

Lavacroon, Orphir, Orkney

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ABSTRACT

Fieldwalking was undertaken at Easter 1979 and 1980 on a mound called Lavacroon near the Earl's Bu at Orphir, Orkney (NGR HY 3325 0447). A large number of substantial structural stones had been disturbed and the area was gridded to enable detailed collection of material. The results strongly suggest an industrial site. Dating cannot be confirmed, but a Norse influence is indicated. An extension of the known Norse site of the Earl's Bu is therefore suggested and the rare nature of this type of site at that period in the British Isles is noted.

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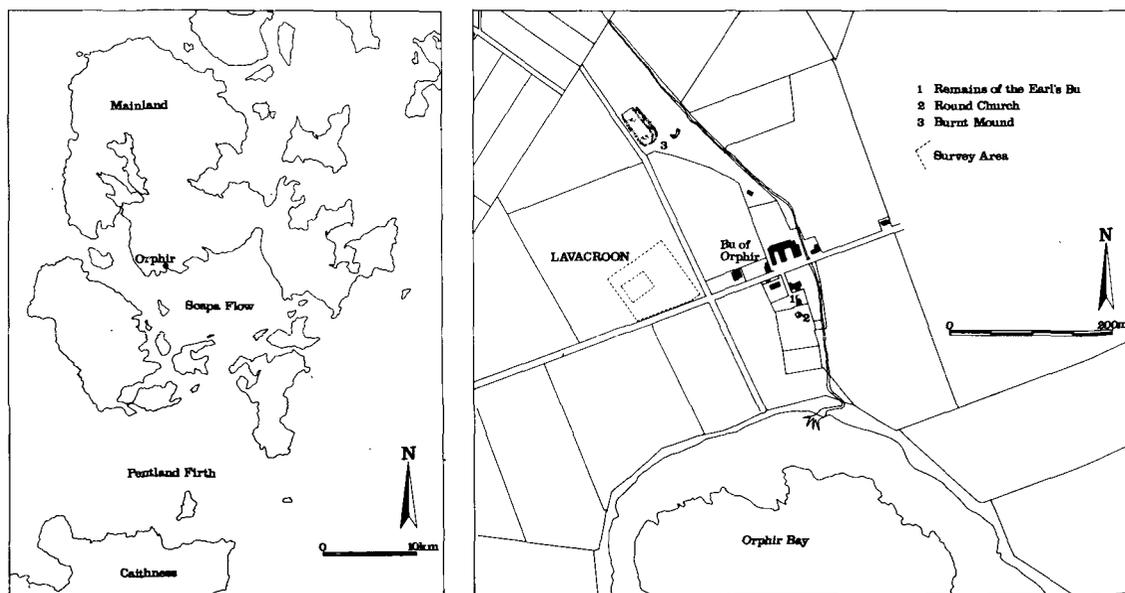
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INTRODUCTION (illus 1)

Whilst working at the Earl's Bu, Orphir, Orkney (NGR HY 3325 0447) in 1979, the farmer, Mr W Stephenson of Bu Farm, drew our attention to a nearby field he was ploughing for the first time in many years. After ploughing, large slabs of both dressed and undressed stones were found dislodged and scattered on the surface of a large mound in the field, and small shelly midden deposits and heavy iron slag were also visible. After walking over the area within a grid of approximately 100 m by 100 m both in 1979 and 1980, maps were drawn-up to indicate the artefact distribution.

The disturbed site corresponds to a mound noted as *Lavacroon* an early parish maps from 1813 and 1820, (reproduced and annotated by Johnston 1904). It was not noted in the old *Statistical Account*, but it is possible that this mound is that noted by RCAMS as 'Mound West of Bu of Orphir - The field is cultivated and no trace of the mound survives' 3rd August 1928 (RCAMS 1946, 178, no 507). At present no satisfactory derivation can be found for the name *Lavacroon*.

There does not seem to be a local tradition of artefactual recovery from the site which supports the farmer's statement that the mound had not been ploughed for a considerable number of years. The direct result of this was that the 1979 ploughing was deeper than that of 1980 and the artefact



ILLUS 1 Location of Lavacroon, Orphir, Orkney, indicating area of survey grid (M J Rains)

retrieval reflects this difference. It is hoped that subsequent ploughing will be shallow and will consequently reduce the damage to this site.

A total of five days was spent on site over two seasons with approximately a dozen people involved. Funding was made available through Durham University Excavation Committee and the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland.

The immediate context of Lavacroon is particularly rich in archaeological sites. There is information from the immediate vicinity concerning the pre-Norse period; to the north-east of Lavacroon is a large burnt mound (illus 1), with a possible smaller one nearby (RCAMS 1946, no 492, 177); many other sites are included in the Royal Commission Inventory (1946, 174–9). Johnston had also distinguished a number of sites in the immediate vicinity of the Earl's Bu, Orphir (Johnston 1904, 197) including the mound at Lavacroon. It is in the Norse period of influence in the area that Orphir is most famous, however: many references in the *Orkneyinga Saga* suggest that there was at Orphir a large drinking hall (cf Taylor 1938, 242).

There has long been interest in this aspect of the site, with various attempts in the 18th and 19th centuries to resolve the lack of supportive archaeological evidence for the 'Drinking Hall'; the distinctive Round Church has long been visible, and was intact as late as 1757 (Kemp 1887, 137). The results of other work on the sites of both the Hall and Church are outlined elsewhere (Batey 1984, 82–3). More recent work by the author on a newly identified part of the Earl's Bu site, to the north-east of the Guardianship area, has revealed extensive midden deposits in relation to a stone, tunnel-like, feature (*ibid.*, 83–4). Scattered finds in the general area, including the runic inscription in Tankerness House which apparently came from St Nicholas's Church, Orphir c 1953, indicate more extensive occupation than has previously been considered. The lands of the modern Bu Farm have produced stray finds, eg two steatite spindle whorls and a small steatite sharpening stone; adjacent Swanbister lands have produced similar objects in sandstone which may conceivably be of Norse date.

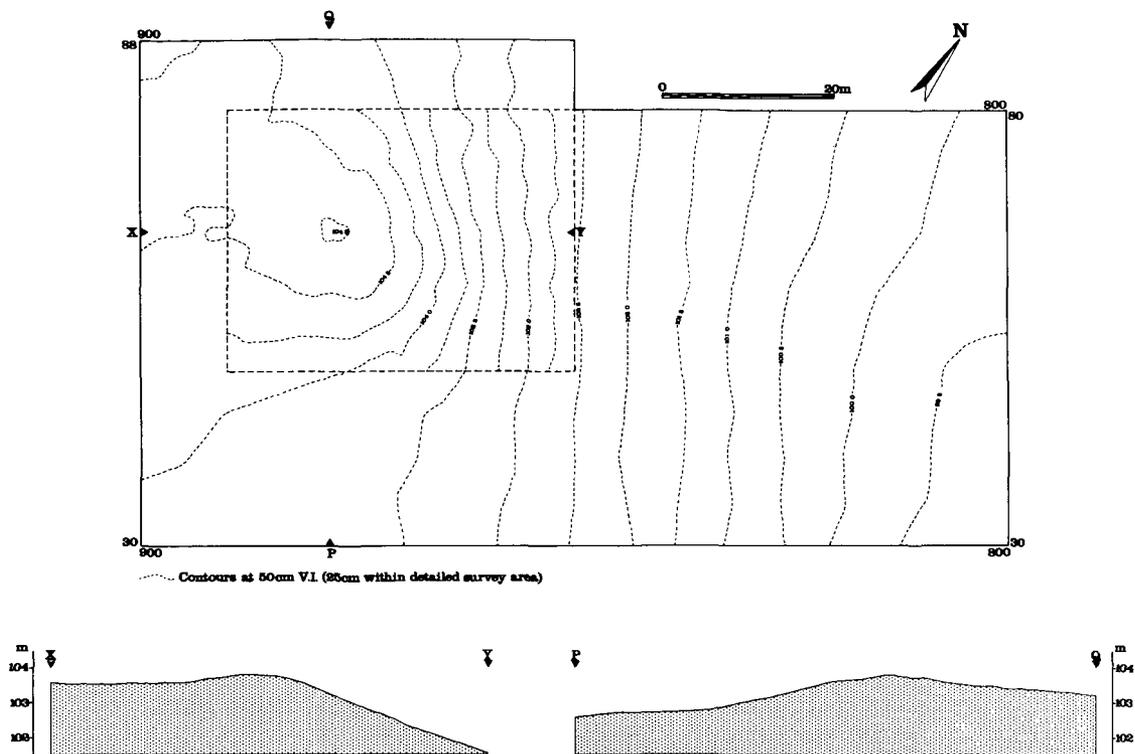
Perhaps the most conclusive Norse evidence from the area is the possible Viking grave found c 1889 in a cist at Greenigoe. In the grave were found various textile fragments and a paste and an amber bead, although no trace of the body remained. Two of the textile fragments are paralleled at the Viking site of Birka, Sweden (Geijer 1938, fig 24, no 3; Henshall 1952, 17).

SURVEY OF THE MOUND

A contour survey of the mound at Lavacroon (illus 2), approximately 58 m N–S by 100 m E–W, revealed that it was raised approximately 1 m above the general level of the sloping land. An area of approximately 30 m N–S by 26 m E–W could be distinguished as an identifiable mound. The ploughing, in a north-west/south-east direction, had taken the top off the mound and spread the stone and associated material over an area of approximately 80 m N–S by 100 m E–W.

It was decided, in view of the large and relatively dense spread of disturbed material, to grid the southern part of the field and to collect according to the co-ordinates of this grid (0–100/800–900: see illus 3–6). A more detailed area at the crown of the mound was distinguished 50–80/850–890. The grid measured 100 m by 100 m except where restricted by Gyre Road, and reduced to 75 m. It was based on the south-east corner peg located 10 m north-west from the field gate post and 14.14 m north-east of a point 30 m to the west of the gate post along the Gyre Road boundary.

The usual, backbreaking, method of intensive fieldwalking was employed; the obviously artefactual items or worked pieces being made Recorded Finds and measured into the grid more carefully. It soon became very obvious that it was not practical to include in this category the bulk of the industrial waste. The area of the grid is indicated in illus 1.



ILLUS 2 Contour survey and profiles of the mound (M J Rains)

The collection and plotting of all items of archaeological interest indicated a number of concentrations, most particularly material centred around the stone distribution at the crown of the mound. These distributions are plotted as illus 3–6. It is of particular importance to note that, although substantial blocks of sandstone had been dislodged during ploughing, these were considerably fewer in the second season, as indeed were the artefacts recorded. The most prolific of the finds recovered (listed and catalogued in microfiche) were undoubtedly associated with industrial activity – including slags and industrial waste, fragments of crucibles and many pieces of stone which are likely to have been sharpening stones or whetstones.

THE ARTEFACT ASSEMBLAGE

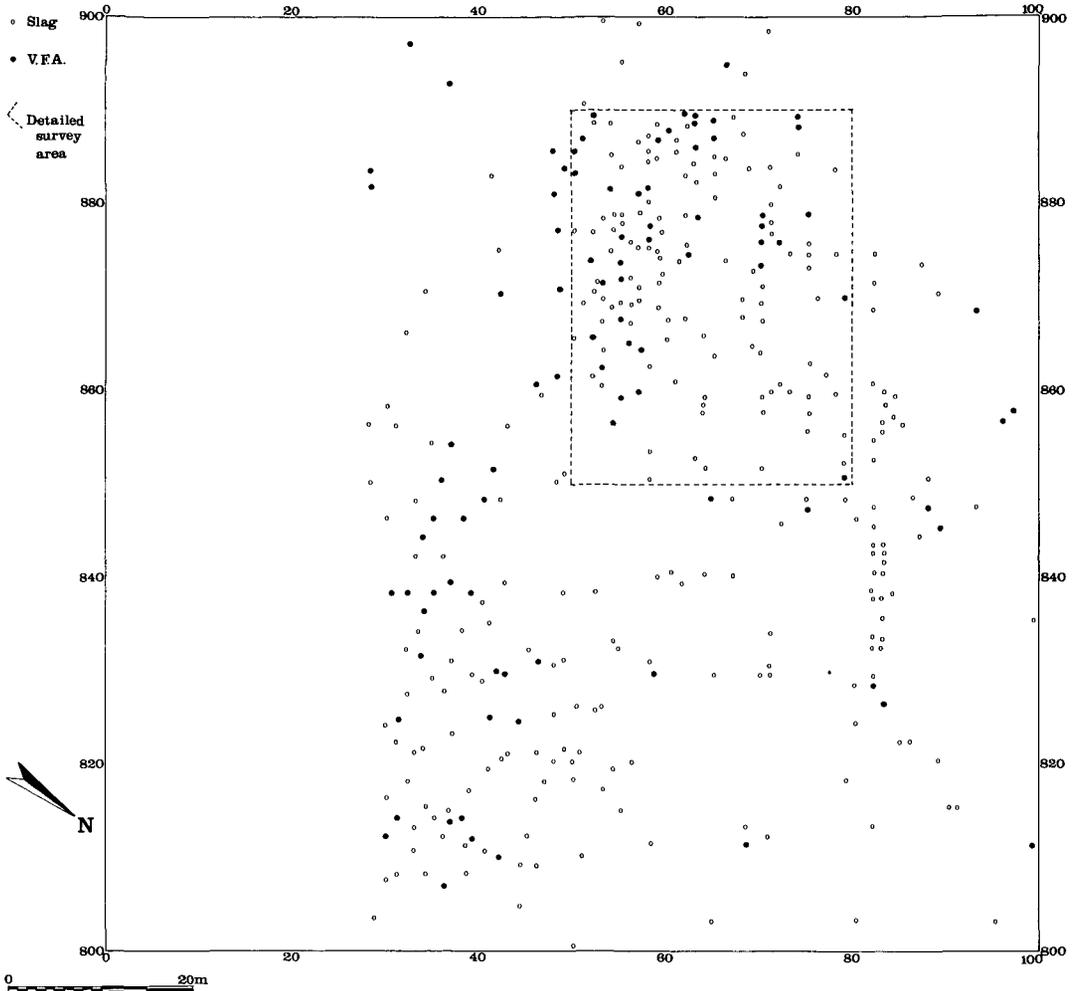
All items in the artefactual assemblage are catalogued and listed in numerical order in microfiche. The discussion that follows should be used in conjunction with that information.

RECORDED FINDS BY MATERIAL TYPE

Iron

RF 5, 14, 63, 64, 66, 67, 77, 87, 89, 98, 103, 106, 109, 111, 113, 115–121, 122, 127, 133, 134, 136–138, 142, 144, 146, 150, 153, 154, 160, 169, 178, 189

Many pieces of iron which were collected during fieldwalking have not been identified because of the advanced corrosion (20 items out of approximately 52; c 38%). In addition it is difficult to be sure of dating because they are surface finds.



ILLUS 3 Lavacroon 1979 artefact distribution: industrial activity (M J Rains)

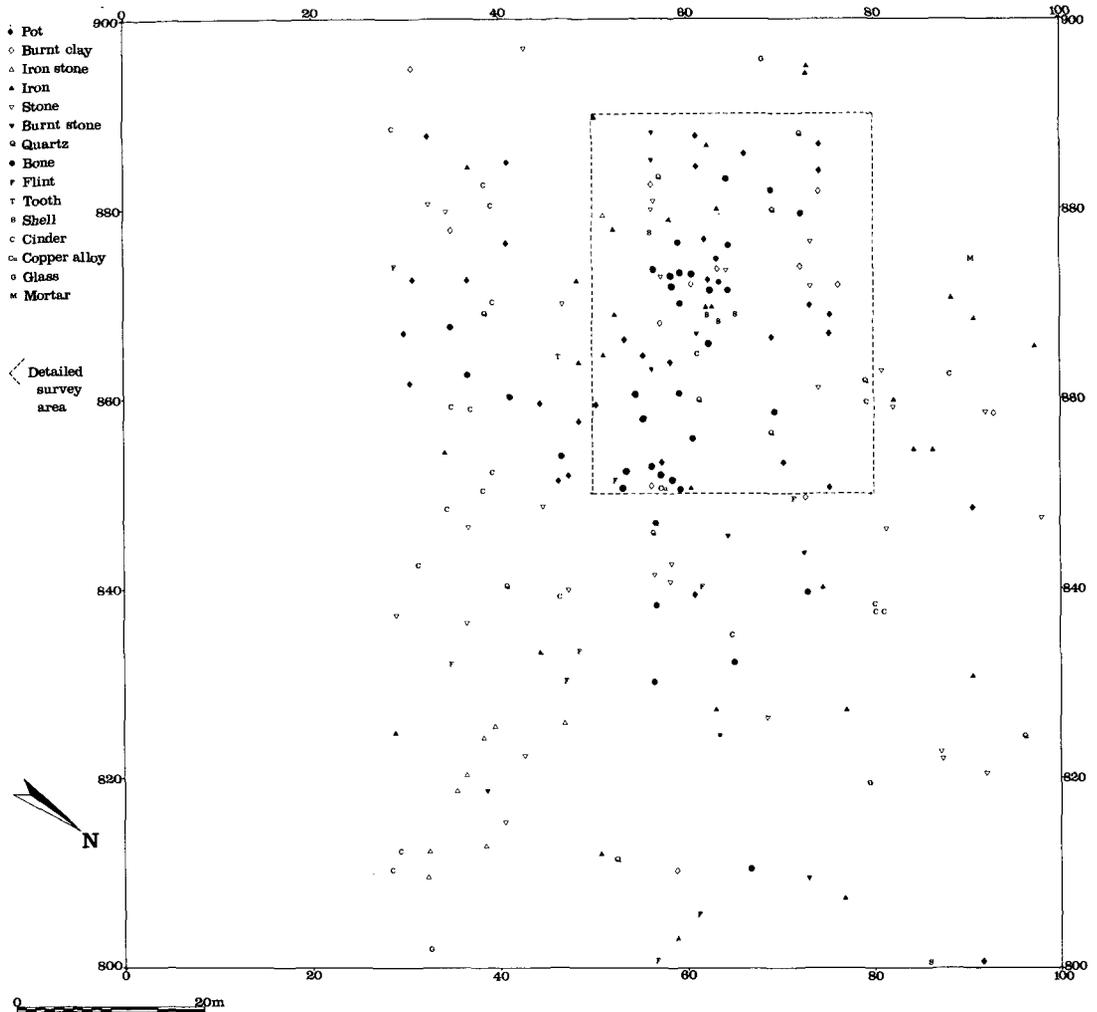
The largest group of iron finds is nails, of which 18 examples are included (34.62%). (RF 5, 64, 66, 87, 109, 116, 117, 118, 120, 121, 133, 134, 136, 146, 153, 154, 160, 189). In addition, some of the sheet-metal fragments such as RF 138 may also be parts of nail heads or rivet plates. As far as it is possible to tell, all the nails have round flat heads and apparently circular-sectioned tapering shanks. They are of variable sizes and presumably of differing uses. Two rivet plates have been distinguished, RF 154 and 109 (visible only on X-ray); however, there is no conclusive information on these pieces. The variety of types of nail is discussed elsewhere (Batey 1986; Batey *et al* 1984).

The sheet metal (eight finds: 15.38%) cannot be positively identified as generally the fragments are elements of larger items. Some pieces, may, however, be parts of nail heads as noted above.

Eight items have been identified as parts of objects:

RF 77 Precise function unknown, iron spike tapering to the point. Very badly corroded. Possibly part of a tool or a harrow.

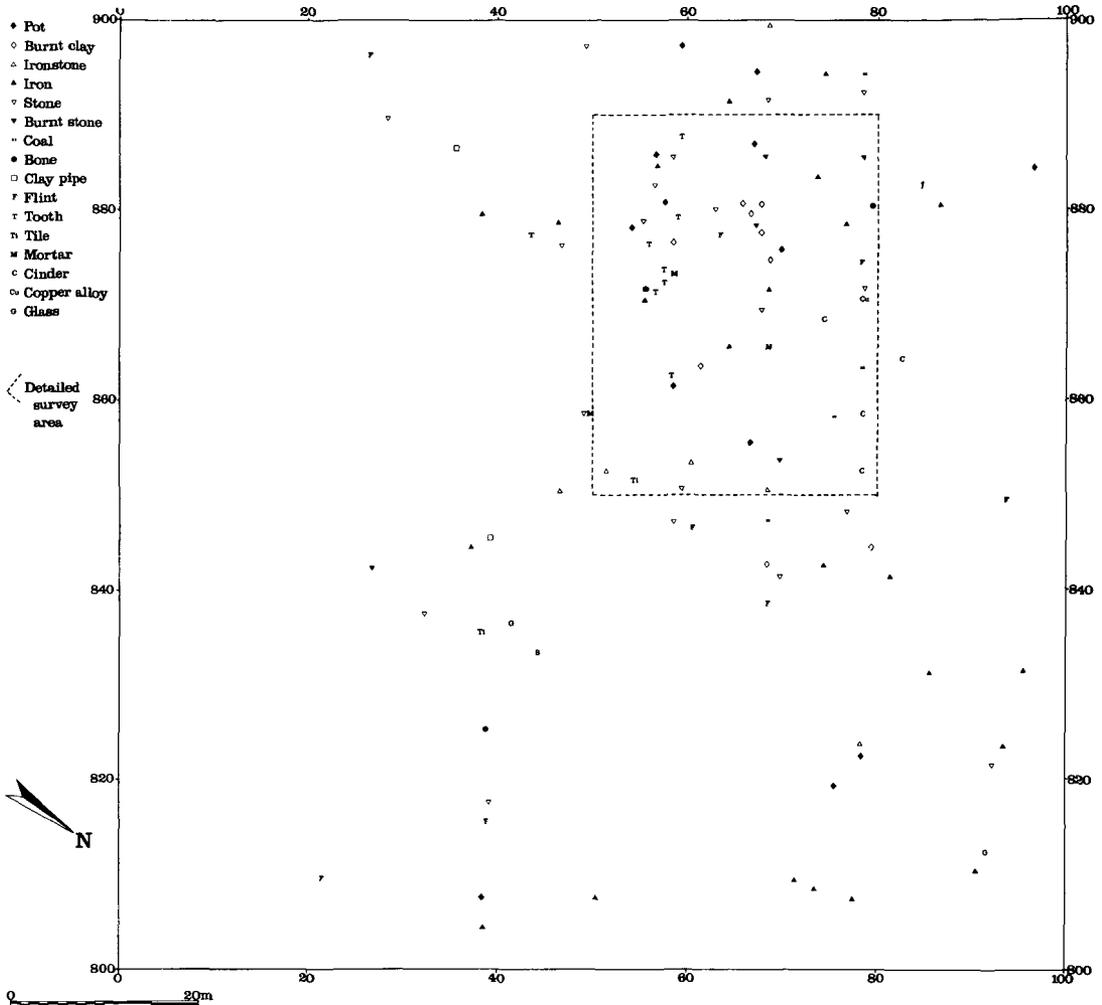
RF 106 Heavily corroded piece of iron with one complete perforation with fitting or nail, and one damaged hole. Probably part of hinge of indeterminate age.



ILLUS 4 Lavacroon 1979 artefact distribution: non-industrial (M J Rains)

- RF 137 One iron staple which may be one of a number in the assemblage which have been straightened and appear to be nail shanks. Also spiral of metal, possibly wire fencing, rather indeterminate.
- RF 14 Indeterminate form, pointed and tapering.
- RF 89 Apparently complete, tapering hook, ? fish hook.
- RF 117 Piece of slightly bent iron, ? tubing or piping. Apparently cylindrical in section. Likely to be modern.
- RF 127 Probably part of a staple.

There are a variety of iron items in this assemblage, but the most distinguishable are the nails and related fragments. There do not appear to be any particularly old forms but it is difficult to be conclusive. Of the remaining identifiable items, it is not possible to suggest any which have distinctive functions in an ancient context. The spike, RF 77, is likely to be part of a modern harrowing machine and RF 106 is probably part of a modern hinge.



ILLUS 5 Lavacroon 1980 artefact distribution: non-industrial activity (M J Rains)

Copper alloy

RF 72, 155

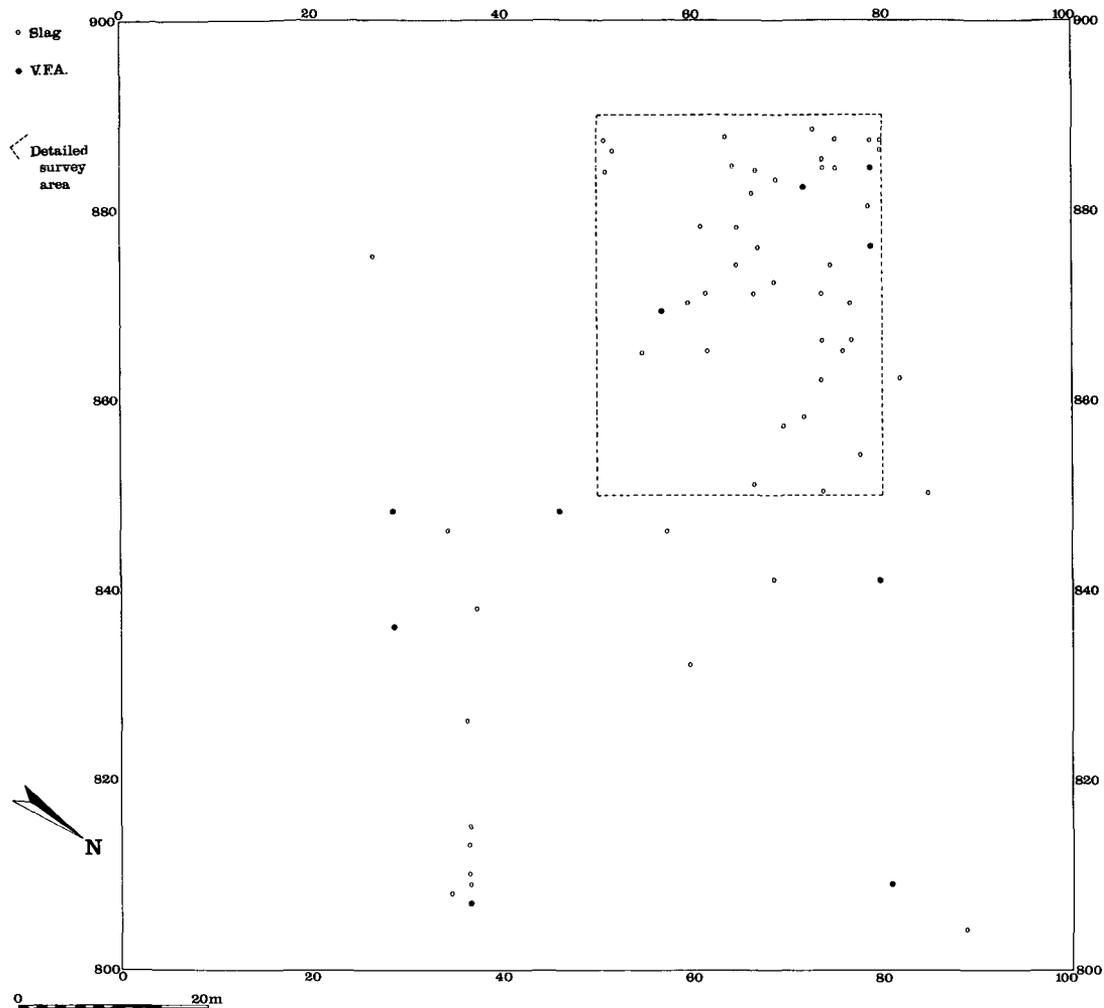
Two items of copper alloy were recovered. One piece (RF 72) is a solid rod of metal slightly bent and the other apparently broken. Its function is obscure but it may have been a rivet.

RF 155 is a decorated disc of metal, not a coin but possibly part of a button or mount. It lacks any obvious means of attachment to another surface. The impressed decoration covers the entire surface centrally, possibly indicating a cutting of the disc at the same time as the impression (illus 9).

Steatite

RF 9, 36

Two pieces of steatite were collected during the two seasons at Lavacroon. One, RF 9, is a small, highly smoothed piece with a slight groove down one side (illus 7). If this is part of a vessel, it is likely to be from the rim area, the groove could have assisted in the suspension of the vessel. It is remarkably smooth,



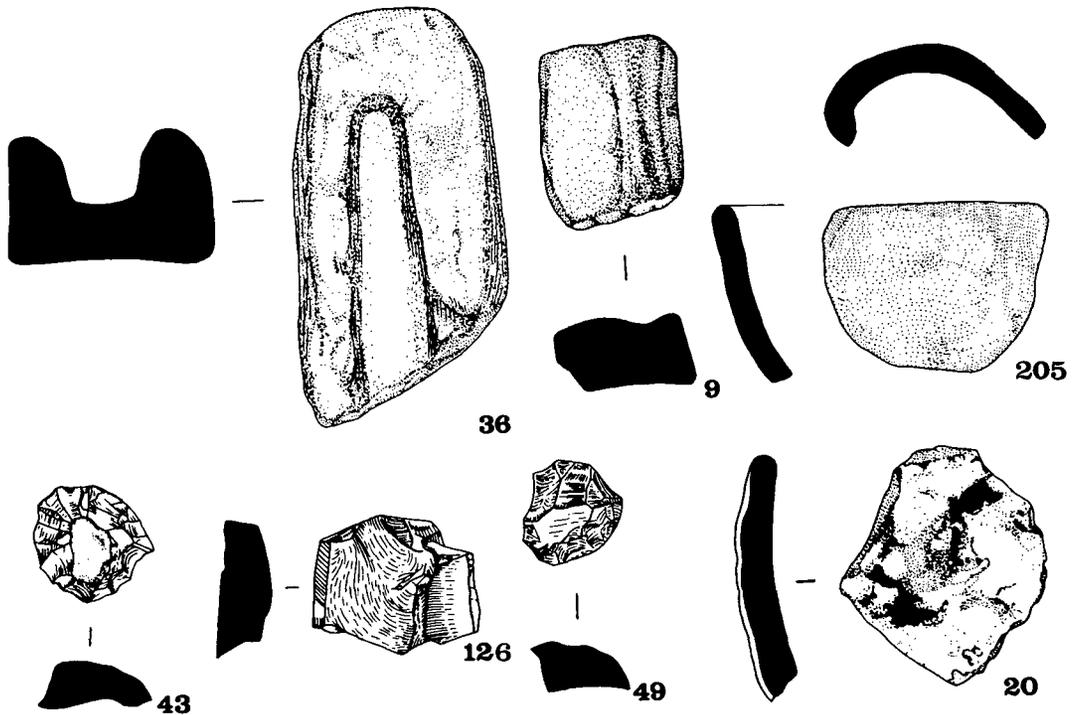
ILLUS 6 Lavacroon 1980 artefact distribution: industrial (M J Rains)

the result either of extensive wear, or abrasion in the ground. The second piece of steatite recovered at the site, however, RF 36, lacks this smooth appearance.

RF 36 is interesting and period-diagnostic. It is an ingot mould made from a reused vessel sherd, indicated by the rough tooling on the flat and unworked back of the piece which has signs of burning. Such an item is a relatively common find on Scandinavian sites where industrial working is indicated, eg from Kaupang, Norway and Hedeby, North Germany (see Graham-Campbell 1980, 127, nos 426 & 428) and the Brough of Birsay, Orkney (Curle 1982, ill 28, nos 574-7, 45). The depression could have been used for moulding a precious metal such as silver or, less likely, base metal such as copper and iron. Once in this form, the metal could be cut to provide the raw material for use in a crucible, or hammered into shape for twisting into an object such as an arm ring.

Stone

RF 8, 10, 11, 17, 24, 25, 27, 32, 35, 38, 40, 41, 46, 47, 52, 54, 60, 75, 78, 79, 94, 97, 110, 125, 131, 132, 140, 141, 148, 156, 164, 175, 177, 185, 188



ILLUS 7 Drawings of Recorded Finds 9, 20, 36, 43, 49, 126, 205 (N Emery)

The stone finds which have been retained are all considered to have unnatural wear patterns. A large number in the assemblage (such as RF 27, 38, 47, 60, 79, 94) are likely to be whetstones. Others, such as RF 41, may have been used as rubbers. There are also a number of stones which have been amended in shape but for what purpose is now unclear.

Hones/whetstones

Eleven out of a total of 36 worked stones can be suggested as hones or whetstones (illus 8). None of these has been cleaned at the time of writing, in the hope that X-Ray fluorescence work will be undertaken on them in the future.

The stone is generally sandstone, suggesting a local source. Makeshift hones of local stones have been found at Freswick Links, Caithness (Batey 1984, 311–12) in a late Norse context, in conjunction with a wide range of other types including small perforated ones and larger 'haunched' types. Simple crude stones which may have been used as hones have also been recovered from a number of other sites. Sandstone hones have been noted at Northampton, for example, in addition to 'miscellaneous hones' of makeshift stones from various contexts (Moore & Oakley 1979, 280–2).

Miscellaneous stone

In this section, there are a large number, 20 out of a total of 25 (80%) which may be described as worked, though any function they may have had is now obscure.

Of those items remaining and with an identifiable function, a number of different uses are represented. RF 17, an undecorated disc (illus 8), may have been a gaming piece. A similar example has been recovered from Jarlshof, Shetland (Hamilton 1956, 83–4, pl XVII, c).

RF 41 has a flattened face and may possibly have been used as a crude stone-rubber in the preparation of leather or cereals; a similar example was found at Clickhimin, Shetland (Hamilton 1968, 32, fig 13, 1). This very simple artefact is difficult to date.



ILLUS 8 Miscellaneous stone Recorded Finds 17, 41, 79, 94, 125 (T Middlemass)

Three pieces, pointed at one end, could have been parts of ards. Similar examples have been recovered from the site of Skaill, Deerness (Gelling, P S, pers comm) but are datable only to the prehistoric period in general.

Flint

RF 19, 21, 26, 29, 31, 43, 49, 61, 69, 112, 126, 129, 147, 151, 152, 157, 161, 190, 191

Most of the flint in the assemblage is in the form of unstruck pebbles: 13 out of a total of 19 pieces. Of the items which can be distinguished as retouched, two appear to be scrapers and one the fragment of a retouched blade (Healey, E, pers comm).

The technology of the artefacts is consistent with the nature of the raw material available; these small pebbles of flint enable only small items to be produced. Recent work on flint deposits (Wickham-Jones & Collins 1978) does not indicate any source of flint in the immediate vicinity of Orphir. The nearest drift sources are North Ronaldsay and Swona/Stroma (*ibid*, 12) with chert found on Eday, in Stromness Flags on the Mainland, and Shapinsay (*ibid*, 17).

Although small flakes and blade-like flakes are present, only RF 126 is retouched. It is clear that split pebbles provided more suitable blanks for scrapers, eg RF 48: the splintered pieces of RF 29 and 190 suggest the use of the *écaillé* technique, characteristic of working small pebble flint (Batey 1984, 315–16).

The three scrapers (illus 7), RF 31, 43 and 49, are small and abruptly retouched on the majority of their circumferences; RF 49 is fragmentary and though abruptly retouched is pointed in form more like the tip of a knife.

RF 126 (illus 7), the butt end of a relatively large blade or blade-like flake, has regular, abrupt, marginal retouch on the right edge, with some spalling on the ventral face; possible a knife fragment.

The quantity of artefacts and range of types are restricted. There are no datable types present, and though small artefacts have been considered synonymous with the Mesolithic, Clarke (1976, 57) has noted that small tools are produced as a response to the use of beach-pebble flint of restricted size. This is a common feature in Orcadian flint assemblages (Henshall 1979, 81).

Pottery

Type 1

Dark grey hard fabric, varying in colour from orange to dark grey. Gritting varies from large to much finer inclusions, some are very dark and glassy, also mica and quartz content. Very similar to Type 2 in fineness of fabric.

RF 2, 4, 30, 33, 71, 73, 100, 187, 204

Type 2

Hard grey/brown sandy fabric with oxidized exterior face. Large grit inclusions, quartz sandstone and fragments of iron ore. Fine clay matrix with a few small angular quartz grains and some similar to Type 6 also.

RF 37, 55, 57, 62, 84, 108, 192

Type 3

Dark fabric, sandy grey/black and very micaceous, fragments of iron ore with very little quartz in a fine matrix. Variable coarseness.

RF 34, 44, 80, 193

Type 4

Find dark grey/brown fabric with a few quartz grains, mica specks and larger grains of quartz sandstone and non identifiable fragments. Oxidized exterior face. Very similar to Type 6.

RF 81, 90, 93, 107

Type 5

Dark grey fabric, micaceous clay matrix with a low percentage of sub angular quartz inclusions. Oxidized exterior face and sooted, reduced throughout. Coarser than Type 6; probably from the same vessel.

RF 105, 173

Type 6

Very fine dark grey fabric with oxidized face, micaceous. Some interior sooting.

RF 123, 186

Various fabrics

The following sherds appear to be single examples of different fabrics. They are sufficiently distinctive to be separated from Types 1–6.

RF 42, 48, 83, 85, 102, 135, 145, 171, 176, 179, 194

Post-Medieval pottery

RF 114, 128, 195, 196

Discussion of pottery

It has been possible to assign the majority of the sherds recovered (28 out of 45) to a series of types. These are outlined above and catalogued in detail in microfiche (5: C1–C8). As can be seen from the similarities of description between these Types 1–6, there are a large number of common features, particularly concerning the clay matrix and range of inclusions. The pottery of these types is crude and hand-made and very likely to have been made from local clays with variations arising only from the nature of the inclusions. All the sherds are too abraded and fragmentary to allow an estimate of vessel number represented in the assemblage. Two sherds may represent basal fragments, Type 4, RF 81, and Type 6, RF 123, and the only other distinguishable sherd is a carinated shoulder of sherd of Type 4, RF 90. It is not possible to distinguish vessel forms from this assemblage.

It is equally difficult to suggest a date bracket for these sherds because of their simplicity. Most could be at home in a post 10th- to 12th-century context in Orkney, and Batey has discussed elsewhere the problems of the crude pottery in the North (Batey 1986) in relation to the Deerness Orkney assemblage. There are, however, similarities between the sherds in the Lavacroon group and those from Tuquoy, Westray (Mills, S A & Owen, O A, pers comm) and possibly also examples from the Brough of Birsay (Morris, C D, pers comm). It is equally possible that some sherds here may be prehistoric.

There is a wide range of undesignated fabric types. These are catalogued in detail in the microfiche text (5: C6–C8), the crude sherds cannot be dated any more closely than Types 1–6. More distinctive sherds are easier to date: RF 48 is a wheel-thrown sherd very similar to Saxo-Norman wares of 11th- to 12th-century date from the Hirsell, Coldstream (Mills, S A, pers comm). RF 102 may also be of the same date bracket. RF 145 has traces of yellow glaze and could date to the 13th to 14th century by analogy with sites further south, eg Hirsell, Coldstream (Mills, S A, pers comm).

Four sherds have been distinguished as post-Medieval, dating from the 18th century (RF 114, 128, 195, 196). These have been identified by S A Mills and are consistent in dating with the pieces of clay pipe noted below.

*Finds associated with industrial activity**Burnt clay*

RF 1, 23, 59, 76, 82, 96, 104, 124, 130, 165, 170, 181, 184, 199, 200

Crucibles

RF 20, 205

Miscellaneous industrial waste/furnace material

RF 13, 15, 28, 39, 50, 51, 56, 65, 68, 74, 88, 95, 99, 101, 166, 167, 174, 197, 198

Industrial waste

See fiche 5:C14–D3

Out of 41 pieces of burnt clay which were recovered, 22 were lacking shape, possibly because of abrasion in the ground or because they are part of larger items. Five have some shaping, generally in the form of a flattened face although one (RF 124) has a curved form. Fourteen have traces of industrial waste adhering. It is perhaps these last pieces of burnt clay which may assist in the identification of the use on this site. It is conceivable that some of the burnt clay may have been associated with industrial processes, parts of furnaces for example. Some of the flattened pieces may have had structural significance, eg clay backing for a wattle structure, but without excavation this problem cannot be resolved. In the light of the other industrial activity represented on the site, crucible fragments and slag, an industrial use of the burnt clay could easily be upheld. Other items in the assemblage are listed as Miscellaneous Industrial waste/Furnace material and include pieces of stone with adhering industrial waste such as RF 50 and RF 28.

In conjunction with this evidence, a large amount of slag was collected during the fieldwalking: some 12.86 kg in 1979 and 3.19 kg in 1980. The concentrations are seen clearly on illus 3 and 5. Two examples of this material were examined in Sweden (see fiche 5: D4–5) and interpreted as the products of either smelting or a reduction process. One piece had a low iron content whilst the other had a much higher iron content. Iron working on the site is therefore suggested by this material.

Two pieces of crucibles were also recovered; RF 20, showed indications of use in melting copper or one of its alloys (J Bailey, Ancient Monuments Laboratory, London, pers comm). RF 205 is a more complete example and was one of the first finds from the site before any organized walking (illus 7).

There is a disproportionate amount of material in this assemblage related to industrial activity, particularly if worked stone is also considered, with whetstones suggested. It would therefore seem safe to assume that during at least one phase in the occupation of this site, industrial working was being undertaken. This problem can only be resolved by excavation.

Mortar

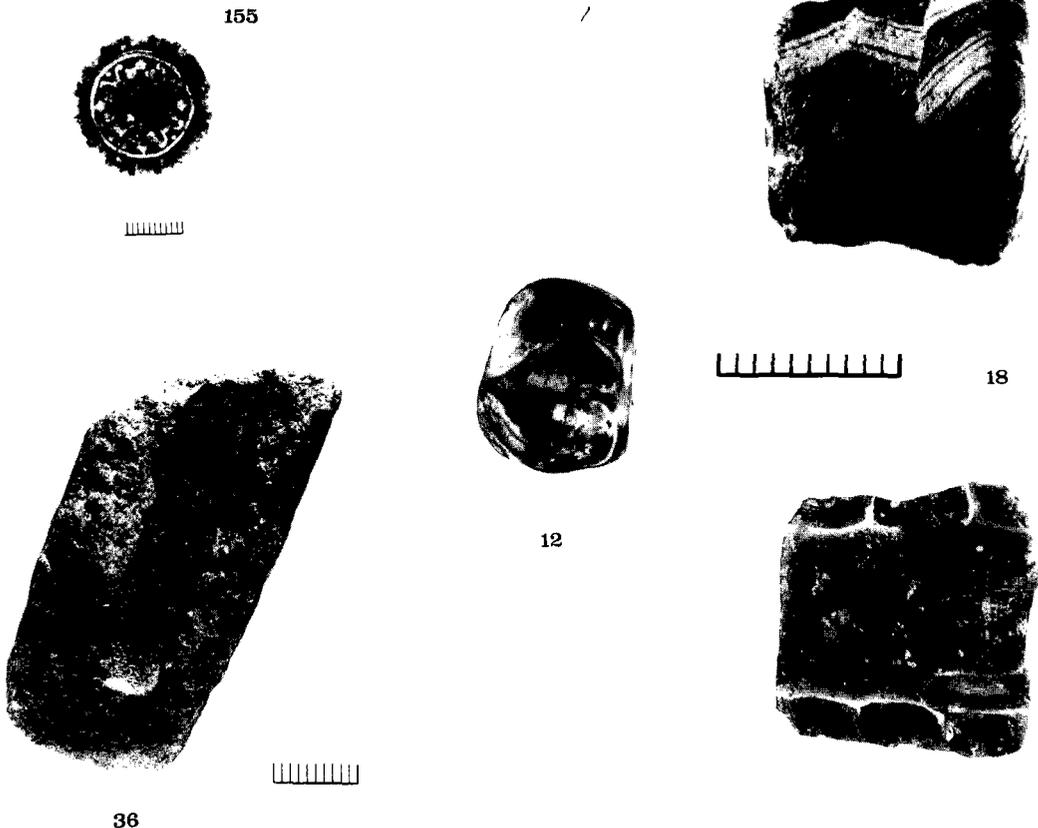
RF 6, 139, 168, 180

Four pieces of mortar were recovered, all of similarly high shelly content. Two pieces, RF 6 and RF 139, which have flat faces, indicate original contact with a flat surface, probably stone. The large stones dislodged during ploughing may have been associated with this but no traces remained on them and presumably rather more ought to have been found during fieldwalking if this were the original context.

Glass

RF 12, 18, 53, 201, 202

Three fragments of glass in the assemblage are modern vessel glass and therefore represent contaminants. (Remarkably few modern items, with the exceptions of the iron, tile and clay pipes, have been noted in other elements of the assemblage.)



ILLUS 9 Recorded Finds 12, 18, 36, 155 (T Middlemass & D Hudspeth)

The two beads are, however, rather more interesting. The broken bead RF 12 has a faceted finish and a large perforation (diameter 5 mm). The glass is an almost transparent mid blue. The profile of the bead indicates an irregular cutting, being somewhat thicker at one side than the other. Its crude finish and manufacture make it difficult to date. The nearest parallel appears at Ipswich from an Anglo-Saxon cemetery (Layard 1907, pl XXXIII). The extreme right-hand bead on the necklace at the bottom of this plate seems to be faceted like the Lavacroon example. A date in the sixth century may be tentatively suggested from this context.

The second fragment of bead from Lavacroon, RF 18, a fine polychrome example has a similar parallel context. David Brown of the Ashmolean Museum and Ulf Nasman of Viborg Museum, Denmark, have kindly commented on the bead and note that the type has a wide distribution in England and the Continent; an origin in the Frankish milieu may be suggested but is at present difficult to prove.

Parallels range from the Anglo-Saxon cemetery at Londesborough, East Yorkshire (Museum of Antiquities, Newcastle University acc no 1958.54.11.H, inf L Allason-Jones). Parallels from the Continent have been recently published by Koch (1977, 210–11, Farbtafel 4, 48,7) from a German burial site at Schretzheim. The context for the type at this site is well-dated to 545–600 AD. The apparently close dating correlation with the bead RF 12 is particularly interesting, providing a northern outlier for this distinctive type of sixth-century polychrome bead.

Clay pipe

RF 143, 149, 203

Three pieces of clay pipe were recovered: one bowl fragment (RF 203) and two fragments of stem, RF 143 and mouthpiece, RF 149. Both pieces have been identified as being of late 18th- to 19th-century date by L J Edwards of the Jarrow Hall Museum, Tyne and Wear.

Bone and shell

RF 158 (whalebone)

A number of pieces of bone and shell were collected; RF 158 a piece of whalebone, is worth noting specifically. It was cut but not obviously worked and could have originated from the nearby beach. Of the remainder of the bone, all that has survived comprises burnt or calcined bone or teeth; these items are particularly resilient and indicate poor conditions of preservation of organic material at Lavacroon. The shell is unremarkable. The general bone and shell are listed on fiche 5: D8–D9.

CONCLUSIONS

The mound of Lavacroon was revealed as an archaeological site through ploughing; the available resources did not permit any excavation. The results presented here are therefore based solely on fieldwalking over the disturbed area. Despite this apparently superficial examination, the quality of some of the finds recovered, and the quantity of others, enables a number of suggestions to be made concerning the nature of the site.

There can be no doubt that at some stage in the development of the site there was considerable industrial activity. The large amount of industrial waste, the several pieces of burnt clay (which may be parts of furnace linings) and the two crucibles all support this suggestion. The working of iron and copper alloy has been indicated. However, this range of activity may be extended to include metals such as silver. The steatite ingot-mould fragment, made from a reused vessel sherd, is most likely to be of Norse date and Scandinavian parallels cited are most commonly associated with the working of silver. This find, related to industrial activity, is the only one which can be assigned any cultural or temporal label in that category. Is it too much to suggest that all the industrial activity at this site was taking place during the Norse period of influence in Orkney?

The nearby site of the Earl's Bu is clearly more extensive than previously thought; recent work has already indicated this (Batey 1984, 83–4). The farmer noted structural remains beneath a new barn between the Guardianship site of the Bu and Lavacroon. Is it therefore possible to see the Norse

site as extending as far as Lavacroon? Such a statement may at present seem to be based on rather circumstantial evidence – a single ingot mould found in a field full of industrial waste – but excavation could easily resolve this problem. Such sites are remarkably rare in this period in the British Isles and therefore its significance cannot be understated.

Unfortunately, the majority of the remaining finds lack distinguishing features and are most difficult to ascribe to any particular period. The glass beads, dated to the sixth century, may have been remnants on the site but the polychrome example remains the most northerly example of its type.

The pottery, although crude for the large part and locally made, may also be consistent with a dating in the 11th to 12th centuries, with some later wheel-thrown pieces included in the assemblage. However, it must also be stressed that such simple forms and fabrics could conceivably be rather earlier in date. The disturbed nature of the site may have resulted in earlier pieces being brought to the surface.

There are many problems involved in the examination of an assemblage gained solely through fieldwalking but in this case, the results far outweigh these. Only excavation can resolve the problem of identifying the type and form of the building on the mound at Lavacroon, the building whose scattered stones brought archaeologists to the site.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The main impetus for this work was provided by the farmer at Orphir, Mr W Stephenson of Bu Farm and his son. Without their considerable help, and practical assistance this project could not have been undertaken. A number of people provided stalwart and backbreaking service and thanks are extended to all of them – they know who they are! I would particularly like to thank Michael Rains and Harvey Watts for help with the gridding and the contour survey of the mound. The financial support of the Excavation Committee of Durham University and of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland is most gratefully acknowledged. Post-survey processing has been intermittent but the practical assistance of Claudine Freeman, Michael Rains, Norman Emery and the Photographic Units in the Departments of Archaeology and Geography of Durham University enabled the completion of this report. Many thanks to all concerned.

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