

Isle Ristol

Archaeological Evaluation and Recommendations for Management



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Introduction

Isle Ristol is a tidal island, one of a group of islands known as the Summer Isles in the mouth of Lochbroom. It lies opposite the pier of Old Dorney and the township of Altandhu, situated in Coigach, part of the Parish of Lochbroom in Wester Ross. The island is 157.35 hectares in size and is round to square in shape. Its highest point is 71m OD in the NE of the island. Its eastern shore makes up the western side of the natural harbour at Old Dornie, and the drying causeway, 200m in length, forms the north side of the harbour. The island is now uninhabited.

This archaeological evaluation has been commissioned by Scottish Wildlife Trust as a companion report to an evaluation of Handa Island in Sutherland. A management plan for Handa was drawn up in 1999 to address issues such as the archaeological heritage, which might be affected by the several thousand visitors to the reserve. No management plan has been drawn up for Ristol, which is not officially open to the public and therefore does not have the same pressures from visitor numbers. However, the island is visited unofficially by yachts, canoeists and by locals crossing the tidal causeway or by boat from Old Dorney, and activities of visitors are unmonitored. These activities, including camping and lighting fires, may have a negative impact on the archaeological record of Isle Ristol. The archaeology may also be being affected by grazing levels and uncontrolled vegetation growth.

It was decided that a complete archaeological evaluation should be carried out, consisting of a desk-based assessment of the historical, archaeological and cultural background of the island and a walk-over survey to identify all visible archaeological features or areas of archaeological interest.

The evaluation is divided into three sections:

- **Section 1.** attempts to give a history of the island from the earliest times to the present day, based on documentary evidence, eye-witness accounts and local history sources. Early maps will be used to show settlement patterns and features of land use. This historical framework will be used both to predict the range of archaeological sites and artifacts present on the island, and to interpret the information acquired during the archaeological field survey.
- **Section 2.** provides the results of a systematic field survey of Isle Ristol. The archaeological evidence will be compared with known historical events and periods, to place the archaeology within an historical context and to use archaeological evidence to increase the understanding of the island.
- **Section 3.** addresses the main issues concerning management of the archaeological and historical sites on Isle Ristol. This section also looks at the potential for further interpretation and presentation of the archaeology and history, and any potential problems associated with these developments.

Section 1. Historical and Cartographic Evidence

1.1 Archaeological context

Prehistoric sites abound in the surrounding district of Coigach, notably a number of burial cists, hut circles (Bronze or Iron Age farmsteads) and burnt mounds thought to date to the later Bronze Age. The remains of two Iron Age forts at Achlochan and Achnahaird indicate defence and habitation during and just before the 1st millennium¹.

A steatite bowl indicating possible Norse settlement in the area was found on the adjacent Island of Tanera Mor in the 1980s. Local tradition records a fierce battle that took place on Tanera Mor between that island's Norse inhabitants and the mainland population. A cairn at Fox Point (Rubh a' Mhadaidh-ruaidh) on the Farm of Dorney is traditionally thought to be the burial mound of a Viking Princess². Medieval and later rural settlement sites are known from excavations at Achnahaird Sands³ and the many townships and farmsteads still discernible within the crofting landscape.

1.2. Historical Background

1.2.1. The Western Seaboard

Isle Ristol is likely to have formed a strategic port of call for many fishermen and early voyagers travelling the Western Seaboard. The Minch was the main sea route followed by the Norsemen and the succeeding Lords of the Isles to their power bases in the Western Isles and Orkney⁴. Unfortunately, the northern aspect of the Western Seaboard has not been investigated or recorded in the same detail as those concerning the southern Hebrides and Isle of Man⁵. The name Ristol (*G. Eilean Ruisteil*) is most likely of Norse origin, from the Norse *hryss-dalr* - Mares dale. On the mainland, at Achiltibuie, is *Allt Ruisteil*, Ristol Burn, which suggests some form of original connection between the two places⁶. The splendid harbour and good fishing grounds nearby make Ristol a likely place for Norse occupation.

1.2.2. Coigach Ownership

Early references relating directly to Isle Ristol are distinctly lacking. 'A Description of the Occidental, i.e. Western Isles of Scotland' by Donald Munro; Archdean of the Isles c.1549 makes no entry for Isle Ristol, despite making mention of most of the other Summer Isles. Nor does Daniel in his voyage of 1811. Although Pennant visited and wrote a detailed account of his visit to Coigach in both 1769 and 1771 no mention of this island.

The first certain historical fact about Isle Ristol is that it would have formed part of the Estate of Coigach. Historically, Coigach and Assynt are known to have been part of the mainland estates of the Macnicols of Lewis followed by the Macleods of Lewis. Both clans were of Norse decent. The Macnicols claim to have ruled for a period of three hundred years before the lands were

‘acquired’ by the Macleods of Lewis through marriage to the Manicol heiress in the 14th century (Baldwin 1994). Coigach became an estate in its own right in 1460 when Norman I (*Tormod*) Chief of Assynt, the second son of Roderick VII Baron of Lewis, gave Coigach to his second son John Riabhach. Coigach remained under the control of the Macleods of Lewis until the end of the 16th century, when a battle at the mouth of the River Garvie (north of Loch Osgaig) was fought between the two half brothers Torquil Dubh and Torquil Conanach⁷. James VI backed Torquil Conanach due to his Mackenzie connections, and in this manner Coigach became part of the Cromartie Estates⁸.

1.2.3. Period of Annexation, 1753-1788

George, 3rd Earl of Cromartie, was a staunch Jacobite and joined in the uprising of 1745. He paid heavily for his allegiance and the estates were forfeited and consequently annexed to the Crown by an Act of Parliament in 1753⁹. It was only after Annexation that any detailed study was made of Coigach and the Western Seaboard, beginning with Roy’s Military Survey of 1748 and May’s Survey of 1756. Prior to 1788, Isle Ristol formed part of the Farm of Dorney¹⁰ which included the pendicle of Old Dorney. Ristol is not mentioned as a separate entity. An initial search through the Cromartie and Annexed Estate Exchequer papers makes no reference of Isle Ristol, but it can be assumed that papers relating to the farms of Dorney, also refer in a general sense to Isle Ristol.

During this period, the only records located are from the judicial rent roll of Dorney and from various petitions for land, or grievances to the Board of Annexed Estates. The Statistics of Annexed Estates record William Mackenzie as Tenant of Dornie with 6 families of subtenants, but there is no indication where, at Dornie, Old Dornie or Ristol, these tenants lived.

Mackenzie’s tenancy was challenged in a complaint by the former tenant Donald Macleod “*late in Dorney, now in Rive*” to the Board of Annexed Estates¹¹. It reads ‘*that in May 1754 [Donald Macleod] your petitioner was most illegally, violently and oppressively dispossessed from [his] possession of Dorny with the tacite consent of Murdow Mackenzie of Achilty the deputy Factor on that part of the Estate of Cromarty by William Mackenzie present Possessor of my said Tack of qch illegal proceeding I complained and applied you for redress*’ . Donald Macleod accused both William Mackenzie and Murdow Mackenzie, the Factor, of concealing part of his rent and possessions. He states that when “*Mr Christy examined the yearly rent of Dorney as payable to the Late Earl of Cromartie he and the other possessors declared that the said lands payed two hundred and forty merks yearly including rent, entry and Customs which far exceeded the rental given by William Mackenzie*”. He reminds the Commissioners of Annexed Estates that it was declared that if “*any person or persons concealed any part of the rent of their possessions they and their heirs were forever to be debarred from possessing any part of the Kings Lands*”. He asked to be restated to his former possession at this Whitsunday 1756 with damages and expenses for failing to do him immediate justice.

It seems curious that when Morrison surveyed the Farm of Dorney for the Board of Forfeited Estates in 1775, he did not include Isle Ristol which, according to the Factor twelve years later ‘*was always included in the rent of the Farm of Dornie*’. This raises the possibility that William Mackenzie and Murdow Mackenzie were in fact deliberately concealing this part of the rent and possessions, as accused by Donald MacLeod.

Donald Macleod was evidently granted one fourth of the Farm of Dornie but in 1767 he petitioned the Board of Annexed Estates once more¹². He complained that his apportionment was not enough to hold his stock and that he was obliged to pay his neighbour, Donald Mackenzie, who had the pendicle of Old Dorney (presumably Ristol as well) exorbitant sums of money for grazing his stock. Donald Mackenzie was, he says, the most troublesome neighbour in the whole Barony, and would poind his cattle if he did not give him what he demanded. Donald Macleod had chosen to do his bidding rather than have any disputes with him. However, on account that Donald Mackenzie was to be removed the following Whitsunday on “*account of him being among the gang of thieves now discovered in Coigach*”. Donald Macleod asked the Commissioners to grant him either the Tack of the whole of the Farm of Dorney, or at least the half thereof with the Pendicle called Old Dorney for such a number of years as the Board should think proper. He was refused as he was an old man with no family and it should be reserved for possessors of Achiltibuie¹³.

1.2.4. The Kelp Industry and early plans for Fisheries

Between 1765 and 1771 various petitions were made to the Board of Annexed Estates for leases of the kelp shores of Coigach in which Dorney, and by association Ristol, featured heavily¹⁴. In 1769 Ninian Jeffrey, Factor to Cromarty Estates proposed to build a fishing village at Dorney. It was costed to £510 and included a sloop, 6 boats, 6 houses, lines, hooks and nets¹⁵. In June 1770 Collin Mackenzie, a Kelp Merchant residing in the Station House of Lochbroom applied to the Board of Annexed Estates for the farm or place of Dorney. He intended it as a residence for fishermen to be employed in the fishing of cod and ling. He did not desire to remove any of the small tenants provided they agree to be employed in the said fishing. He likewise asked for a lease of the kelp shores upon that coast and ‘*as they lye so very contiguous to this place of Dornie, he will give perhaps more for them than any other person will to whom they don’t lye do coincidentally*’¹⁶. A year previously on the 12th May 1769 he had petitioned the annexed estates to set up a cod and ling fishery and likewise proposed to begin a manufacture of rope and net making to answer the cod and herring fishing¹⁷. He reported that he had introduced the useful and lucrative manufacture of making kelp in the North - which to this date has not been introduced to Coigach¹⁸.

Whether any of the above succeeded in securing leases to the kelp shores is not apparent. However, shortly after, a petition was sent to the Annexed Estates from the tenants of Coigach complaining about the embargo on seaware. The tenants were refrained from using seaware to manure their land, under pain of

being turned out of their possessions. This constituted a great loss as there was no other manure for their corn rigs and they were obliged to take the divots from their roofs to manure the rigs, and dig up vast tracts of grazing to rethatch the houses¹⁹.

1.2.5. The British Fisheries Society, 1788-1813

The economic and political problems facing the Highlands following the Jacobite uprisings of 1745 took the forefront in many Government initiatives. The most important, in respect of Isle Ristol, was the Government's proposals to encourage fishing amongst the local population. (Commercial fishing on the West Coast of Scotland was not unknown before the British Fisheries Society²⁰. It was widespread in the 16th and 17th Centuries, and good prices were obtained from Dutch traders following the fishing seasons - cod in winter, salmon in spring, herring later on in the year). In 1785, the current fishing regulations were reviewed in the House of Commons and a committee was appointed to inquire as to the best means for their encouragement and extension. The new Act that followed incorporated an end to the old but ineffective prohibition on buying fish from local boatmen. One of the first outcomes of the Act was the establishment of the Highland Society of London in 1778. One of its main objectives was to give practical encouragement to local fisheries in the Highlands²¹. In 1786 the Society set up a new Committee, at first called The British Society for Extending the Fisheries and Improving the Sea Coasts of the Kingdom, later shortened to the British Fisheries Society²².

The sites chosen for development in Coigach were Ullapool and Isle Ristol. The purchase of Ullapool included "*all and whole the Isle of Ristol opposite or in the neighbourhood of the Farm of Corrie*"²². Surveys were undertaken by George Mackenzie and David Aitken a land surveyor. On 25 January 1788 they reported: '*Wee next proceeded two sundry times five miles in our way to Ristol (which lies 15 miles from Ullapool) with a view to inspect it - But there being no practicable way of going to the Island but by sea - the weather turned out so tempestuous that wee was obliged to lay aside all thoughts of going there at this season of the year - But the surveyor had the rude draught measurement- and notes he made of the Island in July last along with him - and upon revising these notes he is of the opinion the Island is worth to a tenant six pounds ten shillings rent yearly. The factor also examined the tenants of Dornie who occupies the island as a sheeling in the month of July - and a wintering for their cattle in winter and spring. But found there never had been any separate rent put upon the island. That it was always included in the rent of the Farm of Dornie which is present lett at £22.11 Stg yearly. And from every information the Factor could obtain from the tenants - he is of the opinion Lord Macleod should give it to the Society at the six pounds ten shillings stg yearly rent. In regard to Island Ristoll from its central situation to the cod and ling fishing if the Society should judge it expedient at any after period to build a populous village there - the Surveyor would recommend to the Society to get a servitude from Lord Macleod upon his moss's in the neighbourhood - upon the same terms with Ullapool as the moss's in the Island will soon be worn out*'²³.

The initial proposal for Isle Ristol was to use it as a dependency nearer to the open sea to support the new village of Ullapool. A curing station and sheds for drying cod were proposed. However, Melville, the local agent for the BFS, and also referred to as “the little emperor of Ullapool” did not support the venture on Isle Ristol²⁴, and whether these were ever built remains unknown. Nonetheless, a shed for stores is known to have been completed and let to one John Macauley, but he never established himself and was insolvent after three years. The island was then leased to McDonald of Tanera but he sublet it for grazing and it was neglected for many years²².

The two decades following the purchase of Ullapool and Ristol saw the repeated failure of the herring fishing in Lochbroom, and this proved too erratic for commercial supply. Many people began to leave annually for the season’s fishing in Caithness. Even so, by 1808 the British Fisheries Society had to supply meal as relief for both settlers and black hutters on their land²⁴. That same year Melville, the BFS agent in Ullapool, went bankrupt. In 1813, the Coigach Factor, Sir George Mackenzie denounced the whole venture “a great flop” and assets were sold²⁴. The British Fisheries Society sold Isle Ristol to Sir James Matheson of the Lews²⁵.

1.2.6. After the British Fisheries Society

One Murdoch Mackenzie, shipowner and fishcurer, is recorded as losing his tenancy of Isle Ristol in 1816 (he became bankrupt about this time) but lived on the island for a while²⁶. In 1817-18 Ivor MacIvor and Roderick, Donald and John Macleod, resident on Ristol, received provisions from the ‘Hope’²⁷. The surnames of these men can also be found on the 1841 census when it is understood that Campbell and MacIvor were interchangeable names at this time.

Despite the failings of the herring fishing, it is evident that people on Isle Ristol were not dependent entirely on the herring and were able to work in the cod and ling fishery, which did not suffer the same inconsistencies²⁴. In addition, as later census returns show, East Coast fishermen began to come regularly to Ristol for the fishing and fish processing.

Due to its exposed position, Isle Ristol would have been particularly suitable for drying and salting cod, on flat grassy areas or shingle beaches²⁸. It is possible that the curers, coopers and fishermen who appear in the Isle Ristol census returns, taken in April, were seasonal salmon fishermen rather than cod and herring fishermen who, coming later in the year, would not have been recorded in the Census²⁹.

This seasonal fishing industry may have left little in the way of building structures; fishermen’s dwellings could have been of turf or they would camp in any sheltered location. The census returns for Isle Ristol do not specify the type of accommodation they were in. They were recorded as lodgers with the oldest described as head of the household. Each group brought ‘servants’ who were generally sisters of some of the fishermen.

In 1841, there were three families living on the island: Campbell, Mackenzie and Macleod. Only Katherine McLeod is given an occupation: that of cottar. One fish curer and three coopers, who were not born in the county, are also recorded in this census. These would have been the seasonal fishermen camping or lodging on the island.

In 1851, five families lived on the island: three families of Macleods, one Mackenzie and one MacIvor (note that Evander Campbell [*Evander* =Gaelic for Edward] is now recorded as Edward MacIvor, and still lives with his two sisters Janet and Ann). John McLeod is recorded as a shepherd, Alex. MacLeod, Murdo MacLeod and John Macleod as lotters, and the MacIvor family as paupers. There are no itinerant fisherman recorded this year

In 1861 only one family of Macleods lived on the island, recorded on the census as tenants. There are two separate households of 'lodgers', eight in each entry, both made up of six fishermen and two domestic servants. These fishermen came from Banffshire, Elgin and Inverness. It is possible that they were living in the unoccupied houses.

In 1871 there are again three families on the Island: two Macleods and one Maclean. Norman Macleod is recorded as fisherman, Alex. MacLean as farmer, his sons as labourer and herd. The Other MacLeod family are recorded as paupers. The Macleods recorded in 1861 are known to have left Isle Ristol before this time. There are again two households of 'lodgers', six fishermen and two domestic servants in each entry, from Moray, Invernesshire and Banffshire.

The 1881 census records the island as uninhabited. There is some suggestion that this depopulation was not voluntary. One local family record moving from Ristol to Tanera, having had a shop and an inn on Isle Ristol which had a thriving trade owing to the heavy fishing and sea traffic. "*This was all too much for the proprietor*" [Matheson of the Lews], and they were evicted³⁰. Another local family record being removed from Ristol some time before 1871³¹.

The earliest available valuation roll for Coigach dates to 1868-9 but there is no entry for Isle Ristol. This suggests that the island's remaining inhabitants at this date were squatters. If this is the case, and some were making a good living from the shop and inn, it is not surprising that the situation would have been intolerable to the proprietor, although this begs the question why eviction was preferred to the imposition of rents, which would surely have raised more income than letting the island for grazing. Whatever the situation, the fact seems to be that during the 1870s the remaining three families left or were removed, and the island became unavailable as a base for seasonal fishing.

The valuation roll for 1877 records the land being rented for grazing to Thomas MacKenzie, tenant of Achnahaird Farm on a six year lease, at an annual rent of £40.00. In 1880 the grazing rights are transferred to Donald MacLeod, tenant at Old Dornie on a five year lease. Alexander Cameron,

tenant at Badentarbet Farm, rented the grazings from 1885 to 1902, followed by Hector MacRae, cattle dealer of Ullapool; and later tenant at North Keanchulish. At some time between the wars, the crofting tenants of Altandhu acquired all or part of the island as common grazing.

Isle Ristol was bought by Howard Seth Smith in 1938. His intention was to build a house which would enable him to live and work on the island, rearing black cattle³². A soil sample analysis was undertaken in 1939 and in 1940 he applied to the Land Court to resume ownership of 3 acres of common grazing held by tenants of Altandhu. The application was accepted 'subject to the landlord erecting and maintaining a fence running along the western boundary and thence along the northern boundaries to the end of the proposed jetty on a line of which will leave a sufficient access between the fence and high water mark for the passage of shareholders and their stock; the said fence to be stockproof of wooden posts where there is sufficient depth and otherwise of iron stanchions cemented into the rock... and a gate will be provided at the point where the fence meets the jetty for shareholders and their stock, and that the landlord shall on or before the first day of July 1940 erect on the site marked a new fank, measuring forty feet by fifteen feet or thereby to the satisfaction of the 12 shareholders, or in the event of a dispute, the Land Court'. The shareholders were entitled to compensation in respect of the land resumed and the compensation took the form of five shillings per share in the said common pasture, making the rent payable in respect of each share one pound sterling.

A Christmas card dated 1950 shows a stone enclosure complete with shed - this was to be the site of the new house which never came to be. The main problem seems to be that Howard Seth Smith wanted to graze black cattle, and at this point in time sheep and cattle were not permitted to be grazed together³². In 1992 A feu disposition was drawn up between Seth Smith and the Scottish Wildlife Trust. When Howard Seth Smith died in 2000 he bequeathed Isle Ristol to the Scottish Wildlife Trust.

It is known locally, although probably not officially acknowledged, that the Royal Family came ashore from the Britannia to hold picnics on Isle Ristol

Notes and References

1. RCAHMS.
2. Pers. Comm. Macleod I 2003, Mackenzie I, 1999, Muir W. 1990
3. (Farrell and Ross 2001)
4. (Orkneyinga saga).
5. The Minch route was also used by the fleeing Spanish Armada in 1588. Due to inclement storms in the area many were wrecked off the NW of Scotland; one of them on the Reef at Bo Bhuiridh on Isle Ristol (Baird 1995). The book Shipwrecks of the West of Scotland records "there is a local legend of an Armada vessel that was wrecked in the northern bay off Bo Bhuiridh of Isle Ristol". It is recorded as wreck no. 334, latitude 58 03 00 N PA. This links interestingly with the coin hoard According to the Ordnance Survey Bo Bhuiridh means roaring cow. This is probably due to a spelling error between Bo and Bodha (recorded by Fraser). *Bo*, meaning Cow and *Bodha*, meaning Reef. Donnie Fraser's record of the local names show no 5. Caolas bodha bhuiridh as Narrow of the Roaring Reef. found on Horse Island (NMRS collection details).
6. Watson 1904.

7. In very like manner [Torquil Dow came] to the lands of Coigach and Lochbroom where they committed sick barbarous and monstrous cruelties as the like had not been heard of, sparing neither man, wife, nor child whom they might apprehend so that a great number of our true subjects are cruelly murdered and slain, the whole ground foresaid depleted and laid waste, and all the beasts and goods thereof taken and slain (Record of the Privvy Council 11 Feb 1596/97).
8. Richards & Clough 1986. Matheson 1981.
9. Richards & Clough 1989
10. U116/E2 and E3
11. E746/113/8
12. E746/113/53 (1)
13. E 746/113/53 (1)
14. E 746/113/43. E746/98/1 - 4. E 746/127/1. E 746/127/2. E 746/127/2 (I)
15. Mitford Manuscript
16. (E 746/127/1).
17. (E 746/127/2).
18. (E 746/127/2 (I)).
19. (E 746/113/49).
20. (Richards & Clough Richards 1986, Dunlop 1974, Richards, 1994. Clough 1994 and Munro 1994)
21. (Munro 1994
22. (Dunlop 1974).
23. (U116/E2 and E3)
24. (Richards and Clough 1989)
25. An initial search through the uncatalogued index of Sassines in Highland Council Archives did not procure a date for this transfer. Unfortunately, the Matheson Family Archives were allegedly destroyed in simultaneous fires in Stornoway and Ullapool during the early part of the 20th century (Excerpt in Ullapool Museum). However, 'remnants of the Matheson Archives' are held in Northampton Archives (Box V 386 - 392).
26. (Bangor Jones M pers comm 2003).
27. (GD 92/242).
28. Donald Simon, one of the old canears, or salmon fishers of Badentarbet in the 1940s recalls from stories told him by his father from the mid 1800's that cod were dried on Isle Ristol on the shingle beaches (Jim Muir pers. Comm)
29. Alisdair Macleod (pers comm)
30. Alexander Macleod (1897 - 1974) in his account of 'Tanera Island'. His own grandfather, with his brother, came to live on Tanera after being evicted from Isle Ristol.
31. A local family Donnie and Iain (*Roll*) Macleod's great-grandfather John MacLeod lived and grew up on Isle Ristol. They were removed sometime before 1871 and moved to a cottage at the head of Dornie Loch. Both Donnie and Iain Macleod recall family stories of quarrying that took place on the back of the island. The stone was apparently taken to Stornoway to build the Town Hall (pers comm) and fits in with Donnie Frasers recorded placename at C89 Ceith a Leodhasaich - The Lewismans pier. Building stone quarried here for Lewis. Torridon [sic] Sandstone.
32. (pers comm. Ruth Lesley heir).

1.3. Evidence from Early Maps

The earliest cartographic evidence found for Isle Ristol is Roy's military map of 1747¹. The island is recorded as *Id. Reistall* but no details of habitation are shown. Peter May's Plan² of 1756 could not be consulted within the time frame of this project; although the measurements of usage of the farm have been recorded in an unpublished manuscript (see below). Morrison's plans of farms for the Board of Forfeited Estates in 1775³ does not include Isle Ristol with the farm of Dorney⁴. Peter May's survey and Morrison's slightly later plan both record 21 acres of corn land, no grass or good pasture, and 799 acres of hill and moss, a total of 820 acres for the farm of Dorney⁵.

'A New Chart of the West Coast of Scotland from the Point of Ardnamurchan to Cape Wrath' by Laurie and Whittle, dated 12th May 1794, and Captain Otter's Admiralty

Chart of 1848 depict 'Rustal I' and 'Risdale' respectively with no topographical detail apart from the anchorages between Dorney and Ristol and Isle Muligrach and Ristol. Captain Otter's chart indicates a roofed building and attached rectangular enclosure at Ardoch, with what appears to be a pier extending north into the harbour.

The 1st Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1875 shows two structures, one at Ardoch and the other at Tighachaolais, both roofed. The Ardoch structure has an attached enclosure, and at Tighachaolais a dyke extends north from the house to the shore of Loch an Alltain Dubh. It also depicts two areas of agricultural land, one at Seanna bhaile, and another extending back from the shoreline between a point south of Ardoch and the dyke north of Tighachaolais. The 2nd edition shows the two buildings as unroofed, and no improved land is indicated

The present OS pathfinder map, revised in 1971, shows the artificial lochan formed by damming a burn by the previous owner, Howard Seth-Smith. A head dyke is shown crossing the island from north to SE, and what appear to be three buildings and four enclosures as well as the structures at Ardoch and Tighachaolais. The latter is now altered to indicate sections of dyke or fence, the sheep fank and another possible structure. A cairn is recorded in the NE corner of the island.

1. (Sheet 33 3/2 K111 785).
2. (RHP 85395)
3. (E 746/189)
4. (E 746/189 pp 32,33)
5. Mitford Manuscript. E 746/189 pp 32,33).

1.4. Discussion

While it is likely that Ristol has been settled from at least the Norse period, there is no documentary evidence for this. The earliest settlement on Ristol would appear to have been located at Seana Bhaile, and to have been abandoned before the 18th century. It is possible that this was a Late Mediaeval settlement contemporary with Achnahaird and another possible settlement at Old Dornie, but it is not yet known why these were abandoned.

The description of the island in 1788 as occupied by the tenants of Dornie only as shielings in July and as spring and winter grazings for cattle would suggest no permanent dwellings but possibly some shieling structures and possibly enclosures for the gathering of livestock. Evidence from the rest of Coigach at this time, however, suggests that pressure on land led to shielings being given over to rig cultivation at this late date, and some being turned into more permanent settlements. It is therefore likely that the rigs, enclosed by a head dyke to separate them from grazing land, date to this period of 'shielings and grazings only' It is also possible that the Dornie tenants played down their dependence on the island to avoid a rent increase.

Although the British Fisheries Society only succeeded in constructing a shed on the island, the settlers attracted to the new fishing industry would most likely have been allocated a plot of land and built homes, outbuildings and boat ports. As the resident population dwindled through the 19th century, these buildings would probably have been

available for use by seasonal fishing crews, and if no house were available, these visitors would have built temporary shelters to last the season.

When the island was given over to sheep grazing in the 1870s, a shepherd's house was probably maintained, if only for annual visits for lambing and shearing. These activities would have required enclosures and a fank, later a dip; the enclosures also serving the purpose of corralling the sheep before shifting them off the island. A dyke, later a fence, would have been required to prevent unattended livestock straying back to the mainland at low tide.

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McAne daughter of Glengarry in life rent in implement of Marriage. Contract 28 July 1590.
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GD305/1/8 All and haill the [] lands of Dalpollie and the oxgang lands of Inverpollie and all Dornie etc... Alexander Mackenzie of Ardloch of the Lands Dalpollie, Inverpollie and others in the Kingdom. 1681.
GD305/1/5/10. Disposition. John Mackenzie to Sir William Gordon 15 May 1725 Bequeathing: All and haill the oxgate lands of Delpollie, the oxgate lands of Inverpollie, the quarter lands of Auchnahard, the oxgate lands of Dornie and quarter Lands of Ardmore.

Seth Smith's walled enclosure at Ardoch, before construction of the hut, view from SSE



Section 2. Archaeological Evaluation

2.1. Archaeological Background

The following archaeological sites have been previously recorded on Isle Ristol:

- **Seana-Bhaile: township (possible)** at NB 974 115, SMR no. NB91SE0005, NMRS no. NB91SE 21. ‘...a piece of pasture land where formerly stood some few houses...’Old Town’..’OS name Book 1881 Although there is no evidence of buildings on the 1st edition OS map, there is an area of improved ground and the placename suggests the presence of a township at one time. An enclosure is shown on the current edition of the OS map 1970
- **Tighachaolais, Buidling and enclosure** at NB 979 114, SMR no. NB91SE0004
- **Tighachaolais, farmstead, lazy beds, enclosures, building.** At NB 976 112, SMR no. NB91SE0032, NMRS no. NB91SE 27
- **Ardoch, building** at NB 9778 1100, SMR no. NB91SE0033, NMRS no. NB91SE 28.

2.2. Aerial photographs

The following aerial photographs were consulted during this evaluation:

- CPE/SCOT/UK 180, frame 1328, 8th Oct 1946. This is the earliest photograph, covering the whole island. Seth Smith’s shed has not yet been built, although the walled enclosure is complete.
- 58/RAF/1400, frame 0066, 1st April 1954. This frame covers only the NE quarter of the island
- OS/64/66, frame 078, 23rd June 1964. This frame covers the whole island and is the clearest image of features at Tighachaolais. It shows features, possibly sections of ditching, outwith the head dyke, which were not noted on the field survey.
- SC771543-C40066, 1994. This is an oblique view of the NE part of the island and is the clearest image of rig cultivation (reproduced in Plan 4 at the end of the report)

The plan of areas of rig cultivation (Plan 3) is based on these photographs rather than on field survey. Some areas of rig are now obscured on the ground, particularly by mature growth of heather. The entire area of the island enclosed by the head dyke, ie. the NE part, is covered by rigs, with the exception of the higher ground, knolls and the steeper slopes, and the back of the beach at Seana Bhaile. The structures at Tighachaolais and Ardoch and the group of two buildings and an enclosure (below, sites 49/50) are visible but the rest of the structures recorded on the present OS map are not, probably obscured by vegetation.

2.3. Archaeological Survey: Methodology

The survey was carried out on May 10th and 17th 2003 by members of Coigach Community Heritage group, under the supervision of Cathy Dagg and Frances Ross.

May 10th: Geoff Payne, Karen Peach, Ruth Leslie, Bill Drake, Steve Husband, Jo Christofferson, Cathy Dagg, Frances Ross.

May 17th: Lesley Muir, Ish and Andrew Muir, Steve Husband, Ruth Leslie, Jo Christofferson, Bill Drake, Frances Ross.

Boats to the island were provided by Steve Husband and Bill Drake.

The group worked in two teams, covering different parts of the island. Each archaeological feature was noted, measured if appropriate, and photographed. The results of the survey are given below.

2.4. Gazetteer of Archaeological Features

1. **Dyke and Fence from NB 9645 1134 to NB 9680 1195.** A low rubble dyke and a probably later fence run along the clifftops, presumably to prevent livestock from falling.

2. **Possible fish drying area at NB 9647 1142.** A section of rubble walling, 6m long and 1m in height runs across a platform of bare rock to the cliff top (**Photo no. 1**). Behind this, on the grass, a natural boulder 0.6m by 0.4m, has a hollow carved into its top, measuring 20cm across (**Photo no. 2**). This stone basin is similar to a bait hold, but there is no access from the sea at this point, and it is unlikely that activity at this site was directly connected with fishing.

3. **Plank Bridge at NB 9671 1104.** Two planks held together by two iron bars, used as a bridge crossing the small burn running down to Camas a'Bhuailte. This was possibly originally a piece of driftwood as it is unlikely to have been intentionally carried any distance to the spot.

4. **Bank and ditches at NB 9683 1102.** A seemingly artificial length of bank flanked by ditches, similar to one rig strip, curving in an 'S' south from the burn. (A similar, smaller feature was noted on the aerial photograph at NB 9694 1074, but this was not noted during the field survey.) West of this feature, an area of cultivation was noted. (**Photo no. 3**)

5. **Area of peat cuttings centred on NB 9712 1075**

6. **Quarry at NB 9723 1062.** This is the location of Ceith a' Leodhasaich, 'the Lewisman's pier' where stone was extracted and shipped to Stornoway. There is little to see on the ground, but the aerial photograph shows an unnaturally regular shape, which could have been caused by quarrying back from the shore. (**Photo no. 4**)

7. **Stone basin at NB 9743 1062.** An artificial hollow on the top face of an embedded

boulder. The stone measures 1m by 0.8m, and the hollow is circular, 25cm. in diameter and approximately 10cm in depth. This is located immediately above site 7. If this were near to fishing activities, this would be interpreted as a bait basin. **(Photo no. 5)**

8. **Possible fish drying area at NB 9743 1060.** A section of low rubble walling curves across a plateau of bedrock to the cliff top. This site is similar to site no. 2 and presumably had a similar, unknown, function, although fish drying has been suggested as a possibility. **(Photo no. 6)**

9. **Possible quarry site at NB 9747 1070.** Noted as three faces of exposed, unweathered bedrock running towards the shore, covering an area approximately 36m by 16m. The aerial photograph shows no artificial lines here, and this site may be natural.

10. **Spring at NB 9750 1078.** An underground spring. No apparent artificial features are associated with the spring.

11. **Area of peat cuttings, linear feature at NB 9748 1093.** This linear feature is clearly visible on the aerial photographs and is marked on the present OS map. The aerial photographs show it extending further NW, altering direction twice, and attached to the head dyke by another linear feature at a right angle to these two. It is unclear whether this is a ditch, primarily for drainage, with an associated bank of excavated material, or a dyke, now spread to a low stony bank. It is located SW of the head dyke and is not clearly associated with that feature. It may represent an earlier township boundary, although no rigs are located between this and the head dyke. **(Photo no. 7)**

12. **Hilltop cairn at NB 9679 1172.** A rubble cairn placed on bedrock on a prominent height, measuring 1.5m in diameter at its base and 1m in height. **(Photo no. 8)**

13. **Hilltop cairn at 9676 1145.** A rubble cairn placed on bedrock on a prominent height. The cairn measures 1m in diameter at its base, and 1m in height. **(Photo no. 9)**

14. **Hilltop cairn at NB 9691 1144.** A cairn of large stones, placed on bedrock on a prominent height. **(Photo no. 10)**

15. **Hilltop cairn at NB 9693 1130.** A few stones placed at the base of a large glacially deposited boulder, lying on bedrock on a prominent height. **(Photo no. 11)**

16. **Possible enclosure at NB 9714 1110.** A possible rubble dyke enclosing an area 10m by 3m at the base of a rockface. This may be a natural feature caused by tumble of stones from the rock face forming an apparent dyke

17. **Hilltop cairn at NB 9728 1107.** A cairn of large stones, measuring 1.5m in diameter at its base and 1.5m in height. **(Photo no. 12)**

18. **Head Dyke from NB 9708 1186 to NB 9757 1097.** A turf and stone dyke, clearly visible on the aerial photographs and recorded on the modern OS map. The area to the east of this is almost entirely filled with rig cultivation, suggesting that the area to the west was used for grazing and peat cutting.

19. **Possible well at NB 9730 1125.** This feature lies just outside the head dyke at the

foot of a small escarpment. The well is located between two large stones and has a stony base.

20. **Area of peat cutting at 9737 1118.** This the NW extent of the area of peat cuttings (site 11)

21. **Building and enclosure at NB 9743 1108.** Overgrown rubble footings of a building aligned N-S and measuring 10m by 5m, with an entrance in the west wall. Attached to the NE corner of this is a dyke running north then curving west then south to join the head dyke, forming an enclosure approximately 20m wide. Rig strips are clearly visible within this enclosure. **(Photo no. 13)**

22. **Seven circular structures, bank at NB 9731 1171.** A row of stone and turf structures with central hollows, measuring 2m in diameter and spaced 2-3m apart. These are located on top of a raised shingle bank, possibly artificial, between the rigs and the shoreline

23. **Building at NB 9735 1169.** The indistinct footings of a building, aligned E-W and measuring 8m by 5m. This appears to be overlain by the bank and circular structures (site 22) **(Photo no. 14)**

24. **Well at NB 9733 1169.** A shallow pool located between a boulder and an outcrop of bedrock, and flanked by rows of beach pebbles. The bottom of the pool is gravel, and the water appears to emerge from under the boulder. **(Photo no. 15)**

25. **Rock shelter at NB 9736 1165.** A rocky overhang above the high tide line, its entrance closed by a line of rocks. The enclosed area is 8.6m wide and 1.5m deep, its ceiling at 2m high. Immediately outside this enclosure is a flat platform on the rock measuring 18m by 14m. **(Photo no. 16)**

26. **Dam at NB 9739 1154.** A wall of mortared stone, aligned NW-SE and approximately 60m in length. This was an attempt by Seth Smith to create a freshwater lochan on a small burn, but the area behind the dam is silted and covered in reeds. **(Photo no. 17)**

27. **Site of enclosure at NB 9733 1149.** There appears to be a square enclosure recorded on the present OS map at this location, but neither field survey or examination of aerial photographs located this feature.

28. **Stone setting at NB 9740 1148.** A line of stones, possibly a dyke, running for approximately 40m, with a second line branching at right angles to run west for 1m **(Photo no. 18)**

29. **Stone setting at NB 9739 1144.** A short section of rocks and stones which could form a barrier or shelter.

30. **Possible building and enclosure at NB 9737 1144.** The building is aligned N-S and measures 4m by 3m.

31. **Area of cultivation, possible structures at NB 9740 1140.** A grassy area,

measuring 10m by 5m, containing stone piles and a circular, stone-lined hollow measuring 1m in diameter.

32. **Dykes, possible shieling structure at NB 9154 1153.** Two sections of dyke meet at right angles at this point. One runs ENE for 12m, the other NNW for 16m before apparently dipping below the ground surface. In the corner is a small oval shieling-type structure, 3m in length, aligned NE. South of this corner by 6.5m and 13m, are two field clearance piles, oval in shape, at the edge of an area of rigs.

33. **Enclosure at NB 9781 1159.** One straight section of turf dyke runs NE to the shore, parallel with the short rigs below the bank immediately to the east. West of the first, a second section of turf dyke curves from the rockface to the shore, forming an enclosure 15m in width

34. **Section of turf dyke from NB 9770 1152 to NB 9774 1145.** This is a particularly prominent example of the turf dykes which appear to edge sections of rig cultivation

35. **Two structures at NB 9768 1145.** Two shieling-type structures. One is sub-square, and measures 6m by 6m. Immediately NW of this is a second structure 4m in diameter. These occupy the slightly higher ground not utilised for rig cultivation, on the flank of the saddle between Tighachaolais and Seana Bhaile. **(Photo no. 19)**

36. **Two sections of turf dyke at NB 9765 1147.** These are particularly prominent examples of the dykes which form the boundaries between separate areas of rig cultivation, and also possibly form a boundary between Tighachaolais and Seana Bhaile

37. **Possible structure at NB 9767 1135.** This structure is built onto the base of a rock face.

38. **Possible structure at NB 9793 1153.** The indistinct footings of a building aligned N-S and measuring 7m on its long axis, with rounded corners. This structure has possibly been robbed for building material for the adjacent dyke.

39. **Dam, tidal pool at NB 9797 1155.** This low, curving, mortared wall cuts across the north of the tidal pool, which has been created by this dam. This is the same style of walling as the dam at site 25, and is probably also the work of Seth Smith. **(Photo no. 20)**

40. **Possible structure at NB 9800 1153.** The indistinct grassy footings of a structure approximately 3m square, to the east of the tidal pool.

41. **Cairn at NB 9893 1157.** A cairn composed of approximately four courses of small stones, placed on top of a large boulder just above the high tide line. This cairn is recorded on the present OS map. **(Photo no. 21)**

42. **Tighachaolais, building, dyke at NB 9889 1139.** This building survives as grassy footings to the west of the present fank (site 43) and corresponds to the building recorded on the 1st and 2nd edition OS maps. **(Photo no. 22 and 23)** It measures 9.5m by 5m but was probably originally longer, as the dyke, recorded on the early OS maps as attached to the NE corner of the building, now emerges from under the fank. This dyke is

drystone in construction and meanders north above the high tide line then west of the tidal pool to the shore at NB 9794 1155, but is broken by the nousts (site 43)

43. **Double boat noust at NB 9891 1145.** A prominent feature of raised banks, divided by an internal partition into two nousts, above a boat port. Each noust measures internally 4m by 1.5m

44. **Fank, fence at NB 9891 1139.** The fank is constructed of drystone walling with mortared capstones, and consists of a square divided into two compartments, with entrances on both the north and south walls. Outwith the square to the SE and E., more walling, lower and not keyed into the south wall, forms a third compartment, with entrances north and south. **(Photo no. 24)** The fence, on wooden posts, is mostly collapsed but ran from the west corner of the building (site 41) north to a point on the shore east of the dyke and south, out from the shore to beyond a large boulder, terminating at NB 9787 1126. Below the shoreline the posts are iron.

45. **Boat port at NB 9790 1133**

46. **Building, enclosure, area of cultivation, two boat ports** at NB 9774 1125. One building aligned NE-SW and measuring approximately 13m by 4m. **(Photo no. 25)** North of this is an enclosure, as recorded on the present OS map. The point, south of the building, is grassy and has signs of field clearance, and one depression, probably a potato clamp or similar structure. There are two boat ports on the shore, at NB 9778 1119 and NB 9776 1123

47. **Building and enclosure at NB 9765 1122** A stone setting indicating a possible building, shieling or shelter, aligned N-S and measuring 5.5m by 3m, with curved corners. The enclosure is recorded on the present OS map, but is unclear on the ground. The building appears to be attached to the south of the enclosure.

48. **Possible structure at NB 9761 1123.** A stone setting with a right angle, possibly indicating a building, shieling or shelter. **(Photo no. 26)**

49. **Possible structure at NB 9763 1126.** A shieling-type structure, on a knoll, aligned NE-SW and measuring internally approximately 5m by 2.5m

50. **Building at NB 9756 1126.** Located on higher ground north of site no. 50, and possibly a part of the same farmstead, this building is aligned N-S with a doorway in the east wall, and measures 9.5m by 5m. This structure is also recorded on the present OS map. **(Photo no. 27)**

51. **Building and enclosure at NB 9752 1121.** These two structures are recorded on the present OS map. The building is aligned E-W and measures approximately 11m by 5m **(Photo no. 28)**. 20m east of this, the enclosure measures 15m NE-SW and 23m NW-SE, with an entrance in the SW corner **(Photo no. 29)**

52. **Shieling-type structure at NB 9760 1114.** On the summit of a natural hillock, two hollows, each measuring 2.5m diameter, possibly the remains of a shieling –type structure, temporary shelter or food storage.

53. **Farmstead at NB 9765 1109.** Two buildings connected by a dyke. The first building is located on a level platform above a steep rise, is aligned E-W and measures 4.8m by 10.5m. The second building, on lower ground SE of the first, is aligned NE-SW (**Photo no. 30**). A low stone dyke running NE from the NW corner of this building turns west then south to join the NE corner of the first building. East of this group, a second dyke runs NNE-SSW across the beginning of the Ardoch peninsula. Two rubble piles are located below the high tide line below the farmstead, possibly indicating a former port.
54. **Area of ?cultivation at NB 9756 1101.** This is visible as an area of grass and bracken, surrounded by thick heather, and must be indicative of some activity, although it lies within the area of rigs and is unlikely to be solely linked to cultivation.
55. **Three boat nousts at NB 9777 1103.** These are located above a poorly defined boat port, and are dug into the bank, measuring internally 3m by 2.5m. (**Photo no. 31**)
56. **Building at NB 9777 1102.** Low grass-covered stone footings of a building aligned NW-SE, the visible part measuring 7m by 4.7m, but overlaid by the NW corner of the enclosure, (site 56) (**Photo no. 32**)
57. **Ardoch, stone-walled enclosure at NB 9778 1101.** A rectangular enclosure, its main alignment SE-NW and measuring approximately 23m by 12m. The walls are mortared and stand 1.4m high, with a base width of 0.5m. A gateway is set just E. of centre in the NE section, with a metal gate. Within this enclosure, approximately central, are concrete footings measuring 4m by 2.5m. This is the walled enclosure built, or rebuilt by Seth Smith, and the footings of the wooden shed, of which there is now no trace. (**Photo no. 33**)
58. **Steps at 9779 1102.** Seven set stone slabs, measuring on average 0.5m in width and 0.3m in depth, rising a total of 0.7m from the top (SW) end of the eastern boat port (site 58) (**Photo no. 34**)
59. **Boat port at NB 9778 1102.** One main, well cleared port, delineated by a line of large set stones on its NW edge. 13m NW of this is a second line of stones edging a second, parallel port. There is no indication of there having been a pier here as suggested by Otter's map of 1848. (**Photo no. 35**)

2.5 Discussion

It is probably significant that no rigs cover the area of the former settlement of Seana Bhaile. It is possible, but unlikely, that the ground here was unsuitable, being too sandy and unstable, but it is more likely that the rigs were avoiding an area either of visible settlement remains or of folk memory of a settlement. There are no archaeological features in the vicinity which would appear to pre-date the main period of rig cultivation and associated activities. Therefore it appears likely that any remains of this original settlement are concealed under the wind-blown sand above the beach. This area is grassy and stable, and at present no archaeological layers are visible in the eroding face of the bank at the edge of the beach.

It is clear, particularly on the aerial photographs, that the stone-walled enclosures, particularly sites 21, 46 and 47, occupy the same ground as rigs. It is not likely that rigs would have continued through enclosures, so it would appear that the two are not contemporary. Either the rigs were dug through abandoned enclosures or, more likely, the enclosures were constructed after the rigs had been abandoned. By association with the enclosures, this makes the stone-footed buildings later than the rigs and head dyke. It seems likely from historical evidence that the rigs date to the second half of the 18th century, and this would date the buildings and enclosures to the period of the British Fisheries Society or later. More detailed archaeological investigation would be required to ascertain the relative chronology of these features.

In the main area of occupation on the east side of the island, eight buildings, probably dwellings, were identified during the field survey, visible as stone footings (sites 21, 42, 46, 47, 50, 51, 53, 56). This is more than the maximum number of families resident on Ristol between 1841 and 1871, which was five families, present in 1851. Assuming that these buildings are all roughly contemporary, they would appear most likely to represent the settlement of families on the island to take part in the fisheries industry between 1788 and 1813. Most are located near to the shore and have associated boat ports. These families would probably have continued to keep livestock and grow crops for their own use, hence the enclosures and cultivation features other than rigs, but there is no reason why some rigs might not have continued to be used.

Six structures of poorer construction were noted within the main area of occupation (Sites 35, 38, 40, 48, 49, 52). These have been described as shieling-type structures, and they are generally located on higher ground outwith the area of rigs, or on knolls within the rigs. The structures on the low ground in particular are obscured by a tall growth of heather, and are difficult to interpret. Some may be shielings, dating to the period, up to 1788, when the island was, at least officially, uninhabited, and only occupied seasonally for shielings and grazing. Some may be storage structures such as potato clamps associated with rig cultivation or cultivation during the period of fisheries. Some may have been temporary shelters occupied seasonally by fishing crews and fish processors, but the number of deserted houses after 1813 makes this less likely.

No features definitely identifiable as kelp kilns were located during the field survey. The seven circular features, (site 22), could have had this function, but are probably too small, and may instead have been potato storage pits. If there were no kelp kilns on the island, the kelp known to have been harvested here must have been removed to the mainland for processing.

No archaeological feature was located which could definitely correspond to the fisheries shed built by the British Fisheries Society, thought to be at Ardoch. It is possible that this was the building whose footings partly lie under the later enclosure, but this is a very small structure and more likely a dwelling (site 56). This building does not correspond to the building and enclosure recorded on Otter's plan of 1848. The enclosure on that map is in more or less the same location as the present enclosure constructed by Seth Smith, and may substantially be the same. Seth Smith is likely to have chosen this location for the easily accessible stone, and may only have rebuilt the walls on the original footprint, or enlarged it to the north where the attached building recorded by Otter stood.

Seth Smith's enclosure and hut, view from SE



Section 3. Recommendations for Management of the Archaeology

There are two main areas of concern with reference to the protection and management of the archaeological and cultural heritage of Isle Ristol:

- The protection of features from damage from human or natural causes
- The preservation of visibility of archaeological features
 - a. To allow the sites to be viewed and interpreted
 - b. To prevent accidental damage from activity on the island

3.1. Potential for Damage

3.1.1. Damage from Human Activity

This is probably a low risk. The island has few visitors as it requires a degree of knowledge and effort to get there. Quad biking and mountain biking are unlikely activities. There is a possibility that campers will light fires and shift stones from archaeological features, but there was no sign of this having already happened. The visible archaeological features, having few high standing walls, are not likely to be damaged by trampling, either by present visitor numbers or by an increased number if visitor access is developed in the future. There are, at present, no exposed or eroding archaeological deposits which could attract attention.

3.1.2. Damage from Natural Forces

The area of potential concern here is the site of the former, possibly Mediaeval, settlement at Seana Bhaile, now considered to be buried under a stable slope of grass-covered windblown sand. This slope has an eroding face on the seaward side. No archaeological features are exposed in this face at present. It would be useful for this site to be monitored on a regular basis, perhaps once a year after winter storms, to ascertain how rapidly the face is eroding, and to check whether any archaeological features or deposits have been exposed.

3.2. Preservation of visibility of archaeological features

Low or non-existent grazing has allowed the heather cover on the east side of the island, particularly over the area of rig cultivation, to grow into tough, knee-high stalks, obscuring even quite substantial archaeological features and making identification and interpretation particularly difficult. At this stage, the introduction of livestock will have little effect, and the area would benefit from the heather being burnt, followed by a programme of low density grazing. It is hoped that this would not be in conflict with other management aims for the island

Appendix 1. Information from the *Ordnance Survey Name Book*

The OS Name book (1875) describes the Summer Isles as a group of “rocky islands in the Atlantic Ocean lying off Coigach and near the extreme point of that district. The two largest, namely Tanera More and Isle Ristol are inhabited and all of them stocked with sheep and cattle in the winter... “A large Island only divided from the mainland at High Water Mark by a narrow channel called Caolis Eilean Ristol. It is situated about quarter of a mile South West of Altandubh village and quite close to Old Dorney another small hamlet. On the coast opposite the mainland are two houses inhabited. One goes under the name of Tigh a’chaol or the House of the Channel, the other is called Ardoch”¹.

The meaning of Isle Ristol is not recorded².

Bo Bhuiridh:Applies to a rugged point on the North Side of Isle Ristol. The name means roaring cow.

Seanna-bhaile:Applies to piece of pasture where there formerly stood some houses on the east coast of Isle Ristol and opposite Old Dorney a small hamlet on the mainland. The name means Old Town.

Traigh an t-Sean bhaile:Applies to a small sandy beach on the north coast of Isle Ristol and receives its name from Sean-bhaile - or old town. The name means the sandy beach of the old town.

Tighachaolais:The name of a house on the east coast of Isle Ristol meaning House of the Pound, and about quarter of a mile East of Old Dorney, a small hamlet on the adjacent coast.

Meall an t sruith:A small hill on the South west corner of Isle Ristol meaning the Hill of the Current.

Camas a’ Bhuailte:Applies to a small bay on the west coast of Isle Ristol meaning the Bay of the Striking.

Loch an Alltain Duibh:A salt water Loch or bay formed by Isle Ristol on the west, the coast of Alltain Dubh on the East. It receives its name from the village of Alltain Dubh meaning Loch of the Black Stream.

Ardoch:Applies to the name of a house on the East coast of Isle Ristol and about half a mile south of Old Dorney a shepherd’s house on the adjacent coast.

Mol Dheas:Applies to a small bay meaning South beach on the southside of Isle Ristol and quite close to Ardoch House also on Isle Ristol.

Carn an t-Sean-laoich:Applies to a small prominent point on the south side of Isle **Ristol and the mouth of Caolais Eilean Ristol**. The name means Cairn of the Old Hero.

1. This translation differs from the name and translation given later in the OS Name Book by Rev. Archd. Beaton of Coigach, Mr Donald Macdonald and Mr Kenneth Macleod of Reef. House of the Pound”. The former makes the most sense, and corresponds to Caolais Eilean Ristol, the strait between the island and the mainland, and Creag a’ chaolais, a point on the mainland opposite Ardoch. This derives from the Gaelic *caol*=narrows while there is no gaelic word similar to this meaning pound or enclosure. The Gaelic for pound is *punn*, from the English. It is possible that this is a mis-transcription of House of the Sound.

2. The island is recorded as belonging to the Duchess of Sutherland, although at this time records show that Isle Ristol belonged to Matheson of the Lews and was possibly being rented by the Sutherland estate.

Appendix 2. Donnie Fraser's Placenames

In the 1950's Donnie Fraser embarked on recording the heritage of the placenames of the Coigach area as used by the crofting families in the previous century, and as known to those of his contemporaries who spent their lives crofting there. His records in the School of Scottish Studies was preserved in a printed version by his nephew Alisdair Fraser to celebrate the opening of the Coigach Community Hall.

C1. Eilean Ruisteil or Ruisteal: meaning unknown - Watson suggested hryss-dalr - Mares dale. There is a burn at Achiltitbuie with a similar name but no obvious connection. The island is roundish with no great heights, has a low ebb ford to the mainland and was once inhabited. It has a splendid harbour and good fishing grounds nearby making it a likely place for Norse occupation.

C2. Camas a bhat - Boat Bay. Story unknown

C3. Na h-uamhagan dubha or na h-uamhaichean - The black caves of holes

C4. Leac an to-iel or Leac an t-swelle- Meaning unknown. A flattish rock and always surf there say 2 days before a storm from the ocean. There is the word oil - vexation or the word swelle for the English swell - the undulating motion of the sea.

C5. Caolis bodha bhuiridh - Narrow of the roaring reef

C6. Na bodhaichean beaga - The small skerries. They appear at low tide only.

C7. Cnoc a'chaolais - Small hill of the narrows.

C8. Bodha cnoc a'chaolais - Skerry of the reef of the narrows.

C9. An ardag or ardaig - Small point.

C10 Rudh bhuidhe - Yellow point

C11. Ob an leac bhuidhe also Ob na lice bhuidhe - Harbour bay of the yellow flat rock

C85 - Poll a bhridean - Maybe sea pool of the small fish. Fridean c/f frideag - the little finger. The haddock here are small.

C86. Uamh a bhridean Cave of the small fish

C87. Na biodagan _ The dirks, sharp pointed stones appearing at ebb.

C88 Camas a bhuailt also Camas a ghuailt - Probably means thrashed by the sea because the boulders are dark like coal.

C89. Ceith a Leodhasaich - The Lewismans pier. Building stone quarried here for Lewis (Torridon [sic] Sandstone)

C90. Leach dhon. Brown flat rock.

Appendix 3. Evidence given to the Napier Commission

In 1882 Alex Macleod described the grazings available to Polbain Crofters (formerly part of Dorney Farm). "45 years ago when the whole place was under Captain Macleod - they had part of Badentarbet, the whole of Old Dornie and six islands. When Captain Macleod gave up all were cut off and laid under sheep..."

John Maclean a Crofter and Shoemaker in Altandhu complained they had to "pay for seaware [used as manure] which we gather on the shores of Isle Ristol and Old Dornie. This island as well as the all the Summer Isles was once in the possession of the people and taken away about the same time as Badintarbet and Auchinaird... according to my Father's story"

Appendix 4. Details of Ownership and Rentals

The Coigach rental for 1725 (GD305/1/126(129)) records the 'Ivion of Dornie'. The principal tenant was 'Sallachy'. Land duty was 110 marks and the fishing and feu duties made up another 7 marks. The customs paid were shown to be 4 stones butter, 3 wedders, and 1/2 plaid. The rent money paid was 300 marks.

Rental for 1740 (GD 305/1/64) records Alexander Mackenzie of Achilty as the principal tenant of Dorney. The rent was 304 merks, 10 shillings. In an accompanying account of the arrears of Coigach rent dating to 1737 Kenneth Mackenzie of Dornie is shown to have been in arrears.

The Rental of the Estate of Cromartie 1748 (E746/62) shows the tenant to be Kenneth Mackenzie for the lands of Dornie. His rent is shown at 78 merks, 6 shillings and 8d (presumably Scots) with 3 wedders, 4 stone butter, 1/2 white plaid and no feu duties

From the judicial rent of Barony of Coigach 1755 (E 746/70/77) William Mackenzie held the Farm of Dornie (Ref). He paid no entry money to the farm. William Mackenzie sublet to 6 other families made up of 13 men and 10 women over the age of 17. There were 3 males and one female under the age of 17 but over 10 years, and 1 male and 3 females under 10. 3 males and 1 female spoke English. The stock consisted of 16 horses, 60 Black Cattle, 70 sheep, 50 goats. The rent was £8 sterling. 3 pecks of potatoes were sown (statistics of annexed Estates ref - Alisdair Fraser).

In 1756 a petition was made to Captain Forbes, Commissioner for the Annexed Estates by Donald Macleod 'late in Dorney, now in Rive' (E746/113/8). It reads 'that in May 1754 [Donald Macleod] your petitioner was most illegally, violently and oppressively dispossessed from [his] possession of Dornie with the tacite consent of Murdow Mackenzie of Achilty the deputy Factor on that part of the Estate of Cromarty by William Mackenzie present Possessor of my said Tack of qch illegal proceeding I complained and applied you for redress' He was obliged to apply to Mr Christy who had powers from the Commissioners to examine and settle grievances set forth by some inhabitants. In his defence he states that when Mr Christy examined the yearly rent of Dorney as payable to the Late Earl of Cromartie he and the other possessors declared that the said lands payed two hundred and forty merks yearly including rent, entry and Customs which far exceeded the rental given by William Mackenzie. He reminds the Commissioners of Annexed Estates that it was declared that any person or persons concealed any part of the rent of their possessions they and their heirs were forever to be debarred from possessing any part of the Kings Lands. He asked to be restated to his former possession at this Whitsunday 1756 with damages and expenses for failing to do him immediate justice

Donald Macleod was evidently granted one forth of the Farm of Dornie as in 1767 he petitions the Board of Annexed Estates once more (E746/113/53 (1).). He complains that his apportionment was not enough to hold his stock and that he was obliged to pay his neighbour, one Donald Mackenzie who had the pendicle of Old Dorney [presumably Ristol as well] exorbitant sums of money for grazing his stock. Donald Mackenzie was, he says, the most troublesome neighbour in the whole Barony, and would poind his cattle if he did not give him what he demanded (poind on Ristol - House of he pound??). Donald Macleod had chosen to do his bidding rather than have any disputes with him. However, on account that Donald Mackenzie was to be removed the following Whitsunday on 'account of him being among the gang of thieves now discovered in Coigach'. Donald Macleod asked the Commissioners to grant him either the Tack of the whole of the Farm of Dorney, or at least the half there of with the Pendicle called Old Dornie for such a number of years as the Board shall think proper. He was refused as he was an old man with no family and it should be reserved for possessors of Achiltibuie (E 746/113/53 (1)).

That same year, one William Macleod, wright was removed from the farm of Ullapool and put in possession of one half of the farm of Dorney (E 746/158/1-8) which suggests that he held Ristol.

Sir James Matheson the proprietor of Isle Ristol died in 1879. In 1884 and 1885 Isle Ristol was granted by Sir Alexander Matheson Baronet of Lochalsh and others, in favour of Donald Matheson; whom failing Duncan Matheson and the heirs male (valuation rolls). After James Matheson's death the yearly rent and value of the Island dropped from £40.00 to £26.00. Until 1938-39 the island passed down various members of the Matheson line.

Photo no. 1, Site 2, area of unknown activity, defined by rubble walling running to the cliff top.



Photo no. 2, Site 2, basin carved into natural rock.

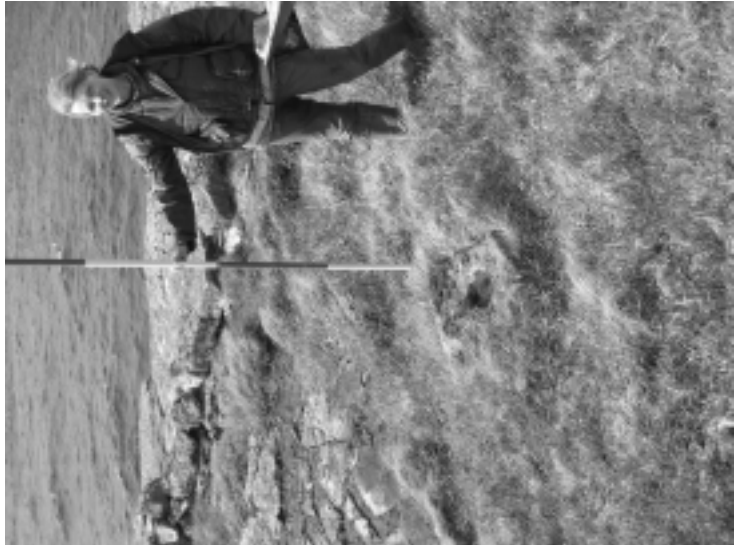


Photo no. 3, Site 4, apparently artificial feature of ditching and bank .



Photo no. 4, Site no. 6, Quarry area.



Photo no. 5: Site no. 7, basin carved into boulder above Site no. 8



Photo no. 6: Site no. 8, rubble walling, enclosing area of uncertain function



Photo no. 7: Site no. 11, linear feature outwith head dyke adjacent to peat cuttings, view from NW



Photo no. 8: Site no. 12, hilltop cairn



Photo no. 9: Site no. 13, Hilltop Cairn



Photo no. 10: Site no. 14, Hilltop Cairn



Photo no. 11: Site no. 15, Hilltop Cairn



Photo no. 12: Site no. 17, Hilltop Cairn



Photo no. 13: Site no. 21, footings of farmstead building, view from south.



Photo no. 14: Site no. 23, footings of building, view from east



Photo no. 15: Site no. 24, Well



Photo no. 16: Site no. 25, 'Rock Shelter'



Photo no. 17: Site no. 26, Concrete and Stone Dam



Photo no. 18: Site no. 28, Stone Setting

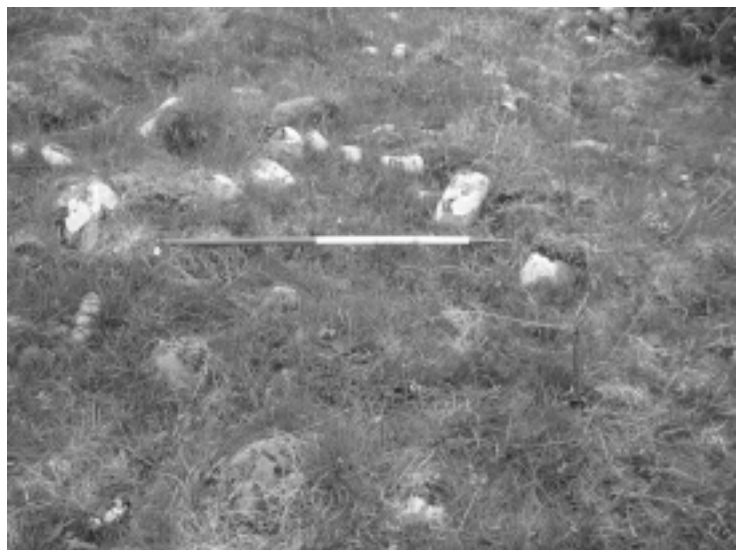


Photo no. 19: Site no. 35, shieling type structure, view from north



Photo no. 20: Site no. 39, concrete and stone dam forming tidal pool, view from west



Photo no. 21: Site no. 41, Cairn, view from SW



Photo no. 22: Site no. 42, Tighachaolais, footings of original building in front of the later fank, view from SW.



Photo no. 23: Site no. 44, Tighachaolais, sheepfank, view from NW



Photo no. 24: Site no. 44, Tighachaolais, sheepfank, view from S.



Photo no. 25: Site no.46, footings of building, view from SE



Photo no. 26: Site no. 48, possible shieling structure, corner stones.



Photo no. 27: Site no. 50, building, visible as heather-covered footings extending back from open grassy area. View from SW.



Photo no. 28: Site no. 51, footings of building



Photo no. 29: Site no. 51, enclosure associated with building. View from W.



Photo no. 30: Site no. 53, Farmstead, footings of lower building, view from E.



Photo no. 31: Site no. 55, three boat nousts, view from NE.



Photo no. 32: Site no. 56 footings of building overlaid by later enclosing wall, view from NE



Photo no. 33: Site no. 57, walled enclosure, view from SE



Photo no. 34: Site no. 58, steps down to boat port, view from NE

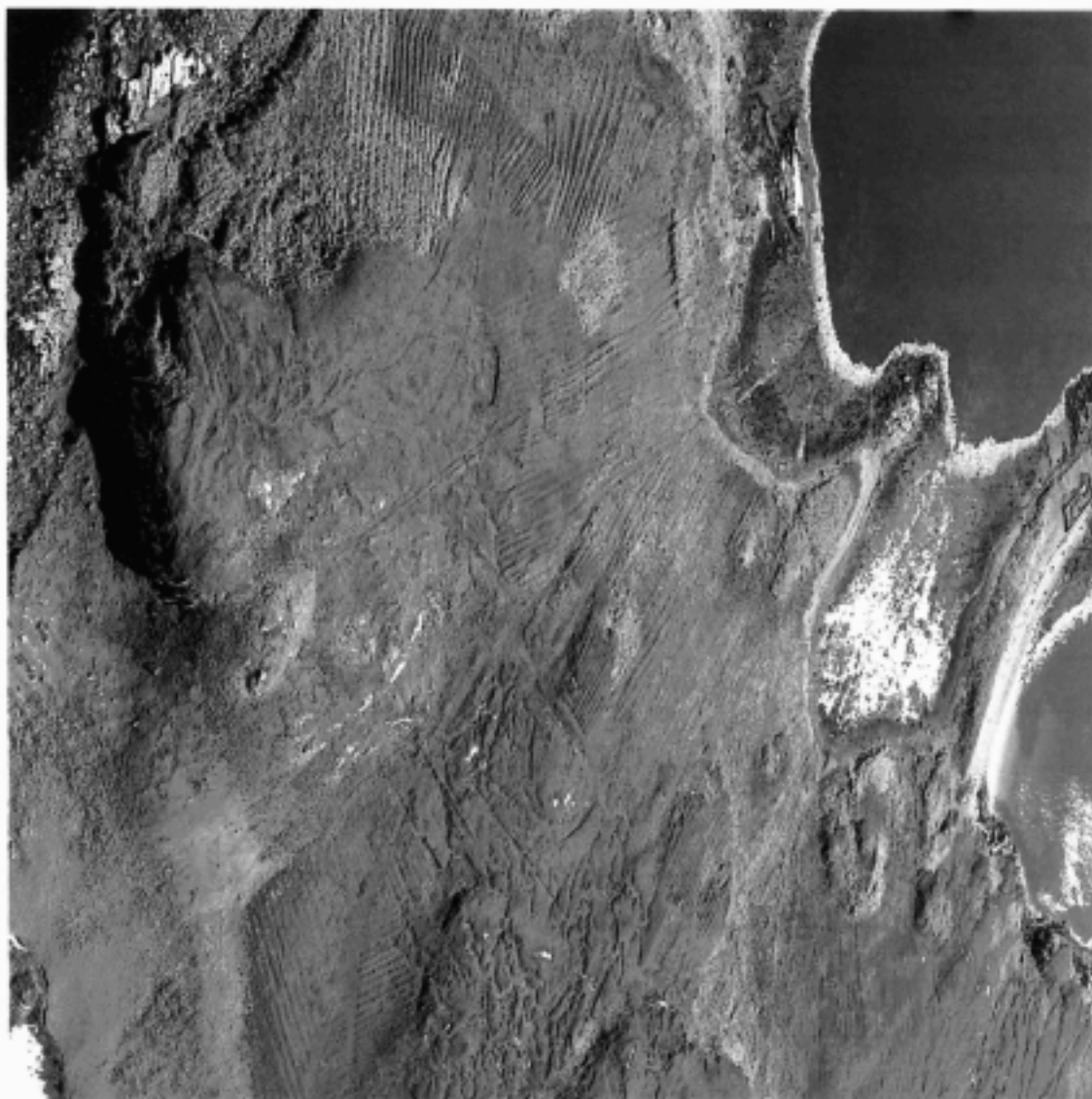


Photo no. 35: Site no. 59, boat port, view from E.





Isle Ristol Archaeological Evaluation, Plan 3.
Areas of rig cultivation, mapped from the aerial photographs



Isle Ristol Archaeological Evaluation, Plan 4.
Oblique aerial photograph of the NE part of the island, showing rig cultivation.
The top of the view is approximately NE, Ardoch is visible at centre right.

A map of the Iberian Peninsula and the southwestern coast of Europe. A thick black line marks the Iberian Atlantic Margin (IAM) along the coast of Portugal and Spain. A dashed line indicates the location of the Iberian Atlantic Margin (IAM) along the coast of Portugal and Spain. The map shows the coastline and major rivers of the region.



