

SHS: Herbert Gatliff's Connection to Cruib Lodge

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Herbert Gatliff (1898 – 1977) was a respected, very capable and high ranking civil servant who was then probably regarded by colleagues as ‘a bit off-message’, but today he would have been very much at home in the Department of the Environment. Herbert was a philanthropist, and many members will be aware that the Gatliff Trust that he established to pursue his charitable interests was responsible for the six simple hostels that the Trust has run in the Outer Hebrides at various times since 1962. The Trust, in the form of the Gatliff Hebridean Hostels Trust currently operates three hostels at Howmore, Berneray and Rhenigidale, all delightfully simple hostels occupying a position between bothies and those hostels defined by the SYHA and YHA (E&W) as being ‘simple’.

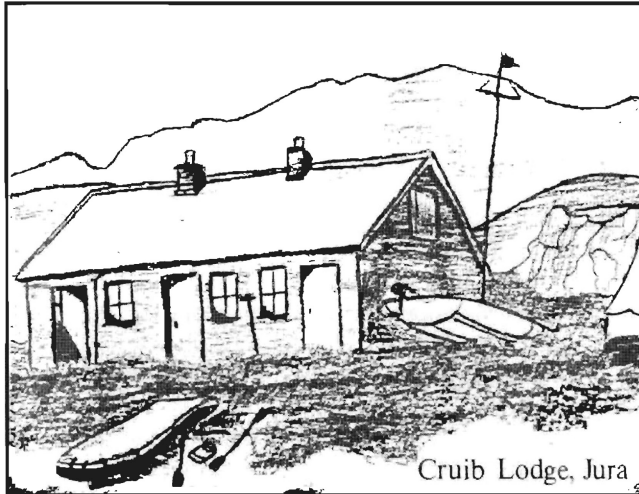
Herbert's life-long aspiration was to help young people to enjoy and care for the countryside of England, Scotland and Wales, especially through the use of Youth Hostels. Not for Herbert was the YHA's suspicion in 1966 that the MBA might be a rival, from the beginning Herbert supported the infant MBA, he had the vision to see that bothies were another means for young people to get out and explore our wilderness countryside.

Herbert Gatliff passed away in 1977 but his Trust continues to support accommodation at the simple end of the spectrum, twice it has given significant help to the Elenydd Wilderness Hostels Trust which runs two excellent hostels in the Ceridigion area of Wales : Dolgoch Hostel forms an easy link with Moel Prysgau bothy and a tougher link with Lluest Cwm Bach. To my surprise I have just received an unsolicited copy of the Gatliff Trust's Triennial Report for 2004 - 2006 in which is recorded the Trust's support for the transfer of the SYHA's simple hostel of Craig to the MBA's care as an open bothy. The report notes ‘Craig was loved by our founder Herbert Gatliff and we know that he would have approved of the Gatliff Trust's actions’

But it is another organisation which provides a link between Herbert Gatliff and Cruib Lodge, our more south-erly and more recent bothy renovation on the Island of Jura. This organisation, the Schools Hebridean Society (SHS), ran from 1962 until 1990, when simply, it had lost out to the increased popularity of school trips to mainland European destinations. Throughout its early years, Herbert gave the SHS support and financial contributions, opening up the Hebrides to hundreds of young people and helping the

SHS to blossom. In its heyday during 1970s, the SHS was able to select participants for the 4 or 5 expeditions it ran each year to various Hebridean islands, but by 1988 it was struggling to fill the available places on the one expedition it ran. Between 1962 and 1989, the SHS ran 124 expeditions, there are not many Hebridean islands that did not receive a visit from one of its expeditions, but from 1965, Jura was a favourite, and from 1971 every one of its alternate year expeditions to this island was centred at Cruib Lodge.

More easily than expected, I have dug out from my bookshelf a summary of the SHS's work which contains reports on its last three expeditions, including the 1988 trip (1989 brought forward a year as the Society began to struggle) to Cruib Lodge on Jura. Cruib Lodge illustrates the front page of the booklet, the drawing that accompanies this article - unfortunately it is the only drawing/photograph of the Lodge, with little to hint at



Cruib Lodge, Jura

its condition long before the MBA's involvement there. Expedition members camped, but it seems likely that the expedition leaders used the Lodge, as did the whole expedition when the weather turned rough. 14 of the 32 expedition members have contributed to the 1988 expedition report, throughout Cruib is always referred to as the Lodge, and never as a bothy although the facilities were obviously bothy standard. The days of the expedition were filled with map work & orienteering, canoeing & sailing, bouldering, hill walking, swimming and an obligatory away day/night, referred to as the bivvy trip, usually bivvying high on one of the Paps of Jura : 'We went off in search of a bivvy site, trying to find one the goats hadn't visited first, which was difficult!' writes Keith MacDonald. Despite the counter-attractions of a ski-ing trip, or a pseudo geography field trip to some hot clime, even these latter-day SHS expedition participants clearly enjoyed the expedition experience and Cruib's hospitality.

Amongst a list of all the SHS's expeditions are trips to Camasunary on Skye in 1983, and Usinish on South Uist in 1970 & 1973, that is before we had taken responsibility for this bothy. Rhenigidale on Harris, i.e. the Gatliff Hostel, is an oft used destination.

The world has moved on, the SHS ran its course; the Estate, assisted by the MBA, has now made Cruib Lodge available to all those seeking wild & lonely places, and through its several interests, the Gatliff Trust continues to encourage the young (and not so young) to explore our glorious countryside.