

THE GATLIFF TRUST

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Hon: Secretary
Malcolm Campbell
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Camden Square,
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Dear Hosteller,

Rhenigidale Youth Hostel.

As a visitor to this hostel, you may like to know how its getting on, and what prospect there is of others like it. 1964 was uneventful. The number of visitors fell from 84 to 67 (bednights from 240 to 169). This may have been due partly to the weather, (as usual the opposite of that in England) but also perhaps to our having been later and less thorough in circulating our report and other news about it. The traffic brought by the new ferry seems to have been mainly motor touring, but this year we are emphasising that in the summer it makes the approach for the hosteller easier. By spending the night at Tig hostel, and crossing to Tarbert by the morning or early afternoon ferry plenty of time and energy is left for the 2-3 hour walk over the hill - an easy one compared with those to Craig or Glen Affric.

Receipts dropped to a little over £30. but with the income of our fund, now over £30. covered all expenses including a small grant to Roddy for his care (which we and hostellers greatly appreciated) and a contribution to church expenses. We also received donations of about £12. which were added to the funds investments. Detailed accounts will be included in those of our trust which are available to anyone who would like to see them.

To those of us who have known the hostel from the start there is little news. The calor worked. The house and equipment suffered no serious mishap (or improvement!) Indeed we now feel so much at home at Rhenigidale that we spell it as its spelt by those who live there and not by the Ordnance Survey who live even further away than we do. But even a long-established hostel is news to those who come to it for the first time and only 3 of the 67 who went there in 1964 had been before. It is hard for the experienced to realise that for most hostellers what is not news is yet usually new, which is much more important, specially when it is a place so far away and characterful as Rhenigidale.

Hostellers again commented not only on the character of the place and hostel, but on the friendly welcome they received. Those who live there may say "But wouldn't you expect us to be friendly?" Others may remind us that there are friendly people in Glasgow and Leeds and even London outside the rush hours. But the friendliness is something more than this. In a remote place with only a few people and conditions at times difficult every individual counts, each is in a way his brother's keeper, yet most careful not to interfere with the other's independence. Life cannot be like this in the big town, but many of those who go to places like Rhenigidale come back to the big town more sensitive to the feelings of their neighbours. Maybe it was for this reason even more than the beauty of the green path along the slope above the sea reached after the climb over the hill that one hosteller wrote "this is a place that should be visited at least once in a life time."

What of the future? We have every hope that the hostel will continue. Roddy and the people of Rhenigidale want it to go on, and even if as we hope the SYHA soon have good hostels of the ordinary kind at places like Tarbert there will still be hostellers who want to stay at, and not merely walk over to remote places of distinctive beauty away from traffic. But it is not easy for us at a distance to take care of a hostel like this even if one of us can now and again get there, and if as seems likely the SYHA feel they cannot take responsibility for small remote hostels off the roads like this, their future must depend on some of you younger users helping our management both at this end and over there.

Much more is this needed if we are to get more such hostels. And as hinted in our 1963 report we have, we think, got more. There is a good prospect of our having next summer the use of old thatched houses in the islands of Scarp (beyond the end of the Husinish road in West Harris) and Berneray (between Harris and North Uist) and probably also at Howmore in South Uist, which will at least provide more shelter from wind and storm than a tent, and we hope will have a few camp beds, a primus stove and some peat for a fire. The two islands are reached only by infrequent ferries not connecting with any public transport, and those who go to them may have to be prepared to camp or sleep out on the way.

We believe we shall have good help from the people of the islands in looking after these houses and welcoming hostellers, but much will depend on our finding hostellers and campers who can give a hand in making arrangements. If we find a number, we may be able to get more such 'shelters' in other islands. But as long as the SYHA have no hostels of their own in such remote places and feel they cannot recognise any that may be found and run (probably at some loss) by others, the ordinary ways of making them known to hostellers by the handbook, YHA magazines, notices, etc. are closed to those who wish to establish them, and are prepared to spend money on doing so, and we must rely largely on you who already know the first of them in the Outer Isles to make them known to others.

If you want further news, or feel you can help us in any way, either at home or out there, we hope you will let us know.

Yours sincerely,



Hon: Secretary.