


**THE ARCTURUS CLAVERING ISLAND EXPEDITION  
JULY/AUGUST 1999**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL REPORT**

**by**

**RAY WOOLMORE**

**CHELTENHAM 2001**



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# **THE ARCTURUS CLAVERING ISLAND EXPEDITION JULY/AUGUST 1999**

**LEADERS: SIMON FRASER AND KATHLEEN CARTWRIGHT**

## **PHOTOGRAPHS, FIELD SKETCHES AND SHORT REPORT ON THE INUIT ARCHAEOLOGICAL REMAINS FOUND ON THE WEST COAST OF CLAVERING ISLAND AND ON PAYER LAND, NORTH AND SOUTH OF REVET**

by

Ray Woolmore

### **Introduction**

The remains found by the expedition are divided broadly into the four groups shown on Map 1:

- (i) Tent rings, caches, a shelter stone and several enigmatic structures on the western shore of Clavering Island, fronting Rudi Bugt, and north of Eigil Elv delta
- (ii) Tent rings and mosaics on the western coast of Clavering island south of the delta of Eigil Elv
- (iii) Tent ring on Copeland Fjord shore of Payer Land south of Revet
- (iv) Tent rings and enigmatic structures on Rudi Bugt shore of Payer Land north of Revet.

No attempt is made to attribute the remains to particular Inuit cultures, other than to say that they all pre-date the middle of the nineteenth century, given that Captain Clavering saw the last recorded Inuit on the Island which now bears his name, in 1823. References are made in this report to two other reports covering this area; firstly to Johnson, D. McI 1933 "Observations on the Eskimo remains on the east coast of Greenland between 72° and 75° north latitude. "Meddelelser om grønland 92(6): 1-69, and secondly to David, Robert G 1995. "A survey of Eskimo sites from mesters Vig to Kuhn Island, north east Greenland" Polar Record 31 (179): 389-398 (1995). Some comparisons too, are made with features found and recorded (though not published, the information was passed to Claus Andreasen at the Greenland Museum, Nuuk) by the author and others on Erskine Expeditions to Hold-with-Hope (1989) and Traill Island (1991).

**Group (i) Western shore of Clavering Island fronting Rudi Bugt 74° 22'N, 21° 38'W to 74° 23'N, 21° 46'W**

Two main sites in this group were found along the coast, and several enigmatic structures (photos only) up to a few kilometres north long the coast. The sites are described with references to photos and drawings from south to north.

Tent rings 1 and 2 and adjacent enigmatic structure (74° 22'N, 21° 48'W)

NY

Two well embedded tent rings (Drawing 1) on either side (N & S) and to the east of a large, but low (1 foot high) and orange lichen spattered grey boulder (Photo 1), about 45 feet to the east of a low 5 feet cliff overlooking the beach and Rudi Bugt. The northernmost ring (Ring 1) at about 9-10 feet diameter (Photo 2) was possibly larger than the southernmost, less distinct, ring (Ring 2 and photo 3). These features have been seen widely by the author at Hold-with-Hope and Traill Island, and are described as "tent borders" by Johnson and "tent-rings" by David and most others. About 50 feet SSE from Ring 2, across a dryas/willow heath plateau, and on the earth edge of the flat gully to the south was an enigmatic structure (Drawing 2 and photo 4) of grey, red and white boulders, mainly well-embedded, and stretching 9 feet in an E-W direction. This structure could be a cache, fox-trap or a grave.

D-shaped shelter and adjacent enigmatic structure (74° 23'N, 21° 46'W)

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This D-shaped shelter under a large rock (Photo 5) was found about 1 kilometre north of the two tent-rings described above, about 50 feet west of the Rudi Bugt shore. The shelter consisted of nine, well-embedded 7"-8" diameter rocks, arranged in a D, stretching about 5 to 6 feet along the face of the large, almost overhanging rock. These shelters under large rocks have been seen by the author on the coasts of Hold-with-Hope and Traill Island, and are described and identified in both Johnson's report ("a small oval of large rough stones, frequently with one side formed by a boulder or rock") and David's article ("D-shaped shelters"). Photo 5 demonstrates how the shelter floor is now well-vegetated with willow, sedge and grasses.

Some 50 feet to the north-east of the D-shaped shelter was an enigmatic structure (Photo 6), a N-S longitudinal group of boulders, about 4 feet long and 2 feet wide. Like the similar structure described a kilometre to the south, this could be a cache/meat store, fox-trap or a grave. Walking along the Rudi Bugt shore north-eastwards for a few kilometres several other similar enigmatic structures (Photo 6A) were found but unfortunately not recorded nor systematically photographed. Mixed in with these structures were several early 20th Century fox-traps put there by Danish and Norwegian trappers.

**Group (ii) Tent rings and mosaics on the western coast of Clavering Island south of the delta of Eigil Elv 74° 19'N, 21° 50'W**

This group of two well-embedded (perhaps part-covered by blown or water-borne material) tent rings and three mosaics (about ½km south of the rings) are clearly related to similar sites described, and grouped, as "Hallebjergene coast, SW Clavering Island" by David (Polar Record 179, 1995), the nearest of which lies only 12kms south. The sites are described with references to photos and drawings from north to south.

Tent rings 3 and 4 (74° 19'N, 21° 50'W)

These two rings, 36 feet apart, were found by the late Dr Hugh Lang (with whom I had collaborated in archaeological surveys at both Hold-with-Hope and Traill Island, and who had also worked with Rob David on Kuhn Island in 1990). Drawing 3 and Photo 7 show their general location and character. They appeared to be on a flat shore, only 60 feet away from the high water mark of Copeland Fjord; and deep "embedding" of the boulders in sand and fine gravel may have been caused by rare high tides, or perhaps minor tidal waves from collapsing ice-bergs, with the water depositing material around the boulders. Wind blown sand, too, may have played a part in the deep "embedding" of the ring boulders and stones. The extensive tufts of *Honkenya peploides*, found generally just above the high water mark, also suggest that the two rings are, for very short and rare periods, inundated by water. It seems unlikely that the Inuit would have located their tents in such an exposed position, liable to the possibility of flood, and because of this it is suspected that these rings were once considerably higher above sea-level, which would appear, from such evidence, to have risen in this area.

The northernmost ring (Ring 3 and photos 7 & 8) is smaller (9 to 12 feet diameter) and more complex than the larger, 16 feet diameter, southern ring (Ring 4 and Photos 9, 10, 11 and 12). A question arises as to whether Ring 3 is, indeed, a tent ring, but given its exposed position perhaps it has been damaged.

The southern ring (Ring 4) too would appear to have the remains of a central aisle, a feature which shows up well in photos 9 and 12, and is common throughout North-East Greenland, and seen and recorded by the author at Hold-with-Hope and Traill Island.

Mosaics 1, 2 and 3 (74° 19'N, 21° 50'W)

These fascinating features were found by Kathleen Cartwright and proved very elusive to find again by the author, until guided to the spot by Kathleen. The three mosaics were found in a E-W line running down the gravelly ridge (as shown in the distance in Photo 12 and close up in Photo 13), at about 50 to 100 feet above Copeland Fjord, and approximately ½km south of rings 3 and 4 described above. Only the easternmost, seemingly complete, Mosaic 1 (Photos 14, 15, 16 and 17) was sketched and measured (Drawing 4), Mosaic 2 (Photo 19) being largely spoilt by animal disturbance (musk-ox, hare, arctic fox, wolf or even man??), and Mosaic 3 (Photos 20, 21 and 22) being, at the



time, too enigmatic and complex for interpretation. Mosaic 2 was about 60 feet downward and westward in a line from Mosaic 1, while Mosaic 3 was another 6- feet downward and westward in the same overall E-W line from Mosaic 2.

The dimensions of the complete Mosaic 1 were about 38" (NE-SW) and 24" (NW-SE), broadly rectangular, with two main features, both delineated by black thin rocks placed vertically in the ground enclosing areas of white quartz pebbles. The two mosaic squares in the NE corner (with total dimensions of 12" x 10") appeared to be the sleeping platforms of a larger "toy" tent ring, while the oval 10" x 9" enclosed feature could be interpreted as a "toy" cache or meat store. (Photo 17 shows this feature in some detail.) Similar features found elsewhere, some only 12 kilometres away, in NE Greenland are described by both Johnson and David, both of whom suggest they could be "toy" formations. David, indeed states that it is now generally accepted that these structures could be interpreted as "children's playthings". As mentioned above it is significant to note that David recorded similar features "of quartz pieces set within a defined rim of stones", only 12 kilometres to the south of this site, at the site he identified as "Hallebjergene" 3 (74° 12'N, 21° 50'W).

Photo 19 shows how disturbed was Mosaic 2, though a large area of quartz pebbles does remain. Photos 20, 21 and 22 show Mosaic 3 as both a complex and enigmatic structure.

However, it should be admitted that while there can be no doubt about Mosaic 1 being man-made, Mosaics 2 and 3 could be random features formed by nature.

### **Group (iii) Tent ring on Copeland Fjord shore of Payer Land south of Revet 74° 20'N, 22° 57'W)**

21° 57'

This well preserved, approximately 12 feet diameter tent-ring, or square formation, (Drawing 5 and Photos 23-27) of mainly well-embedded grey and white (only one brown - Photo 27) boulders, with a recognisable raised earth platform (now dryas covered) was found only one or two kilometres south of the prominent-braided river delta to the south of the Revet hut. It is situated on a flat stony terrace overlooking Copeland Fjord, about 25 feet to the west of a low cliff (Photos 23 and 24) dropping to the beach of the Fjord. Only three feet away to the south was a large (4 feet diameter and 10" high) flat and round shaped boulder (Photos 23, 25 and 26), a feature so often associated with tent-rings.

Indications of an entrance are seen on the eastern (Fjord) side of the ring, with what appears to be a small store (now a jumble of large boulders with a dryas/willow floor) on its northern side, which also forms the NE corner of the ring. Much of the floor, on the raised platform and below are covered with dryas and willow which is also particularly prominent on the northern and southern surrounding areas. Most of the boulders have some lichen cover, and there is bone debris over much of the tent-ring floor and around (Photo 27). One small bone artefact (about 2" x 1") was found by David Shaw and photographed (Photo 28), probably a harpoon or spear-head with a burin drilled hole. Its

location just outside the SE corner of the ring is shown on Drawing 5 and can be seen in the bottom right-hand corner of Photo 27.

David recorded this site (Payer Land) and the author believes that this is the "substantial tent-ring - associated with considerable quantities of bone debris" in David's Payer Land group. David also recorded other sites in this group, but apart from one cache/fox-trap (Photo 29) just south of Revet, no other recognisable Inuit archaeological feature was seen in this area around the braided river delta.

**Group (iv) Tent rings and enigmatic structures on Rudi Bugt shore of Payer Land north of Revet (In locations from north of Revet (74° 25'N, 21° 46'W) to Kap Ehrenberg (74° 26'N, 21° 45'W))**

These features were all seen and photographed by the late Hugh Lang. Unfortunately it is impossible to locate the features precisely, though in some cases use of the map and landscape features shown in the photos enable approximate locations to be estimated. Given that the author has not seen these particular sites, only Hugh Lang's photos, their interpretation can only be speculative.

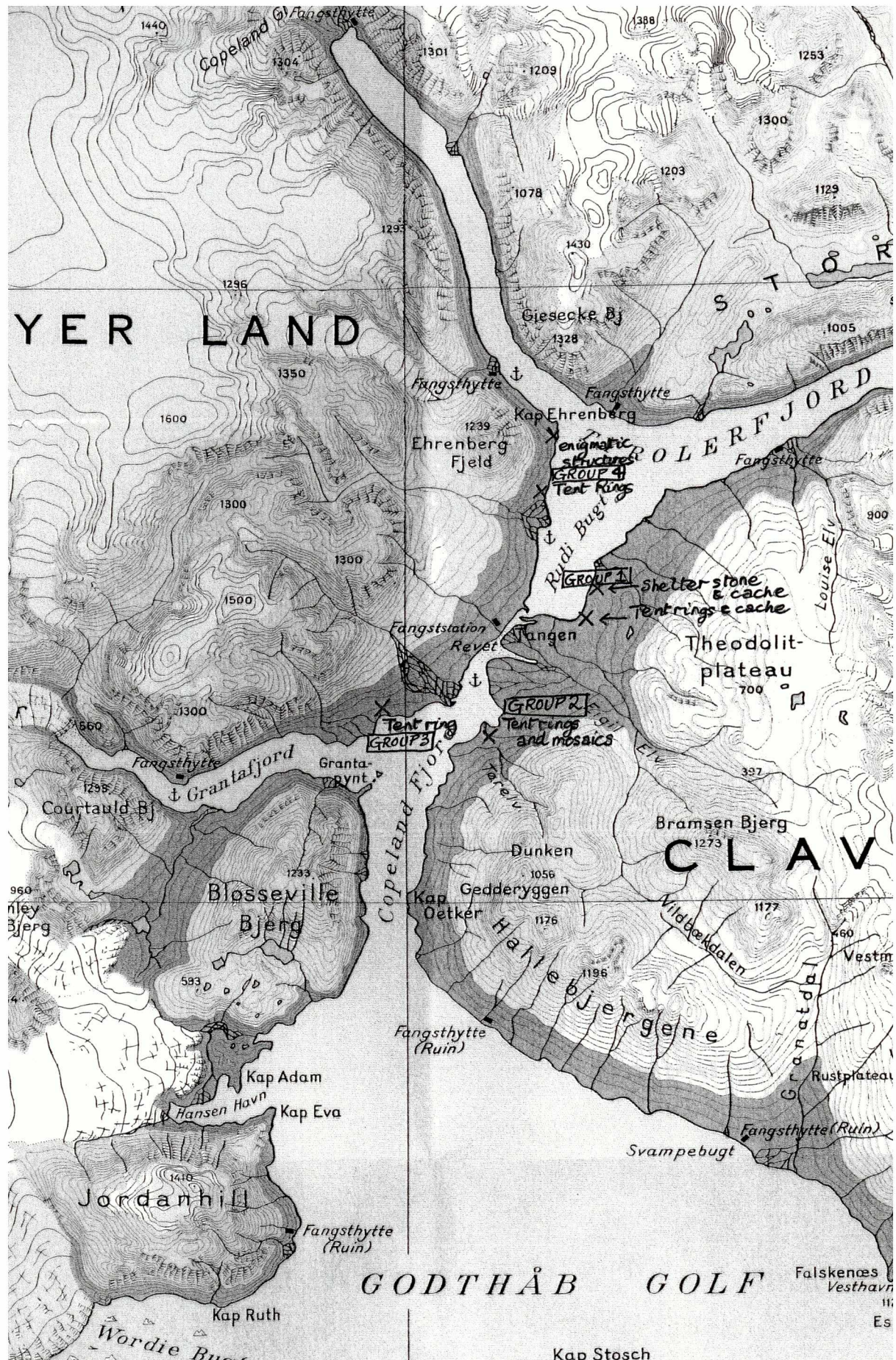
Photos 30, 31, 32, 33 and 34 show a group of tent rings found by Hugh Lang about 50 feet from the shore of Rudi Bugt on an extensive terrace, just north of the braided river delta between Revet and Kap Ehrenberg, at approximately 74° 25'N, 21° 46'W. The larger southern ring appears to be a double ring while the smaller northern ring is single.

The photos show four separate features found by Hugh Lang at Kap Ehrenberg (74° 26'N, 21° 45'W) a few kilometres north of the rings described above. Photo 35 shows a cache/fox-trap on a low bank above the Rudi Bugt shore. Photos 36 and 37 show a complex enigmatic structure, with a large central "layer-cake" boulder set in the middle of a ring or square formation, very close to the cliff which falls abruptly to Rudi Bugt. Photo 38 shows a cache or fox-trap built adjacent to a larger boulder (similar to one seen in 2000 at the ancient Inuit settlement at Konglomeratnoes, Ymers Island - Report by author in preparation), while Photo 39 shows an enigmatic structure.

### **Acknowledgements**

I should like to thank Arcturus Expeditions and Kathleen Cartwright and Simon Fraser for making this visit to Clavering Island possible. Thanks are also due to the other members of the expedition, Gordon Downie, Hans-Peter and Brigitte Grossmann, Graham Moore, Peter Roberts, David Shaw and Rosemary Stewart for their interest in the archaeological features and for their observations. Lastly, but not least, mention must be made of the valuable contribution made by the late Dr Hugh Lang, self-evident from the text and from the quality of his many photographs included in this report.









7

Photo 1

Large boulder between Tent Rings 1 & 2, Western shore of  
Clavering Island, fronting Rudi Bugt 74°22'N, 21°48'W  
Group (i)



N1

7 4 2





7<sup>N</sup> Tent Ring 2 (foreground), Western Shore of Clavering Island  
fronting Rudi Bugt 74°22'N, 21°48'W  
Group (i) Photo 3



Enigmatic structure  
Western Shore of Clavering  
Island fronting Rudi Bugt  
74°22'N, 21°48'W  
Group (i)





D-shaped shelter, Western shore of Clavering Island fronting  
Rudi Bugt 74°23'N, 21°46'W  
Group (i)

Photo 5

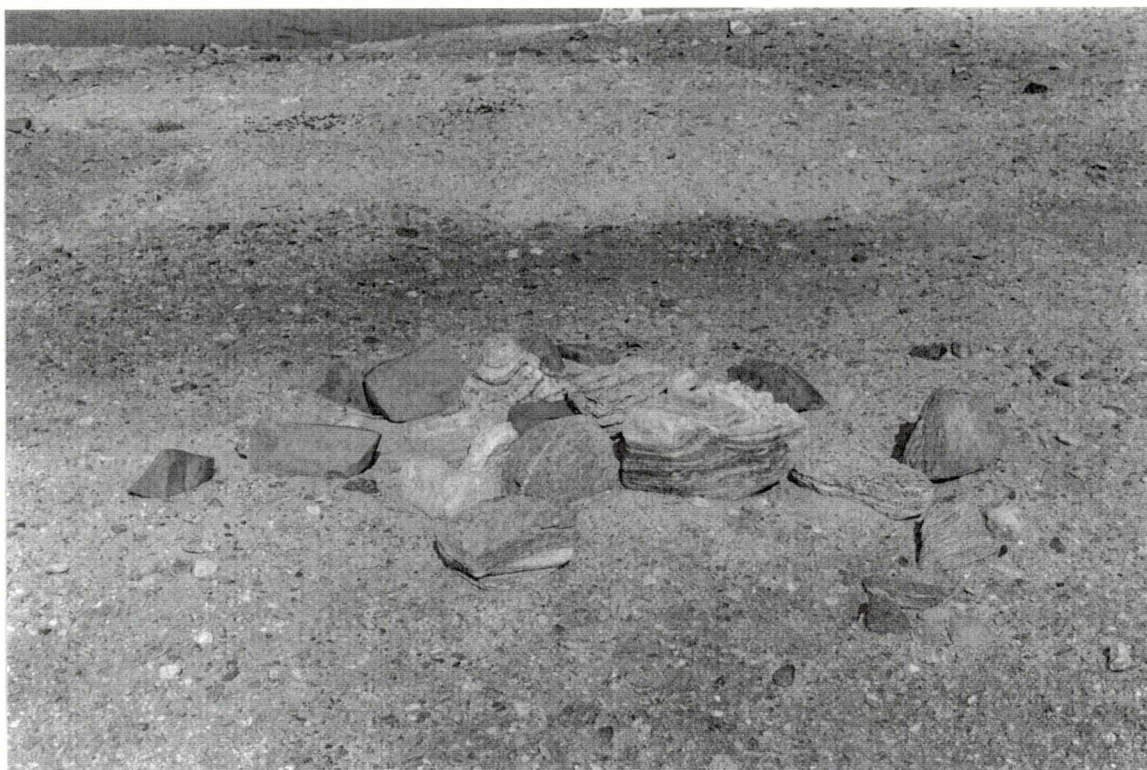


Photo 6





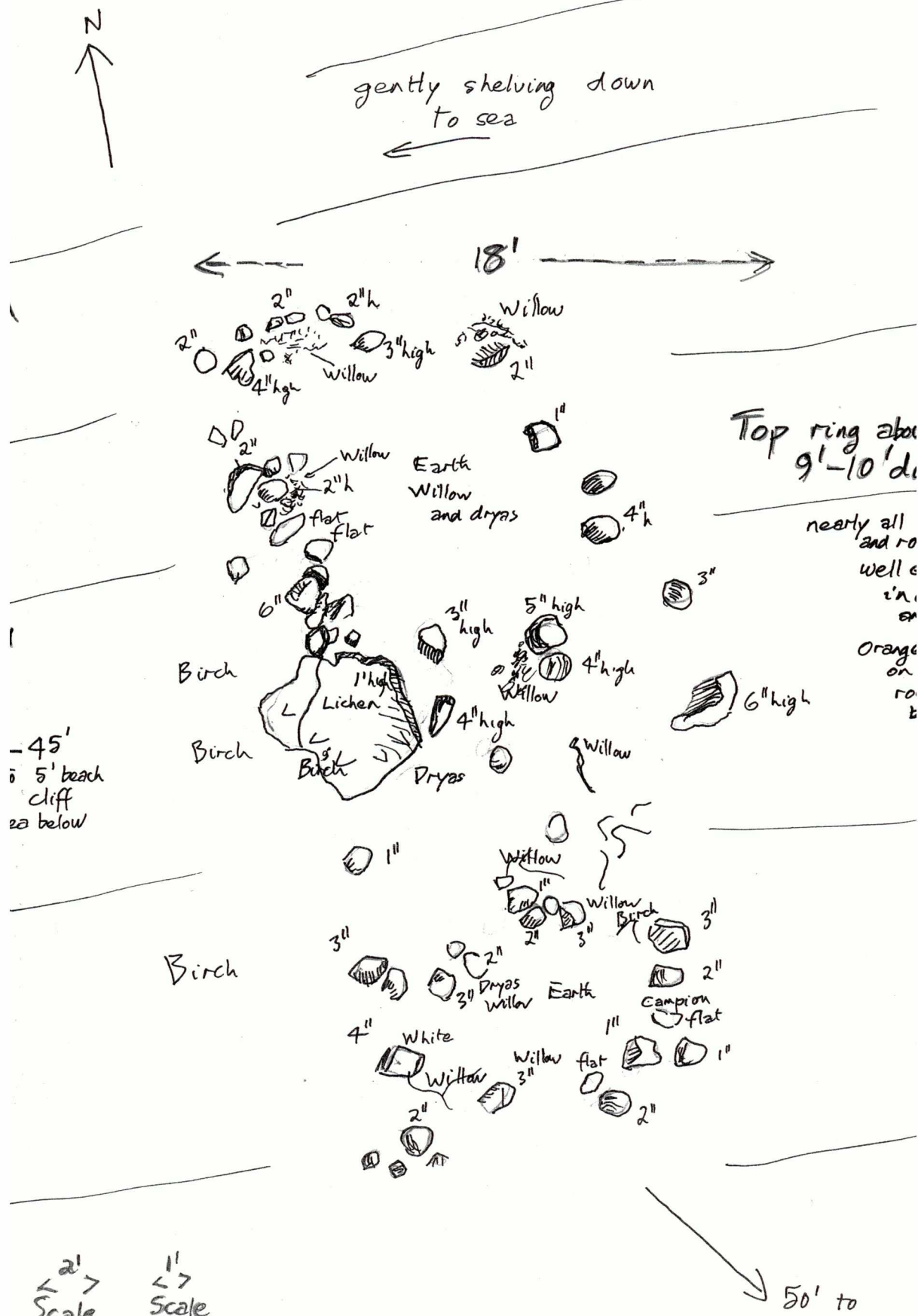
Photo G A. Hugh Lang

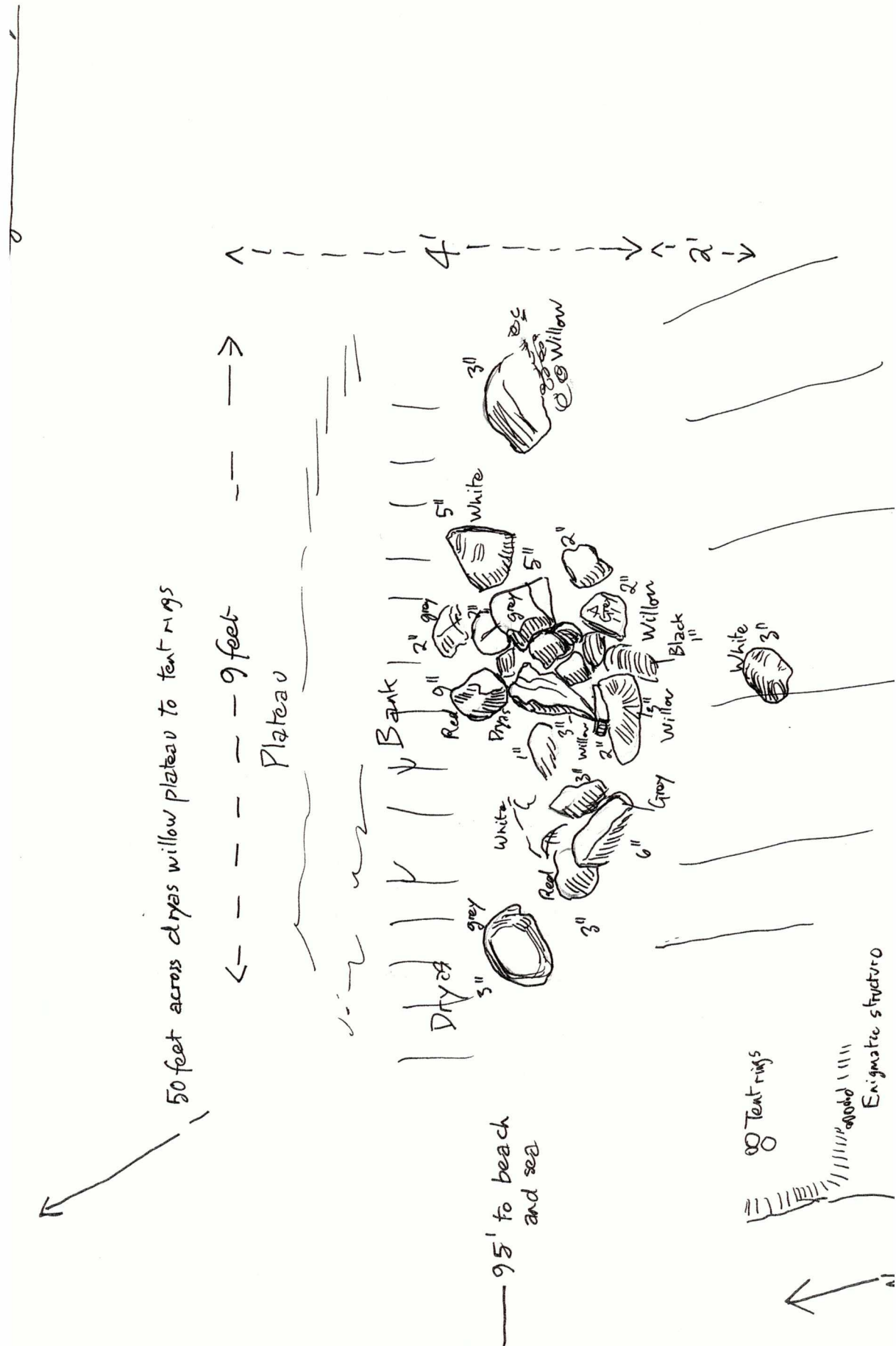
Enigmatic structure (cache? foxtrap? grave?) on low ridge  
overlooking Rudi Bugt, on western shore of Clavering Island  
a few kilometres north of D-shaped shelter, approximately  
74°24'N, 21°45'W

Group (i)



$1\frac{1}{2}$  mile north of base-camp









↘N

Tent Rings 3 (foreground) and 4, western shore  
of Slavering Island, south of Eigel Elv delta  
fronting Copeland Fjord ( $74^{\circ}19'N$ ,  $21^{\circ}50'W$ )  
Group (ii)

Photo 7 (Hugh Lang)



↘N

Tent ring 3 (Nato. Hanneva de ploides tufts) western

Photo 8





V  
N

Photo 9

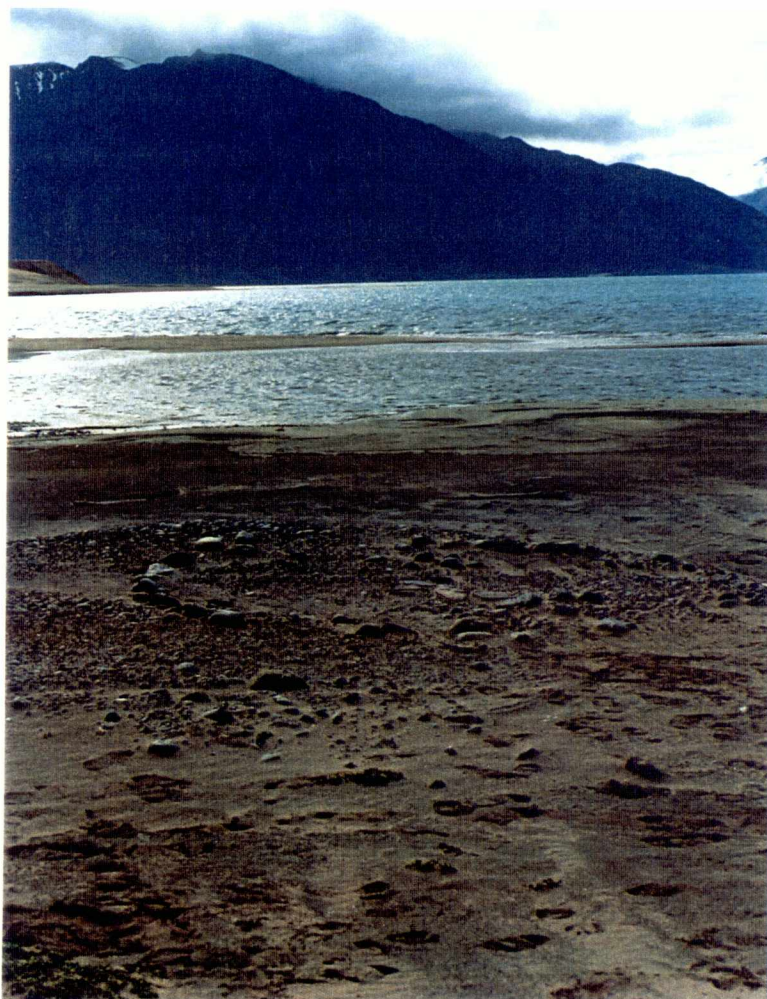
Tent ring 4, western shore of Clavering Island,  
south of Eigel Elv delta, fronting Copeland Fjord  
(74°19'N, 21°50'W)  
Group (ii)



>  
N

Photo 10





Tent Ring 4, western  
shore of Clavering Island,  
south of Eigil Elv delta  
fronting Copeland Fjord  
(74°19'N, 21°50'W)  
Group(ii)

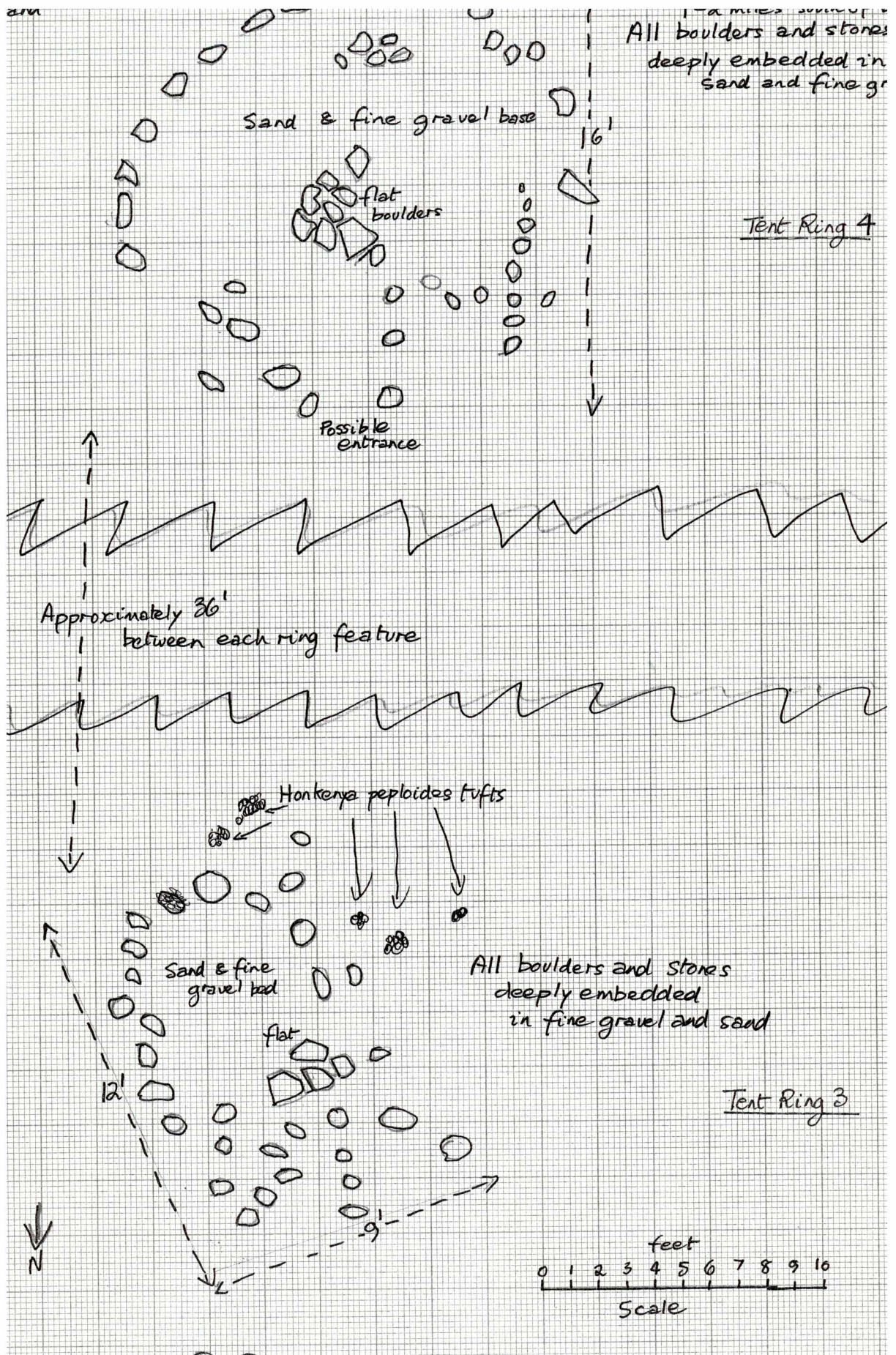
✓  
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✓

Photo 12 Hugh Lang









on low gravelly slope on  
western shore of Claverie  
Island, fronting Copeland Fj.  
looking eastwards up-slo,  
from approximate position  
of lowermost mosaic (3)  
to human figures at upper  
mosaic (1) ( $74^{\circ}19'N, 21^{\circ}$   
Group (ii)

←N



AA - A (K... 1) ... 1N Photo 14 Huel 1999





Mosaic 1 (uppermost) complete feature  
"Toy" Tent ring and cache? Note 2 foot scale  
adjoining "Toy" tent ring to "Toy" cache  
Group (ii)

N

Photo 15



Photo 16

Mosaic 1 (uppermost)  
Detail of Toy Tent-ring?  
with white pebbles forming  
floor of raised platform?  
Note 1 foot scale

Group (ii)

N





Mosaic 1 (Uppermost) Detail of "toy" cache or  $\angle N$   
meat store? with white pebble floor  
Group (ii)

Photo 17



Mosaic 1 (Uppermost) complete feature

$\nearrow$  Photo 18





Mosaic 2 (60 feet downslope and west of 1)  
? damaged - probably by musk-ox  
Group (ii)

Photo 19



Mosaic 3 (60 feet downslope and west of 2)?  
Group (ii)

Photo 20. Hugh La



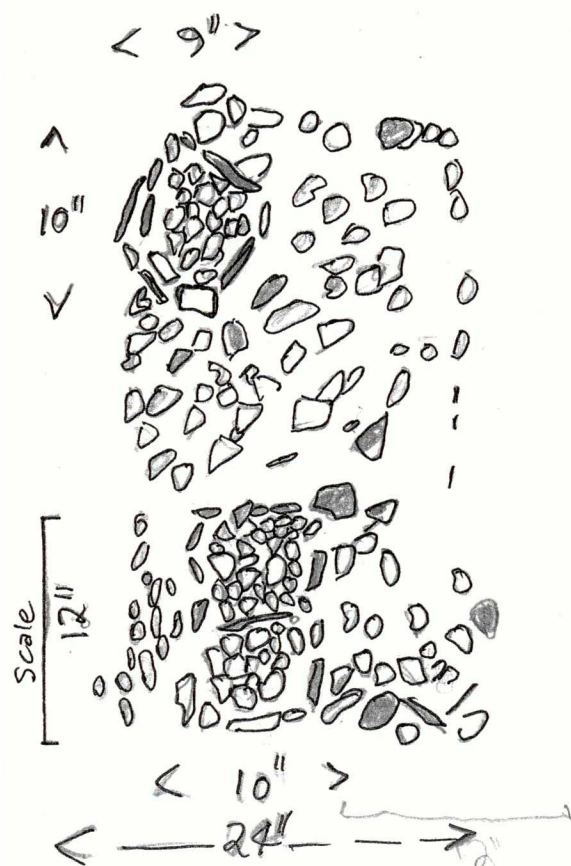


Mosaic 3 (60 feet downslope and west of 2)?      Photo 21 Hugh Lang  
Group (ii)



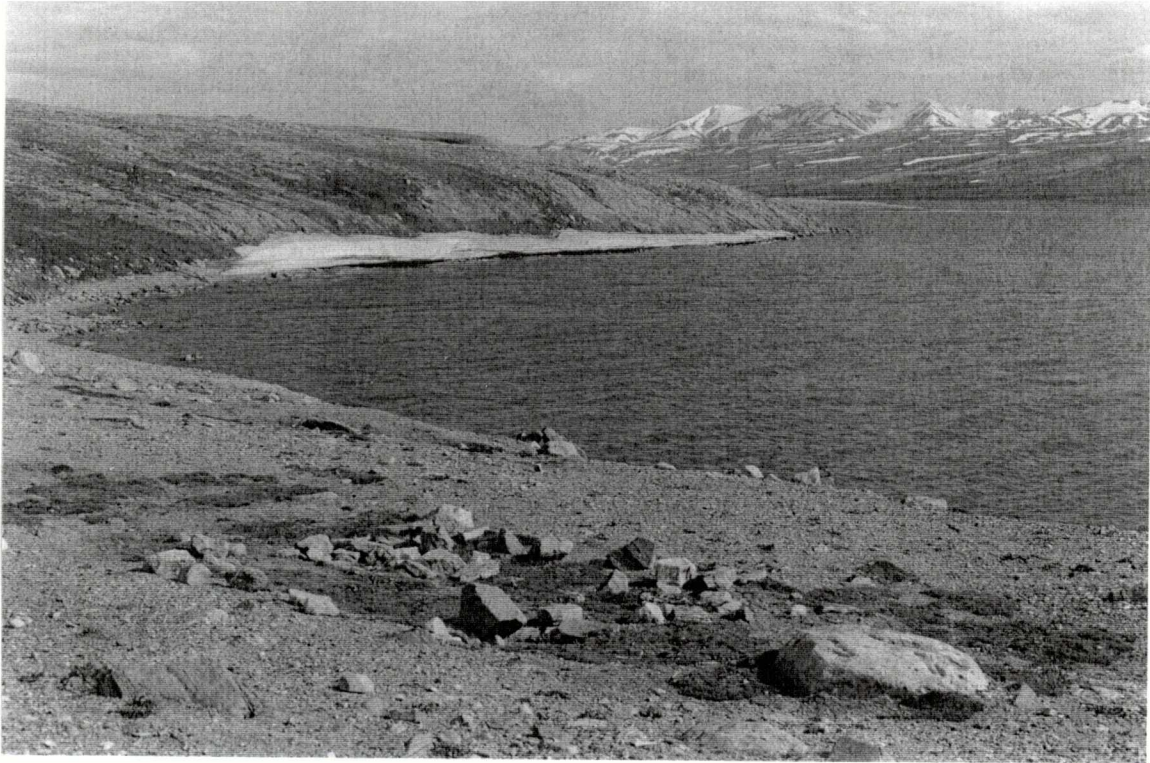
Detail of Mosaic 3 ?? (60 feet downslope of 2)      Photo 22  
Group (ii)





Mosaic 1  
Clavering Island  
approx 74°19'N, 21°50'W

Two other mosaic features  
more disturbed at intervals  
of about 60' running due  
down to Copeland Fjord



Well-preserved Tent ring above Copeland Fjord <sup>N</sup>  
shore of Payer Land south of Revet (74°20'N, 22°57'W)  
Group (iii)

Photo 23

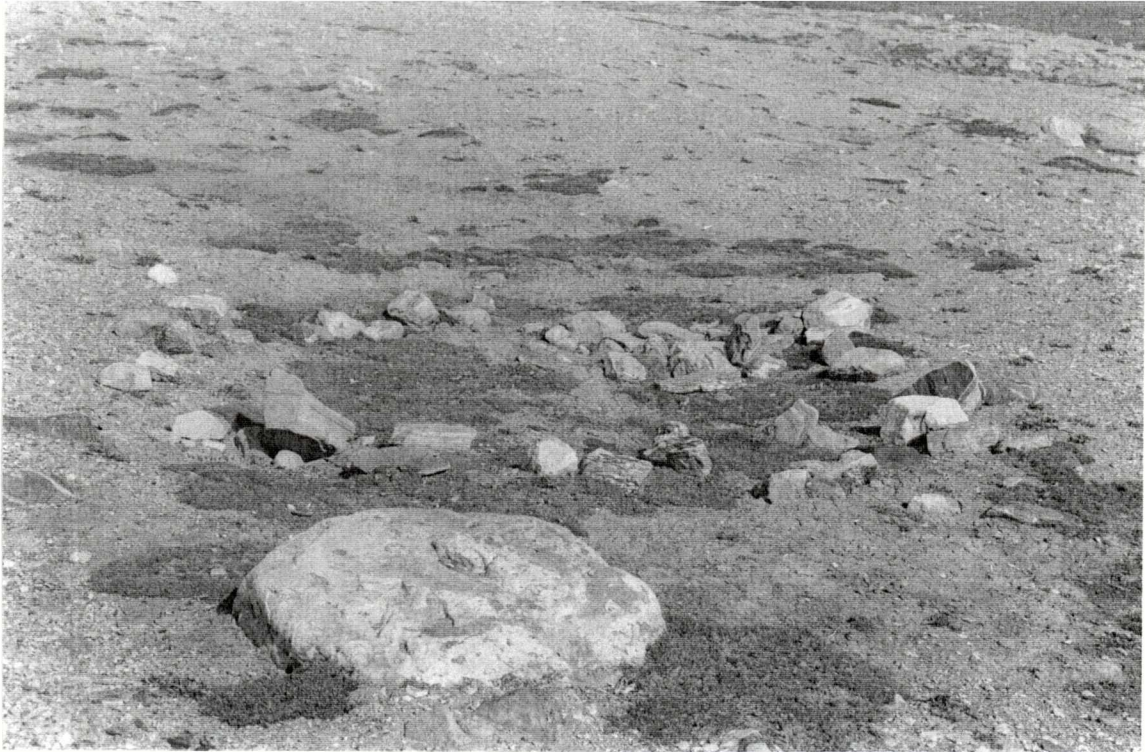


←N

Well-preserved Tent Ring as above with Hans Peter and Briatte

Photo 24





Well-preserved Tent Ring above Copeland Fjord  
shore of Payer Land south of Revet ( $74^{\circ}20'N, 22^{\circ}57'W$ )  
Foreground shows large adjacent 'flat' boulder

Photo 25

Group (iii)



N

Photo 26





N

Photo 27. Hugh Lang

Well preserved Tent Ring above Copeland Fjord shore  
of Payer Land south of Revet (74°20'N, 22°57'W)  
Note artefact in bottom right-hand corner of photo  
Group (iii)



N

Photo 28

Bone (or horn) artefact (possibly harpoon head?)

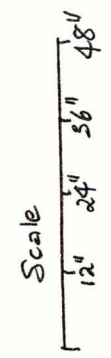
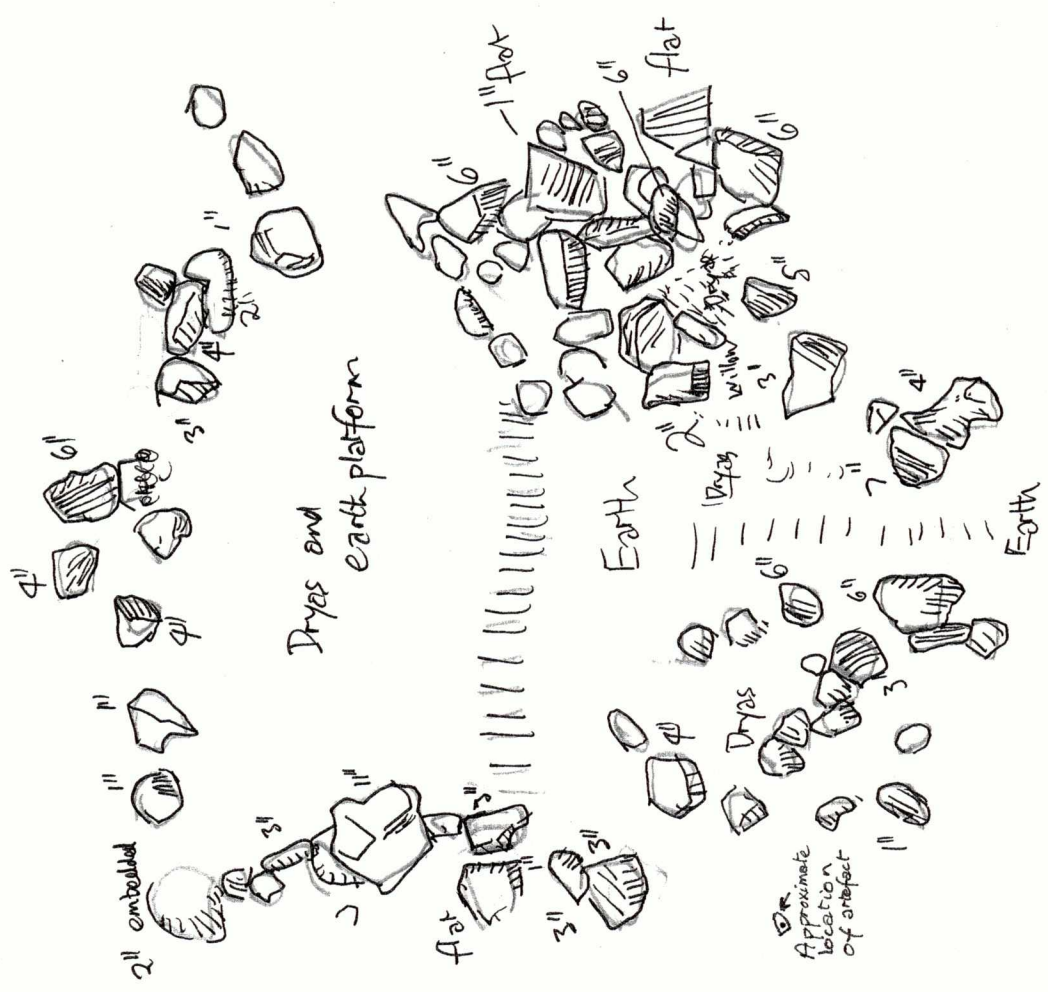




Cache / Fox Trap just to south of Revet  
(See Revet on land horizon)  
Group (iii)

Photo 29 Hugh Lang

← approximately 12' →



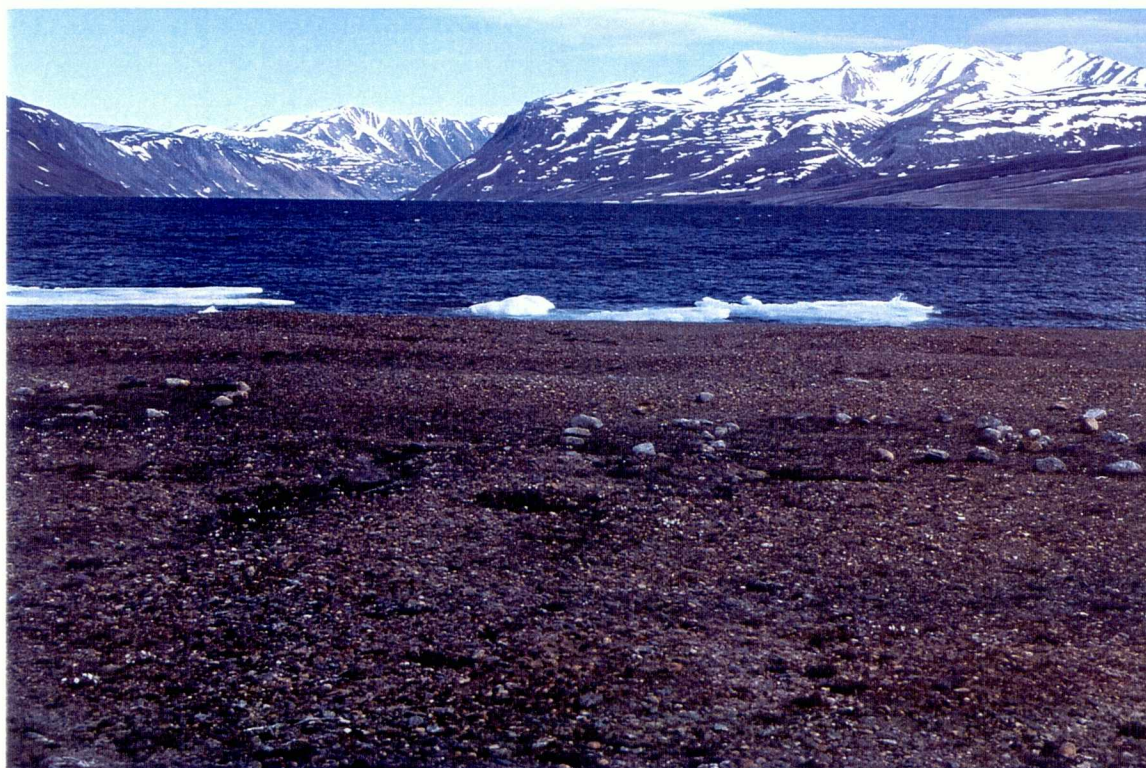




↙ N

Photo 30 Hugh Lang

Tent Rings north of Revet  
on Rudi Bugt shore of Payer Land  
(74°25'N, 21°46'W)  
Group (iv)



↙ N

Photo 31 Hugh Lang

Tent Rings north of Revet





Tent Rings north of Revet on <sup>N</sup>  
Rudi Bugt shore of Payer land  
(74°25'N, 21°46'W)  
Group (iv)

Photo 32 Hughlang



<sup><N</sup>  
Tent Ring, one of group north of Revet on

Photo 33 Hughlang





$\swarrow$   
Tent Rings north of Revet on Rudi Bugt  
shore of Payer Land ( $74^{\circ}25'N, 21^{\circ}46'W$ )  
Group (iv)

Photo 34 Hugh Lang



$\swarrow$   
Cache? on Rudi Bugt shore near

Photo 35 Hugh Lang





N

Enigmatic ring? Kap Ehrenberg  
(74°26'N, 21°45'W)  
Group (iv)

Photo 36 Hugh Lang



<N

Enigmatic ring? Kap Ehrenberg

Photo 37 Hugh Lang





$\angle N$   
Cache/foxtrap? Kap Ehrenberg  
(74°26'N, 21°45'W)  
Group (iv)

Photo 38 Hugh Lang



Enigmatic structure, Kap Ehrenberg  
(74°26'N, 21°45'W)

Photo 39 Hugh Lang