

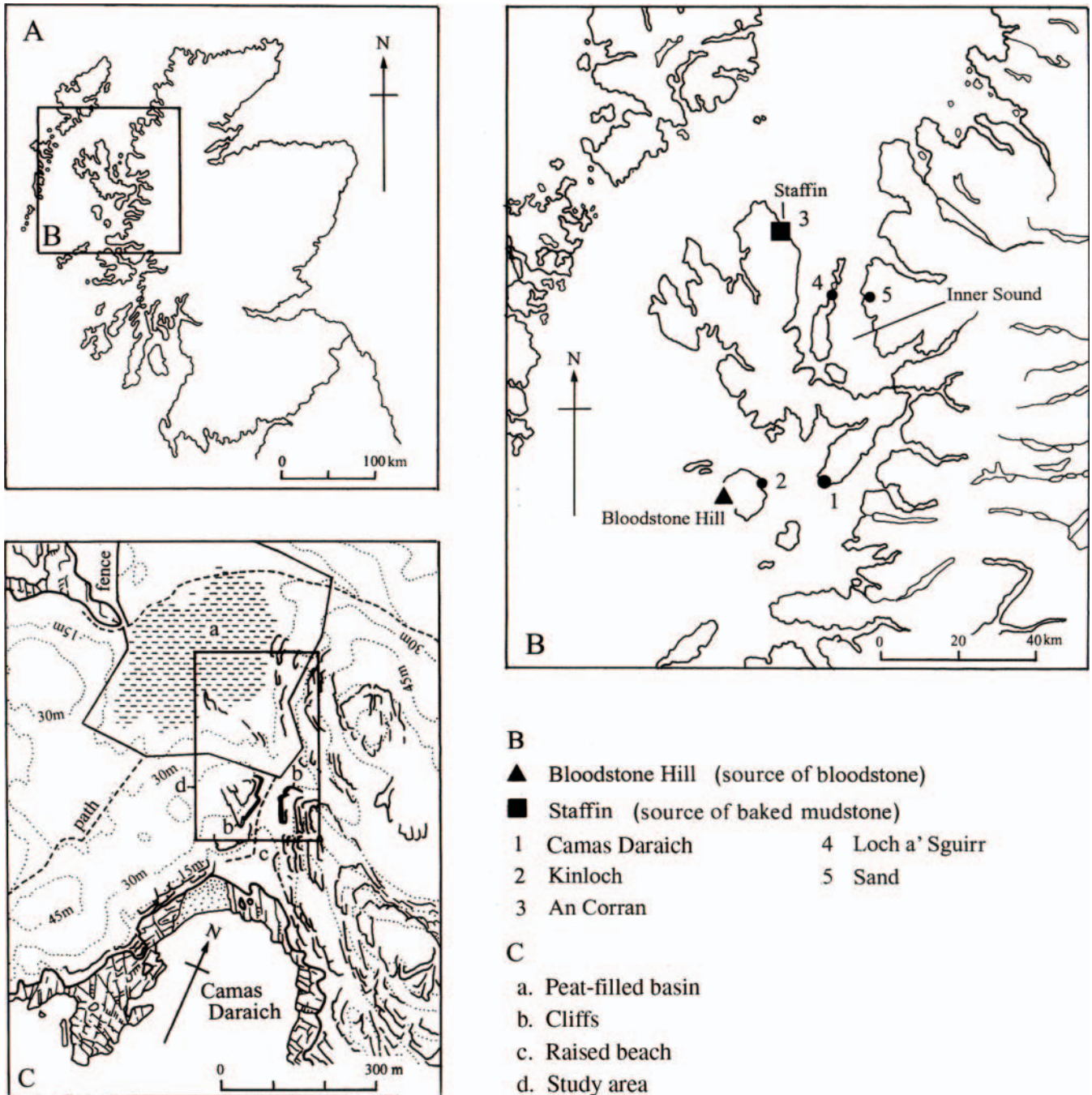
3 Location and pre-excavation information

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3.1 Location

The croft of Camas Daraich occupies the eastern slopes of a shallow basin on the peninsula of the Point of Sleat, in south-west Skye (Illus 4 & 5). The sea is never far away: a small, sandy bay lies some

500 m to the south; while a rocky coastline bounds the west side of the peninsula. The site itself lies on the slope, just below the summit of the 20 m raised beach (Illus 6), facing north into a peat-filled basin that has at various times been part of a small, sheltered marine bay and a freshwater lagoon



Illus 4 Camas Daraich: topographical location map showing the raised beaches, cliff lines and the peat-filled basin



Illus 5 Camas Daraich: general photograph of the site from the SE, showing the grass-covered raised beach with the track running across it and excavation in progress on trench 1



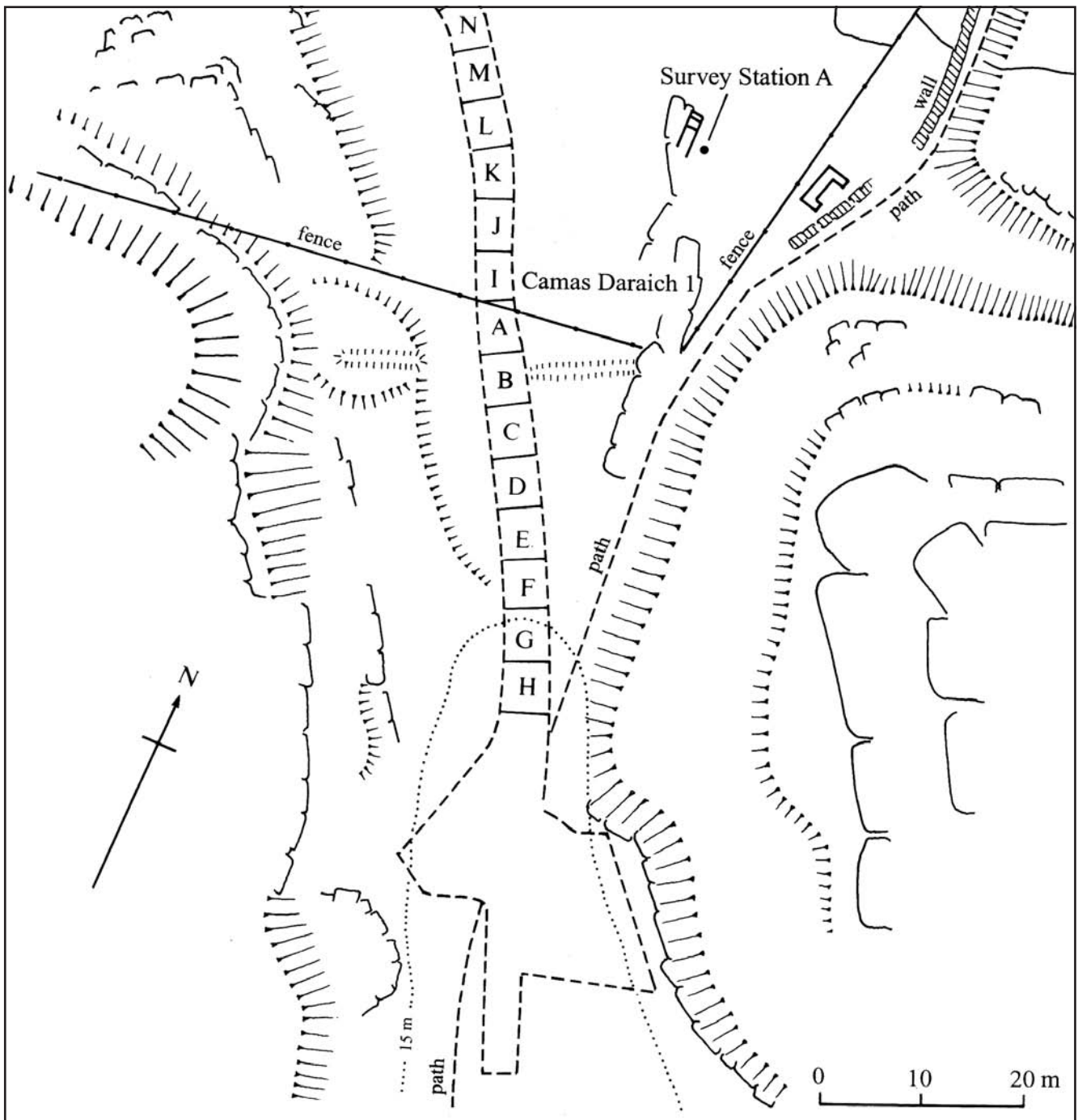
Illus 6 Camas Daraich: view across and up the raised beach from the N



Illus 7 Camas Daraich: view of the surface of the raised beach at its crest above the site, from the S



Illus 8 Camas Daraich: barrow pit cut into the raised beach above the site



Illus 9 Camas Daraich: division of the track into sections for lithic collection

(Section 10.2 – Geomorphology). The original crest of the raised beach lies uphill to the south (Illus 7 & 8), beyond which the land drops to the present shoreline. To the east and west of the site rise cliff lines that bound the raised beach, these provide considerable shelter for the site. To the north the land drops down across a series of younger raised beaches towards the peaty basin (Illus 4).

To the south and west the peninsula looks over the Sound of Sleat to the islands of Eigg and Rùm (Illus 4). To the east lies the Mainland of Scotland. To the north lies the rest of the island of Skye, easily accessible by boat or overland.

3.2 Pre-excavation information

Prior to excavation, Camas Daraich was visited on three occasions in November 1999. The newly bulldozed track was divided into sections of five metres each (CD1A–N; Illus 9) and lithic artefacts were collected by section. Visible features were recorded and lithics collected from three other exposures on the croft (CD2–4, Illus 2). In January 2000 the area of the track was covered with heavy duty Visqueen plastic in order to prevent further erosion, and repeated visits were made in the spring of 2000 in order to monitor the condition of the site.

Visible features included at least two patches of black material, apparently including charcoal. These both occurred along the length of the track. They were visible not only in the track upcast, but also along the central reservation and they suggested that *in-situ* archaeological material might survive.

The pre-excavation work resulted in the collection of 2908 pieces of flaked stone, including many very small pieces. Full analysis of these is provided with the rest of the stone tools from the excavation ([Section 5](#)). In brief, the presence of several narrow-blade microliths in this assemblage suggested that the site was Mesolithic. Further interest was provided by the use of various raw materials, including bloodstone from the island of Rùm to the south-west and baked mudstone from the Staffin area *c* 70 km to

the north ([Illus 4](#)). These suggested a broad Mesolithic context within which the site might be placed. At the time two of the artefacts were tentatively identified as tanged points (a rare and potentially early Mesolithic-type fossil). These were re-classified during the post-excavation analysis, but initially the location of the site, on a late glacial raised beach was also of note. Both observations hinted that Camas Daraich might relate to a very early period of settlement indeed.

It was on these grounds, combined with the threat of further development to the track across the site, that the decision was taken to carry out a preliminary excavation, which was funded by Historic Scotland with support from the Centre for Field Archaeology and Edinburgh University.