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## North of Scotland Archaeological Society: Survey of Loch Hourn

The [North of Scotland Archaeology Society \(NoSAS\)](#) has undertaken one of the largest Shorewatch surveys to date. They have spent two seasons working on the shores of Loch Hourn, one of the most remote of the Scottish sea lochs.

Loch Hourn is approached down a road claimed to be the longest single-track road in Britain. Once at their destination, the group members have stayed for over a week each time, braving what has often been miserable weather to record the numerous features located on the few bits of flat land available by the water.

Meticulous planning goes into the activities of each of the group members before each day. Briefing sessions are held each morning and a debriefing in the evening around the fire of Kinloch Hourn Lodge. These are essential as getting to the survey areas from the house takes a long time, and arriving without relevant equipment would cause great inconvenience. They ensure that as well as taking surveying and recording tools, they have all necessary health and safety equipment, including life vests and communication gear.

The group takes a tent with them so as to provide shelter from the wind and rain. Although they time their survey seasons to take place in early spring, they have not had much luck with the weather. They go at this time of year to allow the vegetation to die away over the winter, visiting before new bracken has a chance to obscure structures. They also hope to avoid the numerous midges by going early in the year. Despite the timing, they still need to spend time cutting away dead bracken.

The NoSAS members have found a landscape dotted with archaeological remains. The majority of these were previously unrecorded. They have found sites ranging in date from prehistoric to the remains of the eighteenth and nineteenth century herring fishing industry.

At Allt Mhogh Sgeir, they have found an area which seems to have been the focus of activity for the herring fishermen. A quay has been constructed of rounded boulders, and the area has been terraced in order to provide flat land for buildings and, presumably, for the repair of nets and sails.

The group has used Shorewatch forms to record the numerous sites located. They have also added all of their findings to the Highland Region Sites and Monuments Record, held in Inverness. In their first season, they recorded over 280 structures. Before their visit, only a handful of sites were noted in local or national records.

They are also doing detailed survey drawings of several of the structures that they have found. They have used a variety of methods, from measured sketches, to plane-table drawings, to surveys using a grid and offset measurements. The group has written [a report of its first season of work which can be found here](#).



A view of Loch Hourn with a sheltered bay for landing boats



NoSAS group members preparing to leave in the morning.



Many of the structures are covered with dead bracken, which the group has to cut down before recording.



A small structure that uses a large rock as its back wall.



The quay at Allt Mhogh Sgeir, seen at low tide.



NoSAS group members recording a large rectangular structure.



NoSAS group members planning.