



HEBRIDEAN HOSTELLERS AND GATLIFF HEBRIDEAN HOSTELS TRUST ACTIVITIES 1993

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\* The Fifth Annual General Meeting of the Gatliff Hebridean Hostels Trust \*  
\* will be held at Berneray hostel on the morning of \*  
\* Saturday 24th July '93. \*  
\* Alan Busson will circulate the details and the Annual Report in June. \*  
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\* On Thursday 22nd July Hebridean Hostellers will be holding an open \*  
\* day at Berneray Hostel. Both events fit into the island's programme for \*  
\* Berneray Week - AGM attendees will be able to support the island's \*  
\* Its-a-knockout and Tug-of-War competitions on the afternoon of the AGM \*  
\* date. Members are encouraged to attend any or all of these events. \*  
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**Claddach Baleshare Hostel closure**

It is with considerable regret that the Gatliff Hebridean Hostels Trust and the wardens Catrina and Tommy Tosh jointly announce that Claddach Baleshare hostel is closed with immediate effect.

Catrina, who does all the day-to-day work of running the hostel, told Peter Clarke in late March that following serious illness in early '92, she and Tommy had struggled through the 1992 season and it was with regret that they had concluded that as her own health had not improved significantly, it is not fair to attempt to operate the hostel in 1993 on such a minimal attention basis. Catrina wrote "It hurts me turning people away from the hostel for I love meeting people and finding where they come from - it's with regret I close the hostel."

The Committee members were obviously aware of the situation and are grateful to Tom and Catrina for managing to keep the hostel open during the 1992 summer season. We hope that a quiet summer and some good weather will speed Catrina along the road to good health. Suitable notices have been posted in the other Hebridean Hostels. We will, of course, keep members advised as to future developments at Claddach.

**Howmore Hostel renovation**

The renovation and extension of Howmore hostel will begin in the early autumn of this year. As previously noted Howmore has been subject to overcrowding during

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recent summers. By agreement with Mrs McSween's family, the accomodation is to be extended by using the adjacent partly ruinous cottage as part of the hostel facilities, and in planning this the Project Organiser, Arthur Meaby, has realised that if the new building is used to house the hostel common room/kitchen and limited sleeping and washroom facilities then facilities for the disabled can be built into the new hostel building. The existing hostel will then converted into dormitory and wash-room facilities in the second phase of the project and should result in the loss of capacity during the quiet season only. The detail of this is all being planned now and all the legal/bureaucratic issues are steadily being resolved. The Rhenigidale appeal will be launched during the summer and the Trust is grateful to those Hebridean Hostellers and charities who have already donated considerable funds to the Appeal. It is the Trustees fervent hope that the Howmore project will continue to run as successfully as it has to date, and we are indebted to the family of Mrs McSween (recently retired warden) & Betty MacDonald (the current warden) for their support and help on this project. News of this project and the Appeal will be carried in future Newsletters.

**Membership Renewal** - A thank you to all Hebridean Hostellers for renewing your membership for 1993, but a particular thank you to all those of you that made a donation to the Trust along with your subscription payment and to those who included words of encouragement and general, friendly correspondence with your renewal. That over 95% of members choose to renew their membership is of great encouragement to the Trustees. We hope that you find your membership interesting and worthwhile and that you are encouraged to join in the Trust's activities.

Four **Supplementary Information Sheets** relating to GHHT and the hostels are enclosed with this Newsletter. These Information Sheets have been offered to new members in the Information/Membership leaflet for the past twelve months but it has taken those twelve months to write the Information Sheets. For the information of existing members and by the way of apology to those who have joined in '92 or '93 the Information Sheets are distributed with this Newsletter.

### **Southern Isles Amenity Trust**

**Helen McDonald**

"How can we stop Teampull na Trionaid from falling down?" "How about repairing to the standing stones at Langas?" "What about thatched cottages and dry stone walling?" "There ought to be more information on local history for visitors".

These thoughts were going through the minds of people in Uist & Barra. Based on the model of the Shetland Amenity Trust and the Argyll and Bute Heritage Trust, they decided to found a Southern Isles Amenity Trust, covering Berneray, North Uist, Benbecula, South Uist, Eriskay, Barra and Vatersay. They formed a committee and succeeded in obtaining the funding necessary to employ a full time Project Manager. Financial support was given by Scottish Natural Heritage, the Esme Fairburn Trust, the Hugh Frazer Trust, John Ellerman Foundation and Allen Lane Foundation. I am that full time Project Manager.

The Southern Isles have a wealth of natural beauty and historic interest, I believe. I hope the trust will help residents of the Isles, visitors and any interested groups or organisations to appreciate and contribute to the care of the islands unique heritage.

We will be looking for volunteers in the future to help with some of our projects. If you are interested in helping the Trust in any way, please get in touch and I will send you an information pack. My address is:

Helen MacDonald, Southern Isles Amenity Trust, Sgoil Lionacleit, Benbecula, Western Isles, PA88 5PJ Tel 0870 602039.

To celebrate the launch of the new Trust, an **Amenity Trust Launch Week** is being

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planned with a programme of events which should be of interest to any Hebridean Hosteller on the islands 25 June to 3 July '93. Or why not make a special trip?

There will be a Film Night, a Ceilidh, a launch party with guest of honour Magnus Magnusson, evening talks on local history at venues throughout Ulst and Benbecula and guided walks throughout the Islands. The walks will be led by local people and will provide a unique opportunity to learn at first hand about the history and environment of the Isles. There will be wild flower expeditions, otter spotting and bird watching. There will be trips to chambered cairns and ancient sites. Did you know that there is a house in Lochmaddy where the soil in the garden came from Russia? - find out more on a guided tour of Lochmaddy.

You can get a full programme of events from me at the address above.

### **Wet and windy weather**

"Truly, I must admit the Hebrides have surprised me with their intensity of life. This is very much reflected by the severity of the weather conditions" Ronan Cavanagh wrote in the Claddach Baleshare hostel logbook.

Unusually wet and windy weather in the Hebrides has been reported this winter as the following extracts show:

Lochmaddy Ferry Terminal, 22 January 93

I am waiting for the ferry at Lochmaddy with a couple of hours to spare. I've really had an adventure, one way or another. The majority of the time spent fighting the storm and running from one lift to another, trying to make connections for ferries, etc. I've had some quite remarkable lifts when you just wouldn't have thought cars could be around. I walked out of Rhenigidale at 5.45 am and about a mile from the main road a car picked me up. This morning I left Howmore at 6.45 and the first van again took me right to the ferry terminal - I was here before the place had opened. I am now just praying that the ferry will leave today. All quite miraculous for me being at the mercy of the elements. I've never known weather like this. It's been very cold even with the hostel stoves burning

*Paul Kew, reporting on his trip to the hostels to take the 92/93 inventory.*

**Gales:** In common with the rest of the islands we felt the noise of the furious winds during this last week. Nothing could have been more awesome than watching the rolling breakers tumbling along to our coastline in the Uists.

At Hougharry large boulders erected there in earlier months to serve as a barricade on the sea front were ruthlessly moved out of place right across the road. What strength and power our ocean has.

There were many other roadways which had much seaweed and sand strewn about the surface requiring to be removed with road diggers

We are, or should be, very grateful to all Council employees who gave of their best to keep the road open. Most of our islands schools had to be kept closed for two days. Very little structural damage was caused, but lightning damaged a telephone cable in the Sollas district.

In the midst of the cold and stormy weather we would like to say 'hats off' to Messrs Macaskill's coal lorry and to Mrs Cathie Laing, of the Bayhead store, who kept her staff of boys so well organised that the many calls for coal were all answered.

*Taing mhor dhuibhe uile*, and of course our hardy crew of the 'Hebridean Isles' who brought in the grocery stores whenever they were able to make the crossings.

May the Lord strenghten you during hazardous times *Stornoway Gazette 23. 1. 93*

**Weather** Again we have been hit hard with real bad weather throughout the week.

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On Saturday morning, January 17th, around 5a.m. most of the North Uist residents were awakened by storm-force winds, which later rose to hurricane levels.

Despite the force of the gale no great damage was done apart from tiles blown off the houses, roofs blown off barns, and caravans turned over. Again on Thursday 21, the winds rose again to hurricane force - while the very strong conditions lasted we found difficulty in keeping our balance outside. Schools, due to electricity power cuts, had to be closed for the day. Ferries were delayed, but by the Friday, the gales had blown out, and the ferries worked normal hours. These seem to be the worst gales in Scotland since 1968. Peace seems to reign at this moment, Saturday 23.

*Stornoway Gazette, 30.1.93*

### **Gatliff Hebridean Hostels Trust Clothes**

#### **Teeshirts**

Price : £ 7.50 (incl P&P)

One size : Large (High quality cotton)

Three colours : Bottle Green, Navy Blue, Red

#### **Sweatshirts**

Price : £ 12.50 (incl P&P)

Two sizes : Large & Extra Large (High quality 50% cotton/ 50% polyester)

Three colours : Bottle Green, Navy Blue, Red

Available from the Hostel wardens or mail order from :

John Stewart

Flat 6

5 Ettrickdale Place

Edinburgh

EH3 5JN

Scotland

Cheques payable to : **Gatliff Hebridean Hostels Trust**

Newsletter 17 will be published in Nov '93, contributions by 31.10.93 please.

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- Gatliff Trust

Chairman - Frank Martin, 20 Cornwallis Avenue, Bristol, BS8 4PP, (0272 292350).