



# *Crofters' Newsletter*

## *2014*

*Newsletter of the Crofters' Hostels in the Outer Hebrides*

*[www.gatliff.org.uk](http://www.gatliff.org.uk)*





## Newsletter of the Crofters' Hostels 2014

This newsletter is for all who stayed at one of the Crofters' Hostels in 2013 and all who support the hostels. The Crofters' hostels are run by volunteers from the Gatliff Hebridean Hostels Trust in partnership with islanders. It is compiled from entries which hostellers left in the log books found at the hostel.

The Newsletter presents a look back on how hostellers enjoyed the hostels. This newsletter has appeared, in a variety of formats, every year since 1963, the year after the first hostel opened at Rhenigidale. Electronic copies of the 2012 and 2013 Crofters' Newsletter and the Hebridean Hostellers Newsletters no 54 (2013), no 55 (spring 2014) & no 56 (autumn 2014) can be found on our web site [www.gatliff.org.uk](http://www.gatliff.org.uk)

### Hostel Results for 2013

Overnights	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Berneray	2311	2226	2147	2752	2562	2698	2039	1864
Garenin	1620	1301	948	1598	1573			
Howmore	1805	1727	1595	2022	1765	1760	1260	1076
Rhenigidale	1010	1035	919	960	983	994	732	864
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>6746</b>	<b>6289</b>	<b>5609</b>	<b>7332</b>	<b>6883</b>	<b>5452</b>	<b>4031</b>	<b>3804</b>

**Jo Burgess, Editor of the Crofters' Newsletter** writes:

I am sitting in the June sunshine in Devon writing this editorial having spent many weeks trawling through the hostel registration sheets to extract names and addresses in order that the belated Crofters' Newsletter can be sent to all who stayed at the hostels who left a full postal address. It has been a long but interesting exercise. Hosteller came from far and wide from all over the UK from Shetland to Cornwall, from Norwich to Barra and from countries as far afield as Iceland and Taiwan.

Once again I did not make it to the islands in 2013 but I did cross the Atlantic to visit friends in Maine. Canoeing out to a seal island, swimming in the sea and walking in

some gentle 'mountains', enjoying fantastic flora and fauna and meeting some really interesting people, I could not help but be reminded of my trips to the islands. The closest I got, was my long weekend in Inverness for the 40th anniversary Runrig concert which also brought back lots of happy memories – of concerts at Heb Celt, Big Sky, the *Atlantic on the strand* and of course *The Edge of the World*. I just wished I could have made it a longer weekend and headed out west.

I recently read a book called *The Old Ways* by Robert McFarlane in which he described the walk out of Rhenigidale where he stayed in the hostel. Such a familiar way for many of us – truly one of the best walks to one of the most special places I know.

As always, I ponder whether any of the young people who were with me here in 1985 on the Schools Hebridean Society Expedition have ever come back. So I will start on Harris.

Kate Langley, our warden at Rhenigidale, featured in the BBC Alba Series *Chi mi'n Tìr, From Harris with Love* first shown in the autumn of 2013. Here is a screen shot of one of the scenes which featured Kate. She can be seen climbing the steps to the hostel..



## Rhenigidale

Rob and Mary from Inverness enjoyed beautiful walks in sunshine in April. Bernn was back after 30 years and thought it still had the same atmosphere and was a great place. Angela thought it was a fantastic location and Jenny and Sheena fell for Harris.

Peter and Janet Davies from Wallingford who had hostelled in many countries wrote that “we will remember Rhenigidale with particular affection.”

In May a hosteller who stayed three weeks wrote that in May after sun and rain one afternoon everything was covered with a white blanket of snow. They praised the new kitchen shelves and Kate’s work to keep the hostel in good shape.

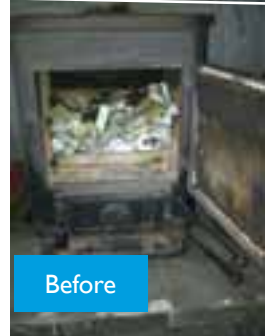
Sandy and Neil Comfort wrote “great little hostel in a superb setting”. Gavin and Sharon from Preston heard the cuckoo, Fiona from Uig wrote that it was the best bolthole ever, Marion from Wales also heard the cuckoo on a walk along the coast line and Margaret and Alan from Manchester walked up An Clisheam and saw a mountain hare and possible eagle above the summit.

In June Tapsa was here from Finland. Tom Nicholson from Oxford wrote that it was a “wonderfully remote and peaceful place”. Philip from Chicago wrote “Rhenigidale is perhaps the ultimate combination of tranquility and beauty, a lovely location for a youth hostel and for travellers to rest their tired feet”. In June there was a heatwave and Bob and Hamish did Clisham and Toddun. Derek from Plymouth (not far from me) recommended the postman’s path. Mark and Claire from Dumfriesshire enjoyed plenty of birdsong. John Dickson from Inverness praised Kate for going the extra mile. Sian and Paul from Glasgow were on their first visit and fascinated by the history of the hostel, wrote they were sorry to have missed Roddy, the hostel’s first warden. (Those who did meet Roddy will never forget him. He was a real character and a very generous man).

In July French cyclists had ridden against the wind via Inverness and Skye to get here “to this beautiful, amazing, gorgeous place of peace and shower.” Eunice from Kenya found her inspiration



Our doors are always open.



Before



After



Lovely clean fridge. Thank you to the hostellers who kept it clean

for her thesis “where the sea mist meets highland fog”.

In August the condition, feel, atmosphere and views from the hostel were praised by Andrew from Nantwich writing it is “simply the best hostel in Scotland.” Adrian caught eight good size pollock and one mackerel. Chris Eley from Oxfordshire had an adventure with his bike going from Tarbert via Molinginish to the hostel arriving very late. Mike and Mairi from Bethesda wrote that Chris’s adventure showed that the spirit of Gatliff is still strong and Gatliff’s suggestion that “the motor car has taken away the thrill of travel” has not permeated everywhere (despite the road to the village).

In September Maggie and Peter Morgan from Peebles were only going to stay one night but stayed three. Rosemary and Ian Costello from Leyland stayed longer than intended too and enjoyed the company of the Stornoway Canoe Club and went away with many happy memories to treasure. Like many others they thanked Kate for being so helpful and welcoming. Roddie, Isi, Megan and Katie from Stornoway had a great evening in front of the lovely roaring fire listening to stories and playing card games while listening to the wind. Kate left a note for Peter Clarke to say she had a great walking day.

In October Rhenigidale saved David Hine from Edinburgh after the wind killed his tent on a planned back packing trip across North Harris. Another hosteller wrote that Rhenigidale was “the best hostel in two decades of hostels around the world.” Also in October John Joyce saw a hedgehog – it had had a long walk !

In November Issy, Kate and Daryll from Cornwall retreated from camping in extreme weather and especially enjoyed the visit from the trick or treaters and their rendition of *Puff the magic dragon*. Other hostellers including Juraj and Ellie from Newquay saw the Northern Lights and an otter. Kevin and David from Belgium enjoyed a cosy hostel in what they described as “rough meteorological circumstances.”

In December Lawrence Washington (former editor of this newsletter) was back and enjoyed the Morso, the wireless and in the big lightening storm the emergency lighting came on as the electricity went off. He dodged the snow showers around Loch Seaforth and popped up Toddun. He wrote that he was looking forward to the “curly green path and a Cal Mac curry”!



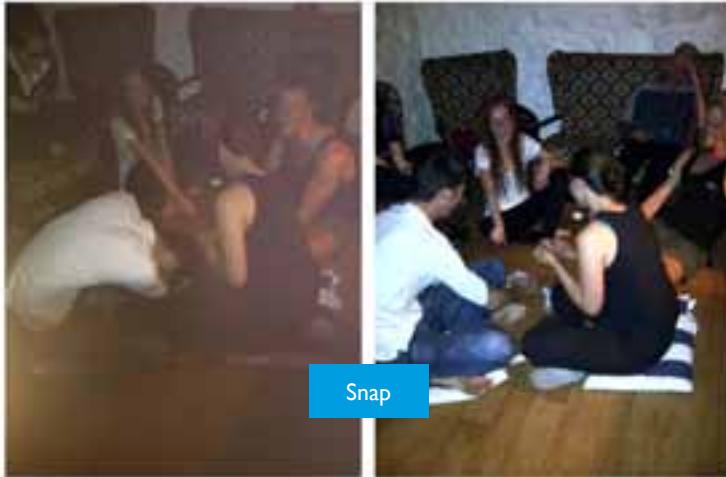
22 August 2013:  
Peter Clarke, chair  
GHHT, at Loch  
Trollamarig “40  
years ago today  
I walked from  
Tarbert to Rhenigi-  
dale for the first  
time.” Pic: [www.johnmacleanphotography.com](http://www.johnmacleanphotography.com)

A Christmas card was also received by Kate from Jill in Germany who was looking forward to returning in the spring and hoping there would be no snow on her tent.

Braidie wrote “Bliadhna Mhath Ur agus tha Reinigeadal gle math” – happy new year and Rhenigidale is very good.

Jorg from London wrote that Rhenigidale is perfect and he hopes it stays exactly as it is. Once again he had a delightful time.

Eddie from Kendal in February thanked everyone for their work on keeping the hostel stocked with fuel, well maintained and open to all.



Stornoway Canoe Club visit - September 2013



# Berneray

The hostel was described as cosy in March. David from North East London was here ten years after his first visit and found Berneray as beautiful and unspoilt as ever.

In April Steve from Oban wrote that it was very windy. Peter and Janet Davies from Oxford found it hard to leave “this special place” – these hostels being the lasting memory of “our Hebridean times.” A Norwegian visitor loved it. Doug from British Columbia thought it “a great place to commune with God – and thanked the Gatliff family, Trust and volunteers. Georgina from Kendal opted for a later ferry because she couldn’t leave.

Steve from Oregon was here in May and once again found that the peace and serenity is good for the soul – it being his favourite place in Scotland. Neil Pinkett (who wrote the Rhenigidale walk book), wrote that discovering the hostel and the island in 1993 was one of those pivotal moments that changed the course of his life. Gavin and Sharon from Lancashire wrote that it was a five star hostel and Yachen from Taiwan showed his appreciation with a drawing (below).

In June the sun shone brightly. Dee Butterly and Michael from Edinburgh wrote it was a beautiful little place, there were lots of lovely people and that they felt rejuvenated for their cycle ahead.

In July Nancy from Canada wrote “beautiful setting, great accommodation, lovely time”. A Welsh visitor found it provided food for the soul. Vicky was blown here from South Uist and wrote “what a view”. Another visitor wrote that the photos on the internet don’t do it justice.



In August the Vivian family thought it the highlight of the Uists. Hilary and Thomas were here for the first time since 1996. They had met whilst Thomas, from France, was hiking round Scotland. They were back with their two sons and lots of happy memories of Annie and Jessie. "It is a special place and it was great to see it looked after and comfy." Lily from Tasmania and Greg from Hull wrote "Heavenly:"

In September Scott from London wrote that it was "simplicity at its best" A Danish visitor wrote "time to relax and contemplate." Richard and Ayesha from York were here after 22 years ago on their honeymoon and wrote, "this place hasn't changed a bit in all the important ways."

In October a white tailed eagle flew over and a visitor wrote that the hostel was next to nature (any closer and my socks would be full of seaweed). Another hosteller from Ayr enjoyed a good sing song and the company of other hostellers. Jessica and Andrew from New Mills in Derbyshire on the other hand had the hostel to themselves and enjoyed the cosy room with the rain hammering down outside.

In November Alex and Neil who were Scottish and proud cycled through wind and hail to get here from Barra. In December Jorg was here again for "another memorable solstice" and in January Liz and Steve woke to a sparkling cold sunshine.

Berneray's fridge is put to good use by 'foodiie' hostellers





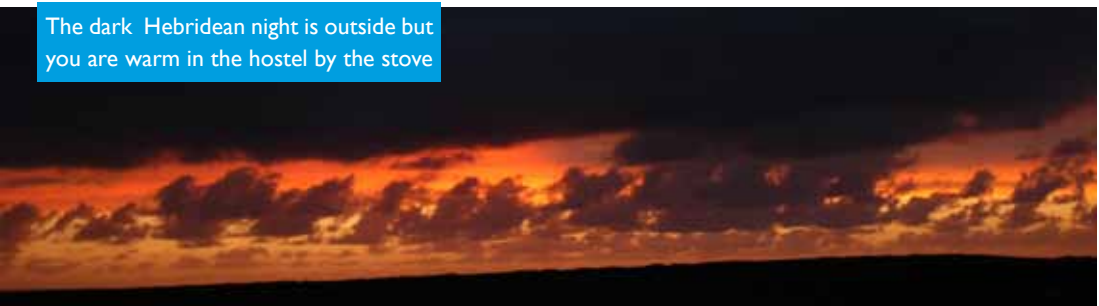


The view from the Honeymoon Suite on a misty day



Looking out to sea ... a great place for thinking big thoughts

The dark Hebridean night is outside but you are warm in the hostel by the stove



## Howmore

In February George Winks from London rolled in with beautiful weather and had the whole place to himself for 5 days of Gale Force 10 winds and storms whilst huddled by the fire.

In March Gordon Birnie enjoyed glorious weather – cold wind but sunny and excellent visibility. He climbed Beinn Mhor and with six inches of snow and gale force winds on top experienced a high wind chill. From Hecla and Ben Corodale on the next day he enjoyed superb views to Harris hills, Skye Cuillins and Rum all covered in snow. In contrast the flat Monarch Isles were bathed in sun looking almost tropical. He enjoyed superb wildlife including 30 plus Shelduck, Golden Eagle, Merlin, snow bunting and the footprints of an unknown mammal – South Uist Yeti? He wrote that the local people were friendly and welcoming and told stories of their way of life, past and present, and geneology which stretches round the globe. Together with their music and culture made for a unique experience



Also in March hosteller wrote up his visit to Eriskay in Gaelice. It was bright – Tha I breagha. RH (Richard Hewitt from London) enjoyed a great dawn chorus on Easter morning.

In April William and Fiona Griffiths from Hereford wrote that it was a lovely peaceful place and a warm welcome from the warden. Cyclists heading north enjoyed cold but clear blue skies and fantastic views and spring birdsong in the machair. Later the weather turned just a little damper and colder. A few days later it was a glorious day for cycling after days of gales and quick dashes between gusts of gale force winds. The hostel was described as a beautiful sanctuary and welcome in a wonderful precious landscape. The wind was so bad later in April that Anna was driven off Beinn Mhor.

In May Neil Pinkett wrote in his beautiful writing that he was really thrilled to be at Howmore again for the first time since 1997. For Neil the stormy winds subsided and it was still. He had a memorable walk to Cnoc Breac along the shore “with the mountains on the east pitch black beneath towering charcoal grey clouds, whilst the beach was bathed in light and out to the west marsh mallow clouds levitated like buddhas above the sea. It was one of those occasions to be truly awed by the drama unfolding all around me. Whilst I have been writing this our friend the corncrake has been singing

his favourite song constantly so it's a bit like trying to write poetry while the dentist is drilling a tooth ! In concert with the corncrake was a snipe and an unidentified pair of birds which sound like a squeaky toy – surreal but in a good way”. Neil wrote “I love this place” and someone else wrote “I do too.”

Later in May hostellers described bright patches of down light amid scudding high cloud and a strong southerly wind with freezing temperatures. The lack of spring was taking its toll on Crofters and fishermen but did not seem to affect tourism with 40 cyclists coming off the ferry on bank holiday monday.

Gavin and Sharon from Lancashire had enjoyed a 12 day whistle stop tour from the Butt to Eriskay during which they had seen amazing bird life including White Tailed Sea Eagles, Hen Harriers and Short Eared Owls.



In June Margaret and Alan Manning from Manchester enjoyed watching the Renfrew crew win Jenga. During the next couple of days they climbed Beinn Mhor and visited the local museum and cafe. Yachen from Taiwan was simply enjoying it and wrote that the Western Isles were amazing. Liz and Dave Wilson from New Mills cycled through last year but this year returned to climb the mountains on a beautiful day and although it was a long day it was well worth the effort. Elizabeth from USA enjoyed fantastic weather, great walking, friendly people and a welcoming warden. A return visitor wrote that it was good to see the improvements and that they managed to light a fire in one attempt. Andy and Sian Lang from Clun had to try a new tent pitch because it was too windy and as usual enjoyed meeting interesting people. A hosteller from Milngavie heard but did not see the corncrake and wished they could stay longer. Later in June it was too misty for Beinn Mhor but despite the gale outside it was cosy inside for Victor and Linda from Rossendale. For Paul Redgrave from Sheffield Howmore was a welcome resting place after a day battling northward on his bike from Barra against a fearsome wind. Malcolm MacKay from Aber-



deen was back after a year's wait and it felt good to be back. Another hosteller was forced back from Beinn Mhor due to the wind on the ridge but wrote that they would be back. Uli from Stirling was back for the first time in two years and was impressed by all the renovations and especially loved the hot shower - a sentiment also expressed by Heather and Tony Connellan from Maidstone.

In July Malcolm (who wrote he has been around for a while) lamented the change from basic to modern hostels. Colin received a very friendly welcome from Betty and wrote that "some of the sights to have graced my eyes have been 'chicken soup for the soul'" and that he had learnt a thing or two about the Hebridean aviary from Vicky. Naomi Westwood from North Corran came upon Howmore by chance weary from too much driving and sight seeing. She lay in the machair and listened to the peewits and a faint but eerie rasping sound - have I heard the notorious corncrake? Others wrote that you do not have to roam to Kiwi country - it is all here and many thanks to the Gatliff Trust for the chance to stay in such a special place. Jan and Mairi from Glasgow were enjoying their third trip and catching up with Betty. Another visitor came upon Howmore by chance. Hostellers from Sutherland met lots of friendly people and had a good time. Oliver Chamings from York wrote that the hostel was a joy.

In August Pam and Steve also from York were on their second visit and found it a



great place to get away from the trappings of city life. It was wet and windy for AH (Hyde) from Macclesfield and Rachel from Ambleside too was resting from the wind as were the Bates family from Dover. Hilary from Inverness was back for the first time in 30 years and wrote that it was lovely to find the same atmosphere and a cosy stopping place. Lesley Burgess and Nick Taylor from Sheffield enjoyed a couple of days mountain walking in fog and drizzle and got very boggy feet and thanked those who keep "these special places running". Others escaped from wet tents and enjoyed the hot shower and a bed. Others too escaped the wind and rain and someone else was based here for their excursion to Stillgarry in search of the Clan Currie Cairn.

In September Steve Bannon from Oban stayed after kayaking the remote east coast. Franz from Bath wrote "like the flowers of the machair I may be gone but will return." A travelling Kiwi was there on their own but thought it an exceptionally idyllic place. Nigel and Sue Bond from Rossendale arrived here from Barra by bike despite a puncture, thanks to the assistance of a van driver with a spanner. Having purchased spare inner tubes and an adjustable spanner they were feeling



better and looking forward to a cosy night's sleep.

In October Thomas from Belgium wrote that “these are the best hostels ever in a really beautiful place” and thanked everyone. For another visitor Howmore was their third Hebridean hostel but the weather had changed from sun and blue skies to low grey slabs of cloud and whistling wind.

In December a German hosteller wrote that the hostel had changed quite a lot since they came here for the first time in 1978 and “the changes were – mostly – for the better.”

Jorg wrote – “what a great place to spend New Year's eve”

## Keep in touch. Join the Trust

We would be pleased to keep you in touch with the hostels. Why not join the Trust? It only costs £10 a year. You will receive this newsletter annually, our Hebridean Hostellers Newsletter which appears twice a year and all other publications including our Annual Report. Above all you will have the satisfaction of knowing you are helping to keep the hostels going.

A membership application form is enclosed. It can also be downloaded from our web site [www.gatliff.org.uk](http://www.gatliff.org.uk) or sent to you by email. (Please contact [ghht@gatliff.org.uk](mailto:ghht@gatliff.org.uk))

Seat at Howmore dedicated to Arthur Meaby, a great hosteller, who died 10 years ago. A founding trustee of the GHHT, who did so much to improve all the hostels. Sadly, Arthur's brother Roy, also a member, died during 2013.

# The Gatliff Hebridean Hostels Trust in 2013

## Trustees

Peter Clarke (Chairman & Company Secretary)

Matt Bruce

John Joyce (Work Party organiser)

Steve Glover (from February to June 2013)

John Humphries (Editor Hebridean Hostellers Newsletter)

Philip Lawson (Treasurer)

Dave Matthews

Julian Paren

**The Gatliff Hebridean Hostels Trust** is dedicated to running Berneray (20 beds), Howmore (16 beds) and Rhenigidale (12 beds) hostels, in partnership with islanders, to a sound basic standard. Its goal is to provide hostellers, including young people of limited means, with the opportunity to stay a while to get to know, and maybe come to love, the unique culture and natural environment of the islands. (We are part of the Scottish Youth Hostels Association (SYHA) family.)

## Berneray

We carried out maintenance work at Berneray during the year. A great deal of work had been carried out at Berneray during 2012 which stood us in good stead during 2013.

The hot water system and the high cost of electricity caused concern. The hot water system was improved and new storage heaters were installed.



The north - south spinal bus service in Uist starts at Berneray Youth Hostel & goes via Howmore to Eriskay slipway (for Barra).

Full timetable information is available at: <http://www.cne-siar.gov.uk>

## Howmore

The Howmore Appeal was launched in June 2013 with a specially produced colour appeal leaflet and a special edition of the Hebridean Hostellers' newsletter. £47,000 was needed for improvements to the thatched building, the stone barn annexe (Common Room building) and the lesser stone barn.

Prior to the launch of the appeal we had re-constructed and re-thatched the roof of original hostel building and installed high grade roof insulation and modern heating. A further £7,000 was needed to pay for the creation of a new shower, toilet and wash-room facilities in the porch. This included new plumbing and water heating, a new electrical connection to the building and a new electrical system in the building.

£30,000 was needed to improve the kitchen and upgrade the common room facilities in the stone barn annexe (Common Room building). This includes improving the shower and toilet facilities. We must also re-roof this building and install high grade roof insulation.

£10,000 is needed to upgrade the lesser stone barn to provide overflow summer accommodation and secure storage for cycles and canoes. This building is smaller than the Common Room building and is not in such good condition. The improvements will make much better use of the space. The building needs a new roof with high grade insulation, a new damp proofed floor, an upgraded electrical system, new windows and a new door.

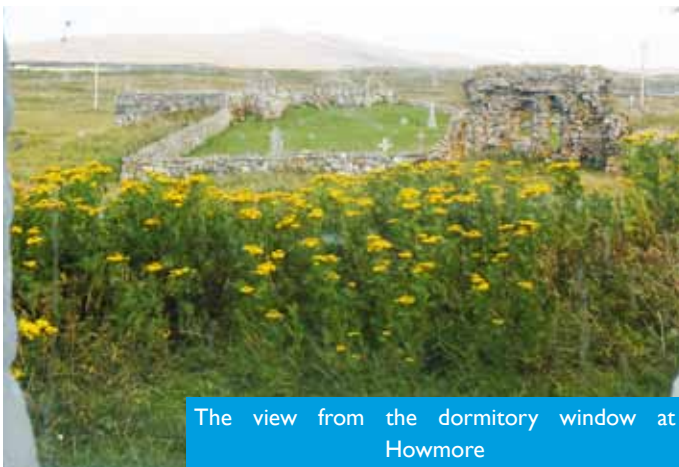


The response from donors was phenomenal and rapid. By the end of 2013 105 donations had been received amounting to £18,601. (Now: towards the end of 2014, over £30,500 has been received. Thank you.)

A high proportion of donors signed Gift Aid declarations which, all being well, will allow us to collect an income tax refund of £2,400. Donations are still being received, so if you, or any other hostellers, wish to give a donation it will be very gratefully received and put to good use.

Many donors sent messages with their donations. For example: "We had a wonderful time at Howmore, so it seems only fair to help with the maintenance!" (Anon); "Had a wonderful time there!" (Anon); "A very worthy cause. We visited all of the hostels run by the Trust as part of our first Scottish mission in 2011. Thanks!" (Sam Jones); "30 years since I stayed at Howmore but loved it. What hostelling is all about!" (Anon); "Good luck with the appeal. I hope to visit Howmore again soon." (Anon); "Fantastic hostels." (Niall Wallace); "Wish I could afford to give you more." (Anon); "For Howmore – many happy memories of South Uist and hope to return soon" (Bronwen Currie); "Keep up the good work." (Alistair Cant); "I plan to visit again sometime..." (Anon)

Thanks to the funds received from the appeal, during the year, we were able to complete the remodelling of the porch in the former hostel building. The new shower



The view from the dormitory window at Howmore

and toilet look good and have greatly increased the comfort and amenity of the shared sleeping accommodation. Work also started on the common room building. The new kitchen was constructed and largely fitted out, but some work was carried over into the New Year. The

kitchen was, however, left perfectly safe and serviceable. Indeed we have been able to keep the hostel open throughout the work.

The bigger kitchen has two cookers and much larger work space which should make it easier for several hostellers to use the kitchen at once. Though the work was not completed in 2013 it was completed in 2014 in time for the Easter holidays.

## **Howmore Appeal**

The Howmore Appeal is still open. £17,000 must be raised to complete work as planned. If you can help we would be grateful for your contribution, however small. See [www.gatliff.org.uk](http://www.gatliff.org.uk)



## Rhenigidale

Rhenigidale had a good year. It received Two Star status from Visit Scotland, and in autumn 2013 was given publicity in the programme *Chi mi'n Tir, From Harris with Love*. Our warden Kate was one of the 'stars'.

In awarding Two Star status Visit Scotland said, 'Due to the recent investment and improvements the hostel now merits a two star award...At the time of this visit all expectations for this award were met.' Subject to normal wear and tear they would continue to be met throughout the coming year. The report went on to note 'There is new easy seating in the lounge. The toilet and shower room were repainted at the start of the season and the paintwork is wearing well. There are now blackout blinds over the Velux windows and two of the windows have also had the 'blown' glass replaced. The mattresses have been renewed with some better ones. Both of the bedrooms have been decorated this year. The paintwork looks excellent and some framed pictures have been added. The kitchen has been completed and the worktops look very practical and should be hard wearing. A new drying room has been added this year.'

Earlier in the year the drains were remade with new brick work and blockages were removed. At the end of the year it was agreed to replace the skews. We hope that this will resolve the issue of occasional damp in the kitchen.



Hostellers recorded their appreciation. Ruth Gilbert said, "Had an amazing week on the islands. Stayed in Howmore and Rhenigidale hostels. Loved every minute. The hostels were just what I'd hoped for, had everything I needed and the company was great. Would recommend to anyone going there. Hope to be back." Other hostellers said, "Thank you very much for the most amazing place. It has got a very special feel and atmosphere." "Simply the best hostel in Scotland with a very good and hard-working Kate."



## Volunteers

Everyone involved at Trust level works as a volunteer, including Trustees. They receive basic travel expenses & receive reimbursement of their hostel overnights, if on Trust business.

The Trustees are very grateful to the many volunteers who give their time to help with the administration and operation of the charity and/or the maintenance of the properties. All Trustees are volunteers who offer their time, talents and skills to the organisation freely. There is plenty to do, so if you would like to help, please get in touch.

The volunteer effort is a vital ingredient in maintaining the unique atmosphere (the 'Gatliff difference') at our hostels. It keeps our overheads and overnight charges down. We are looking for volunteers with drive, time and skills to take ownership of specific projects. So, if you have project management experience, experience of running hostels or even small businesses, or can spend time in the islands, then we can use your skills.

The volunteering opportunities we offer do not only entail doing physical labour at the hostels. There is plenty to do behind the scenes which can be done from member's own homes. All you need is a knowledge of & commitment to the hostels. Whilst it is essential for volunteers to work on their own initiative, it is equally essential that they work within the agreed priorities, policies and budgets set by the Trust. The Trust cannot ask volunteers to carry out electrical, plumbing or gas work at the hostels. These tasks have to be carried out by tradesmen with professional accreditation.

Examples of tasks which volunteers could carry out: organising local signage for a hostel; making sure posters are up on local notice boards; maintaining publicity address lists;



Waste bins at Berneray. As part of a new 'Zero Waste' policy the Council cut the number of waste bins at the hostel. This caused a range of issues. A volunteer Trustee had to get our bins reinstated. August 2014: Success!

running a fund raising appeal; supervising volunteer work parties at the hostels.

These unique hostels with their memorable locations, good facilities and free and easy atmosphere are worth supporting.

Volunteers are invited along to Trustees' meetings. These happen four times a year. If you would like to attend an Executive Committee meeting please contact the Chairman. This will give an opportunity to gain an appreciation of how the Trust is run behind the scenes.

## **What is required of Trustees?**

Trustees need to have time to visit the islands and stay at the hostels. They must also attend meetings and play an active role in the work of the Trust. This can be time consuming but it is a huge privilege to be involved with the hostels and to have the opportunity to continue the work of the Trust. It is always a pleasure to meet hostellers and read, in the hostel house books, about how they have enjoyed their stay in the islands.

We are committed to providing induction and training for new Trustees. This helps them to play a full part in the running of the organisation. New Trustees are supported by the existing Trustees to fully understand their role and responsibilities. We need new trustees to maintain the continuity of our operations, to run projects at the hostels and seek new opportunities. Full details of the operation of the hostels are provided to Trustees.

New Trustees have to commit to supporting the operation of the Trust. We are a volunteer organisation and employ no staff. Consequently any decisions we take have to be carried out by the Trustees themselves. Trustees must act as ambassadors for the hostels. They are collectively responsible for everything that happens at the hostels.



Gas canisters at Berneray. We use gas for cooking at Berneray & Howmore. A Trustee has to take responsibility for ensuring our gas fittings are inspected on time & that they comply with the relevant official regulations



## Jo Burgess, Editor of the Crofters' Newsletter

I first came into contact with the Trust when I led the 1985 Schools Hebridean Society (SHS) expedition to Rhenigidale. At the end of the three week camp, bad weather meant that the boat coming to collect us and all our camping gear could not land. In the days before the road there was no option but to wait for the weather to improve. Roddy MacInnes, the warden (and owner of

the building) kindly let us stay in the hostel whilst we waited.

In 1989 I was one of the directors who had to take the difficult decision to close down the SHS (which had been operating for 25 years). When we were deciding how to distribute the financial assets, I asked that a contribution was made to the appeal to improve Rhenigidale. This is commemorated on the plaque in the hostel.

I paid visits to the village over the following years and kept in contact with Kenny MacKay and his wife Moira. In 2002 my husband and I stayed in the old schoolhouse at the time when the Trust was celebrating the 40th anniversary of the hostel and I went on the walk along the postman's path with other Trust members.

I joined the Trust to support its work.

When the GHHT asked if I would become a Director\* and suffer the hardship of travelling to the islands for a meeting once a year, I jumped at the chance! Although I stood down as a Director some years ago I have continued doing the Crofters Newsletter because I find it very enjoyable going through the log books and celebrating the joy and pleasure the hostels bring.

My joy and pleasure when visiting the islands over the years has been heightened by my long standing relationship with the music of Runrig. I have been a fan since 1981 and like to take every opportunity to share my passion with others – hence the lyrics in the front of the logbooks. One day I hope to find that a young person who was with me in 1985 has gone back to the Hostel and written in the log book.

\*Jo served as a Director from February 2003 until May 2008.

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