Isle of Vallay/North Uist
Archaeology Climate Change Expedition
Season 2
Explorers Flag #109
Rodrick B. MacLennan FN 98
June Julian, Ed.D.
The Isle of Vallay/North Uist Archaeology Climate Change Expedition

Outer Hebrides, Scotland

North Uist Island Center (57.5704° N, 7.2812° W)

Explorers Club Flag #109

Expedition Season 2

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The Explorers Club Flag in the Field

Rodrick B. MacLennan FN 98 and June Julian, Isle of Vallay, June 2017

Image Credit: Jason Paul Tolmie
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Isle of Vallay/North Uist Archaeology Climate Change Project
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Preface
This is the report of our second season of the Isle of Vallay Archaeology
/Climate Change Flag #109 Expedition that took place during June 2017.
The first season occurred during June of 2015 and the report has been
published and archived.

Introduction
In the late1800's Erskine Beveridge, an English merchant, photographer
and archaeologist, arrived in North Uist, Outer Hebrides, Scotland. He
became very interested in North Uist archaeology and that of the Isle of
Vallay, a tidal island, off its North East Coast. He excavated many sites
there and published North Uist: Its Archaeology and Topography in 1911.

With Beveridge as our inspiration, as a team we brought a professional
background in both Archaeology and Art to the Isle of Vallay/North Uist
project. The beginnings of the project followed a circuitous route. After
her presentation at a University of Strathclyde conference in Glasgow in
2008, June wanted to invite Art Students in Scotland to participate in
her Internet Art project with her University students in Philadelphia.
Rod discovered The University of the Highlands and the Islands as a
possibility, and noted that its Art school, Taigh Chearsabhagh, was
located on the Isle of North Uist, an 8 hour bus ride from Glasgow to the
ferry port of Uig on Skye, our point of departure for North Uist. At that
time, Rod’s motivation for the journey was genealogical, since his
Grandfather was from Scotland, and he had little information on his
MacLennnan surname.

So, from Uig, we boarded the Caledonian MacBrayne Ferry crossing the
Little Minch, the legendary sea between Scotland and the Outer
Hebrides. After arriving at the Ferry dock in Lochmaddy, North Uist, in
the late afternoon, we walked inland a bit and were overjoyed to see the
Taigh Chearsabhagh Art Center sign. When we inquired there about a place to stay since it was closing, a nice lady at the book shop phoned *The Old Courthouse B & B*, run by Mr. Norman Johnson and his wife Margaret.

We arranged the Art project with Fiona Pearson at the Art Center the next day. As it turned out, that year the Internet Art project with Taigh Chearsabhagh was a great success, with students on both sides of the Atlantic sharing their artwork and personal stories of their sense of place on their *Wish You Were Here* Project Blog, [http://soundsofthecity-scentofthesea.blogspot.com/](http://soundsofthecity-scentofthesea.blogspot.com/)

Because of our direct involvement with the people, the place and viewing the local Archaeology sites on that first trip, Rod became hooked on the old homeland myth, and Scotland’s special version of *The Mythology of Loss*, the Highland Clearances version. Mr. Norman Johnson supplied the local details with the story of Erskine Beveridge. The hook was then set by the fellow archaeologist Beveridge, and the romance of ruins, ones with which Rod might even have a personal association.

**Background**

The Archaeology of North Uist and the Beveridge book were a source of great inspiration for both our 2015 and 2017 projects. Numerous prehistoric sites have been recorded on Vallay and North Uist: standing stones, middens and structures, and duns. On Vallay, two possibly Medieval chapels, Teampull Mhuir and Teampull Orain, and two stone crosses were recorded. At the Seidinish site, a possible Norse midden was recorded. Other sites consist of boat noosts, a jetty, and field boundaries & structures of 18th-20th century crofts.

Various artifacts have been collected on the islands from the Paleolithic (7000 – 4000 BCE), Neolithic (4000 BCE to 2500 BCE), Bronze Age (2100 – 750 BCE), Iron Age (800 BCE to 43 ACE), and Medieval (400 ACE to 1600 BCE) times. Between the times of Erskine Beveridge and the advent of modern Archaeology, such as Historic Scotland, some tantalizing artifacts from Vallay have made their way into local collections: various cloak pins and toggles, bone needles, spindle whorls, gravers, iron swords, Viking ship rivets, stone hammers and axes, pottery, fishing weights, whale vertebrae bowls, etc.
With his previous academic and professional credentials in American Southwestern and Islamic Archaeology, Rod began taking graduate courses on Northern Europe and Viking Archaeology from Professor Thomas McGovern at Hunter College at City University of New York. When he subsequently participated in a summer dig on Rousay, one of the Orkney Isles, it became clear that immediate action was needed. Rising seas were destroying ancient sites in Scotland. In 2008, Julie Gibson, County Archaeologist and professor at Orkney College had published *Rising Tides: the Loss of Coastal Heritage in Orkney*. The local Archaeologists could use some help.

In the summer of 2009 Rod joined the research teams from NABO (North Atlantic Biocultural Organization) from Hunter College, and associates from Bradford University in Manchester, UK. The Orkney College team led by Professor Jane Down participated locally. Working with this eminent group in Orkney made it clear that all the Scottish islands and coastlines, as well as those around the world were being threatened by climate change. The realization was that Vallay and North Uist were in danger of disappearing.

**Physical Environment**

The Isles of the Outer Hebrides lie West of the mainland of Scotland, just off the Isle of Skye. The chain consists of both large and small isles, rockier in the North and sandier to the South. The Isle of Lewis is the Northernmost of the group. It is rocky and edged by Machair. Its interior is covered in peat of Bronze to Iron Age origin, indicating a shift in climate in the past. Artifacts from earlier times are covered under the thick peat cover. The rocky Isle of Harris lies South of Lewis and presents a starkly barren landscape in places. Below Harris and between it and North Uist are the Isles of Pabbay, Boreray, and Berneray. These small islands are part of what was once a single island that was inhabited from early times.

Located beneath Berneray, the Isle of North Uist is one of the larger islands of the Outer Hebrides, exposed to the North Atlantic to the West and North, and to the Little Minch to the East. It is impacted by the conveyor belt of storms carried by the Gulf Stream to the Western coast of Scotland. About 60% of the area is water. From the air, the island appears as a piece of lace with its many fresh and salt water lochs. To
the North, the Isle of Vallay can be reached by walking across a two mile strand at low tide. On the East, North Uist is flanked by the Little Minch. Fertile, dramatic, and endowed with all the resources of both land and sea, North Uist has been an attractive environment for centuries. Its shores are composed of Machair, an endangered grassland habitat, coastal marshes and extensive peat lands. It is marked by high dunes and outcrops of Precambrian Gneiss. The underlying bones of these islands are the remnants of an ancient mountain range. Upon ferry approach from the isle of Skye, one witnesses the distinctive silhouette of Mt. Eaval (347m) rising from the sea. Its beaches with their pure white sands and deep blue waters have featured plentiful coves and boat landings that have provided an attractive environment for human settlement throughout time. Its Northeast shore is the location of our 2017 study area.

The small uninhabited tidal Isle of Vallay that lies off the Northwest coast of North Uist was the subject of our 2015 Flag #109 research expedition. The field report from that first season is held in the Explorers Club archive and Lambert published the book, *The Isle of Vallay Archaeology/Climate Change Expedition*, now available on Amazon.

Vallay's low-lying dunes cover a base of ancient fractured granite. Open to the Atlantic on its Northern coast, its opposite shore is marked by deep surging channels at either end. When the tides change, they rapidly effect the water levels of the Vallay Strand located between the two isles. The Strand is a sandy area about two miles wide, passable on foot only at low tide, and a shallow bay at high water. Fertile, dramatic, and endowed with all the resources of both land and sea, its shores are composed of Machair, a rare biome of endangered grassland habitat, home to many ground nesting birds. Machair is highly subject to erosion as it intersects with the tidal sands and the periphery of the island. Since early times, the sea and the tidal strand surrounding the island have been highly productive of edible resources, supporting early occupation.

**Climate Change Impacts**

In Scotland, *Scottish Natural Heritage* states that the country is experiencing sea level rise now, and predicts an increase in the future. Although it says that the last Scottish ice sheet began melting 20000
years ago, and that Scotland’s land mass has been rebounding, the vertical uplift rates are now modest (around 0.6 mm per year max). When compared to the more rapid rate of the rising of UK coastal waters (up to 2mm per year) all of Scotland is currently experiencing net sea level rise. *Historic Environment Scotland* declares that rising sea levels and increased storm events are currently endangering historic structures and archaeology. The *Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change*, IPCC, states in its 5th Assessment Report that it is very likely that by 2100, there will be a significant increase in future sea level extremes. In its 2015 Arctic Report Card, NOAA (*The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration*) reports increasing Arctic air and sea temperatures and their global effects. *The United Kingdom Marine Climate Change Impacts Partnership* (MCCIP) unites scientists, government, its agencies and NGOs to provide coordinated advice on climate change impacts. It reports that severe winds and larger mean wave heights are being observed in western and northern UK seas.

In his *Coastal Zone Assessment Survey – North Uist*, Professor Tom Dawson provides critical information on the continuing need for archaeological research on North Uist and Vallay. He describes the effects of storms and sea level rise in eroding documented sites and exposing new ones. By combining his 2005 work with the pioneering work by Erskine Beveridge in 1911, we had important data to use as a starting point for our research for both expeditions.

**The Explorers Club Flag**

We wrote the research proposal for the first season of *The Isle of Vallay Archaeology/Climate Change Project* in 2014, and, as a New York Regional Fellow of the Explorers Club, Rod applied for the privilege to carry the Explorers Club Flag on the expedition the following month of June. Since 1918, the flag has been carried on hundreds of expeditions: to outer space, to both Poles, to the deepest ocean and to the highest peaks in the world. Rod received the prestigious award notification in January 2015 and subsequently selected Flag #109. That particular flag had been carried on research expeditions to both Poles, New Guinea, and Vietnam, among others. We successfully completed the first season of the project in June 2015.
For our second expedition to return in 2017, we officially joined forces as a research team and were awarded Flag #109 again to continue our research on the North East shore of the Isle of North Uist, directly across the strand from Vallay. We successfully completed the second season of the project in June 2017.

**Research Objective – Season Two, 2017**

In the second season of *The Isle of Vallay/North Uist Archaeology Climate Change Expedition*, we continued the archaeological fieldwork that we began in 2015. We extended the research to include those additional archaeology sites located across the Vallay Strand on the North East shore of the Isle of North Uist, which were first recorded by Erskine Beveridge in the 19th century. Based on his groundbreaking work, we discovered and recorded those existing remains, and described the extent of erosion and loss.

**Research Method**

Our qualitative research methods were historical desk research, walking survey on the North East shore of North Uist using GPS, photo, video and sketch documentation and journaling. Visual Art collaboration is a common practice in Archaeology field research. Before modern photography, early explorers and Archaeologists employed visual artists to sketch artifacts, excavations and their environmental contexts.

For our Archaeology field work in the entire month of June 2017, we adopted the research method built into SCAPE, (*Scottish Coastal Archaeology and the Problem of Erosion*), a group within SCHARP, (*Scotland’s Coastal Heritage at Risk*), organization. All of the Archaeology sites at risk in Scotland are noted on an interactive map on the SCHARP web site under four designations: high, medium, and low priority, and recently recorded sites. All of the Beveridge sites are noted on the Isle of North Uist, and we selected 18 of those original sites that were located directly across the Vallay Strand for our research. We used the SCHARP *ShoreUPDATE* digital application to update existing site reports and to add current photographs.

The Visual Arts research method of the *Isle of Vallay/North Uist Archaeology Climate Change Expedition*, is based on the thinking of
Morris Weitz, an American philosopher of Aesthetics, who defines Art as an open concept. The project’s Art component integrates not only traditional visual documentation but it also includes multiple disciplines that engage a community of players within an open perspective. Nicolas Bourriaud’s Relational Aesthetics provide the Social Practice theoretical framework for the participatory research.

Since Social Practice Art is interdisciplinary and participatory, it is an appropriate aesthetic grounding for the Vallay/North Uist project. Not only were traditional fine arts media such as drawing and painting used, along with digital and Internet technologies, but also convivial collaboration with local artists and citizens of diverse interests and talents. Interactions with them provided valuable input to the project’s narrative journal. All of the concrete visual arts outcomes function as data artifacts for the project. (See Appendix for examples)

Project Findings
The weather on North Uist in June 2017 again was uncharacteristically cold, overcast and rainy. The temperature varied between 50 – 54 degrees Farenheight, with either a brisk wind or fog. In spite of these constraints, we made numerous trips to successfully survey the 18 additional Beveridge sites that we had selected on the Isle of North Uist.

18 Original Beveridge Sites That We Surveyed on North Uist in 2017

1. Eilean Maleit, 9230 E:77480/N:873880
2. Eilean Maleit, 9231 E:77390/N:87390
3. Ceann Nan Clachan, 9247 E:77164/N:87436
4. Garry Iochdrach, 9249 E:77200/N:874300
5. Garry Iochdrach, 9253 E:77225/N:874274
6. Garry Iondrach, 9256 E:77250/N:874260
7. Garry Iochdrach, 9257 E:77278/N:874273
8. Bagh An Ackara, 9389 E:76237/N:875269
9. Caolas Bhalaigh, 9293 E:75950/N:875580
11. Ceann Nan Clachan, 9235 E:76977/N:874077
12. Ceann Nan Clachan, 9241 E:77130/N:874120
13. Ceann Nan Clachan, 9237 E:77030/N:874110
15. North Uist, Geirisclett, 9271 E:76700/N:875200
17. North Uist, Ceann Nan Clachan, 9232 E:77152/N:873819
18. North Uist, Ceann Nan Clachan, 9232 E:77075/N:873955

SCHARP’s SCAPE ShoreUPDATE Internet Application provides the following fields for each location on its corresponding Site Form: Priority, Description, Condition, Site Type, and East-North GPS Position. We had previously downloaded the ShoreUpdate Site Forms to the iPhone while connected to the Internet, and subsequently updated each of those forms while unconnected on Vallay. Later, when we were connected to the Internet again, we uploaded the forms to the SCAPE database.

**Our North Uist – 2017 Site Reports**

1. **9230 Eileen Maleit**
   Priority 3
   Condition Poor
   Aisled Round house
   E:77480/N:873880
   Aisled round house, Eileen Maleit, about 1/4 mile E of Cnoc a' Comhdhalach and 30m from the shore, on a tidal inlet connected with the mainland by a causeway which is submerged at high tide. The building has been quarried and reduced in height. Small scale excavations carried out in early 1900s which found at least two separate phases of occupation, the wheelhouse being the latest. As described previously, the wheelhouse is now mostly turf covered.
   June 2017: Partially excavated structure still visible because it sits on a high rock outcrop. Accessible by intact stone causeway. Protected from sea action by site 9231.
   30 m from coast edge
   Active sea erosion
   Active wind erosion
   Structural damage/decay
   Highly visible substantial remains
   Limited visibility in section
2. **9231 Eilean Maleit**
Priority Unknown
Condition Poor
Possible occupation site
E:77390/N:873900
Traces of former occupation are to be seen on the much smaller islet to the west of Eilean Maleit. 1911.
No traces of occupation were seen on this small islet, at NF 7739 7390, which is joined to the west end of Eilean Maleit at low tide. Visited 1965. There is currently an indeterminate pile of stones at this location, no structures could be found.
June 2017:
This site is almost gone. Three small upright stones are still secured by turf at the top. This site could disappear in the next storm. Due to its location to the West of site 9230 it serves as its protection from sea action.
30m from coast edge
Active sea erosion
Active wind erosion
Structural damage/decay
Limited visibility partial remains
Not visible in section
Site has deteriorated seriously. Refer to Beveridge's reports

3. 9247 Ceann Nan Clachan
Priority Unknown
Condition Poor
Kiln Barn
E:77164/N:874336
This kiln-barn lies c.10m S of Site 274, and undoubtedly forms part of
the same settlement. It is orientated N-S, measures 8m by 5m
externally, with the kiln bowl present within the northernmost 2m of
the interior. The southern chamber is open, c.2.5m across, and is
entered from the S end of the E wall. The walls are of double-faced
boulder construction with a cobble core, surviving up to 1.5m high, and
use a large glacial erratic as a foundation at the SW corner. The S wall of
the kiln-barn is abutted by the wall encircling Garry Iochdrach knoll. As
previously described.
June 2017:
Bowl and large stone are still visible.
Boundary wall continues to coastal edge
50 m from coast edge
Active Wind erosion
Animal burrows
Structural damage
Highly visible substantial remains
Limited visibility in section

4. 9249 Garry Iochdrach
Priority Unknown
Condition Poor
Enclosure
E:77200/N:874300
The knoll at Garry Iochdrach is enclosed by a drystone wall surviving in places to 1m wide by 1.5m high. Its external face has greater relief; the inner is either revetted by earth and turf or has been sealed behind cultivated soil (and thus acting as a lynchet). The wall incorporates the Atlantic roundhouses and several medieval or later structures in its circuit, all of which appear to be primary to the wall. The enclosing wall
thus appears to form a relatively late element of the structural sequence at Garry Iochdrach. A bank runs uphill to the summit of the knoll from the E side of the enclosure. Parts of the wall are now missing, presumably eroded by tidal action.

June 2017:
Found much in the same condition with N & E sides eroding due to sea action.

>50m from coast edge
Active sea erosion
Animal burrows
Structural damage
Limited visibility partial remains
Not visible in section

5. 9253 Garry Iochdrach
Priority Unknown
Condition Poor
Structure
E:77225/N:874274
A sub-rectangular structure with rounded corners lies c.15m W of the Atlantic roundhouse site NF77SE 6. The structure measures c.6.5m E-W externally; its W end is 5m wide, tapering to 3m at its E end. The walls have boulder and cobble inner faces revetted into turf, and are c.0.6m wide, standing up to 1m high in places. A possible entrance lies towards the N end of the W wall. Two chambers are present, the western 3m x 2m internally, the eastern 2m x 1.5m. The rounded internal angles of the W chamber suggests that this represents a primary original structure 5m x 4m externally, orientated N-S, with the E chamber latterly tacked on to this - surface traces are not sufficiently clear as to be certain either way. Generally as previously described, this site lies right on the edge of the coast and is therefore at risk of tidal erosion in the future.

June 2017:
As previously described with additional erosion into the sea
At coast edge HWM
Active sea erosion
Animal burrows
Highly visible substantial remains
Limited visibility in section
6. **9256 Garry Iochdrach**
Priority Unknown
Condition Fair
Boat Noost
E:77250/N:874260
The enclosed boat noost recorded by Beveridge (1932) at Garry Iochdrach is of modern origin, and not associated with the Atlantic roundhouse settlement. It is built of large boulders; its form is consistent with Beveridge's published plan.
June 2017:
Boat Noost still visible and intact
Intertidal
Active sea erosion
Highly visible substantial remains
Not visible in section

Garry Iochdrach 9256 E:77250/N:874260

7. 9257 Garry Iochdrach
Priority 2
Condition Poor
Aisled Round House
E:77278/N:874273

Garry Iochdrach is an aisled round house situated close to the west edge of Vallay Strand, 300m NE of Cnoc a'Comhídhach (NF77SE 3) and 500m NW of Eileann Maleit (NF77SE 5). The site was excavated in 1912-3. The oval building shown on the plan to the north of the roundhouse is modern, and the external structure shown as a harbour cannot in fact be such, having regard to the level of the sea, then or now. Finds comprised objects of stone, iron and bronze (including a 4th century coin of Constantius II), deer antler and bone, etc. Pottery included two crucibles.

The remains of this aisled round house are generally as described and planned above. The oval structure to the N of the roundhouse appears to be contemporary and may be the remains of a wheelhouse. The name 'Garry Iochdrach' could not be confirmed. Visited 1965. As described previously, the structure to the S is right on the coastal edge and therefore at risk from tidal erosion.
June 2017:
Only visible in turf covered outline due to wind & sea erosion
Active Sea Erosion
Active Wind Erosion
Vegetation growth
Animal burrows
Limited visibility partial remains
Not visible in section

8. **9289 Bagh An Ackara**
Priority Unknown
Condition Poor
Settlement
E:76185/N:875350
From surface traces, this monument appeared to comprise principally an oval drystone structure with a 1m wide entrance on its east side, located on top of a low knoll. It measured 10m NE-SW by 6.5m within an irregular denuded stone-walled enclosure c.45-50m across. The walling of the structure was visible mostly as a grassy bank, although up to four courses of an internal face were visible to the south, and traces
of an outer face are visible in fragments from south-east to south-west. A wall running between the entrance and the south wall appeared to represent a secondary sub-division of the original structure. Two rubble spreads situated on either side of the interior of the entrance might be interpreted as tertiary bothies. The knoll upon which the structure is set stands to 3m in height, with a very steep-sided northern face. Stones resting on the steep face were originally thought to have been deliberately placed, leading to suspicion that the whole knoll was artificial. This site was excavated in 1995 revealing that the structure had more than one phase. Generally as described.

June 2017:
As described but further tumbled inside and heavily covered with heather
Not eroding
Highly visible substantial remains
Limited visibility in section
9. **9293 Caolas Bhalaigh**
Priority 3
Condition Poor
Structure
E:75950/N:875580
A semi-circular walled feature, 1m high and enclosing an area 3m by 2m, lies on the rear edge of the foreshore. A boulder alignment runs into the sea 5m to the W. The site is probably a boat noost of relatively recent origin. As previously described, the site is now overgrown with grass and there is evidence of erosion around the coastal edge of the feature.

June 2017:
Heavily heather covered obscuring semicircular wall to W. S facing upright stone 1m. high. Boat noost gone.
Eroding
Limited visibility partial remains
Not visible in section

![Caolas Bhalaigh 9257 E:75950/N:875580](image)

10. **9288 Bach An Ackara, Eilean an Acaire**
Priority Unknown
Condition Poor
Structure
E:76230/N:875420
The western half of Eilean an Acaire in Bagh Acaire, Vallay Sound, has, at an early period, been enclosed by a semi-circular wall still distinctly traceable much below high-water-mark. The remains of a drystone dyke of a later period traverse the island near its centre and continue southwards across the intervening beach. 1911.
There are no traces of a wall to be seen round the western half of Eilean an Acaire and no traces were seen on the island of any artificial work other than the dyke described in 1911. Visited 1965. NF 7624 7541 - NF 7610 7477 - substantial bank running between Bagh an Ackara and Loch Fada na Gearrachum; c.2.5m wide by up to 1m high; contains many breaks, some of which appear to be original. Generally as described, only the substantial dyke is visible on this islet.
June 2017:
Island offshore with exposed causeway at LW straight to middle of island. Signs of occupation appear as possible structure on E end.
Surrounding wall below HWM is visible.
Active Sea Erosion
Highly visible substantial remains
Not visible in Section
11. 9235 Ceann Nan Clachan
Priority Unknown
Condition Poor
Structures
E:76977/N:874077
Two structures lie on a knoll in low, boggy ground at Ceann nan Clachan. That to the W is rectilinear and poorly preserved, measuring 9m by 5m over low turf walls 0.3m high. A sub-circular, turf-banked structure lies 2m E of this; measuring 4.5m across over banks 1m wide by 0.5m high, and is entered through a break on its S side. The current OS edition records this site as two conjoined rectilinear structures. This site is as previously described though the structures are now very denuded and overgrown making identification difficult.
June 2017:
As previously described now approx. 7 m. From coastal edge. Found coarse brown pottery pieces. Earlier foundation exposed in rabbit holes. Active sea erosion
Highly visible substantial remains
Limited visibility in section
12. **9241 Ceann Nan Clachan**
Priority Unknown
Condition Fair
Boat Noost
E:77130/N:874120
A 3m wide break in field wall, associated with the clearance of loose stone from the rocky foreshore to reveal a sandy base, marks the position of a boat noost. This site could not be located during the current survey.
June 2017:
Found boat Noost located SE of 9235. Defined by line of upright stones on either side of the head of an inlet. Approx. 50 ft. Wide at the opening and narrowing to a point at the top.

Active Sea Erosion

Limited visibility partial remains
Not visible in Section

13. **9237 Ceann Nan Clachan**
Priority Unknown
Condition Poor
Wall
E:77030/N:874110
A degraded stone wall 1m high and 1.5m wide runs along the NW shore of Ceann nan Clachan; in places it has been eroded by tidal action. As previously described, this wall is still being eroded by the sea and several small lengths of it have been eroded out.
June 2017:
As previously described. Two sides of this wall form a right angle at the shoreline, disintegrating at the coastal edge of the boat Noost. At this erosion point masses of iron are visible in cross section.
Active sea erosion
Limited visibility partial remains
Clearly visible in Section

14. **9239 Cnoc a'Comhdalach: Ceann Nan Clachan**
Priority Unknown
Condition Poor
Aisled Round House
E:77099/N:874139

Cnoc a' Comhdhalach, an aisled round house situated 400m N of Loch
nan Clachan and within 30m of the west shore of Vallay Strand.
Excavated in 1905-7 when at least five periods of occupation were
identified, all separated by long periods of disuse. In addition to
kitchen-midden remains finds included objects of stone and flint
(including a leaf-shaped arrow- head), pottery, bone and bronze. This
feature (the name of which could not be confirmed) is as described and
planned above and is poorly preserved. Some 30m to the NE there are
the remains of a rectangular structure (probably a later building) with
an enclosing wall on the SE side (site 268). Visited 1965.
June 2017:
Located closer to the shore and heavily turf covered.
Local stories say Cnoc a'Comhdalach was the gathering place for early peoples. Translation from the Gaelic is loosely, "hill of gathering". Limited visibility partial remains Highly visible in Section

15. **9271 North Uist, Geirisclett**
Priority Unknown
Condition Poor
Settlement
E:76700/N:875200
Evidence of abandoned settlement, land boundaries and cultivation were identified over a wide area. Approximately 100 individual structures of varying antiquity have been recorded, many of which may relate to the planned early 19th century settlement associated with the clearance of the settlement of Foshigarry. Evidence of a range of early settlement forms were recorded. What may be a township comprising 5 unroofed buildings, three enclosures, two fields and a head dyke are depicted on the 1st edition OS map. Three unroofed buildings, two enclosures, a head dyke and part of a field are shown on the current OS map. NF 7656 7524 field wall over 1m high, composed of cobbles and
boulders, crosses the neck of Geirschlett, and divides the settled and cultivated land to the N from the low-lying, boggy, uncultivated ground to the S. Several features have been recorded within this area that undoubtedly relate to this site.

June 2017:
Settlement buildings are still visible on a knoll above the large cairn at the shore. Numerous turf covered structural walls standing 3 ft. high. Field boundary wall to the E. of the settlement.
Not eroding
Highly visible substantial remains
Clearly visible in Section

16. **9273 North Uist, Geirschlett**
Priority 4
Condition Fair
Chambered Cairn
E:76840/N:875200
Chambered cairn or long cist lying upon Geirschlett, almost exactly at HWM on the extremity of a small point. In 1911 three sides of the
chamber were intact and the capstone was found nearby. In 1962 the cairn was found to have been considerably disturbed and robbed. Excavations revealed an inner and outer chamber separated by a substantial threshold slab. The inner chamber was neatly paved with a hearth in the NW corner. Paving in the outer chamber had already been scoured away revealing smaller paving beneath and a posthole, probably residual. The chambered cairn itself probably dates to the Neolithic while the paving and posthole probably date to the later Bronze Age. The chamber is still upstanding and visible at the HWM. There is water within the chamber.

June 2017:
Inner chamber is all that remains. Now in tidal zone. Smaller broken cairns to S. seem to be part of a larger barpa.
Active Sea Erosion
Highly visible substantial remains
Clearly visible in Section

17. 9232 North Uist, Ceann Nan Clachan
Priority Unknown
Condition Gone
Burnt Mound
E:77152/N:873819
During survey of the Gerisclett area in 1995, a small burnt mound was identified close to the stream flowing from Loch nan Clachan into the inter-tidal Vallay Strand. The site was being actively eroded by the tide and areas of walling were clearly exposed. Small-scale trial excavations were carried out. This revealed a mound comprising burnt stone and a square or rectangular drystone structure containing a substantial hearth possibly contemporary with the mound. Further rescue excavations revealed a figure-of-eight building. Early Iron Age radiocarbon dates have been obtained for the mound and structure. Nothing was found at this location during the current survey. The same site as 262.
June 2017:
Completely Gone. Now in tidal zone
Active sea erosion
Not visible
18. 9234 Ceann Nan Clachan
Priority Unknown
Condition Gone
Burnt Mound
E: 77023/N: 874036
The same as Site 260. The site of an excavated burnt mound was identified at this location. Although this site is situated on the coastal edge it does not seem to be affected by the tide as the trench positions are still clearly visible. As described previously. June 2017:
Now gone. Completely in tidal zone and destroyed by wave action.
Active sea erosion
Not visible

Archaeology/Climate Change Summary
In summary, each of the 18 original Beveridge sites that we surveyed on the North West Coast of North Uist during June 2017 demonstrated marked change from Beveridge’s original reports, Dawson’s 2005 survey, and on those indicators as currently provided on the SCAPE interactive site form. Notably, their condition was markedly degraded
by erosion. Stones had been scattered; they were significantly eroding from the dunes due to sea action; they were located closer to the water’s edge and in many cases, were now within the tidal zone. Some were gone entirely.

**Visual Arts Summary**
The Art component of the research included the comparison of archival images with the ongoing field photographs of the Beveridge sites, and the creation of artifact drawings, watercolor paintings, and daily descriptive narratives of the field work. Interdisciplinary connections and numerous conversations and interactions with local persons contributed to the journaling data within the relational aesthetics framework. Because of insufficient Internet connectivity on the islands, no entries were added for this expedition to the first season blog at [http://northuist.blogspot.com](http://northuist.blogspot.com)

In keeping with the longstanding tradition of artists documenting exploration expeditions, an exhibition of the research paintings is forthcoming. More information will be found on the Double Diamond Archaeology web site: [http://www.doublediamondarchaeology.org](http://www.doublediamondarchaeology.org)

**Future Research:**
It is important that the North Uist and Vallay sites are revisited annually to reassess their condition and the effects of climate change upon them. The data from both the 2015 and 2017 Flag #109 Expeditions will be helpful in establishing a time line for prioritizing future archeological work. The climate change impacts that are occurring in the Scottish Hebrides and that are included in our site reports, may function as bellwether indicators of climate change effects on coastlines worldwide. Digital applications such as *SCAPE* should be developed and widely implemented to document threatened global archaeological sites. The threat to shoreline cultural heritage is real, and should be addressed as a serious issue now. All field reports submitted to the *SCHARP* database and the expedition research materials that are archived at the Explorers Club and at Taigh Chearsabagh Museum in North Uist are available to future researchers.
Resources


*North Atlantic Biome Organization.* (NABO). Retrieved from [http://www.nabohome.org](http://www.nabohome.org)


*Scotland’s Coastal Heritage at Risk.* (SCHARP). Retrieved from [http://scharp.co.uk](http://scharp.co.uk)


Tyndall Center for Climate Change Research. Retrieved from [http://tyndall.ac.uk](http://tyndall.ac.uk)

Appendix

July 6
We’ve been back in New York City for 6 days now, and after the shock has begun to dissipate, I find myself reflecting on my reflections. I’m beginning to visualize our days in North Uist as a pearl necklace: each one an island blue in the North Uist palette, consecutive beads of pearly, watery wonder, an achingly transportive accretion of experience, moment by moment with the tides, the clouds, the waters. Time threaded together on a filament of place.

© June Julian, Research Journal Entry, 3.5 in. X 5.5 in.

© June Julian, Sea Pinks, Research Painting, 8 in. X 10 in. Watercolor