
6 Methodology

The archaeological excavations that are the focus of this publication include a series of investigations mainly confined to an area measuring approximately 80m by 40m on the promontory at the south end of the terrace (Illus 1). The work was not continuous but was conducted in a series of campaigns over a three-year period by members of Glasgow University and the Natural History and Antiquarian Society of Mid Argyll directed by Eric Cregeen. Others involved included Ian Morrison and Frank Bigwood. The areas investigated depended on the existence of archaeological features, their perceived significance and the resources available to deal with them. Quarrying operations continued around the site, and as a result the excavations were conducted under difficult circumstances (Illus 3). Important areas were left as islands; unimportant areas were quarried away; and other areas were covered by quarry spoil. A nearby Bronze Age cist cemetery was discovered, and excavated and published separately (Cregeen & Harrington 1981).

Topsoil stripping of the site was sometimes conducted by hand and sometimes by machine, not all of it conducted under archaeological supervision, and in some cases bulldozer drivers were left to report anything unusual (Illus 4). For example, when the driver noticed anything interesting he dumped the contents of the bulldozer bucket onto an area for Cregeen to inspect later. This was the case for what is described as the debris dumps, which presumably derived from pits identified by the driver. One of these pits was partially described *in situ* by Cregeen.

The site had an excavation grid (Illus 5), but only some of the squares within it were fully excavated and recorded. Entire squares were removed without anything significant being encountered, and others containing significant features only underwent partial excavation and test pitting. Accurate depth measurements and the full extent of different contexts were not usually recorded. There was no systematic numbering of contexts, though post-holes were numbered. This was normal procedure for the



Illus 3 Site under excavation, looking north-east towards Kilmartin, showing quarrying operations in progress around the excavation



Illus 4 Utilizing quarry machinery as a photographic platform (pre-Health and Safety days!)

time; however, the lack of context planning means that there is no way of reconstructing any possible chronological horizons within the main occupation layers (context 003). This is particularly frustrating as the site was clearly multi-period, with significant occupation in the Iron Age and Early Historic periods. However, very detailed descriptions, plans and sections of features such as post-holes were recorded, along with over 600 photographs, mainly colour slides and lists of finds. This very extensive archive was worked on by the excavators over some 30 years in an attempt to unravel the complexities of the site, but it has to be admitted that no comprehensive account of the site can be given based on this material.

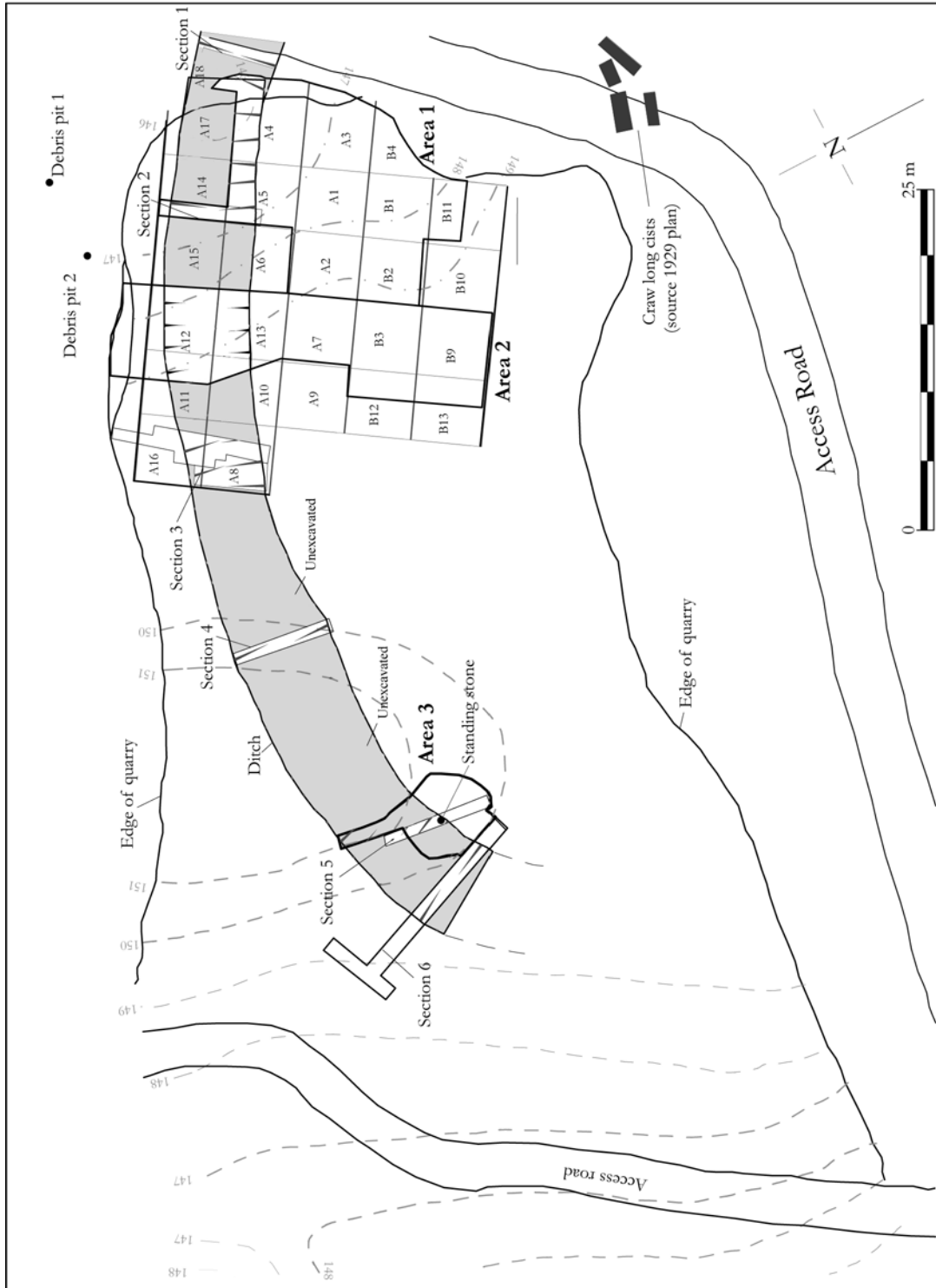
Despite this, a considerable complex of archaeological features were excavated. As more of the site grid was opened and the extent of features became apparent, the site was sub-divided into areas. This was according to when they were opened or the presence of significant features and resulted in two main contiguous excavation trenches (Area 1 and Area 2), and one separate one (Area 3). These were excavated in a series of 16ft (4.85m) squares, including 4ft (0.60m) baulks. The squares were numbered in the order that they were opened. Areas B5, 6, 7, 8, 14 and 15 are in Area 3, while all the other squares are within Areas 1 & 2.

A trench (Area 1) was opened where topsoil stripping in 1959 had revealed potential archaeological features. As work proceeded and the trench was gradually extended, another complex of features, quite different in character, was encountered to the west (into Area 2). Despite the fact that all the features were in the same trench it was decided, probably for logistical reasons, to call one group Settlement Area 1 and the other Settlement Area 2. A separate 'Metalworking area' was identified with Area 2. In Settlement Area 1, all archaeological features were excavated down to a sterile subsoil, whereas in Settlement Area 2, excavation was limited to topsoil stripping and the cleaning of features cut into the occupation layer (context 003). Area 3 was the area around the standing stone at the western side of the site.

A large, curvilinear ditch that bordered both of these trenches was also encountered. Although not fully excavated, it underwent a series of investigations, including test pits and sections excavated across its full width. These are described as Ditch Sections 1–6. North of this ditch there was no systematic excavation, but a number of 'Debris pits and dumps' were recovered by the bulldozer drivers as described above.

In the 40 years since Bruach an Druimein was excavated there have been various developments in excavation methodologies, recording strategy and the study of specialist material recovered from excavations. The site archive and the available small finds were reassessed between 2001 and 2003. Although we cannot improve on the stratigraphic relationships that Cregeen was able to identify, an attempt has been made to clarify the labelling and interpretation of certain key elements encountered during excavation and combine this with contemporary assessments of the various small finds. For the purposes of this report, only the more significant features encountered are described and these have been assigned context numbers in an attempt to ease identification. The post-holes have their own sequence of numbers as assigned by Cregeen.

The finds from the excavation have been deposited in the Kelvingrove Museum (Glasgow Museums and Art Galleries), along with the site archive.



Illus 5 Areas of excavation and site grid. Contours in feet OD, from pre-quarrying survey