



Further copies of this report are available priced £5.00. Cheques should be made payable to The Stationery Office and addressed to:

The Stationery Office  
71 Lothian Road  
Edinburgh  
EH3 9AZ

Order line and General Enquiries  
0870 606 5566

**The views expressed in this report are those of the researchers and do not necessarily represent those of the Department or Scottish Ministers.**

© Crown Copyright 2000

Limited extracts from the text may be produced provided the source is acknowledged. For more extensive reproduction, please write to the Chief Research Officer at the Central Research Unit, Saughton House, Broomhouse Drive, Edinburgh EH11 3XA.

# CONTENTS

1	THE BACKGROUND	1
2	LOCATION OF SITES	2
3	ORIGIN AND GROWTH OF SITES	6
4	SITE CHARACTERISTICS	8
5	HUT CHARACTERISTICS	11
6	HUT OCCUPIERS	14
6	STATIC AND CHANGING SITE OWNERSHIP	15
8	SITE MANAGEMENT	17
9	COSTS	22
10	HUT OWNERSHIP	24
11	PATTERNS OF HUT USE	26
12	THE PROS AND CONS OF HAVING A HUT	28
13	CONCLUSIONS	31

**APPENDIX A - HOW THE STUDY WAS CARRIED OUT**

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks are due to many people for their contributions to the study. Staff in the planning departments of the Scottish local authorities proved very helpful in their responses to requests for information about the location and nature of sites, even though this was a subject about which there seemed to be sparse basic data. In many cases they also provided useful supplementary material and sometimes pointers to additional or alternative sources. Likewise, the Assessors in the Valuation Boards made a major contribution through their searches of rating rolls to try to identify sites and huts and provided data which not only helped to build up a site inventory but also, through listings of occupiers, enabled the second and more detailed part of the study to go ahead. Individual thanks are also due to Marcus Mackenzie of the Registers of Scotland for his help in trying to identify the ownership of a number of rather obscure sites.

Particular thanks go to the site owners and their representatives who were prepared to spend time to discuss at length the background to their sites and sometimes their uncertainties for the sites' future. A number of them clearly regarded initial approaches for a meeting with some uncertainty, or even suspicion but, once the meetings took place, all proved to be not just informative but interested, friendly and helpful. In return for all their help it is hoped that this report can allay some of their concerns about the study's purpose.

Last, but by no means least, thanks go to the hut occupiers for responding to the postal survey. Again, many may have had doubts about its role but they provided a significant cross section of experience and contributed many valuable comments on the benefits and disadvantages of hut ownership. Without their help this study could not have been undertaken effectively

*RCS*  
*May 2000*

# 1 THE BACKGROUND

## The background

1.1 In the late 1990s, difficulties and disagreements between owner and occupiers on a hut site at Carbeth, the most extensive site in Scotland, were being extensively reported in the media and through the courts. While hut sites were known to exist in other parts of Scotland there was little or no systematic information about them, about their history, how they operated and about their current role. In 1999 the Scottish Executive Development Department commissioned a study of 'Huts and Hutterers in Scotland' to provide that comprehensive and systematic picture. This report summarises the findings of the study.

## The approach

1.2 The study comprised two main stages. The first was to establish how many hut sites there were in Scotland, their locations and size and some basic information about them. The second involved discussions with site owners and a questionnaire survey of hut occupiers to explore aspects of huts and hutting in greater depth. Aspects included the nature of sites and huts themselves, patterns of their use through the year and over time and, finally, the ways in which sites operate in terms of agreements between owner and occupier, rents and various conditions. Details of the methods used for the study can be found in Appendix A.

## Terminology

1.3 The following broad definitions were adopted at the outset, for use when seeking information, whether from official sources such as local planning departments or Valuation Boards or from site owners and occupiers :

*'The origin of huts is very uncertain. It appears that in some cases, for example during and after the two World Wars, some*

*Scottish landowners made land available on lease on which ex-servicemen and other town and city dwellers were allowed to erect dwellings at their own cost, primarily to enjoy the benefits of the countryside and fresh air for holidays and at weekends. Such dwellings were generally of modest timber construction and, over the years, generically the name "huts" has been applied to them.*

*'Generally sites comprise a number of dwellings within a specific area of land, though in some cases they may be found as small clusters, or two or three dwellings over a more widely dispersed area (NB this definition excludes beach huts and chalets used for holiday letting, huts on allotments, caravans and mobile homes).*

*' "Hutterers" occupy their plots as "tenants" or "licensees", generally paying an annual rental for their plot, though they **may own** the actual dwellings on the land. The nature of tenancy or licence arrangements is often uncertain.*

*'Both on account of the nature of the structures and the extent, or lack, of services available to them, these dwellings were not intended to be used as permanent residences, though in practice some have come to be used for protracted periods.'*

As the study progressed it became clear that neither the term 'huts' nor 'hutterers' term necessarily applies throughout Scotland. Valuation Boards refer variously in the non-domestic Rolls to 'hut', 'living hut', 'holiday hut' or 'chalet'. Similarly, site owners sometimes made it clear that both they and their occupiers always referred to their 'chalets', seeing 'hut' as a rather derogatory term. Nevertheless, for convenience, the term 'hut' is retained for the structures themselves. Although the term 'hutterers' was used in the initial definition, for simplicity and consistency 'occupier' is used throughout the report.

## 2 LOCATION OF SITES

2.1 At the outset, little prior information on numbers of huts throughout Scotland was available. The role of the first stage of the study was to build up a more systematic picture. To do this it was necessary to draw on a patchwork of sources.

2.2 The initial approach was a written enquiry to each local planning department in Scotland seeking information on a standardised basis about any hut sites known to exist within their areas. In turn some of the responses to this pointed us towards a second possible source, that of the local Valuation Boards, whose rating rolls might contain information, not just on the location of the huts themselves but also some information on their occupiers and even on site owners.

### A complex picture

2.3 The Scottish Executive's initial interest was in huts - though without a minimum number being specified - grouped together on a site under a single ownership and this formed the basis for the enquiry to planning departments and to the Valuation Boards.

2.4 As the study developed it became clear that the picture was more complex and definition became a grey area. While the majority of huts and sites fitted the original criteria, others seemed likely to have done so in the past but their tenure had subsequently changed, perhaps on the death of a former landowner, and individual plots had been sold to their occupiers. Yet others may always have been in individual ownership and here sometimes the source data was unclear.

2.5 Nine local authority planning departments identified one or more sites within their areas. A further two had no comprehensive record of sites from which to make a return.

2.6 The limited information even from those Councils recording sites may be a function of the generally low key presence of sites. Planning Departments may not know a great deal about the sites in their area because they have little

interest in, or problems with them, a supposition which appeared to be borne out in discussion. Apart from a small number of large sites, the rest are generally modest in size and probably do not cause significant problems.

2.7 Information supplied by the Valuation Board Assessors provided confirmation or modification of these figures and helped to fill gaps. On the ground it proved possible to identify a number of properties which appeared to fit the study criteria, i.e. they were in distinct groups unlike other forms of development along that stretch of coast and their building styles generally suggested non-permanent dwellings. Subsequent Assessor information confirmed these as groups of 'holiday huts'. Although a nil planning return was made for Dumfries and Galloway, again assessor information identified a large number of 'living huts' (*a term used by the local Assessor to describe 'non-domestic properties used for holiday purposes but not let on a commercial basis'*). Three sizeable groupings and three small clusters of between two and four huts could be identified along the Solway coastal fringe together with a number of scattered individual huts.

2.8 Using these two sets of data as a basis for the second stage of the study, approaches were made to owners of the larger sites with a view to obtaining more detailed information about each site. These in turn led to further modification of numbers.

2.9 Another feature which emerged from the planning and Valuation Board sources was the existence of very small clusters or of individual huts which in many ways fitted at least some of the criteria and as later information on site origins revealed, these probably started in the same way but never expanded in numbers.

2.10 Both site owners and occupiers indicated that in the past there had been other sites in particular areas, such as parts of west Stirlingshire, the northern Borders and the Solway coast, which have now disappeared completely. Closure in part seems to have been lack of interest

and hence hut decay but also some deliberate post war closure by local authorities, sometimes when they were seen as an abuse of the council house waiting list system, with people buying a hut and then claiming homelessness. Even two owners of existing sites referred to past dealings with their local authorities on this issue. Others, particularly on parts of the Solway coast had been redeveloped as more up-market 'holiday villages'.

2.11 As part of what may be a transitional process elsewhere, one group on the Ayrshire coast which were said possibly to fit the criteria had now become a row of fairly conventional dwellings, still in some cases with a broadly 'hut' or 'chalet' appearance and were now individually owned and on the Council Tax roll, though possibly only in use as 'second homes'. Despite this it seems likely that this group probably started as a form of hut site. Other groups of coastal dwellings likewise may have started in this way but became more permanent a longer time ago.

2.12 Finally, at least one site identified in the early stages of the study proved to have died a natural death within the past few years, though still visible on the ground as an overgrown field with one or two derelict huts on it. Nevertheless, another extant site looks little different and could be on a similar downward path though still just functioning.

### **Hut sites throughout Scotland**

2.13 Given the uncertainty of some source material and modifications to numbers as the study developed, reaching a definitive figure of sites and huts in Scotland is difficult. Nevertheless, by drawing the sources together it is possible to reach a 'best guess' estimate.

2.14 Including all types of site, both those within the strict definition at the start of the study, those on which individual plots of land are owned rather than under a single site ownership and also the very small clusters of huts, the most likely totals for Scotland are of **37** sites, of which **27** are thought to be conventional 'rented sites' and the rest 'owned sites'. The total number of huts is estimated at **c630**, of which **c540** are on 'rented sites'.

2.15 The spread of hut sites across Scotland is largely in a band from the Angus coast to the Clyde coast, with extensions into East Lothian and the northern Borders on the east and south to the Solway coast in the West. Map 1 shows the general locations of all sites with two or more huts. Coastal sites have been important in Angus and along the Clyde Ayrshire and Dumfries and Galloway coasts, together the one East Lothian site. Otherwise sites have been in fairly close proximity to major urban centres, primarily Glasgow but also to a lesser extent Dundee and Edinburgh. Table 1 summarises the distribution by local authority area.

2.16 Table 2 summarises the spread of hut sites in terms of their size within a number of broad groupings. In addition to the total of c630 huts in groups of two or more, there are a number of individual huts, though these are probably the least certain given the nature of the source data since they are variously described as huts, living huts and chalets. However, other categories such as fishing huts, climbing huts, bothies etc. have been excluded since they seem to fall into a different category of use. An allowance of c30 has been made for these though inevitably this must be a very generalised figure.





**Table 1 - Hut sites and huts across Scotland**

	Rented sites		Owned sites		All sites	
	Huts	Sites	Huts	Sites	Huts	Sites
Stirling	188	2	14	1	202	3
Scottish Borders	107	3	0	0	107	3
Angus	93	7	13	1	106	8
Dumfries & Galloway	30	4	27	2	57	6
South Ayrshire	16	1	17	3	33	4
Perth & Kinross	22	2	8	2	30	4
Argyll & Bute	17	2	12	1	29	3
East Lothian	24	1	0	0	24	1
Inverclyde	14	2	0	0	14	2
North Ayrshire	11	1	0	0	11	1
Renfrewshire	9	1	0	0	9	1
Aberdeenshire	7	1	0	0	7	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>538</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>629</b>	<b>37</b>

**Table 2 - Hut sites by size (approximate numbers of huts)**

	Rented sites	Owned sites	All sites
Very large sites (>150 huts)	1		1
Large sites (c50 huts)	2		2
Medium sites (c 20-30 huts)	4	1	5
Smaller sites (c 10-20 huts)	8	3	11
Small groups (c2-9 huts)	12	6	18
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>37</b>

### 3 ORIGIN AND GROWTH OF SITES

3.1 Received wisdom was that hut sites had been deliberately established in the 1920s, probably by landowners making land available on which ex-servicemen and families from deprived inner city areas could erect dwellings at their own cost. By so doing they could enjoy the benefits of the countryside and fresh air for holidays and at weekends. They were not intended for permanent residence, generally being of modest construction with few, if any services available.

3.2 Local planning departments generally proved to have little or no recorded knowledge of when sites were originally established. In reality, site owners revealed that in most instances it was the occupiers themselves who were the instigators of development.

3.3 Only one or two sites can be identified as starting as early as thought. The earliest huts appear to have been built in 1919 and in 1925 respectively. Most sites started in the 1930s with a few soon after World War II. None seemed to have started after this time, possibly reflecting increasing planning control of land use.

3.4 Given that early owners are now long departed, information on origin and growth over time inevitably is vague and anecdotal. Except in rare cases, sites were not consciously 'set up' by individual landowners. Rather, they happened to own the piece of land at that time and initially merely responded to an individual request, mostly from city dwellers, to be allowed to put up, or perhaps bring to it, some form of weekend or holiday dwelling.

3.5 The pace at which individual sites grew varied but essentially was demand responsive. Once the first occupier had been allowed some space and built a hut he probably told his friends and relatives who then decided they wanted one too. This accounts for the tendency for each site to have drawn from particular areas, rather than a haphazard spread. In this way there were 'Glasgow' sites, 'Dundee' sites, 'Aberdeen' sites and even 'Edinburgh' sites, though last tended

initially to come from the city's mining fringes. The size to which a site grew was probably only governed by the area of land that a particular owner had available for this kind of purpose and his willingness to let it grow beyond what he saw as manageable bounds.

3.6 In part site growth in the 1930s may have coincided with increasing interest among urban dwellers in getting out into the countryside, ideas of healthy living and, as proved the case with a few sites, the development of cycling clubs looking for a overnight or weekend base a convenient distance from the city. Access to rural areas may also have begun to improve at that time with an increasing network of rural bus services. In some instances people had been coming for some years, at the time of summer trades holidays, to localities where hut sites subsequently developed, but until then had been camping in fields on or near the sites. This form of origin was referred to particularly in relation to sites near both the Ayrshire and Angus coasts. Occasionally a site grew to serve a more localised demand.

3.7 Carbeth appears to have been the earliest site. Here, the then owner of the small estate had no plans to set up a site as such, although he had allowed some summer camping on his land. Some consequent health and hygiene problems led one or two of the campers seeking permission to put up huts. After initially refusing requests, eventually the first two huts were allowed to go ahead for which a nominal plot rent was charged. This site grew fairly slowly but with a more significant increase during World War II when its location was seen as convenient as somewhere to house people made homeless as a result of the Clydeside bombing.

3.8 Only on two sites does there seem to have been some form of 'conscious development', though in each the purposes were rather different. One, in East Lothian, was a small farm, possibly already with a few huts, which was sold to the local council in the 1930s. Initially intended as a site for houses the council then allowed individual plots to be rented out for huts to be built, in part

seen as encouraging tourism and particularly serving people from mining communities in Edinburgh and Midlothian. Here, as on one Border sites, early hut structures included occasional former railway carriages, subsequently converted into longer term dwellings. The other more conscious decision to **provide** a site was again an effect of World War II where an estate owner near Loch Lomond provided land and materials specifically for huts to be built to meet the needs of a small number of families affected by air raid damage in Clydebank.

3.9 Finally among the variety of sites revealed

by the study is one about which even now very little seems to be known, even by the landowners. Here, perhaps 'site' is a misnomer since it is just a cluster of huts on the Clyde foreshore. While the landowner has been aware of the presence of the site for some thirty years little is known of its origin other than it may have grown up just after the war, possibly involving the remnants of wartime defence structures. With no formal arrangement between estate and occupiers, no rent and little involvement from local authority departments, it just appear to be 'there', though no-one quite knows why, and is accepted.

## 4 SITE CHARACTERISTICS

### Site settings and forms

4.1 Sites are located in diverse settings. A few are on flat land, laid out in a fairly orderly way. Others are more scattered amongst scrub or woodland, sometimes in hilly and remote locations. A few are coastal, sometimes clinging to a shoreline. While the planning enquiry provided some site descriptions these gave only a limited impression of the real nature of sites. Visits at the time of the discussions with site owners give a much better picture and a variety of examples are shown in the illustrations to this report.

4.2 At one time there were three very large sites with between 100 and 200 huts but these were unusual. A few other sites had around 50 but many are quite small. With one or two exceptions they seem to have reached their maximum size within a relatively small number of years from their start date and then mostly stayed at that level until perhaps 10 or 20 years ago. Subsequent decline in numbers and general condition has been variable. Owners rarely admit to deliberately reducing numbers, though there has been occasional 'clearing out' of problem occupiers. Reduction is attributed more to loss of interest by individual occupiers, through age or other circumstances, leading to infrequent use and increasing dilapidation until either the site owner tells them they must improve it or leave, in which case they often choose the latter. In both circumstances the hut's value has usually declined so much that the occupier can cut his or her losses with no qualms. On a few sites decreasing numbers of huts have been associated with change of use of parts of the land.

4.3 The space occupied by hut sites is also very variable. Some are compact and tucked away, others much more spread out. Often the huts themselves occupy indeterminate patches of land with no clear boundaries and it is unlikely that the landowners ever thought about a specific area for their 'sites'. Natural boundaries of an available field or other piece of land were the normal determinants and as there were more requests to

be allowed to put up huts the available area was filled.

4.4 Occupiers' responses suggest that almost three-quarters of huts on their sites are either 'scattered over a larger area' or 'grouped loosely within a small area'. Only about one in five were seen to be in some form of orderly layout. Two thirds of occupiers said that their individual plots were enclosed in some way but clearly there is no set pattern across or within sites in the way in which the area of land on which a hut sits is defined.

### Access

4.5 Another important feature of hut sites, and even more the individual huts, is how you get access to them. Most sites are in rural areas, often fairly remote. The nature of the access to sites and to individual huts within them depends partly on location and on topography and partly on the extent to which a site owner provides at least partially made-up tracks. Only a few sites are directly adjacent to a road and even then these are generally fairly minor roads. Most have to be approached via farm or estate tracks of varying length and condition and one or two are fairly inaccessible.

4.6 Access between huts and the nearest public road may be by a some form of surfaced track, though often these appear to be fairly rough. Alternatives are generally very basic. Descriptions in responses emphasised both the diversity of access and also sometimes the difficulty it could cause. Within a site huts may be adjacent to the access track or some distance from it across open, often rough ground sometimes leading to problems if occupiers use four-wheel drive vehicles in bad weather. Individual occupiers may make efforts to upgrade their own immediate stretch of access, either within their plot or the approach to it, though one owner highlighted occupier attempts to create their own parking space at the side of the site

track through the site damaging stone walls and filling in drainage ditches leading to occasional flooding.

## Services

4.7 Provision of services by the owner is minimal on nearly all sites though the nature of what they perceive as 'services' varies. Only two sites have full mains - or equivalent - services. On the one council-owned site, all huts have water, electricity and drainage to each, though water was originally obtained from a communal well on the site and occupiers had access to a nearby public toilet block. On the other, water connection to individual huts was not available until about ten years ago but now huts are also connected to a drainage system running to two modern cess-pits within the site, a facility again only introduced in recent years. In addition to these two sites, one small section within the Carbeth site has electricity and mains water/sewerage where topography and the nearness of water mains and electricity supply has made this possible.

4.8 Otherwise, if site owners provide services these are mostly limited to water supply, generally via one or more standpipes somewhere on the site. In one instance an owner has installed a central water storage tank for the site, fed from the farm supply and distributed to a number of stand-pipes within the hut area. Not all sites rely on standpipes for their main source of water, alternative including springs or wells or even a stream running through or adjacent to the site.

4.9 However water is obtained, it has to be disposed of. Again, with the exception of the one or two serviced sites referred to above few have any form of drainage. In most cases waste water goes into some form of soakaway within the plot, but creating this is the responsibility of the individual occupier. On one site a condition of a lease was that an occupier should provide such a soakaway to a standard design provided by the estate.

4.10 More problematic is the disposal of toilet waste, since most huts have some form of chemical or dry closet. Again few site owners

make any provision and generally it is expected that occupiers will make their own arrangements for disposal. On only two sites were there any centralised toilet facilities, but both combined huts with other activities such as caravan storage or a static caravan site. Individual occupiers on a Borders site have installed their own septic tanks. Elsewhere one or two owners have provided communal septic tanks or a cess-pit for disposal of toilet waste. Perhaps the most unusual variant is on the mutually owned coastal site in Angus where occupiers dispose of chemical toilet waste into pits dug in the sand of the beach at low water level, either at night or in the early morning a practice which has existed on the site for 80 years and generally has been accepted as an appropriate and hygienic form of disposal.

4.11 Clearance of domestic refuse from sites presents a potential problem but few owners see it as their responsibility to make provision. At Carbeth, one of the 'services' which it emphasises is provided is *'removal of rubbish (partly but not wholly undertaken by the local authorities) and the general upkeep of the amenities'*. Occasionally there is a storage shed, an open mesh container or sometimes 'wheelie-bins' from which refuse sacks are collected by the local council. Site owner attitudes on rubbish vary, with some paying little attention and others adopting a strict view, insisting that occupiers must take away all refuse and other rubbish for disposal elsewhere. Provision of refuse bags and collection of rubbish from hut sites by local authorities is a common source of complaint by both owners and occupiers, particularly as occupiers pay rates on their huts, while owners have had difficulties about whether councils will collect wheelie-bins for the site users as opposed to the owner's dwelling.

4.12 The only other form of service occasionally provided is that of maintaining communal areas of the site, maintenance of individual plots being the occupiers' responsibility. Much depends on the site's area and topography and on owner interest, but it is very rare, mostly limited to periodic grass cutting or additional hard-core on an access track. However, in most cases there is little to maintain. On some sites which are just part of a field owners regard it as the responsibility of the occupiers to cut grass. Two

sites show contrasting approaches to maintenance. The first is now under communal ownership of its occupiers who share responsibility for its upkeep, both in terms of input of effort but also, where necessary, in contributing to upkeep costs. On the other, Carbeth, the site owner takes a very proactive approach to creation and maintenance of access roads and thinning or planting of trees as part of a long term development programme to benefit both the hut occupiers and his land holding as a whole.

### **Changes in sites over time**

4.13 Sites evolve both in scale and the general condition of the site itself and its huts. Both reflect occupier interest in maintaining and developing their individual huts and plots and site owners interest in the site and its occupiers. The latter may come with a change of ownership and positive attempts to enhance the site and its image, though this may lead to additional costs for the occupiers.

## 5 HUT CHARACTERISTICS

5.1 While conversations with site owners provided some picture of the huts on their sites, the questionnaire survey of hut occupiers provided a more structured picture of what huts were like, in terms of age and size, the materials of which they are made and the facilities which they possess. It also provided information on the ways in which huts change over time and how much their occupiers spend on maintaining or improving them in a typical year. The survey covered a wide range of hut sites including, as it turned out, not just the conventional sites but also a number where land as well as hut were owned by the occupiers. In practice some differences emerged between the two groups, perhaps because the latter have a larger stake in their dwelling and so may be prepared to invest in and its plot in a different way to those on the former. Sites are therefore referred to as ‘rented’, or ‘owned’ or to the generality of sites as ‘all’.

### Hut forms

5.2 Huts are a medley of styles and sizes though, with a few exceptions, they are fairly small. Some are very old, a few dating back to their original state from the 1930s. Others are almost completely new. The nature of individual huts reflects preferences, practical abilities and financial resources of their initial occupier and his/her successors. Excluding those where the occupier did not know the age of the hut, one in three were said to date from before W.W.II and two out of five from the 1940s and 1950s. Most of the remainder date from the 1960s/1970s and only a few since 1980.

5.3 There was little prior knowledge about what might constitute a hut in terms of its internal use of space - was it literally an open hut, or more of a small bungalow? The survey revealed most huts as having more than one room with some quite versatile in their accommodation. Virtually all have a single living room, with a number of occupiers emphasising that this is a fairly general purpose room used for cooking as well as sitting and eating. Only a few appear to have more than

one living room though there was an occasional reference to ‘a sun-room’. Almost all huts have at least one bedroom and more than half have two or more. Here again, huts on owned sites are rather better equipped, perhaps larger and more substantially built. Some huts operate on a more ‘open plan’ layout with little formal demarcation between sitting, sleeping and cooking areas

5.4 An initial assumption about huts was that their origin and supposed tenure meant that they were ‘temporary’ structures sitting **on** the ground with some form of solid support, rather than being **built into** the ground with proper foundations as in a normal house. The survey proved this generally to be the case although with some variations, generally related to tenure. Two thirds just sit on some form of support blocks, mostly brick or concrete and particularly those on rented sites. Just over one in ten appear to have conventional foundations and the remainder have a variety of other supports - old railway sleepers are a common form of substructure. Full foundations are much more common on the owned than on the rented sites, a reflection of their greater long-term security.

5.5 When first built, probably no long-term future was envisaged for the huts. Most were built, or rather put-together, by people who were largely amateurs, possibly with building or joinery skills or at least reasonably ‘handy’. Because of this, and the fact that they were also intended as low-cost structures, they were built of whatever materials were cheap or easily available including, in the early days, old bus-bodies or converted railway carriages. While most of the former have now disappeared, occasional bus frames still exist as hut substructures.

5.6 Typically huts are around 25 feet in length, 16 feet in width and 10 feet high, though these mean figures hide a diverse range of dimensions.

5.7 Hut materials are mostly various types of timber, or sometimes tarred felt, corrugated metal or other materials. Weatherboarding or plywood sheets are common. Much original raw material for huts was probably recycled from other

purposes and acquired second hand. More recently, prefabricated panels or even complete prefabricated huts have sometimes been used. Occasionally more permanent materials such as brick, concrete or stone are found as part of a hut structure such as a chimney. Internally plasterboard or plywood or, less often, chipboard or hardboard, are used. Floors are generally timber floorboards, plywood or chipboard or, rarely, concrete or stone. Roofing material is mostly tarred or 'mineralised' felt, over wooden boarding or, less often, chipboard or plywood though in some cases corrugated metal or asbestos have been used.

## Services

5.8 Lifestyle in a hut seems to lie at some mid-point in a triangle between camping, a caravan and a house. Much also seems to depend on what the individual occupiers makes of it and the extent to which their hut is used.

5.9 Very few huts have mains electricity, though here again there are marked differences between those on owned and rented sites. More than half the owner-occupied huts in the survey had mains electricity compared to only a tiny proportion of those on rented plots. One or two sites specifically prohibit any form of mains service supply. It is entirely up to occupiers to make their own arrangements for lighting, cooking and heating but, site owners often had surprisingly little knowledge about how their occupiers cope. Almost half the huts with no mains electricity use bottled gas for lighting, followed by electric batteries used to power small fluorescent lights. Small petrol generators, either to charge the batteries or to power the lights direct, were reported in about a quarter of the huts though these can cause noise problems for neighbouring occupiers. Traditional oil lamps remain common, in about a fifth of huts, though as many use or depend on candles. A few huts have small wind generators. Cooking is most often by bottled gas or occasionally paraffin stoves. Bottled gas is also a fairly common form of heating though some huts have solid fuel stoves.

5.10 As with electricity, mains water is more likely to be provided to the huts on owned plots. Very few of those on rented plots are connected

to mains water and generally are dependent either on access to a standpipe (in around half) or some other source of water. Other sources which occupiers identified included access to a spring or a well while others took water from a burn or river flowing through or along the edge of their site. While the first two of these may be pure enough for drinking, they and the burns are more often used for washing purposes rather than as drinking water. In practice drinking water is generally brought from home in containers - increasingly commercial bottled water - or perhaps obtained locally from a nearby hotel or cafe. Many occupiers collect rainwater from the hut roof into large water butts or other form of storage tank, either inside, above or adjacent to their hut. Mostly this is used just for washing purposes but may be pumped into a normal kitchen sink or even to simple forms of shower.

5.11 Virtually all huts appear to have at least some form of toilet. In practice most of these are chemical or occasionally 'dry' or 'earth' closets. These may be either within the main hut structure or adjacent in a 'sub-hut'. Once again it tended to be huts on owned sites which were more likely to have properly plumbed in facilities, while on at least one rented site occupiers were specifically prohibited in their occupancy agreement from installing flush toilets. On a small number of sites huts even appear to have full bathrooms plumbed in, including those on at least one rented site. Communal toilet facilities for a site as a whole, as often provided on caravan sites are very rare on hut sites.

## The externals

5.12 As with the hut's structure and how it is equipped inside, the extent to which the space outside it is developed depends very much on occupier abilities and preferences. It may also depend on whether plots are clearly defined or just scattered on open ground. At the two extremes are the occupiers who have provided their huts with paved outdoor sitting space, flower beds, hanging baskets and patio furniture. At the other is the grassed patch which may be cut once or twice a year. Between these many variants can be found. Reference was even made in a few of the occupier questionnaires to the benefits of being able to grow ones own produce, seen as



important by some urban flat dwellers. It is often these more active occupiers who probably have also made efforts to improve the immediate access to their hut or perhaps provide a parking space for their car.

### **The organic nature of huts**

5.13 By their nature huts need a considerable degree of maintenance but they are also modified over time. A few original inter-war period huts survive with little outward sign of change but it is much more common for huts to have been enlarged, reduced, rebuilt or re-clad, together with internal changes and improvements. Planning permission is needed for changes and some planning authorities prohibit complete rebuild, while site owner permission may also be needed. For some owners, working on their huts, whether on maintenance or more major change, is a hobby in the same way that people 'tinker with cars' or 'mess about with boats' and many have been made very comfortable and 'homely' inside.

5.14 Occupiers were asked which out of list of possible changes they had made to their huts over the time they had owned them. Repainting and general maintenance is clearly a fairly common activity done by around two thirds of all occupiers. At the same time substantial proportions have undertaken major renewal of complete parts of the hut, particularly roofs - the most vulnerable to lack of maintenance - and walls. Overall only a quarter of huts have been extended, particularly on owned sites, reflecting greater security of tenure and hence the worth of investment.

5.15 All these changes cost money and, as will be seen later in the context of the pros and cons of owning a hut, the constant maintenance is the most commonly perceived disadvantage. Occupiers were asked roughly how much they would spend in a typical year on maintaining their hut and its immediate surroundings. About half spent between £100 and £250, while one in five spent less. About one in ten spent between £250 and £400 while the remaining few may spend even more.

5.16 All this suggests much busy activity and care but inevitably some huts are now run-down, though revival of owner interest or a change of ownership might resuscitate them. Hut occupiers are responsible for the upkeep of their huts, both in relation to their planning permission and the expectations of the site owner, but neither necessarily exert pressure and some occupiers either disappear or are not easily contactable. Under these circumstances site owners have either tried to find a replacement occupier or eventually have had to demolish and clear the hut.

5.17 These contrasting pictures serve to emphasise the individual nature of huts and the character of their occupiers. There is perhaps a greater freedom for this kind of individuality than there is in other forms of housing or even other types of holiday home and it is much easier for an occupier to shrug off responsibility since all he or she has lost is perhaps a tumble-down shack with little capital value a drain on perhaps limited resources. Here so much depends on the amount of time the occupiers wish to spend at their huts and the purposes for which they use them. It may also be that the current occupier does not have the necessary skills to even maintain, let alone improve, the hut.

## 6 HUT OCCUPIERS

6.1 The picture of the hut occupiers gained through this study is of a fairly elderly population, more than two out of three being aged 50 or over and with heavy emphasis towards the over 60s, particularly on owned sites. One couple even specified their ages as 84 and 79. Only about one in six of all occupiers was under 40, nearly all on rented sites.

6.2 It is possible to build up at least a tentative typology of occupier households. The largest category, a quarter of the possible households, is the couple aged over 60, of whom all but a very few now have no 'children' in their household - though both their children and grandchildren may share their interest in the huts. The next category is slightly younger couples in the 51-60 age band, accounting for one in five of the total, and of these only a third still have children at home. A similar proportion of couples are aged 41-50 and here children are more common. In the youngest age band, with a respondent aged 40 or under, couples are more common than singles, the great majority of them with children. Just over a quarter of the households consisted of single adults rather than couples but of these only about one in three included children.

6.3 Half the respondents classed themselves as 'retired', particularly those on owned sites. However, a quarter were in full-time employment, more often among the rented occupiers and a few in part-time work. The self employed and un-waged each accounted for about one in ten but most of the former were on owned sites.

6.4 The initial supposition that huts and hutting emerged as way of providing a means of weekend and holiday escape into the country for people from poor and overcrowded urban conditions may have been correct. Nowadays, while much of the hut catchments remain the same in locational terms, occupiers are very diverse in their background. Here it is only possible to summarise

the types of job background from which hutters come. Among occupiers of rented sites, mostly those who were already retired, there were a number of people who had been in the broadly engineering/technical field, a group in jobs associated with the building industry and some in broadly professional/managerial jobs. Education accounted for a few former occupations, together with some in transport and a couple formerly in the medical field, together with a miscellaneous group of other former occupations

6.5 Among those in full-time employment, occupations varied. Some were in the building trades and a number in industrial or manufacturing jobs. A few each came from professional/managerial jobs, from education and from the medical/nursing sector, while a diverse group came from what are probably fairly lowly paid jobs.

6.6 The picture of occupiers is slightly different on the owned sites. Here, among the retired people most had been in the professions, as were most of those still in full or part-time employment, though the self employed were more mixed.

6.6 Site owners summarise their occupiers as mainly older and retired people, some now very elderly and having started coming to the hut as children when it was first built in the 1930s and subsequently inheriting it, using it with their children and later their grandchildren. They also often described their occupiers as mainly from lower income groups, often with trade or other useful skills in building or maintaining their huts.

6.7 Owners also identify a continuity in occupier catchment area for their sites from the time they started, though a few noted changes. A few sites, particularly those on which the plots are individually owned are less easy to classify and draw from much further afield.

## 7 STATIC AND CHANGING SITE OWNERSHIP

7.1 The original landowners of sites were a mix of small farmers, or people running small agriculture-related businesses such as poultry or pig farms, and a few owners of larger estates. The land which they were prepared to make available was generally fairly scrappy, sometimes a sloping field of very rough pasture, occasionally an odd corner of flatter ground near the house or farm steading, or rougher foothill country in the glens. One or two sites are coastal and here either the land on which the huts sit was on a promontory or rough ground or, in two or three cases, virtually on the foreshore, the last of these raising some uncertainties over ownership rights.

7.2 Overall there is a strong degree of continuity of ownership. Sites on estates generally remain in the same hands though management may have changed. Some other small sites have been passed on within the same family and continue to operate but with varying degrees of interest and involvement of the current generation. In a number of cases new owners have come on to the scene. A farmer may have increased his holding including an existing site or a new owner has bought land for other purposes but let the huts continue in use. Only one new owner, with no awareness of huts, had bought land, as an investment, and found herself responsible for a site.

7.3 Contrasting degrees and styles of involvement emerged within the range of owners and it is important to give a picture of these since they may well have implications for the continuation of sites and huts in general. None of the owners in this survey had particularly negative attitudes to their sites. Some were fairly enthusiastic, others ambivalent and a few had uncertainties about the future which may have resulted from adverse publicity about owners created by the Carbeth disputes. On the other hand with one exception the site plays a very minor part in their lives, mostly just because it has been there by default for many years or else is only ancillary to their main way of life or business.

7.4 Carbeth is at the top end of the owner

involvement scale. Having inherited a small estate with large numbers of huts, within the last few years the owner has deliberately entered with interest and commitment into the full-time business of running a large and often complex site with a difficult history. In part this has been done to preserve and develop the huts and their role to a greater extent than had been done formerly and also because it had become an essential element within the viability and long term preservation of the estate itself within which huts have to earn their keep in return for investment in the land and services.

7.5 At the other extreme is an owner who inherited the running of a very small site on a small farm started in an involuntary way by his grandfather. Through three generations there seems to have been little or no direct involvement in the site which was on land virtually useless for any other purpose. No rent had been charged from the beginning and in return over the years the owners never saw themselves as having any responsibility towards the occupiers certainly in terms of providing any form of services. This is not to say that there was not a perfectly amicable relationship between the two sides for the most part and in some cases occupiers would make some kind of return to the owner in kinds, perhaps by assisting him with odd jobs on his farm when needed.

7.6 Between these extremes is a range of other contrasting approaches. Small sites on large estates may have been in continuous ownership over generations with little direct owner involvement. Rents may be low but minimal services are provided and most occupiers are known to the owner who in turn feels a degree of responsibility to the occupiers provided they respect his position in return. Similar, but perhaps less paternalistic, attitudes apply on some farm sites inherited by their present owners from parents who started the site. Again little is provided by the owner and administration, rents and involvement are minimal but occupiers indicate that such sites are actively used and some praise their site owners. Smaller privately owned

sites may have an owner living adjacent and keeping a 'motherly eye' on them. Different values sometimes apply when outsiders come in and acquire an on-going site, sometimes with an ancillary land use. Again relationships may be easy with little or no paperwork and few imposed conditions and constraints. At the same time the few younger new owners may take a more commercial view, with the site seen as something which they are prepared to accept but possibly would rather be without.

7.7 What is perhaps the main feature of most of these apparently attitudes is that of beneficial interest and building up a degree of mutual toleration and, even better, respect. Where this happens there seem to be few management problems as evidenced by the absence of knowledge about quite what an owner could do to remove a difficult tenant, largely because it had never arisen.

7.8 On nearly all these sites the rent levels have been fairly low and, perhaps more important, there have rarely been significant changes in the way the site has operated or major jumps in rent. On the few sites that have increased rent significantly perhaps not surprisingly there has generally been an initial negative reaction from a minority of occupiers, largely because they may have 'had it too good' for too long and have built up unrealistic expectations. Despite this it has proved possible to make increases and for them eventually to be accepted provided the occupiers are aware of why they are necessary and what the longer term benefits are to them.

7.9 Overall, good relationships between the two sides and fairly uncomplicated management arrangements seem to be a key, but at the same time they can leave both sides with a degree of vulnerability in the event that things go wrong.

## 8 SITE MANAGEMENT

8.1 The basic assumption at the outset was that site owners owned the land and allowed the hut owners to occupy that land in return for payment of some form of 'rent'. Similarly it was assumed that sites were 'run' or 'managed', in a fairly organised way whereas in reality for the most part they seem more or less to run themselves in a much more informal fashion. This section of the report looks at the kind of management arrangements which exist. While it can touch on tenure and other legal issues it was never intended, nor would it have been practicable for this study to examine these in detail.

8.2 The most basic factor in site functioning is the existence of some form of agreement between the person who owns the land and the people who wish to have a hut on that land and to their rights, if any, to be there. This in turn is likely to include arrangements about amounts of rent and when and how this is paid, dealt with in Section 10. Other factors include the responsibilities of the site owner, the things the occupiers are or are not allowed to do in or with their huts and on the site as a whole. The extent to which all these aspects are formalised varied widely from site to site.

### **Agreements between owner and occupier**

8.3 In principle, three broad types of agreement can be identified. The first is the formal missive of let, while the second is a less formal written document, possibly only in the form of a letter setting out some ground rules and the rent. In the third, paperwork is little more than vestigial and a 'gentleman's agreement' is the main link between the two parties.

8.4 The most consistent feature to emerge from site owners is the almost complete absence of formal agreements between them and their occupiers. In many cases there is little more than a verbal agreement or possibly just a letter once a year asking for the rent. Formal rules and regulations again are rare, though there may be assumptions about what should and should not be done, sometimes also incorporated into the rent letters.

8.5 Few of the conventional sites in the survey have formal missives of let. At Carbeth the agreement is for the let of the ground for location of a hut. The provisions of the leases currently in force were established in the very early 1960s, with minor and inconsequential changes in 1987 and 1993 but these did not alter in any way any of the clauses of the leases. The other exceptions are the one council-owned site where tenants have a long lease, discussed further below, and the site in which the occupiers have established themselves as a Trust which has acquired the land for the mutual benefit of the occupiers, both of which place them in a different category to the other sites.

8.6 Another owner sends out a 'lease' each year with a letter to his occupiers though it seems to be a fairly basic document prepared by the owner himself. Again it relates to the right to have the hut 'there' for the specified period though individual plots are not delineated. In this instance the lease has been deliberately restricted to one year partly because it does not tie the owner down and allows a degree of control over the site in the event of difficulties. However, it is also seen as a way of preserving the character of the site with relatively unsophisticated dwellings whereas occupiers with a long lease might be tempted to invest heavily in developing their huts and surroundings, turning them into fully fledged second homes. The lease also emphasises the planning constraint that use is limited to only six months of the year.

8.7 On almost all the other sites paperwork is limited to some form of written request to the occupiers to pay rent for the following year, occasionally with comments about expectations of their behaviour and responsibilities, but it is hardly a conventional form of agreement. Two more recent owners of sites were concerned about the lack of any formal 'tenancy agreement' but, when querying the advisability of regularising the arrangements were advised by their lawyers not to embark on contracts which could prove to be disadvantageous to them as owners.

8.8 Although these arrangements are very laid

back, for the most part they appear to work - one owner's letter in January emphasises that occupation of the huts and land should be in a sense of fairness and co-operation, in return for which few conditions on site use are imposed on occupiers. Another's similar style of letter goes out in May before the rent is due at the end of the month and the occupiers are supposed to sign this and return it with the rent. By doing so the owner regards them as having agreed to both rent and conditions - thus it possibly constitutes a form of 'contract' though the letter itself was careful not to mention the word 'tenancy' - but it is an attempt to keep arrangements fairly informal. Similarly the owner of a very long-standing estate site expressed the view that occupiers did not have any rights over the land other than to place and maintain their hut on it and as far as he is aware they probably do not even have any formal right of access to the site but, once again, it has never been an issue. Again in this case there is no paperwork or lease other than the annual letter asking for the rent.

8.9 On one or two sites paperwork is even more vestigial. The owner may merely keep a record of names, addresses and telephone numbers of occupiers, partly in case it is necessary to chase up missing rent but also because he/she has to make an annual return of this information to the Valuation Assessors. In each case the owner's perception is that they have full rights over the land, while the occupiers have full ownership of their huts which are allowed to stay on the land in return for the annual rent, in all cases payable - theoretically - in advance, thus giving the site owner a degree of security for the year.

8.10 At the lowest end of the formality scale on two sites there is no form of agreement, nor even contact, between the site owner and occupiers. On one, though the factor emphasised that it was only surmise on his part, it was suggested that, given the particular nature of this location and the length of time it had been in place, the hut owners might even now own the small areas of ground since the huts are now on a firmly founded base, i.e. a concrete foundation since under Scots law they therefore have acquired a right to the land - it is not within the scope of this study to express a view one way or the other. On the other site no rent had ever been charged and no written agreement entered into with any of the occupiers since the site started in the 1930s. While the site

owner knew the names and 'phone number of the few remaining occupiers this was largely so that he had some idea of who was around but also because there was an informal understanding that sometimes an occupier might give him a hand with some work on his small farm, such as slating or painting as a goodwill gesture in return for use of the land.

### **Other tenures**

8.11 A number of the sites proved to have other forms of tenure. While in practice this puts them outwith the definition initially adopted for the study they are important in that the sites themselves share many of the features of the 'conventional' hut site, and may indeed have originated as such, but give the occupiers greater degrees of security. This in turn has implications or potential lessons for the future of huts.

8.12 On the one council owned site each plot holder has a full lease which runs until May 2012. If a hut changes hands the new occupiers are given a lease starting with their date of entry but again terminating on the above date. The current assumption is that, barring any problems at that time everyone will then be given a new continuation lease from in May 2012. The nature of this lease also reflects the fact that this site has a more highly developed infrastructure than other sites and generally has more sophisticated huts.

8.13 The study has shown that on a number of 'sites' the individual plots of ground are now owned by the hut occupier. In some cases this has been a fairly recent event where an estate owner has died and part of it has been sold off in this way. In others it seems likely that occupiers may have been sold a small piece of land at the time they asked to put up a hut, though information about this is sketchy and largely anecdotal.

8.14 One alternative form of agreement - and probably the most recent - grew up in response to potential threat to a coastal site in Angus. This arrangement is still in its early days but may be applicable in other situations. In this instance all the occupiers of a site, working as a group, have been able to acquire the land which is now vested in a Trust of which they are all members. This was done when a long established site was seen

to be vulnerable to speculative development from outside. Following the formation of the Trust the best way to protect the individual interests of the occupiers was seen to be to set themselves up as a company limited by guarantee, rather than just as a loose association of members, with the objectives of securing the future for the hutters on the land, protecting the area from speculators and developers and conservation of the coastal path for the long term use and enjoyment of the public. Eventually all the land was acquired and the Trust applied for and acquired charitable status. An 'Owners' Agreement' defines the rights, obligation and responsibilities of each individual owner in relation to the Trust as a whole. While some of the individual occupiers had reservations in the early stages these were eventually overcome and the new organisation has had the effect of bringing the occupiers together as a much more cohesive group. Such a scenario is not necessarily suitable for all sites. Its success depends partly on the nature of the site, on the willingness of a landowner to sell the land, a readiness of each of the occupiers to contribute both financially and in interest and effort and, finally, awareness of the most appropriate channels through which to work and skills within the occupiers themselves to utilise these to best effect.

### **Respective rights and responsibilities**

8.15 Though rarely written down, in most cases there are certain understandings between site owner and occupiers over maintenance, discussed further below, restrictions on subletting and sometimes on the periods of the year when the huts can be occupied. In most cases the last of these is largely a practical matter of the unsuitability of huts for use in the winter rather than any particularly restrictive attitudes on the part of the site owner. Even then there is usually no objection to them visiting in the winter months in order to carry out maintenance.

8.16 Each side has some degree of responsibility within an agreement. What site owners put into their sites in terms of resources is very variable. Only in one instance is there a strong proactive approach but here it has been seen to be necessary in order to prevent an estate as a whole from going into serious decline and taking the huts with it. More commonly owners, both original and new,

seem to put in more or less the minimum of effort and resources. We have seen that few if any services are provided apart from the most basic of water supplies. Mains electricity is virtually non-existent and provision any kind of facility for disposal of chemical toilet waste is rare. Even the access to sites is mostly whatever was there before the huts arrived, generally in the form of a farm track or simple access. Only on the largest site, itself scattered across a number of separate areas, has there been a conscious attempt to upgrade access tracks to make them suitable for motor vehicles. At the opposite end of the spectrum an owner may do absolutely nothing with the 'site', it is there, they can stay on it free, so be it!

8.17 Some site owners are involved in their sites but most are not and largely leave them to run themselves, provided they do not generate problems. This reflects personal interest rather than a management need and also the degree of any relationship between site owner and occupiers. The more involved owners are quite proprietorial about 'their' occupiers and clearly in some cases there has been a substantial level of social interaction.

8.18 Occupiers are also expected to do certain things or behave in certain ways. In practice it is difficult to find fault with most of the 'regulations' since they are mostly, a mix of common sense, reasonableness and neighbourliness. 'Regulations' rarely seem to be set down on paper. The owner of one large site prepared a list of rules some years ago and sent it to occupiers when asking for the rent but after a while ceased to bother.

### *Seasonal occupancy*

8.19 The basic rule underlying all hut use, is that huts are intended only for weekend or holiday use and not for permanent dwelling.

8.20 Limits are sometimes set on the number of days/nights in the year on which huts can be occupied, or on times of year. The most formal specifies use only for '*seven days per week between 1 March and 30 November of any one year, at weekends, including Friday night and Sunday morning between 1 and 23 December and seven days per week between 24 December of the immediately following year*'. Here, huts may only

be used as holiday accommodation, with a maximum of 28 days stay at any one time and use for any business purpose is forbidden.

8.21 One small site makes it clear that occupiers are entitled to the enjoyment of their huts as holiday homes for up to six months of the year. Over and above this there are no particular constraints on what people can do with their huts. Others allow their occupiers to use their huts more or less any time they want provided there is no damage, though as noted earlier in the report one owner sees a particular problem about winter use with occupiers coming out with four-wheel drive vehicles which churn up the ground where there is no underlying hard-core.

8.22 In practice restrictions of this kind represent a mix of the historic function of the sites and a pragmatic response to seasonal conditions since few huts are built to a standard appropriate to winter weather occupation.

8.23 While not always literally spelled out in an agreement, occupiers cannot 'sub-let', though practice varies and some owners take a fairly relaxed view about the hut being lent to other members of the family for the odd weekend or short holiday. Similarly while visitors generally seem to be allowed there are sometimes restrictions on them staying overnight, perhaps understandable given the limited space available in the majority of huts. Only in one instance does the lease agreement individually specify the names of those allowed to stay overnight, the total of which is limited to a maximum number of six people. One owner referred to one of her predecessors going round huts at weekends some thirty or forty years ago and charging an extra shilling (a not insignificant amount at the time) per visitor per night.

#### *Keeping huts and plots in good condition*

8.24 Despite the informality of most arrangements between site owner and hut owner, owners generally expect that huts will be kept in reasonably good condition, in practice often also a stipulation of the local planning authority. What constitutes 'good condition' clearly varies from site to site but on the whole both sides appear to have at least some interest in maintenance. Much depends on how much individual huts are used. Those in fairly regular use are mostly better

maintained, though other may remain untouched and unused for a year or more and then come back into use.

#### *Relationship to working farms*

8.25 Given that many hut sites are on or adjacent to farm land, albeit often only fairly rough pasture it is not surprising that site 'regulations' are likely to include features such as not to take stones from dry-stone dykes, not to knock or cut down trees on the site, keeping clear of the open parts of the site which are in agricultural use and keeping gates shut, particularly as parts of the sites themselves may be used for grazing stock. Another stipulation on a site which is part of a working farm is that, for fairly obvious reasons, no dogs are allowed on the site.

8.26 Perhaps the most informal of the arrangements is founded on a general expectation that occupiers should do nothing that would damage the future of the site on the owner's surrounding land or bring it into disrepute. Basically this owner's main interest is in ensuring that what is there is maintained in a way that will keep his land as he would like to have it, but otherwise he does not see the need to impose constraints and in turn his trust does not appear to be abused.

#### **Site owner powers**

8.27 On the whole the ways in which most sites operate means that sanctions on occupiers are weak in practice. While there is a supposed responsibility to maintain a hut in a reasonable condition, there is no obligation to use it regularly. Many occupiers seem quite able to enjoy their own hut and its plot even when the one next door is in poor shape. It is when the absent occupiers and the run down huts begin to be in the majority that the sites are likely to go into serious decline.

8.28 Site owners were asked what powers they had - or were aware of - to terminate occupancy of a plot if they wished to do so. Most were quite candid and admitted that they had little, if any, idea. All were conscious that they owned the land and that the occupiers only owned their huts. While one or two felt that they might be able to get an eviction order through the courts, there was



also an underlying concern that occupiers might have acquired some form of rights through having been there for many years. However, the absence of any clear view on this potential problem largely stems from the fact that it is not an issue which has ever really arisen. Where there have been difficulties, either they have been sorted out by direct comment from owner to occupier, or in some cases by an older generation ‘ticking off’ the offending offspring. Alternatively, the amounts of money involved in failure to pay the rent have been so low that owners feel it would not be cost effective to institute proceedings. Across the full span, owners do not appear to have been taken too much advantage of by their occupiers.

8.29 On two of the sites, with more formal agreements the owners indicated that they would terminate a lease if there had been a major and material breach of the lease, such as excessive disturbance other tenants, but emphasised that this had happened very rarely. Other grounds would be failure to pay rent after repeated requests. The need to do this seems to occur very rarely and one owner’s view was that as rent was paid in advance occupiers were more likely to ‘behave’ over the year. Otherwise she felt that there was little that could be done other than issue formal Notice to Quit. In this context another owner was concerned that, in the light of comments from one

or two occupiers that they might have acquired tenancy rights over time, this was a grey area which ought to be looked into this again but this probably reflects publicity over recent disputes at Carbeth. At the same time this owner identified a potential problem for herself in trying remove an occupier. While in theory the occupier was bound to remove the hut under these circumstances, refusal to do so would leave the owner with significant clearance costs, out of all proportion to the rental involved.

8.30 Only in two instances had owners actually resorted to formal Notice to Quit or been aware of it having been used by their predecessors. In one instance a new owner used it successfully after acquiring the site on account of a number of what were seen as ‘undesirable elements’ occupying huts. However, in this case as well as issuing the notices the owner offered to buy the huts and then demolished those which were most run down or else found new occupiers for them. In the other instance, at the time the new owner was negotiating to buy the farm and site, he noted that all the then occupiers had been served Notice to Quit presumably as a standard legal practice since a potential owner might be put off buying land with sitting tenants. In practice it caused no problems for him and he was then able to start from scratch by issuing the first of his new annual leases.

## 9 COSTS

### Rentals

9.1 In present day terms most rents charged to hut occupiers are very low and, in a couple of instances totally non-existent. Most sites for which information is available currently have rents equivalent to £5 a week or less. In each of the few instances of higher rents the level is probably justified by what the occupiers get in return. This may be in terms of being on a small but fully serviced site with the manager living adjacent and keeping an eye on the huts in the occupiers' absence. In another instance, occupiers are getting not just a fully serviced site but also a very long lease, unlike that on any other hut site.

9.2 Both the site owner and occupier elements of the study revealed a wide range of annual plot rentals. The highest charge was £800 but this was in the context of a long lease on a fully serviced site. Rent is generally payable annually, the only exceptions being at Carbeth where an option of monthly payments has been available and on the council owned site where it is payable in two six-monthly instalments by means of a Standing Order.

9.3 The occupier survey showed that half paid less than £200 per year to keep their huts on the site. The table shows the spread of rental paid.

Annual rent levels on sites	
	%
<100	19
100-199	27
200-299	18
300-399	2
400-499	2
500-599	2
600+	30
	<b>100</b>

9.4 Rent levels have risen very slowly over the years, generally at rates which mean that they have been declining in real terms. Though the occupier survey did not specifically ask for

changes in rent levels over time, some respondents made passing reference to changes and more information came from the site owners themselves. One or two owners had increased rents very roughly in line with inflation but others suddenly realised there had not been an increase for some time and made a change. Perhaps in proportional terms such increases might appear substantial but, given the very low base level, even a 25 percent increase which takes a rent from £40 to £50 a year hardly seems grounds for serious complaint. Even at Carbeth where there had been one substantial increase in recent years, leading to occupier protest, this has to be seen in a context of a long preceding period of low and therefore actually declining rent and the need for substantial resource input to the site's infrastructure. Occasionally when a complete outsider has taken a site over there have been more substantial initial increases.

9.5 In many cases the time when rent is due reflects site origins, sometimes in July, historically linked to local trade holidays such as Glasgow Fair and the start of the main period of hut use. Other owners choose Easter when occupiers start using the huts again, but there is no consistent pattern.

9.6 Success in actually collecting rent is also variable. Some rents due in the spring do not materialise until September or even later but in most cases do finally arrive and very rarely had been left completely unpaid. Owners accept that there are some bad payers and occasionally have difficulty in getting people to pay up before the following year, particularly those who rarely use their huts. Much depends on owner:occupier relationships. In practice most owners seem fairly relaxed about late payers provided there is no trouble on the site and the rent eventually arrives. Owners recognise that in a few cases occupiers may deliberately delay but eventually pay up. In the same way one owner noted that occasionally an occupier may disappear for a year or two and then suddenly re-appear - under these circumstances while he will try to get the missed rent back but does not push this beyond a certain point if the occupier seems to be moving back on a fairly regular basis.

9.7 Apart from Carbeth, where much of the reason for the recent disputes has been laid at the door of rent levels and, in particular the steepness of increases, only one reference was made to past difficulty with a few occupiers more than ten years ago when, not long after buying the site, they initially tried to put up the rent. This led to some resistance by occupiers but in practice the issue was resolved fairly quickly, the few difficult occupiers left and since then there was said to have been no animosity from those who remain and overall there is a good relationship between site owner and occupiers.

### Hut Values

9.8 In virtually all the above instances rent is the only charge made by the site owner. However, huts are rated by local Valuation Boards and it is the responsibility of the individual occupiers to pay these non-domestic rates direct to the local council. Most owners appear to have to complete a form for the Assessor's department each year listing the names and address of the hut owners on their sites. This is not always easy as people sometimes disappear for a year or two or a hut may change hands without the site owner having been told, something which, though officially not allowed in most of the agreements however informal, does occur. It is this, principally, which most owners say is the justification for insisting on being informed of a change in advance and of having the details of the new occupier.

9.9 Valuation Board data provides a picture of the range of rateable values, and hence of the rates themselves for a number of areas for which data was available. Most huts have very low rateable values and it is only a few of the better serviced ones or the more substantially built structures on which the levels increase.

9.10 The most basic huts appear to have values of between £80 and £100. Slightly bigger/better huts are in the £100-150 range but additions and improvements increase values towards £300. Small numbers further up the transition progress towards a holiday home carry much higher values, in one case just under £1000. Most of the high figures essentially are outliers which perhaps distort what is a lower **average** RV. The table

shows clear differences between Valuation Boards for which there is data.

9.11 Though rates should not be a significant factor in overall hut costs, they appear to be a common source of complaint, largely because occupiers feel that they get little, if anything, in return for these payments. This is seen particularly in the context of refuse collection. As seen earlier, some owners make provision for bagged refuse to be taken to a central point or may themselves provide 'wheelie-bins', but occupiers say that the council does not even provide them with rubbish sacks.

	Valuation Board						
	A	B	C	D	E	F	ALL
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
Max.	230	988	710	250	800	200	988
Min.	85	127	105	75	90	200	75
Mean	120	286	225	120	335	200	229
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
<£100	26	0	0	25	1	0	9
£100-199	68	9	51	68	9	0	32
£200-299	6	68	36	7	40	100	41
£300-399	0	20	9	0	19	0	12
£400-499	0	1	0	0	16	0	2
£500-599	0	0	2	0	6	0	1
£600+	0	2	2	0	7	0	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

### Other Costs

9.12 On one site where the individual huts are mostly connected to mains electricity the occupiers are responsible for their own separately metered costs, but in this instance water is included with their rates

9.13 The one site where there is another form of cost to individual occupiers is that which has become a charitable trust where each occupier owns an equal share of the land vested in the trust, but with provision for a buy back of the share if the trust is wound up. Here, there is an obligation on each occupier to contribute to the running costs of the trust and to general site maintenance.

## 10 HUT OWNERSHIP

### Acquiring a hut

10.1 The occupier survey indicated that while nearly a third of the huts had been acquired within the past ten years, as many as a quarter of occupiers had owned their huts for at least 30 years and a few dated their acquisition or their family's ownership to before W.W.II. However, site owners often felt that the majority of the huts changed hands by inheritance though there were some contrary findings from the occupier survey which suggested that only about one in five huts appeared to have been inherited and the great majority had been acquired by purchase. The exact nature of transfer even within a family is rarely clear and money may well change hands, affecting their perceptions of 'purchase'. In practice it means that huts are rarely acquired on the open market.

10.2 Site owners also commented on continuity of hut ownership through a family and the presence of related occupiers across a site. There is also evidence of considerable longevity, for example two current occupiers had been there more or less since the site started in the 1930s. In some cases already a third generation is present. While new people buying and becoming occupiers has increased, many of these seem to be people who already know about the site and hut availability from friends or neighbours.

10.3 Most purchase of huts is through informal contact, either word of mouth or a hut being offered by a friend. Only one in six were in response to advertisements and a similar proportion through other channels. Some people clearly had advance knowledge and interest in a particular site, referring to having seen a notice on a hut or an advertisement in a local inn, while others found it through the press. One must have been on the lookout for a site for some time judging by the comments that... *'when my partner was an apprentice, some 20-odd years ago, his boss owned a hut and it was always my partner's wish to buy one'*.

10.4 Locating a hut via word of mouth might be either a direct purchase from a friend or more obliquely through information via a friend of a

friend or someone known on a site. Others might find out via a relative. Sometimes it might be more of a chance contact. However, there is some other evidence of people's long term interest in and desire for a hut. Some had been on a deliberate hunt, while for others it was more of case of chance.

### Transferring ownership of a hut

10.5 There seems to be much uncertainty among occupiers on rented sites as to the extent to which they can transfer ownership of the hut to someone else. Although about two thirds say that they can, this may be hedged around with constraints.

10.6 Only where there is a formal lease are there specific stipulations about how transfers may take place. Generally it is more of an 'understanding'.

10.7 Site owners usually stipulate that they should know in advance if a hut is going to change hands, by whatever means, and know who the successor occupant is. The argument for this is that they need to know that that person is going to be able to pay the rent or is not likely to be a disruptive influence on the site, together with the fact, as noted earlier, that they have to provide periodic return to the local Valuation Assessors to ensure that rates are paid by the occupiers. In practice where there are changes the owner may not find out about it until well after the event. Even in the case of the local authority-owned site there seems to be a fairly relaxed view about transfers. On two sites there is a form of charge imposed by the site owner, either charged to both seller and buyer as a fixed fee or taken as a percentage of the sale price of the hut though details in responses were a little vague

10.8 Site owner impressions are that, overall, turnover is low. A few examples suggested levels of ten percent or less a year, though at Carbeth, the largest of the sites, turnover was said to have been higher than this but fairly consistent over a number of years.

10.9 Modest turnover, does not reflect lack of interest. A number of owners indicated that they

get a telephone calls asking if any huts are becoming vacant. Few, if any, handle sales on behalf of occupiers though owners might refer enquiries to a hut owner if that person is known to be wanting to sell. Occasionally, where there

are elderly people who are beginning to lose interest or ability to maintain their hut a site owner may suggest that they might be better to find a new occupier rather than let the hut deteriorate too much.

## 11 PATTERNS OF HUT USE

11.1 It was important to assess the extent to which huts continued to be used, patterns of use within the year and any changes in level of use across the years. Information on these aspects comes both from the more structured occupier survey and from site owner discussions. In particular, the latter are able to give a better overall indication of change over time.

11.2 Owners did not identify any clear patterns of change in level of use over the years and much seems to depend on the nature of the site, the people on it and perhaps the attitude of the site owner. In one instance most of the present occupiers appear to use the site very regularly. Some are older and retired people who have owned their huts and been coming to them for a long time, one having been coming every weekend since 1961, when he built his hut and, now he is retired, his weekends seem to be extending in length. In contrast on another site huts were said to be used less now than they were in, say, the 1960s and 1970s. Another owner's impression was of some change in pattern. In the past people used to come out for the full weekend or even longer, though now they tend rather more to come out for days. They used to come up to the farm and buy milk and eggs but rarely do so nowadays as they bring everything by car. In some cases decline in use reflects older people who perhaps brought their children up with weekends and holidays at the hut. As the children have grown up they may have lost interest but, in some cases, once they have set up their own families there is a resurgence of interest in using the hut, sometimes for economic reasons or even just as part of a family tradition, especially when grandparents are still occupying the hut.

11.3 Particular sites sometimes have distinct patterns. The one site which has changed to become a trust which owns the land for the mutual benefit of its occupiers is very regularly used during the summer, not just at weekends but for longer periods with family and friends of occupiers also using the huts at different times. One or two huts are in almost constant use during the summer. Here one of the other benefits is that while initially the occupiers appear to have

functioned as individuals with not a great deal of interaction, the new ownership structure appears to have brought people together much more as a community with shared needs and responsibilities.

11.4 The occupier survey underlines many of the owners' more subjective comments. Overall, two out of five occupiers said that they used them 'frequently' or 'all the time'. Nearly as many used them 'regularly' compared with only about half this number who used them only 'occasionally'. Frequency was slightly lower among the huts on owned sites with twice as many people saying that they used their huts 'occasionally'.

11.5 Both owners and occupiers confirm that use varies seasonally. This reflects both weather and some site owner constraints on the periods of the year at which huts can be used for overnight stays. Some huts may be used only rarely, sometimes not for a year or two at a time, while others are heavily used through much of the year. Predictably most winter use was limited to weekdays, possibly for maintenance or checks on hut security, and some weekends though more than two fifths of hut owners did not use their huts at all at this season. In any case, despite stoves or alternative forms of heating, few huts would be suitable for any length of winter stay. Use begins to increase during the spring particularly at weekends and now some stay for longer periods, possibly during Easter holidays. By the summer it is concentrated as weekend and longer period use for around one in three respondents in each case. The increase in use from the beginning of the summer trade holidays onwards reflects the origin of many sites. Autumn use closely mirrors that of spring with a return to mainly weekend use in about half the cases.

11.6 Use patterns on owned sites have a predominance of 'longer period' particularly seven and fourteen nights, equating with greater use for spring or summer 'proper holidays', perhaps for people who live at a longer distance and see their huts as a 'second home'. This compares with a predominance of frequent 'weekend' use, with stays of two or three nights

on rented sites, which are perhaps closer to home locations and therefore easier to use. However, site owners note that their older occupiers may make more midweek or long weekend visits, or even stay for longer periods, perhaps with children or grandchildren accompanying them.

### **Changing use levels over time**

11.6 As many as one in three of the occupiers are now using their huts more than in the past. Over the time during which they had owned their hut only one in five are now using it less, mostly for one or other of two groups of reasons: either

change in personal/family circumstances or negative features about the site. Decline in use most often reflected a family outgrowing their interest in the hut and preferring other forms of holiday or weekends breaks. Lack of time to use the hut is another reason, more often among those on rented sites, in contrast to distance from the site affecting the largest proportion of those on owned sites, while increasing age and ill health making it difficult to use the hut are also contributory factors. The 'site related' reasons for decline, generally affecting only rented sites, relate to landlord-tenant matters such as *'disagreements with site owner'*, *'owner wants to redevelop site'*, *'site has become run down'* and *'owner trying to close site down'*.

## 12 THE PROS AND CONS OF HAVING A HUT

12.1 Perceived advantages and disadvantages of hut ownership influence whether people continue to use their huts or have lost interest in them. They acquire huts in a variety of ways, through inheritance, purchase or a variety of other ways. While purchase and most 'other' ways imply a positive desire to own a hut including its upkeep and related problems, inheritance may be a doubtful pleasure. Site owners, referred to occupiers just losing interest or finding their hut too much of a burden and just leaving it to decay. Many such huts revive with new occupiers but some smaller sites seem to have completely disappeared in this manner. What then do occupiers perceive as the benefits and the disadvantages of having a hut for them and their families. Within each it is possible to identify a number of common headings under which responses can be grouped.

### Advantages of owning a hut

12.2 Taking all occupiers (i.e. on both rented and on owned sites) two major groups of benefits emerged as the most substantial, in practice, fairly closely related. These may be summarised as '*escape*' and '*tranquillity*', both frequently used phrases. The first represents the need to get away from town for a break of some kind, together with the freedom which this brings. The second, images of '*peace*' or '*peace and quiet*' and of '*tranquillity*' are less tangible but nonetheless common.

12.3 Three further headings, each of equal importance, related in turn to the value of surroundings, of health and of relaxation. The first is associated with the kind of environment in which huts are located, seen in terms of '*countryside*', '*location*', '*scenery*' and '*nature*'.

12.4 The feeling that being at the hut is '*healthy*' and, depending on the locality, that it incorporates some form of health inducing activity such as '*walking*' or '*sea and boats*' was also perceived as important.

12.5 Similarly '*Relaxation*' and '*stress-relief*' constituted another important beneficial concept, perhaps refreshing the parts that other types of break cannot reach.

12.6 Despite their predominantly older age, occupiers frequently identified the benefits to children of hut access. Clearly many such comments were made in the context of grandchildren or else perhaps as nostalgia for a stage at which they themselves were enjoying the hut with their own children when they were younger. At the same time there was a continuation of such perceptions among younger parents still concerned about bringing their children up children up in a better and safer environment than weekday inner city homes, perhaps in difficult localities.

12.7 An interesting aspect of benefits, very much related to the '*P & Q*' feelings noted above, was that of release from the trappings of conventional present day home/work lifestyle, with an absence of televisions and phones. This seemed to be part of an even more primitive urge - occasionally among site owners as well - to return to '*simple*' or '*basic*' living associated with oil lamps, limited washing and cooking facilities and getting water other than just out of the mains tap - though the absence of these could be equally disadvantageous to some occupiers

12.8 The camaraderie of hutting was a seen significant benefit, referred to both in questionnaires and in conversations with occupiers. Comments often related to get-togethers, barbecues or chatting to friends or just as an opportunity to meet friends.

12.9 Given the way in which sites grew up it is not surprising that family links, both horizontally and vertically, often exist within a site. In some case these links were particularly strong with members of extended families with long association with one site coming to stay at various times of the year.

12.10 Both the emphasis on '*simple life*' referred



to earlier and the 'family' also manifested themselves as a cohesive concept of family members spending more time together at the hut than at home. In part this reflects enforced close proximity but can be encouraged by the absence of electricity placing greater dependence on non-television-based evenings and a general sense of togetherness

12.11 Easy availability of the hut was a particular benefit for some, either because it was just there to be visited whenever they felt like it or else because it was easy to get to from home. Similarly benefits of regular short weekend breaks were emphasised, something which we have seen earlier in terms of the use patterns of huts in general, or even just going there for even shorter times

12.12 Cost, or rather the lack of it, though only occasionally referred to, could also be a significant factor, given the apparent background of many of the occupiers.

12.13 Finally, one interesting perceived benefit was that of 'self-help', reflected in a number of comments in the context of maintaining or enhancing a hut and the use or acquisition of skills.

### **The disadvantages of hut ownership**

12.14 While the last few paragraphs have looked at the good aspects of hut ownership, inevitably there were others which were less good. About two out of five occupiers identified disadvantages in having their hut. As with benefits it is possible to group these perceptions under a number of main headings. Some differences between occupiers of owned and rented sites emerged and it was in disadvantages, much more than benefits, that differences were evident.

12.15 Perhaps the biggest down-side of hut ownership was that of maintaining it, accounting for a fifth of all comments made - much more so among those on owned sites, possibly a feature of distance from home to hut and perhaps of more expensive huts. Maintenance is a combination of both cost and effort, the latter being of particular significance to some of the older occupiers, though even younger ones admitted to finding it a burden.

12.16 Three issues of significant concern to occupiers on rented sites are absent from the owned-site list. These related to tenure, landlords and rents. However, in terms of overall balance of disadvantages, it must be acknowledged that most, though not all, of the comments under this heading related to Carbeth with its troubled history.

12.17 Tenure problems were not just seen as a basic perception of lack of security but as a particular worry in terms of the amount of effort and money spent on a hut and the possibility of this being lost if an owner decided not to continue the site, or if it changed hands. One example of this actually having happened came in the course of a chance conversation with a hut occupier, who lost her hut and virtually everything in it when a site changed hands during a summer about ten years ago and the new owners wished to develop the land for housing. When she returned to the site after a summer absence it was to find that the hut which she and her late husband had built and owned for many years and which had been a major part of their existence, had been lifted off the site by a digger in her absence and destroyed. She received no recompense. Despite this unhappy experience her fondness for hut ownership led her to find one on another site in the vicinity.

12.18 The attitude and powers of the landlord caused concern in some instances. This was sometimes in fairly low key terms, perhaps reflecting the results of a change in ownership, but more often there were more strongly articulated issues.

12.19 While we have seen that in general site rent levels are low in some instances they were much higher and for some constituted a major disadvantage of ownership, mainly in the context of steep and supposedly unjustified increases in relation to what was provided in return.

12.20 The isolation of many hut sites and the fact huts themselves are in only intermittent use means that they can be prone to vandalism. In some cases this perceived disadvantage of hut ownership was based on actual experience of damage to the individual's hut but even among other occupiers there were general concerns about it as a potential problem.

12.21 We have also seen perceptions of the 'simple life' as a distinct benefit for some occupiers, but others viewed it from a different perspective where absence of mains services was a disadvantage. Though mains electricity and water was occasionally mentioned, drainage and flush toilets were seen as a more significant lack, in spite of a high presence of at least a chemical closet for most huts. Sometimes other occupiers' own efforts at improving their huts could cause problems for their neighbours on the site. However, some comments indicated that '*experienced hutters*' might be more tolerant of these absent services than their visitors.

12.22 Two related difficulties figured much more in the comments of occupiers on owned sites and this probably reflects use pattern. These were

issues of distance from home - and we have shown that some of this group of owner-occupier may live very long distances from their hut - and ability to use it in the context of not being able to get to the hut as often as they would like. For these occupiers, use of the hut may be largely limited to a summer holiday or perhaps a shorter break around Easter, rather than the pattern of regular weekend use which is more common among occupiers on rented sites.

12.23 Although it might appear to be a related disadvantage, in practice some comments about difficulties of access related more to physical access in terms of roads or paths within the site, and this also applies to problems of the general condition of the site.

## 13 CONCLUSIONS

13.1 Hut sites have been a feature of the Scottish landscape for around 80 years. Some are visible to passers by, others hidden. Some are large, others small. Some are owned by individuals, fewer by larger estates. Some are in decline, others static. They started and grew to fit particular needs and times but both have changed. Almost certainly there were more sites some 30 or 40 years ago but, while they still constitute a significant presence, numbers of huts on individual sites now are either static or declining. Decline has been greatest on the largest sites but even some smaller sites have reduced, been redeveloped for other, possibly more gainful, uses or just disappeared. Over the years sites have undergone a process of transition. Some huts may have been replaced, first by small sites for mobile or semi-mobile caravans and, later, by static caravan sites. Other forms of transition can be seen in groups of dwellings which have become something between hut sites, 'holiday homes' or even established two-storey houses. Isolated huts have put down firmer roots and acquired facilities until they are indistinguishable from many other small Scottish rural or coastal dwellings. A few sites have been sold off as individual plots to their occupiers, while one is now owned jointly by its occupiers as a mutual trust.

13.2 This study has identified a number of features with implications for the future of huts and hutting. On one hand occupiers are largely an ageing population, implying potential decline in usage and eventual disappearance of sites in future years. Similarly many owners also are older with little resources or desire to make significant change or investment in their sites. While content to continue, even though the site provides little return, it is likely that it is only if it does not require much input or generate 'hassle'. Many occupiers may be content to live with the status quo, will still put time and effort into their huts as they do now and sites will probably continue to 'tick over' as they have done for a long time. On the other hand younger involvement has emerged among both owners and occupiers but their respective expectations are likely to be different. Occupiers may seek better services and security but may not

be prepared for the higher levels of rent which these will bring. Owners may expect greater control and higher levels of return on any investment. While more run down and little used huts might disappear or be taken over and improved, sites would be subject to greater controls. Either way, the traditional sites would be replaced by more ordered, even if low key, holiday chalet sites, perhaps with a different kind of occupier.

13.3 Can sites and huts survive? Do people want them to? This depends on the perspective from which they are viewed. Huts and sites grew before the days of land and planning controls and neither 'conform' in today's more constrained world. Even if officialdom cannot get rid of them, it might be happier to see them slowly wither on the vine. Even huts that have had a great deal of time, effort and resources put into them are still unconventional structures. On the other hand, one of the most important features throughout has been that, by and large, occupiers have managed to do as they like with their huts and modify them to meet changing needs and preferences to an extent unlikely to be possible in their day to day homes. Perhaps the other most important finding of the study is that, despite the very informal, not to say haphazard, basis on which many sites are managed, the over-riding impression is that on the whole they 'work', albeit at a variety of levels.

13.4 At present the equilibrium is delicately balanced. If disturbed, sites are unlikely to continue in their present form and though something may take their place it will be a different and more formal structure. If left undisturbed, hut sites probably will survive, at least in the short term. There is still a substantial enough body of occupiers who love their huts, devote time and resources to them and for whom they are an important part of their lives. Huts are the product of personal individuality, ingenuity and manual skills, not just on the part of their original builders but of successive occupiers. Hut sites are possibly the last bastion of a kind of individual freedom to 'nest', particularly for the sections of population who originally sparked

them off. At the beginning of the 21st century, hut sites may seem an anachronism. One owner said that *'they came in the 20th century and went*

*in the 20th century'*, but in practice and in their different ways nearly all seem to be making it into the new millennium fairly successfully.

## **APPENDIX A**

### **HOW THE STUDY WAS CARRIED OUT**

## STAGE 1 - FINDING SITES

1 A number of possible data sources were considered for the study with a view to their being used in combination, each with potential either to expand on information revealed only partially by one source or to cross check other sources for accuracy. In practice, in the course of the study additional sources emerged and were used in similar ways.

### Survey of local planning authorities

2 It was assumed that local Planning Departments should be aware of developments of this kind within their areas and therefore were seen as a prime source. The first line of enquiry was therefore a written enquiry to each of the Planning Department in each Council in Scotland, A simple questionnaire was used to ensure consistency of data.

3 As well as completing the basic questionnaire, authorities were asked, where possible, to provide any additional information such as location maps or supplementary sources. Authorities with no sites within their areas were specifically asked to make a nil returns.

### Additional sources

4 Given that a local authority might know of the existence of huts somewhere within its area but hold only limited information about a given location additional sources were used to confirm and expand the data.

### *Valuation Rolls*

5 As a result of the return provided by one Planning Department which included extracts from local valuation rolls giving direct reference to 'living huts' on four of the known sites within that Council's area, an approach was made to all the Valuation Boards (with one or two specific exceptions), seeking similar extracts from local Rolls. With the letter of enquiry, Assessors were also sent copies of the Planning questionnaire to ensure clear and consistent definitions would be clear.

### *Maps*

6 In the postal survey, Planning Departments were asked to give Ordnance Survey Grid References for any sites which they identified. They were also asked for map extracts or layout plans of sites where these were available. In practice the former were only provided in a few cases and the latter were very rare.

7 A map search at 1:10,000 scale was undertaken for every site identified in either the Planning or Assessor (see below) surveys, either to try to find a site location where only an address or an uncertain OSGR was available but also to provide some information on site character, particularly where the Assessor survey was the only source of information.

### *Land Registry (Registers of Scotland)*

8 The Land Registry was seen as a possible source of ancillary information on site ownership for sites already identified by other means rather than as a way of initial site identification. In practice it proved useful for this purpose in a small number of cases within the Stage 1 survey.

### *Rent Registration Service*

9 The initial rapid trawl by the headquarters of the Rent Registration Service of its regional offices provided a certain amount of information which once again was used as a cross check on information generated by other sources. In a few cases, where there appeared to be inconsistencies a subsequent check was made directly with the regional RRS office to clarify points from the initial return.

## STAGE 2 - UNDERSTANDING SITES

### The owner perspective

10 The main source of information on site owners was a number of semi-structured interviews. The target population was the owners of all sites identified in Stage 1 as having ten or more huts. Some 20 sites were initially identified for this stage though owners for another four could not be identified. However, one or two additional

possible interviews were identified from additional Valuation Roll data.

11 Letters were sent to owners seeking an interview and setting out the purpose of the study, the issues to be covered and some of the definitional background. Apart from those sites for which owners could not be found, a few initial approaches proved unsuccessful. However, in the end interviews were obtained with 15 owners, covering the full spectrum of site sizes within the given range.

12 Inevitably, given the nature of the owners themselves, the length of time they have had the sites and what generally turned out to be a surprising lack of hard, paper-based records, much of the interview information material was based on recall and tended to be impressionistic. Nevertheless the benefits of this approach were that a great deal of additional information emerged incidentally, not just about the pre-defined parameters of the interview but about site change over time, about the hut occupiers and about the site owners themselves and their philosophy towards their sites and, often, what they often regarded as 'their hutters'.

13 Wherever possible interviews were supplemented by a visit to the site itself, either in the company of the owner or independently. These proved particularly valuable in building up an understanding of the what site looked like and how they operated and, in a few cases provided an opportunity to talk to a small number of occupiers.

14 In the course of the interview stage of the study opportunity was also taken to visit other sites identified in the course of Stage 1 or located subsequently. Some were sites for which owners could not be identified or on which individual plots had been sold off to the hut owners in recent years. Other were outwith the target size range but were due to be included in the 'occupier' element with its larger catchment.

### **The occupier perspective**

15 Given that, when the study was commissioned, there was little or no body of knowledge about both where and what huts and hutters were,

two considerations were of particular importance in trying to build up a picture from the occupier. The first related to the kinds of information which occupiers might be able to provide about themselves and their huts. Second, and even more crucial in practice, was the ways in which that information might be obtained.

16 Four broad aspects were identified as relevant to the study:

the nature of huts themselves;

administrative arrangements between site owner and hut occupier;

patterns of use of huts;

occupier characteristics.

17 It was recognised that any information available from occupiers was likely to be a mix of fact, recall and, possibly, supposition, particularly over past history of use, not just by current occupiers but, even more, when a tenancy/licence changed hands, whether by purchase or by handing down by inheritance, some huts being thought to have been owned by a number of generations of the same family

18 There was much uncertainty about how information could be collected from occupiers. Face-to-face interviews were impractical, mainly on grounds of the difficulty of making contact with occupiers but also on cost grounds if a sufficient coverage were to be achieved. Alternative self completion questionnaire methods were also explored but again it seemed unlikely that these could successfully reach occupiers in their huts. It was only when names and home addresses of a large proportion of the occupiers were eventually traced through the Valuation Rolls that a conventional postal survey approach became feasible.

19 The ability to contact occupiers at their homes had a number of benefits :

the survey could target all occupiers of sites above a certain size in a cost-effective way;

if all occupiers had an opportunity to reply to a structured and objective questionnaire,

sent to their home addresses and returned in confidence, with a guarantee that no individual responses would be identifiable, this might help to generate a more accurate picture, particularly on any site where there were landlord-tenant difficulties;

it would be possible to send reminders to slow responders in order to boost response.

20 The target population was occupiers on all sites with four or more huts, a larger coverage than the ten-hut cut-off for the site owner element. Questionnaire were sent to just under 550 occupiers. These covered a total of 27 sites across Scotland from Deeside and the Angus Coast to the Solway and from Loch Lomond to East Lothian, a good spectrum of site sizes and types.

21 Although questionnaires had to be fairly brief and largely confined to pre-coded questions, it was possible to cover all the relevant aspects identified at the outset. As well as factual data it was also important to obtain open responses on a number of issues and these had the added benefit of obtaining information and experiences in the occupiers' own words.

22 Completed questionnaires were eventually

received from just over one in three of those approached. In reality this probably represents a higher proportion of those who could have taken part, i.e. excluding those who, for example, had moved away or who had already disposed of their hut. One important feature of the response was that it was well spread across the range of sites covered and hence can be regarded as providing a good cross-section of the hutter population.

23 The survey also helped to clarify some sites where it had been unclear whether they were 'hut sites' as initially defined (i.e. with occupiers as 'tenants' on land in a single ownership) or those where occupiers also owned, or at least had a long lease on the land on which their hut was located. Although the latter might have regarded the survey as inapplicable to them - and some made this clear in the form of written refusal - there was a surprising overall consistency of response between the two categories.

24 Another important factor increasing the general robustness of the response is that data quality was good with significant amounts of valuable and informative comment in responses to open questions. Being in the occupiers' own words, the latter are of particular benefit in fleshing out the numerical bones of the survey results.