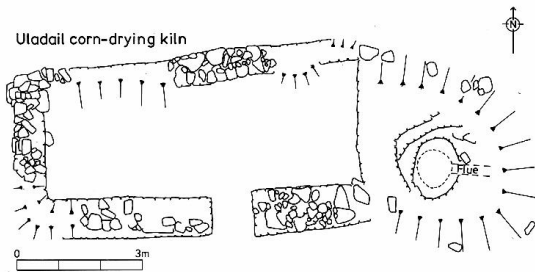
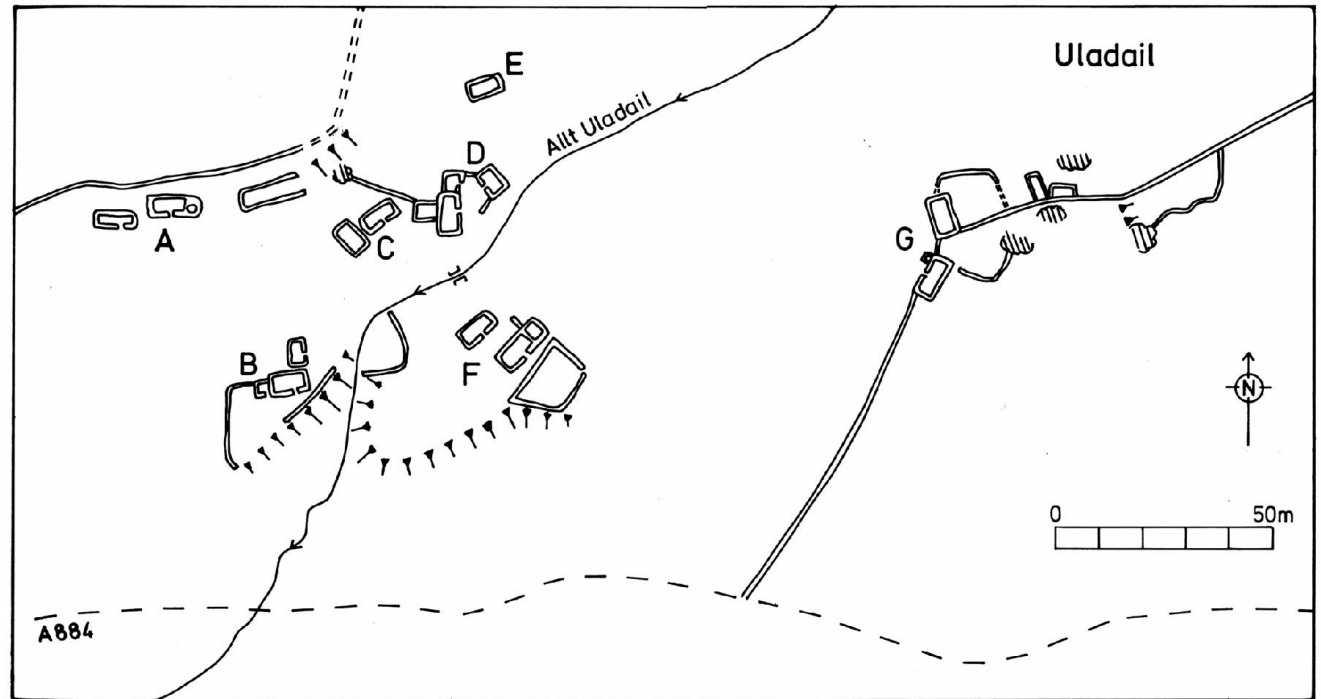


THE DESERTED VILLAGE OF ULADAIL

Uladail is one of the most interesting and certainly the most easily accessible of the numerous pre-clearance settlements in Morvern. It comprises at least 16 houses and outbuildings, which are accompanied by a corn-drying kiln, kailyards, enclosed arable fields, shielings, peat cuttings and woodland enclosures. Together these remains illustrate a complete agricultural landscape, which allows the reconstruction of a way of life typical of Morvern and the West Highlands until around the mid 19th century.



Visitors to Uladail can approach from the A884 road from Lochaline to Loch Sunart. A small car park is situated beside the road opposite the Allt Uladail.



Uladail is situated in Gleann Geal c.6 km NE of Lochaline, just above the A884 road at NM 7161 5060. The name "Uladail" was first recorded in 1390, though the earliest record of any inhabitants is in 1716. General Roy's map of c.1750 shows a cluster of houses at "Ulladill", surrounded by arable land. In 1833, "A Plan of the Farm of Ulladal" shows the lands in detail, much of which can be traced today. The settlement comprised 14 buildings, of which perhaps eight to ten were houses. Around them were enclosed arable fields, while the rest of the land was divided between pasture and oak woodland. In 1841, when Uladail was sold to Patrick Sellar, only one house was occupied, and by 1851 the site had been abandoned.

The archaeological remains are situated on either side of a small stream. The houses are arranged in a compact group along the stream, with a second cluster, Site G, uphill to the NE. All the buildings have the round-angled, rectangular plan typical of Morvern, and are defined by walls of coursed drystone masonry. Some are sufficiently well-preserved to allow some identification of building techniques. The walls are thick and often have a slight batter, tapering in width from around 0.75 m at the base to 0.60 m at the top. Most have been dug into the slope to provide a level platform sometimes supported by a boulder plinth on the downhill side. The roofs were probably all hipped and supported by a cruck frame, with wooden upright posts which were built into the wall in custom-built slots.

The first part of the village to be reached on the W side of Allt Uladail is Site B, consisting of a relatively well-preserved house accompanied by a barn or byre and a small enclosure. The three buildings at Site A are more dilapidated; they were not marked on the 1833 plan suggesting that they were out of use by then. The central building incorporates a corn-drying kiln, consisting of a circular stone-lined bowl, used for drying grain before milling. The horizontal flue opens through the E sector of the bowl, though its exit is no longer visible. Immediately to the E of the kiln, short fragments of coursed masonry connect large natural boulders to define a small rectangular enclosure.

Downhill to the SW is Site C, consisting of two buildings, one of which had also probably been abandoned by 1833. A short distance to the E are two slightly better preserved buildings at Site D, connected by low walls, possibly a house and byre or barn. The level platform, defined by a single course of stone, at Site E, may be the foundation of a turf or wickerwork house (known as a "creel" house). Such buildings were common before the widespread adoption of stone. Although turf houses continued in use even into the 20th century, Site E could be a survivor of an earlier phase of the settlement.

The stone buttresses built against the banks of Allt Uladail between Sites D and F indicate the site of original bridge connecting both sides of the village. The two buildings and enclosure at Site F may represent a house, byre or barn

and kailyard, for the cultivation of green vegetables. To the NE is a group of structures at Site G, where the best surviving example of a cruck slot can be found in the southernmost house.

While the buildings offer much of interest to the visitor, it is their agricultural context which is of perhaps even greater value. The main arable field lies below the A884 road and others, enclosed by stone walls, are still visible along the E bank of the stream. An important element of 19th century and earlier agriculture involved the movement of stock in summer to the shieling grounds. Four small stone structures beside a stream to the W of Creag Uladail (NM 7210 5083) were probably shieling-huts, reached by a narrow path leading NE from the arable fields.

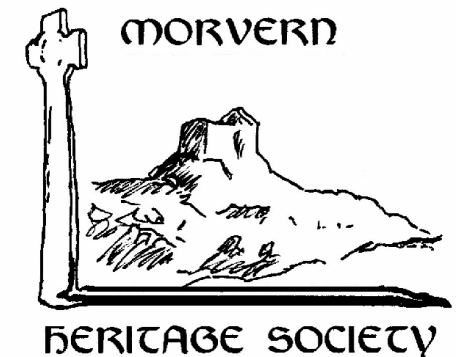
The remains at Uladail also illustrate how the settlement co-existed with the estate's policy of woodland management. The houses and arable ground are sandwiched between two woodland enclosures, which extend for some distance to the W and E. The E wood is enclosed by a broad well-built stone wall, which runs directly past the upper part of the settlement at Site G. The W wood is defined by a stone wall, which again runs very close to some of the buildings, Site A, before turning to the N and then NW, where, as a turf bank, it continues to the Black Glen track.

It is interesting to note that the present woodland policy reflects that of the 19th century; within a scheme designed to

regenerate the old oak woods, the fences erected in 2000 broadly follow the 1833 pattern, leaving the village and its arable for agricultural use. In 2003, the Secretary of State for Scotland designated the area of the Uladail oakwoods as a candidate Special Area of Conservation. It is to be hoped that this designation will encourage the further protection of both the woodlands and the archaeological heritage.

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published by the



printed by PrintSmith (Lochaber) Ltd
with grant aid from the
Local Heritage Initiative Scotland

