



## Gatliff Hebridean Hostels Trust

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

### crofter's newsletter 2002

Welcome to a belated 2002 edition of the Crofters Newsletter. I have taken over from Lawrence on the newsletter because he is busy setting up a micro brewery in the depths of Wales. I was in the islands this summer for the Rhenigidale celebrations, although I stayed in the Old School House, courtesy of our good friends Kenny and Moira Mackay. I first came to the village in 1985 as leader of the Schools Hebridean Society Rhenigidale Expedition and made many good friends at that time. I have visited many times since, over the last 6 years taking in the Hebridean Celtic Festival. This was the first time my husband Chris had been to the islands so as part of the trip we took in the other hostels – staying at Garenin and camping at Berneray and Howmore. I hadn't been to Berneray since the causeway was constructed and had never been to Howmore so I share many of the sentiments expressed by those who have written in the logbooks. I have not received Berneray so can only offer what I saw. A beautiful setting, beautiful buildings – I wish we'd had more time. It was good to see a family on bikes – with one child on a trailer bike and one in a covered trolley. They were having a great time.

#### HOSTEL OVERNIGHT FIGURES

	<u>1994</u>	<u>1995</u>	<u>1996</u>	<u>1997</u>	<u>1998</u>	<u>1999</u>	<u>2000</u>	<u>2001</u>
Berneray	2017	1838	2057	1627	1328	1779	1602	1505
Garenin	1937	2028	2185	1969	1796	1576	1329	1225
Howmore	933	1080	1182	971	1076	1071	923	1034
<u>Rhenigidale</u>	<u>1090</u>	<u>862</u>	<u>928</u>	<u>812</u>	<u>787</u>	<u>800</u>	<u>824</u>	<u>767</u>
TOTALS	5977	5808	6352	5379	4987	5226	4678	4531

## GARENIN

Travellers came from 24 countries including Korea, Poland and South Africa to Garenin. All seem to have been captivated by the scenery, the space, the peace and solitude. It is 'beautiful even in the rain'. 'Its like being under the earth at the Edge of the World (do I detect a Runrig fan?) - hear the sea breathe – silence enough to take some back home.' 'The booming of the ocean at night', 'never ending wind'. 'warm and cosy'.

Gavin of Edinburgh says 'Islands concentrate the dreamers of the world and places like this concentrate their dreams – Long live the wild untamed places of the world where dreams are made'. There were various comments about the mice – although I didn't hear any, and a bit of a debate about the appearance of the village – whether or not it is a bit too 'twee'; most appreciated a glimpse of the past. One visitor who'd known the previous occupier wrote that 'it had changed from when we used to visit the old ladies – Peggy would have had a wry smile'.

A German visitor left the quote 'Shining days ... don't cry that they are gone, smile that they have been' Lao Tse., and rated Garenin as one of her favourite places.

## HOWMORE

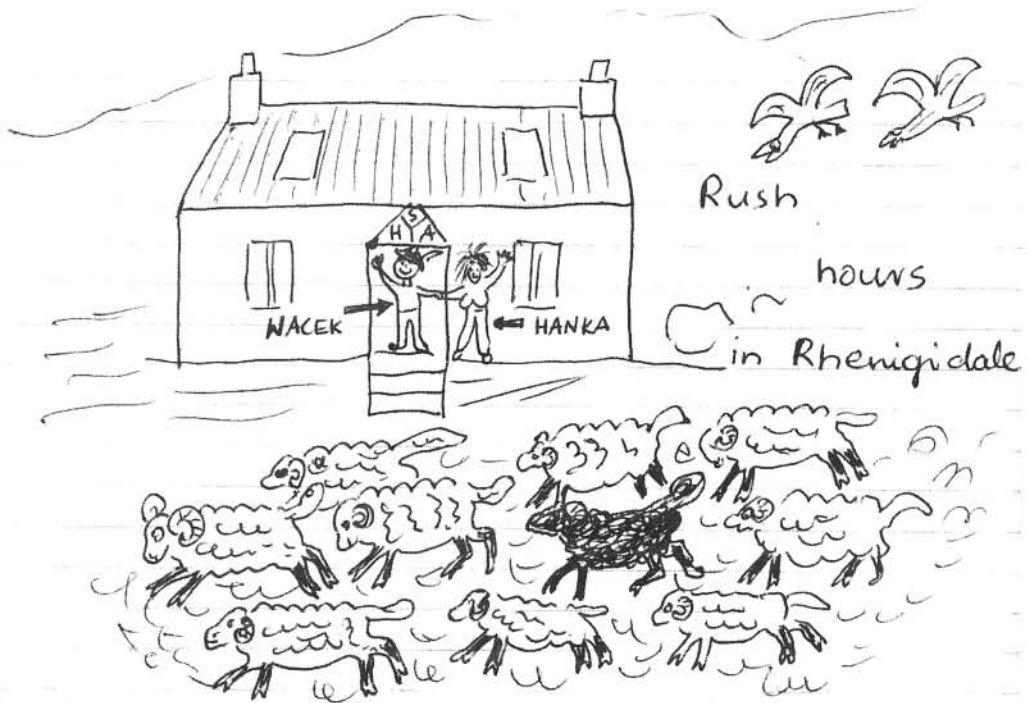
As I went through the logbooks I wondered what brought people from Columbia and the Czech Republic to such a far flung spot. Canadians it is more easy to understand. Laura McIntyre from Canada wrote that 'my roots are strong here. I feel them seeping and burrowing farther down than they ever have gone before. My Grandmother was forced to leave during the Clearances, and I am the first in 3 Generations to come back to the old country'. Douglas from Arizona wrote 'Time to let the land heal and remove some of the scars of stress. Time to return to the meaning of place and be reminded of the flow of time'. Howmore was described as a place where time stands still and peaceful although those who experienced the starlings and the corncrakes would not agree. Many who had visited before praised improvements since their last visit and it was said that South Uist is better than the Caribbean although Stuart Fox, who we met at the hostel in June, probably would not agree. He did make it through the wind and rain to the ferry and we all had an interesting journey to Barra.

Many visitors wrote their comments in Gaelic. My Gaelic is very basic and I haven't gone through with the Dictionary to work it all out but it is good to see so many embracing the language of the islands.

## Rhenigdale

Travellers came from 22 countries including the Canary Islands, New Zealand and Argentina and fell in love with the village. The consensus of opinion was that the peace is rejuvenating, that it was a great place for just 'being' and for switching off completely. The hostel was a warm and cosy refuge from a number of storms. Travellers from Findhorn (Norway I think) were at the hostel on September 11<sup>th</sup> 2001. Vera says 'there couldn't have been a better place to learn about the most horrendous news in New York – and here we are 10 people by the warmth of the fire in a candlelit hostel by the sea, sharing a meal together, different nationalities...peace is possible'. On the more joyous occasion of Hogmanay Meledy from New Zealand and Gene from Munich left the following poem.

Tis Hogmanay night, tis black and still – 'cept  
The lights blinking, over the hill...  
The fire is roaring, the mountains are quiet,  
Eyes are twinkling...'tis Hogmanay night.



## walks from the gatliff hostel at reinigeadal - neil pinkett

This beautifully illustrated guide to walking in the Rhenigidale area of North Harris is available from GHHT at just £3.50 including p+p. Orders should be sent to: **Gatliff Hebridean Hostels Trust, 30 Francis Street, STORNOWAY, Isle of Lewis, Western Isles, HS1 2ND.**

Cheques should be made payable to 'Gatliff Hebridean Hostels Trust'.

The book will also be on sale at Tourist Offices in Tarbert and Stornoway, as well as at Rhenigidale Hostel.

### HOSTEL PRICES - 2003

The overnight charges at the GHHT hostels in 2003 are as follows:

18 and over - £7.50 / under 18 - £5.50 / camping - £3.75

### MEMBERSHIP

If you are not already a member of the Hebridean Hostellers, why not join and help us to support the hostels. Annual membership is currently £5 per year. For further details please see the enclosed leaflet.

Joanna Burgess - November 2002

---

### ADDRESSES

**THE GATLIFF HEBRIDEAN HOSTELS TRUST**, 30 Francis Street, Stornoway, Isle of Lewis, Western Isles, HS1 2ND. email: [ghht@gatliff.org.uk](mailto:ghht@gatliff.org.uk)

**CHAIRMAN** - Matt Bruce, 'Achnaha', Upper Garrabost, Isle of Lewis, Western Isles, HS2 0PN. email: [chair@gatliff.org.uk](mailto:chair@gatliff.org.uk)

**MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY** - Peter Clarke, 264 Alexandra Park Road, London, N22 7BG. email: [ghht@gatliff.org.uk](mailto:ghht@gatliff.org.uk)

**SECRETARY** - Arthur Meaby, 33 Stratford Close, Colwick, Nottinghamshire, NG4 2DL. email: [arthurmeaby@aol.com](mailto:arthurmeaby@aol.com)

**CROFTER'S NEWSLETTER EDITOR** - Joanna Burgess, 58 Prideaux Road, Ivybridge, Devon, PL21 0JS. email: [joannachris.burgess1@btopenworld.com](mailto:joannachris.burgess1@btopenworld.com)

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