



GATLIFF HEBRIDEAN HOSTELS TRUST
CROFTER'S NEWSLETTER 1998

	<u>1992</u>	<u>1993</u>	<u>1994</u>	<u>1995</u>	<u>1996</u>	<u>1997</u>
Berneray	1534	2031	2017	1838	2057	1627
Garenin	1551	2094	1937	2028	2185	1969
Howmore	999	1115	993	1080	1182	971
Rhenigidale	1234	1122	1090	862	928	812
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TOTAL	5816	6362	6037	5808	6352	5379

Welcome to this issue of the Crofter's Newsletter, which goes out to all hostellers who stayed in one of the above hostels during the year 1997 and who left their name and address in the register. There were visitors from 26 countries over the past year including Venezuela, West Malaysia, Algeria, Portugal, S. Africa, Japan, Greece, Czechoslovakia and Poland. What a cosmopolitan bunch!

It seems that overnight stays in the hostels were down on the previous year which could be due to the strength of the pound or weather or competition. It is with this in mind that we aim to make the GHHT hostels more comfortable for all our visitors, by maintaining standards and improving existing facilities and this can only be done with your help and support.

In last years' newsletter an appeal was made for funds to help with refurbishing Howmore and I understand that we were only short £5,400 at the beginning of the year. Many thanks to all of you who helped with this. Should you wish to become a member and support these unique hostels then please contact the membership secretary at the address below.

If anyone would like to know more about the history of the Gatliff Trust and its founder, please send £1.50 to cover postage and photocopying etc to Ms Hilary Wardrope, GHHT, Shore Cottage, Scarinish, Isle of Tiree Argyll PA77 6UH

The charges for overnight stays at the hostels have had to be raised and are in line with the SYHA charge for simple hostels: Adult £4.65; Child £3.85; camping £2.30. This charge covers an overnight stay use of the cooking facilities and hot showers and, it goes without saying, the wonderful ambience of an evening with other like-minded hostellers!

HOWMORE

The new hostel is finished and work starts this year on restoring the original hostel. There were several complaints in the log book about the draughtiness of the dormitory building - well, in fact that is supposed to be the cycle shed and storeroom, but we had to have somewhere for people to sleep whilst the old hostel was being restored and so we made it as habitable as possible as a short term answer.

We also had much praise from visitors regarding the new hostel, how well-equipped and cosy it was, several of them will be pleased that there is now a mirror in the bathroom and it will ensure that Tim from Bury in Lancashire will not 'remove his head whilst shaving'!

Maree, Gareth Rudd, Billy and Frances Adam visited Howmore on their first family cycling holiday 17 YEARS ago and vowed to come back - well they did in July 1997 and we hope they don't leave it so long until they return again!

During September a kayaking team landed at the hostel having been blown in on a blustering gale on a trip from Lochmaddy to Ludag. Their comment was 'great to have a shower and a dry night' - well, I would have thought they would have had plenty of SHOWERS whilst kayaking!! The team were Brian, Fran, Kenny, Valerie, Will, Becks, Lynn & Ian - congratulations.

Andrew and Bryony caught a fine clear day during late September when they climbed Hecla and could see as far as St Kilda and Isle of Mull. They have promised, as do so many others, that they will be back.

BERNERAY

One of the most frequent visitors to the hostel over the past years has been Chris Scargill, many comments have been written about him and the length of his stays, such was his love of the island. I am sorry to say that he passed away unexpectedly at the beginning of the year and our sympathies go to his mother, who wrote and said how much she knew her son had loved Berneray.

Many hostellers voiced concerns that the causeway will change the island and make it more 'accessible' for day trippers and caravanners etc. But think, if you are an islander and need a doctor in the middle of the night or the vet for your livestock, or if you are a young person who would like to visit the pub in the evening? Just thought I'd point out the other side of the coin.

Many enthusiastic birdwatchers have visited, amongst them were Chris Scargill, John Dean, Drew (12) and Eva and they even managed to spot the Corncrake which is becoming something of an endangered rarity.

In May, Beate wrote 'Heard about this hostel at Howmore 18 years ago and have now finally made it here' and 'It is more beautiful here than I could have imagined, one of these places one cannot believe is real'.

Ursula from Germany writes that it is the first time that she has been back to anywhere a second time and that she spent all year dreaming about sitting on the west beach gazing out to sea. I think we all feel that way about the islands and many visitors record returning many

times over to try and recapture the wonderful calmness that overcomes you after just a few hours!

'Take your watch off, you don't need it here' Gordon Gregor MacGregor

Sophia from Australia made the pilgrimage back to the islands after ten years and found 'it absolutely amazing to be back' - she even recommends eating the sea kelp!

Lawrence Washington, a regular visitor has the last say:

Endless days of endless nights
Endless nights of seal cries
Where endless sea meets endless sand
Time has no place upon this land

Like so many others he has been moved to poetry.

GARENIN

This is what Pat and John MacGregor wrote in the log book on their last day as wardens 31.3.97: 'This is the last day that John and I are wardens of this hostel. In the last six years we have met some very interesting and entertaining hostellers (sometimes we have disagreed but usually we have been big friends). If you have been to the hostel before and would like to call at our house for a little chat, we would be pleased to see you.' Pat and John MacGregor. However, since then, I am sorry to be the bearer of sad news when I tell you that John MacGregor passed away at the end of March this year. Many hostellers will remember John for his amusing anecdotes and helpfulness, our sympathies go to Mrs Pat MacGregor.

David J Robertson from Aberdeen comments 'I don't think I know of a place where you can be in a gale with soggy feet and rain coming in horizontally and be perfectly happy!!'.

Even the youngest of our visitors find something to enjoy. Frances Adams (8) 'this was my first youth hostel. I like seeing all the rabbits and going on the beach and cycling'!

Gerard and Curie Sleypen of the Netherlands have a very poetic comment about the hostel 'A stay in Garenin is like the Harris Tweed itself: rough and beautifully coloured on the outside, soft and warm on the inside' - how lovely!

I wonder if Tim Willcocks from Gloucester is the only hosteller left who remembers one of the first GHHT hostels on Scarp. He first visited it 30 years ago!!! He actually met Herbert Gatliff a couple of times when in London during the mid-sixties 'he was a little old, bird-like man with white hair and an infirmity living in a bedsit in Earls Court' He adds 'I thank you Herbert Gatliff for putting a vision into practice and starting this chain of delightful hostels'.

Kirstin Hede11 was recommended to visit this hostel by a friend in Germany. Such is the worldwide recognition of these hostels.

In August the hostel received a visit from Lynette Chiang of Australia who was cycling her way from Land's End to John O'Groats - via the Outer Hebrides - a solo journey by a solo female on a folding bike! It seems the extra miles were worth it.

RHENIGDALE

With the amount of praise that hostellers heap upon the Morso stove I think we should get a percentage from the makers for such promotion!!! Richard from Leeds writes 'I thought Morso was some sort of resident Scandinavian dude who just sat there getting on everyone's nerves after reading in the log book "he doesn't say much but tends to behave himself providing you feed him"' (that is, when Richard managed to find the hostel after getting fantastically lost).

Also, visitors cannot say enough good things about Alasdair the warden who it seems is permanently rescuing hostellers who have no idea of the remoteness of the hostel - Jonathan Errington writes 'respect is due to the warden and a knighthood for services to the slightly dim who don't realise there is no shop (like me) - the way he produced those eggs is a miracle in my book'.

Rhenigdale also had the pleasure of welcoming the Stornoway Canoe Club for a night in April - the hostels make good stop off places for the canoe and kayaking teams, being quite remote yet near to the shoreline.

Krista and Neil visited at the beginning of May and they managed to get the stove in the kitchen working 'giving it a homey feeling'. Neil is presently writing a book on the walks in the area and this should be available soon.

Congratulations to 'Dad', Drew (12) and Dave (9) who had come from Stornoway on bicycles during May - Drew writes 'I was a bit peeved off when my dad said that we would have to go back the way we came, I thought AAAGHHH, not those up hill roads again'.

In fact it seems that many intrepid cyclists made the journey over the summer and without fail all of them were amazed by the scenery (and the hills). It would appear that the best way to get the most out of the trip into the hostel is either by foot from Tarbert over the coastal walk or by bicycle along the new road, to really appreciate a hot shower and warm stove!

John from Kingussie writes 'first time here since road was built - hasn't changed the place as much as I expected'

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Thanks to each and every one of you for making the hostels such fun and friendly places to visit. I hope you return again and again for that special magic that only the Islands and the hostels can provide.

Sandy Mitchell
April 1998

Useful Names and Addresses

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