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## **Northton, Harris**

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### **Excavation**

In September 2011 a small-scale coastal erosion survey of the Mesolithic buried land surface at Northton was undertaken. Previous fieldwork at the site in 2001 had revealed the first radiocarbon-dated Mesolithic deposits in the Western Isles eroding at the base of machair beneath the later Neolithic and Beaker settlement. A subsequent small-scale excavation undertaken in 2010 revealed a concentration of Mesolithic artefacts and ecofacts mixed within an old ground surface (Bishop et al 2010).

In order to assess the spatial extent of the Mesolithic archaeology within the exposed old ground surface, a series of samples were taken at 3m intervals around the coastal edge. At each sampling location, the old ground surface was surveyed, photographed, drawn and bulk samples were taken for artefacts and ecofacts. In addition, a relic peat section approximately 100 m. from the 2010 excavations was sampled to provide a palaeoenvironmental context for the archaeological remains.

The excavated sections through the old ground surface contained varying concentrations of environmental remains and artefactual material, but no archaeological features were detected. On the North-East side of the headland, the buried land surface was present in all sampling locations (up to approximately 25m from the 2010 excavation). The absence of the old ground surface in sections over 18 metres to the North-West of the area excavated in 2010 suggests that the Mesolithic deposits at this site are spatially restricted to an area approximately 45-50m around the coast.

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