

A SENSE OF PLACE

In October 2007 a local artist, Jon Macleod, worked with a group of young people from the Isle of Benbecula in the Western Isles to explore the heritage of the island and how it compares with their lives today. The venue was a renovated nineteenth century steading which provided an appropriate context for the theme of the workshop. Close to the steading are the remains of a medieval chapel, the largely nineteenth century Nunton House, to which the steading belonged, and to the rear is the inspirational setting of Culla Bay.

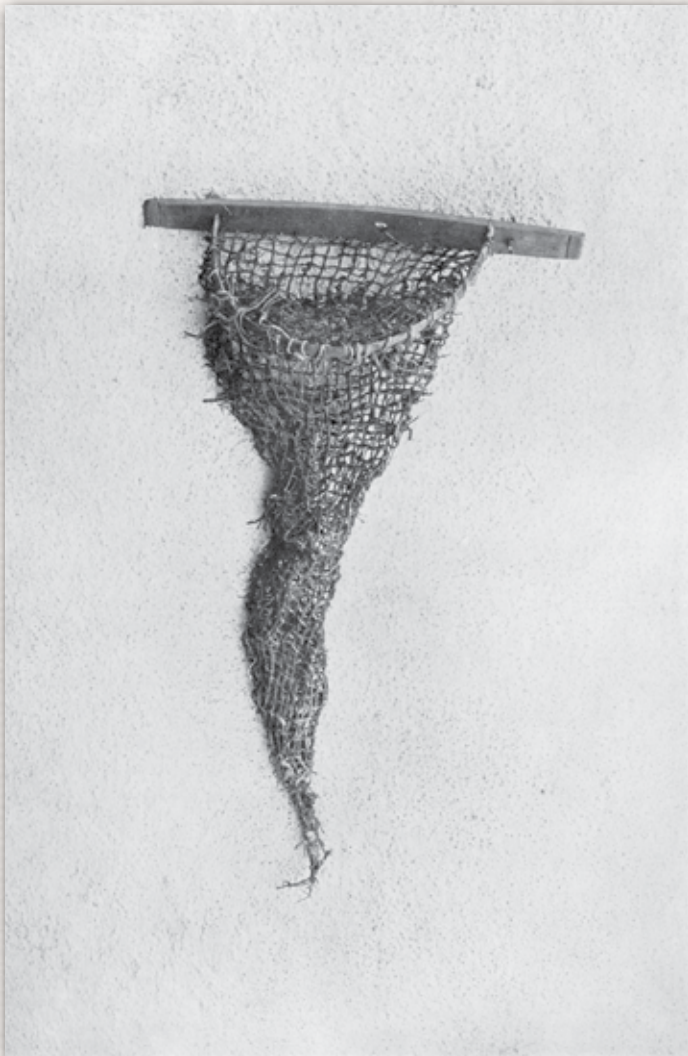


< Nunton Steadings and Culla Bay in 2007. Photographed by two of the workshop participants.

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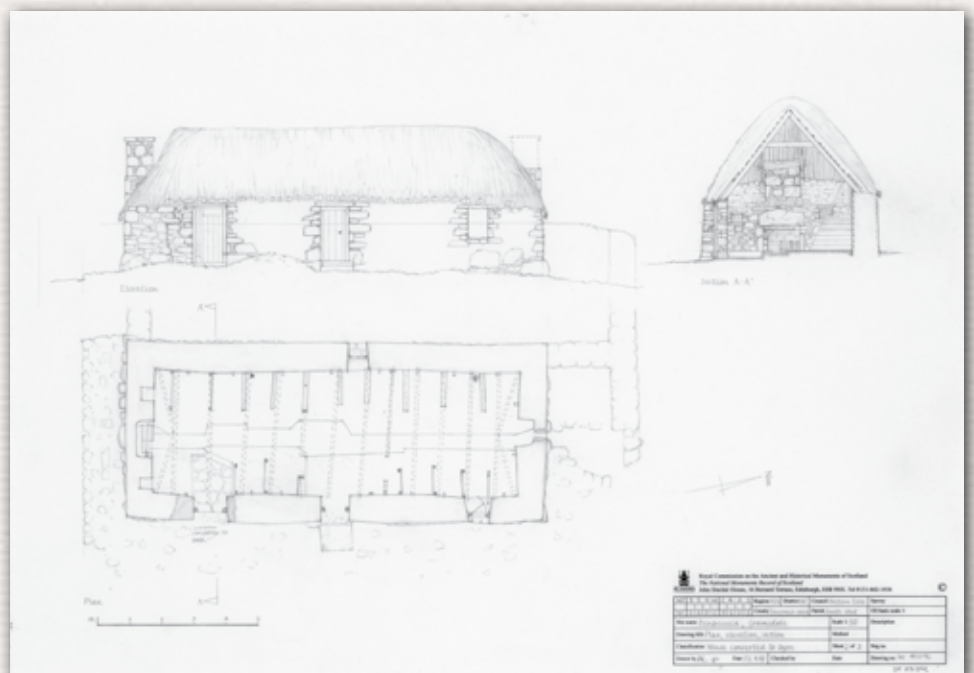
FINDING OUT ABOUT THE PAST



From the collections of RCAHMS, we had brought along a whole range of drawings, photographs and books about the Uists. This included a book from 1911 by the historian and archaeologist, Erskine Beveridge, containing contemporary photographs of the islands; a series of RCAHMS survey drawings of late nineteenth and early twentieth century farm buildings; and excavation drawings of an Iron Age aisled round house. Digital copies were made of the drawings and photographs and the workshop participants used these to help create their art works.

- < The historic photographs gave a fascinating insight into island life a century ago. This photograph of a net made from grass roots is from Erskine Beveridge's book 'North Uist', 1911.
DP031460

A measured survey drawing of a farmstead at Gramsdale, Benbecula drawn by RCAHMS surveyors in 1998.
DP031862



FINDING OUT ABOUT THE PAST

My favourite place is
Hougharry beach.

I also lived in an old house and it is about 200 years
Old there was an old box bed an stove and
I lived near a beach at the of the garden and
it was hot and you had go to the Moor to get
peat for the fire. it was made for my
great ,, grandfather and was made out of stone
and was an animals barns to and an vegand
fruit yard to.

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One of the participants
tells us about her favourite
place - Hougharry Beach.

This photograph of >
blackhouses by the beach
was taken in c.1897.
SC746319



CAPTURING TODAY

The participants were given cameras and sketchbooks to record aspects of the island that interested them. They considered what features represented life on the island today and how this might have differed from life a century ago. They photographed historic buildings, architectural details and landscapes, as well as modern developments and other features including wind turbines, Nissan huts and a water tower. These photographs would later become part of the finished art works.



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A keen photographer recording the island today.



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Recording what they see, >
both old and new.



CAPTURING TODAY



I took this picture because I like the bell. They probably used the bell for telling the farmers it's time to seed the animals.



I took this picture because I like the view. People would recognise the beach. But they might not recognise some parts of it because they might have changed over the years.

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I think they used the plow for planting the grass seeds outside to make the garden. They put the stones there so that the cattle and sheep and cows could grip and not slip, before they get to the stable. The stones are round because the sea currents are rubbing against them and making them smooth and circular. Then sea creatures with shells started to rub against the stones and make them more circular. They still use plows but not as old as this. (see below)



old Farming equipment next page

this is a plow at Nunton Steadings

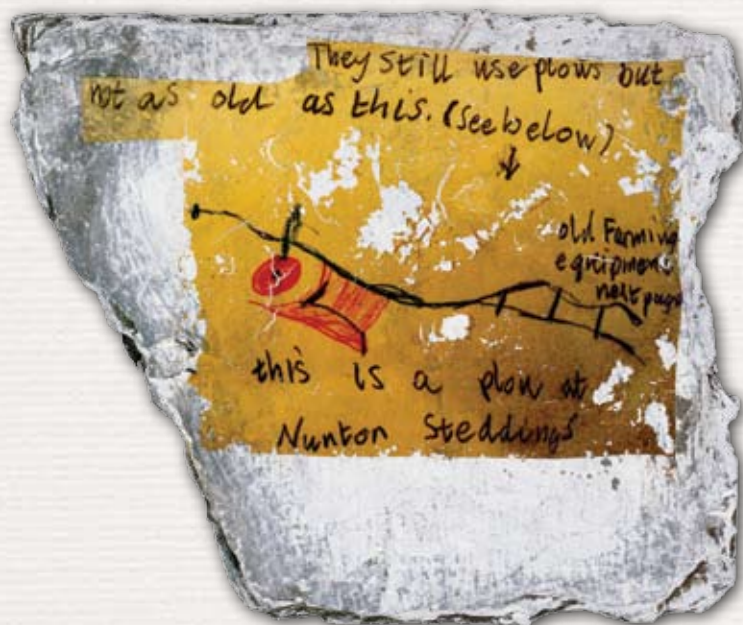
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GETTING CREATIVE

To capture the essence of the island, the participants went to the beach and looked around the steading for objects they could gather and use as part of their art works. Driftwood and old slates made an ideal support for their creations.

Artworks created by two of the participants during the workshop. >

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GETTING CREATIVE

With the help of Jon, the participants used imaging software on the computer to combine and layer a number of images, including their own photographs, drawings and writings, and copies of the RCAHMS drawings and photographs. The images were then printed onto special Lazertran paper. Using water, the top layer containing the image lifts off and can be carefully transferred onto a support, such as the slates and driftwood. The support had already been painted white to allow the image to be seen. The Lazertran is then fixed using turpentine.

The layering of historic images from RCAHMS, with modern images taken by the participants, captures a layering of time and history, as well as the variety of sites of historical interest.

Each participant also produced a self portrait that included an image of themselves, an image they had taken, and a copy of an image from the RCAHMS collections.

“By tying in artefacts and archive images to a place they knew well, the young people seemed to broaden their understanding of their known world. They learned to see things insightfully and critically, to make aesthetic judgments and to develop manual creative skills.”

Jon MacLeod, Artist and Workshop Leader

This artwork combines >
a self-portrait, an image
taken of iron work from the
churchyard and a plan drawn
during the excavation of the
Iron Age aisled round house.

