

THE 1966 REPORT OF  
**THE SCHOOLS HEBRIDEAN SOCIETY**  
 (Founded in 1960)

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## FOREWORD

By **J. S. Grant, Esq., M.A., O.B.E.**,  
Chairman of the Crofters Commission

I sometimes think that your Society could quite as appropriately be called the Hebridean School Society" as the "Schools Hebridean Society .

The Hebrides are a school in a very real sense. In an urbanised and overcrowded island like Britain the discipline of living temporarily in a remote uninhabited place is an important part of education and I am sure the work that you are pioneering on a voluntary basis will eventually become an accepted part of the curriculum—perhaps I should say the vacation curriculum—of many schools.

I remember one day early in the war meeting a young deckboy on the pier at Stornoway. He was coming home on survivor's leave. His ship had been torpedoed three hundred miles out in the Atlantic and, although he was only seventeen years old, he was the only man on board who could handle a lifeboat under sail. He stayed at the tiller almost continuously for five days and nights until he brought his shipmates to safety in the English Channel.

The pattern of life in the Hebrides is changing rapidly and that sort of skill is rapidly being lost except in some of the remote communities still without modern transport. When I was young every man in Lewis outside the professional and commercial classes was a fisherman. Today no one in the whole of Lewis need ever handle a boat except by choice.

It is good, therefore, to see the Hebridean tradition being kept alive by those of you who have discovered the islands and who use them as a proving ground.

It is also good to know that you establish friendly contact with the local communities near whom you camp.

This is a difficult period of transition for many of the smaller communities where the population is ageing and going down rapidly in numbers. Warm, helpful human relations with young folk can mean much to them and while helping the local communities is not, and should not be, the primary object of your expeditions it could be a useful by-product, with profit, I am sure, for both parties in the transaction.

**J. S. GRANT**

## EDITORIAL COMMENT

As I have discovered, it is by no means easy to maintain the high standard set by Martin Child, who built this publication up from nothing to what it is now. Fortunately he has not left the scene completely and I am thankful that he is at hand to help and that I have his invaluable experience in the shape of his past Reports.

As far as timing goes, "the best-laid schemes o' mice and men gang aft a-glay". I think that we shall have to reconcile ourselves to the fact that the Report will be an early Spring publication and that the Prospectus published earlier will serve as the imparter of information for the following year.

I hope that the quality of the finished article is equal to the amount of material received, especially from members of the Lewis and Colonsay Expeditions. My thanks go to John Dobinson and his associates, Steven Harris, John Cullingford and Alan Bateman for their help, as well as to Mr. Leslie James and the Southwold Press Ltd., and to all those who contributed articles. I am sorry that there was not enough room to include them all. A special word of thanks goes to Peter Gait, who not only put up with my efforts on the typewriter, but typed out material for me and drew the map of Scotland and the Islands.

There is a great deal of talent, in many fields, amongst S.H.S. members. However, I think that sometimes we should take a look at work done by others. I am therefore very pleased that we should have for our cover design a painting by Derek Hill. As well as being on the board of the Contemporary Art Society and a portrait painter of note, he is familiar with such remote places as the Scottish Islands and the West of Ireland and is able to capture their atmosphere to the full.

Editor

## DE NAVIBUS

In the 1965 Report I said "A boat of our own at last". I should like to say that our fleet has now been doubled—thanks to generous donations to the Society both by favourably disposed charitable bodies and by parents.

The new addition to the fleet is a 16ft. launch for general purpose usage, with a Seagull Century Plus outboard; she is quarter decked with two thwarts, and side seats aft. Slight modification for hydrographic purposes include a removable shelter amidships which houses a small chart table (and certain individuals in the rain). Since it was hoped to convert the boat to sailing at a later date, a centreboard case and mast step were added. However, it has been found that although a first-class sea boat and very dry, conversion to sail would not be practicable due to the great windage of the bow. For the statistically minded, here are some relevant figures:

16ft. x 8ft. strake dinghy  
Beam 5 ft. 10 in. at maximum  
Beam 3 ft. 6 in. at transom  
Mid. depth (moulded) 2 ft. 0 in.

A name for this boat is still outstanding, so any suggestions before the conference would be welcomed – bearing in mind our sailing dinghy is called “Vinga”

The total fleet of the S.H.S. therefore comprises the following:

- 16 ft. 0 in. launch - in Stornoway.
- 16 ft. 0 in. sailing dinghy - in Colonsay
- One canoe—in Colonsay
- Two Seagull outboard motors
- Lifejackets
- Repair kits.

The estimated cost of the two boats together on the appeal was £480 0s 0d. of which £445 12s. 6d. has so far been spent. There are certain items, including some maintenance, still to come, and this figure should be rounded off by the end of the winter.

Gubernator

## LEWIS EXPEDITION 1966

*Leader* Roger Dennien

*Officers*

Robin Lord, John Dobinson, Mike Baker, John Sandison, David Williams, Launcelot Fleming, Ian Moore.

*Boys*

Martin Bedwell, Paul Brooke, David Crews, Stuart Cullum, Dirk Dekker, Peter Hannam, David Hawkins, Miles Henniker-Major, Michael Milliard, Gerard Hodge, Michael Jeavons, Brian Lett, Peter Liver, Michael Martin, Tony Milton, Fabian Miskin, Jeremy Monk, Tony Nicholl, Bob Pennell, James Osmond, Philip Renold, Graham Turner, Andy Weall, Dick Perks, Lyulph Hesling.

## LEADER'S REPORT

On our last day on the Long Island, in Stornoway, I was interviewed for the Scottish Home Service of the B.B.C. One of the questions was, "How did you set about getting to such an out-of-the-way place as Bhalamus?"; it would have needed a whole programme to answer that!

Some members of last year's Cravadale expedition had complained that it was too near civilisation, "Could we arrange something really out in the wilds?" Well, Bhalamus is the answer, and reaching it is no easy journey. When John Abbott and I inspected the site at Easter 1966 we had to walk out from Eishken, where Miss Thornycroft, the land-owner, lives. It was a good ten miles over very rough country and blizzards and head-winds didn't help. But, even in the snow, Bhalamus seemed to be an ideal site. In addition, John Mackenzie, the crofter of the land around Bhalamus itself, was extremely friendly and said that he was willing for us to use the croft building. This proved its value many times over.

Through the good offices of George Newhall, who, once again, did a wonderful job of sorting out many of the confusions that we created, the Sea Cadets were brought in to solve the problem of taking us to

the site. Commander Peter Cunningham agreed to take us from Stornoway directly to Bhalamus in their M.F.V. So we were in business. Here is our diary:

*August 20<sup>th</sup>: Saturday.* Ian Moore and Graham Turner leave London in Ian's Landrover bound for Tarbert (Harris) and Stornoway to check stores and to take over the boat from the Rhenigidale expedition.

*22<sup>nd</sup>: Monday.* Pye of Cambridge have agreed to *lend* us a radio transmitter/receiver which will link with the nearest lighthouse, Eilean Glas on Scalpay. This will operate in the 160 Mc/sec band and so we can make a regular contact on the lighthouse's own frequencies. Pye are cutting special crystals for us to go in a Bantam unit. They should be ready by Wednesday, they say.

*24<sup>th</sup>: Wednesday.* One of the crystals has failed under test; will I phone tomorrow? Bob Pennell leaves by train to join the others in Stornoway. Dick Perks should be setting out from Oban with some stores.

*25<sup>th</sup> Thursday.* Pye phone to confirm that the set is ready and arrange to leave it at Euston for me to collect. Relief! (We also have two walki-talkie sets for our own internal use but we couldn't really use those for the lighthouse contact.) The majority of the expeditors gather at Euston to catch the Royal Highlander for Inverness, leaving at 8.20 p.m. David Crews misses the train!

*26<sup>th</sup>: Friday.* Having been joined by a few more members on the way we assemble at the Station Hotel, Inverness, for a sumptuous breakfast. I phone David's home and work out that he will not get to Stornoway in time to catch the sea cadet boat to Bhalamus! We travel to Kyle and then, on the Loch Seaforth, make a wonderful journey to Stornoway; the Minch dead calm, forty miles visibility, porpoise escort. Our Stornoway friends and the advance party are on the jetty to meet us. We stoke up at the Square Restaurant and then stagger off to the scout hut for some sleep.

*27<sup>th</sup>: Saturday.* A clear but windy day, we load up the M.F.V. and are away with a goodly crowd waving farewell, including John Mackenzie who came to Stornoway to confirm that all is well at Bhalamus and that his sons will be round on Monday. We make a good passage along a very imposing coastline past the uninhabited Shiant Islands. The cadets are obviously experienced seamen; we make "land-fall" in our snug inlet right on E.T.A. What a beautiful place; clear, still water, ringed round by protecting rock arms, a heathery valley disappearing into the haze with a stream running into the bay. the croft and outhouses with smaller streams running down behind them and a flat area in front leading directly on to the landing stage.

In a very short time the stores are ashore and we are settling in. The two lower rooms of the croft (it has an upstairs!) are being cleared for a galley and work-room and the marquee is going up immediately outside. A 250-foot length of piping is bringing water right to our back door. We are going to be very snug.

28<sup>th</sup>: *Sunday*. Kind weather again and the midges are out in force. I make our first radio contact with Eilean Glas, sitting on the hill overlooking the camp. I can actually see across to Scalpay. We are on double summer time. The duty section has produced a marvellous "all mod. cons." galley and we have a combined wet and dry pit with the outflow from the piped water supply acting as a flush. The north room is cleared and the Bishop takes a communion service there in the evening; very simple, very right.

29<sup>th</sup>: *Monday*. Robin, Ian, Bishop and I go off to Tarbert to see if Miss Thorneycroft will receive us. She suggests that she visits us later on. So we collect Dave Crews from Tarbert, visit Eilean Glas and generally assure ourselves that the boat is sea-worthy. We see one or two sharks who, fortunately, don't seem too interested in us.

Three parties have set off to make a preliminary exploration of the area. James takes a 15-foot tumble and the boat is needed to collect him. The doctor diagnoses bruises only, lucky James.

30<sup>th</sup>: *Tuesday*. The crofters' fishing boat is in the inlet this morning and they come ashore and admire our work on the site. I must say we have really changed things in two days. The north room has maps and charts round the walls, a library and a long work table with an angled mapping surface. The marquee is equipped with a full table and bench unit to seat 32.

The Bishop has come to the end of his brief stay and returns to Tarbert in our boat. We kept a regular link with the boat on the w/t sets and managed to make contact over eight miles.

31<sup>st</sup>: *Wednesday*. The weather remains superb. A party has gone off for the day to the Shiant Islands. The tide pole is up and the first watches are organised. James has gone off to Stornoway with the crofters to have his leg X-rayed. Dick Perks has offered to go with him.

1<sup>st</sup> *September: Thursday*. Today's trip to Tarbert for bread has been delayed because the boat has sprung a plank. John Dobinson has got together a team who have managed to produce a wide range of patching materials. Finally a p.v.c. and tar patch is fixed. The boat seems to let no water at all. We'll see. John Sandison takes a party into Tarbert. It rains, at last, and they return rather bedraggled, having collected James and Dick. The second night "on the pole" looks like being less pleasant.

2<sup>nd</sup>: *Friday*. The crofters have been gathering sheep with the help of some of the expedition and this afternoon a much-filmed dipping session is under way. Tonight's pole-watch is to be a bridge party for four plus one. The Bosun is complaining that Robin is organising too much by the way of provisions.

3<sup>rd</sup>: *Saturday*. A wonderfully warm and dry night on the watch, though we only managed one rubber of bridge. I retire to my tent only to be wakened by the report that Miss Thorneycroft's boat is coming into Bhalamus bay. However, she did not come ashore. Some of us have been helping the crofters on the sheep drive to Balallan, 25 miles away, though they didn't help that far! The weather is breaking up and we are all feeling tired. Rest tomorrow.

4<sup>th</sup>: *Sunday*. A late breakfast and a generally relaxed day after the week's activities. Projects have sprung up in many directions and interest is developing. The weather report is not good and I have set a storm watch.

5<sup>th</sup>: *Monday*. Last night was pretty rough. According to Eilean Glas there was a force nine wind in the Minch. No bread from Tarbert today. So there is a general attack on the sites of the derelict crofts that we have found.

6<sup>th</sup>: *Tuesday*. Last night was even rougher. The storm watch did a good job with a number of tent evacuations to handle. The weather forecast is force eight for the next 48 hours. We need that bread and so John Sandison takes a party walking to Eishken to collect it however he may. Ian and Graham have to leave the island on Thursday and so they walk too. We have moved a lot of people into the upper rooms of the croft and into the barn. Considering how violent the weather is we are pretty snug. The watch on the tide pole has had to end ... no tide pole any more! ... but 107 hours should be enough for the Admiralty computer.

Morale is high. We spent an hour or two fooling around on the headland jumping in the wind which is strong enough to carry you along. The evening sessions of prayers, cocoa and singing take on a real significance in these sort of conditions.

7<sup>th</sup>: *Wednesday*. The weather has moderated. Project work is in full swing again, especially the echo-sounding with long lists of bearings and depths to struggle with and match up to the predicted tide heights. The food party has returned on the crofters' boat (wonderful people).

8<sup>th</sup>: *Thursday*. Mike Baker and Bosun have gone into Tarbert with John Dobinson. They hope to take a quick look at the community at Scalpay village.

9<sup>th</sup>: *Friday*. The weather has deteriorated again. Plans to make this a full day of project work have been cut. However, most people are busy writing their reports. Our last evening is quiet but memorable.

10<sup>th</sup>: *Saturday*. Good weather, for which much thanks. Our final contact is made with Eilean Glas and we go back on to summer time. We are packed and ready at 3 p.m. for the sea cadets, and are back in Stornoway by 7 p.m. Everyone is free until midnight and they are all back for the roll-call.

We spent a quiet Sunday in Stornoway and took the midnight boat to Kyle, arriving at 5 a.m., making a rapid transfer to the train. At Inverness the party dispersed.

And such is the outline of what happened. But who can record the spirit of such an enterprise, the pains and problems, the joys and triumphs, the growing sense of fellowship. We are all changed by our experiences, wiser perhaps, more thoughtful of the needs of others, each with his own memories. Bhalamus is a beautiful place and the memory of it is a happy one.

Roger Dennien

## THE HISTORY OF LOCH BHALAMUS

Before the turn of the century, there were crofters to be found on most of the fertile land on Lewis although this was mainly limited to the shores of the lochs. They lived by fishing and agriculture, growing oats, corn and potatoes. They used lazy beds, a system known in the south as "ridge and furrow" and also kept cows for their own basic needs. However, at the end of the nineteenth century, a profitable market for wool was found and many of the crofters, especially those on the banks of Loch Claidh, were turned out of their homes almost overnight and sent to Canada in order to make more room for sheep. An Act passed early this century has since protected the rights of the crofters.

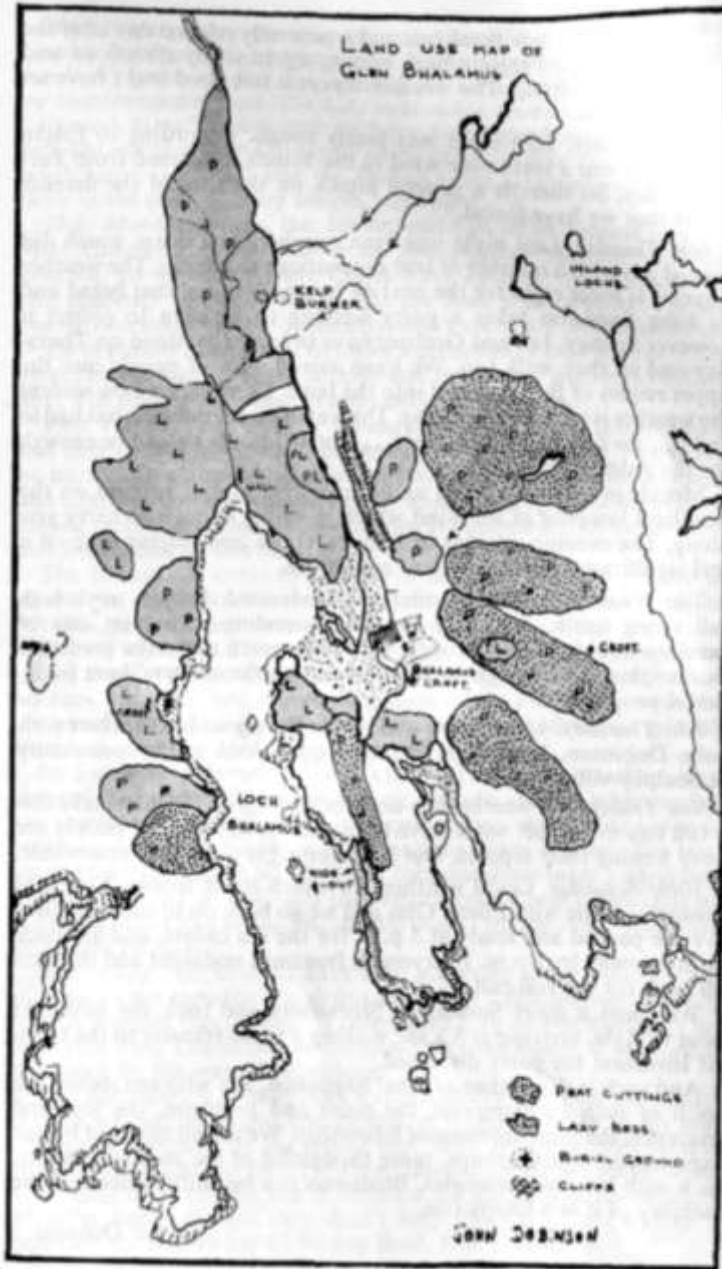
Norwegians used to harpoon basking sharks for their oil which was then stored on Aird Caihanish. They needed a 21 in. rope to hold their catch as the sharks around these coasts can reach a length of forty feet. The crofters say that three or four years ago the sharks were so numerous that small boats had to stay close to the rocks in order to avoid mishap. When the sharks became less numerous the Norwegians discontinued their industry. For the same reasons, lobster fishing also is no longer profitable.

The present crofters of Bhalamus live in Balallan and use the croft at Bhalamus only for storing wool. The croft was once inhabited by stewards of the estate and is said to have had one of the most beautiful gardens on the Isle of Lewis. The MacKenzies, the local crofting family, started with ten sheep and now have seven or eight hundred. They sell eight bales of white wool each year and usually have one bale of black wool in excess. ("Black wool" is the low grade type of wool and not the wool of black sheep.) They sell to the Wool Marketing Board which yields them a price better by far than if they sold the wool locally.

The McKenzies also fish for prawns in summer and herring in winter. These latter they sell either for kippers or to the herring oil factory.

When they are in Bhalamus the crofters now sleep on their boat but they used to live in the house. The house itself is said to be about a hundred and eighty years old. It was built by the owner of the Eishken Lodge Park Estate which embraces all the south-east of Lewis but he never actually lived there. He was an absentee landlord who lived in England so the croft was inhabited by stewards and one of these left his name carved in the lead on an upper window. Unfortunately it is now illegible but the first three letters MOR suggest that the name may have been Morrison. The Mackenzie clan moved from Bhalamus to Balallan during the war while the lairds now live in a larger house at Eishken.

The extent of the community at Bhalamus in former times is demonstrated by the large burial ground found near the house. This is rectangular in shape and made of sand but is now inhabited by a colony of rabbits. Legend has it that a man who shot one of these



rabbits died four days later in very unpleasant circumstances. However no harm has yet come to the member of our expedition, Martin Bedwell, who also tried to reduce the number of rabbits. The MacKenzies joke about the burial ground and its curse but this is unusual for most of the crofters have great respect for the supernatural.

The remoteness of the Outer Hebrides made them an ideal hideout for outlaws and many found their way to the islands. There is a cave on the far side of Loch Bhrollum which is known to have been inhabited by a convict and we also found two well-camouflaged shelters, one of which we excavated.

At Bhalamus is buried a legendary barrel of silver shillings which has often been sought but never found. It is said to have been the property of a crofter who left his money here. There is also a tale of a ship carrying china plates which was wrecked on the nearby rocks and although it is not clear whether the men of Bhalamus murdered the sailors or vice versa, the area became famous for its beautiful plates. Another ship carrying a cargo of coke foundered on the same rocks and the coke which was washed ashore was used by the crofters. Indeed, burnt coke was found in the fireplace of the Sajd croft excavated by some of the members of our expedition.

(We are indebted to the MacKenzie family who were the source of much of the information and many of the legends recounted above.)

Brian Lett and Peter Hannan

## SINGING

From the very beginning of the expedition, as soon as the croft had been cleaned out, singing proved to be one of the most popular activities. The first two nights did not pass with quite the same swing as later on since we were still getting to know each other, but they were a good start and once we were into the North Room and the notice "Lewis Folk Club, All Welcome" had been put up, we really made progress.

Every night, after prayers, almost everyone gathered round the table and before long we were all singing to the accompaniment of our resident guitarist, John Dobinson. Folksongs seemed to be the most popular but all forms of music were enjoyed and especially those with a rousing chorus. Songs were introduced which many had not heard before but which we were quick to learn. These included two songs composed by Tony Nicholl, "Bhalamus Rock" sung to the tune of "Rock my soul in the bosom of Abraham", and "The Bhalamus Blues" to the tune of "The House of the Rising Sun".

Towards the end of the expedition John Dobinson began to compose a song called "The S.H.S. Game" and this we sang to the tune of "The Patriot Game", an Irish ballad. By the time it was completed this now famous work had reached the fantastic length of fourteen verses. It has since been recorded by the Mike Baker Studios but has yet to reach the Top Thousand!

Although the Folk Club met only in the evenings, most people found reason to sing at all hours of the day (and often night), while walking, crofting, boating, cooking, tide-pole watching, and even while doing nothing else at all.

Mike (Paddy) Milliard

P.S. Modesty forbids the writer of the above article to mention the fine Irish music which graced the portals of Bhalamus. For such ballads as "The North Countrie" and other patriotic "ditties" we shall long remember the Irish Paddy.

J.B.D.

## GEOGRAPHICAL SURVEY OF GHLINNE MOIR LOCHS

Investigation of the area above the camp at Bhalamus revealed a plateau 325 ft. above sea level. This plateau contained nine major lochs each of which was cradled in rising peat, and lay as shown on the map.

The temperatures of lochs B and E were taken before a heavy storm which persisted for three days. The surface temperature of loch E was then 58°F. and that on the bottom was 60° F. After the storm, the temperature at the surface was 54 F. but still two degrees higher at depth. The fact that the temperature was greater at the bottom of the lochs is probably due to direct contact with peat. Thus the higher temperature could result from a chemical or bacterial action taking place in the decomposing peat, the latter being the more likely. The temperature gradients of the other seven lochs were also taken and we found a consistent difference between surface and depth of one or two degrees.

A simple method for measuring the depths of the lochs was devised by Mike Baker. With this device, which involved a four-foot plank, forty yards of rope and a large stone, we obtained reasonably accurate measurements. The depths varied and seemed to bear no relationship to temperature. Loch F was 19ft. 11 in. at its deepest recorded point and supported no visible plant life, either on the surface or deeper down. However, weed covered twenty-five per cent of the surface of loch B which was no more than eighteen inches deep. The "Lake of the lilies" was also very shallow and, as its name implies, had a carpet of plants. There is thus an obvious relationship between depth and amount of plant life. On lochs which were only partly covered, vegetation was located where the water was fairly shallow and protected from dominant wind directions.

Part of the peat dam holding back loch F was cleared and the resulting canal flowed underground after about twenty feet and took ten minutes to reappear and flow into loch E. The canal was then damned and reopened several days later when it took only three and a half minutes to reach loch E.

Several of the lochs flow one way and also seep through the peat in the opposite direction. The place at which they flow out is in no case the deepest point. All the lochs are linked by either surface or underground waterways. Some just seem to seep into another, e.g. F into I. but they are all eventually linked with Allt a'ghlinne Mhoir.

These lochs are situated in a very picturesque peat-stepped glen with a burn running down the westward side. Study of lakes in this situation is a relatively new field and leading geographers have not yet fully determined the important role of peat in lake formation under these conditions.

Bob Pennell

### IN RETROSPECT

There are boats and boats, and Oh Boy! was that a boat. The story begins when it was found lying in the bay of Tarbert with rather more water inside than out. Three brave, mad or otherwise lads sailed this craft, powered by a 100 cc. Seagull outboard motor, to Loch Bhalamus where they stopped . . . dead. One day later, thirty innocent explorers arrived at this same Loch Bhalamus unaware of the dangers which lay ahead. Among them were two unshaven matelots who were to become the most efficient, courageous and skilful crew the boat will ever have.

Many "bailful" hours later it was discovered that there was a leak . . . in fact there were two leaks. However even these could not deter our crew from making many death-defying voyages, at risk of life and limb, to that metropolis of Harris, Tarbert to fetch supplies for the starving and "gasping" population of Bhalamus.

Amongst their many adventures, several deserve mention. Firstly, a Very Important Person on leave from Norwich was ferried across the seas to Tarbert. This journey proved uneventful except for the customary filling of the petrol tank and unfilling of the boat.

Next it became necessary one day forcibly to disembark half the crew, leaving the other member in charge of half a dozen passengers. Unfortunately the abandoned crew was left upon a small outcrop of rock surrounded by the cold, dark and uninviting waters of Loch Bhalamus. Discovering this he was, to say the least, a trifle concerned as it happened that the tide was on the rise. His many vain protestations at the fast receding vessel were answered with an amplified version of the same from the other member of the crew who promptly succumbed to a fit of hysterics.

Some days later the crew again took to the boat this time to ferry personnel to the tide-pole and to retrieve two exhausted starving hydrographers who had spent many cold wet hours watching the waters a'coming up and a'going down a piece of wood attached to some rocks. On the return journey a Seagull (of the feathered variety) departed for the Happy Hunting Grounds. A few minutes later the mechanical Seagull suffered a slight "misfortune" and went on strike. The crew by complete coincidence spent several days on shore leave. (Several days too many because they were forced to find other direction for their undoubted talents . . . Ed.)

Then came the storm. This necessitated the rescue of two hydrographers from the rock because neither of them was inclined to carry any of the heavy equipment round the head of the loch. The crew set forth bright and early next morning at about eleven o'clock B.S.T. (Bhalamus Summer Time). With the help of the Bos'n, all the gear

was safely removed from the rock and, incidentally, the two hydrographers as well. This was a perilous venture which taxed the skill and ingenuity of the crew to the utmost. However, with their habitual high standard of seamanship they managed to pick up all the equipment and to extricate themselves without a scratch on the boat, even though there was a two-foot swell. Mission was accomplished safely yet again.

Due to the ensuing storm the crew was unable to set forth again until our trusty lads made their last voyage to Scalpay to deliver one passenger and, once again, to satisfy the needs of the "gasping" masses.

The time came to leave Bhalamus and after a dramatic last-minute rescue of an abandoned anorak, the boat was ignominiously towed to Stornoway where she now lies, lonely and forlorn. The crew was paid off and, after a farewell shindig with the MacKenzies, was sent from the islands in chains, no doubt destined to disrupt sailing communities elsewhere. (No possible doubt . . . Ed.)

The End (literally).

Dirk and Dick

### CLIMBING

At first sight the cliffs above the camp-site looked promising for the experienced and excellent for beginners. However the routes we found proved to be much harder than expected. This was mainly due to the fact that the rock was very steep and handholds scarce and loose. Belays were very poor and in most cases pitons and nuts were needed.

The first climb, "Y" climb, was the hardest we attempted (graded Severe) and had a difficult overhang at its summit. "Werewolf" (Difficult) as usual lacked good belays but was a very nice "balance" climb. "Watercourse", nearby, was climbed, as the name implies, in the rain and in these conditions was graded Hard Difficult.

The longest climb achieved was "Terrace direct" (Very Difficult). This was a good, if loose, climb which had three pitches and was about a hundred and eighty feet long. During the second week of the expedition the gale winds were almost strong enough to carry us up the cliff-face without ropes and thus little climbing was attempted. There is scope for good climbing on rock faces nearer Tarbert and these would be worth visiting another year.

David Crews and Tony Milton

### HYDROGRAPHIC REPORT

Our aim at the outset was to make a chart of Loch Bhalamus. The results at the end fell short of this but, and it is a very important but, the work achieved was vital, interesting to all and often adventurous in the face of adverse elements.

Hydrographers are involved in study of the sea. The Schools Hebridean Society tries, where conveniently possible, to produce work which will prove useful to other organisations. In our case, the

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work of most use to the Admiralty was that connected with the tides and the chart itself is of secondary importance.

Thus our first task was to construct a tide-pole and attach it to a cliff-face. Having done this on the morning of our third day in camp, we opened the record-book and a regular series of quarter-hourly readings of tide-height linked by meteorological comments and notes on the surface of the loch was commenced. One hundred and seven hours later the book closed with this entry: "Tide: 14 ft. 6 in., still rising. Wind: southerly gale-force 8, gusting 10. Considerable swell. Tide-pole bowed dramatic exit in face of heavy surf."

In the task of manning the ill-fated tide-pole, all members of the expedition played their part. Certainly, the drawing of the sine-wave of tide motion each evening produced much interest as we all realised how irregular was the pattern at Bhalamus.

In addition to the study mentioned above, several members of the expedition learned how to use a surveying sextant, an echo-sounder. Seagull outboards - and also an assortment of fishing tackle. The knowledge gained was put to good use and Mr. Bosun, for instance, became a master in the art of gutting and filleting. Possibly of greater importance were the white symbols that appeared along the banks of the loch. The Admiralty will receive a chart showing the exact location of these marks and it was from these that we began running lines of depth soundings and charting of rocks.

With a boat available for longer periods and the Meteorological Section able to forecast better weather conditions, another year should see a great deal more information marked on our chart.

Ian G. Moore

### THE SHS GAME

Being a song of the 1966 Lewis Expedition

1. Now Lewis is far North in the fair Hebrides,  
A party of stalwarts went there for to please  
Their leaders Rog Dennien and Robin by name  
They're all taking part in the S.H.S. game.
2. John D. and John S. and Mike Baker were more,  
Dave—the Doc—Williams and bold Ian Moore.  
That made up the total of officers' names.  
All taking their part in the S.H.S. game.
3. There was Rock, Dick and Dirk to name but a few,  
Two Peters, a Miles and Fabian too.  
Stu Cullum and Brian and Andy and James,  
All taking their part in the S.H.S. game.
4. With Bob, Phil, and Lyulph and Noble Boatswine,  
And Jerry, two Tonies, two Mikes in the line.  
Three David's a Gerard and a Paddy of Fein,  
All playing their part in the S.H.S. game.
5. The weather was fine for the first week or so.  
Then the clouds they did gather the wind it did blow, It  
blew in the Marquee and five tents the same, We  
began to regret, the S.H.S. game.

6. The tide pole was watched for a number of days  
Until it was ripped from its fastening stays,  
We hope the Admiralty can use what remains.  
We all played our part in the S.H.S. game.
7. The wind it did blow at force nine or force ten,  
The boat out of Tarbert it could not get in,  
A party walked out in the dread hurricane,  
To keep us provided in the S.H.S. game.
8. We saw Eagles and Gannets and Hoodies not rare  
Seals, Sharks and Porpoises that swam without care  
Floating in silence the grim Lion's mane.  
So we did not go swimming in the S.H.S. game.
9. We must thank the MacKenzies for all their kind aid.  
The use of their croft for which nothing we paid,  
The drifter we ruined for which Rog got the blame!  
They kept life exciting for the S.H.S. game.
10. Each morning at tennish, at Scalpay it's nine.  
Our radio contact he's always on time.  
He gives us the weather, it's always the same.  
He's an integral part of the S.H.S. game.
11. Now in Bhalamus harbour the rocks are all white.  
The echo recording for each sextant sight,  
The map has been contoured, but it's really a shame, That  
accuracy's rare in the S.H.S. game.
12. The fishing was good in both Loch and in Sea  
Fresh Mackerel and Whiting and Salmon all free.  
With fly and with spinner they're hooked all the same.  
They all graced the table of the S.H.S. game.
13. The crofts were discovered and digging begun.  
The peats they did fly as the work turned to fun.  
The samples were taken and the pots they contain.  
We'll start a museum in the S.H.S. game!
14. And now it is time for the last sad farewell.  
Goodbye to the heather, and the midges as well!  
We'll remember the lochs, the sun and the rain  
And perhaps we'll come back with the S.H.S. game.

John Dobinson

The tune is after "The Patriot Game"—Ed.

### THE SHIANT ISLES

The Shiant Isles consist of three main islands. Eilean Mhuire. Eilean an Tighe and Garbh Eilean, the latter two being joined by a spit of pebbles. These islands are formed from Tertiary Basalt which is a volcanic rock. The highest point is on Garbh Eilean which reaches 530 ft. above sea-level and is one of the highest columns of Tertiary Basalt in the world.

The name of the islands derives from the Gaelic, meaning "charmed", and they are still often referred to as the "Charmed Isles". According to legend they were once inhabited by "The Blue





Men of the Minch" who were supposed to have lured sea-faring folk on to the rocks.

We set out by boat from Loch Bhalamus early one morning and during the smooth crossing we saw two sharks and several seals. We landed first on Eilean an Tighe, the southernmost of the islands, on which there is a white croft with red tin roof. This is still used by shepherds in the summer but there is no water supply on the island. After lunch we walked along the east coast of the north island towards a natural arch in the rocks and saw some very interesting rock formations rising above the shores. After about half a mile the seaweed-covered rocks became impassable and we had to turn back.

Lastly we visited the third island in the group and even as we approached we could hear the howling of the puffins for which the island is well-known. Here also we found signs of previous habitation in the form of three ruined buildings which are now occupied by sheep. Finally we returned to our landing-point and in the white croft nearby we found that a ram had been locked in one of the rooms. We gave him some water and left a supply but later we learnt that he must have been left there by accident and would most probably die.

Before returning to Bhalamus at the end of the day, we sailed round the island once more so that Mike Baker could take some final photographs, and Robin Lord collect some final pebbles.

David Hawkins

### SHEEP-HERDING

On the first Thursday of our stay on Lewis, Paddy Milliard, Brian Lett and I went out with the MacKenzies to help collect some of their sheep for dipping. We set sail on the trawler "Clan MacKenzie" at about twelve noon. An hour later, seven of us and four collies landed at an inlet halfway up Loch Claidh, while one of the MacKenzies took the boat back to Bhalamus.

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We were then asked who thought himself the fittest to climb to the top of the mountains and start driving the sheep. Paddy was slow to say how unfit he was and so set forth with two of the MacKenzies. While we were watching them climb, Robert MacKenzie told us the history of the area we could see, pointing out some old ruined crofts, lazy beds and peat cuttings. He told us about his dog Moss who is fourteen years old and working his last year on the hill—most dogs cannot do this work for more than five or six years as it is so tiring.

When the others had reached the top, the driving of the sheep involved walking in line and periodically waiting while the dogs sought out sheep from bad ground. In one such place, we took about a quarter of an hour to get the flock past some rocks. Further on, we saw that we had left five sheep behind on a ledge but by then it was too late to return and Robert said they would be collected later in the year.

On reaching Rudha Bhalamus Bheag, we could see how many sheep we were driving and by the time we had reached the shores of Loch Bhalamus they numbered more than two hundred. The flock was then driven into the pens behind the croft and the Mackenzie's left to have hard-earned hard refreshment on their boat.

On their return, they made preparations for the dipping of the sheep. Some of the more blood-thirsty members of our expedition showed great interest when one of the ewes had its horns trimmed. These had been growing into its eyes and were nearly blinding it. Further interest was provided when some of the sheep which had missed shearing earlier in the year were shorn.

For the actual dipping, a wooden trough in the ground was filled with water from the burn and then the sheep dip was added. This looked and smelt like creosote but, as it contains expensive insecticides, a year's supply of dip costs thirty to forty pounds. The sheep were separated into groups and herded through a stone wall passage towards the dip. There two men grabbed the sheep and passed them one by one to the dipper. There are two methods of dipping, one being to drop the sheep in feet first and push the head under, the other being to drop the animal in upside-down so that on struggling to its feet it is fully immersed. After their dipping the sheep had to climb into a wooden pen whose floor sloped backwards so that the surplus liquid was not lost.

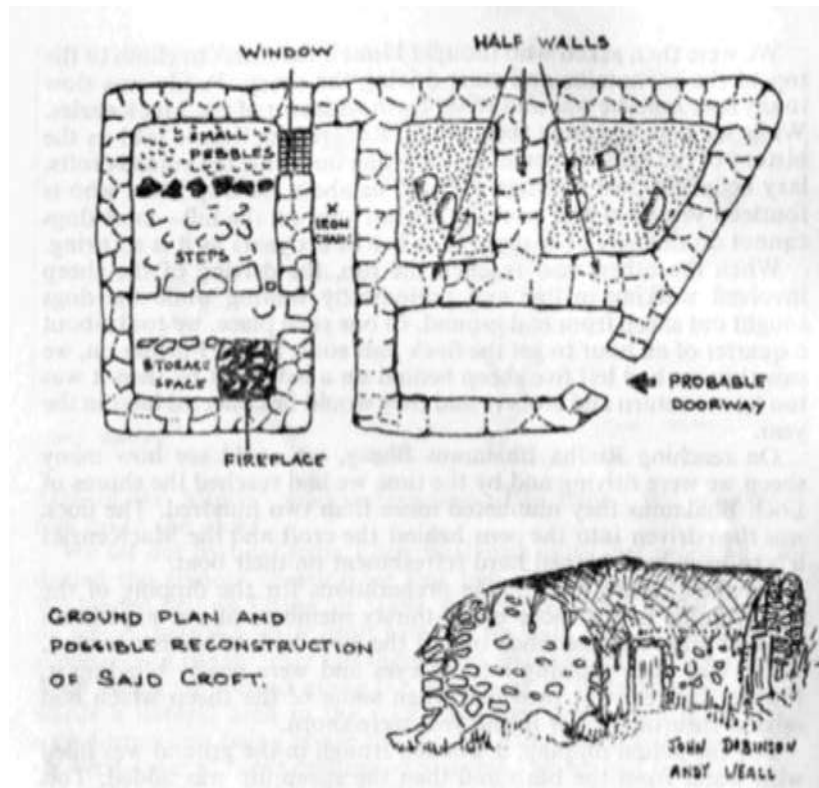
Towards the end of the dipping ceremony, Dirk Dekker, Dick Perks and I persuaded the MacKenzies that they needed some help so we assumed the task of passing sheep to dipper—great fun, but hard work and dirty work. The next day the sheep which were not considered strong enough to winter in the open were driven twenty-five miles to Ballalan while the remainder were released on the hillside.

Mike Jeavons

### CROFTING

During the time we were at Bhalamus, we found the site of several old crofts but unfortunately we only had time to excavate two of these. The first of them is believed to have been an outlaw's hide-

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away because it is so well hidden and difficult to see from all directions. It is built on a cliff face near Loch Bhalamus and is long and narrow, using the shelving rock to form both wall and floor.

The other croft which we were able to excavate rather more thoroughly was in a small bay on the west side of the same loch. This we called Sajd croft from the initials of the four of us who found it, and because it sounds Gaelic! According to the local crofters it was last inhabited about twenty-seven years ago when it was used by some lobster fishermen as their summer residence. There are two rooms, one of which was used as living quarters, in which we found some broken crockery, while the other was probably a store-room because it contained some nails and chains. This second room was of rather peculiar shape because the floor was at a lower level and divided by low walls which rose to the level of the floor in the other room.

Some coke was found near the inside door of this croft and probably originated from a coke-carrying vessel wrecked on the nearby coast about thirty years ago. There was much peat and wood next to the fireplace which showed that the owner probably used this area as storage space. We found also some leather, perhaps shoe leather and some pieces of canvas. A raised platform at one end of the room

seems to have been used for sleeping. At the opposite end of the room, the fire is also raised. The area around the fireplace was covered with roughly hewn stones and these probably represented a supporting wall which had fallen down.

The main wall of this croft is about ten feet above the high water mark. The roof would have been thatched with bracken or peat cuttings and then covered with heavy nets.

Andy Weall, Stu Cullum, Dave Crews, Fabian Misikin,  
Mike Jeavons, and Brian Lett

## THE STUDY OF PLANKTON IN LOCH BHALAMUS

The word "Plankton" comes from the Greek, meaning "wandering or drifting", and the Marine Plankton consists of microscopic animals and plants, most of which drift in the currents of the world's oceans. These minute organisms form the basis of all life in the sea and therefore, fulfil a most important function in the food relationships of all marine organisms.

The study of Plankton is a relatively young subject, but with the advent of the possibility of farming the sea and providing additional protein for a growing population, the subject assumes great importance. It was shown by Dr. Alain, who sailed the Atlantic eating nothing but Plankton and small fish, that human life could be sustained from the reservoir of the sea.

The Plankton study carried out during the expedition was in the nature of a preliminary survey, to indicate to future expeditions the value of such work. The equipment required for such an investigation should include a nylon drag-net fitted with a bucket which can be towed through the water, a microscope carrying low and high power lenses, a supply of cavity slides and coverslips and an identification manual (a good one is *Marine Plankton*, G. E. and R. C. Newell—Hutchinson).

Of the Plankton collected several species were identified. Most of the Plankton found were larval forms of much larger animals, such as Crustaceans and Coelenterates (jellyfish), although many Diatoms and Copepods were found in the shallow waters.

We hope that future expeditions will be able to devote more time to this subject as, once a start has been made, the degree of variation and complexity exhibited by these minute creatures is quite fascinating. Dick Perks, Anthony Nicholl and John Dobinson

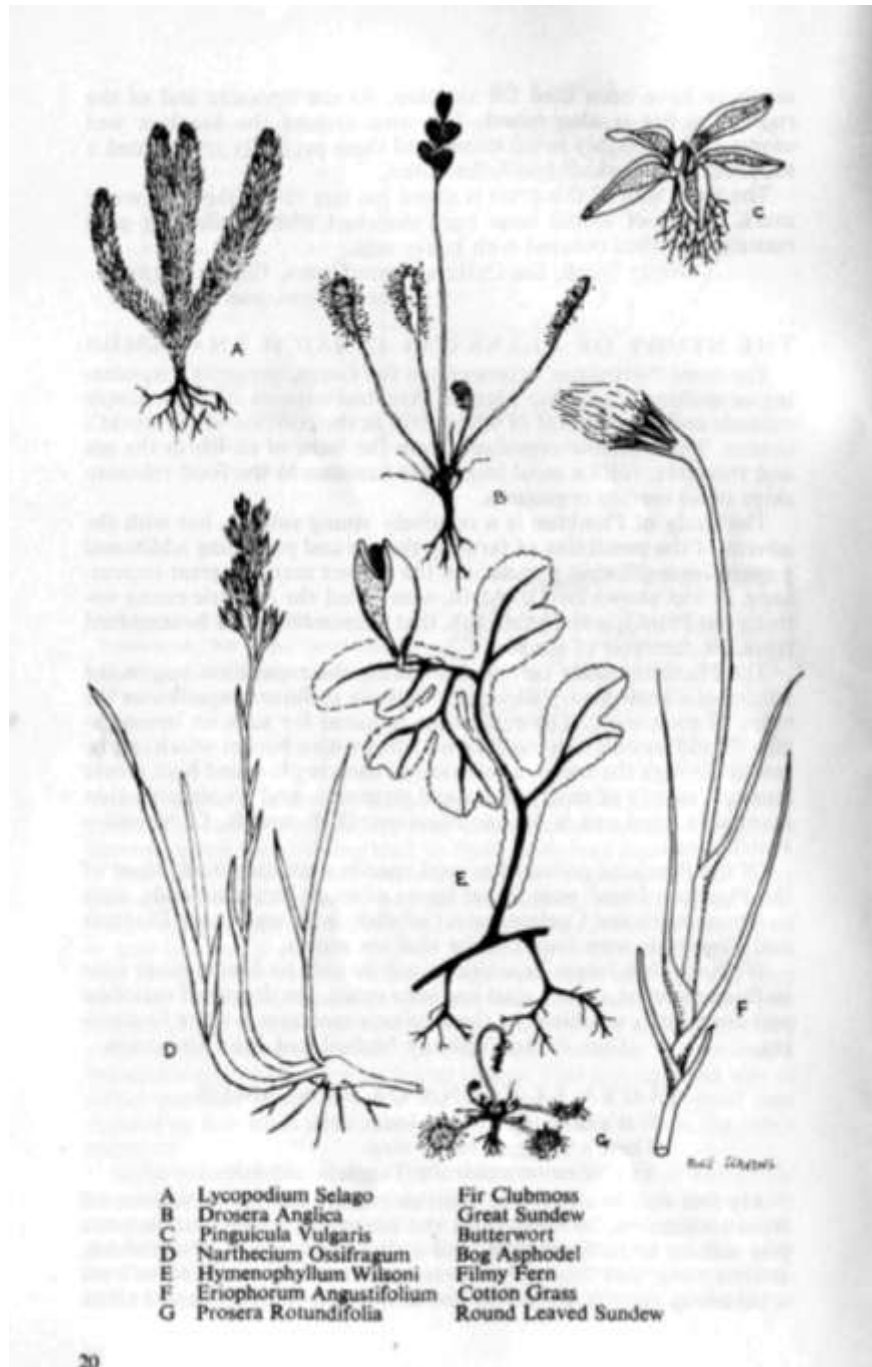
## FLORA ET FAUNA OF BHALAMUS

If it's thinking in your inner hert.

There's braggart in my step

You've never smelt the Tangle o' the Isles.

My first visit to any of the Scottish Islands and here I was cut off from civilisation, 20 miles from the telephone, plants and animals just waiting to be discovered, and a shower of "willing" assistants, thirty strong, just "dying" to help, and most of them couldn't tell a buttercup from a daisy! We got down to it however, and I think



that by the end of the expedition there were a few of us who were beginning to penetrate the mystique of the Naturalist, and some who could understand my excitement at the discovery, by Fabian Miskin, of a superb Royal Fern plant, on our last day there, particularly as we had been seeking it for the whole fortnight.

Botanically speaking, the area was not terribly exciting, being made up of a hard unyielding siliceous rock, by name Lewisian Gneiss, pronounced "nice", but not at all if you happen to fall off it! This type of rock yields a very thin, poor soil—if a soil you can call it: in fact the whole area was covered in a layer of peat, varying in thickness between a few inches to several feet. The peat was extremely acid so all base loving species were missing and we had to content ourselves with a calcifuge flora consisting in the main of three broad vegetation types—cotton grass bog, a heather and ling formation, and in the stream flushes where additional minerals had been washed down, a Sheeps Fescue, Bent Grass association. The only woody species to be found were Rowan trees, *Sorbus aucuparia*, inhabiting the rocky sides of streams where they were sheltered from the wind. Apparently the whole island had once been covered with a dense stand of trees, but these had all been removed by the Norwegians, to drive the native tribesmen out into the open. I don't know how true this story is, as it seems to have taken on the aura of a legend among the people there, and we found no trace of stumps in the bog peat, although we did not dig very deeply.

Perhaps the most interesting of the botanical finds on this acid bog were the different species of Insectivorous or Carnivorous plants. These small plants supplement their nitrogen nutritional requirement by trapping insects and digesting them. We found two species of Sundew, the long-leaved form, *Drosera anglica*, and the round-leaved form, *Drosera rotundifolia*, and also intermediate types which may have been *Drosera longifolia*, although the two former species do occasionally cross and we may have been looking at hybrids. The Sundews have brightly coloured modified leaves, bearing long hairs with sticky knobs, to which small flies become attached thus stimulating the plants to bend the hairs at the centre of the leaf and producing chemicals which digest the body of the insect. The other species found was the Butterwort, *Anguicula vulgaris*, which has bright green rolled leaves with which it forms its insect traps.

All around the loch and extending up the valley were the marks of civilisation—peat cuttings and lazy beds—and the remains of crofts and bothies. We managed to do some interesting detective work on finding the crofts, by using plants which were indicator species of habitation, in particular the nettle, *Urtica dioica*, the Ragwort, *Senecio jacobea*, and in this particular situation Bracken, *Pteridium aquilinum*. Where any of these species were found in any quantity we always seemed to find the remains of a human dwelling, a decaying croft or an outlaw's hideaway. Apparently, before the Highland clearings the area was intensively cultivated and this certainly had left its mark on the floristic composition of different regions, although

no relict crop plants were found owing to the physical structure of the lazy beds and peat cuttings. Wet and dry areas of peat were produced and these were typified by different vegetation types. In the wetter regions the dominant plants were different species of Sphagnum moss and in the drier zones Sheeps fescue. Bent grass and Ling were the dominant species.

The sea cliffs provided an interesting habitat with many succulent and semi-succulent plants of the families *Crassulaceae rompositae* in the splash zone. On the south facing shore of Loch Bhalamus were found many specimens of the rare and rather attractive Filmy Fern. *Hymenophyllum wilsoni*, although some members of the party preferred to call it the "airy Fairy Fern"!

During our stay we made an intensive study of the plants of the littoral zone (between high and low tide marks) recording sixteen different species of seaweed varying between the thin, almost transparent green Sea Lettuce of the upper shore zones, to the tough Brown Kelps of the region below the low water mark. The area of shallow water around the mouth of the river consisted of silt brought down by the river, was most beautifully zoned, this zonation standing out clearly from the top of the cliffs. The diagram gives a good idea of the vertical zonation of these Algae, this particular transect being made at the position of the tide pole.

It was particularly pleasing to note that members of the expedition became interested in all sorts of botanical topics, an enterprising survey being made of the lichens of the peninsula, and another of the vegetation of the small lochs to the east of Bhalamus. Around the croft itself were the marks of human habitation—such species as the daisy, *Bellis perennis*, and the plantain, *Plantago* spp. It is odd to note how man's weeds seem to persist whereas his cultivated plants soon disappear, the only plants of the latter type being two rather forlorn-looking *Fuchsia* plants to the north of the croft.

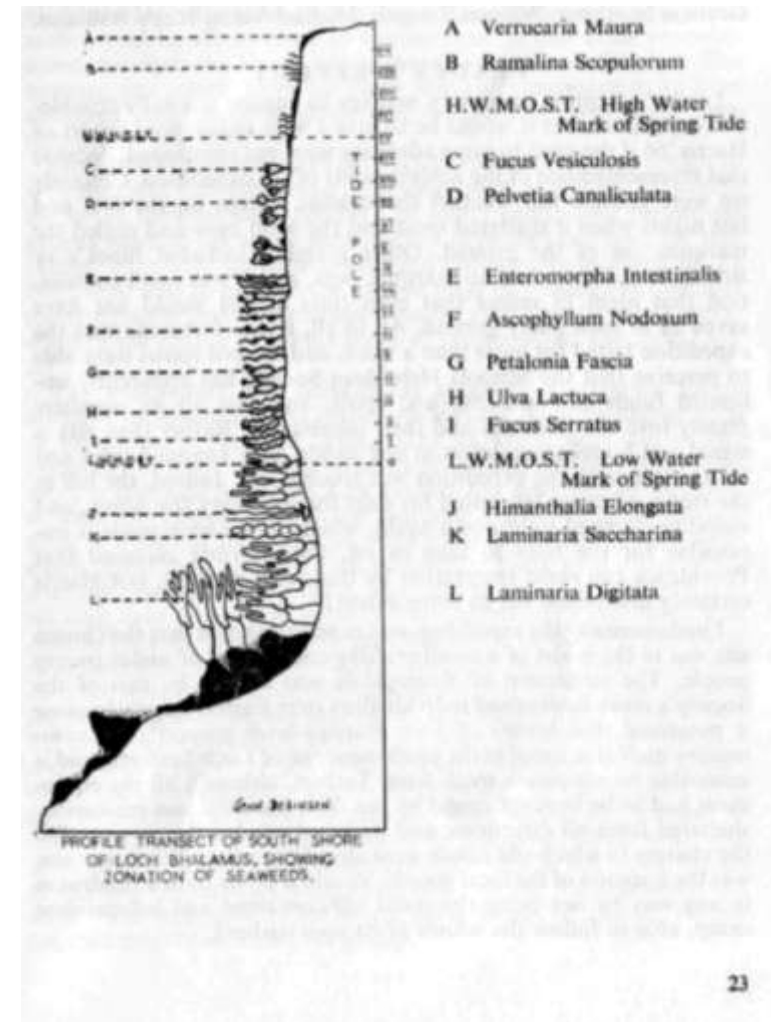
From the zoological point of view the whole area was rather dull, possessing a large number of sheep, a rabbit colony close to the croft (which was rather decimated during our stay owing to several budding Daniel Boones!) and the Red Deer. The latter were so shy that only the most persistent solitary stalker could get anywhere near them. Throughout the fortnight the only person to really watch them was Miles Henniker, who would occasionally don the appropriate headgear and disappear into the morning mist. One day he even managed to return with a fresh (and bloody) severed head of a slain deer, its demise still remains a mystery!

The sea fishing was extremely good and throughout our stay the duty cooks were to be seen preparing quantities of mackerel, mostly caught with feathers on a hand line—a great treat as long as one was not duty section! The Mackenzie's would often come into the loch after a night's prawning, with quantities of different fish, some of which would be cooked, but others examined with much interest, by the biologists, and eventually by the gulls. A most interesting shell

fish which was delivered to us in this way was the Heart Shell, a rather unusual species of the Mediterranean and Atlantic Ocean.

Perhaps the most interesting biological study of the whole fortnight was one of Human Relations between us all. The friendships that were made and the memories that remain imprinted on the brain we shall always remember. I, for one, will never forget the botanical forays, the attempts to classify, the work in the croft at night lit by a hissing tilley, and the excitement of finding new species: all these will spell one thing for me—BHALAMUS.

John B Dobinson



## HARRIS EXPEDITION 1966

*Leader* Alan Bateman

### *Officers*

David Evans, Chris Gascoine-Hart, Steven Harris. Ken Hunter, Gavin McPherson, Chris Ross, Liam Strong.

### *Boys*

Bill Abel, Nigel Broughton, Tony Cardew, Stephen David, Kim Donaldson. David Doyle, James Edwards. Martin Gerrish, Richard Graham, Ian Green, Richard Helliwell, Charles Humfrey, Charles Jackson, Andrew Jones, Archie McKellar, Robert Morton. Oliver Mudford, Neil Munro, Oliver Parker, Michael Powell-Brett, Graham Scothern. William Temple, Michael Venn, Hugh Williams.

## LEADER'S REPORT

Leader's Reports invariably manage to suggest a totally trouble-free expedition, but it would be to give a very unbalanced report of Harris '66 if the need to tame adversity were not mentioned, because that represented one of the achievements of the expedition. Certainly we were granted fair weather throughout, except on the first and last nights when it mattered most and the wind blew and pulled the marquee out of the ground. Other gremlins included Black's or British Rail, for we had no marquee pegs, and it was small consolation that night to reflect that even their arrival would not have saved us in such peaty ground. All in all, it was fortunate that the expedition lasted for more than a week, and the evil spirits were able to perceive that the Schools Hebridean Society has apparently unlimited funds of endurance and spirit, and that all its members greatly love the Hebrides and their inhabitants. Rather than risk a signal and humiliating defeat at our hands, they swapped sides and for the last week the expedition was trouble-free. Indeed, the lull in the storm when we left lasted for only the necessary few hours, and visibility clamped right down again, which would have made it impossible for the boat to take us off. Oscar Wilde assumed that Providence can resist temptation by this time; perhaps, but Harris certainly disciplined her to some extent!

Fundamentally the expedition was experimental, in that the chosen site was in the midst of a small crofting community of under twenty people. The settlement of Rhenigidale was chosen by two of the Society's more determined individualists over Easter, largely because it possessed that luxury of East Harris—level ground! The community itself is situated at the south-west end of Loch Seaforth, and is accessible by mountain track from Tarbert, although all the equipment had to be brought round by sea. The site itself was reasonably sheltered from all directions, and its beauty and isolation provided the charms to which old hands were already familiar. What was new was the question of the local people. Would it prove to be a hindrance in any way by not being the usual self-contained and independent camp, able to follow the whims of its own wishes?

Certainly there were a few minor difficulties over trifling things such as water and wood, but these were generally solved easily and the basic truth is that to be part of a community added much worth to our life: all the time there was the contact between two very different cultures, both of whom respected and wanted to like the other. The result was that for two weeks we received every imaginable help and kindness from the crofters, and learnt much in helping them with hay cutting, peat carrying and all the other vital tasks of their near-subsistence existence. The effect of other values, and the results they had in all our lives, was well reflected in the second Sunday of camp. How we enjoyed that quiet day, following our own individual wishes and wants. Let those who will, rant against (the Highland Sabbath: to us all, I feel, nothing seemed more natural, in such a routine life so close to nature, than to cast aside everyday cares and allow the Harris hills and sea to remain undisturbed. The message was clearly there for those who can experience it; to have shattered such peace by noise and commotion would have been thoughtless sacrilege.

On matters more related to the Society as a whole, it seems right to view the third year expedition as having the responsibility of making the break between the "holiday" of junior camps and the serious project work of the senior expedition. I hope that everyone felt that Harris '66 created the atmosphere and opportunity in which all the boys were able to explore the various ways of passing the time and thereby getting maximum benefit from the Hebrides. Certainly everyone had the chance of a wide range of project work, and most took it!

The sociologists and geographers amassed information galore about Rhenigidale and the immediate surroundings, including maps of the extensive la/y bed areas, many of which were still in use. Sociology in some ways involved us all, whereas botany was rather more a specialist task, but Ken Hunter not only picked incessant flowers, but also beautified the marquee and made some exciting finds in a part of the world so often regarded as barren and windswept. Trees were found in great numbers in parts, even occasionally with honeysuckle around them, and there seems to be a chance that we may have found a strawberry tree—previously unrecorded wild outside Ireland. The ornithologists had much to identify, and those who visited the lochan above camp where the red-throated diver and its chick were in residence throughout our stay, saw a sight few will forget. From such pacific pastimes, admiration must be expressed for Liam, who succeeded in allowing boys up rock-faces without a toe hold in sight, or so it seemed to a far-from-happy leader! Much of the rock around camp was rather crumbly, but the climbers were able to erect the tide pole for Steven, when he was not engaged in conducting the hydrography with naval discipline. Great work was done from the boat (how wonderful to have one at last!) and the art of charting the nation's waters engrossed us all. Rumours that the leader was incapable of reading a sextant can, of course, be discounted quickly as malicious gossip.

Not that we were in any way confined to our corner of Harris, and various visits were made to places afar. Chris Gascoine-Hart headed west with a trusting band of energetic admirers for distant Scarp, where we hoped to recover the climbing rope and "Racasan closet" left behind last year, but in the best spirit of Compton Mackenzie's islanders, they returned empty handed, having had a splendid time, spent a fortune, but failed to unearth the hiding places of the fairies who spirit these things away.

Towards the end of camp Chris Ross left to visit Scalpay in the boat with a collection of gigantic characters and found a most different and prosperous island, upholding, it appeared, much of the commercial prosperity (?) of these islands. Both these groups stayed away for two nights, but Liam and David Evans, joined by Charles Jackson, James Edwards and other stalwarts, climbed the Clisham in a day; a commendable feat, and the S.H.S. has at last viewed the Outer Isles from their highest point. Talking of climbing reminds one of the walk to Tarbert, which almost everyone must have dared at some time or other, to fetch some essential commodity from bread to beer. On the day of the Tarbert Show many headed for the sights, David Evans reaching the other end in 1 hour 23 minutes, a fine effort, particularly when announcing "Are you the Rhenigidale boys?" all the way! Sadly, few of us reached the show, the main reason being the incredible hospitality of the locals in the Harris hotel.

Poor Graham Scothern recovered in comfort at Stornoway hospital (very bad luck, that); Chris Gascoine-Hart taught us some amazing songs which we sang surrounded by Archie McKellar's furniture, although the *piece de resistance* had to sit in a tent by itself. The Doctor pulled us back to health with liberal quantities of banana juice and thereby helped us to enjoy the magnificent cooking of Oliver Parker and others. So many events stick in the mind—Bill's and Fred's beer chase, with the whole of camp streaming to greet them up the hill, Gavin's archaeology (was it Woolworth's china?), the World Cup, and the last sight of William Temple blocking British Rail's lines of communication with Edinburgh at Glasgow by a runaway barrow. Nor will I forget Steven's penny whistle at prayers and elsewhere, all adding up to yet another wonderful store of memories and friendships. Yet another expedition, so similar and yet so different from the others, from which benefit is gained by such a variety of people.

My thanks go to all the officers and boys, for their zestful gaiety and tolerance of myself, to Major Sir Hereward Wake, Bart., M.C., for allowing us to camp at Rhenigidale, Doctor Wood of Tarbert for visiting the camp and handing over the medicine that killed the "bug" so quickly, and very especially to George and Sheila Newhall at Stornoway, without whom so many Outer Isles expeditions would have run into considerable snags at times, I suspect. I leave the inhabitants of Rhenigidale to the end, for they were the inspiration of us all, particularly all the MacInnes's, Duncan and Mrs. MacInnes

and Finlay who led us night fishing, and Roddy, whose hay field it was that enabled us to be there at all. I hope they all realised how grateful we were for everything.

Alan Bateman

## GEOGRAPHY

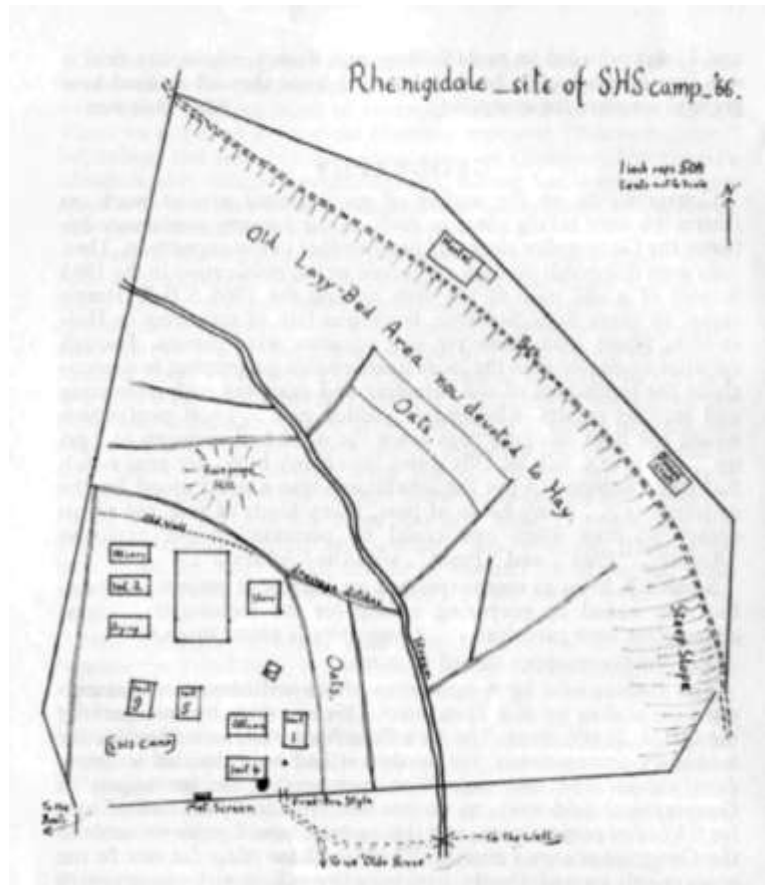
Conversations on the matter of geographical project work on Harris '66 were taking place as early as the January conference between the Geographer elect and one member of the expedition. Then soils were discussed, perhaps prompted by the publication in the 1965 Report of a soil map of the area around the 1965 S.H.S. Harris camp. In those days, however, there was talk of returning to Huishinish, where many different soil varieties were proven. Enough varieties to enable even the more questionable geographer to demonstrate the techniques of soil sampling and mapping with interesting and exciting results. Rhenigidale yielded peat . . . soft peat which would not hold marquee pegs when the wind had occasion to "get up", wet peat which let Olly down into many bogs, dry peat which had to be humped to put the inhabitants into a good mood for the sociologists . . . many kinds of peat, many kinds of soil, but oh so dreary to map when one could be permutating the positions "Archie", "Pole", and "Point", with the "Admiral".

Section 9, loyal as ever, expressed an interest in project soil map, but they ended up preparing a map for the sociologist . . . one consolation here perceived . . . Geography is about maps.

Yea the Geographer turned to maps!

The absence of a large scale plan of the settlement area necessitated the scaling up of a 2½.in. map. This was done by unionjacking the O.S. 1:25,000 sheet. The New Base Map was carried outside for field-work to commence, for by then it had been decided to introduce various and odd expedition members to the techniques of Geographical field-work, as no one was specifically in need of help for "A" level project work, and this exercise would prove valuable to the Geographer's own studies. The New Base Map did not fit the country-side around, clearly there were two valleys with one stream in each on the map there was one valley with one stream on each spur. A second edition of the New Base Map was created by observation, pacing, and field-sketching. This, although inaccurate in places, depicted a much truer cartographical representation of the valleys' features than the first. Using compasses, R. Morton and M. Gerrish then paced and plotted on the New Base Map the positions of paths, fences and lazy beds.

Time was ripe for a proper compass traverse to be made, and the whys and wherefores explained . . . the campsite and the adjoining field were selected for this. Using a 50 ft. tape and a 16/- type "Silva" compass the area was logged. After learning how to "close an error" O. Mudford then drew up a plan of the area's boundary and then proceeded to astound the Geographer with his mathematical genius by calculating the area of the closure to be some 2<sup>2/3</sup> acres.



Geographical interest of a general nature was prevalent throughout the camp: Geomorphological features around the camp were noted by many people and there was one strange report of a rift valley some 20 ft. wide.

The area was proclaimed geologically as foliated Lewisian Gneiss with quartz veins.

Rocks and minerals were identified.

Glaciation and soil formation were discussed.

Project Geography was concluded by a hasty soil survey on the last day of camp, by a group of members returning from a 30-mile hike.

"Fred" did the weather.

C.N.G.H.

## BOTANY

During the fortnight at Rhenigidale, 75 species of plants were identified. Fifteen of these were not reported from the area by the previous survey carried out in 1950. I find it difficult to believe that all these have been introduced in the last 15 years. Some of the grasses might well have been introduced for hay and some of the clovers for pasture for the cattle and sheep. However no self-respecting cow or sheep starts eating white bell heather or white heather, and I doubt if they would even give Blood-drop Emlets a second glance, pretty as they were. Incidentally, the Blood-drop Emlet is a new plant to North Harris although the British Museum Natural History department say it has been recorded on Lewis previously.

The low number of species identified is the obvious consequence of everybody looking for rare plants and not bringing in the common or dominant plants from an area. I am certain that this number would nearly be doubled if most common plants had been collected as well as less common. However my "Flora of Rhenigidale" seems to have a record of most of the rarer plants.

There is one big disappointment to record. The Arbutus or Strawberry trees, which sent me for a swim as a reward for picking a twig off one, was not what I thought. The British Museum say that it is an un-named holly. This type is not mentioned in any of my books and these two were the only type on the island, so I suppose this too is rare.

My thanks to those who helped me with the identifications and those who brought in weird and wonderful specimens from their walks all over the island—even when they were no use to me, they all contributed to Roddy MacInnes's hay stock, which must have doubled through the good intentions of budding botanists.

I have now compiled a "Flora of the Rhenigidale area of North Harris". It covers some 5 square miles from Molinginish to Noster. It is rather a long article, but if anyone would like to borrow it, I have a couple of copies.

Ken Hunter

## A FEW DAYS ON SCALPAY

To sum it up in two words, this trip was "dead interesting". The party to the island consisted of Fred, Bruno, Bill, Kimble and Olly P. (all otherwise known as "Laddies") and Chris Ross.

The island is the second richest community in the Hebrides, and has a population of 500-600 people. Their wealth comes from the now prosperous fishing trade, which has boomed over the last five or six years. There is very little they can spend their money on, so they buy things which act as status symbols, for instance cars and television. Their homes are very luxurious by Hebridean standards, and crofting is now almost extinct.

The island has four shops, general in nature, which supply most of the necessities. For most of the other supplies, the people have to go to Tarbert, by means of the ferry which runs regularly during the day. There were no pubs on the island, and any drink required is

collected by an allotted person going to the mainland. When the seamen's strike was on the island was pretty badly hit, and when the bread arrived, five days late, it was mouldy. Most of the food is brought from Stornoway, but a small number of lazy beds are prepared to raise potatoes and oats.

The people of Scalpay are extremely friendly. They, the ratepayers, have a great deal to say in matters concerning the island's future. The road which runs the full length of the island took from the application in 1932 until 1947 to be built, and that was only after a school strike. When pensions were introduced, the people regarded this as a charity, and refused to accept them, so they just carry on working, not so much in the way of fishing but by cutting peats, in which the women also lend a helping hand. These peats, along with coal, supply the fuel, but power comes from the mainland in the way of electricity and gas.

At one end of the island there is a lighthouse, and providing you can see two beams of the three you are said to be safe from the rocks. Before the war a Norwegian coal ship went aground, and it supplied the island with coal for some considerable time after. In the words of a shop keeper, "the captain had had a dram or two too many".

Kim Donaldson and Oli Parker

### THK ELSAN HUNT

With apologies to Lewis Carol and others (Inspired by a fruitless expedition to Scarp, August '66)

Let me unfold a tale you may love to repeat.  
Of the hunters (as Tennyson does it).  
Who pounded the peat with redoubtable feet.  
In quest of a chemical closet.  
They sought it with tent pegs, they sought it with Zest,  
They pursued it with acumen sharp.  
And went forth at their best, out into the west.  
To the nethermost region of Scarp.  
Five set out on the hunt. Five were bent on the trail.  
Five with only one object in view.  
And their beckoning Grail was no commonplace pail.  
But a cherished Society Loo.  
Their leader made plans which were very discreet,  
And spurred on his helpers to Scarp  
With a vision complete, of a pan with a seat.  
Like an angel, with wings and a harp.  
Could such tangible comfort remain for a year  
Un-assailed, in this desolate land?  
Though their Hope was sincere, there was always this  
fear In the minds of this resolute Band.  
When their practical search yielded nothing at all.  
As they walked on the strand in their sorrow.  
At dreary nightfall, said their leader. "We'll call  
And inquire of the natives tomorrow."

They found them a crofter, grim, ancient and bent,  
And asked him, without more to do . . .  
But he promptly gave vent to a Gaelic Lament.  
On the fate of their perishing Loo.  
"Dust to Dust" cried the swain, and howled like a dog,  
As he rolled on the peal, with a whistle.  
And he yelled. "Bog to Bog", as he sat on a log.  
And a rent in his trews found a thistle.  
So sad were the thoughts of the band as they paid  
Their last respects gratefully unto  
Their daily companion, the Loo. that was made  
To be singled out, built in, and sung to.

ANON & ANON

### 'THE UPS AND DOWNS OF CLIMBING'

So there you are, halfway up a rock-face, with perspiration pouring off your frozen features. "Come on," yells a voice from the top of the climb. "Don't go to sleep." It's all right for him, he's already up. Then a well-known Geologist comes along with the inevitable hammer and starts to chip away your only foothold. "Nice bit of *Petrus vulgaris*" says he, completely oblivious to the fact that you are now hanging by a rope. In horror you see the bowline knot (at least, that was what it was supposed to be) slowly slip. Ah, a clump of heather to grasp. Whoops, that gives way, and thousands of midges begin to bite and suck. "This isn't the National Health, you know. You'll have to pay for my blood," you scream.

Slowly you progress, knees knocking and heart banging at a rate of about two hundred beats per minute. Then the top is in sight, with a group of grubby faces grinning at your misfortune. You scramble up and relax. "Well done," says some "friend", "Pity it took you twenty minutes." Still shaking, you survey the conquered face, all twenty feet of it. and munch "Kendal Mint Cake" in the true Edmund Hilary tradition.

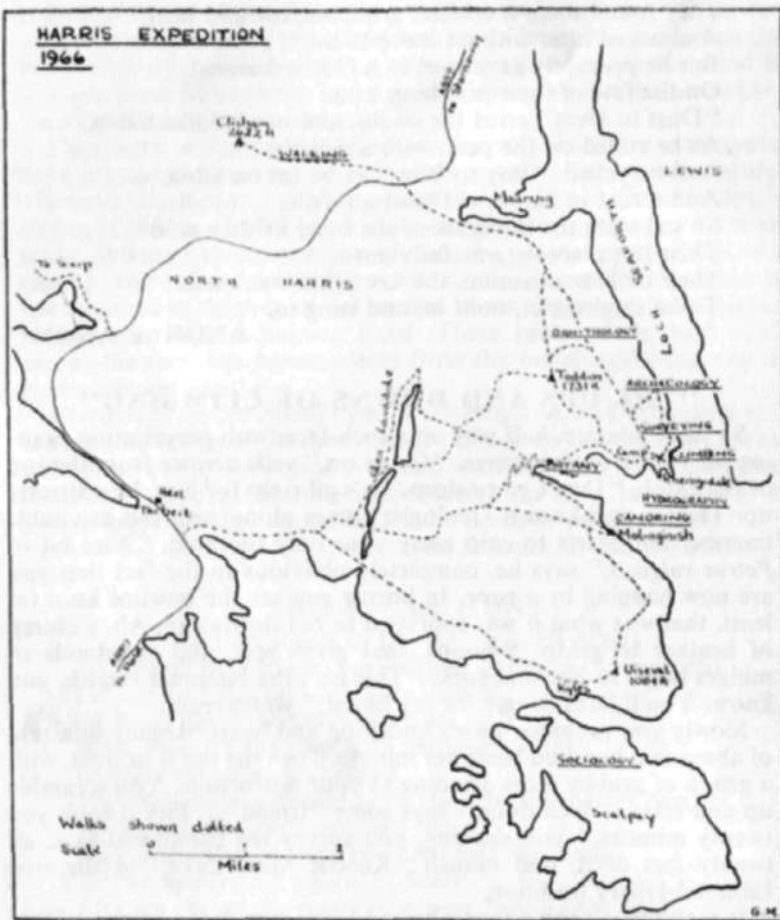
It is the next chap's turn now. and you turn from being a jittery climber into a facetious conqueror. "Hold it a minute," you shout to the next man, half way up, "Keep still. I want a picture of you falling."  
Bruno

### MAP-WORK

Very early in the Expedition, it was discovered that the Ordnance Survey Maps of the Area were not as accurate as they might have been, and it was decided that some systematic corrections were necessary. A list of errors was therefore compiled, which has been sent to the relevant authorities.

One of the most notable errors was the infamous zig-zag path, which climbed 1,000 feet in half a mile, and had apparently escaped the notice of the Men from the Ministry. It did NOT escape the notice of any member of the Expedition walking to Tarbert.





Those of us who followed Oli the First (Parker) down the west side of Toddun felt the contours should have been a little closer together; and the geographers assure me that there are two valleys at Rhenigidale, though the map clearly shows only one.

Finally, a tragic omission. A Mr. Hart informs me that the Christopher N. Gascoine-Hart route to the summit of Uiseval is not marked on the map. I can only console him by pointing out that the Harris Hotel isn't marked either. Gavin Macpherson

### SOCIOLOGY

The survey was preliminary in nature because of the short time spent in Rhenigidale, but staying right in the middle of the community made up for this. We had two basic aims: to study the pattern of life from the outside, and then to understand it from the inside,

from attitudes expressed. Also we were interested in the depopulation of Rhenigidale, which is typical of many remote communities.

First the general pattern of life. There are six permanently inhabited crofts. The mainstay of the community is two brothers, both in early middle age, who form the main link with the outside world, since they are the only two out of the fourteen inhabitants who regularly make the rough 7-mile journey to Tarbert. All provisions from Tarbert are delivered once a week by a fishing vessel, in the summer. The elder brother is the postman, and goes into Tarbert 3 times each week; the other works for the Highland Water Board at Tarbert, returning home each weekend. He is the only crofter there who uses the Crofters Advisory Commission, which gives up to 75% grants for improvement schemes.

The 3 other crofts were managed by couples who were all around 70.

The two main activities are crofting and fishing. Oats, potatoes and turnips are grown on the lazy-bed system, while a single cow and some chickens keep a family in milk and eggs. Wool from their sheep is the only money maker.

In Rhenigidale the people work to live in a rather more direct way than in the outside world, where we work for productivity. One incident strikingly illustrates this difference: one evening some of the lads were helping to clear a field of hay, struggling with large loads, but the crofter was taking much smaller amounts, and his view was "Why take more?—there is all August to do this".

The way of life is also reflected in their strict observance of Sundays. If it were not for taking this day of rest, then every day would be exactly the same, and as their work is all around them, they must make some break with it.

The crofters' way of life, of self dependence, can only be maintained in isolation, so those very links with Tarbert which now keep them going are at the same time destroying their independence, and so, their way of life. Rhenigidale was eight times larger fifty years ago. Compulsory education is a disruptive element. If a teacher is found, the primary school will reopen for the two children, but at 11 they have to go to Tarbert, and after "O" levels to Inverness. Once they have been away, they don't return to settle. Ever since 1921, when, with the government's encouragement, four or five large families left for Skye, Rhenigidale has been declining to a point where it can no longer exist. Every family there has some supplementary income, apart from crofting; for those over 65 it is a pension. But since 1920, the weaving of Harris Tweed is no more; it is too inconstant a supply to be commercial.

Surprisingly, there was no resentment borne against those who had left, and they even thought it better for the children to go away and not try to lead the same hard life as themselves; but they stay because it is home. In Tarbert and Scalpay they think of the Rhenigidale people as "wild", and they in turn think the Lewis men "wild". They are shy, modest and tolerant; will talk to visitors, if approached, and accept their different ways.

The future of Rhenigidale is short, but the people carry on as they always did.  
Chris Ross

## BOOK REVIEWS

### THE HEBRIDES

*The Hebrides* by W. H. Murray, published in 1966 by Heinemann at .30/-. Ranging over all the inhabited islands—and some of the uninhabited ones as well—this is one of the best books I have read on the Hebrides. Comprehensive yet remarkably concise and readable, it contains a good deal of practical, up-to-date information, combined with fine descriptive writing, and some of the truer anecdotes! Highly recommended to all members—to be read both before and after expeditions.

*The Highlands and Islands* by F. Fraser Darling and J. Morton Boyd (1964), Collins. A revised and improved version of a superb book, this is a real bargain at 30/- for anyone who wants to know anything about the wild life, past and present, of one of the most fascinating parts of Europe. Beautifully illustrated; excellent bibliography. It served me well in my finals!

*The Highlands and Islands of Scotland* by A. C. O'Dell and K. Walton (1962), Thomas Nelson and Sons, 50/-. An intelligent and exhaustive text book for the geography specialist, though it concentrates rather too much on the Highlands. Informative statistics and maps. *A Mosaic of Islands* by Kenneth Williamson and J. Morton Boyd (1963), Oliver and Boyd, 21/-. A delightful follow-up to the authors' *St. Kilda Summer*\* this is one of the most readable Hebridean books—particularly in the chapters about Rhum, St. Kilda, North Rona and Mingulay. Imaginatively illustrated. Highly recommended: should appeal particularly to naturalists, but is not too specialised. *The Scottish Islands* by George Scott-Moncrieff (1961), Oliver and Boyd, 21/-. An interesting but sometimes rather biased book; the author tends to be against changes of any type! Useful chapters on the Orkneys and Shetlands. Well illustrated.

*Colonsay and Oronsay* by John de Vere Lodor (1935), Oliver and Boyd. 35/-. A weighty tome (3½ lbs. to be precise), difficult to keep in the pocket or lose on the train, this superb labour of love will tell you everything you want to know (well, practically) about the history, flora, fauna and topography of these beautiful islands. If only all Hebridean islands were so well documented! A few of the 125 illustrations are, not surprisingly, a little dated; otherwise the 30+ years have worn well.

*The Inner Hebrides and their Legends* by Otta F. Swire (1964), Collins, 25/-. Some tall stories made sentimental and even taller. *Highland Folk Ways* by I. F. Grant (1961). Routledge and Kegan Paul, 40/-. A well-illustrated and comprehensive study "set down before it is too late for the traditions to be remembered". Excellent value. (The Highland Folk Museum, founded by the author at Kingussie, at the foot of the Cairngorms, is well worth a visit, too.) *The Last Great Auk* by Allan Eckert (1964), Collins, 16/-. A famous episode: St. Kilda will never lose its fascination.

*The Islanders—A Hebridean Experience* by Rosemary Millington (1966), Hutchinson, 25/-. There is plenty of "experience" to be had, too! The authoress, from Glasgow, imbibes life on Lewis and records it faithfully, with a modern eye for detail and something of the spirit of a J. M. Synge. A few of the observations seem a little pretentious, but there are some excellent descriptions—notably in the sheep-shearing chapter and the Sunday service at the isolated kirk. Recommended to all Lewis and Harris stalwarts. *A School in South Uist* by P. G. Rea (1964), Routledge and Kegan Paul, 30/-. A young Englishman writes with insight about his experiences when appointed headmaster of Garrynamonic School in 1890. Memorable. *Whisky Galore* by Compton Mackenzie (1947), Chatto and Windus/Penguin Books. Hilarious account of unexpected windfall on barely disguised Outer Hebridean island during the last war. Too far-fetched to be untrue. "Captures the real spirit and ethos (hic) of the Hebrides"—the Chairman. Not for sale in the U.S.A. *The Prince in the Heather* by Eric Linklater (1965), Hodder and Stoughton, 25/-. Illustrated. Not vintage Linklater, but what appears to be a pretty authentic account of the notorious escapades of a gentleman who (to quote Mr. Linklater) "brought sorrow and ruin to the Highlands . . . and yet . . . enriched them beyond measure by a story that lives among the great stories of the world." The Bonnie Prince certainly got around; many places mentioned in the book will be familiar to S.H.S. members.

*Scottish Wild Life* by David Stephen (1964). Hutchinson, 63/-. Worth buying, if you can afford it, for the superb photographs alone: 85. in full colour, each with a short essay. An ideal gift. *Seashore Life* by Gillian Matthews and Peter Parks (1965), Puffin Picture Book No. 120. 5/-. Peter Parks's beautiful illustrations (one of which we reproduce) make this book a real bargain. A sensible and practical guide for the young naturalist; useful on expeditions. No doubt partially inspired by the Rhum Expeditions in 1959 and 1963!

*The Pebbles on the Beach* by Clarence Ellis (1954), Faber and Faber, 15/- (also in paperback). Written with clarity and intelligence; not too technical; suits the novice. Good colour plates, but not enough.

Martin Child

### JURA EXPEDITION 1966

Leader Andrew Wilson

*Officers:* Bill Davidson, Rob. Frost, Dave Vigar, Muir Morton, Jonny Ker, Michael Underhill, Richard Collins, John Cullingford, John Hutchinson.

*Boys:* John Abbott, Vaughan Bithell, Andrew Buchanan, Angus Cater, Paul Conran, Robin Dance, John Davies, Michael Eden-Smith, Robbie Gibbins, Chris Hinchliffe, Christopher Hood, Jeremy Jones, William Kay, John Korff, Phil. Lightfoot, Andrew Lynall, Francis Maples, John Marchment, Trevor Nightingale, Charles Purvis, Martyn Riley, John Round, Murray Sager, David Slater, Chris Smith, David Vale.

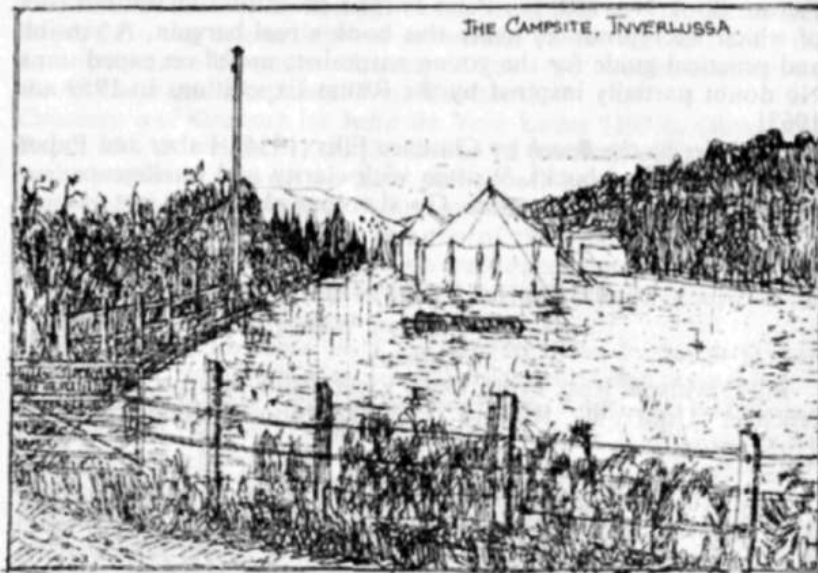
## LEADER'S REPORT

I met the expedition at Central Station, Glasgow, to find that one member had missed his connection at Crewe (through no fault of his own). However, it meant leaving John Cullingford behind to meet him while we continued on to Oban, where we arrived at 5 a.m. on a miserable day. There we embarked for Jura, where we were joined a day later by the other two.

When we arrived on Jura, the weather had cleared slightly, but it was still rather bleak and misty, reminiscent of so many similar days spent in Morvern last year. However, we set to and had all the tents up, including the marquee roof and store tent before dark. Morning dawned, and soon it was sunny and warm. It remained like that for ten days, one of the longest unbroken spells of fine weather for many years on Jura, until the gale just before we left, without which no S.H.S. expedition seems complete.

We very quickly had the camp in order under Dave Vigar's expert guidance, and the boys were soon out looking around and finding things to do. Two days after we arrived, the island sports were held, and we did very well, taking a number of prizes. Unfortunately we were knocked out of the tug-o'-war by a team of Scouts, who were later beaten in the finals.

One of our activities was sailing, which proved to be very popular indeed. We were the first expedition to use the "Vinga", the S.H.S. sailing dinghy, and she proved her worth a thousand times, not least



in the island regatta in which she finished second with Richard Collins at the helm. Climbing was also popular, although nothing too difficult was attempted. However, as on Jura last year, it soon became evident that bivouacking was going to be our most worthwhile activity, because one of the island's greatest assets is its size. All boys went on at least one bivouac, either going to the west to see the caves, or sailing, or climbing the Paps, or on a fence-mending party to the north: many went twice, and some three times.

A great deal of our time was spent, very successfully and rewardingly in contact with the islanders, who were not necessarily genuine Hebridean crofters alone! We narrowly lost two games of football to their team as well as competing in their sports and regatta. Some of the boys did useful work for our host Mrs. Nelson when they helped her son to clear some patches of woodland, and some visited an exhibition held in aid of Oxfam by Mr. and Mrs. Mercer, showing how they made rugs from island wool. All enjoyed their visit greatly. Projects also included a survey of the area to correct a map, which has not been changed since around 1900, a very successful bird watching programme, and a meteorological survey.

The expedition came to an unexpected end when, following the accident in Cornwall, after which the police were checking on cargo boats carrying passengers, Hughie Carmichael telegraphed us to say he could take only our equipment and twelve men. This meant that most of us had to leave a day earlier than planned, since MacBraynes only have a service which leaves Jura once in two days. Arrangements were hastily changed, but all went well, twelve people remaining behind to travel with Mr. Carmichael to Oban on the Thursday, while the remainder returned to Glasgow via MacBraynes.

All of us were greatly impressed with the beauty of the island, and we were all struck by the friendliness and helpfulness of its inhabitants, especially those at Inverlussa and points north with whom we had the most contact. The expedition as a whole had a great spirit, which I can only inadequately describe, and it is an experience I shall never forget. To me, it was a very great privilege to have led such a fine collection of boys and officers, to whom I shall always be grateful.

Finally, I should like to thank the islanders, especially Mrs. Nelson and her family, who were all so very kind and tolerant during our stay in Jura.  
Andrew Wilson

## A LOOK AT JURA

Jura is especially noted for its deer, wild goats, raised beaches and the Paps, all of which features are of interest, as is the whirlpool at the north end of the island. The hills provide excellent walking and parts of the coast are indescribably beautiful.

The islanders were extremely friendly towards the expedition, and it is a good thing for members of expeditions to meet local people. This year, as last year, the expedition played the islanders at soccer and joined in with their dances, sports, regatta and concerts. Their

community spirit is excellent. Nevertheless it is hard to foresee what kind of a future the island has in the modern world. For example, there is the farmstead called Kinuchtrach at the north of the island. This was farmed until about six years ago, since when it has remained idle. Despite extreme effort and hard work the tenant found that, even with all the subsidies afforded by the government, it was not a paying proposition.

There are a number of people on the island who are unemployed and until suitable work is found the drift of the population to the mainland will continue. The whisky distillery, though a very significant and welcome newcomer, has done little to relieve the situation. The student with an insight into phraseology might draw significance from the plaque at the distillery, which says that it was ". . . built to bring employment to the island", and not ". . . built to bring employment to the islanders". Yet, despite all doubts about the future, which exist not only for Jura and the Hebrides, but also for the West of Ireland and any remote place, life continues at more or less the same pace as it has for many years.

This year's expedition made many friends on Jura and we hope that we shall renew their acquaintance in the very near future.

David Vigar

### SAILING REPORT

Sailing on Jura thrived due to "Vinga", our own boat, and the weather. "Vinga" is an excellent instructional boat being fairly sturdy and at the same time giving a measure of the thrills that a racing dinghy can give. Due to the large demand for sailing we took four boys out at a time, generally both morning and afternoon. Everyone had the chance to sail several times and so the majority of boys learned the rudiments of sailing, how to rig a boat, how to derive benefit from the wind and tide and not to battle against both. Also we practised man-overboard drill, but fortunately it was never put to the test.

The weather, apart from one gale was excellent, allowing us out almost every day. We ventured north from Ardlussa, east to the mainland, but didn't quite make it due to wind dropping and a foul tide. We went south to Tarbert and Lagg, having an unexpected tea at the former.

Not to be out-done by the land-lubbers we decided to go on a sailing "Bivvy". The crew was Andrew Lynall, Angus Cater, John Davies, and Muir Morton. We arranged it so that we could compete in the island regatta (and the dance which followed—Ed.), and having sailed to Craighouse from Inverlussa in 2 hours 35 minutes, this we did the following day.

News of our speed pushed up the handicap and the first boat set off 50 mins. before us. The last boat before us set off 20 mins. in front and we set off 10th and last. Twice round the course we sped, boats lowering their racing colours as we approached astern, and finally we were placed second, finishing only 3½ minutes behind the

winner. It was a very exciting race due to the excellent handicap system.

The regatta had a variety of events and it was a pity that hardly anyone entered for them. The writer was pushed in for his only swim of the year and to the surprise of all finished second, fortified by the local brew at each end of the course!

Fishing and ornithology was undertaken on the boat also, the latter being more successful than the former. Mal de Mer struck twice and Daz almost succumbed, but the shore was reached in time!

"Vinga" was voted a great success and immense enjoyment was gained from her. The gale finished off the burgee and the idea is now to have our own S.H.S. burgee—any offers for a design?

Richard Collins

### JURA SONG

Soon I'll cross to Jura isle,  
Where my dearest ones are dwelling.  
Mother waits to welcome me,  
Mine's a joy beyond all telling.

Chorus:

I will sail across the sea, I will sail  
across the ferry.

To my native isle I'm bound  
Braving wind and wave and skerry.  
Sailing swift towards the sea  
Strong brown hand upon the tiller.  
Now my father's form I see  
Wind and Tide can hold no terror.

Chorus:

Flesh of deer will hill provide.  
Fresh-run salmon shall the river.  
Shy grey-hen and mallard wild  
To my gun shall fall as ever.

Chorus:

Calm delight my heart shall warm.  
Light my step to Lussa given.  
Gaelic speech my ear shall charm,  
Dearest island under heaven.

Chorus:

(I regret that we are unable to print the tune—Ed.)

### CRAIGHOUSE AND BACK

Bill Davidson and I set out at 8.41 to break the record of 9 hours 30 minutes for the 35-mile journey. After an hour we had reached Tarbert where we overtook Chris Hinchliffe and John Davies. We kept pressing on through Lagg, half-way between Inverlussa and Craighouse. After Lagg I began to find the pace rather tough and I had to struggle to keep up with Bill, a strong walker.

At about 11.45 we came into Craighouse Bay and from then on followed 45 minutes of agony as we gradually approached Craighouse. It is very tantalising to see your objective so long before you can reach it. Eventually after 3 hours 50 minutes we arrived and went into the hotel for a welcome drink and some natural relief.

We bought some fruit and chocolate in the stores, and walking out we met John Hutchison and Jerry Jones, who had decided to do the return journey by bus. After a short exchange we set out, and immediately met Dave Vigar and Robert Frost. As I was finding it hot, I gave them my anorak. From this moment we were off and on our own.

We walked steadily to Lagg and then up the long steep hill. At the top we stopped for refreshments, the time spent thus, sadly, having to be included in our walking-time. After six minutes we were away on the final slog from Tarbert to camp.

We sighted the dinghy which had been down to Tarbert for tea. I began to falter, but not as badly as on the outward journey and with a little encouragement from Bill, I managed to keep up with him. We reached the final hill and dropped down into camp, our feet in bad need of attention. We had taken 8 hours 10 minutes, a time which broke the previous record by eighty minutes.

Was it worth it? Emphatically, yes. We had blisters, and were exhausted but we also felt very satisfied. Bill deserves all the credit as he was able to keep going so cheerfully. I hope that somebody else will have a go next year, and knock it down below eight hours.

Francis Maples

## CANOEING

One is so close to the water. All the little ripples hill us, romping in the dip of the waves, lift us and tip us, which could only lap the side of a rowing boat.

But then to glide inside a bay, our dribbling paddles quieter than any oars, catch the heron fishing, his dignified motionless poise rising with fright into an expanse of beating wings heaved shrieking into the air. To see the otter appear on a rock, something of a giant rat or young seal from a distance, and to be watching, as he suddenly vanishes.

John Cullingford

## A VISIT TO THE WEAVERS

Walking into their workshop we saw Mrs. Mercer sitting at her wheel, spinning some dark brown wool. She greeted us cheerfully and went to fetch Mr. Mercer. We were invited to sit down on the stone floor, and here we chatted for over an hour.

She, with a mass of brown hair fastened in a heavy bun behind her head, sturdy face and strong jaw line, solid in proportion, but with a peculiar feminine grace of her own, and he, completely different in appearance. Wide flaring nostrils circling up towards green, alert, deep-set eyes, glistening black raggedly cut hair falling naturally over the head, thin lips and sharp firm chin, a delicate-looking, white-

skinned body, but with much apparent vitality. Together a very, unusual looking pair, appearances that would never fit into a suburban surrounding.

They have set up a weaving business at Leah, two miles from Ardlussa. There they weave for six months in every year. In addition they excavate all around the island and are at present working on a cave at An Carn where they have found Mesolithic arrow points, Iron Age bones, iron rivets, nails and pieces of bronze, and pottery from which they have reconstructed a pot with sixty found pieces. Mr. Mercer has, at varying times, been a chartered accountant in Paris and navigator of jet-planes. He now writes children's books, and is awaiting the publication of a more adult book concerned with the philosophy behind the way of life which he leads. During the winter they teach in Spain together, and also relax and explore in the Mediterranean where they canoe and go underwater fishing.

They are selfish in some ways, to insist on the freedom of their existence by avoiding any real involvement with others, but they have mastered many skills through their talent and determination, and they put their time and intelligence to better use than most of us.

Despite lack of involvement with individuals they do not lack *concern* for individuals or world problems. The proceeds from their exhibition of rugs etc. was in aid of Oxfam.

Mr. Mercer writes:

"Who can but feel sorry for the starving Indians and Africans who are in many cases worse off than their Stone Age ancestors? This is because of the disappearance of game, soil erosion and the slow spread of birth-control through the timidness of the clergy. They are looked upon as 'nigger' and 'Jews' and have to face deep-rooted hatred and prejudices. They desperately need financial help to launch development campaigns of lasting value and to buy costly equipment with which to help themselves."

Following this discussion, we turned our attention to their weaving work. They buy most of their wool from the Nelsons, and gather their own natural dyes, which include gorse, dock-leaves, jute, cream of tartar, alum, blackberries, rowan berries, bark, nettles, and ferns, from about the island. They spin the wool on an old wheel found in an attic which they have reconstructed using manufacturers' catalogues. It used to belong to Granny MacNeil, the last woman known to have spun on the island. Their loom is made of driftwood, designed by Mr. Mercer. They work on it at a rate of three inches per hour.

Most of the rugs which they make are greens, greys, or browns in colour; more extreme colours in dyes are invariably synthetic to a degree. As they are well known, they comply with customers' orders and thus sell everything that they make. They refuse to deal with the Scottish Crafts Association as it charges ten per cent for all transactions.

Individuality is perhaps the reason for their being on Jura; intelligence, and the application of it, plus a remarkable relationship between them, are two obvious reasons for their success.

Francis Maples and John Cullingford

## COLONSAY EXPEDITION 1966

*Leader* Chris Dawson

*Officers*

Martin Child, Patrick Bradley, Bob Warrack, Malcolm McGeorge, David Cullingford, John Brooks, Mike Eldon, John Jackson.

*Boys*

Ian Allen, Chris Causer, Tim Colman, Chris Cooper, David Currey, Johnny Eeles, Gareth Firth, Peter Fuggle, Andrew Hall, Kent Hawkins, Andrew Howard, Roly James, Gareth Jenkins, Robin Kennedy, Bruce Kirk, Chris Maughan, Ian Millar, David McCarthy, David Martin, Charles Roberts, Simon Stoye, Edward Stuart, Andrew Sumner, Ian Whitelaw, John Wilkinson.

### LEADER'S REPORT

As I write this report a fortnight's Indian summer has just been brought to a close by two damp and misty days. Autumn is upon us and soon we will be feeling the frosts of winter. At such a time one's thoughts tend to turn back and long for what actually were or what now seem to have been the glorious days of summer. From now on one is in danger of exaggerating and sentimentalising over the summer holidays as they recede into history. Yet Colonsay 1966 must surely be remembered for the pleasure afforded by thirteen rain-free days and for the predominantly happy atmosphere which reigned over the camp. Naturally we had a few problems and grumbles but always cheerfulness and laughter showed through. To all the officers and boys who made it so I am sincerely grateful. By all this my task was considerably tightened. I want especially to thank Pat Bradley and Bob Warrack for all their work with the camp administration and travel.

Colonsay has a reputation for being among the most beautiful of the Islands and so we found it. Trees and farmland mellow the more familiar bog and heather of this part of the world and the sandy bays and inlets are not only beautiful but excellent for water sports. Our campsite was situated beside one of these bays, on what was once the golf course. The dozen of us who were brought by Hughie Carmichael on the Shapinsay managed to pitch camp before the rest of the expedition arrived on the steamer the same evening. We were able to do this largely thanks to the generous help of the factor, Mr. Porteous, and his men. Throughout our stay we received numerous kindnesses at the hands of the islanders and visitors. At least for us Colonsay will have a reputation for hospitality as great as that for its natural beauty. I hope that our attempts to stamp out rhododendron scrub and the "dinner party" showed some of the gratitude we felt.



We were indeed near civilisation for an S.H.S. expedition. The village was only three miles up the road, and several crofts were nearer. Yet this was not a hindrance or disadvantage. Colonsay has too much of interest for one to want to be constantly running to the shop. When we tuned into civilisation it was mutually beneficial. Twice we played football against the local team—losing heavily then narrowly—who never have any opposition normally. One evening we went to a concert, and thanks to the skill of our musicians, contributed our little bit to the entertainment. In turn we had the privilege of listening to, and even joining in with, some stirring Gaelic singing. We certainly lost nothing by all this.

It is unnecessary for me to enthuse over all the activities we might have done or even for that matter over the things we did do. Members of the expedition have been forthcoming with articles about their experiences and projects and I would like to see as many of these in the Report as space permits. I will therefore make my own comment as brief as possible.

Colonsay has a very rich past as anyone who has read John de Vere Loder's excellent book on the island will know. As well as the priory on Oronsay there are standing stones, burial mounds, caves with Stone Age implements to be found in them and even rumours of gold on a tiny off-shore island. There is also plenty of scope for geographical and sociological projects. We only scraped the surface in our investigation of these things.

Climbing and canoeing facilities were excellent and the boys made full use of these activities. Although the highest point on the island is only 500 feet there are plenty of rock faces of varying difficulty and Bob Warrack was kept busy guiding people up these. Our one canoe was kept constantly in action either by novices like myself just paddling round the bay or by those who felt more competent and went flying right round the island.

Perhaps in future years a more adventurous bivouac than our own might be undertaken incorporating walking, climbing, canoeing and sailing. Our dinghy "Vinga" was taken out several times but though a beautiful craft she is not an easy boat for beginners and we could not emulate her performance on Jura.

Colonsay 1966 was a memorable experience. I hope that the articles that follow will give you some of its flavour.

Christopher Dawson

### CLIMBING

"Skyward ever Skyward."

Colonsay, an island of beautiful bays, a kind sun and an abundance of monkeys. Yes folks, monkeys.

In Loder's famous book there is no mention of any species of monkey, rhesus or otherwise, therefore it was with the S.H.S. that the species arrived—Rock Climbers!

The landscape of Colonsay provided a summit not higher than 470 feet, but afforded us an abundance of rock differing in quality from rotten to solid and clean, and differing in height from 20 feet to over 100 feet (most of which were never climbed), whilst the S.H.S. provided the "rock bods".

Every boy had a climb of some description, mainly on one of the four known as: No. 1, No. 5 minus 1, Odd Bods, and The boyo's Buttress, the last being a two-pitcher. There was a hard core of boys who swapped other activities for rock climbing and who showed great promise, but it appeared that nearly everybody who climbed enjoyed the experience.

Colonsay, from the rock climbing point of view, is an island which can be exploited at great length, with considerable variety and enjoyment; somewhere where people can go "Skyward ever Skyward."

Bob Warrack

"Hurry up, Bob. Take in the slack. Okay Okay! That's me."

"Climb when ready, Pete."

"Climbing."

I studied the rock in front of me and began to climb. I found myself a good handhold and knew I was off. The footholds were few and I had difficulty with the first stretch. Now I was on a good ledge and I relaxed. The rope around my waist was tight and I felt sick. Looking around I noticed how jagged and fierce the rock was and how many different colours there were.

The next part was easier and I must have now reached three-quarters of the way up. Relaxing for a moment I slipped but my foot caught on a ledge and I only slipped a yard. I was now in a difficult spot and looked around despairingly. The face of the rock seemed hopelessly smooth.

"Bob, can you pull me up a yard please? I'm sort of stuck."

"Okay, Pete. Hang on tight."

I felt a tug on my waist and gradually I was hoisted on to a good ridge and from there I quickly scrambled to the top.

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"Well that's one way to go up. Pete." "Yes," I replied. "The trouble is you nearly go down first!"

Peter Fuggle

### BUTTERFLIES AND MOTHS ON COLONSAY

My hopes of discovering a rare Hebridean species were sadly diminished after my preliminary tour of the campsite on Sunday morning. Just two Meadow Browns flapping over the marsh were not a lot of inspiration for anybody, however keen.

But soon reports of "little blue things" and "brown spotted butterflies" came pouring in. The first actual specimens were two pupae and a caterpillar discovered on a rock face by Martin Child, which, unfortunately, turned out to be those of a Large White.

Probably the best report of the fortnight was that of the fritillaries north-east of the camp, which Dave Currey (who spotted them) and I identified as possible Dark Green Fritillaries (*Argynnis aglaia*), though this is not definite.

Meadow (*Maniola jurtina*) and Hedge (*M. tithonus*) Browns were widespread but the Small Heath I only saw once, south of Kiloran. Three Red Admirals were seen, at Port Mor (Tim Colman), Oronsay (myself), and South Machrins (Dave Currey). Two Painted Ladies (both at South Machrins) and one Peacock (also at South Machrins) were spotted.

The two remaining species of butterflies positively identified were both widespread—the Green-Veined and Small Whites.

Now we come to the mysterious blues, which, from a brief look at the underside, I identified as Adonis Blues (*Lysandra bellargus*). The only snag here is that the Adonis Blue is (supposedly) only found in the south-east of England. Consequently I spent the rest of the camp trying to get more definite proof. Two Graylings (*Ewnenis semele*) were also seen.

The last highlight of the trip was the discovery of the larva of the Emperor Moth (*Saturnia pavonia*) by Simon Stoye and Martin Child. This, at the moment of writing, is curled up in front of me, noisily eating heather. How I will rear this when I get home is a problem, as Kent is not exactly covered in heather!

I hope that next May I will have news of one adult Emperor Moth, pure Colonsay pedigree!  
C. G. Causer

### WEATHER REPORT

Our weather recording was hindered by a missing hygrometer and a barometer that did not record properly. By watching for haloes round the sun, noting the different clouds and wind direction, and by using the thermometer and barometer we spotted depressions as they came over. Because of this we were able to give reasonably good weather forecasts. If there were stratus clouds we could guess that a warm front was coming and cumulus clouds usually meant a cold front. We had several clear nights so we were able to predict low temperatures and dew.

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One morning we found 0.7 inches of water and a piece of seaweed in the rain gauge. We did not record this as we had not even had any dew that night!

Our readings were taken at 9.00 a.m. and 9.00 p.m. from the evening of 14th August until the morning of 25th August.

Minimum temperature 40° F. Maximum temperature 71° F.

Highest rainfall 0.6 inches. Total rainfall 1.0 inches.

Highest wind Force 5.

David Martin

### AN EXPERIENCE I SHALL NEVER FORGET

I left the camp at ten o'clock,  
 And headed for the highest rock.  
 Soon I reached its highest peak  
 And for a ghost I went to seek.  
 I looked ahead of me and saw  
 Something I've never seen before:  
 There a Scotsman in his kilt . . .  
 I ran until my legs got cramp.  
 And hours later reached the camp-  
 Just in time for breakfast.

Kent Hawkins

### GEOLOGY

The island of Colonsay is of the pre-cambrian period, with schists or mica-schists appearing everywhere. Schists are formed by the metamorphosis of shale. During the geological history of the island there have also been many igneous intrusions (i.e. granite, gabbro, and quartz). Quartz types appearing on the island are: clear, rose, milky and quartzite (recrystallised quartz).

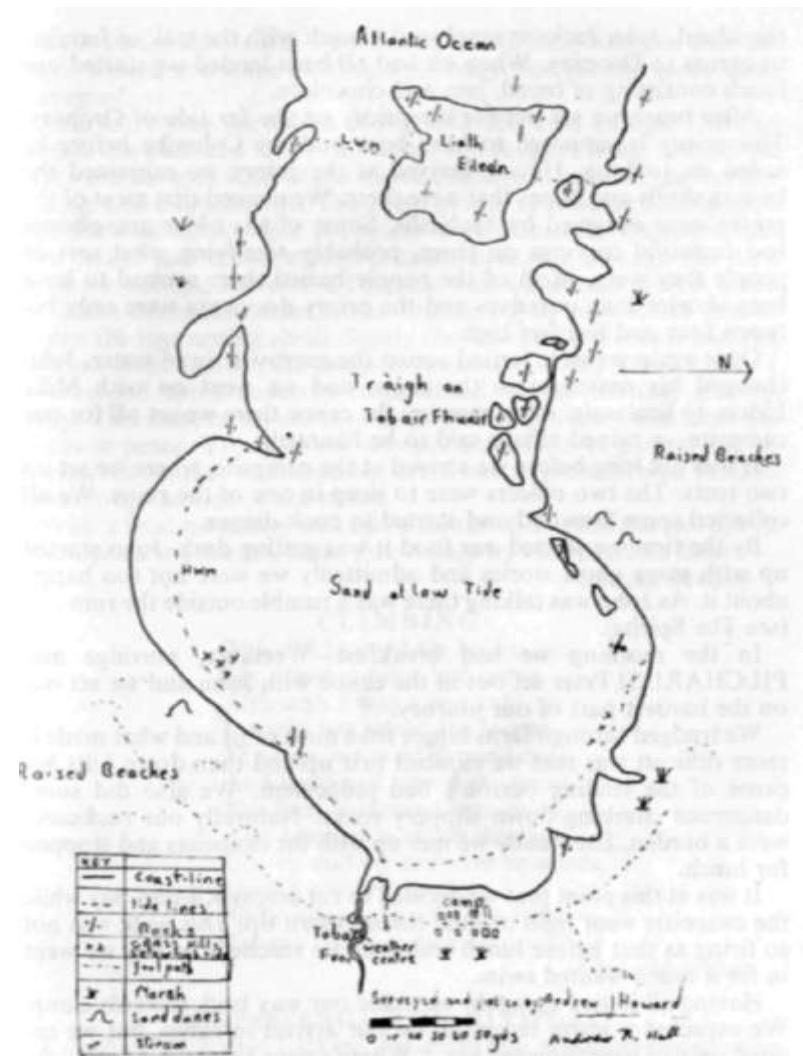
The island is heavily folded and faulted. Raised beaches and cliffs on the west coast and rias on the east also suggest that it has tilted.

Beach pebbles seemed to be the most popular source of specimens. Though some of the pebbles are native to the island most of them are volcanic pebbles carried to the island during the ice-flow. We also found some volcanic ash, although there is some dispute as to whether it is not slag.

We were led on a number of wild goose chases. The first of these was the supposed discovery of garnets. Big business transactions were carried out, with large investments in garnet searching parties. All the deals fell through when it was discovered that the garnets were in fact staurolite. The second big fall-through came when local rumours of gold in the quartz veins at Kiloran started the Colonsay gold rush. The only gold coloured rock found was weathered quartz.

The camp geologists were baffled by a chert pebble in limestone, until it was discovered that there was a limestone outcrop at Kiloran. In the caves at Kiloran stalactites and stalagmites were found. Our test for limestone was thought up by Pat Bradley. The rock was put into an "aqua-clene" bottle full of lime juice.

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All of us were foiled by reports of pink and green pebbles. I solved the problem when I found one of them myself. The pebble was a piece of rose quartz with algae on. To end it all a genuine garnet was discovered. This was of course greatly resented by the would-be treasure seekers.  
 Gareth Jenkins

### THE BIVOUC ON FOOT

We started out at about 11.30 a.m. not knowing the adventures ahead of us. We were to explore the island and collect unusual and rare objects. We walked through thick heather to the south of the island. There we met the canoe that was to take us in turns all round

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the island. John Jackson employed himself with the task of ferrying us across to Oronsay. When we had all been landed we started our lunch consisting of bread, jam and chocolate.

After lunch we set out for the priory on the far side of Oronsay. This priory is supposed to have been built by Columba before he sailed on to Iona. Having arrived at the priory we examined the human skulls and bones that were there. We noticed that most of the graves were occupied by McNeil's. Some of the older gravestones had beautiful carvings on them, probably signifying what sort of people they were. Most of the people buried there seemed to have been shorter than ourselves and the priory doorways were only between four and five feet high.

Once again we were ferried across the narrow strip of water. John changed his passenger in the canoe and we went on with Mike Eldon, to Scalasaig. After meeting the canoe there we set off for our campsite—a ruined village said to be haunted.

It was not long before we arrived at the campsite, where we set up two tents. The two officers were to sleep in one of the ruins. We all collected some firewood and started to cook dinner.

By the time we started our food it was getting dark. John started up with some ghost stories and admittedly we were not too happy about it. As John was talking there was a rumble outside the ruin . . . (see *The Spirits*).

In the morning we had breakfast—Weetabix, porridge and PILCHARDS! Peter set out in the canoe with John and we set out on the hardest part of our journey.

We trudged through ferns bigger than most of us and what made it more difficult was that we climbed first up and then down hills because of the leading person's bad judgement. We also did some dangerous climbing down slippery rocks. Naturally our rucksacks were a burden. Eventually we met up with the canoeists and stopped for lunch.

It was at this point that we decided to cut across Kiloran Bay while the canoeists went right around the northern tip. This walk was not so tiring as that before lunch and once we reached the bay we went in for a much wanted swim.

Having all joined up again we made our way back towards camp. We expected a warm reception on our arrival in camp, but we entered only to hear someone say, "Where's your knives and forks, the party starts in five minutes?"  
David Currey

### THE SPIRITS

In a little valley just north of Scalasaig is a lonely row of cottages, each of which at one time was the shelter, the home of shepherd or crofter and each, on a wild winter's evening, was a haven from the relentless Atlantic gales for some forgotten family. The turf fire blazed and a gentle yellow light flickered through the tiny windows.

One by one each family moved away from the village in search of a new life abroad, until the last cottage had become empty and silent. Storms quickly destroyed the reed-covered roofs, broke the windows

and the village lost its soul—but not its spirits. They watched over the grass-covered street, the smokeless chimneys and the still more silent graveyard.

Year after year the spirits floated over the dead village. Then, as though the past had returned, voices and laughter rang around the valley and the grey walls of the manor once again reflected the warmth and light of a blazing fire. The sweet aroma of cooking food wafted into the evening sky. But the spirits were disturbed. Outraged that their haunt had been trespassed upon, sweeping through the dark misty air one spirit uttered a Plutonic wail which sent shivers down (he backs of the new inhabitants. Disdaining it, their voices rose to drown the insinuating shrill. Surely they would be terrified and run for their lives. But no, the campers remained as they were.

A second spirit suddenly materialised on the hillside, glowing eerily. This must surely rid the village of its interlopers and leave the spirits in peace. Yet again the intrepid band held its ground and so fearless was it that each member crept out to pursue these fiendish vapours up the side of the valley.

With a final menacing wail and a flutter of shrouds the two spirits were driven irrevocably from their valley by the relentless band.

Patrick Bradley

### CLIMBING

The cliff loomed up before me.  
My dreaded hour had come.  
Although I was a coward  
I would not admit I was one.  
The rope was tied around me  
And tightened round my waist. The  
final command was given, And I  
began to climb the face.  
Up, up and up and ever upwards,  
Until I reached the top.  
Although to the others a trifle  
Twenty feet was quite a drop!

Chris Maughan

### CANOEING—THE BIVOUAC

I shall never forget looking out from the seashore one evening towards the mouth of the bay. The rocks that guard its entrance were just shadows on the glistening water, for the sun was melting into the sea right behind them. And as the sky burned red with a sunset worthy of the Western Isles, I could see the canoe silhouetted to the west; only the flash of white from the whirling paddles showed it was moving. I doubt the two out there ever realised that they had become part of a picture that I was long to remember. As far as they were concerned, they had just passed "The Old Man of the Sea", whose eyes and forehead are formed by a natural rock formation in a one-hundred-foot cliff at the entrance to the bay. Perhaps they had paddled over there just to meet him.

Or perhaps they had been singing to the seals in the next bay. When we tried this, three of the seals started to play with us, following and surrounding us, diving noisily in front of us and surfacing silently behind; I never was sure whether they appreciated our voices but I doubt it! Or perhaps they had just been gliding over the water, and had been examining everything that lay so very clearly on the seabed perhaps twenty or thirty feet below. Or maybe they had been vainly trying to surprise the numerous shags that inhabited the next bay.

The ocean had not always been so placid out there, despite what it appeared to be from the camp. Some of the boys had bounced over ten-foot Atlantic waves before then, although wet to the skin, and often blue with cold, they had always come back with a smile, saying they had loved it. It is only when the canoeists are forced to obey each wave is it possible to feel the real challenge of the Atlantic. And to those boys who were in a canoe for the first time in their lives, and who faced this challenge, I salute your courage; but I wonder how much you were trembling.

Such were the joys of canoeing. And it was right I think that more or less the last two days we spent on Colonsay should be taken up with a bivouac. The idea was that a party of boys, seven in number, and an officer, should walk round the island, while the canoe was taken round just offshore from them. Each boy was to take a turn in the canoe, which worked out at an average of about two hours' canoeing per person. Something has been written elsewhere of this remarkable and memorable trip, but only from the walkers' point of view. So here we have the personal accounts of their part of the canoeing from three of the boys themselves, these stages being considered the most interesting.

John Jackson

The first in the canoe was Robin Kennedy. "We set off from camp about eleven o'clock one morning, with the canoe loaded down with supplies sealed in waterproof bags. Having passed 'The Old Man of the Sea', we headed southwards across Port Lobh on a very calm sea. Just before a seemingly impassable string of rocks jutting out from the S.W. point, we came across some seals and began to sing to them, whereupon they started swimming round us and playing with us.

"After navigating the rock channels between Colonsay and Oronsay, we came to the 'Strand'. There were quite a few seals basking on the rocks here. We met the rest of the party at the end of the 'Strand', where they were ferried across to Oronsay one by one. It was a relief to see them as my arms were aching a lot."

Chris Maughan comes next. "Lunch and Kendal Mint Cake gave us energy for about the longest canoe trip of the bivouac. We set off from south of Balnahard Bay, and took the canoe to the most northern part of the island. This was the most deserted part of the coast—indeed we seemed to have been the first people there, until we saw a boat anchored in the very beautiful Balnahard Bay. We passed a herd of wild goats staring down at us from the summit of the cliffs.

However they soon look fright. Several seals and thousands of gulls and shags covered the rocks of the northern coast, flying around us as we approached. An hour later we arrived at Kiloran Bay, with a stiffer breeze beginning to blow the waves up behind us."

And finally Simon Stoye. "I started in Kiloran Bay, adding my weight to an already overladen canoe, bringing the gunwales only a couple of inches above the smooth water in the sheltered bay. As soon as we paddled out of the bay we went broadside to the waves and water started pouring in. Soon we had to take shelter behind some rocks in order to bale out the water we were sitting in.

"Water came in all the way to Port Mor, for the waves, often as high as three feet, were being chopped about by the wind. We had to bale out twice more, and once we had to beach the canoe, unload her and tip her upside down on the rocks. At one stage it was touch and go whether we should reach the shelter of the rocks or fill up with water completely. For the coast was very wild, and often the cliffs came sheer into the sea, offering no protection at all. We eventually reached Port Mor, our destination, an hour and a half overdue. I believe that we were nearer to going under on that day than at any time during this year's expedition. But that is speculation."

## SEASHORE LIFE

The best part of the project was the collection of seaweed. We had nine different species, four of them being types of wrack. The most beautiful specimen was a fragile, pink weed called *Codium tomentosum*. We had yards of bootlace weed. This, as its name implies, is a long, stringy seaweed which grows on underwater rocks in bunches.

After Pat Bradley had announced that he wanted a large collection of seaweed, the "aquarium" (two dixies) was inevitably clogged by a green mass of it, killing off the few animals we had. These included three species of crab: young edible crab, shore crab and hermit crabs.



Little Cuttle (*Sepioloidea atlantica*) 2-3 in. by Peter Parks  
(Previously printed in Puffin's *Seashore Life*)

Although lobsters were abundant we did not catch any, despite attempts by some people to construct lobster pots.

The third part of the aquarium was devoted to shells, including two types of limpets, periwinkles, whelks and sea urchins.

Altogether it was a very successful project. Andrew Hall

### AN EVENING AT KILCHATTAN

After the lazy summer's day the evening was fresh and still. Hills, sky and sea were caught in a motionless tableau and only the dark grey tarmac running insidiously between the hay and heather disturbed the sense of completeness. We followed it down the hill, over the cattle grid, past the rocky bay filled with seaweed and up the other side. A few crofters' cottages stood either side of the road. Their bald heads of corrugated iron or asbestos, now replacing slate or thatch, glinted in the orange light.

Beyond a field of half-ripe oats stood Fingal's Limpet Hammers; rough stone pillars of unknown origin. Two crofters had earlier told us tales about these. The lilting, high pitched voices of these men had linked them immediately to the rich past of the island and belied the protestations of one of them that all the tales were "damn nonsense". It was they who had set us looking for the Giant's Footprint.

It was all rather a hoax. Or so it at first seemed. The print in the vertical rock was no bigger than a size nine shoe and this giant was supposed to have a stride a mile long! It was ridiculous! Perhaps the piece of ground broken away from the cliff just above us was the giant's doing? After all he would land pretty heavily with a stride like his. No! This was too big a stretch for anyone's imagination.

We sat down disappointed. We had been looking forward to seeing the phenomenon left by the old giant. Still, there was supposed to be a footprint on Mull from whence he came and another in the hill a mile or so away. His bed was also in the hills above us. Perhaps these would fulfil our hopes. It was too late to investigate, so we had to take all these on trust.

In the warm stillness my imagination began to rove once more. Those slim pillars of stone below us, so tall and strong, and yet so delicate, were precision instruments. If mishandled they would snap. One could hear them clinking against the rock as Fingal collected his limpets. Or perhaps he collected precious stones, or exercised the sculptor's art. Yes, I think he did all those things and when he had finished his work he hung up his hammers for us to admire, before he slipped away.

"Halla, halla halla" came the high-pitched call. The cows started up the field. The musical lilt of the Gaelic was enough to show that it was not all "damn nonsense". The land and legend of the Celt still had the power to arouse our sense of wonder.

Chris Dawson

## DINGLE EXPEDITION 1966

Leader John Houghton

Members

Martin Ashton, Tom Bragg, John Lace, James Norman, Terry Samuel, David Wrigley, Nick Yates.

### LEADERS REPORT

Plans for the Dingle Expedition only really begun to take shape at the Christmas conference in Derby, where it was agreed that an expedition organised by members of Society other than officers, directors or the Hon. Chairman would provide problems of organisation and responsibility similar to those undertaken on Rhum in 1959. It would therefore be an ideal form of training for prospective officers on expeditions to come, as well as being a change in both substance and situation from those of previous years.

It was decided that the party should consist of 11 Society members, all having been on Harris in 1965. This number was later reduced to 8 with John Proctor doing V.S.O., Simon Rogers being ill, and John Brooks going to Colonsay. A fortnight suiting all was chosen, and an approximate area for the site selected on the north coast of the Dingle peninsula, about 1 mile south of Brandon Point. Nick Yates chose to supply maps of the area and to find contacts who might provide the necessary information about the camp site, bouts and fishing; John Lace undertook the task of keeping accounts, arranging all financial aspects of the expedition, and ordered a marquee and lat. requirements from Dublin; David Wrigley hired Calor equipment from Dingle and Dublin, and Tom Bragg made out a menu (assuming a great appetite for "Marietta" biscuits, sugar, and condensed milk), and ordered stores from a wholesaler in Tralee. Finally, Martin Ashton arranged for 3 people to travel from Fishguard to Rosslare, and for the remaining 5 to sail from Liverpool to Dublin. A meeting was held at John Houghton's house to decide upon final arrangements, and who should bring such articles as tilley lamps, kitchen knives, dolly mops, and fly-sprays.

After a great deal of paper-work, the expedition finally got under way, and we all met at Tralee station: we left for the camp site almost immediately as Tom and Martin had arrived the day before to arrange the transport of stores. The tents were pitched on a well-drained stretch of grass just above a sandy beach facing north. We were sheltered (or so we thought) by spectacular and beautiful mountains to the south and west, with Brandon Mountain rising to over 3,000 ft.

The camp consisted of the marquee for stores, equipment, cooking, eating and sleeping 2, an Icelandic ridge tent sleeping 4, a bivvi tent sleeping 2, and a lat. tent. No driftwood was available for "furniture" so stones from the beach were piled up to make seats. Medical equipment was put under the charge of Pseud, whose speciality the "neck of life" we were unfortunately unable to witness, but whose skill in treating a cut toe made us realise we were in safe

hands. Fresh eggs, milk, and bread, could be bought locally when necessary, and water came from our landlord's farm, half mile away.

During the first week cloudy but warm weather facilitated walks to explore the area. Deelick Point was reached with the use of ropes, and Wriggles heard the legendary pipers from the submerged village in Sauce Creek, while a party was spending the night there under canvas. Hopes to pass the above off as a hermit in St. Brendan's Oratory on the summit of Brandon Mountain were dashed by the discovery that it was an altar rather than a stone hut, but a walk to Loch Cruttia offered a little encouragement to the fishermen, though they later discovered they had fished the wrong side.

Projects got off to a reasonable start, and ranged from ornithology, geology, and sociology to leprechaun hunting and the designs of a certain "Romeo Samuels", the results of whose exploits will not appear in print. Sociology in Brandon showed considerable possibilities, as the locals were extremely friendly and helpful, and the village had an interesting history. Bird life was fairly varied without anything exceptionally unusual. A possible geographical survey was set back by Simon Rogers being unable to come.

It was just as these projects were showing considerable promise that the gales came, at the end of the first week. Gusts of what cannot have been more than Force 7 made short work of the rather doubtful-looking marquee roof, causing 2 ribs over 10 ft. long, and then flattening the whole tent. Stores were transferred to an extra bivvi tent, and cooking and eating quarters to the lat. tent (6 ft. by 6 ft.!). Further gales of up to Force 9 made the re-pitching of 2 tents necessary, and succeeded in snapping 2 tent-poles. Thus 4 days were spent either reorganising camp, keeping the tents up, or recovering from the night watches. However, the final 3 days were fine, so camp was struck without trouble.

Our sincere thanks to James Greaney for our excellent site, and for our water supply—I hope we picked enough onions for him in exchange—also to Sean O'Neill and his minibus, and to Paddy O'Sullivan and his car and trailer, for providing transport from Tralee to the site. Finally to Johnny Fitz(gerald) for his excellent Guinness, his untiring answers to our endless questions, and his suggestions as to where we could take Martin for a hair-cut! These and all members of the party itself all contributed a great deal to make this essentially democratic expedition a great success. I hope a similar one will be possible next year. John Houghton

#### **WHERE HAVE ALL THE HOUSES GONE**

About 100 years ago, the district of which Brandon is a part consisted of numerous villages spread fairly evenly over the parish area. To the west of Brandon there were settlements of herdsmen almost completely isolated from civilisation. These spoke only Gaelic and had little or no contact with schools, doctors or such like. Over the years there has been a steady process of depopulation, with people moving out of the smaller communities into the bigger towns.

First of all the " wild men " moved out of their settlements and then there was a drift of people from the whole area, moving into the big cities of England and America. The trend continues today.

Some say that the settlements were maintained against the will of the inhabitants, because the big lord of the land willed it so. Anyhow the herdsmen started to tire of their isolation and either emigrated or moved into the coastal villages such as Cloghane, Ballyquin and later Brandon. At this time the villages were thriving communities. Their economy was based on a mixed sort of farming, but there was also a thriving mackerel industry. By the turn of the century there were just under a dozen curing stations, all sending to America up to fifty thousand salted mackerels per day.

After the Great War Brandon underwent a slump in prosperity. The mackerel trade died because the shoals moved out of European waters and because, at the same time, America started pouring money into a fishing fleet of her own. The loss of the mackerel industry added poignancy to the old Irish yearning to emigrate and between 1921 and 1960 the population of the district had dropped from 1,800 to under 600. The rush to emigrate has now slowed down but there is still an overall yearly decrease in population.

At the moment Brandon's future is probably in the balance. There were a few middle-aged people moving into Brandon, but still the majority of young villagers prefer to emigrate. There is a farming and a lobster fishing industry, each able to employ more people than it does at present, if only the young people could be persuaded to stay. The danger of Brandon becoming a ghost-town is very real. If more people continue to settle in the village and if the tourist trade increases then there will be enough life for the young people to stay. Otherwise the future that faces Brandon might be the same that faced the herdsmen's settlements a hundred years ago with the triumphing of the big cities again.

David Wrigley

#### **THE NIGHT WE STARTED A LEGEND**

I was lying dozing and drowsy in my sleeping bag, with my surroundings seemingly ebbing and flowing and flowing and revolving uncertainly before me. The warm blaze of the two candles had been extinguished many minutes before but the atmosphere of spent air which they had produced in the tent still remained.

The noise of the wind and the sea and of the occasional rock fall a thousand feet above us all blended into a soothing rhythm. I realised that I must be going to sleep. As is usual when I make such a realisation, I immediately woke up again. But the rhythm in my head still remained; it was the noise of a pipe band and I was hearing it above the noise made by the wind. I pinched myself but it continued. I asked the other guy in the tent if he could hear anything but of course he could not. So eventually I just drifted back to sleep again.

When we got back the following day I asked Johnny Fitz if he knew any legends about the creek. He replied "No", but was most

taken when I told him about the pipe band. That night Jimmy Fitz asked a group of us if we were those who had heard the pipe band down in Sauce Creek. The tall shepherd from over by Mass, asked us the same half an hour later. Next morning Mrs. O'Neill asked us if we were the ones who had heard the banshees.

If there had been no bad atmosphere in the tent that night then there would probably have been no story about the banshees or pipe band. But if you ever stay in Brandon I bet you a pint of Guinness that you will hear the story of the English folk who heard either the lost pipe band or the banshees down in Sauce Creek.

David Wrigley



## ORNITHOLOGICAL SUMMARY 1966

### General

This year's results are most encouraging in two ways. On the one hand, they reveal that ornithology is proving of great interest to more and more members of the Society, which is as it should be—to spend two weeks in the Hebrides means that we must fit into a more natural order of things than is normally possible, or even practical in everyday existence, and bird life can claim to be one of the most stimulatingly consoling things about this more "natural" life. We see them, we hear them and we cannot escape from them: they are often the only living companions around us, each breed with its own ways and habits. If more members of the society are taking an interest in ornithology, then it seems not pretentious to say that more members are really coming to an understanding of the expeditions, and what is to be gained from them.

The other encouraging feature stems from this great interest, for the surveys have been fuller than before, and already certain interesting patterns appear to be emerging, although these are early days for us yet. Nevertheless, we now have surveys from Jura for two consecutive years, while Colonsay was covered this year, which ought to mean a fascinating time for the expedition next year to the same island, as they compare results.

As before, the reports of each expedition have had to be slightly edited in the following summaries, although I hope that each officer in charge of ornithology will not feel that anything of significance has been omitted—full lists are at the end of this report.

### Lewis (August-September)

The expedition was based at the entrance to Loch Bhalamus (O.S. Sheet 12,295010). and the area studied consisted either of rocky and sandy seashore, or hills covered with rough grass and poor quality heather. There were no recent human settlements.

The area was not really exciting from the bird point of view, there being very few grouse in the area, although snipe were quite numerous, the birds flying in their peculiar zig-zag fashion from under one's feet; they seem to spend their day on the marshy slopes facing the sea and come down to the water to feed at night.

A notably common species was the Wren (Hebridean sub-species) bobbing on the rocks throughout the area. It became quite a mascot. Many Blackbirds and Thrushes had taken to a cliff and seashore life, mixing with the large number of Pipits. One Rock Dove was recorded on the Harris mainland, their absence around Bhalamus being due perhaps, to the lack of cultivated crops.

The Golden Eagles were always a source of excitement, and we had two pairs apparently based near the camp, one pair in the high crags at the top of the valley and the other situated on the sea cliffs around the loch mouth. The Eagles have, according to local opinion, ceased to breed now, and this looks like another tale of victims of the insecticides used in sheep dips. A fine Heronry was also found at the mouth of the loch, with upwards of 6 or 7 birds sighted every time we went in and out in the boat, their lazy flapping wings lifting them so awkwardly, but then into smooth graceful flight.

Although the number of species seen was small we shall remember for a long time the freedom and space of Bhalamus with its attendant birds. Thanks are due to all expedition members, particularly Fabian Miskin and Martin Bedwell who saw and helped to identify so many species.

### Harris (July-August)

The expedition forsook the wilder regions (?) and was situated at Rhenigidale, a crofting community of about twenty people near the entrance to Loch Seaforth, on the west side (O.S. Sheet 12, 230018).

(A short visit was also made to Scalpay, which suggested that it offered a most interesting field for study.)

These factors enabled the ornithologists to concentrate on the open sea stretching away to Skye, the hills behind the camp reaching their highest point in Toddun (1,731 feet), or in the inhabited and/or cultivated areas around the camp. In fact, all possible ground had once been cultivated, which meant that along the lower levels around the coast stretched an almost unbroken chain of recent human settlements, with large colonies of "urban" birds such as Blackbirds, Song-Thrushes, and House Sparrows, which had not taken to life on the seashore as tends to happen in the Hebrides.

The high hills offered the selection to which we are fast becoming accustomed, including one pair of Golden Eagles which had their eyrie in Glen Laxadule, and large flocks of Ravens, who were often to be seen flying in the lee of Toddun, calling incessantly. But perhaps the greatest excitement was the Red-Throated Diver with its chick in a high lochan at a height of 850 ft

All day the pair swam up and down, the mother calling incessantly, but no sign was seen of a second parent.

Rhenigidale Island is obviously a breeding site for Gulls and Ringed Plover, although we were too late for the sight of any eggs, but I can recall no more frightening experience than standing alone in the long grass, with flocks of furious Herring-Gulls, and Terns, circling a few feet overhead. Shades of Hitchcock!

I feel it would be fair comment to suggest that the ornithology was in danger of suffering through other calls on the leader's time, but we were fortunate in the knowledge and keenness of William Temple, Nigel Broughton and Kim Donaldson. To them, and all those who contributed to the map in the marquee, many thanks. Jura (July-August)

The camp site was in the same spot as last year, in the north-east of the island at Inverlussa, but we managed to spot large numbers in other parts, either at Craighouse or in "bivvies".

Jura is an excellent region to study because it contains an endless variety of different types of terrain, from high mountains surrounded by rough boggy moorland to the woods, grassy slopes, meadows and seashore of the lower land.

The number of birds seen is larger than that recorded last year, but this may well be accounted for by the better weather which enabled us to spend more time in the field.

#### Colonsay (August)

The west side of Colonsay was most thoroughly explored. This offered a wide variety of habitat, ranging from rock cliffs to sand beaches, fresh water lochs and bog to hill-heather, and woodland to agricultural land. Although much was accomplished, it is not possible to get so much work done with younger boys, and an extremely large amount remains to be done. (cf. Loder's *Book of Colonsay*.)

Red-Throated Divers breed on Loch at Sgoltaire, and Fulmars near Dun Tealraig, west of Kiloran Bay: of this we had proof, but time did not allow us to investigate reports of many birds from the islanders. Next year, perhaps?

#### Summary

One point deserves mention as a result of the last two years' work.

On Jura last year and Lewis this year, we have had reports about infertile eggs from Golden Eagles. These reports are most important to the Golden Eagle survey that is being conducted, because it does seem that this most magnificent bird may well be suffering a drastic decline in numbers. We wish well to those who are trying to maintain the numbers of Eagles while in no way causing sheep farmers and others any "inconvenience". To find a happy solution to this sort of problem is never easy, but one does hope that some solution can be found very soon.

Next year's plans are already in the air. Yet another part of the Long Island (Lewis and Harris) is to be visited, further work can be

done on Colonsay and at Rhenigidale, while we look forward to the first reports for some time from Rhum. Things are going ahead well, although I hope we will shortly be in a position to link up with other bird societies engaged in the business of status and protection. We will gain enormously if we are able to co-operate and add to the knowledge of the Hebrides and their bird life.

Thanks for this ornithological report go to John Dobinson, Richard Collins and John Brooks, assisted by many boys, including John Round, C. Hood, and Mike Jeavons who sent in reports. The Society owes them all very many congratulations.

Alan Bateman

| CLASSIFIED LIST—1966   |            |        |      |          |
|--|------------|--------|------|----------|
| (Classification based on Fitter in Collins' <i>Guide to British Birds</i> .) |            |        |      |          |
| Species  | Land Birds |        |      |          |
|  | Lewis      | Harris | Jura | Colonsay |
| Goldcrest  |            |        | x    |          |
| Hebridean Wren   | x          | x      | x    | x        |
| Willow Warbler   |            |        | x    |          |
| Coal Tit   |            |        | x    |          |
| Blue Tit   |            |        | x    |          |
| Goldfinch  |            |        |      |          |
| Lesser Redpoll   |            |        | x    |          |
| Tree Creeper   |            |        |      |          |
| Pied Flycatcher  |            |        | x    |          |
| Whinchat   | x          |        |      |          |
| Stonechat  | x          | x      | x    | x        |
| House-Martin   |            |        | x    | x        |
| Linnet   |            | x      |      |          |
| Twite  |            | x      | x    |          |
| Common Whitethroat   |            |        | x    |          |
| Robin  |            |        | x    | x        |
| Great Tit  |            |        | x    |          |
| Long Tailed Tit  |            |        | x    |          |
| House Sparrow  |            | x      | x    | x        |
| Greenfinch   |            |        | x    | x        |
| Chaffinch  |            |        | x    | x        |
| Wheatear   |            | x      | x    | x        |
| Hedge-Sparrow  | x          | x      | x    | x        |
| Meadow-Pipit   | x          | x      | x    | x        |
| Tree Pipit   |            |        | x    |          |
| Swift  |            |        | x    |          |
| Skylark  | x          |        |      |          |
| Pied Wagtail   | x          |        | x    | x        |
| Swallow  |            |        | x    | x        |
| Starling   | x          | x      | x    | x        |
| Song Thrush  | x          | x      | x    | x        |
| Ring-Ouzel   | x          |        |      |          |
| Blackbird  | x          | x      | x    | x        |
| Mistle-Thrush  |            | x      | x    |          |
| Golden Plover  |            | x      |      |          |
| Lapwing  |            |        | x    | x        |
| Common Partridge   |            | x      |      |          |
| Jackdaw  |            |        | x    | x        |
| Kestrel  | x          |        | x    |          |
| Red Grouse   | x          |        | x    |          |
| Peregrine  |            |        | x    |          |
| Wood Pigeon  |            |        | x    | x        |

| Species         | Lewis | Harris | Jura  | Colonsay |
|-----------------|-------|--------|-------|----------|
| Black Grouse    |       |        | x     |          |
| Rook            |       |        | x     |          |
| Carrian Crow    |       |        | x     |          |
| Hooded Crow     | x     | x      | x     |          |
| Common Buzzard  |       | x      | x     | x        |
| Common Pheasant |       |        | x     | x        |
| Raven           | x     | x      |       | x        |
| Golden Eagle    | x     | x      | x     |          |
|                 | <hr/> | <hr/>  | <hr/> | <hr/>    |
|                 | 16    | 18     | 41    | 21       |

**Waterside Birds**

|                  |       |       |       |       |
|------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Sand Martin      |       |       | x     |       |
| Rock Pipit       | x     | x     | x     | x     |
| Grey Wagtail     | x     | x     | x     |       |
| Dipper           | x     | x     |       |       |
| Dunlin           | x     |       |       |       |
| Ringed Plover    |       | x     |       | x     |
| Common Sandpiper |       |       |       |       |
| Common Snipe     | x     | x     | x     | x     |
| Rock Dove        | x     | x     |       | x     |
| Common Tern      |       | x     | x     |       |
| Oystercatcher    | x     | x     | x     | x     |
| Curlew           | x     |       | x     | x     |
| Grey Log Goose   |       |       | x     |       |
| Common Heron     | x     | x     | x     | x     |
|                  | <hr/> | <hr/> | <hr/> | <hr/> |
|                  | 9     | 9     | 9     | 7     |

**Water Birds**

|                        |   |   |   |   |
|------------------------|---|---|---|---|
| Petrel                 |   |   |   |   |
| Manx Shearwater        | x |   |   |   |
| Dabchick               |   |   | x |   |
| Puffin                 | x | x | x |   |
| Black Guillemot        |   | x | x |   |
| Black-Headed Gull      | x |   |   | x |
| Coot                   |   |   | x |   |
| Common Gull            | x |   | x | x |
| Kittiwake              | x |   |   | x |
| Razorbill              | x |   | x | x |
| Guillemot              | x | x | x |   |
| Shearwater             |   |   |   |   |
| Arctic Skua            | x |   |   |   |
| Fulmar                 | x |   | x |   |
| Common Scoter          |   |   | x |   |
| Lesser Black Back      | x | x | x | x |
| Herring Gull           | x | x | x | x |
| Velvet Scoter          |   | x |   |   |
| Red-Throated Diver     |   | x | x |   |
| Mallard                |   |   | x | x |
| Eider                  | x |   |   |   |
| Red-Breasted Merganser |   |   | x | x |
| Great Skua             |   |   | x |   |
| Sheld Duck             | x | x | x |   |
| Black Throated Diver   |   |   | x |   |
| Goosander              |   | x |   |   |
| Great Black Back       | x | x | x | x |
| Great Northern Diver   |   |   |   | x |
| Shag                   | x | x | x | x |
| Cormorant              | x | x | x | x |
| Gannet                 | x | x | x |   |

| Species      | Lewis     | Harris    | Jura      | Colonsay  |
|--------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Canada Goose |           |           |           | x         |
| Mute Swan    |           |           | x         |           |
|              | <hr/>     | <hr/>     | <hr/>     | <hr/>     |
|              | 17        | 13        | 22        | 13        |
|              | <hr/>     | <hr/>     | <hr/>     | <hr/>     |
| <b>TOTAL</b> | <b>42</b> | <b>40</b> | <b>72</b> | <b>41</b> |

**PLANS FOR 1967**

The Directors have arranged the following Expeditions for this summer. The dates are provisional and are subject to revision on the publication of rail and steamer timetables.

|                              |                            |
|------------------------------|----------------------------|
| GROUP C (16½ years and over) | <i>RHUM EXPEDITION</i>     |
| July 26th-August 10th        | Leader: John Dobinson      |
| GROUP D (15-16½ years)       | <i>HARRIS EXPEDITION</i>   |
| August 15th- September 1st   | Leader: Andrew Wilson      |
| GROUP E (14-15½ years)       | <i>LEWIS EXPEDITION</i>    |
| July 25th-August 12th        | Leader: John Abbott        |
| GROUP F (12¾-14½ years)      | <i>COLONSAY EXPEDITION</i> |
| August 15th-August 31st      | Leader: John Jackson       |

(Ages refer to August 1967)

Plans are being made for a small expedition (primarily ornithological) for Group B to Handa; and an Officers' Training Expedition to Mingulay; both by invitation.  
Project Co-ordinators

*Ornithology:* Alan Bateman

*Hydrography:* Steven Harris

*Surveying and Sociology:* Tim Wjllcocks

*Geology:* David Carter

*History:* Jim Hardy *Maps and Charts:* Simon Rogers

*Medical Adviser:* P. K. Peace

*Conference Organisers:* David Vigar and Patrick Bradley

*Stationery:* Philip Renold

*Editors of Newsletter:* David and John Cullingford

The excellent 16 mm colour cine film of the 1964 Gometra Expedition and four sets of slides are available to all members for showing at schools etc. Please contact John Lace—his and all the above members' addresses will be found in the directory which follows.

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Every year, as the Society prospers and grows, so more help is received at the hands of both individuals and other organisations. I feel that it would be invidious to select names for special mention in this Report. I would be bound to leave someone out. Instead I would like, on behalf of the Society, to say a very sincere 'thank you to everyone who has helped: to those who helped us to buy another boat trained our hydrographers. loaned us equipment, charts and maps, supplied us with food, helped us with travel, allowed us to camp on their property and pin up with us while we were there. Without all of your support the S.H.S. would not survive. Thank you. Editor