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LEWIS forms the northern expanse of Lewis and Harris. It covers 683mi² (1,790km²) and holds about 75% of the population of the Outer Hebrides (c.18,500), two thirds of whom live in Stornoway and the surrounding area.

In modern Gaelic the island is called *Leodhas*, which in turn probably derives from the Old Norse *Ljodhus*, sounding house. This is an alternative name for the large halls where the Norse spent much time in winter telling stories, reciting poetry and drinking.

However the name is much more ancient and may be the island referred to as *Limnu* by Ptolemy around 150AD. Interestingly *limnou* means marshy in Ancient Greek. Since this word is at least 2,500 years old, the conclusion must be that the origin of the name *Lewis* is lost in the mist of time. But it probably is very apt since much of the island is indeed marshy.

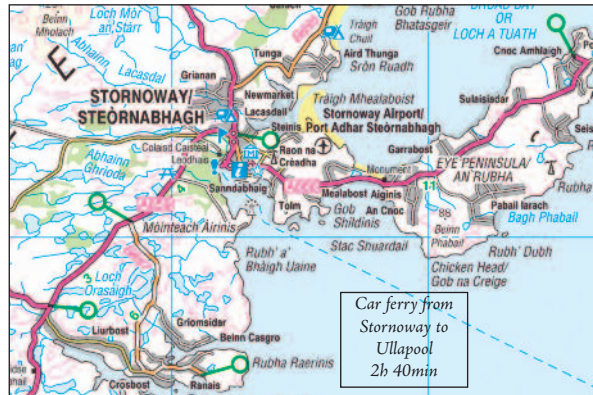
Except in the south, most of the interior is a vast peatbog, strewn with inn lochans. Society here differs from elsewhere in most of Scotland. The Church and Sunday observance remain strong and Gaelic is the first language of a high proportion of the people.

Traditional practices such as crofting, peat cutting and small scale fishing continue. Ceilidhs, traditional story telling, music and song events are held regularly. The Hebridean Celtic Festival held in Stornoway each July, is one of the high points of the local cultural year.

Lewis is a land of contrasts. Stornoway, with its busy harbour, Victorian buildings as well as its modern sprawl of housing and businesses is in contrast to the rest of the island. There is a diverse range of archaeological and historic sites to visit, many fine beaches and good opportunities to observe wildlife.

The Lewis Chessmen are perhaps the most iconic artefacts associated with the island





STORNOWAY, Steornabhagh (ON *Stjornavagr*, Steering or Anchorage Bay) is one of the best natural harbours in the Hebrides and by far the largest settlement in the Western Isles with a population of about 9,000. The original settlement was probably in the vicinity of Point Street, but no buildings remain which are older than the late 18th century.

Herring fishing drew the Dutch, English and Lowland Scots to the area in the 17th century and the town developed into a major fishing port during the 19th century. Most of the main buildings date from this time or later. The oldest is said to be late the 18th century Fishermen's Coop building on North Beach.

The medieval Castle was the



VisitHebrides

stronghold of the MacLeods who were said to be descended from the 12th century Norseman, Olav the Black, King of Man and the Isles. It is highly likely that there was a Viking stronghold on this site, and perhaps an Iron Age broch before that, although there is no evidence.

Clan MacLeod dominated the Isle of Lewis for about 400 years. The castle was the scene of dramatic events on several occasions. In 1506, Crown troops under the Earl of Huntly besieged it whilst searching for the forfeited Donald Dubh MacDonald, Lord of the Isles. The castle was finally destroyed in 1654 by Cromwell's soldiers after a battle with the MacLeods. The remains are under the old roro pier.

In 1598 James VI declared Lewis forfeit to the MacLeods and he granted the island to the *Fife Adventurers* who were to civilise and colonise it. In October 1598 they arrived at Stornoway along with 600 soldiers. However much the settlers may have achieved they were chased off the island and their houses burned. The MacLeods were temporarily in control again, but in 1607 ownership again passed to the remaining settlers.

By 1610 the MacKenzie Earl of Seaforth was in power and the family was to remain so until 1844. In 1628 Stornoway was erected to the status of a Royal Burgh, but only briefly due to objections from other towns. The excellent harbour and rich fishing grounds of the Minch have ensured that fishing has always been important to the town. Today, whitefish and shellfish are the most important



Stornoway from Lews Castle grounds with the ferry MV "Isle of Lewis" arriving

catches, while Herring and Mackerel are landed at Mainland ports such as Kinlochbervie.

In 1653 Cromwell's army built a fort on Goat Island, and a citadel where Point Street is now. By

1695 there were about 60 families in Stornoway with a church and a school, while by 1796 the population was 2,639. Herring was the main source of wealth to the town, which was a major fishing port for over 200 years.

Map of Stornoway in 1821



PLACES TO VISIT IN AND AROUND STORNOWAY

CASTLE

Lews Castle grounds
woodland walks & Woodlands Centre
Chambered cairn & panoramic viewpoint at Cnac na Criche (Gallows Hill) in Lews Castle grounds (NB417323)

TOWN CENTRE

An Lannair Arts Centre
Museum nan Eilean
Stornoway Public Library
Lews Sports Centre
Lews Loom Centre, 3 Bayhead
Stornoway Harbour

NORTH

War Memorial and viewpoint
Priest's Glen stone circle
off Laxdale Lane NB411352
Mudflats and Sands of Tong
for birdwatching
Traigh Chuil lovely beach at Coll

SOUTH

Dun on Loch Arnish (NB189412)
Arnish Point (NB430310)
lighthouse and WWII gun batteries
Memorial to Bonnie Prince Charlie
Amish (NB425300)

EAST

Iolair Monument (NB444305)
St Columba's Church
Aignish (NB484323)
Souterrains at Gress
NB491415 and NB494419
Land Wars cairns at Gress and Aignish
Braigh na h-Aoidhe Beach
on way to Eye Peninsula



Stornoway Fishermen's Coop building may date from the 18th century



Lewis Castle

Stornoway street furniture - reminders of the Herring fishing



Lewis Castle After the purchase of Lewis in 1844 by James Mathieson, considerable development took place in the town and Lewis Castle was built, all financed from the selling of opium smuggled into China. The Castle is now owned by the Council, which is planning to redevelop the building as a hotel, with a new museum in the grounds. Behind it are the modern buildings of Lewis College, a part of the University of the Highlands and Islands.

There is a panoramic view of Stornoway from the top of Gallows Hill. Vast quantities of soil were imported for the Mathiesons plantations. They are especially attractive during spring and summer, with over 70 species of trees and shrubs, in strong contrast to the rest of the mostly treeless islands. Many wild flowers and woodland birds can also be seen here.

Woodland Centre An old sawmill near the Castle was renovated by the Stornoway Trust, creating the Woodland Centre. This has an excellent cafeteria, small shop and interpretative displays about the Castle grounds, which are being greatly improved. There are several interesting waymarked walks to follow.

Stornoway Golf Club was founded in 1890 on the site of Stornoway Airport. The original course was requisitioned by the Air Ministry in 1939. The present 18 hole course in the grounds of Lewis Castle was opened in 1947..

Stornoway Trust Lord Leverhulme of Unilever bought



Woodland Centre Lewis chessman



Stornoway from Aird a' Chbleirich in the Castle Gardens

the island in 1918. He had grandiose ideas about developing Stornoway as an industrial fishing port, but despite investing large sums he failed to get the support of the crofters of Lewis. He then offered ownership of all of Lewis to the people but only Stornoway accepted. Title to the town and

parish of Stornoway was transferred to the Town Council in 1923. It is now administered by the Stornoway Trust, which until recently was unique as a form of community land ownership.

Harbour The harbour is always interesting and is base to a large

number of small fishing boats. Most fish for prawns, scallops or whitefish in the Minch. The harbour fills up with the colourful fleet on Saturday nights as crews spend Sunday ashore. Catches are landed at the fish market here, otherwise at Kinlochbervie, Ullapool or Mallaig.

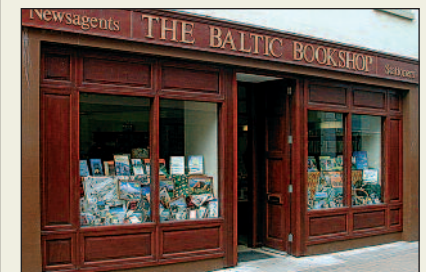


An Lanntair Arts Centre

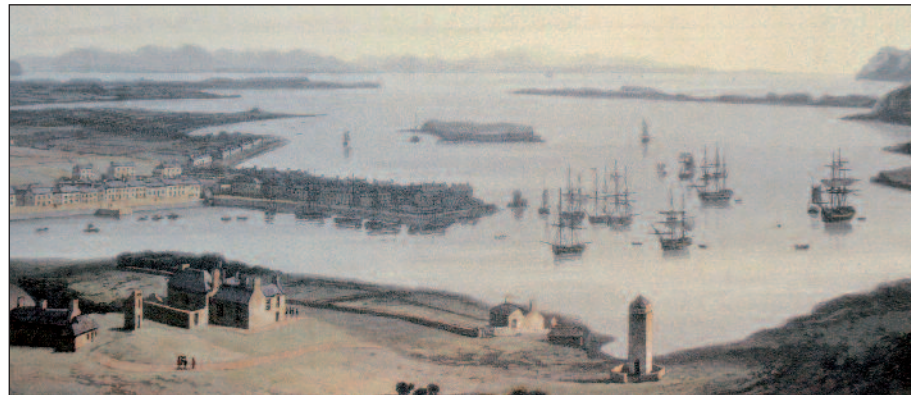
Stornoway in springtime



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Stornoway by William Daniell, 1815

An Lanntair Arts Centre is situated opposite the ferry terminal. There are regular exhibitions by local, national, and international artists. The latest films are shown in the cinema and many cultural events, including operas, plays and music are held. The coffee shop and restaurant has excellent views over the harbour. The shop stocks books, cards and crafts.

Lewis Loom Centre in the Old Grainstore at 3 Bayhead should not be missed. The tour includes explanations of the structure of different wools, dyeing, spinning and weaving and there are some interesting things for sale.

Museum nan Eilean in Francis

Fishing boats return to harbour, passing Arnish Point lighthouse



Street is well worth a visit to see its displays on local archaeology and history. There are periodic exhibitions of artefacts on loan from other museums. Finds from more recent excavations may be on show here. The Public Library in Cromwell Street has a good collection of local books for reference, as well as free Internet access.

Churches St Columba's Parish Kirk was built in 1794 and is one of the oldest buildings in the town. St Peter's Episcopal Church has an eclectic selection of artefacts including a sandstone font originally from the chapel on the Flannan Islands, a Dutch bell dating from 1631, a prayer book which belonged to the 19th century

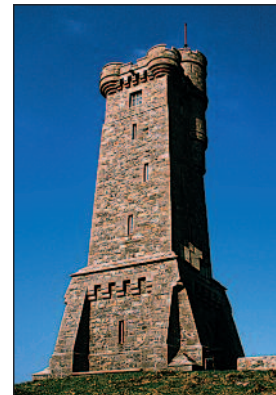
missionary David Livingstone and, finally, the 1608 *Breeches* bible.

Arnish Point The lighthouse here was first lit in 1852 and is unusual in that it was prefabricated on the Clyde rather than being built on site. The oil platform yard was built in the 1970s, but now lies idle, however if oil developments take place to the west it may see work again. Aerogenerators have also been fabricated here.

WWII Gun Batteries There are interesting gun emplacements on the seaward side of the Point. The Royal Navy operated a coastal defence battery here during WWII. Two four inch gun houses, a Battery Observation Post and searchlight mountings remain.

Across the harbour there are two six inch guns in a setting at Battery Point next to the power station. They commemorate the many volunteers who trained here between 1876 and 1919 (NB433322). The old guns were found discarded on the shore.

A cairn above Arnish Point commemorates the visit by Bonnie



Stornoway War Memorial

Prince Charlie in May 1746 when he was attempting to escape to France. It is a monument to failure as nobody in Stornoway would assist him. He did not find a ship and was not allowed into the town, but neither was he betrayed.

The War Memorial on *Cnoc an Uan* (NB418343) was opened in 1924 to honour the 1,151 Lewismen killed in WWI out of a total of about 6,700 serving in the forces. Unsurprisingly, returning servicemen were determined to have land to themselves. This site was chosen because all four Lewis parishes are visible from it. The Memorial also commemorates the 376 killed in WWII.

HMS *Iolaire* tragedy The return of servicemen was made even more tragic by the loss of the Admiralty yacht, HMS *Iolaire* on 1st January 1919. The vessel struck the Beasts of Holm, off Holm Point, only about 3km from Stornoway and 205 Lewismen were lost within sight of home. That 71 survived was due to a Nessman who managed to swim ashore with a line. There is a memorial at Holm Point

(NB444305) which overlooks the seemingly innocuous rocks. A footpath now runs to this site.

Sir Alexander MacKenzie, a partner in the North West Company, was born in the town in 1764. He was the first European to travel across Canada overland, and the Mackenzie River is named after him. Another Mackenzie, born in 1752, became Surveyor General of India and was responsible for the first maps of parts of the subcontinent.

Stornoway Airport Captain Fresson first landed his Dragon Rapide on the then golf course in 1934, which was developed as an airfield in WWII for Coastal Command. Anti-submarine, anti-shiping and convoy escort patrols took place from here and many American aircraft passed through on their way to Britain.

From 1986 to 1993 Stornoway was a Forward Operating Base for NATO and the runway was greatly extended. Although no longer a NATO base the airfield has benefited greatly from the military investment. A large new passenger terminal was opened here in 2001.



Memorial to those lost on "HMS Iolaire"

Stornoway The area has undoubtedly welcomed visitors since long before the first Viking entered Stornoway Harbour in the late 700s AD. Over the centuries fishermen and seamen from Holland, Scotland, Norway, the Baltic and further afield have used the port. *High beid yins* and ordinary folk have come and gone. Some have streets named after them, or commemorative plaques mounted for them.

The town and bay is a unique place, Gaelic yet British, Hebridean yet Scottish, laid back yet bustling. It makes a good base from which to explore Lewis and Harris.

Tree stump in the Castle grounds





AIGNISH To the east of Stornoway lies the peninsula of Aignish or Eye (ON *Egnes*, Ridge Ness) and also known as Point, which is connected to the rest of Lewis by a sandy tombolo. *Braigh na-h-Aoidhe* (G ridge, ON *eid*, ayre or tombolo). The beach on the north side is one of the finest in Lewis. Both sides are good for walks and birdwatching.

Loch Branahuie at the east end of the Aignish tombolo is also very good for visiting and resident waterfowl. *The Braighe*, the bay to the south, holds large numbers of sea ducks and divers in winter.

Eaglais na h-Aoidhe is a roofless 14th century church at Aignish, dedicated to St Columba. An earlier 6th century chapel may have been founded by St Catan.

Braigh na-h-Aoidhe, usually called *The Braigh*, is a lovely stretch of reddish sand on the north side of the tombolo



There are two interesting grave slabs in the church, one to the 15th century Roderic II and the other to his daughter, Margaret, wife of the last Abbot of Iona.

Aignish Riot The nearby Crofters' Cairn commemorates the events of 1888. A meeting in the old churchyard on Christmas Day 1887 decided to give a Mr Newall, of Aignish Farm, two weeks to move out his stock. On 9th January 1888 a riot ensued after a large party of raiders tried to drive his animals to Stornoway.

They were stopped by a Sheriff Fraser with the help of a party of Royal Marines and a company of Royal Scots. Fraser read the *Riot Act*, and eventually the mob dispersed after the arrest of 11 men. Aignish Farm was finally broken

up into crofts in 1905. Thus, ultimately, the landowner's plans were defeated.

The Eye Peninsula is densely populated with many crofts and two small harbours at Pabail and Port na Giuran. The seemingly oddly named Chicken Head (ON *Kirku Ness*, Church Ness) is called *Gob na Creige* on the map, but in Gaelic is *Ceam na Circ*. There is a ruined chapel on the cliff edge (NB508292) and a large Kittiwake colony below.

Tiumpan Head, the most easterly point on Lewis, has expansive views across the Minch on a clear day. The lighthouse was first lit in 1900 and automated in 1985. This and other nearby vantage points are good places to watch for Risso's and other Dolphins in late summer, as well as for migrant birds in season.

Prehistoric sites include Dun Bayle (NB516305) and Clach Stein (NB517318) both near Bayle and a chambered cairn (NB524331) near Garrabost. The famous Shulishader axe was found in peat near the township and dates from about 3150BC.

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15th century grave slab



Tiumpan Head lighthouse - good seawatching site



St Columba's Church or Eaglais na h-Aoidhe



Aignish Riot in 1888



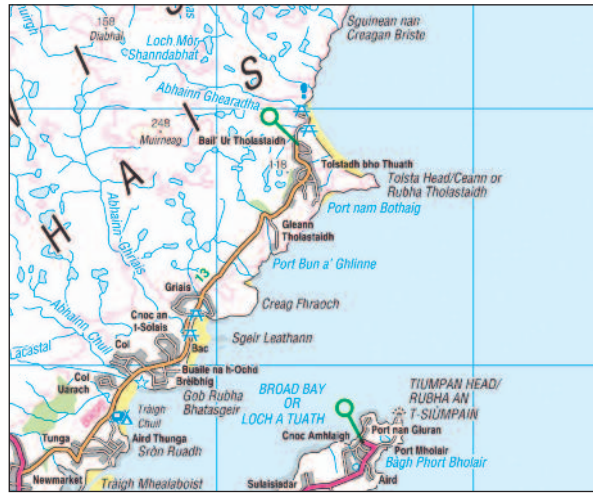
Memorial to the Aignish Riot

Loch an Tiumpan is a good place to see waterfowl and waders



EYE PENINSULA

- Barraigh na h-Aoidhe, beach
- Loch Branahuie, birdwatching
- St Columba's Church, 14th century
- Aignish Crofter's Cairn, 1888 riot
- Chicken Head, chapel and birds
- Dun Bayle, crannog, Loch an Dun
- Clach Stein, standing stone
- Port Mholair, lighthouse harbour
- Tiumpan Head, lighthouse
- Loch Tiumpan, birdwatching



Northeast of Stornoway lie the townships of Tunga, Coll, Back, and Gress. These are all Norse names, (ON *Bakki*, Ridge; *Kula*, Hill; *Tunga*, Spit of land). The fertile Torridonian sandstone soil with beaches backed by dunes and machair make this good agricultural land, the scene of much unrest during the Land Wars.

Although most sandy beaches on Lewis are on the west side, a fine series stretches runs around Broad Bay. They extend from Aignish all the way to Tolsta and are sheltered by headlands with low cliffs.

The Tunga saltflats can be accessed from *Steinis* (ON *Stein Nes*, Stony Point NB448339) or from Tunga (ON Tunga, tongue). They are good for waterfowl and waders. There is a large Tern colony at Gob Steinis. The dunes and extensive sandy beach of *Traigh Mealabost* (ON *Meal Bolstadir*, Sandy Farm) can also be accessed from Steinis.

St Olav's Church (*Teampall Amblaigh* NB490416) is one of the few extant chapels dedicated to a Norse saint in the Western Isles. It may date from the 12th century. This is not surprising

St Olav's Church, (also called St Aula's or Teampall Amblaigh)



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considering that the Vikings would have settled the best land first. The windows are interesting with very narrow outer slits..

Traigh Gress is another fine sandy beach. The remains of a wooden steamship can be seen at low tide. Nearby is a memorial to the Gress Land Raids took place after WWI in protest at Leverhulme's plans for economic development rather than crofting.

Tolsta To the north, the road rises over moorland before descending into Tolsta (ON *Tol's Stadir*, Tolly's Farm). There are wonderful panoramic views from here on a clear day. Sheilavig Mor is a lovely little cove with a small sandy beach and low cliffs.

The beaches and low cliffs of Tolsta are among the most attractive in the Western Isles. *Traigh Mhor* (G Big Beach) is over 2km long, backed by dunes and machair. At its southeast end, Tolsta Head has small stacks and natural arches. Traigh Giordale is sheltered from all directions but the southeast.

Traigh Gheardha (ON *Gerd*, Farm) is at the end of the road. It

St Olav window showing narrow slit



Wreck on Traigh Gress



Traigh Mhor

has spectacular small stacks or castles set in a very attractive sandy bay. The greens and blues of the sea are more like the Caribbean than the Minch. These beaches are deservedly popular with local people.

Bridge to Nowhere North of Tolsta the road ends at the *Bridge to Nowhere*. During Leverhulme's time on Lewis there were plans to build a road connecting Tolsta with Ness. However, only the rather elegant concrete bridge over the River Garry was built. A track leads about a mile further before petering out.

From here is a fine but strenuous walk to Ness over rugged moorland by the coast. The many lochs are excellent territory for



Stacks on Traigh Gheardha

Red-throated Divers. Great and Arctic Skuas nest on the moors, Peregrines inhabit the remote cliffs and Gannets may be seen offshore. Golden and White-tailed Eagles sometimes frequent the area.

Little huts called *airighs* or sheilings dot the landscape. In the past cattle were grazed on lush moorland grass in summer. They were accompanied by young women and girls who stayed in the huts, to milk the cows to make butter and cheese.

Cellar Head and the coastline north of Tolsta





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To the Westside There are several ways to get to the west side of Lewis from Stornoway. The interior of the island is a vast moorland, dominated by heather and dotted with countless small lochs. There are virtually no habitations inland, apart from Achmore.

Barvas Road (A857) The road to Barvas runs northwest across uninhabited moorland and through Gleann Mor Barvas before reaching the west side. Settlements are scattered along the

coast all the way northeast to Ness and southwest to Garynahine.

Pentland Road The most scenic route follows the line of a railway proposed by Leverhulme in the 1920s. The plan was to land fish at Loch Carloway near the entrance to Loch Roag and transport it to Loch Roag and Stornoway for processing and shipment. The scheme was abandoned due to local opposition. The concrete bridge at Carloway was part of this route.

Restored old Ferguson tractors with double back wheels are a common sight



Thanks to this project the present single track road runs across the moor from Marybank to Carloway. Just west of Stornoway it passes the municipal rubbish dump, a fine place to see gulls and buzzards. At Loch Vatandip the road branches right to Carloway, and left to Achmore. Later it branches right to Carloway and left to Breasclete. Red and Black-throated Divers breed on many of the lochs.

Garynahine Road The main (A858) turns west at Tom Mhic Leoid and undulates across the moorland past Achmore, many lochs and conifer woods.

Eithshal (223m) overlooks the inland settlement of Achmore. A steep road leads to its summit, which is dominated by TV and mobile phone masts. There is a panoramic view over Lochs to the mountains of Uig and Harris from



View from Eithshal over many lochs to the mountains of southern Lewis and north Harris

here. On a clear day the greens, blues and mauves of the landscape are quite spectacular.

Peatbanks are scattered along all of these roads. Many are still worked for fuel in spring. A special spade called a *tuskar* (ON Torf *Skera*, turf cutter, *G tairsgeir*) is used to cut and throw the turves onto the bank. When partially dry they are set up in threes, then carted home where peatstacks are built.



Tree stumps with roots are often dug up in peatbanks

Neat banks and stacks are a source of great pride, and communities have varied methods of cutting, setting up and stacking. Old grey Ferguson tractors (*Fergies*), with double back wheels and carefully restored are a common sight everywhere on Lewis.



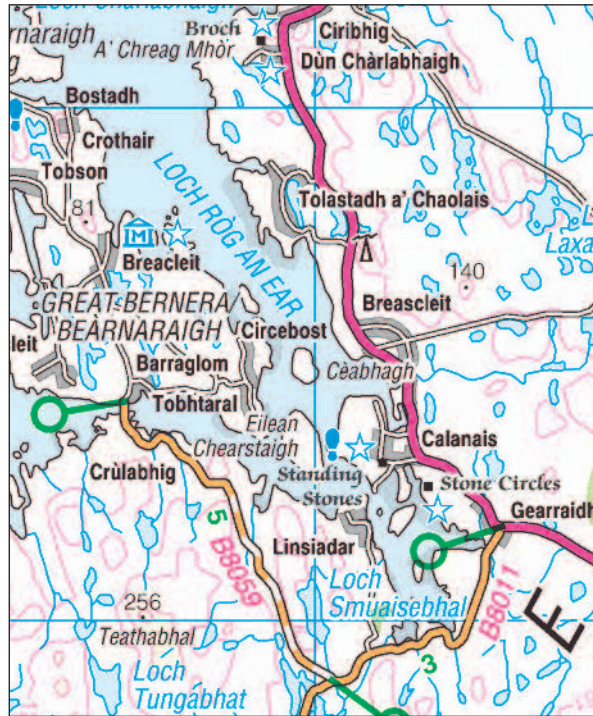
Ardmore cottages

Peat is still regularly cut for fuel



Stornoway to the Westside

- Pentland Road
- Carloway concrete bridge
- Eithshal viewpoint
- Achmore
- Conifer plantations
- Shielings
- Treestumps in peat
- Peatcuttings
- Moorland birds
- Maryhill refuse tip, gulls, etc.



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The inner stone ring of the main site here probably dates from about 2900BC, while the chambered cairn and rows may be of later date. It seems likely that the monument may never have been completed and that avenues may have been planned for all four axes.

The 33 Lewisian Gneiss monoliths form rows, which radiate from a central circle and are arranged like a Celtic cross. The northern avenue is slightly east of north, while the southern arm is aligned due south. The eastern and western arms in turn face south of east and due west.

The stones were partially buried in peat which had accumulated since perhaps 1500BC, but were fully revealed when this was cleared in 1857. This action destroyed most of the archaeological evidence which may have been present. The surfaces have weathered into fantastic contours and the crystals in the rock give it a very beautiful texture, which varies with the light.

Obvious solar alignments are the equinoctial sunset, and local noon,

CALLANISH (ON *Kjallar Ness*, Keel Point) The standing stones and chambered cairns of the Callanish (*Calanais*) area on the east side of Loch Roag form one of the most remarkable Neolithic sites in Britain. A good

place to start a visit to the west of Lewis is the Callanish Visitor Centre which has an interpretation area, an interesting shop and a cafe. The main monument is situated just up the hill.

Midsummer sunrise at Callanish



Major lunar standstill

but other alignments are quite possible. It has been suggested that the eastern row is aligned with the rising of the Pleiades around May Day, or Beltane. This would have been about the time when crops were planted.

The 13 monoliths in the ring may reflect the 13 year months of the lunar year. During each month moonrise and moonset vary from north to south and back due to the relative movements of the Earth and the Moon. In addition

because the plane of the Moon's orbit is slightly different from that of the Earth's around the Sun, the maximum northerly and southerly azimuths vary over a period of 18.6 years, as does the cycle of lunar eclipses. During this period there are major and minor lunar standstills when the apparent movement of the Moon stops and reverses direction. At the latitude of Callanish (58°N) the Moon just skims the horizon at its major standstill.

This phenomenon can be observed from the avenue every 18.6 years, when the Moon appears to dance along the ridge to the south which is called *Cailleach na Mointich* (G Old Lady of the Moors). It sets behind the hill to the southwest, only to momentarily reappear, or flash, in a notch just to the west. This is very reminiscent of the sun's behaviour at Maeshowe and the nearby Watchstone before and after the winter solstice in Orkney.

In about 325BC, Pytheas the

Greek circumnavigated Britain and perhaps even visited Iceland. He is indirectly quoted by the 1st century BC historian, Diodorus Siculus as, "Having seen a round temple on an island no smaller than Sicily while sailing around Britain" and that, "The path of the Moon seen from this island was very low in the sky. The god visited the island every 19 years", the 18.6 year cycle.

The Moon was said "to dance from the Spring equinox until the rising of the Pleiades", or Beltane (May Day).

CALLANISH CALANAIS

- Midsummer sunrise
- Midsummer sunset
- Equinoctial sunset
- Midwinter sunrise
- Midwinter sunset
- Lunar major standstill
- Lunar months
- Lunar year
- Local noon
- Beltane, May Day
- Small stone circles
- Chambered cairns

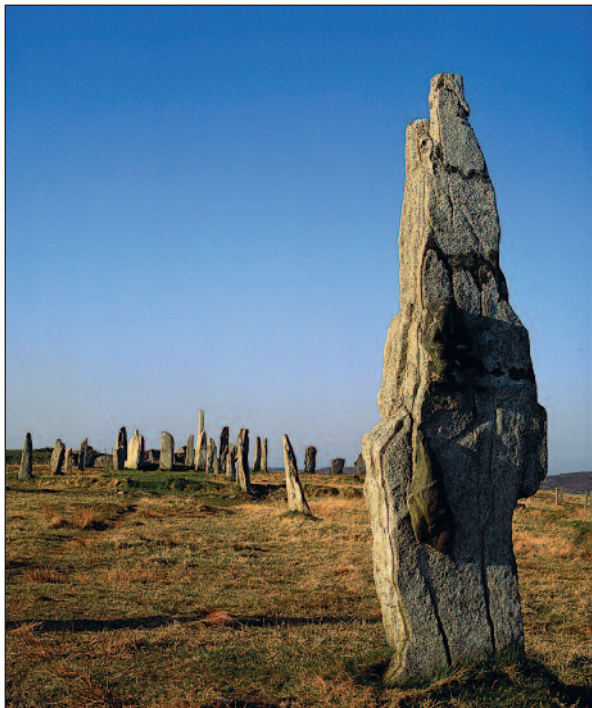


Midsummer sunrise

It is impossible to confirm whether Pytheas visited Lewis in the 4th century BC, but it is entirely possible. Using his solar observations, Hipparchus later made calculations, and one of the latitudes measured was the crucial 58°N at which the Moon skims along the horizon at its major standstill.

Whether or not the site was actually intended to have solar, stellar or lunar alignments will never be proven, but no one can visit Callanish without being overwhelmed by the confluence of sky, water, landscape and monoliths, whatever the season, weather or time of day.

The northern avenue with its impressive outermost monolith

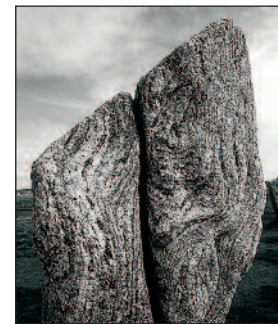


Small circles Apart from the main stone setting (NB213330) there are several other smaller, but remarkable stone circles to visit in the area, including *Cnoc an Gharraidh* (NB223326) and *Cnoc Fìlbbhir Bheag* (NB226328) near the A858 just before the turn off to the Visitor Centre. *Cul a Cleit* (NB247303) is about 1km off the A858 and *Ceam Hùlavig* (NB230304) off the B8011 on a small hillock overlooking Loch Roag. Each of these names is a mixture of Gaelic and Old Norse describing monuments built by people whose language and culture we do not know.

Chambered cairns An unusual feature of some of the stone circles in this area is the presence of a central cairn. Excavation of the cairn at the main site suggests that it may have been in use between 2500 and 1750BC. It is unique for the Outer Hebrides in resembling some cairns in Orkney. Grooved Ware and Beaker pottery sherds were found here.

The most spectacular views of the main Callanish setting are from Loch Roag and it has been suggested that the tallest monolith

may originally have been a sea marker. There are at least another twenty stone settings, standing stones and chambered cairns in this area, which was clearly of great symbolic importance in Neolithic times. Perhaps a geophysical survey will, in future, reveal structures to rival those recently discovered on the Ness of Brodgar in Orkney.



Weathered Lewisian Gneiss



The stones have many fine lichens



The central circle and chambered cairn



Cnoc an Gharaidh to the east of the main setting



Ceam Hùlavig overlooks Loch Roag from a small hill on the B8011



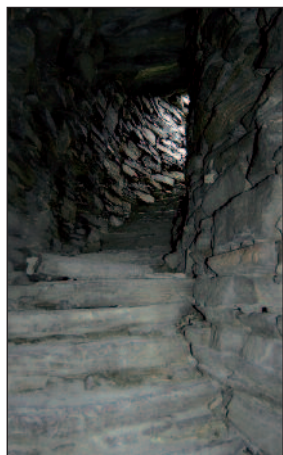
Cnoc Fìlbbhir Beag has 17 upright stones



Dun Carloway stands on a prominent hillock above the township

CARLOWAY (ON *Karlsvagr*, Karl's Bay) On the A858 north from Callanish, the township of Breasleit has a standing stone and a chambered cairn. The ex shore station for the Flannan Isles lighthouse, called *Taigh Mor* (G Big House) is situated nearby. Families of the lightkeepers stayed here before automation in 1971.

Intramural staircase



The broch of Dun Carloway (*Doune Carlabhagh*, NB190413) is the most complete and spectacular of any in the Western Isles and dates from perhaps the 1st century BC or earlier. In common with many other such brochs it is prominently situated on a small hillock overlooking the township. The walls still reach more than 9m in height.

The double walls are over 3m thick at the base and enclose galleries which are accessed by a stairway. There is a scarcement 2.5m above the floor, which is 7.6m in diameter, and it has been suggested that this was the main habitation level. It would have been supported by wooden posts. Many of the original stones are no doubt in the walls of the ruined blackhouses below the broch.

A narrow doorway on the west side has a guard cell on the right-hand side and jambs for a wooden door. The interior walls are vertical, but the exterior is much thicker at the base, thinning towards the top with a pronounced batter. The drystone walls are very well constructed and no doubt will survive many more millenia. The building techniques used clearly show the considerable skill of the Iron Age masons who built these dry stone towers.

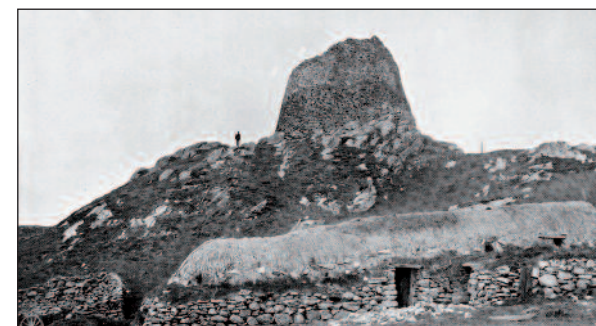
The main part of the broch was cleared out in the 1920s without proper archaeological study. The northeast cell was reinvestigated in 1972 and large numbers of pottery sherds were found, along with part of a quernstone and much evidence of fires. The suggestion is that the broch was still occupied as late as 700AD.

Clan Warfare In about 1500 a group of Morrisons were surprised here by a gang of MacCauleys, who climbed the walls and threw burning heather into the broch, thus asphyxiating their arch enemies. It seems that people were still living here in the late 1800s. Dun Carloway was in use for well over 2000 years. It is one of the most evocative brochs in the Outer Hebrides.

The site has been in State guardianship since 1887. The nearby Doune Broch Centre helps visitors to better understand the monument and its history, as well as brochs in general. It has a small shop, interpretation displays and toilets. The path to the broch offers fine views over the township.



The former shore station of the Flannan Islands lighthouse



Dun Carloway in about 1900

Doune Braes Hotel



**Carloway
Isle of Lewis
HS2 9AA**



**Tel 01851 643252
Fax 01851 643435**




hebrides@doune-braes.co.uk

The Doune Braes Hotel offers a personal welcome from your host, Eileen MacDonald, and her staff, who offer comfortable accommodation, fine food and spectacular surroundings. It is tranquilly situated in the township of Carloway on the west side of the Isle of Lewis, with lovely beaches and world class archaeology nearby. It is an excellent base for exploring Lewis and Harris.

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physically defensive, then a ruinous Norse type mill. Further on, Dalmore beach is the site of a Bronze Age settlement which was revealed after a storm in 1982. Large amounts of pottery and other artefacts were recovered.

Dalbeg The walk ends at the delightful little cove of Dalbeg. This beach is dangerous to swimmers, and surfers should take great care. Large seaworn stones are a feature here. A stream flows into the sea across the sand from Loch Dalbeg, a good place to spot Otters. The loch has beautiful Irises and Water Lilies in summer.

Shawbost Mill Just before Shawbost there is a Norse type mill and kiln (NB244464). The millstone is turned directly by a vertical axis waterwheel and due to the noise made when in operation they were referred to as click mills.

Carloway to Barvas This part of Lewis has a coastline of low rocky cliffs interspersed with beautiful sandy bays such as at Dalmore, Dalbeg and Shawbost. There are many small lochs, behind shingle storm beaches, which are attractive to Otters. The townships of Shawbost, Bragar and Arnol are almost continuously settled, having ruined blackhouses intermingled with 20th century dwellings and croft buildings.

North of Carloway, the 19th century Gearrannan blackhouse village (NB194442) has a hostel, self-catering cottages, and a shop with interpretation centre and tearoom. The inhabitants were crofters and fishermen who pulled their boats up at nearby *Geodha Ruadh*.

Walk A coastal path runs from Gearrannan to Dalbeg. It passes two promontory forts, which might just as easily be monastic as



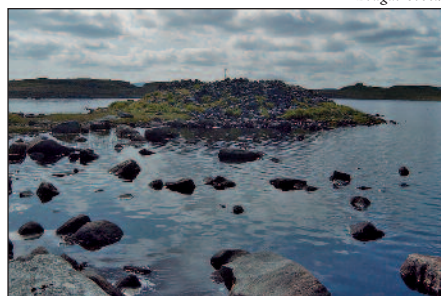
Gearrannan Blackhouse Village
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Nestling by an Atlantic bay in scenic surroundings on the rugged West Coast of Lewis, Gearrannan Blackhouse Village offers four self-catering thatched cottages that range from 2 star group accommodation sleeping 16, to 4 star family cottages. Enjoy modern comforts and complete relaxation in this beautifully restored village.

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Gearrannan, a restored blackhouse village near Carloway



Bragar broch



Restored kiln at Shawbost

There are many in the Western Isles, but this is the only one in working order. They were in use up to the 19th century.

The mill workings are visible in the space below the millstone. Water from a burn is funnelled to the mill race by a stone lined lade. The millwheel turns the upper millstone, grain being fed into the centre by a mechanism which moves the hopper, hence the clicking sound. Meal is gathered in the space around the lower stone.

Shawbost Museum is a small but interesting folk museum in the old school. Nearby there is an attractive small sandy beach. A large wool mill catering for the Harris Tweed industry is situated here.

Dalbeg is a delightful sandy cove



Whalebone arch at Bragar

Bragar Broch The remains of a broch lie on a small island on *Loch an Duna* at Bragar which is connected to the shore by a causeway (NB286475). The broch is 16m in diameter outside and 9m inside. An internal scarcement can be made out at a height of about 3m. Although the broch is ruinous the site is very evocative, especially on a misty day when modern buildings are obscured.

Whalebone Arch Also at Bragar, the lower jaw bones of an 85ft Blue Whale form an unusual gateway. The whale came ashore in 1920 with the explosive harpoon which killed it still embedded in its body. The crofter who removed the deadly harpoon was lucky. It exploded in his shed, but he was not there at the time. Recently, the arch has been coated in fibre glass as the bone was starting to disintegrate.



Shawbost mill interior with millstones and hopper

Carloway to Barvas

- Beaches**
- Dalmore, Dalbeg, Shawbost, Barvas
- Blackhouses**
- Gearrannan, Arnol, Shawbost
- Norse Mill & Kiln**
- Shawbost
- Brochs**
- Carloway, Bragar
- Whalebone Arch**
- Bragar



Interior with central hearth, minimal furniture and box bed

ARNOL BLACKHOUSE MUSEUM (HistoricScotland, NB311493) is typical of many similar ruined buildings in the area. This development of much more ancient houses had people and animals all under one roof. Smoke escaped through the thatch from the peat fire in the centre of the living room floor. It was last occupied in 1965 having been built in about 1885.

The house closely resembles domestic buildings from Norse times or earlier. These were often built from turf, with a timber lining and stone foundations. Variations on the longhouse theme were lived in well into the 20th century. Materials used depended on local availability of stone, timber and turf.



The byre

Stackyard and back of house showing barn and main part



Here the walls are about 1.8m high at most. The gap between the inner and outer stone skins is filled with earth, peat and ashes. The timber in the roof is mostly driftwood or wood salvaged from shipwrecks. Tree stumps found preserved in peat cuttings or whalebone was also used. Here slats were used to cover the purlins, but straw or heather ropes (*simmons*) were also used.

Grass or heather turves were laid face down on top. The turf absorbed soot from the fire and was later used as fertiliser on the cultivated fields. Finally the roof was thatched with heather, bracken, straw or reeds as available. This was held down with ropes and stone weights. Frequently old Herring nets or wire netting was used to secure the thatch.

In these dwellings the byre was always on the downhill end, with an *oddlie* hole in the gable end. This drained into the midden. Dung and waste straw bedding would have been pushed out daily. Obviously the human inhabitants shared the byre with the cattle. The hens had free range and could come in and out at will through an opening in the wall.

The dung which had built up over the winter was cleared out once a year after the cattle had been put outside. Frequently the gable end was partly demolished to facilitate this. Dung, seaweed and sooty turf from the roof were all used as manure on the land.

The barn is directly opposite the main entrance. It would have been used to thresh oats and bere, and



Blackhouse Museum, Arnol showing byre end, barn and peatstack

to store straw, meal and tools. By leaving the doors open a through draft would help in winnowing the crop, which was threshed by hand.

Ventilation is important in houses which lack chimneys. Although smoke escapes through the roof it is important for the health of the occupants to have plenty of fresh air coming in. The byre roof is lower than the domestic end, while the open hole to the midden allows fresh air in. The combination of peat smoke and ammonia in the roofspace would repel insects and also preserve meat or dried fish.

No 42 Arnol is a late survivor of a long tradition of such houses. The introduction of Government grants for crofters to build new houses and improve existing ones

Roofless blackhouse showing lintel over doorway

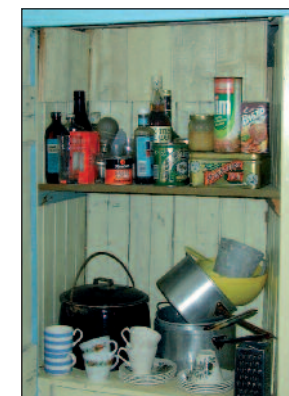


brought the final phasing out of this type of dwelling.

39 Arnol Across the road a newer house is furnished in the style of the 1940s or 1950s. It is typical of houses from the mid 20th century throughout the countryside. They were built of concrete blocks with asbestos slates on the roof. The kitchen has a cast iron stove and



1950s style kitchen with cast iron stove in 39 Arnol



Kitchen cupboards from the 1950s

furniture of the time. It makes an interesting contrast to the older style of building opposite. Most such houses now lie abandoned, having been replaced with more modern designs.

Visitor Centre There is a small visitor centre with shop, interpretation panels and toilets nearby.

Bedroom with box beds





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NESS (ON Nes, headland) is the most northerly part of Lewis. The road from Barvas to Ness runs through a series of crofting townships, making the area one of the most densely populated rural areas of Lewis. New houses, old houses, loom sheds, small shops and working crofts line much of the road, interspersed by areas of moorland.

Ancient Stones At 5.7m high, *Clach an Truiseil* (NB376538) is the tallest monolith in the Western Isles. It may possibly be a prehistoric sea marker. A battle between the Morrisons of Ness and the MacAuleys of Uig is said to have taken place here.

Just to the north, in Shader (*Siader*), the enigmatic site of *Steinicleit* is probably a very ruined chambered cairn, perhaps overlain by a later domestic structure. The mound in the centre has a kerb of stone slabs around it, while the footings of walls lead off from the site, which may have been occupied from 3000BC.

Chapels There are many old chapel sites on the west of Lewis, most of which are close to the shore and ruinous. *Teampall Pheadar* (St Peter's, NB380550) is a grassy mound above *Mol Eire* beach at *Siader*. There is another larger *Teampall Pheadar* at Swainbost (NB508637). *Teampall nan Cro Naomh* (Holy Cross, NB433594) at Galson, now ruinous, was fairly complete in the 1820s.

Port Stoth *Teampall Ronain* (St Ronan, NB524654) above the cove

of Stoth, a sheltered bay east of the Butt, is said to be the oldest chapel site in the Western Isles. *Port Stoth* was the main landing site for stores for the Butt of Lewis lighthouse, and for the Ness area before Port of Ness was built.

Lochruban, a rock stack off *Roimn a'Roidh* (NB507661), near the Butt, has a small beehive shaped cell and legend has it that Pygmies lived here. It is probably a monastic cell. Ruins of similar structures exist nearby at *Cumndal*.

Steinicleit near Shader, probably the remains of a chambered cairn



Teampall Mholuaidh The restored *Teampall Mholuaidh* (NB520652, St Moluag's Chapel) is said to have originally been built by the Vikings, and the roof timbers were driftwood from Stoth. The present church may date from the 14th century or later. There was also once a Norse castle near this church called *Olvir's* or *Olaf's* Castle. It is logical that the Vikings would settle and take control of Ness and perhaps Norse remains will be found in future surveys.

St Moluag's was associated with the healing of wounds and sores, however it was deemed too sacred for women to enter, particularly if pregnant. The people held meetings here twice a year, at Candlemas and Halloween when eating, drinking, dancing and dalliance went on before the people entered the church after dark, and mass was held until morning.

It was also thought that anyone who was mentally ill could be cured by walking seven times around the church with the sun. After a drink of water from St Ronan's Well, they had to sleep overnight in the building.

Teampall nan Cro Naomh at Galson by William Daniell 1815



Clach an Truiseil is the tallest monolith in the Outer Hebrides, William Daniell 1815



Interior of Teampall Mholuaidh (St Moluag's Church), Ness

Another ancient custom in Ness was the annual sacrifice of ale to the sea-god, *Shony*. Every house contributed "a peck of malt which was brewed into ale, and one person

North to Ness

Archaeology

Clach an Truiseil, Steinicleit, Clach Stein Ein, Dun Eistean

Chapels

Teampall Pheadar, Teampall nan Cro Naomh, Teampall Ronain, Teampall Mholuaidh

Coastal

Port of Ness, Bual a Muigh, Port Stoth, Swainbost Sands, Rionn a'Roidh, Butt of Lewis

Attraction

Ness Heritage Centre, St Ronan's cross slab



Richard Jones

Caithness. There was a great tradition of boat building in the area, and *sgoths* have been renovated or even built new here recently.

Placenames Even more than in the rest of Lewis the place-names are very much Norse, although the new Gaelic names tend to mask this often. There is much attractive coastal scenery in Ness, including the lovely beach of *Buail a Muigh* at Port of Ness, the sheltered sandy cove of *Port Stoth* near the Butt, and the series of sandy beaches on the west side from *Traigh Dell* to *Eoropie*. The yellowish Swainbost Sands are particularly picturesque.

The sand dunes and machair are a riot of colour in summer with many wild flowers, while the cliff tops are covered in a carpet of Thrift. Although the cliffs are nowhere very high, the ancient gneiss rocks are contorted and weathered into fantastic shapes, especially at the Butt of Lewis.

Port of Ness Harbour

waded out to his waist with a cup of ale and cried, "Shony I give you this cup of ale, hoping that you will be so kind as to send us plenty of sea-ware for enriching the ground next year".

This was done at night and after the offering everyone went to the church which was lit by candle-light. They remained standing and quiet for a while before the candle was extinguished and then everyone went outside. Ale was consumed and the remainder of the night was spent singing and dancing.

Port of Ness has a picturesque, but silted up, little har-

bour. From here in late summer each year a party of men depart for Sula Sgeir, a small rocky island 65km (40mi) to the northeast, to harvest young Gannets or *gugas*.

The Men of Ness have always been great seamen and it used to be said that *no Nessman of working age ever died in his bed*, they either lived to old age or drowned at sea. They fished offshore using longlines and handlines from boats called *sgoths*. These are descendants of small boats used by the Norse, which resemble the yoles used in Orkney and

Ness yole



Cross-slab from Rona



Eoropie Beach

Vikings According to legend, the Vikings tried to tow the Western Isles back to Norway by attaching a rope to the natural arch at *Rionn a'Roidh*, however they pulled so hard that the land broke apart, leaving the trail of islands from Barra Head to the Butt of Lewis as they are now.

Ness Heritage Centre has a variety of artefacts, photographs and items to look at. The most interesting is the small cross-slab which is pierced with three holes and which has the figure of a man inscribed on it. This grave marker came from the cemetery on Rona, and some say that it marked the resting place of St Ronan himself.

Arts and Music Centre Nearby, *Taigh Dhonnchaidh* (Duncan's House), at 44 Habost, is an arts and music centre committed to the promotion and enhancement of Gaelic language, music and the arts. The house was left to the Ness Historical Society by the late Duncan Morrison, who was a well known music teacher.

HARBOUR VIEW gallery



Original watercolours, fine art prints and greeting cards of Highland and Island scenes by **Anthony J. Barber**, on view at his studio gallery in Port of Ness.

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ajb@harbourview.freemove.co.uk
www.abarber.co.uk



Port of Ness Buail a Muigh

Swainbost Sands





Geo at the Butt of Lewis

Butt of Lewis The headland of the Butt of Lewis, the most northerly point in the Western Isles, is an excellent place for sea-watching. Gannets may be seen fishing, and during the migration times many species may be seen on passage. It is also a good place to see cetaceans such as Minkie, Killer or Pilot Whales, as well as Dolphins. No matter what the season, time of day or weather, the Butt always has another aspect to show.

The lighthouse was first lit in 1862 and was automated in 1998. Its 37m high red brick tower is in contrast to the rather forbidding local rocks. The lens installed in 1905 is still in use, although the lamps are

Roinn a'Roidh, the headland southwest of the Butt. Lochruban is on the far right.



now electric and supplied with electricity from solar cells. A DGPS station is based here which provides ships with extremely accurate position information. It was listed in the "Guinness Book of Records" as the windiest place on the coast of United Kingdom.

Dun Eistean (NB535651) is situated on a large rock stack off Knockaird, northwest of the Port of Ness and has for long been associated with the Morrisons of Ness. There are several ruins as well as a perimeter wall and an artificial pond to collect water. The mound on the seaward side was probably originally a small Norse type castle. It was later rebuilt and may have been deliberately slighted.

The clan Morrison is said to be of Norse origin and descended from Olaf the Black who became King of Man and the Isles in 1226. The Morrisons held the hereditary title of *Breive* (G *Breitheamb*, interpreter of the law) for many generations. Although Ness may seem remote today, it was readily accessible by sea. It is said that the influence of these *Breives* may have extended as far as the Mull of Kintyre.

The site was occupied during the 15th to 17th centuries, when clan warfare was rife. It was used intermittently as a defensive refuge and was eventually captured by the MacLeods, who sacked it. A footbridge now provides easy access. Nearby, in Habost, there is a large red boulder called the blood stone. Here the Morrisons are said to have smashed the heads of their enemies, the Macaulays.



Butt of Lewis lighthouse with summer colours, from the east



THE CROSS INN

The Cross Inn is a small, independent hotel owned and managed by local couple Allan & Maureen. It is situated in the picturesque Port of Ness, about 45 minutes' drive north of Stornoway. The six rooms all have ensuite bathrooms, TV/video and tea/coffee-making facilities, and one downstairs room is suitable for the disabled.

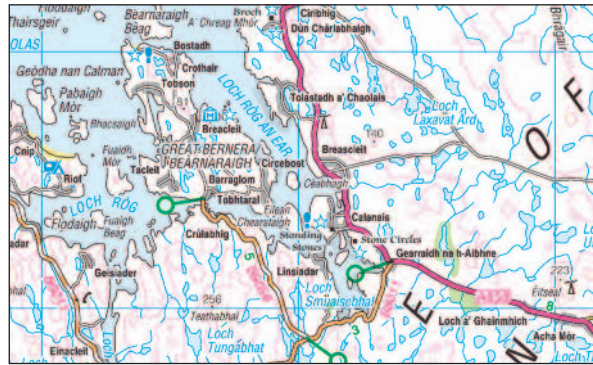
Food is served all day in the lounge and in the restaurant in the evening, with fresh seasonal local produce being a feature of the menu, which includes seafood, such as Salmon and

THE CROSS INN

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GREAT BERNERA (ON Bjornoy, Bjorn's Island) was the first of the small islands in the Western Isles to be connected to the mainland, by a pre-stressed concrete bridge, in 1953. Lobster, crayfish and crab fishing as well as fish farming are the two main economic activities. Though small, the island has much to interest the visitor.

Just over the bridge and overlooking *Sruth Earshader* there are some monoliths standing sentinel over this narrow stretch of water. Two large stones and several smaller ones may have originally been part of a circle. There are lovely views over Loch Rog from here.

Standing stones overlooking Great Bernera bridge



Dun Baravat (NB156356) is a galleried dun dramatically situated on a small island on Loch Baravat and is signposted (about 1 mile north of the bridge). It is joined to the shore by a causeway about 30m long. Part is over 3m high and the remains of a scarcement still exists although the interior is confused by later buildings.

Breacleit The Local History Society has an exhibition and information about the island and its past in the Village Hall, which also has a cafe. The nearby island shop is also well worth a visit.

Bernera Riot In 1874 there was a riot on Bernera. When the sheriff-officer, Donald Munro, who was

also the factor, attempted to serve writs of eviction on 56 householders, he was pelted with sods and stones. Three crofters were arrested but found not guilty when tried. Munro was convicted of assaulting one of them whilst handcuffed and sacked from his several public offices. A memorial to these events stands north of Breacleit (NB153378).

Camas Bosta, (G, bay, ON bol-stadir, farm) at the north end, is a beautiful sandy beach overlooking Little Bernera. Winter storms in 1992 exposed a number of structures which on excavation proved to date from the Iron Age to Norse times. Three of the houses date from the 6th to 8th centuries AD, and have the figure of eight layout typical of Pictish dwellings.

The dwellings had a large main room about 6m in diameter with a smaller room on the north side and the entrance to the south. They were built into the sand with double-skinned drystone walls. The circular shape would have resisted the pressure of the sand and also resulted in the very good structural preservation.

The houses were backfilled after being excavated in 1996. The outline of three can be seen in the sand on the top of the beach. A replica house has been built nearby which is based on one of the excavated structures. While it is not known what the actual roof would have looked like, the reconstruction gives a vivid impression of the amount of space available in such a dwelling. Overall the construction is not very different to later black-houses, such as the one at Arnol.



Camas Bosta showing outlines of houses



Dun Baravat on Loch Baravat - typical galleried dun

Walk The area around Bosta is excellent for walking, and a circular walk via *Siaran Bosta*, south along the coast and back via *Loch a'Sgail* and the low hill of *Shelaval* (87m NB143391) will give lovely views on a clear day. Although the terrain is rocky the walking is easy. Lichens abound as do wild flowers common to wet moorland.



Camas Bosta is the only sandy beach on Great Bernera

A restored Norse type mill lies near the coast east of Breacleit, (NB168372). It resembles the one at Shawbost. Slightly further on is an interesting lobster pond on a small inlet off Loch Risay (NB173373) This was built by local people in the mid-1800s to keep their catches alive. The lobsters could then be sold at the best time of year for prices and survival in transit. Then as now, demand was high in the festive season.

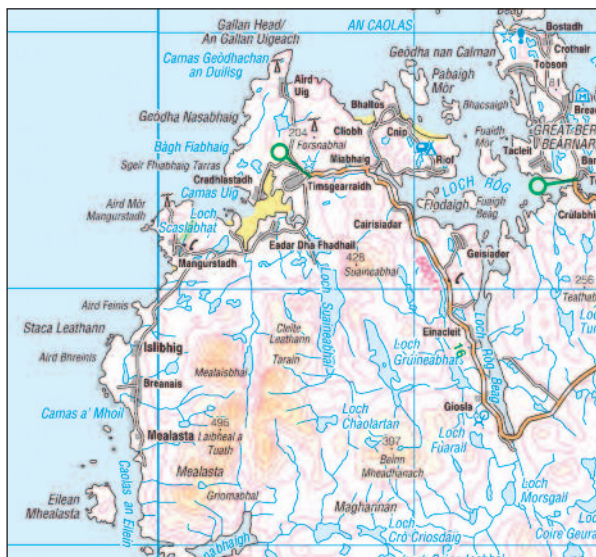


Interior of replica Iron Age house

Kirkibost Pier is the fishing harbour. Great Bernera is not a very good island for agriculture, being quite rocky, but it has been well known for its lobster fishery since at least the 16th century. The waters of Loch Rog are shallow and sheltered, with many skerries, making ideal crustacean habitat. The harbour may not be the prettiest, but the lobsters are excellent.



Kirkibost Harbour



UIG (ON Vik, Bay) The B8011 to Uig crosses the *Abhainn Grimersta* where it enters Loch Roag. This river originates in Loch Langavat and is said to be one of the best salmon rivers in Scotland. The road passes many small lochans which are covered with Water Lilies in summer, before reaching Gisla, with its hydro power station. The views along Little Loch Roag and Loch Roag are wild and spectacular.

This is an area of great natural beauty with dramatic coastal

scenery and a backdrop of mountains. The ever changing light, clean Atlantic air and proximity of the ocean all combine to impress the visitor, no matter what the season or weather.

Beaches The sandy beaches are especially varied and impressive. *Traigh na Berie* is a long sweep of sand protected by the islands of Pabay Mor and Vacsay, while the beaches at Cliff and Mangersta are much more exposed to the Atlantic swell and can be very dramatic in stormy weather.

Traigh na Berie



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Uig Bay from Crowlista with the mountains of Harris in the background

Broch Although Uig may seem isolated today, there is plenty of evidence for past occupation. The Iron Age broch at *Loch na Berie* (NB104352) may have been of similar proportions to Dun Carloway and is preserved because it was filled by windblown sand and accumulated peat. The first floor gallery is complete and clearly shows the characteristic building techniques used.

The waterlogged nature of the site resulted in good preservation of artefacts, but also means that it is hard to view the structure. It seems that the site may have been occupied up until the 9th century AD.

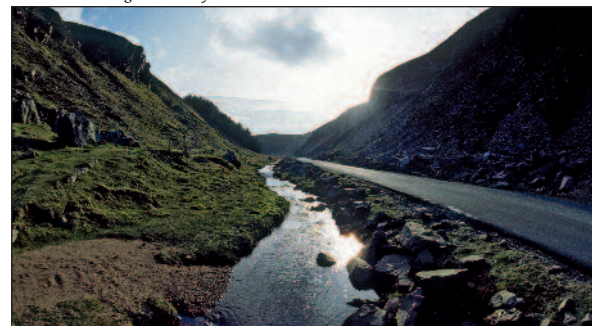
Broch at Loch na Bertie



Dun Bharabhat (NB099354) is on a small loch nearby. This structure is built like a small broch, with galleried walls and internal stairs, but with a diameter of only 11m it was probably never very high. There are a series of Norse type mills on the slope leading down towards *Traigh na Berie* from here, and lovely panoramic views from the top of the hill.

Wheelhouses Several wheelhouses have been excavated in the Cnip area. These were built into the sand dunes and had radial "aisles" to support walls against the pressure of the sand. Though nothing is visible here to the visitor, the dilapidated example at Kilphedar on South Uist is similar.

Glen Valtos is a glacial valley



Vikings Several Viking Age burials have been found in the sand dunes above *Traigh na Berie* which are in close proximity to earlier Bronze Age graves. One female, who was in her late 30s, was buried in the 10th century. She was accompanied by a distinctive pair of oval brooches, a necklace of glass beads, a comb and various iron tools including a small sickle. Another such burial was found in the early 20th century near *Bhalthos* school with a mixture of Celtic and Norse artefacts.

Glen Bhalthos runs from *Miavaig* to *Timsgarry* and was formed as a result of glacial meltwater scouring a path to the sea. The large deposits of sand and gravel at

Carnish are also glacial. *Miavaig* (ON *Mjo Vik*, Narrow Bay) was once the steamer harbour and is now home to a variety of small boats as well as the shore base for fish farms.

Aird Uig On the road towards *Aird Uig*, there is a panoramic view from *Fornaval*, which is accessible by road (205m, NB061359). On a clear day the Flannan Islands and even St Kilda may be visible from here. Gallan Head is the site of an old NATO radar station, built in 1954 and abandoned in 1963. The former administration block is now a small hotel, while many of

UIG

Beaches

Traigh na Berie, Camas na Clibhe, Uig Sands, Mangersta Sands, Mol Forsgeo

Archaeology

Loch na Berie broch, Dun Bharabhat, Dun Boranish

Brenish Norse Mill

Chapel sites

Baile na Cille,

Taigh nan Cailleachan Dubha

Viewpoints

Gallan Head, Fornaval, Timsgarry, Carnish, Ard More Mangersta, Mealista



Carved wooden Lewis Chessman

the other buildings have been converted into houses.

Chapel On a headland called *An Bheannaich* (NB038379) about 1km west of Aird Uig village there is a small ruined chapel called

Taigh a'Bheannaich (G the Blessing Place). A track leads most of the way to this early Christian site.

Uig Sands The view over the wide expanse of the Uig Sands changes constantly as the tide ebbs and flows. Perhaps the best viewpoint is at Crowlista (NB040336), from where the yellowish sands combined with the mountains in the background complement each other to make a most satisfying scenic experience.

Lewis Chessmen In 1831 a large collection of exquisitely carved ivory chessmen was discovered buried in a small stone cist in the dunes on the south side of Uig Bay. The pieces date from the mid 12th century (Late Norse Period) and are carved from Walrus ivory.

It has been speculated that the

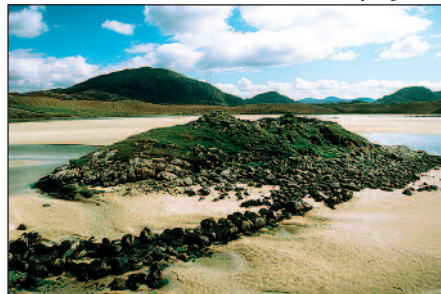


Uig Sands

The Brahan Seer was born at Baile na Cille



Dun Borranish is at the northeast side of Uig Sands



Unusual croft sign

chessmen were carved in Norway and that they may have belonged to a merchant. As with the several Norse silver hoards which have been found, their origin remains enigmatic. At present they are held by the British Museum and the National Museum in Edinburgh.

Dun There is a ruined dun, Dun Borranish, on a small rocky knoll at the northeast end of the bay (NB050333) which is cut off at high tide. The sands ebb dry but are covered at high water. The river from Loch *Suainaval* (ON Sweyn's Hill) winds around the northeast of the Bay.



Uig Bay from Timsarry at high tide

Baile na Cille At *Baile na Cille* there is an ancient ruined chapel in the old graveyard (NB048339). The walls of an 18th century church make a sheltered garden for the adjacent *Baile na Cille* Guest House.

Brahan Seer Kenneth MacKenzie was born at *Baile na Cille* around 1600. Late one evening his mother was herding cattle near the old cemetery when suddenly all the graves opened up. Spirits roamed here and there, but soon only one remained open.

Mrs MacKenzie bravely walked up to the grave and jammed it open with her distaff. Soon the spirit returned and turned out to be a princess from Norway who had been lost at sea. She was so impressed by the bravery of Mrs MacKenzie that she told her to go and seek a blue stone from a nearby loch for her youngest son, Kenneth.

With this stone the young

MacKenzie gained the *second sight*, and could predict the future. He ended up working for the Seaforth's at Brahan Estate near Loch Ussie in Easter Ross. Unfortunately Lady Seaforth took a great dislike to his predictions of the future and had him burnt in a tar barrel at Chanonry Point. The

blue stone he cast away, never to be found by mortal man again.

Carinish There are very fine beaches at Carnish. This area saw some of the most ruthless clearances of the 19th century when the Seaforth MacKenzies and then Matheson cleared large numbers



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Baile-na-Cille

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Mangersta Beach faces the Atlantic and always has breakers even in calm weather

of people from the land and to create huge sheep farms. Most of the former inhabitants were shipped to Canada, where their descendants continue to thrive to this day.

Abhainn Dearg Distillery commenced production at Carinish in 2008 in an old Salmon hatchery. No whisky had been made on Lewis since the demolition of the Shoeburn Distillery in 1844.



Abhainn Dearg Distillery is based at Carinish

Abhainn Dearg Distillery

James Mathieson had made his fortune in the opium trade but was an total abstainer himself.

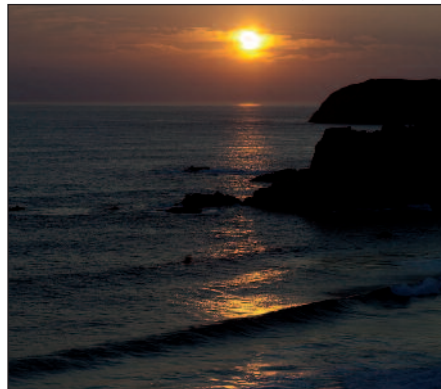
The new distillery has small stills, each with a capacity of just over 2,000l. Both single malt and newly distilled whisky are available to buy. Bourbon American Oak casks are used for maturation.

Mangersta At Mangersta Sands the Atlantic never sleeps and even on a calm day there are still breakers. The ancient dark rocks of the cliffs contrast with the greens and

Sheilavig is an attractive little cove south of Mangersta Sands



Mangersta summer sunset



Mol Forsgeo at Mealista is exposed to the Atlantic Ocean - sometimes it is sandy and sometimes all pebbles

blues of the sea to create a beautiful but wild scene. A good viewpoint is *Aird Mor Mangersta*.

St Kilda Centre There is a plan to develop a major St Kilda facility at Geodha Sgoilt, above Mangersta Beach. The site has panoramic views to the Flannans and, on a clear day, St Kilda.

Brenish Further south, the townships of *Islivig* and *Brenish* are among the most remote on Lewis, but were never cleared. The highest hill on the island, *Mealsival* (574m) and the line of tops to the south dominate the scene here. Golden Eagles nest in these hills and may be seen on occasion.

At Brenish the remains of another Norse type mill are in the burn on the left, while there are ruins of a fishing station at *Camas a'Mhoil*. There are also remnants from a major military presence here in WWII. A Chain Home radar station was installed here in 1942. The power station, hut bases and concrete anchors for the mast support cables remain.

Mealista lies at the end of the road south from Uig. *Mol Forsgeo* is a lovely sandy beach with rounded boulders, backed by machair. *Taigh nan Cailleachan Dubha* overlooks *Mol Forsgeo*. There was a

medieval nunnery here as well as another ancient chapel and graveyard (NB990243). There are two other attractive small beaches further to the south, as well as a slipway for launching boats.



Abhainn Dearg Distillery

Abhainn Dearg Distillery

Remains of Norse type mill at Brenish





LOCH ERISORT The road south from Stornoway crosses the peat-covered Arnish Moor before reaching Loch Erisort. This long sea loch is only separated from Loch Seaforth by about 2 miles. There are strings of settlements along both shores, the

biggest of which is Balallan with its attractive white painted little Post Office and working crofts.

Pairc The promontory of *Pairc* is itself almost an island with only 2 miles of land separating Loch Erisort and Loch Seaforth. The

old name for this area was *Durna* (ON *Deer Ness*, *Deer Point*). The B8060 meanders across the moor to Loch Sealg. The dramatic and remote scenery is well worth a visit, while scattered crofting communities provide a contrast to the otherwise rather barren landscape.

Eilean Chaluim Cille At the south entrance to Loch Erisort is the tidal island of *Eilean Chaluim Cille*, also known as *Oronsay* (ON *Orfjara*, island joined to land at low water), which has an ancient chapel dedicated to St Columba (NB385210), *Eaglais Chaluim Chille*.

Dun Cromor is a ruined Iron Age galleried dun on an islet connect-

Balallan Post Office



Crown Copyright



Dun Cromor is accessed from a submerged causeway

ed to the shore of Loch Cromor by a causeway (NB402207). The gallery is clearly visible and the north part of the islet is enclosed by a wall. It can only be reached if the water level of the loch is low or by boat.

Park Deer Raid A large cairn commemorating the Land Wars is situated south of Balallan. In late 1887 the Deer Park Raid was organised with much publicity by crofters and cottars from Lochs. A large number of deer were shot over two days.

The purpose was to draw attention to the plight of people being cleared from the land, in this case for the benefit of sport shooting. The military were called in and six of the men were tried in Edinburgh. They were acquit-

Loch Seaforth



Deer Park Raid Memorial



Loch Erisort from Balallan

ted, largely as a result of their strong arguments for a better deal for crofters. The raid was a big success in terms of publicising the clearances and the situation of the people in the islands.

Wildlife The remote and isolated area of *Pairc*, particularly the large unpopulated area west and south of *Eisgein* is particularly

noted for its birds. Red-throated and Black-throated Diver, White-tailed Sea Eagle, Golden Eagle, Merlin, Golden Plover, Greenshank and Dunlin all breed here. The only access is by foot, but a visit here is well worth the effort and planning needed. The eagles and divers which are likely to be seen make this an essential birdwatching hike.

LOCHS TO LOCH SEAFORTH

- Loch Erisort
- Pairc
- Eilean Chaluim Cille
- Dun Cromor
- Loch Sealg
- Deer Park Raid Memorial
- Eisgean
- Eagles