

2 Introduction by C R Wickham-Jones and K Hardy

The archaeological site at Camas Daraich (NGR: NG 567 000, [Illus 1](#)) was initially revealed when stone tools were discovered in the upcast from a newly bulldozed track across the croft of the same name ([Illus 2 & 3](#)). It was found in November 1999 by local archaeologist Steven Birch who was quickly joined in preliminary work by fellow Skye archaeologists George Kozikowski and Martin Wildgoose ([Wildgoose 1999](#)). Repeated visits in the spring of 2000 yielded a general spread of lithic artefacts across a wide area and these included several small, narrow-blade microliths. The presence of microliths suggested that the site was Mesolithic and so the authors, currently working on a Mesolithic project around the Inner Sound and the Sound of Raasay to the NE of Skye ([Hardy & Wickham-Jones 2002, 2003](#)), were contacted. Surface collection also suggested that there was stratified material preserved, though the site remained under threat from new developments on the croft. This made excavation both worthwhile and desirable; the present work took place under

the auspices of Historic Scotland, the Centre for Field Archaeology and the Department of Archaeology, University of Edinburgh.

Camas Daraich does not comprise one discrete spread of lithic material, rather lithics may be collected wherever disturbance has taken place over the general area of the croft ([Illus 2](#)). Prior to excavation, archaeological fieldwork comprised mainly the stabilization of the area of the new track together with the collection of lithics where they were visible. This identified several archaeological 'hot spots' ([Illus 2](#)), though it was not possible to investigate all of these by excavation. Detailed excavation was only carried out in one small area across the track, trench 1 ([Illus 3; Section 4.2.1](#)), and in the six days over which work could take place only four squares, of 1 m² each, were investigated. Work was terminated abruptly, so that the bottom of the cultural deposits was not always reached.

Finds from the archaeological work comprise almost entirely flaked stone tools (lithics, [Table 1](#)) and associated debris (4913 pieces in total, see



Illus 3 Camas Daraich: photograph of the croft from the SE, showing the bulldozed track and trench 1. The 'cliffs' to either side of the raised beach may be seen in the bottom left and in the background lies the peat-filled embayment with the sea in the distance

Section 5 and **Section 18** – Catalogue of Flaked Lithic Material). There is a small coarse stone assemblage (**Section 7**), including minute burnt bone fragments (from a burnt area within the upcast of the track), a few pieces of pumice, one of which has been modified (**Section 8**), and several recent items such as fragments of glazed pottery (**Section 9**). There are few lithics from areas other than the main area of the site (the track across CD1, **Table 2**), where the general nature of the assemblage is supported by the radiocarbon determinations in providing evidence that the main activity dates from the mid 7th millennium cal BC. This places Camas Daraich in the early Mesolithic, towards the beginning of the human settlement of Scotland. The Mesolithic of Scotland is still poorly understood (**Wickham-Jones 1994; Finlay et al 2004**) and, despite the disturbed nature of

the site and brief period of archaeological work, Camas Daraich is interesting because it falls within a geographical area of on-going Mesolithic research. Camas Daraich provides an important link between the island of Rùm, where Mesolithic settlement was excavated in the 1980s (**Wickham-Jones 1990**), and the Inner Sound to the north (**Illus 4**), currently the focus of the Scotland's First Settlers project (**Hardy & Wickham-Jones 2002, 2003; <http://moray.ac.uk/ccs/settlers.htm>**). In the north of this area, work at Staffin in the early 1990s yielded the midden site of An Corran (**Hardy et al in prep**) which has Mesolithic material at the base.

The Project Archive will be deposited in due course with the NMRS in Edinburgh. The location of the finds will be determined by Historic Scotland's Finds Disposal Panel (Museum of the Isles, Skye, 2003).