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Lochmaddy from North Lee

islands at the entrance to the sea loch, *Madadh Beag* and *Madadh Mor* (G the Little Dog and the Big Dog). In former times it was known as *Chearsabhaigh* or *Kersivag* (ON *Keris Vagr*, Keris Bay).

ry were built. During the Herring Boom it was one of the main ports along with Stornoway and Castlebay for the landing and processing of catches in the Outer Hebrides.

Lee the view encompasses Loch Eport and Eaval. The walk in over the moor between all the lochs is quite arduous but worth the effort. The two hills can be more easily reached by small boat from Lochmaddy.

Lochmaddy is situated in an excellent natural harbour which was used by fishermen and pirates long before the fine, but slightly incongruous, buildings of the 19th century.

North & South Lee The bay is peppered with small islands and skerries, and is said to have a coastline of about 70km (43mi). The view from the top of the North Lee is magnificent. From South

On 15 September 1943 a USAAF B24 Liberator crashed on the North Lee with the loss of all 8 crew. A small memorial and some debris are all that remains to

UIST, the *Vist* or *Ivist* of the Norse Sagas, may seem to derive from ON *Vestr*, west, but the name is probably much more ancient. Originally, the term applied to North Uist, Benbecula and South Uist together.

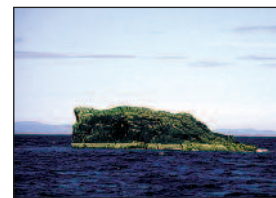
so many views. It is also a maze of lochs and inlets from the sea, of which there are at least 120. Some are fresh water and some are brackish. Lochs cover about a third of the island. Trout and Salmon fishing is excellent here.

NORTH UIST is an island of contrasts. The east is dominated by the three hills of North Lee (ON *Hlith*, slope 250m), South Lee (281m) and Eaval (ON *Oy Fjall*, Island Hill, 347m), whose distinctive conical shape features in

The north and west coasts are fringed by magnificent sandy beaches backed by extensive machair, apart from the low cliffs at Griminish in the northwest. The centre of the island is mostly peat-bog and lochs.

The island is separated from Benbecula by *Oitir Mhor* (G Big Sandbank), the North Ford, over which a causeway was built in 1960. The main car ferry arrives at Lochmaddy from Uig in Skye, but there is also a ferry from Leverburgh on Harris which arrives at the north end of the causeway to Berneray.

Lochmaddy The village of Lochmaddy (G *Loch nam Madadh*, Loch of the Dogs) takes its name from the two small



Madadh Beag, north side of entrance



Madadh Mor, south side of entrance

Lochmaddy old harbour, with North and South Lee in the background



- NORTH UIST**

 - Lochmaddy
 - Taigh Chearsabhaigh
 - North & South Lee
 - Dun Torchuill
 - Dun Sticir
 - Berneray
 - Sollas
 - Greinetobht
 - Udal
 - Cleitreabhal
 - Balranald RSPB Reserve
 - Clach Mor a'Che
 - Unival
 - Committee Road
 - Bharpa Langass
 - Pobull Fhinn
 - Clachan
 - Carinish
 - Eaval
 - Grimsay
 - North Ford



Dun Torchuill on Loch an Duin

remind us of this sad incident, one of many such wartime crashes.

There is an interesting waymarked walk around Lochmaddy village area which circumnavigates Loch Houram and also takes in several impressive 19th century buildings on the way, including the Old Court House (1827), New Court

House (1875), Bank House (1877) and other historical sites.

Otters The many small islands, lagoons and inlets of this area make it an ideal habitat for Otters. They are often seen early and late in the day hunting for fish and eels in the ebb. The vicinity of the pier is one of the best places to start



Dun Torchuill on Loch an Duin

Dun Sticir, Port nan Long



looking for these elusive creatures.

Taigh Chearsabhagh The oldest building in the village, *Taigh Chearsabhagh*, was built in 1741 as an inn and was one of the first buildings on the island with a slated roof. It is now a very inspiring local history museum and arts centre. It has a cafe and tempting shop selling local books and crafts. Regular exhibitions are held in the gallery by local and other artists. Works by visitors include a number of sculpture installations in the vicinity.

There is a seasonal Visitor Information Centre, a Post Office and a grocery shop in the village. The Lochmaddy and Tigh Dearg (G Red House) Hotels are good places to stay or to have a meal.

Dun Sticir, Port nan Long



Loch Blashaval, west of Lochmaddy, with North Lee and South Lee in the background

North Route The A865 runs northwest from Lochmaddy, passing through a strikingly beautiful landscape which is dotted with countless lochs as well as by many sites of interest.

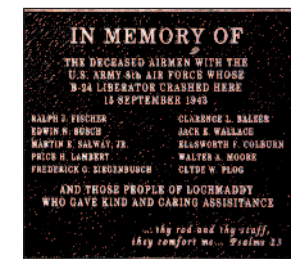
Archaeology North Uist has a rich heritage of archaeological sites, ranging from the Neolithic Age to Medieval times. Few are signposted, and many of the most interesting are not visible as they were back-filled after excavation. Luckily there are several monuments which are easily accessible and visually impressive. The Ordnance Survey map shows many duns, standing stones, souterrains and chambered cairns. The challenge in finding these piles of stones is at least half the fun.

Dun Torchuill Near the turn off for *Bagh a Chaise*, *Dun Torchuill* (NF888739) is perhaps the best preserved broch on the island. It is typical of the many such structures sited on small islands on lochs and accessible by man made causeways. Although most of these sites date from the Iron Age and some were occupied until Medieval times, others date from the Neolithic period.



Taigh Chearsabhagh installation

Dun Sticir The B893 leads to Port na Long (Newtonferry) and the Berneray causeway. *Dun Sticir* (NF897777) is an example of a broch which was in use until Medieval times. It is built on a prominent islet on *Loch an Sticir*. The impressive causeway is about 3m wide, while the broch is 18m in diameter. There is a later rectangular building within the structure, possibly 16th century.



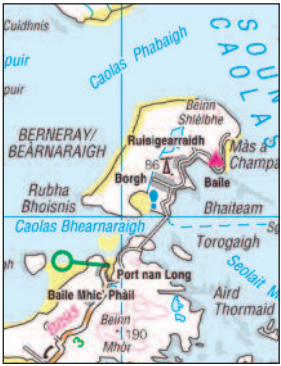
WWII Liberator memorial

Sheep on saltmarsh, Port nan Long



Loch an Sticir, Port nan Long





Traigh Iar (West Beach) on the west coast of Berneray is over 4km long

BERNERAY (ON Bjornar-oy, Bjorn's Island) lies to the north of North Uist in the Sound of Harris. It was traditionally called *Beàrnaraigh na Hearadh*, as it was part of Harris rather than North Uist. Now joined by a causeway opened by the Prince of Wales in 1999, it has a mostly rocky east side. In contrast, the west coast is a

long sandy beach over 4km long, backed by a wide expanse of dunes and machair. This can be reached by following the road through Borge to a carpark on the machair.

There are several interesting monuments including the isolated standing stone, *A'Clach Mhor*

(NF913807), with the remains of a ruined chapel nearby. Remains of blackhouses are prominent near the cemetery at the south end. The Gunnery is a 16th century fortified building and the birthplace of Sir Norman MacLeod, a noted scholar. The roofless Telford church at the north end dates from 1827. It has two doors, one for the Berneray folk and the other for the Pabbay worshippers.

Machair Berneray has a large area of machair which covers the whole of the west side of the island from the dunes to the low hills of the east. It is a riot of colour in summer, with a profusion of wild flowers. Many species of waders breed here as well as the occasional elusive Corncrake.



Loch Bhrusda from Ruisigearraidh

A'Clach Mhor, Standing stone at Borge



The Gunnery, Baile



Sandy beach, dunes and machair at the northeast corner of the island with Mas a'Champair in the background

Mute Swans and Greylag Geese are present all year, while Barnacle and Brent Geese overwinter. Loch Bhuirgh is near the north end of the causeway. It is tidal and is a good place to observe waders, especially during the spring and autumn migration times. A track which goes from Borge to the graveyard passes close to the shore.

There are expansive views across the Sound of Harris from the north end. Loch Bhrusda is good for wildfowl and waders. Divers and seabirds as well as Otters and seals may be seen from the causeway or around the rocky east bays.

Crofting and fishing are the main activities here, and the little harbour has a colourful array of boats. Berneray is famous for its fine



Berneray Harbour is always full of small fishing boats

potatoes and in former times large quantities were exported to Harris. The harbour was built in 1988 to shelter the fishing fleet, which catches mostly shellfish. The main settlement is around Loch a Bhaigh and at Borge, where there is a shop and tearoom.

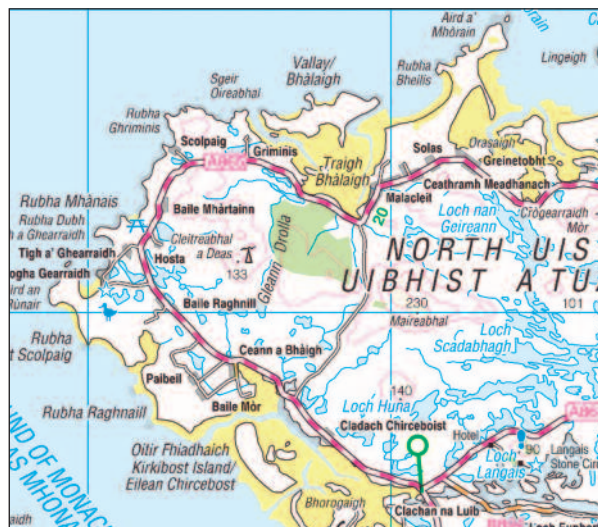
Ferry MV "Loch Portain" at Berneray ferry terminal



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West Route The coast of North Uist from Greinetobht (G Grein, sunny, ON *Tofta*, homestead) to Clachan is a long series of sandy bays backed by dunes and machair. Only the northwest corner around Scolpaig has a rocky coast. Even here there are several sheltered sandy coves.

The machair and beaches at Greinetobht (NF825751) are especially beautiful, and it is worthwhile to take the walk out to *Aird a'Mhorain* (NF832792) where there is an ancient cemetery. There

are lovely views towards Boreray and Berneray from the long sand spit of *Corran Aird a'Mhorain*.

The Udal is on the west side of the headland (NF822781). This area has been extensively excavated as the headland was occupied from Neolithic to post Norse times. Although there is little to see above ground, it is easy to see why the site was so favourable for settlement. Extensive fertile machair, plentiful seaweed, sea for fishing and transport and the sheltered situation behind the dunes all add up.

Renovated blackhouse at Sollas overlooking Traigh Bhalaigh



Sollas suffered some of the most ruthless clearances of the 19th century due to the actions of MacDonald of Sleat in Skye. In 1849, 603 people were forced to off the land. During this clearance a riot ensued during which Glasgow policemen were pelted with stones by the women. The brave yet shameless constables then set upon the women with their truncheons.

Sollas Golf Course is a 9 hole links course on the North West of North Uist over-looking the Atlantic. "It was built and maintained by local volunteers in the summer of 2001. The course is on the machair used by the local crofters who have given permission to use the land to play golf. In the winter, cows and sheep graze here so it is not unusual to have to play around them, and other obstacles they leave behind."

Vallay This tidal island (ON *Vadill*, ford) was home to the antiquarian, Erskine Beveridge, who lived in Vallay House in the early 20th century. The house is now derelict and the island uninhabited. Beveridge did much archaeological work in the area. The island is well worth a visit, but it is essential to check the tide times.



Corran Aird a'Mhorain looking towards Boreray

Neolithic Sites Excavations at *Eilean Dombhuill* (G Donald's Isle) on Loch Olavat (NF746754) showed that the site was occupied during the Neolithic Age, and rebuilt on several occasions. The houses were rectangular with central hearths. A huge amount of pottery sherds were found, including plain bowls, Hebridean Ware and Unstan Ware. The former tend to be tall bowls or jars, while the latter are shallow, round and open bowls. Both have characteristic patterns of decoration.

Eilean an Tighe (G Isle of the House) on Loch nan Geireann is not connected by a stone causeway

Norse era cross at Cille Pheadar



Traigh Udal. Aird a'Mhorain, looking southwest

but excavation revealed a very similar sequence to that at *Eilean Dombhuill*. The site has been interpreted as a Neolithic pottery workshop due to the quantity and quality of the ceramics found there.

near the summit of which there is a chambered long cairn with an Iron Age wheelhouse built into its west end. Originally the cairn was about 30m long with an imposing facade at the east end. Just down the slope is a standing stone and another ruinous chambered cairn.

There is a 19th century folly on Loch Scolpaig (NF731750), built on top of another dun while an ancient cross from *Cille Pheadar* grave yard has been used atop a 19th century memorial (NF726744) which overlooks *Baile Mhartaim*.

On a clear day there are very fine views from this hill, sometimes extending as far as St Kilda nearly 70km (41mi) distant. The whole west side of the Uists can be seen from this fine viewpoint.

Cleitreabhal (ON *Klettr Fjall*, Rocky Hill) A road leads up *Cleitreabhal* (133m, NF749717),

Balranald RSPB Reserve The Reserve covers 640ha and includes beaches, dunes, machair, marsh and lochs as well as a visitor centre



19th century folly on Loch Scalpaig

(NF718698). A large number of birds, especially waders and waterfowl, breed in or visit this area on migration due to varied habitat and suitable feeding grounds. In 2010 there were 40 pairs of Comcrakes here. This is also one of the best places to see and hear

the Corn Bunting. The 3 mile walk around the Reserve takes at least 2 hours, but in practice can take much longer when detained by birds, flora and insects. In summer the machair is a sea of colourful wildflowers which attract many butterflies and bumblebees.



Iron Age roundhouse within a Neolithic chambered cairn on Cleitrebhal

Neolithic chambered cairn on Cleitrebhal



Aird an Rùmair (NF688705) lies just north of the RSPB Reserve, and is a prime seawatching site in spring and summer when the wind is onshore. Many birds on passage north or south use this headland as a waypoint on their flyways. The nearby beaches of Traigh Iar and Traigh nam Faoghailean are attractive to waders and often good places to observe migrants.

Clach Mor a'Che North of Claddach Kirkibost, at Claddach a Chaolais overlooking Kirkibost Island, the 2.6m high monolith of Clach Mor a' Che (G Great Stone of the World) stands by the shore. Nearby there is a large but ruinous chambered cairn, *Dun Na Carnaich* (NF768663), which has several orthostats still upstanding.

Claddach Kirkibost Centre The Centre is in a renovated school and has a café which serves delicious food, with lovely views to the west. A small shop sells homemade jams, chutneys and oatcakes. It holds regular demonstrations of traditional activities as well as various cultural events. Childcare facilities and wifi Internet access are also available.

Unival (ON Hakonar Fjall, Hakon's Hill, 140m, NF802673) offers panoramic views over the flat vista of sea, sand and shore to the west and south with lochs and hills to the east, all dominated by the sky. On the southwest side there is a chambered cairn, *Leatach an Tigh Chloiche* (NF800669). Several of the kerb stones remain standing, but most of the cairn has been robbed out. There is a dun on nearby Loch Huna.

Committee Road This road leads across the moors from north of Claddach Kirkibost to Malacleit. It was built to provide work during the potato blight famine of the 1840s. There are several cairns and standing stones on the slopes above the road, while *Maireabhal* (ON Mara Fjall, Mare's Hill, NF808700, 230m) is another excellent vantage point. There are also good views over North Uist from the road itself.

Hebridean Smokehouse "Peat Smoked Salmon stands out as the real thing, beautiful quality smoked salmon that tastes as good as it looks. All of their seafood is sourced from the pristine waters of the Outer Hebrides, with the salmon and sea trout uniquely of local island origin.

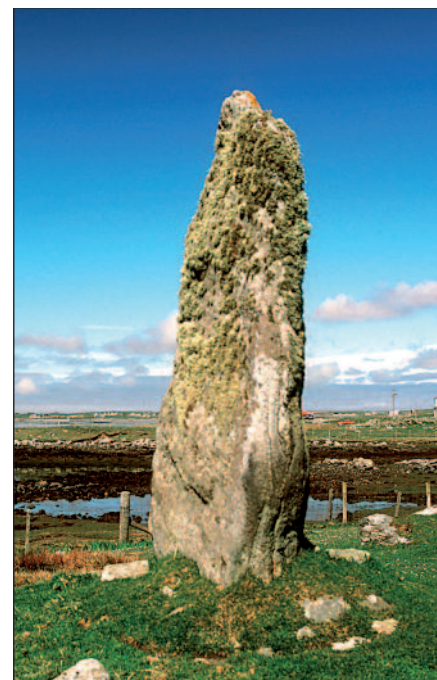
Everything is prepared by hand



Dun na Carnaich, Claddach a'Chaolais is a Neolithic chambered cairn

before smoked with locally cut island peat to impart an unforgettably aromatic flavour. After the smoking the fish is hand sliced. Hebridean Smokehouse is a small family run company with a history of fish smoking on North Uist going back over 30 years, and we aspire to make the best smoked products available anywhere."

Clach Mor a'Che





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East Route The A867 road south from Lochmaddy to Clachan crosses an area of moorland and lochs with much to interest the angler, birdwatcher or archaeologist. All of the moorland birds of the Uists may be seen here. Divers breed on the lochs, while the Langass plantation (NF845655) is good for passerines and migrants. Raptors such as the Golden Eagle, Peregrine and Short-eared Owl quarter the moors, while Greenshank and other waders haunt the shorelines.

Bharpa Langass (G Heap of Stones; ON *Langa Ass*, Long Rocky Ridge) is the best preserved Neolithic chambered cairn in the Outer Hebrides. It lies on the western slope of *Beim Langass* (90m, NF838658), near a signposted carpark. It is built with Lewisian Gneiss rocks and is 24m in diameter by 4.5m high. Some kerb stones remain on the north side.

This impressive cairn encloses a chamber which is intact and may be



Bharpa Langass Neolithic chambered cairn

Bharpa Langass Neolithic chambered cairn - chamber



Bharpa Langass Neolithic chambered cairn - passage



entered with care. The passage is nearly 4m long and slopes downwards into the oval chamber which is about 3m by 2m wide and 2m high. The chamber is constructed with massive monoliths, each of which must weigh several tonnes, with drystone walling filling in the spaces.

Beaker pottery sherds, a flint arrow-head and some cremated bones were found here in 1911. These probably are a Bronze Age deposition. There is a wonderful panoramic view across the moors and lochs to the hills in the west.

Pobull Fhinn, (G *Fionn Gall*, Fingals People, meaning Norsemen or fair outsiders) stone setting (NF843650) is well preserved. It is situated near Langass Lodge on the south side of Ben Langass, about 1km east of Bharpa Langass.

The setting is oval, about 37m by 30m, and built on a levelled platform. It may originally have comprised 24 stones, the tallest being about 2.5m high. There are several fallen monoliths and one stands inside the main group. The site has a dramatic outlook over the watery landscape of Loch Langass and Loch Euphort with North Lee, South Lee and Eaval as the backdrop.

Fionn mac Cumhaill was a mythical Gaelic hero also known as Fingal or Finn. There is another stone circle to the south of the loch, *Sornach Coir Fhinn* ((G Fireplace of Finn's Cauldron, NF828630) off the B894, overlooking *Loch a Phobail*. According to legend it was here that he and his band cooked the deer that they had hunted.

Cronaval Two chambered cairns also lie on the nearby slopes of Cronaval. One may be a Clyde type cairn (NF833627). Several uprights remain among the heather, but no entrance passage seems to exist. Cronaval North (NF832630) is a ruined round cairn. Nearby lies another robbed out large cairn with a large chamber, close to *Loch Glen na Feannag*.



Pobull Fhinn stone circle at Langass overlooks Loch Langass, Loch Euphort and Eaval



North and South Lee from Beim Langass



LANGASS LODGE



Pobull Fhinn stone circle, Loch Langass and Eaval from Langass Lodge

“Set in splendid isolation in its own grounds Langass Lodge is only 10 minutes from Lochmaddy ferry terminal and 25 minutes from Benbecula airport. Commanding stunning views over a sea-loch and a stone circle this small hotel is the ideal base for exploring the Western Isles.

Langass has an excellent restaurant renowned for cuisine specialising in local sea-food and game.”

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Baleshare (G *Baile Sear*, East Township) is so called because the land to the west *Baile Iar*, was lost to the sea in a great storm in the 17th century. A causeway built in 1962 joins the island to North Uist. This area of dunes backed by machair is another good place for birdwatching. The tidal pools and mudflats of *Traigh Eachcamais* are especially good for waders and waterfowl.

Teampall na Trionaid (G Temple of the Trinity, NF813607) at Carinish is said to have been founded by Somerled's daughter about 1200AD, and rebuilt by Amie MacRuari, whose son Ranald was the progenitor of Clan Ranald, about 1350. It was an important seat of learning in medieval times. The 13th century scholar, *Duns Scotus*, may have been educated here.



Teampall na Trionaid, Carinish

Bharpa Carinish chambered cairn with Eaval in the background



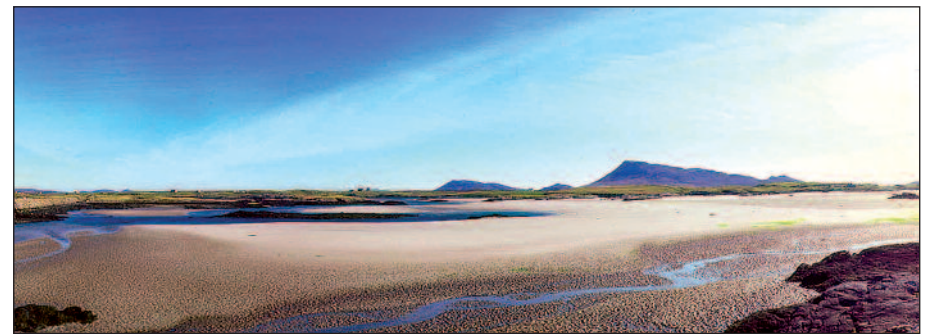
Battle of Carinish In 1601 the Battle of Carinish took place here, and is still commemorated by the Ditch of Blood (*G Feith na Fala*). About 40 MacLeods from Skye had come to lay waste to North Uist and steal cattle.

They were taking breakfast in the precincts of the *Teampall*, when much smaller group of MacDonalds attacked with swords, bows and arrows. After a fierce fight, the MacLeods were subdued. Only two escaped to their boats which had been left at Loch Euphort.

In a good example of 20th century progress, road widening has virtually destroyed the once fine stone circle south-east of Carinish (NF833603). In 1915 there were 15 upright stones here, but now there are just a few scattered remnants in the heather.

Bharpa Carinish The nearby and spectacular Neolithic chambered cairn of *Bharpa Carinish* (NF837603) to some extent compensates for this official vandalism. At 50m long, 21m wide and 2m high and enclosing a chamber at least 6m long the cairn must have been very imposing when built.

Eaval There is a fine walk over the moors from the end of the *Claddach Chairinis* road to the summit of Eaval (ON *Ey Fjall*, Island Hill, 347m NF899606). The route passes inlets, lochs shielings and the small *Dun an t'Siamain* (NF886595) before ascending to the summit cairn with its very impressive views. For a shorter route to the summit take a boat to *Bagh Moraig*.



The North Ford from Benbecula looking towards Grimsay and North Uist, with Eaval in the background

GRIMSAY (ON *Grims-oy*, Grim's Isle) is joined to North Uist and Benbecula by the North Ford causeway which was opened in 1960 by the Queen Mother. Before this time the crossing could be hazardous due to quicksands, or by getting caught out by a rapidly rising tide. This picturesque small island has a circular road with many nice vistas across the fords.



Thatched cottage at Claddach Chairinis

Bagh Mor is particularly attractive, with views to Eaval and Ronay. The modern harbour at Kallin is the base for the many small fishing boats which operate in the area, which catch mostly lobster, crab, prawns and scallops. The Grimsay Boatshed Trust is a traditional boat building and repair business. It teaches and encourages boat building skills, for which Grimsay was once famous.



Oitir Mhor and Benbecula from Grimsay

Fishermen cleaning their boat on Grimsay



Archaeology At the eastern end of Grimsay the ruined *Teampall Naomh Mhichel* (G St Michael's Chapel, NF882548) is where the bodies of seamen carried ashore by the tide were traditionally buried. There is a partially rebuilt Iron Age wheelhouse on the northeast side between Loch Hornary and *Bagh nam Feadag* (NF864577).