

HEBRIDEAN HOSTELLERS



NEWSLETTER 8

MAY 1989

HEBRIDEAN HOSTELS AND GATLIFF TRUST ACTIVITIES 1989

Workparties

Workparties are the core of Hebridean Hostellers activities and the key to support of the four hostels. The following workparties have been planned so far for 1989 and we shall be delighted to see members at any of these workparties.

1. 4 May - 11 May Berneray) Pushing on to completion
2. 8 May - 21 May Berneray) the work on the annexe
moving on to
3. 22 May - 5 June Rhenigdale) Preliminary work on the
4. 8 July - 5 August Rhenigdale) planned major renovation
5. possibly also at Garenin) Setting up basic facilities

In the case of the first three workparties, we already have committed groups of volunteers from The Prince of Wales Trust and Gateshead 'On Track' Scheme. Therefore it is important that if you intend to help, if at all possible, you should contact in advance John Joyce (workparties 1., 2. & 5.) or Arthur Meaby (workparties 3. & 4.), so that any accommodation difficulties can be overcome, and if volunteers in sufficient quantities are promised, so that extra work can be programmed - and let's hope that this is the case.

Other workparties are pencilled in for late August and September at Garenin and Rhenigdale and if you are thinking of helping, then I suggest you declare your hand now (contact John Joyce). It not only helps the planning, but quite possibly at this stage workparties could be shaped to take into account your →

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- * The first Annual General Meeting of the Gatliff Hebridean Hostels Trust, *
 - * Urras Osdailean Nan Innse Galt Gatliff, will be held at Berneray Hostel, *
 - * Isle of Berneray, Harris at 10.00am on Friday 21st July '89. All members *
 - * of Hebridean Hostellers are invited to attend. See page 4 for details. *
 - * *
 - * Berneray Hostel will be officially re-opened on Thursday 20th July - *
 - * see page 4 for details *
- *****

All addresses are given at the bottom of page 7.

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arrangements and availability!. But it is never too late, feel free to contact John Joyce, Arthur Meaby or Peter Clarke at any time to find out the latest details.

The work at Berneray is to finish the annexe which is currently nothing more than a waterproof shell and which therefore requires thatching and internal fitting out. Much more work might have been needed, but for the efforts of Roy Ashworth - see Roy's article on page 8.

It is the belief of the Committee of Hebridean Hostellers that the Hebridean Hostels should be kept simple - the hostels are never likely therefore to be equipped with microwave cookers, televisions or games rooms. Equally the Committee believes the hostels should be pleasant to stay in and should meet the need of those likely to use the hostels, which in these days of high transport costs, particularly petrol and ferries, is most likely to be individuals, small groups and families making a one-off visit to the Islands (or one of the few visits of a life-time) and who consequently may be staying on the islands for a week or a fortnight. In this context, the Committee believes that some of the more basic creature comforts of life should be available in the hostels, e.g. electricity, decent cooking facilities and showers. Without these it is believed the hostels will lose custom to Hotels, Guest Houses, etc, to the financial detriment of the hostels and at the cost of a lost experience to the individual, group or family. This policy has been implemented at Berneray, with every indication so far that it is the correct policy - the slowly declining number of bednights at Berneray has been dramatically turned round following the major renovation of the last two years.

Rhenigidale

Rhenigidale Hostel is, of course, now owned by the Gatilff Trust, and the Committee feels that this hostel should now receive a similar level of refurbishment, not least because the roof needs to be stripped for major attention to the timbers. Arthur Meaby has drawn up a plan of campaign to improve facilities by installing electricity, providing a shower, improve cooking facilities and to repair the roof, including replacement of the aging corrugated iron roof sheets with a modern 'composition slate' roof - it is not appropriate to provide a thatch roof at Rhenigidale, and 'composition slates' are aesthetically very similar to traditional slate rooves. Such work cannot be carried out without making muck and dirt and the final job will be to redecorate throughout the hostel.

As a consequence of this work, Rhenigidale Hostel will be closed from now until completion of the work during the summer of 1990.

Such work is not done cheaply, and the Gatilff Hebridean Hostels Trust will need to raise funds, as it did for Berneray, by public appeal, which gives rise to the following 'vacancy':

The Gatilff Hebridean Hostels Trust requires a volunteer Appeals Officer to undertake clerical, administrative and research work in connection with the appeal for funds for the renovation of Rhenigidale hostel. The job will involve a fair amount of paperwork over a short period of 3 - 6 months, tailing off over the following six months and would suit any person who is reasonably well organised and can afford to give this concentrated period of voluntary assistance, rather than a longer period as one of the Trust's 'bureaucrats'.

Volunteers should contact John Joyce in the first instance. Information on possible sources of financial support, 'sponsorship' or fundraising ideas will also be most appreciated.

Peter Clarke

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Garenin

Subject to the efforts of the building contractors being employed by the Western Isles Council, the first building to be structurally repaired in Garenin Village (near Callinish) will be made available to the Gatliff Hebridean Hostels Trust from the end of June '89 to equip and run as a hostel. With our major resources being concentrated at Berneray and the Rhenigidale this summer, furnishing and equipping of the croft house to normal GHHT standard (and subsequently to SYHA adopted hostel standard) is not planned for this year. However the GHHT has firm plans in hand to provide basic facilities under the guiding hand of Roy Ashworth. The question of wardening has been resolved by the 'appointment' of a local young couple who have volunteered for the job. So everything is looking good for a basic hostel at Garenin from late July onwards. Further details of workparties and use as a hostel from John Joyce from 1st July onwards.

By Machair & Mountain

"Stone circles, duns and other relics of the past - a landscape of sandy beaches backed by firm shell-sand machair and loch-studded moors - rocky hills composed of the oldest rocks in the world - soil raised into lazy beds for cultivation among the rock outcrops - isolated communities winning a hard living from the land and the sea - caves and other associations with Prince Charles Edward Stuart and the '45 - peat cut from the moor for fuel, piled in stacks to dry - a fine oral tradition and heritage of Gaelic prose, poetry and song. These are some of the ingredients which go to make up the unique island environment of the Outer Hebrides..."

So starts the opening page of *By Machair & Mountain*, a small book written by Keith Pennyfather and subtitled 'Walks from the Hebridean Hostels'. A total of 30 walks to and from the six Hebridean Hostels, i.e. including Stockinish and Lochmaddy SYHA hostels, are described together with much useful background information, 23 illustrations and maps, a guide to the six hostels and to Gaelic road sign posting. Profits from the Guide, which is published by GHHT, will go to GHHT. Copies are available from John Joyce at £2-25 inc. p & p, or from tourist outlets in the Outer Hebrides.

Cairdean nan Taighean Tugha (Friends of the Thatched Houses)

is a young organisation which seems to have built up a formidable track record in its short life. Cairdean nan Taighean Tugha (the Friends) fundamental aim is to help retain traditional thatched buildings. Although only in its third year, the Friends has already paid out £15,000 in grants towards rethatching costs on 25 properties on Tiree, Skye, North & South Uist and Mull and on the mainland. Most of the money has derived from the Historic Buildings Council for Scotland which is committed to assisting retention of traditional thatched buildings through grant assistance.

Cairdean nan Taighean Tugha is also making great steps towards building up a Scottish Thatching Archive, from which 25 excellent photographs are included in its second Newsletter (published at the end of '88). Jim Souness, an active member of Hebridean Hostellers, is Secretary of the Friends. Last November he had the pleasure of receiving, on behalf of the Friends, the prestigious 'Glenfiddich Living Scotland Awards' and the accompanying £4,000 cheque - which should guarantee completion of the Scottish Thatching Archive and give the Friends resources to respond immediately where a sum of money is needed "to save the day" on a rethatching crisis.

Hebridean Hostellers who have paid their subscription for 1989 and have a further £2-00 or more to spare may wish to support Cairdean nan Taighean Tugha and should write to the address at the back of this Newsletter for more details.

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Berneray Re-opening

To mark the completion of the major renovation of the last two years, Berneray hostel will be formally re-opened on Thursday 20th July 1989 at 3.00 p.m. All members of Hebridean Hostellers are invited to attend. (If you plan to attend and stay the night, to avoid any embarrassing shortage of accommodation, please contact John Joyce in advance). The re-opening will be performed by Duncan Campbell, Director of the Countryside Commission for Scotland, and as the hostel is a part of Berneray Island life, suitable celebrations are being planned to include the Islanders.

The Gatliff Hebridean Hostels Trust - First Annual General Meeting

The first Annual General Meeting of the Gatliff Hebridean Hostels Trust, Urras Osdallean Nan Innse Gall Gatliff will be held at Berneray Hostel, Isle of Berneray at 10.00 a.m. on Friday 21st July 1989. All members of Hebridean Hostellers are welcome and are encouraged to attend. The normal business of the AGM includes receiving and approving the accounts; approving overnight and annual membership fees; appointing up to six members of the Executive Committee; appointing an auditor; reviewing the activities of the Trust over the past year and setting the course for the next year.



BALESHARE, NORTH UIST

by Crispin Worthington

If you cannot attend the AGM you are entitled to vote by proxy on all the business of the meeting. Alan Busson will be circulating a note in June setting out the AGM business and the details of the proxy voting system. Meanwhile volunteers wishing to further the aims and activities of GHHT and Hebridean Hostellers by serving as Executive Committee members are needed now. Nominations to Alan Busson by 31st May 1989 please.

Errata, and oh dear! Three errors in Newsletter No 7 need to be corrected. Apologies, it is Duncan Campbell, Director of the Countryside Commission for Scotland who will be opening Berneray Hostel on 20th July '89, and not Roger Carr, Chairman of the CCS.

In Hebridean Hostellers Newsletter No 7, I not only mis-spelt Urras Osdallean Nan Innse Gall Gatliff, but did so twice, and in two different ways. Anyway its correct here and elsewhere in this Newsletter. And on page 3 an extra *d* crept into cellidh. The printer spotted it and dug out Chambers Scots Dictionary to see if I could hide behind some ancient spelling. I can't but what we did discover was an alternative spelling of *Kallie* with the associated word *Kallier* - one who outstays his welcome. So now you know what the hint is if one of the wardens calls you a *kallier*!

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Gatliff Trust, Hebridean Hostellers, Osdallilean Nan Gall Gatliff - confused?

As promised in Newsletter 7, Peter Clarke explains the creation of the Gatliff Hebridean Hostels Trust, the second part of our attempt to clear the confusion:

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: A new body, the Gatliff Hebridean Hostels Trust, is now in existence :
: managing the crofters hostels. Is this just the onward march of :
: bureaucracy or is it a step in the direction of more and better :
: hostels in the Outer Hebrides? Peter Clarke explains. :
.....

The Gatliff Trust

During the summer of 1961 as Herbert Gatliff was making plans to start the Gatliff Trust, Mac Hoskin, a volunteer warden at Achinver Youth Hostel, and an active member of the Epsom and Ewell YHA Local Group, went over to the Outer Isles to see if he could find a hostel. In Tarbert he met Herbert Gatliff, who was spending a few days visiting the Isle of Harris. Herbert suggested that Mac go over to the township of Rhenigidale, where there were some empty houses. One owned by Roddy MacInnes, a local crofter, proved suitable for use as a hostel. Roddy was enthusiastic about the project and the hostel opened at Easter 1962.

The SYHA was not willing to take over or "recognise" the hostel. Instead they handed over a fund created to establish a hostel in the Hebrides as a memorial to Keith Chambers, a London caver and Chairman of London Region YHA, who visited the Outer Hebrides in 1951. At that time the SYHA used part of the YWCA building in Stornoway during the summer months as a Youth Hostel. They did not open their first hostel, at Stockinish, until 1965. Lochmaddy opened in 1982.

Herbert agreed to support Rhenigidale hostel via his newly formed Gatliff Trust. A hostel was maintained on Scarp from 1965 to 1969 when the island was depopulated. Howmore opened in 1966, Berneray in 1977 and Claddach Baleshare in 1982. All the hostels were warded by their owners, local crofters, but, after the death of Roddy MacInnes in 1987, the Gatliff Trust bought Rhenigidale hostel, and became the lessee of Berneray hostel in the same year.

The 1980's

After Herbert's death it was necessary for the Gatliff Trustees to reappraise their activities. It was recognised that there was a large number of supporters but no clear link between them and the work of the Trust. So in 1984 the Gatliff Trust set up Hebridean Hostellers as a supporters group for the hostels. Right from the beginning, hostellers have shown strong interest in the Hebridean Hostellers but charity law made it impractical for Hebridean Hostellers to become members of the Gatliff Trust. To overcome this problem and to encourage more local involvement in the running of the four hostels, in 1988 the Gatliff Trustees set up a new Charity, the Gatliff Hebridean Hostels Trust, (frequently abbreviated in this Newsletter to GHHT), registered in Scotland.

The GHHT was also needed to provide the hostel activities with corporate status. The Gatliff Trust is an unincorporated body, meaning that each and every Trustee accepts unlimited liability for everything that the Gatliff Trust does. This was fine in the days when the Gatliff Trust handled a few hundred pounds a year, but in the past four years it has taken on projects involving the commitment of several thousands of pounds.

Formation of Gatliff Hebridean Hostels Trust

Gatliff Hebridean Hostels Trust was formally incorporated on 10th June 1988 as a company limited by guarantee and registered at Companies House, Edinburgh. We were very disappointed that the Registrar of Companies refused to register the

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Trust with bi-lingual names, i.e. Gatliff Hebridean Hostels Trust and its Gaelic equivalent Urras Osdalean Nan Innse Gall Gatliff. However the Executive Committee has decided to use Urras Osdalean Nan Innse Gall Gatliff and Hebridean Hostellers as 'business' names. The Trust has been granted charitable status by the Inland Revenue.

Management of Gatliff Hebridean Hostels Trust

GHHT is run by an Executive Committee of up to 12 people, of whom six (including the Chairman) are nominated by The Gatliff Trust and six elected annually by the members of Hebridean Hostellers at the Annual General Meeting. (The first AGM is on 21st July 89, see page 4). The period of office of all Executive Committee members is one year renewable, so a turnover of people is possible. In other words members can take a turn at being an Executive Committee member and if they cannot spare the time needed to get involved, they can stand down at the end of that year.

The Gatliff Trust has appointed Gatliff Trustees John Joyce (Chairman), Peter Clarke (Vice Chairman), Roger Clifton (Treasurer), Frank Martin and Arthur Meaby as members of the Executive Committee. It has also appointed Philip Lawson, Chairman of the Scottish Youth Hostels Association in order to cement the Trust's relationship with the SYHA.

The non Gatliff Trust Executive Committee members are David Brown, Alan Busson (Secretary), Jim Souness and John Macleod Webb. Now Hebridean Hostellers have the opportunity of playing a full role in the management of the hostels by becoming members of the Executive Committee.

The Relationship Between the Trust and the Gatliff Trust

The Gatliff Trust and GHHT have established a friendly and efficient relationship. Each year the Trust will submit a budget to the Gatliff Trust showing its proposed income and expenditure for the forthcoming year and this budget will become the main instrument of the relationship between the two bodies. The Gatliff Trust has decided in principle to continue the same level of expenditure in the Outer Hebrides but to pass the money through GHHT. This will involve GHHT in taking over all the Gatliff Trust's donations to Hebridean Churches and other Hebridean organisations. Please note that Hebridean Hostellers subscriptions will only be used for running the hostels.

Membership

The membership of the original Hebridean Hostellers group has been incorporated into GHHT, giving it a strong base. From now on all existing and new Hebridean Hostellers will become members of the Gatliff Hebridean Hostels Trust. Their only added liability is that they will have to subscribe £1 in the unlikely event of the company being wound up. That is the meaning of the phrase "company limited by guarantee". Hebridean Hostellers is the collective name of the membership of the Trust.

Conclusion

The Gatliff Hebridean Hostels Trust is the logical evolution of the Gatliff Trust's 25 years of involvement in the Outer Hebrides. It is a historic step which guarantees the continuation of the crofter's hostels in the Outer Hebrides. We hope that people will be prepared to give a little of their time to work with others to run the hostels through the Gatliff Hebridean Hostels Trust.

And to clarify the position About Membership Alan Busson writes:

All recipients of this Newsletter should fall into one of the following two

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groups:

1) Covenantors who currently covenant to the Gatliff Trust

For the next two to three years transitional arrangements will apply so far as covenants are concerned. These transitional arrangements are covered in item 1, of the enclosed letter written by Alan Busson.

A Hebridean Hostellers membership form is enclosed. Please complete the form and write on it the amount that you currently covenant to the Gatliff Trust and send it to Alan Busson. (If you have already done so, see NOTE below).

2) Members of Hebridean Hostellers prior to 1st January 1989 who renew their membership annually and who did not covenant to the Gatliff Trust. Please fill in the enclosed Hebridean Hostellers membership form and send it with your 1989 subscription to Alan Busson. (If you have already done so, see Note Below). Refer also to item 2, of the enclosed letter.

NOTE: If you are one of those organised people who has already paid your subscription and filled in a membership form, do not waste the form enclosed - pass it on to a friend who might be willing to support the Hebridean hostels.

The letter referred to above is enclosed to those who, according to our records, are paid up members of Hebridean Hostellers, and deals with a bit of back-tracking to get the records correct. If no such letter is enclosed then this means our records show that you have not paid your subscription yet this year. If you normally pay by cash/cheque/postal order, then take the opportunity now, while it is fresh in your mind, to pay your subscription by sending your payment with the enclosed completed membership form to Alan Busson. If you pay by Standing Order or Direct Debit, then the assumption must be that this is later in the year. Please fill in and send the enclosed form to Alan Busson, with a note advising when the payment is due to be made.

Sorry if this is all a bit complicated, sorting out the membership is one of the most difficult parts of setting up the Gatliff Hebridean Hostellers Trust. If you wish to query any points in respect of the Hebridean Hostellers membership scheme, please write or 'phone Alan Busson.



Addresses

Hebridean Hostellers/Gatliff Hebridean Hostels Trust

Chairman - John Joyce, 2 Beaumont Road, Upper Norwood, London, SE19 3QZ

(01 653 8376).

Vice Chairman - Peter Clarke, 264 Alexandra Park Road, London, N22 4BG

(01 888 2449).

Secretary - Alan Busson, 4 Sambre Road, Ridgeway, Chisledon, Swindon, SN4 0JB.

Rhenigdale Organiser - Arthur Meaby, 33 Stratford Close, Colwick, Notts.

NG4 2DL.

Newsletter Editor - Richard Genner, 42 Lamberton Court, Pencaitland, East

Lothian, EH34 5BL. (0875 340044).

Gatliff Trust

Chairman - Frank Martin, 20 Cornwallis Avenue, Bristol, BS8 4PP (0272 292350).

Friends of the Thatched Houses

Co-ordinator - Donald MacDonald, Faltie, Heanish, Tiree, Inner Hebrides.

Secretary - Jim Souness, 6 Fernoch Drive, Lochgilphead, Argyll (0546 2106).

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And after all that organisational/committee stuff, a story of real support for the hostels

Berneray Ravaged and Repaired - by Roy Ashworth of Grimsay, North Uist.

I first heard of the problem over the phone from John Joyce but I only managed to go up to Berneray a week later because of the appalling weather, arriving on 20th February. I must say I had grave doubts about tackling the job - A high tide, the highest for 20 years with the assistance of a South Easterly gale had washed away the sand from under the seaward wall resulting in a nine foot wide section of the wall plus all the earth and rubble core cascading onto the rocks sloping down to the beach. The difficulty was to remove the fallen debris so as to be able to create a level stable platform of rocks on which to start to rebuild. To remove all the debris would have risked the inner wall collapsing, this wall was still intact, the sand foundation supported and protected by the fallen rubble.

Eventually a rock platform was established and a concrete foundation was laid, extending under the southern corner which had to be underpinned with blocks and concrete. The weather was bad, gales with hail and rain, so when I left on 2nd March all I had managed to do was the aforementioned concreting plus around four courses of stonework on the wall. However the foundations were at least secure.

On 20th March I returned to Berneray to be met by Anthia, Kate, Angus & Adrian - we had met previously on the Easter Workparty, a nice reunion. I also met Arthur Meaby, Roy Rae & daughter Anne. They were there fitting doors etc in the annexe. Again weather permitting work went on, and this time with the assistance of a cement mixer borrowed from a local builder. At first the mixer wouldn't run but after much walking and talking, a couple of good spark plugs were obtained as was a gallon of petrol from a hosteller who arrived by car at the right time, and the mixer then co-operated.

Apart from the outer wall the core had to be replaced and the inner wall tied to it. The core was supported at intervals by concrete levels and eventually the last stone fitted.

Another problem was that when the wall had collapsed the four top courses had 'hung up', jammed between two massive corner stones and these four courses had to be supported by timber while work went on. Apart from the danger this meant that the core had to be built up from the side instead of from above, a time consuming business. The wall was finished on Tuesday 28th, just as well as the Wednesday was awful, gales and rain, but all that was left to do was to clean up and arrange for 'Splash' to return the mixer in his pick-up.

I must say thank you to the helpful people of Berneray, in particular Splash who delivered the cement mixer, cement and coal for the Raeburn, his brother John who produced two good spark plugs and hospitality, also the people staying at the Hostel, especially a couple from New Zealand who went stone collecting and provided enough to finish the job. It was hard work but enjoyable, the more so because of the nice people visiting the Hostel over the Easter period.

Finally thanks to Crispin Worthington of Lethen, Nairn who provided the drawing of Claddach Baleshere on page 4, and the croft house drawing on page 2 of the last Newsletter. The page 7 drawing of Rhenigdale is the 'standard' Gatliff Hebridean Hostels Trust drawing of the hostel as it is now. I shall be looking for an artist next year to provide a drawing of the newly renovated hostel.

Next issue November '89, contributions by 31 October '89 please.