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Hon: Secretary:
Malcolm Campbell
98 Agar Grove,
Camden Square,
London.N.W.1.

January, 1966.

Dear Hosteller,

Rhenigidale and Scarp Youth Hostels

Having visited one, or both, of these hostels in 1965, you may be interested to hear how they fared last year and our hopes for their future and for other hostels like them.

Rhenigidale had about 150 bednights and Scarp about 75 (including one just before the arrival of the beds), both a little more than we expected. We were glad to have at Scarp a number of visitors from the School Hebridean Association camp at Cravadale, a full report of which we understand will be published in a month or two. Bednights at Rhenigidale were a little less than in 1964; this did not surprise us as now there is an official S.Y.H.A. hostel at Stockinish, far enough from Tarbert not to be a boat-head refuge for motorists, but easily reached by road, and which alone of course has any official publicity; it is the best place for the hosteller who has only a night or two for the Outer Isles. Rhenigidale provides for those who, having more time, want rather more of an adventure (though it is easier to reach than Craig or Glen Affric) and a hostel of a more intimate kind; it is clear from comments that a number of them found it a welcome addition or alternative to Stockinish on this account.

Scarp, though only a short walk from the jetty, is in practice, harder to get to than Rhenigidale as the mailboat only makes the crossing (which is sometimes difficult) every other day, and the twice-weekly bus to Husinish does not run on those days; a special crossing even if it can be arranged means considerable effort and cannot be cheap. So it's best to go only if you have two or three days to spare. But those who went found it very well worthwhile; for Scarp is not only beautiful in a rugged way but probably the most 'apart' of all islands still inhabited in the Hebrides, and gives a very special welcome to visitors. We hope that next summer more definite information will be available of the best way to get there.

It was originally expected that these hostels would not be regularly wardened, and Scarp, perhaps would not be much more than a campers' shelter. In fact, thanks to the care of Roddy at Rhenigidale and Angus at Scarp and the interest and welcome given to hostellers by many others in both places, they have become not our Trust's hostels but hostels provided by crofters with our help, which is far better. We cannot afford to lose much on them, but our fund which now has an income of over £40 a year was provided expressly to meet some loss on such hostels and we think their value to adventurous young hostellers and the way they help to keep good heart in these remote communities fully justifies our meeting this loss. In these days of mass production and organisation very small communities must inevitably in some ways be expensive to keep going, but they have a unique value of their own; if some form of crofting or fishing can go some way to making ends meet for them, it is we feel sure of national, not merely local value, to help them meet better. We have every hope of keeping these two hostels going as long as the people who live there are interested, as our fund's income is enough to meet essential expenses, irrespective of receipts from usage.

There are not many still inhabited places so much of an adventure to reach as these two, but if we had a permanent

income of another £40 we could probably find one or two more on similar lines, and a substantial fund might well discover a dozen or even a score, for 'apart' places have a fascination of their own.

But our immediate addition for 1966 is of a rather different kind, a thatched house at Howmore in South Uist. As far as we know the S.Y.H.A. have not yet succeeded in finding an ordinary hostel in the Uists, but even if they do, a small house of this kind at a road end out on the machair, but quite near the foot of Ben More, would be welcomed by some hostellers. We have good hopes that once the hostel ~~is~~ ~~simply~~-is simply equipped and got going, the local people will be able to run it.

While at hostels of this kind, and indeed anywhere in the remoter parts of the Outer Hebrides, hostellers must be prepared on occasion if not to camp at any rate to make do for themselves with little more than shelter, we hope that minor deficiencies may be met and some small improvements made by next summer. But it is not easy to run from London hostels so far away, and much depends on whether one or two experienced hostellers can extend a holiday in the North West to get out, best of all at Easter, but at any rate by the end of June, to attend to minor needs. This means some expense as MacBrayne's comfortable new ferries cannot be hitched and we can meet a few pounds extra expense. Would you, or any of your friends, who feel they might be able to help in this way please get in touch with us as quickly as possible.

As long as the S.Y.H.A. do not feel able to run themselves small hostels and shelters in remote places, or to recognise those that other people are prepared to run, the ordinary ways of making them known to hostellers are largely, though not wholly, closed to those who provide them, and we must rely largely on you who know and love the Outer Isles, and the hostels we have already provided 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.