

SHS EXPEDITIONS

REPORT FOR 1986 1989

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EDITORIAL

At last - here it is: the "Annual Report" (covering the last 3 years this time!). Those words say a lot – "the last" as it is the final Report which the SHS will produce. I revert to our 'old' name - Schools Hebridean Society - as it seems fitting at this point.

On a practical note, there are articles from South Uist '87; Jura '88; North Uist '89 - a lovely collection showing some of the real qualities and experiences of people and expeditions. And ~ perhaps indulgently - some more reflective pieces from people who've been involved in the SHS for years - some from the very beginning.

Inevitably, it is a time of mixed feelings for all who have been a part of the Society, and those sentiments are really echoed throughout the Report. On a personal basis (Editors are allowed this!!), I would say "Thank you" to the SHS (in its broadest sense) for all it has done and has been - to me, and to so many others. Being a reflective (some would say sentimental) person, I cannot help but feel some sadness at this time. But we are all moving and changing and growing: and what the SHS has given can go on and be incorporated into our lives and, hopefully, shared with others in our own "daily round."

I would like to end with two prayers from the Islands — these have been translated from the Gaelic.

Choice of Timber:-

"Choose the willow of the streams,
Choose the hazel of the rocks,
Choose the alder of the marshes,
Choose the birch of the waterfall*.
Choose the ash of the shade,
Choose the yew of the resilience,
Choose the elm of the brae,
Choose the oak of the sun. "

The Pilgrims Aiding:- (South Uist)

May God be with thee in every pass.
Jesus be with thee on every knoll,
Spirit be with thee by water's roll,
On headland, on ridge, and on grass;

Each sea and land, each moor and each mead,
Each eve's lying-down, each risings morn,
In the wave-though, or on the foam-crested borne,
Each step which thy journey doth lead."
Brigit Hutchinson. July 1990

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Some Reflections on Schools Hebridean Society Expeditions.

Two particular aspects of the life of the Schools Hebridean Society seem to me to be of lasting importance.

The first concerns the Hebrides, the place and its attributes: the nature which is clearly visible there
the elemental forces; earth, air/wind, fire/sun/stars, and water/sea/rain
the lie of the land; its rocks, shapes, contours.... walks & climbs
the animals, from whales off South Uist to voles and midges
the plants a lichens, their intricate adaptations to the weather,
to acidic and low nitrogen soils for example.

Coupled with this is the life of the island people and our meeting with them. Enormous generosity has been shown to us on countless occasions. Overall the places we have visited have provided us with a taste, at least, of "wilderness." They have allowed us to discover things about ourselves and each other which are not easily possible at home. They have enabled us to find out what are the really important things in our lives, both physically (a dry sleeping bag!!) and within ourselves and each other.

This leads to the second aspect of our experience which I would like to mention. It concerns the nature of the group present in this environment. An expedition offers many opportunities for both members and leaders - being part of a team, achieving tasks together, learning to obey when necessary and to make your contribution to the life of the camp (not always welcomed, but sometimes vitally necessary, as some of the articles will show). Living in a "Big Country" can bring feelings of isolation and loneliness at times; it also brings awareness of tolerance and kindness from others; companionship in both pleasure and adversity and the chance to make some great friends.

An expedition member made the following summary of what an expedition was about for her:

to go a long way away; to respond to a new place;
to respond and co-operate with others; to respond to yourself;
to come back bringing something with you;
to learn how to DO and to learn how to BE.

It is my belief that all who have been on expeditions with the Society, both as leaders and members, will have been enriched by both the Hebrides and their time with the other members. No more valuable tribute to the organisation of which we have been a part, could be found.

Richard Young. Chairman. 1986 - 1990.



SOUTH UIST????

"Is South Uist part of the United Kingdom?" asked the man from the Prudential.
"I'm not sure, but I can ask." (One never knows with anything around Scotland) I telephoned then and there.

"Richard, the man from the Prudential is here. Is South Uist part of the United Kingdom?"

"Absolutely," said Richard.

The Prudential was relieved and grateful and gave me my insurance.

That was only a small part of the preparations. There was the first day the prospectus went up on the wall of the house in early March. "Hebridean Expedition" sounded impressive, and the offer of bed and breakfast was reassuring — "I cannot sleep If I am cold", I told Richard, although there was a secret shame that I was rejecting this, the first opportunity of camping I had ever had. But I could do everything else couldn't I? Well, perhaps not the water things. I love water, gazing at its different moods and lights - and perhaps a therapeutic fifteen minutes dip three times a week in the local swimming baths. "I'm not really a water person", I told Richard. "I burn uncomfortably lying in the sun in my swimming costume." "You'll be lucky!!" said Richard.

In fact, I watched the first six people doing capsize drill and photographed each stage but with a different person doing it. I took a really intelligent interest. And I joined in boat trips whenever the chance came: I loved the P4, the fat orange rubber contraption (was that the leader preparing to do battle with the midges?? - Ed) with its obstinate outboard motor that would suddenly roar into life when the frantically active operator nearly fell overboard as he (or she) pulled the starter cord. After that wild beginning to the boat trip, it was a peaceful, soothing, uplifting experience to be a speck on a large expanse of water, able to touch the water with one's hand, humbly.

The day we went fishing from the P4 was the only really wet day we had in the two weeks of the expedition. At last, my waterproof trousers were really useful, but my hands lost all feeling. Racing back to shore, into the teeth of the strong off-shore wind was exhilarating. As we six crowded at the back of the boat and the nose lifted higher and higher into the air, one simply trusted one's leader. After all, had one not signed an oath of allegiance, promising to do as one was told?

With the same faith, I went walking on the hills, grateful when the leader took time to stop and g(r)aze. The changing light was breathtaking. The silence was healing. At the human level one felt inadequate at times, as when Jane and Diane skipped ahead like mountain gazelles along what seemed to me nearly sheer hill-side. "Jane, I don't like this. Please can we go down?" And down we went — the others zigzagging sensibly upright while I sat on my bottom and slid through the heather.

Never before have I really come to grips with birds and plants. I have just enjoyed then vaguely. Now, I was really looking, really noticing details as they were pointed out everyone around me seemed really enthusiastic about noticing and identifying and the excitement was catching.

Then there were the locals - the human beings who shared their life and their beautiful country with us outsiders. They were so kind and calm and friendly and humorous and helpful. I will always remember feeding a motherless lamb from a bottle in Mary's kitchen. And waiting and waiting for Richard courteously taking time to talk when he went and asked permission for us to visit someone's private beach.

The barbecue on the beach on Midsummer Night - when we did not go to see the Standing Stone line up with the Stone on St Kilda because clouds hid the sun; and the meditation we shared there in the afterglow. We had so often this experience at two levels: excellent food, and Imaginative spirituality. Wanda shared with us some beautiful Celtic prayers. I began to have some sense of the qualities of Celtic civilisation. And when Father John Angus MacDonald came to talk to us one evening about the physical history and prehistory of the Western Isles and their political and human history too, that was one of the highlights of the two weeks.

I simply cannot think about the next expedition at the moment. I am too full of this one. There is so much more that I will remember. But perhaps what remains above all is the sense of being in touch with the Celts, and the memory of the vast silence, and the light changing over the loch.

Anon.

The Moor.

It was like a church to me

I entered on soft foot,

Breath held like a cap in the hand.

It was quiet.

What God was there made himself felt,

Not listened to, in clear colours

That brought a moistening of the eye.

In movement of the wind over grass.

There were no prayers said. But stillness

Of the heart's passions - that was praise

Enough; and the mind's cession

Of its kingdom. I walked on,

Simple and poor, while the air crumbled

And broke on me generously as bread.

K.S. Thomas.

An Afternoon Sailing.

By the time Thursday of the second week came, I was starting to relax and get used to the way of life here. I'd learnt to sail sometime ago, and had really enjoyed using the wind to travel on the water. I'd been trying to dull my fear of the sea - and decided to go for a sail if I was offered the chance. On Thursday, Archie MacDonald gave us this chance.

Before the sailing, Andy, Clare, Richard, Terrence and I helped Archie and nephew Duncan shift bags of peat onto pallets from the jetty. Someone — I won't say who — said it was a job for the lads - but the greatest skill in this task was in packing the bags well, to form the tallest pile which wouldn't fall. The lifting proved no difficulty for Clare, nor for me by the end. I really enjoyed this job (is this person okay?? - Ed). We got into a rhythm, filling pallet after pallet, watching the Fork Lift tractor do its work. Archie taking each up the hill with none falling.

After a lunch of sarnies, Archie took Duncan, Clare, Marie-Anne, Terrence, Steve and myself out on the boat. It fascinates me what parts are needed on a sailing boat to do the business of sailing - to hold people and use wind to get from A to B on the surface of the water. This one had one main sail, a jib sail at the front and a small sail at the back. The bottom end of each sail was attached to a rope, some were weighted by a length of wood, or boom. There was a rudder at the back end of the boat, and a board which went down the middle of the boat and protruded below the hull. These were the parts one changed in order to sail - the sails were positioned by means of ropes and one had to decide which side of the boat they should be and how far out from the side. The centre-board stopped the boat from being moved sideways and its degree of protrusion beyond the hull could be altered by a rope. The weight of the folk in the boat was also used as a variable factor - when the boat leaned over to one side in the wind — some of us leaned over the opposite side to balance it.

Throughout the loch the wind speed and direction and the force of the tide varied greatly and we had to take note of these. We sailed in the inner loch where the wind came in gusts coming off the different hills but the tide was quite mild. Going towards the sea was quite different. In the narrow channel between Angie & Archie's house and our campsite it took a large number of tacks to move anywhere. The wind was strong and against us, and gusty, and the tide was also pushing us back. Once through this part we entered the channel which leads to the outer loch. In this part the tide was very strong against us and made the surface look like scores of whirlpools. It was amazing how the surface of the water changed. When we got into the outer loch from the channel the current was less visible and seemed less strong but the swell was much greater.

Here the wind was steadier, with fewer gusts, but as we got near the sea the waves got larger and larger and the spray on the boat quite spectacular. We got a system going — with Duncan at the tiller and in charge of the mainsail, Archie at the front overseeing everything and changing the centre-board when needed, the rest of us changing the jib when Archie said “About” and altering our weight if needed.

It was a good end to our holiday - spending time with Archie, Angie and Duncan, working, then off to play on the loch, experimenting and using some of the different forces on the Island - sea, tide, wind, a trip around the loch which took in sites which had been part of our time here - the saloon farm, the peregrine's nest, the otter's holt, the camp site. Mary a Iain's house.

Liz Todd.

A Trip to the Monach Isles.

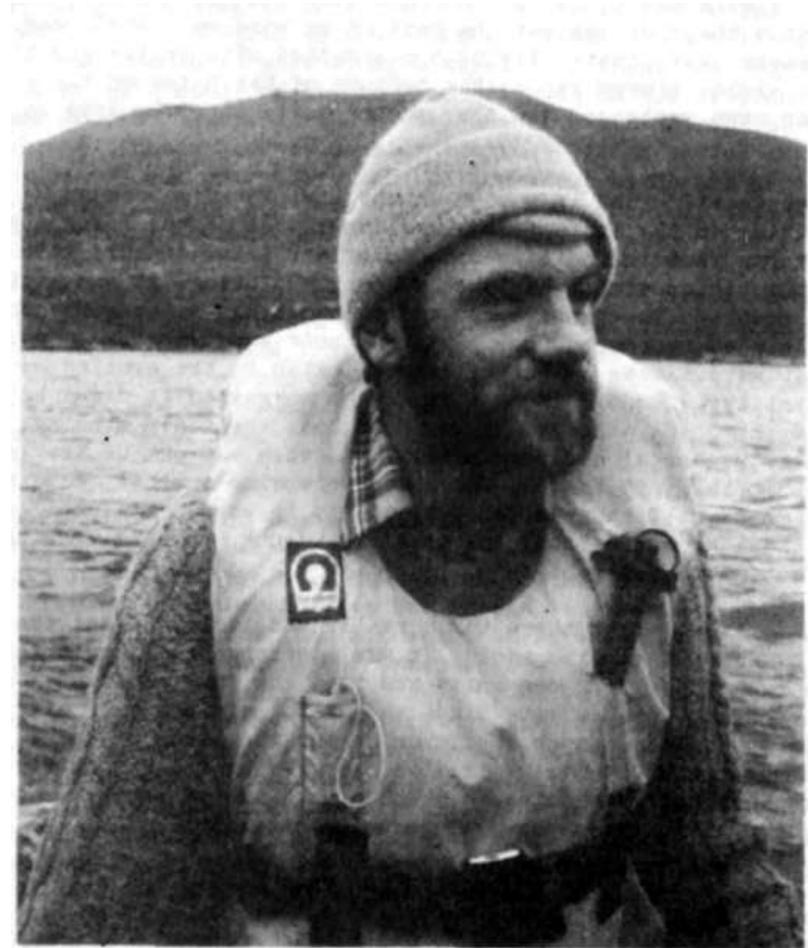
A positive contribution to nature conservancy in the Outer Isles had been planned in a trip to the Monach Isles to count the birds. Ian was a definite member, nay leader, of the expedition but the other constituents were yet to emerge. The initial appeal of a few days away from it all began to pall as people felt considered: either they did not want to miss the fellowship of the main party; or did not want to experience the bleak conditions and vomiting Fulmars which the Monach Isles promised. Even to the morning of departure there were last minute changes but the final team was as follows — Ian, Terrence. Ray, Rachel. Jane and myself. The weather for the trip seemed glorious and we packed furiously with last minute instructions on how to erect or dismantle the tents in BAD weather!! The food was stored without much enthusiasm and with little thought to the amount of Shreddies that would be required.

We reached the appointed boatman a trifle late in a minibus packed to the gunwales. The crew had not surfaced that morning, possibly due to a hangover, and the thought that the trip might be off. This gladdened the hearts of some. But finally everyone was ready and we drove to the point of embarkation to view the "Crystal Sea". Was this boat to take us to a larger sea-going vessel or was this THE boat? Those remaining knew they had made the right decision: those leaving could not now back out in such a public place.

We boarded, and Willie Stewart (the captain) was in charge. We chugged out through the myriad of Islands and glided under the causeway towards the west. The sea swell grew, the sea-gulls floated past and North Uist - the mainland - receded as the Monach Isles sharpened on the horizon. The Atlantic Ocean bullied us for 2½ hours until we landed on a sun-kissed beach of white sand and blue sea. It was suggested that we land quickly as the tide was coming in and we slowly walked up the sand dunes.

Awaiting us at the top of the dunes was the most glorious pastoral scene of lush grass, with bright yellow buttercups bobbing, sheep grazing, rabbits scurrying to their warrens and the birds flying up to warn others of our approach. The sun blazed in the luminous blue sky and we were very glad to be there.

Jonathan Orr.



R. G. Young, Chairman 1986 — 1990

Our Trip to the Monach Isles.

A place where there's green, green grass, a carpet of yellow buttercups, white sweeping sand dunes, sea alternating between deep blue and Jade green glistening In the sun, seems almost too good to be true, yet this was the experience of six of us when we visited the Monach Isles during the second week of the expedition.

Ian successfully managed to convince me that It didn't matter that I'm not an expert birdwatcher, and my spirit of adventure lasted for a whole 20 minutes or so, until It was too late to chicken out. I really didn't know what to expect - none of us did really, so when we saw our mode of transport to the Islands, Willie's lobster-catching large wooden dinghy, It was perhaps for the best that I saw the funny side of things. Rory decided It would be rather fun to lay along the bow and made an excellent figurehead to our noble vessel. It was quite choppy when we got out into the open sea yet the rest of us were well sheltered behind our rucksacks. Any possibility of conversation with Willie and his companion, John, proved Impossible because of the noise of the engine, yet smiles were exchanged and they seemed quite happy to have us on board.

On arrival we all gazed In wonder at the mini-Paradise around us and set about putting up the tents In the shelter of one of the ruins there, a stone's throw from the main loch, on Cean Iar. After dinner, which was a scrutiny vegetarian dish a la Jane, we went exploring. It was such a gorgeous evening, the passage of water between the Islands was dotted with seals playing peepbo. Roy captured their mood when he said It was as If they were having swimming lessons. Later In the evening we heard strange walling sounds, and just as Alison suggested It might be Jane playing a Joke, Ian asked us If we could hear the seals singing. I found this really wonderful and fascinating, and this was one of the loveliest things about the trip for me. The sheep were also comical: some of them appeared to be half sheared yet very shaggy In parts — I wondered whether these were the "cool dudes" of the flock, keeping up with the latest fashion In hair coiffure.

At the same time I felt there was a really sad feeling about the island, especially where the ruins stood. It was a strange feeling to think that this was once a thriving community and that now the Island stands alone and uninhabited, home only to birds and seals, visited only every now and again during the summer by fishermen and the likes of us. It reminded me of the Treasure Island encountered by the Famous Five, so that I kept on half expecting to stumble on a secret passage, and noted every footprint In the sand with subdued excitement.

Tuesday morning came damp and soggy from rain during the night, but undaunted we split into groups and divided the Island up so as to have some kind of method in madness. Up until we'd arrived, I'd had this rather odd picture In my mind of us all dashing around a little

barren rock, trying not to count the same bird twice, but when we actually began It didn't seem quite so silly, although obviously there's a limit to the accuracy you can obtain. Jane and Terrence were assigned the Southern part of the Island, while Ian, Alison and I took the Northern areas. Rory did a thorough and comprehensive Fulmar count of the whole Island, some task which we all agreed he did very well. Fulmars seemed to be nesting everywhere, including the ruins, which meant that us ladies had to double check before we went about our business!! I don't know whether Ian, Terrence and Rory had similar problems in the "gents' dunes!!

Ian suggested I might like to go swimming and do a seal count but I felt I should do my bit for the cause, and I'm really glad I did, because my Interest in bird watching was kindled and I found myself enjoying the experience, despite trying to scramble over wet rocks in the rain and getting eyestrain from trying to peer through the binoculars too avidly for too long. We tended to walk along a stretch of coastline and then record all that we'd seen, trying to keep our eyes on the Eider ducks, who at times paddled faster In the water, than our pace along the beach. The rain stopped for an hour or so mid-afternoon and It seemed to me as if a lovely peace came over the beach. Alison and I temporarily relaxed and let our minds contemplate Joys other than the birds whizzing around (only temporary Ian, honest!!).

Before the day was out, I had learnt how to identify an Oyster-catcher, Fulmar, Turnstone, various sorts of Pipets, Eider and Shellducks, to mention but a few. Alison and I also came across what we later identified as a Gannet, on the rocks on the east coast of the Island. I thought he looked really awkward and sweet until I caught a head-on view through the binoculars, when I decided I wouldn't like to be a fish when he's hungry.

Evening time brought better weather, although it was still quite blowy. After Ian had braved the sea and we had all eaten, we went for a more leisurely and less Intensive walk down to the Bounty advert beach, and discovered that the causeway between our Island and Beamish, which you could only cross at low tide, had appeared. We were umming and arring about whether to cross, when to our amazement, we spotted four figures on the highest point of Beamish, and to our even greater amazement began to cross the causeway towards us. Rather put out that our apparent isolation might be an illusion, Ian suggested that they actually lived on Beamish and crossed the causeway for holidays!! Since this didn't seem too feasible somehow, it was quite a relief to find out that they had travelled up from Dublin in their yacht and had moored round by the third Island. Apparently they had been rather puzzled by us too and to our amazement had concluded that we were a wreck, presumably because we were sitting next to a rather large tree trunk that for some reason was on the beach. Poor Terrence, beset by a rather vicious attack of hiccups, headed back for camp to Join Roy at this point, while Ian,

Jane, Alison and myself nipped over to the other island, which turned out to be even more deserted and beautiful than "ours". We couldn't stay long for fear of being cut off, so we sloshed back "home", wishing we were wearing our wellies and trying to pretend that our walking boots weren't really letting water in by the bucketful. We were glad that we actually managed to get over to this middle island, although we didn't have time to do any sort of bird count there, and we were advised by our fishermen friends not to try to get over to the third island.

The fishermen stay in the only intact house on the island and at regular intervals took pity on our soggy boots and rather dishevelled appearances and invited us in for a "wee dram!" Each night after it had become dark, a dim glow appeared at their window which I found rather eerie and added to my feelings that I was taking part in a Famous Five adventure story.

I think we were all quite sad to leave the islands on the Wednesday. Terrence consented on how it was funny how we now regarded South Uist as "the mainland". We had a final look around in the morning in bright, warm sunshine and had our lunch sitting on the rocks, which was rather jolly. I enjoyed a leisurely paddle and when the tide was right, Willie and John came and, sitting amongst the lobsters, we made our way home.

Rachel.

Le Pays ou ne fait presque pas nuit.

Si tu veux trouver la nuit,
Cherche dans la terre,
C'est la qu'elle s'est enfouie.

Si tu veux trouver la nuit,
Cherche dans la lac,
C'est la qu'elle repose.

La terre est noire,
Le ciel est clair.
Le lac est si profond,
Et les cieux soit si clairs.

Si tu veux trouver la vie,
Cherche les ruisseaux,
C'est la qu'elle boudit.
Observe la respiration du lac et les mille éclats de soleil qui l'effeuillent tour à tour.
Cherche aussi dans le vent, écoute l'oiseau que tu ne peux pas voir.

Puis, il faudra aussi te souvenir de la laine des moutons qui s'accroche à la bruyère, te souvenir aussi des couleurs des petites fleurs, et du sentier étroit à flanc de colline.

La Terre est noire comme la nuit,
La sable est blanc comme la neige,
Blanc comme les coquillages mouillés,
Blanc comme l'écume furieuse contre les rochers,
Le sable est blanc de petits diamants - -

Enfin si tu veux trouver la fraternité, frappe à la porte de tes voisins, cherche dans leur cœur, et reçois le cadeau inattendu de leur amitié.

Marie Anne.

Still at Loch Long.

Grey rock, glacier-scratched, wrinkled to an elephant-skin.
Solitary cuckoo calls but twice,
A wind runs to the edge of the loch,
Then ripples uphill through the heather,
Boulders on the skyline stand the motionless sheep.
Anon.

Consider in Silence.

Consider things in silence;
You cannot speak
Of what you do not know.

When you have considered
In silence
Those things you do not know - -
And now know,
You find you can no longer talk,
For words cannot tell. Anon

Heather.

Heather everywhere,
Birds resplendent,
Islands dancing,
Eagles soaring. Anon.
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Thanks.

Dear Richard and Jane,

Thank you very much for a wonderful fortnight during which I enjoyed every moment from getting on the ferry at Oban and seeing the scenery on the way up South Uist.

I enjoyed camping with the group and going camping with Steve, Marie Anne and myself. One of the best moments for me was when we went up Bheinn Mhor and saw the view from the top.

I have got my photographs back from the shop of the expedition and when I returned home on the Sunday morning, I had a bath and fell asleep in the bath.

Thank you once again for a wonderful fortnight. Take care,

Mark Trafford.

South Uist.

On the ferry journey from Oban to Lochboisdale I really enjoyed seeing the scenery of the mainland from the boat. When we went further out to sea the scenery was wonderful -- looking at the islands of Rhum, Eigg, Canna, Muck and Skye.

As we left Oban the sea was calm but when we left the shelter of the islands, the sea became very choppy. The ferry took six hours from Oban to Castlebay on Barra, and then another two hours from Barra into Lochboisdale. The ferry has two funnels and takes about twenty to thirty cars and lorries. There are cabins on board for people to sleep in and the ferry also served meals on the crossing.

When we arrived at Lochboisdale it was midnight but still quite light. We drove from Lochboisdale to the camp along the narrow roads of the island.

A few days later, a party of us returned to camp from Usinish walking along the cliffs on the East side of the island. It is very hard to walk amongst the heather and the ground is soft, marshy and peaty.

A party of us walked up Bheinn Mhor which is the highest peak on South Uist at 2033ft and we also visited the West coast where we found that the beaches were very sandy, a total contrast from the East coast!!

Mark Trafford

People Coming and Going.

The Long Island has had some more visitors. These visitors stayed for only a fortnight, have not made it their home and (should) have left no visible marks apart from some well-trodden paths.

Whilst there we saw signs though of other visitors who'd stayed longer. Wheelhouse and Standing Stones thousands of years old, deserted villages with ruined houses and overgrown lazy beds a hundred or more years old, present day villages with some houses turf-roofed and others still being built.

Many of these visitors have eventually left, willingly or unwillingly: to fight wars and battles, to settle new islands, for jobs or education.

The islands may seem remote, but they are not isolated, and have shaped the people they've been home to.

We thought of those before us, a little daunted by the harshness of their lives in the Hebrides, and wondered where their travels may have taken them. Life there now is rooted to the rhythm of the tides and the discipline of the weather and the land - but even now these are being turned.

How have we been shaped? We've seen the beauty of the land, and sensed its hardness; we've met new friends - from the island and amongst ourselves - and seen a little of what makes up their lives.

Our horizons are a little wider.

Stephen Hobbs.

Reflections on the Hebridean Expedition 1987.

My reflections seem to suit less an expedition than a retreat (after which written, I speedily looked up the word 'expedition' in a dictionary). It said, "Warlike enterprise; journey voyage, for definite purpose; men(!), fleet sent on this ..." well, my 'definite purpose' was one of many. It was a multi-purpose expedition, and that was one of its charms.

My purpose was not to have a too definite one but to allow things to come up and surprise me. Maybe it was to find an antidote for too disciplined living. Maybe, without knowing it, I was hankering after the more relaxed mode of Hebridean living. The expedition presented me with the time and an atmosphere which made right-brain receptively easier. Or, to put it simpler. I had the and an encouraging environment to simply stand and stare, to take in the changing mood of the countryside, the changing colours, sounds, temperatures, allowing then to make an impact on me, work in as. I was also trying to let boss of any unfinished business emerge in silence and my times of solitude.

I found that the untamed, awe-inspiring, menacing beauty of the elements communicated healing.

For once it did not bother me that, in my activity, I was surrounded by people who seemed to really have a 'definite purpose' of exploring the natural world - bird watching, collecting and identifying plants, insects, or counting birds on a remote island! I am not taking the mickey out of this purposeful activity. I was very genuinely impressed and admired everyone being so active and energetic while I was idly and blissfully happy for most of the time, and that without feeling guilty - some achievement! !

Thinking back on that pursuit, a haiku came to mind. (Japanese poem of 17 or so syllables, to do with nature and expressing emotion)

A sponge sponges steadily
Among the dry heather
A woman soaking in the world.

Also the rough walking — the sheer physical effort, the exhilaration of both the travelling and the arriving: the wide views and the feeling of achievement, modest as it was, added to the glee.

So did the camp life - common work. Informal chats and laughs in plenty in congenial company. What a good mixture of people we were, each being allowed the freedom to pursue their interests and activities, so that everyone could experience silence a solitude as well as company, if they wished.

Another important aspect of the expedition was for me, getting a glimpse of the life of the local people, in an area where it seems to blend so remarkably with the natural surroundings. The little insight into the early Celtic spirituality came as a very timely confirmation that things natural and spiritual belong together, that the dualistic diversions are false and life-diminishing.

I valued so much our quiet reflections together, even if the setting reminded me of Muriel Lester's comment after a long meditation session on the terrace of a Buddhist monastery, somewhere in Asia: "Mosquitoes love long silent prayers." Midges love even the vocalised ones.

But to finish, just a little 'mickey-taking':

A haiku poem (with apologies to the Japanese) on bird-watching:

On yonder rock a bird
Should I look up its name?
Wait, let it first look up mine.

Another one dedicated to a young couple who shall remain nameless:

Maiden in distress weeping
He is gone away
In pursuit of an insect..

None as good as the one I offered as a 'party piece':

If you are kind to a sparrow
It may reward you
With a dropping.

Now one in the mood of the last day there:

The Hebridean wind blows
All my cobwebs away
But soon I must return home.

Wanda Hayman

Trappings.

Rock, heather, bracken.
Dry rock, wet sock,
Dry peat, wet peat,
Cloud on the hat,
Rain in the bag,
Through trousers and socks,
Down into boots, wet through.
Up up up up Up up up up
"Not far now?" they ask
"Still some way," he says.
"Not far enough," I think.
We climb on,
Our steps locked again,
Into the steady pace
Of the compass-bearer

Claire Troome

Return.

No-one there, but the echo
Of twenty voices ringing in my ears
And tell me: where is the wind?

Claire Troome

Thoughts of a Past Chairman.

Why did I stay involved with the SHS for over twenty years? What was in it for us? Well, I can remember that on my first expedition to Jura in 1965 when 16 years old, I met some most amazing and amusing people. It was these individuals as well as the islands themselves that sustained me over the years. When, later, I was lucky enough to become a Director and then Chairman it was always the memory of the opportunity which I had been given then that motivated me - even when it meant attending very long and frequently boring meetings at weekends in London in January or repairing equipment at the store in Leeds at 11pm at night or having our house piled high with tons of food!!

The essential feature of the SHS, whether on the expeditions or working in the background was that nobody ever got anything worthwhile out of it unless they put some effort into it in the first place. Expeditions were frequently hard work, the weather was often terrible, things did not always go right but that did not mean that people sat back and complained - or at least if that was their attitude then they did not like it and did not come again. I suspect that part of the reason for the sad demise of the SHS lies in the fact that we as a society are now much less willing to do things for ourselves - too often we expect everything to be carefully 'packaged' and laid on a plate for us. The concept that an expedition is "a long line of everybody" (Winnie the Pooh) - that everyone has to make an effort for the good of the group - has become more and more difficult to get over to our members. Thus the SHS was always at pains to point out that we did not run carefully structured 'action packed adventure holidays' - but this was the 'market' in which we increasingly found ourselves competing for recruits. Along with this changed attitude has come greater affluence which has meant that more of us can now afford to go to much more exotic destinations than the Hebrides - whether this be Majorca or Florida. For the more adventurous - those from whom the SHS used to recruit - destinations such as Kenya, Norway or the Himalayas are no longer impossible pipe dreams.

I am extremely glad that the present Directors have not tried to compete in these leagues. The SHS is a unique organisation which has done enormous amounts of good for those who got involved. The need for opportunities such as we offered is certainly still there - In fact the need is probably now even greater than it was in 1962 when the original Directors ran the first official expedition to Rhum. I do know that I have been privileged to be involved for so many years - thank you to all the wonderful people I met both in the Hebrides and within the SHS -- you have a lot to do with the person I am today.

Phil Renold. Chairman 1970 -1976 & 1983 - 1986.

Thoughts of a Past Chairman.

It is with a mixture of feelings that I approach this Chairman's article for probably the last ever SHS Report. Reading back over previous Expedition Reports brought back to mind vividly the many tremendous experiences, rich friendships and creative energies which went into making the SHS what it undoubtedly was: an imaginative, worthwhile and thoroughly enjoyable venture. The wild beauty of the Hebrides and the challenge of mounting an expedition there with all the unpredictable spin off's from that made the SHS for me, and for most of us no doubt, a rich, rewarding and precious part of our experience.

Mixed in with these fond memories however is the sadness at the SHS's decline into its non-operative status. Outwardly to all Intense and purposes the Society was vigorous and healthy with newer equipment and better food, stronger financial basis, successful expeditions, a fairly comprehensive management team and new Ideas. However recruitment fell sharply in the early Eighties. Despite some vigorous efforts directed at recruitment nothing affected that trend until in a few short years the Society was no longer a viable concern. It is a tantalisingly elusive question to ask why? Was it the mushrooming of holidays abroad, leisure facilities or the professionally run outdoor pursuit opportunities for young people? Was it changes in the make up of the Society itself which had moved it out of its market? Or was it simply that one or two expeditions for today's fast moving young person was enough? There was a discernable shift over time from SHS members returning year after year to going on expeditions once or twice only. Under this regime recruitment had to be much more successful each year than in previous years. This was born out for me recently in conversation with a professional in North Wales. Having set up his centre he discovered that what the public wanted on the whole was not long courses with certificates at the end, although they do run such courses, but one-off experiences of a day or weekend with a variety of activities tried out. I thought this was significant in thinking about the difficulties the Society had experienced.

But whatever the reason for the Society's retirement, for those of us lucky and privileged enough to have been a part of the SHS, I think we can be justly proud of what the SHS was and what it achieved over twenty eight years of voluntary, self supporting existence. I for one will take with me many precious memories of excellent days spent amidst the Isles.

Come to think of it where did I leave those bog rolls from North Uist '79!!!

Steve Paynter. Chairman 1980 - 1983.

Our arrival was as warmly welcomed as it had always been in the past and the SHS got stuck in with much heart. Special mention to Danny (Hair Gel) McCormack who, at the age of 14, took on Jura's best in the Senior mile and was narrowly beaten into 2nd place. The other notable achievement was in the tug of war. On ten previous visits, we had never managed to win a single pull. How we spoilt that record by finishing second out of five teams, narrowly losing the final, capping what had been a great day out.

Although the expedition needed a lot of planning, I would have gladly done it all again having seen how much pleasure the expedition brought to you, the members. You are the people who made it such an enjoyable and successful expedition (despite the weather) and I do say a very big thank you. My other thanks go to all those who helped: Mr Bury, Landowner; Iain Petrie at Ruantallain; the Islanders on Jura; my parents for all their help with the food and lorry driving; to mention but a few. Thank you all.

Rob McDermott



The ancient art at 'welly wanging', superbly demonstrated by Rob McDermott



Diary of a Paps Bivvy.

Thursday 4th August.

Five of us sat within view of a white, sandy beach, one hot(?) August lunchtime. The place was Glenbattrick, and we were eating our sandwiches before embarking on a bivvy to the Paps. As we set off, the weather was good (for Jura standards) — cloudy but dry. The Intrepid group was ably led by Simon “Veteran of the Paps” Lorimer, with Andrew “Mouldy” Ward, Rodney “Lighthouse” Moran, Ian “Roddy” Robinson and myself.

Having walked along the beach and ascended a short distance over boggy ground, infested with pleasantly perfumed sage (not Jo and Gary?? - Ed) for an hour, we were ready for a well-earned rest. To the call of “Take Five”, we all immediately collapsed and rested for ten minutes!!

The weather had already deteriorated and, as we climbed further, we soon found ourselves in the mist. Visibility was very poor so we spent the rest of the day walking on compass bearings. We continued until we reached the col near Bienn an Or and found a suitable bivvy site. Water on the boil for soup and the inevitable chicken supreme and smash!! It was at this point I became really worried — the chicken supreme tasted great!! The heavy rain and the cold sent us crawling to the depths of our orange bivvy bags or green goretex bags in the case of Simon and Ian.

At this stage, we had absolutely no inclination towards activity, and so settled down in our bivvy bags for the night ahead. Every once in a while, Ian would unzip his goretex and peer out to check that the three of us hidden beneath orange bags were okay. Stifling the occasional shiver, we assured him we were okay and he guiltily disappeared back into the warmth (goretex with built-in central heating??? - Ed). We then noticed that Mouldy was very quiet and we were worried until a resounding “Bodies to the P4” echoed around the Paps. (“Bodies to the P4” was one of Rob's little ways of keeping the camp on their toes)

At about midnight, Rodney poked his head out of the top of his bivvy bag and called over to me, and sounded slightly worried when he noticed I had disappeared from where he had last seen me asleep not long before. I had slid about four feet down a slope and was having such intense difficulty crawling back up the slope that I just gave up trying. Instead, I settled down to spend the rest of the night propped up against a pegged-out goretex bag to stop me rolling further downhill.

Friday 5th August.

Guess what? Really grotty weather again!! (so what is new?- Ed) I found my sleeping bag was saturated when I woke up, partly due to condensation, partly due to rain. The others had a similar problem so we tried, unsuccessfully, to air our kit before packing it. We cooked breakfast of porridge and crushed digestives, then decided to set off up Bienn an Or, the highest Pap, and give up any hope of conquering the other two.

We eventually got to the top, managing to admire the view for seconds at a time between the dense, drifting cloud, then we fell asleep in the rain. After an hour at the summit (asleep!!), we began our descent, on slippery rocks, stumbling frequently along the way (Jura whisky has this effect — Rob). Below the lower line of scree and rocks, we stopped for lunch, before asking our way down to the loch beneath. We then skirted round it on higher ground in an attempt to avoid the really soggy ground.

For the whole journey, we were entertained by Mouldy’s enormous repertoire of songs, and even more amused by his angelic voice (only joking!!). After several rowdy renditions of SHS songs, and a few miles later, we had reached the forest, all that lay between us and the road. Mouldy and Rodney decided on the direct approach, straight through the forest whilst the rest of us took the easier route around the edge. We walked a short way along the road and then sat at the roadside to wring out our wet socks.

A welcome vehicle approached, with Mouldy and Rodney inside - as they had been picked up as they emerged from the forest. Thankfully, the driver stopped for us too, and we all piled into the back of the land-rover and set off towards the exciting night-life of Craighouse, the disco and the ceilidh but that is another story!!!!!!!!!!!!

Heidi Albert.

Summer Mornings on Jura.

Idle early morning chatter recedes as a lone figure

rises and leaves the marquee.

His hair stands askew in the breeze,

unwashed and thick

Weariness shows in his eyes and his gait.

The path is well trodden and a little rocky.

Waves splash close by but the smell of salt disappears

soon to be replaced by another.

Head down he trudges slowly towards the two tents

The smell of the bog pits makes him nauseous,

but soon his task is complete.

Matthew turns and walks back to the marquee

Another morning on bog duty.....

Ian Robinson.

Route card for the Paps.

From	To	Route	Distance	Time	Magnetic Bearing	Escape Route
Camp	Glen-battrick	P4 to beach	3 miles	30 mins	270	Swim!!!
Glen-battrick	Glen-battrick	Up one of Paps and down again. (The one in the middle I think!!)	Miles!!!	Quite quick	South then North	Down!!!
Glen-battrick	Middle of Loch Tarbert	P4 collecting group	1 mile	10 mins + 30 mins swearing + 20 mins engine starting time	37	Via Colonsay!
525813	526813	Susie takes over P4 driving. Boat describes a rather inelegant figure of '8' before setting off in the wrong direction three times!!!!	100m	14 hours!!	294 then 352 then 163 then 97	Over the side!!!
526813	526813	Engine stall time	0m	55 mins	0	Rowing!!!
526813	Camp	Susie made to walk plank. P4 starts first time and returns to camp at full speed!!!	2 miles	5 mins	48	Away from Susie!!!!

Simon Lorimer.

Isle of Jura Expedition.

The three weeks on Jura were the most enjoyable weeks of my life, I learned so much. in fact, I must be honest and say that the three weeks were much better than I thought they would be.

Everyone got on well with each other and helped with the various chores, except Hosey. but after several duckings in the sea, he amazingly started to help. (These leaders will stop at nothing!! - Ed) I think the amount of times "Bodies for the P4" and "Everyone in the marquee" were said, could have gone in the Guinness Book of Records for the most said sentences.

I had a great walk to the Highland Games, so good that when we arrived, the Games had just finished!!!

I think one of the laziest days I had was when I went on a climbing bivvy and we ended up having about three hours sleep in the afternoon. my reason for going climbing was to see the view at the top and what a view it was..... clouds, clouds and more clouds! ! ! One good thing was that the beach we were dropped at was beautiful. Coning back into camp after the climb, we saw that one of the toilet tents had been let down on Keith, who was still sitting there at the time!! We found It funny but for some reason, Keith didn't) !!

The day before we left Cruib was one of the funniest as it was the day of the expedition's own 'Highland Games". Welly throwing, blind-fold piggy-back fighting and tug of war were just three of the many games organised but it was during the SEVEN legged race that the leaders gained their revenge for all that they had put up with during the expedition. The A.L's. not forgetting the LEADER, started pelting us with eggs and gunge, In other words, time for a food fight. What a brilliant one it was. We all went into the sea to get cleaned off and that started the water fight. Great fun!!! After getting cleaned up, we then waited for the special Leaders meal (all our meals were special — Rob) at which we were all given a nick-name. For some reason, I was Miss Fussy!!.

After the meal had finished (and it was good) we had a bit of a sing song, but not just any old sing song — this one involved everyone acting like clowns (which wasn't very hard) and this showed what complete idiots we all are!!!

Melanie Williamson

Jura '88.

The journey on the way up to Jura was long and boring but Keith kept us entertained with his non-stop chatter. (You're telling me — Rob) After travelling for many hours we had to hike across sobs boggy and very rough land which was vary bard considering how little sleep I had managed to get during the journey. Finally we arrived at Cruib Lodge and eventually managed to get some of the tents up. We then had to walk back to collect our kit which had been brought part way by the P4's. Finally, after some supper, we were allowed to bed and I was asleep as soon as my bead bit the pillow.

The next morning I had to help cook and wash up. The activities starting a couple of days later. We first had to do a capsized drill in the canoe which I thought was great, although others did not quite share the same view!!! (I'm not surprised - Ed).

Soon after, the bivvy's started and I chose to go on my first bivvy to Ruantallain by canoe. We never got as far as Ruantallain due to a problem with one of the canoes (It sank!! - Rob) but we still managed to find a great bivvy site next to a waterfall.

We got back to camp just in time to depart for the Highland Games and I took part in the barrel-rolling and the mile run, though heaven knows why. I must have been mad (You said It!!! - Bob).

On the last day in camp, we had our own Highland Games with our team winning the welly throwing, ...the egg race and the obstacle race. We lost the tug of war when we were pulled into the stream! ! (One of Rob's idea's no doubt!! - Ed)

The last event was the seven legged race -- at least we thought it was an event! Our team was doing well when we were suddenly greeted with eggs and a lot of gunge, courtesy of the leaders. Everybody pelted everybody else then we ended up in the sea for a water fight. Most went in of their own accord but one or two had to be helped!!!!!!!

After this it was a question of packing, moving all the equipment back to the road and onto the mainland for the long journey boat.

Darren Clark.

Corpach Bay Bivvy.

Leaders: Simon, Ernie, Phil. Members: Ryan, Andy, Kevin, Sam, Mouldy.

The day we set off was a sunny and fairly hot Sunday (for a change).

The group should have set off around midday but the trouble was no-one wanted to do a route-card and Rob would not let us go until we had. Eventually, several of us

were

"persuaded" to complete it although I was a little concerned about our time of arrival... 'midnight'!!! We finally started walking about 1-45pm. We flew (clever people! - Ed) up Ben Cruib in about half the time shown on the route card and headed

for Rainbeg Nor where we found a tiny stream which had thousands of really small tadpoles (thousands — did you count them ALL?? - Ed) in it. We then walked up and over Rainbeg Nor which was a bit of a pig as it was still very hot.

A couple of hours later to our eternal relief we arrived at Corpach — not midnight but a quarter to eight in the evening. Some mad Idiots then went swimming (Ernie and Phil?? - Ed), well, paddling whilst the rest of us pitched tents. Ernie made a camp fire which took at least 15 matches to light (more like 1500 for Ernie - Rob) around which we all sat and ate toasted banana sandwiches, after which yours truly had to do the washing up. Eventually, everyone drifted off to bed and I made sure that everyone in my tent was asleep before I shouted out at the top of my voice waking them up. Sam and Phil were not amused — I can't think why!!!

The next day was Kevin's birthday and when we got back to camp there was a birthday treat waiting for him — one or two or twenty two buckets of water!! That was a laugh, like the whole expedition.

Andrew Ward.

Bivvy Report.

It all started when one of our wonderful teachers at school showed us some slides about an expedition the following summer. I decided to go, not realising that it would be very wet and incredibly stupid at times.

After a week or so at Cruib Lodge, we went on a climbing bivvy. Kim drove (??) us there in the P4 Inflatable and after we had all got out, Kim tried to restart the engine. She failed and was rapidly being overtaken by the tide when she decided to get out to move the boat. The water looked shallow and she only expected to go in to her knees. It was so funny when she went in right up to her neck!!!

We went off in search of a bivvy site, trying to find one the goats hadn't visited first, which was difficult!! Finally, after a lot of searching, we found a suitable site and set up our camp, had tea, and then went and did a bit of bouldering on some small rocks nearby.

When we got back to our sleeping bags, it was time for cocoa and into bed. Most people went to sleep quickly but Squashy, Jamie and myself started to tickle Heidi's feet, something which she hates. After an hour of this, it was time for sleep but not before a visit to the nearest rock for the necessary toilet. On returning, my sleeping bag had gone and I spent a very cold half hour inside my orange bivvy bag before getting my sleeping bag back and falling asleep.

The next day dawned bright (on Jura?? - Ed;) and after breakfast we set off to undertake some climbing and abseiling. The climbing was very difficult and only Edi, Ian and Squashy managed to get up the rock face. Far easier was the abseiling which followed although I had never done anything like it before. To say I was worried when I went over the edge was an understatement — I was petrified!!, but quickly went back for another go and another ... and another!!!

All too soon, it was time to collect all the gear together and start the walk back to camp, which could be seen across the bay but still took a long time to reach; such is the shape of the coastline.

Keith MacDonald.

Jura Expedition 1988.

The whole expedition was great, including the journey up there although the walking was not quite what I had expected. It would be!! Even the food was good and the food fight of the last day was brilliant!! The 'gunge' was made up of:- flour, cornflour, porridge, and eggs (and that was the nice stuff!! - Rob). In addition, eggs were also being thrown separately. The last night in camp also saw the best meal, cooked and served by the leaders and followed by a good sing-song during which some of the leaders managed to drink vast amounts of wine (Ian Earnshaw in particular).

The last day saw us packing up all the equipment in the pouring rain. It had started raining at 7-00 in the morning when we started to break camp and only stopped at 9-00 at night when Rob, Simon and Ian finally arrived at Craighouse having literally thrown all the gear (which was soaking wet) into the back of the minibus. We, in the meantime, had all been getting nice and warm in the village hall eating loads of burgers and beans.

The journey back to Luton was long and hard, especially as there was nowhere to put your feet.

Overall, the expedition was great and I think the best moment was on the last day when we were putting all the equipment away in the pouring rain.

Mark Goodman

My Expedition.

We departed from Luton on the Saturday lunchtime and arrived at Kennacraig in the early hours of the Sunday morning. On arrival, Rob, Simon and Steve left us in the capable hands of Brigit who escorted us to our very comfortable (!?!) tents pitched on a slope. The minibus then departed for Glasgow to collect the remainder of the expedition members who were travelling by train. The next morning we had a quick explore around the ferry port whilst waiting for the minibus to return so we could meet the rest of the expedition.

We were unable to reach the site on the planned day due to the weather and the following day had to use the P4 to be ferried across the loch and then walk into Cruib where the camp was to be based. Eventually, all had arrived by 8-30pm and we set about pitching tents and preparing some food.

The early part of the expedition was spent playing wide games like 'hunt the jerry can' and also taking part in an orienteering course. Trying to be clever, our group decided to take a short cut across the bay at low tide (it was a long way round) and ended up deep in the mud — it came up to my waist. Edi and Ian came down off the hill to take photos of us. Between their fits of laughter.

In short, the expedition was brilliant!!!!

Robert Hosey.

Ruantallain Bivvy.

On this particular bivvy we all had to go. We were split into three groups — walking, canoeing, and P4. I drew the short straw and had to walk.

Ruantallain is situated about 5 miles from camp out on the west coast of Jura and the walk is very hard, mostly over rocky 'raised beaches'. We had only managed to go about 100m from camp when we had to return

as Robert Hosey had forgotten his sleeping bag. Because I was only carrying a small light rucksack, I was made to carry the sandwiches until lunchtime. Unfortunately, the lunch consisted of squashed sandwiches as I had tripped over a boulder and fallen on them!!!

After we had eaten our lunch, we set off again over the raised beaches and after a short while came upon a very steep, slippery cliff-face. In the distance we could see the cottages at Ruantallain which we were heading for, and we could also see the group of canoeists on Loch Tarbert. Together with the P4

When we arrived at Ruantallain, our first task was to unload the P4 which had brought all the cooking equipment and food that we would need and carry it up to the cottages. After a short rest, we all went on a search for driftwood on the surrounding beaches and brought it back to the cottage, ready for a barbecue which was being planned for the evening.

When enough wood had been collected, Bob and sons of the A.L's built the fire and John Parry then used a whole box of Matches to light it (sounds like another Earnshaw - Ed). We had got the fire burning nicely, and were just about to start cooking when, guess what, it rained!!!! Fortunately, due to this possibility, we had taken a gas burner with us and so moved into the cottage and cooked our supper inside. After supper, I took ay rucksack Into the outside shed where I planned to spend the night.

At about 10-00pm, it was time for cocoa and we were all sat around in one of the rooms in the cottage watching the fire die down, thinking of the group who ware on top of the Paps, and listening to Bob and Ernie tell jokes. Eventually, I could not keep my eyes open any longer and headed off for ay nice warm sleeping bag ..which was back at camp!!!!, so I ended up having a very uncomfortable night sleeping in an orange bivvy bag.

The next morning we had an early start, collecting more driftwood to store in the cottage for future users and then started heading back to camp, arriving at about 4-00 in the afternoon. Just in time to start preparing the evening meal.

Mark Heslop.

The Unfair Food Fight.

Yes, it's me, the noise maker of the year. I suppose I have to write this as I won't get done on it's own eh, as old Bunion Brains.

Anyway, I wish to protest about this food fight — supposedly a PAIR fight. I, being Keith, was shot at with at least 23 eggs.

I wish, too, to ask these A.L.'s where they went to learn how to be a "Sadist bunch of Morons" in a food fight 'cos I wish to congratulate then on succeeding totally! !!!! Having said that, they were a great bunch and I hope to see some or all of them on another expo' if possible.

My Short notes on the Unfair Food Fight.

1. End of "Putting up the tent whilst being blindfolded." By the way, I could see everything that was going on 'cos I cheated. I was lucky that Edi missed my face when he was checking to see if I could see.

2. Me spots the gunge hidden in bowls in the marquee.
 3. I go mental and visit the toilet very quickly!!!.
 4. Told everyone, whilst going mental, about the gunge.
 5. Shouldn't have told anyone else 'cos I was then singled out to be the main target.
 6. Supposedly a nice happy game of 7-legged race.
 7. I tie my leg very loosely so as to aid a quick getaway.
 8. Rob ties my leg very tightly (!!!??*!*\$?)
 9. We run, or at least, try to.
 10. A.L's run a lot better and faster than we do.
 11. I scream and fall to the floor, realising what is about to happen.
 12. I am in very deep **!* (I cannot untie the rope).
 13. A.L's appear dressed in bin liners and armed with buckets and bowls and pans, all full of gunge.
 14. A.L's take aim and fire
 15. A.L's win!!
- Anyway, I have protested and said my piece.

Thanks to you all and hope to see you again in the future. Lots of happiness to you and whenever you think of me, I will be thinking of me also!!!

Keith MacDonald.

The Eating Contest.

One day the weather wasn't too good (which day was that?? - Rob) and everyone was picking their brains wondering what we could do. Then some brilliant, intelligent, super-efficient person (me!!) suggested that we could have an eating contest. Some brainless, twit-faced person (who could that be?? - Ed) then agreed to it. Six eager(?) "volunteers" sat around the dining table surrounded by the rest of the expedition, who were armed with cameras, and awaited the first course. Before the contest started, we were told that we could not drink anything. After this, we had the simple task of trying to eat four dry cream crackers and then whistle the national Anthem. All of us sat scoffing cream crackers whilst everyone else clicked away merrily with their cameras. Eventually, Keith came through to win course one.

Round two was to eat twelve plums with a knife which didn't seem too difficult and Danny won this without any trouble.

Round three was to eat three bags of crisps.....

without the use of our hands!!!. This was seemingly impossible and I think everyone gave up.

Round four was an Earnshaw Special. It was a drink consisting of: one raw egg, plus juice, and water. We must have had a couple of pints each. I thought I was the only person present who liked it but Mark came through with a sprint finish to win. Whilst I was sitting awaiting the next course, the other contestants left for a competition of a different sort outside!!!

And what was my prize for winning the eating competition?? A chocolate biscuit and a Mars bar!!!!!!!

Kevin Goddard.

The Topper!

After getting stuck up a rock face two metres off the ground, and being petrified of the thought of abseiling, I at last found something that I really enjoyed thanks to Squashy!!!!!!

The Topper sailing dinghy!

My first ever sail on the Topper was an experience not to be forgotten, in many ways!! The day was great —“just right for the Topper” says Squashy — and he was right. The water was a bit too cold for my liking so Ian Robinson had kindly lent me his XEGA wetsuit just in case we happened to capsize!! (As if that would happen!!! - Ed)

The canoes were out in full force and Ernie and Edi were whizzing (well, chugging) around the bay in the P4. I was a bit scared at first but was soon into the swing of things and we had great fun. Squashy was telling as everything that he was doing so that I could hopefully sail myself (although that moment never came) and I will always remember him saying —“If we do happen to capsize, which we won't, just stay in the water while I collect the Topper and I will come back and collect you.” ‘O.K. Boss, if you say so!’ I said and never thought anything more about it until we saw the second P4 appear in the distance.

The distant P4 rapidly approached closer and by this time it had been joined by the other inflatable with Ernie and Edi in it. Both P4's headed towards us and I was screaming for someone to help us — who I don't know?? Anyone would have done — even Bossy!!!, but no-one came to our rescue and we did not get away in time. I think for the rest of my life I will always remember Rob's evil face (how true - Ed) as he brought the P4 closer, causing us to capsize.

The water was as cold as I had imagined It to be and actually tasted worse than the powdered milk we had at camp (Is this possible? - Ed). The thing I cannot understand is how I ended up In the water and Squashy managed to stay on the Topper?? It must have been planned by the so-called Leader, judging by the grin on his face!! Thanks to Ernie and Edi, I was rescued and returned to the Topper in one piece.

Believe it or not, I was not put off by this episode and we sailed around for a while afterwards. We had a good laugh threatening to capsize Ryan in his canoe and we also had an amazing time watching some baby seals, although at one point, we thought we had sailed right over one!! We did capsize once more before we returned to dry land but this was without the help of the Leader!!

I really enjoyed my outing on the Topper that day and a couple of days later Squashy and myself sailed the Topper to Ruantallain and back. We did have rough weather but it made it more fun and Squashy is a capable sailor so I felt quite safe.

I know that not many people went sailing on the Topper and I can honestly say they missed an experience of a lifetime.

Sarah Gatehouse.

“Six Go Mad In a Minibus”

It is late at night. Most of the members are tucked up in bed. Danny has just been forcibly evicted from the marquee. Mark and Jamie have just returned in hysterics after amusing us with another episode of chasing John (The Prat) Parry round the marquee with a bucket of water.

We settle to discussion. John, returning to his own peculiar brand of sanity, reminds us that we only have one loaf of bread left (being the good CA that he is!!). The next batch had been delivered to the minibus, up on the road. We would have to go for it first thing in the morning.

"Why don't we do the bread run now?" I suggested.

"Now?"

"Why not?" (Humour him, he cannot be serious)

"Okay... anyone else coning?" says Ernie, getting up and putting his cagoule on.

I get my cagoule on and wander over for a life-jacket.

Rob stares.

"All right is it Rob? ... if we go now?"

"Couldn't stop you anyway" he mumbles enviously. (After all, the Leader HAS to be responsible!!!!)

John, Susie, Gooby and Kim have, by now, gathered this is for real, and, not wanting to miss out on something daft are getting their jackets on.

"We could bivvy to the minibus" Rachael adds. Ernie and I return to our tent for our sleeping bags and what is left of Rob's bottle of "Bells". (Without Rob knowing - Rob)

"Bodies to the P4!" goes echoing around Cruib. No-one stirs. They won't be caught out by that one again!!! "Bodies to the P4!" Mark sticks his nose out of his tent. "They've got life jackets on!?!?!"

12-40am. The engine starts first time - a good omen?? Alison mumbles something about idiots, turns over and goes back to sleep. For once, the engine is firing properly and soon we are out on Loch Tarbert in near darkness - the moon playing hide and seek among the clouds. Ernie and Kim are lying flat at the front of the boat, Ernie straining his eyes, Kim resting hers!!

I move out past where I think the hidden rocks ought to be and steer towards a large black mass of land. The channel is inked out by the hills behind it. Less than fifty yards away and the channel appears. A small alteration of our course and we are into that narrow stretch of fast moving water - staring ahead. Suddenly the moon jumps out (clever moon!! - Rob) from behind the cliffs - almost blinding us. Take a wide sweep at the next bend and hope we don't run aground. Just as well we've got a high spring tide with us - give us a larger margin of error. Ernie's right hand is waving wildly about to starboard. He seems to think I'm going the wrong way, but I can see the channel so I'll ignore him. 30 yards off shore I realise I'm headed behind a small Island. A quick pull at the tiller and the bow swings round to where Ernie is still pointing (probably with a smug grin on his face).

Brushing aside the temptation to 'buzz' a large yacht anchored near the "Maplin Warrior" (estate boat - Rob), we head in the general direction of the boathouse. The shore is a black smudge in front of us, the nearer we get, the faster we seem to be going. Everybody seems able to see the boathouse except me, so I just keep on going. Three head-torches come on in unison lighting up the half submerged posts along the jetty. We set off up the track towards the minibus, our already wet feet splashing through the puddles.

1-30am. We all pile into the minibus, spread out our karrimats and dive into our sleeping bags. The scene is set for a maggot fight of epic proportions. Two hours later we collapse in a heap

6-50am. I awake to discover I am lying across a wheel arch and being used for a pillow. In desperate need of a 'pee', I answer this call as everyone clambers out of their sleeping bags. The bread is carried to the boat and we return triumphant to camp!! !!I

Edi Albert.

Three Men in a Boat by Jerome K. Jerome
(alias Philip Squance)

Or

The Alternative Topper Sailors.

Edi Albert -

Ay ay mateys - Pirate Ship Jura was on the move. Edi had a wonderful way of expressing himself as a piece of phallic artwork, a figurehead (although it was his whole body), standing on the bow very cunningly disguised. We headed towards a P4 in search of treasure (a tin of mandarin oranges). With the P4 broadsides, Edi did a spectacular jump of at least 25cms, captured the tin of mandarins, and threatened to throw Gooby overboard - she made some excuse about having her passport in her pocket (on Jura??? - Rob).

That was the first alternative sailor.

Ian Earnshaw -

It must have been a force 6 gale (slight breeze more like!!! - Ed) and Ian and myself had gone out for a quick spin in the Topper. We had got out of the cove and past the small Island when all of a sudden the main sail gave way from the boom. We stopped and there was a violent flapping of the sail and boom before Ian "Superduck" Earnshaw got his act together and without a care for his own safety, grabbed the boom and pulled it into the boat. "Away you go. Squashy. Save yourself" came the cry (This wasn't Earnshaw was it?? - Rob). It wasn't the easiest of journeys back to camp as it was into the wind making it hard work for Ernie to hold the boom. I must admit it was more akin to windsurfing than any sailing I'd ever done before, and so on that happy note, and a "Bravo" for Ernie, there finishes the second of the "Alternative" Topper Sailors.

Phil Squance (the best of them all) —

I decided to go out for a quick sail as the wind had picked up, so, hurriedly I ran to the Topper and went out onto the loch. I decided to try and be clever and, turning into the wind, tipped the boat over so that the top part of the mast was touching the water (wicked fun). Then came the tricky part - standing up in the cockpit trying to steer, keeping the sail tight, and balancing the boat, all at the same time. It was lots of fun so I did it again and again and again and again. Eventually, in a strong wind, I was able to keep the boat with the mast touching the water for about two minutes. A good feat of balancing if I say so myself. So there ends the third, final and, of course, far superior tale of "The Alternative Topper Sailors".

Phil Squance.

Hebridean Water Fights

All was well around 5-30pm, until the dessert was served. Tonight it was to be the good old faithful INSTANT WHIP. Unfortunately, some fool decided to fill Edi's white hat with this scrumptious treat. All hell was let loose in camp; people were racing to take cover as Edi and his "mean machine" began to take revenge. Every article that was capable of holding water was quickly grabbed from the kitchen as those famous SHS words 'WATER FIGHT' echoed around the camp.

The ensuing battle took place by the stream with, predictably, the leaders easily beating the members. Bodies were in a mess so needed rinsing off and water from the stream was being hurled all over the place. Suddenly, Edi came face to face with Rodney, each armed with a pan full to the brim of freezing cold Hebridean water. Careful aim was taken, and pan contents were flung, just as Rodney Ducked.....to come into direct contact with Edi's pan!!

End of contest - urgent medical attention from the medics to treat a wound which looked much worse than it was.

So now everybody reading this account may see for themselves that a Hebridean expedition undertakes many activities (some of which are awaiting perfection).

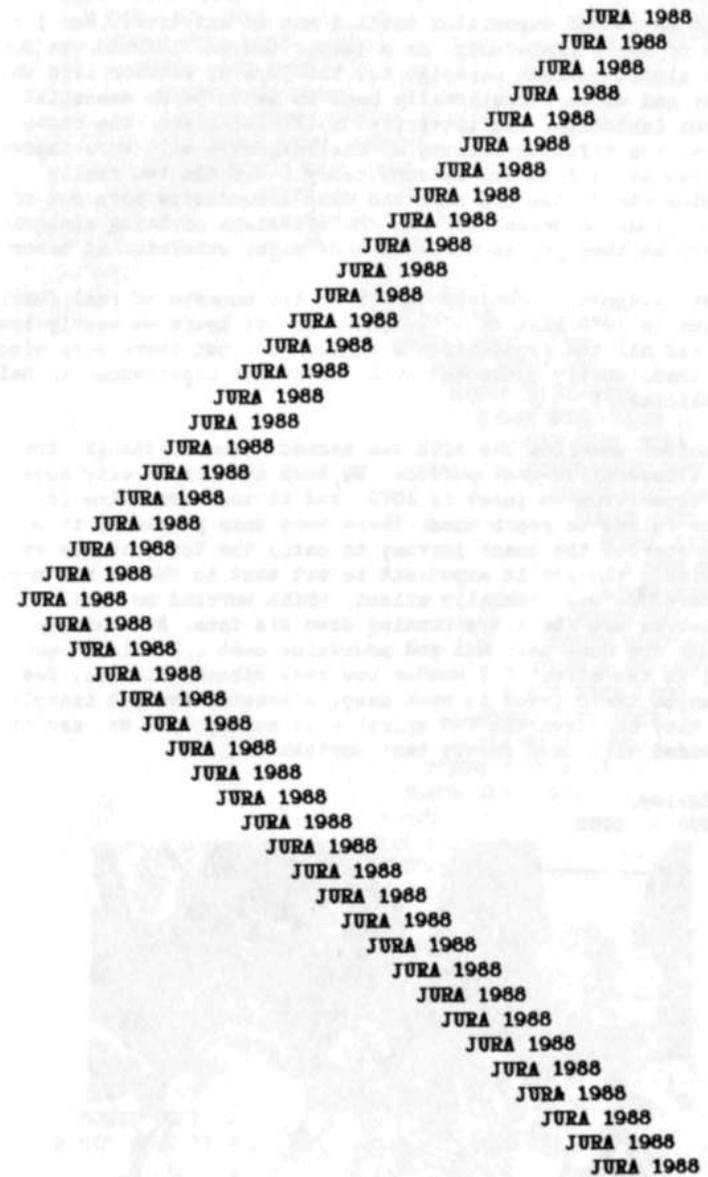
Before closing, I would like to add a very big note of thanks to Rob, his assistant leaders, and all the expeditioners.

JURA 1988 WAS A GREAT SUCCESS!!!!!!!

KeithMcDonald.



Not prunes again????!!!!???



Thoughts of a Past Chairman.

I never went on an SHS expedition until I was at university, so I missed the thrills of early membership. As a leader though, I found the Society provided an almost perfect paradigm for the joys of outdoor life which I hold so dear and which educationally seem to me to be so essential. The purity of the landscape, the integrity of the Islanders, the romance of a wild place, the infinite variety of challenges - all were important, and still draw me back to the Islands today —but the two really essential elements of the SHS were the deep friendships born out of hardship and close co-operation, and the privilege of being alongside other members as they gained insights they might otherwise of never had.

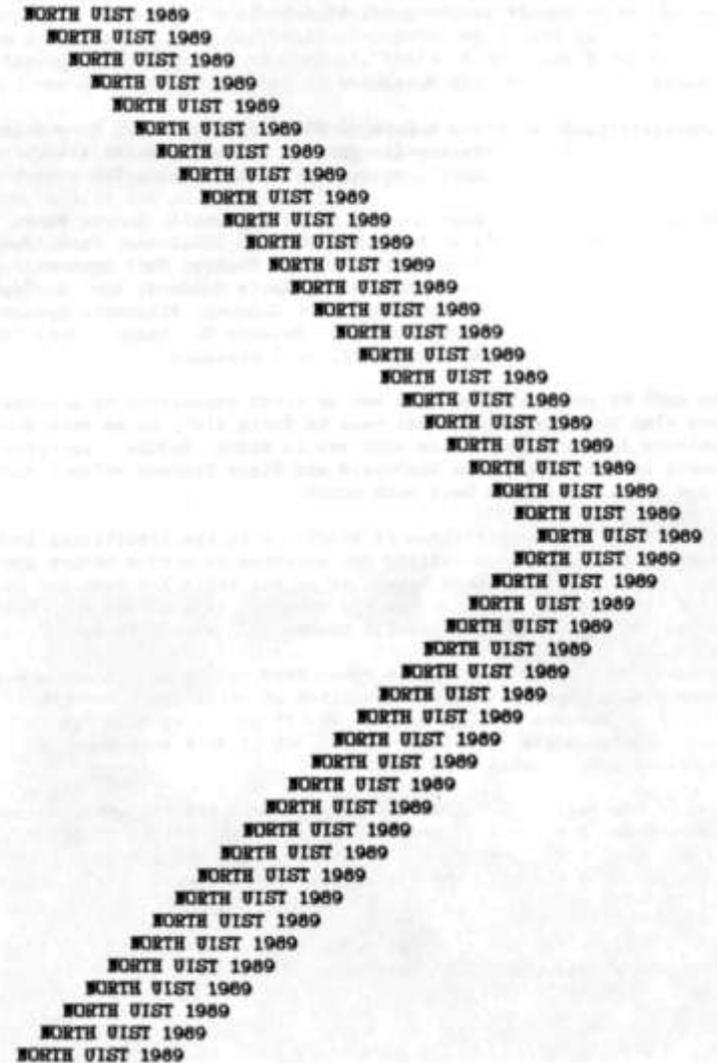
In the first category, I confess to one or two moments of real fear, like the time in 1970 when in a violent gale off Lewis we nearly lost both lives and all the expedition's equipment - but there were also the hilarious times, mostly connected with 'off-road' experiences in Salford Van Hire vehicles!!!

My most precious memories lie with the second element, though, for which one simple illustration must suffice. We took some inner city boys with the junior expedition to Islay in 1979, and it took some time for the magic of the Island to reach them. There were some problems, it must be said. As we started the coach journey to catch the ferry at the end of the expedition I thought it expedient to sit next to one of the more lively members. He was unusually silent, which worried me until he turned to let me see the tears running down his face. As Blake wrote, "Great things are done when men and mountains meet ... This is not done by jostling in the street." I wonder how many others, like me, feel the SHS has changed their lives in such deep, elemental and yet inexplicable ways — if they do, then the SHS spirit will surely live on, and in all energy expended will have surely been worthwhile.

Roger Weatherly. Chairman 1976 - 1980.



A.L.'s Neall!!77!!



North Uist 1989.

Leader: Ian Earnshaw.

Assistant leaders: Rob McDermott (DL); Jo Sage (DL); Gary Sage;
Jeremy Clough; Kim Atkinson; Heidi Albert; Mark Langley;
Marian Blackwell; Edi Albert.

Members: Andy Hounan; Keith MacDonald; Andrew Ward; Alex
Bradbury; Dominic Gallacher; James Munley; Simon Pollard; Mark
Heslop; Phil Squance; Wayne Mountford; Kevin Goddard; Mark
MacKenzie; Martyn Pegg; Mark Goodman; Elizabeth Spencer;
Terry Campbell; Melanie Williamson; Paul Amiss,
Samantha Hall; Paul Stannard.

As most of you will know this was my first expedition as a Leader. It was also the first time I had been to North Uist, so as with most of the members I didn't quite know what was in store. Before I continue, I would like to thank John MacDonald and Fiona Pearson without whom the expedition could have been much worse.

As with all good expeditions it started with the traditional hour or two hanging around Glasgow waiting for everyone to arrive before continuing on to Uig for an overnight stay. After the tents had been put up it was time for supper — the look on the barmaids face at Uig when Rob and I asked for 32 baked potatoes with cheese will stay with me for years.

Looking back on those glorious sunny days (ha ha ha), there are several events which spring to mind; the first of which was a remarkable new design of marquee with extension. How it stayed up will remain one of the unsolved mysteries of the world, but if Mark ever goes into architecture, he will make a fortune!!

Two of the best days for me were when I took several members down to South Uist. For those of you who were with me, events at the bothy were, to say the least, memorable. For those of you not present, too gruesome to mention. All I will say is that 'packages' have a whole new meaning in my life.

I could go on for the next few pages (want a bet?? - Ed) writing about events from the loss of the P4 engine to Edi arriving in the middle of the night after swimming the loch but you will all have your own special memories.

The one I'm sure will stand out uppermost in the mind of anyone must be the final few hours, and the slight wind that blew away the cobwebs along with the odd tent or two!! It is one of those nights that you do not forget in a hurry. You all deserve my personal thanks - we worked well as a team under very difficult circumstances — and if I ever have to go through anything like that again, there is no other group of people I would rather go through it with than you lot. Anyway, some of you may know that Rob and I returned to North Uist the week after the expedition to a campsite that resembled the Somme! We salvaged what we could from the stuff left behind. Below you can see what was left of one of the tents!!

That is it from me, Thanks to everyone for their help especially my fellow Directors, and hope to see you sometime in the Hebrides.

Ian Earnshaw



What an Experience!!

Me, I was the stupid un-informed Australian, who thought this was going to be a simple little camping trip.

Little did I know.....! It all started when No, don't be corny, just get on with it!

Okay, to be truthful, I didn't enjoy the first week at all. I met the group at Glasgow, not knowing anyone, or anything. I was soon to learn; and find myself in charge of a duty group (never knew they existed!)

Got through introductions - Glasgow/Uig. Endured the setting up of camp and the associated problems!!!

Then finally began to see, that maybe we could have some fun after all - this was probably after I had been thrown in Loch Eport fully clothed, WITH my boots on.

?? Enjoyed scaring myself ****less while abseiling (never again!!) and got plenty of rowing practice on our "great" Loch Obissary bivvy — shame you had to throw up Alex!! Wore myself out, walking over North and South Lees; up Ben Eaval and round past Eaval Cottage, other days (no comments please!).

Of course, the major event was the last night. Having to hastily put on clothes (why was that?? - Ian) and pack up camp to move out, 'cos all our tents were blowing/blown down -- I wouldn't have missed it for the world!!

I don't know about me introducing you to any Australian "culture", but you sure showed me some "English and Scottish!!!"

In the end I really enjoyed it and it was sad having to say good-bye to everyone at Glasgow. I must say, if I was to be around and you wanted me for next year, I would love to go again.

Thank you SHS. (i.e. Ian, Rob, Jo & Gary, Jez, Heidi, Kim, Edi, and last but not least, Mark, ((wonder why that is?? - Ian)) Oh! And of course, all you kids!)

You have one satisfied customer! See you in Tasmania!!!!

Marian Blackwell.

First Timer.

This year I went on my first expedition to North Uist. It all started on Friday afternoon. I came home, changed my clothes and went to Liverpool with Ian (Leader) and Rob (Deputy Leader): I was staying with the leaders until Sunday. From Liverpool, we went down to Luton and stayed at Mark's house. Then the journey really started. We went from Luton to Milton Keynes and then by train to Glasgow, then onwards by coach to Skye. The ferry took us to North Uist and then another coach to within one mile of our base.

The expedition was very good.

The parts I enjoyed most were climbing and canoeing. I like the climbing because I learnt how to chock, which means how to place the chocks in the rock. The abseiling was even better. We had a small run that was hard at first, but then got easier. The face on which we were climbing had lots of places where you could place yourself but finding the next hand or foot hold wasn't always quite so easy. The abseiling was very good because you had the feeling that you were falling and all that is going to save you was the climbing rope. It was very exciting. Abseiling is like walking or jumping down a rock face for pleasure.

I liked the canoeing because I knew what we were doing. I had already canoed with the scouts. We went on a two night bivvy which I did not finish because my feet blistered. From what I heard, the last part of the journey back was very good. They all had extra rations because I was not there to eat mine!!!

There were some other parts which I did not like. There was a nightline where we all had to follow a rope at night whilst blind-folded. The bad thing is that you ended up in the sea or lake. I had just got my walking boots dry and, hey presto, they were wet again. As we walked back, all you could hear was squish squish. When we got back a nice hot cup of drinking chocolate was waiting for us. Mind you, we had earned it!!!

The other part I did not like was the last day of camp. In the afternoon I saw four pegs being hit into the ground. Then all of a sudden, ten members pounced on me and tied ropes to my ankles and wrists. I was then tied to the pegs and a mixture of 'gunge' was poured over me by the members. I also had boot polish rubbed on my face. I did not like it at all!!!(Understatement of the year!!! - Ed) It was a big joke on the people they thought did not do enough work or were first timers on the expedition.

I gained a lot of things on the expedition. I learnt how to work as a member of a team to get the best results — for example, on the two day mini-expedition. I also learnt about problem solving, preparing, carrying out a task, and reviewing performance. For example, we were

South Uist Bothy Bivvy.

Hello children. Are you sitting comfortably? Then I shall begin.

Once upon a time, on a remote SHS North Uist expedition, a small party decided to ascend the grand hills of South Uist. The day began with an early rise at 6-30am, so we could get our gear together in time to assault the hills early. Breakfast was vast (one bowl of cereal each) and spirits were high. A special request for quiet by Mr McDermott was greeted with a volley of abuse from Gary. This was shortly followed by the entrance of Rob into the marquee, looking none too happy. He swiftly put the blame on Brad for the noise (case of mistaken identity!! - Rob), with the extremely guilt-ridden face of Gary somewhere around his feet!!

We were soon in the Land-Rover (death on four wheels when Gary is driving), unaware of what lay ahead. After quite a journey (nightmare is probably a better way to describe it), we were suddenly deposited in the middle of nowhere with no other option other than to walk. Looking ahead, there was this rather ominous-looking hill which was what we were aiming to conquer. It was called Bheinn Mhor, but it was soon given many unrepeatably names as we started to ascend. The view from the top was incredible ...cloud and more cloud!!!!!!

Having reached the top, it was then time to come down (logical!!) and I was rather glad that I could not see what lay ahead as the path (??) seemed to get steeper and steeper. Gary discovered a very novel way to descend (see diagram) and I was glad when we finally reached the bottom.

Our overnight halt was located the other side of another 'little' hill, so over we went and found the bothy without too much trouble where we spent the night listening to ghost stories from Mark Langley.

The next day saw a little hike along the coast until we reached the Land-Rover which was, thankfully, waiting to meet us.

P.S. Children, do not try this at home — let the experts do it!!!!

Kevin Goddard.

Devastated But Proud.

When I was picked for the SHS Expedition I was looking forward to a great adventure. On the Journey up to Scotland the weather was fabulous and we were very excited, but as soon as we got on the ferry for forth Uist it started to rain. It never stopped for the next 18 days until I arrived back In Newcastle. I thought North Uist was going to be countryside — but it was desolate wet place with no shops or houses for miles.

given four ropes, two pieces of long wood and we had to cross an imaginary river with crocodiles in it. By letting everyone have their say and putting them together to build an effective plan, you were successful and built up a good working relationship. I gained self-confidence in cooking and climbing by saying to myself "I can do it" rather than "I cannot". Now I feel confident to go on similar expeditions and am about to spend a weekend in Snowdonia.

I would recommend this expedition to my friends because I really enjoyed myself and met lots of people. There are many things you can do and it is great. The leaders are great fun and yet make you feel confident to try new things. It gets you away from home and you can do what you would like to do but watch out always, and work hard or you will get covered in gunge just like me!!!!!!

James Munley.

Expedition Song.

Dear Ernie,

I enclose an incredible piece of artwork on my part. It took all of two minutes to do. Please could you include it in the Report.

I am H.A.P.P.Y

I am HAP.P.Y

I know I am

I'm sure I am

I am H. A. P. P. Y. Y. Y. Y. Y. Y. Y. Y. Y.

I think you know the rest.

Andrew Ward

SHS Uist.

After a very long and tiring journey from Newcastle, we eventually arrived at Uig, Skye. The mountains looked great, I just wanted to stay there. We only stayed overnight and set off for North Uist the next day in the rain. In fact, it rained for nearly all the time and that spoilt the campsite. We spent all the first day carrying supplies in a P4 Inflatable from the road to the campsite. It was great fun and I was luckily enough to see an otter with an eel in its mouth. We also saw some herons and other sea birds but not on the same day. Whilst there, I learnt how to paddle a canoe and passed ay capsized test. I made loads of new friends and did things I've never done before. I would like to go on another expedition but somewhere with shops next time.

Terry Campbell.

I felt very lonely and homesick — there did not seem to be any escape from the terrible weather.

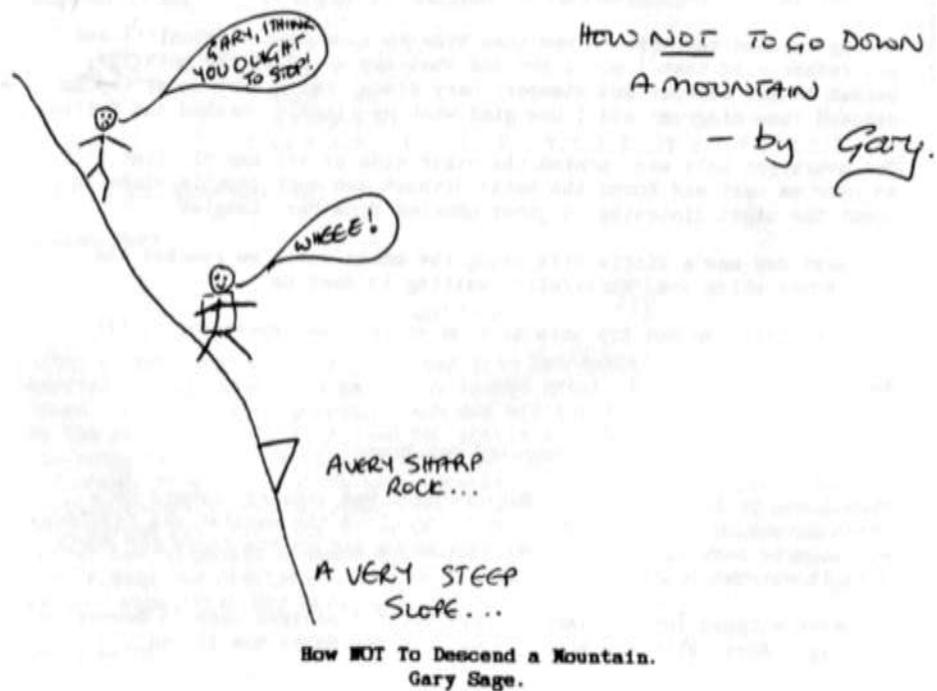
Even in our tent at night time there was no comfort for my feelings.

We ate our meals in a big marquee but this too was just like a swamp — we kept on sinking into the mud.

My feet were always cold and wet and I longed for dry socks and dry trainers. It was very hard not to get homesick and at one point during my time there, I decided I could not stay any longer. If it had not been for my mates, I would never have stayed and coped with the expedition.

After it was all over, I felt a great sense of achievement and anything else I ever try will be easy after that. If you feel like me when you go, don't give up — talk to your mates — they feel the same. By sticking together, you all get through and make it easier.

Andrew Hounan



Canoeing Bivvy.

The bivvy was led by Kim and I had the yellow canoe which was one of the best ones. All our gear went into bivvy bags and was stowed in the back of the canoe in an attempt to keep it dry. It didn't!!!!!!

The five of us set off and we lake-hopped for 5 km on the first day. We camped by the side of the one major road on the island and hitched to the nearest village which was about 7km away.

We made a half pint last for two hours before setting off to return to our canoes. It was a long walk back to the bivvy and by the time we arrived, we were all very hungry. Unfortunately, all we had to eat that night were two tins of Irish stew. We were about to get the stove going when we thought we were dreaming. . . a Fish 'n' Chip van rolled slowly past. The dream turned into a nightmare when we realised that none of us had any money on us at all. The van disappeared into the distance and we were left with the stew.

After another day of lake-hopping, we met the Land-Rover which had more supplies, lost one of the party due to bad blisters, and camped on the beach for our second night out of camp.

We returned to camp on the third day, tired, but we had all enjoyed it.

Mark Heslop.



Rob, clearing up one week after the Hurricane.

Launcelot Fleming: 7/8/1906 - 30/7/90

Launcelot, who wrote the Foreword for the first SHS Report In 1962, and who had visited the first official expedition to Gometra was of crucial importance in ensuring the Society was given credibility in the very early days, and remained friends with many expeditioners until his death. For almost the entire history of the Society Launcelot was an Honorary Adviser, and he attended expeditions up to his 70th birthday.

The Rt. Rev. Launcelot Fleming. K.C. V.O. M. A, D.D, . M.S.. F.R.G.S. . F.R.S.E.. spent his whole life not only in the service of others, but as an inspirational and a joyful companion to anyone who crossed his path. Despite his high office - as explorer, scientist, Chaplain, Bishop, and ultimately as Dean of Windsor — he shared with only a very few other gifted people the ability to relate personally to absolutely anyone, young or old. His modesty was touching and disarming-, he surely cannot have made a single enemy as a result of his actions. However, he was determined and dynamic, keeping up an almost frenetic round of appointments and commitments, and acting as the champion for a thousand causes, including our own.

Launcelot's life was a magnificent example of practical Christianity. He never imposed his commitment on others, though his faith so obviously controlled his life. Ordained nearly sixty years ago he must have ministered to tens of thousands of individuals, quite apart from larger congregations, for ever ready to listen, reserve judgement, and wait for insight to dawn. While in one sense horrified that so many should look to him as an example, he lived to the highest personal standards and was never ashamed to acknowledge his source of strength. Alan Webster in The Guardian quoted a recent message from Launcelot - "Be natural - don't pose -- be yourself and look this way . . . For me this means looking to Jesus Christ, though not to him alone, so as to try to understand and respond better to the wonder and mystery of God's creation."

After a distinguished academic career at Trinity Hall, Cambridge and then at Yale, Launcelot joined Sir Vivian Fuchs in 1932 as geologist on an expedition to Iceland, and the following year, after his ordination, accompanied the Oxford University Exploration Club under Sir Alexander Glen's leadership, as chief scientist on an expedition to Spitsbergen. Launcelot then returned to begin work as Chaplain of Trinity Hall, only to depart again for the Antarctic in 1934, as geologist and Chaplain to the British Grahamland Expedition, the first major expedition to leave Britain since Scott's last expedition in 1911. He stayed in the Antarctic for three years, exploring and mapping one of the last uncharted areas of the world and the Fleming glacier in Grahamland justly bears his name.

During the Second World War Launcelot spent several years as Chaplain on H M S Queen Elizabeth and other ships, and then returned to Cambridge as Dean and Chaplain of Trinity Hall. In 1949 at the early age of 43 he was appointed Bishop of Portsmouth, and then in 1959 he moved to a

twelve year appointment as Bishop of Norwich.

But in 1967 Launcelot suddenly fell ill. A serious spinal condition reduced his mobility and he spent time in hospital. Those who remember him at that time will recall being invited to join him swimming, as he did everything he could to maintain his fitness. Eventually in 1971 at the age of 65 he left Norwich to become Dean of Windsor, where for five busy years he was a close and valued neighbour of the Queen, and other members of the Royal family. His appointment as a Knight Commander of the Royal Victorian Order — the highest personal award the Queen can make -- was recognition of the loyal service Launcelot gave, on occasions which were sometimes potentially very difficult.

Many who met Launcelot for the first time were greeted by the following conversation: 'How old are you?'...'Are you married?' In 1965 in his fifty-ninth year Launcelot and Jane were married, and they celebrated their Silver Wedding anniversary just before he died. Jane and Launcelot were everlastingly hospitable, not least to SHS members, especially at Windsor and at Poyntington, where they lived in so called retirement

This busy, gifted, charismatic man might have been excused for being unable to accept even a nominal association with the SHS. let alone build friendships and maintain lengthy correspondence. Certainly one SHS Chairman was regularly invited for briefings and asked for news of many expeditioners whom Launcelot remembered. Most valuable of all however was Launcelot's participation in expeditions, for here his unique ability to communicate and his lifetime's experience in exploration and pastoral ministry made every moment he stayed of inestimable value. One hot Sunday in 1976, a few weeks before Launcelot retired from Windsor, in contrast to the magnificent splendour of St George's Chapel, but in the wonderful environment of Rhum, Launcelot celebrated Holy Communion for the SHS expedition. The altar was a 'black box', there was a simple cross upon it made from driftwood, and the chalice was a plastic cup. There were no robes, no ceremonial, and a congregation made from the committed, the curious, the agnostic and the 'nothing would drag me into a church.' With humility, integrity and gentleness Launcelot embraced us all, including the sixteen year old Jewish boy who had felt unable to come until Launcelot reminded him of Jesus' nationality. We were in the presence of a saint that day.

The previous Christmas Day, in a television service from Windsor watched by millions Launcelot spoke these words in his sermon: "We are all different. People are always particular people with their own particular qualities, their own distinctive make-up; this is the great thing about humanity. There is no-one in the wide world, and never has been, who is quite like you ... so we must learn to be sensitive to each person's particularity. It is always in the particular that we find God's presence and activity and it is an essential part of the Law of Love to recognise this." Launcelot lived his life bound fast to that Law. In the lives of those he touched, including many in the SHS, his courage, humility, trust, sensitivity, vulnerability, humour and faith will remain as his lasting testimony.

R. Weatherly.

Thoughts of a Past Chairman

Hebridean Dawn.

I suppose it all happened a long time ago but, like a Hebridean dawn. It still seems incredibly clear.

My generation grew up on a diet of Arthur Ransome, the Kontiki Expedition, American National Geographic Magazines and dare I say it ... even the early Enid Blyton Famous Five Books. We were also the immediate post war children, our other readings were the escape yarns such as Colderitz and the Wooden Horse and epics about - The Cruel Sea. We wanted our own adventures.

The Schools Hebridean Society really started late one night in December 1957 after the last performance of the school play - Macbeth, I think it was -- at a boarding school in Surrey. We stage hands had invested the remainder of our pocket money in a couple of bottles of 'V P. British Sherry' ... ugh! ... but it was cheap -- six shillings a bottle --30p and to us it encouraged a sense of expanding our horizons, excitement and maturity.

"Let's go off and live on an uninhabited island", someone said. "Let's do some scientific experiments." Only two of us were actually scientists, the rest just keen to pretend that we one day might count as such and, in the meantime, were more than content to be intrepid explorers.

It took us a long time to get organised. Much consultation of maps and consideration of lists of supplies preceded that glorious month which ten of us eventually spent at Shahman Insir on the extreme North of Rhum in 1959. But modern expedition goers must turn green with envy at the ease with which we got free gifts to take with us from various firms. So much Daz had we that we could have washed all our clothes ten times over, daily for a whole month and still there would have been more cases of those crinkly white soap flakes! As for Swiss Knorr soup we had it three times a day, and still gave away four boxes at the end of the expedition. And the crates of McEwans Export ... three 16 ounce cans a day per person per day for a whole month! Then there was Lea and Perrins Worcester Sauce, best plums and jam from Histon and boxes and boxes of Penguin biscuits. How do I remember? It was I who was in charge of the stores!!

Maybe my whole philosophy owes its origin to Winnie the Pooh. We are all going on an expedition", said Christopher Robin. What's that?", said Pooh. "I don't know really", said Christopher Robin, "I think it's a long line of everyone. We are going to discover a Pole or something." "Can I come too", said Pooh. "I will bring all the stores"... at any rate the text goes something like that. (And it being late at night and my copy of Winnie the Pooh being in my youngest son's bedroom I wouldn't dare chance waking him to check up on this!!)

So we did eat - and drink -- well on Rhum in 1959; and we survived a couple of nasty gales, we stalked deer and climbed mountains and even studied parasites on seagulls! We discovered ourselves. I suspect, more than anything else. . and that did each of us a lot of good. So excited did we become that the idea developed its own momentum. Raasay followed in 1960 and then, the first expedition to call itself the SHS, Gometra in 1962.

Our claim for these was loud and clear.

"Many unspoilt islands off the North West coast of Scotland provide an ideal opportunity for people to live, for a short while, a life that is less restricted and less complicated than usual. With the combination of mountain and sea of beauty and solitude, the Hebrides offer untold adventure for those who seek it.

The Schools Hebridean Society exists to organise expeditions of schoolboys to these islands. Each expedition is made as self supporting as possible from the moment at which it leaves port; the boys have ample scope, throughout to think and act for themselves. Opportunities are given for instruction by the Officers in such sports as climbing and sailing, and in pursuits such as ornithology and botany. This is combined with a practical project that is undertaken by all expeditions.

It is the sincere hope of the Society that boys and officers alike, will benefit greatly from the close interdependence that such a community life engenders. Skills and fresh interests gained will, it is believed, enable a fuller life to be enjoyed by all concerned."

Reading through the early reports it is amazing to see what a juxtaposition there was in the great and the good, the young and the old, extolling the virtues of SHS expeditions. Lord Strathcona said in 1967:

"The Schools Hebridean Society has achieved the remarkable success of finding an enjoyable activity which aims for admirable objectives: all at a modest cost without interfering with anyone else. If you think about it, this is a rare combination of virtues, from the biased viewpoint of anyone making their home in the Western Isles, they also have the good sense to appreciate the particular charms of a wonderful part of the country. They make a real contribution towards achieving a better life in the increasingly complicated, artificial and hard-pressed society by giving young people the opportunity to savour the values of a simpler way of life where time is not always pressing. To the healthiness of the outdoor life is added the "refreshment" of the spirit from the experience of an unspoilt and spacious landscape. Learning to understand the world of nature can add a new dimension to living and makes its contribution to the increasing problem of the constructive use of leisure."

In the same report a poem by G.M. gives a more racy description.

With a mountain of freight, only two hours late,
 We arrive one day by the sea;
 We boarded a boat that could scarcely float
 And for hours drank cups of tea.
 Through the storm we came, remarkably game
 To arrive at Kinloch's Pier
 And what should we find in this desolate land
 But a Post Office selling beer?!

We climbed the track with the wind at our back
 Till the sea was again at hand.
 And here we stay for many a day
 On Shamhnan Insir's strand.
 There are stories great that one may relate
 Of the deeds that then were done:
 Of the heroes who stride on Papadil's Road
 Of how Askival was one.

Some search for gold from days of old;
 Some croquet played with a float;
 Some sailed the seas with redoubtable ease
 Whilst the leader searched for his own boat.
 One summer's morn in the early dawn
 While many were still asleep
 With commendable pluck some set off for Muck
 To see how the natives keep.

Until at last the days were past
 And we headed South for the sun;
 The windy ridges and Billions of midges
 Were memories of Rhum.

Expedition followed expedition. Sagas of rock climbing, sailing, ghost hunting, fishing, bread making, surviving the lumpy porridge, singing raucous rugby songs on the hills and intoning more sacred hymns late of an evening ... always for the initiate exploring a new world of oneself, in surroundings of quite incomparable splendour.

It is an amazing thought but those first ten 'Intrepid' schoolboys, inspired a string of several thousand over the next thirty years. To nearly all of us, I suspect, these were precious days. Days to be thought of not just with nostalgia but days which live with us still in the confidence that they give us in our own strengths; the insights they gave of how each is dependent on the other; and, in a kind of metaphoric sense, the realisation that however hard those Hebridean winds might blow — however vicious might be the klegs late of an evening — the Hebridean dawn will always follow — as clear, as unsullied, as full of colour and excitement as life itself.

John Abbott. Chairman 1962 - 1970.

PAST EXPEDITIONS OF THE SHS

Expedition	Year	Leader
Gometra	1962	John Abbott
Rhum, Shahman Insir	1963	John Abbott
Gometra	1963	Tim Willcocks
Mingulay	1964	Martin Child
South Rona	1964	John Abbott
Raasay	1964	Richard Fountaine
Gometra	1964	James Emerson
Harris, Cravadale	1965	John Abbott
Jura, Ardlussa	1965	Johnny Ker
Raasay	1965	Clifford Fountaine
Norvern	1965	Jim Hardy
Lewis, Bhalamus	1966	Roger Dennien
Harris, Rhenigidale	1966	Alan Bateman
Jura, Ardlussa	1966	Andrew Wilson
Colonsay	1966	Chris Dawson
Dingle, Ireland	1966	John Houghton
Mingulay	1967	Kenneth Huxham
Rhum, Shahman Insir	1967	John Dobinson
Harris, Rhenigidale	1967	Andrew Wilson
Lewis, Aird Bheag	1967	John Abbott
Colonsay	1967	John Jackson
Vatersay	1968	Phil Renold
Lewis, Aird Bheag	1968	David Cullingford
South Rona	1968	Chris Hart
South Uist, Loch Eynort	1968	John Cullingford
Colonsay	1968	Alan Bateman
Shetland	1969	Chris Dawson
South Uist, Loch Eynort	1969	John Cullingford
Lewis, Aird Bheag	1969	John Hutchison
Rhum, Shahman Insir	1969	Chris Hart
Colonsay	1969	Roger Trafford
South Uist, Usinish	1970	Geoffrey David
Shetland, Unst	1970	David Vigar
Fladday	1970	Mike Baker
Lewis, Aird Bheag	1970	Alan Howard
North Uist, Eaval	1970	Phil Renold
Ulva	1970	Alan Fowler
South Rona	1971	Roger Weatherly
Rhum, Salisbury Dam	1971	Phil Renold
Jura, Cruib Lodge	1971	Charles Hooper
Colonsay	1971	Alan Howard
Mingulay	1971	Hugh Williams
Shetland, Muckle Roe	1972	Ray Winter
South Uist, Loch Eynort	1972	Alan Fowler
Lewis, Aird Bheag	1972	Gavin Macpherson
Raasay	1972	Paul Caffery

PAST EXPEDITIONS OF THE SNS

Expedition	Year	Leader
North Uist, Eaval	1972	Roger Weatherly
Harris, Rhenigidale	1972	Phil Renold
South Uist, Usinish	1973	Alan Fowler
South Rona	1973	Jim Turner
Rhum, Salisbury Dam	1973	Mark Rayne
Jura, Cruib Lodge	1973	Dave Bradshaw
Colonsay	1973	Alan Howard
South Uist, Loch Eynort	1974	Jim Turner
Raasay	1974	Peter Carlisle
Harris, Rhenigidale	1974	John Hutchison
North Uist, Eaval	1974	John Cullingford
Lewis, Uig Sands	1974	Paul Caffery
Colonsay	1975	Phil Renold
Jura, Cruib Lodge	1975	Lawrence Hall
South Uist, Loch Eynort	1975	Alan Evison
Raasay	1975	Gavin Macpherson
Mingulay 1	1975	Nick Deeley
Mingulay 2	1975	Wick Deeley
Lewis, Uig Sands	1976	Paul Caffery
Harris, Rhenigidale	1976	John Bromley
South Uist, Loch Eynort	1976	Mike Hayward
North Uist, Eaval	1976	Alan Fowler
Rhum, Salisbury Dam	1976	Roger Weatherly
Lewis, Uig Sands	1977	Wick Deeley
Jura, Cruib Lodge	1977	Dave Harding
Colonsay	1977	David Lennard-Jones
Lewis, Mealista	1977	Phil Renold
Knoydart	1977	Craig Roscoe
Loch Shiel	1977	Peter Liver
Raasay	1978	Roger Weatherly
North Uist, Eaval	1978	Simon Atkinson
South Rona	1978	Mike Hayward
South Uist, Loch Eynort	1978	Dave & Angie Crawford
Rhum, Salisbury Dam	1978	Humphrey Southall
Knoydart	1978	Jim Turner
Rhum, Salisbury Dam	1979	Mike Hayward
Islay	1979	Roger Weatherly
Lewis, Tamanavay	1979	Tony Ingleby
Loch Shiel	1979	Alan Smith
Jura, Cruib Lodge	1979	Steve Paynter
Lewis, Mealista	1979	Pete Weston
Colonsay	1980	John Round
Mingulay	1980	Nick Deeley
North Uist, Eaval	1980	Steve Paynter
South Uist, Loch Eynort	1980	Simon & Rose Atkinson

PAST EXPEDITIONS OF THE SNS

Expedition	Year	Leader
Harris Rhenigidale	1980	Jonathan Orr
Knoydart	1980	Ian Arrow
Colonsay	1981	Chris Venning
Lewis, Mealista	1981	Gavin Macpherson
Jura, Cruib Lodge	1981	Roger Weatherly
Lewis, Tamanavay	1981	Peter Fale
Rhum, Salisbury Dam	1981	Alan Smith
Loch Shiel	1981	Steve Paynter
Raasay	1982	Chris Venning
North Uist, Loch Eport	1982	Hugh Lorimer
South Uist, Loch Eynort	1982	Richard Young
Loch Shiel	1982	Simon Lord
Harris, Rhenigidale	1982	Simon Atkinson
Mingulay	1982	Ian Arrow
Rhum, Salisbury Dam	1983	Richard Young
Skye, Camusunary	1983	Simon Lord
Jura, Cruib Lodge	1983	Hugh Lorimer
Colonsay	1983	Colette Armitage
North Uist, Loch Eport	1984	Richard Young
Harris, Cravadale	1984	Steve Paynter
South Uist, Loch Eynort	1984	Mark Bankes
Mingulay	1984	Nick Deeley
Rhum	1985	Alan Smith
Harris, Rhenigidale	1985	Jo Walker
Colonsay	1985	Colette Armitage
Jura, Cruib Lodge	1985	Rob McDermott
Knoydart	1985	Mark Bankes & Jonathan Bletcher
Harris, Cravadale	1986	Claire McCombe
Lewis, Mealista	1986	Mike Osborne
Knoydart	1986	Rob McDermott
South Uist, Loch Eynort	1987	Richard Young
Jura, Cruib Lodge	1988	Rob McDermott
North Uist, Loch Eport	1989	Ian Earnshaw

Since 1962, there have been 124 expeditions visiting the following areas:- (some areas have had more than one site)

Gometra (3); Rhum (11); Mingulay (8); Islay (1); Skye (1); South Rona (5); Harris (11); Raasay (7); Jura (11); Morvern (1); Loch Shiel (4); Lewis (15); Dingle, Ireland (1); Colonsay (12); Vatersay (1); South Uist (13); Shetland (3); Fladday (1); North Uist (9); Ulva (1); Knoydart (5).

What of the Future???

As you will have read, the Directors of the Schools Hebridean Company Limited have, reluctantly, taken the decision to dissolve the Company.

It is written in the Articles of Association of the Company that, should the Company cease trading, the assets have to be distributed amongst similar organisations. Here is a breakdown of where the assets have gone:

Money

Gatliff Trust (Rhenigidale Hostel) approx £2000.00

Jura Project (Outdoor Centre) approx £2000.00

'Watch' Scotland (Environment Project) approx. £500.00

Equipment

Jura Project — 2 P4's plus engines; 40' by 20' marquee; 12' by 12' marquee; 4 canoes; BBC B computer + peripherals; topper: project boxes; 6 Icelandic tents + groundsheets; 3 vango tents; kitchen equipment.

Torrington Scouts — climbing equipment; 30' by 15' marquee.

221st Birmingham Scouts — 2 ropes; 2 helmets.

Forest School Camps -- remainder of damaged equipment.

Jura Project

At the final meeting of the Directors of the SHS, it was decided to support a project on Jura which was being established with very similar aims to the SHS. In view of this support Jura, in return, have offered a Directorship to Rob McDermott who has accepted on behalf of the SHS. This will ensure that the ethos of the SHS will continue (if only in spirit) and will also allow people to continue to use the equipment. Anyone requiring information can contact Rob.

Gatliff Trust

The SHS Directors requested of Gatliff that the money be specifically for Rhenigidale where it will be spent on the construction of a new toilet block adjacent to the Hostel. There will be a plaque to commemorate this.

Any further information about SHS Expeditions, lists of past member's addresses, etc, can be obtained from Robert McDermott, whose address can be found on page one of the Report. Those interested in associating with the Jura Project or in working parties renovating the simple hostels of the Gatliff trust in the Outer Isles should also contact Rob.

Richard Young.

Bob McDermott.

On behalf of SHS Expeditions

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