

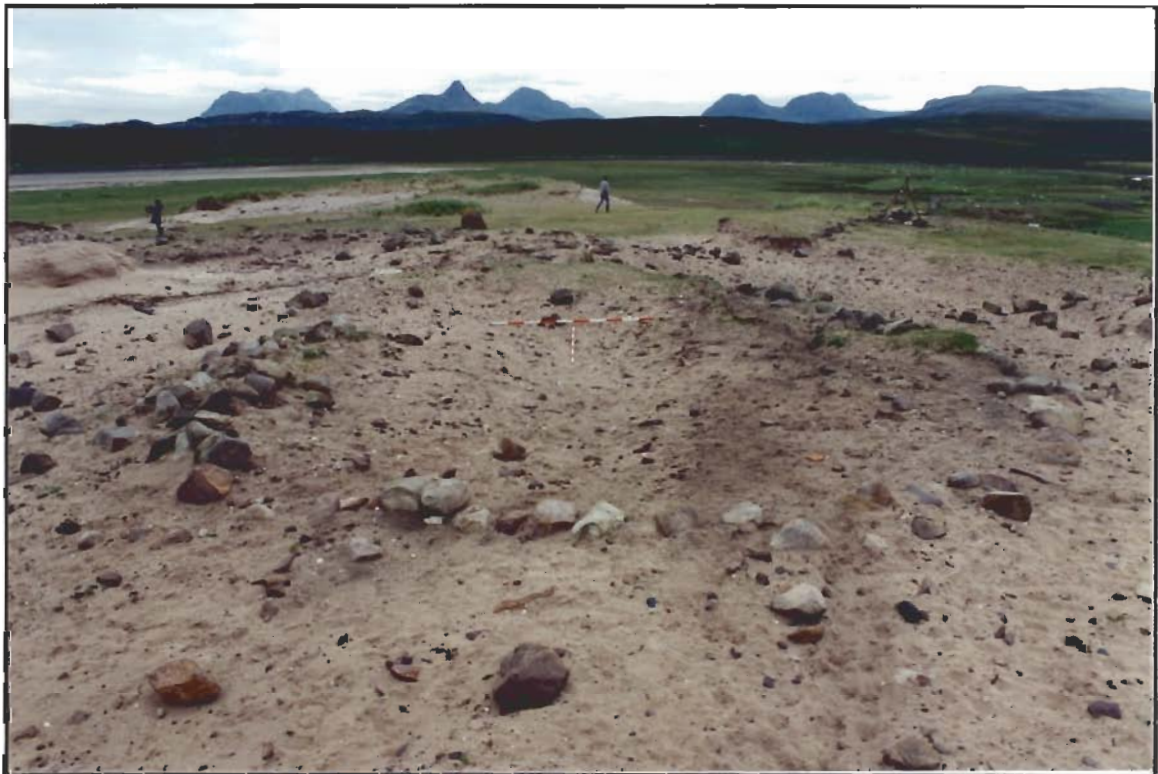


# Coastal Assessment Survey Ullapool to Lochinver

---

October 1996

Volume 2



*Prepared for Historic Scotland*

*by*



**ANDREW LONG**

*Consultant Archaeologist*

*in association with*



**UNIVERSITY  
of  
GLASGOW**

Cover: Achnahaird Sands (NC 01 SW 2). Building 2, facing east south east towards the Coigach mountains. Note stock damage to the walls and interior of the structure.

© Historic Scotland, Glasgow University & Andrew Long 1996

Coastal Assessment Survey  
Ullapool to Lochinver

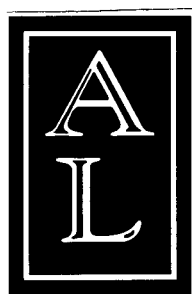
---

October 1996

Volume 2

*A Report Prepared for Historic Scotland*

*by*



---

**ANDREW LONG**

*Consultant Archaeologist*

*in association with*



**UNIVERSITY**  
*of*  
**GLASGOW**

## Abstract

In August 1996 a coastal assessment survey was conducted along a 115 km stretch of the north western coastline of mainland Scotland between the towns of Ullapool and Lochinver. The principal aims of the survey were to document the archaeology of the coastal zone and assess the impact of coastal related processes on the cultural environment. The survey involved an inspection of both the intertidal zone and a 50m wide coastal strip above the high water mark.

In summary 192 sites were inspected, of which 136 were new recordings. The sites primarily consisted of structures and field systems associated with 18th-19th century crofting townships, however several structures and deposits dating back to the prehistoric and medieval periods were also recorded. A total of 5 sites were considered to be actively eroding, including the most significant site recorded, the multi-period structural complex and midden deposits at Achnahaird Sands (NC 01 SW 2).

Overall the coastline was considered to eroding, though generally at a rate negligible for the purposes of cultural resource management. It was noted that a significant proportion of the recorded sites exist in exposed and low lying positions and are thus highly vulnerable to marine transgression or erosion under extreme conditions.

This is Volume 2 of the report, which contains a site gazetteer, glossary of definitions, list of sources, organisations and individuals consulted and a list of previously unrecorded sites. A selection of sketch plans and colour plates have been appended to the rear of the report.

## Abbreviations

ALS:	Afforestation Land Survey	N:	North
APU:	Aerial Photograph Unit, RCAHMS	NMAS:	National Museum of Antiquities of Scotland
ASL:	Above Sea Level	NMRS:	National Monuments Record of Scotland
E:	East	RCAHMS:	Royal Commission on the Ancient & Historical Monuments of Scotland
GUAD:	Glasgow University Archaeology Department	S:	South
GUDGTS:	Glasgow University Department of Geography & Topographic Science	SIMS:	Scottish Institute of Maritime Studies
HS:	Historic Scotland	SNH:	Scottish Natural Heritage
HWM:	High Water Mark (mean)	SSS:	School of Scottish Studies, Edinburgh University
LWM:	Low Water Mark (mean)	W:	West
MOLARS:	Medieval or Later Rural Settlement		

## CONTENTS

### Volume 1:

<b>1. INTRODUCTION</b> .....	1
1.1 BACKGROUND.....	1
1.2 PROJECT AIMS .....	1
1.3 REPORT FORMAT .....	2
1.4 THE STUDY AREA .....	2
1.4.1 Introduction.....	2
1.4.2 Extent and Dimensions.....	2
1.4.3 Description .....	4
1.5 PREVIOUS ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH.....	6
<b>2. METHODOLOGY</b> .....	8
2.1 INTRODUCTION .....	8
2.2 BACKGROUND RESEARCH.....	8
2.3 FIELDWORK .....	8
2.3.1 Field Techniques.....	8
2.3.2 Recording Criteria.....	9
2.3.3 Survey Conditions.....	10
2.3.4 Survey Coverage and Effectiveness.....	10
<b>3. STUDY RESULTS</b> .....	12
3.1 ULLAPOOL TO ARDMAIR.....	15
3.1.1 Hinterland Geology and Coastal Geomorphology .....	16
3.1.2 Erosion Class.....	21
3.1.3 Built Heritage and Archaeology.....	23
3.2 ARDMAIR TO CAMAS BEAG .....	26
3.2.1 Hinterland Geology and Coastal Geomorphology .....	27
3.2.2 Erosion Class.....	29
3.2.3 Built Heritage and Archaeology.....	31
3.3 CAMAS BEAG TO GEODHA MÓR .....	34
3.3.1 Hinterland Geology and Coastal Geomorphology .....	35
3.3.2 Erosion Class.....	37
3.3.3 Built Heritage and Archaeology.....	39
3.4 GEODHA MÓR TO BADENSCALLIE.....	42
3.4.1 Hinterland Geology and Coastal Geomorphology .....	43
3.4.2 Erosion Class.....	45
3.4.3 Built Heritage and Archaeology.....	47
3.5 BADENSCALLIE TO POLBAIN.....	50
3.5.1 Hinterland Geology and Coastal Geomorphology .....	51
3.5.2 Erosion Class.....	53
3.5.3 Built Heritage and Archaeology.....	55
3.6 POLBAIN TO REIFF BAY .....	58
3.6.1 Hinterland Geology and Coastal Geomorphology .....	59
3.6.2 Erosion Class.....	61
3.6.3 Built Heritage and Archaeology.....	63
3.7 REIFF TO RUBHA DUBH.....	66
3.7.1 Hinterland Geology and Coastal Geomorphology .....	67
3.7.2 Erosion Class.....	69
3.7.3 Built Heritage and Archaeology.....	71
3.8 CAMASCOILLE TO GARVIE BAY .....	74
3.8.1 Hinterland Geology and Coastal Geomorphology .....	75
3.8.2 Erosion Class.....	77
3.8.3 Built Heritage and Archaeology.....	79

3.9 GARVIE BAY TO LOCHAN SÀL .....	82
3.9.1 Hinterland Geology and Coastal Geomorphology .....	83
3.9.2 Erosion Class.....	85
3.9.3 Built Heritage and Archaeology.....	87
3.10 LOCHAN SÀL TO LOCH KIRKAIG.....	90
3.10.1 Hinterland Geology and Coastal Geomorphology .....	91
3.10.2 Erosion Class.....	93
3.10.3 Built Heritage and Archaeology.....	95
3.11 LOCH KIRKAIG TO LOCHINVER.....	98
3.11.1 Hinterland Geology and Coastal Geomorphology .....	99
3.11.2 Erosion Class.....	101
3.11.3 Built Heritage and Archaeology.....	103
<b>4. ANALYSIS.....</b>	<b>106</b>
4.1 INTRODUCTION .....	106
4.2 EROSIONAL CONDITION .....	106
4.2.1 Survey Results.....	106
4.2.2 Potential Impact on the Built Environment.....	107
4.2.3 Discussion .....	109
4.3 ARCHAEOLOGY.....	111
4.3.1 Introduction.....	111
4.3.2 Prehistoric Sites.....	113
4.3.3 Pre-Improvement Sites.....	115
4.3.4 Post-Improvement Sites .....	117
4.3.5 Intertidal and Marine Zone Sites.....	119
<b>5. SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....</b>	<b>121</b>
5.1 SITE EROSION .....	121
5.2 DEVELOPMENTAL IMPACTS .....	123
5.3 GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS.....	123
<b>6. BIBLIOGRAPHY .....</b>	<b>125</b>

## Volume 2:

PREFACE TO VOLUME 2 .....	vii
APPENDIX 1: SITE GAZETTEER.....	I
SURVEY MAP 1: ULLAPOOL TO ARDMAIR .....	III
SURVEY MAP 2: ARDMAIR BAY TO CAMAS BEAG.....	VII
SURVEY MAP 3: CAMAS BEAG TO GEODHA MÓR.....	XII
SURVEY MAP 4: GEODHA MÓR TO BADENSCALLIE .....	XIII
SURVEY MAP 5: BADENSCALLIE TO POLBAIN.....	XVIII
SURVEY MAP 6: POLBAIN TO REIFF BAY.....	XXVI
SURVEY MAP 7: REIFF TO RUBHA DUBH.....	XXXIII
SURVEY MAP 8: RUBHA DUBH TO GARVIE BAY.....	XXXIX
SURVEY MAP 9:: GARVIE BAY TO LOCHAN SÀL.....	XLVI
SURVEY MAP 10: LOCHAN SÀL TO LOCH KIRKAIG.....	XLIX
SURVEY MAP 11: LOCH KIRKAIG TO LOCHINVER.....	LII
APPENDIX 2: GLOSSARY - DEFINITION OF TERMS.....	LVII
APPENDIX 3: LIST OF SOURCES, ORGANISATIONS AND INDIVIDUALS CONSULTED .....	LXVII
APPENDIX 4: LIST OF PREVIOUSLY UNRECORDED SITES.....	LXXI
APPENDIX 5: SKETCH PLANS .....	LXXVII
COLOUR PLATES .....	XCIV

## SURVEY MAPS

<b>Volume 1:</b>	Map 1: Ullapool to Ardmair	17-21
	Map 2: Ardmair Bay to Camas Beag	25-29
	Map 3: Camas Beag to Geodha Mór	33-37
	Map 4: Geodha Mór to Badenscallie	41-45
	Map 5: Badenscallie to Polbain	49-53
	Map 6: Polbain to Reiff Bay	57-61
	Map 7: Reiff to Rubha Dubh	65-69
	Map 8: Rubha Dubh to Garvie Bay	73-77
	Map 9: Garvie Bay to Lochan Sàl	81-85
	Map 10: Lochan Sàl to Loch Kirkaig	89-93
	Map 11: Loch Kirkaig to Lochinver	97-101

## FIGURES

<b>Volume 1:</b>	Figure 1: Study Area Location, showing Key to Maps 1-11.	3
	Figure 2: Distribution of Prehistoric Sites in the Study Area.	111
	Figure 3: Distribution of Pre-improvement Sites in the Study Area.	113
	Figure 4: Distribution of Post-improvement Sites in the Study Area.	115
	Figure 5: Distribution of Shipwrecks and Hulks in the Study Area.	117
	Figure 6: Distribution of eroding Sites and the Impact of Recent Developments in the Study Area.	119
<b>Volume 2:</b>	Figure 7: Survey Plan of Structural Complex at Old Dorney Bay (NB 1984 9115).	XXIX
	Figure 8: Survey Plan of Structural Complex at Achnahaird Sands (NC 01 SW 2).	XLII

## TABLES

<b>Volume 1:</b>	Table 1: Analysis of Erosional Character by Survey Map.	103
	Table 2: Prehistoric Sites recorded in the Study Area.	110
	Table 3: Pre-improvement Sites recorded in the Study Area.	112
	Table 4: Post-improvement Sites recorded in the Study Area.	114
	Table 5: Intertidal and Marine Zone Sites recorded in the Study Area.	116
	Table 6: Eroding Sites recorded in the Study Area.	118

## PLATES

**Volume 1:**
**pp. 124-126**

- Cover: View of Camas Beag, looking south east towards Dun Canna (NC 10 SW 1). This sheltered inlet is enclosed by a fish trap (NC 2111 9009), just visible at centre left (compare with Figure 12).
- Plate 1: A typical stretch of 'skerry' coastline, looking north west to Rubha na Brèige from Rubh' a' Brochaire (Map 10).
- Plate 2: Storm bar composed of massive boulders, defining the head of Loch of Reiff (Map 7).
- Plate 3: The sheltered harbour of Old Dornie Bay (NB 1985 9113), with several slipways and a boat naust visible in the foreground. Looking towards Isle Ristol.
- Plate 4: Subcircular structure near Alltan Dubh, (NB 1975 9131) revealed through peat cutting.
- Plate 5: Remains of circular kelp kiln at Rubh' a' Choin (NC 2033 9148); note heat shattered rocks inside boulder arrangement on storm beach
- Plate 6: Enclosure composed of piled boulders on a storm beach, Garvie Bay (NC 2038 9141).
- Plate 7: Abandoned croft at Badenscallie (NC 00 NW 56). Reputedly built below HWM to avoid eviction, this building was flooded several times while in occupation.
- Plate 8: Hulk stranded in a tidal stretch of the Ullapool River (NH 2123 8947).
- Plate 9: Evidence of wave erosion to a structure at Achiltibuie (NC 2019 9090). Achiltibuie Mill (NC 00 NW 27) is in the background
- Plate 10: Evidence of wave erosion at the edge of a historic midden at Port na Bà, Inverkirkaig (NC 2074 9198)
- Plate 11: Stone and turf dyke on the west side of Achnahaird Bay (NC 2018 9127); note erosion caused by tidal inundation

**Volume 2:**
**pp. XCV-XCIX**

- Cover: Achnahaird Sands (NC 01 SW 2). Building 2, facing east south east towards the Coigach mountains. Note damage to the walls and interior of the structure caused by livestock.
- Plate 12: Camas Beag fish trap (NC 2111 9009) exposed at low tide, looking north west along an extremely precipitous stretch of coastline towards the Summer Isles.
- Plate 13: Old Dorney Bay (NB 1984 9115). View of the curved west end of structure 1, shell midden and cairn field. Facing south south east.
- Plate 14: View of Achnahaird Sands (NC 01 SW 2) from the south east. Note an expanse of salt marsh in the middle distance, and the line of a dyke (part of NC 2018 9127) affected by tidal inundation in the foreground. Zones D, E & F are in the eroding area on the left.
- Plate 15: Achnahaird Sands (NC 01 SW 2). General view of Zone D, showing the residual form of an eroding dune mesa which previously protected this area, flanked by buildings 1 (left) and 2 (right). An exposure of shell midden (Zone F) is in the background.
- Plate 16: Achnahaird Sands (NC 01 SW 2). Building 2 facing west. Note eroding edge of machair behind the structure. Achnahaird House (NC 01 SW 34) is in the background.
- Plate 17: Achnahaird Sands (NC 01 SW 2), Zone E. Eroding section, facing south west, showing *in situ* shell deposit, buried land surface and underlying palaeosol. Note rabbit activity at the base of the section. This land surface has been revealed through the loss of sand dune cover and approximately 1m of machair soil.



## PREFACE TO VOLUME 2

This document comprises Volume 2 of a coastal assessment survey conducted in August 1996 between the towns of Ullapool and Lochinver on the north west mainland coast of Scotland. This part contains supplemental information to the main report (Volume 1), and includes detailed site information in a site gazetteer (Appendix 1), a glossary (Appendix 2), a list of parties consulted (Appendix 3) and a separate list of previously undocumented sites (Appendix 4).

At the request of the project sponsors (Historic Scotland) the initial emphasis was placed on the production of Volume 1, which contains the basic survey data, maps, analysis and recommendations. Since the production of the 2 volumes comprising this report has occurred in two stages, it is inevitable that there have been both minor revisions to the contents of Volume 1 and additions to the planned contents of Volume 2. These changes are listed below:

- Occasional minor reassessment has been made to site interpretation and recommendations which generally do not effect the overall results of this study. In case of doubt, Volume 2 should be considered the more up to date source of information. It is not considered warranted to list each minor correction, except in the case of recommendations. The following additional sites require occasional monitoring:

a)	<i>Achduart</i>	<i>Settlement</i>
b)	<i>Camas a' Bhothain</i>	<i>Settlement</i>
c)	<i>Loch Kirkaig</i>	<i>Standing stone (?)</i>

In other cases where only minor erosion is evident and no immediate action is required, a note has been appended to the condition section of each site entry.

- Additional references not contained within the Volume 1 Bibliography (Section 6) have been inserted in the form of footnotes. While not judged the best editorial style, for consistency with Volume 1 the Harvard system is still used for works already cited.
- A selection of measured sketch plans have been included at the back of the volume, generally for sites with a high degree of complexity not adequately illustrated elsewhere. These are duplications of the original survey sketch plans with only occasional annotation (e.g. site reference numbers). It is hoped that the interpretational value of these useful illustrations will outweigh their rough presentation.

A site numbering system has been used throughout this volume which cross-references with the site lists and survey maps in Volume 1 (e.g. 5/3.1.2 = survey map 1, site 3, element 1, building 2). In instances where sites are referred to in the text this system is consistently employed, except in the case of sites located outside the study area when NMRS nos. are used. An ALS number has been included if a site had previously been recorded as part of the RCAHMS Achiltibuie Afforestation Land Survey (e.g. ALS 247).

The Site Gazetteer (Appendix 1) contains an expanded version of the data contained in the site lists of Volume 1. Many of the site dimension measurements have been gained from the previous ALS survey records. Two variations in survey methodology should be noted here. Firstly, in some cases the ALS measured internal, rather than external dimensions of buildings. Secondly, the maximum height of wall measurements taken by the ALS generally excluded the additional height of a gable. Unless stated otherwise, all measurements in this study are external dimensions, and include the gable height.

## Acknowledgements

The project has only been accomplished through the involvement and patience of numerous people, acting in both professional and voluntary capacities.

The author would like to thank the following colleagues and other professionals who provided advice, assistance and valuable comments on aspects of this research; Patrick Ashmore, Richard Hingley, Derek Hall &, Nick Haynes (HS), Chris Morris, Alex Morrison, Alan Leslie, Heather James, Effie Photos-Jones, Diane Alldritt, Ewan Campbell, Bob Will, Iain Banks & John Atkinson (GUAD), Colleen Batey (Kelvingrove Museum), Donald Bateson (Hunterian Museum), Jim Hansom (GUDGTS), Piers Dixon, Peter McCaig, David Easton, Gavin Acheson & Leslie Ferguson (RCAHMS), Trevor Cowie, David Caldwell, Nick Holmes & Fraser Hunter (NMAS), Rod McCullagh (AOC), George Lees (SNH), Ian Oxley & Diana Groom (SIMS), John Wood (Highland Region), Robin Hanley (Inverness Museum), Ian Rogers (Gifford & Partners), Dr John Webb (Department of Geology, La Trobe University, Melbourne), Ross Murray (Ross Murray Photography), Ian Fraser (SSS), Jeffery Stone (Department of Geography, Aberdeen University) and Malcolm Bangor-Jones.

The project director and field team are especially grateful for the interest, enthusiasm and support of the residents of the Coigach area. A warm thanks is particularly due to the following for their help; Frances Ross, Mike & Leslie Kelly, Peter Fraser, Dick Poor and Cathy Dagg. The author would also like to extend his gratitude to William & Marion Maclean, Jim & Ruth Kirby and Frank Newell for their interest and valuable contribution to the study of Achnahair Sands.

Finally, the successful execution of the fieldwork has only been possible through the untiring efforts of the project team who daily faced the trials of toiling through wet, tick-infested 'vertical heather' along some sections of very rugged and inaccessible coastline. I would like to thank Jenny Lee, Fred Stevenson, Vanessa Edmonds and Harvey Johnston for their eager participation and high standard of recording under difficult work conditions.

The project owes its existence to the hard work, enthusiasm and faith of Maree Lee Smith, who helped enormously in the early stages of project design. I would like to extend a particular thank you to her.

The photographs, maps and plans used in the report were produced by Jenny Lee, Fred Stevenson and Andrew Long. Any errors, opinions and misinterpretations contained within this report are the sole responsibility of the author.