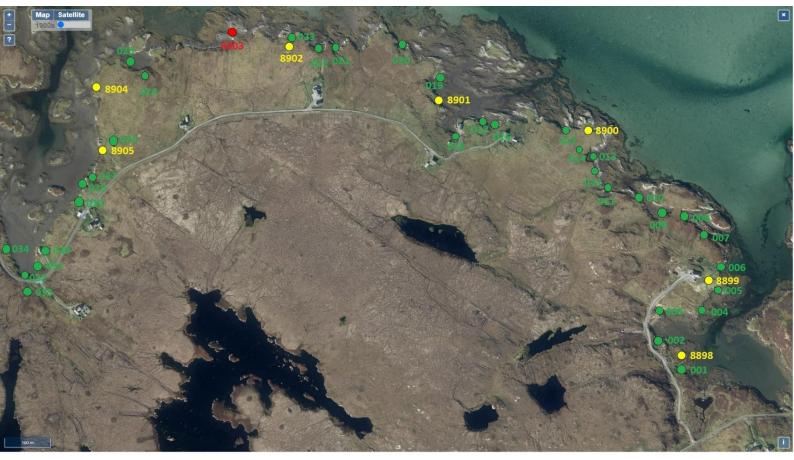
Rubha Ghaisinis Sites and Updates



A number of new sites and features have been identified around the Rubha Ghaisinis, which formerly had only 8 listed sites. Most of the sites relate to kelping or fishing activities, but boats were routinely used by local residents as the road was not built until the 1990s, so trips to the Co-op, other shops, schools or friends were made on foot or by boat, hence the quay behind the Co-op (SCAPE site #14199) [as reported by a resident crofter.]

The Rubha Ghaisinis field project was prompted by undertaking a SCAPE Update on Site 8903, the Rubha Ghaisinis Chambered Cairn, when a chance find of an enriched mound with a bothan àirigh was identified – a position thought to be unusual

This initial collection of findings relate only to sites and features within 50 metres of the coast, further field work will result in further discoveries in time. There is scope to extend the area(s) for investigation which might be prompted by field findings, particularly with reference to the adjacent coastlines.

All interpretations and conclusions are my own, based on the evidence I identified during my field trips to the area and sites.

Simon M Davies

Rubh'an Stroim (8898)

Description

The footings of two stone buildings stand close to a small inlet which has been used as a slipway. One building measures 8.5m long and is 3m wide. The other is 6m long and 3m wide. The slipway has been made by clearing stone from the floor and using it to form a low 10m long jetty to the west side of the inlet.

Updated description

A second slipway/boat naust is extant to the south side of the headland at NF 81877 44661 where the footings are sited. It is of similar size and construction to that described for the west sited slipway/boat naust which sits at NF 81839 44712.



IMG_1187 The southern cleared slipway/boat naust found at NF 81877 44661 (site #001)



IMG_1188 the slipway/boat naust and stone quay to the western shoreline, northwest of the building ruins at NF 81839 44712. (feature #002) The large boulder at the top of the cleared area was probably used as a mooring bollard

Rubh'an Stroim (New Entry) A Lost Site (New site feature #003)

Description

The satellite imagery provided by Microsoft/Bing clearly shows a cleared slipway/naust at NF81855 44799. The site has a short access track, from the main house driveway, which runs down to an apparent small stone quay. A secondary wall runs along the eastern side of the inlet and into the bay to afford some protection from wave damage during stormy weather. This site has been completely buried by the new landowner who has 'reclaimed' a portion of the bay with many tons of stone, broken concrete, sections of electric cabling and earth, probably demolition rubble, up to the level of the access driveway. This new reclamation can be seen on Canmore's satellite imagery, supplied by Bluesky International Ltd and Getmapping Plc 2020. Since the Canmore image, the landowner has continued with his civil engineering works and appears to be creating an encircling track around the property, mostly sited now just above the beach, but does affect the recorded features at SCAPE site #8899.

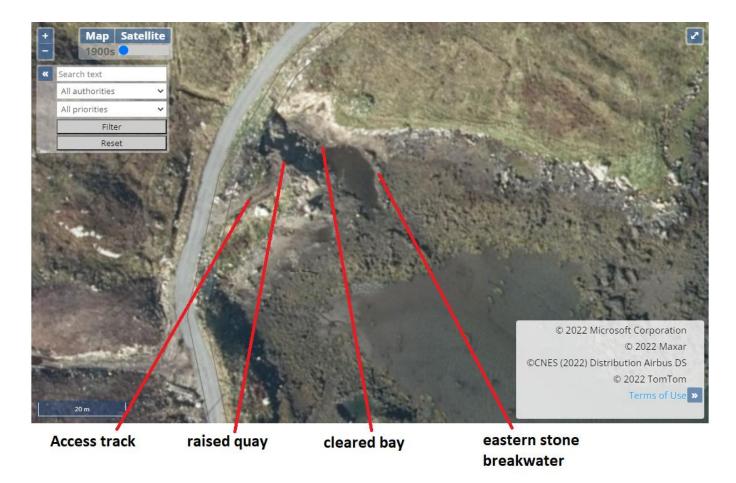


Image to left shows the 'original' features of the lost site, now lost forever, together with the enclosure boundary ridges visible on the shoreline to the north and east of the small bay/harbour.





Access track reclamation starting

Spoil heaps awaiting spreading

Image of similar area taken from Canmore Mapping (©Bluesky International Ltd and Getmapping Plc), showing the reclamation activities underway. Each of the spoil heaps represents a dumped truckload of material, around 20-30 m³.



the new house now on the land and a view of the extensive and still ongoing groundworks which threaten some of the coastal archaeology, some of which has already disappeared!

Rubh' an Stroim (New feature # 004) NF 81952 44804

Description

A drystone wall has been placed across a part of the upper beach at this point (NF 81952 44804) originally separating off a section of ground, which has subsequently been partly washed-out exposing shingle and boulders previously just above the high-water line. It is probable that this was a deposition point for cut tangle which would be piled here to drain before spreading on the local fields to dry prior to processing in a kelp kiln close to site #8899



IMG_1190 The wall to retain tangle whilst it drained, prior to drying on the adjacent fields.

Rubh'an Stroim (8899) with new features #005 & #006

Description

The ruins of a rectangular building stand close to the coast edge. The roof has collapsed in to the building and the walls are crumbling. The building has two windows and two doorways. One of the doors is situated in a long wall and the other is in a gable end wall. The gable end door has a carving above it which reads' Aug 8th 1930'. A small drystone enclosure and a modern building, which is roofed but dilapidated, stand nearby

Updated description

This site description is no longer accurate! The building with windows and the enclosure are now covered by the current landowners civil engineering works, as previously discussed. There remains a small rectangular drystone building, probably a shed relating to Kelp production, the evidence for this activity are all featured on or near this site.

Kelping was a vital contributor to economic activity on the Western Isles between the 18th and early 20th Centuries. Kelp, the product, was a soda/potash material produced by the controlled burning of tangle (mixed seaweeds) and, after further processing, was used in glass making, soap manufacture and, later, in iodine 'manufacture'. Typically, a kelping site would include boat moorings/slipways/nausts, cleared beaches for landing boats, stone walls along the high tide mark for initial draining of tangle, enclosures/fields for spreading tangle to dry, kelp 'kiln' locations for burning to produce the Kelp and storage facilities for the finished product. Often, if kelping was taking place away from home, there would also be bothies, usually turf walled, resembling shieling huts near the shoreline for the seasonal occupation. Kelping took place over the summer when tangle was at its richest. The best tangle was cut from rocks using a billhook, sickle or similar and needed 10-15 tons to produce a single ton of Kelp. Tangle from storm debris could be used, but needed considerably more, up to 20 tons, to produce a ton of Kelp.



IMG_1193 the small drystone building just above the shore, probably a former kelp store.



IMG_1190 cleared shingle beach (feature #005) adjacent to the building at site #8899, suitable for safe landing of boats to discharge tangle. A nearby bedrock shelf iss a likely place where kiln kiln was placed.



IMG_1195 Feature #006. At the north end of the beach at, NF 82008 44886, there is yet another boat naus common to find they do not run straight, so as to prevent waves entering tha channel directly with risk of damage to the boat within.

Rubha Ghaisinis – (New) Features #007, #008 & #009

Description

On the north-eastern 'corner' of Rubha Ghaisinis, at the entrance to Bagh na Creige Loisgte there is a narrow, sheltered bay which has been cleared of boulders and several boat nausts created. Although possibly associated with site #8899, it is likely to be a separate 'enterprise', as it is demarcated by main boundary turf and boulder ridge boundary, still indicated on modern O.S. Explorer maps. It was common that, although some townships worked their kelping as a communal venture, others were more directed to the individual farming family, as their 'personal' requirement for rent-work tribute to the Estate, as determined by their 'tack' a form off rent licence. This bay is formed between the main Rubha Ghaisinis peninsula and a smaller peninsula which is at the NE corner, the attaching neck is extremely narrow, offering a connection only some 16 metres wide! The corresponding bay has a boundary wall across it, marking the next 'tack' section



IMG_1206 The major boundary ridge demarcating the start of this kelping section at NF 81959 44948



IMG_1208 A single boat naust, taking advantage of bedrock formation at NF 81951 44977



IMG_1209 the narrow cleared bay showing the protected access to the waters of the South Ford, as was probably a single farmer's allocation for kelp production



IMG_1217 the western bay, with its prominent boundary wall crossing the centre, and visible as boulder and turf ridges on both sides (feature #009)

Rubha Ghaisinis (New) Features #010, #011, #012 & #013

Description

These features all relate to kelping activities, but there does seem to be a 'natural' division between features #010 with #011 and the bay at #013, so it may represent two adjacent tack allocations. Feature #012 is a rectangular stone setting, possibly originally for a turf walled structure for Kelp storage. Its exposed shoreline position has caused rapid deterioration of the turf walls, none of which have survived the Uist climate.

Feature #010 is a single naust with adjacent retaining/draining area. Nearby there is an area of fire marked boulders, probably remains of a kelp kiln area and around feature #011 there are no fewer than four boat nausts and several retaining walls! On the flat field behind the site, there is a foundation and floor of a demolished shed, probably not part of the site. There is also a rusting mid-20th Century motorised plough, slowly deteriorating.

Feature #013 is a self-contained bay with steep peat banks on the shoreline There are two obvious nausts with adjacent kelp draining areas, and a cleared 'channel to the open water which would help get boats into the bay at mid tide.



IMG_1221 Single boat naust feature #010 at NF 81838 45020



IMG_1175 Feature #011 another naust with adjacent line of boulders for tangle retention and draining



IMG_1176 Close to the site is this mid 20th Century motorised plough - a rusting dinosaur!



IMG_1174 Feature # 012 the remains of the stone setting, between features #011 and #013, probably the foundations of a turf storage clamp for finished Kelp product.



IMG_1172 Feature #013, the self-contained peat backed bay with multiple nausts and tangle draining areas.

Rubha Ghaisinis (#8900) (including Features #014 & #015)

Description

A traditional stone house, standing close to a rocky shore, has been renovated. It has a thatched roof and whitewashed exterior. In plan it measures 8m by 5m and is aligned north west- south east. A small porch has been built onto the east side.

Updated description

The provenance of the present house is uncertain. the 1st Edition OS 6-inch map (surveyed 1878) shows a roofless house here, but this becomes a roofed house with a small (attached) roofless outhouse in the second edition (surveyed 1901)

Aesthetically, this is an extremely attractive cottage, with thatch and lime-wash in good repair. However, the small porch referred to in the original entry has been removed, leaving only the flooring. Whether this was by design or storm is uncertain! Although it is in such good aesthetic condition, the cottage is currently used only as an animal food store and part time byre by the crofter.

Around 50 metres to the south-west two 'channels' in the bedrock have been cleared of most boulders to create a boat naust and an adjacent holding/draining area for tangle prior to processing to kelp (Site #015

On the hinterland of the house there are a complex set of field boundary ridges, suggestive of extensive farming of the locality historically. Currently, it is the crofter in the house above sites #016 & 017 who has the land, which is now used only for cattle pasture.

A virtual 3D model is available on https://sketchfab.com/Smilemaker/collections/rubha-ghaisinis-area



IMG_1169 Site #8900 - idyllic from a distance! Front 'door' is a long pallet held in place with two otherwise redundant barrels.



IMG_1166 Feature #015, the boat slipway/naust (left) and adjacent tangle draining area, above the line of boulders (right) at NF 81684 45203



IMG_1226 Feature #014, some of the field boulder-and-turf boundary ridges on the hinterland at NF 81699 45152, with the cottage (site #8900) behind.

Rubha Ghaisinis (New Site group) Features #016 & #017 Description

This is a group of three boat nausts/slipways cleared of boulders in usual fashion (feature #016). A little further west there is a substantial stone-built quay (feature #017) built out to allow easier boat access at mid tide. These features are all related to Croft no.11 and the house just south on the hinterland.



IMG_1160 Old wooden boat still occupies one of the boat nausts at feature #16, situated at NF 81559 45227



IMG_1156 Ruins of old croft house, now replaced but shown on early OS maps sited at NF 81515 45207



IMG_1158 Feature #017, a small shed and the substantial stone built quay for boat access at mid tide. The roof behind belongs to Crofthouse number 12 (now a holiday let property), with SCAPE Site #8901 just visible in the background

Rubha Ghaisinis (New site) (Feature #018)

Description

Along the southern the south shoreline of a small bay immediately to the west of the croft-house number12 the foreshore has been cleared of boulders for the safe beaching of a boat or boats. This was for use by the residents of croft12 before they relocated to a newer property, croft-house 12A, further from the bay in the 1990s, after road access had been provided to the croft houses on Rubha Ghaisinis. There is still the rusting cylinder block from a small marine engine resting on the shingle at NF 81415 45230.



IMG_1155 Croft 12's cleared shoreline area for boat beaching, with an abandoned small marine engine.

Description

The ruins of three stone buildings, sited close to the rocky shore, represent the remains of a farmstead. The largest building, a house, measures some 10m by 5m. In its original form, it had an east facing facade with a central doorway, flanked by a window to either side. A third window was present in the western long wall. A hearth stood in the north gable end wall, but this was subsequently blocked. In more recent times a concrete platform and chute built inside the building suggest that it was latterly used as a sheep dip. A second building, probably of similar dimensions, was aligned parallel to the house, but is poorly preserved. A small shed, measuring 2.5m by 5m stands nearby.

Updated description

The three buildings are still extant as described. From the form and features of the house, it was probably built in the very late 19th Century, so is not the building depicted on the OS First Edition 6-incjh map, which is shown lying east-west, parallel to the bay, unlike this building which is aligned north-south. The concrete top of the stone platform has the date 1986 naively inscribed, suggesting this is when the house was 'converted' to a sheep fank and lambing pen.

The bay on which these buildings sit has been totally cleared of obstructions and some walls and breakwaters created. There is also a revetment immediately in front of the buildings to use as a quay for loading and offloading of goods. It seems likely that the earlier house and the outbuildings were erected for kelping, but this was discontinued and the family switched to farming when the new house was built.

There is a virtual 3D model available to view at <u>https://sketchfab.com/Smilemaker/collections/rubha-ghaisinis-area</u>



IMG_1151 "1986", as naively inscribed into the concrete draining platform of the sheep dip



IMG_1018 The small 'shed', the easternmost building of the three at Site 8901. Similar size sheds were used for storage of Kelp product storage.



IMG_1021 The ruins of the central building at Site 8901, likely to have been a small byre originally.



IMG_1027 The revetted quay and extensive cleared bay at Site 8901



IMG_1076 Retaining wall, breakwater and naust at the western extremity of Site 8901's bay at NF 81409 45340 (feature #019)



IMG_1154 The interior of the house, looking south, showing the draining platform of the sheep dip. The dip tank was against the west wall (right) but has since collaposed, probably from frost damage.

Rubha Ghaisinis - Wall (new site) (Feature #020)

Description

At NF 81331 45410, a section of dry-stone wall extends across the vegetation of the foreshore edge and down the sloping beach towards the high water line. It marks a significant boundary and is the continuation of a boulder-and-turf ridge and ditch boundary running southwest to northeast across the hinterland.



IMG_1081 Feature #020, the maritime end of the significant property boundary wall



IMG_1075 The boulder-and-turf ridge and ditch boundary crossing the hinterland

Rubha Ghaisinis – Beach access track (new site) (Feature #021)

Description

At NF 81200 45411 there is a substantial track crossing the shoreline. It extends in a snaking route between bedrock and boulders about 80metres and runs inland to around 50 metres before it is hidden by vegetation. It was probably used for transporting and launching boats when required, as boats would be unlikely to be left close to the water when stormy weather was expected in the winter season.

At the top of the beach, at NF 81199 45420, there is a sheltered boat naust built into the track side.



IMG_1088 The track snakes its way between boulders and bedrock from the shoreline to the open sea of the ford. Note the sheltered naust on the left with its opening facing the shore to give guaranteed safety from all but the worst weather



IMG_1103 The lower end of the track heading across the hinterland to the shore

Rubha Ghaisinis – A substantial Harbour (new site) (Feature #022) centred at NF 81162 45427

Description

A small bay, partly sheltered by bedrock buttresses has been extensively embellished with dry-stone walls to create an extremely strong looking harbour for 2-4 small boats. There are two tangle draining areas and an adjacent enclosed field, ideal for spreading tangle to dry. A flat section of bedrock on the top of the harbour is just above high tides and would have been ideal for a kiln site.

A virtual 3D model of the site can be viewed at <u>https://sketchfab.com/Smilemaker/collections/rubha-ghaisinis-area</u>



IMG_1095 Looking across the harbour from the west



IMG_1099 The western wall of the harbour with its naust. The bedrock in the right foreground could be used as a kiln site.



IMG_1098 The substantial east wall of the harbour with a naust immediately alongside. The raised green area with its fringing boulders would be ideal for tangle draining.



IMG_1101 the harbour viewed from the south, the hills of Ruabhal (Benbecula) and Eabhal (North Uist) in the distance

Rubha Ghaisinis (8902)(including feature #023)

Description

Two slipways have been created in small inlets on a rocky stretch of coastline. One is accompanied by a jetty measuring 15m in length. Nearby, the remains of two small stone building may represent boat sheds or stores. One measures 10m by 4.5m, the other measures 4m by 3m.

Updated description

The "two small stone buildings" represent a farmstead – the longer one is almost completely destroyed but was a farmhouse (complete with bathtub in the rubble) and the smaller building on the headland is a typical local example of small byres of the times. There are two slipways/nausts, one either side of the headland. The eastern one is well preserved following a graceful curve to protect from direct wave encroachment. The western one is shorter and has a small quay structure for ease of loading and off-loading, but offers less protection from the weather.

A virtual 3D model of the smaller building can be viewed at https://sketchfab.com/Smilemaker/collections/rubha-ghaisinis-area



IMG_1093 The smaller building at site 8902, typical of a small byre of the time and locality



IMG_1090 The eastern slipway and naust – in use today by a local fisherman collecting tangle for commercial animal feed factory.



IMG_0378 The wreckage of the larger building, complete with its bathtub!

Rubha Gaisinis / Grosavagh A kelping complex (new site) (Features #024 & #025)

Description

The sheltered bay at the extreme western end of Rubha Ghaisinis, where Grosavagh opens to the South Ford has been modified as a centre for kelping. The bay has been cleared of boulders and a pier/jetty has been constructed in the centre around 1.5metres wide and 5metres long, to a height of just over a metre. To the southern part of the bay, cleared areas have been created for boat landings and a stone setting is all that remains of a former turf walled bothy or hut at the end of a promontory, likely to have been used for tangle drying.



IMG_1062 The jetty (feature #025) in the centre of the sheltered bay, looking north east



IMG_1064 Looking south west over the jetty to the kelping complex with its grassed drying area and small turf walled bothy on the promontary.



IMG_1065 Looking down the promontary towards the remains of the turf walled bothy (feature #025) at the end

Grosavagh (8904)

Description

The footings of a rectangular stone building stand to one side of an inlet. The building measures 7m by 3.5m in plan. No features survive. View the 3D model at https://sketchfab.com/Smilemaker/collections/rubha-ghaisinis-area

Updated description

Little more to be said, but you may view the 3D model at https://sketchfab.com/Smilemaker/collections/rubha-ghaisinis-area



IMG_1066 Site 8904 looking west across the site - little more that the footings and some tumble remains.

Grosavagh (8905) (together with feature #026)

Description

The remains of a stone shed, measuring 4m by 7m, stand to one side of an inlet which has been used as a slipway. The stone cleared from the floor of the inlet has been roughly piled to form a 5m long jetty wall to one side of the inlet.

Updated description

The stone shed is a small byre, typical of the locality and period (late 19th Century). It is associated with a typical small, thatched cottage about 25metres higher up from the shore. The cottage has had a later (20th Century) extension using corrugated iron to give a larger kitchen and bathroom for the inhabitants. From the debris, it seems the house was occupied until the late 20th Century

A 3D model of the byre can be seen at https://sketchfab.com/Smilemaker/collections/rubha-ghaisinis-area



IMG_0989 The extended cottage (feature #026) just above the byre at site 8905. The small stone bridge is a channelled stream which once flowed where the corrugated iron extension now stands



IMG_0990 The byre at site 8905, once twin doored, but the front wall, as viewed, has collapsed.

Grosavagh (new site) (features #027 & #028)

Description

On either side of a heather clad headland, two slipway/nausts have been created. There has been some remodelling of the bedrock to keep the desired shape and to keep the southern slip a constant width. An iron bracket has been mounted into the bedrock between the entrances, possibly to allow a lantern to be hung there in case of enforced travelling after darkness, as access would be limited to high tides times.



IMG_1105 The southern slipway/naust curving down to the bay (feature #028



IMG_1110 The northern landing area is wider and has a rudimentary quay for off-loading, however it is also rather more exposed (feature #027)



IMG_1107 - the iron bracket mounted in the headland's bedrock, possibly for a lantern mounting

Grosavagh (new site) (features #029)

Description

Two small stone-built huts have been placed on the grassy headland, about two metres above the tideline. They are related to croft #16, about 60metres above, on the far side of the road. The crofter has also erected a modern cabin-style holiday home at the roadside, just above these two roofless sheds.



IMG_1112 The two ruined dry-stone built huts with the cabin style holiday home behind. The croft-house is just visible top left

Grosavagh (new site) (feature #030 & #031)

Description

This site is a combination of a small, thatched cottage, at NF 80525 45030, close to the southern terminus of Grosavagh and a nearby boat naust, at NF 80521 44993, which would have been used by the household for access before the road was built in the 1990s. The cottage is now used only for visitor holiday accommodation.

A 3D model of the boat naust can be seen at <u>https://sketchfab.com/Smilemaker/collections/rubha-ghaisinis-area</u>



IMG_1149 The restored thatched cottage, now a holiday home



IMG_1149 The slipway/naust to the south of the thatched cottage at mid tide

Grosavagh (new site) (feature #032 & #033)

Description

At the southern tip of Grosavagh there is a short wall and a dry-stone quay (feature #032 at NF 80498 44979) allowing a small boat to discharge goods and passengers and affords a place to moor too. Just across the road, where the northern section of the Hebridean Way path joins the road, there is the ruined foundations of a small cottage which is shown as a roofed house on the 1st Edition 6-inch OS map.

A 3D model of the foundations can be seen at <u>https://sketchfab.com/Smilemaker/collections/rubha-ghaisinis-area</u>



IMG_1001 the remaining stone foundations of the former cottage, south tip of Grosavagh

Grosavagh (new site) (feature #034)

Description

Between the road and the inlet called Grosavagh, thwere is a narrow strip of rough grassland. Within this there are the foundation remains of a number of small houses and buildings, which appear on the 2^{nd} Edition 6-inch OS map



IMG_1121 Feature #034 Foundation remains at NF 80450 45039



IMG_1124 Feature #034

Further buildng remnants found

NF 80456 45019