

V.

AN AISLED FARMHOUSE AT THE ALLASDALE,
ISLE OF BARRA.

BY ALISON YOUNG, F.S.A., F.S.A.Scot.

During 1950 and 1951 Sir Lindsay Scott examined the farmhouse at the head of the Allasdale in Barra, the most southerly island of any size in the Outer Hebrides; he planned to complete the excavation in 1952. In April of that year he became seriously ill, and before his death in June he expressed the wish that the examination of the site should be completed.

Here it seems fitting to pay tribute to his work for Scottish prehistory. His keen observation and wide outlook won for him a very special place in the company of Scottish archæologists.

Excavation at the Allasdale in 1953 was made possible by grants from the Society and from the Prehistoric Society. Thanks are due to The MacNeil, the owner of the site, for permission to excavate, and for presenting the finds to the National Museum of Antiquities.¹

The site, described by Lindsay Scott as an aisled farmhouse, is built on a knoll of rocky outcrop 400 ft. above sea-level, where the steeply slabbed hill of Cora Bheinn, so characteristic of the Hebridean landscape, flattens into a series of terraces, also typical of the terrain (Pl. V, 1).

The farmhouse entrance faces west across one of these terraces towards the sea. To the north Ben Cliad shelters the site from the worst of the north-westerly gales, to the south-west Ben Martin rises to about 800 ft., and the coastal plain at the foot of these hills is a wide stretch of machar bounded northwards by Greian Head, where there is deep water anchorage, and to the south by the shelving reefs of Seal Bay.

The site excavated consists of the farmhouse, with souterrain and kiln-house and an outside working-place, as well as a steading, which included barn and byre, the whole standing in approximately 1½ acres of ground, enclosed by a wall (see fig. 1).

The farmstead, known locally as Tigh Talamhanta ("The house under the ground"), was built with the entrance at the highest point of a rocky knoll steeply scarped on three sides. On the fourth, to the east, a gentler incline of gravelly soil overlies schistose rock (figs. 2, 3, 4).

The wall footings were laid on clay, and clay may have been used to fill

¹ I am indebted to Miss K. M. Richardson, F.S.A., and Mr E. Steel, who worked during the 1953 season; also to Mrs E. Steel for her drawing of the final plan of the site (fig. 3). Also to Mr H. H. Coghlan, F.S.A., and Mr A. D. Lacaille, F.S.A., for examining material.

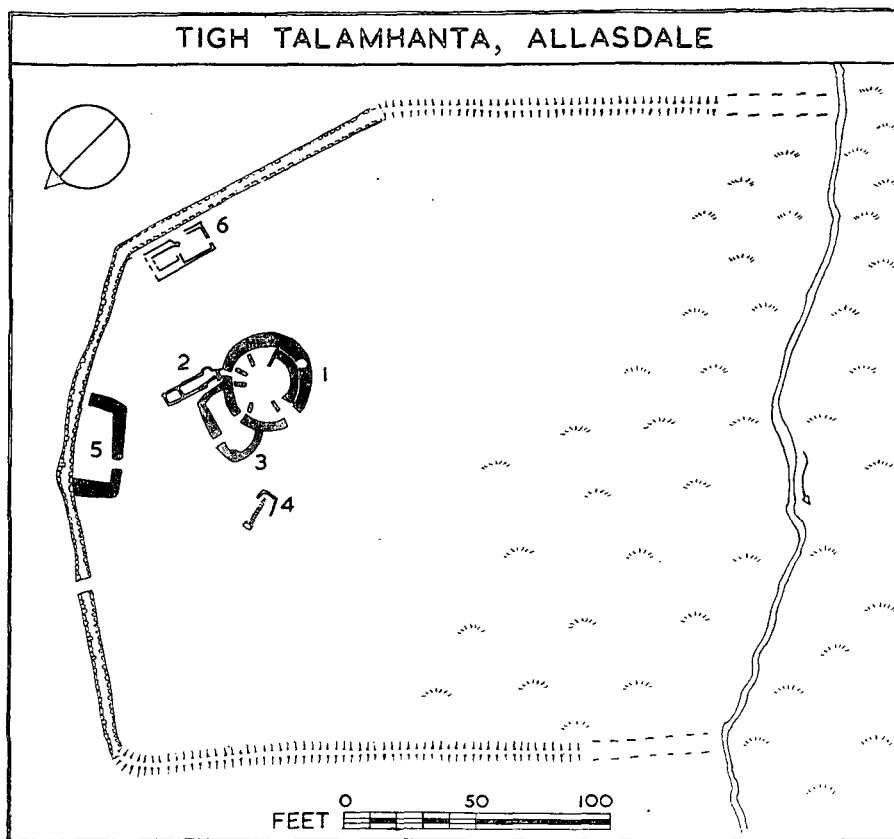
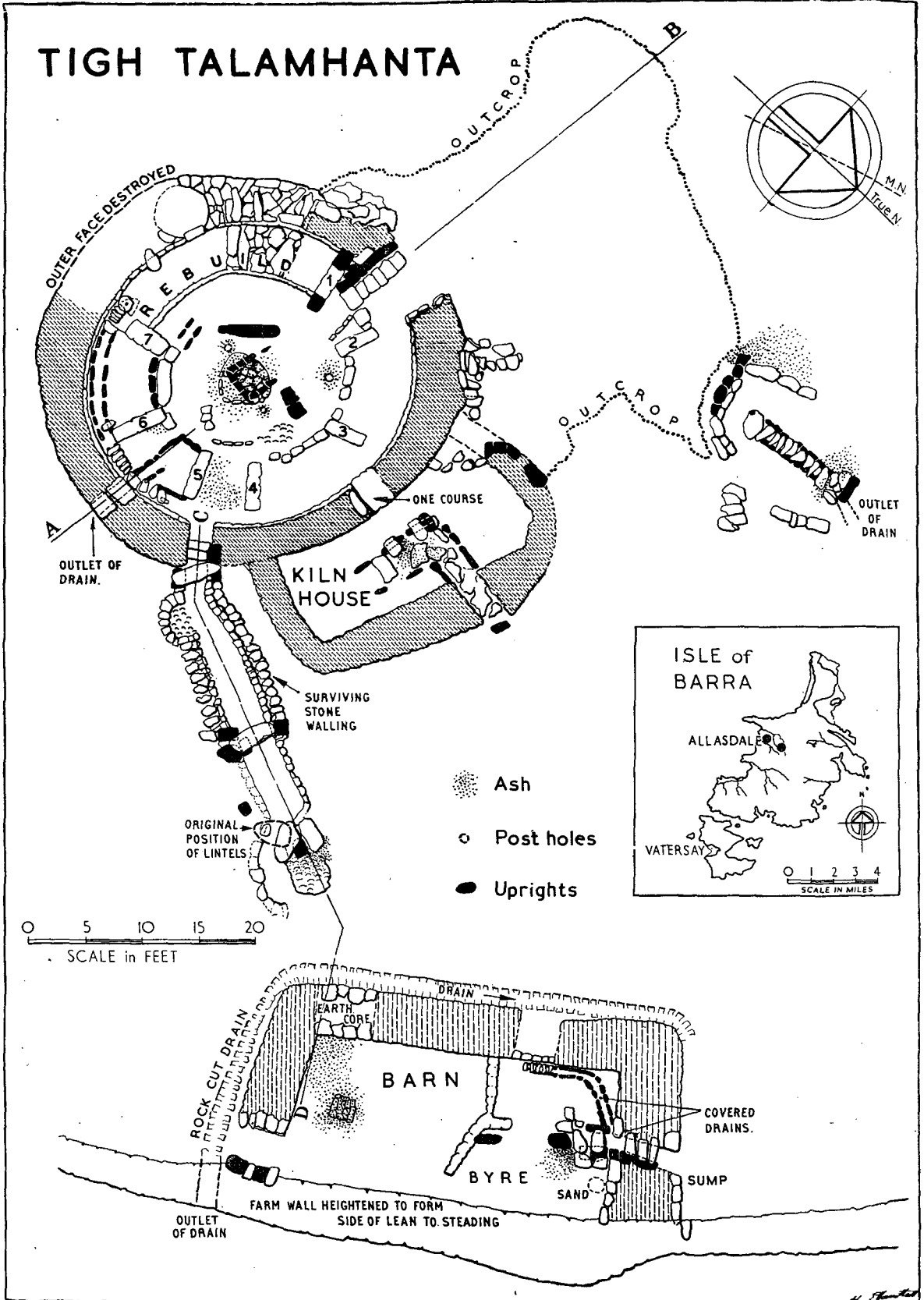


Fig. 1. No. 1, Farmhouse; No. 2, Souterrain; No. 3, Kiln house; No. 4, Outside working place; No. 5, Steading; No. 6, Later structure.



Fig. 2. Conjectured reconstruction of farmhouse.

TIGH TALAMHANTA



in between stones; this was easily obtainable at various points in the banks of two nearby streams. These burns, rising in Cora Bheinn, diverge, one flowing west, draining the fertile Allasdale, the other turning north, providing alike defence in their marshy margins and an easily accessible water supply. The iron present in the soil colours the burns, and the rocky sides are stained red to the winter high-water mark.

A gap in the enclosing wall opens to the north on good pasture, also towards another farm site, one of a group noted by Lindsay Scott, in this instance lying at a distance of half a mile from Tigh Talamhanta above the steep bank of the north flowing burn.

ALLASDALE, BARRA

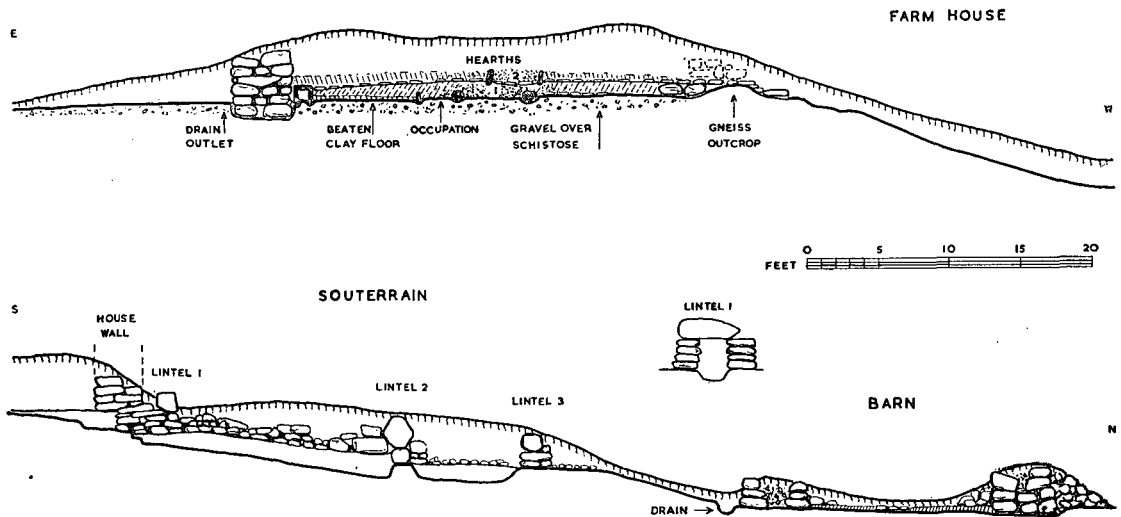


Fig. 4. Sections AB and CD.

The Farmhouse.

This structure, 36 ft. in diameter, is roughly circular in plan, and the souterrain and kilnhouse open from the main building. The paved entrance on the west leads inward from a sill of the natural rock, and the building at this point is much wrecked. Rough steps in the rock lead down the knoll, which is an outcrop of Hebridean gneiss stretching westward from the entrance over an irregular area of more than 20 ft. Where walling was laid on the natural rock it has greatly collapsed. There were indications of a working platform outside the entrance, now a mere rickle of stones, but a series of bowl forms recovered from this area suggest a dairy.

Piling up against the gneiss on the east is a soft schistose rock with

gravelly covering, and on this the greater part of the farmhouse is built. The surviving wall stands at highest six courses and is built with no apparent sign of batter, well laid and of massive stonework. The outer and inner wall faces, filled with smaller material, have long stones lying athwart, bonding the whole.¹ The choice of building-stone in this locality is poor, nevertheless skill is shown both in selection and in laying the stone walling.

Phase I.

The horizon of the Phase I level is a black layer. This was ascribed by Lindsay Scott to the collapse of a burnt roof, and covered the central area. It was of varying depth from 4 ins. to a mere powdering of ash over the beaten clay floor of the bays, excepting in Bay 6, where the ash deepened and contained numerous sherds of pottery. At the lowest level many of these came from at least one large storage jar (fig. 5, 1). The ash has a rather different character in this bay, and may have been of rush or other material in which storage jars were set. Charcoal from twigs of willow is recorded at this point, and suggests that baskets were also used.

Cobbling alternates with rough paving in the central area, where the fire was made on the gravelly soil which was reddened and burnt to a depth of 2 ins. The Phase I hearth, roughly oval, was defined on the west by slab paving. This feature was also noted on the west of the barn hearth (Pl. VI, 2) and would provide a level cooking place for pots, or for baking. To the south lay a heap of stoneless clay, unburnt. Roughly set stones limit the hearth on the east.

Large charred fragments identified as spruce, presumably from a log of drift timber,² were recovered from and around a post-hole. Two smaller post-holes on either side of the original hearth indicate a wooden structure in the first phase.

Stone-built piers, set radially, formed the foundations of roof supports. Of these, seven remain; originally there must have been nine, the surviving piers, also laid on clay, showing signs of rebuild.³ The bays formed by these radials were fenced towards the central area by kerbing. One slipped corbel-stone originally joining the outer walling and the radial pier no. 6 was the sole remaining evidence of the method of roofing employed, with the exception of heather charcoal identified in samples from the black level overlying the earliest occupation. Lindsay Scott was of the opinion that the roofing technique was similar to that indicated at Clettraval,⁴ and where the walls are built free-standing as in the Allasdale farmhouse, this is the simplest method of roofing where timber is scarce. He also postulated an overall

¹ See plan (fig. 3).

² "Drift Timber in the West," *Antiquity*, xxv (1951), 151-3.

³ A scrap of metal, perhaps the fragment of a brooch, was found at the base of Pier 4 (see fig. 9, 1, and Appendix B).

⁴ *P.P.S.*, xiv (1948), 53.



1. Site from NW., before excavation.



2. Clay moulds.



3. Pivot stone, from Barn entrance.

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1. The souterrain, Lintel 2 (fig. 1, no. 2).



2. The steading, Barn hearth (fig. 1, no 5).



3. The steading, outside drain (fig. 1, no. 5).



4. Outside working place (fig. 1, no. 4).

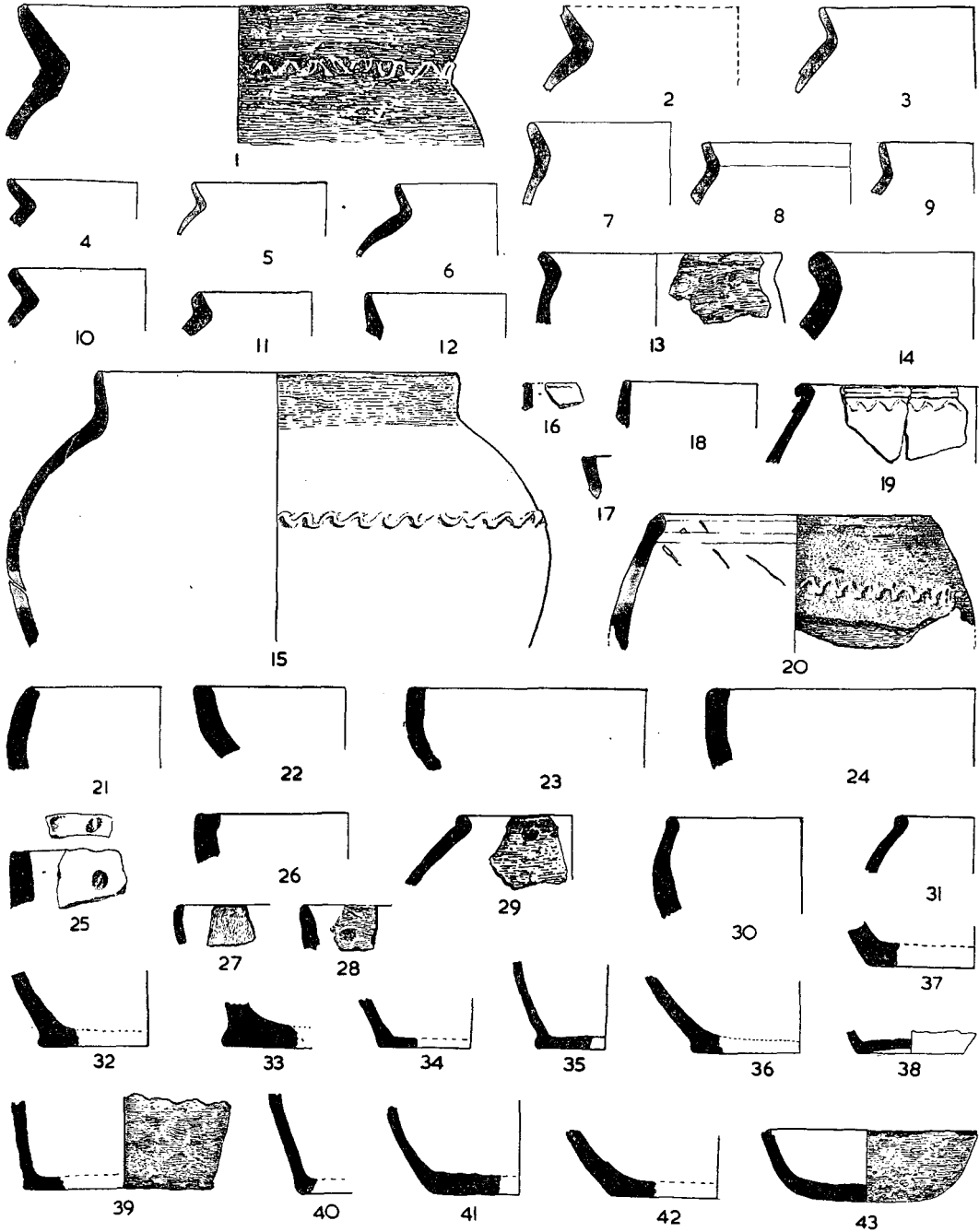


Fig. 5. (Scale $\frac{1}{4}$.)

roof of thatch or turf to carry rain-water down to the outer walling, and from the charcoal identified as heather twigs we may deduce thatching.

The skin tent roofing recently suggested by Mr T. C. Lethbridge for his Kilpheder site,¹ where the walls were not free-standing but backed against the sand, would be impracticable on an exposed site such as Tigh Talamhanta, where however the outer walling was capable of carrying the weight of a roof.

A recess, or wall chamber, opening from the interior in Phase I was entered by a doorstep 21 ins. in length, which indicates that the original floor-level of this feature was higher than the interior of the main building.

A drain, lined and covered with slabs, led from a funnel-shaped basin of hard clay and ran behind Piers 7 and 6, beyond which it joined two further lengths of drain which, however, could not be traced to their source, and were possibly destroyed in the subsequent rebuild of the hearth area. The outlet passed under the main wall and was carefully constructed, but beyond this point no further channel or soak-away was apparent. This feature must have gone out of use in the second phase, and from that period at least, if not earlier, piles of dark earth, streaked with uneven tips of peat ash and shells, mainly cockle and limpet, surrounded the landward side of the farmhouse and backed against the souterrain walling; the original turf line could be traced below the dump. Very few sherds came from these areas, and it may be that they were peat heaps serving a dual purpose of fuel storage and added warmth and protection for the eastern portion of the main building.

Phase II.

There can have been no great gap between the collapse of the outer wall in Phase I and the rebuild in Phase II. The ash from a burnt roof and a peat hearth could be scattered by the gales of one winter.

The principal feature of Phase II is the reinforcing wall which runs from Pier 7 to the entrance. This was built after the collapse of the main wall between Pier 7 and the mutilated wall-chamber. The absence of large stones at the destroyed portion of the wall had been puzzling. In 1953, however, examination of the hitherto unexcavated section showed that an inner reinforcing wall had been built, probably using the original stones of the collapsed walling. A feature of the building is the use of small footing stones bedded in clay. In tracing the inner footings of the ruined wall the doorstep of the recess was found, which indicated that the Phase I entrance was from within. Possibly the thin outer wall of this chamber, or recess, was a contributing factor to the collapse of the earlier main wall, and it seems that some calamity, perhaps a gale, lifting the driftwood rafters, thrust back the section which was subsequently reinforced by an inner wall. At the

¹ *P.P.S.*, XVIII (1952), 180.

two lowest courses of this rebuild, a gritty substance was stuffed between the stones on the inside. This was too carbonised to admit of precise identification, but may have been sphagnum moss.

In Phase II a bench, set to the south of the kerbed hearth, was built probably of stones from the destroyed Pier 8, and to this phase belongs rough paving, superimposed over the beaten clay floors of the bays. Paving also covered the mass of ashy material in the central area, and the square-paved hearth edged on three sides with chamfered stones was set over the original oval fireplace.¹

The Souterrain.

The souterrain (fig. 1, no. 2; fig. 3, and fig. 4, C-D), an original feature, is entered by two steps leading downwards through a narrow passage between Piers 4 and 5. The passage passes under a massive lintel, and beyond this on the right is the opening to a semicircular recess with a cobbled floor. Although the space under the first lintel is only 2 ft. 10 ins. in height, numerous sherds were recovered which suggest that this recess was used as a larder or store. Beyond this a narrow trench 2 ft. in depth was regularly cut in the rock, and runs for 26 ft. down the slope of the knoll. A sill left in the rock below the second lintel indicates that the already small aperture between the two chambers was usually closed. The outer lintel, of the same quartzose gneiss, had been moved, and the lower entrance was partly wrecked so that the opening cannot be reconstructed with certainty, although the sockets of supporting stones to the east suggest the original position. There is no trace of a sill in the rock-cut drain at the lower end of the souterrain, and the trench is carried beyond the lintel round a cobbled area which was covered with ash and charcoal.

To describe this structure, which has Scottish and Irish parallels,² as a souterrain is something of a misnomer; it was by no means underground. The edges of the shallow trench were built up with dry-stone walling, which apparently supported thatch or turf roofing carried from lintel to lintel over a framework set against spruce ridge poles, which must have been of drift-wood. This is indicated by the presence of spruce charcoal throughout the length of the structure. Hazel, no longer common on the island, is also identified, and most probably formed the framework of the roof. The side

¹ The section AB (fig. 4) is composite, and consists of a drawing of the hearth by Lindsay Scott and of the outer walling made during the 1953 season.

² Among the numerous and varying types of "souterrains" the following may be quoted: *P.P.S.*, XIV (1948), 95; *P.S.A.S.*, VII (1876), 165; Foshigarra, *P.S.A.S.*, LXV (1930-1), 300; Jarlshof House III, *P.S.A.S.*, LXVIII (1933-4), 224; Letterkeen, *P.R.I.A.*, 54, C4 (1952), 100, in a house associated with drying kiln and metal-working; Cush, *P.R.I.A.*, 45, C (1939-40), 92, 96, 99; *Ulster J.A.*, XIII (1950), 6; H. O'N. Hencken, *Cornwall and Scilly* (1932), 132. Hebridean examples may be due to the difficulty of building wall galleries for storage purposes, owing to the nature of local stone, and the souterrain at Tigh Talamhanta has the added advantage of good drainage.

walling was backed by earth, reinforced by a peat stack or midden dump, streaked by tips of shell debris. No pottery was found in the space between the second (Pl. VI, 1) and outer lintel, and it is possible that this chamber, with its airflow, which could be controlled from the main souterrain, was used for drying and storing winter provisions.

The Kilnhouse.

The kilnhouse was apparently a lean-to building entered from the main dwelling, and in Lindsay Scott's opinion was used for corn-drying.¹ The west end of this structure was greatly wrecked, but it seems probable that the only entrance was from within the main building. Uprights with covering slabs are built over the hearth, and a paved vent or smoke-hole ends with an upright stone which could have been adjusted to control the draught. Iron remains, which may be of two knives or a pair of shears, were recovered from the kilnhouse (fig. 9, 3 and 4).

The Working-Place.

The working-place to the west of the farmhouse (Pl. VI, 4 and fig. 1, 4) was constructed against the edge of hard rock outcrop. A stone-built seat, backed on to the natural rock, was further heightened with upright slabs and banked with earth so stoneless that a turf construction is indicated. This shelter was probably only partly covered, and a paved drain runs down the centre and under the hearth which was built against upright stones. The cover from the upper end of this drain, which was of the local stone, was smoothly hollowed, and may have been a discarded saddle quern re-used.

The Steading.

The farmyard wall, computed by Lindsay Scott to stand originally 4 ft. high, along the length of the steading, formed the outer wall of a barn and byre (fig. 1, 5 and fig. 3).

A part of the steading was used in the 18th century, and the upper levels were a confused mass of stone with wooden uprights set inside the old walling.

The lowest levels however, sealed by the old turf line, show the footings of a dividing wall laid in the gravelly subsoil, and a second, slightly staggered entrance leading into the byre. Here it may be noted that this rectangular building, with rounded outer corners, was well constructed, so that tradition,² or practical use, such as wind resistance, inspired the circular plan of the farmhouse.

¹ *Antiquity*, xxv (1951), 196.

² Stuart Piggott, *Neolithic Cultures of the British Isles* (1954), 35.

A lined and covered drain runs across the inside of the original byre entrance, following the line of the wall to a carefully built outlet, which opened into a sump where surface water still collects. Beside the dividing wall an upright stone, set well into the gravel, may be the remains of a central roof support. Backed against upright stones, a deep level of peat ash covered the clay-built hearth of the byre, and a heap of seashore sand was found nearby. From the ash an iron ring (fig. 9, 2) and an amorphous iron object were recovered, as well as a fragment of vitreous character which cannot be identified with any certainty. No shell debris, so abundant elsewhere, was found in the ash heaps of this building.

The barn has a square-paved hearth (Pl. VI, 2) laid on the gravel floor; a dump of peat ash filled the angle of the inner wall. Apart from the farm wall which formed the north side of the steading, and was at this point stone faced and rubble filled, the outer walls were of stone with an earth core.

A drain 24 ins. wide (Pl. VI, 3), cut in the soft rock, surrounds two sides of the steading and leads out below the farmyard wall. Built into the entrance of the barn, a holed pivot stone apparently carried the framework of the door (see Pl. V, 3).¹

The Farmyard Wall.

The enclosing yard wall (fig. 1) was stone built where footings were on solid ground, changing to a stoneless, turf-built bank on the marshy ground west of the farmhouse and on the south, as it approached the margin of the Allasdale burn, where no stone-built structure was practicable. Throughout the years repeated spates have varied the course of the burn, indicated by a marshy area in which intermittent mounds are probably remains of the once continuous earthen bank of the farm enclosure, for some form of limitation must have existed if, as the walling suggests, the enclosure was used for stock. The burn itself would normally present no barrier to sheep and cattle.

Indications of a building with a small adjoining courtyard lay near but not against the wall on the east (fig. 1, 6). Examination in 1953 proved this to be a late construction, probably a shieling; the only outstanding feature was a level of clean seashore sand immediately below the turf, the whole nicely dated by a large sherd of late 18th-century crock.

THE POTTERY.

The bulk of the pottery from the Allasdale falls into two main groups of globular bowls and jars. These include some, but not all, of the types from

¹ Another such stone is reported from Foshigarry (see *P.S.A.S.*, LXV (1930-1), 303).

Cletraval, which have been very fully discussed by Lindsay Scott.¹ The Barra sherds, however, show forms which did not figure among the North Uist material, as well as certain individual types.

Much of the Allasdale pottery has a mere skin of well-prepared gritless clay, too thick to be described as a slip, and this covers the heavily gritted paste of the typical ring building and flakes off easily. Sherds from the finer pots have a good surface, but coarser wares are finger-pressed and uneven.

Group I.

Group I pots occur in both phases of the farmhouse and may be plain or decorated (fig. 5). In Phase I the characteristic rim is everted, as shown in nos. 1-14. Only one of these forms is decorated, the big storage jar, no. 1, from the lowest level of Bay 6. In this example the typical ornament is applied immediately below the everted rim. Sherds from the rebuilt wall joined on to the Bay 6 fragments. Another rim sherd from the rebuild is the fine little example no. 5. No. 14, from the lower hearth, is greatly abraded and is of a different character from the rest of the group.

The characteristic decoration of this and related Hebridean sites² consists of an applied fillet of fine clay, pressed into a wavy line by means of a blunt tool, a type of ornament found on pottery from Mont Beuvray,³ and applied bands of slashed or stamped decoration. Nearer home, Lindsay Scott has suggested affinities from south-west England.

The technique of finger-pressing or slashing an applied band of clay has parallels elsewhere, *e.g.* from Traprain⁴ and from Mont Beuvray,⁵ where a sherd with a double row of finger-pressed ornament occurred. Slashed decoration occurs at Gergovia⁶ and the neighbouring sites of Corent and Ronziers.⁶ At Drum na keel,⁷ an Irish iron-working site of a later date, slashed decoration is also reported.

The bowl form, no. 19, a brittle and over-fired pot from Bay 2, can be closely matched by another from Tiree,⁸ and a similar sherd is figured from Eilean Maleit in North Uist. The two fragments illustrated are unlike the bulk of the pottery in paste, and may be from a neighbouring island where wood-fired kilns were used. Professor Childe has pointed out the poor quality of pottery fired by peat alone,⁹ and so inadequate is the firing of many abraded sherds from Tigh Talamhanta, where the heavy accumulation of

¹ See *P.P.S.*, xiv (1948), 57.

² *P.P.S.*, xiv (1948), 68.

³ Bulliot, *Fouilles du Mont Beuvray, Album* (1899), pl. xxvi, 5.

⁴ *P.S.A.S.*, LVIII (1923-4), 257, fig. 13.

⁵ Bulliot, *Fouilles du Mont Beuvray, Album* (1899), pl. xxxiv, 12.

⁶ *Arch. J.*, xcvi (1940), p. 58, fig. 8, 7, and p. 62, fig. 10, 4-7.

⁷ *Ulster J.A.*, 7-8 (1944-5), 27.

⁸ Erskine Beveridge, *Coll and Tiree* (1903), 174, pl. 1; *ibid.*, North Uist (1911), 208.

⁹ V. G. Childe, *Scotland before the Scots* (1946), 31.

peat ash in hearths and dumps suggests its use as the main source of heat, that joins are often impracticable.

No. 15 shows decoration on the body of the pot. This vessel with upright rim is from a later context than the preceding examples, and such sherds from the upper hearth denote Phase II. The upright rim, however,

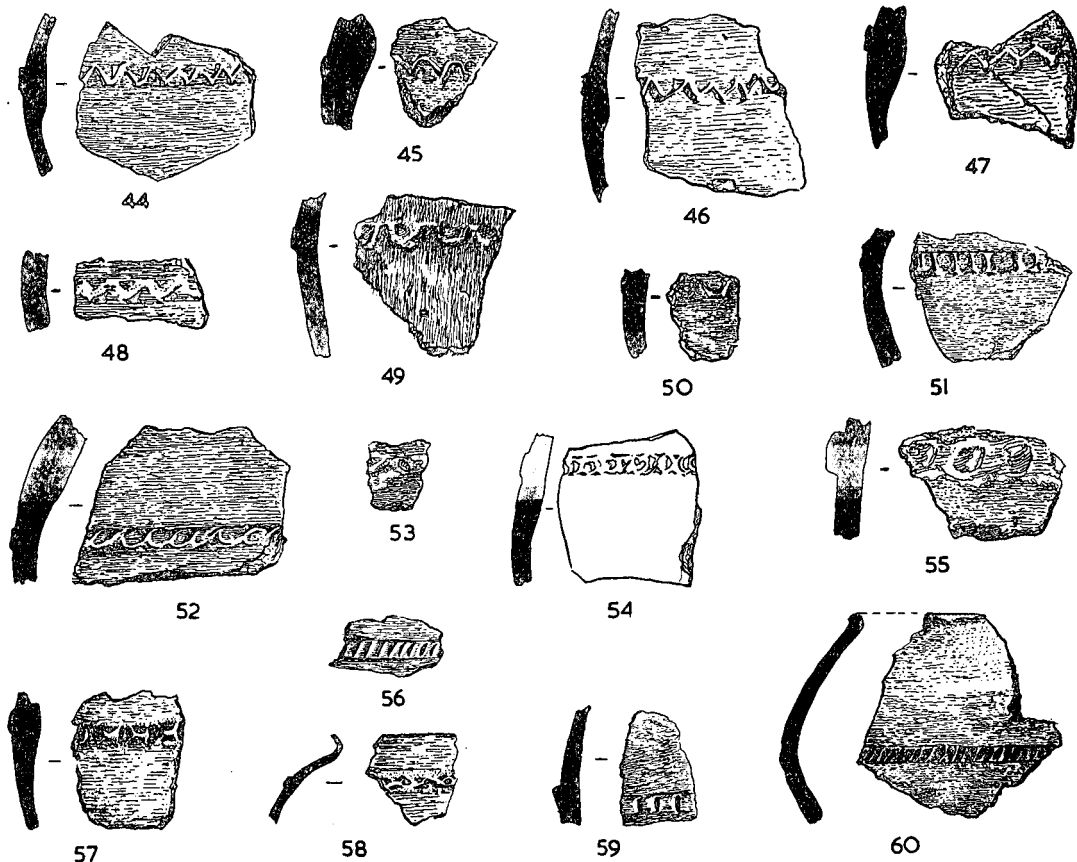


Fig. 6. (Scale $\frac{1}{4}$.)

tended to break away, as in no. 18 (a feature also of the Cletraval pottery).¹ Perhaps owing to the nature of the clay available the rim fell out of fashion, for rimless bowl-forms appear more frequently, *e.g.* nos. 19–21, 30 and 31, as well as coarse, shallow dishes such as nos. 22 and 23.

Fracture sometimes occurs at the join of the ring building (fig. 5, 43), in some examples near the bottom of the pot where the clay ring appears to have been capped over the base, which was apparently made as a separate

¹ *P.S.A.S.*, LXIX (1934–5), 524, fig. 40, 19–21.

unit, and these fractures give the effect of a false rim. From other base fragments it appears that the saucer-shaped base unit, of heavily gritted paste, was squared and covered with the outer covering of gritless clay already noted. Varying forms of decoration from the second phase, where the fillet is applied nearer the greatest girth of the pot (fig. 6), suggest that the ornament has become functional, often covering and perhaps reinforcing the joins of the lumpy ring building by means of the pressure used in working the applied ornament. Pl. VII illustrates the original fine roll of clay deteriorating into a coarsely applied band slashed or finger-pressed into varying patterns.

Group II.

The second group, fig. 7, nos. 61-74, has incised decoration, and includes better fired examples of well-prepared and less heavily gritted paste. The incised patterns are boldly executed, and consist mainly of straight lines and "feathered" designs.¹ A poorly applied wavy fillet, or a slashed imitation of the technique, defines the lower edge of the decoration. This group, mainly from the upper hearth area, and the souterrain entrance, may be compared to pottery from Dun Iadhart in Skye, from Coll and Tiree, Cletraval, and from South Uist. The applied decoration occurs on the body of the pot, and the group may therefore be assigned to a dating coeval with or later than the second phase of the last group.

Certain sherds (fig. 7, nos. 61, 62, 65, 67; and Pl. VIII) show a curious ring pattern made with a stamp. Mr Lethbridge has recently published his account of excavations in South Uist,² in which he illustrates one ring-stamped sherd which resembles the series from Tigh Talamhanta. On comparing the sherds he established that the stamp used was a shouldered pin, of which he found iron and bronze examples. Shouldered pins of this type are recorded, among other sites, from Traprain,³ where they have been dated 1st to 2nd century A.D. This suggests a date for the stamped pottery sequence, allowing perhaps some extension for the pin type in the far west. Sherds from two pots are treated in this manner, and appear to be stamped with different pins. The same bold incised technique is used for nos. 64 and 71 (fig. 7), sherds from one vessel, the slashed pattern forming a raised zone, in imitation of the typical applied decoration. The fragment no. 69 appears to be from a pot decorated in the manner of no. 64. No. 70 has a deeply incised pattern of triangles. The punch used for no. 74 served both for the raised pattern and for the infill of the incised lines.

¹ Dunan Nighean, Erskine Beveridge, *Coll and Tiree* (1903), 174, pl. no. 9, and *P.S.A.S.*, LXXXVI (1951-2), 196, fig. 9, 7; Dun Iadhart, *P.S.A.S.*, XLIX (1914-5), 57, fig. 13, 14; Cletraval, *P.S.A.S.*, LXIX (1934-5), 517, fig. 33, 25; Dunbeag, *P.S.A.S.*, LV (1920-1), 129.

² *P.P.S.*, xviii (1952), 176, fig. 8, 3.

P.S.A.S., XLIX (1914-5), 171, fig. 25, 3; *ibid.*, I (1915-6), 102, fig. 23, 7 and 8.



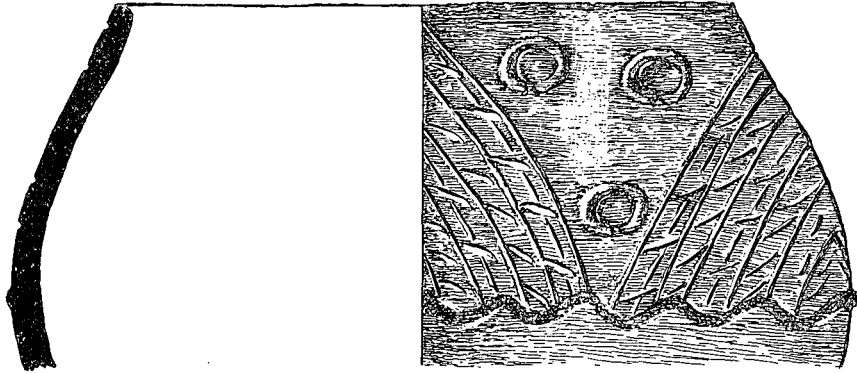
Applied decoration. (Scale $\frac{1}{2}$.)

(See fig. 5, nos. 58, 45; fig. 4, nos. 15, 19; fig. 5, nos. 54, 51, 52, 60.)

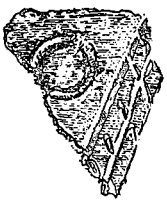


Stamped and Incised pottery. (Scale $\frac{3}{4}$.)
(See fig. 6, nos. 6, 64; fig. 7, no. 84.)

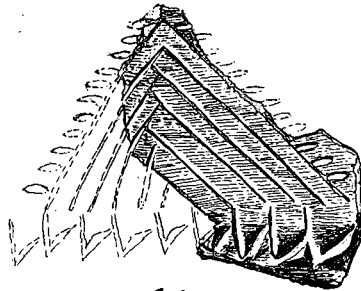
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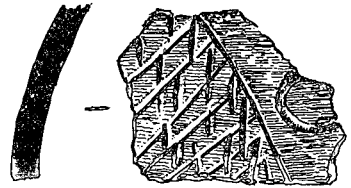
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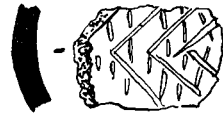
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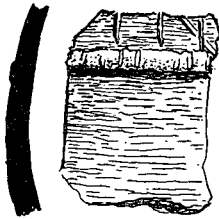
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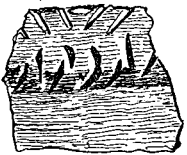
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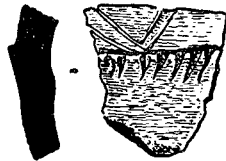
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74

Fig. 7. Stamped and incised sherds. ($\frac{1}{2}$.)

This group of incised pottery indicates the local development of imported characteristics, and parallels from North and South Uist support the suggestion of a Hebridean idiosyncrasy of which, however, an echo may be traced in the North.

I am indebted to Mr R. B. K. Stevenson for the excellent photographs of unpublished comparative material from the National Museum of Antiquities. The sherd from Cnoc a' Comhdhalach, Griminish, North Uist (Pl. IX, 1), is the closest analogy to the ring-stamped ware from Tigh Talamhanta, with its chevron pattern of double incised lines, rather carelessly cross-hatched, spacing the stamped decoration. The raised band of slashed ornament closely resembles nos. 64 and 71 (fig. 7 and Pl. VIII) in technique. Two Orkney examples are shown (Pl. IX, 2) from the Broch of Lingrow,¹ also ornamented with incised lines forming a chevron pattern in which the pin-stamping is centralised. This pot has a slashed cordon immediately below the rim, which recalls a sherd from Corent in the Auvergne, figured by Professor J. B. Ward Perkins.² From the Broch of Ayre, Orkney, another more crudely executed example is shown (Pl. IX, 3), the incised chevron being unevenly executed and the pin stamp incomplete; the sherd is nevertheless reminiscent of the Hebridean series. In addition to these parallels, a sherd from Eye Peninsula, in Lewis (Pl. IX, 4), shows a further development of the stamped motif recognised by Mr Stevenson, who has kindly included impressions of the pattern, which give the clue to the stamp used, a ring-headed pin with movable head. This form is regarded as a later development of the shouldered pin, and suggests that the method of treating pottery persisted. The brushed surface of the pot from Eye Peninsula resembles sherds from Tigh Talamhanta, which are noted as later than the main group of the pottery from that site. With the exception of the last quoted, these sherds also combine the chevron motif with ring-stamping.

The pottery illustrated in fig. 8 shows types of which few sherds were found, and which do not fall into the preceding classification. Nos. 75 and 76 show the lumpy pressed-on bosses also found at Dun Iadhart and Foshigarry.³ It has been suggested that these simulate the round-headed rivets used as decoration in south-western metal forms, but this technique may also be the survival of a half-forgotten native tradition.⁴ No. 78 can be matched by a sherd from Eilean na Tighe and from Galson, as well as from a sandhill site in Tiree.⁵ A sherd illustrated from Kilpheder⁶ is curiously ornamented with

¹ *Scotland in Pagan Times: Iron Age* (1883), 244. Unstratified finds of Roman coins include a denarius of Vespasian, two of Antoninus, and one of Hadrian, and two coins of Crispina.

² *Arch. J.*, xcvi (1940), 62, fig. 10, 6.

³ *P.S.A.S.*, xlix (1914-5), 68, fig. 13; *ibid.*, lxxv (1930-31), 342, fig. 24, 21.

⁴ Cf. Skara Brae, *P.S.A.S.*, lxxiv (1929-30), 190, fig. 28, 1 and 2.

⁵ Eilean na Tighe, *P.S.A.S.*, lxxxv (1950-1), 1, pl. v, 1; Galson, *P.S.A.S.*, lviii (1923-4), 197, fig. 8, 7; Erskine Beveridge, *Coll and Tiree* (1903), 176: Sandhill pottery, pp. 1, 2.

⁶ Erskine Beveridge, *North Uist* (1911), 116.

a thumb-nail pattern which closely resembles no. 89. The fine little sherd no. 82 with dot-filled incised pattern can be compared, Mr Hamilton tells me, to material from Jarlshof. No. 77 is like a sherd from Dun Iadhart.¹ Nos. 79, 83 and 87 are roughly incised and punched or finger-pressed, and resemble early material from Cleittraval.² No. 84 has a circlet decoration apparently stamped before firing with a hollow bone or reed. Nos. 85 and 86 are a

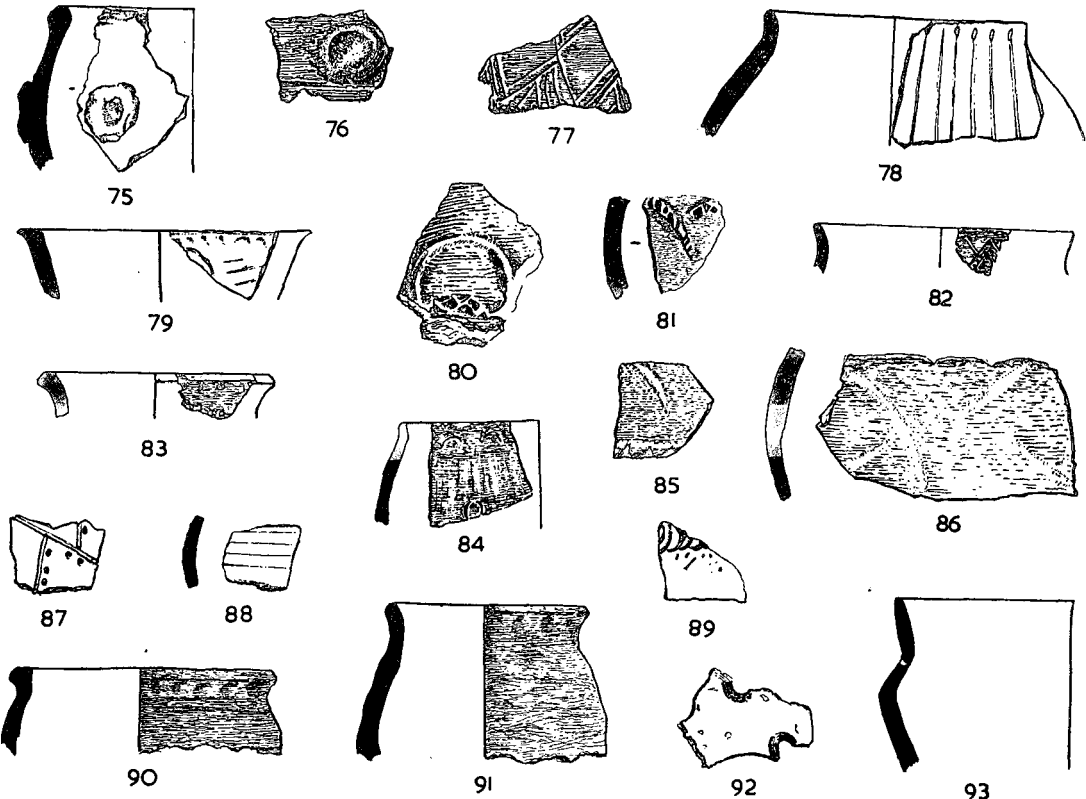


Fig. 8. (Scale $\frac{1}{2}$.)

debased type of the grooved or finger-channelled material which Lindsay Scott classified early in his Cleittraval series.³ At that site the applied decoration is finely executed, and the finger-pressed channels are in a bolder technique than the Barra sherds, which are, apparently, from one vessel and have carelessly channelled lines limited by a slashed imitation of applied ornament. No. 88 is a thin, well-made pot of light red clay unlike the native paste, with regular ribbing, so evenly applied that the use of a slow wheel

¹ P.S.A.S., XLIX (1914-5), 69, fig. 14. ² P.S.A.S., LXIX (1933-4), 516, fig. 32.
³ P.P.S., 14 (1948), 62, pl. viii.

is indicated. No rim or base fragment of this little vessel survives, but the paste and firing suggest an import. The raised circlet and punched decoration of no. 80 is comparable to sherds from Eilean Maleit.¹ A finger-pressed pattern under the rim of no. 90 can be closely matched at Dun Iadhart.² The colander base, no. 92, shows signs of three holes made after firing. The sharp outline of no. 93 is reminiscent of a metal prototype and the two sherds are unique at the site. In conversation with Lindsay Scott he spoke of a third and later stage of occupation at Tigh Talamhanta, but in his working plans no evidence of this can be quoted. It is however confirmed in the pottery, for not only are there sherds which appear to antedate the bulk of the pottery recovered, the dot-filled ribbon, the unevenly scratched groups of chevrons and the raised bosses, evidenced by few and fragmentary sherds, but at the other end of the sequence, perhaps coeval with, but also post-dating the wealth of applied and incised decoration, there is a plain ring-built type, still of globular form, also a laminated ware, with brushed surface. The latter occurs at Tigh Talamhanta in the highest levels and is without character.

In all, 127 rims, 80 bases and 261 decorated sherds were recovered, together with over four stone in weight of plain undecorated sherds, of which ring-built material is the characteristic type.³

CATALOGUE OF POTTERY ILLUSTRATED.

FIG.

- 5.1. Fragments of large storage jar with everted rim, applied fillet in neck angle, well-prepared paste. From lowest level in Bay 6. Rims from rebuild join. Cf. *P.P.S.*, XIV (1948), 59, fig. 5.1A.
2. Everted rim. Cf. as above.
3. Well-prepared clay, surface smoothed. From rebuild. Cf. as above.
4. Burnt and abraded, sharply everted rim. From rebuild. Cf. as above.
5. Sharply everted rim, fine paste. From rebuild. Cf. as above.
6. Everted rim, fine paste, smoothed surface. From rebuild. Cf. as above.
7. Weak outline, well made, few grits. From hearth area.
8. Square rim. From hearth area. Cf. as above.
9. Well made, fine paste, few grits. From rebuild.
10. Coarsely made. From souterrain entrance.
11. Short, everted rim, slightly hollowed, coarse, heavily gritted, sandy paste. From Bay 5.
12. Nearly upright, slightly concave rim, finger-pressed on outer edge, finely made. From central area.
13. Coarse, short rim, thumbled at neck, coarsely prepared red paste, poor flaky surface. From souterrain.
14. Sandy paste, few grits, greatly burnt surface. From hearth. Cf. *P.P.S.*, XIV (1948), 59, fig. 5.1C.

¹ Erskine Beveridge, *North Uist* (1911), 208.

² *P.S.A.S.*, XLIX (1914-5), 57, fig. 13.

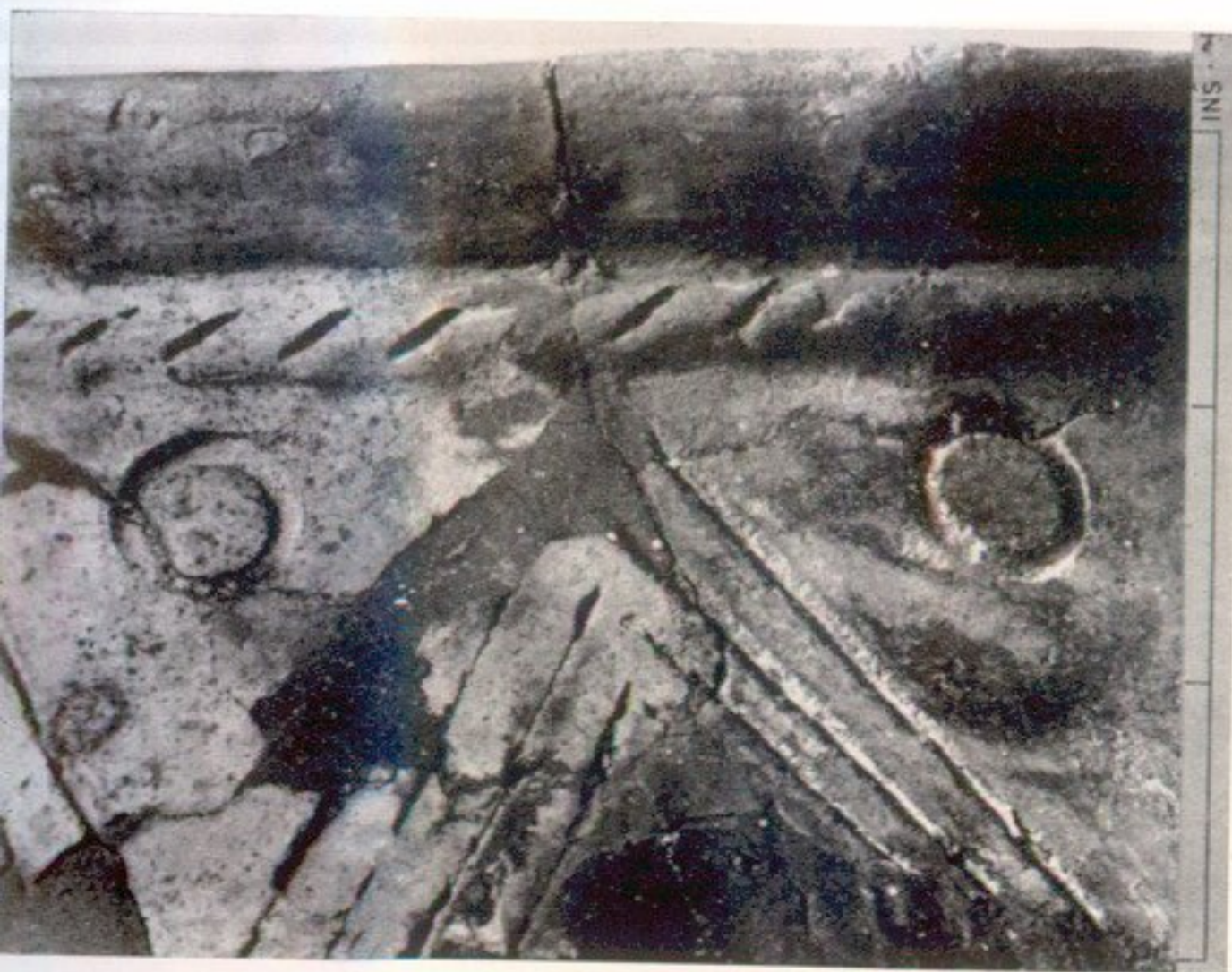
³ See R. B. K. Stevenson, *Man* (1953), 97: "Prehistoric Pot-building."



1. From Cnoc a' Comhdhalach, Griminish, N. Uist.



3. From Broch of Ayre, Orkney, and Broch of Lingrow.



2. From Broch of Lingrow, Orkney.



4. From Eye Peninsula, Lewis.

ALISON YOUNG.

[To face p. 96.

FIG.

- 5.15. Upright rim, swelling body, sandy paste, heavily gritted, inner surface gone, showing ring-building. From upper central area. *P.S.A.S.*, LXIX (1935), 524, fig. 40, 19–21.
16. Tiny sherd of finely prepared, gritless clay. From working platform.
17. Upright rim with concave edge, gritty, abraded. From central area.
18. Upright rim broken at bottom, pale sandy clay, surface gone.
19. Bowl with faceted rim and fillet immediately below edge. Cf. Erskine Beveridge, *Coll and Tiree*, 174.
20. Bowl form with faceted rim, much abraded, marks on inside as though grass had been included in the paste, gritted, ring-built.
21. Sandy clay, good surface, few grits. From working platform.
22. Shallow dish (compare no. 21), abraded. From working platform.
23. Shallow dish, same paste as no. 22, larger grits, well-smoothed surface on rim but finger-pressed over ring build. From outside working-place.
24. Squared rim, coarse, sandy paste, heavily gritted, greatly abraded. From working platform.
25. Bowl with finger-and-nail impressions on top of rim and below, sandy paste, with large grits. From souterrain.
26. Rim of bowl, smoothed, sandy paste. From rebuild.
27. Fragment from bowl or false rim of ring build, burnt and abraded. From souterrain.
28. Finger-pressing below rim.
29. Rim thumbed round, sandy, coarse paste, heavily gritted and abraded. From upper hearth. Cf. Dun Iadhard, *P.S.A.S.*, XLIX (1914–5), 68, fig. 13; Cnoc a' Comhdhalach, Erskine Beveridge, *North Uist*, p. 204.
30. Bowl with slightly out-pressed rim, ring-built, clay well prepared and smoothed surface. From upper hearth. Cf. *P.S.A.S.*, LXIX (1935), 524, fig. 40, 1.
31. Slightly rolled rim, sandy, gritty paste, surface gone. From rebuild.
- 32, 36. Bases, coarse, sandy paste, foot outpressed, no. 32 brushed surface. From souterrain.
33. Very flat base, kicked out, well-prepared paste, smoothed surface. From rebuild.
34. From Bay 2.
35. Base, fine paste, finger-pressed, brushed surface, not ring-built. From central area.
36. See no. 32.
37. Fragment of base, sandy, abraded. From central area.
38. Slightly dished base, fine red paste, well-prepared clay.
39. Base, finger-pressed, ring-built, much abraded. From rebuild.
40. Finely ring-built base, sandy clay, smoothed.
41. Base, finger-pressed, thin wall, ring-built, heavily gritted, well fired. From rebuild.
42. From central area.
43. From Bay 3/4. Described in text.
- 6.44. Finely applied fillet, decoration covering the join. From rebuild. Cf. Foshigarry, *P.S.A.S.*, LXV (1930–1), 344, fig. 23, 4–8; *P.P.S.*, XIV (1943), 62, pl. xi.
45. As above, fine good surface. From working platform.
46. Marked at the back with finger-pressure of ring join. From surface.

FIG.

- 6.47. As above, burnt. From central area.
48. Soft, red paste, few grits, much abraded, showing ring-build. From souterrain, built up in the wall on sill of lintel 2.
49. Coarse applied fillet, on thin-walled pot, smooth, good paste.
50. As above.
51. Ring-built, finger-pressed decoration applied, good, smooth paste. From rebuild, near entrance.
52. Thick paste. From central area.
53. Small fragment, unique pattern, applied band with strokes made with blunt point, fine paste; section shows ring-building. From souterrain, upper chamber.
54. Ring-built, soft, red paste, edges abraded, finger-pressed decoration. From surface.
55. Finger-pressed applied band on well-made pot. From working platform. Cf. Dun Iadhart, *P.S.A.S.*, XLIX (1914-5), 68, fig. 13.
56. Ring-built, applied band slashed obliquely, good paste. See also no. 60. From upper hearth.
57. Good, red paste, applied band pressed on in pillow-shaped motifs, good joins in ring-building. From central area. Cf. *Ulster J.A.*, XIII (1950), 22, fig. 8.2.
58. Very thin, soft, red paste, broken-off everted rim, applied pattern pointed on with blunt tool giving chain effect. From central area.
59. Applied band slashed, ring-built pot, surface burnt away. From rebuild.
60. Fine, red pot, inside abraded, large grit backing, the slipped outer surface showing the marks of burning. Slashed band as no. 56. From central area. Nos. 44-60, cf. Cletraval, Dun Iadhart, Foshigarry, Galson.
- 7.61. Hard, thin paste, ring-building well finished, inside rim much abraded, but one sherd is complete. Geometric incised pattern stamped with shouldered pin, groups of three impressions between chevron motifs above an abraded and poorly applied wavy fillet. From souterrain entrance. Cf. pl. VIII. Cf. *P.P.S.*, XIV (1935), fig. 5, type 4.
62. Stamped with shouldered pin, feathered incised pattern.
63. Fine, hard paste with feathered incised pattern, ring-built, finely joined, well fired.
- 64, 71. Sherds of well-made pot, incised pattern, feathered lines decoration, limited by slashed imitation of applied fillet. See text, p. 92.
65. Incised pattern, with shouldered pin stamp. Simpler technique of decoration.
66. Incised pattern. From hearth.
67. Thin paste showing the thin clay coating covering interior; stamped with pin.
68. Abraded sherd, originally brushed surface with slashed applied band. Thin, well-made ring-built pot. From central area.
69. Fragment from pot similar to no. 64.
70. Well-made and fired sherd with incised pattern of triangles, good paste, burnt. From central area.
71. See no. 64. From central area.
72. Applied band imitated by pressing up clay and slashing, possibly with fingernail; faintly incised chevron pattern above the band. Cf. Foshigarry, *P.S.A.S.*, LXV (1930-1), 343, fig. 23, 19.

FIG.

- 7.73. Applied fillet finger-pressed, faint incised criss-cross pattern. From central area.
74. Four small sherds of a pot in gritless, well-prepared paste, clay pushed up to imitate applied band and punched with blunt point. Traces of feathered incised pattern and infilled ribbon design. From central area.
- 8.75. Globular ring-built pot, applied thumbed-boss. Cf. Dun Iadhart, *P.S.A.S.*, XLIX (1914-5), 68, fig. 13. From Bay 5/4.
76. Fragment of thumbed-on boss with trace of channelled pattern, not incised. From souterrain. See above.
77. Light, red, soft paste, thin-walled globular pot, haphazard chevron pattern, faint trace of applied band, slashed.
78. Rim fragment of light, red, coarse paste, pattern made with point jabbed in and dragged downwards in the wet clay. See text, p. 94.
79. Fragment of small bowl, grey, sandy paste, thumbed along top of rim, signs of poorly incised pattern. Cf. *P.S.A.S.*, LXIX (1935), 516, fig. 32.
80. Good paste, stamped applied band, chain effect and applied raised circle.
81. Curved line of slashed application, light, sandy paste. From Bay 5/4.
82. Very fine rim fragments with sharply incised triangular pattern, dot infilled. Good, finely prepared paste.
83. Punched pattern, light, fine paste. See also nos. 79 and 87.
84. Brushed surface, fine paste, showing stamped pattern made with prepared bone or hollow reed. From central area.
- 85, 86. Finger-channelled fragment with slashed applied band. Poorly executed pattern; compares ill with Cletraval sherds of same technique. From Bay 3/4 and souterrain. *P.P.S.*, XIV (1948), 62, pl. viii.
87. See nos. 79 and 83. Cf. Foshigarry, *P.S.A.S.*, LXV (1930-1), 344, fig. 24.9.
88. Light, red fragments of well-prepared clay, regularly ribbed, perhaps by the finger. The only example suggesting the use of the slow wheel.
89. Thumb-nail decoration on light, rather porous paste. Cf. Beveridge, *North Uist*, 116.
90. Fragment finger-pressed round neck. From souterrain.
91. Distorted globular pot found under seat in outer working-place.
92. Colander base, 3 holes apparently made after firing. From Bay 3/4.
93. Unique form (see text, p. 96) fine paste, sharp outline. From central area, Hearth I level.

SMALL FINDS (fig. 9).

Objects of Metal.

The acid soil of the site was unkind both to metal and bone but the following finds are reported:—

1. At the base of Pier 4 a fragment of metal was recovered. The identity of this fragment can only be conjectured. During 1951 Lindsay Scott asked me to draw this, reconstructed as a brooch, before sending it for examination

(fig. 9, 1). There is no sign of a catchplate on the broken expanded foot, and the spring end was missing, but we cannot discount the possibility of an attempt by a rustic craftsman to fashion a brooch after a style remembered or described. The only comparable prototype would be a fantail brooch of the Aesica type. The cable binding on the Allasdale fragment is reminiscent of ornament on the oval clasp of a silver collar which formed a part of that hoard.¹ Analysis shows that the elements of which it is composed are unusual.² Mr Coghlan reports that the metal is essentially a leaded bronze, with high tin and lead content and an appreciable inclusion of zinc. He notes that while zinc-tin-copper alloys are known from continental Europe, they are relatively rare among finds hitherto examined. He suggests that the object may have been made under Roman influence in Gaul, or, if actually cast in the Islands, that metal of continental origin was re-used for the manufacture of this find. Looking at the rather artless manner of the workmanship, it seems possible that valued scrap metal may have been re-fashioned by an island craftsman.

2, 3, 4. Besides an iron ring from the byre hearth, and the two iron knives from the kilnhouse, little iron has survived. The broken shaft of a pin, a riveted strap-end from the outside working-place, and some unstratified and much corroded nails make up the tale of iron artefacts.

Metal-working.

There was evidence of metal-working at the farmhouse.

7-10. Fragments of clay moulds (Pl. V, 2, and fig. 9, 7-10) were found in the central area; most of them had been used, but one of these had been broken before use. Unfortunately, the pieces recovered are too small to identify the object for which these moulds were made, but the smooth surface of the unused example suggests that the mould itself was made by pressure, possibly from a metal or wooden pattern. Iron slag and broken crucibles were also among the finds.

Beads.

5. Among last year's finds from ash in the reinforcing wall, was half of a yellow bead of vitreous paste, matching another fragment and a whole bead found in former seasons (fig. 9, 5). Parallels for yellow glass beads are found from Traprain,³ from Lochspouts Crannog,⁴ a single find from Dun Iadhart in Skye,⁵ from Meare Lake Village in Somerset,⁶ and from Castle Dore in

¹ Sir Arthur Evans, *Archæologia*, LV (1897), 187, fig. 9.

² Appendix B.

³ *P.S.A.S.*, XLIX (1914-15), 139.

⁴ Munro, *Ancient Scottish Lake-Dwellings*, p. 178.

⁵ *P.S.A.S.*, XLIX (1914-15), 65, fig. 10, 7.

⁶ *Meare Lake Village* (1948), I.

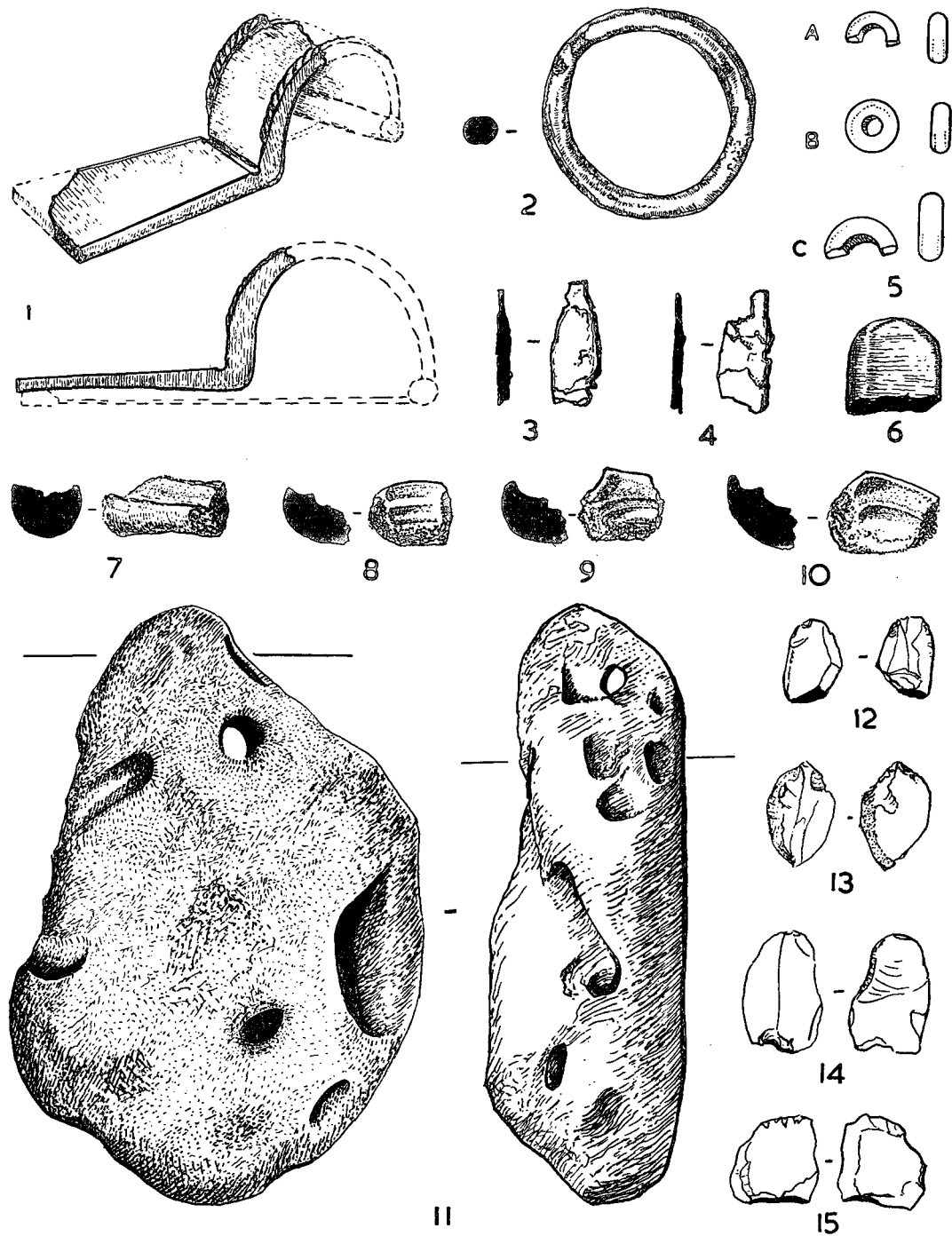


Fig. 9. Nos. 1 and 5 (scale $\frac{1}{2}$); remainder (scale $\frac{1}{4}$).

Cornwall,¹ and are reported among early finds from the Crannog at Lagore, Co. Meath.² I am indebted to Mrs Piggott for her report on these yellow beads (Appendix A).

A curious little perforated stone bead, or pendant, may perhaps come under this heading. Of native stone, this thin slip of micaceous rock was found outside the farmhouse.

Stone Implements.

6. Hammer-stones of every size were numerous. The simplest are oval beach pebbles, abraded at each end, which the workmen called limpet hammers. These implements are reported from comparable sites, and are illustrated by Mr Beveridge in his book on *Coll and Tiree*.³ Beach pebbles of varying sizes occurred at all levels and in some quantity at the farmhouse, and no particular significance can be attached to them, but a broken whetstone was formed from one of these, and rubbers of all sizes were found, as well as many water-rolled quartz stones. Two large beach pebbles of quartz from the rebuilt wall were abraded on three sides, and could have been the rubbers of trough querns such as were found on allied sites, of which however no example was recovered from the Allasdale. A curious little spatulate fragment of tremolite rock was found in the farmhouse, in the upper level. A shaped and well-used rubber of pumice-stone came from the reinforcing wall. Fragments of this sea-borne material are commonly found on the west coast of the island.

Flint Implements.

As no natural flint occurs on the island, the presence of the worked flints is doubtless due to seaweed-borne beach pebbles. The distribution of these pebbles is noted by Symington Grieve in his book on the floating power of seaweed.⁴

Mr Lacaille has kindly commented on the tools:—

12. A flake-scarred fragment of flint pebble. This has also been worked. Since the surfaces are unaltered, the working is of the same age as that of the edge trimming on no. 13.

13. A flint flake from the central area has a retouched, curved margin, the surface of the trimmed area as fresh as the day it was retouched. The working involved the heavy patination of an ancient flake scar, and the upper surface shows signs of earlier knapping. The specimen bears evidence of man's work in two widely separated periods. The surface change on the old scars resembles the effect noted on Mesolithic artefacts from the Hiberno-Scottish province.

¹ *J.R.I. Cornwall*, I, Appendix, 1951, p. 69, fig. 8, 4.

² *P.R.I.A.*, LIII, Section C. 1 (1950), 135, fig. 65, 1382.

³ Beveridge, *Coll and Tiree*, p. 176.

⁴ Recorded *P.S.A.S.*, LXIV (1929-30), 109.

14. A flint of fair quality, actually a core trimming, is a poor flake, made to serve as a concave scraper by fine edge retouch along part of the margin.

15. A scraper, formed from a fragment of tabular vein quartz, has been crudely shaped by blows on the edge and may have been used as a strike-a-light. This came from the outer chamber of the souterrain.

Objects of Baked Clay.

Fragments of two spindle whorls made from pierced sherds were found. (Not illustrated.)

11. A curious object was recovered from the reinforcing wall, which appears to be a distorted example of a baked clay loom-weight. That it had been used as a counter-weight for some purpose is obvious. The core is heavily gritted. The smoothed covering surface is in part destroyed, but there is evidence that sticks were thrust through the top in two directions before baking. Attempts at boring further holes were made, apparently after baking.

For clay moulds see Metal-working above.

SUMMARY.

The farmhouse with its steading and drying kiln suggests an essentially pastoral community, and the iron-working, deduced from slag and clay moulds, is further witness to a self-supporting unit, possibly one of a group, as Lindsay Scott inferred in recording his observation of nearby farmhouse sites. Analysis of the brooch fragment from Pier 4 proves that, whether an heirloom or obtained by barter, the metal is not native to the site; the yellow beads, with their wide distribution, may also be imports.

Charcoal of hazel and birch was identified, trees which would now be difficult to find on the island; extensive grazing may account for this to some extent, for the typical scrub of to-day, brakes of mountain willow, flourish mainly on the steep banks of the burns, beyond the reach of stock. A limited supply of seasoned timber would be available for rafters and purlins, the driftwood which collects on the west coast of the island, where high cliffs alternate with stretches of sand, flanked by the dunes of the machar. Stranded remains of trees are cast up in the south-facing bays. The re-used saddle-quern is in line with finds from Foshigarry, among other comparable sites, where however both saddle- and rotary-querns are reported. Besides shellfish debris, fragmentary remains of bone were found, which Dr Fraser has identified as of sheep and a breed of small cattle, many from immature beasts, and diet was doubtless supplemented by fish and sea-birds' eggs.

The pottery sequence witnesses to a long occupation of the farmhouse. Lindsay Scott gave the 1st century A.D. as the initial date for the Cletraval

farmhouse, and in his opinion the settlement at the Allasdale was not among the earliest of the Gallo-British colonies, so that a date late in the second half of the 1st century A.D. may be suggested as the upper bracket for the Barra farm. The carefully worked out Cletraval series provides analogies, but pottery comparisons have also been quoted from Cnoc a' Comhdhalach, Eilean Maleit, and Foshigarry, in North Uist, while from South Uist there is also a link with Barra which dates an unusual pottery decoration as co-existent with shouldered pins. Such pins have hitherto been dated by analogous finds from Traprain as 2nd century A.D. In the light of Mr Lethbridge's recent discoveries at Kilpheder, and material from Sithean a Piobhaire, a study of the pins which were used as stamps may produce a more precise date for the ultimate occupation of the farmhouse. It is significant that this pottery type is not the earliest in the Barra series. Comparisons have also been quoted from Galson in the Lewis, from the Skye brochs, Dun Iadhart and Dun Beag, across the troubled waters of the Minch, as well as from the nearer islands of Coll and Tiree. In all, though there is a link with Orkney, the picture of the Allasdale settlement which emerges from study of the comparable material and economy is in the main typically Hebridean.

APPENDIX A.

REPORT ON THE THREE SMALL ANNULAR BEADS.

BY MRS C. M. PIGGOTT, F.S.A.

The history of this type of bead appears to be as follows. It was introduced into or first made in SW. England, probably in the 1st (possibly 2nd) century B.C. Large quantities occur at Meare. Carried northwards by trade or settlers into Scotland, the type appears to have been made at least in the Culbin Sands area (where over 250 examples were found from one site in the sandhills) in the early centuries A.D. It was probably from this source that they reached such sites as Dun Iardhard (Skye),¹ Dun Troddon Broch (Glenelg),² Loch Spouts Crannog,³ Aitnock Fort, Dalry (Ayrshire),⁴ and Traprain Law, where they occur chiefly in earlier levels.⁵ A date for them in the 1st or 2nd century A.D. is likely in Scotland, though how long the type persisted is uncertain. A similar type occurs in the Dark Ages, though colour and glaze appear to be slightly different. When more work has been done on the chemical analysis of these beads, it may be possible to distinguish the early from the late beads with greater certainty. In the opinion of the writer, the Allasdale beads are characteristic of the 1st-2nd century A.D., as they are in Scotland. Had they been found in southern England an earlier date would be more likely.

¹ Dun Iardhard, *P.S.A.S.*, XLIX (1914-5), 65, fig. 10, 7.

² Dun Troddon, A. O. Curle, *Antiquity*, I, 290.

³ Munro, *Ancient Scottish Lake-Dwellings*, p. 178.

⁴ Aitnock Fort, Dalry, *P.S.A.S.*, LIII (1918-9), 123.

⁵ Traprain Law, *P.S.A.S.*, XLIX (1914-5), 139.

APPENDIX B.

REPORT ON BROOCH FROM ALLASDALE FARM, BARRA.

BY ALFRED HERBERT LTD., COVENTRY.

Copper	67.05 per cent.	Zinc	1.60 per cent.
Silicon	1.88 " "	Antimony	0.12 " "
Tin	21.32 " "	Silver	0.35 " "
Lead	7.74 " "	Nickel	0.08 " "

The sample was exhausted in making the above analysis, but slight traces of iron, manganese and aluminium were observed.

The metal is essentially a leaded-bronze which contains an abnormal number of minor ingredients, some being present no doubt by accident.

Slag Samples.

Four fragments were tested; one piece selected was darker in colour, and seemed heavier than the rest.

Copper, tin and lead were absent from all these specimens, and it was therefore concluded that they could have no relation, as slags, with the manufacture of the metal used in the brooch.