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**Scotland's First Settlers  
2001**

**Data Structure Report**

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## **1. SUMMARY**

### **1.1 Background**

1.1.1 This report presents the results of a continuation of the fieldwork of Scotland's First Settlers in 2001, namely: the coastal survey of the Island of Raasay and the east coast of the Island of Scalpay; an assessment of the archaeological potential of the lithic sites

around Staffin Bay, Isle of Skye; and an assessment of known lithic raw material sources in the Staffin Bay area.

1.1.2 The work was carried out between May and August 2001 as part of the University of Edinburgh's Scotland's First Settlers project (SFS).

1.1.3 The survey work was also to have included the Island of Rona but due to the continuing risk of Foot and Mouth Disease, this part of the survey has been postponed until Spring 2002.

## **1.2 Objective**

1.2.1 The aim of the project is to investigate the early settlement of the coast and islands OF the Inner Sound, W. Scotland.

## **1.3 Methods**

1.3.1 The Raasay and Scalpay coastal survey was designed to cover the entire modern coastline together with visible raised beaches. The aim was to record all rockshelters and caves (both with and without obvious archaeological remains), lithic scatters and any identifiable open-air middens.

1.3.2 The Staffin Bay archaeological assessment was designed as a visual reconnaissance to assess a programme of investigation into the numerous lithic scatter sites previously located here during SFS work.

1.3.3 Raw material work comprised a visit to the known sources of baked mudstone and chalcedony in the area and the collection of unworked samples.

I SUPPOSE YOU COULD ADD POST-EX IN SIMPLY HERE?

## **1.4 Results**

1.4.1 The coastal survey identified and recorded 29 previously unrecorded sites, 9 of which had archaeological remains. In addition 2 known sites were visited and their archaeological potential recorded.

1.4.2 The Staffin Bay assessment found that the area to the west of An Corran comprises an almost continuous lithic scatter within an area of turf on the shore for an area for approximately xxxx sq.m. This scatter is interesting because it comprises little culturally specific material from either the Mesolithic or the Neolithic (both of which are present nearby at An Corran REF). It is likely to have derived from several prehistoric sites which may still be in situ and it is possible that some of the sites may date to the later Mesolithic (a period which has so far proved elusive among the microlith assemblages examined by the project).

- 1.4.3 Samples of baked mudstone were collected from the foreshore below An Corran and to the west into Staffin Bay. The course of the Suarbie burn was walked and samples of chalcedony collected from both till and gravels along its length.
- 1.4.4 Worked lithics were found at two locations inland along the Suarbie burn in the course of the raw material work (NG 4825 6565 and NG 4855 6590)

## **1.5 Further work**

- 1.5.1 Five sites on Raasay were identified as potentially of Mesolithic age, based on the presence of lithic and midden material, and as a result, should be test pitted in line with the overall methodology of SFS (Finlayson, *et al.* 1999; Hardy & Wickham-Jones 2000).
- 1.5.2 A programme of shovel pitting between An Corran and the Kilmartin river would be useful to determine the nature, preservation and possible date of the lithic scatter sites.
- 1.5.3 Analysis of the raw materials in use in the Mesolithic is important to SFS. Raw materials not only have a part to play in lithic technology, they also help with the interpretation of wider issues such as mobility, contact, and territory among the early population of the Inner Sound. Geological analysis of the raw material samples is important to determine the precise nature and formation of the chalcedonies which are so abundant along the various burns in Staffin. Many of the raw materials in use seem to have specific and limited sources and this needs to be checked against factors such as glacial or marine movement so that their use as indicators of movement can be verified. In this respect, further geological work is necessary to rule out the possibility of other local baked mudstone sources. More detailed work on local quartzes may also be worthwhile.
- 1.5.4 The inland worked lithic sites are an important indicator of human activity. Though inland sites do not fall within the remit of SFS, the contribution of the inland ecosystems to the early settlement cannot be ignored and SFS aims to liaise with other local work in these areas.

## 2. INTRODUCTION

### 2.1 General

2.1.1 This report presents the results of the archaeological survey of the Islands of Raasay and Scalpay and the archaeological reconnaissance of Staffin Bay. The work was carried out between May and August 2001 as part of the University of Edinburgh's Scotland's First Settlers project (SFS).

### 2.2 Objectives

2.2.1. The primary aim of the SFS project is to examine the Mesolithic occupation of the seascape of the Inner Sound, which lies between Skye, and the mainland of Scotland. It forms an enclosed body of sea and islands. As a part of this it aims to address certain specific questions including:

1. Shell middens both within the Mesolithic and with later periods;
2. The location of Mesolithic sites and the seasonal nature of their occupancy;
3. The dating of shell midden sites;
4. The seamanship of Mesolithic people;
5. The relationship of sites to the Mesolithic shorelines;
6. How the dynamic climatic change of the early Holocene is reflected in the middens and how the human population adapted to this.

### 2.3 Background

2.3.1 In August 1999, a two week season was undertaken (Finlayson *et al.* 1999). Trial trenching took place on four known shell midden sites; the coastal survey started in three selected areas and preliminary post excavation was carried out on all finds.

2.3.2 In April – May 2000 a 5 week field season was undertaken (Hardy & Wickham-Jones 2000) on the Applecross peninsula. This included completion of the survey of the Applecross peninsula and excavation of a Mesolithic shell midden at Sand. In addition, all sites on the Crowlin Islands and most sites on the Applecross peninsula were test pitted.

2.3.3 As a result of the 1999 and 2000 field seasons 146 sites have been recorded by the survey teams, 37 sites have been test pitted, and an area of 90sq.m excavated at sand (Figure 1). Post excavation work sponsored by Historic Scotland is currently in progress on material from this fieldwork. A series of radiocarbon dates from Sand complement the previous dates to show that this site was in use during the early Mesolithic and again in the Early Neolithic.

OxA no.	Location	Sample ref	Radiocarbon
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			age (BP)
<b>Sand NG 6841 4934</b>			
OxA-10152	B24ANE, spit8	Bone, mammal	8470± 90
OxA-10175	B24B NE, spit 7	Bone, mammal	7825± 55
OxA-10176	A1B NE,spit 9	Bone, mammal	6605± 50
OxA-10177	A2B SW, spit 10	Bone, mammal	6485± 55
OxA-10384	B24A NE, spit 4	Bone, mammal	7855± 60
OxA-9280	where	antler	7520±50
OxA-9281		bone, deer	7715±55
OxA-9282		bone, deer	7545±50
OxA-9343		charcoal ( <i>Betula</i> )	7765±50

**Table 1. Radiocarbon determinations from Sand, 1999 and 2000**

### 3. COASTAL SURVEY AND TEST PITTING IN 2001

#### 3.1 Extent of surveyed area

3.1.1 A total of 61.5 Km of coastline was surveyed.

#### 3.2 Location of surveyed areas.

1. The coast of the Island of Raasay (Appendix 1)
2. A portion of the east coast of Scalpay (Appendix 2)

#### 3.3 Method

3.3.1 Prior to the survey, all visible raised beaches were identified and their locations marked on 1:25000 OS maps. Both the present shore level and fossilised shore levels were walked.

3.3.2 All caves and rock shelters, with or without midden, were recorded and all erosions, animal rubs, ditches and mole hills were inspected for lithics and midden materials. A total of 31 sites were visited, 29 of them recorded for the first time (Table 2 Appendix 1).

Site types	Numbers of sites
caves or rockshelters with midden	6
caves or rockshelters, no visible midden	22

lithic scatters	2
Pebble beach (old land surface)	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>31</b>

**Table 2 Sites recorded on coastal survey**

- 3.3.3 Small shovel pits (200 - 300mmsq) were dug in sites that appeared to be of particular archaeological potential in order to extract material for a basic analysis of date and preservation (Appendix 4). **There appears to be no regularity just some sites selected on ? basis except that they looked interesting – leave as above? YES OK**

### 3.4 Threats

- 3.4.1 Based on Historic Scotland's coastal survey threat categories (Ashmore 1994), the following results were recorded.

<b>Condition of site</b>	<b>Number of sites</b>
Accreting or eroding	1
Definitely eroding	6
Eroding or stable	8
Stable	15
Not recorded	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>31</b>

**Table 3. Nature of threats to sites**

- 3.4.2 The main threats identified in 2001 were animals and wave attack, both occurring at 6 sites.
- 3.4.3 Table 4 shows the total number and type of new sites recorded by SFS by the end of the 2001 season. **C – yes new – but it may be clearer just to put in total no of sites 146 as I have mentioned that before YES CAN WE NOT HAVE A CAT FOR PREV KNOWN SITES AND MAKE IT UP TO 146?**

<b>Type of site</b>	<b>No. of Sites.</b>
Rockshelter/cave	102
Lithic scatter	20
Open midden	7
Single find spot	3
Old land surface	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>133</b>

**Table 4. Total number of new sites recorded by the SFS project**

## 4. STAFFIN FIELD ASSESSMENT

### 4.1 Method

4.1.1 Several lithic scatters were recorded during the SFS survey season in 1999 in the area immediately to the west of the Mesolithic site of An Corran (*ref*, Figure 2). In addition this area lies in between a baked mudstone raw material source, found almost directly above An Corran and a source of chalcedonic silica along the Kilmartin river to the east. The area was re-walked with the aim of assessing the best method to examine the Mesolithic archaeology here.

Figure 2 Staffin, area of lithic scatters.

4.1.2 The area of baked mudstone nodules on Staffin beach was re-visited by walking. The beach was also examined for chalcedonies and a 2km stretch of the Suarbie burn was walked to look for nodules of chalcedonic silica in the river gravels and local till. In addition other walks undertaken by the field surveyors in 2001 have encompassed the Kilmartin burn and the Stenscholl River to look for nodules of raw material.

## 4.2 Results

4.2.1 The lithic sites were not autonomous, as previously thought, but rather form parts of a generalised scatter which LIES across the eastern end of Staffin Bay (Figure 2). As a result, an intensive programme of shovel pitting across all of the selected area would be the best way to assess the spread, nature and distribution of the archaeology.

4.2.2 All of the Staffin sites are eroding so that new lithic material is visible on each visit. The sites are therefore under some threat, and this is at present monitored by the SFS field surveyors, Martin Wildgoose and Steven Birch.

4.2.3 Nodules of both baked mudstone and chalcedonic silica were collected from the beach below An Corran and round into Staffin Bay. In Staffin Bay the density of baked mudstone falls as one moves away from the source at An Corran, but the density of chalcedonic silica rises.

4.2.4 Nodules of chalcedonic silica were abundant along the course of the Suarbie burn.

4.2.5 Worked lithics were found at two locations inland along the Suarbie burn in the course of the raw material work (NG4825 6565; and NG 4855 6590).

## 4.3 On-going post-excavation work

4.3.1 A preliminary programme of post-excavation analysis has taken place through 2001, under the sponsorship of Historic Scotland and the University of Edinburgh. This has comprised the sorting of all excavated residues into



constituent parts and the sorting of all flotation samples below spit 4 (in an attempt to avoid contamination in the upper layers). A wide range of material has now been separated out so that a post-excavation plan may be drawn up.

## **5. FUTURE WORK**

### **5.1 Post excavation**

5.1.1 Post-excavation work involving full specialist analysis of all material from the excavations at Sand and the test pitted sites will take place.

### **5.2 Fieldwork**

5.2.1 Survey work on Rona is programmed for spring 2002.

5.2.2 Some areas of the Inner Sound remain unsurveyed such as Loch Carron and Loch Torridon. These provide an interesting contrast to the previously surveyed areas in terms of geology and vegetation and should be incorporated into the project.

5.1 Test pitting of relevant sites recorded in 2001 and in any future surveys should be considered.

5.2 The lithic sites at Staffin are interesting for three reasons: they lie between two good sources of raw material; they lie in close proximity to the excavated shell midden of An Corran where both Mesolithic and Neolithic activity have been examined (ref); and their recorded lithics suggest that they may provide information relating to the little known period of the later Mesolithic and transition to the Neolithic. They are currently eroding and further work to evaluate their date, preservation and significance is strongly recommended.

5.3 Detailed geological work on the lithic raw materials of the Staffin area is vital to a full understanding of both mobility and territoriality within the Inner Sound. This needs to be combined with work on other local resources such as rum bloodstone and local cherts and quartzes.

## **6 PUBLICATION AND DISSEMINATION OF INFORMATION**

### **6.1 Discovery and Excavation in Scotland**

6.1.1 A summary of the results of the SFS fieldwork in 2001 will be submitted to *Discovery and Excavation in Scotland 2001*.

### **6.2 Academic publication**

6.2.1 A report on the 1999 season is to appear in the next issue of Mesolithic Miscellany. An Interim report is planned for Glasgow Archaeological Journal. A comprehensive academic publication will be prepared once the post excavation work is complete. A BRIEF INTERIM HAS RECENTLY BEEN

COMMISSIONED BY ANTIQUITY. Specialist reports and publications will be produced as relevant.

- 6.2.2 Academic lectures have been given at the Meso 2000 conference in Stockholm in September 2000 (together with a poster display), at the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland in Edinburgh and Aberdeen, and one is due at the Society of Antiquaries of London in Feb 2002. A poster session was also presented in Edinburgh at the Mesolithic conference of November 1999

### **6.3 Public Information**

- 6.3.1 Final publication will also include preparation of material for the public.
- 6.3.2 The 1999 - 2000 interim results have been presented at the CSA *Archaeology in Progress* conference in Inverness, May 2000. Poster boards have been prepared and used for public information in several locations on Skye and in Applecross. Public lectures on the project include Edinburgh, Sleat, Applecross, Lochcarron, Portree, Oban, Aberdeen, Peebles and the Moray Science Festival. A session is planned for Highland Archaeology Week 2001 with the support of RACE AND THE PROJECT HAS RECENTLY BEEN INVITED TO CONTRIBUTE TO SCOTTISH ARCHAEOLOGICAL FORUM 2001. IN GLASGOW
- 6.3.3 Newsletters summarizing the results of the 1999 and 2000 season were widely distributed.
- 6.3.4 The 1999 Newsletter is available on the Internet ([www.pabay.org](http://www.pabay.org)) and a dedicated web page can be found at: <http://www.moray.ac.uk/ccs/settlers/htm>
- 6.3.5 The project is liaising with the Applecross Heritage Society to provide material for their new Heritage Centre in Applecross.

## **7 ARCHIVING AND FINDS DISPOSAL**

- 7.1 A copy of this report and all the site records will be deposited with the National Monuments Record of Scotland. Copies of the reproducible elements will be deposited with the Highland Council Sites and Monuments Record. Finds disposal will be conducted according to Historic Scotland policy. Electronic archiving will take place according to AHDS guidelines.

## **8 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

- 8.1 In addition to the sponsors the project directors would like to thank the following people for their help during the 2001 field season; Steven Birch, George Kosikowski, Martin Wildgoose.

## **9. BIBLIOGRAPHY**

Ashmore, P. J. 1994 *Archaeology and the Coastal Erosion Zone. Towards a Historic Scotland Policy.* Unpublished report. Historic Scotland

Finlayson, B., K. Hardy & C. Wickham-Jones 1999 *Scotland's First Settlers: Data Structure Report.* Unpublished report. Centre for Field Archaeology, University of Edinburgh.

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An Corran

**APPENDIX 1 List of coastal survey sites.**

<b>GRID REF.</b>	<b>SFS NO.</b>	<b>SITE NAME</b>	<b>SITE TYPE</b>
<b>NG62 NW</b>			
NG 6333 2883	SFS 118	Scalpay House	Lithic scatter
<b>NG 53 SE</b>			
NG 5613 3382	SFS 119	Rubha na Cloiche	Cave
NG 5727 3401	SFS 120	Eyre	Rockshelter
<b>NG 53 NE</b>			
NG 5994 3804	SFS 121	Rubha na Leac 1	Rockshelter
NG 5994 3818	SFS 122	Rubha na Leac 2	Cave
NG 5986 3816	SFS 123	Rubha na Leac 3	Rockshelter
<b>NG 55 SE</b>			
NG 5875 5173	SFS 124	Uamh nan Daoine	Cave
<b>NG 54 NE</b>			
NG 5955 4709	SFS 125	Creag Ban	Rockshelter !
NG 5844 4788	SFS 126	Tairbeart 1	Rockshelter
NG 5839 4781	SFS 127	Tairbeart 2	Rockshelter
NG 5814 4547	SFS 128	Brochel Forest	Pebble beach
<b>NG 54 SE</b>			
NG 5845 4385	SFS 129	Eaglais Breige	Rockshelter * !
NG 5855 4334	SFS 130		Rockshelter
NG 5858 4315	SFS 131		Rockshelter !
NG 5862 4292	SFS 132		Rockshelter !
NG 5862 4290	SFS 133		Rockshelter * !
NG 5863 4283	SFS 47		Rockshelter * !
NG 5866 4110	SFS 134		Rockshelters

NG 5863 4019	SFS 135		Boulder shelter
NG 5868 4007	SFS 136		Rockshelter * !
NG 5502 4447	SFS 138	Doire Domnain	Rockshelter
NG 5512 4073	SFS 143	Carn Dearg	2 Rockshelters
NG 54 NE			
NG 5550 4626	SFS 139		Cave
NG 5579 4668	SFS 140		Old sea cave
NG 5577 4675	SFS 141		Cave * !
NG 53 NE			
NG 5876 3978	SFS 137		Boulder Shelter
NG 53 NW			
NG 5481 3997	SFS 142	Holoman Island	Rockshelter
NG 5441 3640	SFS 144	Clachan, Old Harbour	Lithic scatter
NG 65 SW			
NG 6046 5110	SFS 145		Rockshelter !
NG 6022 5412	SFS 147	Eilean Tigh	Rockshelter

Note 1: \* = rockshelter containing visible midden

Note 2: ! = shovel pit

Note 3: SFS 144, Clachan, Old Harbour, Island of Raasay, is a peat exposure with submerged tree remains, lying in an intertidal zone within the Old Harbour. One baked mudstone flake was found within the peat deposit.

## **APPENDIX 2          List of photographs, coastal survey.**

## **APPENDIX 3          List of photographs, Staffin Bay assessment.**

1. Staffin from An Corran
2. Staffin towards An Corran
3. Staffin area of eroding lithics
4. Staffin area of eroding lithics
5. An Corran
6. Staffin towards An Corran

## **APPENDIX 4          Survey maps of Raasay and Scalpay**