
INTRODUCTION AND NOTES TO THE VOLUME

This volume is the report of the archaeological excavations that took place on the island of Rhum between 1984 and 1986 (Wickham-Jones 1989; Wickham-Jones and Sharples 1984; Wickham-Jones and Pollock 1985). The text not only contains details of the stratigraphical remains on site, and in particular the large body of mesolithic material recovered, but also describes the approaches that were taken to the excavation and to the associated analyses. Further sections of the volume describe these detailed analyses of the artifactual assemblages as well as the environmental and geophysical studies that were carried out in conjunction with the excavations. There is a section on the use of raw materials in the west of Scotland taking the picture beyond Rhum and the final section presents an interpretation of the site and of its place in the early settlement of Scotland.

Detailed information relating to the methods and results of analyses and the full accounts of specialist work are included in microfiche sheets at the back of the volume. They also contain catalogues of the contexts and of certain artifacts. The catalogue of the flaked lithic assemblage is not included in the volume because of its great size; this catalogue is held at the National Monuments Record of Scotland.

It is hoped that this volume, as well as appealing to those with an interest in the early prehistory of Scotland, will also be of particular help to those who may embark on similar projects.

THE SPELLING OF RHUM

Although the original name of the island is 'Rum', the modern version 'Rhum' is used throughout this volume. This is the form in which the island now appears on most maps and gazetteers.

RADIOCARBON DETERMINATIONS

Throughout the volume, all radiocarbon determinations are given in uncalibrated years before present (AD 1950), and the standard form 'BP' is used. Thus 8590 ± 95 BP represents a date from 8685 – 8495 uncalibrated radiocarbon years before AD 1950 (see Chapter 10, table 24).

ORDNANCE DATUM

The Datum on Rhum established by the Ordnance Survey is specific to that island and hence it is referred to throughout the volume as Rhum Local Datum 'Rhum L.D.'. The bench marks on the most recent 1:10,000 maps of Rhum have the values (in metres) of the survey reported (in feet) in the 2nd edition 1:10,560 Ordnance Survey maps and the Rhum Datum is related to a low-tide position. Surveyed altitudes on Rhum are therefore not strictly comparable to mainland altitudes which relate to Newlyn Datum, a mid-tide reference level. As there is a tidal range of around 4m on Rhum, the Rhum Datum (Rhum L.D.) may be considered, broadly, to be 2m below Newlyn Datum.