

2 Introduction

Arisaig, together with Moidart to the south and Morar and Knoydart to the north, make up the area traditionally known as *na garbh Chrìochan*: the Rough Bounds (Illus 1). An anonymous writer in 1750 (quoted by Rixon 2002) considered that:

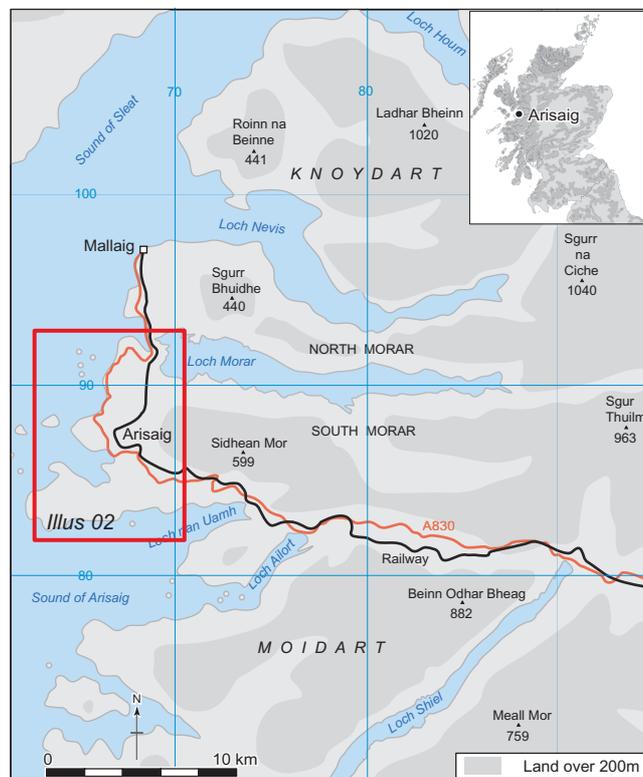
All these countries viz. Knoydart, the Two Morrirs, Moydart, and Arisaig, are the most Rough Mountainous and impassible parts in all the Highlands of Scotland, and are commonly called by the Inhabitants of the Neighbouring countries the highlands of the Highlands.

The construction of the Fort William to Mallaig Road (the 'Road to the Isles', completed in 1812) and the railway that follows the same route (opened in 1901) considerably improved the accessibility of Arisaig and Morar. Knoydart remains one of the least accessible parts of the Scottish mainland, at least if we judge by the standards of our modern car-dependent society.

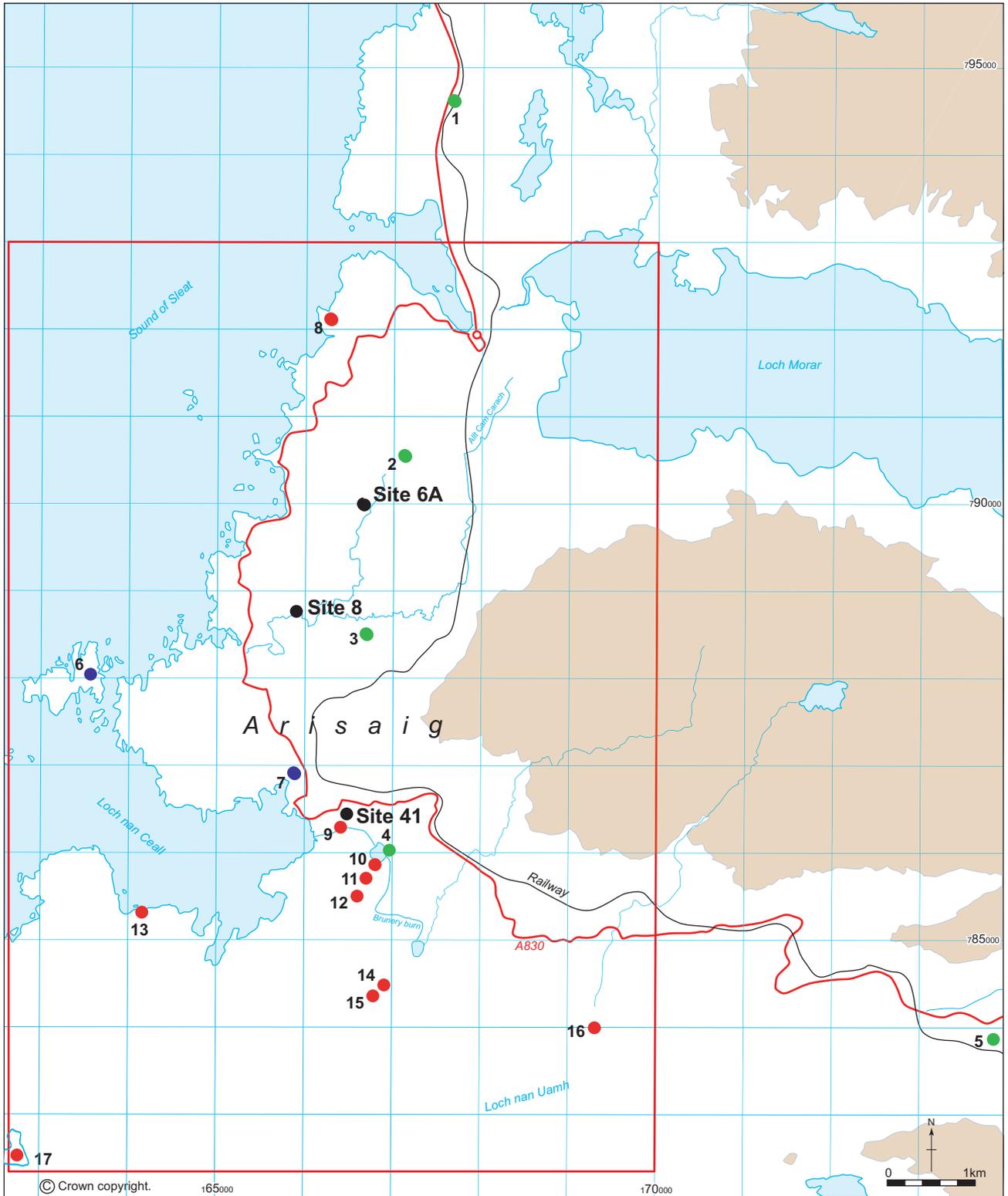
Progressive upgrading of the road (now the A830) from its former single-track status to modern trunk road standards has been accompanied by archaeo-

logical investigations in recent years (eg Rees 1996), in line with current national planning policy guidance. We present the results of a programme of archaeological and palaeoenvironmental investigation carried out during the upgrading of the section of the A830 between the village of Arisaig and Kinsadel at the west end of Loch Morar (Illus 2). This 6-km section of road was rebuilt on a totally new line, inland from the existing road, and therefore offered an opportunity to record an undisturbed transect of the landscape. The investigations were carried out by the Centre for Field Archaeology (CFA), University of Edinburgh, and Headland Archaeology Ltd between 2000 and 2001; the road was opened in 2003.

For readers of this paper who know the area well, it should be noted that we use the name Arisaig to refer to coastal land between Loch nan Uamh (Borrodale) in the south and the River Morar in the north. This definition does not precisely match the historic estate of Arisaig as it takes in part of South Morar in the north and excludes parts of Arisaig to the south-east.



Illus 1 Site location (from Ordnance Survey maps © Crown copyright)



KEY

- Pollen site
- Medieval site
- Prehistoric site
- Limit of study
- Land over 200 m

Pollen sites

- 1: Lochan Doilhead (Williams 1977)
 - 2: Allt Dail an Dubh-asaidh
 - 3: Mointeach Mhor (Shennan et al 1994)
 - 4: Loch nan Eala (Shennan et al 1995)
 - 5: Polish (Clarke 2000)
- Archaeological sites**
- 6: NMRS NM68NW 1: Stronghold and Corn-Drying Kiln. Medieval or later
 - 7: NMRS NM68NE 1.00: Medieval church
 - 8: NMRS NM69SE 1: Mixed scatter. Quartz and flint tools. Mesolithic - Bronze Age

- 9: NMRS NM68NE 7: Kerbed cairn
- 10: NMRS NM68NE 2: Crannog
- 11: NMRS NM68NE 4: Oak platform
- 12: NMRS NM68NE 6: Cairn
- 13: NMRS NM68NW 9: Promontory fort
- 14: NMRS NM68SE 1: Cup-marked stone
- 15: NMRS NM68SE 5: Cairn
- 16: NMRS NM68SE 2: Promontory fort
- 17: NMRS NM68SW 2: Fort