

In brief

To celebrate the RIAS Festival of Architecture, Western Isles Architects Group and An Lanntair have teamed up to create the "Building our Islands" project to increase awareness of architecture in the Outer Hebrides. This Architectural Trail has selected 29 notable places from the Butt of Lewis to Barra, with sites ranging in age from the Iron Age to the present.

The natural environment has significantly shaped architecture and human settlement, with towns and smaller settlements in the Outer Hebrides all close to the sea. The wet and windy climate is harsh on buildings and the architecture reflects this.

This trail is a mixture of public and private sites, historic and modern. These buildings show the skills and desires of island designers and craftsmen, mostly using local stone, sand and gravel. Other building materials were imported, since there is little timber or clay for building use. The importance of religion is reflected in some of the buildings chosen, while new buildings show the confidence Islanders have in reflecting their changing needs and aspirations.

As a result of the history of land ownership, very few houses predate 1880. The traditional dry-stone walled blackhouses, built in the North Atlantic longhouse tradition, gave way to newer White-houses with rendered stonewalls and a few standard layouts. Modern private homes now span a range of building materials, both local and imported, and feature unique and creative architectural design.

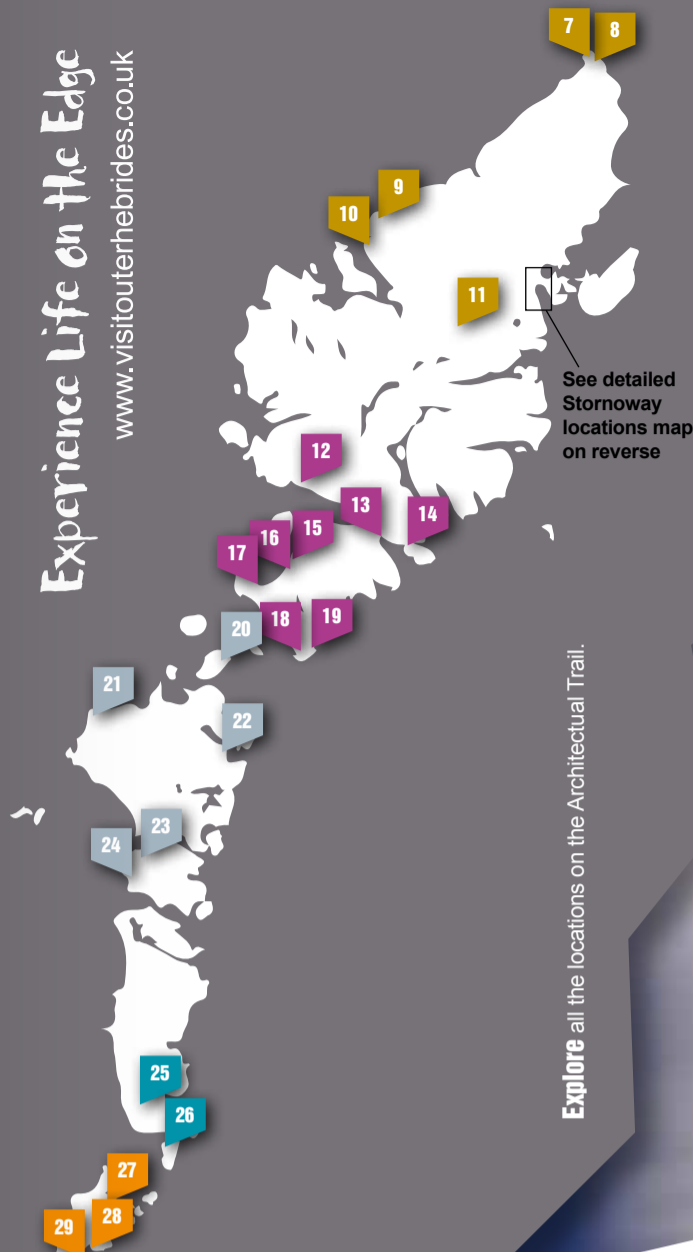
Acclaimed photographer John Maher has photographed the buildings, capturing the beauty of the islands' variety of architecture.

Additional sites and information are available at www.visitouterhebrides.co.uk or for more information on The Building our Islands project visit www.lanntair.com

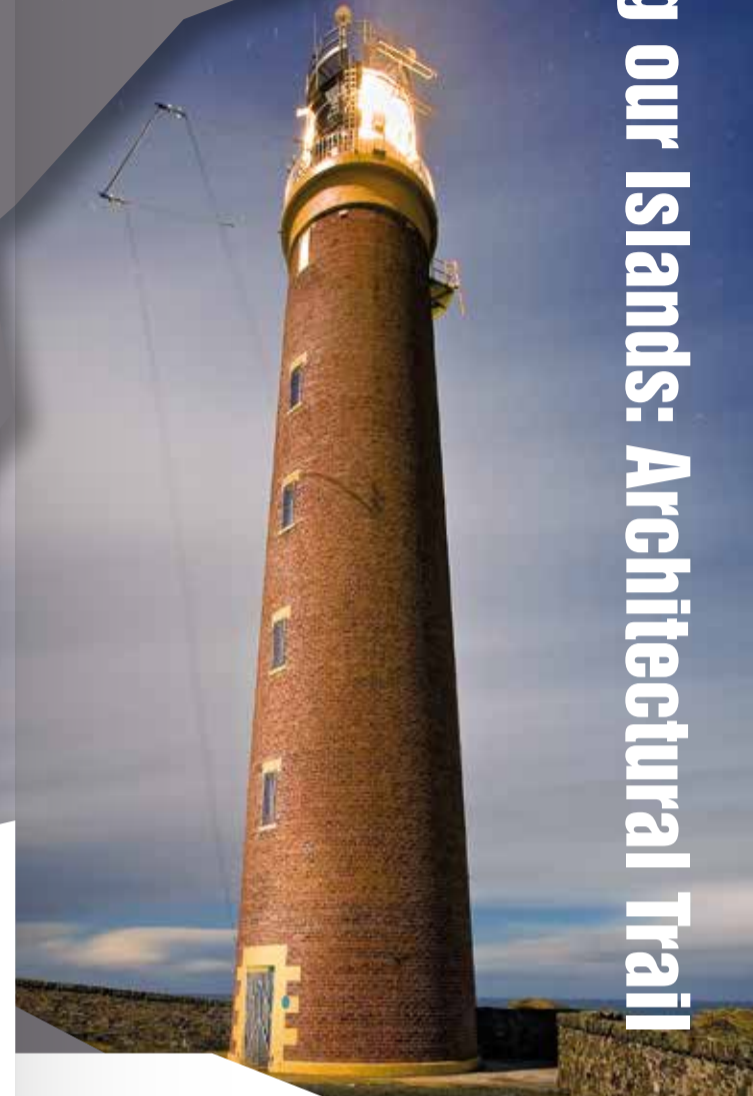
For more information about Western Isles Architects group please contact Stuart Bagshaw (Chair), SBA Architects Ltd sbaarchitects@btconnect.com

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Building our Islands: Architectural Trail



Projections at the Giral



Locations



1

Lews Castle and Museum, Stornoway

Built in 1847-51 in the Neo-Gothic style popular in the Victorian era by Sir James Matheson and substantially altered by Lord Leverhulme. After being used as a school it re-opened in 2016 with the addition of a modern extension for the museum/archives.

The Boatman's Tower, Stornoway

Built in the grounds of Charles Wilson's Tudor Gothic Lews Castle (1847-51). The boatman ferried people to Stornoway and the tower housed his family. It is one of three buildings voted as "their favourite building" as part of the Building our Islands Project and plans are afoot to renovate it.



2

An Lanntair, Stornoway

An Lanntair's award winning building, designed by Nicoll Russell Studios, is inspired by its name, which means "the beacon" in Gaelic. The arts centre houses a multipurpose auditorium and cinema, gallery and café/bar.



3



4

Martin's Memorial Church, Stornoway

A Stornoway landmark, built in 1878. Martin's Memorial Church was designed by RA Bryden. An imposing Gothic church, The hall, designed by John Robertson, was added to the rear in 1893 and the pinnacles and spire were added in 1911.

Nicolson Institute Clock Tower, Stornoway

The Italianate Clock tower remains from the original elementary and infant school built in 1873, with the tower designed by Dr Alexander Ross in 1902. Adjacent to the Nicolson Institute, it is one of the three buildings voted as "their favourite building" as part of the Building our Islands Project.



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6

Gibson Gardens, Stornoway

A large (in island terms) social housing project for rent which fits an urban site where a school hostel had been located. Completed in 2012 by local architects Anderson Associates. It was awarded the Outer Hebrides Design Award 2014 for Group Housing.

Butt of Lewis Lighthouse, Ness

Built in 1862 by David and Thomas Stevenson. Made from red brick, which was unusual for Scottish lighthouses, it is 37 metres high and has 168 steps to the top. Spray flies over the top of it in winter storms. It was one of the last lighthouses to be automated in 1998.



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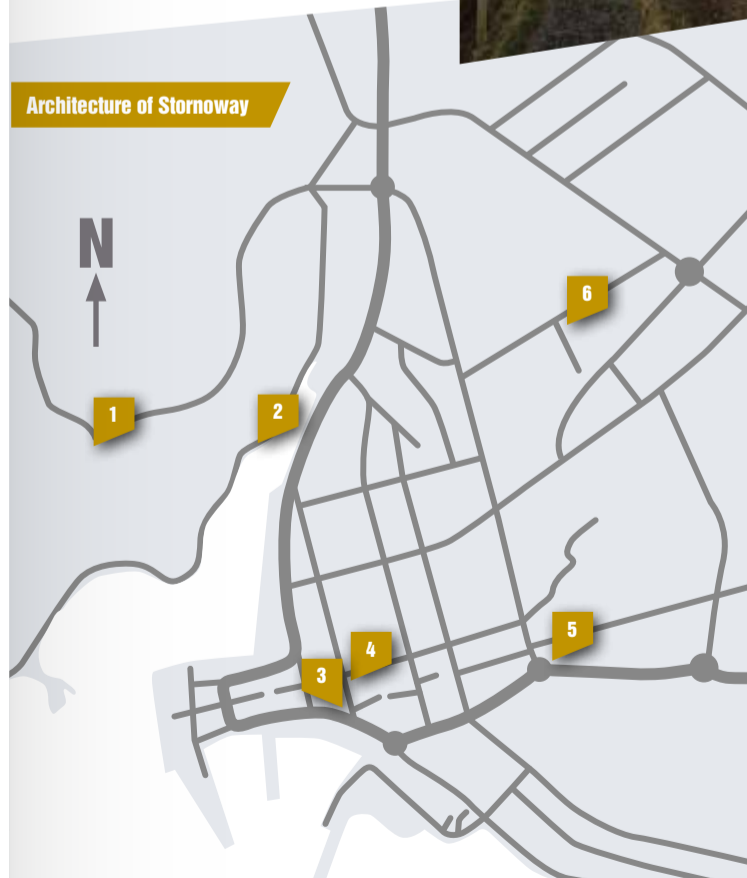
St Moluag's Church, Ness

St Moluag's Church is a 12th century Temple, said to have been built by the son of a Scandinavian King, who had converted to Christianity. Saint Moluag was a Scottish missionary and contemporary of Saint Columba. The building may have been altered up to the 16th century and was restored in 1911-12.

8



Architecture of Stornoway



Building our Islands project is made possible by support from:



The leaflet has been produced by WIAG and An Lanntair in association with Outer Hebrides Tourism.

Locations

Gearrannan Blackhouse Village, Carloway

Blackhouses were common dwellings in the Hebrides. This was the last group to be occupied, being vacated in 1974. Built in the late 19th century, restored and in some cases rebuilt in the 1990s, the village includes a museum, interpretation centre, shop, café, self-catering blackhouses and a hostel.



Dun Carloway, Carloway

A broch is an iron-aged drystone hollow-walled structure found only in Scotland. Dun Carloway, was likely built in 1st Century AD and had four different phases of building. It is the best preserved Broch in the Outer Hebrides.



The Summer House, Achmore

Inspired by the traditional Hebridean summer dwellings or 'airidhs'. The larch-clad house is both colourful and sculptural with dramatic views over the Harris hills. Hand-built by local architect Duncan Porteous. (Private residence: not open to the public).

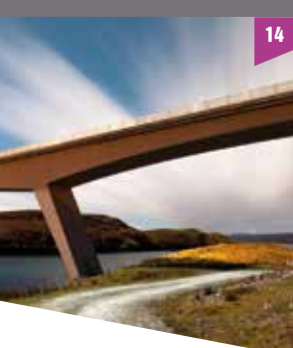


Amhuinnsuidhe Castle, North Harris

Amhuinnsuidhe Castle was built in 1865 in the Scottish Baronial style by the architect David Bryce and the 7th Earl of Dunmore. The public road to Hushinish passes the front door and through a grand arch. (Access by prior arrangement only.)

Isle of Harris Distillery, Tarbert

Designed by John R. Coleman Architects, it occupies a strategic position in Tarbert, visible to everyone arriving there. It is a modern take on a traditional form. Copper is used externally at the entrance area – hinting at what lies within.



Scalpay Bridge, Scalpay

Scalpay Bridge opened in 1997 and was designed by Halcrow Crouch. It replaced a bow loaded ferry as Scalpay's link to Harris. Its design had to consider complex geology, environmental impact, climactic conditions, the lack of existing infrastructure and fit the natural beauty of the location.



Talla na Mara, Niseabost

Translated from Gaelic, Talla na Mara means the Centre by the sea. Overlooking Niseabost beach, the Centre boasts one of the most photographed locations in the Outer Hebrides. Designed by Rural Design Ltd, the building's angular form was inspired by the surrounding landscape.

The Broch House, Borve

Inspired by Scottish coastal Iron Age buildings, it is probably the first broch built in the UK since the Roman era. 21st century comforts in what could be an ancient ruin. Designed by Stuart Bagshaw (Private residence, please view from the road.)



Temple Café, Northton

A stone building reminiscent of a Blackhouse, designed by Stuart Bagshaw in 1999 as an interpretive centre of William MacGillivray, an ornithologist from Harris who worked with John James Audubon on the book 'Birds of America'. It is now a café.



The Giral, Rodel

Large iron-roofed 18th century structure, it is thought to have been a store or 'keeping house' with two floors and three bays. It is one of three buildings voted as 'their favourite building' as part of the Building our Islands Project.



St Clements Church, Rodel

St. Clement's earliest sections date to the 15th Century and it is the finest pre-reformation church in the Hebrides. Inside is one of the most ambitious and richly-carved tombs of the time for the Macleod clan chief. The carvings depict biblical stories, a stylised castle, a hunting scene and a Birlinn galley.



Gatliff Hostel, Berneray

These two converted blackhouses now form the Berneray hostel site of the Gatliff trust, and lie in a Conservation Area. The original croft houses probably dated from the 19th Century. The roofs are thatched, including a thatched sculpture of an otter perched on one roof.



Scolpaig Tower, North Uist

The folly was built on the site of an Iron Age broch by Dr Alexander Macleod in the 1830's to provide work during a famine. Now open to the elements, it is a nesting place for birds.

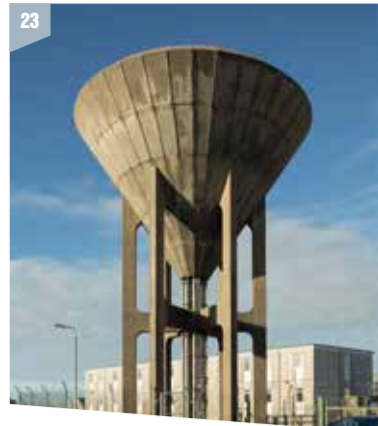
Taigh Chearsabhagh, Lochmaddy

A former inn with detached stable/storehouse, built on the site of an old salt house. Later used as a bothy and an estate workshop, it became derelict and was rescued and extended by Taigh Chearsabhagh Trust in 1994/95 as an arts centre and museum. It also serves as the local post office and café.



Benbecula Water Tower, Balivanich

An iconic structure built in the early 1970s to service the RAF station in Balivanich. It is no longer in use. It divides local opinion but local support saved it from demolition. Its height makes it a notable landmark in the flat Benbecula landscape.



Nunton Steadings, Nunton

The current steadings was built in the early 1700's; originally the site was part of a Nunnery from 1300. Converted for the Uist Preservation Trust by Simpson and Brown in 1999 and now used as a craft centre and tearoom.



Our Lady of Sorrows, Garrnamonie

Designed in 1965 by architect Richard McCarron, this Catholic church has been described as "brutalist", owing little to traditional Outer Hebrides building styles. It was largely self-built by the parishioners.

St Michael's of the Sea, Eriskay

Constructed by the islanders themselves under the guidance of Fr. Allan McDonald using local stone, timber salvaged from wrecks and a lime mortar of burnt shells and sand in 1899-1903. The altar rests on the bow of a lifeboat washed overboard from an aircraft carrier.



Cuithir Houses, Barra

Built in 2000 for Barra & Vatersay Housing Association (now part of HHP) by Ben Tindall Architects following extensive community consultation. The curved ends, similar to Viking longhouses, reduce heat lost from wind chill. Many other energy-saving design features are included.

Our Lady, Star of the Sea, Castlebay

Our Lady, Star of the Sea, designed by G. Woulfe Brenan and completed in 1888, is perched atop a crag in Castlebay. The church dominates the bay and is a beacon for returning boats. It is built of local granite, and a bell and clock were added to the tower in 1891.



Kisimul Castle, Castlebay

This medieval castle was the seat of the Clan Macneil. Built in the 15th century it was abandoned in the early 18th century, with stones used for shipping ballast. It was rebuilt in 1956-70. In 2000 The MacNeil Clan Chief leased it to Historic Scotland for an annual rent of £1 and a bottle of whisky.