

## **Scotland's First Settlers: entry for DoA Annual Report 2000**

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### **Fieldwork**

Between May and August 2001 SFS fieldwork continued with a 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.

The coastal survey identified and recorded 29 previously unrecorded sites, 9 of which had visible archaeological remains. In addition 2 known sites were visited and their archaeological potential recorded. Five sites on Raasay were identified as potentially of Mesolithic age, based on the presence of lithic and midden material. As a result of the 1999 and 2000 field seasons 145 sites have now been recorded and visited by the survey teams and 37 sites have been test pitted.

The Staffin Bay assessment found that the area **of the shore** to the west of An Corran comprises an almost continuous lithic scatter within an area of turf for approximately 8000 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. 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).

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. 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)

### **Post excavation**

In April – May 2000 a 5 week field season was undertaken on the Applecross peninsula which included excavation of a Mesolithic shell midden at Sand and the test pitting of 37 survey sites (**reported in the Annual Report 2000**).

Throughout 2001 a preliminary programme of post-excavation analysis on SFS material 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 and **a programme has been drawn up for** detailed post excavation work, due to start in Spring 2002.

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 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	9/8	antler	7520±50
OxA-9281	9/8	bone, deer	7715±55
OxA-9282	9/7	bone, deer	7545±50
OxA-9343	9/8	charcoal ( <i>Betula</i> )	7765±50

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

The Scotland's First Settlers project is grateful to the Department of Archaeology for providing facilities and space throughout 2001 for the sorting programme. Funding has been provided by Historic Scotland. Many people, students and others, were involved in the sorting programme and they are all owed our thanks.

### **SFS bibliography, 2001**

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**SFS lectures 2001**

June 2001	Edinburgh	Soc Antic Scot
June 2001	Aberdeen	Soc Antic Scot
Oct 2001	Applecross	HAW
Oct 2001	Inverness	HAW
Oct 2001	Peebles	Local Society
Oct 2001	Glasgow University, Conference. Modern Views - Ancient Lands: New Work and Thought on Cultural Landscape.	