

THE GATLIFF TRUST

Trustees: Herbert Gatliff
Bernard Selwyn
Malcolm Campbell
Robert Wickenden
Frank Martin
Roger Clifton

Hon Secretary: Malcolm Campbell
98 Agar Grove,
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London,
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March 1976

Dear Hosteller,

Crofters' Youth Hostels

This is the fourteenth annual review of the youth hostels provided with financial assistance from the Gatliff Trust in the Outer Hebrides.

Last year's letter proved to be far too gloomy and during 1975 both hostels achieved record overnights. Howmore, South Uist, had 680 (508 in 1974) and Rhenigidale, North Harris, 569 (214 in 1974) overnight stays. The number of visitors from 18 nations totalled 333 compared with 181 during the previous year. The Trustees agreed following the poor results in 1974 to do some modest advertising in 1975. This seems to have been very worthwhile and will be continued in 1976. The increase at Rhenigidale is particularly encouraging as Roddy MacInnes had made sterling efforts to improve the amenities at the hostel. Mrs MacSween, the warden of Howmore, also works very hard to make the hostel welcoming and during the year transferred ownership of the hostel to her daughter, Mrs Fraser MacDonald.

Fire precautions, mentioned last year, have been improved. Fire retardant paint was used to redecorate the kitchen/living room at Howmore. Clear notices have been put up throughout both hostels and No Smoking notices placed in all the dormitories.

Visitors to the hostels included Ratcliffe College to Howmore at Easter, and a number of people active in the Youth Hostels Association (England & Wales): Mrs Jackson and her daughter (Lakes), Tom Hall (Merseyside) and Derek Baker, Alan Reimer and Dave Turner (Eastern). Meg and Mick Lee (to Rhenigidale) and Archie McCullum (to Howmore) made return pilgrimages. Ruth Wiese, a member of a family from Hamburg, Germany, decorated Rhenigidale with excellent drawings and paintings of animals.

Two Trustees, Bernard Selwyn and Frank Martin, visited both hostels. Frank was accompanied by his wife Katherine and their 21-month old daughter, Sarah - the walk to and from Rhenigidale was hard going but most worthwhile to see both the hostel and the crofting community in such good heart. Frank and his family spent ten nights at Howmore. Both Trustees were very satisfied with the conditions at both hostels.

Colin Sharpe and two other lads from Oldham spent two weeks at Rhenigidale exploring the area and writing a guide to the walks which can be made from the hostel. The log of their trip is available from Frank Martin, 20 Cornwallis Avenue, Bristol, BS8 4PP - please enclose a stamped, addressed envelope. Other writings in the housebook and logbook at each hostel make interesting reading and show the appreciation of many visitors of the Hebridean way of life.

From the Rhenigidale Logbook:

"On top of Toddun, mid-summer's day.

"Evening has come, we climb the hill to see the sun in splendour, gathering her light in a great glow, setting the clouds on fire. Strangers to one another, yet our lives for a while melt and run together into the light and stand, written in clearness against the coming night."

Matthew Barton

Please tell your friends of these small and friendly hostels. If you have suggestions, comments or offers of help the Trustees would like to hear from you. Their Annual Report and Accounts are available on request; please send a stamped, addressed foolscap envelope.

Yours sincerely,

Malcolm Campbell
Hon Secretary