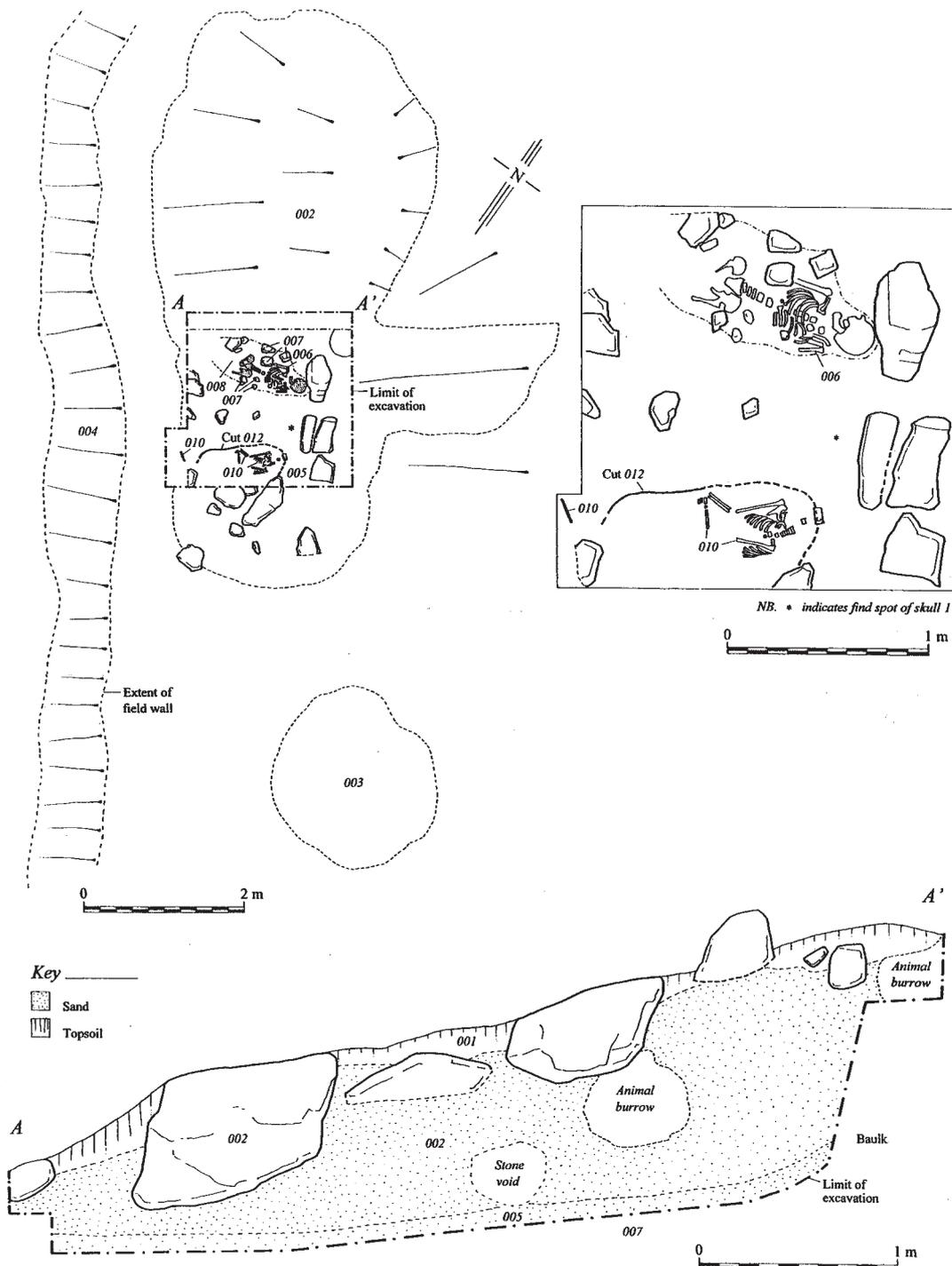


3 The Excavation by Gavin MacGregor

3.1 Aims, Objectives and Methods

The evaluation of the site aimed to establish whether further human remains were present, how the human remains had been deposited at the site, the

extent and number of cists or graves and the extent of the cairn. The work also aimed to establish whether there were any intimately related structures near to the site and to fully record and lift a limited number of cists/skeletons (c1-3) if they were



Illus 4 Loch Borrallie cairn: plan of the excavation trench (inset: detailed plan of the burials)

present. A trench measuring 2.1 m by 2 m was excavated by hand. Where they were present, turf and topsoil were removed and the stonework beneath cleaned and then recorded by measured plan. The remaining matrix of the cairn was then excavated to establish whether or not human remains were present. On completion of the excavation, the site was reinstated.

3.2 Excavation results

Excavation revealed that the cairn (context 002) had a maximum height of 1.2 m and was composed of large, sub-angular and sub-rounded rocks (including quartz and quartzite) and occasional rounded cobbles within yellow-orange sand. The cairn sealed a layer of red brown sand (005) up to 0.20 m in depth. Further excavation revealed the remains of two inhumations (Illus 4). Both were supine and lay east to west with their heads at the east end. An iron ring-headed pin (small find no 1) was recovered during the excavation of the red brown sand (005), lying 0.15 m to the north of Skeleton 1 (Section 5).

One inhumation, Skeleton 2 (context 010), lay within an irregular grave (012), cut through the red

brown sand (005) and onto the natural gravel sand (013) below. The grave had been filled with sand (011) and a small stone had been placed immediately to the north-east of the head. This individual was poorly preserved; the lower limbs had decayed almost completely and were found to be disarticulated. Analysis has established that this individual was aged between 12 and 18 years and consequently of indeterminable sex (see Section 4.2).

The other inhumation, Skeleton 1 (context 006), was sealed by the red brown sand (005: note that the line near the section line on Illus 4 marks only the extent to which this deposit was excavated to reveal the skeleton). Skeleton 1 was relatively well preserved, apart from the almost complete absence of limbs; only the upper half of the left femur and upper half of both humeri were present. This skeleton, of a small, shortly-built male of middle age or older (Section 4.2) had been placed on a low cairn (007/008) of stone and earth. Two pieces of probably struck quartz (small finds 2 and 3: Section 6) were found beneath Skeleton 1. A large stone had been placed immediately to the east of the person's head. The full extent and depth of the primary cairn (007) remains unknown. It did, however, appear to sit on a natural deposit of gravel sand (013).