

2 Introduction

2.1 Location

The site is located towards the south end of the Spurness peninsula, at the south-west end of Sanday, Orkney (NGR: HY 60553 34489) in Cross and Burness parish (*illus 1*). The spine of the ridge is formed of Rousay Flags, flanked by Eday Sandstone Beds, all of which belong to the Devonian of Middle Old Red Sandstone period (*Mykura 1976*, 82). The site lies in rough heath land in a prominent position at a height of *c* 31m OD.

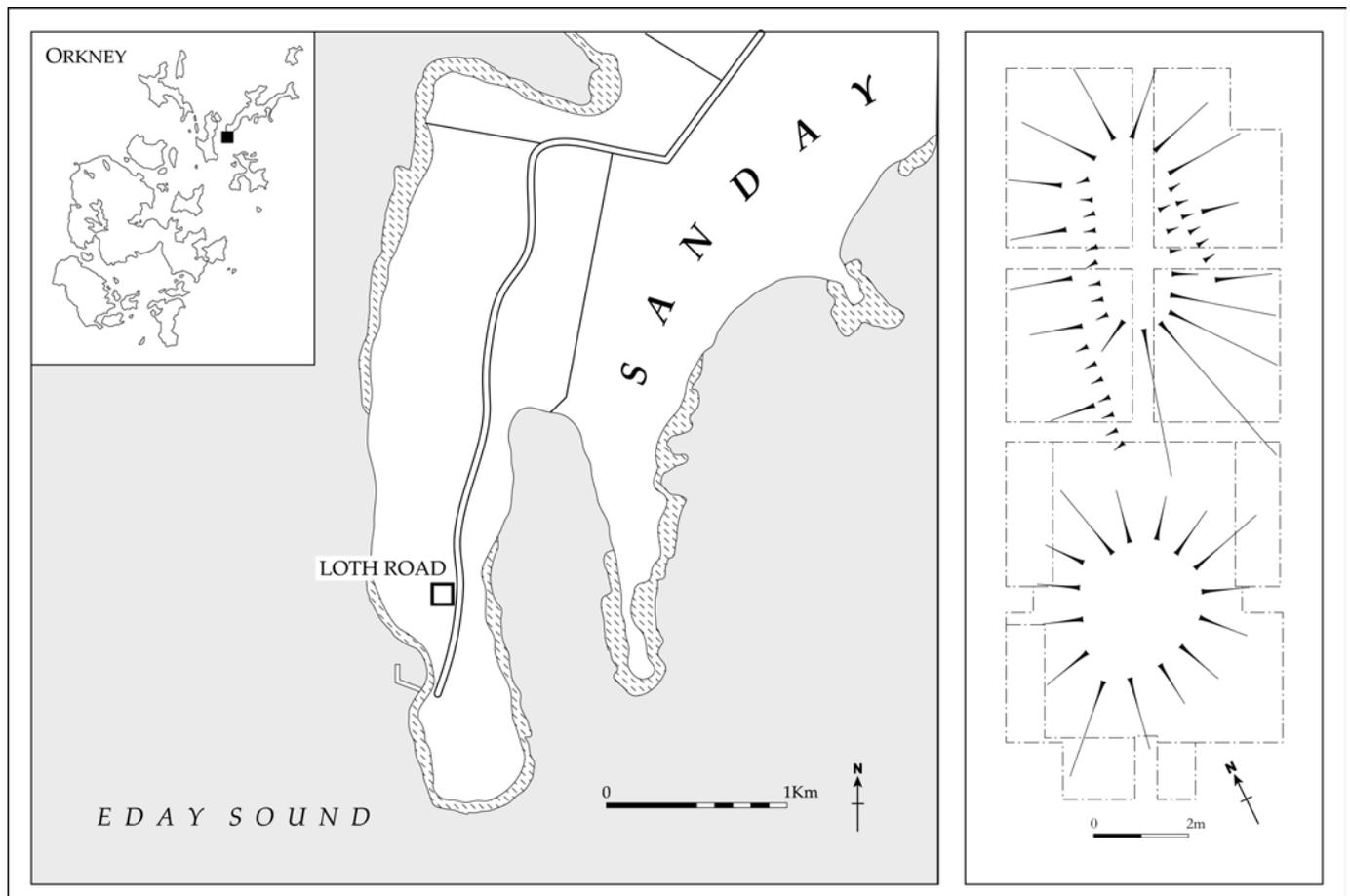
2.2 Discovery and survey

The site was first recorded by Dr Raymond Lamb, then the Orkney County Archaeologist, as ‘Two low shapeless mounds [which] may be burial mounds. OR369’ (*Lamb 1980*, 24). In late 1990 and early 1991, Bradford University conducted an archaeological survey along the proposed access route to the new

ferry terminal at Loth, near the south end of Spurness Ness (*Hunter & Dockrill 1991*). The survey divided the site into two – Site 19 to the east and Site 20 to the west – identifying both as probable burnt mounds, due to the location of burnt or midden material by geophysical survey, although the surveyors noted that there was still a possibility that they were Bronze Age burial cairns (*Hunter & Dockrill 1991*, 7–8). A topographic survey of Site 19 shows two merging mounds (*illus 1*). The north mound (Structure 1) was sub-rectangular, some 11m long NNE/SSW, 6m wide and up to 0.6m high. The south mound (Structure 2) was sub-circular, 5–7m in diameter and roughly 1m high (*Hunter & Dockrill 1991*, 25, fig 6).

2.3 Excavation

Orkney Islands Council funded the excavation of Site 19 prior to the construction of the new road. The excavation was conducted in June and July 1991



Illus 1 Site location, based on Ordnance Survey maps © Crown copyright

over a period of two weeks by Ruth Gosney (now Peace) and Alan Braby. No provision for funding post-excavation analysis was in place, so the site records, finds and samples were held in storage by the Orkney Museum and Ruth Peace. Orkney Archaeological Trust was kindly funded by a grant

from Historic Scotland to bring the site to publication. It should be noted that two of the plans and ten samples could not be located. The missing samples and the fact that not all contexts were sampled has affected the type and quantity of material retrieved from features across the site.