



NEWSLETTER 22

MAY 1996

HEBRIDEAN HOSTELLERS AND GATLIFF HEBRIDEAN HOSTELS TRUST

Welcome to members new and old to this Spring-time edition of the newsletter. It has been a long hard winter, plenty of snow around my house and even in late May we are still getting hailstorms! I am afraid that there aren't any drawings in this issue, so do get your pens/pencils out and try your hand at sketching something with a Hebridean flavour for the next issue. Likewise if you have anything you would like to share with other members/readers let me have your input before end of October this year for the next newsletter. As you can see below, I was busy last winter delivering lots of goodies for your every comfort in the hostels.

**RHENIGIDALE** - All mattresses and pillows are new in the hostel and the afore-promised chairs have been installed. Storage radiators have been installed and are now working keeping the damp at bay and the hostel aired. The water supply is now on the mains instead of from the loch at the rear, ensuring a constant (unblocked by debris) flow.

**GARENIN** - All mattresses and pillows are new in the hostel as are the chairs around the stove. Pots and pans, glassware and utensils are also replaced/new. The new stove was fitted in December (which seemed an easy task until I realised that the stove would only fit through the entrance of the hostel if I removed the doors!)

**BERNERAY** - All mattresses and pillows are new in the hostel. There is also a heavy duty tin opener fixed to the worktop and the grills and burners have been fixed. Aforementioned new shower is in place. Over the Easter period a workparty visited the hostel to paint the inside.

**HOWMORE** - The roof has now been put on the new hostel. The porch has been completed at the front entrance. Both these achievements mean that internal work can now go ahead despite any weather problems. Work parties are being organised for a continuous programme during the months of June and July. If you have skills that you think can be put to good use during this time then please contact Diane Waddell (see end). It is now hoped that the hostel will be completed by the end of this year.

## A HOUSE DESIGNED FOR THE LANDSCAPE

Twin brothers Alasdair and Neil Stephen have gone back in time to create a 'new-look blackhouse'. The two young architects have just completed a house on the Isle of Skye and the new owner is delighted. It is based on the principles of the blackhouse, very long, low and narrow. The thatched roof and dry stone walls have been replaced by modern alternatives and the inside is equipped with all mod cons. The pair are passionate about the culture of the Highlands and aim to change them by filling the glens with people again. They have started in Skye where wealthy incomers from the South have pushed up house prices, making it cheaper to build new ones. Up until now people have had to use kit houses as the cheapest form of housing, but they are unattractive box-like buildings out of keeping with their surroundings. Alasdair and Neil think that by going back to original designs which worked with the elements and the landscape they can save the beauty of the Highlands from poorly planned and ugly housing.

## DRAMA IN THE ISLANDS

Scotland's only professional Gaelic theatre group Tosg (which means Ambassador), has been formed in response to public demand for more drama in the Gaelic language. They have given a 21 day tour in Harris and will be appearing at halls throughout the Highlands and Islands. The group's chairman Calum Robertson is quoted as saying "We aim to deliver quality theatre which is relevant, accessible, and entertaining and develops the Gaelic language and culture." The first play performed by the company entitled 'Taighean na Mara' (Houses of the Sea) is about an early nineteenth century minister called Norman Macleod who became popular for outbursts against his own church and hundreds of Scots followed him to Canada.

## NEW FERRY SERVICE

A new ferry service linking the islands of N Uist and Harris was to be opened early May, but I haven't had a chance to check this yet. It is a purpose built ferry of CalMac's designed to carry 150 passengers and 18 cars between Otternish in N Uist and Leverburgh in Harris, it will also link up with Berneray. This will provide a service of up to four return crossings per day in summer. I would suggest that if you are taking a vehicle on this route during the summer months that you book ahead to avoid disappointment.

Caledonian MacBrayne are also taking over the ferry service between Otternish and Berneray. Do check all this info with Lochmaddy office (01876 500337) for times etc.

## CAUSEWAY BLOCKED TO BERNERAY

The Scottish Office has blocked plans for the long-awaited causeway which was to link Berneray with N Uist. The European Objective One programme has only managed to award a 50% Euro grant towards the causeway project instead of the hoped for 75%. This leaves the Western Isles Islands Council to come up with the other 50%, instead of the 25% they had projected for (presuming to get 75% costs from a Euro grant).

The car ferry which now services Berneray and N.Uist will now have to be retained indefinitely, to avoid a reduction in service. This ferry was actually earmarked for Eriskay. Western Isles MP Callum Macdonald has written to the Scottish Secretary telling him it would be impossible for the council to make up the shortfall of £4.3m without Government help. The Western Isles Council has already funded the Scalpay bridge project which is now under construction at a cost of £8m.

The spokesperson of Berneray Community Council is quoted as saying "That (the causeway) would allow for an efficient service and in the long term less demand on the public purse. Without the causeway we could end up with an inferior service or use much more public money just to keep the level of service we have. It makes no sense."

#### PRE-ROMAN FINDS IN LEWIS

First it was the Chessmen that brought Lewis to popular notice last year and now there is great archeological interest in an ancient dwelling on the beach at Bosta on Great Bernera.

It is thought to date from BC during the Iron Age, before the Romans came to Britain. However, time is running out for the archeologists to unearth the secrets that lie in this ancient ruin before the sea takes its toll and the walls of the circular house tumble onto the sands and everything pertaining to the lifestyle of these early inhabitants is washed away. They have already found remains of a midden which contained shells, bits of pottery and burnt materials.

#### ALLT BEITHE

On the 30th of September the SYHA re-opened Glen Affric the remotest hostel in Scotland, after a major refurbishment which includes the provision of showers and a reed bed system for sewage similar to the installation we have at Howmore.

Glen Affric Hostel was opened in 1949 as a simple hostel originally built as a shooting lodge has always been popular with members who wish to get away from it all, a visit to it can easily be included to or from the Western Isles if travelling across Skye.

In 1965 it probably lost its title of the remotest hostel in Scotland when we opened our hostel in Rhenigidale but regained it when the road reached Rhenigidale in 1989. The hostel will remain open longer closing on 28th of October however a section of the dormitory annexe will be left unlocked as a refuge for anyone caught out in bad weather conditions. Arrangements have been made for the N.T.S. Ranger service to monitor the property when it is closed.

#### HERBERT GATLIFF MEMOIR

Len Clark has written a booklet "Herbert Gatliff - An English Eccentric" and it has just been published by the Gatliff Trust. The 27 page booklet contains a brief biography, some examples of his writing

and several reminiscences from those who knew him.

A copy has been sent to the common room of all Youth Hostels in the British Isles.

Herbett Gatliff was a well known figure in the amenity, countryside and outdoor movement for over 40 years from the 1930s. His papers are deposited in the Bodleian Library, Oxford.

Copies of the booklet can be obtained by sending £2.50 to Frank Martin, 20 Cornwallis Avenue, Bristol, BS8 4PP (Tel: 0117-929-2350)

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M	Next Meeting to be held at	G
*		M
A	BERNERAY YOUTH HOSTEL	*
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M	on	G
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A	Saturday 27th July 1996	*
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M	11.00 am	G
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Hopefully this will set a precedent for holding the Annual General Meeting's in one of the Gatliff Hostels on alternate years. Although the Berneray hostel only has 20 beds (which cannot be booked and are on a first-come-first-served basis) there is ample space for camping and still enjoying the use of the hostel facilities.

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#### Useful Names and Addresses

CHAIRMAN - PETER CLARKE, 264 ALEXANDRA PARK RD, LONDON N22 4BG.

VICE-CHAIRWOMAN - DEIDRE FORSYTH, THE SHEILING, GLENBURN RD, ARDRISHAIG, ARGYLL, PA30 8EU.

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