

The Survey Report

This report is the product of both field survey and desk based research. The following notes explain the terminology and short hand descriptions used throughout the report.

Site Description Entries

The gazetteer entries comprise a set of characteristics for each site. The categories are as follows:

| Category | Example |
|-----------------------|---|
| Island | Islay |
| Map | '40 |
| Site code | IY297 |
| Grid reference | NR 3183 5117 |
| Site type | Funerary |
| NMRS no. | NR35SW 2 |
| Status | <i>(only relevant when a site has been designated as scheduled/listed)</i> |
| HS Index | <i>(for scheduled sites only: Historic Scotland index number for scheduled sites)</i> |
| Place name | Knockangle Point |
| Location to the coast | <100m |
| Condition | n/a |
| Recommendation | n/a |
| Date range | 3rd-1st Mill BC |

Site Code

Each site has been given a unique reference code for the purposes of this survey. The letter which begins each code refers to the survey area: eg IY9 = Islay site 9.

Site Type

While the categories of site types has not been restricted to a predetermined list, some standardisation of descriptions has been made. For example ruinous buildings of 18-20th C

date which could be positively identified have been divided into categories such as 'house', 'mill', 'outbuilding' etc. Where their use was not readily apparent, they have been described as 'structures'. The use of 'croft' or 'farmstead' has been avoided where the designation of the land or association of land with buildings was not known.

Prehistoric sites, particularly mounds and eroding middens, are frequently difficult to date and characterise from the visible remains. The identification of mounds as burial monuments or more recent farm or refuse mounds, for example, was made on the basis of previously recorded information, or where this was not available, the most probable explanation of the visible remains.

Date Range

The date ranges set out for various site types within this report are based on comparison with similar sites in the area which have already been dated or characterised. These ranges represent a general consensus; it must be noted that there is much debate about the date ranges of specific sites (such as brochs, for example). It is also likely that there are many local variations which provide exceptions to the rule. The date ranges used are as follows:

- 4th-3rd millennium BC
- 3rd-1st millennium BC
- 1st millennium BC-1st millennium AD
- 10th century AD-14th century AD
- 14th century AD- 18th century AD
- 18th century AD- 20th century AD
- Indeterminate- i.e. of uncertain date

Condition

The condition of each site entry was labelled using the following criteria:

▪Good: This label was applied where a site exhibited either high potential or had sufficient visible elements surviving to properly characterise it. An archaeological site was considered to be in 'good' condition where it was undisturbed or only slightly disturbed and retained obvious archaeological potential. Further work at such sites could reasonable be expected to provide information regarding date, nature, extent and complexity. Buildings (especially the large category of 18th/20th C structures) were considered 'good' where there were multiple site elements represented and survived in a reasonable enough condition to provide information regarding their construction, development and use.

▪Fair: This label was applied to sites considered to have some potential or where limited elements remained and the site could be generally characterised. Archaeological sites of this type were generally somewhat disturbed but retained some potential; a sufficient part of the site remains that it could be more fully characterised via excavation. Standing buildings were considered 'fair' when, although ruinous or disturbed, sufficient of the site remained that it could be generally characterised.

▪Poor: Sites described as 'poor' have visible elements which are very disturbed and offer little potential for further characterisation. This assumption was made on the basis of the evidence available at the time of this survey and it must be noted that, without recourse to full assessment, the true potential of many sites can only be estimated.

Recommendations

Three types of action have been recommended:

- Survey: This has been used as a general term covering all forms of further archaeological investigation or site protection. It includes topographical survey, section recording, trial trenching and open area excavation.

- Monitor: This is recommended either to keep a site of known potential under surveillance or to check for new exposures on sites currently considered to be of low or unknown potential. This will entail regular site inspections and include cross-checking of known information against new exposures and should be carried out by an archaeologist.

- Nil: No action has been recommended where a site is not immediately vulnerable to change, or is of very low potential.

Hinterland Geology and Coastal Geomorphology: Gazetteer Entries

The gazetteer entries comprise a set of characteristics for each coastal unit. The categories are as follows:

| Category | Example |
|------------------------------------|---|
| Label - Place name | 3. Carraig Fada (Map 5) |
| Grid Reference (to centre of area) | NR 346 445 |
| Length of Unit | 1.2 km |
| Foreshore Type | Rock platform |
| Coast Edge Height | Coast edge <5m |
| Hinterland Type | Drift on visible rock |
| Description | The coast edge within this unit is low lying... |

Erosion Class: Gazetteer Entries

The gazetteer entries comprise a set of characteristics for each coastal unit. The categories are as follows

| Category | Example |
|------------------------------------|---|
| Label - Place name | 1. Bunnahabhain (Map 15) |
| Grid Reference (to centre of area) | NR 425 721 |
| Length of Unit | 4.4 km |
| Characterise unit | Stable |
| Description | The coast edge in this unit is rocky..... |

Erosion Classes

The following definitions have been used:

- Eroding: Where more than 70% of the coastline is actively eroding.

- Eroding to Stable: Where there is both active erosion and stable areas, with 30-70% of either one.

- Stable: A section which is more than 70% stable. Usually any erosion is limited and local; any variation is specified in the accompanying text.

- Accreting to Stable: Where there are both accreting and stable areas, with 30-70% of either one

- Accreting: A section with accretion over more than 70% of its length.

- Accreting/Eroding: There are both accreting and eroding processes taking place and may vary from 20% to 80% of each process. The erosion and accretion may not be arranged in a

linear fashion along the coastline; there may be erosion of the coastal edge and deposition of sands along the foreshore.

Analysis of the Results of the Islay Coastal Survey

The coastline of Islay is estimated to be in the region of 233.6 km in length when measured at a scale of 1:25,000. Measuring at the same scale, the coastal survey examined some 219.1 km of the coastline and access was not available to the remaining 14.5 km. The area surveyed represents, therefore, 93.79% of the entire coastline of Islay. It should be remembered, however, that the length of the coastline when measured at a scale of 1:10,000 is over 300 km long and the length of area walked increases to around 280 km.

A total of 297 sites were recorded during the survey. This is a notional figure since it includes entries for some sites which, although previously recorded, could not be relocated during this survey. It excludes most individual listed buildings and shipwrecks, both of which are separately itemised within the appendices to this report. Some site entries represent a single set of remains, others represent groups of sites or site complexes.

| | |
|---------------------------------|-----------|
| Length of Coastline walked | 219.km |
| Number of site entries recorded | 297 sites |

The site entries represent a mixture of new and previously recorded features; with new sites representing 54.8% of the total. Where possible, sites which had been recorded prior to this survey were revisited and examined for signs of change. In some cases previously recorded sites could not be located during this survey. In other cases where they were located, some were found to have changed, for others their original interpretations were confirmed or challenged.

| | |
|-------------------------------------|-----|
| Previously recorded sites | 134 |
| New sites identified by this survey | 163 |
| Total | 297 |

While taking the qualifications noted above on board, it is possible to calculate that the average density of sites within the coastal zone of Islay is approximately 1.36 sites per kilometre walked. To put this figure into a wider context, the table below illustrates the average site density in other survey areas.

| Survey Area | Site Density |
|--------------------------|---------------------|
| Islay | 1.36 sites per km |
| Coll | 1.23 sites per km |
| Tiree | 1.53 sites per km |
| Shetland: Northmavine | 1.5 sites per km |
| Shetland: South Mainland | 1.3 sites per km |
| Shetland: East Burra | 2.6 sites per km |

While there are no national figures yet available, it can be seen that the density of sites within the coastal zone on Islay is comparable with densities for other areas in which coastal survey has been carried out. The greatest difference is to be found in the degree to which sites are considered at risk on Islay and the paucity of sites which can be attributed to the prehistoric and early historic periods. These factors are considered in more detail below.

Date Range

The assignation of sites within date ranges was based on a field interpretation of the likely type and period of the remains, and in the case of sites which could not be relocated, upon the interpretations of earlier surveyors.

Needless to say, this can be an extremely inexact method of assessment, especially when the site in question is poorly preserved or wholly or partially buried. The sites most likely to be in poor condition and to be buried tend either to be those of earlier date which have been disturbed and/or buried by subsequent natural and human action or to be later sites of insubstantial construction or where considerable disturbance has occurred.

Even where there are clear topographic features present, these may not be diagnostic in terms of assigning a date or function to the remains. This is the case for many of the sites which are here collectively termed 'duns' mainly by virtue of their geographic locations. In truth, these

may represent a variety of sites of widely different periods and with diverse functions. In the case of duns, the date range has been classified as uncertain, although they have been tentatively grouped together as probable defensive structures.

There are exceptions where there is documentary evidence for the construction and use of a site, such as the many 18th-20th C buildings which remain standing and for landmark sites, such as castles and churches with recorded histories and sometimes distinctive architectural features.

| Date Range | Number of Sites | % of Total |
|---|------------------------|-------------------|
| 18th-20th C | 182 | 61.3% |
| 14th-18th C | 2 | 0.7% |
| 10th-14th C | 4 | 1% |
| 1st millennium BC- 1st millennium AD | 2 | 0.7% |
| 3rd millennium BC- 1st millennium BC | 12 | 4% |
| 4th-3rd millennium BC | 0 | 0% |
| Indeterminate- of uncertain date | 86 | 30% |
| Not applicable- not located | 6 | 2% |
| Sites with multiple elements of different dates | 3 | 1% |

The majority of sites identified by the survey are classified as being of 18th-20th C date. This group constitutes some 61.3 % of the total recorded sites.

The second largest group, at 30%, are of uncertain date. Sites of 14th-18th C and 10th-14th C are poorly represented, amounting to 0.7% and 1.% respectively.

Of prehistoric and early historic date, sites of 1st millennium BC to 1st millennium AD form 0.7% of the total, while sites of 3rd-1st millennium BC date represent 4% of the total. No sites of 4th-3rd millennium BC date were identified.

Behind these figures there are several factors at play. While sites of 18th-20th C, 10th-14th and 14th-18th C date are widely dispersed throughout the area, sites of prehistoric date are more concentrated within a few areas, mainly where sand erosion has resulted in the remains becoming exposed.

Within the 'indeterminate' date category there are 40 duns or probable dun sites. These may date from the prehistoric into the medieval periods and a proportion may have been reused on more than one occasion throughout their life span. These duns occur in largest concentrations along the south east and west facing coasts but are scarce over large areas, for example on the north coast between Ardbeg and Ardnave and on the south coast between Portnahaven and the Oa peninsula. While recognising that this group is likely to be varied in function and date, it may be suggested that the distribution of duns is partly linked to the occurrence of topographical factors such as natural knolls and cliffs, upon which most are sited. The scarcity of duns on the north coast cannot, however, be explained by topographical factors since there are many suitable sites along this coastline which have not been used. This may be due to the fact that this area is high and access, either by foot or boat is difficult and does not appear to ever have been densely settled. The true nature and date of these duns and the factors affecting their distribution will ultimately, however, only begin to be unravelled through further work such as targeted assessment and excavation.

Site Types

Sites were assigned to one or more categories according to what they were used for. These categories were set prior to fieldwork to aid progress and to permit some degree of standardisation in the interpretation of the results. Some of the categories, such as churches, are period-specific but most contain sites of a variety of date ranges.

| Site Type | Number of Sites | % of Total |
|--------------------------------|-----------------|------------|
| Defensive | 44 | 14.8% |
| Domestic | 13 | 4.3% |
| Funerary | 12 | 4% |
| Indeterminate | 43 | 14.5% |
| Industrial | 10 | 3.3% |
| Maritime | 32 | 10.7% |
| Agricultural /pastoral | 108 | 36.4% |
| Church | 7 | 2.3% |
| More than one type represented | 22 | 7.4% |
| Other | 6 | 2% |

The largest group of sites, totalling some 36.4%, represented agricultural or pastoral remains. These include cultivation remains, land boundaries, tracks, enclosures and more unusually, utilised caves. All but seven sites within this group are dated to the 18th-20th C. While remains of this type are distributed very widely throughout the area, there are several concentrations, such as on the Oa peninsula, which are associated with deserted settlements which lie in the immediate hinterland. The remaining seven sites are classified as being of uncertain date and include both less well preserved examples and features such as isolated clearance cairns which cannot be dated without recourse to invasive assessment.

The sites categorised as 'industrial' are all of 18th-20th C date. These include distilleries and quarries, although some of the quarries may have been in use prior to the 18th C.

The maritime category includes sites such as lighthouses, piers, slipways, jetties, boat noosts and shed and fish traps. The relatively high numbers of these sites reflect not only the fact that prior to the building of modern roads, boats were a frequently used mode of transport but also that in the recent past Islay had a fishing industry, with designed fishing villages at Portnahaven, Port Charlotte, Port Wemyss and Port Ellen. With the exception of two sites, all of the maritime sites are of 18th-20th C date. There are many more shipwrecks around the coast of Islay than have been included as site entries; some of these are listed in a separate appendix to this report. The shipwrecks (or rather hulks) included here are sites which were observed during survey. The majority of wrecks lie hidden beneath the sea and therefore not amenable to inspection through coastal survey.

The 'defensive' category contains sites as diverse as WWII remains, Dunivaig Castle, a battlefield site and some forty duns of uncertain date. The actual defensive capacity and nature of the dun sites is unknown and in many cases it is likely that they are better sited as lookout positions rather than forts.

Sites of domestic type include both 18th-20th C houses and middens and hut circles of presumed prehistoric date. The relatively small number of such sites identified within the coastal zone may be due to the fact that some sites, such as duns, may also have had a domestic use and that many houses of both the prehistoric and early historic periods may have been built of wood and thus leave few or no topographic indications behind. It is also

possible that, as with much of the modern settlement, domestic sites were sited with preference to the better land within the hinterland.

Funerary sites include burial grounds, memorials and excavated cist sites. A cluster of cist sites occurs at Ardnave, where sand erosion has exposed the remains. Other than these cists, no other funerary monuments of the prehistoric period are represented within the survey area, although chambered cairns and barrows are found throughout the hinterland of Islay. It is possible that some of the cairns and mounds ascribed to the 'indeterminate' category may in fact be prehistoric burial monuments.

The 'Church' category includes four sites of 10th-14th C date, one of probable late first millennium AD date and one which extends from the 14th C up to the 20th C. A putative church site on the Oa peninsula is included within the 'indeterminate' category since it could not be conclusively identified.

The indeterminate category includes a wide range of sites varying from utilised and potentially utilised caves to structural remains and cairns and mounds of uncertain type. Most of the sites within this category exhibit too few topographic features from which to deduce their function; in most cases it is also impossible to ascribe a date to these remains. This category should not be thought of as the 'scrap-heap' of sites, however, since it contains a number of sites which although not readily classifiable are of high archaeological potential. This is particularly true of the putative monastic or later enclosed settlement at Cnoc Uamh nam Fear (sites IY20 and IY261).

Site Condition

The sites were inspected to determine their physical condition and to assess both their archaeological potential and the nature and severity of any risk to their survival. Again, this is a subjective interpretation based upon what it is considered that the site represents, what it would have originally looked like and whether enough of it is preserved to give productive results if it were to be excavated in the future. The risk from threats such as coastal erosion, wind erosion, development and animal and human disturbance were taken into consideration.

At best this provides a snapshot of the factors likely to have a bearing on the future survival of sites, but without knowledge of the seasonal changes in these forces and the rate at which a site has been degrading prior to inspection, it is impossible to provide anything more than an educated guess.

| Condition | Number of Sites | % of Total |
|--------------------------|------------------------|-------------------|
| Good | 38 | 12.8% |
| Good-Fair | 3 | 1% |
| Fair | 184 | 61.9% |
| Fair-Poor | 6 | 2% |
| Poor | 31 | 10.4% |
| N/A- or site not located | 36 | 12% |

The majority of the sites were found to be in fair condition. This reflects the fact that most sites are currently stable and appear to preserve sufficient of their original form or quantity to be considered of some archaeological potential.

Within the 'good' category are many sites of 18th-20th C date. A proportion of these sites remain in use and are regularly maintained, managed or have been consolidated in the recent past. There are also several cave sites within this category; these have been included largely because they do not appear to have been unduly disturbed in the past and offer the potential to be better understood by further work.

Many of the prehistoric sites within sand hill areas, such as Ardnave and Sanaigmore, are considered to be in a poor condition. In many cases they are visible as ex-situ remains within deflation surfaces, indicating that here at least, there is little potential for anything other than rescue collection of artefact scatters. Their presence, however, indicates that other sites of similar type and date may be preserved nearby although they are not currently visible. Since sites in areas such as these are very vulnerable to rapid exposure followed by total destruction it is advisable that the areas are monitored on a regular basis for the occurrence of new exposures.

Dunivaig Castle, a site of historical importance and one of only two sites of 14th-18th C date within the coastal zone, is also considered to be in a poor condition. While there are upstanding elements surviving, much of the fabric of the buildings are unsound and much of

the site is currently inaccessible. This state of affairs is to be regretted especially in view of the importance of this site and its value as a heritage site to Islay.

Recommendations

A recommendation for future action was attached to each site entry in the field. The factors taken into consideration when deciding the optimum course of action were the present physical condition of the site, its archaeological potential and the degree of risk to the site from forces other than development. It is assumed that any development within the area of a site will be subject to planning conditions and that provision will be made either to safeguard them or to have them archaeologically assessed and/or excavated by professional archaeologists.

| Recommendation | Number of Sites | % of Total |
|-----------------------|------------------------|-------------------|
| Survey | 9 | 3% |
| Monitor | 74 | 24.9% |
| Nil | 192 | 64.6% |
| N/A, not located | 22 | 7.4% |

Within this report, the word 'survey' is used in a broad sense to mean thorough assessment. This may be by means of topographical and geophysical survey, trial trenching, full excavation or rescue excavation, depending on the individual site context and circumstances. It has been recommended that 3% of the sites identified within the coastal zone should be subjected to some form of survey. The specific form of survey required is discussed under each site entry within the Recommendations section of this report. The sites recommended for survey include artefact scatters, structural remains, a utilised cave, cairns of uncertain type and a putative monastic complex.

For some 24.9% of the sites it is recommended that future action should take the form of site monitoring. This work should be non-invasive and designed to record any changes which occur in the future. In some cases, such as at sites in sand dunes, monitoring is likely to lead to the discovery of new sites, whilst elsewhere it will record the slow degradation of sites. This work would add a vital time-dimension to survey work such as this project, recording the rate of change and highlighting the key factors affecting sites. Ideally, this monitoring