



NEWSLETTER No. 2.

DECEMBER 1984

BERNERAY

Berneray hostel is now closed. All being well it will reopen in Spring 1986 with a new roof and new porch. Internally it will be completely refurbished and redecorated. A wc and other new plumbing is planned. Electricity will be connected.

To achieve this target :

1. £10,000 must be raised.
2. A large number of volunteers are required to join work parties to carry out the work.

The bulk of the donations from Hebridean Hostellers in 1985 will be put into the Berneray appeal. If you wish to make an additional donation specifically for Berneray, just add it to your regular donation.

If you would like to volunteer for a work party at Berneray contact: John Joyce, 91, Knollys Road, Streatham, London SW16.
01 677 3062

Appeal for funds

£10,000 must be raised. Aside from financial contributions, if you have connections with the media, or are artistic, could you help design and publicise the appeal?

Do you know of any potential voluntary or charitable sources of funds? If you can help in any of these ways, contact Peter Clarke, 264, Alexandra Park Road, London N22 4BG 01 888 2449.

Work parties

Work parties are the only certain means of carrying out the work. Early in 1984 we had high hopes that we could get the work done by a local builder. However, there is a great deal of building and renovation work occurring on Berneray and all the local builders were booked up throughout 1984 and 1985.

The dates of working parties will depend on the availability of volunteers, but, all being well, they will take place from late Spring to early September. Each party will be lead by a Trustee or someone closely involved with the Trust.

What will it involve? - If you have a week (or more) to spare why not join a work party for a week and then tour the Outer Hebrides? If you have any building skills (we currently lack carpentry and plumbing) - so much the better. If not there is plenty of need for brawn. We will also need some who can cook meals etc.

Accommodation will be provided in tents. The camping and food will be paid for by the Gatliff Trust. Families are welcome, so long as they can find or provide their own accommodation.

We ask all volunteers to pay their own travel costs to and from Berneray. We simply do not have the funds to meet these costs. However, if you are keen to volunteer, have specific skill or relevant experience, but cannot afford all or part of the fare, let us know. We are making no promises but we are prepared to consider cases.

The challenge

We began 1984 with high hopes of rapid remedial action at Berneray. This did not occur, but that is so often the way with the Hebrides. The pause during 1984 delayed the appearance of this Newsletter but it has allowed us more time to plan the work and organise an appeal. The priorities and intentions remain the same but the plans are different. John Joyce, Gerald McGuire, Peter Clarke and Frank Martin each visited the hostel. A local architect has been hired to draw up the plans. Arthur Meaby is acting as clerk of works. John Joyce is co-ordinating volunteers.

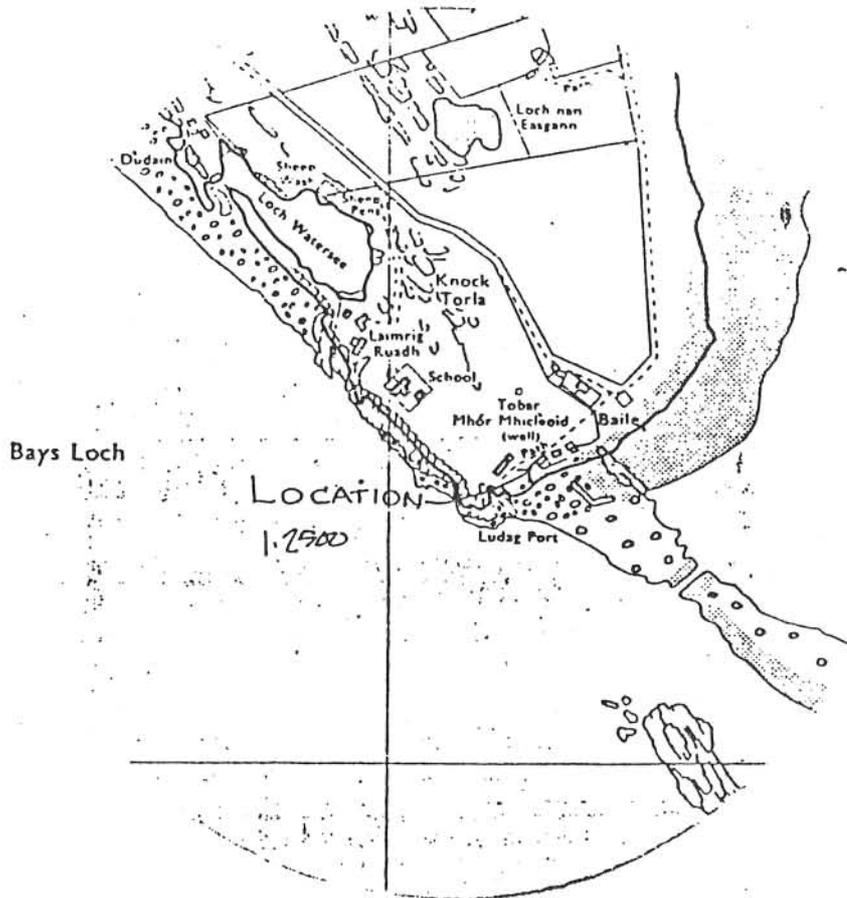
We believe that the end result will justify this effort. Judging by entries in the Berneray log book, we believe that you agree.

Here are a few of the comments:

"It is a really lovely hostel on an island with very friendly people."

"W. H. Murray in his book "The Hebrides" describes the circumambulation of Berneray as one of the best walks in the isles. The patches of snow still clinging to Sgurr Alasdair in the Cuillin of Skye and the massive cliffs of St. Kilda and Boreray in the west were clearly visible in addition to the marvellous scenery nearer at hand."

"Tonight. I walked up Beinn Shleibhe, wild thyme under foot, flaming sky above. I watched the sunset over Berneray and listened to the mournful wail of the gull and the insistent "pip" of the oystercatcher. Berneray. I am at peace."



HOSTELLERS' INAUGURAL MEETING

The first meeting of the Hebridean Hostellers group took place on 21st July 1984. The proceedings were informal. After introductions we outlined our thinking about the Hebridean Hostellers and there was a general discussion. We then enjoyed tea whilst slides of the Hebrides and other Scottish islands were shown by John Joyce and Andrew Gannon.

It was agreed that it was best to organise the Hebridean Hostellers around working parties in the Outer Hebrides.

Follow up

The 1985 meeting of the Hebridean Hostellers will be held in Scotland. Meanwhile in July Hebridean Hostellers in Edinburgh and Glasgow had the opportunity to meet with Peter Clarke for a chat about the Hebrides. We hope to organise similar meetings, as the commitments of peripatetic Trustees allows.

A LOGO FOR THE HOSTELS?

From time to time hostellers have suggested that a distinctive sign or logo be used for the hostels, and the Trust's note paper and publications. The sign could also be used for any finger posts to the hostels.

Has anyone got any ideas?

News from the hostels

HOWMORE

A carpenter has now replaced the front door of the hostel. Now, the windows all open. During 1985 we hope to rethatch the cottage. Without rethatching every two or three years the roof lets in the rain.

In the men's dormitory there is a notice about the risk of fire:

"If there is a fire get everyone out of the hostel"

A wag has written underneath

"What are we supposed to do then, stand outside and watch it burn?"

To which the inevitable reply was -

"damn sight better than standing inside and watching it burn".



CLADDACH BALES SHARE

Provisional returns show that 1984 was a good year for Claddach Baleshare: overnights are up. The year began with a school visit from Stornoway, at Easter, and continued with a steady stream of visitors throughout the year.

During 1985 Tommy and Catrina Tosh are planning to build a porch to contain a sink and W.C. This will liberate the small central room. The Trust will be paying for this work less whatever can be raised by a grant. A new rayburn stove is being bought for the kitchen. This will be much easier to light than the existing stove.

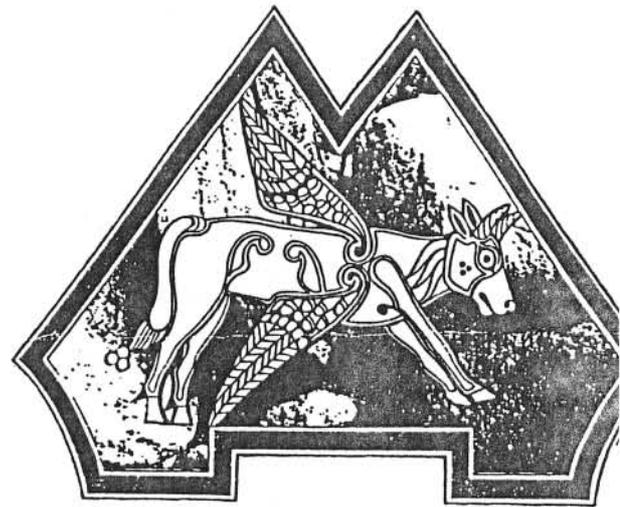
Thatching

Tommy Tosh is prepared to teach the skill of thatching, Is anyone interested in learning? If you are could you contact: Tommy (Sea Breeze, Claddach Baleshare, Lochport, North Uist, Western Isles)

RHENIGIDALE

The Land Rover track will be started in the near future. The first part of the contract, we understand, has been let.

Some time ago a cast iron stove was taken to Rhenigidale but it has proved unsuitable. It needs to be shifted, possibly to Berneray or Howmore. Any volunteers at Easter - with transport ideally?



MAINTENANCE WORK PARTY

Whilst Berneray will be the major project of the year, there is also work to be done at the other hostels before work at Berneray begins. If you are free at Easter and would like to join a maintenance work party could you contact John Joyce (see Berneray for address) or Arthur Meaby. (29 Upper Lewes Road, Brighton Sussex BN2 3FH)

ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECT OF THE WESTERN ISLES INTEGRATED DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME - The Nature conservancy Council issued the following press release in September.

The Nature Conservancy Council (NCC) has published an interim appraisal of the environmental effect of the Integrated Development Programme (IDP) for the Western Isles. Commissioned by the EEC Environment Directorate in April 1983, the work is being carried out by Dr John Hambrey under contract to the NCC.

Although the study is incomplete, the interim report puts forward a set of provisional conclusions as a basis for debate, the more important of which are as follows:-

1. There are incentives within the IDP for activities which could have serious impacts on the environment. These incentives are largely concerned with the drainage of wetland and moves towards intensive grassland management. In practice, however, local constraints in the form of crofting traditions and land tenure, as well as the physical limitations of soil and climate, will make it unlikely that such developments will take place on a scale which will cause extensive or long term damage to the environment.
2. The environmental protection mechanisms within the programme have shortcomings and would not be adequate if these constraints did not operate. Suggestions for their improvement are given in the report.

3. In general the implementing agencies of the IDP do not take a sufficiently positive attitude with regard to furthering nature conservation out with Sites of Special Scientific Interest.
4. A good deal of the wildlife and landscape interest in the Western Isles is depending upon small scale, part time, crofting agriculture. To the extent that the programme stimulates crofting generally, it can be said to have a beneficial effect on such interest, especially in the short term. To the extent, however, that the programme tends to bring the greatest benefits to larger, more intensive producers, while at the same time giving relatively little boost to alternative non-agricultural employment, there is a danger that it may, in the long term, fail to sustain both the crofting communities and the wildlife which is associated with them.

A video film relating to some of the issues raised in the report will also be completed shortly, and will be shown in the Western Isles from November. It is hoped that this will act as a further stimulus to debate and the exchange of information.

Comments and further relevant information are sought from experts, members of the public and organisations, especially those directly concerned or interested in the IDP - and should be sent to Dr. Hambrey as soon as possible. The final report is due to be submitted to the EEC Environment Directorate in July 1985.

For further information and copies of the report:-

John Hambrey
Nature Conservancy Council
12 Hope Terrace
Edinburgh EH9 2AS

Tel: 031-447 4784