



NEWSLETTER 19

NOVEMBER 1994

HEBRIDEAN HOSTELLERS AND GATLIFF HEBRIDEAN HOSTELS TRUST  
ACTIVITIES 1994

We have said a sad farewell to Richard Genner from the GHHT committee and thus amongst other things from the important post of editor of your newsletter. Thanks, Richard for all your work and thanks also to Lynn for her work as Membership Secretary.

We have searched from Castlebay to the Butt of Lewis from inner to outer hebrides to find his successor but lo and behold in a sleepy village called Waterside in Ayrshire one intrepid hosteller, committee member and would-be scribe took on the position. Unfortunately, he didn't know this until October and so has had scant time to search around for interesting details and information to put into the newsletter.

Despite having visited all the Hebridean Hostels many times in the past five years, I only joined the Hebridean Hostellers quite recently. So, I have only received two of the newsletters but nevertheless hope that I am able to maintain the high standards of those issues.

### Failla

A warm welcome to all those members who have recently joined the GHHT and hello to all existing members. Please remember this is YOUR newsletter and therefore any items of interest connected with the Hebrides that you think would be of interest to other members should be forwarded to myself Jim McFarlane at the address below.

### Officers

At the AGM in September, the following committee members were elected or held office:

Chairman:	Peter Clarke
Vice Chairman:	Deidre Forsyth
Secretary:	Alan Busson
Treasurer:	Angela Gallagher
Buildings Officer:	Arthur Meaby
Membership Sec'y:	Sandra Mitchell
Volunteer Coordin:	Diane Waddell

Main topics during the meeting were the refurbishment of Howmore hostel and possible acquisition of a building in Barra for a new hostel.

### Howmore Refurbishment

A workparty was organised and led by Jim McCulloch at the beginning of November to move all the stones and general debris in the adjacent buildings to the hostel in preparation for the rebuilding work. A week later I joined the stonemason Brian Wilson and his colleague to rebuild parts of the walls and dismantle and rebuild the doorway. It has to be said at this stage that my part in all this was to sort and grade the stones - some as large as a full rucksack others as small as a mouse - into various piles. By the time I had finished Brian said it was a shame to take from and spoil such a well-formed cairn of stones. That was just the pile for infill.



The area now looks as if it is surrounded by battalions of regimented stones, which Brian selects to create a perfectly straight and even wall. Each layer of stones is levelled in exactly the same way a bricklayer would line them up, but without the cement to keep them together - it truly is a highly skilled craft. Upon completion the walls will be a metre thick, comprising an outer and inner wall with an infill of small stones. Thankfully, the weather was excellent with only one day of rain, which is most unusual for mid-November and this enabled us to complete many tasks in the one week. Brian will be returning early in 1995 and again around May to finish the work on the walls and gable ends allowing the next stage to begin.

### Barra Hostel

Negotiations are still ongoing regarding the site for the new Barra hostel. I hope to be able to give you more details and a definite location in the May newsletter.

### Privatisation of Cal-Mac Ferry Services

At long last the report from KPMG Management Consultants has been received at the Scottish Office. It has been determined that Cal-Mac will continue to run the ferries and the routes will not be in the hands of private companies.

## Winter Hostelling

Continuing along the theme of travel to the islands, members should remember that services both air and sea are subject to the vagaries of the weather. One should make allowances and be 'elastic' in planning a timetable and travelling during the winter months.

For instance, recently there was a ten hour delay on the Cal-Mac sailing from Oban to Castlebay. There can be even longer delays for passengers trying to fly the Barra/Glasgow route -sometimes for a whole day owing to cross-winds and the difficulties of landing on the beach in poor conditions. Islanders on Barra were unhappy about the change to a Shorts 360 aircraft, this was borne out by the recent bad weather when the aircraft could not land, so waiting passengers wanting to depart eventually had to be lifted by an Islander aircraft. Lord James Douglas Hamilton Scottish Office Minister responsible for Transport gave a clear indication of the Scottish Office's concern at Loganair's failure to provide an adequate service. Good news for Barra is the re-introduction of the twin Otter, the plane will remain on the route for the duration of Loganair's contract up to 1998.

The good news for anyone travelling the islands this winter (including the Orkneys) is a British Airways/Loganair deal called a Highland Rover ticket. This comprises five single flights for the price of 179. When I tried to contact BA about this deal earlier in the week, they were a little hazy on the finer details as the offer is so new, but try calling them yourself on: 0345 222111.

## Western Isles Challenge

This will take place next year from 2 - 5 May. The course for the event will take competitors from the Isle of Barra through 12 checkpoints, 12,000 feet of ascent, at least one sea crossing, totalling some 200 miles and finishing at the Butt of Lewis. Half the distance must be covered on foot the remainder by non-motorised means. If you are interested in putting a team together then contact: Ian Callaghan, Scarista House, Isle of Harris, PA85 3HX Tel: 01859 550238 before mid-December. This could prove a great challenge to our fitter members and perhaps you might consider the possibility of being sponsored and putting the proceeds (or part of them) towards the GHHT.

## Berneray Week

Great fun was had in July this year when I visited Berneray with my girlfriend and daughter to discover that we had picked the week for the Island's annual fun and games. There were activities every day including some wonderfully traditional ceilidhs, plays in Gaelic, dancing into the wee small hours to one of the finest bands in the Hebrides and the grand finale of the 'It's a Knockout' competition. There were two teams from the hostel, which was bursting at the seams with people, including the all-necessary children. These proved to be like gold-dust and were much coveted by several of the other teams, since each team had to consist of six adults and two children. The event was held in the fields near to the village hall and since it was

a beautifully hot day the turn-out was tremendous, despite agonised faces on some of the adults who had enjoyed their liquid comforts to a high degree at the ceilidh the night before. There were nine competing teams in total, with ten games for them to endure, for example: crossing the burn over a 'greasy pole', pushing a tractor tyre over a course which traversed the burn in two places, tug-of-war over the burn. As you can see water featured quite highly in the events, there was even a cruelly thought up event where a cold, wet sponge was thrown into a bucket resting on one of your team mates heads! Thank goodness it was so hot. I am pleased and proud to announce that our team 'Rest of the World' won the competition and in honour of the fact there is a plaque with our name on it in Mary and Angus' shop.

On a sadder note, whilst I was at the hostel, Roy who was Annie and Jessie's beloved dog passed away through old age. I am sure that there will be many hostellers who will be sad not to see Roy accompanying the wardens to the hostel. However, during a visit I paid the island in October, a new puppy was in residence who I am sure will become a firm favourite with the hostellers.

Useful Names and Addresses

- CHAIRMAN - PETER CLARKE, 264 ALEXANDRA PARK RD, LONDON N22 4BG.
- VICE-CHAIRWOMAN - DEIDRE FORSYTH, THE SHEILING, GLENBURN RD, ARDRISHAIG, ARGYLL, PA30 8EU.
- SECRETARY - ALLAN BUSSON, 4 SAMBRE RD, RIDGEWAY VIEW, CHISLEDON, SWINDON, SN4 0JB.
- TREASURER - ANGELA GALLAGHER, FHARRABUIE, WEST BANK RD, ARDRISHAIG, ARGYLL.
- BUILDINGS OFFICER - ARTHUR MEABY, 33 STRATFORD CLOSE, COLWICK, NOTTS, NG4 2DL
- NEWSLETTER EDITOR - JIM MCFARLANE ) 20 NEW COTTAGES,  
MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY- SANDY MITCHELL ) WATERSIDE,  
 ) AYRSHIRE, KA6 7JF.

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GATLIFF TRUST

CHAIRMAN : FRANK MARTIN, 20 CORNWALLIS AVENUE, BRISTOL, BS8 4PP

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SUBMISSIONS FOR MAY NEWSLETTER MUST BE RECEIVED BY MYSELF  
(JIM MCFARLANE) BEFORE APRIL 12TH 1995

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