

# CAIRNS, NEOLITHIC HOUSES AND BURNT MOUNDS IN SHETLAND

by CHARLES S. T. CALDER, A.R.I.A.S., F.S.A. SCOT.

## INTRODUCTION

THE Royal Commission *Inventory for the County of Shetland* was published in 1946. The following report on field-work since that date describes the excavation of a number of cairns and a neolithic house, records sites unnoted either in the *Inventory* or on the O.S. maps, reclassifies a further number of sites already known but hitherto wrongly described and includes corrected lists of all known cairns and burnt mounds in Shetland.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to acknowledge with thanks my indebtedness to my esteemed friend the late Laurence G. Scott and family for notification of most of the new sites described below which, but for their keen interest, kindness and assistance, would otherwise have escaped record: to Mr James Young and Mr Peter Moar for notifying me of the sites of Punds Water and Grista respectively: to Brigadier the Hon. W. Fraser and to Mr John Copland for permission to excavate at their sites: to our Society for a grant to cover the cost of excavation and the Royal Commission on the Ancient Monuments of Scotland for time off to supervise the operations: to Miss Audrey S. Henshall for her contributions on the finds.

I wish also to thank Miss Dorothy Dudley, M.A., F.S.A., for drawing my attention to the cairn at Nor' Nour, for permission to mention her discovery, and to make use of a copy of her interim drawing to allow comparison between Nor' Nour and Punds Water.

## PART I: THE CAIRNS<sup>1</sup>

### 1. *March Cairn, Esha Ness, Northmaven*

Prior to excavation in 1949 the state of this cairn was reported in the *Inventory*.<sup>2</sup> It was then an imposing landmark on the stony summit of the rising ground of the Hamars to the east of the Loch of Houlland (fig. 1). Although almost square on plan (fig. 2) the cairn is clearly an example derived from the heel-shaped variety in having a cruciform chamber and a frontage on the north-east, distinguished by upright corner stones which are features characteristic of the class (Pl. VI, 1). In this instance the upright boulders measure 4 ft. 9 in. and 3 ft. 7 in. in full height at the E. and W. ends respectively and the eastern has apparently slipped from an original position as shown at C<sub>1</sub> to C<sub>2</sub> on the plan while the two neighbouring face-stones,

<sup>1</sup> In the map references throughout the code letters HU or 41 are omitted.

<sup>2</sup> R.C.A.M., *Inventory of Shetland*, 94, article 1362, fig. 605, Pl. 32 and fig. 614.

D, had also become dislodged from their former alignment as marked by the heavy dotted lines. The cairn had been encased by large boulders, now reduced on each side to a foundation course and the rear corners were rounded. This casing enclosed a core of large stones reaching to a present height of  $5\frac{1}{2}$  ft. in the centre and the over all plan dimension was approximately  $33\frac{1}{2}$  ft. each way. The chamber (Pl. VI, 2) is built in the eastern half of the structure and, contrary to the usual practice, the entrance-passage is also located on the E. side and not in the middle of the frontage where normally expected. This deviation from type was probably brought about with the intention to conceal the true position of the opening from unauthorised persons or chance marauders. The point to mislead is not an isolated case since

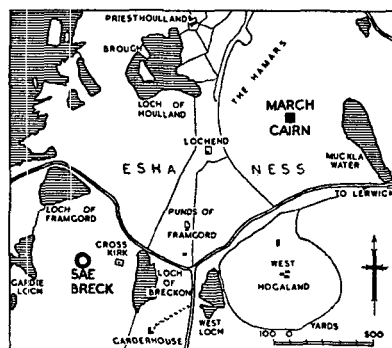


FIG. 1. March Cairn: site map

other tombs with false entrances have been recorded as, for instance, at Belas Knap<sup>1</sup> and in Shetland itself at Vementry where the entrance was hidden by the frontal platform.<sup>2</sup> Also in support of this idea the sill-stone, which is unusually large for the size of the opening, is well-embedded at both ends to form part of the actual facework. It measures 7 ft. long by 2 ft. square in greatest section and the passage is 7 ft. 3 in. in length by an average of 2 ft. 8 in. in width. Each rear jamb of the latter finishes in an upright boulder which also does duty as a corner-stone of each lateral recess of the chamber. Corresponding stones formed the junction between the lateral and terminal recesses but the southmost of the pair, lettered A on the plan, is missing. The recesses are angled and each is backed the full width by a very large flat-faced boulder on which still rests a course of masonry; the sides are rubble-built and the walling in each rises to a present height of  $3\frac{1}{2}$  ft. above the bottom which is, in part, a level bed of natural rock. All the recesses are fully 4 ft. in width, the side ones being just over 3 ft. each in depth and the end one  $4\frac{1}{2}$  ft. The floor of the chamber and passage consists of a paving of thin slabs raised from  $1\frac{1}{2}$  to about 2 ft. above the actual bottom and runs in a slight hollow from the sill-level of the doorway to the inner end as best seen in the sectional drawings (fig. 2). The paving was borne on a footing of stones around the sides of the recesses but rested on a more compact packing of rubble in the central portion of the chamber and in the passage.

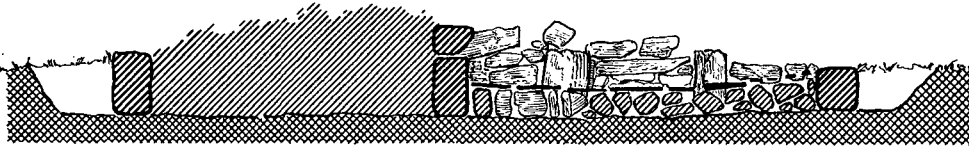
<sup>1</sup> Clark, Grahame, *Prehistoric England*, 4th edn., 91-92 and Pl. 83.

<sup>2</sup> *Inventory of Shetland*, 115, fig. 625, section A-B.

MARCH CAIRN, ESHANESS, SHETLAND.



SECTION C-D



SECTION A-B

C<sub>1</sub> FORMER POSITION OF CORNER  
 C<sub>2</sub> PRESENT POSITION  
 D = DISLODGED STONE  
 F = FALLEN STONE

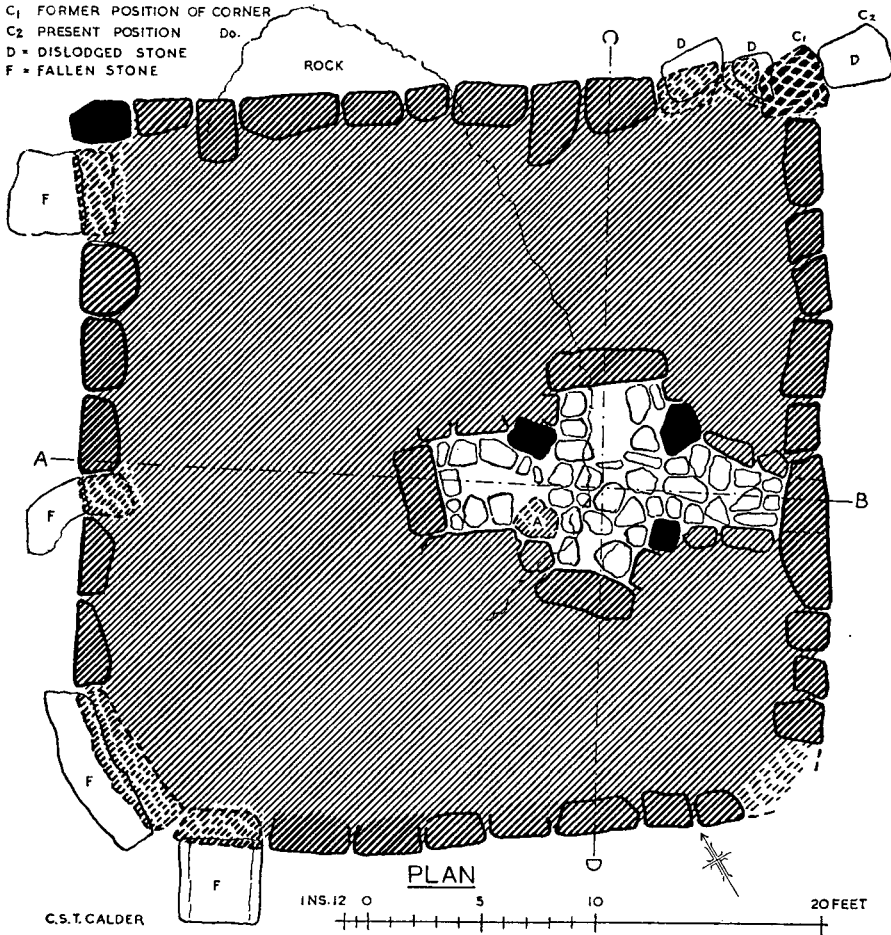


FIG. 2. March Cairn: plan and sections

Relics were few and consisted of two very small fragments of red-coloured pottery; two circular discs of phyllite, diameter *c.* 0.75 in., thickness 0.2 in. one side flat and the other bevelled round the edge; a piece of bone and three chips of quartz. It may be suggested that the discs were gaming pieces or perhaps cores for skin or cloth-covered buttons.

When the site was first surveyed the cairn was the only one of square shape known in Shetland but, since then, three others have been noted, one at Grista, described below (p. 50), another on the Holm of Melby<sup>1</sup> and a third at Pettigarths Field in Whalsay.<sup>2</sup>

221789 unnoted

## 2. Cairn, Punds Water, Mangaster, Northmaven

Two cairns are situated fully half-a-mile to the NW. of the croft of Mangaster (fig. 3). No. I lies on the slopes above the S. shore of the loch of Punds Water and is already described in the *Inventory*.<sup>3</sup> No. II some 300 yds. to the NW. of above rests on the summit, about midway across the neck, of a small promontory that juts into the SW. side of the loch and the site has not been previously noted. When it was excavated in 1959 it was found to be of a kind so far unknown in Shetland but externally a remote connection to the heel-shaped cairns was demonstrated in the retention of a short depressed and presumably degenerate frontal concavity with a horn abruptly projecting from each end. Internally, however, there is a vast difference in the plans of the chambers, the small typical cruciform design of the true heel-shaped order being replaced by a much roomier space off which opens a series of five contiguous wall-recesses, each provided with a raised bench. This interior arrangement recalls the somewhat similar formation of benched recesses in the chambers of two cairns in Orkney, one at Huntersquoy, Eday,<sup>4</sup> and the other on the Calf of Eday.<sup>5</sup> The resemblance of these details between them and Cairn No. II suggest all belong to the same category and that their erection was taking place in Orkney and Shetland at the same time. Also it would imply the first definite stage of contact between these Islands and it should be observed, too, that shelved or benched recesses are particular features of some of the stalled cairns of Orkney. That there is as well a strong affiliation between this Punds Water type of cairn and the houses of Shetland seems obvious by the provision in each case of such recesses but in the houses which so far have been excavated none of the recesses has been furnished with a shelf or a bench. Externally, however, the cairn is circular on plan and in dilapidation the structure has assumed the shape of a mound while the houses in general are oval on plan and their walling has tumbled to form a bank of debris surrounding a hollowed central space.

Around the remains of the cairn being dealt with the growth of peat had attained a height of  $3\frac{1}{2}$  ft. above the original surface of the ground and it had spread over the

<sup>1</sup> Henshall, A. S., *Chambered Tombs of Scotland*, 1, 164, paras. 19 and 165, fig. 5.

<sup>2</sup> *Inventory of Shetland*, 86, article 1321 and *P.S.A.S.*, xciv (1960-1), 38, fig. 6.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*, 96, article 1367.

<sup>4</sup> *Inventory of Orkney*, 56, article 217 and figs. 105-7.

<sup>5</sup> *ibid.*, 70, article 247 and fig. 126.

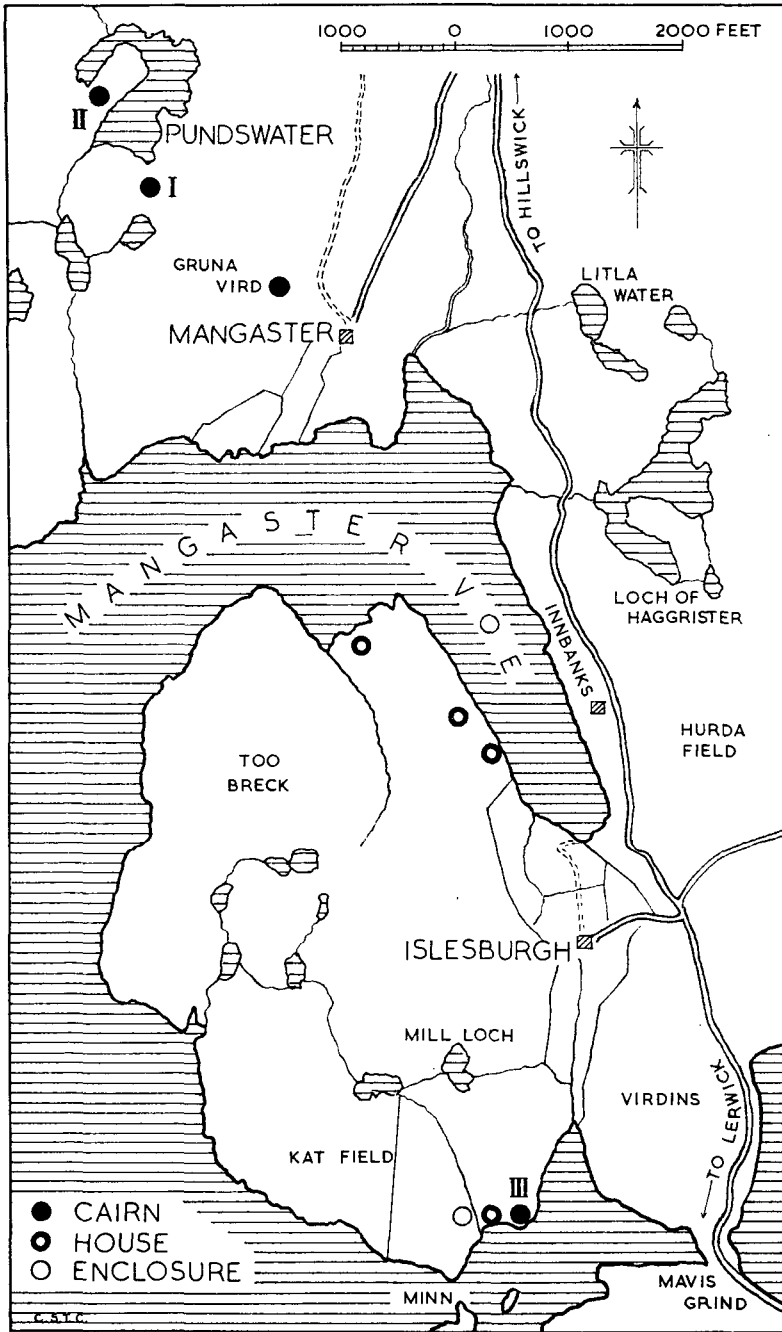


FIG. 3. Punds Water and Islesburgh: site map, with excavated sites shown in Roman numerals

broken-down wall-heads to form only a slight mound hardly perceptible in a covering of heather. The tips of two earthfast boulders, which turned out to be the front and rear jambs of the W. side of an entrance-passage, and a rickle of building-stones in the middle of the mound were the only indications of structure. Partial disintegration and demolition had probably been accelerated by the robbing of the masonry to help build a strong dyke, across the promontory a short distance to the E., which itself was now much torn down and in places entirely hidden by overgrowing vegetation. With the exception of part of the outer face where it is inferred by a dotted line on the plan the excavation completely exposed what was left of the building (fig. 4). The body, now reduced to its lower one or two courses of rubble masonry on the outside, was subcircular on plan with an average diameter of  $33\frac{1}{2}$  ft. but on the SE. arc, however, the outline of the construction was depressed in the formation of the concave and horned frontage (Pl. VII, 2) from the middle of which the entrance-passage led into a good-sized chamber. The concave portion was distinctive from the rest of the facework in being built of large boulders, two on the N. side of the entrance and three on the other and it measured  $11\frac{1}{2}$  ft. between the horns which had jutted out from the face in an obtuse angle of  $117^\circ$ . Such an angle tends towards a funnel-shaped appearance of the forecourt rather than one of the common circular or semicircular pattern where the horns extend smoothly on the sweep of the curve of the frontal arc. The S. horn was destroyed but certainly indicated by a rough tusing in a break of the otherwise regular masonry; the N. one was well-defined as a wall still projecting 3 ft. 4 in. to its broken end and it appeared to be bonded, not just butted, into the main walling. Its inner face was determined by two fairly large boulders in proper alignment but its outer face was torn and ragged so that a true thickness could not be ascertained though a size of 4 ft. looked probable.

A narrow strip in front of the facial concavity was laid with paving-stones as also was the entrance-passage, which measured 7 ft. 9 in. in length and 2 ft. in width, and was lined with boulders and rubble masonry but no lintels had survived. The chamber has an irregularly shaped central space, 14 ft. in length and from 8 to 10 ft. in width, off which, as already mentioned, are the recesses, two on each side and one at the inner end. These are numbered from 1 to 5 on the plan and are separated by radial partitions finished in front by large stones in the masonry (Pls. VII, 1 and VIII, 1-4). In the partition between Nos. 2 and 3 part of a broken trough quern has been re-used as a building stone. The smallest recess, No. 3, and the largest, No. 4, measure extremely 4 ft. 2 in. by 3 ft. 8 in. and 7 ft. by 7 ft. 8 in. in length and width respectively and the masonry in No. 3, the highest, still stands to a height of about  $3\frac{1}{2}$  ft. above the floor-level. In front of Nos. 1, 2 and 3 there is a suggestion of a rough kerb which at No. 4 is of definite occurrence (Pl. VIII, 2), but at No. 5 there is no trace of such a feature. The bench in each recess was formed by a packing of earth and stones behind a frontal revetment of boulders and, as in all other examples of benched tombs would be used as a bier on which the bodies of the dead would be reverently placed. The benches rose from 12 to 14 in. above the floor except in No. 3 recess where the stepping-up was only a matter of 4 or 5 in.

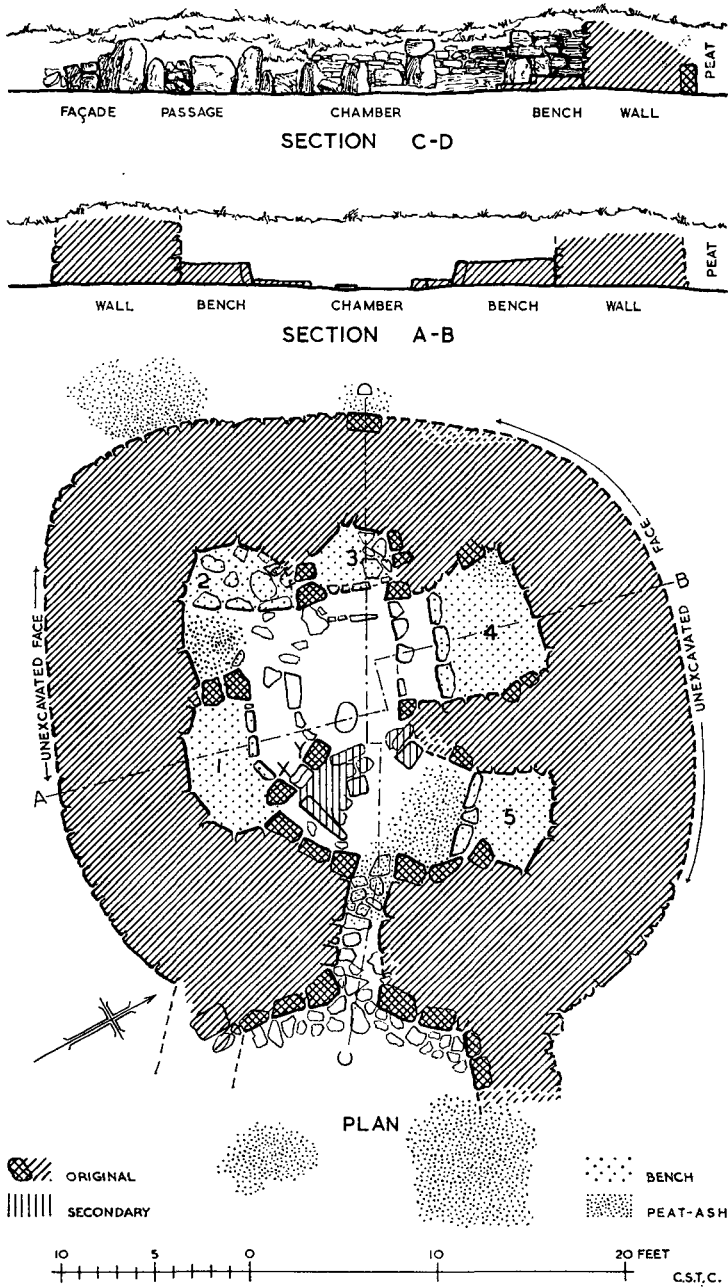


FIG. 4. Punds Water Cairn No. II: plan and sections

In the latter and in No. 2 the bench-tops were still partly paved and here and there on the earthen floor of the chamber a few flat stones had the appearance of loose paving while near the middle, an oval water-worn stone, about 1 ft. 9 in. by 1 ft. in size and the only one of its kind in the building, seems to have been carefully laid on the floor but for some purpose unknown. A large thin slab which may have been a fallen lintel leaned against the inner wall-face between the passage and No. 1 recess and from it to the radial between Nos. 4 and 5 a loosely-constructed secondary piece of walling with a gap in it divided the chamber into two parts. Two aligned uprights, marked X and Y on plan, appear doubtfully in the original setting but could quite possibly have been stones re-used in the building of the secondary cross-partition.

Layers of peat-ash were noted at points both inside and outside of the tomb and those inside, up to 3 in. in thickness, lay on the original floor. One spread in No. 2 recess covered a small saucer-shaped scoop probably used as a hearth; another in front of No. 5 extended into the rear half of the passage and there was also a small patch in the inner corner of No. 4. Two heaps, 4 to 5 in. in thickness, lay a short distance in front of the building at a level slightly higher than the original surface and with another two, higher and thicker still against the outer face at the back, were seemingly later deposits.

Some broken pot-sherds, including rim, wall and steatitic pieces, were recovered

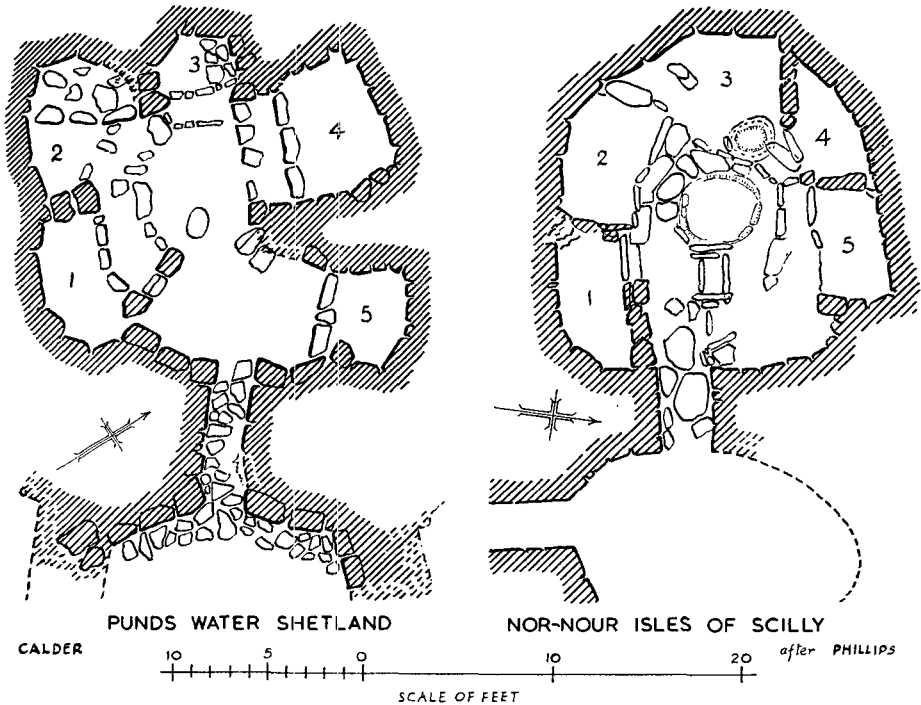


Fig. 5. Punds Water and Nor' Nour Cairns: comparative plans



from the ash inside and from the front patches, and a few lumps of pumice, some smoothed and grooved by use, were picked up during the operations. Fragments of pottery which came from a point low down in the packing of the bench in the far corner of No. 1 recess were evidently original. At various levels in the debris around and inside the cairn a number of rude stone implements of typical pattern and fabrication were collected. The best-preserved examples of these together with all the pottery were handed over to the National Museum of Antiquities of Scotland (see Appendix).

Since the excavation of the cairn, two others obviously belonging to the same class have been noted and surveyed and these are described hereinafter under heading Nos. 4 and 5 respectively at Sulma Water and Gravlaba on the mainland of Shetland. There is little doubt but that many of the cairns tersely described as sites in the *Inventory* are also members of the group but are in such a featureless and dilapidated condition that their signification has not been apparent. However, another monument which in my opinion is strongly suggestive of being one of the type has turned up in a distant and most unexpected quarter at Nor' Nour on one of the smaller islands of the Isles of Scilly. So far only the plan of the interior chamber has been recovered but the comparative plans reproduced to the same scale (fig. 5) illustrate how closely the features correspond considering how vast is the gap in distance which separates them from one another. The resemblance is also manifest on comparing these plans with that of the cairn at Sulma Water, *infra*, p. 48, fig. 7. 323716 unnoted

### 3. *Heel-shaped Cairn, Islesburgh, Northmaven*

The ruin of this cairn lies barely half-a-mile in a southerly direction from the croft at Islesburgh and some 500 yds. to the west of Mavis Grind (fig. 3 and Pl. IX). It is situated 12 ft. or so above sea-level within a few yards of the eroded banks of the seashore and at first it appeared as a small grass-covered mound with the tips of a row of boulders protruding on the SE. and set edge to edge in a concave alignment identifiable even then as the frontage of a heel-shaped cairn. In 1959 the site was excavated and a plan (fig. 6) was recovered almost completely; the few parts missing could be reasonably conjectured to follow the course shown by the dotted lines on the drawing. In outline it was shaped like a cocked hat somewhat similar to that of the Cairn No. 1 at Punds Water. The lowest course of masonry, consisting of much lesser boulders than those that formed the façade, was all that was left of the facework around the back of the structure (Pl. IX, 3 and 4). Centred within the fabric there was a small box- or cist-like chamber to which entrance was gained through a passage which opened off the middle of the frontal concavity (Pl. IX, 2). The cairn measures 15 ft. 8 in. from the mouth of the passage to the line of the rounded back and transversely along the longitudinal axis of the chamber 17½ ft. from side to side while along the chord between the extremities of the horns the dimension may be reckoned to have been about 29 ft. The passage measures only 4 ft. 9 in. in length, the width being 1 ft. 4 in. at front and back but increasing to 1 ft. 10 in. in the middle. Each jamb consists of three large boulders of which the tallest,

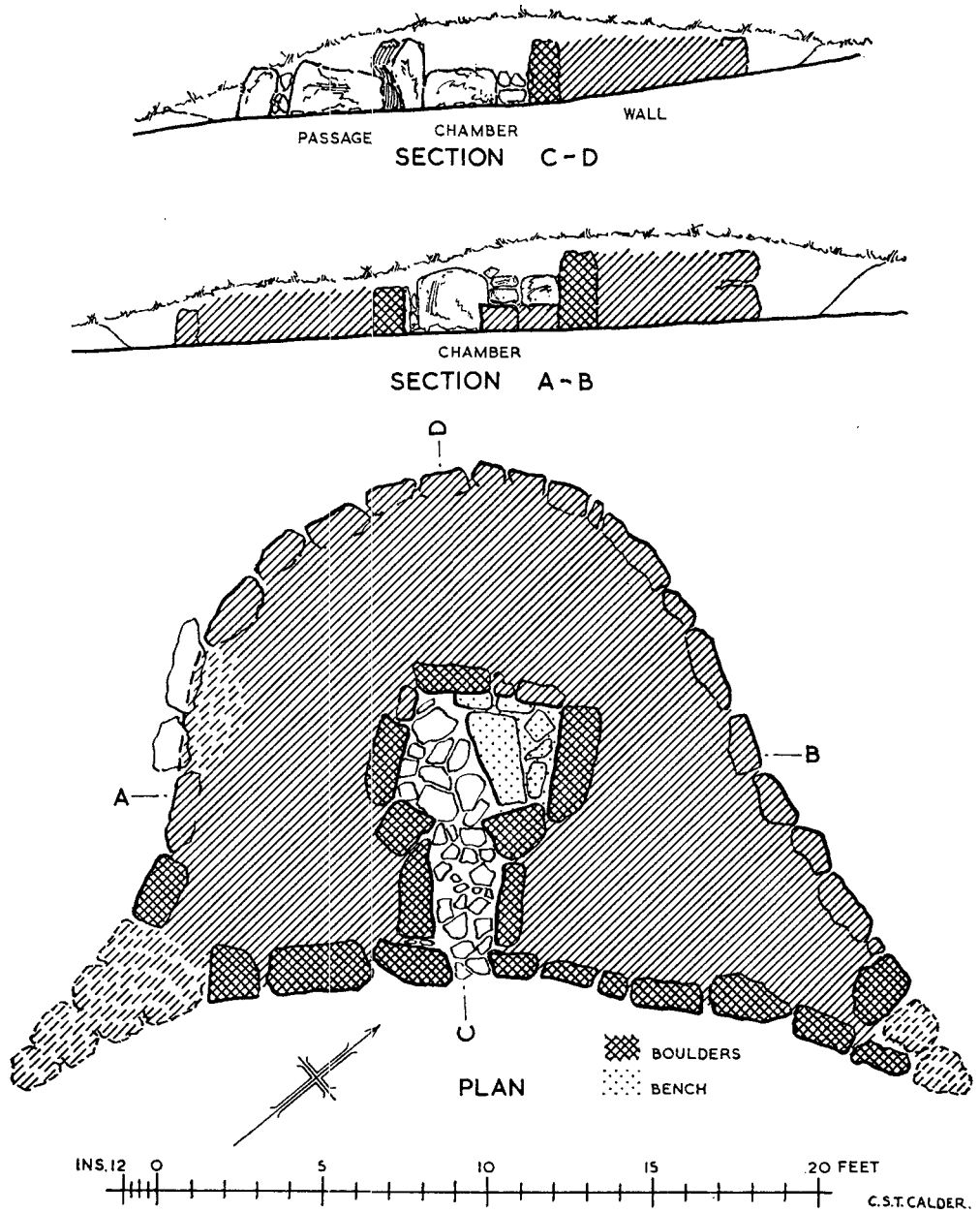


FIG. 6. Islesburgh Cairn: plan and sections

still standing on end to a height of 3 ft. are those standing one on each side at the rear end of the passage. The floor of both passage and chamber is roughly paved and rises slightly from front to back. Above the paving at the mouth of the passage the opening was closed by two stones, in course above one another and firmly wedged at one side, which represented what was left *in situ* of the blocking-stones that had sealed the entrance after burial. The chamber measures  $4\frac{1}{2}$  ft. in length and at greatest 3 ft. 9 in. in width. In its NE. half the space is filled by a paved bench, rising  $8\frac{1}{2}$  in. above the floor, which is fronted by a large stone on bed, set obliquely across the chamber and of a thickness equivalent to the rise (Pl. IX, 1). The cairn is reminiscent of the passage-grave at Rona's Hill<sup>1</sup> where also a box-like chamber,  $5\frac{1}{2}$  ft. long and 3 ft. wide, is still intact and closed by roof-lintels about 4 ft. above the floor. The periphery of the latter is lost in a mass of loose and fallen stones but in view of the likeness of the interior plan of the chamber to that of Islesburgh it is highly probable that Rona's Hill cairn was also heel-shaped. Another example of the type may be visualised in the vestigial remains of the small cairn at Mangaster.<sup>2</sup> No peat-ash was noticed in or around the building and the only relics were two elongated, flattish, roughly-chipped implements of sandstone which were found one in front of each horn. They have been described by Miss Henshall as follows:

- (a) Both long edges and one rounded end are chipped on both faces, probably to produce fairly sharp edges which have become blunted by use; the other end is somewhat thicker: 11 in. long, 2.8 in. wide, 1 in. maximum thickness (EO 975)
- (b) Similar object, one end noticeably thicker with its edges pecked, presumably shaped for a haft; 6.6 in. long, 2.1 in. wide, 1.1 in. maximum thickness (EO 974).

Both objects are of the same type as Punds Water, No. 4.

The above cairn and a neolithic house beside it have been earlier but only briefly noted in *P.S.A.S.*<sup>3</sup>

334685 unnoted

#### 4. Chambered Cairn, Sulma Water, Sandsting

This cairn is situated half-a-mile to the S. of the croft of Fogrigarth on the shoulder of the high heather-covered slopes overlooking Sulma Water to the E. and it is included in the list of the *Inventory*.<sup>4</sup> On a revisit in 1957 and assisted by the late Mr L. G. Scott and his daughter Mrs A. Robertson, we were able to recover an almost complete plan (fig. 7). The record was obtained on the tearing away of the heather in the chamber and the removal of such fallen stones and debris as could be handled without actually digging into the ruin. It is a matter of some importance that the lay-out helped to establish a new, but probably degenerate, type of heel-shaped cairn in being almost identical, as far as the plan goes in shape and features, with the more recently discovered and excavated cairn at Punds Water, No. II. Most of the outer wall-face and core was destroyed, levelled and grass-grown but

<sup>1</sup> *Inventory of Shetland*, 94-95, article 1364, figs. 612, 615.

<sup>2</sup> *P.S.A.S.*, LXXXIX (1955-6), 363, article 1.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*, 96-97, article 1368, fig. 617.

<sup>4</sup> *Inventory of Shetland*, 104, article 1409.

from the rather doubtful evidence on the western arc where two short lengths of a masonry course like a foundation and three stones at intervals appearing low through the turf it is felt that the outlines could, with some degree of safety, be assumed. The cairn is subcircular with an average diameter of  $47\frac{1}{2}$  ft. but at the

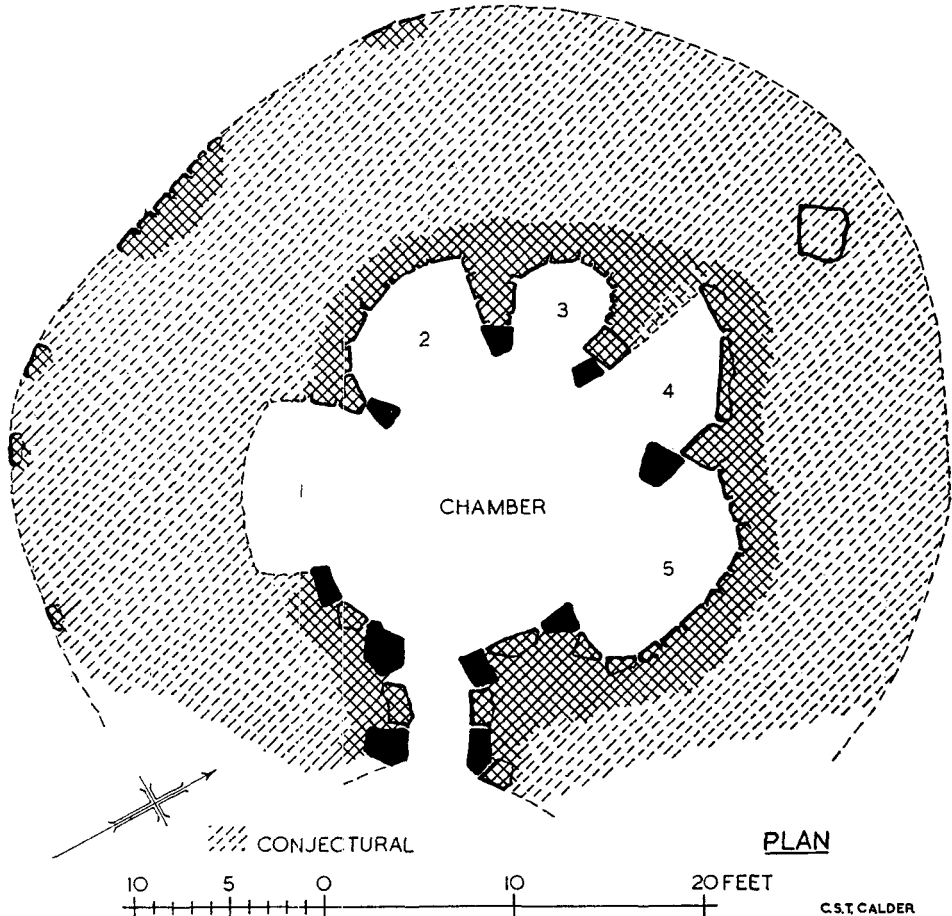


FIG. 7. Sulma Water Cairn: plan

entrance on the SE. which is set inwards from the general periphery, the faces of the jamb-stones, together with the face-stone *in situ* in the walling next the right hand jamb, would meet in an obtuse angle of about  $127^\circ$ . Thus set it would appear that the frontage was, at least, originally concave but whether it ended in funnel-shaped tusks or horns or was simply a rounded corner incurved from the true circumference is a point now impossible to determine from superficial conditions. The structure contains a short passage, minus its lintels, and the remains of a single chamber. The passage is lined with three boulders on each side and measures 6 ft.

in length by 3 ft. in width. The clear central space of the chamber is oval-shaped with dimensions of 16 ft. 6 in. and 14 ft. 8 in. along the line of the respective long and short axes but these sizes are limited within a series of five curved recesses opening widely and directly off the central portion as at Punds Water. Also as at the latter site these recesses are built two on each side and one, the smallest, at the inner end, and they range in width from 5 ft. in No. 3 to 11 ft. 3 in. in No. 5, the average depth being fully 5 ft. Each is separated from its neighbour by a radial partition, fronted by a single upright boulder, which, no doubt, supported continuing courses of beehive masonry over. The back walling of No. 1 is not traceable but it is probably still intact in the lower courses under a depth of accumulated soil and debris with which the interior of the monument is much covered. Our efforts at clearance did not extend deep enough to prove the existence of benches in the recesses but judging from the great likeness it bears otherwise to the Punds Water tomb it is more than likely that benches still survive below the present surface.

256553

#### 5. Chambered Cairn, Gravlaba, Sandsting

The remains lie on the top of a ridge about one-third of a mile to the E. of the N. end of the Loch of North-house near the pair of Standing Stones reported in the *Inventory*,<sup>1</sup> and is itself mentioned therein as a questionable cairn.<sup>2</sup> In 1957 it was

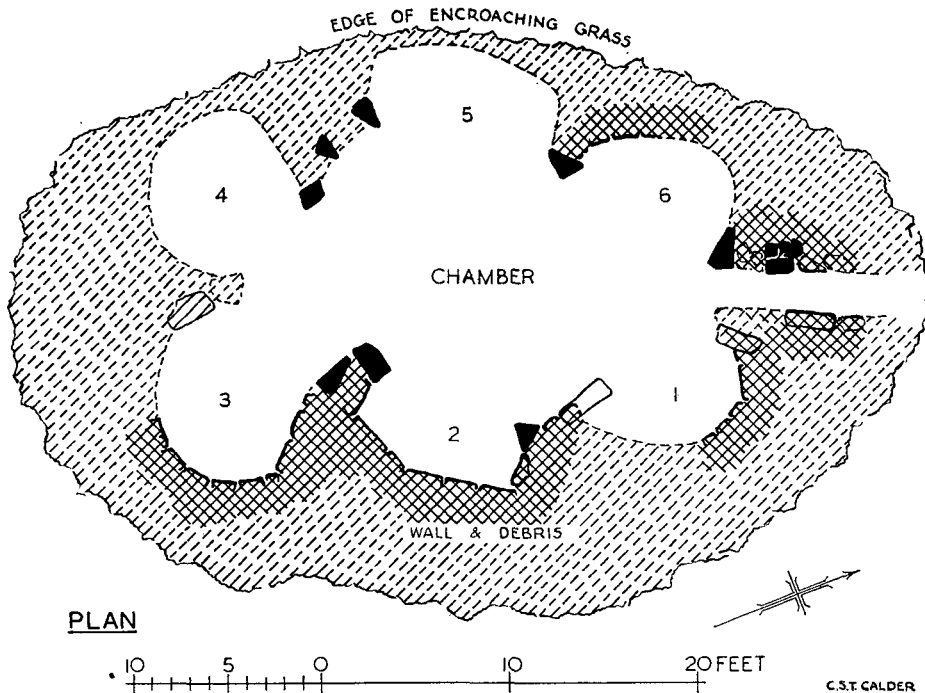


FIG. 8. Gravlaba Cairn: plan

<sup>1</sup> *ibid.*, 103, article 1403.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*, 105, article 1422.

revisited and more carefully examined on uplifting and laying aside, with the help of Mr Frank Scott, many of the boulders that littered the interior. From what evidence that could be gleaned on the spot and from its likeness to the cairns at Punds Water and Sulma Water, described above, it has, no doubt, been placed in its proper category. A grass encroachment conceals the line of the outer wall-face and the structure is now waterlogged in a depth of peat that has grown up around it. Still, much of a chamber and a passage can be made out and little conjecture is required to complete the inferential plan of the interior (fig. 8). Distinct traces of the passage leading into the chamber appear at the NNE. end and it measures 1 ft. 10 in. in width but its length is not determinable. In the chamber a series of six recesses open widely off a central space which measures about 22 by 13 ft. These, numbered from 1 to 6 on the plan, are separated as usual by radial partitions fronted by upright boulders and are arranged three on each side of the longer axis of the chamber. In width they vary from 7 to 9 ft. and the average depth is about 6 ft. It is possible, but not too probable, that Nos. 3 and 4 could have been a single end compartment as in the two other cairns of this sort before-mentioned but in that case it would seem to have been overlarge in comparison to the examples; the tendency observed from the meagre signs on the ground leaned towards the division into two. The whole site is so much obscured by heavy boulders and debris that the presence of benches in the recesses cannot be resolved without proper excavation.

323558

#### 6. Cairn, Grista, Tingwall

Fully  $\frac{1}{4}$  mile due N. of the Loch of Grista and on a fairly level shoulder of the hill of that name there are the remains of a cairn robbed of its structure down to the foundations. The inside area is totally covered with a fairly level patch of grass and the extent of the monument is defined only by a broken row of earthfast boulders on the SE. and SW. sides and by very incomplete alignments on the other two (fig. 9). The formation is roughly that of a square and it has been illustrated in a page of cairn plans in *P.S.A.S.*<sup>1</sup> but it is not described or otherwise recorded. The SE. face may be regarded as the front and nowhere along the perimeter is there a gap suggestive of an entrance. The sides bulge slightly on approaching half-way to the frontage and the faces on the SE., NW., NE. and SW. measure respectively 34, 30, 30 and 33 ft.

412447 unnoted

#### 7. Cairn, Hard Knowe, Nesting

To the W. of the road between Benston and Freester and about 300 yds. to the W. of the Loch of Benston a denuded circular cairn has a fine marginal setting of large stones (fig. 10). In or near the centre two earthfast and two fallen slabs are evidently the remains of a short cist lying on an axis E. and W. Its suggested dimensions are roughly 5 ft. in length and  $2\frac{1}{2}$  ft. in width and the cairn has an average diameter of 26 ft. In size and detail the structure very closely resembles the cisted cairn on Nesbister Hill.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *P.S.A.S.*, LXXXIV (1949-50), 199, fig. 9.

<sup>2</sup> *Inventory of Shetland*, 122, fig. 639.

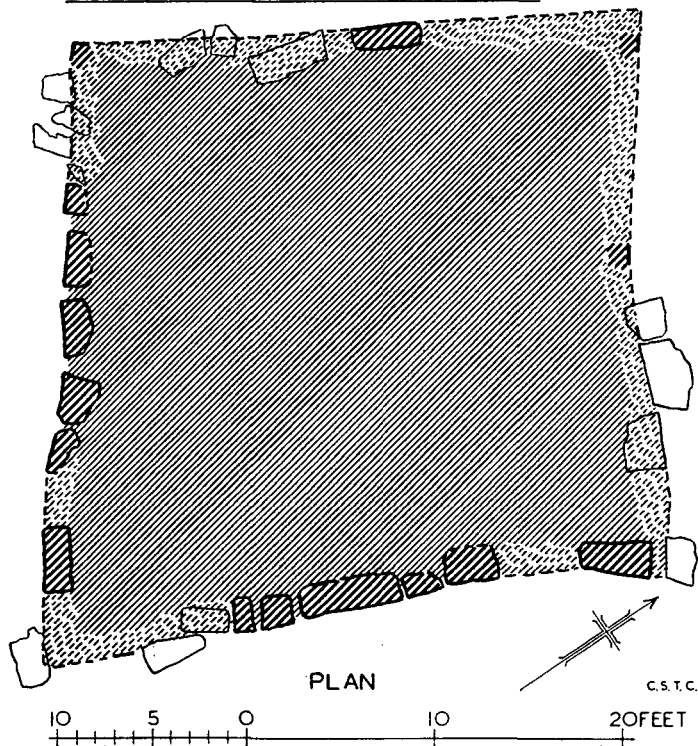
CAIRN, GRISTA, TINGWALL, SHETLAND.

Fig. 9. Grista Cairn: plan

The monument is surrounded eccentrically by a single line of stones, mostly earthfast and some now missing, at intervals in a subcircular formation. The alignment is presently broken over a stretch of rocky outcrop on the N. and S. and the enclosure so bounded has a diameter of roughly 142 ft. It could be an original setting but a later period cannot be ruled out. Within the SE. section a comparatively modern 'plantie-crub' has been erected.

455534 unnoted

8. *Chambered Cairn, Trolligarts, Walls and Sandness*

On the slope of Trolligarts barely 200 yds. E. of the road from Walls to Sandness and half-way between the W. ends of the loch of that name and the Loch of Flatpunds there is a setting of large boulders forming the irregular polygonal interior of a small chamber (fig. 11). A gap, 2 ft. 2 in. wide, between the two southernmost boulders suggests a point of entrance to the chamber which measures only 5 by 4½ ft. at most. A wall thickness of 6 ft. is determined by two similar and adjacent boulders in curved alignment demarcating the outer face on the N. The remains would appear to be those of a small round cairn having a diameter of 16½ ft.

244525 unnoted

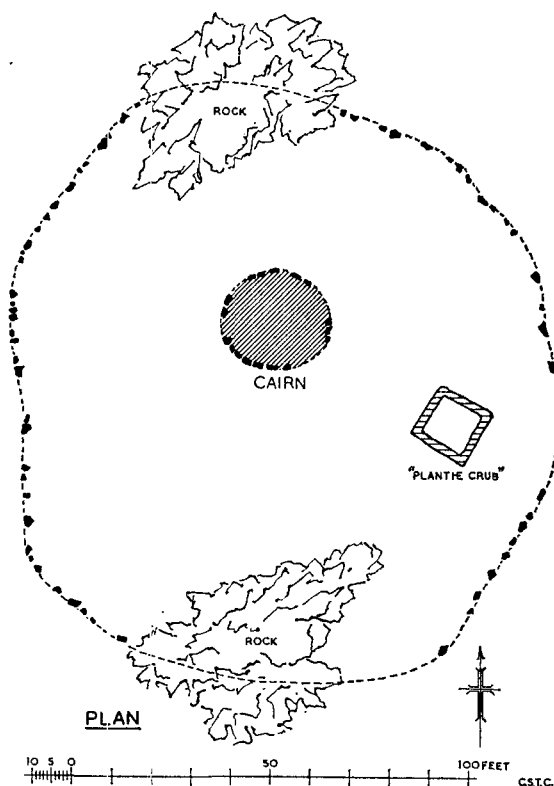


FIG. 10. Hard Knowe Cairn: plan

### 9. *Heel-shaped Cairns, Hill of Crooksetter, Delting*

The remains of two cairns lie on the southern crest of the summit of the Hill of Crooksetter in the parish of Delting.

No. I, the eastmost shows a mass of heavy tumbled stones, backed in places with smaller stones which would seem to be part of the core of the monument. The cairn has been deeply dug into around the perimeter and a surveyor's cairn has been built on the top. The outline is somewhat indefinite but it appears to have been heel-shaped originally with the flat or slightly concave face running in a direction from SSE. to NNW. At the SW. corner two large stones in alignment, each roughly 2 ft. broad by 1 ft. thick, are set earthfast on end. Over the debris the approximate dimensions are 37 ft. 6 in. along the face and 30 ft. transversely.

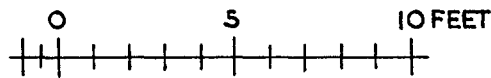
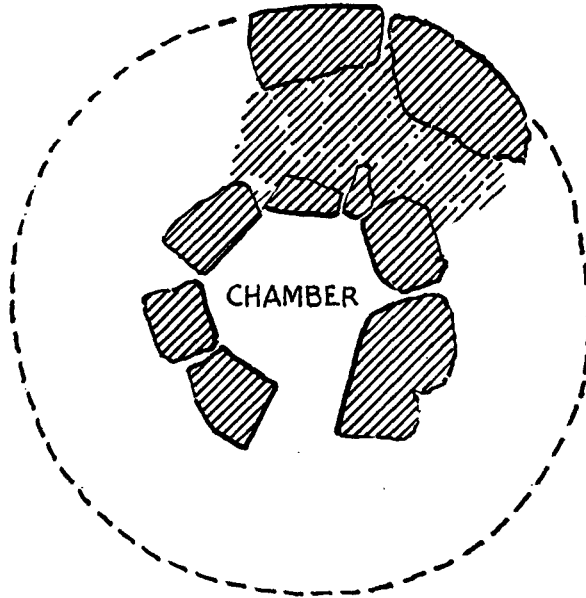
418757 unnoted

No. II is on a slightly lower level of the crest of the ridge about 450 yds. to the NW. of above. It is heel-shaped with a fairly clear concave façade set on a line from SW. to NE. and its circular outline round the back can be distinctly traced. There is a suggestion of a break in the centre of the concave face for an entrance passage leading to a chamber but the gap is presently filled with loose stones and



earth. Along the chord between the extremities of the front the cairn measures 32 ft., the rise of the concavity being 4 ft. 3 in. and in a transverse direction the dimension is 29 ft.

418755 unnoted



SKETCH ROUGHLY TO SCALE

FIG. 11. Trolligarts Cairn: plan

10. *Chambered Cairn, probably heel-shaped, Culsetter, Delting*

On top of an eminence about 100 yds. from the Loch of Culsetter and from 250 to 300 yds. to the SSW. of the croft a number of earthfast boulders in curved alignment would seem to be the remains of a heel-shaped cairn measuring 20 ft. from the concave front, facing ESE., to the seemingly rounded but incomplete back. Transversely over the middle the measurement is 18 ft. but this dimension expands to 21 ft. between the present extremities of the frontal concavity and the expansion suggests a horned formation. In the centre of the concave face a gap indicates the position of an entrance leading apparently into a small chamber, the whole resembling the type of cairn at Islesburgh described above.

334673 unnoted

11. *Chambered Cairn, Ward of Veester, Dunrossness*

On a rocky knoll on a flat shoulder of the E. slopes of the Ward of Veester just above 700 ft. contour and about 700 yds. W. of Lerwick/Sumburgh road there is a grass-covered area in which large stones are set around a slightly hollowed centre. Locally the site is known as the Wulga and the remains are evidently those of a round cairn averaging  $30\frac{1}{2}$  ft. in diameter and having a central chamber averaging 10 ft. 9 in. in diameter within a wall measuring 10 to 11 ft. in thickness.

A subcircular enclosure 28 by 26 ft. in axial dimensions and bounded by a wall about 4 ft. 6 in. in thickness, can be traced on the sloping S. side. On the E. a wall, 2 ft. 6 in. thick extends for a length of 9 ft. from the cairn, but both enclosure and wall are probably later additions made of stones robbed from the cairn.

421267 unnoted

12. *Cairn, Wiltrow, Dunrossness*

In a field about 350 to 400 yds. S. by E. of Wiltrow Mr R. Bairnson uncovered a short cist in a low mound, now denuded. It had been made of thin slabs on a natural rocky bottom but one end slab and the cover-stone were missing. The interior measured 2 ft. 6 in. by 1 ft.  $6\frac{1}{2}$  in. and 1 ft. 10 in. in depth and the contents were 16 pebbles and nodules of quartz. Another very tiny cist, also minus a cover-stone was unearthed 3 ft. away and measured only 14 in. square and the same dimension in depth. Probably they represent urn burials.

At a distance of 50 ft. from the site two or three courses of rubble masonry were exposed for a length of 7 ft. 2 in. on the arc of a circle forming the inner face of a concave wall and at a similar distance from each end of the concavity there was a single earthfast stone separated by 10 ft. from each other. The construction, however, is too much destroyed for any satisfactory explanation but small pieces of pottery and iron slag suggest an Iron Age date for its erection.

397143 unnoted

13. *Heel-shaped Cairns, Vord Hill, Feltar*

The two cairns described in the *Inventory* p. 57, art. 1215, are reported as very dilapidated heaps of large stones with no features of interest except that of size. Respectively the areas covered by the remains are noted as being 65 or 70 ft. and 40 to 50 ft. in diameter, and by inference from these dimensions they may be thought to have a subcircular periphery. The notice was made before heel-shaped cairns were known and a closer inspection in 1958 revealed the fact that both undoubtedly belonged to this category. In each case the curved backs and straight or slightly concave frontages, which looked towards the SE., were observed in the mass of debris. No internal features were noticed in the larger of the two cairns but in the other a passage entering from the middle of the concave face and the outline of a chamber could be made out. The chamber was of cruciform shape with two squared lateral recesses and a rather triangular terminal one. Two circular enclosures bounded by the foundations of a stone dyke running from the ends of the concave

façade impinge on the cairn on the E. and W. sides and are no doubt later constructions erected with stones taken from the original monument.

Near the Ordnance Survey bench-mark to the SE. of these a large heap of stones showing the curved outer and inner faces of a wall and what look like horns extending for several feet from the main body, may represent, though doubtfully, the remains of a third cairn.

621936 and 622938

14. *Cairn, Hill of Shurton, Lerwick*

On the summit of the North Ward of Wick, between 2 and 3 miles WSW. of Lerwick, there are vestiges of what is probably a cairn. It is now greatly denuded and deep-set under a heavy growth of peat but the trace of a built wall-face on the arc of a circle is noticeable on the NW. for a length of 12 ft. as well as are many large loose stones in the centre of the mound. From information by Mr Peter Moar who drew my attention to this site it is known that a hoard of Shetland flensers was found on a bare patch of the hillside close by the mound.

The peat on the Ward is very deep in places and in rifts and clearings round the site down to the hard it may be as much as 12 to 15 ft. At this depth, in clearings to E. and W. of the cairn, the foundations of dykes built of large stones have become exposed and may be of a contemporary period.

442401 unnoted

15. *Chambered Cairn, East Hill of Bellister, Nesting*

On glebe land on the eastern slope of the East Hill of Bellister about 1 mile or so NW. of the manse of North Nesting, and 150 yds. W. of the house-site mentioned in *P.S.A.S.*,<sup>1</sup> there is a cairn which consists of a much overgrown rickle of large stones. Some of the stones set on end near the middle of the heap suggest a former chamber and what appears to be the inner face of an outer ring of walling may be observed for a length of 9 ft. on the S. arc. The spread of debris suggests a circular periphery measuring 28 ft. in average diameter. Amongst fallen stones down the slope on the E. side there are the foundations of a thin wall bounding a circular space 20 ft. in diameter but this has probably been built with stones out of the original cairn.

490591 unnoted

16. *Chambered Cairn, between Lochs of Freester and Houlland, Nesting*

On the neck of land between the Lochs of Freester and Houlland and about 40 ft. from the main road, the ruins of a circular cairn with an almost complete marginal setting of fair-sized stones is appearing from under the peat. Many stones are of no great height above the present surface, the highest rising to barely 2 ft. and the core is composed of small stones. In the centre there is another setting of earthfast stones on edge around a small chamber which is subcircular on plan and measures 6 ft. from E. to W. and  $4\frac{1}{2}$  ft. from N. to S. Without excavation it is

<sup>1</sup> *P.S.A.S.*, LXXXIX (1955-6), 366, No. 10.

impossible to say that a passage led into the chamber but there is a suggestive gap on the W. although no corresponding break in marginal setting is to be seen. The cairn averages 38 ft. in diameter; the lay-out of the chamber is reminiscent of the smaller cairn at Trolligarts above.

453541 unnoted

17. *Heel-shaped Cairn, near Loch of Freester, Nesting*

About 300 yds. W. of the Loch of Freester and just S. of the new road junction at Catfirth, a mound in front of the old Wireless Station holds the remains of a cairn. Stones in the mound lie in a fairly straight line and end in what would appear to be corner stones all suggestive of a small cairn of heel-shaped type.

450540 unnoted

18. *Cairn, Pund of Grevasand, Northmaven*

About 100 yds. S. of a neolithic house and on the edge of a ridge to the E. of the Pund there is a grass-grown heap of stones which is probably the remains of a cairn roughly 28 ft. in diameter. A small surveyor's cairn has been erected on top of it.

273760 unnoted

19. *Cairns, the Runk, Watch Hill, Esha Ness, Northmaven*

I. Towards the head of the Runk  $\frac{1}{4}$  mile SW. of the cairn described in the *Inventory*, p. 99, art. 1389, there is a green knoll containing many large boulders some of which appear to be set on the arc of a circle. The diameter over the rickle of stones is approximately 19 ft. and the remains are probably those of a round cairn.

256779 unnoted

II. A stony area, now very much overgrown with grass lies 50 yds. distant down the slope towards the sea. Three or four marginal stones have the appearance of being set and another cairn, 32 ft. from N. to S. by  $31\frac{1}{2}$  ft. from E. to W. is visualised.

255778 unnoted

20. *Chambered Cairn, East Burrafirth, Sandsting*

On a small knoll overlooking the inner end of East Burrafirth and about 70 yds. NE. of the road, several large stones in curved alignment seem to outline a more or less circular chamber having a diameter of 8 ft. The mound measures about 26 ft. in diameter.

363578 unnoted

21. *Chambered Cairn, Breawick, Sandsting*

On a slight level portion of the rising ground at Breawick there are the scanty remains of a denuded cairn. An irregular setting of 6 angular stones apparently marks the position of a former chamber measuring 6 ft. 9 in. from N. to S., by 6 ft. 1 in. from E. to W.

338578 unnoted

22. *Cairn, Ramnaberg, Wind Hamars, Tingwall*

Barely 1 mile NE. of Scalloway and between 200 and 300 yds. N. of the main road a very ruinous cairn lies at the S. end of the grass-grown ridge of Wind Hamars. The western segment is utterly destroyed on the edge of a steep decline and only a very short arc of the outline is traceable on the S. and SE.; only a rough measure of  $31\frac{1}{2}$  ft. NE. to SW. is obtainable. Towards the SW. portion of the interior a cist of slabs on edge is well defined and measures 4 ft. 6 in. long by 3 ft. 4 in. wide. A few feet to the N. of it there are two rows of three boulders each, set in parallel alignment; the rows are spaced about 5 ft. apart and are closed at the N. end by a boulder set transversely in a formation suggesting an extra large cist or probably a small chamber.

415402 unnoted

23. *Chambered Cairn, South Setter, Tingwall*

On the moorland fully 600 yds. WSW. of South Setter and 150 yds. W. of a small lochan there is a peat- and heather-clad mound with large stones showing through the vegetation and in the middle the stonework has the appearance of a small built chamber. The mound measures 21 ft. in diameter by 2 ft. in height and would seem to be the remains of a chambered cairn.

406431 unnoted

24. *Breiwick, Tingwall*

Two separate lots of boulders, some earthfast, on the approach to Fora Ness appear to be the remains of cairns.

457475 and 459476 unnoted

25. *Indeterminate Structure, Loch of Flatpunds, Walls and Sandness*

Beside 'plantie-crubs' on the N. shore of the loch the ruinous mass of a structure may be the remains of a cairn. It differs, however, from all the rest in having a long gallery still distinctly traceable for a length of 25 ft. 9 in. with a width of 2 ft. 9 in. and the walling seems to measure fully 8 ft. in thickness. The gallery lies along the line of the major axis from ENE. to WSW. and sweeps in a shallow curve having a rise of 1 ft. 10 in. on its present length. The entrance is at the WSW. end and it appears to open in the middle of a slightly concave façade but its true nature is so uncertain that its inclusion in the list of cairns has not been thought advisable.

247524

26. *Cairn, Gallow Hill, Dunrossness*

In a small mound on the top of Gallow Hill a slab-lined cist has been exposed.

397145 unnoted

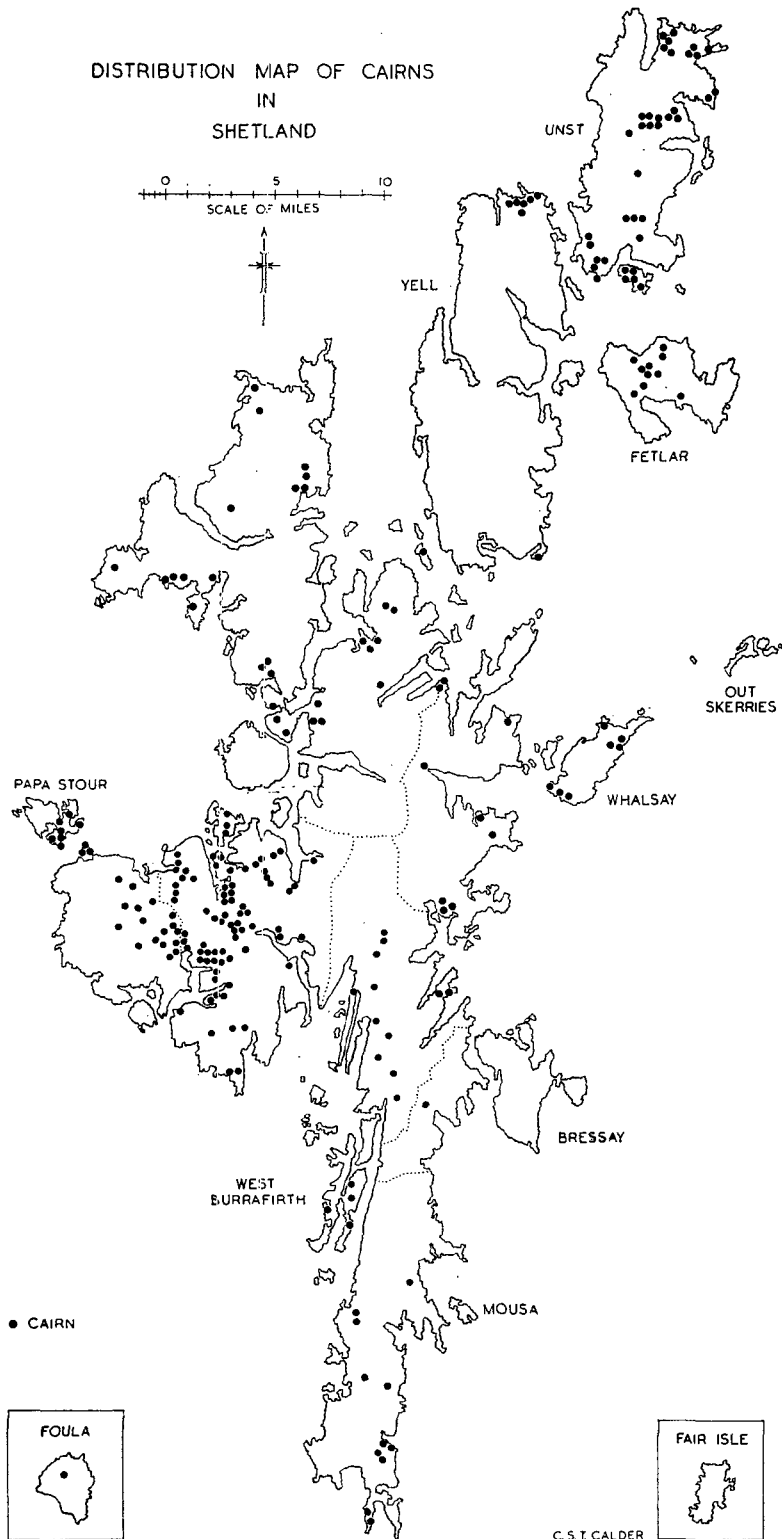


FIG. 12. Distribution map of cairns

## DISTRIBUTION MAPS OF CAIRNS

Regardless of type, which at this stage cannot be treated with sufficient discrimination to be placed in their true categories, 231 cairns are spotted on the map (fig. 12). Of these 200 have already been recorded in the *Inventory of Shetland*, and 31 are discoveries since its publication. The numbers above include 44 cairns known to contain definite or probable chambers and another 30 are accounted for in those having cists or probable cists. In 28 cases the heel-shaped variety can be distinguished, this number being 13 in excess of those of this type mentioned in the *Inventory*. The increase is due to later discoveries or to re-classification and all are noted on a separate distribution map (fig. 13), corresponding with the enumeration as follows:

Recorded in the *Inventory*,

Nos. 1, 2, 6, 7, 8, 11, 13, 14, 17, 18, 22, 23, 25, 26, 27 = 15

Those reclassified,

Nos. 3, 4, 19, 20, 24 = 5

Since discovered,

Nos. 5, 9, 10, 12, 15, 16, 21, 28 = 8

Total 28

The map (fig. 12) is based on the total of all the sites listed below.

TABLE I: CAIRNS

C. = Cist  
 Ch. = Chambered  
 d. = diameter in feet  
 H.S. = Heel-shaped  
 Dimensions and remarks are taken mostly from the description in the *R.C.A.M. Inventory*.

<i>Map Reference</i> (code HU)	<i>Inventory</i> <i>Number</i>	<i>Parish and Name</i>	<i>Dimensions</i> <i>in feet</i>	<i>Remarks</i>
-----------------------------------	-----------------------------------	------------------------	-------------------------------------	----------------

I. CAIRNS RECORDED IN THE SHETLAND *Inventory*

## DELTING

336668	1118	Gossaford Hill	56 × 52	
364674	1119	Hill of Burravoe	60 × 53	Built kerb
		do.	44 × 40	do.
363686	1120	Ladie Hill	44 × 35	
404727	1121	Graven	35 d.	Ch.
396732	1122	Houb of Scatsta	33 d.	
409699	1123	Hill of Dale	33½ × 23½	H.S. no break in façade, suggest cist
406732	1133	Garths Voe		C. destroyed
445796	1135	Easter Hevda Wick	61 × 48	Pear-shaped, built kerb

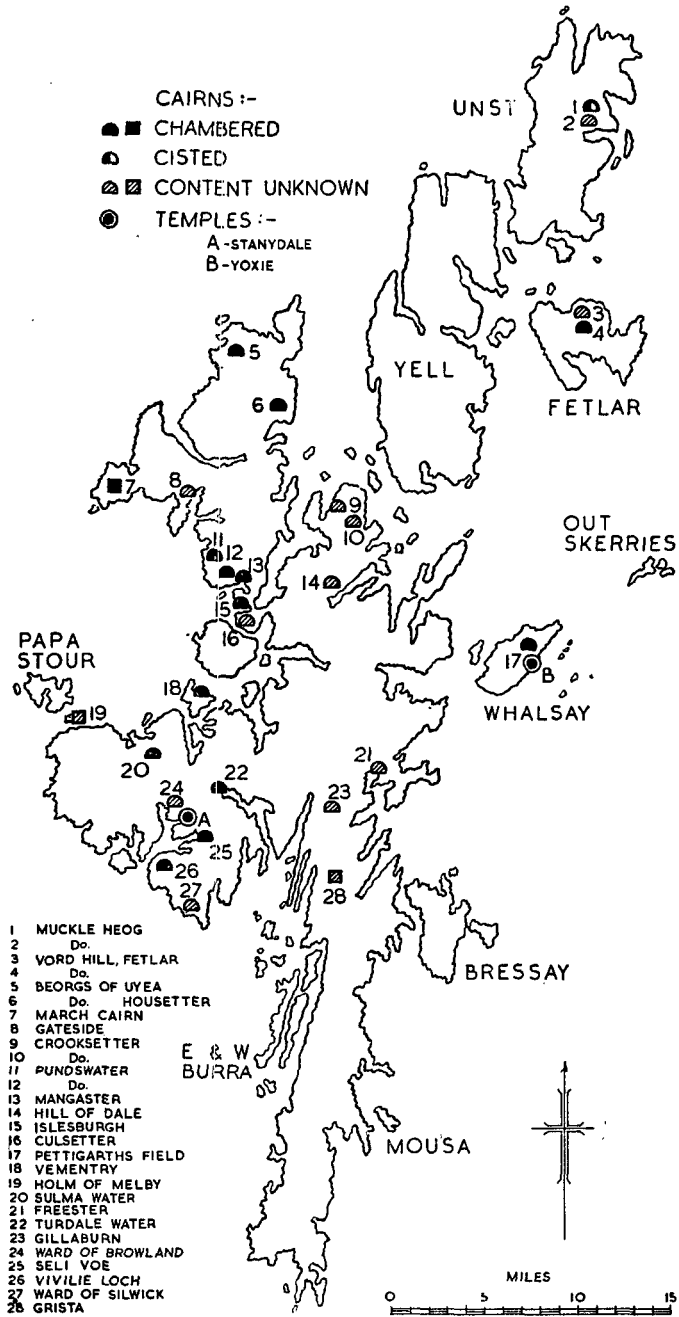


FIG. 13 Distribution map of heel-shaped cairns



<i>Map Reference (code HU)</i>	<i>Inventory Number</i>	<i>Parish and Name</i>	<i>Dimensions in feet</i>	<i>Remarks</i>
DUNROSSNESS				
382238	1158	North Lochend	30 d.	
382243	1159	Longhill	68 × 64	Well-defined outline
385094	1160	Fraga		C.
403145	1180	Southvoe	16 d.	
403145	1180	Southvoe	17 d.	
387092	1182	Scatness	30 or 40 d.	
407190	1193	Virdi Field		C.
FETLAR				
622938	1215	Vord Hill I		H.S. (new classification)
621936		do. II		H.S., Ch. do.
611913	1219	Clothin		Very little trace
601928	1220	Hamara Field		C.
618927	1226	'Haltadans'	39 d.	C. ringed setting and probable cist
616923	1228	Whilsa Pund I		Shows concave wall-face
		do. II	40 d.	
		do. III	44 d.	
631906	1241	'Helina Kruga'		
603906	1242	Papil Water		
LERWICK (East Burra)				
385342	1260	Wester Heog	60 to 65 d.	
381330	1261	The Heog	70 d.	
380309	1262	Clettna Taing	35 d.	
		(West Burra)		
360382	1269	Ruff Loch		Curved marginal setting
NESTING				
458702	1288	Noness Head I	50 × 32	Ch. and later C. marginal wall pear-shaped
		do. II	43 × 23	Ch. oval
505672	1289	Lunning	28 d.	Ch. marginal ring wall
445635	1290	Knowe of Brulland	60 × 50	10 ft. high and kerbed
479607	1312	Muckle Head (Whalsay)		
587654	1321	Pettigarths Field		H.S., Ch. square-shaped
539617	1322	Snarri Geo		C.
534620	1323	Symbister Ness	45 × 35	
573667	1347	Ward of Challister		Ch. two courses of a built face
582652	1348	Willie's Wart	23 d.	C.
NORTHMAVEN				
361852	1360	'Giant's Grave'		
221789	1362	March Cairn	33½ sq.	HS., Ch. square-shaped
305834	1364	Rona's Hill		Ch. chamber intact
361854	1365	Beorgs of Housetter		H.S., Ch.

<i>Map Reference</i> (code HU)	<i>Inventory</i> <i>Number</i>	<i>Parish and Name</i>	<i>Dimensions</i> <i>in feet</i>	<i>Remarks</i>
324714	1367	Punds Water		H.S., Ch. well-preserved features
328710	1368	Mangaster		H.S., Ch. very little trace
259781	1389	Watch Hill	18 d.	Kerbed
328929	1390	Uyea, North Roe		Removed
356844	1391	Voe of the Brig I	36 d. to	Demolished without record
		do. II	42 d.	do.
291782	App. I	Gateside		HS., C. much destroyed
SANDSTING				
254548	1407	Smith's Hamer		Featureless
255550	1408	do.	19 d.	Marginal setting
256553	1409	Sulma Water		HS. probable Ch.
362563	1410	Hurdi Field	26½ d.	Circular marginal wall
270554	1411	Robie Glen's Loch	30 d.	
265566	1412	The Wards	26½ d.	Ch. traces of marginal wall
257573	1413	West Burra Firth		Dilapidated
263583	1414	The Runie	25 d.	Traces of marginal wall
291579	1415	North Ward	30 d.	Ch.
288570	1416	Hurds of the Ness	43 × 35	Grass-covered mound
301568	1417	Pundsberg		Ch. (but maybe only a cist)
314569	1418	Clousta Church	36 × 30	Marginal wall, oval
323571	1419	Loch of Vaara	30 d.	C.
326574	1420	Roonions	30 d.	C.
334574	1421	Linga Roe	80 d.	Ch.
323558	1422	Gravlaba		Ch.
297552	1423	Forse Water	50 d.	Much destroyed
296550	1424	South Houllan	20 d.	Traces of marginal wall
296553	1425	do.	60 d.	Traces of curved and straight walls
346520	1426	Quarsdale	41 d.	Turf-covered
339498	1427	Bekka Hill	27 d.	Dilapidated
295484	1428	Seli Voe		H.S., Ch.
284476	1429	Wards of Seli Voe	35 d.	C. (or chamber)
292478	1430	do.	30 d.	C.
286475	1431	Craw Knowe	26 d.	C. (or chamber)
294496	1432	Laidie Hill		C.
302498	1433	do.	45 d.	
283502	1434	Hamars (3 cairns)		O.S. record only
do.		do.		Massive blocks on site
286513	1435	Stanydale I	35 d.	Much destroyed
		do. II	47 d.	Marginal setting suggested
		do. III	50 d.	Much destroyed
268516	1436	Ward of Browland		H.S., Ch. (reclassified)
263524	1437	Upper Loch of Brouster	44 d.	
306450	1438	Swart-houll	30 d.	Ch.
296424	1439	Muckle Hamar		Indefinite remains
290425	1440	Ward of Silwick		H.S. much destroyed
292457	1441	Hestinsetter Hill	31 d.	Ch.
262461	1442	Vivilie Loch		H.S., Ch.

<i>Map Reference (code HU)</i>	<i>Inventory Number</i>	<i>Parish and Name</i>	<i>Dimensions in feet</i>	<i>Remarks</i>
279531	1443	Erne's Ward	50 d.	Ch. marginal setting of Boulders
292531	1444	Hulma Water I	62 × 36	
		do. II	35 d.	
312529	1445	Turdale Water		H.S., Ch.
305536	1446	Groni Field I	40 d.	Ch.
		do. II and III		Traces only
290537	1447	Wester Houran	80 × 58	Marginal setting
295500	1461	Loch of Gruting		C. (actually a short distance to N.E. of position described in <i>Inventory</i> )
255545	1470	Galta Water		O.S. record
288449	1471	Bottom		do.
260573	1472	Engamoor		do.
285582	1474	Longaness	33 d.	
299558	1475	North Houllan	50 d.	
298554	1476	Forse Water		O.S. record
294552	1477	South Houllan		do.
325561	1478	Loch of Vaara		O.S. record
325560	1479	do.		do.
346558	1480	Aith		do.
342556	1481	Houster		do.
331522	1482	Bixter		Trace only
327525	1483	Garden		do.
304527	1484	Moorhouse		O.S. record
300527	1485	Hulma Water		do.
299524	1486	Burnside	24 d.	Very much destroyed
		do. Roadside	35 d.	do.
292534?	1487	Hulma Water (Vementry)		
294612	1493	Vementry		H.S., Ch. good features
299600	1494	Loch of the Chubb	26½d.	
297598	1495	Seggi Bight	26½d.	
TINGWALL				
406515	1506	Gillaburn		H.S. denuded to foundation
402502	1507	Loch of Strom	35 d.	
384473	1508	Hill of Oligarth		O.S. record
405454	1509	Nesbister Hill	26 d.	C. good masonry faces showing
410415	1510	Little Asta		C. two-storeyed grave
406516	1521	Gillaburn	86 × 18	Probable long, horned cairn
400477	1531	West Hamarsland		O.S. record
UNST				
632165	1554	Saxa Vord I		Almost demolished
		do. II	26 d.	Much destroyed
		do. III	30 d.	
		do. IV	36 d.	Ch. (probable)
		do. V	25 d.	

<i>Map Reference</i> (code HU)	<i>Inventory</i> <i>Number</i>	<i>Parish and Name</i>	<i>Dimensions</i> <i>in feet</i>	<i>Remarks</i>
651153	1555	Ward of Norwick	40 d.	Ch. (probable)
652153	1556	do.	55 d.	
659123	1557	Hill of Clibberswick I	22 d.	Grass-covered
		do. II		Almost entirely destroyed
630108	1559	Muckle Heog		H.S. (probably cisted)
		do.		H.S., C. (two cists)
631109	1560	Little Heog	45 d.	
615107	1561	Crussa Field I	39 d.	C.
		do. II	27 d.	
		do. III		Doubtful
		do. IV	53 d.	Three rings around central heap
		do. V		
		do. VI		
604065	1562	Hill of Caldback	33 d.	Ch.
597051	1563	Watlee	35 × 32	
603037	1564	Sobul I	28 d.	
		do. II	33 d.	
		do. III	40 × 35	
574992	1565	Heogland	18½ d.	Marginal wall-face
575006	1566	Gallow Hill	30 d.	Marginal wall-face
574002	1567	do.	35 d.	C.
600096	1586	Balliasta	67 d.	Rings round central heap
608024	1587	Knowe of Hoversta		Scanty remains
565019	1588	Snarravoe I		Disappeared. See Irvine's
		II		<i>Miscellanea</i>
575006	1589	Gallow Hill		C. O.S. record
661156	1594	Garths (Uyea)		do.
603996	1599	Cliva Skerries		Ch. much destroyed
600993	1600	The Ward I		Recorded
		do. II	23 × 17½	C. oval, marginal setting
		do. III		Recorded
604986	1604	Uyea		C. recorded
WALLS AND SANDNESS				
213564	1614	The Spinner	24 d.	C. marginal setting
219555	1615	Mousavord Loch	50 to 40 d.	
230541	1616	Burga Water	38 d.	
239545	1617	Daney's Loch	34 d.	Curved marginal setting
259528	1618	Voxterby I	22 d.	
		do. II	23 d.	
244515	1619	'Hansie's Crooie'	35 × 27	Ch. pear-shaped
246516	1620	Cattapund Knowe	140 × 47	Destroyed to make road metal during World War II
259510	1621	Gallow Hill	30 d.	
258509	1622	do.	32 d.	
257507	1623	do.	80 d.	Marginal ring of large boulders
219518	1624	'Sclater's Cuml'	40 d.	Shows inner wall-face

<i>Map Reference</i> (code HU)	<i>Inventory</i> <i>Number</i>	<i>Parish and Name</i>	<i>Dimensions</i> <i>in feet</i>	<i>Remarks</i>
211522	1625	Stourbrough Hill	35 × 25	
216541	1676	Stanevatstoe Loch		O.S. record
228532	1677	Neuglesbreck	40 to 45 d.	
255530	1678	Loch of Voxterby (Holme of Melby)		O.S. record: demolished
193585	1680	Holm of Melby I	70 d.	8½ ft. high
		do. II		6½ ft. high H.S. square-shaped
		do. III	60 d.	4 ft. high
		(Foula)		
958405	1681	Harrier (Papa Stour)		Dilapidated
181611	1690	Holti Ward	57 × 37	Outline of masonry
186604	1691	North-house	33 d.	5 ft. high
173603	1692	Setter	80 × 50	3½ ft. high. Ch. oval and ? stalled
173601	1693	Mid-Setter	70 × 62	
172594	1694	Whirlie	58 d.	3 ft. high
170593	1695	Round Hill	30 × 25	Ch.
165594	1696	Fielie	30 × 27½	Indications of wall-faces

## YELL

520050	1726	Sands of Breckin (5)		Five recorded by Irvine
527790	1727	Cumlins	30 d.	
519047	1750	Clody	60 × 40	Recorded by Irvine

II. CAIRNS DISCOVERED SINCE THE PUBLICATION OF THE *Inventory*  
AND DESCRIBED ABOVE

## DELTING

334673		Culsetter		H.S., Ch.
418755		Crooksetter I		H.S.
		do. II		H.S.

## DUNROSSNESS

397145		Gallow Hill		C.
421267		Ward of Veester	30½	Ch.
397142		Wiltrow		C.
388188		Mallilee <sup>1</sup>	20 to 30 d.	

## LERWICK

442401		Hill of Shurton		
--------	--	-----------------	--	--

## NESTING

491591		East Hill of Bellister	28 d.	Ch.
453541		Between Freester and Houlland	38 d.	Ch.
450540		Loch of Freester		H.S.

<sup>1</sup> *Discovery and Excavation, Scotland* (1956), 27.

<i>Map Reference</i> (code HU)	<i>Inventory</i> <i>Number</i>	<i>Parish and Name</i>	<i>Dimensions</i> <i>in feet</i>	<i>Remarks</i>
455534		Hard Knowe (Whalsay)	26 d.	C.
587653		Pettigarths Field II		C.
544618		Peightschoose <sup>1</sup>	25 d.	
NORTHMAVEN				
273760		Gravasand		
334685		Islesburgh		H.S., Ch. excavated
323716		Pund's Water II		H.S., Ch. do.
256779		The Runk I		
255777		do. II		Probably Smir Heog <sup>2</sup>
328901		Beorgs of Uyea		H.S. <sup>3</sup>
SANDNESS				
244525		Trolligarts		Ch.
SANDSTING				
338578		Breawick		Ch.
363578		East Burrafirth	26 d.	Ch.
285512		Stanydale IV } do. V }		Additional to group described in <i>Inventory</i> , art. 1435
302515		Hockland <sup>4</sup>		
TINGWALL				
412447		Grista		H.S. square-shaped
415402		Ramnaberg		C.
406431		South Setter	21 d.	Ch.
457475		Breiwick, Fora Ness I		
459476		do. II		

III. SITES WRONGLY LISTED AS CAIRNS IN THE *Inventory* OR LACKING IN EVIDENCE OR RECORD AND OMITTED FROM THE DISTRIBUTION MAP (fig. 12)

503387	1089	Ward of Bressay		No evidence
618916	1216	Mounds at Turra Field		Purpose unknown
615905	1218	Knowe of Heog		do.
512412	1109	Loch of Brough		No evidence, cist (?)
554640	1318	Peerie Roonie		House
583653	1319	'The Benie Hoose'		do.
582652	1320	'Standing Stones of Yoxie'		Temple
577646	1349	Isbister		No evidence
584645	1350	'The Gairdie'		House <sup>5</sup>
214781	1361	Sae Breck		Broch

<sup>1</sup> *ibid.*, 26.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.* (1955), 30.

<sup>3</sup> *P.S.A.S.*, LXXXVI (1951-2), 171.

<sup>4</sup> *Discovery and Excavation, Scotland* (1957), 34.

<sup>5</sup> Site marked 'D' in *P.S.A.S.*, xciv (1960-1), 28, fig. 1.

<i>Map Reference</i> (code HU)	<i>Inventory</i> <i>Number</i>	<i>Parish and Name</i>	<i>Dimensions</i> <i>in feet</i>	<i>Remarks</i>
296536	1488	South Houron		No substantial evidence
388473	1508	Hill of Oligarth (lower site)		House
631112	1558	'Harold's Grave'		No evidence, probably Viking
	1682	Cougar		Questionable

## APPENDIX

*The Finds from Punds Water* (see fig. 14)

by AUDREY S. HENSHALL, M.A., F.S.A., F.S.A. SCOT.

## POTTERY

1. Sherds of heavy dark brown-buff ware, heavily gritted mainly with granite chips, many of large size. The fabric, to 0.6 in. thick, varies from fairly hard to rather friable. There is a fine slip.

(a) Sherd with everted flange at the rim, concave neck with shoulder below; internal diameter about 9.5 in.; black concretion outside (HD 1791). Fig. 14, 1.

(b) Sherds from the rims of three or more vessels, probably similar but retaining the everted lip and internal bevel only; the diameter of one is about 9 in. One sherd contains a fragment of a steatite urn still retaining its sooty outer surface (HD 1790, 1792, 1793). Fig. 14, 2-3.

(c) Sherd from the shoulder of a vessel, probably the same form (HD 1797) (from the ash layer in the court outside the entrance). Fig. 14, 8.

(d) Rim sherd, probably of similar type, but harder ware with smaller grits (HD 1795).

(e) Three wall sherds, ring-built, of similar but well-fired pot with orange outer surface (HD 1798) (from ground level in the forecourt).

2. (a) Rim sherd, similar gritty ware to 1 (d), fairly hard, brown-black; it seems to have had a deep slightly everted lip (HD 1796) (from recess no. 2). Fig. 14, 6.

(b) Wall sherd of similar but thinner ware (HD 1799) (from the peat ash in front of the stub of the horn).

3. Rim sherd with flat edge, probably from a more or less straight-sided vessel, hard black ware with grits mainly of steatite (HD 1794). Fig. 14, 5.

4. Sherds of hard, generally thinner, highly steatitic ware with some mica, dark grey, 0.3 to 0.35 in. thick, often with black concretion outside.

(a) Part of a vessel, somewhat contracted towards the rim (the exact angle is uncertain); the walls become somewhat thinner towards the rim which is slightly thickened at the very edge; a groove along the internal bevel and five shallow grooves on the shoulder; rim diameter about 7 in. (HD 1800). Fig. 14, 4.

(b) Two rim sherds with internal bevel (HD 1801). Fig. 14, 7.

(c) Wall sherds of the same ware, showing ring-building (HD 1802).

The ware of group 1 is of the same general tradition as certain wares from other Shetland sites, the Benie Hoose, the Standing Stones of Yoxie, Ness of Gruting, and ultimately Stanydale temple.<sup>1</sup> Some of the Punds Water sherds are certainly primary. Sherds 1 (a) and (b) are very like Benie Hoose sherds 4 (d) (figs. 7, 14 and 16) in fabric, and, apparently, in shape also, for all seem to come

<sup>1</sup> Finds from the Benie Hoose, P.S.A.S., xciv (1960-1), 40-45; from the Standing Stones of Yoxie, *ibid.*, 45; from Ness of Gruting, *ibid.*, lxxxix (1955-6), 381-97; Stanydale, lxxxix (1949-50), 194-7.

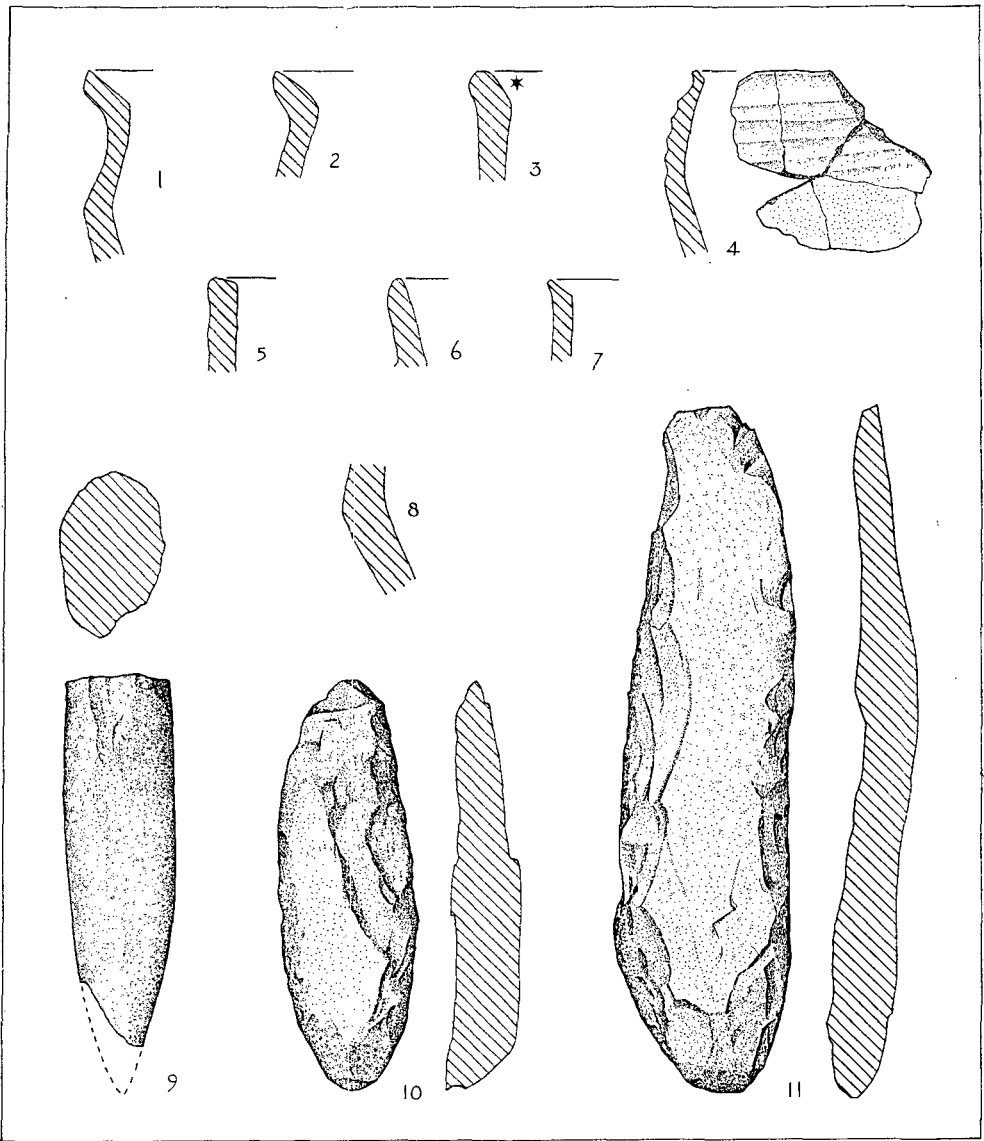


FIG. 14. Finds from Punds Water and Isleburgh Cairns. Star indicates rim sherd where angle is certain ( $\frac{1}{2}$ )

from vessels with somewhat everted lips, concave necks with shoulders below. Poor versions of this shape are Benie Hoose 4 (*b*) and (*c*) and Standing Stones of Yoxie (figs. 8, 4), but these are made in a steatitic and therefore harder fabric. At Ness of Gruting a group of unstratified sherds (HD 1580-1), including a much damaged rim, were quite different from the main mass of pottery, and included in the published report among the Iron Age sherds<sup>1</sup>; these now seem to be part of the same tradition.

<sup>1</sup> *P.S.A.S.*, LXXXIX (1955-6), 391, group XIII.



More remotely, most of the pottery from Stanydale temple, though in general more friable and thicker, belongs to this tradition too; in particular the fabric of one group of sherds (EO 794) from the floor level of one of the interior recesses may be compared with the Punds Water sherds. But the shape of these vessels is dissimilar or unknown.

The sherds of group 4 present a contrast to group 1. This hard, highly steatitic, relatively thin ware is similar to the steatitic sherds among groups 3 and 4 from the Benie Hoose. In shape the Punds Water sherd HD 1801 may be compared with Benie Hoose (figs. 7, 3 and 5).

#### STONE IMPLEMENTS

The stone types are very similar to those found previously by Mr Calder at Shetland house-sites, and reference is made to previous publications where some comment on the tools has already been offered.

1. Pointed sandstone bars, probably plough shares.

(a) The broken point of one of these bars, the symmetrical tip pecked on one side, worn smooth (except where fractured) on the other (HD 1803). Fig. 14, 9.

(b) Point of another, the surface pecked, but the tip broken; subsequently used as a hammer-stone (HD 1805).

(c) Roughly chipped bar, 8.7 in. long, broken at one end, the other end assymmetrically pointed by subsequent use as a pounder (HD 1807). See Ness of Gruting VII, p. 396, Benie Hoose, 4.

2. Cylindrical stone, 6 in. long, 2 in. in diameter, pecked to shape though somewhat uneven due to flake scars (HD 1804).

3. Handle of a pecked sandstone implement, 4 in. long, oval in cross-section, broken off at its junction with the implement; probably from a club-like implement (HD 1806). Compare Benie Hoose, 8.

4. Four rough flattish implements of various rocks, roughly chipped to shape, probably originally with fairly sharp edges, but fractured and abraded by use (HD 1808-11). The type is common at house-sites of the second millennium in Shetland, compare Benie Hoose, 4, and Ness of Gruting, VII.

5. Roughly chipped lump of fine-grain rock, the ends and one side abraded by hammering (HD 1812).

6. Chip from a slate implement, one face smooth with light scratches from use; probably from a cleaver (1813). Slate implements, mainly knives and cleavers, were found in quantity in the lowest Late Bronze Age levels at Jarlshof,<sup>1</sup> and a small number of implements came from the middens below, but only one fragment of a slate implement has been found at any of the houses dug by Mr Calder, i.e. at the Benie Hoose. At this site, however, pieces of cleavers, similar to those from Jarlshof but made of sandstone, were recovered. (See Benie Hoose, 7 and 8.)

7. Three pieces of pumice, of different textures, smoothed and grooved by use (HD 1814-16). Some lumps of pumice, which have been used as abraders, are normally found at prehistoric Shetland dwelling-sites.

## PART II: NEOLITHIC HOUSES

In *P.S.A.S.* for 1955-6 a total of 60 house sites are enumerated and briefly described<sup>2</sup>; this number includes 3 which have been excavated and a mention of 1 at Islesburgh which at that time had not. The latter has since been completely uncovered and

<sup>1</sup> Hamilton, J. R. C., *Excavations at Jarlshof, Shetland* (1956), 12, 15, 26.

<sup>2</sup> *P.S.A.S.*, LXXXIX (1955-6), 340 ff.

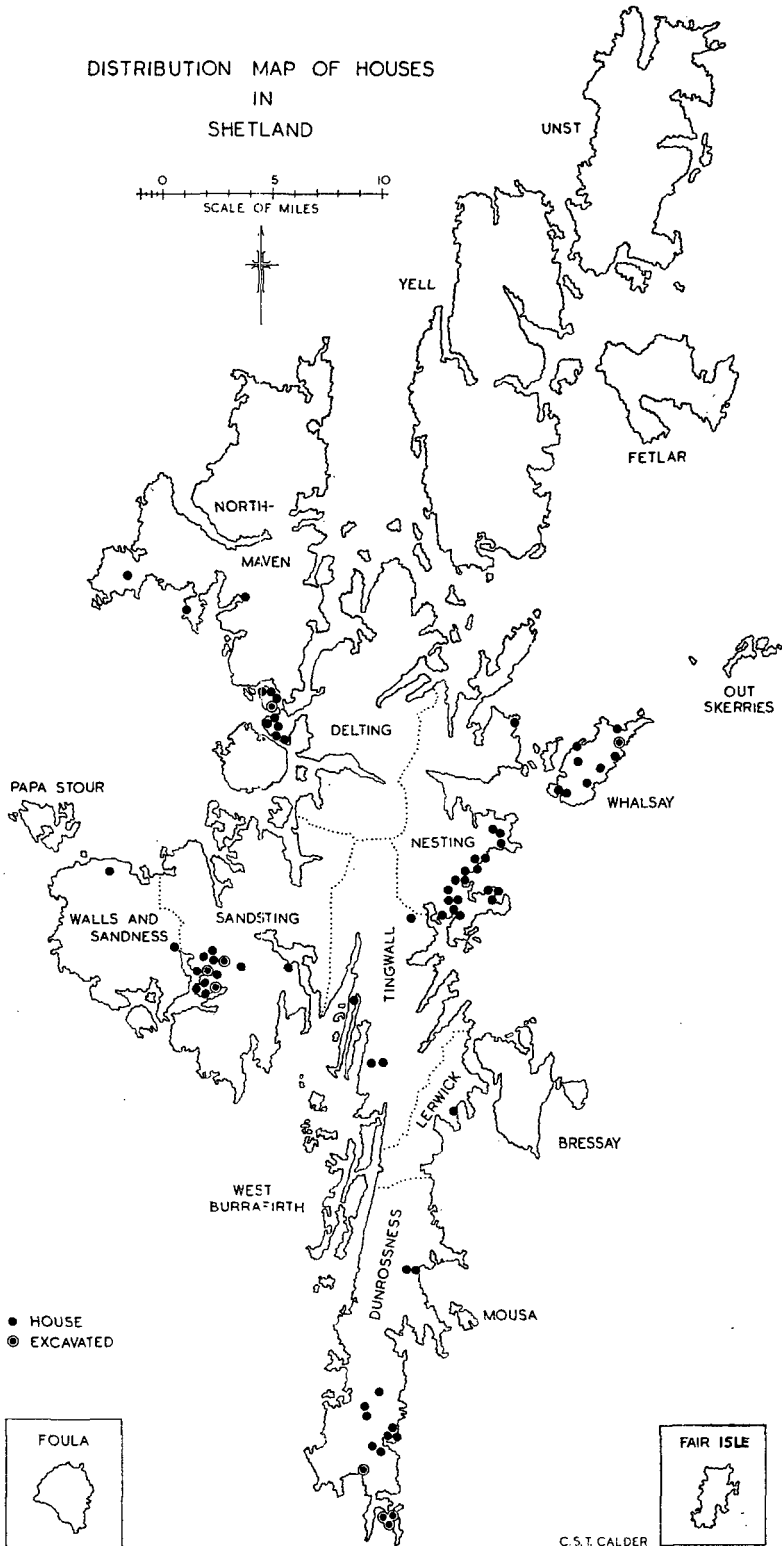


FIG. 15. Distribution map of Neolithic houses

is described below along with notices of the sites of later discoveries which bring the revised total up to 74; all are spotted on the Distribution Map (fig. 15).

Although definite remains are visible at each site no house seems to have been recognised or recorded before 1949 when the first one was excavated at Stanydale.<sup>1</sup> With the exception of the Benie Hoose which, however, is singular in architectural implications and purpose,<sup>2</sup> none is known by any specific place-name, either in the Norse tongue, local dialect or on the O.S. maps. Thus it may be inferred generally that, even before the Norsemen arrived, the house sites were already so old, ruinous and forgotten as to be deemed unworthy of notice or name.

#### *Islesburgh, Northmaven*

About 120 yds. W. of the cairn on the south shore of Islesburgh<sup>3</sup> a 'plantie-crub'<sup>4</sup> overlies an earlier building already reported on as the stead of a Stone Age house.<sup>5</sup> Digging has since confirmed this classification but only partial excavations could be undertaken as the operations were limited and impeded by the intrusive crub which, presumably, had been erected with stones robbed from the site. Attention was mainly confined to a segment of the house lying just clear of the north side of the crub and here in a stony, grass-covered bank a length of curved walling was exposed. It measured from 7 to 8½ ft. in thickness and was stripped down to two bottom courses of masonry. This trace of structure and the continuance of the banks around a hollow central area suggested a typical house-plan of oval shape (fig. 16) measuring over all about 52 by 42 ft. on the respective axes. In the exposed portion of the wall at a point that must have been the middle of the inner end of the chamber there was a small and well-built semicircular recess, about 3 ft. in diameter, with each jamb of its opening formed by an upright boulder. In the accumulated soil inside the crub a hole was dug to a depth of 2½ ft. when a paved floor was encountered. On it rested a very large boulder, broken at one end, which had seen much use as a trough-quern since the action of rubbing and grinding of grain had worn out a bowl to a depth of 11½ in. The floor slabs also acted as covering-stones to a well-built stone-lined drain which measured 11 in. wide by 6 in. deep and ran through the centre of the house on the line of its longer axis. The operations yielded a piece of the wall of a steatitic basin, a nondescript fragment of steatitic pottery, three pieces of pumice, one utilised, and about a score of the usual rude stone implements (fig. 14, 10-11).

On a slight terrace in front of the house there are four well-set earthfast stones, on the line of the crest, which would appear to be the remains of a small field annexe. Also at distances from the house varying from 12 yds. on the N. to some 25 yds. on E. and W. respectively and 30 yds. to the shore-banks on the S. the site is surrounded by a now ruinous boundary-wall of uncommon strength (Pl. X, 2). It measures from 4 to 5 ft. in thickness and still rises at the better-preserved parts to a height of

<sup>1</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*, xciv (1960-1), 31 ff.

<sup>3</sup> *supra*, p. 45, article 3.

<sup>4</sup> A drystone dyke enclosure for the raising of young vegetable plants.

<sup>5</sup> *P.S.A.S.*, lxxxix (1955-6), 363, article 1.

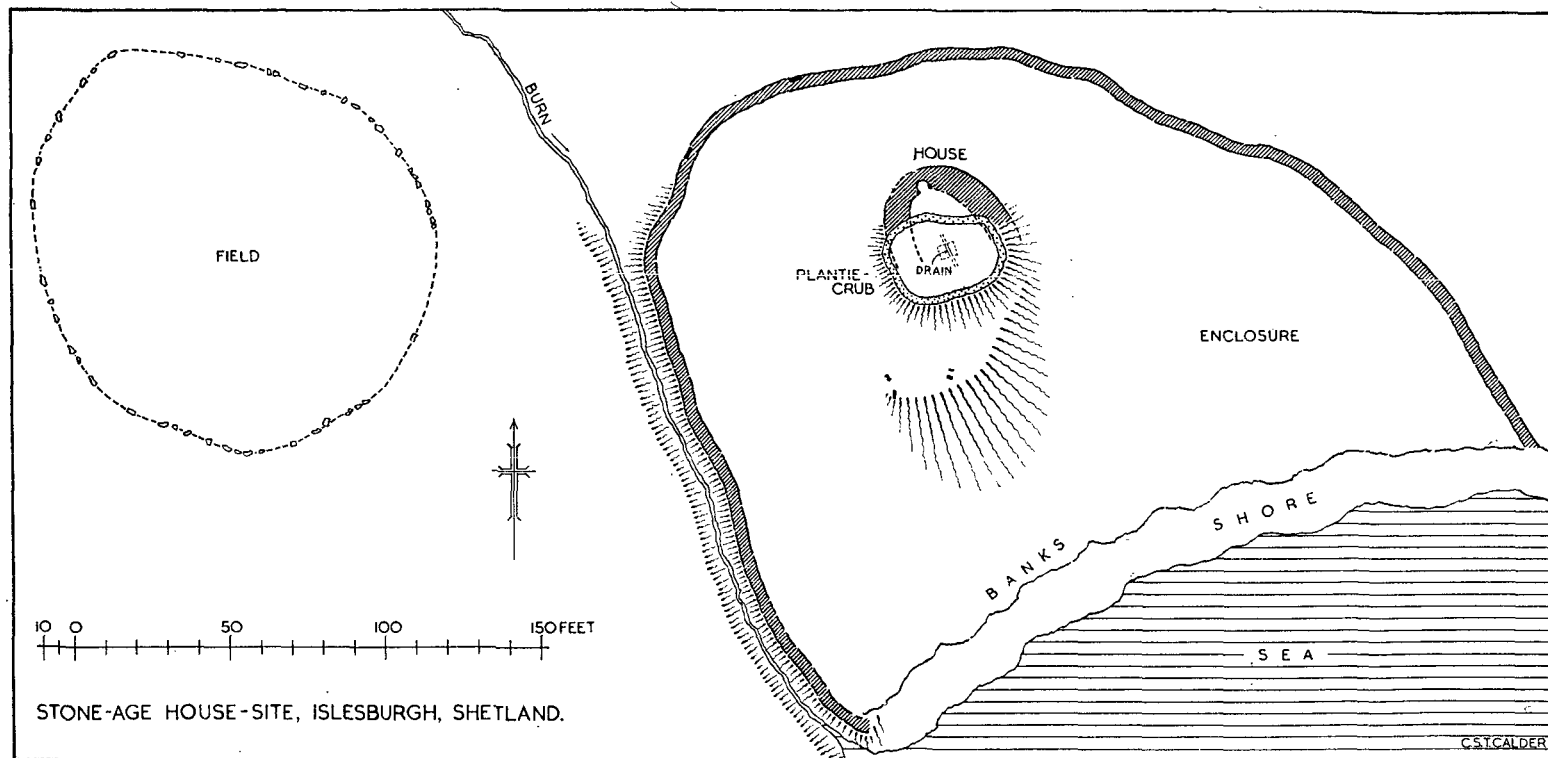


FIG. 16. Islesburgh house and enclosure: plan

much the same dimension. Its eastern limit approaches to within 60 yds. of the above-mentioned cairn and it encloses an area of fully  $\frac{3}{4}$  acre. The wall runs in a widely-spread U-shape with the mouth, 80 yds. in length, extending along the banks where no walling is now to be seen and if ever such existed it has long since been undermined and washed away by coast erosion. The site lies in a sheltered position at the foot of surrounding hill-slopes and that the enclosure has been cultivated is evidenced by its good pasture-land as well as by three old and large heaps of field-gathered stones which have been dumped just outside the wall on the NE. A burn running down the outside of the W. wall has ensured a convenient water-supply.

Some 25 yds. W. of this main enclosure, on the slopes known as Kat Field, there is a circular field, 130 ft. in diameter, which may belong to the period of the above complex and it has been bounded by a dyke which is now reduced to a single line of earthfast stones at intervals.

333685 unnoted

#### HOUSE-SITES ADDITIONAL TO THOSE ALREADY NOTED IN *P.S.A.S.*

##### 1. *Loch of Collaster, Sandness*

The house is situated  $\frac{2}{3}$  mile ESE. of Norby and about 175 yds. from the E. shore of the Loch of Collaster. It lies on gently sloping pasture land roughly 220 yds. NNE. of the croft of Langhill, and is well-defined by an oval mound, stony and grass-grown, with a hollow interior (fig. 17). On the outside and inside of this feature a considerable number of large boulders still exist and indicate the curved faces of the original walling of the house which contained only a single chamber. The site measures some 36 ft. in length by 31 ft. in breadth and the walling averages 9 ft. in thickness.

A gap facing the loch to the N. indicates the entrance and the opening converges inwardly between front and rear boulder jambs in a width of 4 ft. and 2 ft. 9 in. respectively over the length of a 9 ft. 6 in. passageway. Two large isolated boulders rising to a height of 2 ft. 4 in. and marked A and B on the sketch plan are set 5 ft. 6 in. apart and 3 ft. 5 in. in front of the entrance. It is not clear if these formed an extension of the passage or if they represent the remains of a porch. In the chamber, which follows the oval shape of the mound and is 13 ft. 6 in. in width with a probable length of 16 ft. 6 in., two other stones, C and D, are built radially to the wall-face and may have been the corner-stones of recessed compartments. The S. end is the more destroyed portion and the walling here may have been robbed more on this side to provide building-stones for 'plantie-crubs' erected about 50 and 100 yds. away in this direction.

A trace of enclosed fields on the SE. is shown by a few stones arranged close together in alignment with others at intervals. About 20 yds. to the SSW., the top of at least one grass-grown heap of field-gathered stones is visible above the present surface-level.

211572 unnoted

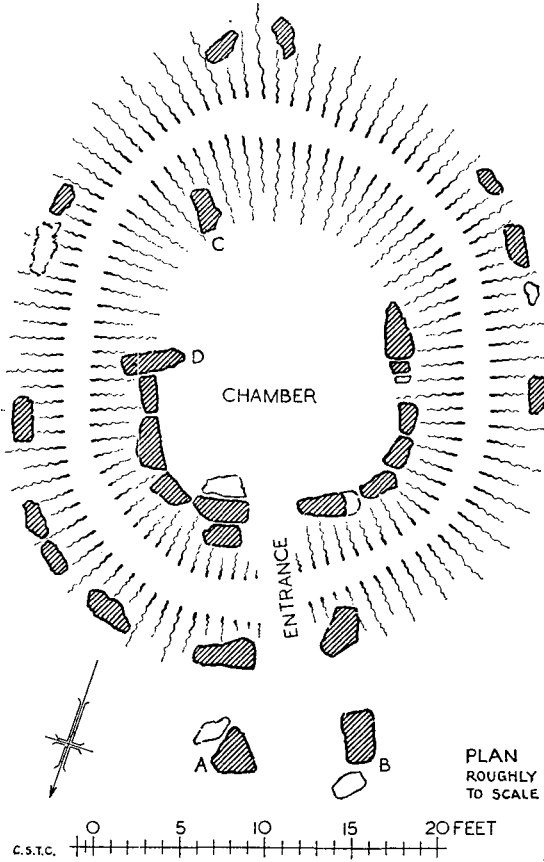


FIG. 17. House at Loch of Collaster: plan

## 2. *Black Water, Esha Ness*

On the moor about 500 yds. W. of the bifurcation of the Vinsgarth-Stennes road and on the slight sloping ground between the road and the Black Water on the N. side a structure has been revealed from under its covering of peat. It consists of an oval setting of large boulders with traceable alignments of the outer and inner faces of a wall  $7\frac{1}{2}$  ft. in thickness, on the N. and S. arcs. The hollowed interior generally associated with house-sites is not seen but in the space there is a mounded growth of virgin peat. It is strongly probable, however, that the remains are actually those of a neolithic house measuring approximately 40 by 36 ft. over all. There is no sign of an entrance which would have been situated at the lower end.

Some 30 yds. to the W. there is a small oval enclosure which may be connected with the above and it is formed by only a single line of large stones with gaps here and there between.

3. *Pund of Grevasand, Ness of Hillswick, Northmaven*

Almost 1 mile SW. of Hillswick and half-way between the Pund of Grevasand and the streamlet in the valley the site lies with the larger axis falling from W. to E. on sloping ground facing the NNE. A stony bank surrounds a deep hollow of oval shape and is typical of the remains of neolithic houses in Shetland. On the outside of the higher end, the bank rises 1 ft. above the present surface but on the inside the scarp is much deeper and the difference in the size is evidently due to the usual scooping-out of the interior to gain a more level bed for the floor of the chamber contained within. The axial dimensions of the house are respectively 40 ft. and 36 ft. over the walling which measured 6 ft. in thickness where best determinate on the N. and SSW. arcs. For the most part the exterior face could be well followed but there was only a faint trace here and there on the inside. At the lower end on the E. a gap in the bank suggested the entrance and there was a suspicion of a thickening of the S. side of the passageway but it may have been caused by the addition of some internal feature.

Extending in front of the entrance a rectangular enclosure bounded by earthen banks about 4 ft. in breadth and 1 ft. in height forms a small annexe. It projects 17 ft. 6 in. from the walling and has an extreme width of 19 ft. 2 in. over the banks but the purpose is obscure.

273760

4. *Quendale Bay, Dunrossness*

The site was excavated by Mr and Mrs Alan Rae and is reported in *Discovery and Excavation, Scotland* (1958), 34.

367207

5. *Near Loch of Browbreck, Dunrossness*

This house is sited a short distance to the W. of the Loch of Browbreck and W. of the house excavated by Dr Curle at Wiltrow, which by the way, was almost totally destroyed by soldiers during the Second World War. No measurements were taken during the brief visit when it was discovered by accident but the general surface indications and the dispositions of the stones were enough to suggest the usual type of neolithic house. From the house southwards, a large field enclosure could be made out in a curvilinear alignment of the foundation stones at intervals.

393146

6. *Near Benston, South Nesting*

Over a  $\frac{1}{4}$  mile to the NNE. of the township of Benston and to the E. of the Mount of Houlland there are the dilapidated remains of a neolithic house some 70 yds. to the S. of a peat road and within 100 yds. of a knowe locally called Whalsa Willie's Knowe. A shallow hollow is outlined within a stony bank which is much broken-down but still retains many large stones purposefully set though no true wall-faces are now to be seen. The longer axis, measuring 44 ft. over the bank lies in a direction E. to W. and transversely the dimension is about 40 ft. A

large trough-quern was found in the interior. The house is surrounded by the remains of a curvilinear dyke at an average distance of say 20 yds.

464544

7. *Loch of Semblister (Aithsting), Sandsting*

Just beyond the high ridge and conspicuous knoll on the E. side of the Loch of Semblister and  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile SE. of the township of that name there are the remains of a neolithic house set eccentrically within the western arc of a large field. Also within the field some 12 yds. to the E. of the house there is a setting of large stones which may be the remains of a small enclosure of about 17 ft. in diameter. Outside the boundary on the top of the knoll some 30 yds. to the W. of the house there are large stones in a heap, spread over an area having a diameter of 13 ft., which is probably the debris of a small cairn.

The house lies on sloping ground and is defined by a grass-grown, stony bank which presumably is all that is left of a built wall. It encircles the oval hollow of a scooped-out interior space but there is no definite face-work either on the outside or the inside to indicate a true wall thickness. The overall dimensions on the NS. and EW. axes, however, measure  $34\frac{1}{2}$  ft. and  $40\frac{1}{2}$  ft. respectively. In the western side of the hollow three large weatherworn stones protrude from 9 in. to 2 ft. above the turf. These are placed  $7\frac{1}{2}$  ft. apart and extend at right angles to the presumed wall-face. In this position they would seem to have been used as the radial partitions or corner-stones of large recesses opening off the original chamber. A depression in the bank on the ESE. suggests the point of entrance.

The field is also of oval shape and it measures 240 ft. from N. to S. and 208 ft. from E to W. It has been bounded by a dyke of which many foundation stones still survive and a length of its curved alignment appears to die out in the mound on which the cairn sits.

339497

8. *Ward of Hoorin, Whalsay*

The site is described in the *Inventory of Shetland*, 87, art. 1335, as the remains of an indeterminate construction but on a re-examination of the ruins it is here concluded that it should come under the classification of Neolithic Houses.

It lies underneath a destroyed and disused 'plantie-crub' on a slope called the 'roonies' and is situated about 50 yds. from the shore. There is the usual oval hollow within a bank measuring externally 41 and 33 ft. respectively along the axes. The house seems to have been enclosed by a field-dyke running down on each side to the water's edge. Part of the inner wall-face on the N. side is visible and rude stone implements have been found on trenching the interior.

Some 55 yds. to the N., in the same field, there are the remains of another construction of large set stones and at one place a squarish recess appears to survive. This building, however, is much too ruinous to express any definite opinion as to its purpose but it is probably as old as the house itself.

583666



9. *Orbister, Northmaven*

To the SW. of Orbister and near the shore towards the head of Hamar Voe there is an oval hollowed formation within two curved alignments of stone which evidently represents the outer and inner faces of a surrounding wall now greatly denuded. It bears a strong superficial likeness to a neolithic house-site which it probably is.

313767

The following houses in Whalsay are reported by Mr J. Stewart:

10. *Loch of Huxter*<sup>1</sup>

This is an oval house measuring 42 by 33 ft. Two other sites recorded are not specifically described as houses.

561623

11 and 12. *Little Ness, Sandwick*<sup>2</sup>

The constructions here are also recorded in the *Inventory*, 88, art. 1336 as 'Enclosures'. Two oval houses are noted lying 42 paces apart; the one measures 40 by 32 ft. and the other 43 by 32½ ft. Associated with them are many traces of field-dykes.

539617

13. *Vatsford, Traewick*<sup>3</sup>

A small, oval house with an outshot of 8 ft. across at a lower level.

571634

14. *Houll, Roe Sound, Delting* (see Pl. X, 1)

The site was reported as that of a large house by Mrs A. Robertson of Lerwick and visited by Mr R. B. K. Stevenson who accepts her identification. The remains are situated close to the shore a short distance W. of the old croft at Houll on the extreme end of a tongue of land jutting into Roe Sound at a point to the NW. of Crog Holm and to the NE. of the neolithic houses on the Ness of Culsetter beside the loch of Bays Water.<sup>4</sup>

The house has been erected on a very steep slope and for this reason the wall on the W. (lower) side has been built 14 ft. 3 in. thick and the bank of wall debris still survives to a maximum height of 9 ft., while on the diametrically opposite (upper) side it is only 8 ft. thick and the bank almost merges into the higher ground.

Some foundation stones of the original walling survive and indicate a squat, sub-oval plan with dimensions from side to side overall varying from 60 to 72 ft., containing a characteristic but outside hollow measuring in one place 50 ft. across. The doorway may have been to the SE. where the bank has been completely destroyed.

To the S. there is a slight indication of a semicircular annexe or yard extending

<sup>1</sup> *Discovery and Excavation, Scotland* (1955), 31.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.* (1956), 26.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.* (1957), 34.

<sup>4</sup> *P.S.A.S.*, LXXXIX (1955-6), 364-6.

from the wall of the house; on each side of this there is a boat-noust and overlying part of it a mound, formed subsequent to the main structure, which incorporates a small cist.

335663

Note. Doubtful house-sites at Ward of Clett are omitted.

### PART III: BURNT MOUNDS

In outward appearance burnt mounds (Pl. XI, 1-3) are not unlike some earth and grass-covered burial cairns for which they have at times been mistaken<sup>1</sup> and both kinds without discrimination, where marked on the O.S. Maps have been called Knowes or Tumuli. The name 'Burnt Mounds' does not mean, as the term would suggest, that the substance of their composition has actually been burned *in situ*; it arises because the mounds consist mainly of smallish stones, fractured and discoloured by the action and application of heat, which having served an original purpose have been thrown aside in the formation of a heap by gradual accumulation. Also to a lesser degree there is a mixture of earth and charcoal throughout.

Regarding their origin and purpose there was a spice of uncertainty even as late as 1946 when the *Inventory of Shetland* was published. Then it was only thought 'safe to conclude that the mounds were in some way connected with a cookery process in which stones were used as a medium for applying heat to foodstuffs. Beyond this rather meagre conclusion it is, however, hardly possible to go in the present state of our knowledge.'<sup>2</sup> That proposition so far is correct but it can now be asserted positively, as the result of comparatively recent excavations and experiments in Ireland,<sup>3</sup> that the mounds are really the tangible indications of communal outdoor cooking-places, or kitchens for the roasting and boiling of meat by a system involving the use of heated stones as above suggested. The stones are subjected to high temperatures on a hearth or in fireboxes and also to dousing in bringing water to the boil and in repeated usage they lose their efficiency. On becoming wasters they are discarded and dumped in a heap close to, but clear of, operations round the fireplace and in this way a mound begins to grow. Obviously the finished development in size will depend on the length of time the culinary industry remains active and also on the number of persons who have to be catered for. The mounds vary greatly in size and range from a very small gather to others of very large dimensions. The biggest in Shetland is one at Vassetter on the Fair Isle which covers approximately 122 by 88 ft. and attains a height of 10 ft. In shape they are frequently aligned on a slight arc with the depression on the inner side clearly suggesting that the thrown-up material radiated from a central point - namely the hearth - in the hollow side where the burning of the stones had been performed. The sites of these communal kitchens usually lie beside a loch, stream or well, naturally to have an

<sup>1</sup> Brøgger, *Ancient Emigrants* (1929), 108 ff. Asta, Grista, Breibister, Brouster and Beosetter are all Burnt Mounds and not grave-mounds of Early Viking settlers as Brøgger suggests.

<sup>2</sup> *Inventory of Orkney and Shetland*, I, 40.

<sup>3</sup> *J.R.S.A.I.*, LXXXIV (1954), pt. II, 105 ff.

essential and convenient water-supply at hand. 'Similar deposits of burnt material have been found in other parts of Scotland as also in East Anglia, Wales and Ireland, some of the Welsh examples containing stonework "hearths" and some of the Irish ones hearth-like constructions of stone or wooden troughs.'<sup>1</sup> But 'no mounds of this character have been reported from any Scandinavian country',<sup>2</sup> although in Norway, Iceland and Greenland the process of heating stones in the houses of the people was a well-known practice in the cooking of food. Even today in many parts of the world the method of preparing food by heated stones is still employed by primitive communities who have not yet progressed beyond the Stone Age. In Ireland burnt mound sites were dated by finds and pollen analysis from the early Bronze Age into medieval times.

In Shetland about a score of burnt mounds have been utterly destroyed and swept away during agricultural or road-making operations, and some have become partly destroyed by being dug into. None, however, has been thoroughly and scientifically excavated and examined but from record or hearsay it is known that in a few which have been disturbed slab constructions associated with the mounds have been exposed. In eight instances they have been referred to as cist- or box-like formations which may happen to convey an impression of use as slab-graves but the terms are also aptly descriptive of the fireboxes and also of the tanks necessary for the water to be heated. As half of the cists were provided with cover-stones and since urns were also found in as many cases it is probable that these at least were graves but in being located in a burnt mound instead of in the usual type of burial cairn the probability is that the interments were insertions thus indicating that the mound itself was of a still earlier construction. Other relics recorded are a holed whetstone, a large blue, glass bead striped with white, fragments of pottery and several rude stone implements. The graves, if such they be, the whetstone and bead as well as the implements could all be well assigned to the Bronze Age.

No Viking material has ever turned up in burnt mounds nor have hearths been recorded from Shetland but from the presence of the latter in Irish examples they may be inferred. Surviving traditions in Scotland imply that the sites were those of outdoor cooking-places or deer-roasts. That they were so is more significantly supported by the 'Irish traditions of the use of similar mounds by the Fena as cooking-places'.<sup>3</sup>

The following descriptions are of Burnt Mounds discovered in Shetland since the publication of the Inventory:

1. *Ward Hill, Dunrossness*

About 200 yds. W. of the main road near the Ward Hill and in the fork made by two streamlets there is a crescentic mound of burnt stones which shows signs of structure in a few set-stones on the N. and S. margins. It measures 55 by 29 ft.

app. 388138

<sup>1</sup> *Inventory of Orkney and Shetland*, I, 39-40.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*, 40. <sup>3</sup> *ibid.*

2. *'Wal' Knowe, Skellister, Nesting*

A grass-covered semi-oval bank, 12 ft. wide and open to the N. is set on the shoulder of a slope at the bottom of which there is a well, 25 ft. to N. On the longer axis it measures 36 ft. over all.

46855<sup>I</sup>3. *Brunswell, Skellister, Nesting*

Known also as the South Well, the mound forms a small curving bank, 15 ft. across, on the N. side of the road near Skellister and is 25 ft. in length by 3 ft. in height. At a distance of 28 ft. from its N. end there is a well.

app. 4655

4. *Benston, Nesting*

This again is a semi-oval bank, from 12 to 18 ft. wide, which is set on marshy ground to the N. of the Loch of Benston and SW. of the old school at Garth. The bank rises about 4 ft. on the outside and 1½ ft. on the inside and its length over the ends is 49 ft.

464543

5. *Vadill of Garth, Nesting*

The mound lies to the E. of Garth towards the inner end of the Vadill of Garth and, at high-water, the larger portion of itself is separated from the smaller part left on the shore, by a channel 3 ft. deep. The break here has, no doubt, been due to tidal action and erosion. The mound is large and seems to have been about 90 ft. in diameter originally.

47354<sup>I</sup>6. *Orbister, Northmaven*

About 170 yds. ESE. of the house of Orbister, above the site of a chapel in a field called Benigirth and 200 yds. from the shore at Hamar Voe, the owner cut through a mound of burnt stones in the making of a new drain. A burn runs down the steep slope alongside and the mound measures 30 ft. from N. to S. and 24 ft. from E. to W. and about 3 ft. in height.

313767

7. *Tangwick, Eshaness, Northmaven*

The mound is on the inner part of the shore of Tang Wick and formerly lay beside a small loch now drained into the sea. It has become much destroyed by the wash of the sea during heavy gales. Within memory there was exposed a tank-like structure with a drain, all of slabs on edge, running seaward out of the mound and a few surviving slabs *in situ* testify the likelihood of this local information being correct. The mound is now littered with thrown-up seaworn stones but it seems still to measure 53 by 32 ft. and 5 ft. high.

234775

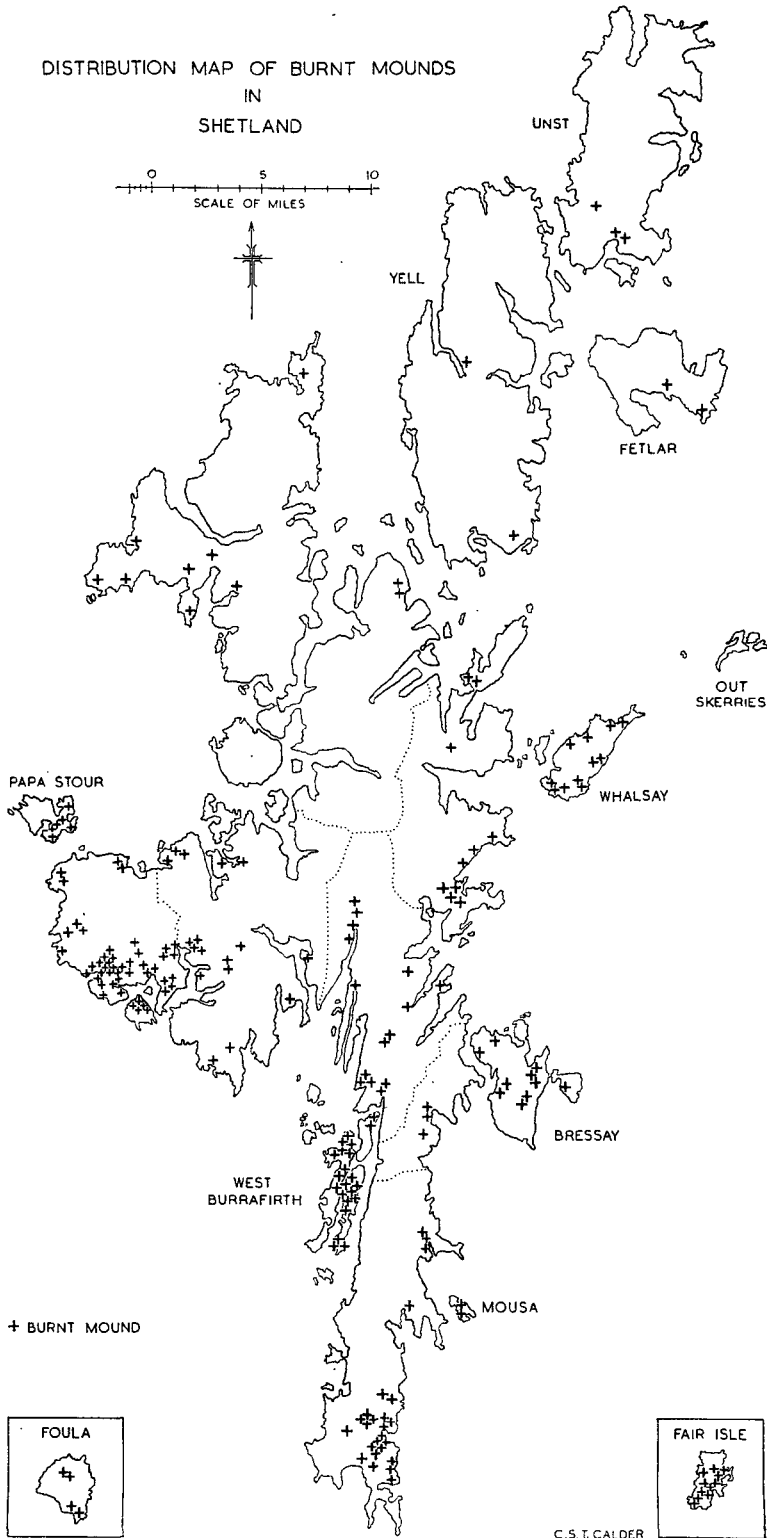


FIG. 18. Distribution map of burnt mounds

The above seven sites, additional to those enumerated in the list below, bring the total of burnt mounds up to 200 and all are marked on the Distribution Map (fig. 18). Only a tenth of the number are particularised by a distinctive name.

TABLE II: BURNT MOUNDS

d. = diameter in feet

h. = height in feet

Dimensions and remarks are taken mostly from the descriptions in the *Inventory*

<i>Map Reference</i> (code HU)	<i>Inventory</i> <i>Number</i>	<i>Parish and Name</i>	<i>Dimensions</i> <i>in feet</i>	<i>Remarks</i>
BRESSAY				
491440	1090	Beosetter	70 × 42½ × 6 h.	Cist-like structure exposed; pottery and steatitic sherds
493401	1090	'Will Houll'	54 d. 7½ h.	Structure and perforated stone
479425	1092	Cruester	65 d. 5¼ h.	Bee-hive cell, steatitic pottery and a well
521421	1093	Cullingsburgh		
519413	1094	Brough		
520410	1095	Ullin's Water		Destroyed
514395	1096	Wadbister		
514394	1097	do.		
499408	1098	Gunhall		
539402	1111	Voss		
DELTING				
435772	1124	Brough		
436766	1125	do.		
DUNROSSNESS				
401158	1161	Dalsetter	42 × 24 3½ h.	Short cist-like structure
405125	1162	North Exnaboe I do. II	40 d. 5 h. 29 × 25 2 h.	Passage and chamber
389127	1163	Quendale	45 × 25 6 h.	Placed stones visible
429300	1164	Starkigarth I do. II		
437288	1165	Will Houll		Destroyed
422246	1166	Swinister		
401181	1167	Knowe of Willol		
407179	1168	Braefield		
393165	1169	Skelberry		Group of four
401158	1170	Dalsetter I		
401158	1171	Dalsetter II		
377155	1172	Bakkasetter		
399146	1173	Southvoe		
	1174	Southvoe		
	1175	Southvoe I		
		Southvoe II		

<i>Map Reference (code HU)</i>	<i>Inventory Number</i>	<i>Parish and Name</i>	<i>Dimensions in feet</i>	<i>Remarks</i>
	1176	Southvoe I		
		Southvoe II		
406116	1177	Punds (Fair Isle)		
212716	1195	Gilsetter	30 × 23 3½ h.	1 clay and 1 steatite urn
207715	1196	Vaasetter	122 × 80 10 h.	Largest mound in Shetland
208713	1197	'The Rippack'	50 × 40 3 h.	Cist-like structure and stone im- plements
217725	1198	Burn of Furse I Burn of Furse II Burn of Furse III		
207721	1199	Sukka Moor		
207716	1200	Pund I Pund II		
206710	1201	Stonybreck		Destroyed
203706	1202	Hool (Mousa)		
459203	1207	Mid Field		
459237	1208	Broch		
FETLAR				
654888	1221	Swainkatofts		
635908	1222	Selli Geos		
LERWICK				
443385	1249	The Kings Knowe		
441393	1250	Wick		
439368	1251	Danwall (East Burra)		
375326	1263	Norbister		Group of seven
378318	1264	North House		
372300	1275	Symbister I do. II do. III (West Burra)		? West Burra in <i>Inventory</i>
375338	1270	Bumont do.		Large group of small mounds not spotted on map.
383367	1271	Bruna Ness		Group of five
369355	1272	Brandsiclett		
379346	1273	'Gulver'		
373330	1274	Grunasound		
NESTING				
483698	1291	West Lunna Voe		
483695	1292	do.		
485641	1293	Loch of Garths		

<i>Map Reference (code HU)</i>	<i>Inventory Number</i>	<i>Parish and Name</i>	<i>Dimensions in feet</i>	<i>Remarks</i>
493582	1294	Loch of Kirkabister		
482574	1295	Brettabister		
474565	1296	Scudillswick (Whalsay)		
565656	1324	Oo Knowe		
552647	1325	Infant's Gaird		
585665	1326	The Mutter Knowe		
593666	1327	East Loch of Skaw		
579640	1328	Knowe of Willerhoull		
581640	1329	Isbister		Destroyed
564617	1330	Huxter I do. II		do.
545616	1331	Whirlie		Destroyed but stone-cists, urns and stone implements are recorded
538617	1332	Loch of Sandwick		
539616	1333	do.		
NORTHMAVEN				
279785	1369	Burnside		Destroyed but a cist and its cover- stones remain
368925	1370	Lower Loch of Setter		
297797	1371	Assater		
278756	1372	Bight of Niddister		
214783	1373	Loch of Breckon		
240805	1374	Hamna Voe		
SANDSTING				
299505	1448	Sefster	80 d. 9 h.	Well, structure and fragments of pottery
298438	1449	Wester Skeld	40 × 34 5½ h.	Well or box-like structure
258580	1450	West Burra Firth I do. II		
258574	1451	Engamoor		
296573	1452	Nounsbrough I do. II		
309574	1453	Voe of Clousta		
358504	1454	Tresta Voe		
345473	1455	Sand		
282429	1456	Wester Wick		
299504	1457	Sefster		
276492	1458	Gruting I do. II do. III		
275508	1459	Hestaford		
TINGWALL				
393526	1511	Steinswell		Destroyed



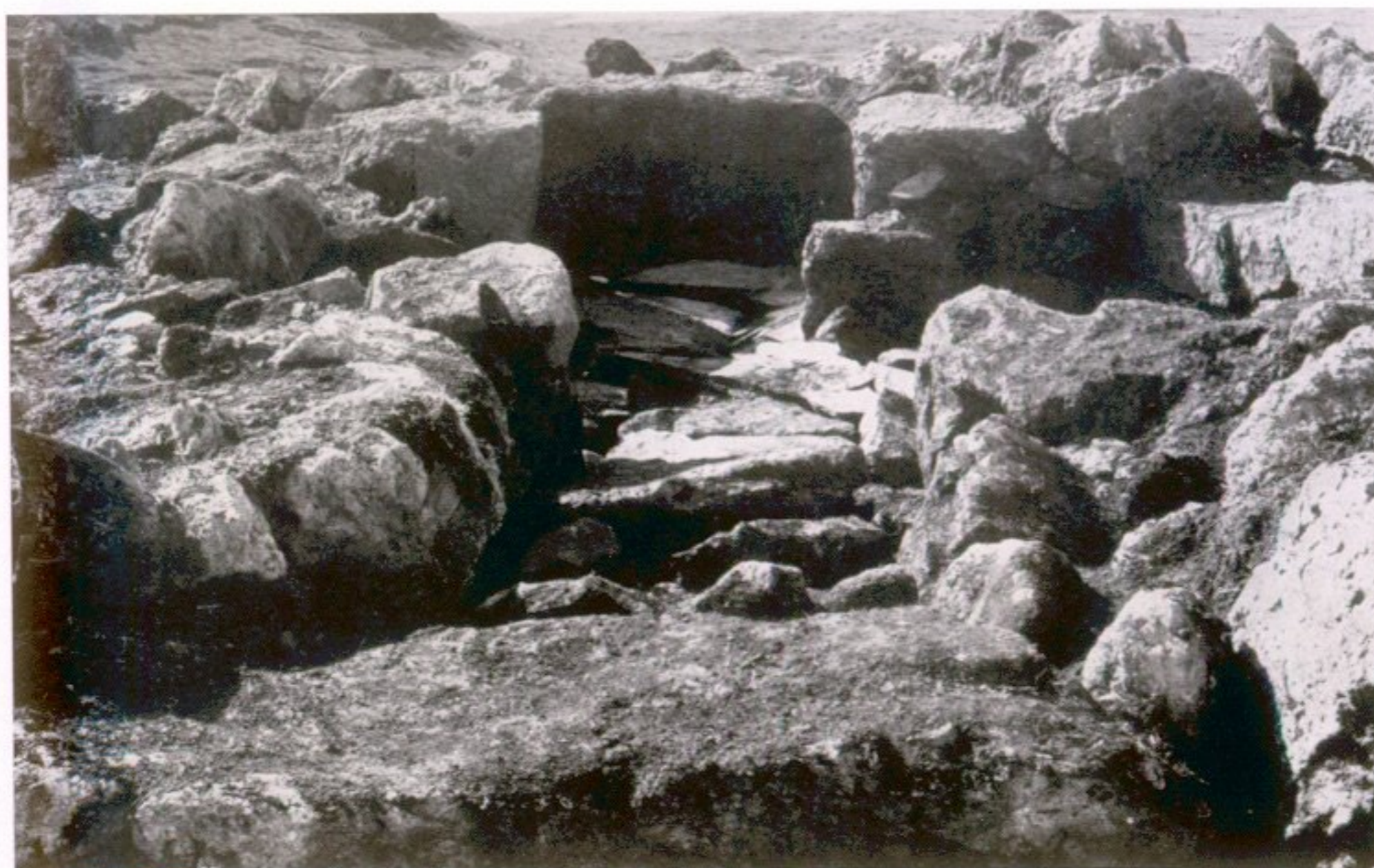
<i>Map Reference</i> (code HU)	<i>Inventory</i> <i>Number</i>	<i>Parish and Name</i>	<i>Dimensions</i> <i>in feet</i>	<i>Remarks</i>
395543	1511	Flemington		Destroyed, but urn recorded
395534	1511	Housegord	30 d.	Urn; holed whetstone; bead
391516	1512	Nestaness	30 d. 3 h.	Pottery and implements
395410	1513	Burwick I		Destroyed, cist
		do. II		Destroyed, stone coffin
		do. III	30 d.	Destroyed
391477	1514	Churchton		
428486	1515	Loch of Vatster		
455480	1516	Houbie		
426561	1517	Swinister		
415444	1518	Grista I		
		do. II		
412411	1519	Loch of Asta		
409403	1520	Upper Scalloway (Trondra)		
400385	1532	Scarfataing		
401382	1533	South Ayre		
UNST				
	1569	'Fustrie's Knowe'		Known only from record
605018	1570	Mailand		Destroyed
609014		Murrister		Destroyed
586041	1571	Underhoull		
WALLS AND SANDNESS				
172564	1626	Muckle Brownie's Knowe		
173568	1627	Little Brownie's Knowe		
220568	1628	Brenwell I		
		do. II		
260519	1629	Brouster		
249510	1630	Brunatwatt I		
		do. II		
250489	1631	Loch of Grunnavoe		
252487	1632	Grunnavoe I		
		do. II		
252476	1633	Whitesness		
246495	1634	Foratwatt		
245495	1635	Loch of Foratwatt I		
		do. II		
240494	1636	Loch of Kirkigarth		
	1637	do.		
237502	1638	Bardister		
237515	1639	Noral Knowe		
230514	1640	Clodisdale		
223496	1641	Burriland		
224494	1642	Houll		
220497	1643	The Green Knowe		
218495	1644	Breibister		
218494	1645	Brindister		

<i>Map Reference</i> (code HU)	<i>Inventory</i> <i>Number</i>	<i>Parish and Name</i>	<i>Dimensions</i> <i>in feet</i>	<i>Remarks</i>
215489	1646	Stanesland		
223479	1647	Burrastow		Destroyed
204479	1648	Littlure		
202486	1649	Scarvister		
201491	1650	Hevdigarth		
211504	1651	Burn of Setter I		
		do. II		
211505	1652	do. I		
		do. II		
212506	1653	do.		
205505	1654	Lainwall Knowe		
210507	1655	Whirlwill Knowe		
206512	1656	Tunigarth		
195508	1657	Clothie		
199497	1658	Tully Knowe		
195496	1659	Green Knowe		
174508	1660	Wats Ness		
194528	1661	Quildrin Knowe (Foula)		
960405	1683	Harrier		
961402	1684	Wilse		
968378	1685	Whirlie Knowe		
966371	1686	Biggesters (Papa Stour)		? Cist-like cavity
184614	1697	Little Hoo Field		
173602	1698	New Setter I		
		do. II		
171602	1699	Setter		
184599	1700	'Little Heogan'		
173594	1701	Whirlie (Vaila)		
224469	1709	Head of Voe		
227469	1710	Vaila House I		
		do. II		
227468	1711	do. I		
		do. II		
YELL				
480936	1728	Brocken Burn		Group; indefinite, destroyed (one only spotted on map)
516800	1729	Kettlester		

*The Society is indebted to H.M. Treasury for a grant towards the cost of publishing this paper.*



1. March Cairn: E. corner of NE. façade



2. The same: passage and chamber from E.

CALDER: CAIRNS



1. Cairn, Punds Water II: benched recess No. 1



2. The same: façade showing entrance and angle of N. horn



1. Cairn, Punds Water II; benched recess No. 3



2. The same: benched recess No. 4



3. The same: benched recess No. 2



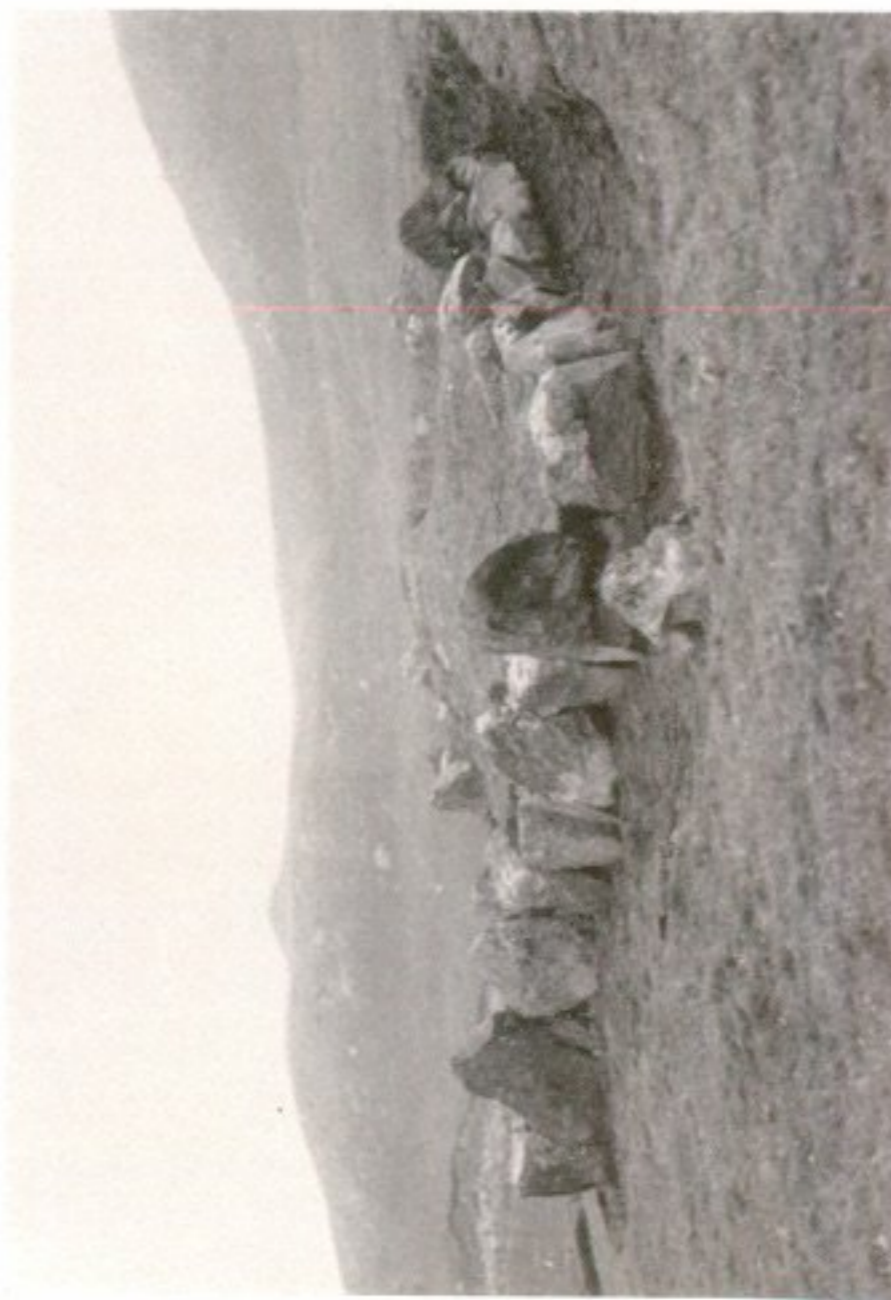
4. The same: benched recess No. 5



1. Cairn, Islesburgh: NE. end of chamber showing bench



2. The same: entrance to chamber



3. The same: view from ENE, showing concave façade



4. The same: view from WNW.



1. Houll: house

*Photograph by Mrs A. Robertson*



2. Islesburgh: house and enclose from NNW.

CALDER: CAIRNS



1. Burnt mound: Sefster



2. The same: Will Houll



3. The same: Swinister

*All reproduced from R.C.A.M. Inventory  
of Orkney and Shetland by courtesy of the  
Controller of H.M. Stationary Office.*