life that was eked out by the kelpers clinging to the coast.

The coastline which runs from Rubha na Mheine on the north of the loch, opposite the island of Calbhaigh, west toward Port Skeig, is one of the most densely settled areas depicted on Bald's map (Figure 5.6.9). Where other settlements are frequently depicted as one or two buildings, substantial settlement clusters can be seen here. The archaeological evidence is also extensive. A head dyke runs roughly parallel to the coast enclosing a large area which is almost entirely covered in cultivation remains in the form of *feannagan*, rigs, and enclosures (Figure 5.6.7), as well as extensive settlement remains such as dykes, buildings, and peatbanks. The difference in landuse within the head dyke can be clearly seen on satellite images, where the distinctive green of cultivated land within it contrasts the bare, rocky moorland without (Figure 5.6.8).
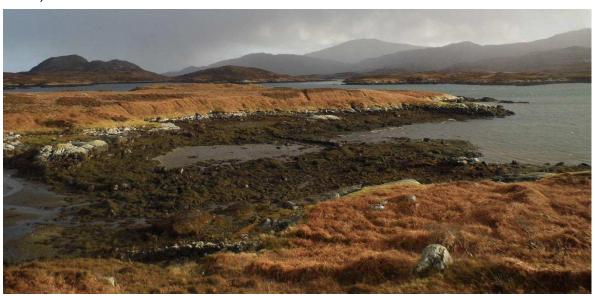
Figure 5.6.7. Extensive cultivation remains are visible on the headland Rubha Bhuailte. Linear features can be seen within the dead bracken. In the foregound, a small noust and linear banks can be seen. A fish-trap lies in the middle of the bay © K. Grant.

Figure 5.6.8. North Loch Aoineart pictured from the air. The coast and the headlands display clear evidence of long-term cultivation, and indeed much of the area is still croftland. The road ends at the croft which lies in the wooded area in the centre of the image. From there, a track runs north east, ending at Port Skeig. The inn lies above the small patch of trees roughly half-way along this track. Map data: Google, Getmap plc
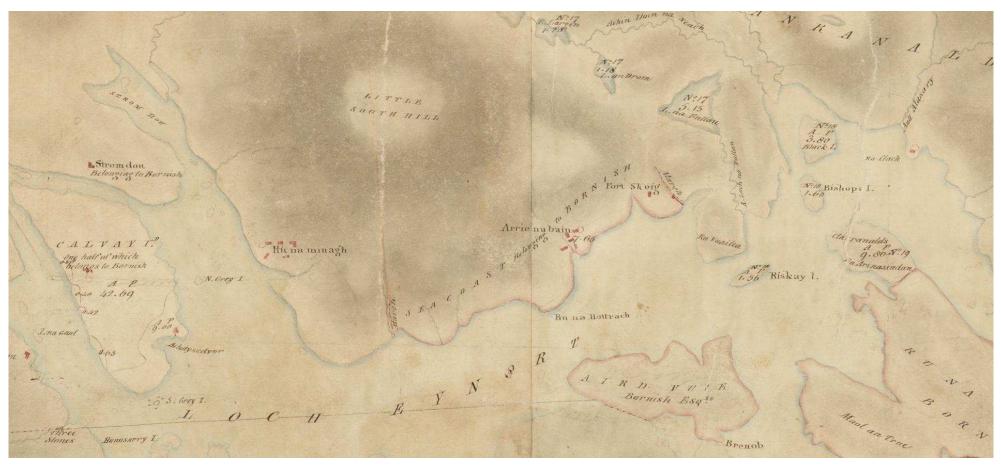
Figure 5.6.9. Extract from Bald's map of 1805 showing North Loch Aoineart. Almost all of the man-made features (depicted in red), can be identified on the ground today, although they are obscured in places by much later crofting use, which continues today. Original deposited at the National Records of Scotland, RHP38151.

The archaeological evidence suggests much more sustained agricultural use and longevity of occupation than many of the small kelping settlements discussed previously. The extremely denuded remains of a large sub-rectangular structure lie just north of the headland of Rubha Bhuailte. There is very little stonework to be seen, which is suggestive of turf construction, particularly as there are no structures nearby which might be comprised of robbed stone. This structure is not marked on Bald's plan of 1805, and it may significantly pre-date it. The remains of other byre-dwellings already discussed, such as those on Calbhaigh or on South Loch Aoineart at Frigary (Moreland and MacLean 2012: 85), which *are* marked on Bald's map, appear to have a more substantial construction with at

Figure 5.6.10. Byre-dwelling remains on Rubha Bhuailte © K. Grant

least basal layers of the wall being built of stone, and their remains are in a much less ephemeral condition that those of the structure north of Rubha Bhuailte. It is therefore suggested that this structure comprises evidence for 18th century or earlier occupation on this part of the loch. This interpretation seems to be supported by place-name evidence, with the local ecclesiastical names Àirigh nam Ban (the Sheiling of the Nuns), and Eilean an Easbuig, (the Bishop's Isle), probably suggesting a late medieval link to Iona and that this area was of some importance (MacLean 2012: 364). The place-names in this area are

distinctive; elsewhere in Loch Aoineart most of the names are descriptive rather than relating to landscape history or human activity. This perhaps reinforces the landscape biography suggested in section 5.2; prior to the kelp boom, established settlement clustered largely around the inn at the head of the loch, with the rest of the landscape being used only for sheilings. This landscape use has a long history and its biography is imprinted in the place-names. Alexander Carmichael recorded a somewhat fanciful, if evocative, account from an old man of the beauty of Àirigh nam Ban, with its fine anchorage, when it was in use as a sheiling, perhaps in the later 18th century. This account suggests a strong folk memory of the nuns who once dwelled there, despite the fact the place-names almost certainly refer to land-holding rather than an actual ecclesiastical presence (Carmichael 1884: 459-60). The short-lived landscape of kelping, with its influx of outsiders, occupied areas previously only named descriptively from the sea, leaving little trace of its way of life in the place-names that survive. It is suggested then that in 1800, this part of north Loch Aoineart represented a well-established and relatively middle-status settlement of tenants of Bornais working improved land. This would have stood in stark contrast to the new, small, and hastily built temporary structures of the kelpers and new tenants of the coastal pendicles on the south side of the loch. Here, on the north side, well-established tenants of good land clustered around the estate structure of the inn and Port Skeig, their history and heritage imprinted on the landscape in place names as well as physical remains. The south side of the loch was inhabited by in-coming tenants and the penniless cottars and kelpers scraping a living from the sea, often only with a tiny strip of *feannagan* for subsistence agriculture. This area of the loch is an important reminder that status in Highland society was not binary, held entirely by an elite and out of reach of everyone else, but rather that there would have been gradations of status right across the community on the lochside.

The place-names in this area also inform us about some aspects of the relationship between the estate and its elite and the community in Loch Aoineart. The place names Àirigh nam Ban and Eilean an Easbuig would have been reminders of the community's Catholic past and identity, something that was increasingly under threat in the 18th and early 19th centuries. Amongst the elite, many tacksmen became Protestants in order to ensure promotion in their

new careers within the army whilst there was a conscious effort to replace Catholic with Protestant tenants, and even to force the tenants to convert (MacLean 2012: 366). Throughout this, Bornais, the landowner of much of north Loch Aoineart, remained a staunch Catholic. This is likely to have held the local community of this area together whilst elsewhere new pendicles and lots were preferentially leased to Protestants as was probably the case for the south Loch Aoineart pendicles when they were leased out in the early 1800s. Nevertheless religious persecution and the pressure of having to compete for land with others more favourably viewed by the estate drove many *Deasaich* to emigrate (MacLean 2012: 367; McLean 1991). This area is therefore a good example of how even within a small landscape, the interplay of religion, estate economics, and the beliefs of individuals who wielded power could influence daily life. Also on the headland of Rubha Bhuailte is a dyke and enclosure, marked as 'march' on Bald – a physical structure marking the boundary between the land belonging to Bornais and Clanranald. It is interesting to consider that the nature of the landscape and the lives of those within it could have been markedly different depending on which side of this boundary they lived.

There are other clues within the place-names of this area that provide insight into the complex relationships between the various social strata of Gaelic society. Rubha na Mheine, Headland of the Meal, is supposedly named for the importation of meal here in times of crop failure or famine (Moreland and MacLean 2012: 92). SEARCH publications suggest 1812 and 1815 as years when this may have taken place (Moreland and MacLean 2012: 92; Parker Pearson *et al*. 2004: 173), but archival sources seem to suggest that this was a frequent occurrence at the start of the 19th century. In August 1802, Aonghas Òg, tacksman of Àirigh Mhuilinn, wrote to Brown requesting meal to feed his tenants as soon as it could be got from 'the low country'. Soon after, Robert Brown's agent in Edinburgh, Anderson, gave him advice in a letter about kelp matters suggesting that meal could be bought cheaply from Ireland, and offered to aid in arranging this (NRAS2177/1508-10). Within weeks, a letter arrived at the desk of Robert Brown from a tacksman in Ardnamurchan, another part of Clanranald's lands, asking that meal be sent there *from* South Uist (NRAS2177/1508-10). In 1802, there are references to meal being imported to South Uist from both Ardnamurchan and Peterhead, suggesting that meal shortages were apparently

endemic during this period. This is perhaps no surprise, given the huge
population increases of the time and the neglect of agriculture caused by a focus
on kelping, the dangers of which were recognised by outside commentators and
estate staff alike (MacDonald 1811: 795; MacLean 2012: 366-8). Rubha na Mheine
was a reminder in the landscape of the interdependency of all social classes.
While the elite depended on the kelpers producing kelp to turn a profit, the
kelpers relied on people such as Robert Brown to arrange for transport and sale
of these goods. The ordinary people also had to have faith that when food
supplies ran short they could, through their tacksman, receive support in the
form of foodstuffs that would allow them to continue to stay on the kelp shores
to which they, and many of the estate's elite, owed their livelihood.

It is almost certainly in this part of the loch that the tacksman of Àirigh
Mhuilinn, Aonghas Òg, drowned while ferrying kelp to a larger ship in 1809. He
could well have been rowing with his crew in a *geòla* from Port Skeig to the
Jean, *Friendship*, or any other of the small sloops that plied the loch. This event
became ingrained in the landscape through the lament for Aonghas Òg,
composed shortly after the event by a Benbecula poet, which was still to be
found in local tradition in the 20th century (Shaw 1977: 105). This can be seen as
a study of the complex relationships that the people of the Middle District had
with each other, and the landscape:

' 'S thug thu ràimh dha d' chuid ghillean,
Cha robh tuilleadh a dhìth ort;
Gun robh thu 'n dùil mar a b'àbhaist
Gun robh do shnàmh mar an fhaoileag,

Gun robh do shnàmh mar an eala
A dh'fhalbhadh aigeannach aotrom;
Do phearsa dìreach deas, dealbhach,
Gur bochd a dh'fhalbh thu gun aois bhuainn

Fhir a' mhùirn 's a' chiùil-ghàire
Fhir thug bàrr air na ciadan
Ann an treunad 's an gaisge,
Gum b'fheàrr nach fhaca sinn riamh thu;

Fhir a sheasadh na càirdean

Nuair chuireadh càch iad gu diachainn;

Ged bha thu ciùin ann ad nàdur,

`S e do ghàirdean gun dìoladh…

H-uile h-aon thig air astar

Trom, airtneulach, sgìthear,

Bheir sùil chianail air t'aitreamh

Far na chleachd iad bhith dìreadh,

Gu fàrdrach na fialachd,

'S i 'n diu a' crìonadh fo'n dìle;

Bu tric aighear le uaill ann

'S a chuir luchd fuachd an cuid sgìos dhuibh

You gave the oars to your crew, you required nothing more; you thought, as usual, you could swim like the seagull, that you could swim like the swan which would go lightly and lively, with your straight and beautiful form. Sad it is that you left us before reaching old age.

Lad of joy and mirth, one who excelled hundreds in strength and heroism, it would have been better if we had never seen you. You who would stand loyal to your friends when others put them to hardship; though you were gentle in your nature, it was your arm which could work vengeance…

Everyone who comes from afar sore, weary and fatigued will cast a sorrowful eye on your dwelling to which they used to ascend, to the hospitable dwelling today decaying under the rains. Often there was joy and pomp there, and therein the cold traveller threw off his weariness.' (Shaw 1977: 105)

At a basic level, the poem is a reminder that a tacksman, a member of the local elite and the clan nobility, was by no means an abstract symbol of power. He was a physical presence in the loch and the landscape. He was also directly involved in the kelp trade, taking part in its day-to-day execution. Whilst the tacksmen may have had more options, such as a military career, and the resources and connections which made emigrating a more attractive option, it is

interesting to consider that they too were trapped by the monoculture of kelping that overtook South Uist at the start of the 19th century, a practice that was recognised to be unsustainable even as the estate transferred more and more of the island's labour to the practice. Although Aonghas Òg may have been a victim of the kelp trade in a figurative sense, he certainly became one in a literal sense when he met his tragic end. The poem above gives us hints as to the complex relationship the community had with its elite. It repeats classic themes of Gaelic praise poetry which date back centuries, such as praising his physical strength, courage, and beauty, as well as his hospitality and loyalty (Newton 2009: 97-102). But we know from the documentary evidence that he *was* loyal: in acting to secure food for his tenants, and for showing concern, affection, and care for his colleague Robert Brown during his illness. At the same time, he was a fundamental part of an economic system which systematically impoverished and took advantage of the people who laboured the land, and one that would ultimately result in mass emigration and suffering in the decades the followed.

Conclusion

It is hoped that the discussion in this section has shown that power in Gaelic society was not a binary model of chiefs and clansmen, but rather that there were often distinct gradations of power, status, and inequality *within* the communities which worked the landscapes of Hiort and Loch Aoineart. These relationships were often complex and dynamic, negotiated and renegotiated seasonally or around certain tasks and activities. In an oblique way, the elite of clan society has been ever-present in this thesis so far: the desperate work undertaken by ordinary people to meet the demands of rent, either by kelping or fowling; the tight control over access to mainland markets that set the price of goods; the possibility of an oppressive tacksman;and the threat of dispossession. We have also seen the more positive presence of the clan elite in the benevolent factor of Hiort who improved the lives of its people, the provision of food in times of dearth to the people of South Uist, and the poetic praise lavished on the elite in *Birlinn Chlann Raghnall* and the lament for Aonghas Òg. The oral tradition in particular shows a cultural sharing of values, symbols, and understandings between the different strata of Gaelic society.

The challenge in this chapter has been to show that it is possible to study powerful individuals, using primary archival material, in a way that does not view them as abstracted wielders of power, locked away in their studies, but which places them within the landscape and considers how their behaviour impacted ordinary life. A microhistorical approach has been crucial to this exercise. A detailed consideration of the events of two days in summer 1799, during the hearings regarding the destruction of kelp shores, allowed us to consider who the key figures in the elite of local society were by placing them in the context of a real event which took place in a known location in the landscape. The kelp road was presented as an important part of the apparatus of power which allowed these people, and indeed their correspondence and its bearers, to be placed in the landscape: physical presences which were seen, interacted with, and noticed. Consideration was given as to how the tasks these powerful individuals were engaged upon gave particular places in the landscape associations with power: an idea which is supported in the oral tradition in the lament for Aonghas Òg, where reference is made to his dwelling, now lying in decay, symbolic of the physical body of the man himself. A consideration of the vessels on the loch suggested that these too would reflect the hierarchical nature of Gaelic society. The chief could use his economic connections, through his factor, to arrange pick-up from the large ocean-going vessels of the English-speaking Lowlands and the wider British Isles, while the tacksman could muster the crew for and gain access to, a sgoth, or even own one himself. Tenants may have the use of a small yawl for fishing, kelping, and travel around the loch; and the cottar may have had a part-share in the use of a boat or, more likely, nothing. Finally, a detailed examination of the archaeological evidence in the landscape around Àirigh nam Ban framed a narrative about sites of power in the landscape, and how this may have affected the status of those living nearby.

No study of a landscape would be complete without a consideration of the influence and activities of those who wielded most power within it. Members of the elite must, therefore, always be an important area of landscape study. It is hoped that this chapter has demonstrated that by placing these people, their tasks, and their influence within the landscape and the community, it is possible to study them in a that does not foreground their own written documents: sources which were absent for the vast majority of the community. Although, as

has also been discussed, such documents were a part of the landscape for everyone in the community. This chapter has revealed a complex and dynamic web of power relationships across and within the landscape of Loch Aoineart itself and its hinterland: the tacksmen of the *machair* lands to the west; the estate and Mac 'ic Ailein in Benbecula to the north; the agents and merchants of the south; and the captains and crews of the vessels sailing the 'streaming ocean of the roadways' beyond the mouth of the loch to the east.

6. Discussion and Conclusions

This research set out with two broad aims:

- To formulate a new approach to the study of the place and period which advances knowledge and understanding of the lived experience of the landscape

- To demonstrate and critically assess the approach by applying it to two case study areas.

In attempting to achieve these, the discussion has journeyed across the landscapes and seascapes of Hiort and Loch Aoineart, as well as the landscape of Scottish post-medieval archaeology and the paradigms and meta-narratives which lie behind much of the academic literature.

This chapter will begin with a summary of how the approach was formulated and a critical consideration of how it was applied to the case studies. The second section considers key themes which emerged from Chapter 5, where six distinctive narratives about life in the past were presented, comparing and contrasting the two case studies. This includes the broader theoretical and methodological considerations which emerged from the research. It also considers how the historical meta-narratives of the period were manifested in the case study narratives and their efficacy as tools for understanding life in the past. The chapter concludes by placing this thesis in the wider theoretical context of international historical archaeology, considering areas within the thesis that may warrant further study, and possible future directions.

6.1 Embodiment, Practice, and Narrative: A Landscape Archaeology for Post-Medieval Gaeldom

Section 3.1 sought to demonstrate that a new approach was needed by critically examining previous archaeological studies of the post-medieval Highlands and Islands. A brief historiography began by exploring the paradigms of the antiquarian origins of the subject: that the way of life in the post-medieval was an unchanged survival of prehistory, and that Gaelic society was backward, an

idea supported by the then-popular stadialist theory. The discussion continued by considering the 'Folk Life' approach, which also tended to perceive Highland life prior to the 20th century as static and unchanging, characterising it as a vanishing way of life being torn apart by modernity. The beginnings of modern archaeological enquiry in the 60s were then outlined, and it was suggested that study retained an empirical approach, seeking largely to acquire primary archaeological data for the medieval and post-medieval rural landscape until the 1990s. This short history was crucial in outlining the background of the subject in advance of the next section, a critique of previous approaches.

This critique drew several themes from previous approaches to the place and period. A key idea was that the archaeological study of the post-medieval Highlands has been dominated by narratives and paradigms from other disciplines. Historical geography has been a dominant approach, while the well-developed narratives of history have often served as the basis for archaeological study, particularly as they frequently resonate with what remains politically important in Scotland today. It was suggested that the reliance of archaeologists on the theoretical constructions and meta-narratives from these disciplines has often relegated archaeology to the role of illustrating these paradigms rather than engaging in a more confident approach which would see it telling its own stories about the past.

It was highlighted that theoretical developments from wider archaeology have made little impact in the sub-discipline, which has remained largely empirical in its outlook. There were a small number of papers and publications in the early-to-mid 2000s that did approach the subject with a more nuanced theoretical view drawn from Historical Archaeology and landscape archaeology. However the promise of this work does not seem to have been realised, as even these more nuanced approaches have been influenced strongly by the historical meta-narratives of the period. Almost universally, they tended to attempt to understand change in relation to historical paradigms such as Clearance, Improvement, or the emergence of capitalism and modernity. As a result, there are very few studies of everyday life and landscape as experienced at any particular time and place.

It was argued that a further result of a reliance on historical meta-narrative has been an emphasis on the elite of Gaelic society which is too exclusive. This focus has tended to reflect the combative binary opposites of the historiography of the period: clansman versus chief, pre-Improvement versus Improvement, tenant versus landlord. In these models, society tends to be homogenised into opposing groups within which there is no room for difference, conflict, or variety of experience. A final issue which was highlighted was the influence of Romantic ideas of the Highlands, which have allowed problematic views of people and society in Gaeldom to proliferate. More importantly perhaps, it was suggested that the backlash against these ideas may be one reason (aside from the obvious language issues) why evidence from the Gaelic oral tradition has rarely been incorporated into studies of the place and period. It was argued that the lack of use of this evidence, which unlike the written record comes from all levels of society, has exacerbated the homogenisation of the population and the over-emphasis on the elite and their ideologies. It was argued further that the Gaelic oral tradition is likely to be highly informative about how people viewed the landscape and their place within it, and would offer evidence that allowed for a greater number of viewpoints to be considered.

The section ended by highlighting the counter-currents to many of the themes drawn out in the critique, outlining some of the work which sought to bring more confidently archaeological approaches to the material. These papers were highlighted in part to recognise the small but important body of literature which has brought insightful and original narratives into the subject area, but also to show that where new approaches have been taken, novel and enlightening narratives have emerged about life in the past. Recognition was given to the school of diverse 'cross-disciplinary' scholars who have used their language skills and critical understanding of the tradition to advocate for the better integration of Gaelic tradition and culture into the study of the period. The efficacy of these approaches, combined with a critique of the subject area, made the case for a new approach to the post-medieval archaeology of the Highlands and Islands: one which would attempt to avoid the common pitfalls of previous work to create evocative and original narratives about life in the past. In doing so, this thesis joined the small number of scholars writing in various disciplines

attempting to present more nuanced and inclusive approaches. In section 3.3, this new approach was outlined.

This thesis began by exploring the idea of 'landscape'. There are many varied understandings of this concept, which is a significant idea in several disciplines, not least archaeology. The section 'Concepts of Landscape' (3.2) clearly outlined the theoretical understandings of landscape within which the research has been broadly situated. Landscape was discussed not as 'the environment', a neutral physical stage upon which human affairs play out, but as a complex concept formed through human experience and bodily engagement with the world. The discussion set out not to create a unified theory of landscape, but to introduce several theoretical approaches to the concept which would later be of use in framing and directing in the approach taken in this thesis. These concepts were discussed under three headings, which also formed the basis of the approach. The theme of 'embodiment' introduced concepts of landscape which consider individual embodied engagement as central to the idea of landscape. 'Practice' brought together a number of approaches to landscapes which considered routine practices or were themselves practices or methods. 'Narrative' explored the idea of storytelling and narrative in archaeological writing, ideas of landscape as narrative and representation, and showed how narrative represented a common thread across many of the other concepts discussed.

Section 3.3 outlined how these concepts of landscape were developed to create a new approach to the place and period. It drew on the methodological aspects of embodied approaches, particularly of walking in the landscape to observe and record experiential effects. The theoretical issue of reconciling present-day experience with that of individuals in the past was addressed by considering the results of such engagements with the landscape as pieces of experiential evidence which would inform a wider narrative, rather than the 'results' of direct engagements with past embodied experiences. A focus on routine practice through taskscape was presented as an ideal complement to embodied approaches as it transcended individual experience and operated at a landscape and community level, as well as being methodologically useful in reconstructing past landscapes. The practices of microhistory and of psychogeography also formed a key part of the approach. Narrative was introduced as the concept which would draw together many strands of the theory and method and play a

key role in shaping the nature of the research and the thesis itself. The critical use of narratives from Gaelic oral tradition was an important aspect of the research from the outset. This material served not only as a crucial and overlooked form of evidence, but as material to furnish narrative frameworks which drove and structured discussion, tracing trajectories and experiences in the landscape. The idea of archaeological storytelling was introduced: using fictional narrative alongside more traditional academic narrative to bring together various strands of discussion and to present more complex narratives than would be possible using academic writing alone. Narrative was also used structurally, informing the overall outline of the thesis. Each section of the main discussion chapter was formed around a single theme, drawing out particular aspects and experiences from the landscape. The idea of storytelling, and of a coherent aesthetic or narrative which runs through the thesis, was introduced as an idea which informed many decisions about the content and shape of the final work.

Throughout section 3.3, several important methodological aspects of the approach were outlined. Perhaps the most important and distinctive of these was taking a very narrow temporal focus. Embodied encounters are necessarily of the moment, and routine practice was dynamic, dependent on the whims of the economy and the cultural and historical context of the community engaging in it. It was therefore necessary to narrow down the discussion to as short a period of time as possible. A form of 'landscape reconstruction' would then take place, drawing from the evidence to consider the basic shape of the landscape and the community in the period under discussion. Then, narratives or themes were selected, drawn out through a reflexive engagement between the needs of the theoretical and methodological approach and the character of the landscape and the surviving evidence. These narratives focussed down the discussion even further, attempting to examine a single aspect or theme in the landscape at a given period. This narrow focus was necessary to allow for many of the theoretical and methodological techniques to be applied, but it was also intended to subvert traditional approaches to the place and period. These tend to foreground change over time, particularly the grand meta-narratives of Highland history such as Improvement, and rarely ever consider life in one place at one time except to examine how it was then changed by these historical

paradigms. By focusing on a very narrow period, it was hoped that the focus could be directed toward everyday life and, where relevant, the *experience* of change and complexity in the landscape.

This synchronic, thematic, approach to landscapes necessarily required an extensive and varied evidence base. This was the key requirement which informed the selection of the two case studies of Hiort and Loch Aoineart. Another important consideration was previous archaeological and historical studies of the landscapes, the presence of which would allow for the results of the research presented here to be compared or contrasted with that of others. Chapter 4 introduced the case studies, outlining their suitability and describing their own unique and local expressions of the historical meta-narratives common to most post-medieval landscapes across the Highlands and Islands. In Chapter 5, the main case study section of the thesis, the approach was applied to the case studies in six thematic discussion sections which alternated between Hiort and Loch Aoineart.

Sections 5.1 and 5.2 followed a similar pattern. Both drew heavily on taskscape and narrative to create accounts of the experience of a particular set of routine tasks in their respective landscapes. On Hiort, the fulmar hunt of 1812 was the focus of study. A route was traced through the landscape, forming a narrative through which many different aspects of the hunt, including the social and cultural elements, could be considered in the wider context of the seasonal experience of landscape. In both chapters, short passages of narrative interspersed the discussion, describing in sequence the activities undertaken by members of the community in the landscape. After each short narrative passage a section of more traditionally academic writing described the evidence and drew out various themes and ideas for discussion. Both of these chapters also served a methodological purpose: they set out to show how the evidence could be used in each case study to partially reconstruct the landscape at a given time. They also acted as an introduction as to the character of the landscapes in the given periods. The narratives resulting from each of these sections were contrasted with previous accounts. In both cases, the topics have often been approached from an economic, or 'Folk Life' approach, with a focus on the technical aspects of the activity. The approach used in this thesis moved these practices into the landscape and the community, contextualising them culturally

and historically. The seasonality of the activities was discussed, and the dynamism of the economies and taskscapes of the period highlighted the fact that seabird fowling and kelping should not be viewed as discrete economic activities, but rather as a suite of tasks that varied over time and within which there were many different individual viewpoints and experiences. In the case of fowling, the narrative was contrasted with previous discussions of the practice which represented it as being unique, unusual, and masculine, highlighting problematic narratives about the community of Hiort and its supposed economic isolation. With kelping, one of the key conclusions was a methodological one. The case study demonstrated that it was possible to create a historically-contextualised study of the kelping landscape through a close reading of the evidence. This approach sought to avoid the creation of 'an ahistorical present', creating instead a closely considered past as it may have been experienced (contra Moreland and MacLean 2012: 93). In both cases, the discussions comprised the first extended archaeological considerations of these topics in Scotland.

The next two sections (5.3 and 5.4) considered aspects of the landscape which cut across many tasks and experiences, forming an important part of how the landscape was experienced as a whole. In the first of these sections, the 'unusual' on Hirte was considered: that is, the landscape of the supernatural, of religion, folk belief, and the extraordinary. Approaching the topic from a landscape archaeology point of view was methodologically and theoretically challenging. Psychogeography was drawn on in this section due to its focus of taking new and unusual routes through the landscape to reveal the hidden and the enchanted. The section took the form of mental travelling, taking an imagined *dèrive* from the middle of the settlement to the far side of Hirte, encountering aspects of the unusual landscape along the way. The phenomenological approach placed these discussions in the landscape, and the *unusual* was seen to be a part of routine practice, society, and everyday life, rather than as something separate and outwith the landscape. The section attempted to address the complex issue of reconciling present-day experience with past being-in-the-world by considering a phenomenological *dèrive* not as experiencing a past landscape but as a tool for framing and informing an unconventional narrative about a 'hidden' aspect of the landscape.

One of the most striking aspects of this case study was its contrast to other treatments of the subject on Hiort, which have tended to lump together many forms of belief from many different periods. By focusing on a much narrower period, a more historically contextualised account was given which excluded some of the most written-about aspects of belief and the unusual on Hirte as they were not appropriate to the period in question. The study presented a narrative which did not present otherworldly beliefs and organised religion as opposing ideas, but part of a co-existing continuum of dynamic beliefs in the landscape and community. This was in contrast with accounts by historians and others which perceived beliefs that would not be considered as Christian today as ancient and unchanging: two characteristics which often form part of wider meta-narratives about the place and period.

Section 5.4 explored the idea of the marine landscape by examining the experience of the sea and the coast for the communities living and working around Loch Aoineart. Although the task here was in some ways similar to that of the previous section - considering an overarching element of the experience of landscape - the nature of the evidence was substantially different. When looking at the unusual on Hiort, much of the material was drawn from historical accounts and from the oral tradition, with relatively few examples drawn from the archaeological landscape. Section 5.4 sought to demonstrate that the approach could also be applied to landscapes where there is scant reference to the theme to be discussed in the historical and documentary record. Taking a taskscape and microhistorical approach, it drew heavily from the archaeological remains around Loch Aoineart to reconstruct elements of the marine landscape. Wider Gaelic culture was then drawn on, including oral tradition from 20th-century South Uist, to form a coherent account of the marine landscape which was culturally and historically contextualised. Using an authentic Gaelic voice in the form of an early 20th-century poem from South Uist, the chapter ended by drawing together all the aspects of the marine landscape already discussed and placing it in the wider context of the terrestrial landscape and its routine and seasonal practices.

The final pair of case studies (5.5 and 5.6) sought to address wider questions of the social experience of landscape through a consideration of life in the pre-Improvement *baile* on Hiort and the elite of South Uist society. Section 5.5

employed a microhistorical approach, creating a 'thick description' of an evening in a single dwelling in Hirte's *baile*. This section attempted to integrate a deep consideration of how landscape and community were perceived in Gaelic culture with much of the evidence already discussed, drawing in routine practice, oral history, individual experience, material culture, and history. Fictional narrative was used as a way of weaving together all these complex elements, creating an account which allowed for more complexity than traditional academic writing. Non-representational theory was discussed in this section as it views both the embodied experience of landscape and representations of landscape, such as cultural understandings and metaphor, as important. It considers representations as both *of* and *in* the landscape, and so was a useful theoretical model for integrating experiential and representational forms of understanding landscape. The chapter ended with a consideration of the family as a key social unit through which everyday life and the wider community were negotiated and organised, and an important driver in ordering the landscape.

Section 5.6 began with a microhistory of an event in 1799 which was used to introduce the individuals who made up the elite of South Uist society in the early part of the 19th century. Through taking this approach, the individuals were placed immediately in the landscape at a real place and time, avoiding an account which would present the elite as abstracted from normal experience. For much of the rest of the section, taskscape and embodied approaches were used to presence power in the landscape as a culturally and historically contextualised reality which directly intersected with people's lives in tangible, visible ways. This section was intended to demonstrate that the methodology could be equally applied to the elite, integrating archival evidence into a landscape archaeology grounded in everyday experience. Although operating at a landscape level, the discussion ranged beyond the shores of Loch Aoineart to consider the wider landscape of South Uist, and indeed of Britain's maritime trade. The final paragraphs of the section explored the complex gradations of power within those who worked the landscape, and how these could be tied to religion, cultural memory, and landscape.

6.2   'The Shape of History': Reflections on the Landscapes of Hiort and Loch Aoineart

Hiort and Loch Aoineart had much in common as case studies. Both landscapes are Hebridean and were home to Gaelic-speaking communities who lived in small clusters of vernacular dwellings close to the sea, operating mixed economies that were responding to the demands of a wider export market. In both cases, the period discussed was broadly the same: 1812 in the case of Hiort and the first two decades of the 19th century in the case of Loch Aoineart. The choice of period was dictated largely by the availability of evidence, and so the fact that both case studies were concurrent was fortuitous rather than intentional. The case studies are so close geographically that they are in fact intervisible. The

Figure 6.2.1. The mountains of South Uist on the horizon, from Hiort © K. Grant.

mountains of South Uist which tower over Loch Aoineart are the most prominent landmark on the eastern horizon of Hiort, where they can often be seen. Yet for all these similarities, there are striking differences between the ways of life of the communities, their landscapes, and the evidence they left behind.

One of the key differences between the case studies is the nature of the evidence, and, as a result of this, the methodology varied in its application. Hiort, as discussed, is one of the most extensively written-about places on earth, and has a large and varied evidence-base from which to draw upon, even if much of it is highly problematic. In the case of Loch Aoineart, there is a well-surveyed archaeological landscape, a small number of historical and documentary sources,

and an oral traditional record which includes two songs about the loch in the 18th century as well as a corpus of material from the earlier 20th century. It was therefore necessary in the South Uist case study to spend much more time interpreting and describing the archaeological record, showing how the evidence was combined to create the landscape reconstructions within which the narratives were set. Material from the wider Gaelic oral tradition had to be brought in as there was very little material which was directly relevant to the place and time. On Hiort, much of the primary work had already been undertaken, and there was an extensive corpus of oral tradition from the islands, some of which could be closely dated to the relevant period. Applying the methodology to these two related-but-contrasting case studies demonstrated that it can work in situations where the character of the evidence is very different, although in each case the broad approach needs to be adapted to the circumstances.

Bearing these differences in the volume and quality of the evidence in mind, it is perhaps surprising how the narratives which emerged from the research relate to those produced by previous studies. It is on Hiort where the narrative presented here departed most from that of previous approaches. This is probably because there, perhaps more than anywhere else in Scotland, historical meta-narratives have dominated much of the previous work. The meta-narrative is so strong that it even has a name - 'the Hardrock Consensus' (Fleming 2005: 4-6). This thesis joins the counter-current of material which has emerged since the late 1990s challenging previous approaches to Hiort, expanding upon it by providing interpretations of three aspects of the landscape which have not previously seen sustained and detailed discussion. On South Uist this thesis largely supports the very broad conclusions about Loch Aoineart's history reached by the SEARCH project, which itself critiqued the historical paradigms that have coloured many previous studies of the region and period (Moreland and MacLean 2012; Parker Pearson *et al*. 2004). The key difference between this thesis and previous work on South Uist is the tone and character of the narrative. The narratives of SEARCH are of the *longue durée,* seeking to create a coherent account of South Uist's archaeology from the first people to arrive there to the present day. In doing so, however, they have rarely considered the experience of life at any given time. The very nature of such a long-term study is homogenising, favouring

generalised 'periods' rather than the specific realities of life in the landscape. John Moreland believed that it was not possible to prise apart the layers of the later post-medieval landscape of Loch Aoineart, and worried that any attempt to do so would run the risk of creating a 'past in palimpsest', an 'ahistorical present' (Moreland and MacLean 2012: 93). This thesis has sought to show that it is, in fact, possible to investigate Loch Aoineart as a living and inhabited landscape that is culturally and historically contextualised.

A key theme in both case study landscapes is the sea. A recurrent part of the 'Hardrock Consensus' is to emphasise the lack of fishing undertaken by the *Hiortaich* and to present this as unique or unusual, although it is now recognised that the evidence suggests fishing was an important part of the subsistence economy (Harman 1997: 225). At first glance, we might regard the community of Loch Aoineart to be starkly different, drawing many of their resources from the sea and in all likelihood being constantly in and out of small boats. However, the community of Loch Aoineart was more 'coastal' than 'marine'. Their engagements with the sea came along the intertidal zone, with fishing vessels and ships used for trade being either controlled by the elite or the preserve of semi-professional seafarers drawn from the wider Hebridean community. Repeatedly on Loch Aoineart we see seafood and fishing as a marker of poverty: the use of baitholes, fish-traps, and the collecting of seafood being a sign of stress in the ordinary subsistence economy. Interestingly, it is recorded that fish was an unpopular dish on Hiort (Harman 1997: 225). It has been suggested that this ambivalent relationship with the sea stems from both 'risk management' and cultural factors. Gaeldom was a society which valued land and the products of agriculture. When times were good, the communities of Loch Aoineart and Hiort seem to prefer to have looked landward, where the most high-status foods and activities were. This is an interesting counterpoint to environmentally deterministic ways of seeing the landscape (particularly prevalent in perceptions of Hiort), and adds an additional complexity to the relationship between the routine tasks undertaken by communities, economic fortunes, and cultural norms.

An equally pervasive and important aspect of both landscapes was the annual round of routine practices that ensured subsistence and the production of materials for export. The landscape of both communities is still marked by the

remains of agriculture and 'industry', be it *feannagan*, kelp kilns and platforms, or the hundreds of *cleitean* on Hiort that stored the products of seabird fowling, fishing, agriculture, and the cutting of peats. It is somewhat ironic that a methodology which set out to critique overly-economic approaches to the post-medieval Highlands and Islands has had such a strong focus on agriculture and the rural economy. However, it is abundantly clear from the evidence that these activities *did* take up the majority of people's time and created the routines that governed their annual and seasonal experiences. The issue then is not so much that the economy is over-emphasised, but that it is discussed through the particular lens of economic history, of national or regional models of the economy which are abstracted from the experience of individuals and communities. In this thesis, these important aspects of the case study landscapes have been discussed in a historically and culturally contextualised manner, as part of a mixed landscape which includes cultural and social considerations as much as economic practice. In particular, the seasonality of the landscape and of the tasks and activities within it have been a recurrent theme.

There is a striking difference between Hiort and Loch Aoineart in terms of general quality of life and the stability of these communities in the periods discussed. The period of the early 19th century was recognised at the time and by later generations as one of great hardship on the Uists. The title of James Symonds' (1999b) study of 18th-and-19th-century South Uist, *Toiling in the Vale of Tears*, is apt indeed. In the early 19th century, the landscape of kelping in South Uist was a transient one created by a fast-moving process of economic change. Parts of the lochside had been let out as pendicles: small parcels of land designed to encourage the tenants to turn to kelping to pay their rents, inhabited by those cleared from their lands or individuals seeking to improve their lot through kelping. The coastline was dotted with small temporary kelping huts of landless cottars or people from the west coast working at the kelp when they could find time between tending their crops. All laboured desperately only to see their indebtedness increase year-on-year. Religious persecution and the threat of dispossession were ever-present, as were the pressures of a sharply increasing population which the economy of the island struggled to support without repeated aid from the estate (MacLean 2012: 366-8). Emigration

remained high through the period and within years all these communities would be swept away. On Loch Aoineart, as evocatively described by Alexander Carmichael, 'the smoke of the whole people…now ascends through the chimney of a single shepherd' (Carmichael 1884: 460). To examine the landscapes and communities of South Uist in the 19th century is to see a society which, even by its own rules, was not working.

On Hiort, a very different picture emerges. We see the community of 1812 as one which is settled and stable. Whilst tens of thousands of Hebrideans emigrated to the Lowlands or to Canada and elsewhere, the population on the archipelago remained. Only once before the 20th century, in 1852, was there mass emigration, and this was driven largely by a conflict with the estate over religion (Fleming 2005: 142; Harman 1997: 133). They were well-established in their *baile* surrounded by the land from which they drew their living, a land which was also imprinted with long-lasting cultural and social memory. Rental records show their economy was remarkably diverse (Harman 1997: 100), with good agricultural land supplemented by fishing, cattle, and, more importantly, the seabird products which were increasingly valuable and over which they held a virtual monopoly. In 1812, they had a relatively benevolent tacksman, and were lucky to have a permanent minister who could attend to their spiritual needs as well as provide an education. That is not to say the *Hiortaich* were rich; they were still working within an ultimately exploitative system which saw the tacksman and landowner selling export goods to the markets at a multiple of the price paid to the *Hiortaich* from whom he received them as rent. But whilst their way of life appears unimaginably hard to modern eyes, in contrast with many other communities in Gaeldom at the same time, this was clearly a society which was stable and functional by its own standards and where the standard of living was relatively high. This subverts the idea of life on Hiort as being dominated by the struggle for survival against an unusually harsh environment.

In neither case study was the economy simply one of 'subsistence': their communities were engaged in producing goods for export to wider markets, and were enmeshed in wider economic and social systems. In both cases, the wars between Britain and France and their respective allies that marked the end of the 18th and the beginning of the 19th century were key drivers for these export economies. Loch Aoineart was, through the kelp trade, profiting from the wars;

an activity which briefly stemmed the tide of emigration. A generation or two before kelping became the main driver of the economy, beef was a key export product, destined to sail the globe in the holds of Britain's navy and the bellies of its hundreds of thousands of mariners (Moreland and MacLean 2012: 96). Loch Aoineart's community was enmeshed with the project of Empire through the community's membership of the local Volunteers, in the guise of captaincies for the elite and guaranteed cash incomes close to home for the people who worked the land. There was a long tradition of military service in the Hebrides which is peripheral to this study but well-discussed elsewhere (MacKillop 2000, 2012). One of the most striking examples of the opportunities it afforded is Jaques MacDonald, son of Niall MacEachen from Howbeg, South Uist, who become one of Napoléon's Marshals (Hache and Stiùbhart 2010). The navy was a physical presence in the landscape, part of everyday life, not an abstracted notion of something central seen from a distant periphery. On Hiort, feathers dominated rents in the early 1810s as a response to international markets. In the later 19th century, the relationship between the navy and the *Hiortaich* would be the driving force behind a wave of Improvement, not the relationship with their landlords (Geddes and Grant 2015). The landscapes of Loch Aoineart and Hiort are writ large with themes of engagement and connection with the wider world, something that has only latterly been recognised (Moreland and MacLean 2012: 96). Where people had choices, the route to economic success, or at least alleviating distress, was often through these engagements with the wider world and the 'project' of Empire. Such a view is in contradiction with the meta-narratives that see the ordinary people of the Highlands and Islands as 'victims' of modernity and of the wider trends of commercialisation and Empire: 'a romantic counter-modernism, which seeks to preserve (or as one might say, construct) the 'purity' and simplicity of traditional societies and which reads this incorporation into the modern world system only as a tale of alienation and fragmentation'(Moreland and MacLean 2012: 97).

It is interesting to consider how the specific experiences of the landscapes of Hiort and Loch Aoineart tie in to the wider historical narratives of the period, such as Improvement. In a traditional narrative a 'pre-Improvement' landscape in Gaeldom is one in which the economy was based largely on subsistence, where surplus would be paid in kind to the tacksman, perhaps with a small

amount sold on to pay a cash rent or the trading of cattle. This surplus would be passed up the chain, eventually to the chief, who would preside over a complex system of hospitality and mutual obligation (Dodgshon 1998). Although, of course, things were gradually changing, this landscape should logically be static and stable, almost timeless, relatively isolated from the 'outside' world. The landscapes of Loch Aoineart and Hiort hardly fit this pattern.

While Hiort retained the classic pre-Improvement settlement form of a single nucleated *bailte* set within unenclosed fields, the landscape was given over not to subsistence but to the production of seabird products on a near-industrial scale. Seabird feathers, a commodity of next to no use at all to the community itself, comprised the island's entire rent in 1814 (Harman 1997: 100). The shape of the land and the community was dictated largely by the need to produce materials for export: the allocation of fowling cliffs shaped the relative poverty or wealth of its members and was probably reflected in the sharing of the agricultural land. This was a community in which the minister enjoyed snuff and profited from the British Empire though his business interests overseas. He also taught at least some of the community English, which they used to negotiate with visitors to the islands. Loch Aoineart in the early 19th century was a landscape where traditional *bailtean* lay alongside the proto-crofts of the kelping pendicles. Like Hiort, much of the landscape was given over to the production of a commodity much in demand by the British state and its empire, in this instance kelp. The situation was dynamic, changing both as a result of the actions of the elite and the limited choices available to the rest of society. Some tenants continued to farm in the hope that surplus crops or animals would pay the rent. For others, the lotting of pendicles represented an opportunity to gain land and engage in the kelping industry. Some chose to attempt both farming and kelping, while cottars were likely to have had little choice but to take any work they could. Many of those who could emigrated. It is hard to square these dynamic pictures of the landscapes of Hiort and Loch Aoineart with the paradigms of 'pre-Improvement' landscapes we find in much of the literature.

It is also worth comparing the historical changes which occurred in the case study landscapes to the historical paradigms of Improvement. Hiort, as will be discussed later in this chapter, saw neither Improvement in the classical sense, nor Clearance. However, on South Uist, it would have been apparent at the start

of the 19th century that significant change was occurring, particularly to the economy of the islands, and this was having a profound effect on society. By the 1840s and 1850s, South Uist had reached the classic 'end-point' of Clearance and Improvement: much of the land was cleared to make way for sheep, while those who stayed lived in a reordered landscape of individual crofts and improved farmsteads (Symonds 1999b). One way of considering these developments would be to say that the period of around 1780–1850 was one of Improvement, then Clearance. In this model, the kelping landscape of the 1800s and 1810s would be seen as part of this process, a precursor to formal Improvement, the introduction of crofting, and (seemingly) inevitable Clearance. However, it is argued that to view it in this way implies an 'intentionality' on behalf of the estate and the community that does not reflect well the evidence or the experience of everyday life. The narratives in this thesis present a landscape in which various individuals and groups were trying to navigate a dynamic and chaotic situation. It seems problematic to suggest that for those experiencing this period there would have been any sense that they were part of a long-term process. The most immediate and influential acts which shaped the local community and the landscape were probably the decisions of local tenants, tacksmen, and the estate elite, not those of wider historical processes. The effects of these decisions, unlike long-term Improvement, were tangible, visible, and immediate at the time.

It could be argued that the period was experienced this way by ordinary people because they were unaware of the machinations of the wider elite, but the evidence we have from the estate does not suggest any coherent plan on their part either. It is interesting to note that archaeological evidence obtained during the SEARCH project suggested that living standards for ordinary people had actually been higher in the later 18th century than they were by 1800 (Moreland and MacLean 2012: 97). By the early 19th century, we see the estate reacting to wider economic change by attempting to turn almost all of the island's production over to the lucrative kelp trade. However, it was apparent at the time that the situation was unsustainable, and that the policies of the elite were impeding ordinary subsistence agriculture and even agricultural improvement (MacDonald 1811: 790). This is supported by the frequency with which the estate was forced to import food-stuffs in the period. The estate seems to stagger from

KELP.

At a GENERAL MEETING of the HIGHLAND SOCIETY OF SCOTLAND, held at Edinburgh, the 10th January 1815,

The EARL of WEMYSS and MARCH, V. P. in the CHAIR,

" The following Report of a Committee of the Society upon KELP, was taken under consideration, and approved. The Society resolved to offer the premiums specified in the Report, which was ordered to be printed and circulated. The Meeting farther recommended to the proprietors of Kelp Shores, and those intrusted with the management of the manufacture of the article, to pay attention to the Report, and co-operate with the Society in a matter so important to themselves, and of general interest to the country, especially to the Highlands and Islands."

REPORT.

KELP is an article of much importance to the Highlands and Islands of Scotland, as affording employment and subsistence to many thousands of the poorer classes of the inhabitants, and thereby preventing emigration, and as yielding, till of late, a considerable addition to the income of the proprietors, and tending, in many other respects, to improve the Highland districts, by bringing money into circulation in those parts of the country. It is also of importance, to the nation at large, as affording a necessary material in several valuable manufactures, which are useful at home, and bring into the country a great deal of money by exportation abroad, and saving to the country a considerable expenditure of money to foreign countries for the purchase of barilla ; and it is valuable as breeding up a great number of seamen, even in the earlier stages of the process which lead to seafaring habits, and afterwards in conveying the article, and the manufactures produced from the article, from place to place ; and it is also of much importance, from the great number of vessels employed in the trade.

Of late, the price of kelp has been so much reduced, that there has been no adequate inducement for carrying on the manufacture of it ; and were it to be given up, the Highlands, and even the country at large, would suffer materially.

This matter was lately brought under consideration of the Highland Society, and a Committee was appointed to make inquiries and to report. The Committee accordingly met, and, with the view of obtaining the necessary information, made out and circulated a set of queries as to the price of kelp, and expence of manufacturing, &c. for some years back, the quantity made, or which might be made, in different districts, the number of persons employed, and kinds of kilns used, with several other particulars regarding kelp, and some particulars regarding barilla. But, in addition to the points to which these queries refer, the Committee find, that there are some other matters, relative to which information is also requisite, so as they may be enabled to state correctly the real value of the article, considering it fully, in all respects, and to point out the most advantageous method of preparing it and bringing it to market. In order that this information may be obtained, they propose the following experiments : ·

1. To cut sea ware in places where there are strong currents, of the growth of one, two, and three years; to dry properly; to take an equal weight of each kind so dried; to burn in the most careful manner, preventing any mixture of stones, sand, or other extraneous matter ; to burn thoroughly, but with a moderate heat, drawing the ware regularly to the flame during the burning, and stirring well towards the close of the process (the different kinds of ware, with their produce, being always

Figure 6.2.2. First page of a pamphlet found in the kelp accounts of the Clanranald estate, encouraging experiments to improve the yields and quality of kelp. © National Records of Scotland GD201/6/39.

one crisis to another, trying several different approaches with little success.

There is only once piece of *direct* evidence of the 'ideology' of Improvement.

During research into the kelp industry in Loch Aoineart, a small pamphlet was

found tucked in among the accounts (GD201/6/39). The document, created by the Highland Society of Scotland in 1815, is a report of a committee regarding kelp, formed in response to plunging prices which occurred immediately after the end of the Napoleonic War (Figure 6.2.2). The pamphlet suggests various experiments to investigate how the yield and quality of kelp can be improved, even setting out bounties to those who will do the work. This is a reactive document: a response to the economic crisis unfolding across the West Highlands as the kelp industry collapsed. Even this improving society was not attempting to enact a long-term plan, it was simply attempting to mitigate the immediate economic effects of the ending of the war, something entirely outwith its control. This pamphlet would have arrived too late for Loch Aoineart, where debt was already rising and the situation was becoming untenable. By 1838, all the estate's attempts to remain solvent had failed, and it was sold. At the same time the tacksman of Bornais, who owned the land on Loch Aoineart not held directly by the estate, was forced to sell up (MacLean 2012: 367).

The suggestion that a historical meta-narrative of Improvement appears to be a poor model for understanding the experience of life in the case studies discussed in this thesis leads to a wider question: how useful, generally, are historical paradigms such as Improvement in considering the experience of life and landscape in the past? In his paper *Oral Tradition and History in a Hebridean Island,* Eric Cregeen (1998) set out to compare and contrast evidence from the oral tradition and the historical record on the island of Tiree. While a very useful study on the reliability and usefulness of such evidence for historians in itself, it is his thoughts about what might be considered the shape of history that resonate with the findings of this thesis. He suggests that the archival and written record is preferred by many scholars because 'it is given in a coherent form and frequently statistically, combined with observations that show the historian that the writer is like himself in his thought-processes and values' (Cregeen 1998: 22). Thus, when we see a list of annual accounts in the archives, we can imagine the past as a neatly ordered series of events, where trends can be seen and a direction of travel may be apparent. In the oral tradition, 'this obliging form of presentation is usually absent'(Cregeen 1998: 22). It forms not around grand historical meta-narratives, but around the prominent individuals, kinsmen and family, and the normal events of daily life. Where Improvement or

Clearance are remembered, this is more normally in stories about particular tacksmen or factors, not large-scale historical narratives (Cregeen 1998: 27-8). Cregeen also noted that when the oral tradition recounted events in the more distant past, outside living memory, it tended to coalesce around well-known historical events, creating a past punctuated with fixed points around which communal memories were formed. Thus an event like the Battle of Waterloo exercised a 'gravitational attraction on minor events in its temporal field' (Cregeen 1998: 21).

These two contrasting shapes of the past have a significant impact on archaeological and historical endeavour. The past of big history is one in which the long-term historical narratives can be seen; the landscape is perceived before and after Improvement, with everything in between representing a journey from the A to B. The shape of oral tradition is different: something truer to ordinary lived experience than the shape of history. Individuals would have been aware of immediate effects on their lives and of wider processes of change in the landscape. Indeed, their response to and protest against the changes they saw going on around them survives in the oral tradition (Meek 1990, 2003). The elite, certainly, would have conceived of and probably discussed an 'ideology of Improvement', an ethic that influenced their decisions, long-term plans, and their attitudes toward their estates and tenants (MacKichan 2008; Tarlow 2007). However, it is perhaps important to draw a distinction between the 'ideology' of Improvement which existed in 18th-and-19th-century thought and its immediate effects, and the historically-constructed 'narrative' of Improvement. Few ordinary people in the past would have experienced 'Improvement' as it is conceived as a historical model, viewed in hind-sight with its clear stages and a seemingly inevitable end-point. If Improvement in this historical sense was perceived at all by those who lived through it, it was after its ending: the testimony of the Napier commission (1884) shows us that half a century later the overall trajectory of Improvement and its ultimate results were all too apparent in hind sight. However, individual life histories and communal memories are punctuated and structured by the memory of immediate, lived events; there is no possibility of teleology in the embodied experience of the moment. Narratives viewed with hind sight certainly aid us in understanding how the landscape came to be the way it is today, how historical events and trends

developed over time, but should they really play such a central role in our understandings of the experience of life in the past when they often meant little to those living in the midst of these historical processes?

To consider this thought further, let us compare Improvement with the experience of the Napoleonic Wars. While the former concept is a later historical construct as much as it was something perceived at the time, the Napoleonic Wars had an immediate and discernible impact on the landscapes and communities of both Loch Aoineart and Hiort. The armed forces were an important part of daily life, the economy closely followed the course of the war, and news and rumour probably also spread in the community. It is perhaps no wonder that Waterloo drew folk memory towards it on Tiree: the experience of hearing the news of the battle would be a highly memorable event that would make a mark both in individual life histories and in communal memory. And yet, the experience and impact of the armed forces and conflict in these communities has tended to be subsumed within the wider narratives of the period or are treated as secondary to Improvement or Clearance. Until recently, they were rarely discussed at all, although recent work by historians has greatly improved our appreciation of their importance (Dziennik 2015; MacKillop 2000, 2012). Still, the impact of the army and navy and the wars of Empire tend to figure little in archaeological accounts of the post-medieval Highlands and Islands. If our aim is to understand the experience of individuals and communities in the past, it is argued that 'the Hebridean experience of the Napoleonic Wars' is a more useful model than 'the Hebridean experience of Improvement'. The former was widely perceived and understood at the time, meaningful to people and communities in the past. The latter is more a historical narrative which attempts to explain the experiences of thousands of people across the region over decades than a concept which would have been meaningful to the vast majority of people living through it, who probably viewed the changes they saw and the hardships they experienced largely as the immediate results of the decisions of specific members of the local elite.

Time and again in this thesis, the narrow temporal focus of the approach has created a narrative which contrasts significantly with that presented in other accounts. This is perhaps to be expected: in accounts which seek to examine large-scale changes over decades, even centuries, there is often little

opportunity to consider life in any particular time and place. However, this is not to deny that Improvement, the emergence of capitalism, modernity, and other such concepts are very important areas of study. Indeed, these topics are a fundamental part of the project of historical archaeology (Hicks and Beaudry 2006: 3-5), and are key themes of study highlighted in the Scottish Archaeological Research Framework (ScARF 2012). However, in allowing such grand themes to dominate, there is a risk that we shape the past in the image of our arguments and disciplines, creating ahistorical or teleological accounts that treat the recent past simply as a process that ultimately ends in the present day. The term 'post-medieval archaeology' has often been considered problematic because it suggests the period is only of interest due to its relationship with the medieval, often being approached as little more than an 'age of transition' between the medieval and the modern (Hicks and Beaudry 2006: 3). However, in focusing only on how grand historical themes of the period formed the modern world, we are perhaps at risk of making the 'post-medieval' 'pre-modern': again seeing the period as something to be contrasted with another, rather than as a subject of study in its own right. A key reflection of this thesis is that by allowing certain narratives to dominate, we allow only for a certain shape of the past to emerge. By taking a new approach, this thesis has endeavoured to show that different shapes, those which may better reflect everyday experience, can also be formed from the historical evidence.

6.3   Wider Context and Future Directions

This thesis has focused exclusively on the post-medieval Highlands and Islands of Scotland, and upon archaeological and historical approaches to this topic. However, it can be seen as part of the wider of project of historical archaeology, an international sub-discipline which forms the wider context for the now well-developed field of post-medieval archaeology in the UK (Horning and Palmer 2009). Historical archaeology differs from the work of archaeologists in other periods in the much greater quantity and diversity of evidence (Hicks and Beaudry 2006: 3). It also has certain approaches and concerns which, while not all unique to the sub-discipline, are particularly prominent within it. These approaches and concerns are also reflected in this research: the experience of landscape in communal and personal memory (De Cunzo and Ernstien 2006; Hicks and Hauser 2007; Holtorf and Williams 2006); the experience of time and the

character of history (Lucas 2006); theoretical and methodological approaches to using documentary evidence (Wilkie 2006); and writing and storytelling (Joyce 2006; Praetzellis 1998). Historical archaeology also shares a concern that post-medieval archaeologies often attempt little more than to contribute to or illustrate 'grand narratives in economic or social history' (Hicks and Beaudry 2006: 6). A reaction against this has led to attempts to create more nuanced studies which reject normative archaeological accounts of the past. It is into the international context of these new 'interpretive historical archaeologies' that this thesis should be situated (Hicks and Beaudry 2006: 6).

A particular concern of historical archaeology is that of 'scale': that is the challenge of addressing both the wider, often global, trends of the post-medieval world *and* the local and particular. The issue remains unresolved, although several possible models for addressing the relationship between the global and the local have been put forward (Orser 2009). The research presented in this thesis emerged partly from the feeling that the 'big' side of the scale, the historical meta-narratives of the period, have tended to be over-emphasised in the study of post-medieval Gaeldom at the expense of understanding the experience of life in the landscape. The approach taken in this thesis sought to subvert these narratives by focusing on the local and the particular. However, in doing so, considerations of the large-scale trends and events of the period, such as maritime trade, Empire, Improvement, and the Napoleonic Wars, naturally emerged and were drawn into the discussion. The case studies in this thesis placed such large-scale processes in the landscape, examining the small-scale experience of Hebridean communities which were closely entangled in these wider, often global, historical events. It is suggested then, that this approach is a model through which narratives about the past can be created which address concerns at many levels of scale.

There is no reason why the approach advocated in this thesis could not be applied to many other post-medieval landscapes. The contrasting case studies demonstrate that it is possible to work with varied evidence bases, drawing as much evidence as possible from the local landscape, but reaching outwards for wider context when necessary. Although a decent quantity and variety of evidence is required overall, the historical and archaeological records do not need to be comprehensive. The themes which were chosen for study were

selected partly as they tended to bring together large portions of the available evidence, making the most of what is often a patchy record. This resulted in a pleasingly reflexive relationship between the approach and the case study landscapes: the themes studied emerged as a result not only of the wider interests of the research but of the character of the landscapes and the nature of their archaeological and historical records.

On the other hand, it also meant that there were several areas which it was not possible to explore. Life in the sheiling, the summer transhumance settlements, would be an extremely interesting theme to address. The tightly seasonal experience there, in a locale often far from the normal settlement and with distinctive social and cultural aspects, would have made an interesting contrast with life in the *baile*. However, sheiling practice had ended in both case study areas by the periods which were chosen for discussion. Although addressed to some degree in section 5.3, religion, in the form of Christianity would likely be a particularly useful theme to explore. Devotional and religious material is an important part of the oral tradition (Meek 2003: 266-98), and religion appears to have played a fundamental part of everyday life in many communities. Unfortunately, the evidence base in the case study areas was not rich enough to allow for this topic to be explored further. However many themes were left unaddressed, it is hoped that this research has shown that taking a new approach to the period often opens up new areas of landscape and experience to archaeological enquiry.

An interesting possibility for future work would be to apply the approach to other landscapes or periods which would make for interesting comparisons to those presented here. How, for example, would the Hebridean experience differ from that of land-locked areas or from rural Perthshire, so close to the Lowlands and their centres of commerce? It would also be interesting to compare the pre-Improvement landscapes presented here with a similar study of a post-Improvement landscape. This would allow for a consideration of Improvement that did not view the changes brought about by the historical trends of the period as abstract economic or historical concepts, but as changes to the lived and embodied experiences of communities and landscapes. Certainly, the changing relationship between people and the land after Clearance is a rich seam in the oral tradition (Meek 2003).

One place where local and detailed narratives about life in the past could be particularly informative about larger-scale historical trends is Hiort. Although the community was relatively typical of the region in the period discussed, what happened next was not. The introduction of a crofting landscape to Hiort, which occurred in the later 1830s, is not in line with common historical models. Improvement appears not to have been driven by the desire of the landowner to increase cash profits from the land, but by a desire of the community, its minister, and perhaps its tacksman, to improve living conditions and agriculture, taking advantage of charitable donations from external sources (Gannon and Geddes 2015: 98-101). What Improvement did come affected living conditions and brought new forms of landholding, but did not fundamentally affect the economy of the islands, the annual round of seasonal tasks and activities, or indeed the community itself, which remained intact. Unlike many parts of the Highlands and Islands, Clearance was not visited upon Hiort. Previous studies of the archipelago have tended to view it in isolation, regarding it as unique and unusual, and as a result it has rarely ever been used as a case study in wider discussions about post-medieval Scotland. Recent work on Hiort has begun to break down the highly problematic narratives of previous studies, presenting much more critical and nuanced accounts which are now available for consideration by the wider historical and archaeological community (Fleming 2005; Geddes and Gannon 2015; Geddes and Grant 2015; Harden and Lelong 2011). Now that Hiort has been, in a sense, rehabilitated, it could provide a very interesting case study for historians and archaeologists as to what could have happened elsewhere in Gaeldom if Improvement and Clearance had taken different forms, or if communities had been more empowered. The future study of Hiort after 'Hardrock' may finally see it take its rightful place within the wider history and archaeology of post-medieval Scotland.

Perhaps the most significant conclusion of this thesis, and the point on which it will end, is that Gaelic oral tradition is a crucially important resource for studying life in the post-medieval *Gàidhealtachd*. This resource, however, has been woefully under-used by both archaeologists and historians of the period. Material from the tradition has been central to this research, comprising some of the key evidence for understanding how people experienced and perceived the landscape, their communities, and their place in the world. It has acted as an

antidote to the homogenising narratives of big history that often seem to have little to say about the lives of ordinary people beyond viewing them as simple caricatures or romantic tropes. The tradition, unlike documentary and archival sources, reflects the entirety of Gaelic society, and myriad viewpoints and experiences of individuals with varied life experiences and roles within it. Post-medieval archaeologists are exceptionally fortunate to have first-hand narratives from the past which were intended to convey culturally and historically contextualised ideas about landscape, society, and history. Our colleagues studying prehistory can only dream of such a resource: imagine how the discovery of the words of even a single song describing ritual behaviour in a megalithic monument would transform our understanding and approach to such structures. Yet despite the presence of a huge resource of oral tradition for the post-medieval period, archaeologists have rarely engaged with it in a critical or extended manner.

In an ideal world, all archaeologists studying Gaeldom would be able to acquire some facility with the Gaelic language. Indeed, the relatively small amount acquired during the process of producing this thesis certainly aided in identifying useful thematic content in both place-names and the recorded oral tradition. However, this thesis has sought to show there is a significant amount of translated material available and a corpus of literature in English which allows for a basic critical understanding of the tradition to be acquired. Indeed, it should be noted that a number of well-respected academics who have contributed significantly to the subject are non-Gaelic speakers (e.g. Crawford 1962, 1967; Cregeen 1998). Although this thesis would encourage those studying the place and period to acquire what Gaelic they can, perhaps more importantly it argues that an inability to speak the language is no excuse for not engaging with the very culture of the people under examination or the oral tradition which was an important and ubiquitous part of their daily lives and of their understanding of the world in which they lived. It is also argued that being a Gaelic-speaker alone is not enough to allow a researcher to fully appreciate the meaning and importance of the oral tradition. Much of the nuance of the language has been lost or altered since the 18th and 19th centuries, and to understand the content often requires detailed knowledge of the context, both geographical and temporal, of the material which is being studied. In almost all

cases, notes on the oral tradition compiled by Gaelic scholars, which are often in English, will be needed in order to gain even a basic critical understanding of the material. Thus being a Gaelic-speaker is just one of a number of multi-disciplinary skills required – and no one individual is likely to be able to encompass them all. While it is certainly true that the examination of the oral tradition in this thesis was necessarily more superficial than what would be expected by researchers who specialise in this subject area, it should be regarded as a basic starting point that could readily be achieved by any archaeologist and will, hopefully, be developed further in future.

Although scope for a deeper engagement with the tradition remains, this research still represents the deepest and most extended archaeological engagement with the Gaelic oral tradition to date. The experience of this research suggests that to present any account of post-medieval Gaeldom without engaging with this material would be to ignore much of the richest evidence - evidence which often represents voices and experiences that are found nowhere else in the archaeological and historical record. In this regard, this thesis seeks to place itself within the small school of thought operating in several disciplines which has sought to promote the use of Gaelic culture and oral tradition in history and archaeology for several decades (Cheape 1995; Cregeen 1998; Cregeen and MacKenzie 1987; Kidd 2000; Kidd 2007; MacGregor 2002; Matheson 1972; Meek 1990, 1995).

The Gaelic oral tradition has not simply been used as a form of evidence in this thesis. It has been deeply embedded in the entire work through the key theoretical and methodological approach of narrative. Gaelic songs and poems have structured chapters, influenced the selection of themes and topics for study, and provided a wider sense of story, of coherence, to the work. The approach used allowed the oral tradition to form a relationship with the overall narrative of the research, almost fulfilling the role of a co-author. This thesis began with the consideration that most of the historical and archaeological accounts of post-medieval Gaeldom lacked the colour, emotion, richness, and variety of the oral tradition. It is hoped that a part of this richness has been expressed in the course of this thesis. Certainly, it was a great pleasure to have a reason to explore the songs, poems, and stories of Gaeldom which in their richness and variety are instructive not just in understanding the past but in

understanding the nature of human experience and the place of the individual in an increasingly globalised world. The past of the oral tradition has a distinctive shape and character, different to that found in the papers and books of archaeological scholarship with their familiar paradigms and meta-narratives. To truly understand the experience of life in the past, and to grasp its significance for contemporary society, room has to be made for many pasts, many experiences and voices. By presenting a new approach to the landscapes of post-medieval Scotland, this thesis has sought to reveal some of these unique experiences and narratives, and it is hoped that in future it will contribute to shaping new understandings of the past which are as rich and evocative as the songs and stories of the people who lived there.

7. Epilogue

Hiort, 1840

The smell of fresh lime-wash can still be detected in the interior of the new Kirk at the south-east end of the bay. It lies in the half-finished complex of dry stone dykes that will enclose the glebe, the land that will support the new minister, Neil MacKenzie. The landscape within which it lies is starkly different from the open landscape of just a few years before. A procession of long, linear, crofts are bounded by a new drystone head dyke and separated by stone boundaries, the most monumental of which are built from the ruins of the old baile. Running like a stitch down the centre of this patchwork of crofts is the street. The new houses, barns, byres and cleitean *cluster along its northern edge. To the untrained eye they appear identical to the small byre-dwellings of the baile of a generation before, but their inhabitants still view them as novel. Their windows and doorways make them brighter and airier during the day. Their purpose-built wall-beds will be warm and cosy. The animals still share these dwellings with the* Hiortaich *in winter, but the stone tallan which separates them from the people and the provision of outside middens will make the experience less like living in a byre. The houses, and the wider landscape, are physical manifestations of the new order and the transformation the community have made over the past few years. It has been hard, often backbreaking, work.*

This transformation has changed more than the physical ordering of the landscape. Within the kirk, the community sit, rapt, listening to the words of their new minister. This man is altogether different to the ministers and missionaries who saw to their spiritual needs in previous generations. Some of his flock look hesitant, even uncertain, whilst others, leaning forward to catch every word, are experiencing nothing short of a spiritual rebirth. Under MacKenzie, the community are making a new commitment to their God; establishing a new relationship which they and their descendants will cling to during good times and bad. The community, like their homes, appear relatively unchanged superficially, but they too are transformed. The courting fowler and the ambitious crofter of 20 years ago are the mainstay of the community now, their own families attending school when they can find time between the demands of fowling, farming, and worship. Effie MacCrimmon is no longer as

young as she was. The faces of the young are full of confidence, excited by the change which has happened already, eager to push forward even more. The older people are less certain, remaining stubbornly in their old houses, worrying about the future. Despite their feelings about the change that is sweeping away the landscape of their youth, they feel secure in the thought that whatever the future holds the Hiortaich *will face it, as they always have, together.*

***

Loch Aoineart, 1851

A shepherd trudges across the spongey moorland between the hills on the south side of the loch, weaving his way up the valley of Craigavaig, near where Loch Aoineart meets the open sea of the Minch. Stepping over a turf wall, already slumping after just a few years of neglect, he pushes through the rotting stalks of the grains which have run wild by the ruined byre-dwelling. Weeds, waist-high, obscure the regular banks of the feannagan *below. He skirts around the remains of what once was a family home. It's collapsed crucks stick up drunkenly from the slumped remains of the thatch like ribs projecting from the decaying carcass of some huge beast. Bracken is already growing within. The shepherd doesn't dwell on it; he didn't know the family who lived there, and he saw many such abandoned houses in his native Ross-shire. Unlike the few* Deasaich *still living at the head of the loch, he doesn't remember the coast when it was a busy place. He doesn't remember the years of uncertainty, and then the cruel catastrophe of the potato departing. He doesn't remember hollow-cheeked friends and families haunting the roads, the ships in the loch taking the* Deasaich *across the sea, to Manitoba, Cape Breton, Nova Scotia. However, like his new neighbours and many of his fellow Gaels his heart has hardened to such suffering. It is all too familiar.*

Abandoned bailtean *are merely obstacles to him. He has many sheep to gather and miles to cover before he can go home to his family and his stone cottage at the head of the loch, near the old road which leads west to the machair. He works hard and he is proud to be a shepherd. When the census enumerators came that year he felt fortunate to state his occupation when so many others made their excuses. Most of them had enough English to know what 'pauper'*

meant. His new neighbours, the Deasaich, have been welcoming enough. The few families still there live tenuous lives on the small crofts to which they have been cleared from more fertile land in the west. They earn some money as servants and labourers, hoping to gain something to eke out the potatoes and shellfish that, all too often, make up both their daily meals. They endure, hoping that the South Uist Gaelic of their forebears will still ring out across the waters of the loch in the days of their children and grandchildren. The last publican barred the windows of the inn before he left. Anyone looking east, towards the head of the loch, would see only one sign of human life there. The smoke of a single chimney.

8. Bibliography

Acland, Anne
    1981   *A Devon Family: The story of the Aclands.* Phillimore and Co.: Chichester.
Adamson, Donald Beck
    2014   Commercialisation, change and continuity: an archaeological study of rural commercial practice in the Scottish Highlands. PhD Thesis, University of Glasgow.
Alexander, Stewart
    1877   The St Kilda Maid's Song. *Gael* 6, 125.
Aston, Michael
    1985   *Interpreting the Landscape: Local archaeology in landscape studies.* Batsford: London.
Aston, Michael and Rowley, T
    1974   *Landscape Archaeology : An introduction to fieldwork techniques in Post-Roman landscapes.* David and Charles: Newton Abbot.
Atkinson, George Clayton (ed.)
    2001   *Expeditions to the Hebrides by George Clayton Atkinson in 1831 and 1833.* MacLean Press: Waternish, Skye.
Atkinson, John
    2000   Rural Settlement in Lochtayside: Understanding the landscapes of change. In John Atkinson, Ian Banks and Gavin MacGregor (eds.), *Townships to Farmsteads: Rural settlement studies in Scotland, England, and Wales*, 150-61. British Archaeological Reports: Oxford.
    2010   Settlement Form in Evolution in the Central Highlands of Scotland, ca. 1100-1900. *International Journal of Historical Archaeology* 14, 316-34.
Atkinson, John, Dalglish, Chris, Lelong, Olivia, MacGregor, Gavin and Shearer, Ingrid
    2005   *Ben Lawers Historic Landscape Project: Excavations at Tombreck and Kiltyrie.* GUARD: Glasgow.
Bailie, Warren and Adamson, Donald Beck
    2015   *ARO17: The demise of Tigh Caol, an eighteenth century drovers' inn.* GUARD Archaeology Ltd: Glasgow.
Bald, William
    1805a   *Plan of the Estate of Boisdale, the Property of Colonel Alexander McDonald. Surveyed by William Bald, assistant to Mr Ainslie 1805.* National Records of Scotland (NRS): Register House Plans. RHP 3066.
    1805b   *Plan of the Island of South Uist, the Property of Ranald George McDonald Esq. of Clanranald. Surveyed by William Bald, assistant to Mr Ainslie, 1805.* National Records of Scotland (NRS): Register House Plans. RHP 38151.
    1829   *The Island of South Uist, the Property of Ranald George McDonald Esq. of Clanranald. By William Bald. Lithographed by A Forrester, Edinburgh.* National Records of Scotland (NRS): Register House Plans. RHP 1040
Baldwin, John R.
    1974   Sea Bird Fowling in Scotland and Faroe. *Folk Life* 12, 60-103.
    2004   Seabirds, Subsistence and Coastal Communities: An overview of cultural traditions in the British Isles. *Traditions of Seabird Fowling in the North Atlantic Region*, 12-36. The Islands Book Trust: Callicvol, Port Nis, Eilean Leòdhas.
Bannerman, Nigel and Jones, Cecil
    1999   Fish-Trap Types: A component of the maritime cultural landscape. *The International Journal of Nautical Archaeology* 28, (1): 70-84.
Barnes, T.J and Ducan, J.S
    1992   Introduction: Writing worlds. In T.J Barnes and J.S Ducan (eds.), *Writing Worlds*. Routledge: London.
Barr, Gordon (trans.)
    2010   Birlinn Chlann Raghnaill (Clanranald's Galley) http://www.moidart.org.uk/datasets/gbarramcma/gordon%20ama%20part%202.pdf
Barret, John and Ko, Ilhong
    2009   A Phenomenology of Landscape: A crisis in British Archaeology? *Journal of Social Archaeology* 9, (3): 275-95.
Bathgate, Thomas
    1949   Ancient Fish-Traps or Yairs in Scotland. *Proc Soc Antiq Scot* 38, 98-102.
Beaudry, M.C

2008   "Above Vulgar Economy": The intersection of historical archaeology and microhistory in writing archaeological biographies of two New England merchants. In James Brooks, Christopher DeCorse and John Walton (eds.), *Small Worlds: Method, meaning and narrative in microhistory*, 173-98. School for Advanced Research Press: Santa Fe.

Beaudry, Mary
  1998   Farm Journal: First person, four voices. *Historical Archaeology* 32, (1): 20-33.

Bender, Barbara, Hamilton, Sue and Tilley, Chris (eds.)
  2007   *Stone Worlds: Narrative and reflexivity in landscape archaeology*. Left Coast Press: Walnut Creek.

Benjamin, Jonathan, Bicket, Andrew, Anderson, Deborah and Hale, Alex
  2014   A Multi-Disciplinary Approach to Researching the Intertidal and Marine Archaeology in the Outer Hebrides. *Journal of Island & Coastal Archaeology* 9, 400-24.

Bennet, Margaret
  1996   *Oatmeal and the Catechism: Scottish Gaelic settlers in Quebec*. John Donald: Edinburgh.

Bezant, Jemma and Grant, Kevin
  2016   The Post-Medieval Rural Landscape – Toward a Landscape Archaeology? *Post-Medieval Archaeology* 50, (1).

Black, Ronald
  2000   Introduction. In Ronald Black (ed.), *Smuaintean fo Éiseabhal; Thoughts Under Eiseaval*. Birlinn: Edinburgh.
  2001   *An Lasair: Anthology of 18th Century Scottish Gaelic Verse*. Birlinn: Edinburgh.
  2005   *The Gaelic Otherworld*. Birlinn: Edinburgh.

Blackadder, John
  1800   *Survey and Valuation of Lord MacDonald's Estate.* Brynmor Jones Library.

Boivin, Nicole (ed.)
  2008   *Material Cultures, Material Minds*. University Press: Cambridge.

Boswell, James
  1785   *The Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides*. Henry Baldwin: London.

Bourdieu, Pierre
  1977   *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. Unversity Press: Cambridge.

Bowman, Anne
  1990   Boat Naust Survey on Papa Westray, Orkney. *The International Journal of Nautical Archaeology* 19, (4): 317-25.

Boyd, John Morton and Williamson, Kenneth
  1960   *St Kilda Summer*. Hutchinson: London.

Boyle, Steven
  2003   Ben Lawers: an Improvement-period landscape on Lochtayside, Perthshire. In S Govan (ed.), *Medieval of Later Rural Settlement in Scotland: 10 years on*, 17-29. Historic Scotland: Edinburgh.

Branigan, Keith and Foster, Pat
  2000   *From Barra to Berneray: Archaeological survey and excavation in the southern isles of the Outer Hebrides*. Sheffield Academic Press: Sheffield.
  2002   *Barra and the Bishop's Isles: Living on the margin*. Tempus: Stroud.

Bray, Elizabeth
  1986   *The Discovery of the Hebrides: Voyages to the Western Isles 1745-1883*. Collins: Glasgow.

Breton, Andre
  1972   *Manifestoes of Surrealism*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan.

Brophy, Kenny and Cummings, Vicki
  2013   Psychoarchaeology: Theories, methods and practice http://centraltag.wordpress.com/call-for-papers/psychoarchaeology-theories-methods-and-practice/

Brougham, H
  1871   *The Life and Times of Henry Lord Brougham - by Himself*. Blackwood: Edinburgh.

Brück, Joanna
  2005   Experiencing the Past? The development of a phenomenological archaeology in British Prehistory. *Archaeological Dialogues* 12, (1): 45-72.

Bruford, Alan and MacDonald, A (eds.)
  1994   *Scottish Traditional Tales*. Polygon: Edinburgh.

Buchan, Andrew
  1727   *A Description of St Kilda*. Lumisden and Robertson: Edinburgh.

Buchanan, John Lane

1793   *Travels in the Western Hedbrides from 1782 to 1790*. GGJ and J Robinson London.

Buchli, Victor
1995   Interpreting Material Culture: The Trouble with text. In Ian Hodder, Micheal Shanks, Victor Buchli, J Carman, J Last and Gavin Lucas (eds.), *Interpreting Archaeology: Finding meaning in the past*, 181-93. Routledge: London.

Buchli, Victor and Tilley, Chris (eds.)
2002   *The Material Culture Reader*. Berg: Oxford.

Bumstead, J
1982   *The People's Clearance: Highland emigration to British North America 1770-1815*. University Press: Edinburgh.
2005   The Rise and Fall of the Kelping Industry in the Western Isles. In Keith Branigan (ed.), *From Clan to Clearance: History and Archaeology of the Isle of Barra c850-1850*. Oxbow: Oxford.

Burt, Edward
1974   *Burt's Letters from the North of Scotland*. John Donald: Edinburgh.

Caird, James
1979   Land Use in the Uists since 1800. *Proceedings of the Royal Society of Edinburgh* 77B, 505-26.
1989   Early 19th Century Estate Plans. In Finlay MacLeod (ed.), *Togail Tir: Marking time*, 48-79. Acair: Stornoway.

Cameron, Ewan (ed.)
2001   *Clearances of the Highlands and Islands*. The Oxford Companion to Scottish History. University Press: Oxford.

Campbell, Alexander
1802   St Kildan Elegies. *The Scots Magazine* 64: 976-7.

Campbell, John Francis
1860   *Popular Tales of the West Highlands*. Edmonston and Douglas Edinburgh.

Campbell, John Gregorson
1902   *Witchcraft and Second Sight in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland*. James MacLehose and Sons: Glasgow.

Campbell, John Lorne
1999   *Songs Remembered in Exile*. Birlinn: Edinburgh.

Campbell, R
1799   An Account of the Island of St Kilda and Neighbouring Islands. -. National Library of Scotland: Edinburgh.

Campbell, Stuart
2009   Post-Medieval Settlement in the Isle of Lewis: A study in adaptability or change? *Proc Soc Antiq Scot* 139, 315-22.

Carmichael, Alexander
1884   Statement by Mr Alexander Carmichael as to Farming Customs in the Outer Hebrides. In Napier Commission (ed.), *Evidence taken by Her Majesty's Commissioners of Inquiry into the Conditions of the Crofters and Cottars in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland*. Commission of Inquiry into the Condition of the Crofters and Cottars: Edinburgh.
1900   *Carmina Gadelica: Hymns and Incantations*. Oliver and Boyd: Edinburgh.
1971   *Ortha nan Gàidheal/ Carmina Gadelica*. Scottish Gaelic Texts Society: Edinburgh.

CED
2003   "Sheet Anchor". *Collins English Dictionary*. Harper Collins: London.

Cerón-Carrasco, Ruby
2011   The Ethnography of Fishing in Scotland and its Contibution to Icthyoarchaeological Analysis in this Region. In Umberto Albarella (ed.), *Ethnozooarchaeology: The present and past of human-animal relationships*. Oxbow Books: Oxford.

Chadwick, A. M. (ed.)
2004   *Stories from the Landscape: Archaeologies of inhabitation*. BAR International Series. Archaeopress: Oxford.

Cheape, Hugh
1993   Crogans and Barvas Ware: Handmade pottery in the Hebrides. *Scottish Studies* 31.
1995   A Song on the Lowland Shepherds: Popular reactions to the Highland Clearances. *Scottish Economic and Social History* 15, (1): 85-100.
2010   The Society of Antiquaries of Scotland and their Museum: Scotland's national collection and a national discourse. *International Journal of Historical Archaeology* 14, (3): 357-73.

Clancy, Thomas Owen

     1998   *The Triumph Tree: Scotland's earliest poetry, AD 550-1350*. Canongate: Edinburgh.

Clarke, Edward Daniel
     1824   *The Life and Remains of Edward Daniel Clarke*. William Otter: London.

Coats, Richard
     1990   *The Place-Names of St Kilda: Nomina hirtensia*. Mellen: Lampeter.

Corbin, Alain
     2001   *The Life of an Unknown: The rediscovered world of a clog maker in nineteenth-century France*. Columbia University Press: New York.

Cosgrove, Denis
     1984   *Social Formation and Symbolic Landscape*. London.

Cosgrove, Denis and Daniels, S
     1988   *The Iconography of Landscape: Essays on the symbolic representation, design and use of past environments*. University Press: Cambridge.

Coverley, Merlin
     2006   *Psychogeography*. Pocket Essentials: Harpenden.

Cowley, David and Harrison, John
     2001   *"Well Shelter'd and Watered": Menstrie Glen, a farming landscape near Stirling*. RCAHMS: Edinburgh.

Cox, Richard
     2002   *The Gaelic Place-Names of Carloway, Isle of Lewis: Their structure and significance*. Institute for Advanced Studies: Dublin.

Crawford, Ian
     1962   Feannagan Taomaidh. *Scottish Studies* 6, 244-46.
     1967   The Divide between Medieval and Post-Medieval in Scotland. *Post-Medieval Archaeology* 1, 84-9.
     1986   *The West Highlands and Islands: A view of 50 Centuries: the Udal (North Uist) evidence.* Great Auk: Cambridge.

Cregeen, Eric R.
     1998   Oral Tradition and History in a Hebridean Island. *Scottish Studies* 32, 12-37.

Cregeen, Eric R. and MacKenzie, Donald W.
     1987   *Tiree Bards and their Bardachd*. Society of West Highland and Island Historical Research: Coll, Argyll.

Crossland, Zoe
     2010   Materiality and Embodiment. In Dan Hicks and Mary Beaudry (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Material Culture Studies*. Oxford University Press: Oxford.

Curwen, Eliot Cecil
     1938   The Hebrides: A cultural backwater. *Antiquity* 12, 261-89.

Dalglish, Chris
     2001   Rural Settlement in the Age of Reason: Archaeologies of capitalism and the recent History of Highland Scotland. *Archaeological Dialogues* 8, (1): 2-23.
     2002   Highland Rural Settlement Studies: A critical history. *Proc Soc Antiq Scot* 132, 475-97.
     2003   *Rural Society in the Age of Reason*. Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishing: New York.
     2010   For the Community: Scottish Historical Archaeology and the Politics of Land Reform. *International Journal of Historical Archaeology* 14, 374-97.
     2011   The Medieval Scottish Countryside: Evidence, interpretation, perception. In N Christie and P Stamper (eds.), *Medieval Rural Settlement: Britain and Ireland, AD 800-1600*. Windgather Press: Oxford.

Dawson, Tom
     2004   *Locating Fish-Traps on the Moray and the Forth*. University of St Andrews: St Andrews.

De Cunzo, Lu Anne and Ernstien, Julie H
     2006   Landscapes, Ideology and Experience in Historical Archaeology. In Dan Hicks and M.C. Beaudry (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Historical Archaeology*. Cambridge: University Press.

Debord, Guy
     1981   Introduction to a Critique of Urban Geography. In Ken Knabb (ed.), *Situationist International Anthology*. Bureau of Public Secrets: Berkeley, California.

Deetz, James
     1977   *In Small Things Forgotten: The archaeology of early American life*. Anchor Press: Doubleday New York.
     1998   Discussion: Archaeologists as storytellers. *Historical Archaeology* 32, (1): 94-6.

Deleuze, Giles and Guttari, F
    1988   *A Thousand Places: Capitalism and schizophrenia*. Athlone Press: London.
    1994   *What is Philosophy?* Verso: London.
Devine, Thomas
    1988   *The Great Highland Famine: Hunger, emigration, and the Scottish Highlands in the Nineteenth Century*. John Donald: Edinburgh.
    1994   *Clanship to Crofters War: The social transformation of the Scottish Highlands.* University Press: Manchester.
    2006   *Clearance and Improvement: Land, power and people in Scotland 1700-1900*. John Donald: Edinburgh.
Dewsbury, J.D, Wylie, John, Harrison, P and Rose, M
    2002   Enacting Geographies. *Geoforum* 32, 437-41.
Dodgshon, Robert
    1980   The Origins of Traditional Field Systems. In T.R Slater (ed.), *The Making of the Scottish Countryside*. Croom Helm: London.
    1993   West Highland and Hebridean Settlement Prior to Croft and the Clearances: A study in stability or change? *Poc Soc Antiq Scot* 123, 419-38.
    1998   *From Cheifs to Landlords: Social and economic change in the Western Highlands and Islands c 1493-1820*. Edinburgh: University Press.
    2000   The Evolution of Highland Townships During the Medieval and Early Modern Periods. *Landscape History* 20, 51-63.
    2002   *The Age of the Clans: The Highlands from Somerled to the Clearances*. The Making of Scotland. Birlinn: Edinburgh.
Dòmhnall Aonghais Bhàin
    2000   *Smuaintean fo Éiseabhal / Thoughts under Eiseaval*. Birlinn: Edinburgh.
Dòmhnall Ruadh Choruna
    1969   *Dòmhnall Ruadh Choruna: Orain is dain*. Gairm: Glasgow.
Donnachie, Ian and Whatley, Christopher (eds.)
    1992   *The Manufacture of Scottish History*. Birlinn: Edinburgh.
Douglas, Mary
    1996   *Natural Symbols. Explorations in Cosmology*. London: Cresset Press.
Dunn, Charles
    2003   *Highland Settler: A portait of the Scottish Gael in Nova Scotia*. University of Toronto Press: Toronto.
Dwelly, Edward
    1993   Faclair Gàidhlig agus Beurla le dealbhan/The Illustrated [Scottish] Gaelic- English Dictionary. Birlinn: Edinburgh.
Dziennik, Matthew P
    2015   *The Fatal Land: War, Empire, and the Highland soldier in British America*. Yale University Press: New Haven.
Edmonds, Mark and Seaborne, Tim
    2001   *Prehistory in the Peak*. Stroud: Tempus.
Emery, Norman
    1996   *Excavations on St Kilda 1986-1990*. Edinburgh.
Fairhurst, Horace
    1960   Scottish Clachans. *Scottish Geographical Magazine* 76, (7): 67-76.
    1967-8 Rosal: A deserted township in Strath Naver, Sutherland. *Proc Soc Antiq Scot* 100, 135-69.

Featherstone, M, Hepworth, M and Turner, B.S (eds.)
    1991   *The Body: Social process and cultural theory*. Sage: London.
Fenton, A
    1968   Alternating Stone and Turf - Obsolete Building Practice. *Folk Life* 6, (1): 94-103.
    1976   *Scottish Country Life*. John Donald: Edinburgh.
    1978   *The Northern Isles: Orkney and Shetland*. John Donald: Edinburgh.
    1986   *The Shape of the Past: Essays in Scottish ethnology*. Donald: Edinbugh.
    1987   *Country life in Scotland: Our rural past*. John Donald: Edinburgh.
Fenton, Alexander and MacKay, Margaret A.
    2013   A History of Ethnology in Scotland. In Alexander Fenton and Margaret A. Mackay (eds.), *An Introduction to Scottish Ethnology*. Scottish Life and Society: A compendium of Scottish ethnology. John Donald: Edinburgh.
Ferguson, Calum
    2006   *St Kildan Heritage*. Acair: Stornoway.
Flatman, Joe and Staniforth, Mark

2006   Historical Maritime Archaeology. In Dan Hicks and M.C Beaudry (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Historical Archaeology*. 168-88. University Press: Cambridge.

Fleming, Andrew
1988   *The Dartmoor Reaves: Investigating prehistoric land divisions*. Batsford: London.
1998   *Swaledale: Valley of the Wild River*. Edinburgh University Press: Edinburgh.
1999a   Human Ecology and the Early History of St Kilda, Scotland. *Journal of Historical Geography* 25, 183-200.
1999b   Phenomenology and the Megaliths of Wales: A dreaming too far? *Oxford Journal of Archaeology* 18, (2): 119-25.
2003   St Kilda: The pre-Improvement Clachan. *Proc Soc Antiq Scot* 133, 375-89.
2004   The Skerry of the Son of the King of Norway. In E Carter and Olivia Lelong (eds.), *Modern Views, Ancient Lands*, 65-70. University Press: Oxford.
2005   *St Kilda and the Wider World: Tales of an iconic island*. Windgather Press: Macclesfield.
2006   Post-Processual Landscape Archaeology: A critique. *Cambridge Archaeological Journal* 16, (03): 267-80.

Forsythe, William
2006   The Archaeology of the Kelp Industry in the Northern Islands of Ireland. *The International Journal of Nautical Archaeology* 35, (2): 218-29.

Foucault, M
1977   *Discipline and Punish*. Penguin Books: London.

Fraser, Shannon
2000   The Materiality of Desire: Building alterative histories for a Hebridean crofting community. *The Archaeological Journal* 157, 375-98.

Gannon, Angela and Geddes, George
2015   *St Kilda: The Last and Outmost Isle*. Historic Environment Scotland: Edinburgh.

Gazin-Schwartz, Amy
2001   Archaeology and Folklore of Material Culture. *International Journal of Historical Archaeology* 5, (4): 263-80.

Gazin-Schwartz, Amy and Holtorf, Cornelius (eds.)
1999   *Archaeology and Folklore*. Routledge: London.

Gazin-Schwartz, Amy and Lelong, Olivia
2005   *Borralie Durness: Data Structure Report: Project 1634.* GUARD: Glasgow.

GD201/1/313, NRS
1799   Copy, Proofs of precognition as to the destruction of the Loch Boisdale Kelp Shores at Loch Boisdale, South Uist. Depostions take before Robert Brown, baron bailie in South Uist. Ardvchael June 1799. In National Records of Scotland (ed.), *Papers of the MacDonald Family of Clanranald (Clanranald Papers)*.

GD201/6/39, NRS
1810   Accounts, charge and discharge, Duncan Shaw, factor, with rents of South Uist and Benbecula, crops 1811, 1813-20. In National Records of Scotland (ed.), *Papers of the MacDonald Family of Clanranald (Clanranald Papers)*.

GD201/6/44, NRS
1810   Balances of Accounts Settled with Tenants of South Uist and Benbecula. In National Records of Scotland (ed.), *Papers of the MacDonald Family of Clanranald (Clanranald Papers)*.

Geddes, George
2011   *Calum Mor's House, Hirta, St Kilda Conservation Statement.* RCAHMS/National Trust For Scotland: Inverness.
2015   *St Kilda Storehouse Conservation Statement*. The National Trust for Scotland: Inverness.

Geddes, George and Gannon, Angela
2015   *St Kilda: The last and outmost Isle*. RCAHMS: Edinburgh.

Geddes, George and Grant, Kevin
2015   The Plan and the Porcupine: Dynamism and complexity in the landscape of St Kilda *Landscapes* 16, (2): 145-63.

Geddes, George and Watterson, Alice
2013   'A Prodigious Number of Little Cells' - Cleitean and the St Kilda World Heritage Site. *Architectural Heritage* 24, (1).

Geertz, Clifford
1973   Deep Play; Notes on the Balinese cockfight. In Geertz Cliffort (ed.), *The Interpretation of Cultures*. Basic Books: New York.

Gillies, Donald
2010   *The Truth about St Kilda*. John Donald: Edinburgh.

Gillies, William
    1987   Gaelic: The classical tradition. In R.D.S. Jack (ed.), *The History of Scottish Literature 1: Origins to 1660*. University Press: Aberdeen.
Gillings, Mark
    2010   Chorography, Phenomenology and the Antiquarian Tradition. *Cambridge Archaeological Journal* 21, (1): 53-63.
Given, Michael
    2004   *Archaeology of the Colonized*. Routledge: London.
Goffman, Erving
    1961   *Encounters: Two studies in the sociology of interaction*. Bobbs-Merill: Indianapolis.
Govan, Sarah
    2003   Medieval or Later Rural Settlement in Scotland: 10 years on. Paper presented at the annual meeting of Spring Conference of the Medieval Settlement Research Group in Association with Historic Scotland, University of Edinburgh.
Grant, I F
    1924   *Everyday Life on an Old Highland Farm*. Longmans & Green: London.
    1960   *Highland Folk Ways*. Routledge and Kegan Paul: London.
Grant, Kevin
    2014   "…and in Every Hamlet a Poet.": Gaelic oral tradition and postmedieval archaeology in Scotland. *Historical Archaeology* 48, (1).
Graves-Brown, Paul (ed.)
    2000   *Matter, Materiality and Modern Culture*. Routledge: New York.
Gray, Malcolm
    1951   The Kelp Industry in the Highlands and Islands. *Economic History Review* 4, (2): 179-209.
Greene, Kevin
    1995   *Archaeology: An introduction*. Routledge: London.
Gregory, Donald
    1881   *The History of the Western Highlands and Islands of Scotland 1493-1625*. Birlinn: Edinburgh.
Grimble, Ian
    1979   *The World of Robb Donn*. Bell & Bain: Glasgow.
Gunn, Neil
    1969 [1941]   *The Silver Darlings*. Faber and Faber: London.
Hache, Jean-Didier and Stiùbhart, Domhnall Ulilleam (eds.)
    2010   *The French MacDonald: Journey of a marshal of Napoléon in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland*. Islands Book Trust: Stornoway.
Haldane, Sean
    2007   A Dying Tongue: Reading Sorley MacLean. *The Dark Horse* 45, (Summer).
Hale, Alex
    2004   Fish-traps in Scotland: Construction, supply, demand and destruction. *Ruralia* V, 119-26.
Harden, Jill and Lelong, Olivia
    2011   *Winds of Change: The living landscapes of Hirta, St Kilda*. Society of Antiquaries of Scotland: Edinburgh.
Harman, Mary
    1997   *An Isle Called Hirte*. MacLean Press: Waternish, Isle of Skye.
Heidegger, Martin
    1996   Building Dwelling Thinking. In D Krell (ed.), *Basic Writings*. Routledge: London.
Hicks, Dan and Beaudry, M.C.
    2006   Introduction: The place of Historical Archaeology. In Dan Hicks and M.C. Beaudry (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Historical Archaeology*. 1-13. University Press: Cambridge.
Hicks, Dan and Beaudry, Mary (eds.)
    2010   *The Oxford Handbook of Material Culture Studies*. University Press: Oxford.
Hicks, Dan and Hauser, Mark
    2007   Colonialism and Landscape: Power, materiality and scales of analysis in Caribbean Historical Archaeology. In Dan Hicks (ed.), *Envisioning Landscape Archaeology*. Left Coast Press: Walnut Creek, California.
Hodges, R
    1991   *Wall-to-wall History: The story of Royston Grange*. Duckworth: London.
Hogg, James
    1986   *A Tour in the Highlands in 1803: A series of letters*. James Thin: Edinburgh.
Holden, Tim G.

       2004   *Research Report: The blackhouses of Arnol.* Historic Scotland: Edinburgh.
Holtorf, Cornelius and Williams, Howard
       2006   Landscapes and Memories. In Dan Hicks and M.C Beadry (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Historical Archaeology.* 235-54. University Press: Cambridge.
Home, Stewart (ed.)
       1997   *Mind Invaders - A reader in psychic warfare, cultural sabotage and semiotic terrorism*. Serpents Tail London.
Horning, Audrey and Palmer, Marilyn (eds.)
       2009   *Crossing Paths or Sharing Tracks?* Boydell Press: Woodbridge.
Hoskins, W.G
       1955   *The Making of the English Landscape*. Hodder & Stoughton: London.
Hunter, James
       1976   *The Making of the Crofting Community*. John Donald: Edinburgh.
Hunter, Michael Cyril William (ed.)
       2001   *The Occult Laboratory: Magic, science, and second sight in late seventeeth-century Scotland*. Boydell Press: Woodbridge.
Hurst, D. Gillian
       1968   Post-Medieval Britain in 1967. *Post-Medieval Archaeology* 2.
Hutchinson, Roger
       2014   *St Kilda:A People's History*. Birlinn: Edinburgh.
Ingold, Tim
       1993   The Temporality of Landscape. *World Archaeology* 25, (2): 152-74.
       2000   *The Perception of the Environment: Essays in livelihood, dwelling and skill.* Routledge: London.
       2007   Materials against Materiality. *Archaeological Dialogues* 14, (1): 1-16.
Innes, Bill
       2001   Biography. In Bill Innes (ed.), *Chì Mi*, vii-xxiii. Birlinn: Edinburgh.
Islands Book Trust
       2004   Traditions of Seabird Fowling in the North Atlantic Region. Paper presented at the annual meeting of Traditions of Seabird Fowling in the North Atlantic Region, Nis, Eilean Leòdhas.
Johnson, Mathew
       1999   *Archaeological Theory: An introduction*. Blackwell: Oxford.
       2007   *Ideas of Landscape*. Blackwell: Oxford.
Johnson, Samuel
       1775   *A Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland*. Strahan and Cadell: London.
Jones, Sian
       2011   'Sorting Stones': Monuments, memory and resistance in the Scottish Highlands. In M.C Beadry and Jim Symonds (eds.), *Interpreting the Early Modern World*, 113-39. Springer: New York.
       2012   'Thrown Like Chaff in the Wind': Excavation, memory and the negotiation of loss in the Scottish Highlands. *International Journal of Historical Archaeology* 16, (2): 346-66.
Joyce, Rosemary
       2002   *The Languages of Archaeology: Dialogue, narrative and writing*. Blackwell: Oxford.
       2006   Writing Historical Archaeology. In Dan Hicks and M.C Beadry (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Historical Archaeology.* 48-69. University Press: Cambridge.
Kennedy, John
       1932   *The Apostle of the North; the life and labours of the Rev DR J MacDonald*. Northern Counties Newspaper and Prining and Publishing Co.: Inverness.
Kennedy, Michael
       2002   *Gaelic Nova Scotia: an economic, cultural, and social impact study.* Nova Scotia Museums: Halifax.
Kidd, Sheila
       2000   The View from the Inside. *The Innes Review* 51, (2): 188-93.
       2011   E-mail correspondance with K Grant.
Kidd, Sheila M (ed.)
       2007   *Baile Mòr Nan Gàidheal = City of the Gaels* Roinn na Ceiltis, Oilthigh Ghlaschu: Glasgow.
Kirk, James (ed.)
       1998   *The Church in the Highlands*. Scottish Church History Society: Edinburgh.
Knabb, Ken (ed.)
       1981   *Situationalist International Anthology*. Bureau of Public Secrets: Berkeley, California.
Lawson, William M

1993   *Croft History: Isle of St Kilda*. Northton: Bill Lawson Publications.

Le Beau, David
2011   Menstrie Glen: An archaeology that makes sense. A phenomenological and G.I.S. approach to the study of a post-medieval landscape. Masters' Thesis, University of Glasgow.

LearnGaelic
2015   Eathar, meaning and definition.

Lelong, Olivia
2000   The Prospect of the Sea: Responses to forced coastal resettlement in nineteenth century Sutherland. In John Atkinson, Ian Banks and Gavin McGregor (eds.), *Townships to Farmsteads: Rural settlement studies in Scotland, England and Wales*, 217-24. British Archaeological Reports: Oxford.
2007   *Ceannabeinne & Traigh Na Huamhag, Durness: Data Structure Report*. Glasgow University Archaeology Research Divison: Glasgow.

Lelong, Olivia and Wood, John
2000   A Township Through Time: Excavation and survey at the desered settlement of Easter Raitts, Badenoch 1995-99. In John Atkinson, Ian Banks and Gavin MacGregor (eds.), *Townships to Farmsteads: Rural settlement studies in Scotland, England, and Wales*. British Archaeological Reports: Oxford.

Levi, Giovanni
2001   On Microhistory. In Peter Burke (ed.), *New Perspectives on Historical Writing. 2nd ed*, 97-119. Polity Press: Cambridge.

Lloyd's
1800   *The Register of Shipping for the Year 1800*. H.L. Galabin: London.

Lorimer, Hayden
2005   Cultural Geography: The busyness of being "more-than-representational". *Progress in Human Geography* 29, (1): 83-94.
2008   Cultural Geography: Non-representational conditions and concerns. *Progress in Human Geography* 32, (4): 551-9.

Love, John
2004   Seabird Resources and Fowling in Scotland. In The Islands Book Trust (ed.), *Traditions of Seabird Fowling in the North Atlantic Region*. 54-77. The Islands Book Trust: Port Nis, Eilean Leòdhas.
2009   *A Natural History of St Kilda*. Birlinn: Edinburgh.

Lucas, Gavin
2006   Historical Archaeology and Time. In M.C Beaudry and Dan Hicks (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Historical Archaeology*. University Press: Cambridge.

Mac an t-Saoir, Dhòmhnaill
1968   *Sporan Dhòmhnaill: Gaelic Poems and Songs*. Oliver & Boyd: Edinburgh.

MacAulay, Kenneth
1764   *A History of St Kilda: Containing a descrption of this remarkable Island; The manners and customs of the inhabitants; The religious and pagan antiquities there found; with many other curious and interesting particulars*. T. Becket and P. A. De Hondt: London.

MacCoinnich, Aonghas
2015   *Plantation and Civility in the North Atlantic World: The case of the Northern Hebrides, 1570-1639*. Brill: Leiden.

MacCulloch, John
1819   *A Description of the Western Isles of Scotland*. Hurst, Robinson and Co: London.
1824   *The Highlands and Western Isles of Scotland*. Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, Brown, and Green: London.

MacDhòmhnaill, Dòmhnall Iain
2001   *Chì Mi*. Birlinn: Edinburgh.

MacDiarmid, Hugh
1978   *Complete poems, 1920-1976 / Hugh MacDiarmid* Matrin Brian & O'Keeffe: London.

MacDonald, A and MacDonald, A
1904   *The Clan Donald*. Northern Counties Publishing Company: Inverness.

MacDonald, Alexander (ed.)
1924   *The Poems of Alexander MacDonald (Mac Mhaighstir Alasdair)*. Northern Counties Publishing Company: Inverness.

MacDonald, Fr A
1991   *Gaelic Words And Expressions from South Uist and Eriskay*. University Press: Oxford.

MacDonald, Fraser
2001   St Kilda and the Sublime. *Ecumene* 8, (2): 151-74.

MacDonald, James
      1811   *A General View of the Agriculture of the Hebrides or Western Isles of Scotland*.
      Alex Smellie: Edinburgh.
MacDonald, John Angus (ed.)
      1999   *Orain: The songs of Donald Allan MacDonald 1906-1992*.
Macfarlane, Robert
      2005   A Road of One's Own. *Times Literary Supplement*.
MacGill-Eain, Somhairle
      1999   *From Wood to Ridge/O Choille gu Bearradh: Collected poems*. Carcanet:
      Manchester.
MacGillivray, J.
      1842   Account of the Island of St Kilda, Chiefly with Reference to its Natural History.
      Edinburgh New Philosophical Journal 32, 47-70.
MacGregor, D.R
      1960   The Island of St Kilda: a survey of it's character and occupance. *Scottish Studies*
      4, 1-48.
MacGregor, Gavin, Lelong, Olivia and Johnston-Smith, DJ
      1999   *Tigh Vectican, Arrochar.* GUARD: Glasgow.
MacGregor, M.D
      2002   The Genealogical Histories of Gaelic Scotland. In A Fox and D Woolf (eds.), *The
      Spoken Word: Oral culture in Britain 1500-1850*. University Press: Manchester.
      2014   Gaelic Christianity? The church in the Western Highlands and Islands of Scotland
      before and after the reformation. In Tadhg Ó hAnnracháin and Robert Armstrong (eds.),
      Christianities in the Early Modern Celtic World. Palgrave MacMillan: Basingstoke.
MacInnes, A.I
      1996   *Clanship, Commerce and the House of Stuart, 1603-1788.* Tuckwell: East Linton.
MacInnes, John
      2006a   Gaelic Poetry and Historical Tradition. In Micheal Newton (ed.), *Dùthchas Nan
      Gàidheal: Selected essays of John MacInnes*. Birlinn: Edinburgh.
      2006b   Looking at Legends of the Supernatural. In M Newton (ed.), *Dùthchas Nan
      Gàidheal: Selected essays of John MacInnes*. Birlinn: Edinburgh.
      2006c   Religion in Gaelic Society. In Michael Newton (ed.), *Dùthchas Nan Gàidheal:
      Selected essays of John MacInnes*, 425-42. Birlinn: Edinburgh.
      2006d   The Seer in Gaelic Tradition. In Michael Newton (ed.), *Dùthchas Nan Gàidheal:
      Selected essays of John MacInnes*, 443-58. Birlinn: Edinburgh.
MacKay, Donnie
      1988   The Western Highlands and Islands: A cultural backwater. *Scottish Archaeological
      Review* 5, 110-4.
MacKenzie, J.B.
      1905   Antiquities and Old Customs in St Kilda, Compiled from Notes made by Rev. Neil
      MacKenzie, Minister of St Kilda, 1829-48. *Proc Soc Antiq Scot* 39, 397-402.
      1906   Bardachd Ireteach: St Kilda verses. *Celtic Review* 1-16.
MacKenzie, Neil
      1911   *Episode in the Life of the Rev. Neil MacKenzie, at St Kilda from 1829 to 1843*.
      Privately Published.
MacKenzie, W.C.
      1903   *History of the Outer Hebrides*. James Thin: Edinburgh.
MacKichan, Finlay
      2008   Lord Seaforth and Highland Estate Management in the First Phase of Clearance
      (1783-1815). *The Scottish Historical Review* 86, (1): 50-68.
Mackie, Catriona
      2006   The Development of Traditional Housing in the Isle of Lewis: Social and cultural
      influences on vernacular architecture. *Béaloideas* 74, 65-102.
      2008   A Social History of Houses: The Hebridean example. *Proceedings of the 22nd
      Annual Harvard Celtic Colloquium* 22, 141-55.
MacKillop, Andrew
      2000   *More Fruitful than the Soil: Army, Empire and the Scottish Highlands, 1715-1815*.
      Tuckwell: East Linton.
      2012   The Outer Hebrides during the Wars of Empire and Revolution 1750-1815. In
      Island Books Trust (ed.), *Island Heroes: The military history of the Hebrides*. Island Books
      Trust: Shawbost, Lewis.
MacLean, Alasdair
      1984   Notes on South Uist Families. *Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness* 53,
      491-518.

MacLean, Charles
        1977   *St Kilda: Island on the edge of the world*. Canongate: Edinburgh.
MacLean, Gill
        1989   *Locheynort South Uist: Appraisal of Uist documentary sources c1600-1980.*
        Comann Eachdraidh Uibhist A Deas, Historical Concerns in South Uist: South Uist.
        2012   Locheynort (Loch Aoineart) in the Historical Period. In Mike Parker Pearson (ed.),
        From Machair to Mountains. Archaeological survey and excavation in South Uist, 359-78.
        Oxbow Books: Oxford.
MacLean, Lachlan
        1838   *Sketches on the Island of St Kilda*. MacPhun: Glasgow.
MacLean, Malcolm and Dorgan, Theo (eds.)
        2002   *An Leabhar Mòr: The great book of Gaelic*. O'Brian Press: Dublin.
MacLean, Roderick
        1841   Parish of South Uist, Presbytery of Uist, Synod of Glenelg. *The Second Statistical
        Account of Scotland*: Edinburgh.
Maclean, Sorley
        1985   Old Songs and New Poetry. In William GIllies (ed.), *Ris a' Bhruthaich: The criticism
        and prose writings of Sorley Maclean*. Acair: Stornoway.
MacLellan, Angus
        1997   *The Furrow Behind Me: The autobiography of a Hebridean crofter*. Birlinn:
        Edinburgh.
MacLeod, Anne
        2012   *From an Antique Land: Visual representations of the Highlands and Islands 1700-
        1880*. John Donald: Edinburgh.
MacLeod, Donald
        1814   Notices on the Present State of St Kilda. *Scots Magazine* 76, (December): 912-3.
MacPherson, James
        1996   *The Poems of Ossian and Related Works*. Edinburgh University Press: Edinburgh.
Mann, Ludovic
        1921-2 Ancient Sculptings in the Island of Tiree. *Proc Soc Antiq Scot* 56, 118-26.
Mark, Colin
        2003   The Gaelic-English Dictionary/ Am Faclair Gàidhlig-Beurla. Routledge: London.
Martin, Martin
        1703   *A Description of the Western Islands of Scotland ... To which is added a brief
        description of the Isles of Orkney, and Shetland*. Andrew Bell: London.
        1999   A Late Voyage to St Kilda. *A Description of the Western Islands of Scotland circa
        1695, A Late Voyage to St Kilda with a Description of the Occidental i.e. Western Islands of
        Scotland* Birlinn: Edinburgh.
Matheson, William (ed.)
        1938   *The Songs of John MacCodrum*. Scottish Gaelic Texts Society: Edinburgh.
        1972   Notes on North Uist Families. *Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness* 52,
        318-72.
Mathieson, John
        1928   *Map of St Kilda or Hirta and Adjacent Islands.* Southhampton: Ordnance Survey.
McGuire, Randall
        2006   Marxism and Capitalism in Historical Archaeology. In Dan Hicks and Mary Baudry
        (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Historical Archaeology*. University Press: Cambridge.
McLean, Marianne
        1991   *The People of Glengarry: Highlanders in transition, 1745-1820*. McGill-Queen's
        University Press: London.
Meek, Dòmhnall
        1990   The Role of Song in the Highland Land Agitation. *Scottish Gaelic Studies* 16, 1-53.
        1995   *Tuath is Tighearna/Tenants and Landlords*. Scottish Gaelic Texts Society. Scottish
        Academic Press: Edinburgh.
        2000   *The Quest for Celtic Christianity*. Handsel Press: Edinburgh.
        2003   *Caran an t-Saoghail/The Wiles of the World: Anthology of 19th century Scottish
        Gaelic verse*. Birlinn: Edinburgh.
Mendyk, Stan
        1986   Early British Chorography. *The Sixteenth Century Journal,* 17, (4): 459-81.
Merleau-Ponty, Maurice
        1962   *Phenomenology of Perception*. Routledge and Kegan Paul: London.
Meskell, Lynn
        2005   *Archaeologies of Materiality*. Blackwell: Oxford.
Miller, Danny

2005   *Materiality*. Duke University Press: Durham, NC.
Miller, Danny and Tilley, Chris
1996   Editorial. Journal of Material Culture. *Journal of Material Culture* 1, (1): 5-14.
Milner, W
1848   Some Account of the People of St Kilda, and of the Birds in the Outer Hebrides.
The Zoologist 6, 2054-62.
Mitchell, A
1865   Consanguineous Marraiges on St Kilda. *Edinburgh Medical Journal* 10, 899-904.
Moray, Robert
1677/8   A Description of the Island Hirta: Communicated also by Sir Robert Moray.
Philosophical Transactions (1665-1678) 12, 927-9.
Moreland, John and MacLean, Gill
2012   The Mountains Survey: Loch Aoineart. In Mike Parker Pearson (ed.), *From
Machair to Mountains. Archaeological survey and excavation in South Uist*, 83-117. Oxbow
Books: Oxford.
Moreland, John, Parker Pearson, Mike and Barker, David
2012   Excavations of Early Modern, Early Historic and Prehistoric Sites at Kirkidale. In
Parker Pearson Mike (ed.), *From Machair to Mountains. Archaeological survey and
excavation on South Uist*, 330-58. Oxbow: Oxford.
Morrison, Alex
2000   Scottish Rural Settlement Studies: Retrospect and prospect. In John Atkinson, Ian
Banks and Gavin McGregor (eds.), *Townships to Farmsteads: Rural Settlement Studies in
Scotland, England and Wales.* British Archaeological Reports: Oxford.
Muir, Thomas and Thomas, F.W.L
1860   Notice of a Beehive House in the Island of St Kilda. *Proc Soc Antiq Scot* 3, 225-32.
Munro, Donald
1999   Description of the Occidental i.e Western Isles of Scotland, by Donald Munro who
Travelled Through Many of them in Anno 1549. *A Description of the Western Islands of
Scotland circa 1695, A Late Voyage to St Kilda with a Description of the Occidental i.e.
Western Islands of Scotland* Birlinn: Edinburgh.
Munro, George
1799   Parish of South Uist, Country of Inverness, Synod of Glenelg, Presbytery of Uist. In
John Sinclair (ed.), *The Statistical Account of Scotland*: Edinburgh.
Munro, Neil
1994   *The New Road*. B&W Publishing: Edinburgh.
2004   *Children of the Tempest*. Blackwood: Edinburgh.
Murray, John
2014   *Reading the Gaelic Landscape*. Whittles Publishing: Dunbeath.
Napier Commission
1884   *Evidence taken by Her Majesty's Commissioners of Inquiry into the Conditions of
the Crofters and Cottars in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland.* Commission of Inquiry
into the Condition of the Crofters and Cottars: Edinburgh.
Nash, C
1996   Reclaiming Vision: Looking at the landscape and the body. *Gender Place and
Culture* 3, 149-69.
2000   Performativity in Practice: Some recent work in cultural geography. *Progress in
Human Geography* 3, 149-69.
National Museum of the Royal Navy
2014   *Squadron Colours, Information sheet no. 055*. Library and Information Services
Information sheets. National Museum of the Royal Navy: Portsmouth.
Newton, Michael
1997   *Gaelic in Scottish History and Culture*. An Clochán: Belfast.
1999   *Bho Chluaidh gu Calasraid*. Acair: Stornoway.
2000   *The Handbook of Scottish Gaelic Culture*. Four Courts Press: Dublin.
2006   *Dùthchas Nan Gàidheal: Selected essays of John MacInnes*. Birlinn: Edinburgh.
2009   *Warriors of the Word: The world of the Scottish Highlanders*. Birlinn: Edinburgh.
NicDhòmhnaill, Flòraidh
2009   *Coco is Crubagan = Cocoa and Crabs: A Hebridean childhood*. Islands Book Trust:
Lewis.
NRAS2177/1508-10
1800   Miscellaneous Correspondence to Robert Brown. In National Register of Archives
of Scotland (ed.), *Papers of the Douglas-Hamilton Family, Dukes of Hamilton and Brandon*.
NRAS2177/15012

1802   Miscellaneous Correspondence to Robert Brown. In National Register of Archives of Scotland (ed.), *Papers of the Douglas-Hamilton Family, Dukes of Hamilton and Brandon*.

O'Connor, Blaze and Cooney, Gabriel
2010   Intoduction: Materialitas and the significance of stone. In Blaze O'Connor, Gabriel Cooney and John Chapman (eds.), *Materialitias: Working Stone, Carving Identity*.

O'Connor, Blaze, Cooney, Gabriel and Chapman, John (eds.)
2010   *Materialitas: Working stone, carving identity*. Oxbow Books: Oxford.

Ó Baoill, Colm
1994   *Gàir Nan Clàrsach/ The Harps Cry*. Birlinn: Edinburgh.

Orser, Charles
2009   The Dialectics of Scale in the Historical Archaeology of the Modern World. In Marilyn Palmer and Audrey Horning (eds.), *Crossing Paths of Sharing Tracks? Future directions in the archaeological study of post-1550 Britain and Ireland*. Boydell and Brewer: Woodbridge.

Parker Pearson, Mike (ed.)
2012   *From Machair to Mountains: Archaeological survey and excavation in South Uist*. Sheffield Environmental and Archaeological Research Campaign in the Hebrides. Oxbow Books: Oxford.

Parker Pearson, Mike, Marshall, Pete and Smith, Helen
2012   Excavations at Beinn na Mhic Aongheis. In Mike Parker Pearson (ed.), *From Machair to Mountains: Archaeological survey and excavation in South Uist*, 308-31. Oxbow Books: Oxford.

Parker Pearson, Mike, Sharples , Niall, Symonds , Jim, Mulville, Jaqui
Raven, John, Smith, Helen and Woolf, Alex
2004   *South Uist: Archaeology and history of a Hebridean island*. Tempus: Stroud.

Parker Pearson, Mike and Zvelebil, Mark
2014   *Excavations at Cill Donnain*. Oxbow Books: Oxford.

Pennant, Thomas
1998   *A Tour in Scotland and Voyage to the Hebrides*. Birlinn: Edinburgh.

Perrin, Michael
2013   A Brief Consideration of Psychogeography: Archaeological applications and possibilities. University of Leicester.

Petts, David
2011   Archaeology and Psychogeography http://outlandish-knight.blogspot.co.uk/2011/12/archaeology-and-psychogeography.html

Pinder, David
2011   Errant Paths: The poetics and politics of walking. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space 2011,* 29, 672-92.

Pluciennik, Mark
1999   Archaeological Narratives and Other Ways of Telling. *Current Anthropology* 40, (5): 653-77.

Praetzellis, Adrian
1998   Why Archaeologists Should Tell Stories Once in a While. *Historical Archaeology* 21, (1): 1-3.

Praetzellis, Adrian, Praetzellis, Mary and Ziesing, Grace
1997   *Tales of the Vasco.* Anthropological Studies Centre, Sonoma State University Rohnert Park, California.

Prior, Gina L
2013   *Seabird and Marine Ranger Annual Report, St Kilda.* The National Trust for Scotland: Balnain House, Inverness.

Quine, David A.
1988   *St Kilda Portraits*. D.A Quine: Ambleside.

Quine, David A. and Baxter, Colin
1994   *St Kilda*. Colin Baxter Photography Ltd.

Rackham, O
1987   *The History of the Countryside*. Dent: London.

Raven, John
2012   The Sheilings Survey: Central South Uist. In Mike Parker Pearson (ed.), *From Machair to Mountains: Archaeological survey and excavation on South Uist*, 160-88. Oxbow Books: Oxford.

RCAHMS
1928   *The Outer Hebrides, Skye and the Small Isles*. HMSO: Edinburgh.
1990   *North-east Perth: An archaeological landscape*. RCAHMS: Edinburgh.
1994   *South-East Perth: An archaeological landscape*. RCAHMS: Edinburgh.

    2007   *In the Shadow of Bennachie: An archaeology of Donside, Aberdeenshire*. RCAHMS: Edinbrugh.

RCAHMS and Historic Scotland
    2002   *'But the Walls Remained: A survey of unroofed rural settlement depicted on the first edition of the Ordnance Survey 9-inch map of Scotland'*. RCAHMS: Edinburgh.

Renfrew, Colin
    2005   Material Engagement and Materialisation. In Colin Refrew and Paul Bahn (eds.), *Archaeology: The key concepts*, 159-63. Routledge: London/New York.

Riach, Alan
    2015   The Birlinn of Clanranald. Kettillonia: Newtyle, Angus.

Rippon, Stephen
    2012   *Making Sense of an Historic Landscape*. University Press: Oxford.

Robertson, Boyd and MacDonald, Ian
    2004   Teach Yourself: Gaelic dictionary. Hodder Education: London.

Robertson, D.J
    1909   Among the Kelpers. In J Gunn (ed.), *The Orkney Book: Readings for young Orcadians*, 227-42. Thomas Nelson and Sons: London.

Robinson, Gary
    2013   'A Sea of Small Boats': Places and practices on the prehistoric seascape of Western Britain. *Internet Archaeology* (34).

Robinson, R.A
    2005   *BirdFacts: Profiles of birds occuring in Britain and Ireland* BTO Research Report 407. British Trust for Ornithology: Thetford, Norfolk.

Robson, Michael
    2005   *St Kilda Church, Visitors, and 'Natives'*. Island Book Trust: Kershader, Lewis.

Rymer, Leslie
    1974   The Scottish Kelp Industry. *Scottish Geographical Magazine* 90, (3): 142-52.

Sands, J
    1877   Life in St Kilda. *Chamber's Journal*.
    1878   Notes on the Antiquities of the Island of St Kilda. *Proc Soc Antiq Scot* 12, 189.
    1881   Notes on the Antiquities of the Island of Tiree. *Proc Soc Antiq Scot* 16, 459-63.

ScARF
    2012   Modern Panel Executive Summary http://www.scottishheritagehub.com/content/executive-summary-4

Scottish Executive
    2003   Revised Nomination of St Kilda for Inclusion in the World Heritage Site List. In Evironment and Rural Affairs Department (ed.). HMSO: Edinburgh.

Self, Will
    2013   Decontaminating the Union: Post-industrial landscapes and the British psyche. *Scottish Geographical Journal* 129, (2): 59-66.

Seton, George
    1878   *St. Kilda*. Mercat: Edinburgh.

Sharbau, H
    1858   Plan of St Kilda Village. *Society of Antiquaries of Scotland Manuscript Collection*.

Sharples, Niall
    2005   *Bornais: A Norse farmstead in the Outer Hebrides: Excavations at mound 3, Bornais, South Uist*. Cardiff Studies in Archaeology. Oxbow Books: Oxford.

Shaw, John
    2007   *Na Beanntaichean Gorma*. University Press: McGill-Queen's

Shaw, Margaret Fay
    1977   *Folksongs and Folklore of South Uist*. Oxford University Press: Oxford.

Sheeran, Patrick
    1988   Genus Fabula: The Irish sense of place. *Irish University Review* 18, 191-206.

Sinclair, Iain
    1998   *Lud Heat and Suicide Bridge*. Granta: London.
    2002   *London Orbital*. Granta: London.

Small, Alan (ed.)
    1979   *St Kilda Handbook*. The National Trust for Scotland: Inverness.

Smith, Helen
    2012   The Ethnohistory of Hebridean Architecture. In Mike Parker Pearson (ed.), *From Machair to Mountains: Archaeological survey and excavation on South Uist*. Oxbow Books: Oxford.

Solnit, Rebecca
    2001   *Wanderlust: A history of walking*. Verso: London.

SQA
        2009   *Gaelic Orthographic Conventions (2009).* Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA):
        Glasgow.
Steel, Tom
        1965   *The Life and Death of St Kilda*. William Collins & Sons Ltd: Glasgow.
Stell, G and Harman, M
        1988   *The Buildings of St Kilda*. HMSO: Edinburgh.
Stevenson, Robert Louis
        2007 [1886]   *Kidnapped and Catriona*. Polygon: Edinburgh.
Sturrock, John
        1990   *Celine: Journey to the end of the night*. University Press: Cambridge.
Symonds, James
        1999a   Songs Remembered in Exile? In Amy Gazin-Schwartz and Cornelius Holtorf
        (eds.), *Archaeology and Folklore*. Routledge: London.
        1999b   Toiling in the Vale of Tears: Everyday life and resistance in South Uist, Outer
        Hebrides, 1760-1860. *International Journal of Historical Archaeology* 3, (2): 101-22.
        2000   The Dark Island Revisited: An approach to the historical archaeology of Milton,
        South Uist. In John Atkinson, Ian Banks and Gavin McGregor (eds.), *Townships to
        Farmsteads: Rural settlement studies in Scotland, England and Wales*, 197-210. British
        Archaeological Reports: Oxford.
Tarlow, Sarah
        2007   *The Archaeology of Improvement in Britain, 1750-1850*. University Press:
        Cambridge.
The Carmichael Watson Project
        2012   Bait Holes in the Hebrides, and Beyond. In Alexander Carmichael (ed.): Edinburgh.
        2013   The Carmichael Watson Project
        http://www.carmichaelwatson.lib.ed.ac.uk/cwatson/en
The Nature Conservancy Council
        1998   *St Kilda National Nature Reserve, Candidate Special Area of Conservation,
        Special Protection Area, 5 Years Management Plan 1998-2003.* The Nature Conservancy
        Council: Edinburgh.
Thomas, F.W.L
        1857   Notice of Beehive Houses in Harris and Lewis; With traditions of the each-uisge, or
        water-horse, connected therewith. *Proc Soc Antiq Scot* 3, 127-44.
        1860   Observations Respecting Articles Collected in the Outer Hebrides, and now
        Presented to the Museum. *Proc Soc Antiq Scot* 4, 115-9.
        1870   Notices of Three Chruches in North Uist, Benbecula and Grimsay, said to have
        been Built in the Fourteenth Century. *Proc Soc Antiq Scot* 9, 368.
Thomas, Julian
        1993a   The Hermeneutics of Megalithic Space. In Chris Tilley (ed.), *Interpretive
        Archaeology*. Berg: Oxford.
        1993b   The Politics of Vision and the Archaeologies of Landscapes. In Barbara Bender
        (ed.), *Landscape: Politics and perspectives*. Rhode Island: Providence.
        1996   *Time, Culture and identity: An interpretive archaeology*. London: Routledge.
        2004   *Archaeology and Modernity*. Routledge: London.
Thomson, Derick (ed.)
        1994   *The Companion to Gaelic Scotland*. Gairm: Glasgow.
Thrift, N
        1996   *Spatial Formations*. Sage: London.
        1997   The Still Point: Resistance, expressiveness, embodiment, and dance. In S Pile and
        M Keith (eds.), *Geographies of Resistance*.
        1999   Steps to an Ecology of Place. In J Allen and D Massey (eds.), *Human Geography
        Today*. Polity Press: Cambridge.
Tilley, Chris
        1994   *A Phenomenology of Landscape; Places, paths and monuments*. Berg: Oxford.
        2004a   *The Materiality of Stone: Explorations in landscape phenomenology*. Berg: Oxford.
        2004b   Round Barrows and Dykes as Landscape Metaphors. *Cambridge Archaeological
        Journal* 14, (2): 185-305.
Turner, Robin
        2003   The Ben Lawers Historic Landscape Project. In Sarah Govan (ed.), *Medieval or
        Later Rural Settlement in Scotland 10 years on*. Historic Scotland: Edinburgh.
Tymoczko, Maria
        1983   Cetamon: Vision in early Irish seasonal poetry. *Eire-Ireland* 18, 17-39.
University of Glasgow

2014   *Language and Style Guide 2014*. University of Glasgow: Glasgow.

Walker, John
1980   *The Rev. Dr. John Walker's Report on the Hebrides of 1764*. John Donald: Edinburgh.

Walton, John, Brooks, James and DeCorse, Christopher
2008   Introduction. In James Brooks, Christopher DeCorse and John Walton (eds.), *Small Worlds: Method, meaning, and narrative in microhistory*. Santa Fe: School for Advanced Research Press.

Webster, Jane
1999   Resisting Traditions: Ceramics, identity and consumer choice in the Outer Hebrides from 1800 to the present. *International Journal of Historical Archaeology* 3, (1): 53-73.

Westerdahl, C
2011   Conclusion: The marine cultural landscape revisited. In B Ford (ed.), *The Archaeology of Maritime Landscapes*. Springer: New York.

White, H
1987   *The Content of the Form: Narrative discourse and historical representation*. John Hopkins University Press: Baltimore.

Whittington, G
1973   Field Systems in Scotland In A R H Bakers and R A Butlin (eds.), *Studies of Field Systems in the British Isles*.

Wilkie, L
2004   *The Archaeology of Mothering: An African-American midwife's tale*. Routledge: London.
2006   Documentary Archaeology. In M.C Beadry and Dan Hicks (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Historical Archaeology*. University Press: Cambridge.

Will, Bob, McLellan, Kirsteen and Maguire, Donna
2007   *Limited Excavation and Survey within The Village, Hirta, St Kilda.* GUARD: Glasgow.

William, J
1822   *The Naval History of Great Britiain*. Baldwin, Craddock, and Joy: London.

Withers, Charles
1992   The Historical Creation of the Scottish Highlands. In Ian Donnachie and Christopher Whatley (eds.), *The Manufacture of Scottish History*, 143-57. Polygon: Edinburgh.

Wylie, John
2005   A Single Day's Walking: Narrating self and landscape on the South West Coast Path. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographies* NS30, 234-47.
2007   *Landscape*. Oxford: Routledge.

Yentsch, A
1994   *A Chesapeake Family and thier Slaves*. University Press: Cambridge.