

THE GATLIFF TRUST

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HEBRIDEAN HOSTELS - NEWSLETTER for 1986

	<u>1981</u>	<u>1982</u>	<u>1983</u>	<u>1984</u>	<u>1985</u>	<u>1986</u>
Berneray	284	242	225	178	200	561
Claddach Baleshare	-	186	156	227	471	313
Howmore	339	410	405	367	523	516
Rhenigidale	324	299	266	270	414	364
	<u>947</u>	<u>1137</u>	<u>1052</u>	<u>1042</u>	<u>1608</u>	<u>1754</u>

It was with great sadness that we learned of the death on 16th May 1986 of Roddy MacInnes, for 24 years the Trust's warden at Rhenigidale. During those years Roddy welcomed over 5,000 visitors to his hostel. To every one he gave a kind greeting and made time to talk and to answer the endless questions posed about life in that remote community. It is indeed difficult to imagine a visit to Rhenigidale without a ceilidh with Roddy, the two being inseparable. He will not be forgotten.

The Trust was most fortunate that Roddy's sister-in-law, Mrs Marion MacInnes, agreed to act as warden after his death. It was a pleasure to arrive in Rhenigidale and be met by her bright smile and kind welcome. Alan Duncan wrote in August: "On my own and after cooking a meal I enjoyed the hospitality of Mrs MacInnes - the sort of person you travel all these miles (on a cycle from Peterborough except for the ferry) to meet."

The future of the hostel at Rhenigidale is presently in doubt as at the time of writing it is advertised for sale. The Trustees hope that they will be able to continue to operate the hostel there but at present this is uncertain.

The logbooks of all four hostels contain appreciative tributes to the wardens and once again thanks in great measure must be sent to them all for their kindness and good cheer.

During 1986 all four hostels were well used. Berneray reopened for use, having been closed for renovations for two years. Its logbook is full of appreciative comments about the improvements. Tara Lawrence writes: "I'm very impressed and am sure this superbly equipped and lovely hostel will be a joy to many in years to come". There is still work to be done and plans are in hand. The Berneray Appeal reached its target and raised the magnificent sum of £10,000. Thanks to all who contributed and to those who worked so hard to make the plans a reality.

Come to Berneray in 1987 to see what your donation has done!

Work on the other hostels has included maintenance at Howmore in April when Tommy Tosh from Claddach Baleshare did patching and rethatching on the roof aided by Jim Souness (Carndean) and Rosie Quick who also whitewashed the building. It now looks very trim. We are grateful to them for giving up their time to do this work.

Visitors in 1986, as before came from all places between the Arctic and the Antipodes! A Brazilian, someone from Trinidad and a South African all registered amongst many others. From quite near home came John Tasker, Vice-chairman of the YHA of England & Wales who with his fiancée, Anne Cartwright, stayed in the three Uist hostels in August.

Many entries in the hostel logs talk about the beauty and remoteness of the Hebrides and their distance from worldly affairs. Unfortunately, North Uist in particular proved to be no different from many other parts of Britain when, after the Chernobyl disaster, a ban was imposed on the movement of sheep in the island. On 15th August 1986 Nigel Bray of Lincoln wrote in the Baleshare book: "Mr Tosh is busy with his sheep, wondering if he will be able to sell his lambs due to the present ban as a result of the Chernobyl disaster." All crofters were so affected in North Uist for a time but fortunately, the readings dropped and the ban was lifted before most of the autumn lamb sales took place.

Despite indifferent weather during the summer all visitors seem to have enjoyed themselves. There are many fine descriptions of wildlife observed and walks undertaken. Irvine Butterfield in the Howmore log describes a walk on the east coast of South Uist: "Traverse of Ben nan Caorrach, Beinn Mhor, Beinn Corodale and Hecla with overnight stay at Usinish bothy. Views exceeding wide and vistas on all sides superb. Hills of Harris, Cuillin of Syke and Rhum, Jura and hint of shores of Northern Ireland. But the westward view surpassed all expectations with a clear sighting of St Kilda for the very first time. Stac stood out well with main island rising like some great creature of the deep." and "... weather abated to allow tolerable return by Corodale and the coast with a crossing of bealach below Ben na Hoe just below the mist. Spectacular coast and we found Prince's Cave complete with heather bed obviously used by local shepherds." "Glen Corodale an obvious fugitive's choice for the cottage hidden behind a rock on its seaward side would not be seen by Hanoverian men o'war in the Minch."

For all lovers of the walk over the hills to Rhenigidale is a translation of a charming eighth century Chinese poem written in the Rhenigidale book in August by Jocelyn Grigg.

South mountain stuffs all heaven and earth
Sun and Moon grow up from its stones.
The high peaks at night hold back the sun.
The deep vales are never bright by day.
Natural for mountain people to grow straight.
Where paths are steep the mind levels.
The wind blows through the cypresses
With a sound that sweeps the thousand hollows clean.
Who comes here regrets that he ever studied
Morning after morning to be close to floating fame.

Meng Chiao

Isabel Steel
Edinburgh, January 1987