Shielings of the Isle of Rum

JOHN A. LOVE

[The literature of shielings (Gael. sing. *àirigh*) has burgeoned recently, particularly in Scotland where their late survival has provided rich material for social and comparative ethnographical studies. Following certain 'pioneer' accounts such as that by Whitaker in Scottish Studies (1959: 167–88), Professor Ronald Miller's paper 'Land use by Summer Shielings' (1967: 193–221) discussed the motives for such annual movement of settled farm populations, and described the ruined shieling huts characteristic of particular Scottish regions, including Rum.[1]

The author of the following paper has been based in Rum for six years, and in the course of fieldwork has been able to increase the total of identifiable shieling ruins (*bothan àirigh*). He relates these to the ecological background of the island. Edd.]

The ruined shieling huts of Rum are doubtless fairly typical of those found anywhere in the Highlands except that we know they abruptly fell into disuse when the island was cleared of its entire human population (some 350 souls) in 1826–28. Thereafter a few shepherds were employed to tend the 8000 sheep brought in by the new grazing tenant (Banks 1976: 83–84; Love 1980a: 30). There being no phase of intensive crofting as such, the ancient runrig pattern of settlement with its groups of blackhouses and dykes (now ruinous) and fields of lazybeds have remained, unobscured by later developments.

The various 1:10 000 maps of Rum locate no more than a hundred or so shieling huts. But one or two of these are in fact ruined blackhouses, while others, not marked as shieling huts, have been incorporated into the complex system of dykes. Miller (1967: 212) examined only 140 shieling huts. Obviously a more thorough survey is desirable. The winter months prove the most productive for this purpose, when the vegetation, cropped down by the red deer, has died back to expose more clearly the shieling structures. By first visiting those already marked on maps I soon began to recognise situations where others may be found. I marked each hut on a 1:10 000 map and made rough diagrams of its structure in the field. I subsequently found that I could assign each to one of three basic, easily recognisable structural forms. So far nearly 380 shieling huts have been located, permitting useful conclusions to be drawn as to their distribution.

Identification of huts, and size of groups

Shieling huts or bothans were simple dwellings where people, usually the women and children, would spend several months each summer tending their stock, milking, and

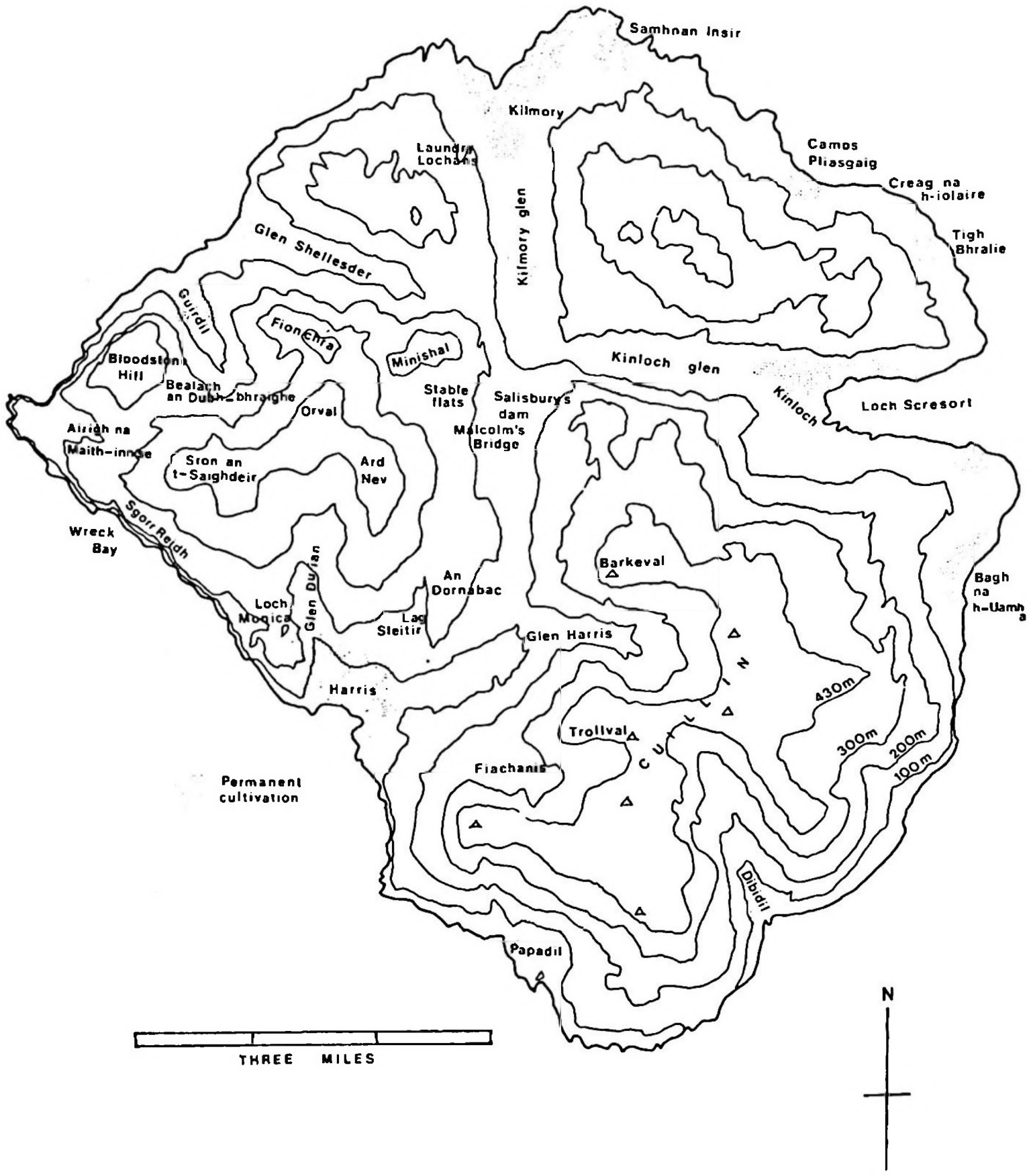


Fig. 1 Map of the Isle of Rum showing areas of permanent settlement and certain places mentioned in the text.

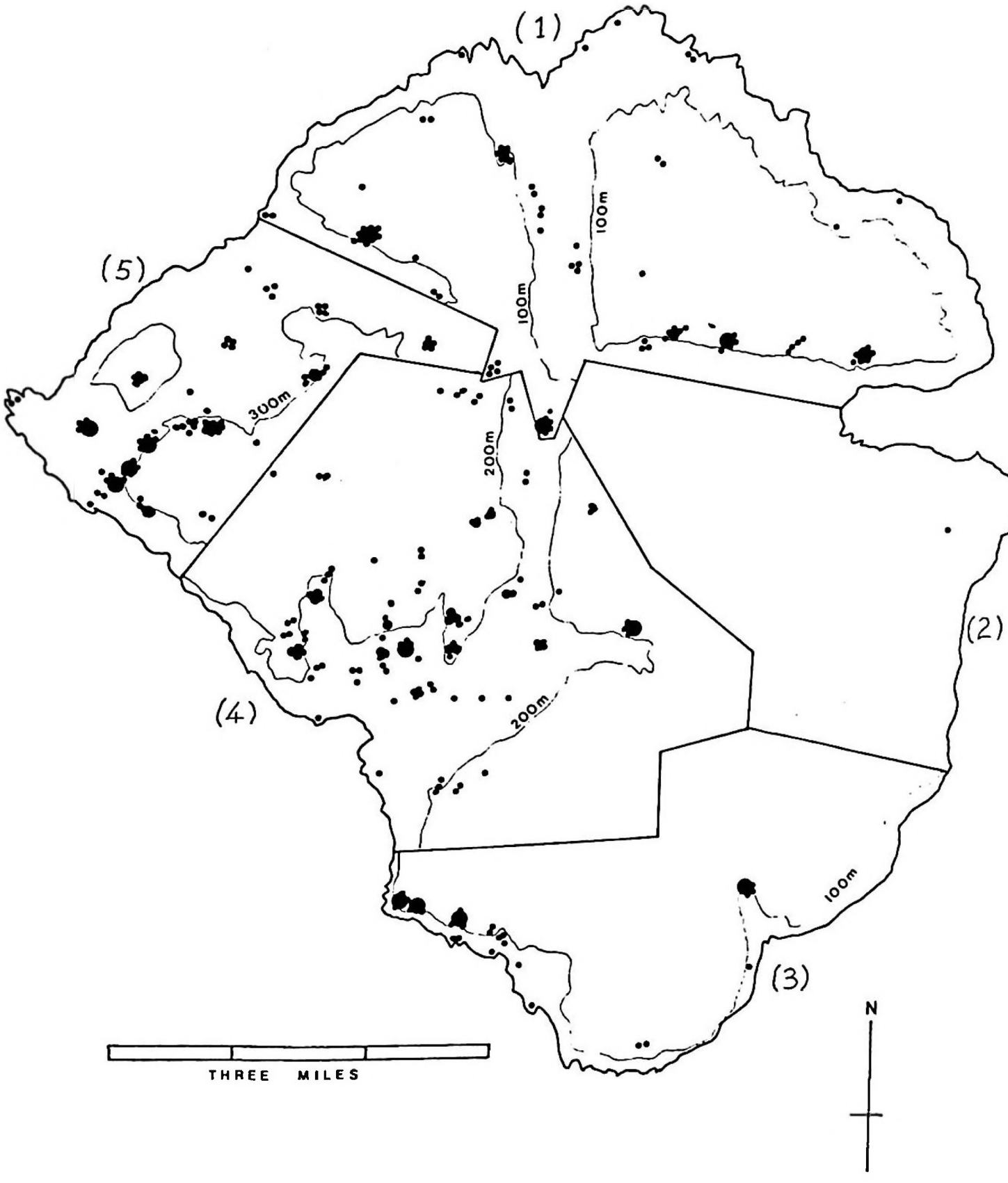


Fig. 2 Distribution of shieling huts (in each of five zones, with appropriate contours added).

making butter and cheese. Miller (1967: 193–221) and Fenton (1976: 124–136) amongst others, provide useful and informative discussions on the practice. As we shall see, many of the huts had only the foundation made of stone, the rest being built up probably with turf overlying a framework of timber. Such huts rapidly decayed over winter and had to be repaired annually. Indeed in some parts of the Hebrides where timber was scarce the roof beams were taken home for storage at the end of each summer (Mould 1953).

It is not surprising, therefore that no shieling huts on Rum now remain intact. Even those roofed completely with stone would in time collapse in winter storms or under the feet of grazing animals. On the well- vegetated slopes of Fionchra there is an acute shortage of stone: the huts there lack even the stone foundation and must have been built entirely of turf. Now only faint traces remain. One group of ruined huts was

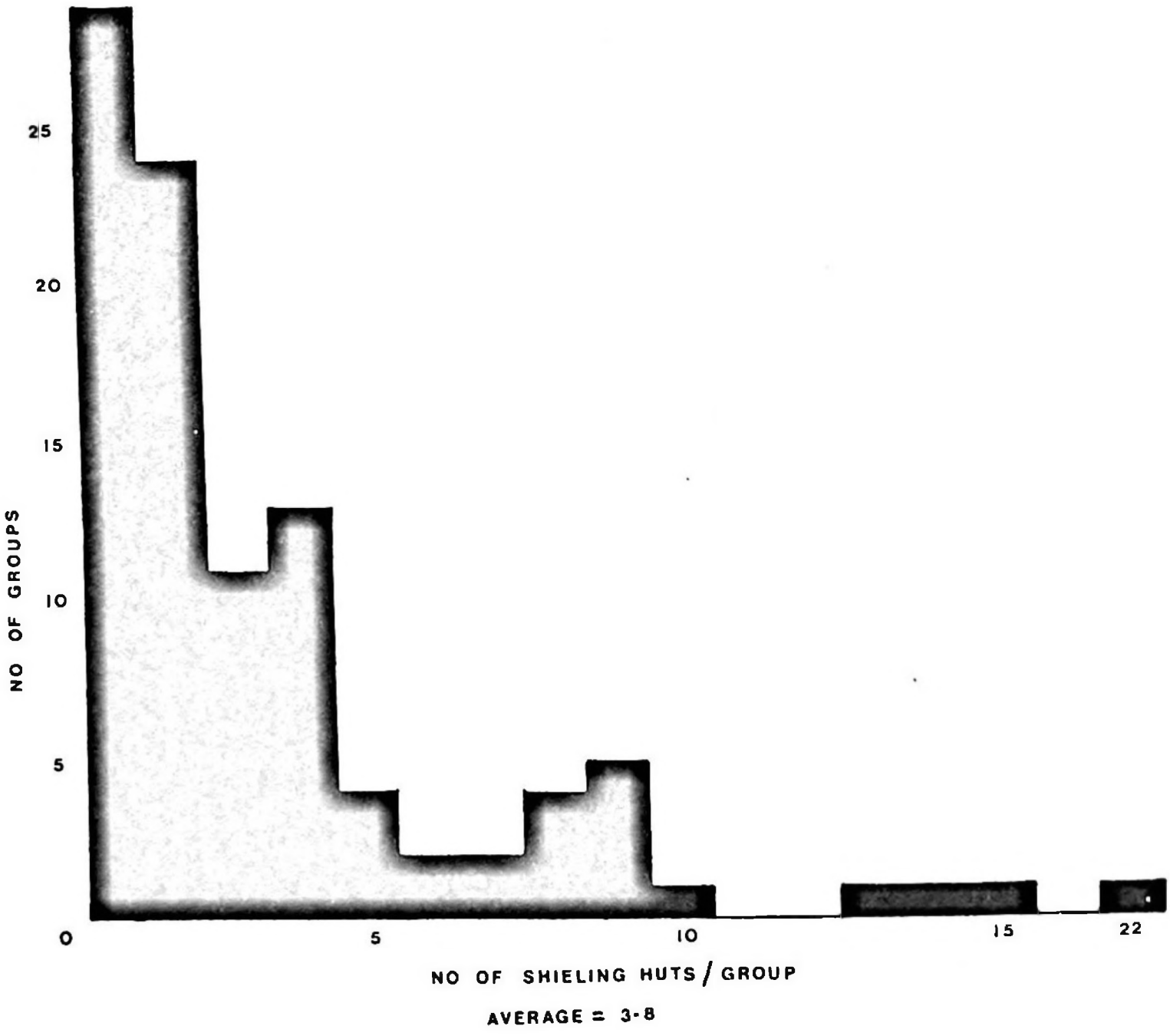


Fig. 3 Size of groups of shieling huts.

temporarily flooded about 1850 when the ill-fated Salisbury's Dam was built: now their ruins are overgrown and barely discernible. A small proportion of the huts of Rum have been re-designed by later shepherds to make temporary shelters for themselves or for ewes with fostered lambs. In modern times too some huts may have provided material for road construction, while as recently as 1977 one ruin was removed to repair a bridle path in Glen Guirdil. Even before the clearances on the island some huts would have been demolished so that their stones could be used to build new ones, dykes or even a house.

Difficulties of identification are increased by the presence of stone structures which may predate the shielings. Some ruins at Harris and on the north shore of Loch Scresort may prove upon excavation to be prehistoric dwellings: all are constructed of beach stones and are now almost totally destroyed. A group on the slopes above Harris bay (NM 344965) show certain affinities to small Bronze Age kerb-cairns in Argyll which have been described by Ritchie *et al* (1974–75: 30–33). A curious group of stone ruins lies on the shore east of Samhnan Insir (see fig. 9 H) which Miller (1967: 212) has interpreted as fishermens' bothies: they may however warrant detailed examination; but they have not been included in the present analysis. Finally, some stone walls found at shieling grounds may be too large to have been dwellings and may instead have served as enclosures for stock, or fodder.

A total of 377 shieling huts have been located for inclusion in this analysis (fig. 2), doubtless others remain to be discovered. Not all these huts are likely to have been in use at the same period: the peak population in Rum was only 450. Some huts may have fallen early into disuse; while others, at lower altitudes, might only have been inhabited at the beginning of the summer before conditions permitted stock to be moved to higher grazings (in this way making most use possible of all suitable vegetation).

A distance of 100 metres has been used to differentiate between groups of huts: 99 such groups have been distinguished. About 80 of the shieling huts seem to have been built either singly or in pairs (fig. 3). Clusters of four, or of eight or nine, huts are not uncommon. The largest group (NM 310988) consists of 22 ruins: a long line of huts, joined together by a complexity of walls and enclosures, which runs along the edge of an extensive scree slope at an altitude of 300 metres above sea-level near Airigh na Maith-innse ('the shieling of the good grazing'). The average number of huts in a group is 3.8.

Distribution

About twelve areas of permanent settlement can be recognised on Rum: all are coastal (fig. 1). Presumably the people at each township located their shielings within easy reach: none of the huts are more than 2½ miles from permanent habitation. But it is no longer possible to say which huts belonged to which settlement. For the purposes

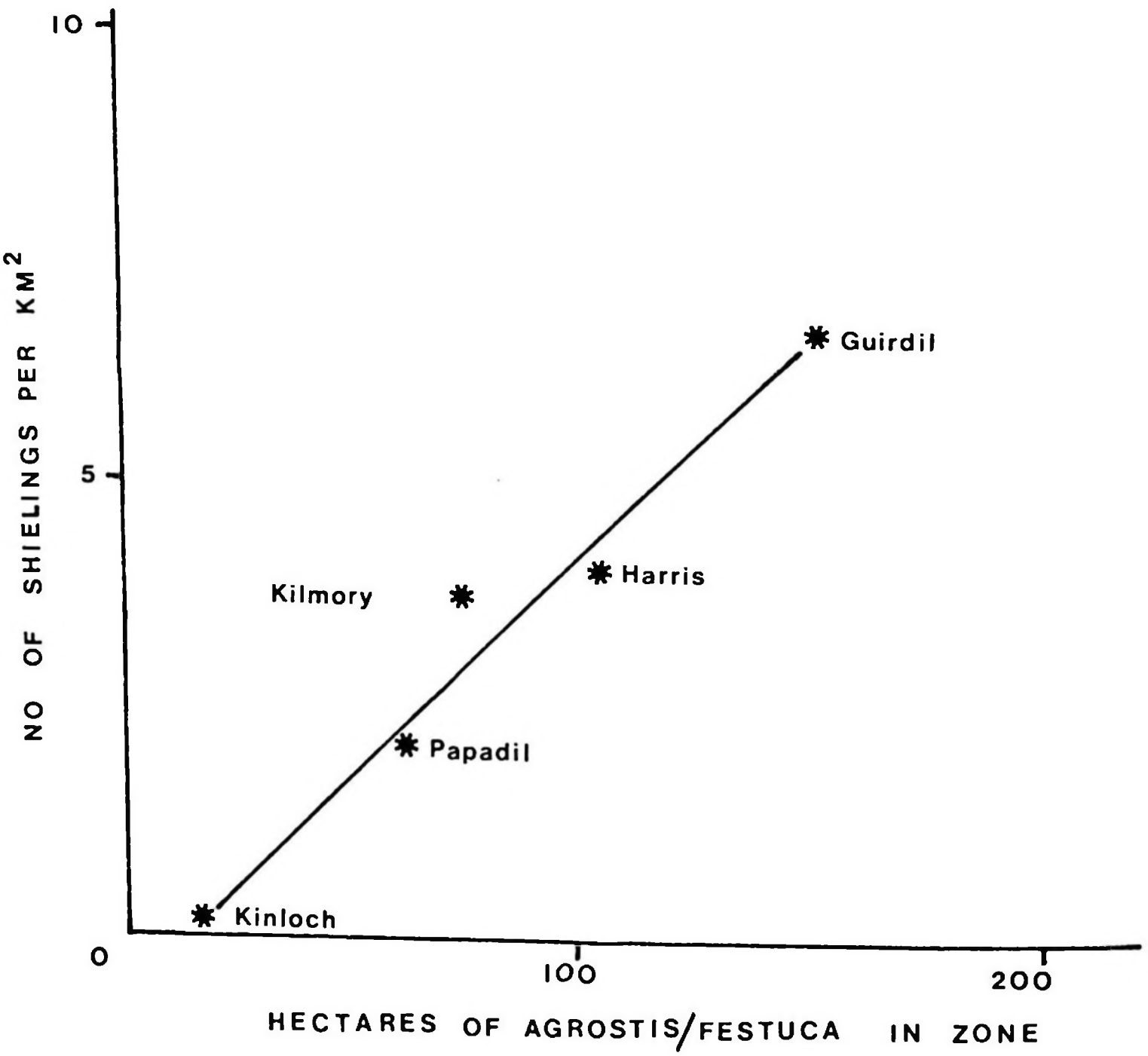


Fig. 4 Density of shieling huts in relation to amount of *Agrostis/Festuca* grassland in each zone.

of this analysis five zones have been delineated, not all of equal size. Their boundaries take into consideration both geology and relief. They would also seem to be appropriate to the pattern of settlement. Those zones with the richest vegetation (represented nowadays by *Agrostis/Festuca* grassland) would be likely to have a larger human population which would require more shielings. (Figure 4 demonstrates a direct relationship between the area of *Agrostis/Festuca* and the number of huts in each zone).

(1) Kilmory (103 shieling huts). This takes Glen Shellesder and Kinloch Glen as its southern boundary.

The whole area of about 28 square kilometres is mainly of Torridonian sandstone, with wet heath and blanket bog the predominant vegetation types but with scattered patches of heather (*Calluna*). Kilmory Glen bisects the zone and where it meets the sea has an extensive tract of cultivable land with twenty or so ruined blackhouses. There was another settlement, now almost obscured by the present-day farm and village, around Loch Scresort: part of this is included in the next zone.

(2) Kinloch (1 hut). Again Torridonian sandstone and shale predominate, merging into the ultrabasic igneous rocks of the Rum Cuillin which forms the western boundary. With the exception of some moor-grass (*Molinia*) flushes around Bagh na h-Uamha, the vegetation is mainly wet heath and blanket bog. Montane grassland abounds on the Rum Cuillin, but since it is above 600 metres on steep, rocky ground it is unlikely to have been used by domestic stock to any great extent.

(3) Papadil (35 huts). The vegetation of this southernmost zone is similar, although extensive tracts of herb-rich heath stretch westwards from Papadil. This whole area is very steep however, the only cultivable land being around the loch at Papadil, where there has been a small settlement. Dibidil also has little to attract much farming: it is comprised of sandstone on the lower slopes, with ultrabasic rocks towards the summits.

(4) Harris (124 huts). This is the most extensive of the five sectors, lying to the west of the Cuillin, with Fionchra, Orval and Sron an t-Saighdeir forming the northwest boundary. The vast basin of ultrabasic rock forms a wide plateau of bog and *Schoenus* fen, before sloping down to the herb-rich heaths and *Agrostis/Festuca* grassland of the coast where there was once a large township of thirty or so blackhouses. Neither the rich montane pastures of the Rum Cuillin nor the poor quality *Nardus* grassland on the western hills are very accessible to stock (*Nardus* in any case being comparatively unpalatable to grazing animals: M. E. Ball pers. comm.).

(5) Guirdil (114 huts). This, the smallest and highest zone, is bounded largely by steep, high cliffs, its rich pastures overlying the basalt rocks of Bloodstone Hill, Fionchra and Orval. Its high altitude precludes much permanent settlement except on the coast at Guirdil. Extensive screes of granitic rock form the southern boundary with some *Nardus* heath on the summits.

Rum, with an area of 112 sq. km. has an average of only 3.4 huts per sq. km. : much of the island is however rough hill ground and therefore not suitable for stock rearing. The largest settlement is located at Harris, but the poorer quality ground inland of Kilmory (the second largest township) has almost as many shieling huts. The next largest settlement may have been at Kinloch (though now almost obliterated by later

developments), where most of the shieling grounds were located to the north: only one hut has been found in the Kinloch area south of Loch Scresort. Few people could have lived at Papadil and most of the huts on the steep slopes of this zone are found along the cliff tops close to Harris. Guirdil is the smallest zone but with 114 shieling huts supports by far the highest concentration (6.7 per sq. km.).

Various factors in addition to accessibility and the distribution of population seem to have influenced the location of shieling grounds.

(a) Altitude. In Rum shielings are to be found from sea level to 450 metres: 90 per cent of the huts lie between the 50 and 350 metre contours. The most fertile land occurs at the coast but it was used for cultivation during the summer months, not for stock rearing. It can be seen from figure 5 that shieling huts are most frequently encountered at three distinct altitudes: most at about 100 metres, some at 200, and the remainder at about 300. These correspond to the heights at which most flat land is to be found in each of four zones (fig. 6: Kinloch zone is excluded, as only one shieling hut has been found there). Thus around Kilmory and Papadil most shielings

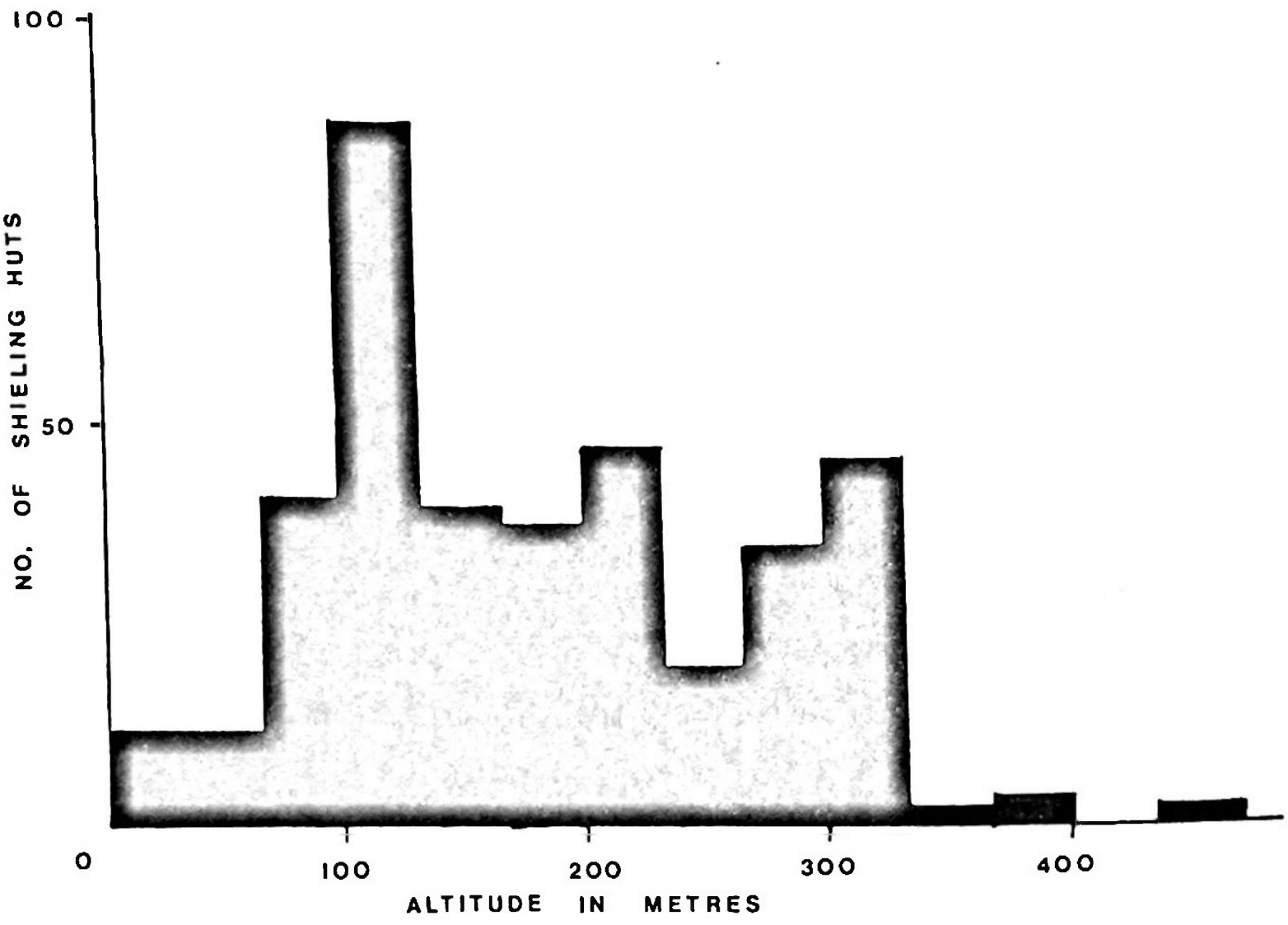


Fig. 5 Altitudinal distribution of shieling huts.

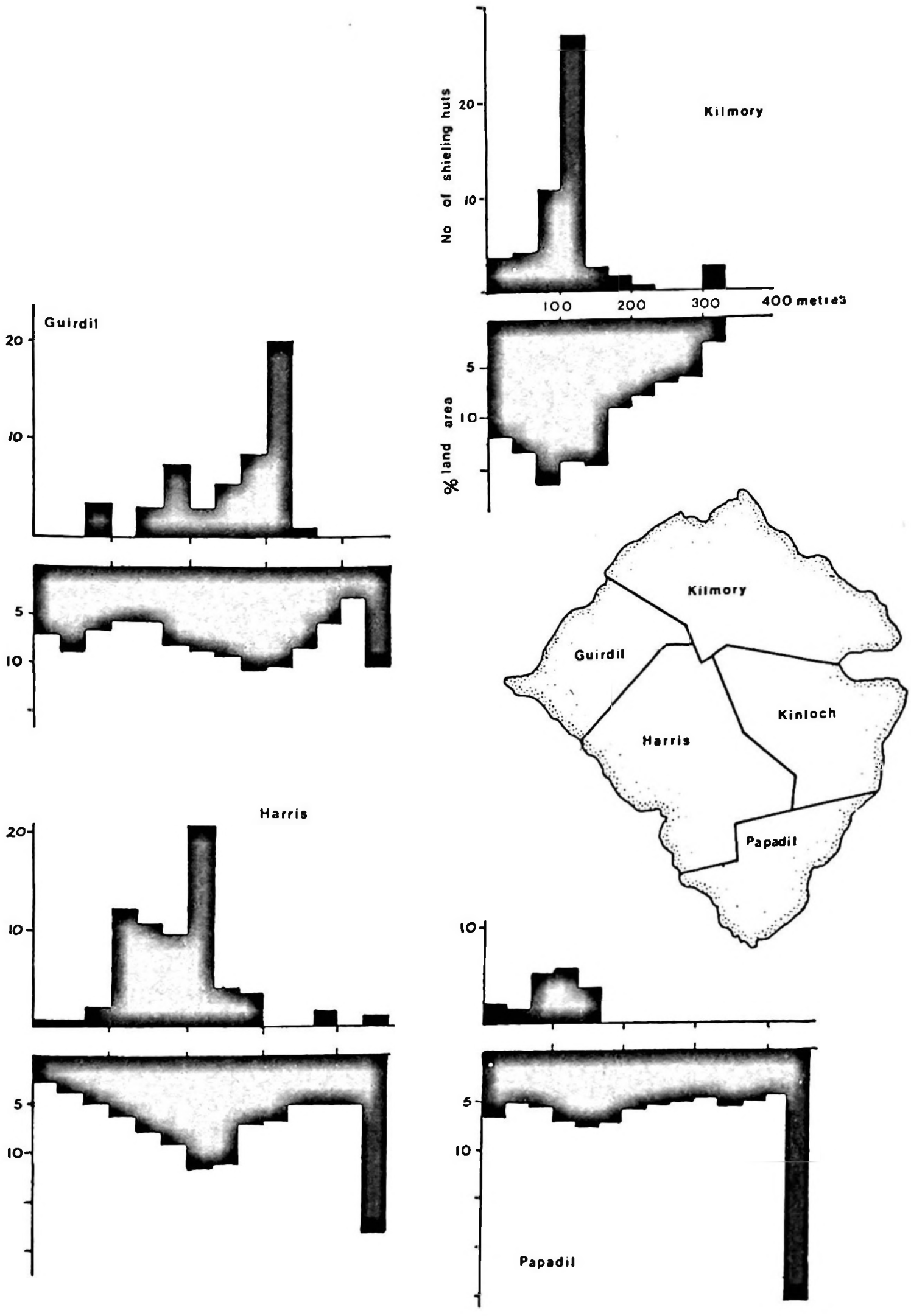


Fig. 6 Altitudinal distribution of shieling huts in relation to land area.

are located around the 100 metre contour: above this altitude the land becomes steep and the quality of vegetation less suitable for grazing. At Harris some huts occur at 100 metres but most lie on the broad shelf of land 200 metres above the sea. In contrast, nearly all the shielings in the Guirdil zone are located on a plateau of fertile land 300 metres above sea level.

(b) Vegetation. The suitability of these flatter areas as shieling grounds is determined by the vegetation. It is convenient that in 1970 Rum's plant communities were mapped by R. C. Ferreira. If we superimpose our shieling locations upon Ferreira's map we find that three plant communities were particularly favoured as shieling grounds—herb-rich heath, *Agrostis/Festuca* grassland, and *Calluna* heath (fig. 7). Other huts are to be found elsewhere, even on bare rock; but often these sites are close to pockets of better pasture.

It may be that the present vegetation cover is not quite the same as that prevailing at the time the shielings were being used, But it will in general reflect the nutrient quality of the soil and the underlying rock. A factor to be considered is that the

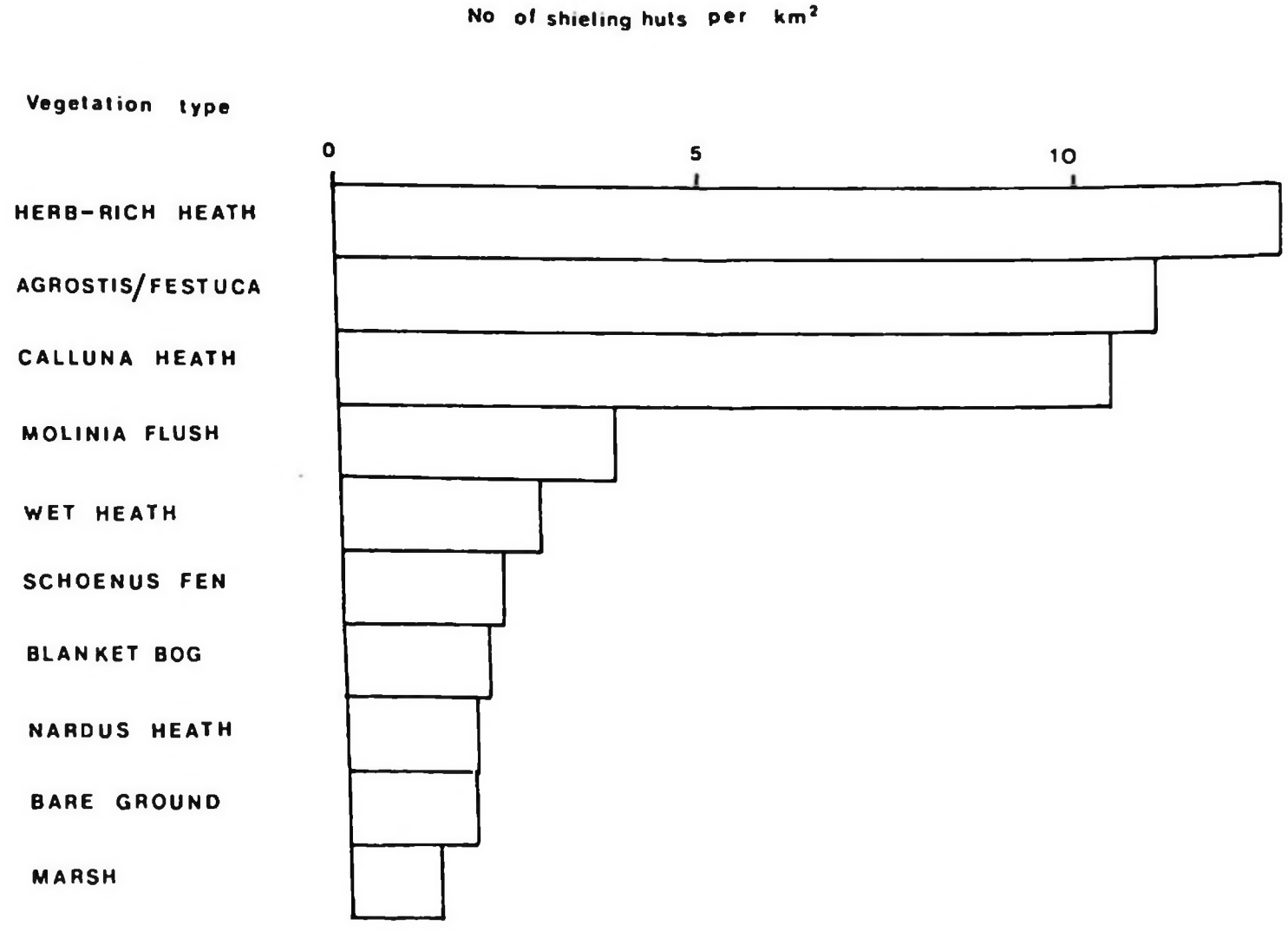


Fig. 7 Density of shieling huts in relation to vegetation (types mapped by Ferreira, 1970, and described in National Nature Reserve Handbook 1974).

annual manuring and trampling by domestic animals could improve pastures, so that the vegetation we see now might to some extent be the result of, rather than the reason for, the siting of shielings.

(c) Shelter. Aspect and shelter would have been important considerations in the siting of shielings, but these factors are not easy to demonstrate. It is apparent (figs. 1 and 2) that in Kinloch Glen, Glen Shellesder and Glen Harris shieling huts tended to be situated on south facing slopes. In Kilmory Glen, which runs north-south, huts are to be found on both sides of the valley. In small, steep-sided glens such as Dibidil, Guirdil and Duian, hut groups nestle in the glen bottom. At first glance some huts would appear to be very exposed, especially in the Guirdil zone; they do however utilise any shelter from adjacent rocks, lie in natural hollows or are even partially sunk into the ground. Such small-scale features cannot be detected on any map, being obvious only in the field. Local topography seems to have afforded sufficient protection from the elements in the case of the Guirdil huts for they demonstrate no obvious preference in the orientation of their outer doorways. Elsewhere on Rum

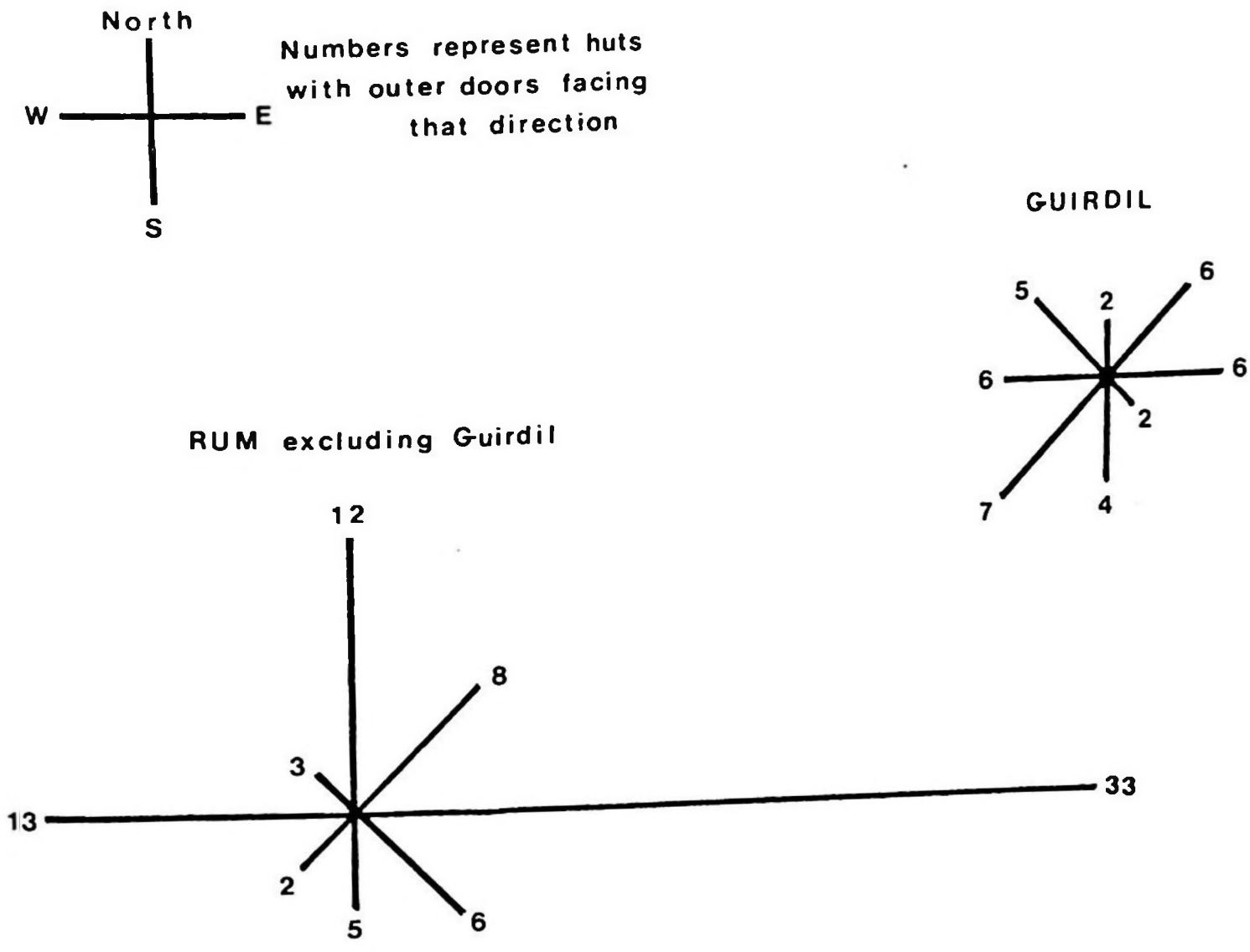


Fig. 8 Orientation of doorways.

however (where the prevailing wind is from the south-west) the majority of doorways face roughly east (fig. 8). About 25 per cent of the huts seem to have had two doors, invariably in opposite walls: thus some east doors have a west equivalent. Some huts gained additional shelter by having a wall or porch (*forsglan*) of stone and turf constructed in front of the door (fig. 9G).

(d) Other factors An obvious requirement in siting a shieling hut would be the availability of building materials. Many huts are encountered at the foot of scree slopes, where there is abundant stone. Huge natural boulders, rock faces or even steep grassy slopes have been employed to form one or more walls of some of the huts. As has already been mentioned, stones were lacking on the fertile, basalt slopes of Fionchra, where the huts were probably built entirely of turf.

Proximity to a source of fresh water must have been of great importance—not only for drinking, but also for the washing of dairy utensils. Huts can be looked for near burns or springs; but, where shelter permitted, well drained sites were chosen (though small burns now flow directly underneath two huts!). Often a hut is found on a small knoll (Plate I). In some instances this may have been artificially created: disintegrated turf blocks and domestic refuse may in some cases have contributed to the formation of a mound, while in others a completely new structure appears to have been built on top of an old, ruined hut. The presence of mounding is indicative, then, that the site had a prolonged history of occupation: it can also be a useful indication of age, as we shall see presently.

By considering these various factors together I have found it possible to predict with an encouraging degree of success where previously unmapped shielings are to be found.

Shieling construction

Considering the ruinous state of nearly all the structures, and the crude sketch maps and measurements made of each, I did not think much would be gained by attempting a detailed analysis of structures, nor, at this stage, by comparing them critically with shielings elsewhere in Britain. However, early in the course of the survey it became obvious that three basic types of shieling could be recognised—cellular, chambered and rectangular (Table 1). On the whole cells and rectangles were reasonably distinctive while more variety in form was encountered among chambered huts. All but 5 per cent of the structures were assigned to one of the three categories: perhaps a somewhat optimistic assessment. (Fig. 9 shows diagrammatic plans).

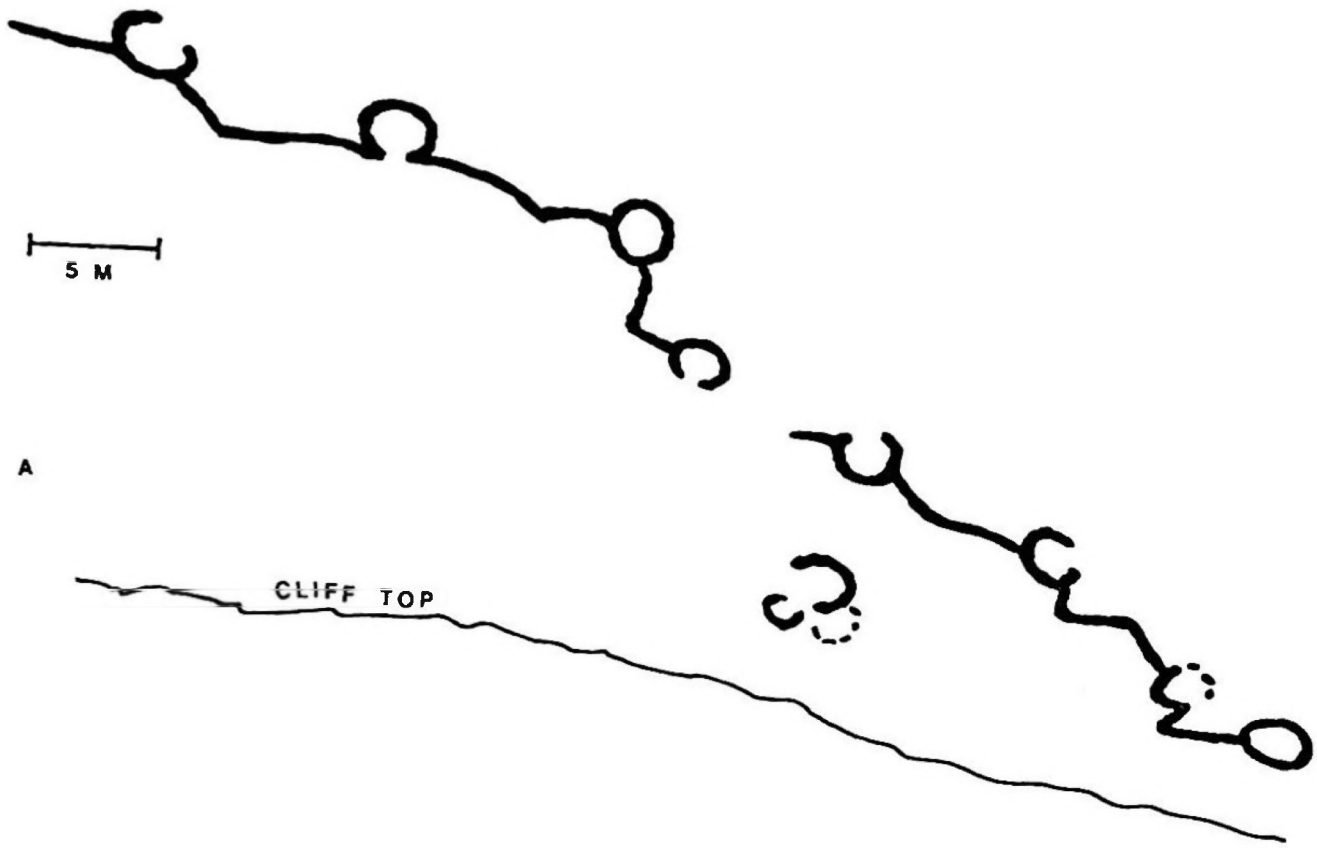
TABLE I

Numbers of shieling huts in five zones in the Isle of Rum.

	Kilmory	*Kinloch*	*Papadil*	*Harris*	*Guirdil*	*Rum*
Cellular huts	28	0	6	18	52	104
Chambered huts	44	1	16	72	35	168
Rectangular huts	17	0	10	34	27	88
Category uncertain	14	0	3	0	0	17
Total no. of huts	103	1	35	124	114	377
Area of zone (sq. km.)	28	18	16	33	17	112
Density of huts (no. per sq. km.)	3.7	0.05	2.2	3.8	6.7	3.4
No. of shieling grounds	26	1	10	41	21	99
Average group size	4.0	1.0	3.5	3.0	5.5	3.8
Average altitude of groups (in metres)	99	67	93	191	233	163

(i) Cells. These are constructed almost entirely of stone slabs partly overlapping one another towards the roof (Plates II & III). Thus the walls are gradually closed in to form an almost conical, beehive structure—a technique known as 'corbelling'. Some huts are so crudely built that they must surely have had the gaps plugged with turf, or have been entirely covered with sods. All but one (Plate II) have now collapsed inwards so that it is difficult to determine the interior height of a cell. The tallest is 2 metres high inside but most are less than this, the walls surviving to an average height of about 1 metre. In ground plan the cells are either circular (60 per cent) or oval with an average internal diameter of 2 metres (range 1–4.5 metres). Amongst the better-preserved examples some 65 per cent are 2–3 metres in diameter and a further 26 per cent appear to be only 1–2 metres across: no more than 9 per cent exceeded 3 metres. Small cells are commonly either attached to, or lie adjacent to, chambers and rectangles, but these will be discussed along with the chambered huts. Only those apparently functioning as separate shieling huts, either alone or in groups, are included in this section.

In all, 104 cellular shielings have been identified, 28 per cent of all shieling huts found on Rum: half of these are located in the Guirdil zone. Indeed 46 per cent of all the huts found in this zone are the cellular type. They tend to be in a better state of preservation and larger (on average 2 metres internal diameter) than those elsewhere on Rum. The preponderance of such a hut design in Guirdil may be related to the high altitude of grazings. The exposure to wind may have necessitated robust buildings of stone: many are partially sunk into the ground, presumably for further protection. A number of these huts have been constructed below the eastern scree slopes of Sron an t-Saighdeir where stone abounds. Many of the cells are joined to one another by dry-stane dykes and thus effectively enclose the rich pastures of Airigh na Maith-innse. The steep slopes of Bloodstone Hill forms the northern boundary to this plateau. The point of access to Glen Guirdil is 'guarded' by another, though more



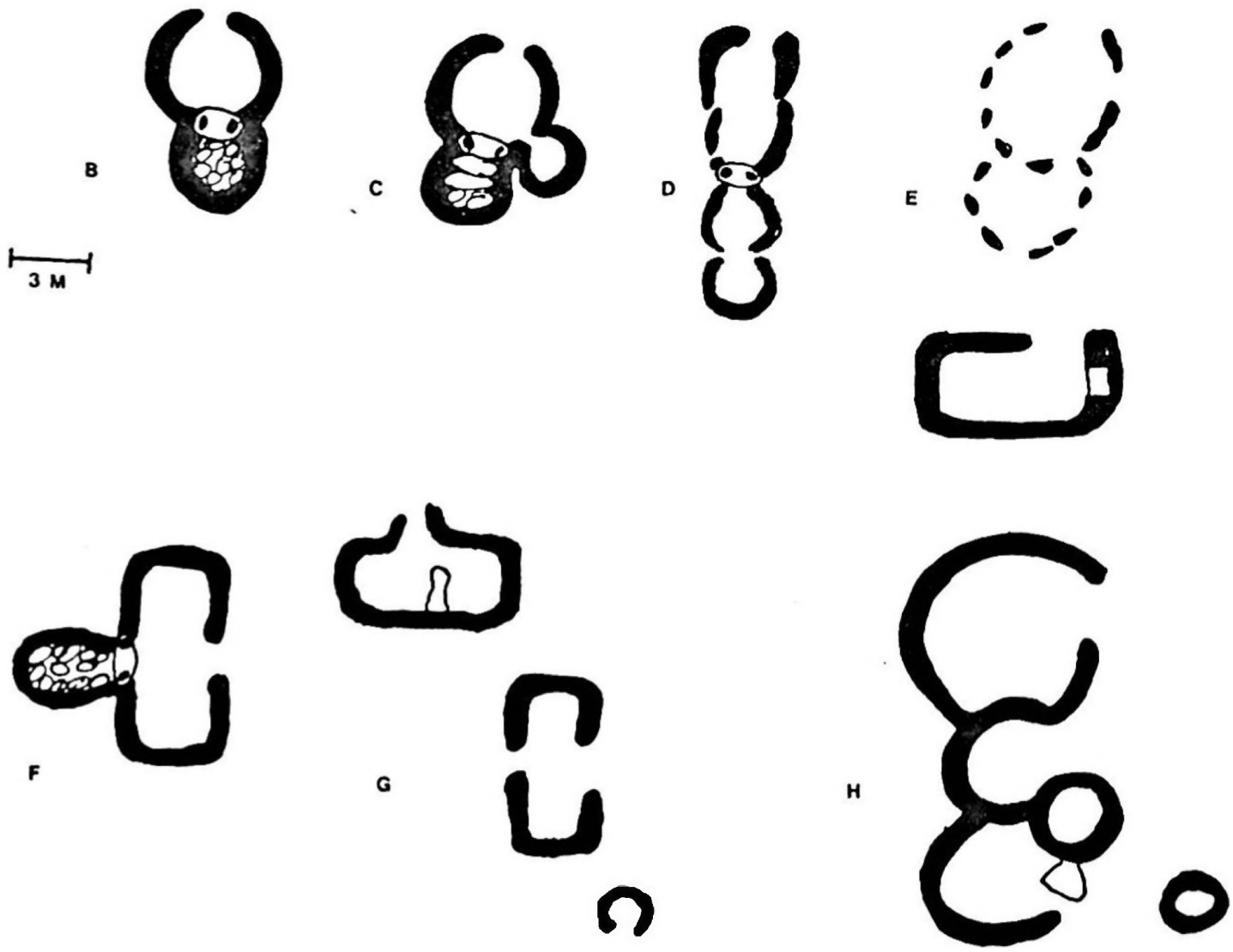


Fig. 9 Diagrammatic plans of some shieling huts found in Rum. (See notes on opposite page).

scattered, group of huts and dykes at Bealach an Dubh-bhraighe. To the west and south are sheer cliffs, but it would have been possible for stock to break out along the cliff top at Wreck Bay: here lies another group of cells and dykes (fig. 9a; Plate III), well preserved although in a very exposed and windswept position. It has been suggested by Miller (1967: 212) that these complex structures may have functioned as a trap for stampeding deer over the cliff, but on the whole this seems unlikely (Love 1980b: 131–132). There seems little need to regard them as other than shieling huts placed strategically near to patches of good grazing and to a source of building materials. They may however be of considerable antiquity, perhaps replaced by other shieling huts built at a later date (when the climate is known to have been deteriorating) in more sheltered hollows nearby.

Because of their more ruinous state few cells (18 per cent) reveal the position of their entrance: only one retains a lintel stone. Another near Fiachanis has a small window built into its back wall: this hut (NM 350945) is a flimsy construction and seems to be of a comparatively late date. One cell displays a small recess or shelf built into an inside wall.

(ii) Chambers. 168 have been identified and are by far the most common type of shieling hut on Rum—44% per cent of all those on the island. They occur in a variety of forms and sizes. A few of the smaller ones overlap in design with cellular huts and others with rectangular ones.

The basic unit is a low circular or oval wall of stone, the smallest not exceeding 1 metre in maximum internal diameter (Plate IV). No obvious roofing slabs lie within: it is probable that the structure was completed with a framework of timber overlaid with turf. The chambered huts range from 1–5 metres across inside: 72 per cent are 3–4 metres. Some of the larger constructions may have served as enclosures rather than dwellings and so never supported a roof.

62 chambered huts (37 per cent) have no other associated structure. 79 (47 per cent) have one small cell attached and 14 (8 per cent) have two cells. In 8 (5 per cent) the

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Notes to fig. 9 (opposite)

A Line of 8 cells joined by dykes on the cliff top at Sgorr Reidh (NM312983) with a ruined chamber and cell within, (possibly a deer trap but see text).
B Typical chambered hut with attached cell (and lintelled door) on the west slope of Kilmory Glen (NG361025).
C Chambered hut with two attached cells (and one lintelled door) at Creag na h-Iolaire (NG410024).
D Chambered (?) hut with two small attached cells in Lag Sleitir (NM351973).
E Demolished chambered hut with attached cell lying near typical rectangular hut (with wall recess) near Malcolm's Bridge (NM359998).
F Typical rectangular hut with lintelled door leading to an attached oval sleeping cell (both mounded) at Laundry Lochans (NG355032).
G Two rectangular huts, one (mounded) with *forsglan* and *crupach* and the other with two opposite doors and a detached cell, at Lag Sleitir (NM351973).
H Ruins on the shore of Samhnan Insir (NG383044) interpreted as 'fishermen's bothies'.

cell is detached but lies nearby, whilst one has two such detached cells. The remaining 5 (3 per cent) are complex: one is a chamber with four associated chambers, two others both consist of two chambers with one detached cell, and a further two are also both double with three attached cells (Plate V).

The construction of these small, associated cells is similar to the cellular shieling huts described above. They were built almost entirely of corbelled stone, perhaps ultimately covered in turf. Their internal diameter ranges from 1–3 metres though three-quarters of them do not exceed 2 metres. Two of the cells attached to chambered huts retain a complete roof of stone (Plate VI); the rest have now collapsed. In 18 per cent of the chambered huts the doorway leading to the cell retains a lintel stone: in each case, the doorway barely exceeds 0.5 metre square but is sufficient to admit a small adult or youngster. If a second cell is present this tends to be circular rather than oval, and is smaller in diameter, as were most of the detached cells. These doubtless served for storing dairy utensils and produce. Four of the chambered shielings possess recesses in the walls and two others have two such recesses.

(iii) Rectangles. All 88 found in Rum are basically rectangular in plan (Plate VII): the walls are thicker and more substantial than those of chambered shielings—sometimes 0.7 metre or more thick and up to 1.3 metres in height. More than half the number of ruins have obvious doorways: a fifth of them each have two doorways. Five huts have recesses built into the wall. The internal dimensions vary from only 1.3 by 1 metre, to 5 by 3 metres. Most however measure some 3–4 metres by 2 metres.

45 rectangles (50 per cent) have no associated structures. Amongst the remainder, 20 huts have a single attached cell, 7 two attached cells, and only one hut has 3 cells. 13 others have a detached cell nearby, one has two such cells and another has both an attached and a detached cell. In 13 huts with attached cells the lintel stone survives to reveal a doorway (into the attached cell) measuring only 0.5 metre square, as in the case of the chambered huts. The maximum diameter of these associated cells varies from 1 to 3 meters: about 60 per cent are oval in plan. Detached cells are smaller (1.5 metres) and 95 per cent of them are circular.

A distinctive feature of many rectangular huts is a line of kerb stones within, demarcating about half of the floor space which when filled with heather would function as a bed (*crupach*).

Discussion

Whilst it is possible to state with confidence that none of the shielings on Rum functioned beyond 1828, it is impossible to say when the huts were first constructed. The cellular design is obviously an ancient one, being employed by Celtic monks in

the sixth century, and most probably modelled on earlier prehistoric structures. Some of the chambered huts on Rum seem to be constructed from several circular cells enlarged into one. In these cases the internal diameter would make corbelling impractical so that turf and timber roofs would be required. Carmichael (1884: 451–482) noted how in the Outer Hebrides the men would depart each spring to the shielings carrying 'sticks, heather, ropes, spades and other things needed to repair their summer huts' for the women and children.

It may be that on Rum the corbelled cell was retained in exposed situations such as Guirdil where several remain in good repair. The larger and roomier chambered huts were by this time common, with the most recent development being towards a rectangular one, like a small cottage. But the rectangular could not have entirely superseded the chambered however, and an elementary chronology is suggested by the degree of mounding present underneath shieling huts. Few of the cellular structures are mounded, but about one quarter of the chambered ones are, and nearly half of the rectangular ones (fig. 10). Macsween and Gailey (1961: 77–84) have excavated one such mound under a shieling hut on Skye and found the remains of at least three older structures beneath.

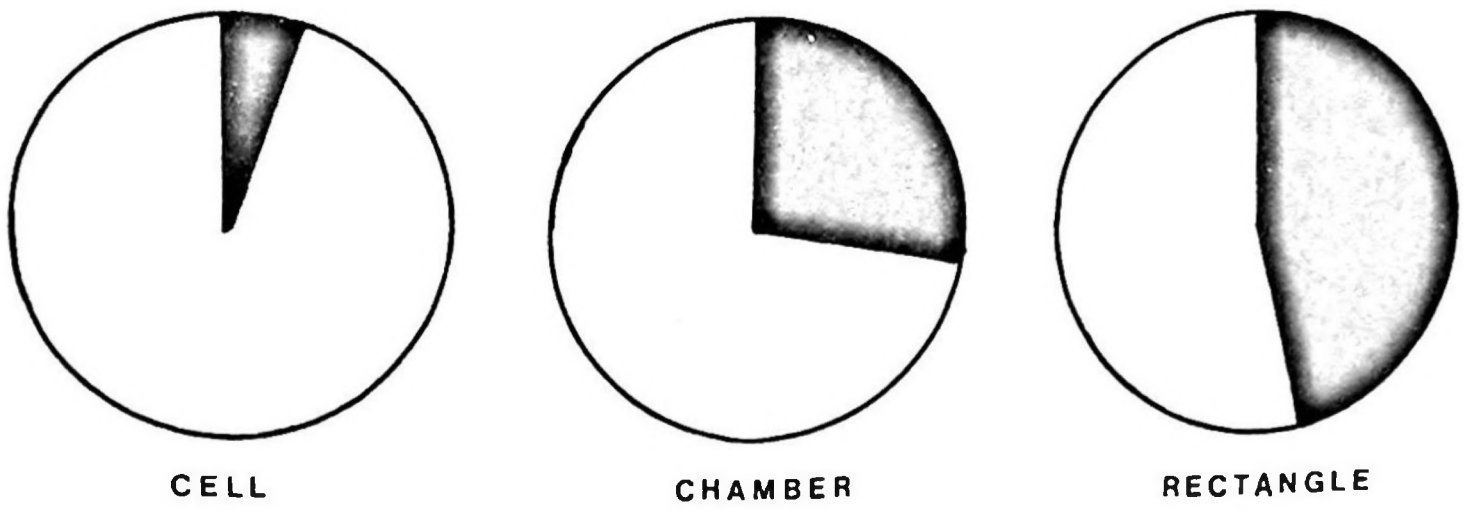

Fig. 10 Frequency of 'mounding' in each of the three types of shieling huts.

Several rectangular huts have no mounding, and they may be of fairly late construction: one might postulate that on Rum as the population increased towards the end of the eighteenth century, a demand was created for additional shieling grounds. Some of the unmounded rectangular huts are in remote and more marginal areas which hitherto may have been considered unattractive as pasture. Also as the population increased several shieling grounds may have been required for permanent settlement: it is likely that the remote blackhouses at Tigh Bhralie, perhaps Camas Pliascaig and Bagh na h-Uamha, possibly also Dibidil and Glen Shellesder, became permanently occupied thus. Two large huts approaching blackhouse dimensions are to be found near the track on Stable Flats (NM 354997) and may latterly have been permanent

dwellings. Together with two or three houses in Kilmory Glen, these are the only non-coastal permanent habitations in the whole of Rum.

There have been several descriptions of shielings huts published in recent years, and we also have earlier eye-witness accounts of occupied shielings in the Hebrides: both can aid us in the interpretation of the Rum structures. In the last century Carmichael distinguished stone-built shieling huts (*both cloiche*) and turf ones (*both cheap*) (1884: 451–482); while Thomas described an assortment of such structures in detail. For example, one had walls which were very rudely built enclosing a square chamber measuring 3 metres by 2 metres and roofed with timber. Attached to one side was a circular stone-roofed building about one metre broad and 0.5 metre high, long enough for a man to lie in. 'Into this strange hole, the person who would sleep gets in "feet foremost", sometimes by the help of a rope from above, his head lying at the mouth of the hole.' The doorway was hardly more than 0.3 metre square (Thomas 1857–60: 127–144).

In 1772 Thomas Pennant visited some shieling huts on the Isle of Jura, an island physiographically similiar to Rum. The huts

> formed a grotesque group; some oblong, many conic, and so low that entrance is forbidden without creeping through the little opening, which has no other door than a faggot of birch twigs, placed there occasionally: They are constructed of branches of trees, covered with sods; the furniture is a bed of heath, placed on a bank of sod; two blankets and a rug; some dairy vessels; and above, certain pendant shelves, made of basket work, to hold the cheese, the produce of the summer.

Several accounts advocate how idyllic shieling life could be, the only holiday which the people could afford. Indeed on fine summer days it may well have been enjoyable, but just as often in the west Highlands it can be cold, wet and miserable. Also, prior to the '45 Rebellion, clan feuds were commonplace. The remote shielings to which the women and children repaired in the summer, doubtless provided some refuge from raiders. Some of the shieling groups on Rum are remarkably well concealed, especially if they had once been covered with fresh turf. Others are in secure positions, such as those built between the huge boulder blocks on the slopes of Barkeval (Plate I). One or two are conveniently close to natural caves in boulder fields and the groups around An Dornabac are within easy reach of a cliff-girt prominence: the simple access route to this refuge is defended by a dry-stone wall, which would appear to be of comparatively late construction.

But despite potential dangers and discomfort the annual migration to the shieling grounds was an integral part of a way of life now long past. Carmichael (1884: 451–482) remarked how the people would speak with nostalgia of the benefit they derived in mind, body and substance from their life in the hills.

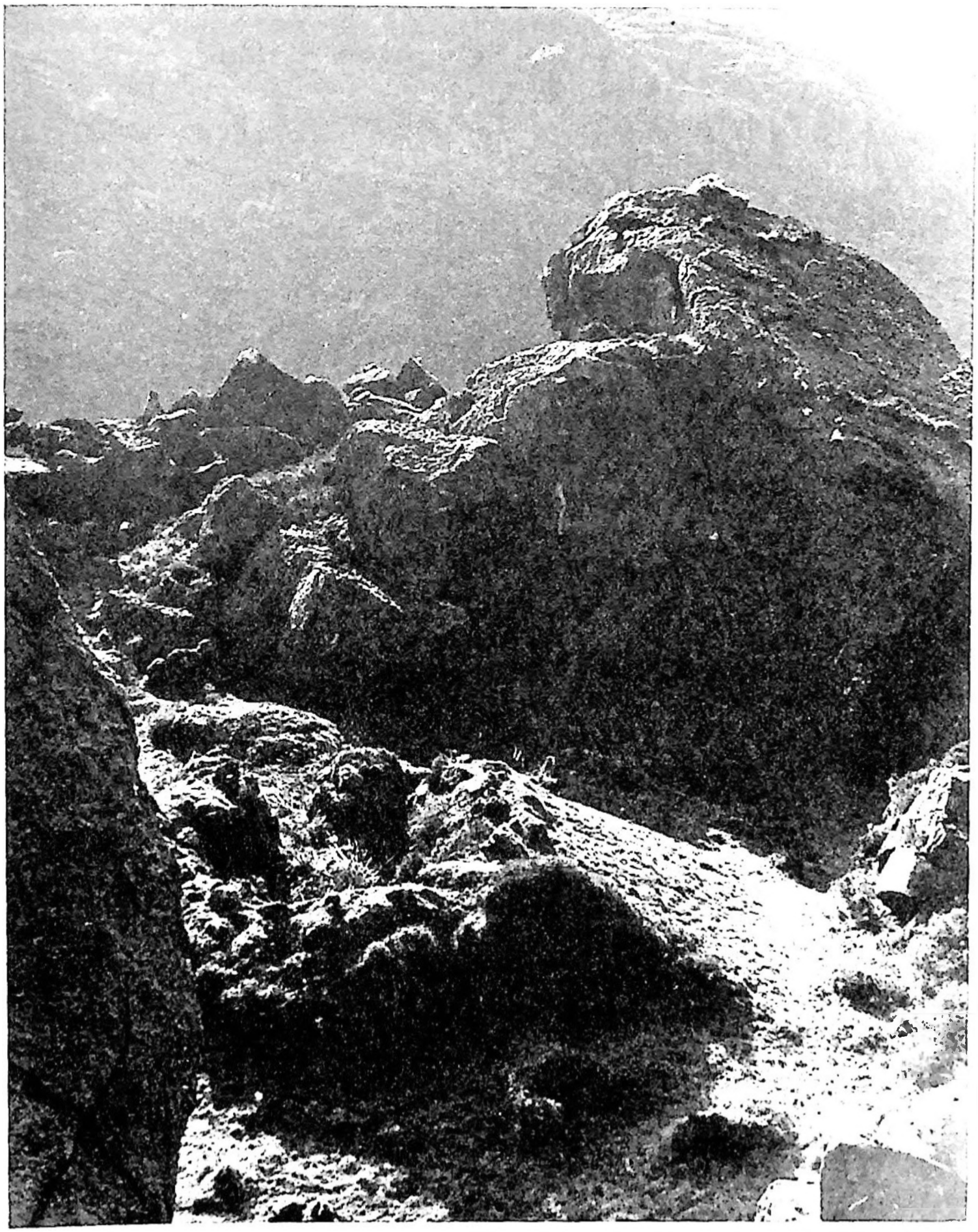

Plate I 'Mounded' rectangular hut, evidently sited on the remains of successive turf-walled structures. It lies amongst huge boulder blocks at an altitude of 250 metres on the south slope of Barkeval (NM 375967). There is a small cave in the shadow to the right of the ruin.
[All photographs, except that for Plate VI, were taken by the author in 1980].

Plate II Complete corbelled cell above Kinloch (NG 407005).

Plate III Cellular hut (collapsed) built into dyke at Sgorr Reidh (NM 312983). See fig. 9A.

Plate IV Well preserved chambered hut with tiny lintelled door leading to a collapsed cell, Kilmory Glen (NG 361025). Illustrated in fig. 9B.

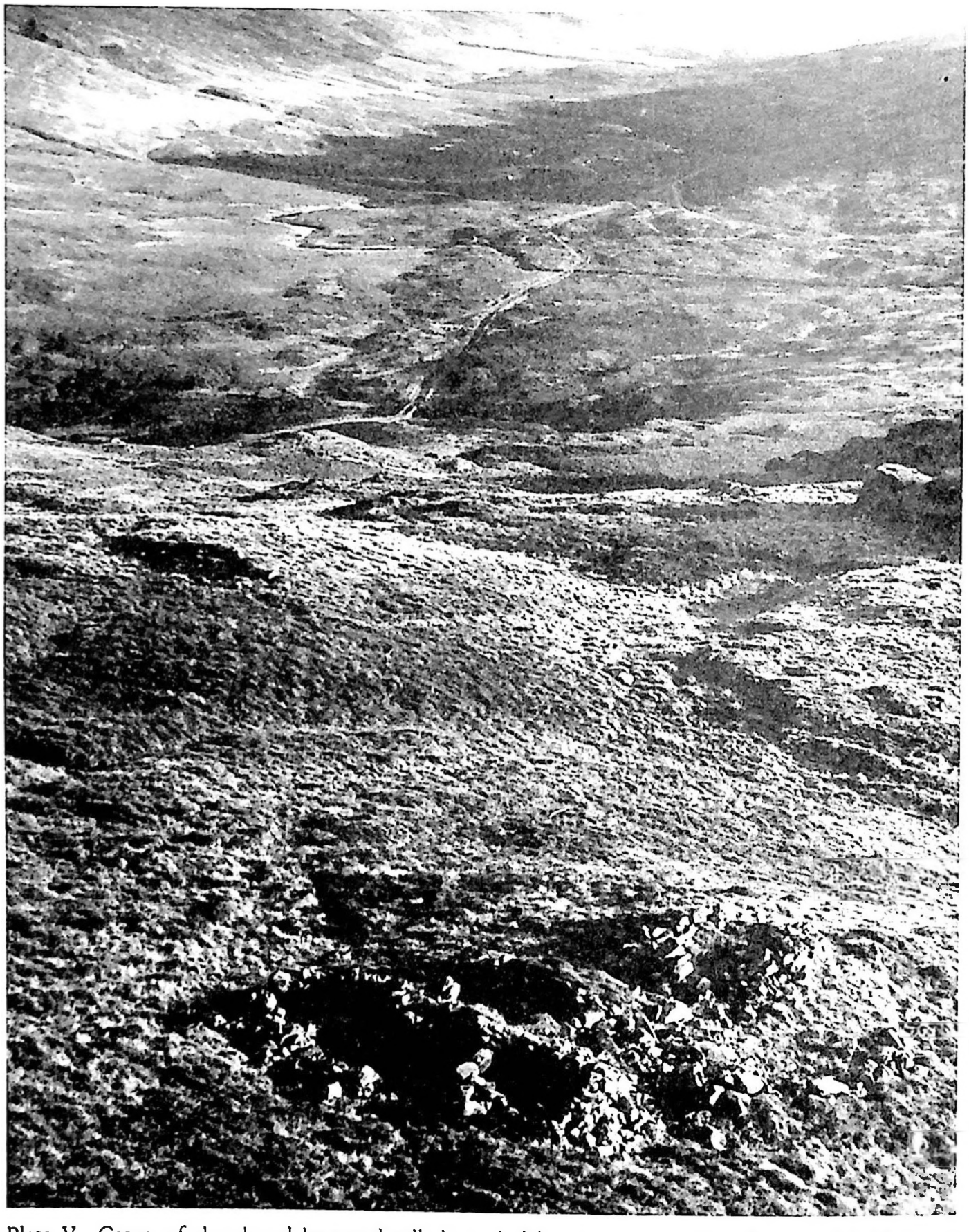

Plate V Group of chambered huts and cells in typical location near a scree slope on Minishal and overlooking Kinloch Glen (NG 356004).

Plate VI Unusual chambered hut with attached cell completely roofed, one of a line of huts above Harris beside Loch Monica (NM 333966).
[Photograph by R. T. Sutton, 1980].

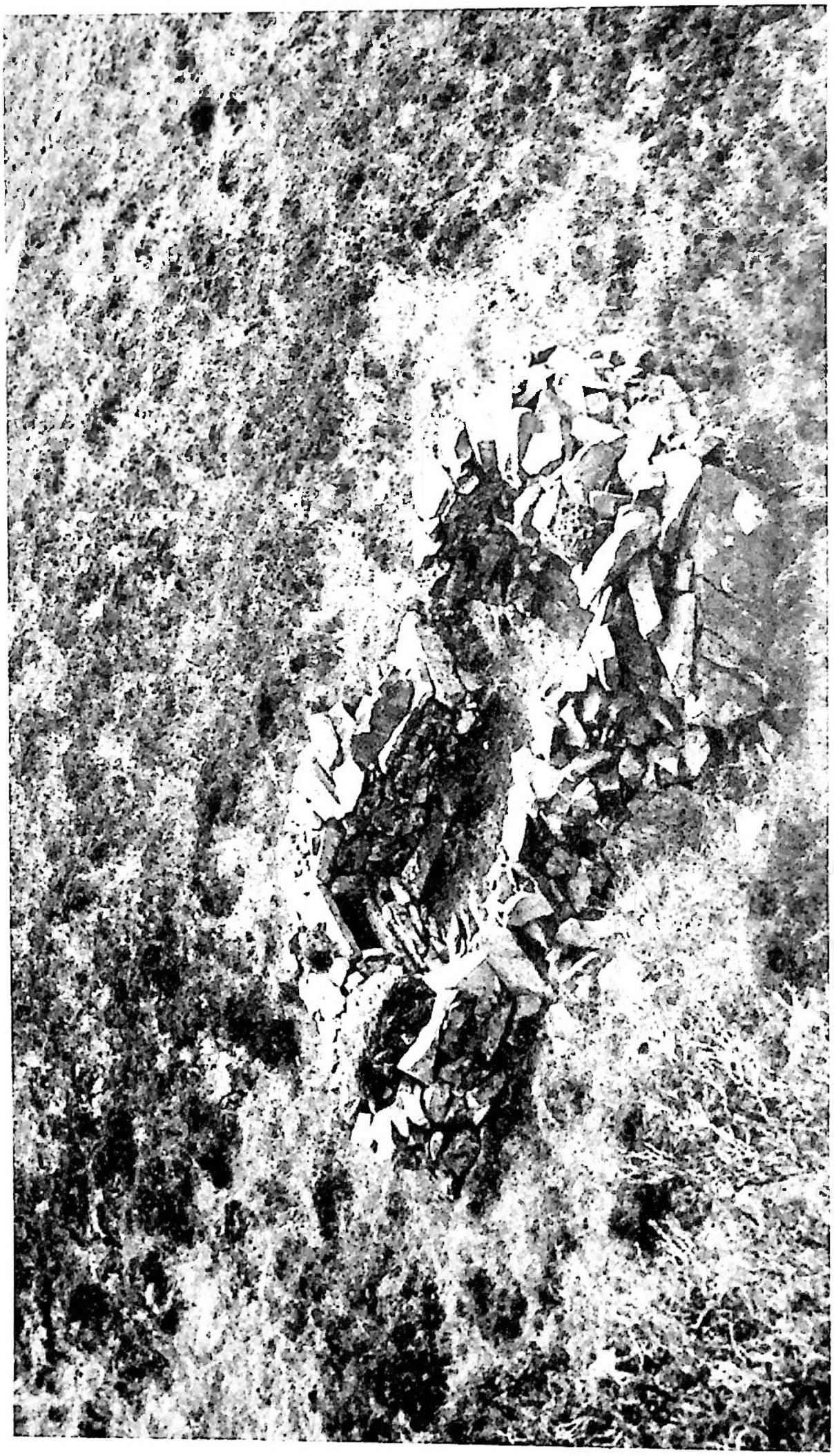

Plate VII Good example of rectangular hut (with wall recess) built of sandstone slabs, between Papadil and Dibidil (NM 379433).

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I am grateful to the Honourable Fiona Guinness, Callan Duck and R. T. Sutton for indicating to me shielings of which I was not aware, and to R. T. Sutton also for the photograph for Plate VI. M. E. Ball kindly read and commented upon the manuscript.

NOTES

1 Important discussions of shielings in Scotland will be found in Alexander Fenton's book, *Scottish Country Life* (Edinburgh 1976), chapter 7: 'The Shieling', pp. 124–43, with select bibliography; and in the same author's section of the volume *The Making of the Scottish Countryside*, edd. M. L. Parry, and T. R. Slater (London and Montreal 1980), chapter 4: 'The Traditional Pastoral Economy', pp. 93–113, with detailed references to sources.

For Norway a recent survey in English is that of Dr Anne-Berit Ø. Borchgrevinck, 'The *Seter* areas of rural Norway—a traditional multi-purpose resource', in *Northern Studies* 9 (1977), 3–24. In two subsequent issues of the same journal Dr Borchgrevinck has published an illustrated account of 'The houses of the Norwegian *Seters*: an analysis of local type-varations', *Northern Studies* 16 (1980), pp. 53–69, and 17 (1981), pp. 9–26. This journal, published by the Scottish Society for Northern Studies, is available from 27 George Square, Edinburgh, EH8 9LD. [Edd.]

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