

Christophe Philippe from France mentions the connection between Brittany and Gaelic speaking Scotland, in the Berneray book. He says "We have been linked together for a long time. One time we were the same people, the same civilisation. We still have the Gael character in Brittany, you can even meet the last druids of this rich Celtic civilisation.... I feel just like at home here."

Don't lose heart, Christophe! If you read back in the Berneray and Howmore hostel books you would have found that the Celtic peoples are still very much aware of their common heritage and it is still struggling to survive. Pol O' Murchú from Dublin in April 1980 writes "I am on my way to South Uist, Iochdar where is a seminar on Celtic films and television materials. Cinema Sgìre who are organising it have lined up much interesting material. This is the first festival for the Celtic film makers." In fact this festival was a great success and it is sad to have to report now that due to financial cut backs, Comhairle nan Eilean (the Western Isles Council) have required to withdraw their support from and thus close down Cinema Sgìre. It was a body based in Uist which both made films about and showed films to the community, throughout the Isles. Other casualties of government spending cuts are the Gàidhlig theatre company, Fir Chlis and the long promised Rhenigidale road.

Geoff Garbett from Somerset expresses himself in the Rhenigidale book: "This has been a return trip after 7 years - I expected to find a Motel or ghost settlement, but, miraculously nothing has changed (except the arrival of the tap and the W.C.) Rhenigidale must be about the last community in the British Isles to receive the delights of the 20th century - electricity in 1981 and a road in 1982? (How wise to add the question mark!) "I hope that these will ensure the survival of the settlement but, alas it will never be quite the same for us townies looking for a few days of the rugged island life. Will Roddy be too busy watching the tele to come and talk to us at night and bring us eggs and the socks his sister has made? Will a bare electric light bulb provide the same warm atmosphere as a hissing Tilley? Nevertheless, I will be back, and I wish Rhenigidale and its inhabitants lots of luck and a prosperous future."

As always, the log books are filled with details of birds observed, flowers found, people met and descriptions of the landscape. The Stellers eider is still in the vicinity of Howmore and at Rhenigidale there are reported sightings of eagles on Toddun. A number of people on Berneray have taken an interest in the stone circles and sites of antiquity on the island and there are discussions and illustrations about stones lining up to the midsummer sunset. Diego Yule in Berneray writes down information given to him by Ian Ferguson of Borve whose name is mentioned many times in the log. Diego writes: "During the potato famine in Ireland the same blight that ravaged the potato crop there attacked the crops on Berneray as well and the beaches were crowded with people trying to gain some nourishment by picking mussels winkles whelks and limpets off the rocks. Then during the highland clearances, all the inhabitants were cleared off the land and from the 1850s to 1901 or '02 there were only a few people here. In 1901 or '02 most of the families of the present inhabitants came over and settled here, at which time many of the stones (i.e. standing stones) were removed from the stone circles which had previously surrounded the present standing stone (at Borve) and used for building materials. Apparently at one time there were 3 stone circles surrounding

the standing stone. One, the first was 36ft from the standing stone, the next ring was 72ft from the standing stone and the last was 144ft from it."

The books contain a variety of illustrations including a plan to show the whereabouts of the Prince's cave at Borodale, a cartoon depicting the walk to Rhenigidale and a drawing of the Steller's eider and of a tooth laden and ferocious midge!

Descriptions of the scenery abound, one charming example being that of Christine Wright of Australia who writes at Howmore: "a really beautiful day was topped off superbly by one of the most fantastic sunsets I have yet experienced in the British Isles. The wide white beach, the lochs reflecting purple and gold, a family of swans, grasses needling up out of the peat marsh, all so clear and so wild."

WORK PARTIES

It is proposed to send a small work party to each hostel in the early summer of 1981 to whitewash Berneray and Howmore and possibly to paint inside Rhenigidale as well as dealing with general maintenance and repair work at all three. Assistance will be given towards volunteers travelling expenses and subsistence. Anyone interested in helping *next year* should please write to Isabel Steel, ~~Tanglin, 3 Well Road, Bridge of Allan, Stirlingshire FK9 4HW.~~ *7 Canely Bank Terrace, Edinburgh EH4 1AT*

SUGGESTED READING

There follows an entirely arbitrary selection of books relating to the Outer Hebrides which might be of interest to visitors. Some are out of print but should be found in any public library.

'The Western Isles'	W. H. Murray
'A School in South Uist'	F. G. Rea, edited by Dr J. L. Campbell
'The Prince in the Heather'	Eric Linklater
'Tir a' Mhurain'	Strand, Davidson
'Children of Tempest'	(a novel) Neil Munro
'Harpoon at a Venture'	Gavin Maxwell
'The Songs of John Mac Codrum'	ed. W. Matheson
'North Uist'	(rare) Erskine Beveridge
'Gaelic Songs of Mary Macleod'	ed. J. C. Watson
'Carmina Gadelica' (6 vols)	Alexander Carmichael

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Isabel Steel