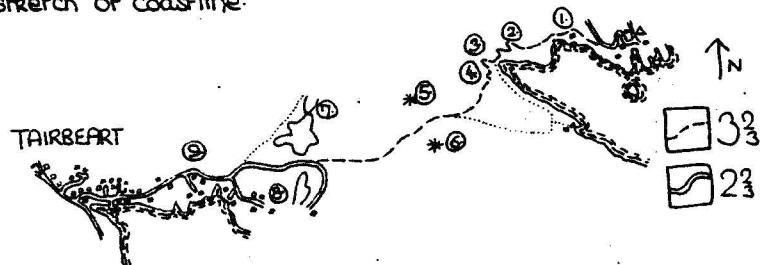


## THE TAIRBEART PATH

6½ miles\*

When a person living in Reinigeadal fell ill and needed a doctor as soon as possible, the swiftest available person would be summoned and sent along the Tarbeart Path to get help. Some people could run the distance in less than an hour using a few shortcuts en route. When the sea was too rough for boats to put out, supplies might be brought into the village along the path too, but mostly the path provided a link between the little villages, Malinginis, Gearraadh Lotaigear and Reinigeadal and the areas of lazybeds, built in every possible place along the coast. In the days when this area was most populated, the path was kept in good condition, nowadays it is in disrepair, eroding away and being encroached upon by the heather. The construction includes a layer of springy heather twigs, which would have provided a bit of bounce underfoot.

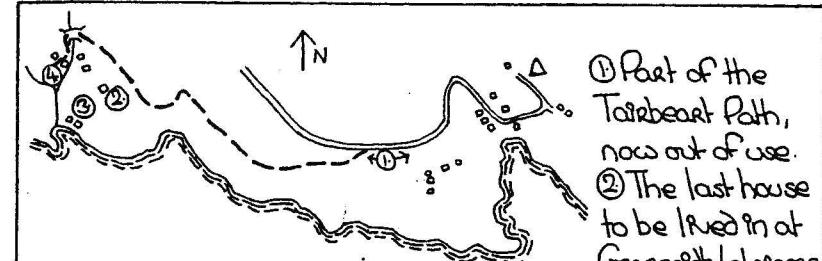
Nowadays the majority of people using the path are hikers and travellers, usually having enough time on their hands to move along at a gentle pace and savour just being there, on a lovely stretch of coastline.



- ① Gearraadh Lotaigear
- ② Big Stone
- ③ Glen Trollamore
- ④ The zig-zag
- ⑤ Trollamul
- ⑥ Beinn Tharsuim
- ⑦ Lacasdal
- ⑧ Urgha
- ⑨ Gleann Lingeadal

\*From Reinigeadal to Tarbeart

4.

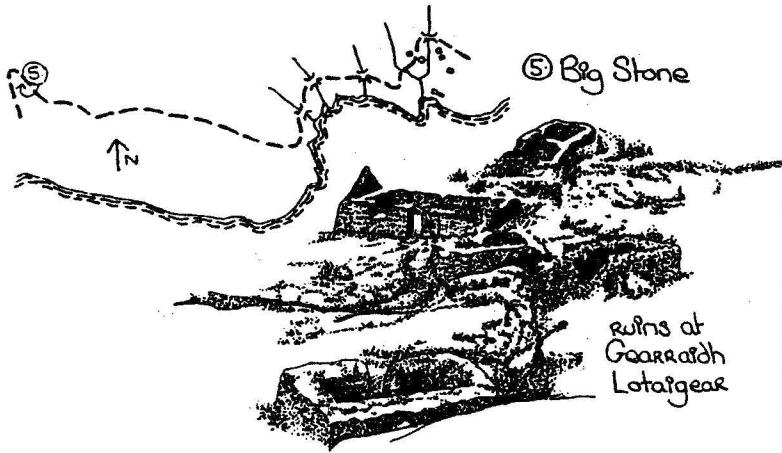


- ① Part of the Tarbeart Path, now out of use.
- ② The last house to be lived in at Gearraadh Lotaigear.
- ③ These buildings were constructed with the intention that they would be a shop and store room.
- ④ A blackhouse converted into a sheep dip and pen.

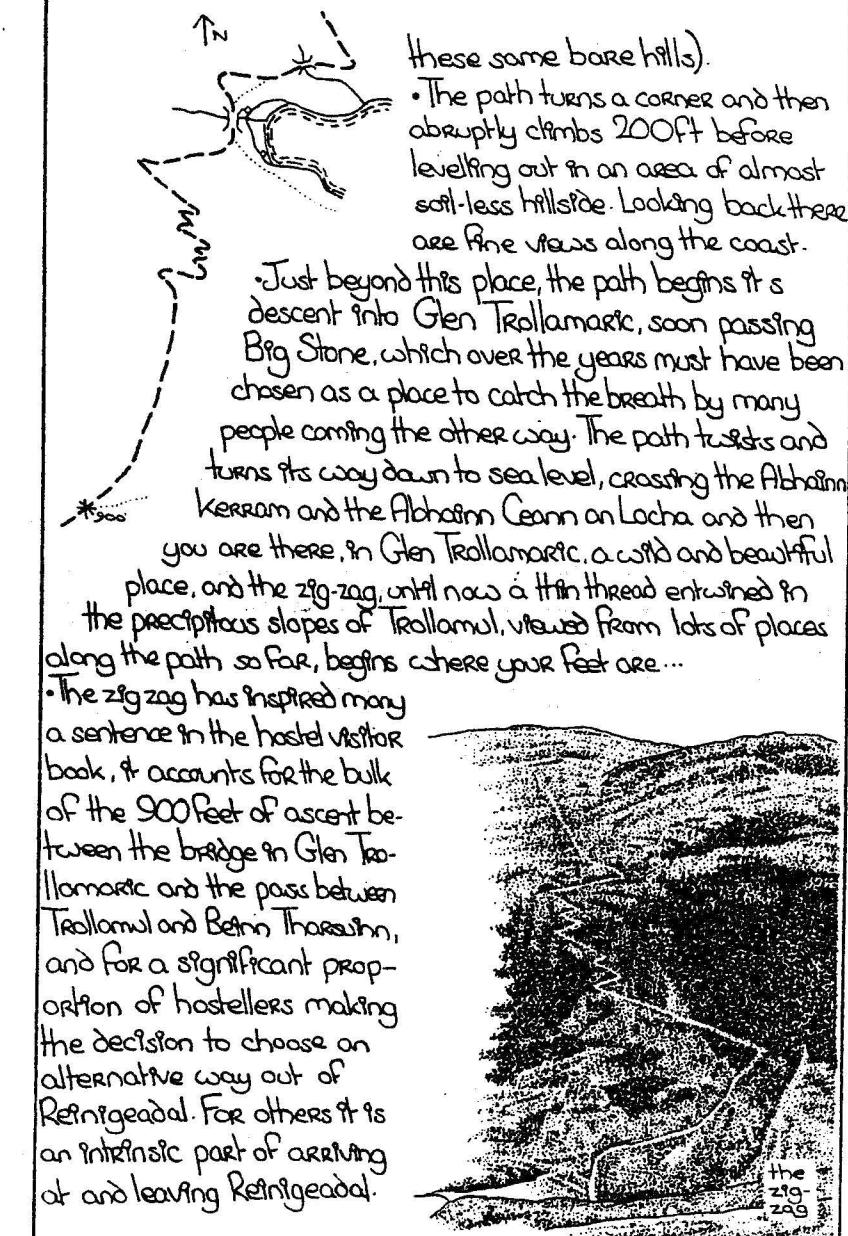
- Leaving the hostel, follow the road out of Reinigeadal and onto the hillside opposite. The road continues to climb though not so steeply as initially, and you will shortly arrive at a signpost marking the point at which the old Tarbeart Path meets the newer road.
- Here leave the road and follow the path down and around the hillside, always taking care to ensure that you leave all the gates you pass through closed behind you.
- After about half a mile the path will drop down into the deserted village of Gearraadh Lotaigear. The last of these houses to be lived in was the now burnt out wall-less ruin with the two distinctive chimney stacks left standing. It was lived in by two old ladies, and the light issuing from its windows on a dark night was like a beacon to locals returning to Reinigeadal along the path – once passed, it was only a short way to their own homes. Down by the shore there are two curious little buildings built from stone cut from the rock of the coastline next to them, the idea was to provide a shop for the people of Reinigeadal and Gearraadh Lotaigear, which could be supplied by boat, hence its location close to sea-level.

5.

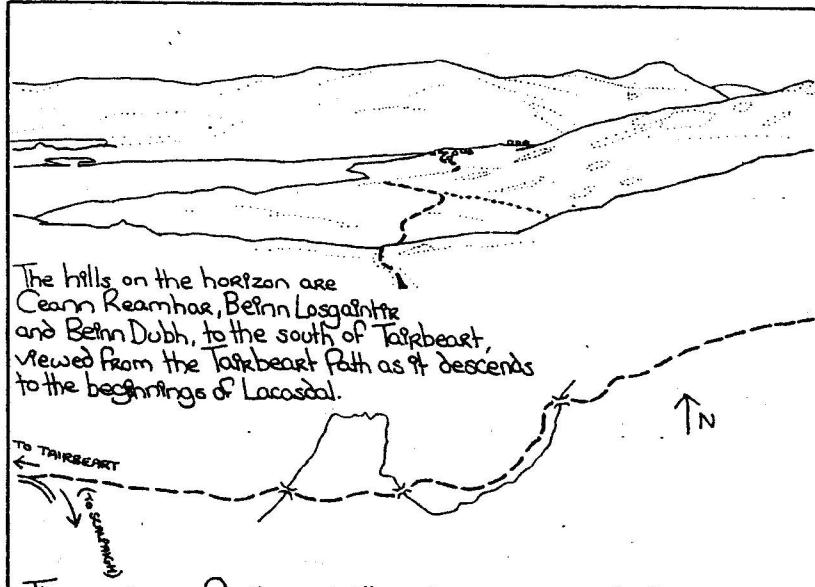
- The path continues out of Gearraidh Lotaigear and winds around the hillside, crossing streams that tumble down from Tobar to the sea.
- Along much of the length of the path, you will be passing by old lazybeds (raised parallel strips of earth, upon which the crops were grown). On such a wild coastline, every potential space was put to good use and so the hillsides are patterned with these ribs of earth, often precariously located above sheer drops. When the sun is low in the sky and the shadows long, this work of earlier generations is again plainly revealed, and pronounced so, maybe they draw the attention and thoughts of today's people though the heather and grasses have reclaimed them. It was heavy work creating and maintaining lazybeds, seaweed and old tar and soot filled thatch from the blackhouses was hauled to them to fertilise the earth. In some parts of Hebridh, such as along the Golden Road, the land was practically devoid of all soil and the new inhabitants, forced from their lands in the west during the Clearances first had to create soil (incidentally some scenes from 2001: A Space Odyssey, were filmed in



6.



7.



- The postman for these settlements used to make the journey to Tairbeart and back three times a week. As well as delivering and posting mail (up to 30lbs per journey) he also delivered shopping lists to the grocers in Tairbeart on behalf of all the families around Loch Trollamore and the south-west of Loch Shiophaig. A few days later, the shopping would arrive by boat.
- Once you have reached the highest point on the path, between the tops of Trollamul and Beinn Tharsunn, you will be leaving behind the remote villages and moving into a new landscape. Todden, whose presence towered above the first half of the walk, now is lost from view. Ahead are the first hills of southern Hebridean, not giving anything away of the beautiful coastline just beyond them. As you descend, so more of the hills to the north-west come into view: Beinn na Teanga, Goramul and Sgaoth Airidh on the far side of Lacaadal, and Clisham, a couple of miles more distant.
- After 1½ miles, the path meets the road to Tairbeart. Turn

right and then simply follow the road all the rest of the way (about 2 miles). After 4 miles the road passes the beginning of the Lacaadal section of the old drovers road to Leadhais (see page 28).

- If instead you chose to turn left where the Tairbeart Path meets the road, you would eventually arrive at Caolas Scalpaigh and the new bridge across the water to Scalpaigh. Around 450 people live on the island, and fishing is the principal industry. It was on Scalpaigh that Bonnie Prince Charlie, whilst taking refuge after the defeat of the Jacobites at Culloden in 1746, was very nearly betrayed to the pursuing English by a Presbyterian minister from South Uist who was tempted by the £30,000 reward offered for his capture (this was the sole instance of intended betrayal during the Prince's flight from the English).
- Tairbeart is the principal village on Hebridean, here you will find grocers, post office, bank, tourist information, buses, ferry, craft shops, fast food and more.

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- The Tairbeart Path is easy to follow, with only a couple of vague moments between Gearraidh Lataigear and Big Stone. There are a few rough short cuts along the way but it is advisable to avoid them all. When the clouds are down on the hills and the rain is heavy this land takes on a very different personality, particularly closing in on the thoughts of a hiker new to the area who can't see far ahead through the gloom and mist and doesn't know how much further it is to the hostel but just has to follow the winding path over the hills, with careful steps on the slippery surface, and serious doubts about that 5km signpost. So, always allow 2½ hours at least to complete this walk and walk it in the daylight.