

THE SUTHERLAND CROFTING SYSTEM*

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Sutherland is fourth in order of size among the seven Crofting Counties, but last in order of population—in 1961 it had only 13,442 inhabitants, or 6½ persons per square mile (Table I; Fig. 1). Of this scanty population over 60 per cent live in

TABLE I
The Crofting Counties 1961
(a) Crofting Counties in order of size

County	Acres
Inverness	2,695,094
Argyll	1,990,521
Ross and Cromarty	1,977,248
Sutherland	1,297,913
Caithness	438,833
Shetland	352,337
Orkney	240,848
Total	8,992,794
Scotland	19,068,724

(b) Crofting Counties in order of population

County	Population
Inverness	83,425
Argyll	59,345
Ross and Cromarty	57,607
Caithness	27,345
Orkney	18,743
Shetland	17,809
Sutherland	13,442
Total	277,716
Scotland	5,178,490

primarily crofting settlements. Taken together there are 2100 registered crofts in Sutherland—say 2150 croft-type holdings in all—the occupiers of which have the use of almost 320,000 acres, or very nearly one-quarter of the area of the county,

* This article is substantially a paper read to Section E of the British Association at the Aberdeen Meeting, 1963. It embodies some of the results of doctoral research undertaken at Birbeck College, University of London, 1957-60.

the rest being almost entirely occupied by forests, farms, sheep farms and deer forests. With so many crofts scattered over so

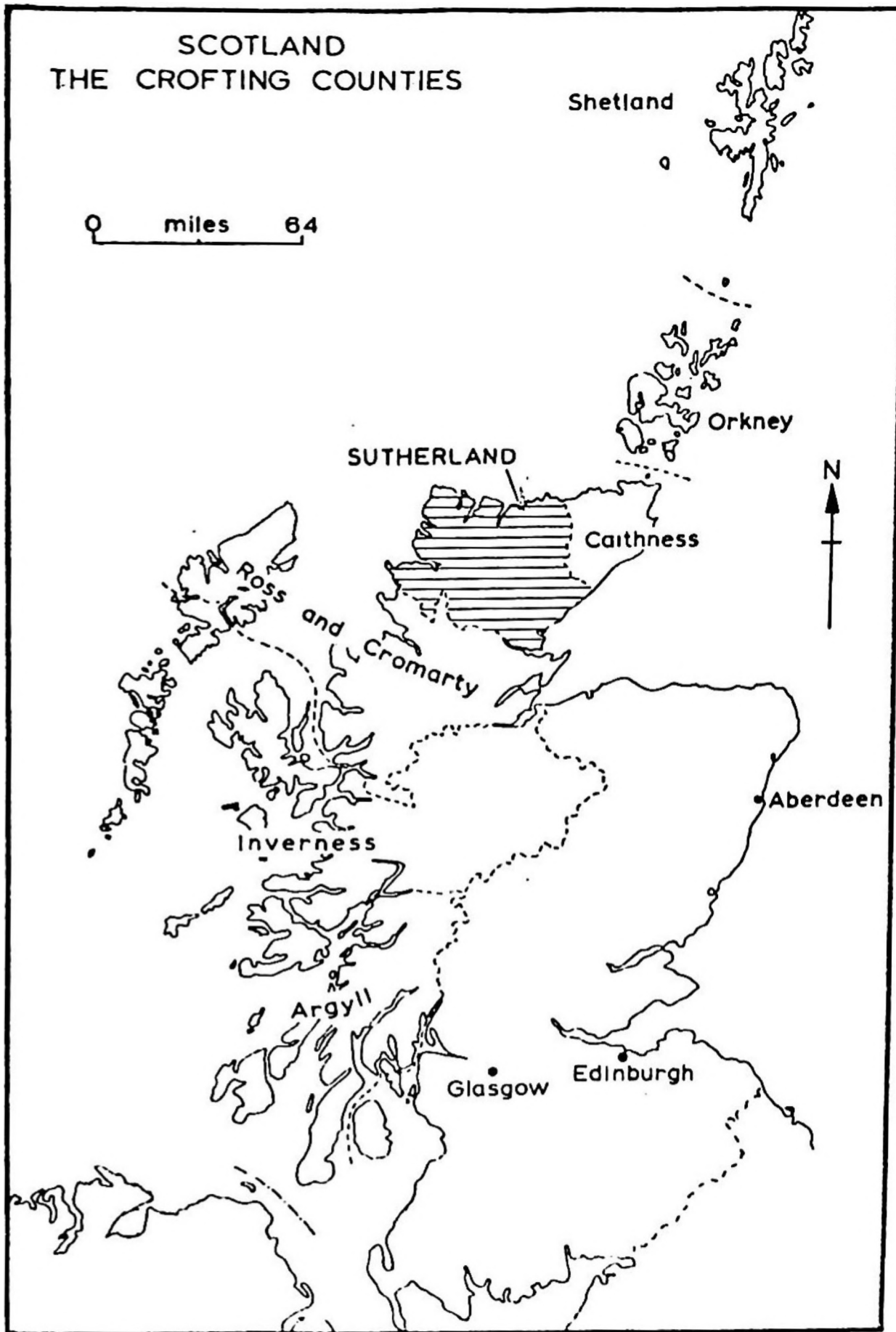


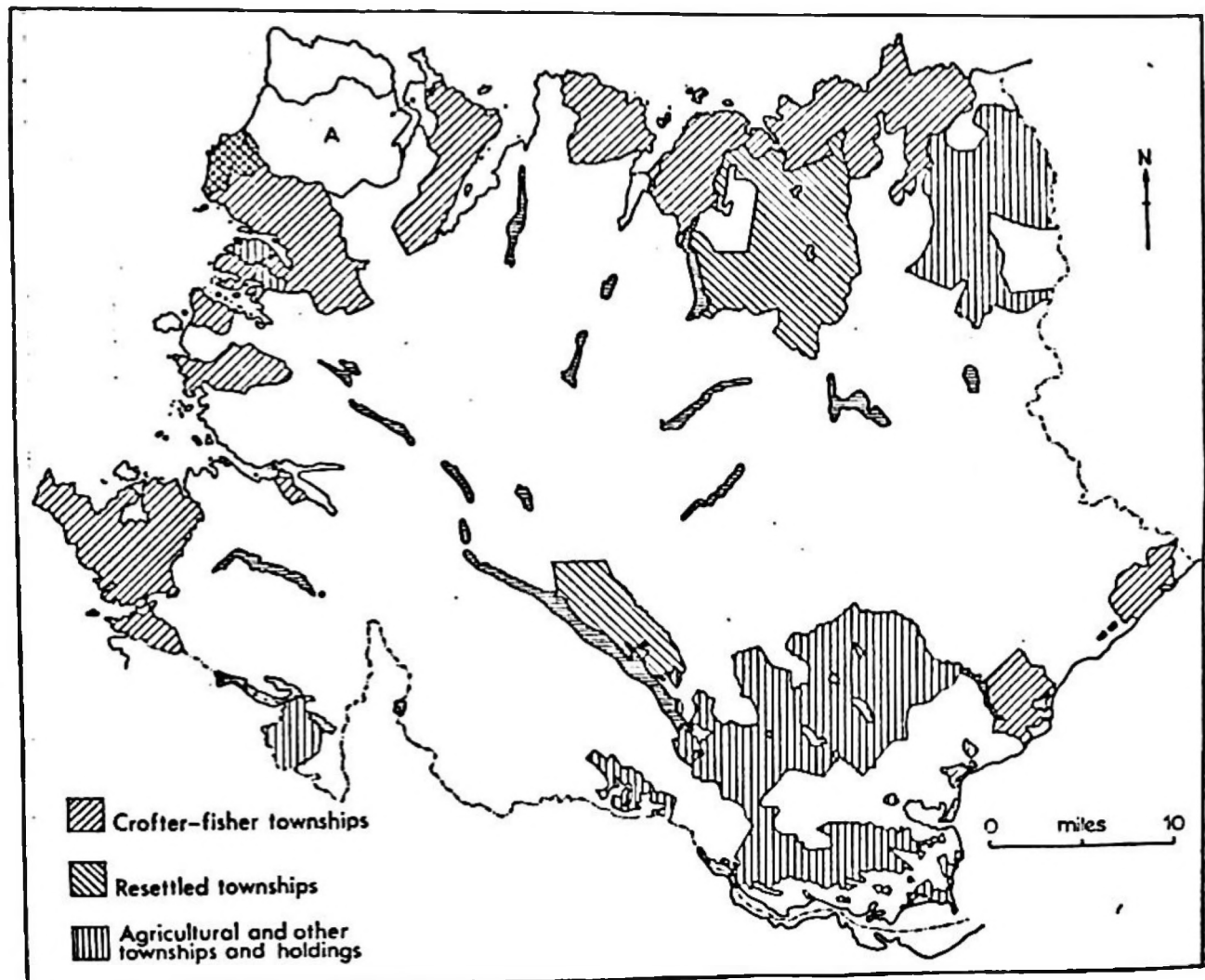
FIG. 1.

wide an area it is not surprising that the actual crofting system varies a good deal. Some of this variation derives from the

original establishment of the crofting townships, and some has developed since—occasionally in the face of legislation which is meant to be protective but which can sometimes be restrictive.

On the basis of a sample of 1000 croft and croft-type holdings examined in 1958 and 1959, it is suggested that four main types of crofting township may be distinguished in Sutherland (Fig. 2):—

1. Townships round the coasts of the county designed for crofter-fishermen in the Clearance settlement of the



The Crofting Lands of Sutherland, 1960

FIG. 2—Compiled from information kindly supplied by the Crofters Commission, the Department of Agriculture for Scotland, and the Scottish Land Court, and from fieldwork. (A—Keoldale Club Farm.)

early nineteenth century. Whether on old or new sites, they were lotted or relotted so as to give small holdings providing a home and some subsistence for families gaining their main income from the sea.

2. Townships either undisturbed by the Clearance or set up at about that time, and consisting of units of a primarily agricultural type, though most of the holdings

were small enough to make a supplementary income increasingly desirable.

3. Resettlement townships set up as a result of post-1886 legislation. These were mostly designed to give full-time agricultural holdings. As such they were just what many of the crofters had always asked for, and therefore their success or failure has assumed an added significance.

4. Miscellaneous townships and single crofts. The latter, relatively small in number, include some holdings set up by post-1886 legislation which are among the biggest crofts in Scotland, 2000 acres and more, modest sheep farms in effect; others are small holdings tied to certain forms of employment such as smithying or gamekeeping, and are therefore not crofts at all in the strict legal sense; but all these townships and holdings operate within the general ambience of the crofting system.

In spite of this classification, however, it must always be remembered that each township has its own individuality, deriving often from very local factors, much more affected by one or two dominant personalities within the township than by broad trends and widespread influences.

The crofter-fisher townships form much the largest class dealt with. Almost all the townships on the north and west coasts of Sutherland are of this type. The holdings are small, averaging about 8 to 12 acres inbye, though amalgamation by inheritance, family co-operation and sub-letting official or unofficial, frequently increases the size of actual working unit (Table II). Sometimes the crofts are grouped in small townships, strictly differentiated, and with individual common grazings—Assynt, for example, is an area where congestion was serious, hill land limited, and where enlargements had sometimes to be at some distance from the inbye. In other cases the crofts form townships of a dispersed type, with many hamlets sharing one common grazing—for example, Tongue Skerray. In both cases the average acreage of hill land per working unit is not ungenerous, but the low carrying power of the grazing, especially on the wet, bleak hills of the west, and the occasional lack of systematic care in shepherding and township co-operative grazing organisation, reduce the value of the hill lands. As a result, the stint or soum of stock theoretically allowed is not very large—on average the equivalent of between 40 and 50 sheep per working unit—but even so,

TABLE II

Holdings and areas of inbye and outrun

	No. of complete townships*	No. of tenancies	No. of working units	Working units per cent tenancies	Inbye in acres			Outrun in acres		
					Total	Per tenancy	Per working unit	Total	Per tenancy	Per working unit
Crofter-fisher townships—										
West coast	20	266	223	83.9	3637.8	13.7	16.3	45,543.5	171.2	204.2
North coast	6	241	186	77.2	1905.8	7.9	10.2	27,769.3	115.2	149.3
East coast	6	187	106	56.7	1239.8	6.6	11.7	5951.8	31.8	56.1
Total	32	694	515	74.2	6783.4	9.8	13.2	79,264.6	114.2	153.9
Resettled townships—										
Total	3	60	58	96.7	2450.5	40.8	42.2	27,766.8	462.8	478.7
Agricultural and other townships—										
Total	13	184	154	83.7	3203.6	17.4	20.8	39,540.4	214.9	256.7
County (sample)—										
Total	48	938	727	77.5	12,437.5	13.3	17.1	146,571.8	156.2	201.6

* In this and in Tables III and IV only those sample townships with data available for every holding have been included.

between a quarter and a half of the working units keep less than half their allotted soum. In most cases, moreover, sheep form nine-tenths of the stock actually kept (Tables III and IV).

As might be expected, therefore, and bearing in mind the difficult climate of the area, both the proportion of the inbye assessed as arable (just over half), and the amount of the assessed arable actually in cultivation (about a third), are low. Hence it will be clear that if one adopts a purely arbitrary criterion of efficiency—that of cultivating at least half of the

TABLE III

	No. of complete townships	Soumings			Acres out-run per sheep unit
		Total	Per tenancy	Per working unit	
Crofter-fisher townships—					
West coast . . .	20	9275	34.9	41.6	4.9
North coast . . .	6	9036	37.5	48.6	3.1
East coast . . .	5	1903	12.1	21.6	2.7
Total . . .	31	20,214	30.4	40.7	3.9
Resettled townships—					
Total . . .	3	5282	88.0	91.1	5.2
Agricultural and other townships—					
Total . . .	10	9621	66.8	82.2	3.8
County (sample)—					
Total . . .	44	35,117	40.5	52.3	3.4

assessed arable acreage per unit and carrying at least half of the allotted soum—there is widespread inefficiency in the present working of the crofting system of these parts of Sutherland in terms of the original assessment of the capabilities of the area. However, it is true that this assessment was first made when the former intermingled strip or run-rig system was changed to a regular lay-out of individual tenancies about 1810-1830, and then revised or confirmed after 1886, and that the judgments of what was possible then with population pressing hard upon the land and low standards of living are not wholly acceptable now. In any case, as already pointed out, townships even within one class vary considerably: Achriesgill, for instance, has hill enlargements and leases, is one of the most efficient and best organised townships in Sutherland, and is probably the most prosperous and progressive of the crofter-fisher townships, while the Durness crofters jointly control the famous Keoldale Club Farm, which is worked as one large integrated unit (see A in Fig. 2).

TABLE IV

Cultivation and Stock

	Cultivation					Stock						
	No. of complete townships	Assessed arable: total acres	Assessed arable per cent inbye	Cultivated: total acres	Cultivated per cent assessed arable	Per cent working units less than half assessed arable in cultivation	No. of complete townships	Total stock in sheep units	Stock held per cent soum	Sheep per cent stock held	Per cent working units with less than half their toum	
Crofter-fisher townships—												
West coast	6	263.0	56.3	93.0	35.4	62.1	7	3660	3702	98.9	89.8	44.1
North coast	5	994.5	54.2	367.5	37.0	65.0	2	3030	3558	85.2	88.5	30.3
East coast	5	971.0	88.8	441.3	45.4	51.7	4	1596	1727	92.4	73.3	27.9
Total	16	2228.5	65.6	901.8	40.7	61.2	13	8286	8987	92.2	86.2	34.0
Resettled townships—												
Total	3	993.9	40.6	492.2	49.5	39.6	3	5282	4682	112.8	79.7	12.1
Agricultural and other townships—												
Total	13	1673.8	52.2	1008.6	60.2	48.0	9	4061	4939	82.2	76.4	36.4
County (sample)—												
Total	32	4896.2	54.1	2402.6	49.1	55.2	25	17,629	18,608	94.7	82.0	31.2

There are fewer crofter-fisher townships in the east of Sutherland, partly because two of the fishing ports there tended to have full-time fishermen, and partly because the land available for crofting was restricted by the arable farms of the coastal lowlands and the sheep farms of the interior plateaus. Hence the original crofter-fisher holdings were even smaller than in the north and west, but they have been much affected by subsequent amalgamation—in two townships a total of 72 tenancies has been reduced to 36 working units—and the outrun is still more confined. The townships around Helmsdale and Portgower have true hill common lands, overgrazed and with small soums. In fact, the soums may be somewhat exceeded—though not equally by every shareholder—and the stock consists almost entirely of sheep (95-97 per cent). With the concentration on sheep goes a low proportion of cultivation—less than a third of the assessed arable—though, given the layout of the crofts in uniform strips over good raised-beach lands, which allows an unusually high proportion of improved land, and given the better climate of the east coast, the total area cultivated per working unit is generally better here than in the north and west.

On the other hand, certain of the more favoured townships round Brora have both their inbye and their very limited outrun on raised beach and fluvio-glacial materials, often relatively fertile, fenced, and of easy access. Here only half the heavy total stocking is in the form of sheep, and corresponding to the great increase in horses and cattle (almost entirely the latter) nine-tenths of the inbye is assessed as arable, about half of which is actually cultivated.¹

It may therefore be said that the crofter-fisher townships of the east of Sutherland differ from those of the north and west in having better inbye, more amalgamation and a better general level of cultivation. Where their outrun is genuine hill their stock regime is like that of the north and west and cultivation is not stimulated, but where the outrun is on lower ground they have a much higher proportion of cattle, and since this necessitates raising fodder crops (oats, turnips and sown grass for hay and grazing) cultivation is relatively intensive.

Having considered some of the more poorly endowed townships of Sutherland it is instructive to turn to some of the best—the resettled townships, most erected with the specific object of providing full-time agricultural employment.² Here, the main townships under discussion will be Syre (Strathnaver

1901), Borgie (1916) and Shiness (with West Shiness and Achnairn 1920).

These townships vary in size from 11 to 29 holdings, but, as would be expected, the clearly laid out holdings are much larger than in the crofter-fisher townships. Since they have been recently established and are firmly administered by the Department of Agriculture for Scotland, little amalgamation has taken place—there has been less need for it with an adjusted population and an adequate allowance of land. The outrun, too, is on a more generous scale, and so are the soums, which are also realistic in terms of hill carry, unlike the oversoumed hills of the crofter-fisher townships, where population and political pressure may have had some influence in the assessment of soum per croft.

These townships keep their whole soum or more, but only three-quarters of the stock is sheep, and keeping the other stock mainly on the inbye together with careful shepherding relieves the hill of any danger of over-grazing. The proportion of arable to inbye varies, but half the assessed arable is under cultivation, largely for cattle fodder. It is therefore clear by our arbitrary criteria that the agricultural object of these townships is by and large being fulfilled, whatever specific problems of organisation there may be in individual cases.

The agricultural townships surviving from before the Clearances or established as a result of the Clearances contain a wide variety of features, but they tend to fall between the crofter-fisher and the resettled townships. Some of them, such as the Strathalladale townships, have generous inbye and outrun, and have become comparable to the resettlement townships in situation, layout, activity and prosperity. There is, however, this difference, that formerly these townships were much more heavily populated, and that the present position has been attained as the result of a process of depopulation and amalgamation of holdings. Therefore the individual holdings are much more variable and irregular than the planned, resettlement townships.

More typical of this intermediate class are the townships of Rogart, which are scattered over rolling country into some of the highest croft land in Sutherland. Irregularity of layout here reflects the original pre-Clearance situation as complicated by short-distance movements, and the piecemeal lotting of run-rig, and is reflected in the wide range of individual croft

size and of stocking rates; two in five working units keep no stock at all, while most of the remainder are fully or over-stocked. Very few holdings in this district have only sheep, and over a fifth of the stock is actually cattle and horses—mainly cattle. The average amount of cultivation is only one-tenth of the inbye, but if one particular township is omitted, this represents

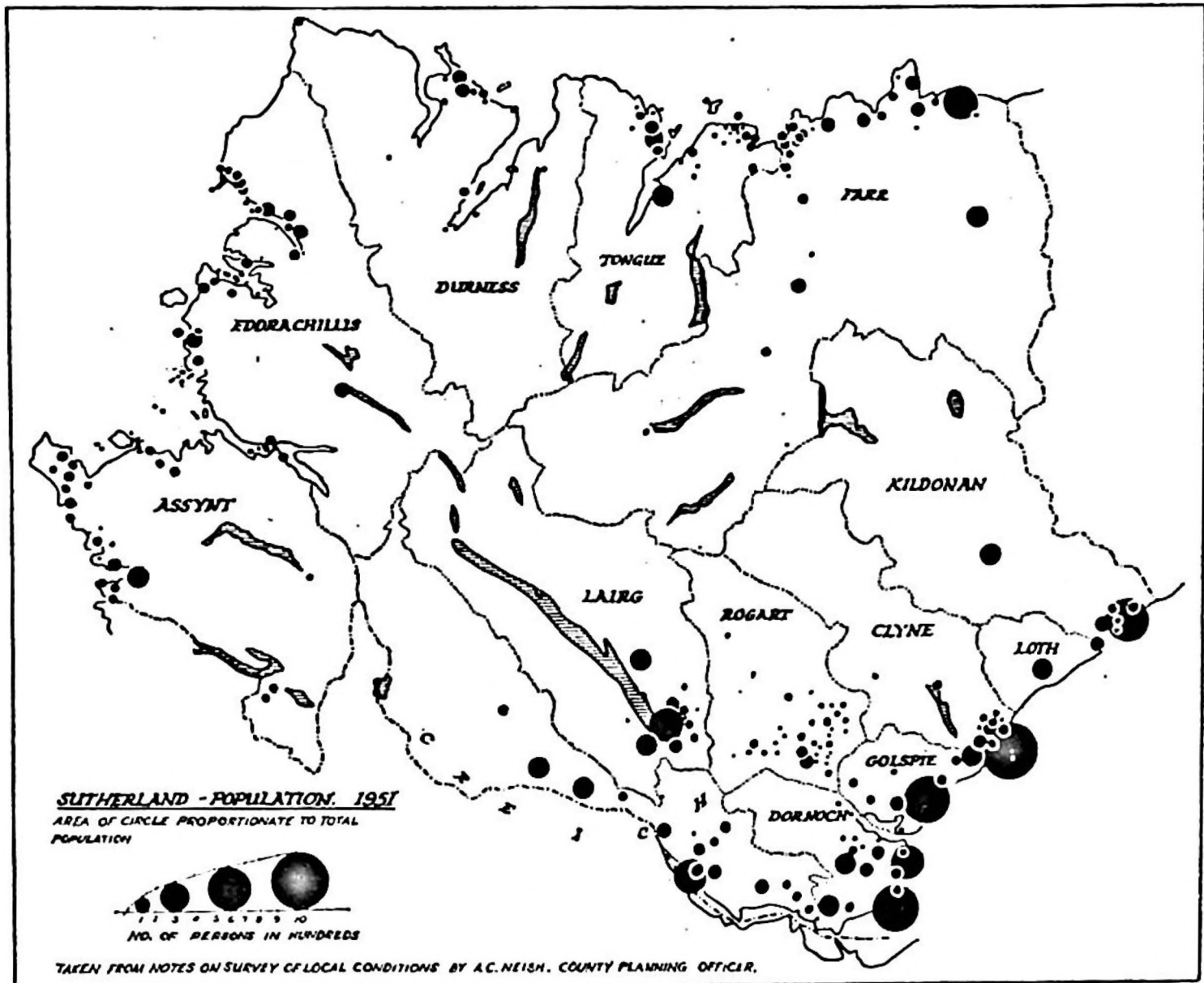


FIG. 3.

well over half the available improved land. Again, the crofts with most cattle tend to have most cultivation.

Some of this intermediate class of township, like the relatively small number of miscellaneous crofts and townships, therefore, are poorly endowed and utilised, others are better off and better used, though it is by no means a necessary conclusion that it will be the best endowed township that is best used.

Questions of rural economy cannot be divorced from questions of rural population: let us, therefore, turn our

attention to the population of Sutherland. A quick glance at the modern distribution shows the extreme peripheral nature of settlement, with a vast, empty, dead heart to the county.³ This is the first essential characteristic of the population of Sutherland. It also incidentally supports the contention that a large part of the existing population is still, willy-nilly, connected in some way with crofting. The larger settlements—of which only Brora Village exceeds 1000—are primarily, though not exclusively, non-crofting service centres, and stand out clearly—Brora, Golspie Village, Dornoch, Helmsdale, Embo Village, Bonar Bridge and Lairg Village in order of population numbers. Only Lochinver and Tongue Village in the north and west can be included here. Most of the other settlements are in the first place crofting sites. Now, it is not possible to distinguish with exactitude between the crofting and the non-crofting population, but if the service centres are subtracted one is left with 65 per cent of the population in mainly crofting areas, and the further one looks back through the records the greater this proportion becomes.⁴

The second essential and characteristic fact about the population of Sutherland is that it is a shrinking and an ageing one (Fig. 4). From 1755 to 1831 it rose, though the overall rate of increase, mainly because of emigration, was less rapid than for Scotland as a whole. From 1831 to 1851 it oscillated, but thereafter the decrease has been rapid and continuous. Only within the decade 1951-61 does there appear to have been a slightly less rapid rate of fall.

But neither the decrease nor its apparent ameliorations have been evenly distributed. A valid distinction may be made, for instance, between the parishes of the north and west and those of the south and east (Fig. 5). In the former the population is almost all in the poorly endowed, isolated crofter-fisher townships—though there is precious little fishing by crofters nowadays. There, numbers have continued to decline rapidly, and the population structure is becoming increasingly unbalanced, whereas in the relatively accessible and prosperous south and east the decline of population and loss of balance are apparently slightly less serious.

But further analysis is necessary, for not even the south and east are uniform—the area, as already pointed out, contains most of the non-crofting service centres as well as considerable crofting areas. One may take Rogart as an example of a parish almost entirely devoted to crofting, with holdings

of the intermediate agricultural type, while Golspie, which over the years has become increasingly dominated by the

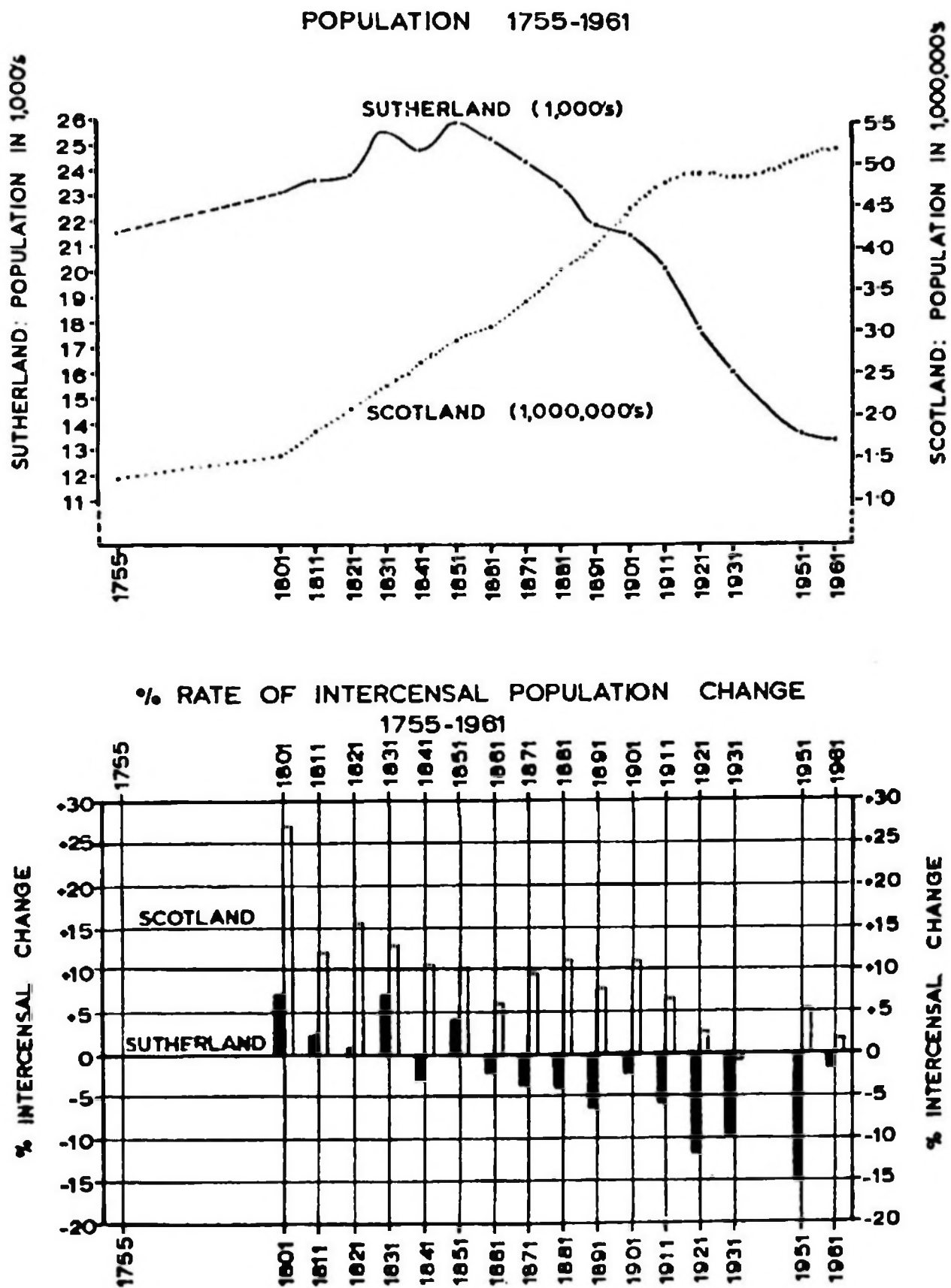
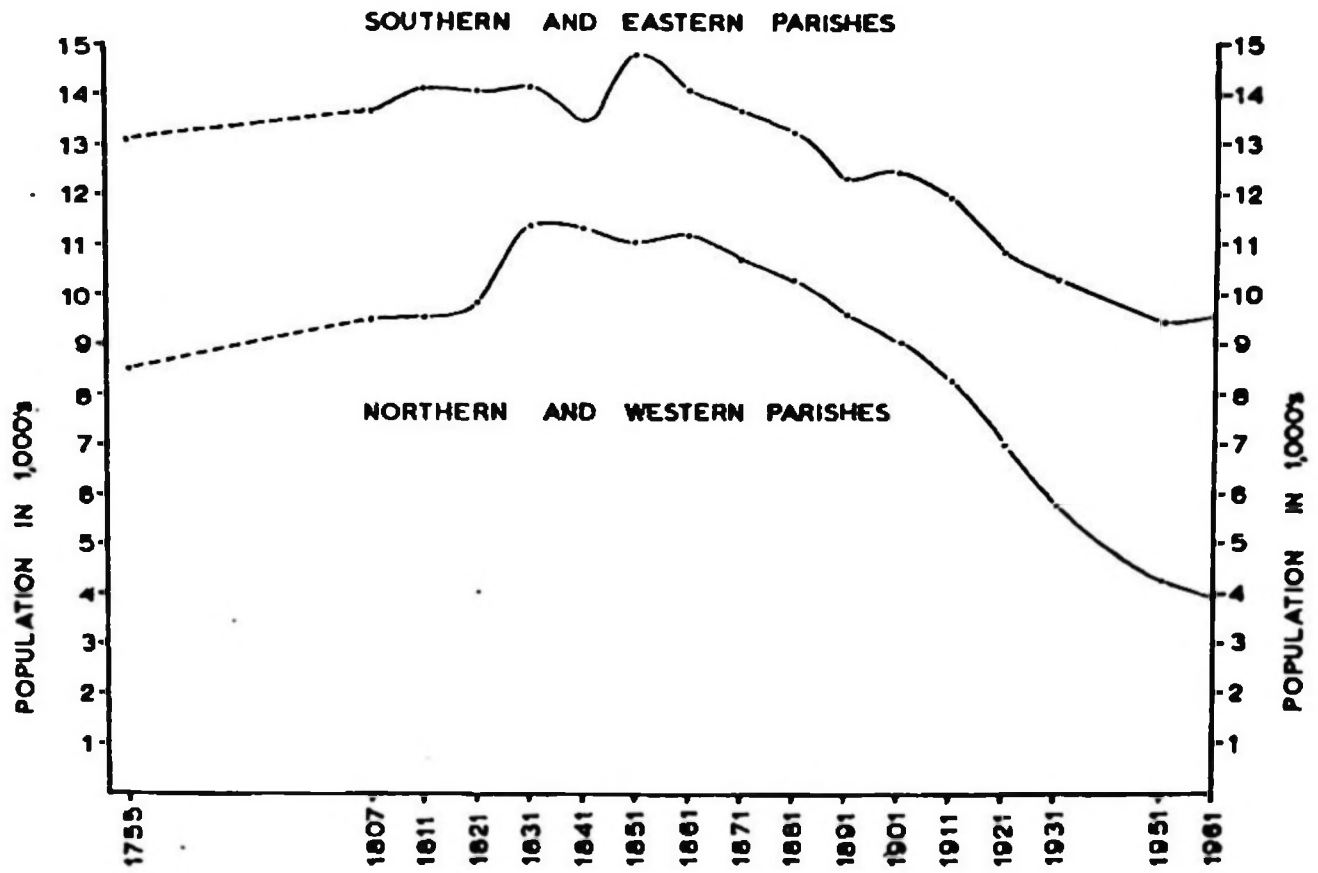


FIG. 4.

non-crofting Golspie Village, may be taken as a largely non-crofting parish (Fig. 6a and b). The difference in the population trends is striking: Rogart, in spite of its position in the south-east, has lost population in the last 100 years at as rapid a rate

as the northern and western crofting parishes, while Golspie, with its thriving village, has had a completely different population history, and is actually showing signs of a very slight

SUTHERLAND: POPULATION 1755-1961



SUTHERLAND: POPULATION 1951

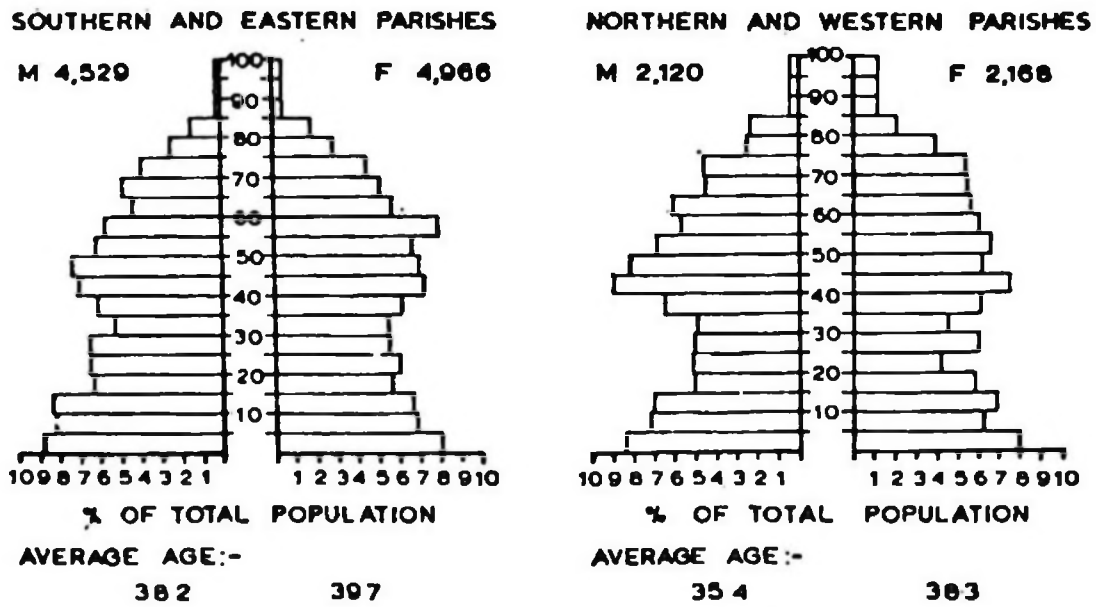


FIG. 5.

recovery in the last decade. It may, in fact, be taken that the population of all the crofting districts has fallen very seriously if unevenly over a long period, and resettlement has not been on a sufficiently large scale to alter this. In contrast, the

population of the non-crofting districts has suffered less severely, especially in the more recent period, and may even have increased slightly, mainly due to immigration from the outlying crofting districts.

It is therefore a feature of the modern crofting system that the population it sustains is declining and ageing: how does this come about? Partly, of course, it is a straightforward matter of emigration: one-fifth of all croft holders in Sutherland are absentees, most of them permanently so (Table V). The

TABLE V

Distribution of Absentee Tenants among holders of 988 crofts or croft-type units

	Male				Female				Vacant, uncertain, disputed	Total
	Resident		Absentee		Resident		Absentee			
	15-64	64+	15-64	64+	15-64	64+	15-64	64+		
Crofter-fisher townships—										
West coast . . .	89	50	32	5	22	20	20	12	18	268
North coast . . .	98	35	28	1	14	16	12	1	7	212
East coast . . .	57	40	16	4	22	30	6	5	7	187
Total . . .	244	125	76	10	58	66	38	18	32	667
Per cent of total . . .	36.6	18.7	11.4	1.5	8.7	9.9	5.7	2.7	4.8	100.0
Resettled townships—										
Total . . .	28	21	4	5	1	...	1	60
Per cent of total . . .	46.7	35.0	6.7	8.3	1.7	...	1.7	100.0
Agricultural and other townships—										
Total . . .	115	36	21	4	29	21	15	7	13	261
Per cent of total . . .	44.1	13.8	8.0	1.5	11.1	8.0	5.7	2.7	5.0	100.0
County (sample)—										
Total . . .	387	182	97	14	91	92	54	25	46	988
Per cent of total . . .	39.2	18.4	9.8	1.4	9.2	9.3	5.5	2.5	4.6	100.0

causes of this emigration are clear enough: holdings which are too small and poor to give an acceptable livelihood at a time when standards are rising and opportunities of emigration are increasing cannot retain an intelligent and active population, particularly when that population has been offered the possibility of a good academic education and has an increasingly wide network of contacts all over the world. The result of this emigration—which on the evidence of the croft-holder statistics is concentrated in the active 15-64 age group—is that the declining residual population is an ageing one—in 1951 Sutherland had the third highest proportion of persons over 65 of any county in Scotland—while the number of children born to replace losses by death and emigration falls continuously.

This last is not due to a decline in fertility for the birth rate and the proportion of surviving children to each woman (15-64) has fallen less in Sutherland in this century than in Scotland as a whole. It is due to the small proportion of married

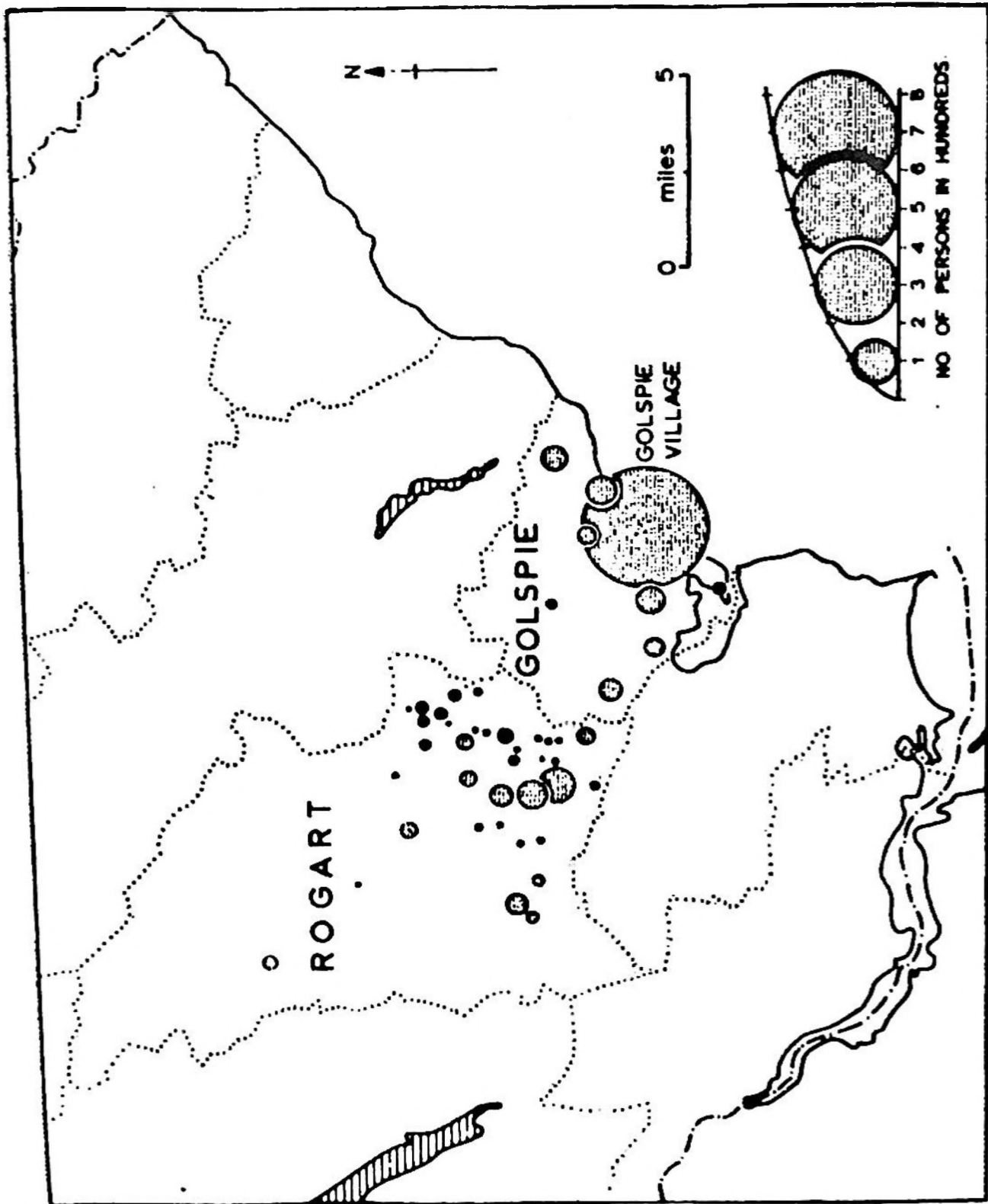


FIG. 6(a).—Rogart and Golspie: distribution of population 1951.

women in the 15-64 age group in the local population (17·7 per cent) compared with that of Scotland (21·7 per cent), and this in turn is largely the result of emigration (Illegitimacy is of small importance in Sutherland.) It may be added that the modern worsening of the position of the local crofting areas *vis-a-vis* the non-crofting areas reflects this differentiation in

POPULATION 1755-1961

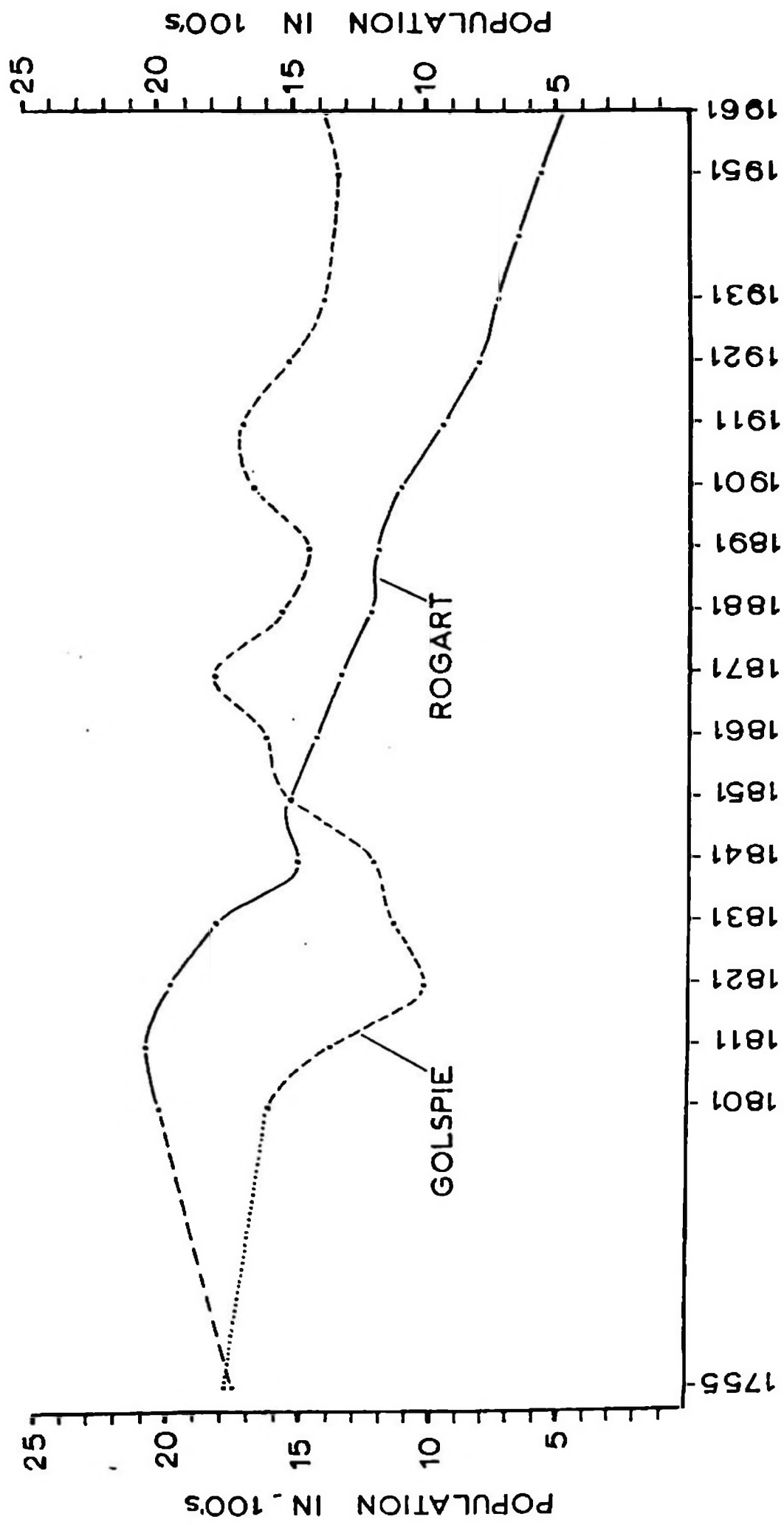


FIG. 6(b).—Rogart and Golspie: population changes 1755-1961.

little, although there is no actual variation of fertility between women in the two types of area.

Emigration of the active, child-bearing population therefore seems a most important factor in the decline of population. What of the people who do not emigrate (Fig. 7)? In this sample of croft holders only about 12 per cent—almost all men—were full-time crofters in the age group 15-64, while in the same age group 5 per cent were entirely non-crofting. Almost exactly half the remaining resident croft holders were over the age of 65, and therefore necessarily of declining efficiency as croft workers. In fact, of the total population of 1600 resident persons in 38 townships, 18 per cent were children below the age of 15, but almost a quarter were over the age of 65. Of the remaining 58 per cent of the population between 15 and 64, 401 or rather less than half were women, of whom only 26 were in employment—for women in particular employment opportunities are very limited except in the neighbourhood of the service centres. So far as crofting work is concerned, it may be fairly said that a prejudice is growing against women having to undertake a great deal of croft work, and their place is less important therefore in some respects than in the past. In fact, women who are active crofters are almost always single, living alone, with no male help. Few women concern themselves much with sheep, though dairy cattle are rarely kept unless there is a woman on the croft.

Men, therefore, provide the main crofting labour force, but even so in these 38 townships, of the total resident male population between the ages of 15 and 64, only 16 per cent (86 out of 524) were full-time crofters of varying degrees of effectiveness. The rest all had regular or periodic employment, of whom 96 were quite frankly non-crofting. The most important sources of employment include firstly transport and communications in various aspects—work on the roads and railways, employment on buses and by the Post Office, and work in garages, smithies, and similar service occupations—and secondly agriculture and forestry—including workers in private and Forestry Commission employment and shepherds and farm labourers. Other important sources are building and contracting, and unskilled work. Fishing is significant but not outstandingly important, employing only 5 per cent of this sample of those in gainful employment—mostly as inshore lobster fishers. One remaining and significant class is those employed by the Dounreay Atomic Establishment,

though this was strictly limited to a stretch of territory along the north coast as far west as Bettyhill.

One may therefore summarise the whole situation by saying that the population of Sutherland has diminished and is diminishing, so that the problems of an ageing and declining population are added to those of a sparsely scattered and largely isolated distribution. Only the non-crofting service centres show vitality, and since they depend ultimately on supplying services to the majority of the population that lives in the mainly crofting districts, they must be affected by any continued decline in the crofting system. The population is falling because of a decline in family size, because the active and child-bearing age groups 15-64 have to emigrate in order to find work, and because the residual population is not supplying enough children to compensate for the outflow. Of the residual population, a large percentage is of old or retired persons who are of declining activity. The unusually small percentage of those in the 15-64 age group who remain in the county, owing to the inadequacy under modern conditions of the crofting system to provide an acceptable livelihood, have to look for alternative and ancillary employment. The range of employment in the county is extremely limited, the best opportunities for the future lying in forestry, in certain very limited industrial occupations, and in work which is ultimately concerned either with services or with transport.

Under these circumstances it is not surprising that absenteeism among croft holders, especially in the active age groups, is everywhere serious—and symptomatic of the decreasing attractiveness of a crofting life—and that even where ancillary employment is available there is nowadays a strong tendency to concentrate upon that rather than upon the croft—even where the croft is of good potentiality. The croft tends, in fact, to be effectively regarded as somewhere to live rather than as a unit to be worked as part of the holder's livelihood. Consequently, the agricultural and pastoral efficiency of the crofting areas is frequently below what it was designed to be. The only way to cure this would be to reorganise croft tenancies in an effort to make the rewards of crofting attractive under modern conditions, with as croft holders only those willing to work their crofts fully, and then to enforce the conditions of good husbandry. To do this would involve amalgamating many existing croft holdings to form full-time units. This would invite a catastrophic fall of population unless alternative employment

were offered for the non-crofting population. If it were decided to attempt to retain even the present moderate population, that employment would have to be in the present crofting areas as one of the serious problems already is a population distributed so thinly over the county that the supply of social and commercial services is becoming increasingly difficult. Probably forestry is the only large-scale, full-time activity

TABLE VI

Total resident population upon 654 croft and croft-type holdings

	Holdings	Population					Total
		Children under 14 years	Male		Female		
			15-64	64+	15-64	64+	
Crofter-fisher townships—							
West coast— . . .	93	39	67	23	47	23	199
North coast . . .	241	82	124	32	85	46	369
East coast . . .	187	31	70	34	62	45	240
Total . . .	521	152	261	89	194	114	810
Per cent of total . . .		18·8	32·2	11·0	23·9	14·1	100·0
Resettled townships—							
Total . . .	60	24	50	26	39	28	167
Per cent of total . . .		14·4	30·0	15·6	23·3	16·8	100·0
Agricultural and other townships—							
Total . . .	73	114	213	57	168	71	623
Per cent of total . . .		18·3	34·2	9·1	27·0	11·4	100·0
County (sample)—							
Total . . .	654	290	524	172	401	213	1600
Per cent of total . . .		18·1	32·7	10·7	25·1	13·3	100·0

that could be quoted here, and of such the Fort William pulp mill may be an augury, though it is unfortunate that the major crofting areas are in parts of Sutherland which (in spite of the pioneering work of the Pulford Estates in the Reay Forest) remain unattractive for extensive commercial forestry.

None of these solutions is original, none is easy, but as things stand the population, which hitherto has been largely connected with crofting, is declining rapidly in spite of the fact that the crofters' condition has been continuously improved since 1886, and that the crofters now control more of the county than ever before, in spite of the fact that the crofting system as a whole is very heavily protected and guided, and in spite of the fact that the Highland population in general is heavily subsidised. It has recently been suggested that crofting in its present form is an inefficient means of using natural resources,

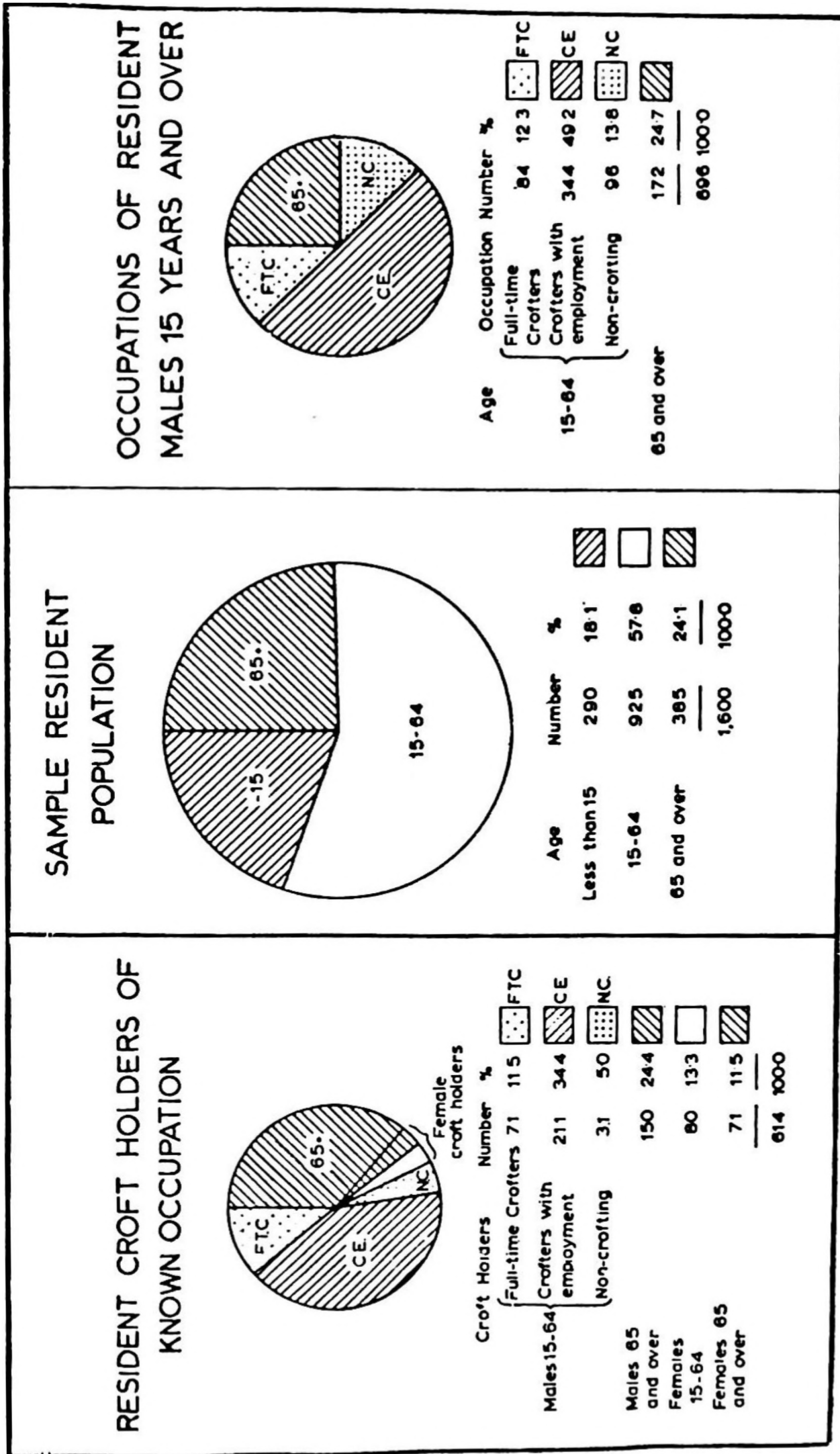


FIG. 7.

and in Sutherland at least it is clear that the present crofting system is less efficient than it could be either as an agricultural system or as a means of supporting a virile population. As, although it has its roots in the past, it is a fairly recent and artificial legal creation, and as it is also an expensive and failing one, any measures taken to save the whole area of the Crofting Counties would almost certainly have to be more radical than anything since the Clearances, and might well involve a virtual reasoned abandonment of the crofting system as we now know it.

NOTES

- ¹ It is worth noting that fishing developed less well in Brora than in Helmsdale, Golspie or Embo Village, and that conversely other sources of employment (coal, salt, brick and tile making, agriculture, services) have at various times developed better.
- ² The chief exception to this rule is the small and isolated township of Sheigra, established in 1912 specifically as a crofter-fisher township at the extreme north-western end of Loch Inchard. An anachronism even at the time of its establishment, it remains one of the few townships in Sutherland to have the arable and hay lands divided equally in small intermingled strips. In view of its character, Sheigra has been classed as a west coast crofter-fisher township, and not as a resettlement township.
- ³ Fig. 3 is constructed from data kindly made available by A. C. Neish, Esq., formerly County Planning Officer for Sutherland. It should be noted that for Loth, Strathalladale and Strath Helmsdale consolidated figures only were available, thus accounting for apparent nucleation in districts of scattered population. The 1961 Census, however, confirms both the general distribution and the continued trend towards concentration of population upon the service centres.

Settlement	1951 population	Settlement	1951 population
Dornoch Burgh	748	Embo Village	374
Brora	1074	Bonar Bridge	355
Golspie Village	915	Lairg Village	318
Helmsdale	705	Tongue Village	164
		Lochinver	156

Total population in service centres, 1951—4809 or 35.2 per cent county population.