

## Recent work on Coll and Skye

- (i) Excavations at Sorisdale and Killunaig, Coll
- (ii) Notes on prehistoric and later artefacts from Coll
- (iii) Beaker pottery from Skye

- (i) Excavations at Sorisdale and Killunaig, Coll

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with contributions by

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### INTRODUCTION

Archaeological finds of all periods have been made within the sand-dunes of the NW coast of the island of Coll, and the twin beaches of the northern tip of the island, between Cnoc Mór and Rubha Sgor-innis, 600 m N of Sorisdale, have proved to be rich in remains from the Mesolithic period to more recent times (fig 1). The contours of these dunes change regularly, and the discovery of a burial associated with a beaker vessel followed inspection of the sand-hills by Mr J Crawford after a series of storms in September 1976. The burial was reported to the officers of the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland, who had recently been on Coll in the course of the preparation of the third volume of the *Inventory of Argyll*, and the Commission mounted a small excavation in order to record the skeletal remains; this account is published by courtesy of the Commissioners. An immediately adjacent stone setting, possibly part of a house, was also examined (fig 2). The excavation of two cists at Killunaig, some 6 km to the WSW of the Sorisdale burial, was undertaken on the same occasion (fig 1); although the larger cist had been partly examined by Mr J Crawford in 1973, neither appeared to have been fully excavated previously.

#### *Sorisdale* (NGR NM 272638)

The first indication of the burial at Sorisdale was the discovery of a skull, which had been exposed by the wind, lying about 0.7 m N of a fragmentary stone setting and at a depth of about 3.5 m below the turf level of the adjacent machair. The top of the cranium had been damaged, presumably by animals, and it was decided to move it for safety. The removal of loose sand from under the skull immediately revealed the first few vertebrae of the neck, a clavicle, a humerus and sherds of an All-Over-Cord ornamented beaker. The position of the skull and the beaker as indicated on fig 2 is thus only approximate. Detailed excavation of the burial showed that it had

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been inserted into a grave-pit dug into the natural sand; the pit, which was aligned approximately E and W, was about 1.4 m long, 0.6 m broad and about 0.25 m in depth and had been cut through a thin discontinuous layer of midden material consisting of dark sand with sherds of coarse pottery and limpet shells.

The skeletal remains had not been deposited in anatomical order, and, although the bones at the W end had clearly been disturbed as they eroded out of the sand-dune (the damage to the skull is evidence of this), the rest of the body had not obviously been moved since burial. The major bones have been numbered on fig 2 and are discussed in the Appendix p 81-2. The left arm was in feasible anatomical order – L humerus, radius and ulna (fig 2, nos 7 and 8), but the

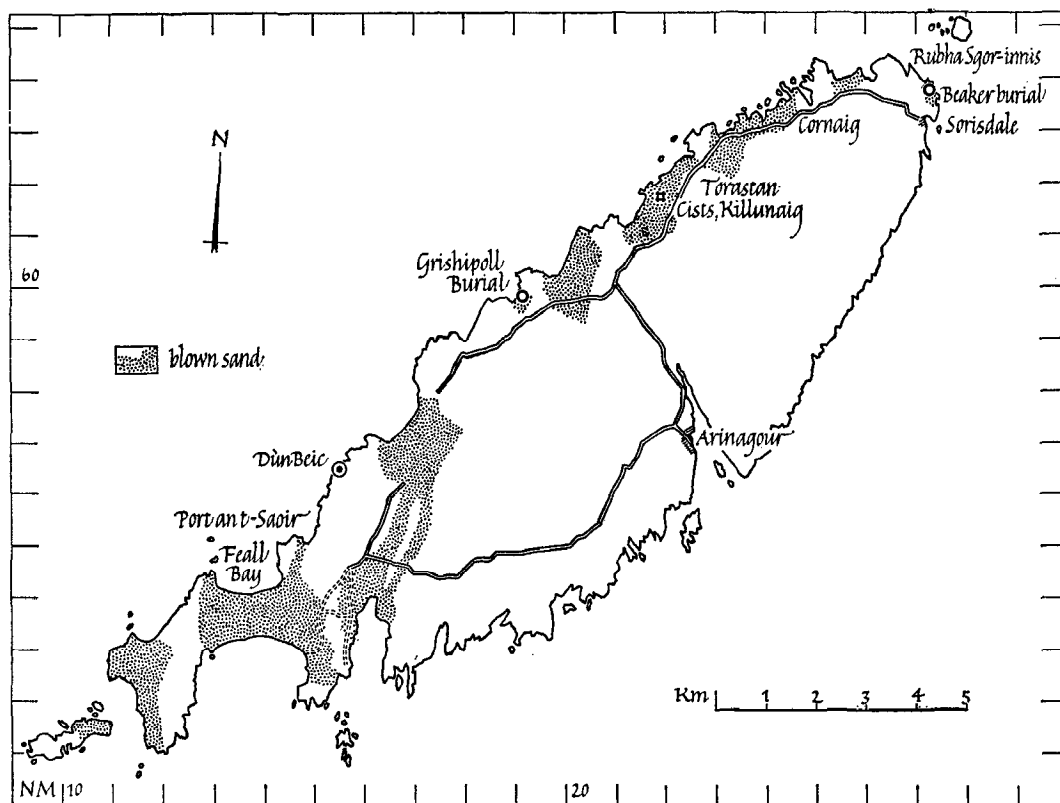


FIG 1 Sand-hills on Coll

right arm was not in correct relationship to the assumed position of the shoulders of the body at the W end of the cist, and it must have been detached at the time of the burial or re-interment – R humerus, radius and ulna (fig 2, nos 9 and 10). A metacarpal shaft (?R 3rd; fig 2, no 13) and proximal carpal phalanx (?3rd) were found at the end of the forearm bones but no other traces of hands were found *in situ*. The remains of the spine indicate that the body was laid with the head at the W end, and the surviving vertebrae show the sequence from thoracic (fig 2, no 3) to the lower thoracic, and first lumbar vertebrae (fig 2, no 4) to the pelvic region (R ilium, ischium and pubis; fig 2, nos 5 and 6). The heads of the femora were to the E – the opposite direction from the pelvis, and thus they too were out of anatomical order (fig 2, no 11), suggesting disturbance or re-interment in antiquity. The presence of the right arm partly beneath the femora has already been

noted. A radiocarbon date of  $1934 \pm 46$  bc (BM-1413) was obtained from analysis of collagen isolated from the femora. There is no certain indication of the feet of the skeleton (although one small fragment may be a metatarsal), and it is possible that two mottled-brown stains in the sand at the E end of the cist may be all that remained of this part of the body (fig 2). Thus the bones were clearly not in anatomical order, but they were not in total disarray. On plan the grave-pit narrows to a central waist where, on the S side, there was an oval upright boulder measuring 0.38 m by 0.12 m and about 0.32 m in height. The top of this stone was approximately level with the top of the adjacent boulders of the house, but evidence for the association of the burial, the midden and the house had been destroyed by erosion. Except on the SE, where the colour of the pit fill was the same as that of the surrounding sand, the edge of the pit could be traced by excavation, with the lower fill differentiated from the compacted undisturbed sand.

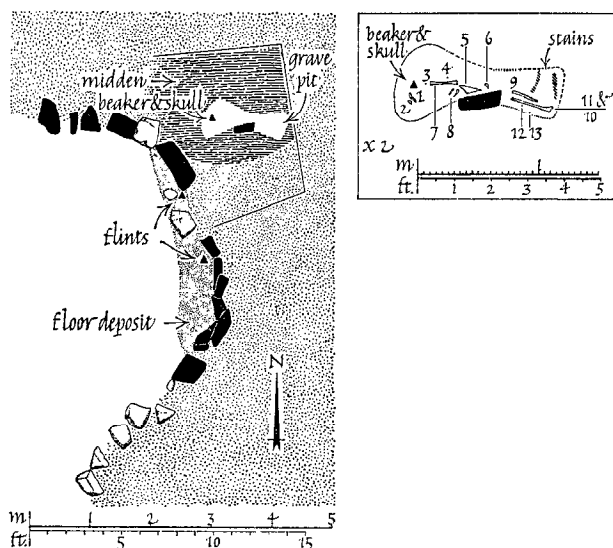


FIG 2 Sorisdale, Coll: burial and possible house

The remains of the stone setting, possibly a house, were situated to the W of the grave-pit; only the arc of the E end of the inner wall-face survives, with a very small area of floor-level close to the line of stones, the rest of the interior having been scoured out to below this level by the wind. The wall-face consisted of stones measuring up to 0.8 m by 0.3 m and 0.35 m in height and set into a pit dug into the sand. There was no trace of an outer wall-face or of constructional features such as posts behind the upright stones. Two stones on the E side had fallen out of position and are, like those that were no longer in position at the SW end of the wall, shown white on fig 2. The floor deposit, which was about 30 mm thick, did not run under the stones of the wall and is thus a contemporary floor rather than a land-surface on which the house was built; pollen analysis of this deposit and of the floor of the grave-pit proved disappointingly negative. Dr G Whittington, Department of Geography, University of St Andrews, reports: 'The samples were treated in hydrofluoric and hydrochloric acids before Erdtman's acetolysis. Previous experience of material derived from the calcareous machair suggested that any pollen content would have been destroyed. Analysis showed an almost identical result to that obtained from a buried soil under a cairn at Kneep on Lewis (DES (1976), 56-7). The midden material contained small numbers and the grave-floor material very large numbers of damaged spores of *Osmunda regalis* (royal fern).

One badly corroded grain of *Corylus* (hazel) was also present in the grave-floor material. The occurrence of the spores comes from a time when *Osmunda regalis* was common in the islands. Today it is confined to a few places where the plant cannot be cropped by animals. Due to the resistance of these spores, as their survival here shows, they could have been in the soil for a very long time. As evidence of environmental conditions, the analyses are uninformative, as are all so far undertaken from machair sites.'

## CATALOGUE OF SMALL FINDS

### *Pottery* (fig 3)

- 1 Small All-Over-Cord ornamented beaker accompanied the burial; almost the complete circumference of the rim and about half of the body survives; the lower part and base, however, are missing. Fine sandy ware with small grits fired to a dull red exterior and light-brown inner surface; the rim is slightly out-turned and there is an undecorated cordon at the carination. On either side of the carination the outer surface is decorated by the horizontal impression of fine twisted cord; the interior of the rim has four horizontal lines of cord impression. Surviving height 77 mm; rim diam 88 mm; wall thickness 5 mm.
- 2 Sherds of a large vessel, of which about one-third survives, restored to a height of about 300 mm, though it must originally have been rather taller, with a rim diameter of about 300 mm; coarse ware, about 14 mm thick with large grits, roughly smoothed outer surface; flattish rim sloping slightly outwards; the vessel has a distinct carination and a rounded belly. The base has not survived. Midden.
- 3 Small rim sherd with flat upper surface and slightly thicker rim than wall, the latter being about 9 mm thick. Midden.
- 4 Rim sherd of sandy fabric with medium grits; flattish slightly out-turned rim; wall about 11 mm thick. Midden.
- 5 Fragment of flat base, about 80 mm in diameter and 11 mm thick, coarse gritty fabric, slight outward beading at the base. Midden.
- 6 Sherd from the shoulder of a vessel similar to no 2 but of smaller size, 9 mm in thickness, heavily gritted, slight vertical rippling on the outer surface. Midden.

### *Flint*

The flint has kindly been examined by Miss Caroline Wickham-Jones, Artifact Research Unit, National Museum of Antiquities of Scotland (*see* p 88).

- 7 Inner flake; pale yellow; corticated; extensive damage along right side; 39 mm long, 34 mm broad, 13 mm thick; core rejuvenation flake; new platform at 90° to old. Floor deposit within stone setting.
- 8 Inner flake; white; corticated; lightly patinated; broken; right side surviving; 37 mm long, 19 mm broad, 5 mm thick. Floor deposit within stone setting.

## DISCUSSION

The fragmentary nature of the evidence limits useful discussion to a brief examination of the parallels for the pottery, the burial-ritual and the house. All-Over-Cord ornamented beakers have been found widely in the sand-hills of Coll, Tiree and on the adjacent mainland at Sanna Bay (Clarke, D L 1970, 513-14), as well as at Kilellan on Islay (Burgess 1976, 200). Very little of this material has been found in association with burials or structural remains, and the Sorisdale example is a useful addition to the comparatively small number of All-Over-Cord ornamented vessels that have accompanied burials (Clarke, D L 1970, 452-5). An All-Over-Cord ornamented beaker, associated with two flint flakes and fragments of metal, was found in a cist at Salen, Mull, about 1883, and fragments of a similar beaker, along with a small flint knife, were recovered from

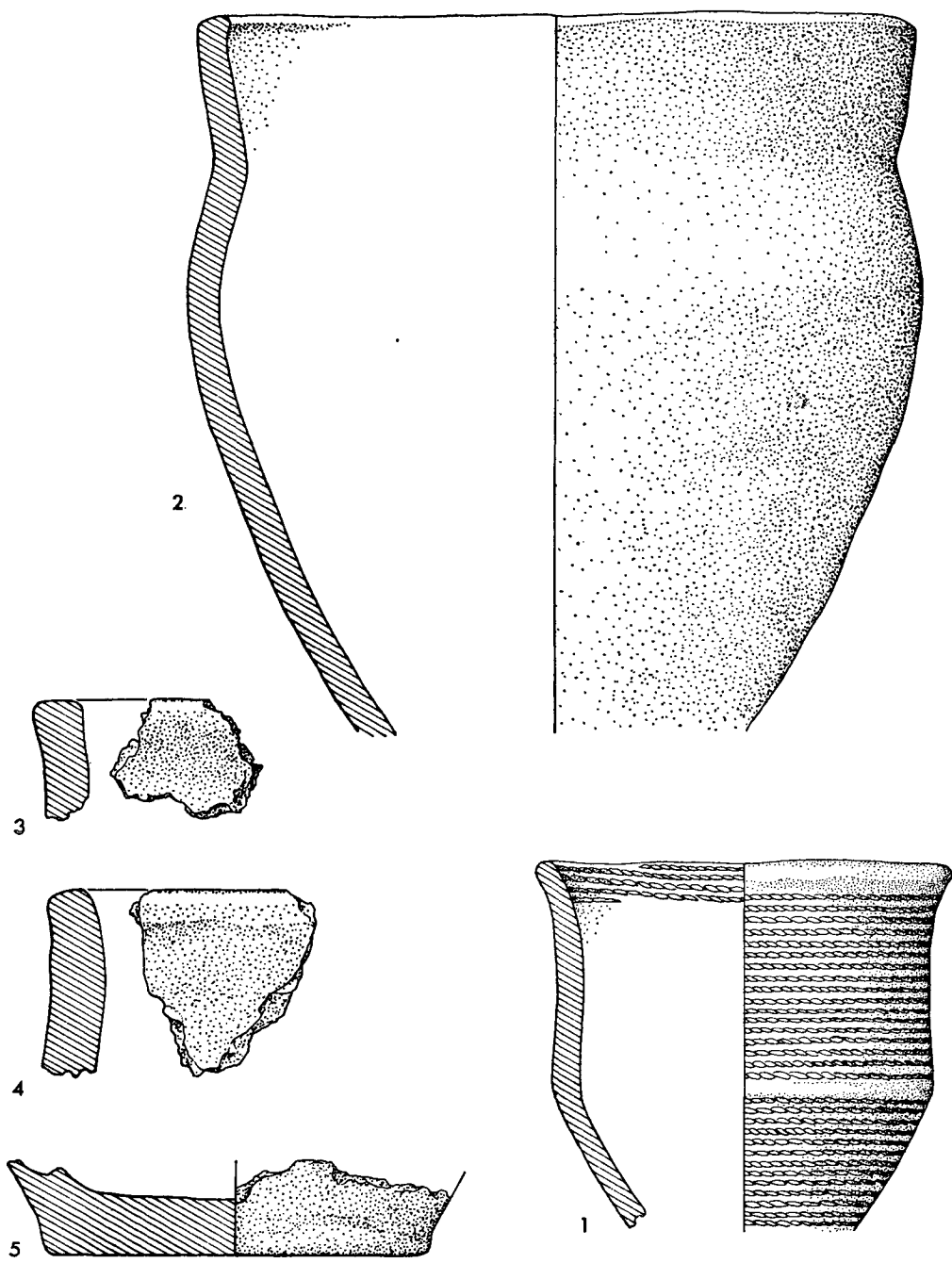


FIG 3 Sorisdale, Coll: pottery from burial (1) and midden (2-5) (scales 1, 3-5, 2: 3; 2, 1: 3)

the inner compartment of the chambered tomb at Dalineun, Lorn, Argyll (Duns 1883, 84-5; Ritchie 1970, 50-1; 1972, 59). The large plain shouldered jar from the midden deposit (fig 3, no 2) may, however, be compared with finds from Kilellan, Islay, and Rosinish, Benbecula (Burgess 1976, 196; Shepherd, I A G 1976, 212); *see also* p 97; there is a rather smaller shouldered jar from a shell midden at Heanish Bay, Tiree (NMAS no HR 1234). The partial dismemberment of the body that had taken place before interment may be paralleled at Skateraw in East Lothian (*DES* (1958), 39); the deposition at Sorisdale shows a similar attempt to observe some respect for the rituals of burial. Burials within middens of beaker date were discovered at Northton, on Harris, where there are also comparable 'houses' (Simpson 1976, 222); dry-stone walling provided an inner face to structures set within the sand, the best preserved measuring 18.5 m by 4.3 m. A series of stake-holes within Structure I were thought to have been too insubstantial to have supported a roof. The surviving walling and collapsed material indicated that its original height could have been 1.5 m; the small arc of surviving wall at Sorisdale gives no impression of such height, and the loose stones in the sand round about would not supply the necessary stone-work. Simpson's suggestion, therefore, that the Northton setting 'served as a revetment to hold back the sand in a pit dug to provide a semi-subterranean shelter for a light tent or hut' (1976, 222-4), has much to recommend it as the interpretation of the Sorisdale setting as well. A radiocarbon date of 1654 bc  $\pm$  70 (BM-707) from the earlier of the two beaker layers at Northton is also of interest, as the pottery associated with this period of activity at Northton is of a rather later style than the All-Over-Cord vessel from Sorisdale (Simpson 1976, 222-6).

Beveridge listed several sand-hill sites on Coll (1903, 33-44), and it is possible that some were comparable to that found at Sorisdale, but in the absence of excavation they cannot be classified; the more extensive dunes have been visited on a number of occasions by the officers of the Commission but no other prehistoric structures have been identified. Only repeated examination of the dune sites and excavation of the fragmentary traces in conjunction with a programme of environmental work, like those undertaken at Dundrum, Co. Down (Collins 1952; 1959), the Udal, North Uist (Crawford & Switsur 1977) and Kilellan, Islay (Burgess 1976), is likely to elucidate further the archaeological potential of the sand-dunes of Coll.

#### *Killunaig* (NGR NM 219617)

In the sand-hills of Killunaig, about 4 km N of Arinagour and 270 m W of the burial-ground of Killunaig, there are the remains of two cists (fig 1; Beveridge 1903, 38); the larger (Cist 1) is at the W end of a low sandy hillock within a hollow in the deflated dunes, and the smaller (Cist 2) is set into the sand about 3 m to the SE. Cist 2 is aligned NE and SW, with the capstone and NE end-slab missing; it was about 0.3 m long internally but narrowed from a breadth of about 0.25 m at the SW end to only 0.18 m at the NE. It was filled with sand which contained a small quantity of cremated bone (Appendix p 84). Aligned E and W, Cist 1 measured about 1 m by 0.55 m and about 0.5 m in depth (fig 4); the capstone was missing and the W end-slab had been dislodged. At the centre of the cist there was a smaller stone box, comprising four side-slabs, a floor-slab and a capstone, and measuring internally about 0.25 m by 0.17 m and about 0.1 m in depth; the capstone was 0.45 m by 0.3 m and 0.1 m thick. The W and E slabs were set upright, but the N and S slabs leant against them, like a playing-card house. The E and W sides were supported by a number of chocking stones as shown on fig 4, and the complete inner box was surrounded by a layer of sand, filling the space between the uprights and the sides of the cist itself. There were two patches of clay on the surface of this sand layer, one in the SW corner of the cist and the other just at the SW corner of the central setting. Human bones were found in three parts of the cist: in the sand surrounding the central setting; within the central setting;

below the floor-slab of the setting. While the bones in the central setting were known to have been examined in 1973, those within the surrounding sand appeared to have been undisturbed, and it is thus interesting to discover that bones apparently from the same individual were found in both deposits (Appendix p 82-4). At least three individuals appear to be represented among the bones and it seems likely that all the disarticulated bones were deposited at the same time, although this is no more than conjecture. Cist 5 at Glenreaddell Mains, Kintyre, contained within it a smaller roofed stone setting, but this shared the side slabs of the main cist structure. Fragments of cremated bone were recovered both from the inner setting and from the spaces between it and the

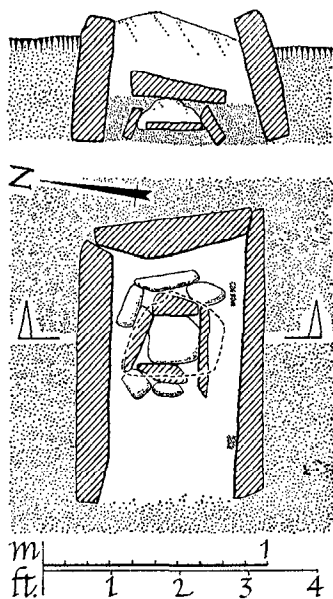


FIG 4 Killunaig, Coll: Cist 1

end-slab of the larger cist, and, as at Killunaig, they proved to belong to the same deposit, although in this case of only one individual (MacLaren 1969, 113). Killunaig Cist 1 is a further example of the diverse group of divided cists and adds another type to those distinguished by Glover for Ireland (1975, 152): the first type includes those divided into two compartments by a transverse slab (MacLaren 1969, 114); the cists of the second and third types are 'semi-detached', with two cists sharing a side- or an end-slab respectively; an independent setting within a cist, as at Killunaig, is yet a fourth type, but no precisely comparable examples can be cited. The interesting problem of the deposition of multiple inhumations and cremations in cists and other forms of burial has been fully reviewed by Petersen *et al* (1974, 49-54).

## APPENDIX

### Skeletal Remains from Sorisdale and Killunaig, Coll

by Dorothy A Lunt, Department of Oral Biology, University of Glasgow, Dental Hospital and School, and A Young, Department of Anatomy, University of Glasgow

#### Sorisdale

*Skull and dentition:* much post-mortem destruction of the facial bones had taken place, and those fragments which had survived were in poor condition. Often the internal cancellous bone had disintegrated

and only the outer plates of the bone had survived. Of the whole face, only some fragments of the jaw-bones and a portion of orbital rim remained. The cranial vault had a large hole in the left parietal region. The broken fragments from this area were lying inside the cranium as it was presented for examination. The cranial vault was almost filled with sand of two different colours. At first the cranial base appeared to be fairly complete, but removal of the sand from the inside of the cranial vault showed that the cranial base had been fragmented and many of the smaller fragments had been displaced.

Some teeth were exposed on the surface of the main mass of sand. These proved to be the L mandibular premolars and molars. Fragments of the outer cortical plate of this part of the mandible and of the L ramus of the mandible had been displaced and were retrieved from loose sand. The teeth were however still in their correct relative positions.

Further clearing of sand revealed the R body and ascending ramus of the mandible and the chin, forming a single intact mass which still contained ten permanent teeth in their sockets. This was closely related to the maxilla, though the latter had been crushed laterally, and the mandible had slid forward and to the left across the maxillary teeth. Some of the maxillary teeth had fallen out of their sockets, but most were still *in situ*.

The dentition was well preserved, only two permanent teeth having been lost *post mortem*. The third molars had erupted, but were completely unworn, and this suggested that they had reached their functional position only a short time before death. The third molar roots also appeared to be complete but close examination of one of the upper third molars showed that the root apices had barely closed.

The teeth are small, but well formed, and there is no evidence of dental disease. There is however one quite rare developmental abnormality: both upper second premolars have failed to develop, and the second deciduous molars are still in place. One of them is in a normal position, but the other has become submerged below the normal occlusal plane and presumably it was partially ankylosed to the alveolar bone. Such retained deciduous teeth may persist for some years in an adult, but are usually lost fairly soon since they are not designed to cope with the occlusal stresses of the adult dentition.

*Vertebrae*: cervical vertebrae 1 and 2; neural arches of eight vertebrae (thoracic) and neural arches of three others possibly T12, L1 and 2; a number of small pieces of vertebrae. *Clavicle*: L and R, each lacking both ends, the R is the lateral three-quarters of shaft – from a small individual. *Scapula*: R, spine and three pieces of axillary margin. *Ribs*: several rib fragments including R and L1. *Humeri*: L and R lacking all epiphyses. *Radius and Ulna*: L and R bones, the former radius is the upper half of the shaft and neck (head missing), and the L ulna is the upper third of the bone less the olecranon process; the R radius is the proximal half of the shaft (lacking the head), and the R ulna is the shaft, lacking both lower (distal) end and the olecranon process. *Carpal bones*: a proximal phalanx (?3rd) – lacking base, shaft of a metacarpal lacking both ends (?R 3rd), distal two-thirds of a proximal carpal digital phalanx (?4th digit). *Ilium and Ischium*: R, no epiphyseal surfaces present, the ischium survives only in part. *Pubis*: R. *Femur*: L and R, both lack whole of lower ends and also greater and lesser trochanters, but the heads of the femora are fused to the shafts, possibly the trochanters were in process of fusion. *Fibula*: R, lacking both ends. *Metatarsal*: piece of shaft of a bone lacking both ends – ?1st R metatarsal.

The major bones found *in situ* are indicated on fig 2: 1, L clavicle; 2, R scapula; 3, rib fragments and thoracic vertebrae; 4, rib fragments and vertebrae, possibly thoracic 12 and lumbar 1 and 2; 5, R ilium and part of R ischium; 6, R pubis; 7, L humerus; 8, L radius and L ulna; 9, R humerus; 10, R radius and ulna, below no 11; 11, R and L femur; 12, R fibula; 13, ?R 3rd metacarpal fragment.

There is nothing to suggest the presence of more than one individual. The evidence of the third molars suggests that the most likely age of the individual at death was about 20–22 years, and the relatively slight amount of wear of the other teeth supports this estimate. The other anatomical evidence suggests an age of between 15–20 years – the size of the clavicles and the absence of almost all epiphyseal parts suggesting 15–16 years, while the fact that the femoral heads are fused to the shafts indicated an age of 18–20. Taking both types of evidence therefore the probability is that the inhumation is that of a slightly built female aged about 20 years.

### *Killunaig, Cist 1*

#### *Bones from Cist*

*Skull and dentition*: R zygoma with a portion of maxilla attached to it; L temporal bone fragment with root of zygomatic process and the temporo-mandibular joint surface; a coronoid process (?L); part of R side of sphenoid bone; a number of fragments of skull vault; fragmentary L mandible with



sockets for  $\overline{3-11-8}$ ; isolated upper right 2nd permanent incisor ( $\overline{2}$ ); isolated lower right 2nd premolar ( $\overline{5}$ ); isolated upper right 1st permanent incisor ( $\overline{1}$ ). *Clavicle*: middle third of L. *Vertebrae*: part of an atlas with arthritic changes; fragment probably from another atlas; part of the body of a thoracic vertebra (?T1) with arthritic changes and probably non-fusion of the epiphyseal rings; the body of a vertebra – possibly a low thoracic one – from an individual of 14–16 years, the epiphyseal plates had not fused; three fragments. *Ribs*: L 2nd rib; two other L ribs; two from the R side, one of which shows arthritic changes at the tubercle; nine other rib fragments. *Scapulae*: part of the vertebral border and medial part of the spine of R scapula; part of the glenoid surface of ?L scapula; acromion process of R scapula. *Radius and Ulna*: part of the shaft of a young person's forearm bone, probably belongs to the L radius of the youngest individual identified (see p 84); upper end of a large L ulna; middle third of shaft of a large R ulna; *Carpals*: R triquetral and two other carpal bones which were too damaged for accurate identification. *Metacarpals and Phalanx*: L 2nd metacarpal lacking the head; L 3rd, 4th and 5th; phalanx – ?from L 1st digit. *Sacrum*: two fragments. *Innominate Bone*: fragment from beside great sciatic notch (R). *Femur*: L patellar surface – fits condylar portion from inner setting (see p 84). *Fibula*: the lower end (malleolus) of a large L fibula. *Tarsals*: talus, a pair; navicular, one R; cuboid, one R and one L; cuneiform, L lateral. *Metatarsals*: R 1st; proximal two thirds of R 5; two examples of proximal half of L 5; distal half of one and the mid-shaft of another. There was a piece of a long bone with the epiphyseal/metaphyseal surface. This was most probably a tibia of a human under 18 years – perhaps between 14 and 16 years of age. In attempting to identify it more certainly it was sawn through lengthwise; the cut surfaces reveal several 'Harris' (growth) lines indicative of periods of impaired growth such as result from illness or malnutrition. There were also a number of assorted fragments including bits of thick skull vault, of heavy long bones and part of the head of either humerus or femur.

#### *Bones from central setting*

*Skull and dentition*: two portions of the vault of a rather thin skull, and a R temporal bone lacking the petrous portion; three other pieces of vault, one of a rather thick skull; piece of skull vault and mastoid region of a R temporal bone; fragmentary R mandible with sockets for  $\overline{8765}$ , lacking ramus – fitting the L mandible from the area outside the central setting; fragmentary L mandible with sockets for  $\overline{67}$ , lacking part of the condyle and a part of body; lower left 2nd premolar ( $\overline{5}$ ); lower left 2nd permanent molar ( $\overline{7}$ ); lower right 1st and 2nd permanent molars ( $\overline{6}$  and  $\overline{7}$ ); posterior part of the outer wall of a mandible. *Clavicle*: R, lateral two thirds of shaft, both ends are missing. *Vertebrae*: 2nd cervical vertebra lacking the inferior epiphyseal part of the centrum; L side of the odontoid process is irregular compared with the R. L atlanto-axial articulation surface is worn down, grooved and rough compared with the R, denoting arthritis; the age might be up to 25 years; the corresponding atlas was found in the cist. Thoracic vertebrae – probably T2, 3 and 4 of an adult; neural arch probably of an upper thoracic vertebrae lacking the spine; one thoracic vertebra, damaged, the upper epiphyseal ring of the body was fused. A lumbar vertebra, posterior half of body, pedicles, laminae and most of spine, the upper ring epiphysis for the body has possibly fused but the lower one has not; there is slight arthritic flipping of the upper articular facets – age would be around 24–25 years; R half of adult (?4th); R half of ?L1 – the epiphyseal parts of the centrum are not fully fused – age under 25 years; ?L1, damaged, the upper epiphysis of the body was probably not fused, age under 25 years. *Ribs*: R 1st, R 2nd, ten other fragments. *Scapulae*: the root of the spine from two L scapulae, one of heavier build than the other; two R scapulae represented by their glenoid surfaces, part of the spine and acromion processes, on one a part of the acromion is missing, on the other the acromio-clavicular joint surface suggests an old dislocation of this joint. The former may be the match of one of the L scapulae above, but the latter seems to fall between the two L scapulae in size. *Humeri*: R complete in two pieces (length = 312 mm), heavy build; height = 1.63 m to 1.66 m; L, lower third only – not as heavy build as the R above, and they are probably not a pair, but both are fully adult; lower third of R humeral shaft. *Radius and Ulna*: radius, upper third lacking epiphysis of head; ulna, upper two thirds lacking olecranon epiphysis; these seem to form a L set from an individual possibly around 12–14 years (upper limit of 18 years); radius – intact, R, adult (length = 224 mm), probable height 1.58 m to 1.61 m if male or 1.6 m to 1.65 m if female; ulna, R, though lacking both ends this R ulna seems to match the previous radius; part of the shaft of a ?L radius; shaft in three pieces of R ulna – head missing; R radius lacking both ends seems to match a complete R ulna, adult. *Carpus*: 2 proximal, 1 intermediate and 1 distal (thumb) phalanges – adult; a proximal carpal phalanx – ?R 3rd digit – from an adult of heavy bone structure. *Sacrum*: upper fragment carrying the superior articular facets, upper

two neural arches and R auricular surface. *Innominate Bone*: the auricular surface and a little of adjacent bone of the L side. *Femora*: a pair, the R lacks both ends, the L lacks lower third, and all epiphyses of the upper end. The age is under 18 years and probably nearer 12-14 years; popliteal surface of an L femur, posterior half of medial condyle which fits the popliteal fragment and a patellar surface fragment from the main cist, piece of another condyle, both of these show complete fusion of epiphysis with shaft; two pieces of the shaft of an L femur and part of a head. *Patellae*: a complete L one and the articular surface of another. *Fibulae*: the head and upper end of shaft of what must have been a massive R fibula; the lateral malleolar part of possibly a second R bone. *Tibiae*: L, mainly condylar surface, fully fused epiphysis, ie over 22 years of age; upper third of a shaft showing epiphyseal surface, age around 14 years. *Tarsus*: a pair of talus bones; L navicular bone. *Calcaneum*: R, upper articular surfaces and sustentaculum. *Metatarsals*: R 2nd and R 4th adult; R 1st, lacking basal epiphysis, ie age under 20; fragment possibly the head of a large 1st metatarsal. Fragmentary bones include ? femoral shaft, ? humerus shaft. *From beneath central setting*: there are five pieces of bone - one is probably from a long bone - the other four are from ribs; one may be human, the second cannot be identified as to species, the third, a piece of shaft, is possibly bovine, and the fourth is the vertebral end of a rib possibly sheep or deer.

### Conclusions

The following associations can be made on the dental evidence: the R mandible from the inner cist fits perfectly with the L mandible from the cist (individual 1). The L mandible from within the central setting represents a second individual.  $\overline{5}$  from the main cist belongs to individual 1;  $\overline{7}$  from the central setting belongs to individual 1;  $\overline{7}$  from the central setting belongs to individual 2; the other 4 teeth do not belong to the fragments of mandible.

*Individual 1* The permanent teeth were fully erupted, and the amount of attrition of  $\overline{7}$  suggests that the individual was a mature adult, possibly in the early thirties. There is considerable evidence of periodontal disease. The  $\overline{6}$  socket shows severe infection, and the tooth was probably lost before death. There is also loss of alveolar bone in the  $\overline{78}$  areas. There is some bone loss round the standing  $\overline{7}$ , and signs of inflammation in  $\overline{6}$  socket. One small, very early carious lesion is present in the cementum of  $\overline{5}$  (the remaining teeth from all individuals are caries-free).

*Individual 2* The degree of attrition of  $\overline{7}$  is even greater than that of  $\overline{7}$  in individual 1, and suggests an age at death perhaps in the mid forties. In this individual also, there is evidence of relatively advanced periodontal disease. Severe bone loss has occurred round  $\overline{7}$ , and  $\overline{8}$  has almost certainly been lost *in vivo*.

From an anatomical point of view clearly several individuals are present - one at least, was of heavy build, another was probably under 25 years, yet apparently had quite severe arthritic changes in his/her cervical spine, and one was probably about 12-14 years (under 18 years). It is not possible to say whether there were only three individuals. The height of one individual was possibly around 1.58 m to 1.65 m (from a R radius); and a L humerus gave a possible height of 1.63 m to 1.66 m - one cannot say if these two bones came from the same individual.

### Killunaig, Cist 2

*Cremated Bones*: part of the ramus, Right side of a mandible and the distal ends of two phalanges, probably carpal intermediates; the remaining fragments were too small to be identifiable.

Miss Mary Harman has kindly contributed the following note on cremated bone discovered by Mr Crawford in a rabbit hole adjacent to Cist 2: 'The remains consist of a small quantity of calcined bone, weighing 210 g and composed mainly of fragments of long bone shaft, the largest being 50 mm in length, though there are also several skull vault fragments, part of a temporal bone, and a tooth root. The remains suggest that an adult or sub adult is represented; there is no evidence of more than one individual. Only a token collection of ashes appears to have been deposited.'

## (ii) Notes on prehistoric and later artefacts from Coll

Joanna Close-Brooks,\* Alan M Lane,† J N Graham Ritchie and  
Caroline Wickham-Jones

During the past century the sand-hills of Coll have been the source of several extensive collections of surface-finds, the two most notable being those of Erskine Beveridge and Ludovic Mann. The recent presentation to the National Museum of Antiquities of Scotland of much of a third major collection, that of Mr John Crawford, has prompted the preparation of this note to provide a catalogue of some of the more important items. All the material in the catalogue is in the National Museum, unless otherwise attributed, except the bone pins and bronze brooch from Sorisdale (fig 7, nos 10, 11 and 13), which are still in Mr Crawford's possession.

*Rubha Sgor-innis* (NGR NM 273638)

In general the material from the sand-hills of Coll cannot be associated with any structure nor with any other finds, but one collection of flint and stone objects was found by Mr Crawford in a small area of sand-blow at Rubha Sgor-innis. Although the problems inherent in material collected from dune-sites cannot be forgotten, the flint and stone tools were found eroding from the old land surface in a small patch, and there is some likelihood that they are contemporary. Dr Close Brooks has provided the catalogue and discussion of the stone tools and Miss Wickham-Jones has contributed the section on the flint-work.

*Stone: bevelled pebble tools*

Mr Crawford found eight elongated pebbles, with one end bevelled by abrasion, in the same restricted area as the flints described below, and four examples are illustrated on fig 5, nos 3-6.

- 3 Pebble, wider end double-bevelled, 47 mm long.
- 4 Pebble, wider end single-bevelled, 48 mm long.
- 5 Flaked pebble, wider end double-bevelled, 34 mm long.
- 6 Pebble, wider end double-bevelled, 56 mm long.

Two of these pebbles have been deliberately flaked into shape (eg fig 5, no 5); the rest retain their natural surface except for the bevelled end.

Similar pebbles with ground bevels at one or both ends have been found in Mesolithic contexts on Oronsay and on the island of Risga in Loch Sunart, Argyll (Lacaille 1954, 216-17, 223-4, 233). They are also known from Wales (Wheeler 1925, 45-6; Grimes 1951, 17). The pebbles are described conventionally as 'limpet-scoops', for scooping limpets from their shells, or 'limpet-hammers', for knocking limpets off rocks (Lacaille 1954, 216-17, 223-4). No conclusive proof has yet been produced for either interpretation. It is hoped that further practical experiment may shed light on the problem. Meanwhile the new find has extended the distribution of these tools; there must be many more awaiting discovery in the coastal areas of Western Scotland.

*Flint*

The collection is basically a pebble industry based upon locally collected beach pebbles; no stone other than flint is represented among the flaked stones but this may reflect collection

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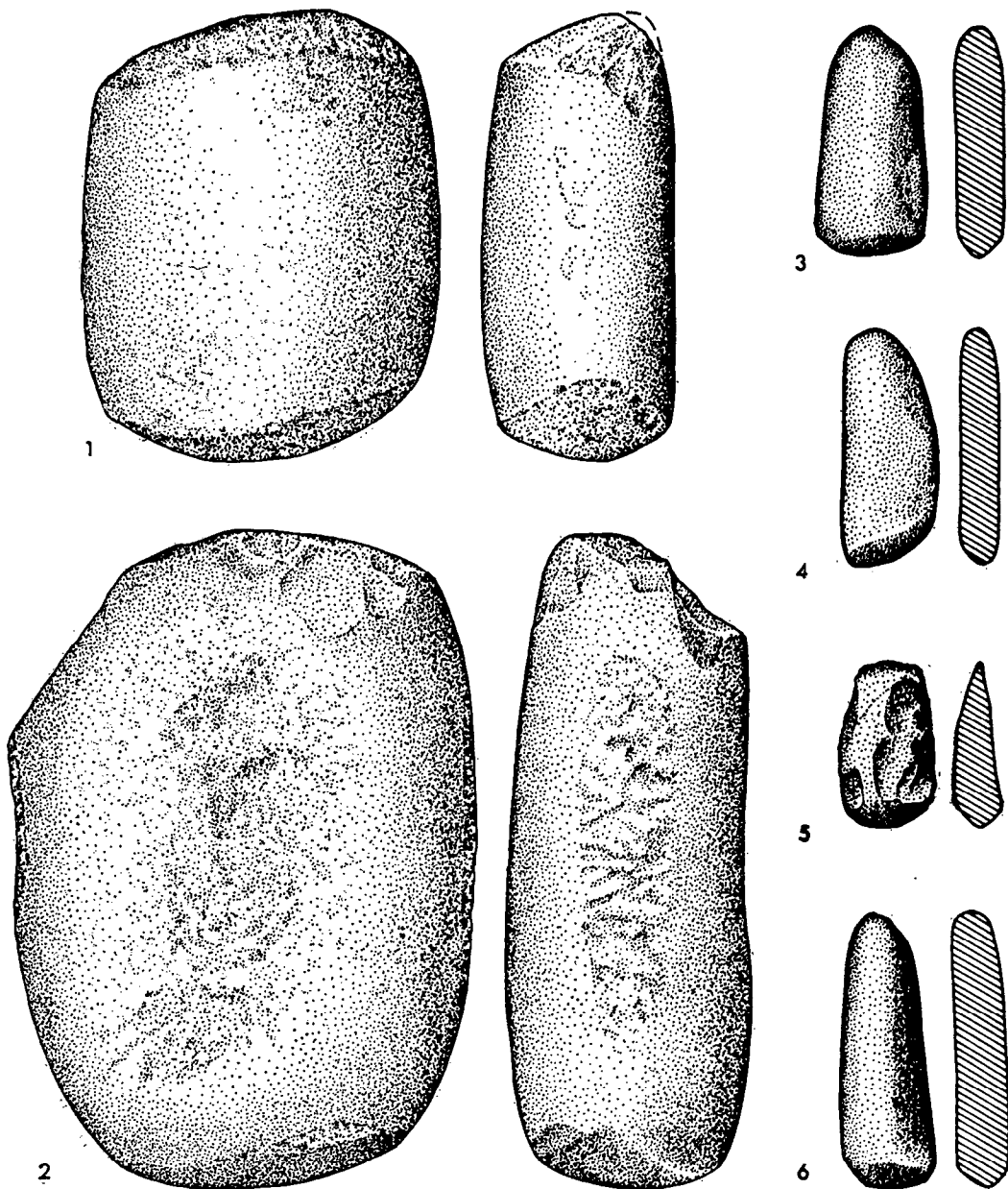


FIG 5 Sorisdale, Coll: stone implements (scale 2 : 3)

procedures. An impression of the quality of the raw material being worked may be gained from the pebbles themselves, both complete and split, which remain in the assemblage. Amongst the pieces there is much evidence of natural flawing and cracks, caused presumably by the action of frost upon the material. While some of this may be subsequent to the deposition of the material, an amount must be older and must certainly have affected its knapping. Many of the nodules were relatively small, much of the flint was of poor quality and was even rendered useless by the flaws.

Some of the pieces show the abraded evidence of earlier flaking and it is clear that any sizeable piece of flint that could be found in the dunes was being used as well as fresh nodules collected from the beach. Most of the pieces are heavily corticated and many show varying degrees of patination; these conditions are likely to have developed after deposition and need not therefore be taken into a consideration of the assemblage in use.

A raw material based upon beach pebbles places certain limitations upon the knapper, and it is possible to see these limitations reflected in the characteristics of the pieces. All four cores are small and rounded, and only one has strikes removed all around. The flakes themselves show a preponderance of diffuse bulbs of percussion suggesting the use of soft hammers rather than heavy hammerstones. There is, however, very little evidence of the damage at both ends of the ventral surface, which would point to the use of the bipolar technique of knapping, often with indirect percussion through a punch, onto an anvil. It would seem that during knapping the pebbles were held in the hand or rested upon the knee, and the presence of spontaneous retouch on many of the pieces would support this interpretation. These are small regular retouch-like scars which cover short stretches of the edge and are caused by the flake pivoting against the core, and thus 'flaking' itself upon removal when it is hand held. The hand, of course, would normally cover the flake to prevent its dropping to the ground and becoming damaged.

Several of the flakes display platforms that have been prepared by the removal of a few large flakes. This, together with the presence of several core-trimming flakes among the inner flakes, points to the general care that was taken in knapping to make the most of the raw material. The core-trimming flakes are all small with a central ridge on the dorsal face and much damage extending down from the proximal end. Their purpose is usually to remove the protrusions left at the edge of a core by the removal of flakes and indeed they indicate the presence of cores more extensively worked than those represented in the collection. Other flakes, and one of the cores, utilise platforms made from the natural cortical surface of the pebble.

### *Tools*

There are seven unretouched blades or fragments of blades in the collection. They are all relatively small, although two are broken with only the proximal ends surviving; two are irregular blades. Several of the pieces have been retouched but there are none that would readily fall into categories covered by conventional typology. In the absence of microscopic wear-studies, it is impossible to order them according to function, and thus discussion must largely be confined to the descriptions which are set out in the catalogue. It may be seen from this that two pieces are blades that have been retouched, seven are secondary flakes and six inner flakes. Primary flakes are poorly represented in the assemblage as a whole and none have been retouched. Only one piece approaches a conventional tool type; this has been classed as a scraper preform. It is more than a simple blank upon which a scraper or other tool could have been made, as irregular retouch has already been carried out upon the piece. The other pieces have been described either as retouched flakes or miscellaneous tools. In the case of retouched flakes an attempt has been made to classify the areas of retouch. Miscellaneous tools are pieces that either carry more complex retouch (including for example inverse retouch on the ventral face), or have been broken so that the total extent of the retouch cannot be gauged. There are therefore four miscellaneous tools, three broken and one with a complex retouch pattern. In addition there are eleven retouched flakes and blades, four dual-side retouched flakes, three single-side retouched flakes, two end-retouched flakes (one with the edge retouched from both faces), and two retouched denticulates. There is also one tool without retouch which bears the extensive damage normally associated with fabricators or strike-a-lights.

None of the retouched edges are deep enough to be called scrapers, and the production of a scraper-based industry does not appear to have been the intention. It must, however, be borne in mind that, as the collection comes from a surface scatter of flints within the dunes, much of the assemblage may already have been lost or may await further erosion to expose it. The retouch indicates the alteration of pieces for a set of specific purposes; what these purposes were cannot, however, be determined and thus the general functional nature of the assemblage must remain uncertain.

## CATALOGUE

Notes to the Catalogue and to entries on pp 78 and 92.

- (i) All pieces are flint unless otherwise stated.
- (ii) In classifying the pieces, although conventional typology has been used, few are readily paralleled; other pieces have conventional names which imply too definite a description of function. The term 'retouched tool' has therefore been used together with an attempt to describe the position of the retouch, and in the latter case the conventional name has been placed in parentheses.
- (iii) An irregular blade is one where the length: width ratio is at least 2 : 1 but where the sides are not parallel or straight.
- (iv) Dimensions are given in millimetres in the order length: width: thickness, although in the case of pebbles these axes have obviously been arbitrarily chosen.
- (v) Dimensions of unretouched flakes and split pebbles are not given.
- (vi) During examination, the pieces have always been held with the dorsal face uppermost and the proximal end towards the observer.
- (vii) Colour has been indicated in the case of catalogue entries of single flints to show the variation among the assemblage.
- (viii) Cortication refers to the matt discoloration, usually white or cream, which may cover the surface of a flint with age. Patination is the lustrous sheen that may subsequently develop (Shepherd, W 1972, 114-18).
- (ix) Entries marked with an asterisk are those considered to be tools. Allocation of a name has been left to the end of the entry as this is largely a subjective matter and it should in any case be remembered that totally unretouched pieces may have formed efficient implements.
- (x) The following abbreviations have been used: lt: left edge angle; rt: right edge angle; d: distal edge angle.

- 1 Core; white; corticated; single platform; three strikes; one sided; 41:27:17.
- 2 Core; pale grey; partially corticated; lightly patinated; single platform; 3 strikes; one sided; 36:25:20.
- 3 Core; cream; corticated; two platforms at right angles; four strikes; one sided; 37:77:30.
- 4 Core; white; corticated; lightly patinated; natural cortex platform; four strikes all round; 29:28:14.
- 5 Three pebbles; two corticated; all patinated; frost flawed and cracked; 54:43:45; 41:34:12; 32:27:22.
- 6 Seven split pebbles; corticated; four lightly patinated; some evidence of frost cracking.
- 7 Ten primary flakes; all corticated; all patinated.
- 8 One hundred and five secondary flakes; one hundred and two corticated; seventy four patinated.
- 9 Seventy-nine inner flakes; all corticated; sixty-one patinated.
- 10 Heated; one primary flake; crazed and calcined.
- 11 Heated; five secondary flakes; all crazed; three calcined.
- 12 Heated; one inner flake; crazed and lightly calcined.
- 13 Irregular blade; inner; white; corticated; lightly patinated; 28:12:4.
- 14 Irregular blade; inner; cream; corticated; lightly patinated; 29:12:6.
- 15 Blade; pale yellow; inner; corticated; lightly patinated; right side angles towards left at distal to form point; 33:13:7.
- 16 Blade; pale yellow; secondary; corticated; lightly patinated; natural cortex platform; right side angles towards left at distal to form point; 25:10:3.

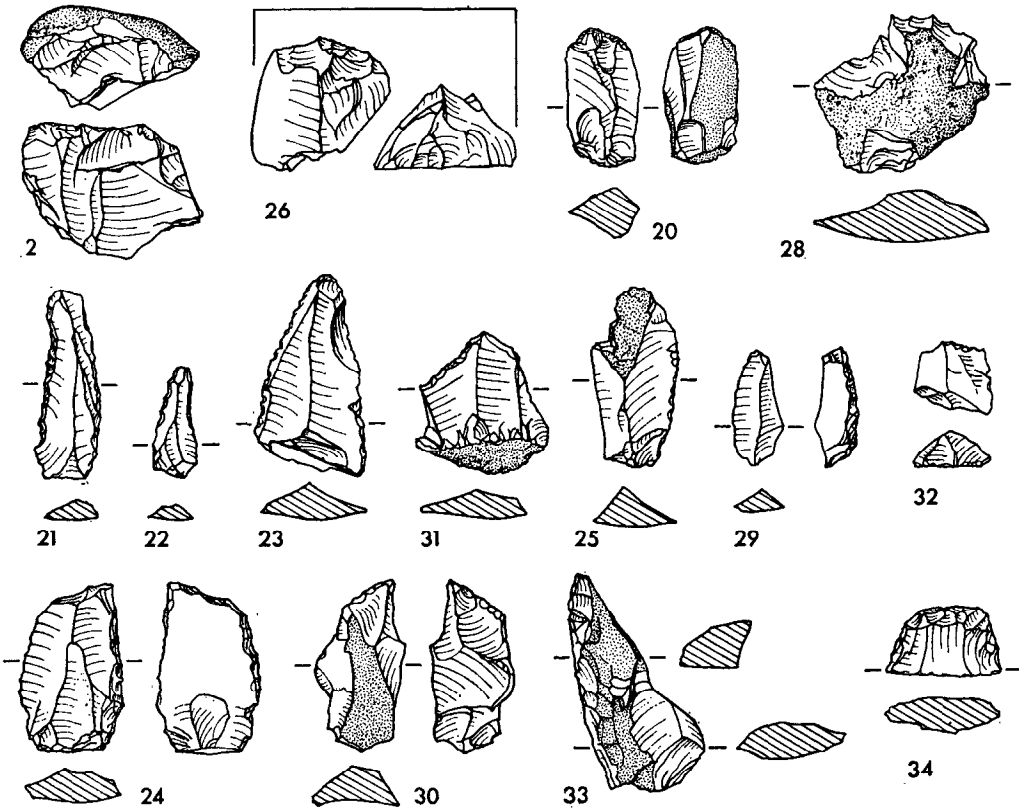


FIG 6 Sorisdale, Coll: flint implements (scale 2 : 3)

- 17 Blade; cream; secondary; corticated; lightly patinated; right side cortex; blunt distal; 25:12:5.
- 18 Blade; cream; secondary; corticated; broken; proximal end surviving; left side cortex; 32:15:8.
- 19 Blade; cream; secondary; corticated; broken; proximal end surviving; 20:15:5.
- \*20 Secondary flake; grey-brown; corticated; extensive damage at distal; no retouch; 27:15:9; fabricator.
- \*21 Blade; inner; pale yellow; corticated; lightly patinated; broken; proximal surviving; irregular retouch on both right and left sides; 37:13:6; lt 76°; rt 81°; dual-side retouched blade.
- \*22 Blade; inner; cream; corticated; lightly patinated; broken; proximal surviving; retouched right and left sides; both sides converge towards distal; 21:18:4; lt 53°; rt 61°; dual-side retouched blade.
- \*23 Inner flake; cream; corticated; irregular retouch on right and left sides and left proximal; sides converge to distal point; 39:22:8; lt 77°; rt 52°; dual-side retouched flake.
- \*24 Inner flake; white; corticated; lightly patinated; irregular retouch on right side and distal; inverse retouch on left side; left side curves to meet right at oblique distal end; 33:21: 8; lt 75°; rt 74°; distal 80°; miscellaneous tool.
- \*25 Secondary flake; cream; corticated; lightly patinated; retouch on right side; 34:18:9; rt 36°; single-side retouched flake.
- \*26 Secondary flake; cream; corticated; irregular retouch at distal; 28:28:17; d 63°; scraper preform.
- \*27 Secondary flake; cream; corticated; lightly patinated; right side and distal denticulated and retouched; 21:28:12; rt 58°; one denticulation: 10 mm; retouched denticulate.
- \*28 Secondary flake; cream; corticated; distal denticulated and retouched; 28:35:11; d 65°; one denticulation: 5 mm; retouched denticulate.
- \*29 Secondary flake; light grey; patinated; inverse retouch on left side; 19:16:4; lt 52°; single-side retouched flake.

- \*30 Inner flake; honey coloured; corticated; patinated; distal end blunt and retouched from both faces; 33:18:10; d 51°; retouched edge tool.
- \*31 Secondary flake; pale yellow; corticated; lightly patinated; retouch on distal half of left side and proximal half of right side; pointed at distal; 27:26:10; lt 57°; rt 72°; dual-side retouched flake.
- \*32 Inner flake; pale yellow; corticated; lightly patinated; broken; distal surviving; retouch across break; 12:15:7; 72°; end retouched flake.
- \*33 Secondary flake; pale grey; corticated; broken; left side and proximal end surviving; retouched left side; 45:20:11; lt 56°; miscellaneous tool.
- \*34 Inner flake; white; corticated; patinated; broken; distal surviving; retouched right and left sides and distal; blunt ended distal; 13:23:7; d 67°; lt 63°; rt 55°; miscellaneous tool.
- \*35 Inner flake; pale grey; lightly corticated; patinated; broken; middle surviving; retouch along long side; 23:10:5; 58°; miscellaneous tool.

## DISCUSSION

Bevelled pebble tools have only been found in a few contexts in Scotland, all so far belonging to the Mesolithic period, and one may presume that the Coll tools are also of Mesolithic date. It is tempting to argue that the numerous flints found at Rubha Sgor-innis with the pebble tools are also Mesolithic, but no features clearly diagnostic of date have been noted in the flint assemblage.

### *Stonework and pottery from the Crawford collection*

A large number of stone pounders have been discovered on Coll, as they have on so many of the west Scottish islands. Several were found by Mr Crawford in the scatter of unstratified material surrounding the stone setting at Sorisdale (p 77), and two of these are illustrated here (fig 5, nos 1 and 2). The first is a pebble (88 mm by 72 mm by 37 mm) with one smoothed surface showing a small area of pocking where it has been used as a hammer, and with both ends rounded by constant abrasion. The second is a flattish rounded pebble (130 mm by 93 mm by 48 mm), with one end broken, the other smoothed by abrasion; the flat faces have been used for hammering and are centrally pitted; the edges have also been worn by working. Beveridge mentions the finding of hammer-stones at six of the forts and duns of Coll (1903, 174) as well as in almost all of the scatters in sand-dunes, but these do not appear to have been presented to the Museum (*Proc Soc Antiq Scot*, 41 (1906-7), 183).

There is a considerable range of beaker material from the sand-dunes of Coll, including many All-Over-Cord ornamented sherds comparable to those from the burial at Sorisdale (fig 3, no 1). Unfortunately the find spots of some collections have not been well documented, but beaker material, or decorated sherds akin to beaker ware, have been found at Cornaig, Grishipoll, Sorisdale and Torastan (fig 1); the widest range of decoration can be seen in the collection of the late Ludovic Mann (Clarke, D L 1970, 513). Figs 7-9 illustrate a representative collection of beaker and more recent sherds from the sand-hills. Such large quantities of pottery sherds have been discovered that it is practicable here to catalogue only the more recognisable or interesting pieces. It is important, however, that such collections, appropriately labelled, are preserved for study in our museums, since with the publication of such pottery sequences as that from the Udal, North Uist, many of the stray finds from the west of Scotland may thus be given a chronological context, which at present they lack. The following three figures (figs 7-9) give a general impression of the types of material represented by recent discoveries. Mr Alan Lane has kindly provided the concluding comments on some of the most interesting sherds.



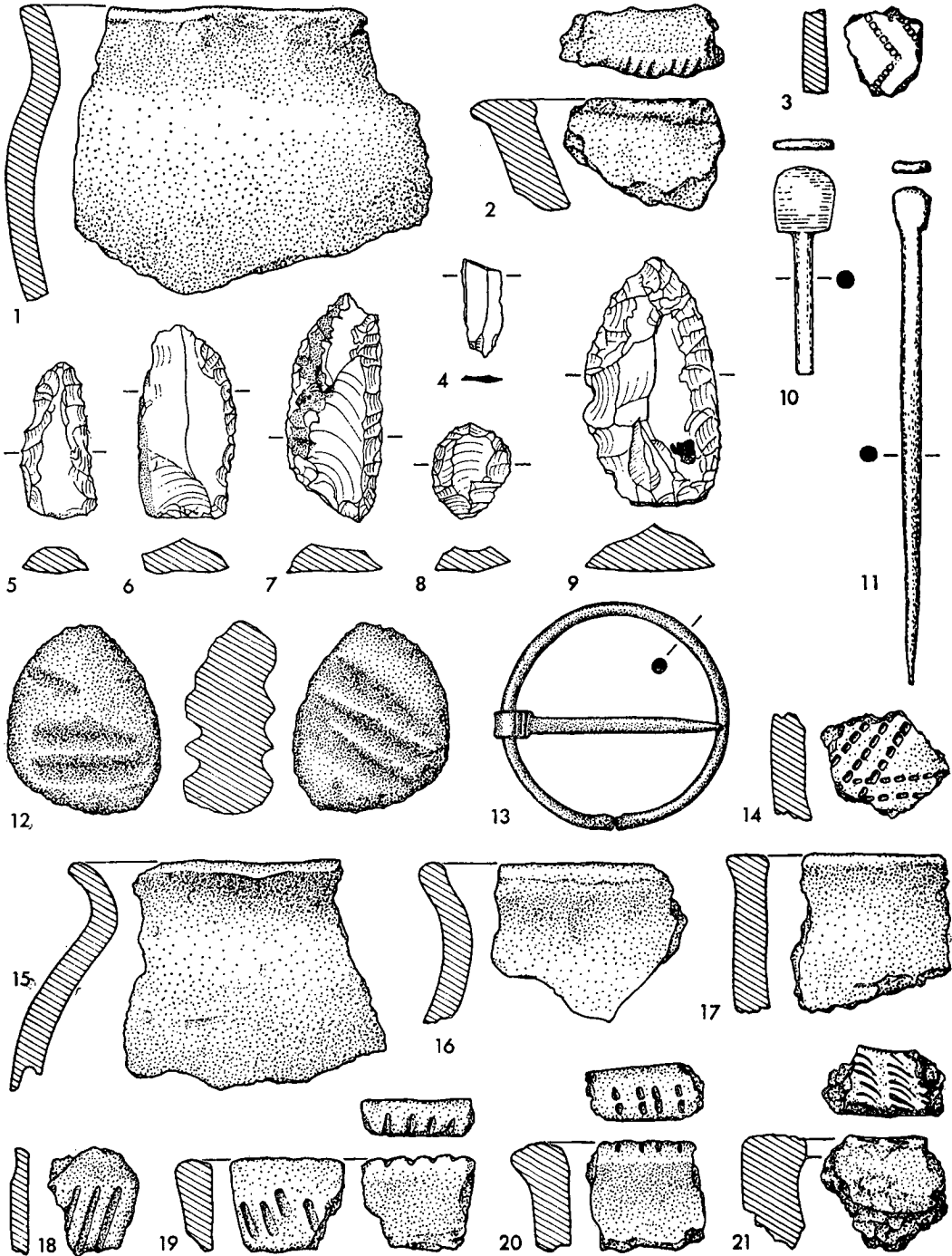


FIG 7 Sorisdale, Coll: various objects (scale 2 : 3)

*Fig 7: Sorisdale*

- 1 Rim sherd of a cooking pot with a rounded rim, upright neck and slight shoulder, hard well-fired buff/grey ware.
- 2 Rim sherd of a flared bowl with slight nicking on the flat rim, hard well-fired grey ware.
- 3 Small beaker sherd with zigzag comb impressions.  
4-9 Flint: the asterisked pieces are considered to be tools (*see* p 88).
- 4 Blade; secondary; dark grey; patinated; broken; proximal surviving; 20 mm long, 9 mm broad, 2 mm thick; left edge angle 67°; right edge angle 36°.
- \*5 Secondary flake; pale grey; partially corticated; natural cortex platform; retouch right and left sides; right side straight, left side convex, converge to blunt point at distal; 33 mm long, 15 mm broad, 10 mm thick; left edge angle 63°; right edge angle 62°; dual-side retouched flake (plano-convex knife).
- \*6 Secondary flake; pale grey; corticated; faceted platform; retouched right side; left side straight natural cortex; right side convex converges to blunt point at distal; 41 mm long, 22 mm broad, 9 mm thick; right edge angle 70°; single-side retouched flake (flake knife).
- \*7 Secondary flake; cream; corticated; lightly patinated; broken; middle surviving; retouched right side; left side convex natural cortex; right side straight; 49 mm long, 21 mm broad, 9 mm thick; right edge angle 58°; single-side retouched flake (flake knife).
- \*8 Inner flake; white; corticated; patinated; retouch left side and distal; left side convex; 20 mm long, 17 mm broad, 6 mm thick; left edge angle 74°; end and side scraper.
- \*9 Secondary flake; pale grey; corticated; natural cortex platform, retouched right side and distal end of left side; right and left sides converge to form a point at distal; 53 mm long, 30 mm broad, 13 mm thick; left edge angle 55°; right edge angle 67°; dual-side retouched flake (flake knife).
- 10 Bone pin-head, 44 mm long, with flat spade-shaped head.
- 11 Bone pin, 106 mm long, with slightly swelling shank and small flat head.
- 12 Lump of pumice (34 mm by 40 mm) grooved on each side from use in shaping bone needles or pins.
- 13 Bronze ring-brooch (the hoop fractured) 49 mm in diameter, with a ring of circular section (3 mm in diameter) and a pin, 49 mm long, with three grooves on the flat head which is folded round the ring. Brooches of ring type are found from at least AD 1300 (Callander 1926, 119-20). From about AD 1600 flat broad annular brooches of brass were in use, but it is uncertain how completely these replaced the ring-brooches. The form of the pin on this brooch shows that it is not one of the earliest ring-brooches.
- 14 Beaker sherd (8 mm thick), orange outer surface; comb decoration, possibly a fragmentary pendant triangle.
- 15 Sherd with sharply everted, rounded rim and globular body; hard black ware, clear construction ring at bottom.
- 16 Rim sherd of thin orange-buff ware; dark grey interior.
- 17 Rim sherd of dark brown ware with large grits, flat slightly expanded rim.
- 18 Sandy coloured thin hard ware with quartz grits, decorated with linear incisions.
- 19 Hard-fired rim sherd, abraded, with sandy grits; grey inner surface decorated with small jabbed strokes, and short impressions on the narrow edge; the angle of this sherd is quite uncertain.
- 20 Hard well-fired sherd with expanded rounded rim, decorated with a two-toothed comb, greyish ware with quartz grits.
- 21 Rim sherd, flat rim with slight internal thickening, decorated on the top with transverse rows of finger-nail impressions, probably prehistoric.

*Fig 8; 1, Sorisdale; 2-10, Cornaig*

- 1 Rim and body sherds of a globular vessel, fairly upright everted rim, brown hard-fired ware, quartz grits; sooty black outer surface.
- 2 Rim sherd of well-fired orange ware; rounded rim, micaceous grit.
- 3 Small rim sherd of abraded beaker ware, decorated both internally and externally with linear, possibly cord, impressions.
- 4 Sherd of the flat base and wall of a small brownish vessel, gritty fabric, with a dark core.
- 5 Small rim sherd of thin, hard-fired brown ware, outcurving rounded rim.

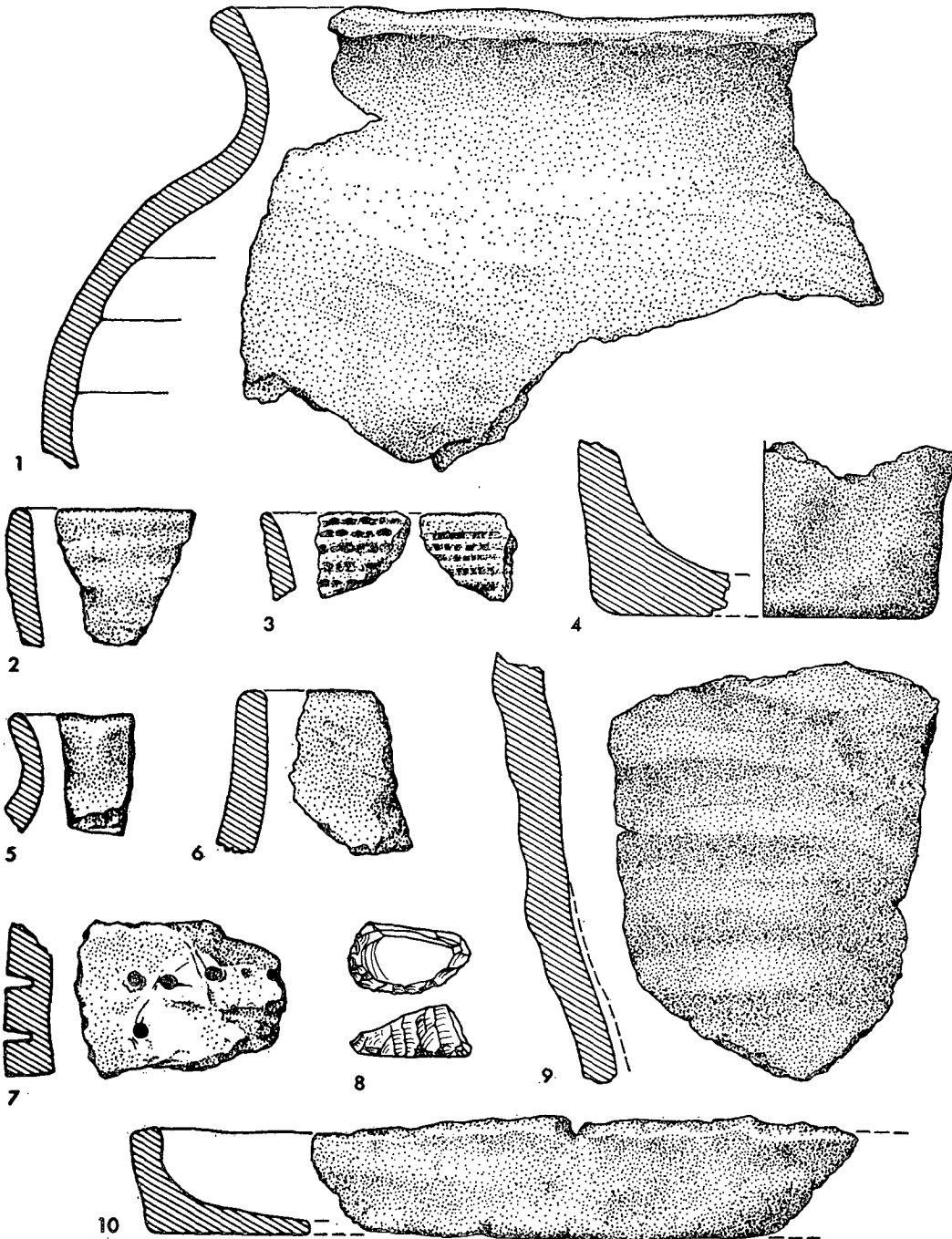


FIG 8 Sorisdale and Cornaig, Coll: pottery (scale 2 : 3)

- 6 Rim sherd of hard-fired ware, quartz grits, rounded rim.
- 7 Wall-herd of hard-fired ware with reddish outer surface decorated with deep round jabs, and dark interior and inner surface, quartz grits, organic tempering.
- \*8 Inner flake; pale grey; partially corticated; remains of exhausted core; reused with retouch on left side; heavy damage at distal end either to use or to bipolar technique (unverifiable without microscopic examination); 26 mm long, 14 mm broad, 11 mm thick; left edge angle 76°; side scraper.
- 9 Wall sherd of a large vessel with crude horizontal rippling on the outer surface; hard well-fired ware with quartz grits; dark exterior and orange interior.
- 10 Fragment of a flat-based platter of hard well-fired brown ware with sooty black inner deposits, quartz grits, the base has a roughened outer surface.

*Fig 9: Various sites*

- 1 & 3 Two unusual sherds from the Beveridge Collection from Traigh Foill are now in the National Museum (NMA nos ND 332 & 333; Beveridge 1903, 41, fourth plate following p 176).
- 1 Rim sherd of a large vessel, possibly a cinerary urn, heavily gritted, diameter approximately 205 mm, everted, of coarse ware with a roughly smoothed, but undecorated, outer surface, the inner surface and upper surface of the rim decorated with circular impressions 4 mm in average diameter.
- 3 Rim sherd of food vessel ware from a small bowl of gritty fabric with the rim bevelled both externally and internally; outside, below the rim, there are two horizontal lines of comb impressions and, at the thickest part of the rim, two lines of roughly alternating jabs; below this there are three lines of horizontal impressions with fragmentary triangular motifs below; a row of zigzag incisions on the internal bevel.
- 2 Rim sherd of a small vessel from Grishipoll Bay (perhaps about 80 mm in diameter), 6 mm in thickness, with an everted rim; an undecorated horizontal cordon some 20 mm below the rim forms the bottom of the first band of decoration, which consists of zigzag comb impressions. There is a line of comb decoration below the cordon and a trace of some further decoration below. The fabric is rather coarser than is usual for beaker ware.
- 4 An unprovenanced sherd from Coll presented to the Museum in 1881 (NMA no BN 15) of fine beaker ware is from the belly of a vessel and has a band of herringbone comb impressions, bounded by horizontal comb lines. Two more abraded sherds are probably from the same vessel (NMA nos BN 17 & 18; McGillivray 1878, 687).
- 5 A small beaker sherd from the dunes at Sorisdale is decorated with zigzag impressions probably of whipped cord.
- 6 A beaker sherd from Torastan found in 1898 (NMA no HD 331) has a smooth exterior decorated with comb impressions forming horizontal lines and possibly triangles, and by jabs made with a cut reed or bone (Beveridge 1903, fourth plate following p 176).
- 7-9 Among the sherds collected by officers of the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments at Port an t-Saoir to the E of Ben Feall (NGR NM 148550) are three rim fragments of hard well-fired gritty wares (NMA nos HD 2036-8; *Proc Soc Antiq Scot*, 107 (1975-6), 333, no 2). This is an extensive sand-dune site from which many sherds, flint and stone implements, and iron slag have been collected (*DES (1968)*, 7-8; (1971), 5; the material is in Glasgow Art Gallery and Museum *see also* p 98). The indeterminate stone structures appear to be rectilinear and are certainly not comparable to the fragmentary remains at Sorisdale.
- 7 Rim thickened with outward bevel, the interior and rim bevel are grey, the outer surface is pinky-buff; quartz gritting; the rim is decorated with vertical jabbing.
- 8 Rim sherd, brown fabric with grey interior, flat top decorated with close incised lines.
- 9 Rim, the flat top of which is decorated with slanting incisions.
- 10 Part of a rounded bowl from the midden of a small dun at Dùn Beic (NGR NM 154564); decorated with incised lozenges, themselves infilled with a vertical sub-division and horizontal lines, well-fired brownish red ware (NMA nos HD 319-21; Beveridge 1903, 10-11, third plate following p 174). Two sherds with incised criss-cross decoration were found in the course of the Commission's survey of the site (NMA no HD 2049; *Proc Soc Antiq Scot*, 107 (1975-6), 333, no 2).

*Fig 10: Various Sites*

- 1 Iron socketed spearhead found with an inhumation burial at Grishipoll in the early 1950s, donated to the National Museum of Antiquities of Scotland in 1978; the body was discovered in the sand-

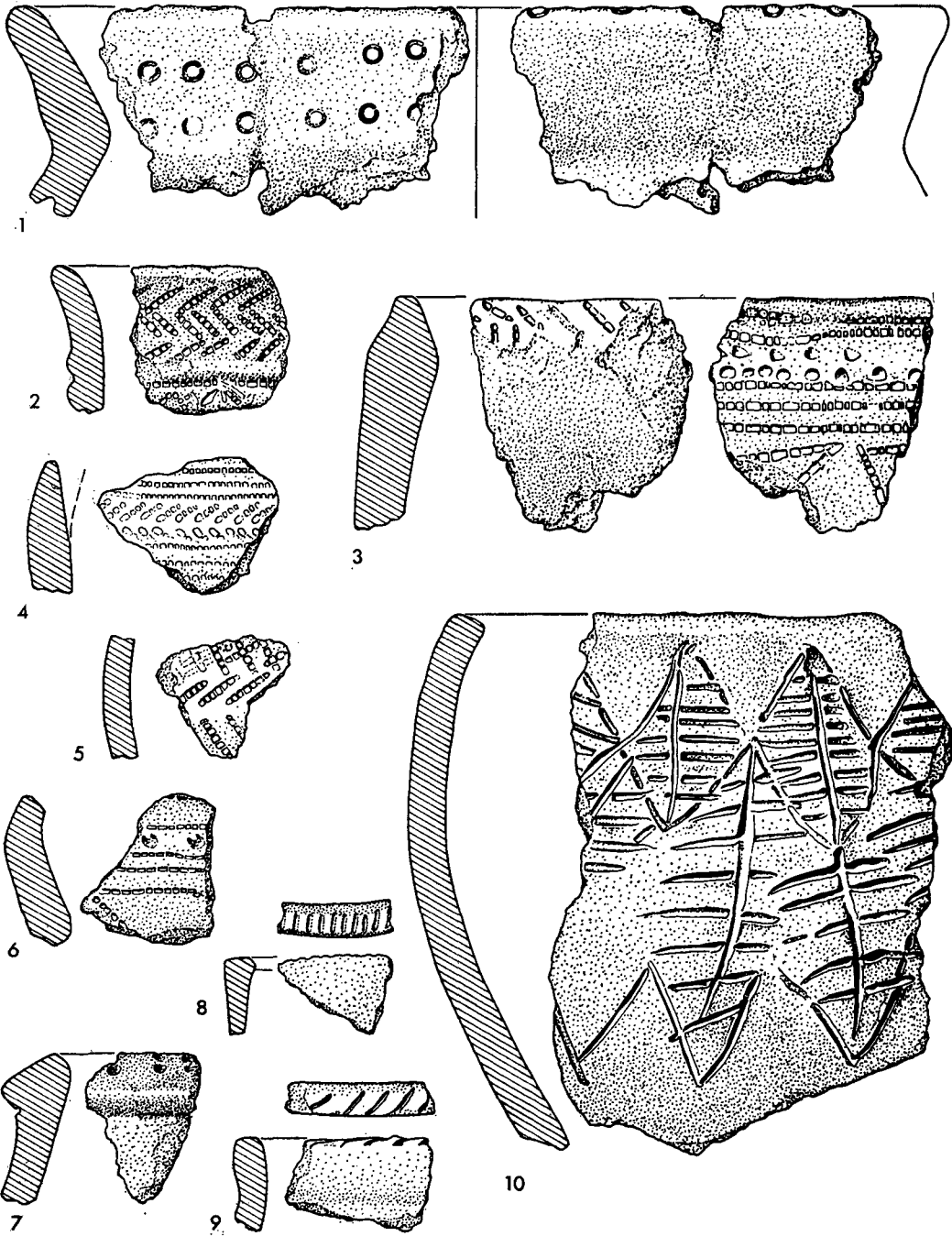


FIG 9 Various sites on Coll: pottery (scale 2 : 3)

hills about 750 m NNE of Grishipoll (NGR NM c 191598) and the spearhead was discovered under a flat slab at one end of the grave (it is unfortunately not now certain which end). The spearhead is in two pieces: the blade measures 235 mm in length and 35 mm in maximum width; the surviving portion of the socket, which lacks its end, is 90 mm long. The spearhead is not itself of a distinctive type, but the association with a burial suggests that it may be of Norse date. The only part of a skeleton that is still extant is a portion of the mandible; Dr Dorothy A Lunt of the University of Glasgow, Dental Hospital and School, has kindly provided the following description: 'The specimen consists of the chin region and most of the left side of the body of the mandible. The

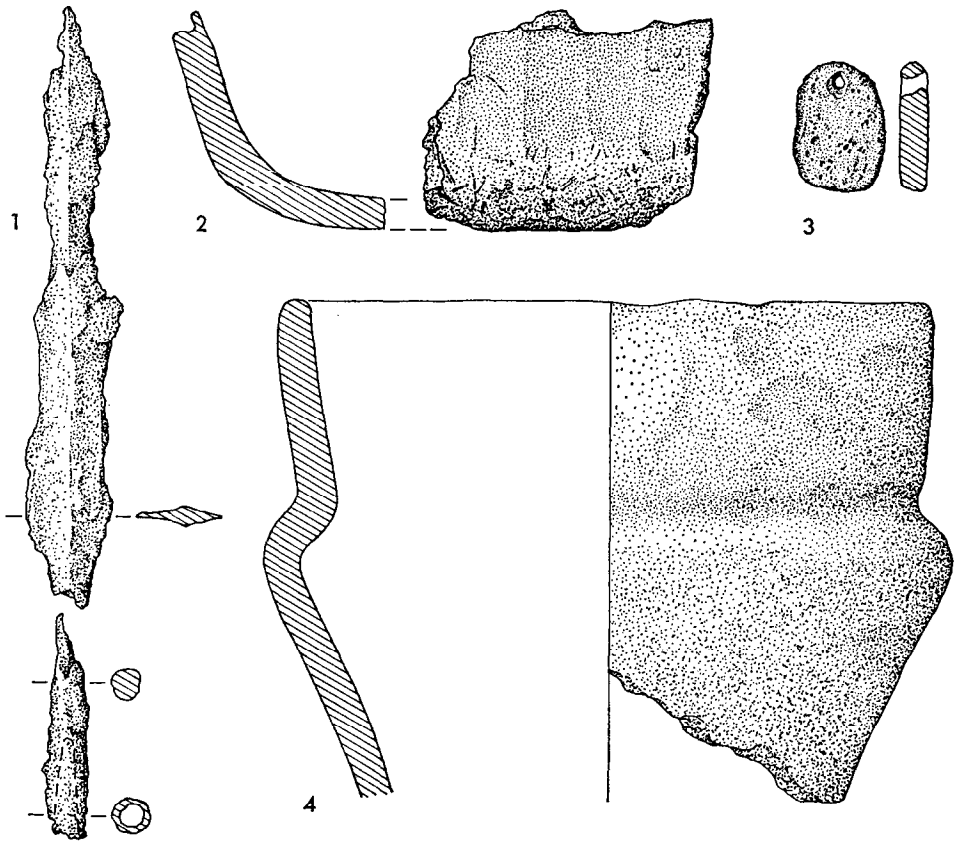


FIG 10 Iron spearhead from Grishipoll, Coll (scale 1 : 3); pottery and pumice pendant from Sorisdale and Feall Bay, Coll (scales 2-3, 2 : 3; 4, 1 : 3)

mandibular left 1st and 2nd permanent molars are *in situ* and there are a further eight sockets of erupted permanent teeth which have been lost *post mortem*. An X-ray shows that the root apices of the 2nd molar have been completely formed; the individual was therefore probably older than 15 at death. Behind the 2nd molar there is part of the crypt of the 3rd molar. Unfortunately the bone has been broken across the middle of the crypt and its total shape is therefore uncertain, but the appearance of the area which is present suggests that little more than the crown of the third molar had formed at death. Third molars are extremely variable in timing of development, but this stage is usually reached at 13 to 15 years of age, though it can occur as late as 20. In view of the fact that the second molar apices are well closed, an age at death of about 15 to 17 may be suggested. The very slight attrition of the molars accords with such an age estimate. There is no evidence of dental disease. There is a suggestion of a torus mandibularis developing on the lingual aspect of the mandible.

- 2 Base sherd of dark grey and buff ware, hard fabric, rounded basal angle and slightly sagging base, grass-marking on exterior surface. From Feall Bay.
- 3 Pumice pendant from the Sorisale sand-hills, 25 mm long by 18 mm wide and 5 mm thick, perforated at the top. A similar pumice pendant was found in the chambered tomb of Taversoe Tuick, Orkney, along with thirty-five disc beads of flagstone (Grant 1939, 163, pl lxvi, 3). Another pumice pendant was discovered in a cist at Golspie, Sutherland, in 1956, associated with fragments of clay moulds presumably of Iron Age or Dark Age date (Woodham & MacKenzie 1957).
- 4 In 1978 a sherd from a large shouldered jar with a tall neck and flattish rim was retrieved from the sand-dunes close to the Sorisdale burial. It is rather irregular in shape with uneven surface, buff interior, exterior partly buff, but heavily sooted near the rim. Estimated rim diameter 260 mm, surviving height 200 mm (*see also* p 78).

## DISCUSSION

The material described above covers many centuries of prehistoric and early historic occupation on Coll, including periods which are ill-represented by the surviving monuments of the island. The Mesolithic stone tools amplify earlier discoveries mentioned by Lacaille (1954, 298), which were, however, without geographical location. The lack of Neolithic material, and indeed the absence of monuments of this date, suggest that Coll was only intermittently settled until the arrival of the users of beaker ware. The range of decoration represented, including All-Over-Cord ornament and complex impressed patterns as well as the considerable weight of material, suggests a more extended period of settlement than the small number of field monuments might imply. The discovery of sherds of large shouldered jars from Coll (eg fig 3, no 2, & fig 10, no 4), comparable to those from Kilellan and Rosinish, clearly indicate a sedentary economy, even if evidence of agriculture has not so far been recorded. Sherds of those classes of Bronze Age wares which may be recognised in other parts of Scotland, food vessels and cinerary urns, are rare in the islands of Argyll, though two rather tentative attributions to those groups are offered here (fig 9, nos 1 & 3). The range of decorated Iron Age wares may best be gauged from Beveridge's publication (1903), and indeed the pottery was for the most part excavated by Beveridge himself in the course of his examination of the forts, duns and their associated middens.

The problems of dating and interpreting surface collections of unstratified material have already been briefly mentioned. These are particularly difficult in the Western Isles of Scotland, where large surface collections of finds have been made, often over many years, from eroding multi-period sites. The pottery of this area poses some particularly confusing problems of interpretation, and it is the very existence of a developed pottery tradition that distinguishes the Hebridean Islands from most of the rest of Scotland during the Iron Age and later periods. It has long been known that simple hand-made pottery was produced in the Hebrides from the late Iron Age to the late 19th-century AD. It was assumed that this pottery, the so-called 'craggan ware', was a prehistoric tradition continuing in a 'cultural backwater' (Curwen 1938, 280-2). However, it is only recently, as a result of Mr I A Crawford's excavations at the Udal, in North Uist, that the nature of the pottery sequence has been established in the centuries between the Iron Age pottery from duns and wheelhouses, and the post-medieval and early modern 'craggans' (Crawford & Switsur 1977). Only part of the Udal pottery assemblage has as yet been studied in any detail<sup>1</sup>, but some general points are already clear as regards the whole sequence. In the Hebrides the recurring use of simple shapes and decoration, and the continued use of similar clay sources and simple technology, means that caution is essential in the dating of unstratified Hebridean pottery. In particular the recognition at the Udal of medieval and late medieval forms with incised line decoration, stabbed dots and incised rim-tops, must cast doubt on the casual assumption that decorated pottery must be Iron Age or earlier. The excavations at Breachacha

Castle, on Coll itself, produced similar, if slightly cruder, decorated hand-made pottery. Here the pottery was associated with imported wheel-made wares which help to confirm a post-medieval date for some of this material (Turner & Dunbar 1970, 182-5). In addition, Lethbridge noted hand-made pottery associated with a rectangular building at Hogh Bay on Coll. Unfortunately this pottery, which had 'medieval forms' and impressed decoration on the rims, was not published in any detail (Lethbridge 1950, 96-7; 1954, 193). Crawford has identified pottery from North Uist dating to the 18th-century AD, which had been previously attributed to the Iron Age on typological grounds (Crawford & Switsur 1977, 133). It seems likely that other material has been similarly misdated.

With these problems in mind it will be clear that some of the material from Coll is not closely datable, and only those sherds that have reasonably close parallels will be discussed in any detail. Fabric has not been used to date sherds unless some other factor already suggests an attribution. The employment of similar clays and simple technology over many centuries must cast doubt on identifications based solely on fabric, except where detailed stratified local sequences are available. In particular it seems unlikely that undecorated body-sherds can be dated with any confidence.

Two items from Sorisdale (fig 7, no 15 & fig 8, no 1) have everted rims, similar to the medieval and later pottery from Breachacha (Turner & Dunbar 1970, 182-3, 185, fig 13, nos I.3, I.4 & VI.1), and the incised and impressed sherds from Sorisdale (fig 7, nos 19 & 20) would find general parallels of similar date among the Udal assemblage. One sherd from Cornaig (fig 8, no 7) with deep stab marks also seems likely to be of medieval date though such deep stabbing has not yet been noted at the Udal.

The low-walled vessel from Cornaig Lodge (fig 8, no 10) is at present unparalleled in Scotland. It seems very similar to the platters which Thomas has reported in the Cornish sequence from the 6th century to the early 12th century AD (Thomas 1968). The closest parallels appear to be the undecorated examples in the early phase at Gwithian (Thomas 1968, 315, fig 72, nos 9 & 11), but since the site sequence is yet unpublished in detail it is difficult to establish how similar the later platters may be. In addition the Cornaig Lodge vessel has no grassmarking on its external surface, though the basal surface is roughened in a way that study of Scottish pottery suggests may be analogous to grassmarking.

Two rim-sherds from Port an t-Saoir (fig 9, nos 8 & 9) have incised rim-tops, which are closely paralleled in the medieval pottery from the Udal. The vertical stabbing on the rim-top of no 7 (fig 9, no 7) is also found at the Udal although the bevelled rim form has not been recognised. In this context two earlier finds from Coll may be noted: a rim, from a shouldered vessel with a 'punctuated design' on the rim-top, from Feall Bay was compared to 'Iron Age A' pottery from Jarlshof, Shetland in *DES (1968)*, 7-8; a second rim, from an unspecified Coll site, with stab marks on the rim-top has likewise been compared to prehistoric material from Jarlshof (MacKie 1963, 170, fig 5, no 116). Though a generalised similarity to the Shetland pottery is recognisable (Hamilton 1956, fig 18), the combination of shape and decoration, which is closely paralleled at the Udal, would suggest that a medieval or later date is more likely for the Hebridean examples.

One sherd from Feall Bay is of considerable interest. This is a base-sherd, with a rounded basal angle, slightly sagging base, and exterior grassmarking. These traits can all be paralleled closely in the Udal assemblage where a considerable proportion of the bases in the Viking-age levels are of this round-angled, sagging base form.

Grassmarked pottery has been used as evidence of a 6th-century migration from Ireland to Cornwall (Thomas 1968, 328). In view of the historically documented connections between



Ireland and Scottish Dalriada the absence of similar pottery in Scotland has strengthened doubts about such an early date for this material in Ireland (Alcock 1971, 266–7). Consequently any finds of grassmarked pottery in Scotland are of some interest. However, the Feall Bay sherd has the sagging base form closely similar to the Udal material. This is not typical of the Cornish or Irish material, where flat bases predominate, though it is known on a few Irish sites, as at Larriban in North Antrim (Childe 1936, 191, fig 5, nos 16 & 18). None of the grassmarked sherds at the Udal seem to be earlier than the 9th century (*contra* Crawford & Switsur 1977, 130), and current research on the Hebridean sequence suggests a 9th- to 11th-century date for grassmarked pottery in the area.

The report of grassmarked pottery at Iona, and in the Sound of Harris, has been used as evidence of ‘early Irish settlement’ (Thomas 1972, 55) and ‘missionary activity’ (Thomas 1971, 55). However, none of the fourteen small sherds found in the earlier excavations on Iona are grassmarked and no distinctively Irish traits are recognisable. Two grassmarked sherds were found in Reece’s excavations at Iona Abbey but both were in contexts above the ‘burning level’ dated by Reece to the 9th-century AD (Reece 1973, 42; Lane forthcoming). The unstratified material from the Sound of Harris includes sherds identical to the grassmarked ‘platters’ typical of the Viking-age deposits at the Udal (Crawford & Switsur 1977, 131). These Hebridean ‘platters’ are in fact flat discs of pottery without side walls, and they are at present unknown in Irish and Cornish contexts. Although no sherds of this type have been found on Coll, a sherd from Cornaig on Tiree shows that these ‘platters’ are not confined to the Outer Hebrides (Glasgow Art Gallery and Museum: Tiree–N/N Box).

Ryan is cautious about identifying grassmarking as a purely Irish trait (Ryan 1973, 630). It may indicate Irish influence, but the evidence from the Udal would suggest that a Viking-age date is more appropriate in Scotland, and it may be that grassmarking was introduced by more complex means than simple migration. Much work still remains to be done on the Hebridean sequence, but as the pottery of each period is defined and published from stratified groups it is to be hoped that further surface collections will be dated. The potential for site location and dating is considerable.

Finally, it is worth while drawing attention to the burial from Grishipoll associated with an iron spearhead (fig 10, no 1), for although the date of this burial is uncertain, it may indicate an area where further fieldwork and examination of the sand-dunes will reveal more extensive remains.

### (iii) Beaker pottery from Skye

Joanna Close-Brooks and J N Graham Ritchie

*Elishader* (NGR NG 466655)

In 1978 Mr Dugald Ross presented to the National Museum of Antiquities of Scotland some sherds of beaker pottery which he had found on croft No 7 at Elishader. Mr Ross retained further sherds and six barbed-and-tanged arrowheads found at the same place. The find spot is on the hill to the north of the croft-house; a grassy mound about 5 m in diameter stands some 0.3 m higher than the surrounding peat, which partly covers it. In the centre is a large hole dug many years before, which shows that the mound is largely composed of yellow-brown earth. One large rectangular boulder and some smaller stones lie in the hole where the sherds were found. Local tradition has it that a former owner of the croft (before the 1930s) found two beakers and at least a dozen arrowheads in the mound, which after being in the care

of a local minister for a while, were 'sent to a museum in Edinburgh'. No record of these beakers can be traced. By courtesy of Mr Ross his finds are illustrated here. Those still in Skye have been drawn from sketches made on the spot.

*Beaker sherds* (fig 11)

1-3 Two rim sherds and a body sherd of All-Over-Cord ornamented beaker, buff ware with a grey core. The two rim sherds are probably from the same pot, despite variations. Three further body sherds are not illustrated.

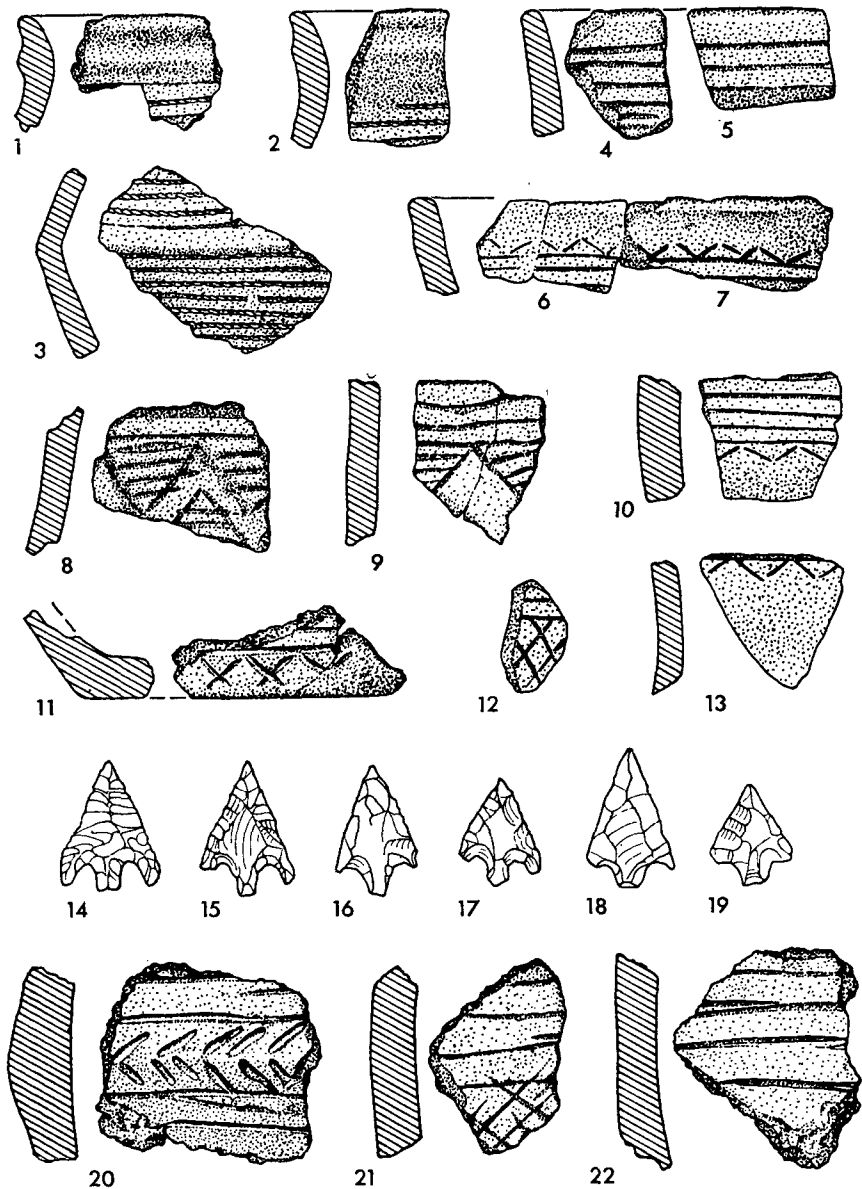


FIG 11 Beaker pottery and arrowheads from Elishader and Garrafad, Skye (scale 2 : 3)

- 4, 5 Two rim sherds decorated with incised lines; red burnished surface, dark grey core.  
 6, 7 Two rim sherds decorated with incised lines bordered by zigzag; these and the following sherds have a reddish brown surface.  
 8–10 Body sherds with incised designs.  
 11 Base sherd, incised criss-cross pattern below horizontal lines.  
 12 Small body sherd with incised reticulate pattern.  
 13 Body sherd with incised zigzag.  
 A further fifteen body sherds are not illustrated

*Barbed-and-tanged arrowheads* (fig 11)

- 14 Pale whitish buff flint.  
 15 Translucent grey flint, thin in section, one tang broken.  
 16 Light grey chert.  
 17 White and pink banded flint, one tang broken.  
 18 Bluish-white agate (?), one tang broken.  
 19 Greenish-grey fine-grain stone.  
 Nos 1, 3, 4, 7, 8, 9 and 11 are in the National Museum of Antiquities of Scotland, the rest of the material at Elishader.

*Garrafad* (NGR NG 495675)

In 1970 Mr Calum Macleod presented some beaker sherds to the National Museum of Antiquities of Scotland. The sherds were found in a trench dug by him through the centre of a cairn at Cadha Riach, Garrafad, Staffin. The following description of the cairn is largely taken from the Ordnance Survey record card (NG 46 NE no 12). The remains of a chambered cairn survive as a turf-covered mound 0.6 m maximum height, and spread to a diameter of about 8.5 m. Two probable kerb-stones on the W and three others on the S suggest that the original diameter was 7.5 m. The E side of the cairn has been robbed. A squarish depression in the centre of the cairn appears to be the remains of a chamber, of which five stones forming the W arc survive *in situ*, and two others displaced. The sherds were found on the S side of the chamber.

*Pottery* (fig 11)

- 20–22 Three sherds, probably from the same beaker, of thick rather coarse fabric with small grits; buff exterior, brown core and interior. Decorated with boldly incised horizontal lines and herringbone and reticulate patterns. Two similar smaller sherds are not illustrated. NMAS no EQ 793.  
 23 Rim sherd of dark brown ware with large stone grits; flat-topped rim. Also 16 body sherds in similar fabric, undecorated. NMAS no EQ 794.

The vessels from Elishader and Garrafad are interesting additions to the small number of beakers known from Skye and are the first to have been found in the northern half of the island. In contrast to the island of Coll discussed in Part ii, where the beaker material occurs widely in sand-hill sites, most of the vessels so far discovered on Skye have been found in the course of excavation. The All-Over-Cord ornamented beaker from Elishader is the first of this class to be recorded from the island, and some indication of the *floruit* of this style may be given by the radiocarbon date from Sorisdale, Coll, p. 77. Rather later dates for such material have been provided by determinations from the Udal, N Uist, about 65 km to the N of Elishader, 1520 bc ± 120 (Q-1133) and 1610 bc ± 100 (Q-1134), but the excavator considered these to be rather late (Crawford & Switsur 1977, 128).

Clarke lists four sites on Skye from which beaker material has been found (Clarke, D L 1970, 518, nos 1672–6), an addition of only one to Mitchell's catalogue of over thirty years before, but this is a reflection of the small amount of recent archaeological activity on the island. The

addition of two further sites to the distribution of beaker material is thus of some importance. The wristguards from the chambered cairn at Liveras are further indication of the activities of the users of beaker pottery on the island (Henshall 1972, 190-1, 484-5). The complex cultural relationships present at this period may be underlined by the probable association of bloodstone from the island of Rhum with the beaker material from the cave at Rudh 'an Dunain and the discovery of a barbed-and-tanged arrowhead of bloodstone from Rhum (Clarke, D V 1968, 187-8), comparable in shape to examples from Elishader (eg no 19).

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### NOTE

- 1 The work on the Dark-Age and Viking-Age pottery from Mr Iain Crawford's excavations at the Udal, North Uist, is being done, as part of a PhD thesis by Mr Lane, in the Department of History (Medieval Archaeology), University College, London.

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