A geological excursion guide to Rum: the Paleocene igneous rocks of the Isle of Rum, Inner Hebrides


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Torridon Group

Mesozoic strata

Palaeocene

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The Rum Central Complex

Stage 1
The Main Ring Fault

Minor intrusions: the commencement of Stage 2

Stage 2: The Layered Centre (formerly the ‘Layered Suite’)

The Canna Lava Formation on Rum

Events post-dating the Rum Central Complex

The Pleistocene and later

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**Excursion 1 Kinloch and surroundings. A. West of Kinloch**

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Locality 4.16 Harris Bay – shelves eroded in well-layered gabbro [NM 373 958] Locality 4.17 East end Harris Bay – intrusion breccia at gabbro/microgranite contact [NM 3405 9505]
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**Introduction**

The Isle of Rum is the largest of the Small Isles in the Inner Hebrides, north-west Scotland (See image). It is a National Nature Reserve, owned and managed by Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH)* and there are several geological Sites of Special Scientific Interest (Emeleus and Gyopari, 1992). In addition to the spectacular geology, the island is noted for its herd of red deer (the subject of a long-term study initiated in the 1950s), feral goats, plant life, birds (Rum was used as the base for the reintroduction of the Sea Eagle to the Hebrides), and insects. Rum has a population of about 20, the majority of whom live at Kinloch.

Visitors to Rum can usually freely explore the immediate surroundings of Kinloch, where there are several well-marked nature trails. At certain times during the year there are restrictions on access to parts of the island, especially the northern area around Kirkcolm which is the centre for ongoing deer studies. Notification of these activities is usually given on the information boards outside the White House. Those walking or working outwith Kinloch should always fill in daily route cards (available outside the White House) and make sure that these are completed on return. Leaders of parties visiting the island must contact the Reserve Manager well in advance of their intended visit; geologists should note that rock sampling can only be carried out with the Reserve Manager’s permission. Collecting from loose material is usually not a problem but hammering exposures is not generally permitted.

Rum and the other Small Isles (Eigg, Canna, and Muck) are served by ferry (foot passengers only) from Mallaig, which is connected by road and railway to Fort William (70 km) and Glasgow (240 km), and by road to Inverness (180 km). The nearest airports are at Glasgow and Inverness. There is also a regular vehicle ferry connection (c. 40 minutes) between Mallaig and Armadale on the Isle of Skye.
Fieldwork on Rum generally involves cross-country walking over rough, damp ground and climbing to between 500–800m elevation. Rain and strong winds are common. It is therefore essential to have good walking boots and adequate waterproof clothing. There is no public transport and all vehicles on the island are for the use of SNH employees. There are no paved roads, only rough tracks and paths.

The island is well known for the ferocity of its midges, which can be very trying on still, humid days. Visitors should bring their preferred repellant and midge nets, for these may not be available on the island. Ticks occur in the areas frequented by deer and goats. The best protection against both of these is provided by long trousers and long-sleeved shirts. There are no snakes on Rum.

A selection of maps and books relating to Rum is listed below. Topographic maps can be obtained through most booksellers or from Edward Stanford Ltd, 12-14 Long Acre, London, WC2E 9LP (www.stanfords.co.uk). SNH publications are available from the Publications Section, Scottish Natural Heritage, Battleby, Redgorton, Perth, PH1 3EW (www.snh.org.uk) and some may be bought from the SNH office on Rum. The SNH 1:20,000 geological map is only obtainable from SNH on Rum. Publications (maps, memoirs, etc.) of the British Geological Survey (www.bgs.ac.uk) can be purchased from: BGS, Murchison House, West Mains Road, Edinburgh, EH9 3LE; BGS Keyworth, Nottingham, NG12 5GG; The Natural History Museum, Earth Sciences Galleries, South Kensington, London; or through approved stockists. (NB: BGS publications required for educational purposes and ordered through an educational establishment may attract a discount.)

**Maps**

Visitors to Rum should bring a copy of the Ordnance Survey 1:25,000 map and use this at all times when in the field.

Ordnance Survey topographic maps:

1:50,000 Landranger series: Sheet 33, Rum and Eigg

1:25,000 Explorer series: Sheet 397, Rum, Eigg, Muck, Canna and Sanday

**Geological maps**

1:50,000 British Geological Survey Scotland Sheet 60, Rum (Solid & Drift) (1994)

1:20,000 Scottish Natural Heritage, Rum - Solid Geology

(Second Edition, 1992) (obtainable only from SNH on Rum)

**Selected books, etc.**


Travel

Caledonian MacBrayne operates a service from Mallaig to Rum and the other Small Isles. Details about the current timetable and fares should be obtained from Caledonian MacBrayne (Mallaig 01687-46-2403; or see the company’s website, www.calmac.co.uk). For train connections between Mallaig, Fort William and Glasgow, consult the National Rail Timetable or First Scotrail (www.firstgroup.com/scotrail). Buses operate between Mallaig and Fort William (Shiel Buses, Acharacle, Argyll, PH36 4JY; shiel.buses@virgin.net). As ferry departures from Mallaig are generally earlier than the arrival of trains (except on Saturdays during the summer), it is necessary to stay in Mallaig overnight. Hotel, B&B and other accommodation is available but should be booked in advance. A summer ferry service also operates between Arisaig and Rum on certain days; for details contact Arisaig Marine (tel. 01687-465224; www.greentourism.org.uk/ArisaigMarine). Private vehicles (cars, motorcycles, etc.) are not permitted on the island and the SNH office on Rum should be consulted about the use of mountain bikes prior to arrival.

NB: Ferry sailings can be delayed or cancelled when there are adverse weather conditions. This rarely happens during the summer and delays are less frequent since the completion of the new slipways on Rum and the other islands.

Accommodation

Accommodation (self-catering/individual meals/full board) is currently available at Kinloch Castle hostel (contact: The Manager, Kinloch Castle, Isle of Rum, PH43 4RR, Tel. 01687-46-2037). Camping is allowed at Kinloch; elsewhere camping is strictly controlled and may only be arranged with the permission of the Reserve Manager. Bothies maintained by the Scottish Mountain Bothies Association are located at Dibidil [NM 393 927] and Guirdil [NG 320 013]; the Reserve Manager should be consulted if it is intended to use these.

A small licensed shop and post office next to the community hall [NM 403 997] at Kinloch sells a selection of groceries and beverages. Opening hours are from about 17.00–19.00. A limited selection of postcards may be available and postcards may also be on sale in the castle, along with Scottish Natural Heritage literature about Rum. A comprehensive selection of SNH publications about Rum is obtainable from the Reserve Office which is open on mornings, Monday–Friday. There is a public telephone near the old post office [NM 403 996] and in the castle courtyard. At present, mobile phone reception is possible on parts of the east side of the island, but is poor to non-existent elsewhere.

Items needed for the bothies

The bothy accommodation is spartan. There are two rooms, each of which has a fireplace, a table, and some benches. There is no plumbing and at Dibidil there is no nearby source of fuel (driftwood or otherwise). If you wish to light a fire in this bothy, bring a supply of fuel (kindling, firewood, coal, firelighters, matches, etc.). Sleeping bags, cooking utensils, a lightweight stove, all food, and
candles/torches will be required. Mobile phone signal is generally good in the Dibidil bothy.

**References**

At all times follow: The Scottish Access Code and Code of conduct for geological field work


- Edinburgh Geological Society

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