

# Three Gatliff Trust Hostels



Rhenigidale, Harris



Howmore, South Uist



Berneray, North Uist

## Herbert Gatliff An English Eccentric

By Len Clark

Second revised edition with new illustrations and preface



# Preface to Second Edition



## SIMPLE HOSTELS IN THE OUTER HEBRIDES

run by the  
**Gatliff Hebridean Hostels Trust**  
(Urras Osdailan Nan Innse Gall Gatliff)





**Reinigeadal** (Rhenigidale), Isle of Harris 12 beds  
OS sheet no 14 NB 229018  
A croft house in a remote village in a secluded bay at the foot of Loch Seaforth. Views over the Minch to Skye & NW Scotland



**Bearnaraigh** (Berneray), Isle of North Uist 20 Beds  
OS sheet no 18 NF 932814  
Two thatched cottages on Berneray's eastern beach. Wide views over the Sound of Harris & the hills of South Harris



**Tobha Mor** (Howmore), Isle of South Uist 13 Beds  
OS sheet no 24 NF 757365  
A thatched house amidst the ruins of a 13th century church site between bog & machair. Views over S Uist's three highest peaks

### GATLIFF HEBRIDEAN HOSTELS TRUST

Urras Osdailan Nan Innse Gall Gatliff  
Charity no: SCO13660 A Company limited by guarantee Registered no 111557 Scotland

The Gatliff Hebridean Hostels Trust is dedicated to running Berneray, Howmore and Rhenigidale hostels, in partnership with islanders, to a sound basic standard. Its goal is to provide hostellers, including young people of limited means, with the opportunity to stay a while to get to know, & maybe come to love, the unique culture & natural environment of the islands. (We are part of the SYHA family.)  
Everyone who shares our aims & is willing to donate a minimum of £10 per year is welcome to join GHHT. Send your name & address and donation to GHHT, 30 Francis Street, STORNOWAY, Isle of Lewis HS1 2ND.  
Or email: [membership@gatliff.org.uk](mailto:membership@gatliff.org.uk) Or text 0790 999 3863 Our hostels are open to all; membership of GHHT is not a pre-requisite.

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



*Poster advertising Gatliff Hostels with line illustrations of the hostels.*

Len Clark was born 100 years ago and is still active. He authored the pamphlet *Herbert Gatliff – an English Eccentric* in 1995. For this he wrote an account of Herbert's life to which he added examples of Herbert's writing and reminiscences of his colleagues.

Although Len's essay on Herbert's life has been accessible through the website of the Gatliff Hebridean Hostels Trust (GHHT), few people have seen the full pamphlet. To celebrate Len's hundredth birthday, the GHHT decided to republish this pamphlet in a format that might attract readers amongst the new generation of hostellers. This e-book is the result. It is available to be downloaded to the modern tablets/Kindles/Hudls that are seen everyday clutched to the public commuting to work, in a world far removed from the Hebrides. There is also a PDF version.

This 2016 edition benefits from a few minor corrections to the original pamphlet, and contains some new material and illustrations. It contains a contemporary appreciation of Herbert Gatliff by Peter Clarke, Chairman of the Gatliff Trust as a concluding entry in Chapter 5. A new Chapter 6 includes four short reminiscences of Len Clark by Trustees of the Gatliff Trust.

July 2016

Julian Paren

Editor and Trustee, Gatliff Hebridean Hostels Trust



# Preface to First Edition



*Herbert Gatliff on the road to a meeting of the YHA Northern Advisory Board at Edmundsbyers Youth Hostel in May 1946. Herbert Gatliff (right) was a member of the Executive Committee and he is seen here with Bill Brunton , Honorary Secretary of the YHA Hostels Advisory Committee, and his wife.*

The surname GATLIFF is a very uncommon one, though in one form familiar to readers of C P Snow's Corridors of Power novels. The subject of this sketch was an equally uncommon person. The existence of the Gatliff Trust heightens the interest in the name and often prompts questions about its origin.

Herbert Gatliff was a truly English eccentric never likely to be forgotten by anyone who met him. This sketch of his life, activities and thought, supplemented by some of his own writings and anecdotal impressions of a number of people who knew him well, may help to bridge a gap between the generations, especially for young people spending an evening in a remote hostel common room after a long day's journey, and looking through the hostel bookshelves.

Most of Gatliff's papers are stored in the Bodleian Library in Oxford, and may be of considerable interest to research students. They include fascinating comments on controversies of the period amongst enthusiastic countrygoers, amenity societies and government departments. Rather than drawing on these in detail this booklet attempts merely to give an outline of a remarkable character who had a special genius for expressing profound thoughts in simple but effective

English. Since his death the environmental arguments have moved on to highly sophisticated levels and sometimes complex jargon. One wonders what he would have made of all that - suffice to say he would not have remained silent.

June 1995

Len Clark

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# Herbert Gatliff



**Herbert Gatliff - Founder of Croydon YHA Group**

Herbert Evelyn Caulfield Gatliff was born at Stafford on 21 September 1897, the son of the Reverend and Mrs J S Gatliff. His father was vicar of Alveley in Shropshire and in later years of Breinton, west of Hereford. He had one brother, Frank.

He was educated at The Elms, Colwall, a prep school and then went to Rugby, where in due time he became Head Boy of School House (i.e. top classical scholar). It was at Rugby that he came under the influence of the Reverend H H Symonds, who was the Head of Classics and a formidable figure in later years in the emerging social movement for access to the countryside and its protection.

Symonds went on to be Headmaster of the Liverpool Institute, a boys' independent school, and devoted an increasing amount of his time to the campaign for establishing National Parks, and especially to the protection of the Lake District, his over-riding passion. During the 1930s coniferisation of the uplands became a burning topic, and the afforestation of Ennerdale by the Forestry Commission became a cause celebre, bitterly opposed by those who walked the fells. Ultimately an agreement was struck with the Forestry Commission taming any imperialistic ambitions they may have had. Symonds was a leading light in the campaign. He also helped pioneer the growth of youth hostelling, and donated important farmland in the Duddon Valley to the National Trust. His book *Walking in the Lake District* was a classic in its day, and is still an excellent read, with its affectionate attention to detail, its whimsy and its classical asides. HHS was Herbert's mentor and

Symonds' book has much in common with Gatliff's own style.

Gatliff went on from Rugby to Balliol, where he was contemporary with Harold Macmillan and others who became well known in public life. Leaving Oxford he took a commission in the Coldstream Guards, quite an uncharacteristic episode in the light of his liberal and pacifist views. He was affected by a sense of debt to friends and school fellows who had gone to the Great War and been killed in their youth. But his career as a soldier (it was, of course, wartime) was short lived. The records show that having been gazetted on 15 January 1917 he relinquished the commission on 1 July 1917, on account of ill-health, and "was granted the honorary rank of Second Lieutenant". Happily the ill-health does not appear to have over-shadowed his subsequent life, perhaps attributable to his outdoor pursuits and a wiry frame.

He then entered the Civil Service where he became an Assistant Secretary in the Treasury, serving there for many years until moving to the new Ministry of Town and Country Planning, set up by the Labour Government after the Second World War.

As a civil servant he seems to have settled in some ways to a conventional professional career, marrying

Lois, subsequently a hospital almoner, on 20 September 1923, and living in a modern house built to his own design at Chipstead in Surrey, which was then beginning to succumb to suburbanisation.

During the 1920s Herbert Gatliff's interests began to develop in the realm of left-of-centre ideas. These were the days when the Surrey Hills at weekends were alive to the sound of music of liberal sociologists and philosophers, with all sorts of programmes for a 'Healthy New World'. He found camping and walking in the countryside ('hiking' was the current buzz word) much to his liking. Whilst never a specialist in natural history, bird watching or archaeology, he had a passion for landscape, which he often described in a pungent phrase, much repeated.

In turn this interest brought him into contact with a whole range of voluntary societies with idealistic objects for the environment. The Commons, Open Spaces and Footpaths Preservation Society and the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings were grandparents to this movement, having started in Victorian times, and the Commons Society pioneers were midwives to the National Trust. Herbert became a keen member of both. In 1926 the Council for the Preservation (now Protection) of Rural England was formed, and active

Ramblers' Federations from all parts of the country, but notably in the north, came together in 1935 to form the Ramblers' Association.

But the new movement which was to play the greatest part in the rest of Herbert's life was the Youth Hostels Association, founded in 1931 with the aim of 'to help all, especially young people of limited means, to a greater knowledge, love and care of the countryside, particularly by providing hostels or other simple accommodation for them in their travels'. This was in essence camping with a more or less fixed roof, and it struck a dominant chord with Gatliff. He soon joined, though not at the very outset, and became an active member of the fast growing London Region, largest in the country. In later years he joined the National Executive of the Association. His financial background in the Treasury made him a ready choice as Regional Treasurer, and it was his rich and romantic presentation of the regional accounts to a YHA Annual Meeting which drew the writer's first interest in YHA affairs, which was to become also a long lasting love affair.

The National Trust also attracted Herbert's attention and he was invited to join the Estates Committee, at that time largely composed of landed grandees. But this did not inhibit him from expressing the 'voice of one', and he

had pointed views (from a Treasury bench) on the financial implications of land holding and its management. For the Trust establishment he was a rare non-conformist, but they had the wisdom to listen to him and benefit from, if not always to follow, his views. He espoused especially the cause of the lone lightweight camper seeking to bivouac in remote lonely places in the hills.

Indeed Herbert increasingly joined groups with which he was in sympathy, to be followed by his injection of heterodox ideas, often expressed forcibly by letter as well as in well rounded oratory. In the end it was sometimes said that his £5 annual subscription to a society represented a net loss to them because of the aggregate cost of stamps and time taken to reply to his many suggestions!

Although always an individualist Gatliff was very sociable and found the Southern Pathfinders (later the Croydon YHA Group, the first of many to be established) much to his taste. His reflections on 'not going cosy' and the philosophy of rambling are referred to below.

For the bodies who had Herbert Gatliff as a member their first, and time consuming task, was to decipher his spiky idiosyncratic handwriting, which became quite

famous. A facsimile copy is on page 44. The letters were invariably written in small triplicate copy books bought at Woolworths, so that the carbon copy could be retained for future reference. All incoming correspondence was carefully stored in cornflake packets.

Almost certainly much wisdom went undeciphered, but once the decoding had been mastered there was always something meaty to consume. It was not uncommon to receive by first post a letter marked 'URGENT' describing a critical phase which had been reached in some problem or campaign; and in the second post a shorter letter saying that the issue now seemed even more vital than earlier in the day!

Gatliff's remarkably individual mind and outlook became equally well known in Whitehall. It was not uncommon to find a rucksack and primus stove in his office, and possibly a bicycle propped up against the wall.

Official memoranda were often adorned with disrespectful or pungent marginal notes, and some of these have raised eyebrows since the 30-year ban on official documents has passed. Thus he was much involved with the Ramblers' Association's campaign for public access to all open country, but as a civil servant his marginal notes showed him heretical to those with whom he had worked in the voluntary movement. In

some quarters his 'alternative view' made him regarded as a maverick.

For Gatliff often espoused the minority cause almost on principle, especially when he disliked or distrusted the establishment view. Yet he was equally at home working out a compromise in words. In youth hostelling affairs, when its Council decided to impose a nominal extra charge on those travellers who made use of the members' kitchen to cook their meals, Herbert was bitterly opposed in principle, as was the Northumberland and Tyneside Regional Group. So he proposed to pay from his own pocket the sum which they would have received from the levy so that the Geordies could persist in their dissent.

It became increasingly clear that Gatliff was not popular with establishments in both governmental and voluntary circles. But fortunately there were always those around willing to listen to his heresies and admire the way in which he put them forward. Maurice Mendoza, who retired as a civil servant in the early 1980s writes of his earliest days as a Junior:

*"Although I did not meet Herbert Gatliff face to face I have not forgotten his name since I first saw his characteristically spiky signature over fifty years ago. I was then a clerk in the Office of Works and he was an Assistant Secretary in the*

*Treasury. The Civil Service was, of course, much smaller than it is now and Treasury control of expenditure was much more detailed. The Gladstonian ethos of saving the candle at both ends was then still with us. I therefore often had to draft letters for my seniors to seek Treasury authority for even minuscule increases in rent or to explain a cost over-run on a building project. Gatliff's replies were a revelation. They were lucid and succinct; he was an absolute master of the one paragraph response that said everything. But it was the style of his writing which made the greatest impression on me. At a time when most official correspondence was rotund and not a little pompous Gatliff's was not only as natural as if his words were spoken, but also enlivened by humour. Somehow he left a sense of personality through the medium of the most official correspondence. "*

The setting up of the new Ministry of Town and Country Planning in the late 1940s was of obvious interest to Gatliff and he became a Regional Officer for the North, based in Leeds. He later returned to London and took early retirement in 1953.

For some years he had been living alone, since his marriage had broken up. One of his daughters became a doctor, the other a health visitor. The latter, Liz, is still a member of the Gatliff Trust. They had been educated at Dartington in Devon, a notable progressive school, though it is said that their journey there was a bit

uncertain and they may have ended up at the Quaker Sidcot School.

Whilst living at Hampstead Garden Suburb and working in Whitehall he was a familiar sight standing in a Northern Line tube train with Homburg, umbrella and rucksack, perhaps in deep discussion with a fellow country lover. Later he moved to Kensington.

Having shaken off the shackles of officialdom Herbert Gatliff was free unhindered to pursue his chosen causes in the countryside. Not that he did not have other concerns, notably for small struggling social charities working for disadvantaged groups and cherished churches. The schedule of his papers in the Bodleian Library at Oxford gives a clue to some of these: the Society for Autistic Children; Birthright; Ely Cathedral; St Ives Help Centre; Friends of Kingsway Community Centre; Friends of Lewes; Border Bothies Association; Society for Psychical Research; Richmond Fellowship; Prevention of Addiction; Release; Disablement Income Group and many more. He always claimed that this was the most rewarding part of his life.

But the discovery and appreciation of the countryside remained paramount. And just as he readily parted company with the establishment, so by way of corollary he was critical of his own generation and saw

most hope in the new thinking of the young. This led him to hit on the idea of awarding each year prizes for essays by school pupils of youth hostelling trips they had taken. At his own expense these were reproduced, circulated to hostel common rooms and those judged best awarded cash prizes. One schoolboy from the East Midlands showed an outstanding fluency for words and subsequently became a distinguished academic in the field of forestry; others produced short pieces or poems, some of which Gatliff promoted to the level of Major Insight and were much invoked by him. This was a novel experiment which continued for a number of years.

In his enthusiasm for special causes Gatliff sometimes failed to realise that others with more mundane preoccupations might not effectively carry out his wishes. He provided funds for special purposes and directions to YHA on their dispersal. The funds produced a rate of interest, but not always the necessary other 'interest' to affect their proper use. So the pump-priming aspirations were not always realised.

All these attempts to finance defined purpose funds had their limitations, because it was not easy to persuade others to see the inspiration so clear to Gatliff. So in 1961 he decided to set up the Gatliff Trust, to perpetuate his various interests, in particular the

enjoyment and care of the countryside in England, Wales and Scotland by the young, especially through youth hostelling. As founder, he provided all the basic funds (relatively modest because Gatliff was not a rich man) and donations have since been received from public and private sources, especially in response to specific appeals.

The Trustees, the original ones all known to the founder over very many years, have tried to continue grants to a number of societies as they believe Herbert would have wished, but the major business has been concerned with sustaining a chain of small crofters hostels in the Outer Hebrides. Gatliff had a special affection for the islands ever since being introduced to them by John Cadbury of the chocolate firm and a former Director and Chairman of the YHA.

Small hostels had always appealed most to Herbert, whether in the Devil's Punch Bowl, Surrey, Mid Wales or the Pennines, but the romance of the west coast of Scotland beckoned even more strongly. Throughout the 1950s and early 1960s he made the same trip to the Western Highlands and Islands each September always ending at Iona. The Scottish YHA (separate from England and Wales) were very conscious of the Gatliffian pressures, cajoling, admonitory and congratulatory,

concerning the fascinating little hostels on the coast of Wester Ross, such as Achininver, Craig and Inver Alligin. He loved all of these. But the Outer Islands were virtually virgin territory. This was a momentous opportunity to establish simple hostels.

The aim of the Gatliff Trust hostels is twofold: to offer basic overnight accommodation to young hostellers exploring 'the edge of Europe', many of them from the Continent and the Antipodes; and by generating some income to help sustain the crofting economy.

These little hostels have certainly evoked a remarkable reaction and enthusiasm from the cognoscenti who have found their way there, as is evident from many of the logbook entries. There are now four of these hostels, at Rhenigidale, Isle of Harris, Howmore, Isle of South Uist (found by Herbert), Berneray, Isle of North Uist and Garenin, Isle of Lewis. There have been hostels on Scarp, Isle of Harris and Claddach Baleshare, Isle of North Uist and it is very likely that there will be a hostel on Barra in the not too distant future.

In 1988 a separate Gatliff Hebridean Hostels Trust was set up, with some Scottish based members to join existing Trustees, to concentrate on the hostel work. Supervision of the Outer Hebrides hostels has never

been easy from addresses 600 miles to the south of them. There remains a basic problem of securing the right level of publicity so that the traveller is aware of the hostels, without their becoming overrun by success. The Scottish YHA operate hostels at Stockinish, Isle of Harris and Lochmaddy, Isle of North Uist and cooperation between the two organisations over the years has been very good. Both the SYHA and the Gatliff hostels appear in the International Youth Hostels Federation's Handbook.

Herbert Gatliff's last years in Kensington were somewhat sad. The running of the Hebridean hostels would necessarily pass to younger trustees and although he had strong views on policy visits these were beyond his capacity. He moved from his hotel accommodation in Lexham Gardens to a room off Kensington Church Street, where he lived in a condition of Dickensian privation. Surrounded by racks of cornflake packets as filing boxes, there was a gas ring and a warm welcome for his many visitors who might be offered a meal of spaghetti or baked beans and animated debate on countryside politics.

But he was not unhappy there until his health failed. His letters continued to pour out, with recipients ranging from schoolboys to cabinet ministers. If they

lacked a reply he was not usually discouraged, but occasionally it was otherwise. The flow of advice, comment and advocacy was always worth reading (if you could) even if policies were not always practicable.

When at the age of 78 his health began to fail there was also a progressive loss of mental activity. This was not senile dementia, but a degree of repetition and loss of memory which in anyone else would have gone unnoticed, but for someone with such a good mind the deterioration was the more marked. Removal to a succession of nursing homes and hospitals was not a happy period, as he felt the power of self determination was slipping from him -something he prized all his life. The letters were still full of passion and despair alternating with optimism that 'the young would get it right'. At the end of a battle with the doctors who had been reluctant to agree to the tablets he favoured for treatment of his eczema is a triumphant P. S. ' All parties have now agreed to the Anti-itch pills!'.

Herbert Gatliff died on 19 April 1977 and was buried in the family grave at Breinton overlooking the river Wye, next to a delightful corner of National Trust land, and a truly English eccentric had rejoined the English countryside.

Gatliff had his faults: he could be exasperating in his obstinacy, wheedling in his negotiating for compromise. But his eyes were on the same stars as his many friends and others who knew him. Those who found inspiration from this remarkable character would like to pass on something of their testimony and experience for the young youth hostellers and campers whom he believed 'would get it right'.



# Samples of Herbert Gatliff's own writing



*Herbert Gatliff in his later years*

# A Motto for the Club

## **An Article in *The Southern Pathfinder*, Easter 1932**

Now that the Club is nearly a year old, it is time we chose a motto. Indeed we might even aspire to a coat of arms, such as “On a field of mud proper a Pathfinder couchant; supporters a pair of shorts improper and a club stove breathing fire.” But if we put it on the Club notepaper, we shall have to take out a licence to use “armorial bearings” which costs a guinea a year, so we had better be content with a motto. The first that came to my mind was “Let us take the road.” Those who know their Beggar's Opera will remember that this is the first line of the Highwaymen's marching song, and has a fine swinging tune that would be a joy to sing as we set out in the morning. But in these days the road is not often a pleasant place to walk on, and somehow “Let us take the path” sounds a little flat. Then too, if I am not mistaken, the original singers had drunk rather more freely than would be seemly for a Pathfinder and besides if we labelled ourselves as highwaymen, we might find it difficult to get even a cup of tea by the way.

Then I thought of another familiar line “Over the hills and far away. ” There is much magic for the Rambler in those plain words. It has been said that the motor car has taken away all the true thrill of travel, which is to know full well that over the hills is indeed far away, but we rambblers know that the thrill, most of all perhaps when we begin to climb Colley Hill and Walton Heath into a keen north wind, lies beyond. And in this case too there is music ready to hand from the Beggar’s Opera. But the rest of the song is even more frivolous than the highwaymen’s chorus and would cause the irreverent to make even merrier at our expense.

So, looking for something a little more serious, I turned to Masefield’s early poems and ballads, whose very words sing of themselves without need of music, and hoped to find a motto there. For no words have expressed more poignantly the spirit of the wayfarer than

*We travel from dawn to dusk, till the day is past and by.*

And

*Only the road and the dawn, the sun, the wind and the rain,*

*And the watchfire under the stars, and sleep and the road  
again.*

Or in lighter vein (if it be the right song and the right singer).

*Laugh and be merry, remember better the world with a song.*

Or

*It's good to be out on the road, and going one knows not where,*

*Going through meadow and village, one knows not whither nor why.*

But lovely as all these are, perhaps they hardly bite as a good motto should; besides they also are songs of the road and not the path, and the last which is otherwise the best might suggest that we always get lost. So rather sadly I put away "Poems and Ballads."

And then I remembered a phrase I met in a book about the Sussex Downs. It was said of someone, "Oh, he's gone cosy. He's grown soft he cannot do without his overcoat and armchair, he has put away the adventure of youth and shut the windows and sits by the fireside." And that, I thought, is just what we ramblers try not to do. We will not shut the windows of life. As the old song says,

*What care we for a goose feather bed*

*With the sheet turned down so bravely, oh,*

*To-night we will sleep in a cold open field*

*Along with the raggle-taggle gipsies, oh.*

Of course we don't take the last lines quite literally; for myself at any rate, while I have slept a good many nights in the open under the stars, it has been mostly on a camp bed with a comfortable spring mattress, and earwigs and spiders rather than raggle-taggle gipsies for company. But certainly from being much in the country and the open air we grow harder and tougher; we learn to lead a keener, simpler life than that of the town, to find our own way to go without things, to endure fatigue and sometimes a certain amount of hardship. Not that we lay claim to any heroic achievements. We have too much sense of fun for that; we know that our wildest adventures are very small beer by comparison with those of other places and times. Those who are young now have not, thank heaven, to pass through the fire of war like those who were young fifteen years ago. Not for us the supreme effort of climbing the Himalayas, or wintering alone in Greenland, or even such lesser adventures as jumping out of an aeroplane with a parachute or breaking the ice to swim in Keston Pond (except perhaps by accident). But we do learn to get away from the fireside and the armchair and the street lamp, not to lose ourselves in strange places, or better

still to find ourselves when lost (for there is more joy over one pathfinder who loses his own way and finds it again, than over a score that have the way found for them), to stand together in difficulties, to greet the mud and the rain and the cold with a song, to be at home with the wind on the lonely heath, and the dark woods and the night sky and the stars. We learn not to “go cosy”.

And there is a “cosiness” of the mind as well as the body that the open-air life dispels. It is easy in the shelter of an urban civilisation, where so much is done for us, to surrender our minds to the machine and stop thinking for ourselves. It is easy to accept the mechanical routine of town life and the sounds and sights of the city, the office and the shop, to expect to find our pleasures ready made for us, to forget the open spaces of the world and how full of beauty and wonder they are, if we will but seek them out, and how the best happiness is only won by long continued effort. Hard walking in the quiet of the country opens the windows of the mind and lets in the wind to blow away the cobwebs. It helps our minds to think their own thoughts, just as our feet to find their own paths away from the street lamps and sign posts of custom and prejudice. Those who are at home with the countryside and the life of the earth and the open air will not go cosy

in mind any more than in body. For how indeed shall youth go cosy beneath the stars?

So I do not think the Club can choose a better motto than “We won’t go cosy.”

# The YHA - Some Memories and Hopes

## *An Article in The Southern Pathfinder, Spring 1934*

For some of us I think the chief event of the Club's last year has been our discovery of Youth Hostels. At first, perhaps, we were a little shy of this new thing. We thought it might set our feet on the way of Martha rather than Mary; our minds would be so full of stoves and frying-pans and double-decker beds that we should have no eyes for the midsummer sunset or the bloom on the birch copse in January. We were afraid, too, that it might weaken the common life of the Club - how could we hope to find in so great a multitude that spirit of intimate friendliness that is our joy and pride? But we remembered that our ideal is to teach all our members to find their own way across country; that we are not the less a family party if we go our several ways all day and gather again round the tea table or fire-side to tell each other of what we have seen and done. Then we felt sure that we should find in the YHA that spirit that we value in our own Club. We were not disappointed. And so it

is that now I am trying to tell you, both those who are hostellers and those who are not as yet, a few of my memories of the YHA as it is, and my hopes of what it may become.

To me the very names of the hostels (save a few) are full of music and romance. Derwent Hall, Black Sail, Winchester, Lepham's Bridge, Shottery, Maeshafn, Brendon, Dartmeet, to take a few almost at random - they are like a peal of church bells calling us over the hills and far away to the sea and the moorland and the mountains. My own memories are of but a few, eight only of the two hundred odd that have been opened in three years along the highways and byways of England. Of these there are two or three that live always in my mind.

First of all, the City Mill at Winchester, queen of London Region's hostels. You may see it as you leave the city eastward, lying across the River Itchen just above the bridge, closing in your view upstream with its mellow brick walls and long roof of weather-worn tiles. But you actually come to it by a side door in a by-street, stumbling down a few steps into a shadowy passage-room. The common room, though, is light and lofty enough with its great open roof; this is the main mill building, lying right across the river. Down below, half

underground, are the bath rooms; for your bath at Winchester is unique, the river runs through on either side, and when you want a bath (in summer at least) you take hold of a rope and step down into the mill race. You must not forget the rope; legend has it that someone was once swept out of his bath into the open stream, to the distress of the good people of Winchester. Or if you do not want to be so adventurous, you may step down into the little garden that lies upstream, parting the river in two almost like a boat, with a wealth of bright flowers down the middle, and on either hand flagged paths and low stone walls where you may sit and look at the evening sky and listen to the water.

Winchester is no place for those lone spirits that want only their own company. Even outside the holidays you will find many coming and going there and at Easter or Whitsun or in August there may be fifty or more. Over all Joey, best of wardens, rules with brisk understanding. Lights out is no empty command at Winchester. Gently but surely we are marshalled to bed; one or two of the more restless spirits murmuring maybe of the tyranny of woman, but obedient withal; no bedside gossip here; soon the voices of hostellers are stilled, and only the voice of the river goes on filling every comer and every minute.

A very different place is Nether Wallop. Remember first that it is neither Nether nor Wallop, but high on the open hills, three miles out by a road that runs right over the roof of the Downs unflinchingly into the south—west wind. It was a wet wind when we walked into it that July evening at an hour when I had hoped to be at supper. But at last we found the hostel, and in it that spirit of good cheer that befits a hostel whose warden is an old sailor. Soon we were passably dry and set to work to cook our supper from the ample stocks we had laid in from the grocer in the last village just as he was closing. The hostel (an old army hutment) is not a spacious one; indeed there is (or was) almost need of a notice “Cooking facilities for thin hostellers and small eggs only.” Still we fed well and slept well, and next morning were well rewarded for our wetting: the rain-washed air was keen like wine, and full of the golden sparkle of sunrise in an unclouded sky, and all around us the long soft sweep of the hills.

Another hostel that will always live in my mind is Lepham’s Bridge. We came to it, a party of fifteen, after twenty-five miles’ walking on that August bank holiday Sunday when the heat was beyond ninety in the shade. Hour after hour we had walked on in the hot, fresh sunshine, regretful that we could find no lake to bathe in, but still cheerful, and in the fading evening light as

the air grew cool and large and quiet and a light mist rose on the streams, we came over Ashdown Forest and by valley and woodland, stumbling at last in the dim twilight away from the path through a copse and field to the hostel. There we found a scene almost, one felt, as it must have been in the days when the pilgrims went to Canterbury. By the glimmer of oil lamps we could see hostellers crowded on every bench, drinking tea and eating tomatoes and eggs and cheese - there was hardly space to cook or eat anything more elaborate - and in the doorway Mr. Martin handing out blankets and stores. Somehow we found our sleeping quarters - we latecomers were put on stretchers in the bam - and our supper. And when we were fed and rested a little, Mrs. Martin came in and played, and we sang fitfully and not very tunefully maybe, but with our hearts full of the afterglow of sunset. Some of the old songs, one above all, Annie Laurie, I shall never forget; it was one of those rare moments when time stands still. And so to bed in the barn.

I hope I may go to Lepham's again many times. It will never be one of those neat and orderly places dear to committees. You cannot expect the mechanical perfections of a Lyons Comer House in a range of outbuildings grouped round a farmyard, where you fetch water from a pump and when the kitchen is overfull do

the rest of your cooking on a fire of old wood in the yard. But Lephams when it is full has a gaiety of its own; it hums merrily like a slightly disordered beehive, as "Jack" Hobbs with his busy smile flits to and fro.

So much for my memories. Now for my hopes.

The first hope that I have for the YHA is that it will never "go cosy." Let us keep always a certain simplicity and hardihood. For the YHA was made for those who, at any rate if they are to taste the full joys of the pilgrim and the country lover, cannot afford to go cosy. We must be sure that we do not become soft or exacting in our demands, else we shall make the hostels too expensive and close them to those for whom above all they are meant, those who have very little money and must think of every penny they spend.

But we do not want to turn away those who have more money, so long as they are happy to abide by our simple standards. Rather we welcome them; for it is the privilege of the YHA beyond almost any other institution, to bring together just as friends "all sorts and conditions of men" (and women). Bishop and blacksmith shall be equally welcome, provided they are young in heart and will share the washing-up. Those who could afford far more than they pay in the YHA can give what they save quietly to one or other of the many

needs of the YHA itself or to help save one or other of those beauties of the English countryside for which all true hostellers care. That is a matter that every hosteller should consider sternly with his conscience and his pocket.

For we do not want the YHA to be always begging. Rather do we want it to stand more and more on its own feet. It is my dream that some day no one will be allowed to give money to the YHA till he (or she) has slept a certain number of nights in a hostel. I have another dream that goes beyond that. I dream that some day YHA members may join to save and make free for the people some famous hill or wood or cliff, Kinderscout or Bredon or the woods beside Clovelly. Whatever we may think of the rights or wrongs of private property in beauty spots, such an effort would at least show that we really do care for the things that are lovely, and are ready to make sacrifices to save their loveliness.

But the YHA needs not only our money but our effort. There is plenty of work to be done. There is work at hostels; even the best kept households need sometimes that mystic ceremonial called spring-cleaning. There is painting and gardening and cutting wood and making swimming pools. There are a hundred little

ways in which we can help wardens to see that things go smoothly. And there is administrative work too, you cannot cover the land with hostels except by much tiresome committee work. We must not let that fall only on a few shoulders. We do not want the YHA run by some people for others; we want it to be a true democracy run by all its members for all its members. We want its committees to consist largely of members who are themselves constantly using hostels - so long as in the hostels they are hostellers and not committee members. Above all we want every committee to have a large proportion of young members.

Another thing we value in the YHA is its gay friendliness. It has just that spirit of the great family party that we value so much in our own Club. We who are members of the YHA may have many different ideals, different politics and churches, different ways of thinking and living. But we are all pilgrims and wanderers, loving the open sky. Let us maintain that bond unbroken, thinking always first, not of particular interests, but of the YHA and its ideals, all friends together, with a ready welcome for every fellow member, whether he live on beef or beans, be his politics never so fantastic or his costume so strange.

And withal we must not be too serious. Committees and model hostels are requisite and necessary to salvation, but let us not be overmuch preoccupied with them. We may feel that we have a mission, but we must not become Peculiar People or Seventh Day Adventists, thinking that ours alone is the way of salvation. But I do not think we are in much risk of that. We have plenty of members who will see to it that we are reminded of the gaiety of life. Most of us after all are young; those who are not so young have at any rate had their minds well cleansed of cobwebs by wind and rain and sunshine. How shall we not laugh when all around us are the mountains skipping like rams and the little hills like young sheep?

Those are my hopes and ideals for the YHA. What of the world beyond? We are not out to convert the world, but to be young together ourselves in the slow old-fashioned way that is best at the last. But half unawares maybe we shall come ourselves in time to make the greater world a brighter, lovelier place, to help “build Jerusalem in England’s green and pleasant land.” Pilgrims awheel or on foot, we may become the more pilgrims of the spirit, inspiring others with something of that gay gentleness that simple hardihood - “wanting no tricks save only the one trick o’ courage and the will to stand alone” - that marks the true pilgrim in whose heart

it is always morning. After all are not all men pilgrims and wanderers on the earth if they but knew it. Maybe we of the YHA may help them to say with us,

*We are the pilgrims, Master, we shall go*

*Always a little farther. It may be*

*That somewhere. . .*

# Oral Evidence to the Royal Commission on Common Land,

The points about access we would specially like to stress are that there is access of the eye as of the foot, and access not just in one dimension along paths but in two, a freedom to fling one's arms out and roam where one wants, and that not merely on the hill tops, but also very much on the hill slopes and the moors. This does not of course apply to all the bogs and thickets that are to be found in the depths of some commons; we know perfectly well that there are some places which are unattractive and impenetrable. We would also like to stress very much the beauty of some wild land - wild things such as bracken, gorse and birch scrub. In their way - and I have said this elsewhere to people holding strong views on the misuse of commons - these have just the same sort of value as the flower beds in St. James's Park which nobody is going to suggest should be used to economic advantage.

Another point perhaps not quite enough brought out in our memorandum is that the access of the eye and the freedom of the wild place mean a good deal to the cyclist as well as to the walker. Half our members

probably are cyclists, less than half in the north, but more in the south, at any rate among those who go to Devon and Cornwall. We are of course not motorists, but the same consideration arises for those who motor through some of these wild places. It is a very great joy after going through much cultivated country to have a stretch of Dartmoor or Bodmin Moor even if we are not going to walk on it very much.

Another point of much importance to the YHA is that there should be remote wild places not a great deal visited. I was on the top of Great Gable at Whitsun and there were twenty-seven people there. My experience of the remote areas is perhaps rather more in Scotland where the question of commons does not arise except I think in the Outer Hebrides, but the aesthetic values are of the same type. When I went through Glen Affric on a similar Whitsunday I was alone for thirty-six hours. There is value in keeping places where there is that kind of remoteness. One thinks of particular cases. I think of the man who got off his bicycle and walked down with me to a hostel in the Central Highlands. I lent him my maps and he went on to Glen Farrar, and he walked alone over a number of mountains that are hardly ever visited. He is now a mathematics senior research student, obviously a rising young leader. I think of the Geordie lad who came in late alone over the hill to the

Glen Affric hostel. I remember that later he told me he had walked thirty miles alone one weekend on the Cheviots. He is now an Air Force rescue worker and has made a career of it. Those are the sort of people for whom the remote places are worth something.

On the other hand the YHA have also a great sense of the living countryside, a love of the country in good heart, a joy in good woodland. We are much in touch with the Forestry Commission. We have owed a lot to them in many cases. We are very conscious that they produce a much less monotonous result than they did, and have done a good deal in places for access. It is not always all that one could wish but we owe them that tribute, and many of our people are very interested in their work. I think our people also have a great sense of the value of good pasture and good grazing. It is a great joy to them to see good grassland rather than mere scrub. One story perhaps I might tell is about a row on the South Downs over some fences which the farmer said he must have if he was to keep the land well grazed and so stop the thorn scrub spreading. One of our people, a tough young man who had been accustomed to bait keepers on Kinder was asked to go down and have a look at the place and say whether he minded the fences. On his return he said, "I do not mind the fences in the least, they are no impediment, but I got stuck in the

thorn scrub and it took me half an hour to get out. ” I would like to add on that point that the YHA are not too happy that the Ministry of Agriculture is as successful as it would like in getting a lot of private land well farmed.

What it comes to I think is that we do try to take a balanced view of these things, but we do not want to see a major sacrifice of those values of landscape and remoteness that in practice many of the commons in various ways in different parts of the country have given us. On the whole I think the younger generation seem to care less for principles in matters like this than perhaps mine did but I think probably they care just as much perhaps more, for the practice, and perhaps their care for the practice means that in the end they serve those values more effectively. I think that is the spirit in which we try to approach these problems.

# A Letter to his Typist

ERA HOOSE.

699.18

19276

My dear Kathy.

I've paid Acetype (seem to be a bit cheaper than the others - only 1/4 p. 6.3 p.) And I'll pay your mother.

Here's the COLP letter which we'd better have duplicated as quick as possible. With Ames, we exchange from COLP to Champion, and draft is going off but slightly amended, so as far as I can remember, so well await arrival of carbon from Malcolm. The draft uses our instrument under power as an excuse for the change, but the situation is really worse; COLP adviser has it either the skill or the effort of M.G.

The UHF Christmas thought was 1968, not 1965, which I expect explains why you missed it because it's in the long list of stencils you sent me a year or so ago.

I caught the mouse that's been eating my books last night and feeling very brutal drowned it - at least it vanished from me!  
Yours  
H. E. H.



# Reminiscences of Herbert Gatliff



*East coast of Berneray close to the Gatliff Hostel*

# James Shaw Grant, August 1989

## *A Man in a Gas Cape: Article in The Stornoway Gazette and West Coast Advertiser*

I read my Gazette week by week not only with interest but with wonder and delight. Wonder that so much can be happening in a small community. Delight that it should be so.

Inevitably, as I read, my mind goes back to the early thirties when I was scraping around for news. A very mediocre concert rated a column or so of space, and council meetings were reported almost verbatim. Nothing else was happening, except religious (or irreligious!) squabbles and obituaries. It was a depressing but a challenging time.

By the end of the thirties the Islands were beginning to struggle out of the Slough of Despond, but even so the transformation which has overtaken their social life - mainly, but not all, for the better! - in the last twenty-five years is quite astonishing. This comment is provoked by the juxtaposition of several items in a recent issue, particularly the annual report on An Lanntair and the

opening of the Herbert Gatliff Youth Hostel in Berneray. Herbert Gatliff deserves to be remembered in the Islands with gratitude and affection. I well remember my first meeting with him. I was told by one of the staff there was a tramp at the door who wanted to speak to me. "Show him in", I said, wondering what strange story was about to unfold. Instead of a tramp, I was greeted by a senior civil servant who had held high office both in the Treasury and the Ministry of Town and Country Planning. A man of considerable intellect with many friends of the same calibre, but who was possessed - I don't think the word is too strong - by a love of the Highlands and Islands. The small remote places. He was weather-beaten after weeks of walking through the hills. Tousled a bit from sleeping rough or at best in youth hostels where they were available. His hair was long and a bit unkempt, in the fashion of the day, although it had not then penetrated to the Islands. And he was dressed in a rather dilapidated, wartime, camouflaged gas cape.

It was the beginning of a correspondence which spanned many years. His letters were hand written on small sheets of paper, torn, I guessed, from a duplicating notebook, so that he retained a copy, which he would need to do, because he kept up a voluminous correspondence, much of it with bright young people he

had met on his hostelling trips and whom he wanted to imbue with his own love for out of the way places.

His later years were devoted to establishing small hostels in areas the SYHA had not reached. He particularly wanted them to be integrated with the community. Partly so that locals would benefit from any small financial spin-off, but much more importantly because he wanted the young folk from the cities to mix with and learn from those who really lived in the countryside. He poured a good deal of his own money into the work and when he died he left a trust fund so that it could continue.

At that time, for reasons I never understood, he got no help or encouragement from the SYHA. He was swimming against an adverse, or at least indifferent, official tide.

It gave me particular pleasure to see that the new Berneray Hostel has the backing of the SYHA, and that the Countryside Commission and the Council of Social Service were both represented at the opening ceremony. That is the sort of memorial Herbert Gatliff would have wished. He may be no longer with us, but he had made his point!

Shortly after he died I was summoned to Stornoway to give evidence before a Parliamentary Committee then visiting the Islands. I was told they wanted to question me as chairman of the Harris Tweed Association. Much to my surprise, Harris Tweed, the Island's principal industry, was hardly mentioned. I was grilled for a couple of hours on the question why Lewis was not producing its own milk supply like Orkney. It was a frustrating experience. There is nothing more difficult than fending off the questions of people who believe in miracles and cannot understand why you are not performing them. At the end, one of the MPs, who seemed to be better informed than the rest, came over to speak to me privately. "I was hoping to have a word with you", she said. "I was a regular reader of the Gazette for many years. "

That shook me. She sat for an English industrial constituency and was very much in the news at the time because she was too hot a political potato even for her left-wing constituency executive to handle. They were reported to be trying to edge her out of the seat because she was not only a very active feminist but an avowed lesbian. She certainly did not fit the profile I had in my mind of the typical reader of the Stornoway Gazette. She explained that before going into Parliament she had been a civil servant. Her boss had been Herbert Gatliff and he

insisted on her reading the Gazette so that she could understand that London was not Britain, and learn what made a real community tick. I had always known Herbert Gatliff was a friend of the Islands, but, up until then, I had not realised he was our self-appointed mole in high places.

# Bob Chaney

*Member of YHA National Council from Manchester*

He had his own very distinctive mode of address, which commanded attention as soon as he started to speak, and which could make people think twice before disagreeing with his opinions. He did not waste words, and he never gave any hint of bias, political or otherwise. I felt he was a very genuine and sincere man, with no time for showmanship or playing to the gallery, who deeply loved such wide open and lonely parts of our country as still remained, and who would give his all in support of any cause in which he believed.

# Jack Frame

*Vice-president of Scottish Youth Hostels Association*

We used to see him yearly at Inver Alligin in the 50s when he was on his round of the hostels. We had a wee cottage in Wester Alligin, the six of us, and our Manchester friends had another cottage. One Sunday, very wet, everyone camping or hostelling in the area decided to visit us! In walked the 'old man' (for we didn't realise he had retired at about 55 and wasn't as old as he looked). There followed a monologue about the state of all the hostels - irrespective of the interests of all the others.

# Alan Gardiner

*Long serving YHA volunteer on YHA's Committees and Councils and a founder member (with Herbert Gatliff) of Croydon YHA Local Group*

Of meeting Herbert in his huge office at the Treasury and him extracting all his walking kit from a stately filing cabinet! He used to leave for weekend hostelling by the back door!

Of crossing the Larig Ghru with Herbert, of bathing (just dipping as it was very, very cold) in the Pools of Dee in the middle of the Larig in the buff. Of camping overnight, watching the torrential rain through the open end of the tent and of the wind suddenly changing and soaking us. Of soaking exposed skin in oil of citronella - the midges just paddled with greater irritation and then crouching round the primus stove which helped a little to keep their numbers down. Herbert's boots exposing more and more foot until the boots were thrown away and he continued barefoot. Of bathing in another pool in the buff, suddenly realising a mixed party was approaching, making ourselves respectable and sitting on

a mound just above only to see our visitors strip off to the buff and dive in.

Of Herbert at National Council and Regional AGMs pushing countryside issues against opposition but with such charm and erudition that you could not possibly but agree!

# Graham Heath

*Past Secretary, International Youth Hostels Federation*

I came to YHA National Office as a very young Assistant Secretary in 1937. I was blissfully unaware of YHA politics, but I soon realised that a long, handwritten letter from Herbert Gatliff (addressed from the Treasury) meant trouble; it was action-stations for that good pacifist Jack Catchpool (YHA National Secretary) - as the minutes and files were searched for defensive ammunition. . . Not being involved in financial matters, I had little personal contact with Herbert. But I was very nearly responsible for his early demise. There was to be a committee meeting at Saltburn, and I offered to give Herbert a lift in my newly acquired car. It was a young man's car, a convertible, and the day was cold. We drove all the way up the North Road with the top open, and I expatiated on the virtues of fresh air. Herbert's nose, a noble organ, turned increasingly blue. But he never complained. However, for the homeward journey he chose another form of transport.

# Carol Johnson

## *Ex-MP*

My most frequent and closest connections with Herbert Gatliff took place in the Commons (now Open Spaces) Society where, apart from the Society's business he often talked with or wrote to me about his other interests, and in particular his activities in opening up the wilder parts of Britain to young people: he showed me their letters and writings - vivid in phrase and often poetical in character - which showed what an influence he had had in opening the eyes of young people to the glories of our countryside and in particular its moors and hills and mountains.

Herbert Gatliff served on a number of bodies and made his presence felt on all of them, as in a way he was different from many of us in his air of unconventionality: he was indeed a 'character' in every sense of the word and often exhibited an individual approach to problems. In the field of finance he impressed everyone with his (to many of us) special and unusual knowledge about 'city' ways and the world of finance. But he brought to all

problems a highly trained mind and an individual approach - indeed he seemed to me to have a 'wide-angled' mind which often introduced a quite different but invariably germane idea that raised the discussion to a more relevant level.

Herbert Gatliff was a man one would not easily forget and one remembers him always with a sense of gratitude.

# Max Kirby

*Past National Treasurer, YHA*

It was at the end of May 1947 that I first met Herbert Gatliff. I was on a walking holiday in Coigach and Wester Ross staying at SYHA hostels each night, which at that time were mostly small crofter's cottages or old school houses.

My companion and I had spent one night at Inver Alligin, an 18 bed hostel in a small cottage on the north side of Loch Torridon where we were the only people staying at the time and left after breakfast to spend the day walking on the peaks of Liathach.

Upon our return we had been joined by a slightly stooped middle-aged man who was wearing khaki shorts. He had a Punch-like face and rather long and unruly hair which fell over his face at regular intervals.

He told us he had left his office which was in Leeds at that time and had taken the night train to Inverness. He had travelled alone in a first class compartment in which he had cooked his meals on a Type 96 Primus

stove much to the consternation and concern of the Guard.

During the long evening whilst we prepared and cooked our suppers on the solid fuel stove by the light of candles and a hurricane lamp we talked of our journeys and the burning topics of Scottish countryside matters of that time, afforestation mainly of conifers, and the plans of the North of Scotland Hydro Electricity Board for some of the most beautiful glens.

Next morning we made our way down to the village to pay our overnight fees and to take the warden's launch across the loch to Shieldaig - there was no road on the south side in those days. Here we parted company - Herbert with a lightweight tent, food and his primus to sustain him on the coastal path to Applecross, whilst we made a beeline for the Corries and then to the hostel at North Strome.

In the twenty years or so which followed I was privileged to receive many notes written on the pages of triplicate note books in a hand which was difficult to decipher but always of interest to read, and to serve with him on the National Executive and Finance Committees of YHA.

# Dick Knapp

*Past National Secretary, Youth Hostels Association*

Herbert was a unique character. Many folk could not accommodate themselves to his uncompromising attitude to some amenity questions, his odd manner of speaking and his almost illegible and lengthy notes. But he was very kind and supportive to me from the time when on my appointment to the YHA Secretaryship, he invited me to go as his guest to the Annual Meeting of the Council for the Protection of Rural England.

He devoted much time and thought to the YHA because he believed passionately in encouraging and enabling young people to think and act for themselves, particularly by exploring the countryside - especially the wild, remote areas which would challenge their courage and initiative. He felt strongly that these objectives could be best achieved by the provision of the simplest possible overnight accommodation, of which his Scottish 'bothies' were a practical illustration. Long may his spirit invest them.

# Peter Knottley

*Cycling journalist from Cheam, Surrey*

Herbert went to great lengths to ascertain the views of the young on countryside and amenity matters and to encourage them to take part in YHA affairs. Typically, I recall a visit with him to Berry Head in south Devon, where some gravelly development was proposed, to get some idea of its extent and effect and to form some opinion on whether the proposal should be opposed and if so on what grounds. This would have been about 1952. I strongly suspect I learned a good deal more from Herbert than did he from me.

I often think of Herbert and his work, which delayed the destruction of so much of our heritage for so long, when I am out and about in the country, and in particular I invariably do so when in the Scottish hills and glens. They were surely his spiritual home, and I can readily imagine Herbert among them still, conversing as he walks, complete with rucksack - and perhaps, umbrella, too.

# Steve McCombie

*Past YHA Committee and Council member from Greenwich*

. . . But what was so remarkable about Herbert was his ability to bridge the generation gap. To a great degree, to articulate the views and aspirations of young people far better than those around him. This was because he was actually in touch with them from his encounters in hostels and the correspondence that ensued. He was constantly armed with, and quoting from, recent letters from young hostellers (who I recollect were invariably male – simple hostels in the Outer Hebrides were perhaps considered rather too adventurous for young ladies in those days). Herbert had a passionate concern to encourage adventure by young people in the countryside and saw hostels (as well as bothies, camping etc) as a means to that end. At a time in the late fifties and early sixties when the YHA was getting middle aged and moribund, increasingly interested in organised school parties, family hostelling and, indeed, anything that enabled old stagers to carry on hostelling like they always had, Herbert performed a most memorable service in stressing the real principles

for which the YHA existed 'to encourage the first independent adventure of the young in exploring the countryside'.

# George and Sheila Parry

## *Past wardens of Kemsing Youth Hostel*

We remember his championship of Keith Chambers; his verbosity, apparent vagueness, his scholarship, great kindness, and above all his great courtesy and country-gentleman demeanour, typified by his invariable hostelling dress of knickerbockers and long stockings. George particularly remembers Herbert's oft-used preface when he stood up to address a meeting, 'Broadly speaking. . . '.

# Bryan Speedy

## *Member of YHA Committees and Councils*

His appearance at Lloyd's always caused something of a stir; he invariably arrived trailing an army surplus gas cape round his ankles; as a result my brothers always referred to him as 'Gas cape'!

His tendency to threaten to add codicils to his will if things were not going his way!

He once related to me how, in his married days, he was down at some remote hostel in Cornwall 'just getting the feel of the hostellers' when his wife arrived from the local hotel and destroyed the whole atmosphere!

Another quote: 'the finest food in London is to be found in Lyons Comer House'.

# Bernard Trayner

*Past Publicity Officer, YHA*

Herbert was an indefatigable letter writer, using carbon paper notebooks. Not only indefatigable, but almost illegible. I could read his writing, but not get the sense of it without having it typed out. In one memorable week I received 50 pages of Gatliff code, and after a few weeks of not having replied, I felt I ought to apologise when I met him. Herbert was not put out and said, 'Even if you don't reply, I think it useful for you to know what is going through my mind'.

I used to dread August when the National Secretary, Accountant and Countryside Officer were all on holiday, as he used to ring me up, complain about the absences, and tell me what he wanted to discuss with each officer. At the end of it he sometimes forgot what he really wanted to discuss with me.

# Michael Trinick

*National Trust Director, Cornwall*

‘Gatters’ - never known as anything else - sat on the Estates Committee of the NT from before my joining in 1950 until - I think - shortly before his death. While he was distinctly an odd man out, in what was then a somewhat aristocratic landowning membership, he was entirely capable of holding his own and projecting his persona which was based on the open air, simplicity, idealism.

I think Gatters had been at the Ministry of Housing and Local Government, and that it was he - acting as an anonymous civil servant ~ who ensured that one of the earliest cases of coastal land coming to the Trust under National Land Fund procedure was pushed through. This property is the Kelsey, a wonderful headland west of Newquay - with beaches on either side of it - on which I was subsequently able to build a mini-empire. Gatters kept the ball in play from about 1948 until 1951 when the land was eventually transferred to the Trust.

# Noel Vincent

*First Warden of Tanners Hatch Youth Hostel, Surrey*

I was always impressed by his voice - so deep and resonant to come from a man who was on the small side. I think it was he who told that he was sent to a provincial city to advise on their finances. After an impressive dinner with the burgesses they took him to his suite at the best hotel. After waiting for the coast to clear, out he comes with shorts, boots and rucksack, walks up the hills above the town to spend the night in his little 'Itisa' before coming down at dawn.

# Peter Clarke

## *Chairman Gatliff Trust and Gatliff Hebridean Hostels Trust*

Herbert Gatliff was a clear thinking rebel who believed in Youth Hostels and who wanted young people to experience the adventure of youth hostelling in the British Isles. He supported many causes during his lifetime, but in 1961 he set up and endowed the Gatliff Trust. It was registered under the newly enacted Charities Act 1960.

The Gatliff Trust has endured to the present day. Herbert Gatliff touched people; he connected with them somewhere in their soul or heart. This much is clear from the memories recorded in this 1995 pamphlet. His free thinking, lucid talking and unshaking commitment that young people would benefit from getting out into the countryside of the British Isles inspired many. Indeed Len Clark, the editor of the pamphlet, admits to “coming under his spell” back in 1939!

I will always remember my first meeting with Herbert back in 1975 when I was a PhD student at the London School of Economics. Over supper, a can of

soup warmed in the can over a Bunsen burner that sat on the small table between our two chairs, he talked to me about the destruction of the scenery in the best valleys in western Scotland by the power cables being built to give Skye its first mains electricity. He talked of the Elenydd, a remote area of wilderness in mid-Wales and its (then) three youth hostels, but above all he talked about the Outer Hebrides. He talked about how he sent out students like me to find new hostels in deserted villages, villages like Rhenigidale, which were clinging to survival and needed a youth hostel to keep them alive. He spoke on how to find tracks and ways across remote moors and hills. I left that night with an arm full of reports and logs written by youth hostellers who had explored these tops. This was another world, a new world. I realised that I could find adventure in the beautiful but threatened British countryside and wilderness in the British Isles.

The Gatliff Trust endures because Herbert's mission is yet to be fulfilled. Young people need to be encouraged to live in open spaces and fresh air rather than cyberspace. They need to understand the value of beautiful landscapes, but above all they need to get to visit the furthest flung places in the British Isles and get to know their peoples.



# Reminiscences of Len Clark

## Peter Clarke

*Chairman Gatliff Trust and Gatliff Hebridean Hostels Trust*

Len Clark met Herbert Gatliff in 1939 enchanted by Herbert Gatliff's "romantic presentation of the YHA London Region accounts." He rose through the ranks of the Youth Hostels Association of England & Wales serving as its National Treasurer and National Chairman. His achievements were honoured by a CBE, and by the YHA by being appointed a Vice President. For over 25 years he served on the Council of the National Trust. (He had first got involved at Herbert's suggestion). More recently he was one of those who was instrumental in the creation of the South Downs National Park.

Like Herbert, Len does not conform to any stereotype. He is famed for turning up at distant meetings on his moped. Perhaps long journeys from his

home are made inexpedient by advancing age, but Len is reputed to use his moped to travel to his local bus stop. So if you are in Godalming watch out!

## Kathy Martin

*Secretary to Herbert Gatliff and Trustee Gatliff Trust*

Len is a former Chairman of the YHA and for many years he was the YHA's representative on the Council of the National Trust. His natural ability to speak and write lucidly, thoughtfully and persuasively made him a popular committee man. He was heavily involved in the inner workings of the National Trust, following in Herbert Gatliff's footsteps as a member the Trust's Estates Committee. Though much less of a maverick than Herbert, he can be quite as eccentric – see, for example, his essay “On Legs”, at <http://www.lenclark.wordpress.com>

## John Joyce

*Trustee Gatliff Trust and Gatliff Hebridean Hostels Trust*

I was always impressed by his natural lucidity in speaking, his ability to enliven any debate, clearly expressing points of view or making suggestions all with

an innate sense of humour and the value of human purpose.

## Rev Roger Clifton

*Treasurer and Trustee, Gatliff Trust*

I have known Len for a very long time (though not all that well), and have always admired his courtesy, his perceptiveness, and his quiet competence. He is, I believe, a practising Quaker, and lives up to the qualities that implies.