



THE 1967 REPORT OF
THE SCHOOLS HEBRIDEAN SOCIETY
 (Founded in 1960)

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The Editor of the Report is C. J. Dawson

FOREWORD

By Lord Strathcona
Laird of Colonsay

The Schools Hebridean Society has achieved the remarkable success of finding an enjoyable activity which aims for admirable objectives: all at modest cost without interfering with anyone else. If you think about it, this is a rare combination of virtues. From the biased viewpoint of anyone making their home in the Western Isles, they also have the good sense to appreciate the particular charms of a wonderful part of the country.

Special credit must be given to the officers and organisers. Not only do they have the imagination and energy to set up the scheme: but they also set a magnificent example in their willingness to devote part of their own holidays to the considerable task of arranging these trips and providing the leadership which makes them such a success.

They make a real contribution towards achieving a better life in an increasingly complicated, artificial and hard pressed society by giving young people the opportunity to savour the values of a simpler way of life where time is not always pressing. To the healthiness of the outdoor life is added the "refreshment of the spirit from the experience of an unspoilt and spacious landscape". Learning to understand the world of nature can add a new dimension to living and makes its contribution to the increasing problem of the constructive use of leisure.

This sort of living throws the individual back on his own resources. Most people discover something new about themselves in the process. At the same time communal living in a camp calls for restraint, and emphasises the need for mutual help and understanding hand in hand with individual self-reliance and responsibility. Any undertaking which has these goals deserves all possible support.

The S.H.S. members have clearly shown their genuine interest in the people and habitat of the communities they visit and have given many practical demonstrations of their wish to help where they can. Certainly they leave behind many friends in Colonsay who will be glad to see them return. For our part we like to think that they at least understand some of the problems of local life and that our visitors have joined the ranks of the enthusiasts who appreciate the variety of scenery and weather, the diversity of nature and the many other attractions of the beautiful Hebrides.

STRATHCONA

EDITORIAL COMMENT

Once again the Report will be in circulation at a far later date than we intended. This is one instance in which the S.H.S. has not improved its running efficiency in the past year.

The reason may be loosely termed "lack of communication".

With an organisation such as ours, with members spread throughout the British Isles, it is vital that those responsible for any part of the administration should receive the necessary cooperation from other members. The new committee system, instituted to deal with the actual organisation of the expeditions, leaving the Board to make policy decisions, will certainly make the running of the Society easier and more efficient. But this can only be achieved if members continue to come forward and show that they are willing and able to take on the jobs which present themselves.

Our membership has increased so that we are not far short of 400. This is certainly encouraging.

With our new brochure, and the Report, we hope to attract a considerable number of new members; but most of all we rely on you to tell others when you have enjoyed an expedition: and if for some reason you didn't enjoy it, well, TELL US.

Again there was a large amount of material submitted for publication and it is not possible to print it all.

My thanks to John Dobinson, Andrew Wilson, Ian Christmas and John Lace for editing the contributions from the various expeditions, before passing them on to me; also to Mr. Leslie James and the Southwold Press.

We are certainly gathering a wealth of knowledge about the Hebrides. This is noticeable in the realms of ornithology and botany.

Alan Bateman has done much good work in collecting together and tabling the ornithological results, and it would now appear, from the amount of material collected, that it is opportune for similar work to be done with the botanical results.

The winning cover design is by Martin Child.

This, we felt, gave a suggestion of the atmosphere and activities of our Society, and provided a pleasing picture at the same time.

The entries of the runners up will be found elsewhere in the Report—John Davies' sailing ship on the inside cover, and David McCarthy's illustration of Oban Harbour between the reports of the Lewis and Harris expeditions.

Being myself in hospital, and confined to bed at the present time, I realise even more than ever the enjoyment we can get from physical activity, and especially from outdoor activities.

I would, therefore, first of all, like to wish Danny Hearn as speedy a recovery as possible from the serious injury he sustained playing against the All Blacks. Danny was on the 1964 S. Rona expedition. Secondly, on behalf of the Society I wish to convey our very sincere thanks to all those who in any way helped us to maintain our efforts, and in particular to launch the 1967 expeditions, and to carry them out so successfully.

Editor

COLONSAY EXPEDITION 1967

Leader John Jackson

Officers

Pat Bradley, Donald Campbell, Martin Child, John Cullingford, John Lace, Philip Renold, Simon Rogers.

Boys

Robert Arnold, Robert Bailey, Paul Baker, Nigel Deberker, Simon Carlton, Roger Crawshaw, Robert Craymer, Giles Cullingford, Christopher David, Robert Davies, Stephen Elliott, Paul Fanner, Andrew Gale, Richard George, Tim Griffiths, Andrew Houghton, Robert Marchment, Neil Mitchell, Tim Rounce, Christopher Scrine, Eddie Stuart, Martin Weyer, Paul Willis, Tim Wilson, Keith Wright.

LEADER'S REPORT

So it was friendly little Colonsay again; the place where we had had such a good lime last year. Would it now be an anti-climax? We soon found out. Last year's party had paved the way so that the islanders felt they already knew us. We were soon joining them on the soccer pitch, in the concert hall, at dinner or tea, or at the kirk. No, Colonsay had not changed; the midges were still there, though there were, perhaps, a few less people. But it was still as lovely as ever.

The site of the camp was again at the golf-course on the west coast. The tents were pitched only a couple of yards from the large beach at the end of a splendid bay. And when the sun set, the rocks in the mouth of the bay became as shadows in a silver sea. Behind us was the golf-course, and around all this were the rocky hills and the heather.

One of the joys of such an island is that the boys feel that there is some definite area to explore; there was always this dark cave, OF that hidden bay, which they had not yet visited, or the wild goats that they had not yet seen. There was also very good scope for the various activities and projects, and soon groups of three or more could be seen from the northern tip to the southern point. John L. kept the sailing dinghy in constant use, and made several trips to Seal Island. Even the officers had a sail. It also enabled one or two of the boys to catch some mackerel, which they would cook for supper. Rock-climbing was also popular, and poor Philip was well-nigh exhausted by the end of the fortnight. The only person who was seen to fall was himself, and that was through embarrassment! The canoes were worked hard, and the canoeists also spent some time playing and singing to the seals. Once, however, the canoeists decided to play with the dinghy—or was it the other way round?—anyway the canoe was certainly the other way round by now, and continued on its course in the most undignified manner.

Bivouacking is something many will remember, and everyone was able to go on one, much to their delight. It gave the opportunity to the officer to break from camp routine, and to the boys to experience what the more real and somewhat less leisurely camp life is like,

where each boy has a definite responsibility in the welfare of such a camp. On one memorable occasion such a party was unable to find its tents in the dark; they were situated in the ghost village. And when the dozen ghosts came from the main camp to haunt them, they were instead surprised by one Zombie, a few weirdies, a lost Cully, and some fish.

The most precise project was sociology, under the auspices of which John C. must have had many cups of tea. Anyway he and some of the boys learnt much more of the history and legends of the islands and islanders. He also taught the boys a little astronomy. Many of the boys were introduced to, and some increased their knowledge of, the fields of botany, zoology, and ornithology under the able wisdom of Martin and Don. And there was Simon who introduced the game of golf to camp life. He also erected a tidepole for hydrographic purposes, but results are not forthcoming.

Thus we spent the mornings and afternoons; and after dinner we played soccer or cricket, or walked around the nearby hills. After prayers there was the singing, or story-telling, or the game of bridge, or a romp on the ground. But the songs were usually punctuated with puns, and the stories usually started shaggy and ended flat—like the teller.

The last night eventually arrived, and the party roughed it at the harbour, where songs, games, and stories lightened the early-morning sleeplessness. It was a sad party that left the next morning. Everyone had enjoyed themselves—some, like myself, as never before. It was a tremendous experience, and such an experience can only be rare. Whether on the rock-face or in the canoe, or in some situation in the camp, we had all been challenged in some way, and that challenge had demanded the most of us. We may have struggled on after we were tired without one word of complaint or we may have slept peacefully next to someone we had at first disliked. And in the way the boy had answered the challenge, that he is and no more. Afterwards it will be different. We now know we can do it; before we were afraid,—afraid of being tested; afraid of failure. It is what we put into such a situation that really matters, and the more we put in, the more we will gain, and the more our lives will be enriched; so that our achievement lies in the giving, not in the taking.

And now we were leaving. One boy had already gone off to Glasgow hospital by lifeboat and plane, and underwent a successful operation. I would extend the thanks of his parents to all those who helped. We were going back the other way—MacBrayncs.

I had with me a grand lot of boys, and the officers were exceptional. I thank God that I had had the privilege of being one of them. All we left were those very friendly islanders, whose kindness we could never repay. Especially I would thank Lord and Lady Strathcona, who lent us anything from a chop to an island, and Peter Mac-Allister, who looked after our dinghy and canoe over winter. I would also thank Robert Craymer, who so kindly lent us his canoe. Without it we should have been sunk. And there were many others,

both islanders and otherwise, and I hope very much that we shall be seeing you all again soon.

John Jackson

WRITING FOR THE REPORT

If I write something remotely connected with the camp or Colonsay, they say it may be put in print. But what shall I write about? It's alright for Andrew Gale—he can rhapsodise about moths and butterflies, or Zombie about "Fires I have lit". Then if I had been Simon, maybe something witty could flow on the pleasures of playing golf in the middle of a flock of sheep, or perhaps if I had been Nigel I could have written on "Ode to a pair of boots now lying 5 fathoms deep in the Sound of Jura". Other suitable topics might have been "My first fish caught at Scalasaig"—a suitable topic for Tim and Robert—or "Wrestling", written by John Cullingford.

No, article writing is for sailors like John Lace or the climbing Philips of this world, but not for me. I have nothing to write about; in fact what can a camp administrator say when there are so many more eloquent pens dashing off reminiscences of bivouacing with raw porridge for breakfast, stumbling over a golden eagle or canoeing round the island. So I had better leave it to them.

Patrick Bradley

SAILING

"Do you know anything about sailing?" This was one of the first questions put to me by John Jackson when we joined the train from London at Crewe Station at 1.30 a.m. on August 16th. Once I had said "Yes" John went on to explain that John Maguire had had to call off because of jaundice, and then announced that I was to be the sailing officer.

Fortunately the weather was kind to us, sometimes too kind, and so having spent a couple of days having minor alterations done to "Vinga" we had almost uninterrupted sailing until the last two days when high winds kept us on dry land. On the other two occasions when we could not sail, the reason was simply lack of wind, and so parties were able to go out using the outboard motor. Not being mechanically minded, I had to be told by Simon Rogers that it was necessary to switch on the petrol before I could expect the motor to start!

When the winds were in the region of force 4 we experienced sailing at its best. One afternoon we sailed 20 miles on the eastern side of the island and as various boys took their turn at the helm they were justifiably excited by the way we were leaving a trail of churned up waters behind us. On another occasion we had an impromptu race against Lord Strathcona's boat, "Ketchup", which was sailed by Lady Strathcona and a Dartmouth cadet. It was a very interesting match as "Ketchup" had the faster hull while we had the larger sail area. "Ketchup's" load was two adults while "Vinga" had a total crew of five in addition to an outboard motor and three gallons of petrol! Anyway, the result was a win for "Ket-

chup" by about two minutes over a 5 1/2 mile course. Perhaps next year's sailing officer will challenge "Ketchup" to another race under more favourable conditions.

On another afternoon I took Paul Willis, Simon Carlton and Tim Wilson out in a fairly heavy sea and we were all soaked as we beat to windward straight into the waves. It was on this occasion that we came nearest to capsizing!

Sometimes we went down to Seal Island which is just south-east of Oronsay; on one occasion we must have seen more than 100 seals at very close quarters. They were fascinated by our white sails.

"Vinga" is ideally suited to the Society's needs. She is a perfect sea-boat, being roomy and safe, but, unlike so many instructional boats, she is fast and in a reasonably strong wind she can give the thrills which are so much a part of sailing.

I hope that at least some of the boys enjoyed the sailing enough to want to take it up when they get home, even if just by crewing other people's boats.

John Lace

ROUND IN A DAY

Donald Campbell, Andrew Gale and I set off from the camp at 9.30 a.m. on what Donald had called "a gentle walk around the island". However, as we turned off the road a few hundred yards from the camp I realised that the walk was going to be far from gentle. Before entering the much tougher northern phase of the walk from Kiloran we had a snack of dates under a blanket of mist. After this we carried on along the rock coastline and reached the northern tip of the island at a time we all considered to be lunchtime. Out came the sandwiches, fruit, sweets and dates, which we ate in warm sunshine which had replaced the mist between Kiloran and the northern end of the island.

During the earlier part of the afternoon we waded through thick heather in the direction of Scalasaig. About half way we saw a herd of wild goats. Nearing Scalasaig we passed through the ruined village where there were some S.H.S. bivouacers who gave us a tip-off that there were cans of Coke to be had in the shop. Our next stopping place was indeed the shop.

Duly refreshed we carried on southwards towards the Strand between Oronsay and Colonsay. We climbed the hill at the entrance to the Strand where we admired the good view and had a good rest in the warm sunshine of the late afternoon (as we had become quite tired). We took our boots and socks off and walked almost the whole width of the island in bare feet along the sand.

The last couple of miles back to camp were walked in good time as there was the prospect of food and drink at the other end. As we approached the camp along the beach we were greeted by, "Dr. Campbell I presume", from one of the more witty members of the expedition who was obviously not expecting us to return.

Christopher David

SOCIOLOGICAL REPORT

This year sociology was "sociable" rather than "sociological". We met almost everyone on the island except the Kellys up North in Balnahard (Gaelic for Cape Homestead) Farm, and that seemed a little too far to go. It was absolutely informal; we asked for water rather than information so what we learnt was, at least, refreshing!

There are eight farms on Colonsay and one on Oronsay, and these account for most of the island's population. Farming in Scotland is nowadays heavily subsidised, but Colonsay, in the days of the "Old Laird" (John McNeill, 1805-1845) was famous for its agriculture, particularly its herd of black cattle, and because of good farming conditions the island population rose to a peak of 979 in 1841. But the Potato Famine of 1845 and altering economic conditions ruined agriculture, and by 1871 the population was 408; by 1937 it was 235; and today it is between 130 and 140—a considerable proportion of these being old age pensioners.

The Farm at Balaronin Phu is deserted, the smaller farms have been taken over by the larger farms, crofting (i.e. having enough land to keep one cow and a few sheep) is no livelihood.

Cattle are still the centre of farming. They are sold live to the mainland, but the islanders have to import meat for their own needs at higher prices because they have no permit to slaughter their livestock.

The arable land is used for growing oats—winter food for cattle. Potatoes and turnips are grown for the islanders' needs. Sheep roam Colonsay: Machrins Farm has 2,000 and the wool is exported. The old crofts are being used as summer cottages for visitors and this helps the farmers' income a little.

Other than farming, there is a hotel built between the wars, which flourishes in summer, a post-office/sweet shop, and a general stores, having a monopoly, for what it is worth, over the island population. Then there is Charlie MacInnes who runs the school bus and drives a freight-lorry—a good job—and Peter McAllister, the only fisherman on the island. The latter, when the lobsters are in season, makes a sizeable profit.

Colonsay House employs three men to keep its amazing subtropical garden in trim. Two years ago, eight men used to be employed, but, partly because of the new Selective Employment Tax, they proved too costly.

The school is run by Mrs. Walker. There are sixteen children between five and twelve years old in the class this year. They don't learn Gaelic anymore. At thirteen they have to leave the island to finish their education in Oban. This "having" to leave the island, so we were told, invariably results in their developing a taste for mainland luxuries and their not wishing to return to Colonsay; neither could they, for at present there is no work for them to do. The population is thus undermined, though there are at present twelve children under five on the island.

There are five separate families of McNeills on Colonsay (related, but too complicatedly for us). The Lairds of old were McNeills; the island only became Lord Strathcona's in 1904. Sir John Carrstairs McNeill died in debt to him, so Strathcona bought it for a further £44,000.

Some part of the present Lord Strathcona's large family is on the island from Easter onwards. The summer visitors also begin to arrive from then on, augmenting the population to about two hundred. Possibly the tourist trade is the one solution to the island's problem. The islanders undoubtedly enjoy the summer with more folk to see and their Hall is used for Dances and Concerts.

Though they must be uncertain as to their future, nevertheless we found the islanders some of the most amicable people on earth.

John Cullingford

BIVOUAC ON ORONSAY

A slight mist hung across the Strand as we wailed on the shore for Simon's party who had camped on Oronsay the night before. In a short while they arrived and we had lunch together. After lunch we said farewell and walked to Oronsay across the sand and shingle which are exposed at low tide.

We carried on towards the farm with one stop to look at some wild goats which were silhouetted on top of the hillside. We soon found the tents which had been left by Simon's party at Port na Luinge. We left our kit there and went back to look at the Priory which was in very good condition and we spent an interesting half hour reading inscriptions on the tombstones.

We returned to the tents and after having a swim we set about preparing the supper; no easy task as we ran out of gas! Later on we climbed Ben Oronsay where we saw our first golden eagle and when we reached the trig point on the peak we could see the camp at the golf course. When we arrived back at our tents we turned in.

At about 5 o'clock in the morning we were disturbed by some cows who were nibbling at our tents, but we managed to get rid of them. As we did not have any gas we had a breakfast of cold sausages sandwiches and lukewarm coffee! After breakfast we explored the island Dubh Eilean and had a quick swim.

At 10 a.m. we packed our equipment and set off towards the Strand, we had to choose our time carefully so that we would catch the low tide. We decided to return via Ardskenish which was deserted except for cows. We walked through pastures, sand dunes and a rocky pass until we arrived back at our base camp at 3.30 p.m. feeling rather tired and very hungry! Robert Craymer

THE WEATHER

This year's weather began very fine but in the last few days it became wet and windy. The weather readings, taken by Dick George and myself, were taken after breakfast and after cocoa and so they were not very consistent. Neither were the wind readings

accurate since the Beaufort Scale goes by movement in trees and small flags among other things, and on that part of the island there were no trees and the only small flag was my own grubby handkerchief.

Here are some of the more interesting facts.

Highest Day Temperature: 75°F (Wednesday 23rd August) (Maximum ever recorded on S.H.S. expeditions)
Lowest Day Temperature: 42°F (Monday 28th August)
Highest Night Temperature: 70° F (Tuesday 22nd August)
Lowest Night Temperature: 44JF (Tuesday 29th August)
Total rainfall: 2.5 inches.
Heaviest rainfall in 12 hours: 0.7 inches (Tuesday 29th Aug)
Highest wind: Force 7 (Tuesday 29th August)

Martin Weyer

CANOEING

Was it not Rat who liked messing about in boats? I wonder if he tried it with canoes. If he had, he may have been able to glimpse something of the very soul of the sea; from the absolute peace of the calm to the terrifying peace of the storm. It is in moments of the storm that man can really find the harsh challenge of nature, and to take a canoe through the centre of it is to meet the challenge full in the face. It is in moments like that that a man can realise how small he is, how terribly small. And yet he has the strength to win.

To Martin this was the most exciting experience of the expedition and this is what he and Stephen wrote of it:

"The bay at the Colonsay Golf Course is a fabulous place for beginners, as the large waves of the Atlantic are broken by rocks, and within it only small ripples rock the canoe from side to side. But we were going for a 'spin' in the rough, and so we went on out through a narrow channel and past the barrier on which the waves were crashing down. We advanced into the sea. The breakers were terrific, and we were wondering if the next wave would break us, or even capsize us—a terrible thought in such a sea. As the canoe tosses and turns, the spray splashes over you, and a chill runs down your warm body. A little way ahead the water looks comparatively calm, and already the waves are over ten feet high. And then we see the rocks at the end of the headland, and they arc completely covered with surf.

The sea was not usually so rough, and the canoes used to go some way from the camp. One favourite place was the Strand, where we could play with the many seals basking on the rocks. Having waddled off the rocks they were immediately overcome with curiosity. Drawn on by our whistling and humming they would gradually get nearer, so that we could soon see them rolling their eyes craftily towards us.

We also managed two round trips of the island, though the first one was unintended. We had canoed to Kiloran for lunch and then found that the sea had risen too much to canoe safely back to camp along the four miles of a very rocky and unprotected coastline. We

completed the round trip the next day. We did enjoy a demonstration, however, from two officers of how to capsize in a diddy bit of surf without intending it!"

Perhaps the canoeing climax was the bivouac when Nigel, Giles, Tim Griffiths, Neil, Simon and myself "did" the island in two days. You will read elsewhere of what happened to Nigel, Giles and Simon, but we did have one memorable stage. Simon, Giles and Nigel had set off overland from the beautiful and isolated bay at Balnahard. They went southwards along the coast to the ruins of the deserted village which was the result of a depression in 1923. I don't think they knew what they were in for, for they had to face the toughest walking the island has to offer. This is how Giles described it:

"It was the toughest part of the journey, especially with ruck-sacks on our backs. We went up and down hills and valleys, through swampy land, thick heather and bracken which was waist high and through a terrible little wood with little hills about 7 or 8 feet high which were very close together; this was most irritating. When we had got past the wood we saw many wild goats. We probably looked rather odd to them. It seemed hours before we reached the ruins where we were to camp for the night."

Meanwhile the rest of us had set out in the canoes, only to find the sea covered with white horses, the wind blowing up and the waves up to six or seven feet high. We carried on, and it took us over 3 hours to reach the ruins over 4 miles away. At one stage we found the wild goat population of the island taking interest in us from the cliff tops about us where they lived. And when we finally beached, cold, wet and exhausted, there not more than 150 feet above us was a soaring golden eagle.

Why do we do it? Why are we prepared to get cold, wet and exhausted? Perhaps it's just for the experience, or perhaps we feel we must do it, because it is there to be done. Perhaps Masfield was right in his poem, "Sea Fever" when he wrote of the call of the sea. It is for us, as well as for Ulysses, "to strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield".

John Jackson, Giles Cullingford, Stephen Elliott,
Tim Griffiths and Martin Weyer

CANOEING

I must down to the seas again, though the sea's no longer blue,
But wild and grey from the stormy day as it buffets my lonely canoe;
And all I ask, as we play each wave, and face the surf hard blowing
Is the strong arm of a dear friend for the long way going.

John Jackson

AN UNFORTUNATE INCIDENT

Giles Cullingford and Nigel Deberker were in the Kingfisher canoe and I was in "Teal" with all the stores as we set off towards the south from our campsite at the ruined village.

Rounding the headland to the north of Scalasaig we saw John Lace and his doughty crew of cut throats sailing the pirate vessel "Vinga" in the bay and, being unaware of John's intentions, we headed peacefully towards them to say "Good morning".

Having saluted the captain at the helm of "Vinga" I once again headed "Teal" southwards to be halted almost immediately by shouts from behind me. Upon turning around I saw Giles and Nigel swimming for their lives away from the sharp bows of a "Vinga" that seemed to have gone berserk.

As I towed the overturned Kingfisher back to the pier I turned around and saw the renegade "Vinga" with Nigel and Giles aboard heading out to sea - I was told later that they were tacking or something, but I don't believe it! (The writer being a military man obviously doesn't understand the subtleties of the sea!—*Ed.*).

At the pier we were met by John Jackson and the rest of the bivouac party who had watched the whole affair from the cliffs, and who thought it a huge joke.

John Lace was actually permitted to take "Vinga" out again, much to the dismay of all who canoed during the rest of the expedition!

Simon Rogers

GOLF ON COLONSAY

For those of us who were lucky enough to have brought our clubs with us, Colonsay provided ideal conditions for practice, despite the numerous objects, animals and mineral, which were strewn over the course.

My dream before the expedition had been to play a round of golf before breakfast. Thus, on our first morning I crept out of our tent and with a light heart placed my best Dunlop '65 upon a convenient tuft of grass and took a swing at it. The resulting click of club and ball was utterly delightful—so delightful that I omitted to watch where the ball was going and so promptly lost it!

Golf never failed to provide light entertainment. For instance the sight of John Jackson, who is left handed, trying to drive off with a right handed club, has to be seen to be believed. To Martin Child a golf club is a lethal weapon, as many poor cows and sheep remember to their cost, except for one which never flinched even when Martin holed out on its head with a No. 7 iron!

My worst moment of the whole expedition must have been when, having decided to drive off in one direction, I looked up to see that Robert Bailey, who was just in front of me, had decided to drive off in the other direction. For the rest of the expedition my reactions were somewhat nervy.

Simon Rogers

CLIMBING

Climbing seemed to go very well on Colonsay this year. I enjoyed teaching the subtleties of the art to the boys, most of whom seemed to be quite oblivious to the finer points, and more intent on hanging on for dear life than anything else!

All the boys climbed at least once, but most of the officers either did not trust me or were chicken, or else too busy. The best climbing was to be found at "Oddbods", but "Grotty Gully" and "North Wall" were used as well as the "Black Spider". An ill-fated expedition to Kiloran Bay was also mounted, upon the malicious suggestion of John Jackson, but here as elsewhere the rock was found to be very rotten.

By the end of the expedition, boys were leading up climbs themselves and were abseiling, prussiking, and belaying each other up. There was some good material amongst the boys, to be developed in the years to come. Perhaps some of them will become the "Tigers" of the 1980s—who knows?

Philip Renold

PHIL'S BIVVY

Phil led seven of us to Oronsay to take over the tents from Simon Rogers. We arrived at the Strand. Simon Rogers had said, "Don't bother to take spares for the gas burners". The first thing that happened was that at the same time they both ran out, and we were only half way through cooking supper.

The midges drove us mad. We climbed Ben Oronsay to get away from them. When we got back we went to bed.

Morning came, 6.30 a.m. "Moooh!" I thrust my head out to find that I was underneath a cow's rear quarters and that Phil was about to lose his fly sheet. Having got rid of them some of us went back to bed. I got up and went for a walk. I came back to find Phil eating cold unmixed porridge. After breakfast we struck camp and arrived at the Strand in good time.

Looking back, as we put our best foot forward, I realized that I had really enjoyed this bivouac because nothing had gone right and we were left to use our own initiative.

Eddie Stuart

ACTION STATIONS

It was Sunday night, with three more days to go until the end of camp. I had just drunk a cupful of Simon Rogers' delicious??? mushroom soup, when I started to get stomach ache. (There was no connection between the two.)

A few minutes later John Jackson pulled on his anorak and walked bravely out into the windy, rainy night on his errand of mercy to get the doctor.

About an hour later, the doctor arrived. After taking my temperature, pulse and asking the usual questions, he gave me a painkilling injection. Next day I was just as bad, but after another painkilling injection, I was able to eat some cold rice pudding and gooseberries. On Tuesday I was made to take two tablespoonfuls of castor oil (Ugh!), but that did no good, neither did the various pills. So on Wednesday I started my James Bond style exit from Colonsay.

At about midday on Wednesday, I was put on a stretcher and put into the island's only mini-bus and taken to Scalasaig, where,

after a wait of about 15 minutes, I was loaded on to the Port Askaig lifeboat. After the lifeboatmen had manoeuvred the almost brand new lifeboat out of Scalasaig Harbour, we started for Islay.

The sea was very rough and every time the boat went up and down, I could feel my stomach being left in mid-air. I was not seasick, but John Cullingford was soon asking for a bucket. We arrived at Port Askaig at about 2 o'clock, where I was taken off and put into an ambulance. After a delay of about 15 minutes, through the ambulance not being able to start, we set off for the airstrip. After a drive of approximately 45 minutes we reached the airstrip and after waiting for the plane, which was 5 minutes late, I was loaded on board and strapped in for take-off.

Half-an-hour later, after another rough ride, we arrived at Glasgow airport, where I was put in an ambulance and taken to the Glasgow Southern General Hospital. Here I was examined, X-rayed and admitted, and at 10 o'clock on Wednesday night I had a major operation for an obstruction in my stomach.

An experience not to be repeated too often, and my sincere thanks go to all members of the Colonsay Expedition, 1967, for their help.
Andrew Houghton

LEWIS EXPEDITION 1967

Leader John Abbott

Officers

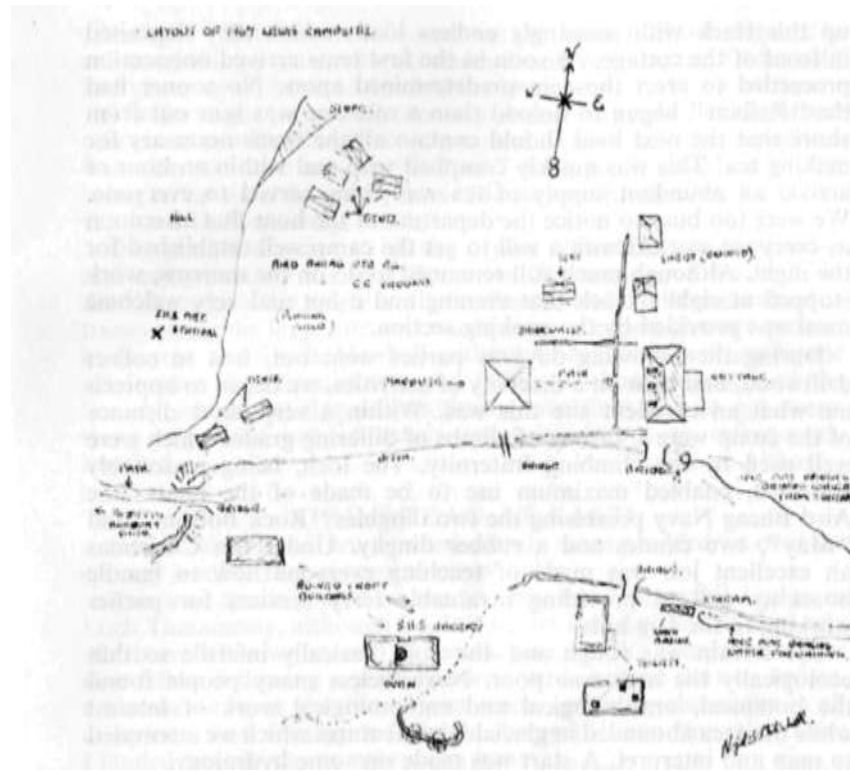
Ian Christmas, David Cullingford, Charles Hooper, John Houghton, Richard Hughes, John Newman, Barry Smith, Ian Thornton, Jim Hardy.

Boys

Ian Allen, Mike Bagshaw, Timothy Bannerman, Chris Causer, Tim Colman, Chris Cooper, Gareth Firth, Ian Goddard, Peter Gould, Andrew Grant, Paul Hartnell, Kent Hawkins, Brian Hood, Andrew Howard, Geoffrey Hume, Gareth Jones, Martin Julian, John Kemp, Nigel Mitchell, Allan Moon, Jonathan Orr, Chris Richards, Charles Robson, Keith Saunderson, Geoffrey Scrutton, Richard Seaton, Peter Stamer, Simon Stoye, Andrew Sumner, Ian Whitelaw.

LEADER'S REPORT

During the past six years the Society has visited many of the most beautiful and remote parts of the Hebrides and this year's expedition to Aird Bheag was in the best tradition of previous years. On the West coast of Lewis, a couple of miles north of Loch Resort, is the small, well sheltered Loch Tamanavay. With the rugged glaciated Uig hills to the North and miles of undulating damp moorland to the East, the loch is about as far removed from twentieth century culture as is possible in the British Isles. On a sheltered, level piece of ground a hundred feet or so above sea level on the southern side of the loch is the old crofting village of Aird Bheag. All that remains is one substantial croft house, a number of roofless ruins and a well



surfaced track leading down to the two stone "jetties" that served as the harbour.

This was the site finally chosen by the reconnaissance parties in March of this year. On a bitterly cold day with the wind blowing a full gale and with intermittent snow showers, we had reached this desolate spot after an eleven mile walk across the moors. It took a great deal of imagination and blind faith that day to envisage this as an expedition site as, wet to the skins, we fumbled with numb fingers to light a primus. White horses chased each other across the loch, battering themselves to pieces against mist-shrouded cliffs and only the solidity of the croft house assured us that it was possible for humans to live here.

How different all this seemed when we arrived in July. The sea was still so rough that only a skeleton crew of four could travel with the equipment on board the "Reliant" from Kirkibost, North Bernera, experiencing most unpleasant conditions off Gallan Head. The remaining thirty five of us hiked across the moors from Morsgail on a gusty but fine morning, and arrived at Aird Bheag only fifteen minutes after the "Reliant". With the aid of the dinghies the seven tons of food, tents, personal kit and general equipment were ferried across to the little jetty. For three hours people toiled

up this track with seemingly endless loads which they deposited in front of the cottage. As soon as the first tents arrived one section proceeded to erect those in predetermined spots. No sooner had the "Reliant" begun to unload than a message was sent out from shore that the next load should contain all the items necessary for making tea! This was quickly complied with and within an hour of arrival an abundant supply of tea was being served to everyone. We were too busy to notice the departure of the boat that afternoon as everyone worked with a will to get the camp well established for the night. Although much still remained to do on the morrow, work stopped at eight o'clock that evening and a hot and very welcome meal was provided by the cooking section.

During the following days as parties went out, first to collect driftwood, and then on a diversity of activities, we began to appreciate what an excellent site this was. Within a very short distance of the camp were a variety of climbs of differing grades which were well used by the climbing fraternity. The loch, being reasonably sheltered, enabled maximum use to be made of the boats—the Aird Bheag Navy possessing the two dinghies "Rock Bottom" and "May", two canoes and a rubber dinghy. Under Ian Christmas an excellent job was made of teaching everyone how to handle boats as well as providing invaluable ferry services for parties working in the Uig hills.

The terrain was rough and the soils basically infertile so that ecologically the area was poor. Nevertheless many people found the botanical, ornithological and entomological work of interest while the area abounded in glacial features which we attempted to map and interpret. A start was made on some hydrology.

While the area has never sustained a high population there are numerous remains of settlements modified according to age, by subsequent denudation. Some of the sites are undoubtedly very old and there is much here that would repay studies of following expeditions, as would the glaciation of the area by a more competent group than our own.

On the last night a "debriefing" session was held when various people explained the work which they had done, thus enabling each project to be seen in relation to the whole.

A novel feature of the expedition, in fact unique on an S.H.S. expedition, was the marvellous smell of freshly-baked bread which emanated from a derelict croft proudly bearing the inscription "SHS Bakery" above the door. There, inside the old chimney, a makeshift oven of oil drums, water pipes, pieces of turf and sheets of metal, with a capacity for burning large quantities of driftwood produced what, to members of the expedition, was delectable bread. (See Rhum Expedition! *Ed.*)

A number of highly successful bivouacs were held in remote parts of the Uig hills and nearer base at Loch Tealasay—one of these causing more than the usual amount of drama! A visit was paid to Scarp on a particularly fine day while on another sunny

afternoon "Rock Bottom" went to the head of Loch Resort to collect a hiking partner who arrived half an hour after the "Admiral" had given up all hope and sailed for home!

The fortnight passed all too soon but fortunately our departure was more comfortable than our arrival. About half the expedition was able to travel on the "Reliant" back to Bernera, and, after being entertained to tea by Mrs. Macauley, travelled by lorry and van back to Stornoway.

Our gratitude is due to all those who contributed to the success and enjoyment of the expedition—to the owners of the croft at Aird Bheag; to the neighbourly landlords; and to those involved in transporting the large and awkward pieces of expedition equipment; to George and Sheila Newhall without whom no expedition would get further than Stornoway; and finally to those members of the Society whose untiring efforts throughout the years to get every thing organized are so much appreciated, but so infrequently thanked.

A. J. Abbott

AIRD BHEAG AT LAST!

Down below us a Tern wheeled silently as we plodded on over the springy heather that concealed many holes.

This was the last part of our journey from Morsgail Lodge to Loch Tamanavay, although I didn't realize it at the time. It was early afternoon when we arrived at the old cottage. We wandered in, the next fellow following a good hundred yards behind the one before. I clambered over the flimsy wire fence, scattering the sheep in all directions, and coming to a bank, dropped down the other side; I landed heavily on my now worn boots.

"Oh, good!" I thought, "Another rest." I followed someone through a door of the cottage on my left and entered a tiny room, which was obviously the kitchen and then I went into another room which was later to become a store-room. Venturing through the front door, I flopped down on the grass.

"Better go and get the stores up from the beach," a voice said behind me. I groaned, and regretfully left my comfortable place on the grass and went to haul up a case from the stone jetty.

"Tea up!" There was a sudden surge as everyone rushed up to the cottage for the very much welcomed refreshment. "Next tea-up, an hour's time. Meanwhile back to the boat."

And back we went to haul another case up. I. D. Goddard

THE SEA SHORE

Throughout the fortnight much time was spent on the sea shore, initially in a highly successful hunt for driftwood and later in a more organised survey of the flora and fauna around the sea lochs. Enthusiasm for the project was difficult to judge because a number of members realised that distances walked would be small and also the glass floats sometimes found on the shore were much prized by boys and officers alike!

The shore available for study was mainly rocky but owing to the steep slope the area exposed at low tide was small despite a 10 foot average tidal range. There were a few stony beaches at the mouth of the freshwater streams but these provided disappointingly little variation from the flora covering the rocky coast. The whole of the rocky shore was densely covered with seaweed; the Wracks predominating in the mid shore zone. The usual distribution of Wracks was well shown with Chanelled Wrack (*Pelvetia canaliculata*) being found in brackish water and around the high water mark; Knotted Wrack (*Ascophyllum nodosum*) and Flat Wrack (*Fucus platycarpus*) in the middle of the shore and Bladder Wrack (*F. vesiculosus*) and Serrated Wrack (*F. serratus*) together around the low water mark. The Wracks terminated sharply at the low water mark and below this the two large brown weeds *Laminaria digitalis* and *L. saccharina* were dominant. A number of other seaweeds were found in different areas around Aird Bheag. Brown weeds: *Stilphora rhizodes* and *Chorda filum*, which was less prominent than on most sea shores. Green seaweeds: Sea lettuce (*Ulva lactuca*) was found on the lower shore while the small *Cladophora glauca*, *Enteromorpha* and *Rhizoclonium* were found in the occasional rock pools. The more delicate red seaweeds were only found in sheltered areas, for example West Tamana. The following were found: *Ceramium rubrum*, *Plocamium coccineum*, *Cryopleura ramosa*, *Lomentaria articulata* and *Chondrus crispus*. This latter is eaten in Ireland but despite spilt soup and inedible porridge the S.H.S. organisation was such that we never had to resort to trying it! The only other seaweeds found were two small species *Ectocarpus* and *Polysiphonia fastigata* which grow on the Wracks. Altogether a total of 20 species which compares favourably with the 9 species reported by the S.H.S. in 1966.

The number of rock pools meant that only a small number of shore animals were to be found. Common muscles, acorn barnacles, cockles, limpets and periwinkles were abundant, while common sea urchins, clams and the uncommon jellyfish *Chrysaora isosceles* were found in small numbers.

Initially there appeared to be an absence of crabs; however an offer of 6d. for the first sizeable crab showed this to be incorrect for within a few hours enough crabs had been collected for a crab racing course to be constructed back at camp! The other notable find on the sea shore was a whale's skeleton 20 feet in length. Numerous seals were seen in the lochs but reports of live killer whales in Loch Tamanavay remain unconfirmed.

Despite the unpromising appearance of the sea shore there proved to be a fair number of animals and plants available for observation. Further study could provide interesting comparisons between the sandy beaches and rocky coasts both found in the Outer Hebrides.

THE BATTLE OF THE SHIELINGS Or Bivvy "a la" Bottom

(For copyright reasons this edition is not for sale in the U.S.A. or Chasefield Mews, Park Road, Bowdon, Cheshire)

On August 6th 1967, five intrepid explorers set out from Aird Bheag under the capable?? leadership of Major-general A. J. Abbott, W.C., C.D.M., S.H.S., D.D.T.? etc. Little did they expect the hardship that lay ahead, much less did they suspect that it would be an epoch-making expedition. There had been a brief briefing at which Bot had whispered the magic word "BIVOUAC". Five brave, or perhaps foolish, recruits volunteered to accompany Bot on the manoeuvre.

The party, full of beans and fried bread, meandered cheerfully down to the jetty and the troop ship "Hard Bottom", and set sail. Under the command of Admiral Christmas they soon made land-fall and disembarked.

Bidding farewell to the crew they plunged into the rugged Lewisian interior and began their journey. They cruised up the valley at almost 20 m.p.h., stopping only occasionally to gaze awestruck at Bot's beloved lateral and medial moraine. There was not a living thing in sight except a couple of eagles. The not-quite-so merry party trudged downwards, confident of Bot's ability to locate the much-sought bivvy. Finally, they met the previous party and attempted to "cook" some cocoa on a fuel less primus stove. The site was perhaps not the best of sites; the tents being pitched sloping at the rate of 2, and I suspect 3, in 5. The comfort-loving Bot enrolled himself as chief scout (apologies to J. P. -Baden-Orr) and searched the entire area within about a mile radius for a more suitable site. However, it seemed worth the extra effort, for it transpired that Bot had discovered a deposit of that valued commodity in the Hebrides—flat well-drained ground.

Tents pitched, the explorers felt renewed vigour in their weary bodies, and before they knew it, the party was on the move again on a Bot Trot to Uig Bay—a mere three miles away! The party arrived back from their jaunt more than ready for their Horlicks dehydrated chicken with pasta. Full and tired they turned in, wondering what surprises the next day would bring. Little did they know....

On Friday August 4th at 11.15 p.m. a small party left the main camp site going towards the boat shed. It consisted of Richard Hughes, David Cullingford, Kent Hawkins who was to join us later, and myself.

We reached the boat shed and the two officers proceeded to bring one of the canoes to the low water at the bottom of the jetty. I went into the boat shed to fetch the life jackets and the paddles. As Kent was found to be missing, I was sent to look for him. By the time we returned the officers had carried the other canoe down to the water. Fifteen minutes later we were approaching the other

side of the loch. As the tide was low we had to climb over the twenty yards of slippery seaweed covered rocks to put the canoes in a safe place above the high water mark. We then proceeded up the valley directly opposite the main camp site.

When we reached the watershed at the top of the valley the time was about 1 a.m. We rested on the crest for five minutes, for the first and last time. We pressed on again down the other side where we passed a large loch. The bivouac site was about another five hundred yards further, on from here onwards absolute silence was observed by the party. There was some trouble in finding the bivouac camp site because the tents resembled large rocks due to the nature of the terrain.

At two o'clock exactly, after working out which tents the two pairs were going to attack, we struck in absolute silence. It was nearly ten minutes after the attack was delivered that the first sign of life of any sort, was shown. A light appeared to move towards us so we moved off at great speed. We now started to use the torches that two members had brought with them....

At 2 a.m. Bot woke to find a heap of canvas on top of him. His first thought was that the tent had collapsed—clever man, that Bot!! He woke the other one and a half who were with him, and crawled out of his tent and looked around him.... "-----" said he. The other two tents were also down, and there was not a breath of wind. Then he saw something which made even his well-built heart fall into his size 15½ boots, which, by the way, he had hastily donned. There were lights on the hillside!

Immediately Bot's emergency plan swung into action. Grabbing a torch, he ruthlessly yanked every member of his party out of their sleeping bags and explained what was happening. Most of the party wanted simply to re-pitch the tents and return to dreamland, but Bot's Full Precautions had to be taken. The first part of the plan was to occupy the ruined shieling and so form a fort in which to withstand a possible siege. Small stones were then collected to use as ammunition to hurl at any living thing that came within ten miles, adopting the policy of shoot first, enquire later.

Suitably armed with tent poles and boulders, the members of the party each kept a look-out in a different direction, whilst Barry Smith made a rather insipid looking liquid which he called cocoa. A bar of chocolate supplemented this beverage. The lights re-appeared once or twice on the hillside, but nothing further happened. Bot and Barry were holding an urgent conference in hushed undertones about what to do next. Everyone was getting rather tired of doing nothing, and very cold indeed. Bot's plan was to wait until daybreak, and then walk the 3 miles to Uig Bay in order to alert the police. The waiting seemed interminably long, and most people were half asleep; the whole set up was quite unreal; shooting stars glissading through the heavens did nothing to dispel the eeriness of the scene. Gradually the darkness crept back and the sun rose. All the equipment was packed into the "Castle". Bot left a note

for the relief party and in the early morning sun the party set off at a brisk pace for Uig Bay. At 5 a.m. a crofter was "knocked up". He showed typical Highland generosity and kindness, not only by letting us use the phone but by supplying tea and "butties". The policeman whom Bot contacted was less helpful and when he had finished his cups of tea, Bot tried to explain to him what had happened. It soon became obvious that this "Cop" needed to level up his local geography. Bot patiently explained and finally seemed satisfied that he had got the message over.

Thanking the crofter, Major-General Abbott led his gallant comrades down to the beach for an early siesta. Having cursed those who had perpetrated this foul deed, it was decided reluctantly to return to the battle scene....

They slogged on along the uphill climb and as the sun rose higher in the sky they began to wonder who could have committed this great crime. They ruled out the possibility of a practical joke by some other member of the party, as the main site was five miles over a very difficult path even by day, let alone by night. It could be poachers, they thought, or perhaps the Russians!!

The attacking party arrived back at the lochside at 5 a.m. and paddled happily home lit by the first gleams of rosy-fingered dawn. Back in the camp they had the best breakfast of the whole camp, cooked by David Cullingford....

The bivvy expedition bade farewell to the relief party and headed for home. Although at the time this was a hair-raising experience, for many days it was the highlight of the camp, and to be admitted "a great laugh". I for one would not have missed "Bot's Bivvy" for the world—especially as the Major-General treated us all to pie and chips in Stornoway on the way home by way of commemoration. Brian Hood (Defence!) and Jonathan Orr (Attack!)

INSECTS ON LEWIS

The commonest insect on Lewis was undoubtedly the midge, or so it seemed. However, we spent more time evading than studying them!

Other well-represented insects were bees, butterflies and moths, dragonflies, and, to a lesser extent, beetles.

Most of the trip was spent examining and collecting the lepidoptera and dragonflies. Before leaving for Lewis I looked up and found that there were only about six (out of about 70 British species) butterflies that we could expect to see while we were there. The ones we found were the Large and Small Heath (*Coenonympha tullia* and *pamphilus* respectively), Hedge and Meadow Browns (*Maniola tithonus* and *jurina*) and the Common Blue (*Polyommatus icants*). All of these were fairly common.

During the "exploration" of the island we found four moth larvae—two of the Northern form of the Oak Eggar (*Lasiocampa quercus*), and two of the Emperor (*Satitrania pavonia*). These we kept and fed on heather. When I eventually got home (despite

British Rail), they were so hungry that they would eat anything that I gave them, including some asparagus! I decided to feed them on willow, though, as this is mentioned as a substitute by South. At the present moment three are eating and one has pupated.

Our other attempt at moth-collecting was when John Newman and I took a lamp out on to the hill one night and caught five species of moth. A phenomenon worth noting is the abundance of the Magpie moth (*Abraxas grossitlariata*) as its food-plants are currant, blackthorn, gooseberry, and *eunonymus* (!)

Two species of Dragonfly were observed, the Common Blue Damselfly (which we caught), and a larger opponent, which despite half an hour's bog-hopping we failed to catch.

Yes, the insects of Lewis are certainly of interest! Chris Causer

"BEE HIVE DWELLING EXTRAORDINARY"

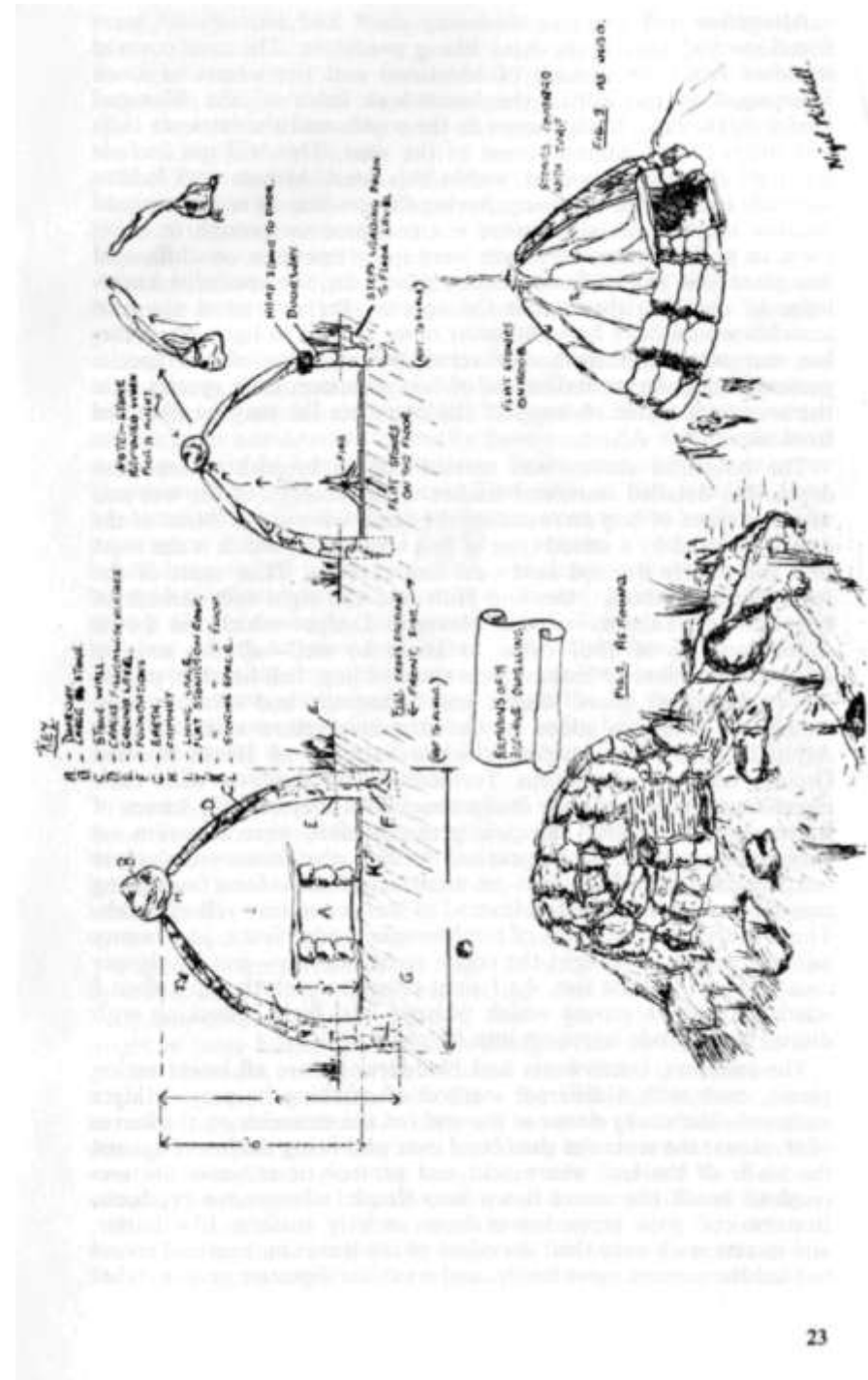
An unusual group of "Bee Hive" type dwellings was discovered hidden among the Uig Hills across the loch from our camp site. They were unusual in several ways.

- (a) There were at least ten of them as opposed to the usual one or two used by shepherds in the summer grazing season.
- (b) There were no signs of cultivation such as Lazy Beds.
- (c) They were not near any paths or any signs of a path.
- (d) They were a little too far from the loch to suggest that they might have been used during the Napoleonic War when everyone gave up farming to gather seaweed for a living. The seaweed was sold for the making of kelp—an ingredient of gunpowder.

Jim Hardy and a small party, including myself, excavated one of the ruins but we discovered nothing to establish their date or reasons for existence. Nigel Mitchell

BOTANICAL PROJECT

The botanical enthusiasm of different members of the expedition varied enormously. Many people helped me in my endeavours to prepare a complete list of the flowering plants and ferns of the Aird Bheag region—some producing armfuls of foliage with great zeal but little purpose, others bringing less common plants out of genuine botanical curiosity, others from a desire of actual monetary gain, because the camp botanist had offered a sixpence prize to anyone who produced a flowering plant in flower which he could not identify without reference to textbooks. This scheme should have brought financial rewards to Gareth Firth, Ian Goddard, Peter Gould and Brian Hood, but sixpences were such a rare commodity at Aird Bheag that the author still sincerely intends to honour his debts before this report is published! Some of the attempts to hoodwink the botanist were distinctly ungentlemanly. The flower of a grass was offered for identification with the leaves of a buttercup. The pretty little yellow petals of Tormentil were for some reason the most frequent weapon of the deceitful. It was offered to the writer for identification with petals or without, with green leaves or red sunburnt leaves, fried or even coated with ham and green pea soup.



Altogether 131 different flowering plant and fern species were found on and around the Aird Bheag peninsula. The area covered stretches from the summit of Mealisval and the waters of Loch Raonagail in the north, the homestead fence of the Morsgail Lodge in the east. Loch Resort in the south, and the intricate cliffs and inlets of the Atlantic coast to the west. This will not include quite all the plants present within this area. Mosses and lichens were not included in the study. Spring flowers may have been missed because their heaves alone were not conspicuous enough to bring them to notice. Primrose leaves were quite common on cliffs, and one plant was still in flower. Some genera require specialist knowledge in order to distinguish the species. Perhaps more vigorous searches would have brought many more species to light. Nevertheless our researches have discovered the majority of the species present and given an indication of how common each species is in the area as a whole. A copy of the complete list may be obtained from me.

The botanical survey was carried out in breadth rather than depth. No detailed statistical studies of the ecology of the wet and very wet types of bog surrounding the camp were made. Most of the area is covered by a mixed type of bog vegetation, which is the most that the poorly drained acid peat can support. Thus most of the Aird Bheag peninsula, the Uig Hills and the eight mile stretch of bog between Tamanavay and Morsgail Lodge—which the Lewis expeditions of 1967 came to know so well—all this area is covered by a more or less uniform sheet of ling, bell heather, purple moor grass, deer grass, sedges, and Sphagnum and other mosses. Additional colour is added by the attractive yellow spikes of Bog Asphodel, the pink, purple or white varieties of Heath Spotted Orchid, and the ubiquitous Tormentil. The sundews with their insect-trapping leaves were fascinating; both they and the leaves of Butterwort in rosettes like pale green starfish, were common on very moist ground. I was excited to find the butterworts' close relation, Lesser Bladderwort—an unattractive name for a fascinating aquatic flower with bladders instead of leaves and tiny yellow petals. This I found 20 yards west of the Morsgail Lodge fence, just twenty minutes before we caught the coach to Slornoway—just inside our area and just in lime too. As I went closer to pick the tiny plant I nearly trod on a grouse which whirred into flight, chucking with disgust at the rude intrusion into its privacy.

The sundews, butterworts and bladderworts are all insect eating plants, each with a different method of catching its prey. Midges stick onto the sticky drops at the ends of the tentacles on the leaves of sundews: the tentacles then bend over and bring the insect against the blade of the leaf where acid and proteolytic enzymes are secreted to break the insect down into simple nitrogenous products. Butterworts' pale green leaves have an oily surface, like butter, and insects stick onto this: the edges of the leaves curl up and round to bind the captive more firmly, and a similar digestive process takes

place. The bladders of Bladderwort both help it float in the water and act like a kind of lobster pot to catch minute insects, which are broken down not by enzymes secreted by the plant, but by bacterial action. In their devious ways these groups of bog plants have managed to provide themselves with the nitrogenous compounds which are lacking in the peat soil.

The lochans would repay further study than we had time or *sang froid* to give them. The uncommon Water Lobelia became familiar to everyone because its pale lilac flowers were held bravely six inches above the chilly waters of most of the surrounding lochans. Another uncommon plant. Floating Bur-reed, was only recorded from one lochan on Aird Bheag and another north of Loch Raonagail.

The islands in the freshwater lochs provided interesting natural experiments demonstrating how Rowan, Honeysuckle, Bracken and Great Woodrush can establish themselves in a position where neither man nor animals normally have access. A curious find on such an island in Loch Bodavat was Goosegrass, which was never found anywhere else in the area. The seeds of this familiar plant have sticky burs which adhere to sheep's wool or men's clothes. The occurrence of Goosegrass on the island seemed to be evidence that it had been visited in the past. This was disappointing for our two intrepid climbers who had risen at dawn and daringly paddled the rubber dinghy across to the deserted island. They thought they were treading where no man had dared to tread before. Two crofters later told us that four years previously the loch had frozen in the winter and some sheep had strayed across the ice to shelter on the island. They were stranded by the thaw, and a boat was carried two miles overland to rescue them. The crofters' tale vindicated the piece of botanical detective work!

The (Jig hills were not high enough to provide much of an alpine flora. The summit of the highest, Mealisval. 1885 feet, was carpeted with mosses and lichens between the tangled mass of large and small boulders. The three different heathers, ling, bell heather, and cross-leaved heath were common, as were bilberry, purple moor-grass, common buckler fern and Great Woodrush.

The lack of trees was very striking. The camp site was distinguished by a few stout Rowan trees, but on the cliffs the only other trees, holly, aspen and various willows, rarely grew to more than the height of large English bushes. It is thought that Lewis, like the rest of the Hebrides, was heavily wooded until the Viking invasions, when the trees were either cut down for building ships, or burnt in order to flush out the island natives and drive them back from the coasts. Since then grazing by deer and sheep has prevented redevelopment of woodland, and the only trees are confined to deserted islands, like the one in Loch Bodavat, and to inaccessible cliff ledges.

Botany conducted in this way is a hobby as well as a science, which provides an excuse and purpose for visiting remote parts. The botanical excursions were never entirely single-minded: we

had a close-up view of a golden eagle, which hovered over us trying to decide who would provide the tastiest meal. On occasions botany was completely forgotten; it is difficult to appreciate even the rarest plants when soaked to the skin during a bivouac trip. It is also impossible to botanise while crossing six miles of bog at night to let down the tents of a particularly idle bivouac party. Nevertheless it proved to be possible to navigate by turning north-cast at the lochan with Floating Bur-reed, and due South at the lochan with the Rowan tree. These bearings brought the botanical raiding party directly onto the tent of no less a person than the Chairman of the Schools Hebridean Society, whose snores were all that disturbed the tranquillity of Loch Raonagail's depths and darkness. By the lime that the softly fallen canvas had woken the slumberers, the botanists were speeding back to Aird Bheag, turning due south at the Floating Bur-reed and looking round to see alarm and despondency behind them.

On some occasions plants literally thrust themselves under the nose of the searcher. The daring ascenders of the rock flake on the coast of Loch Tealasavay had to push their noses through a clump of Wood Sage as they eased themselves from the vertical face onto the summit ledge—hence the name of the climb, Sage Stack. This appropriately remains the only recorded occurrence of Wood Sage in the area and I hope that no Sassenach has used the clump as a handhold! Although an expedition to a Hebridean island is a worthwhile experience in itself, the botanical excursions demonstrated one way of giving a purpose to our explorations and so added to the interest of our enchanting and wild peninsula.

Richard A. C. Hughes

(I regret that lack of space does not permit the printing of the long list of species found—*Ed.*)

LAST DAYS

Last days with the flowers and rocks;
The Divers and the Whimbrels. Even
the breakfast—calls, Like distant
voices on the wind; Distant, but
remembered.

Last days of the cocoa and songs; As
fingers hover over strings. Even the
sunsets, Like red-hot metal, seem
Distant, but remembered.

Last days of hills and lochs; Dark
under low skies. Even the ruined
crofts, Like sentinels, await the
years. Distant, but remembered.

D. Goddard



HARRIS EXPEDITION 1967

Leader Andrew Wilson

Officers

Tom Bragg, John Brooks, Peter Bundred, Steven Harris, Hugh MacAllister, Geoff Tattersall.

Boys

Michael Ackroyd, Charles Boyle, Andrew Buchanan, Anthony Butler, Charles Clark, Anthony Conder, Paul Conran, Jeremy Cook, Robin Cullen, Robin Dance, Michael Eden-Smith, Alan Evison, Robbie Gibbins, Chris Hood, William Kay, Bruce Kirk, Ian Laurie, Phil Lightfoot, Andrew Lynall, John Marchment, Robert Metcalf, Richard Munro, Charles Purvis, James Ralston, Charles Roberts, John Round, John Ryle, Christopher Smith, David Vale, Peter Watson, David Wills, Simon Wood.

LEADER'S REPORT

When I left Aberdeen on my way to meet the rest of the Expedition in Edinburgh, the weather looked far from promising for the next fortnight, and except for a superb sunset over the Montrose basin, it rained all the time until we arrived in Stornoway, where we spent the night in the Scout Hut. However, we were again fortunate enough to be greeted at Rhenigidale by fine weather, which lasted for most of the first week.

We had the camp set in fairly good time. This year, the marquees were anchored with fence posts, and although we had high winds, the tents all stood up until the end. In this respect, at least, we learnt from Alan Bateman's experiences last year. Camp furniture was built over the first couple of days, thanks to Roddy MacInnes, whose field we were on, who lent us some sheets of hardboard with which we made some rather hilly tables. Without them, we might not have had any tables at all!

During this time, we were familiarising ourselves with our surroundings, and most of us managed to heave ourselves up the hill behind the camp. On the day I did it, we could see from St. Kilda to Sutherland on either side and many of the Inner Isles to the South-East. We were all struck by the stark beauty of the island, but soon came to see the severe limitations of the site at Rhenigdale. There are only three ways which are practicable for leaving the settlement—one is round by sea to Tarbert, another overland, and the other up Loch Scaforth, either on foot or by boat, to Maernig.

However, three bivouac parties went out at various stages. One went to Scalpay for a couple of nights to do some sociology, and the other two went to South Harris for two nights each, but seemed to spend a good deal of their time travelling. We all had good practice at walking to Tarbert, usually to collect bread and other stores, and one party went to the cattle sale. One of our number, Peter Hundred, did the seven miles from the camp to Tarbert Post Office in 1 hour 13 minutes, smashing all previous records, and winning himself a cup of tea from one of the inhabitants of Tarbert. I think they thought we were slightly mad to try it, but on the other hand, Duncan the Post does it three or four times a week all the year round, once up and once down the notorious zig-zag a day.

Due to the failure of the Admiralty to answer letters during the Israeli -Arab war, we had no hydrography equipment, but, under Admiral Harris's direction, two boys, Alan Evison and Robin Dance, made a tidepole from a piece of wood lent for the purpose by one of the local people. This was immediately christened the Obadiasis (and Steven, the Obadirector). Soon everyone was proficient in the art of Obadiah -watching, which we managed to keep up for about five days without a break, day or night, until the wind nearly blew away the Obadiah tent. Hence the art of Obadiology (or is it a science?) was born, and it is considered to be the finest accomplishment an S.H.S member can attain to have practised Obadioscopy.

The boat ("Rock Bottom") proved to be very useful on the expedition. In it, we carried bags of lime round the coast for Roddy MacInnes, later spreading them on the hillside as part of his grassland improvement scheme for his sheep. Many of the bags burst on handling, as they seemed to have been sitting at the landing place for months. However, most of the lime arrived where it was supposed to. In fact, for a lime it didn't seem that we were going to get a boat at all, since Admiral Harris agreed to take it round from Kyles

Scalpay with a skeleton crew. As we left on a bigger boat with all our equipment, we saw him filling the tank of the outboard with what he (and we) took to be petrol. However, when we arrived at Rhenigdale, and for an hour or so afterwards, there was no sign of Steven. Later still, we saw the MacLeod's boat returning with "Rock Bottom" in tow—the engine had never started. On investigation, we discovered that he had taken the can of paraffin and not one of the three cans of petrol!

Eventually, the time came to leave Rhenigdale and the friends we had made there. They were really sorry to see us go. When groups like ours come to Rhenigdale, it reminds them of the time there used to be 30 or 40 children in the school (now there are only two), and when the boats, now lying idle on the beach, used to be out fishing the Minches every day. Then the fish left, and with the First and Second World Wars, so did the young men, many never to return, either killed, or living now on Skye or the Mainland. As Mr. MacKay said "It's too quiet here—we like the noise of the young people."

I hope we shall return, if not as a group then as individuals—let us help to keep Rhenigdale alive! The expedition, and its success, owes it a great debt.

Andrew Wilson

BEHIND THE SCENES BEFORE BREAKFAST

"BREAKFAST" screams the Scourge of the Cooking Section (an uncultured youth), through the tent door which he has just wrenched open with all the zeal of one who has had to get up three quarters of an hour earlier to produce the aforesaid gunge and is now enjoying the sight of others suffering. His inspiring cry however falls upon stony ground and ends with a gurgle as a well-thrown sock catches him neatly in the mouth. We are now no longer fooled by this deceptive message. Scourge says something quite unrepeatable and splashes off through the mud to the next tent of victims leaving the door open with the gale blowing in. The lamp falls over, spilling paraffin onto everyone, and a long discussion ensues as to who should shut the door. I discover then that I have been sleeping for seven hours in a pool of water and my sleeping bag is as wet as the world outside. Never mind—I can dry it later on Robin's towel!

Time passes. Midges bite. And the Scourge once more appears this time with the mournful call—"LAST CALL FOR BRECKER"—a tactful reminder that the prescribed time allotted to breakfast in the Andrew Wilson Book of Rules is nearly over, and that the remaining few of the 32 who have not yet made it to the festive board in the marquee will have had it, or rather the duly section will have had it, unless they show a grubby leg soon. Thirty-two people stir in their sleeping bags. Slowly I prise myself out of my sleeping bag and set a course to the marquee, steering clear of the buoys which mark the fatal spots in the mud.

In the marquee, the cooking section shrouded in swirling mists from the bubbling cauldrons, I push a forgotten prune aside and set to on the "pogage". Another day in Bonnie Scotland is born. "Orch aye!" (quote Haggis, John Hutch., Hugh, all noble Scots!).

John Round

BOTANY

Most of the area round Rhenigidale is blanket bog, on which some of the commonest plants are Ling Heather, Deer Sedge, Woolly Hair Moss, and Sphagnum Moss. The remains of the latter form the bulk of the peat. The formation of blanket bog is due to the combination of base poor soil (i.e. containing relatively little of such elements as calcium and magnesium), and high rainfall, which washes away what little of these elements is present and also waterlogs the soil. It is only where these elements are supplied that grassland can exist. Such situations occur where Roddy MacInnes has limed the peat on the tide pole point, and on the West coast of Harris where the vegetation is developed on, or limed by, wind-blown shell sand.

On the peat bogs the insectivorous plants have a supplementary supply of these elements, and especially nitrogen (the soil organisms which fix atmospheric nitrogen do not thrive in acid bogs). Around Rhenigidale examples of all three groups of native insectivorous plants were found. There were two species of Bladderwort (in a pool near Loch Mor) with special branches bearing little bladders which trap small fresh-water animals. The bladders' trapping mechanism resembles a squeezed-in plastic detergent bottle with a trap-door, the tension being released when an animal touches the trap-door and is carried in in a rush of water.

There are very few trees around Rhenigidale. That this is largely due to the presence of sheep was seen from the heavily grazed stumps of Eared Willow near "Donald the Post's" house, and the fact that trees were more or less confined to islands in Loch Laxadale and cliff ledges inaccessible to sheep. Aspen, Sallow (the common willow), Eared Willow, Rowan, Holly, and Honey-suckle were seen on the ledges, while near old crofts Elder and Ozier (a willow) occurred, the latter probably having been planted for use in weaving baskets. Apart from the three Heaths, the other woody plants found were the Creeping Willow (beside the path), and the tiny Least Willow on the summits of Toddun and Clisham.

An interesting observation was that the normal sexually reproducing Sheep's Fescue Grass appeared to be absent, being replaced by its viviparous form. This produces little plantlets in the flower head instead of flowers and seeds, thereby avoiding the uncertainty of wind pollination and the risk of a short season preventing ripening. However it sacrifices the variability conferred by the combination of genes from different parents which is essential before natural selection can adapt the population to a changing environment. Those of us who climbed Clisham in the second

party also saw the rare viviparous mountain grass *Deschamperia alpina* (Alpine Tufted Hair Grass).

Perhaps one of the more appreciated plants was the Common Sorrel (*Rumex acetosa*) whose refreshingly acid-tasting leaves were occasionally sampled. Fewer people liked Wild Thyme, a herb still often used for flavouring.

The most interesting finds were odd forms of common plants. White Ling Heather (the traditional White Heather) was found four times, while the white form of Cross Leaved Heath was seen in Glen Laxadale, and white Knapweed grew beside the Tarbert path. The Ragwort in the camp area was peculiar in lacking the petal-like ray florets, though in other parts of Harris it was of the normal rayed form. As Ragwort is largely a weed of cultivation the Rhenigidale population is isolated from all others and has evolved a rayless form, probably by chance—or could it be that the less conspicuous rayless flowers have some advantage which has been selected for?

Over one hundred species of moss and liverwort were recorded in the 10 Kilometer National Grid square in which Rhenigidale lies, one of them, collected near the waterfall on the burn at the head of Loch Trollamarig, being a new record for the Outer Hebrides. The list will be used in the compilation of an atlas giving the distribution of all mosses and liverworts within the British Isles. The South Harris bivouac party found the rare moss *Myurium Hebridarium* on Toe Head, and this has turned out to be a new record, the forty-second 10 kilometer square in which it has been found (there are approximately 3,500 such squares). Apart from the Hebrides, this moss is known only in the Azores, Canaries, and Madeira.

At Loch Maarug the brown seaweed *Fucus ceranoides** which normally grows attached to stones on the shore, was also forming a neat brown turf between the grasses in the salt marsh. This is the normal behaviour when spores of such seaweeds are washed onto the grass; but it was very surprising to find that the Spiral Wrack (*Fucus spiralis*) had the same appearance whether it was growing on rock or mud.

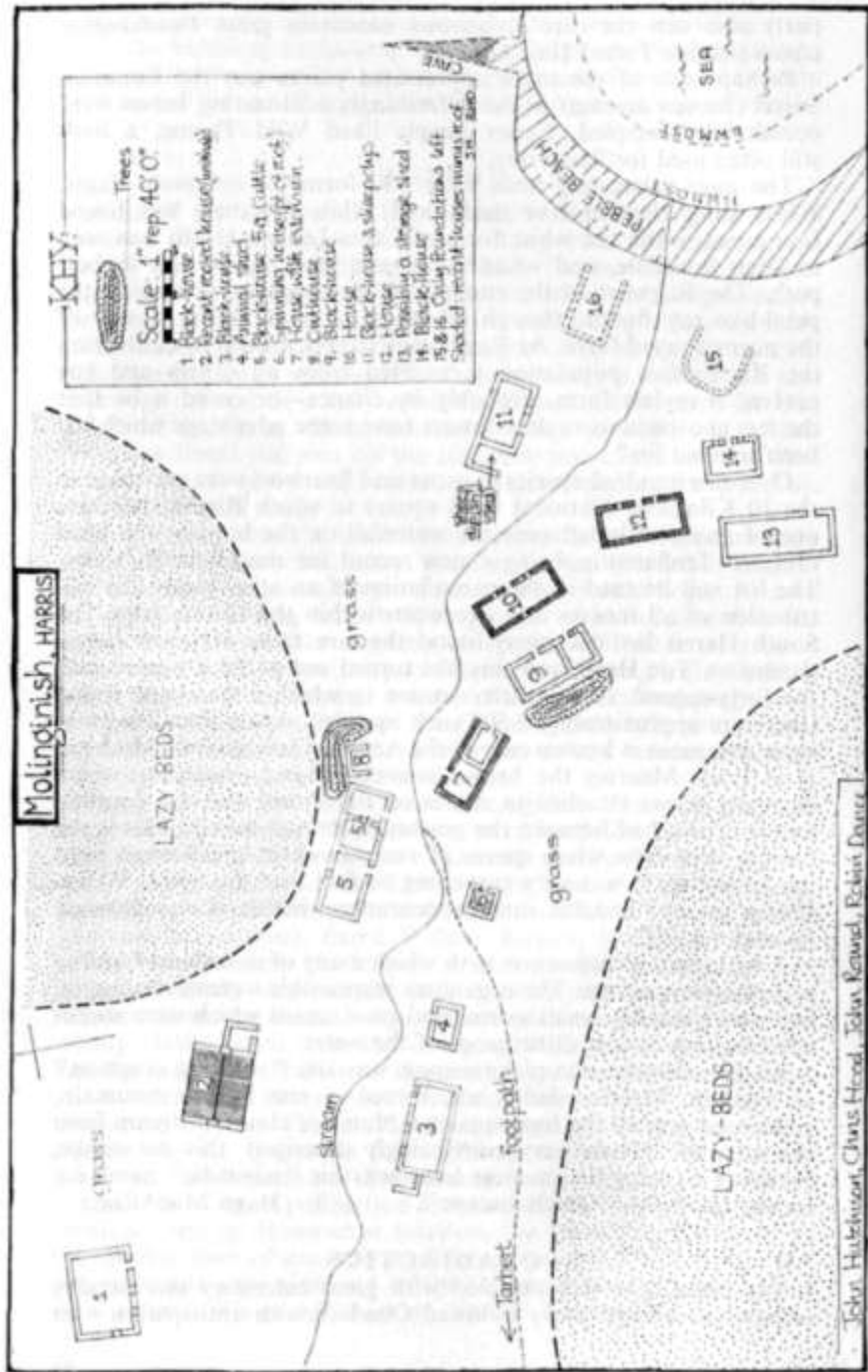
A biological phenomenon with which many of us became familiar was phosphorescence. The organisms responsible were never caught, but were probably small worms and crustaceans which were stimulated to flash by any disturbance of the water.

An un-scientific non-phenomenon was the "volcanic eruption" of Toddun. Moisture-laden air, forced to rise by the mountain, condensed around the top, causing a plume of cloud to stream from the summit. Steven very convincingly described this as smoke. However perhaps his greatest hoax was his "scientific" name for the tidepole—"Obadiahscope".

Hugh MacAllister

OBADIACTICS

The Obadiasite was revealed with great ceremony one Sunday afternoon. A large party followed Obadiah with anticipation over



the hills in sedate and misleading zig-zags to Obadiahs Point, some ten minutes' walk from the camp. Several days later the Obadiahs itself was borne in stately procession to the rock-face on which it was to be lashed for a rather wet week.

John Brooks and Tom Bragg, not to mention Obadiahs himself, took charge of securing the Obadiahs. It was tied firmly to the rock-face with nylon Obadiahsrope to insure it against gales, storms, killer-whales and hungry sheep. The Obadiahs was observed with apprehension. What could go wrong?

Not long after the Obadiahs had been so forcibly ensconced amongst the barnacles and sea-weed, it happened that, in accordance with Nature's sage laws, the tide rose—so did the Obadiahs.

Once again John Brooks and Tom Bragg took charge of extracting the buoyant Obadiahs from the "finny deep".

Digression: the Isle of Harris is abundant with rocks of all shapes and sizes. Harris is, in fact, one of Earth's rockiest inhabited places, and if one summoned enough energy to climb Clisham, the highest mountain the Outer Hebrides offers, one would see at its peak an expanse of rocks twisted and broken in every conceivable shape so as to resemble pictures one sees of Lunar landscapes.

However, to return to the subject, a rock of suitable size and shape was tied to the bottom of the Obadiahs and once again it was lowered into the water and lashed to the rock-face. At last the team of trained Obadiographers could be uncased and Obadiactics could begin in earnest.

A twenty-four-hour Obadiahs watch was kept and the night vigils were spent in the renowned and feared Obadiahtent. Obadiahs-recordings were entered into the Obadiahs-record Book, kindly provided by the R.O.S. (Royal Obadiagraphic Society). In addition to this, an Obadiahs-graph was drawn recording the motions of the tides for five consecutive days—an unqualified record for unbroken Obadiactics on any expedition to date.

Perhaps a short explanation of what Obadiactics entail is required for the uninitiated. As I have said, a twenty-four-hour watch was kept on the Obadiahs. Readings were taken every half hour from the Obadiahs showing the height of the tides, and as the tide approached either its highest or lowest point, ten-minute readings would be taken for extra accuracy.

On the whole, fine weather made Obadiactics extremely pleasant and relaxing, but it did occasionally have its trials.

Three keen Obadiographers set out at midnight to keep a watch until eight o'clock the following morning. The Obadiahsite then was perfect. A warm night breeze kept the ravenous midges at bay and a glowing "toddle" fire filled the air with sweet-scented smoke. A sky of stars patched with small clouds encompassed the scene and filled the night-watchers with a sense of profound well-being. The groundsheet was spread out beside the fire a little way from the tent and was bathed in a soft pool of gold. For an hour we brewed

coffee, played cards and kept a trouble-free watch on the motions of the lapping tide.

At one o'clock the groundsheet registered the fall of a raindrop with a loud "plop" and we hurriedly made for the Obadiahtent, a Lilliputian object, hardly large enough and certainly not comfortable for one. By three o'clock we were huddled half-on, half-off the groundsheet in the tent trying to avoid the drips. Two fell asleep in a tangle of arms and legs while the third kept awake for the next watch. Obadiaetics did have its trials. However, what sticks in one's mind are not the trying moments, but the enjoyable ones which were in far richer supply. One may look back, possibly with nostalgia, to sunny days when one lay back on the spring turf reading, painting or cursing the midges. *Vocabulary for the Uninitiated*:

Obadiah: Steve Harris

Obadiahsis: Tide Pole

R.O.S.: Admiralty

"Toddle": Peat

A. L. D. Evison

ZOOLOGY REPORT

Ornithology was once again the most widely covered aspect of the zoological surveys, but we did a little work on mammals, the results of which will be sent to the Nature Conservancy. Apart from rabbits, which were seen from Toddun to the headlands, there were two rarer species recorded. The first was a common shrew, at first thought to be a pygmy shrew, which was captured at a height of 750 feet near a small lochan to the east of Toddun. The chase of this animal was quite exciting and produced a rare specimen for this area.

The second species, far larger and more dangerous, were five killer whales which appeared by a headland near the mouth of Loch Seaforth while two lads were swimming. Fortunately, both the lads had just left the water. From the headland we had an excellent view of them swimming about, close to the rocks, 60 feet below us, breaking the surface every minute or so with their dorsal fin to breathe noisily through the blow hole on top of their heads.

Other mammals of the sea were a few grey seals and a number of porpoises, the largest school seen numbering about sixty. The Admiral in Chief of the Obadiah reported a common seal on his infamous voyage to Tarbert with only three pints of fuel for the outboard motor. A brown rat foraging among the rocks at low tide completed our list of mammals.

Of entomology, the midges were by far the most common and noticed species. Without a specialist entomologist no organised work in this sphere was done. However a fox moth caterpillar was captured and several large heath butterflies were seen.

As a result of numerous fishing trips in the dinghy a list of fish seen appears here. Mackerel and saithe were very abundant and easily caught on feathers, with an occasional pollack, as our vener-

able leader proved by catching one weighing 2 1/2 lbs. FLUKE!! From the sandy bottom of Loch Trollamarig several dogfish and dabs were removed with the inevitable mackerel now and again. The largest fish caught by, or rather gave itself up to, Simon Wood early one morning near Rhenigidale Island—a 3 lb. cod.

Also seen were yellow eels in one of the burns and brown trout in some of the lochs.

I would like to thank Robbie Gibbins and Tony Butler in particular for their help.
J.C.B.

SOJOURN ON SCALPAY

Towards the end of the Harris Expedition, a party consisting of Michael Ackroyd, Charles Boyle, Michael Eden-Smith, John Marchmont, Richard Munro and Geoffrey Tattersall left Rhenigidale to bivouac for a few days in the Isle of Scalpay with the ostensible objective of attempting to make some kind of sociological survey there. We immediately discovered that one of the most obvious assets of the islanders was their incredible hospitality and we were very fortunate indeed to meet a Mrs. McMorrison, who kindly allowed us to pitch our Icelandic tent in the field at the rear of her bungalow. She and her husband's friendly help and conversation contributed greatly to make our bivvy enjoyable and successful—though some of us would no doubt rather prefer to forget some of the personal comments she made—(one may, for example, find it a little perplexing to be told several times: "Oh, you'll be getting married soon...").

Scalpay is a striking contrast to Rhenigidale—a contrast in both size and affluence—with a population of about 700 persons and a total of 84 children on the Roll at the School, where Gaelic and English are taught; Gaelic being the natural and everyday spoken language in the island. The affluence of the island centres around the fishing industry (which has broken all previous records this year) and is shown by the 25 cars and the modern bungalows and semi-detached houses, which still remain designated as crofts so that the occupants can claim improvement grants from the Crofters Commission.

Weaving has diminished in the island and there are now only three weavers, only one of whom is full-time and even he is under contract to sell his Tweed to the five or six mills in Stornoway, which produce the vast majority of Harris Tweed.

There are four general stores and a post-office, together with travelling vans owned by the Scottish Co-op and a group of Pakistanis selling cheap Empire goods, to whom one trader attributed the blame for loss in his trade. The absence of licensed premises is the local explanation for the non-existence of trouble and general respect for Law and Order and in consequence the policeman from Tarbert only visits the island once every two months.

Naturally enough in such a close and friendly community, news travels fast—as did that of our arrival and of our activities—we

were always greeted by the introduction, "It's good weather today isn't it... are you the boys from Rhenigidale?"

But in addition to "interrogating" the islanders, we managed to find time to play football against Mrs. McMorrison's many (though, fortunately, younger) sons on a pitch composed entirely of peat which shuddered with every heavy step and was almost completely surrounded by an inextricable bog. Spurred on by our sense of English fair-play, sides were changed almost as frequently as goals scored, though memories cannot recollect the final score, or indeed, little else, save that balls kicked into touch were left for the home team to retrieve. In addition, we visited the island's lighthouse to be entertained there by the Principal who proudly showed us all, including that foghorn which had been keeping us awake for the last two nights at Rhenigidale.

Finally, it was interesting to note the comments of the islanders about Rhenigidale, which varied in manner from the polite to the abusive. One shop-keeper pointed out a comparison with the Isle of Scarp, where the school had closed down this year because there were no longer any children, and said both wouldn't last more than a few years. One man said quite bluntly and without apology, that the people of Rhenigidale realised their community had no future and that they should leave since they were "a burden on the government". Nearly all said what one would have expected, and indeed what the Sociologists on the 1966 Harris Expedition reported, that there was *no* future for Rhenigidale and that the community there would soon die out.

Geoffrey Tattersall

RHUM EXPEDITION 1967

Leader John Dobinson

Officers

Gavin Macpherson, Roland Emson, Geoff David, Mike Eldon, Ken Hunter, Chris Gascoigne-Hart.

Boys

Bruno Broughton, Fred Doyle, Oli Parker, Hugh Williams, Kim Donaldson, Dave Hawkins, Richard Helliwell, James Forshaw, John Ward, Stuart Shepherd, Charles Jackson, Ewan Harries, David Begg, Fenton Marshall, Michael Powell Brett, Chris Jones, Michael (Ferret) Harvey, Ollie Graham, Ronald Lewandowski, Michael Venn, Peter Best, Bill Abel, Martin Broad, Stephen David, Neil Munro, Bill Partridge.

LEADER'S REPORT

John McCulloch, writing in 1819, said of Rhum, "... Although the rough and dangerous shores, the trackless surface, and the perennial rain of this island are repulsive to the general traveller, the geologist (*and Naturalist*) will have met with appearances of such interest as to defy the toil which he must encounter in its investigation and to induce him to brave its tempests". Not an inviting introduction to the island that was to be home for thirty-odd stalwart expeditioners!

Rhum is not a new island to the S.H.S., in fact it formed the venue for the very first expedition in 1959. and was visited again in 1963, but after hearing all the glowing reports of such a wondrous isle it was obvious that another visit was due. In addition, we had been invited by the Scottish Nature Conservancy, who own the island, to come again and we hoped that we should be able to carry out some useful survey work for them.

Access to the island is good. MacBraynes, who run the Small Isles service, have a boat, the "Loch Arkaig", which calls three times a week at Kinloch on the east coast of the island. The only problem was that we were camping on the north coast five miles from Kinloch—how were we to get our equipment there? Anyone who has tried to transport a marquee across Hebridean moorland will appreciate the problem. Various ideas were thought of—a charter boat from Mallaig direct to the site was discussed but could not guarantee a landfall at the site with anything like a westerly wind, so that idea was scrapped. We could not understand why the boatman was so timorous about landing there but, halfway through our stay we saw *the rocks*: huge slabs ringing the bay, and we realised that he was right. The story goes that the previous Small Isles ferry had gone aground there and had to wait twelve hours to get off. Eventually the Nature Conservancy came to our aid in the ever-helpful shape of George McNaughton, who carted all our equipment across the island by Land Rover and trailer, dropping it at Kilmory from where it was humped by sea and land to the camp site.

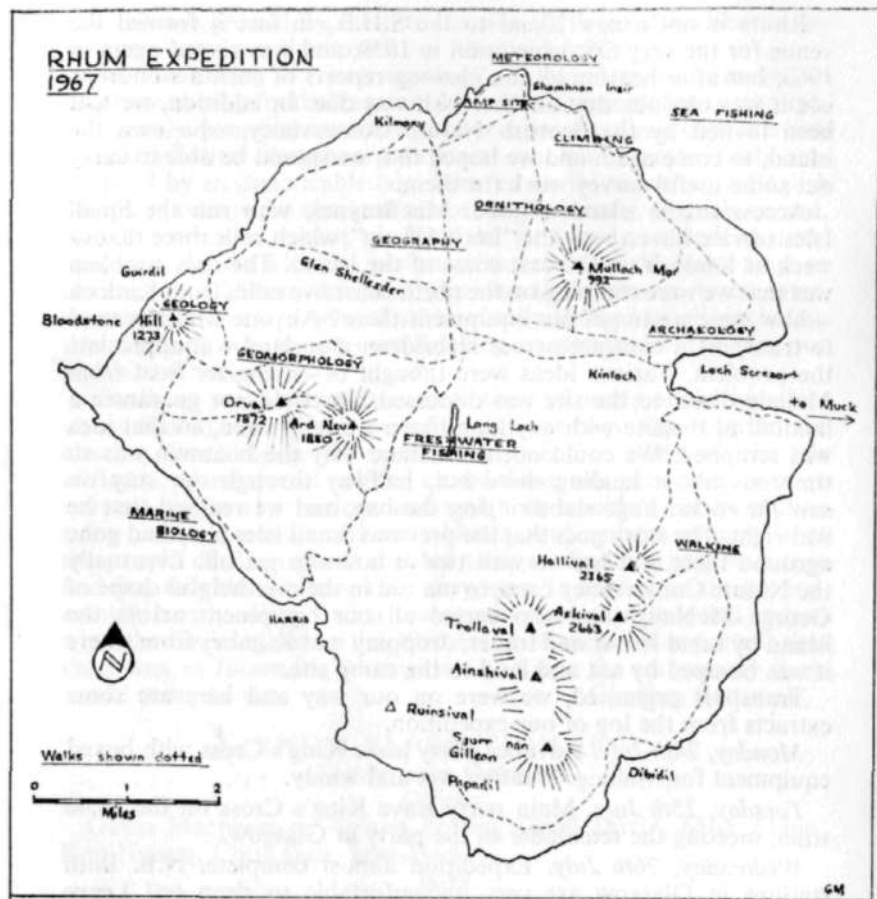
Transport organised, we were on our way and here are some extracts from the log of our expedition.

Monday, 24th July. Advance party leave King's Cross with boxed equipment for Mallaig. Weather wet and windy.

Tuesday, 25th July. Main party leave King's Cross on the 19.40 train, meeting the remainder of the party at Glasgow.

Wednesday, 26th July. Expedition almost complete. N.B. Both stations in Glasgow are very uncomfortable to sleep on! Leave Glasgow at 6.00 hrs. Train stops at Bridge of Orchy—pouring with rain: there's been a derailment on the line ahead. We meet Lewis expedition on same train and are transported by MacBraynes coaches to Fort William. Catch another train and arrive at Mallaig two hours late. It is still pouring with rain. Dash onto Loch Arkaig and say farewell to Lewis crowd. Advance party have done their job; all equipment is aboard. We leave Mallaig in a pall of driving rain and head out for the islands. We arrive at Rhum and disembark on the jetty. George McNaughton is there, and we load the trailer and some Land Rovers and begin the walk to Kilmory. Arrive safely and sleep in the old laundry for the night. Michael Powell-Brett and the Doc., Ken Hunter, are missing.

Thursday, 27th July. Now the real job of portage starts. We review the camp site, an old settlement called Shamhnan Insir, pronounced Sham an Easer, and decide that it's worth the effort of moving all the stores. It's a mile and a half from Kilmory so we



make a human chain across the moors and start the lift. The small transceivers I have brought help to keep contact with the camp site. Roland and Ronald go off for the boat which should be at Kinloch. The chain works with small articles and when most of the bits and pieces are at the camp site we have an "al fresco" lunch and await the dinghy's return. Dinghy arrives and makes three journeys around the coast, the last is nerve racking as it's very low in the water and unstable. The seals observe us closely. By 17.00 hrs. most of the kit is in camp and everyone is busy erecting tents. Marquee is put up and watches go back one hour.

Friday, 28th July. A glorious morning! Collection of driftwood and construction of furniture is the order of the day; no petrol for on-board so it's hard walking. Stores Icelandic built directly on to Marquee, looks as if it will be efficient. Tables finished look strong. Stream through camp is cleared so that water can be collected: site

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is quite superb—gently sloping sandy grassland going into dunes and a sandy beach, ringed by the hills to the south and east, looking out towards the Cuillins of Skye.

Saturday, 29th July. Work of the expedition starts in earnest. Bivouac group leave for Harris and Guirdil to investigate some reports of beehive huts, and to study the seashore flora and fauna. Party leave for Kinloch over Mulloch Moor, return with petrol. Ken Hunter and Michael Powell Brett return with party, all soaking wet. The weather has degenerated—it's pouring with rain now, poor bivouacers! Ken has no kit as MacBrayncs have dropped his rucksack off at Eigg! Meanwhile the bivouac party is having little success owing to the rain, but Geoff David reports a possible Bronze Age site above Harris. This is exciting as the island, according to general belief, was not settled until Christian times.

Sunday, 30th July. A group leaves camp to meet the bivouacers under Bloodstone Hill. We arrive dead on time—no sign of the others so return to find them already home. On return trip we find a survival pack which contains cans of water, Spangles which have gone off, and a first aid kit. Camp complete again as the weather improves. A Black Throated Diver is reported from Loch Sgaorishal—never been reported from Rhum before. Was it an accurate record? (Probably not).

Monday, 31st July. Great Bruno porridge for breakfast, followed by general lethargy after our previous days' exertions. Michael Powell Brett in bed with temperature of 102°. The Doc. and Chris G.H. try their hand at bread-making—great success. Some abseiling done on sea cliffs by a group with Geoff David. Transect work done on rocky shores around the edges of the bay.

Tuesday, 1st August. More Marine Biology by Roland Emson and David Begg and Martin Broad. Mike Eldon and Geoff David also lake out small groups for geomorphological studies and archaeology. Geoff finds more "beehive dwellings" along north coast not reported before. This is getting really exciting. Weather bright but showery. Ollie Graham takes to his bed with a temperature—looks like a cold. Mike Powell Brett up again.

Wednesday, 2nd August. Good weather but wind is strong from the south. Little wind indicator made from wire and a polythene bag works well. Several parties out—one to Kinloch by sea, then climbed Hallival. Bitterly cold in cloud on top. Another to Bloodstone Hill and Orval. Exposed west coast marine studies; and more archaeological finds (see Archaeological Report).

Thursday, 3rd August. A relaxing day. S.H.S. croquet invented, using large metal net floats and a maul by kind permission of Blacks of Greenock. One group off to climb Askival and Hallival. Archaeological discoveries in sand dunes at Shamhnan Insir—bits of flint, potsherds, and most exciting of all a bronze pin in perfect preservation. Geoff David is very excited. Some sceptics in camp but the evidence for Bronze Age settlement is building up. Nest of Red Throated Diver found—two eggs. Cuillins clear for the first time!

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Friday, 4th August. Excavation Day! The whole camp grovels round in the sand and finds amongst other things a silica bead, a musket ball, early pottery (very coarse), calcined bone and perhaps the most exciting of all, a perfect bloodstone arrowhead found by Ronald Lewandowski. It looks as if we really have something here! Also George III pennies found, with Irish harp on the obverse. The mind boggles!

Saturday 5th August. Gloriously sunny day. Party set out for Kinloch to catch the boat for Muck. They will be spending two days on the island. A lazy day for the rest.

Sunday, 6th; August. No stalking—the island is ours. Everyone must go—mass exodus! Three parties, one to Giurdil, one to Harris and one right down to the south, to Papadil. Ground very wet after 0.75 in. in one night! The Harris party took the dinghy as far as Kilmory but it had disappeared when we returned! We suspected, and were proved right later, foul play by the Doc!

Monday, 7th August. Very low tide. We discover a circle of reefs ringing the bay. Emland and Dobland solemnly claimed in the name of S.H.S. Archie and Robbie arrive to spend last few days with us. Officers prepare evening meal. Menu:

Salmon Cocktail
Tomato Soup
Stew. Sauté and mashed potatoes and vegetables
Rhubarb Crumble
Coffee and Currant loaf
Toasts to the Queen and S.H.S. in George IV Scotch.

Tuesday, 8th August. Strike camp—weather glorious. Move over to Kinloch. George picks up kit at Kilmory. Temporary camp at Kinloch where we are attacked by the "midges" and how! I have never seen anything like it!

Wednesday, 9th August. Sunny, but all stay in tents until midges clear. We say goodbye and thank you to George McNaughton and see Peter Wormell, the Warden, who has just returned from Sweden. He is most excited about all our archaeological finds. Board the "Arkaig" at 16.45 hrs. where we regale the tourists with an S.H.S. sing-song on the Forecastle. Sleep in the Church Hall in Mallaig and off the next morning.

Thus ends another S.H.S. Expedition. It is sad to say goodbye to so many good friends; to that gorgeous island—even to the refreshing Hebridean weather! Some people would say "Why do it—why leave civilisation with all its comforts and convenience and rough it in an isolated and wild landscape?" To prove oneself: to seek comradeship: to find a relief from everything being done for one: who knows! All I can say is that the memory of the place and the people are indelibly marked on my mind and all those memories are happy ones.

John Dobinson

"RHUM '67"

With a mountain of freight, only two hours late,
We arrived one day by the sea;
We boarded a boat that could scarcely float
And for hours drank cups of tea.
Through the storm we came, remarkably game
To arrive at Kinloch's pier.
And what should we find in this desolate land
But a Post Office selling beer?
We climbed the track with the wind at our back
Till the sea was again at hand.
And here we stay for many a day
On Shamhnan Insir's strand.
There are stories great that one may relate
Of the deeds that then were done:
Of the heroes who stride on Papadil's road;
Of how Askival was won;
Some searched for gold from days of old;
Some croquet played with a float;
Some sailed the seas with redoubtable ease
Whilst the leader searched for his boat.
One summer's morn in the early dawn
While many were still asleep,
With commendable pluck some set off for Muck
To see how the natives keep.
Until at last the days were past
And we headed south for the sun;
The windy ridges and million midges
Were memories of Rhum.

G.M.

BUMBLE BEES ON RHUM

The Topography of the island immediately sets a limit on the type of bee to be found. Water and heather were in plentiful supply, so there seemed little reason why several varieties should not flourish. Even the hardiest of insects, however, do require some cover, and this was almost entirely lacking on Rhum. Bees normally seek dry banks and verges as nesting sites, and the island has a very high rainfall making such situations very scarce.

Four different species of bee were recorded. *Hombits pratorum* not surprisingly was found well scattered over the whole island. Its distribution on a National scale is mainly in the South West and in the North of Britain. *B. terrestris*, *lapidarius* and *Jonellus*, the three most commonly found British bees were all recorded on the island.

It is interesting that only one recording of a wasp, *Vespa vulgaris*, was made during the whole of our stay. This is presumably due to the lack of trees; wasps build their nests from masticated wood,



THE CAMP SITE,
COLONSAY

MC

In conclusion, although the island should provide an ideal habitat for insect life, due to the absence of harmful pesticides, few species were recorded probably because of the extremes of exposure.

John A. Ward

ARCHAEOLOGY

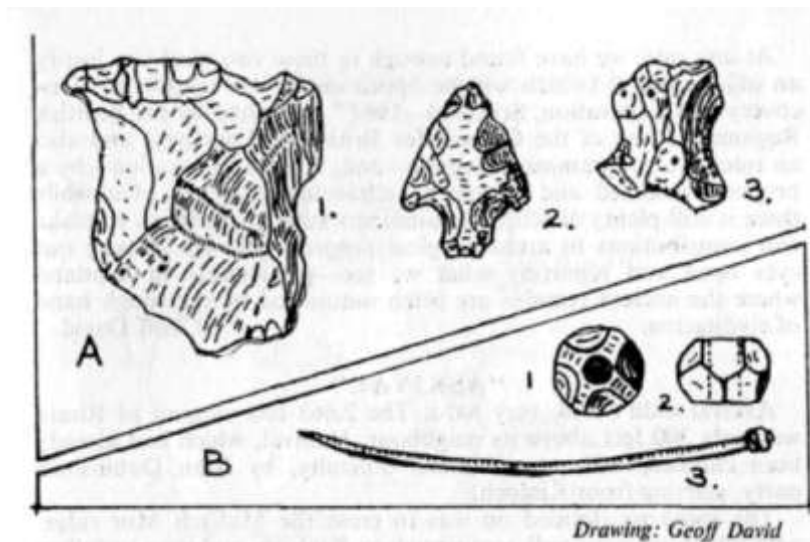
"Rhum is not known to have been inhabited before the Middle Ages" according to an eminent archaeologist writing in 1934, and all the official reports have assumed that the island was uninhabited in prehistoric times.

This makes the work of the S.H.S. Expedition to Rhum this summer all the more worthwhile, as we succeeded in finding fairly definite proof that the experts are wrong.

The best evidence for this came, surprisingly enough, from our own camp site at Shamhnan Insir, where a two-day hunt in the sand produced a host of objects, some of them modern, some medieval or later, and a few almost certainly prehistoric. Chief among the latter is a finely-worked little arrowhead, chipped out of Bloodstone (a rock which occurs only in Rhum). Judging by its shape and design, this dates from the Bronze Age—a vague term, but certainly not later than about 100 B.C. and probably a great deal earlier, even as far back as 2000 B.C. As well as the arrowhead there were several "scrapers" (used probably for making skin clothing), one possible "spokeshave" (for paring down arrow shafts?)—all of bloodstone—and several "waste flakes" of flint and chert, suggesting that tools and weapons of flint and chert were made on the spot. All of these could also be Bronze Age: some of them might even be earlier, i.e.: Neolithic (New Stone Age) dating back to about 3500 B.C. The only other place in the British Isles where bloodstone implements have been found is the Neolithic stone-built tomb at Rudh'an Dunain which is on the South coast of Skye only six miles across the water from our campsite. This strongly suggests contact of some sort—trade or exploration—between Skye and Shamhnan Insir in Neolithic times. Bloodstone could have been a valuable item of trade—it is easily worked and takes a good sharp edge, and would have made a good substitute for flint which is quite a rare stone in Scotland.

Of the later objects, there were many small pieces of rough, hand-made pottery, which is very difficult to date—it could be as early as 100 B.C. (Early Iron Age) but it might be as late as medieval. There was also a cluster of bronze pins—12 complete and 6 broken ones. These had me very excited at first, as they looked like a very distinctive type firmly dated to the Early Bronze Age, but alas—the unsympathetic expert in the National Museum of Antiquities in Edinburgh has since declared them to be "early modern"—anything from medieval up to nineteenth century. Most unfair!

More easily dated were two coins, both eighteenth century, one clearly showing the date "1766" and the legend "Hibernia"—minted in Ireland to pay the British garrison there?



ARTEFACTS FOUND IN DUNES AT SHAMHMAN INSIR,
ISLE OF RHUM A.

Prehistoric finds, all of bloodstone

1. Scraper or borer
2. Tanged and barbed arrowhead
3. Hollow scraper or spokeshave

H. Finds of a later date

1. and 2. Two views of a bead of unknown age. Siliceous material, translucent, pale mauve
3. Bronze knot-headed pin. Early modern?

At any rate, our campsite seems to have been used off and on for at least 2000 years, probably nearer 4000. This is hardly surprising, in view of its advantages of shelter from the prevailing wind, well-drained soil, adequate water supply, and good landing beach for small boats (barring the rocks off the entrance).

But Shamhnan Insir was not the only source of interest. On the West coast, between Guirdil and Harris, we found two separate groups of very small round huts, each group linked together by a straggling wall. These are the so-called "beehive dwellings" which were already vaguely known from casual remarks by previous visitors. What they were used for, and how old they are, is still anybody's guess. They look fairly like the "cells" of the Early Christian monks in the West of Ireland, dated to somewhere around A.D. 800-1000. Alternatively, they might be part of an arrangement for hunting deer by stampeding them over the cliff edge. Only excavation by a skilled archaeological team could tell, and I am trying to arrange for this to be done some time next year.

We also found other "beehive dwellings" of this kind on the East side of the island, on the North side of Loch Scresort and Kinloch Glen. These are most likely "shielings", but once again, their date is problematical: they could be prehistoric, or they could be only 200 years old.

one might expect to see Swamp Warblers, but none was recorded. The highlight of the expedition was the discovery of a Red Throated Diver's nest (with two eggs) on Loch Shamhnan Insir just above the campsite. Just around the point to the north of the camp was a steep cliff which contained a nesting colony of both Shags and Kittiwakes. It was also frequented by members of the Auk family, mainly Guillemots and Razorbills. The four pairs of Golden Eagles reported by the Warden to be nesting in the island were very much in evidence although we did not discover for certain where they were nesting. One must assume that their nests are in the mountains of the south west. A great deal has been said about the infertility of the eggs of the Golden Eagle owing to chemicals ingested by the birds when feeding on dead sheep. As far as we could make out there were no sheep on Rhum and so the Eagles should not suffer from this.

James Forshaw

SPECIES LIST—RHUM 1967

(Classification based on *Finer in Collins "Guide to British Birds"*)

Land Birds

Goldcrest	Pied Wagtail
Common Wren	Starling
Coal Tit	Blackbird
Whinchat	Sparrow Hawk
Stonechat	Lapwing
Spotted Flycatcher	Kestrel
Robin	Red Grouse
Great Tit	Short-Eared Owl
House Sparrow	Peregrine
Chaffinch	Hooded Crow
Wheatear	Raven
Meadow Pipit	Golden Eagle
Swallow	

Waterside Birds

Rock Pipit	Sanderling
Grey Wagtail	Common Snipe
Dipper	Rock Dove
Dunlin	Arctic Tern
Ringed Plover	Oyster Catcher
Jack Snipe	Curlew
Common Sandpiper	Heron

Water Birds

Manx Shearwater	Less Black-Backed Gull
Puffin	Herring Gull!
Black Guillemot	Red-Throated Diver
Common Gull	Eider
Kittiwake	Shelduck
Razorbill	Great Black-Backed Gull
Guillemot	Shag
Arctic Skua	Cormorant
Widgeon	Gannet
Fulmar	

[This list was received too late to be included in the classified table at the end of the Report—*Ed.*]

METEOROLOGY

Meteorologically speaking, the expedition was eminently successful. We had weather every day. A series of depressions brought in a very satisfying number of showers and periods of steady rain, not forgetting the bright periods which we predicted with astounding accuracy. That's about all that happened—no fireballs, hurricanes or thunderbolts, I'm sorry to say.

Leaders comment. The weather forecasting service was not nearly such a "hit and miss" affair as Mike's report might suggest! In fact, it was perhaps one of the most important facets of the expedition, allowing us to plan ahead in the knowledge that their predictions would be accurate.

Mike Eldon

BOTANY

The geology and the climate are the two most powerful factors governing the flora of a Hebridean island. On Rhum the geology is highly complex and hence the botany of the island is complicated by different ecological communities existing on the various rock types present.

In the north and east—the area most extensively studied—the more rounded undulating hills are formed by Torridonian sandstone and shales. The higher hills in the southern half of the island are composed of complex intrusive rocks of Tertiary origin. Granite is present chiefly in the west and peridotite and eucrite have weathered to provide fine soil rich in bases from the mountains. Extensive lava-flows from the summits of Fionchra and Bloodstone Hill. Limestone also occurs in a small area in the north-west corner.

Between forty and sixty inches of rain fall on Rhum annually over a period of 250 rain days. This maintains a high humidity on the island. The annual temperature variation is small because of the influence of the gulf stream bathing the coast. Frosts are rare and the prevailing wind is from the south west. This wind prevents the growth of tall shrubs and trees in exposed places but they survive in gullies and crags on the coast. The wind also provides salt spray and calcareous sand which influences the flora in coastal areas.

Botanical interest centres on the floras of the higher mountains and cliffs and on the woodland floras found in the gorges and on the lower cliffs of the north-east coast. A collection was made by Peter Best of the common plants found around camp while David Begg undertook the study and collection of the mosses and liverworts—of which there are over 130 on Rhum. I concentrated on the monocotyledons and pteridophytes but made a rather superficial survey of the whole island at the same time. Nearly 700 species have been recorded from Rhum excluding the bryophytes and other less highly evolved plants. Some observations were made on the fungi of the area around the camp.

The Rhum mountains provide the main habitat for the so-called "arctic alpinus" in the Inner Hebrides. The mountains of the Askival-Hallival massif consist of ultra basic periodite and alli-

valitic which weathers to give the flora excellent lodges but to provide also a soil rich in basic salts. This undoubtedly contributes to the rich flora found. This included *Silene acaulis*, *Ai'abis pctræa*, *Saxifraga oppositifolia*, *S. hypnoides*, *S. stellaris*, *Oxyria digyna*, *Alchemilla alpina*, *Thalictrum alpinum*, *Arenaria sedoides*, *Salix herbacea*, *Deschampsia alpina* and *Juncus trifidus*. *Juncus triglumis* and *Tofieldia pusilla* in wetter habitats. The Norwegian sandwort, *Arenaria norvegica*, grows on the coll between Sgurr nan Gillean and Ruinsivul. *Poa alpina* and *Poa glauca* were found on Hallivul's north face. These mountains also contained some very interesting mosses, *Ditrichum zonatum*, *D. vagitans*, *Oncophoms vire/is*, *Arctoa fulvella* and *Isopterygium muclleriamtm* to name but a few.

With the exception of trees planted in the area of Kinloch the island may at first appear much the same as other Hebridean Islands—desolate and treeless. This could hardly be further from the truth since some remarkable relict woodland floras are to be seen on Rhum. They are confined to gullies and cliffs where they are sheltered from the full force of the wind. *Betitla pubscens** *Corylus avellana* and *Popuhts ircmula* are the most common trees but *Ilex aquifolium*, *Crataegus monogynaaod*, *C. oxycantha* and *Qtiercus petraea* are also commonly present. Accompanying the trees and sometimes occurring alone in the gullies are typically woodland plants such as *Luzullt sylvatica*, *Teucrium zoorodonia*, *Oxalis acetosel/a*, *Holetts mollis*, *Brachypodium syfvatiam*, *Fragaria vesca* and *Equisetwn sylvaticum*. Ivy and Honeysuckle are also often found and the Royal fern is characteristic of such habitats. These interesting relics only survive in these conditions because the gullies and cliffs on which they grow provide them with protection from the blasting salt-laden winds, from animals grazing and, probably most important, the peat which blankets the level and gently sloping ground to a considerable depth in many places is unable to develop on the steep sides of the gullies.

Although most of the island was covered by small groups no detailed botanical work was undertaken in any area apart from the camp site—for obvious reasons!
Ken Hunter

CAMP COOKERY

One of the most interesting facets of the Rhum expedition this year was the adventurous cooking that was done by Chris Gascoigne-Hart and Ken Hunter. John Dobinson brought along a small oven and this allowed new recipes and methods to be tried out. One of I he favourite foods of the S.H.S. is Steak and Kidney Pie—which is usually chopped and stewed. With the oven, however, the pies can be baked and are much tastier. In addition to these pies a lot of baking was also done. Bread was successfully made and formed a welcome change to pre-packed sliced loaves.

The oven was quite a small affair—consisting of a tin twelve inches high, twelve inches wide and about nine inches deep. This was fitted with a false bottom to allow the heat from a calor gas burner to

raise the oven temperature to a maximum of about 450 K The oven had a hinged door on the front and two shelves inside and although only an experimental set-up and rather too small for a large expedition was adjudged by the whole camp to be worth the space that it took up.

In order that other expeditions can benefit from these culinary experiments we include some well-tried recipes for varying the camp diet. Incidentally, throughout the whole fortnight I think it is true to say that we had no case of tummy trouble!

Chris Gascoigne-Hart, Ken Hunter, John Dobinson
[Due to shortage of space we have had to omit the recipes. They have, however, been passed on to the relevant department—Ed.]

THE ISLE OF MUCK

The island of Muck is the smallest, and is often called the fairest, of the four small isles (although the name might indicate otherwise). The island is reached by taking the MacBraynes' boat to Eigg and being met there by the Muck boat owned by the MacEwan family who own the island. Only one boat a week actually calls at Muck, everything else must come via Eigg. The lack and cost of communications is one of the main reasons for the decline of the islands.

The island has the best farmland of any of the small isles, and is fairly flat, the highest point being only 951 feet above sea level, making the island comparatively dry; 43 inches compared with about 100 inches p.a. on Rhum, one of the wettest places in the British Isles!

The total population of the island is about 30, most of them living at the port, but the MacEwan family farm and all the associated farm buildings are a mile away at the other end of the island. The island is run by the MacEwan family—mother and two sons; another son is farming in New Zealand and one other has just qualified as a geologist. There are three other men who work on the farm, one as a full-time shepherd and farmhand, the other as a part-time farmhand, part-time drinker! At the port there are three acres of common land, but these are monopolised by one family, which uses them as a small-holding, selling eggs in Mallaig, and also keeping a cow, a few sheep and growing some oats. The rest of the population is made up of women and children. As there are two children of infant school age a school teacher has to be provided. One child under school age attends voluntarily as he finds little else to do on the island. The schoolteacher herself comes from Shropshire. She was holidaying in Greece while we were staying, which was unfortunate as she would probably have a good picture of the island as an outsider who has lived there for some time!

On Muck 104 out of the total 1,500 acres are under cultivation.

They operate a seven-year rotation:

4 years grass or hay

1 year oats

1 year root crops

1 year oats.

They are cutting down on the amount of root crops because of the difficulty in lifting. The oats and hay are fed to the sheep and cattle, but island supplies do not meet requirements and oats and concentrates have to be imported. While we were staying they were harvesting the hay. Although they have tractors and a certain degree of mechanisation, they have no bailers and haymaking is done with pitchforks. It is also important to remember that they have only one crop of hay compared with two in the South of England, and harvesting is often impeded by inclement weather conditions. Sixty cattle and numerous sheep are kept on the island and used for breeding. Calves and sheep are sold in the Autumn and Spring although in the future more will be sold in the Autumn to avoid the high cost of wintering the animals on the island. There are also some hens and a small dairy herd kept for the island's internal milk consumption.

One of the most important factors affecting all aspects of life on the islands is communications. The selling of cattle and sheep is greatly affected by freight charges. It is uneconomical to bring unsold sheep and cattle back to the island, so low prices must be accepted at markets. Cost of importing food is also high, communications having declined since the nineteenth century when Eigg had ten boats a week.

In the past there were many cottage industries which have died out. Kelp was exported in the early nineteenth century and used for fertiliser, but the market declined. The islanders also used to make cottage cheeses and do some fishing, but both of these have died out.

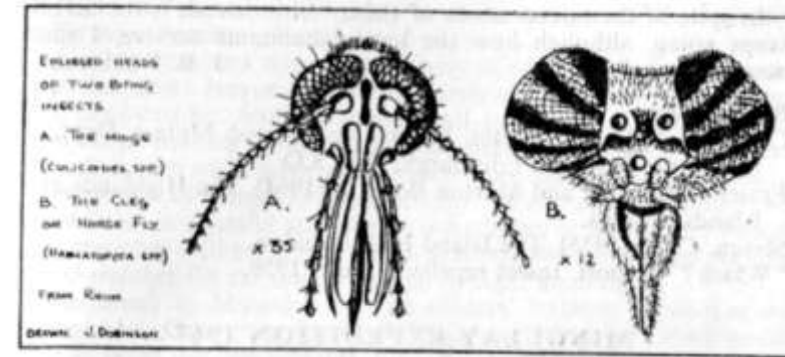
In the season lobster fishing pays quite well (£80 in one month seems to be the record) but as usual marketing is difficult. Recently on Muck they opened a cottage to let to tourists during the season. This seems to be a promising venture as they have spent £200 on converting another. Holidaying in remote places away from the crowds obviously has a certain potential. A good example is the S.H.S. itself!

Charles Jackson

BITING INSECTS IN THE HEBRIDES

Anyone who visits the Hebridean Islands soon discovers the winged inhabitants who can plague his life at dawn and dusk—the midges and the clegs. All S.H.S. camps suffer in one way or another from these insect attentions and this article was prompted by a most vicious attack experienced by the Rhum Expedition this year. Rhum has the well-deserved reputation of possessing the most virulent and blood-thirsty insects in Scotland. C. R. Steven writes, "The clegs descended on us in their hundreds, suicidal in their thirst for human blood", and quoting workmen on the island, "If it isn't the clegs, it's the midges, if it isn't the midges, it's the rain!". The midge is a small insect with piercing mouth parts (see diagram) and belongs to the family *Chironomidae*; the range of the insect covers the whole of the Islands and Highlands, up to 2,000 feet. A favourite spot, much loved by the midge, is the strip of decaying seaweed on the high water mark on the beaches, but every square yard of heather moor has its population.

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The life cycle of the insect is a complete metamorphosis, the eggs being laid in water and hatching into larvae in the summer. The larvae overwinter and pupate in the early spring, hatching into the "perfect" insect during the summer of the following year. The pupae form part of the basic diet of many fish and so do probably have at least one important function, small comfort if you are being eaten alive!

The species which is most commonly found is *Culicoides impunctatus* and this seems to favour the early morning and evening for its attacks. Although man is one of the most important organisms attacked, the insect is not specific to him and causes much irritation to other animals, particularly deer. A special committee was set up in 1946 to report on the midge, and although the tourist industry would benefit greatly from the full-scale control of this pest, most methods of control cause widespread damage to other aspects of the environment and consequently personal protection appears to be the only way out. Few of the proprietary brands of insect repellent are very effective against the numbers which one comes across, and even a foul-smelling brand of tobacco seems to have little effect on the determined midge! My only suggestion—climb over 2,000 feet.

In the Tabanid flies—or clegs—the female is the only bloodsucker. Here the mouth parts consist of a type of double saw, which seem to penetrate the skin without causing any sensation of pain. The addition of blood to the female's diet causes ovulation, so is a prerequisite to successful breeding. The two genera commonly found are *Tabanus* species and the small clegs, *Haemotopota* species. The head of the latter, to be found on Rhum, is illustrated.

The other biting organism which can cause discomfort is the sheep tick, *Ixodes ricinus*. This animal is not restricted to sheep as a host, and can equally well enjoy a meal of blood from rabbits, deer and many other wild animals. The animal is a dull grey in colour and, when gorged with blood, can reach the size of a gooseberry. This relative of the spider attaches itself to its host on areas of the body where the skin is thinnest. They should be removed as quickly as possible, as they are vectors of several virus diseases.

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In spite of the ministrations of these "little friends", the S.H.S. keeps going, although how the local inhabitants survive, I shall never know!
J. B. Dobinson

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MINGULAY EXPEDITION 1967

Leader Kenneth Huxham
Camp Administrator Nick Yates
i/c Ornithology Donald Campbell
i/c Radio Michael Underhill

Michael Cunliffe-Lister, Michael Fischer, Michael Jeavons, James Osmond.

September is a little late in the summer to run an expedition to the Outer Hebrides though we were fortunate to enjoy mild weather during our stay on Mingulay. We chose this end of the summer to allow a continuous period for some members to do vacation jobs or academic work.

We had an advance party of two to collect equipment at Glasgow and do odd jobs in Oban on Tuesday while the rest of the party arrived in Oban by train on Wednesday morning to catch the seven o'clock steamer for Castlebay. The crossing was smooth and at Castlebay Hector Campbell agreed to take us over to Mingulay the following morning.

Food, calor gas and our VHF radio were here added to our cargo and on Thursday at mid-day we were landed on Mingulay island. Rather in the style of Rhum 1963 we spent the first day carrying equipment from the rocky landing place to the old chapel house half a mile away. We used this as living quarters while we slept in two Icelandic tents. Everyone got down to work and we soon had the place looking ship-shape. Two excellent tables and a bench were constructed out of the original dilapidated furniture.

For many of us this was our first experience of camping on a small island (2J by \ miles approximately), and after the initial effort to set up camp there was some doubt about what to do next.

As on Mingulay 1964, ornithology proved to be overall the most popular activity. We were fortunate to have Donald Campbell, an experienced zoologist, with us. He made an exhaustive study of the bird and plant life on the island and we all benefited from his knowledge.

In terms of total man-hours, the amateur radio operations undertaken by Mike Underhill deserve special mention. As well as maintaining a daily link between ourselves and Tiree Airport he also

brought the name of Mingulay to radio enthusiasts in over fifty different countries.

Fishing consisted almost exclusively of spinning for pollack and coat fish, Mike Jeavons catching the only mackerel. Hydro-engineering, lead-casting, football (tennis ball in the sand), photography and rabbit-hunting by torchlight were pursued with varying degrees of enthusiasm while advocates of swimming had a cool reception.

Inasmuch as Mingulay was a holiday, we had a good holiday; we were living in a restful atmosphere doing more or less as we pleased. We were fed well on a varied diet—rabbit stew twice—and we had good weather for the season—seven or eight good days.

Inasmuch as Mingulay was an officers' training expedition we learnt a lot. Combining facets of Dingle and Mingulay 1964 I would like to point out two features.

Firstly, almost everybody gained first-hand experience of doing what needs to be done in organising an expedition, even a small one like this.

Secondly, there were no organised projects. Although warned, I think this took people a little by surprise. Anyone who had been on S.H.S. expeditions before, as most of us had, expects as a matter of course that there will be climbing, canoeing, sailing etc. It is only when you are left to yourself that you see the reason for having projects.

It seems to me that projects provide the opportunity for you to know your island or area from a particular, specialised angle; a project also provides a basis from which you can learn to work and talk with others in the group doing it.

In conclusion I would like to thank everybody in the S.H.S. who made an otherwise difficult job easy and Neil Sinclair for allowing us to use Mingulay, Hector Campbell for taking us to and from the island, and Mrs. C. Fazackerley for typing the circulars.

Kenneth Huxham

THE MINGULAY CAMPING SONG

Chorus; Hamish Drinking Rucksacks
sinking, Decks awash there,
The Good God bless you;
Land the box boys I know you
can't boys There's no panic on
Mingulay.

Hector Campbell that seaman bold,
Carried us there from Castlebay,
Would only land us as of old
Down at Aneir on Mingulay.
All our stores by hand we carried
From the rocks at the landing place
Where the seamen toiled and tarried
To land our gear on Mingulay.

Twas half a mile to the chapel
Where our camp was pitched by nightfall
By a path which with time grapples
For existence there on Mingulay.

The chapel ceiling there, revealing
That "J. Douthwaite is a grot" and
News there was of one from Haling,
Plus many other facts of note!

Soon our camp was set up snugly,
Fashioned from some wood we found there,
Furniture was made so ugly
In that house on Mingulay

Chorus: Fischer's eating, James is smoking,
And we are all Playing cards in the
chapel. Nick is hammering, Jeavon's
skinning Rabbits for stew on
Mingulay.

There were three Mikes on that island,
Daz was the fourth, O what confusion;
Then there were James, Nick and Donald,
With dear old Ken, there on Mingulay.

Daz was crouching over his wireless,
Don was stalking all over the island,
Ken was shouting in the darkness
Every day on Mingulay.

Some are fishing, some departed To
sing to seals in the briny, Trying to
get their engine started Are Mike and
Daz on Mingulay. Rabbits we could
catch with torches So a tasty stew we
fettled, Poor old Ken he had the
twitches About our shares on
Mingulay.

Fine it dawned that final morning
And the seamen sailed in early.
Sad we were but did no moaning
As we left our Mingulay.

Nick Yates

(This song was written in imitation of the rhythm of the Mingulay Boating Song.)

RADIO ON MINGULAY

Over two and a half hundredweight of radio equipment contributed to the "Tudor Rose" being dangerously near her plimsoll line on the

journey from Barra to Mingulay, much to the disgust of all (but one ?) expedition members who then had the unenviable task of humping it three quarters of a mile from the landing-place to the dwelling-place. Two car batteries (52 lb and 34 lb), one 12 volt petrol-electric generator (45 lb), one sectional aerial mast with aerials (32 lb), one reel of assorted cable (20 lb), one suitcase containing a kW2000 radio amateur transceiver and etceteras (40 lb), one packing case containing an HP114 VHF transceiver (about 80 lb) and ten gallons of petrol (? lb!) made up the load which soon earned the curses of the expedition members.

Still, within a few hours of setting foot on the island and using a hastily improvised aerial GM3LHZ/P was on the air for the first of the nightly 10 p.m. schedule contacts with a group of amateurs in Sussex and Surrey. From then on the call of "Golf Mike Three Lima Hotel Zulu Portable on the island of Mingulay" was likely to echo from a corner of the storeroom at any time of day or night.

Next morning saw the radio operator with his other hat on calling "Tiree from Mingulay" on the emergency VHF link with Tiree Airport. Conditions on this 36 mile path were poor usually necessitating the use of overhead aircraft as a relay to maintain the morning schedules.

That was also the day when it was found that the petrol-electric generator was not going to be the current success it had been hoped. Promptly christened in no uncertain terms in the soon-adopted Mingulay vernacular, it remained unreliable from the first day to the last, being prone to stop without warning.

Frequent oil changes, not possible for lack of oil, appeared to be the only cure. Cooking corn-oil, although plentiful, was not tried as it was thought that the results might be too amazing! Anyway nearly 120 hours of running was eventually coaxed out of the little machine for about 65 hours of actual operating.

Two hundred and fifty-five contacts were made with 192 amateur radio stations in 59 different countries in most parts of the globe. So Mingulay was well and truly put on the map much to the joy of the many aficionados who delight in collecting contacts with rare spots of the world, although some are probably still wondering where (on earth) Mingulay is. In their turn those non-initiates to the esoteric cult among the expedition members are probably still wondering what "an inverted vee multiband trap dipole" is, or what is meant by "90 watts peak envelope power", although they probably realise that "a 600 foot centre fed" is not a description of a bifurcated hexacentipede with rather strange eating habits.

Many were the moments of excitement; the very first contact and with it the realisation that all the effort was going to be worthwhile; the first continental contact; the first transatlantic one; reaching Australia (via the long path); a partial radio black-out and ionospheric storm caused by the appearance of sun spots; speaking to other island stations like the Maldives and St. Pierre;

contacting a South African friend, who, when he was in the UK, had originally owned one of the aerals being used on Mingulay; the meeting up with old friends and the meeting of new; all added to the interest of the exercise.

So twelve days, nine and a half gallons of petrol and a pint of oil later, the time came to take down the aerals, dismantle the gear and pack away the bits and pieces. The problem of lowering one of the aerals had been neatly solved by the gale the night before, much to the disgust of one expedition member who narrowly missed being crowned and strangled!

It was now all over. It had been an expedition with a difference, another facet of expedition living in a truly remote and isolated part

of the Hebrides.

Michael (Daz) Underhill

P.S. For those who like statistics here is a list of countries contacted:

Afghanistan, Alaska, Algeria, Australia, Austria, Bahrain, Balearic Islands, Belgium, Canada, Ceylon, Channel Isles, Cyprus, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, England, Eire, Finland, France, Germany, Gibraltar, Greece, Greenland, Hungary, Iceland, Israel, Italy, Kenya, Lebanon, Liberia, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Maldives Islands, Morocco, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nigeria, Northern Ireland, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Rumania, St Pierre Island, Sardinia, Scotland, South Africa, South Arabian Federation, Russia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Latvia, Ukraine, Byclo-Russia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, U.S.A., Wales, Yugoslavia, Zambia.

BIRD WATCHER'S IMPRESSIONS: MINGULAY

1967

A green grazed bowl, sand blown ruins and a single sheltered bay at the centre of a semi-circle of barren hills which soon end in superb, precipitous cliffs and the Atlantic: that is Mingulay. It is the cliffs that make it ornithologically important but by September they are deserted except for fulmars, and on arrival on 7th September, my bird-watching hopes were placed on interesting movements of sea-birds.

As it turned out my early enthusiasm for sea watching was soon dampened, despite a fine and comfortable position, by the absence of migrating sea-birds and the daily watch was reduced to an hour or so. This was part of the daily routine which also involved a walk round the island and as many visits as convenient to the only real cover provided by the nettles, thistles and flags of the ruined village. At the end of a week the "list" for the trip was 29, all of which had been seen in the first couple of days, and this stagnation gave me an incentive to study the flowers of the island as well. By the end of the trip 63 species had been recorded which, non-botanist as I am, I considered surprisingly high, comparing favourably with the 103 seen on Colonsay during the previous fortnight (this total, illogically, excluding trees and grasses). Incidentally, no butterflies were seen compared with 14 species on Colonsay.

On the 13th, the usual search among the pipits on Hecla was interrupted by the distinctive call of Lapland buntings but it required a couple of hours of searching before satisfactory views were obtained of a party of five. Two more were seen on the 14th and 17th, by which time there had been a minor fall of passerines during a period of gentle east winds and low visibility. Though nothing rare was seen there was a peculiar fascination in visiting the ruins at this time to see what familiar birds might have taken refuge in the rather barren shelter of the village. On the 15th there were two willow and two garden warblers and on the 16th four willow warblers and single chiffchaffs, redstarts, spotted flycatchers, blackcaps and garden warblers as well as a willow warbler fluttering incongruously among the fulmars on one of the northern cliffs. Some of these were seen again on the 17th when a whinchat arrived, while on the 18th there was a robin and an interesting record, which on grounds of lateness I originally doubted, of a swift. Oddly enough \ had an even later record on Skye on the 25th.

The only reward for sea watching, apart from the splendid gannets, was five sooty shearwaters during a forty-minute watch on the 16th. Of the birds seen regularly the buzzards and ravens seemed to take progressively less notice of us and approached closer and closer. A couple of eagles sometimes visited the island and were well seen. A peregrine haunted the western cliffs and the song-thrushes provided an interesting example of sub-specific status. Most of them were noticeably dark, and the nature of the habitat made their whole behaviour unusual. Most distinctive of all, though not mentioned in the Handbook, was the alarm call, decidedly reminiscent of ring ouzels.

It was not altogether a startling visit but one that was filled with points of interest and dominated by the fulmars whose gyrations and gurglings on and around the formidable cliffs produced endless pleasure.

Donald Campbell

ORNITHOLOGY 1967

Central

Printed below are summaries of" the reports from the expeditions to Harris, Lewis, Colonsay and Mingulay. It will be noticed that we have now reclassified our records, so that they follow the Peterson system, based on the natural classification, which is more realistic than the old system that depended on assumed habitat as its basis.

The change in classification has enabled me to include fuller details in this report about each species where such information is of interest, and I hope that this change will increase the value of our work.

Harris (17th-31st August)

The expedition was based at Rhenigidale (O.S. Sheet 12, 230018), a crofting community situated on the west side of the entrance to Loch Seaforth, enabling a watch to be kept on both sea and land birds (cf. the Society's expedition to the same place last year).

Lewis (25th July-12th August)

The area studied was remarkably wild and barren, being based at Tamanavay (O.S. Sheet 12, 040202). The landscape was mountainous in the north with many steep cliffs, hilly to the south and south-west, and generally speaking, flat and boggy to the west, the moorland being covered by rough grass or poor quality heather. The coast was rocky, but apart from cliffs north of Brenish there were few suitable nesting sites for seabirds,

Colonsay (16th-30th August)

This is one of the most beautiful of the islands—trees and farmland mingle with the more familiar heather and bog, enabling a wide range of habitat to be covered, adding rock cliffs and large sandy bays to those listed above. The camp was situated in one of these bays, on what was once the golf course (cf. last year's expedition to Colonsay).

Mingulay (7th~20th September)

We have not had reports from this island, which is one of the most southerly of the Outer Isles, since 1964, although the dates this year were too late to see many of the breeding birds. The habitat included sandy beaches, hills and the steep cliffs which halt the Atlantic **on** the island's west side, and are the resting sites of many species earlier in the summer.

See Bird List below

CLASSIFIED LIST

(Based on Peterson in "A Field Guide to Birds of Britain and Europe" (Collins))

H = Harris (17-31 August. Report sent by John Brooks)

C=Colonsay (16-30 August. Report sent by Donald Campbell)

L= Lewis (25 July-12 August. Report sent by John Houghton)

M = Mingulay (7-30 September. Report sent by Donald Campbell)

<i>Family</i>	<i>Species</i>	<i>Recorded</i>	<i>Other details</i>
Divers	Red-throated Diver	H	1 pair on lochan near An Reithc
		L	Not uncommon
	Black-throated Diver	C	With young on Dubh Loch
		L	Only 1 confirmed on August 10th between Great Bernera and mainland
Great Northern Diver	H	Several flew over Loch Sea forth on August 25th. One pair in Loch Tamanavay—unconfirmed L	
	C	On Loch Fada	
Grebes	Little Grebe	H	Abundant
	Fulmar	L	Became more common as one moves North past Brenish. Appear to breed on cliffs by Ard More Mangensta where many hundreds seen on August 10th from boat
Petrels and Shearwaters	Sooty Shearwater	C	
		M	
		M	5 passing South in 40 minutes on September 16th
		H	Strong gale on August 20th drove 400 into Rhenigidale Bay
Gannets	Manx Shearwater	L	Single bird seen off Brenish on August 10th
		C	Off Scalasaig on August 16th
		H	About 20 fishing one afternoon in Rhenigidale Bay
		L	Recorded daily. Very common in open sea North of Scarp
Cormorants	Cormorant	C	
		M	
		H	Large numbers, especially on stormy days
		L	Seen alone or in pairs. Not numerous
Shag	H	L	Large numbers, especially on stormy days
		L	Numerous on coast, and common in lochs
		C	
		M	1100 counted on rocks and at sea on September 9th
Herons and Bitterns	Grey Heron	H	1 seen in Glen Laxadale, 3 at Loch Maaruig
		L	Seen on several occasions
		C	
Geese, Swans and Ducks	Canada Goose	C	
		C	Kiloran and Tobar Fuar. (N.B. These were introduced in 1935 and now breed regularly)

<i>Family</i>	<i>Species</i>	<i>Recorded</i>	<i>Other details</i>
Wigeon	Shelduck	H	Flat Norlhton Sands, South Harris
		L	Unconfirmed . at a distance
	Teal	C	
		C	
	Tufted Duck	H	10 seen at Northton Sands, South Harris
		C	On Loch Fada
	Eider	H	Seen near mouth of Loch Seafort. 1 rf and 5 \ at Northton Sands, South Harris. C M
		H	4 around Rhenigidale Island
	Common Scoter	H	1 at Northton Sands, South Harris
		H	7 on Strand on August 25th
Red-Breasted Merganser	C		
	H	1 seen flying over Loch Trollamarig	
Kites, Buzzards, Hawks, Eagles, etc.	Buzzard	L	Said to be more common nearer habitation. One confirmed report only
		C	
		M	Widespread—up to 6 in the air at a time
		H	2 confirmed on Toddun
Golden Eagle	H	L	Seems to be an amazing concentration North of Loch Resort—12-15 birds
		L	Adult and young near Balnahard
		M	Occasional visits from one pair
		M	
Falcons	Peregrine	M	
		L	2-3 birds seen around camp
Merlin	C	C	2 records
		C	
		C	
Grouse	Kestrel	C	
		H	£ at Maaruig
		L	1 seen on August 10th quarter mile from Morsgail Lodge
Red Grouse	C	L	Single bird near the deserted village
		C	

<i>Family</i>	<i>Species</i>	<i>Recorded</i>	<i>Other details</i>	
Partridges and Pheasants Rails, Crakes and Coots Oyster-catchers	Pheasant	C		
	Moorhen	C		
	Oystercatcher		H Around Rhenigidale Island L Very common on Atlantic coast near Brenish C	
Plovers	M Ringed Plover	About 20 birds	H Rhenigidale Island C M 5 Birds	
	Golden Plover	C	M 12 on September 19th H 10 seen at Northton Sands, South Harris L Very common on pasture near Brenish, but none nearer Ard Bheag C	
	Lapwing		M Maximum of 115 H Rhenigidale Island C	
	Turnstone		H C C	
	Sandpipers, Curlews, Godwits and Snipe	Dunlin Redshank		C C
	M Greenshank	Only 2 records	C Tobar Fuor and Oronsay Strand	
	L Common Sandpiper	1 heard on rocks	C North-west of Loch Tamara H	
	H Curlew	2 seen at Maaruiig,	C 30 at Northton Sands, South Harris H one at Rhenigidale Island C	
	M Whimbrel	About 30 birds	C Seen on August 19th and 25th M Seen on September 10th	
	H Snipe		L Single birds at Loch More, Glen Laxadale and Loch Maaruiig C About 8 reports from heather on lowish moorland	
Skuas	M Arctic Skua	About 30 birds	H Around Rhenigidale Island, and out to sea C 2 pursuing kittiwakes on August 22nd	
Gulls and Terns	H Black headed Gull		H 5 seen at Northton Sands, South Harris C	
	M Lesser Black Headed Gull	Only one record	H Confirmed in mouth of Loch Seaforth L Fairly numerous around the coast	
	H Herring Gull		L Easily the most common gull C M 20 birds	
	H Great Black Headed Gull		L Fairly common on rocks: always single birds C M 150 birds C	
	M Common Gull		M 3 birds H	
	C Kittiwake		H C	
	M Common/Arctic Tern		H Last birds left breeding cliffs on August 26th L One of the commonest seabirds, especially around the loch C	
	Auks	H Razorbill		H 6 in Loch Seaforth on August 23rd L Only come into Loch Tamanavay when sand eels present H
		H Guillemot		C H
		H Black Guillemot		C H
		L C		L Very common in lochs and open sea C Scattered pairs, and up to groups of 10. (Also Vatersay, Barra and Skye>

Family	Species	Recorded	Other details
Puffin			L Only in Loch Tamanavay when sand eels present. Not common
Pigeons and Doves	Wood Pigeon		H 2 near Loch Mooriug and 2 at Tarbert. Crofters said that quite a number come to Rhenigidale during the harvest
		C	Only 2 seen
	Rock Dove		H 9 confirmed at Gary Aleteger
			L Unconfirmed—seen from boat to Scarp C
			M 6 birds
Cuckoos	Cuckoo		L One immature (from call) seen on different occasions rising from heather above camp
Swifts	Swift		M A late record on September 18th
Larks	Sky Lark		H Not uncommon
		C	
		M	About 20 birds
Swallows and Martins	Swallow		C
Pipits and Wagtails	Meadow Pipit		H Very abundant around Rhenigidale
			L Very common everywhere except on shore
			C
			M Maximum of 250 birds
	Rock Pipit	H	Single bird seen on rocky shore at Rhenigidale
			L Occasionally seen on sea-shore: status uncertain
	Pied Wagtail	H	2 in Glen Laxdale
Dippers	Dipper	H	6 around Loch Mar, and one in a burn near the Clisham
			L Occasional records of single birds in streams leading into lochs
Wrens	Wren	H	Around the crofts and lazy beds—some were of a very light colour and not as dark as the usual Hebridean sub-species
	(Hebridean sub-species)		L Very common, and only bird indifferent to our presence. Numerous on both moor and sea-shore C
		M	About 20 birds
Accentors	Dunnock	H	2 seen in Glen Laxdale, one pair at Molingish
			L Two pairs near old habitation at tip of West Loch Tamana
			C
Warblers, Flycatchers, Thrushes, etc.	Sedge Warbler		C
	Garden Warbler	M	Mingulay ruins—2 on September 15th. 1 on September 16th
	Blackcap	M	Mingulay ruins on September 16th-18th
	Whitelthroat	C	
	Willow Warbler	M	Mingulay ruins—2 on September 15th, 4 on September 16th, 1 on September 17th, 1 on cliffs among fulmars on September 16th
	Chiffchaff		C
			M Mingulay ruins. 1 on September 16th and 17th
	Goldcrest	C	
	Spotted Flycatcher	M	Mingulay ruins on September 16th
	Whinchat	H	Reported from Toddun
			L Unconfirmed
			C
			M Mingulay ruins on September 17th and 18th
Stonechat		L	3 pairs and ♂ alone seen on open moorland
			C
	Wheatear	H	Around Rhenigidale
			L Very common on moorland and coastal areas—all Greenland variety
			C
			M Maximum of 50 birds
Redstart		M	Mingulay ruins on September 17th and 18th
	Robin		H Around crofts and lazy beds
			C
			M Mingulay School House on September 18th
	Blackbird		H Rhenigidale
			L Fairly common except on moorland
	Song Thrush		H Around crofts and lazy beds. 1 in Glen Laxdale
(Hebridean sub-species)		L	Seen in pairs on sea-shore, particularly boulder shore and near old settlement. Occasionally on higher moorland
			C
			M About 20 birds
	Mistle Thrush		H 1 pair near Loch Mar
		L	One recognised by call at head of Loch Tealasavay

<i>Family</i>	<i>Species</i>	<i>Recorded</i>	<i>Other details</i>
Tits	Coal Tit	C	
	Blue Tit		C
	Great Tit		C
Finches	Greenfinch		H 1 seen at Molinginish
	Twite		H 1 seen on Toddun
	Linnet		H 1 seen around Rhenigidale crofts
Sparrows	House Sparrow		H Large colonies around the crofts
	L		Very common near human settlement at Brenish, otherwise unconfirmed
Starlings	Starling		H Large colonies around the crofts
		L	Several largish flocks of 30-40 birds on shortish grass above sea-shore by jetty and West Loch Tamara
Crows	Chough		C One pair seen twice at North of the island
	Jackdaw		C
	Hooded Crow		H 3-5 birds
			L Several single birds seen
			C
			M 6 birds
	Raven		H Maximum of 4 at a time
			L Numerous on hills down to 300 ft.
			C
			M 8 birds

Alan Bateman

1968 CONFERENCE REPORT

The Annual Conference was held at Chester College of Education from the 5th to the 8th of January. It began officially at 8.30 p.m. on Friday the 5th when coffee and sandwiches were served. There followed a migration to the bar, which was on College premises, for an evening of refreshment and reminiscences.

The following morning slides of the 1967 expeditions were shown, with commentaries by various people—one of which was especially notable for its shaggy dog story.

In the afternoon there was a football match in which the "All Stars Officers XI" drew with an "Others XI" 3-3. After tea any remaining "keen types" played basketball in the gym. There were also two lively discussion groups which came up with some very good ideas. These were a 1968 officers and leaders group and a group of members from the 1967 junior expeditions.

Before dinner the Directors gave their now traditional sherry party, which everybody thoroughly enjoyed, though there were some pleas for a drier sherry. None was forthcoming!

After dinner various films were shown—"Rockets Galore"; "Running, Jumping, Standing Still"; and an excellent one on sea-birds. The day finished with a sing-song which ended with a raucous rendering of "Good Night Bottom".

Sunday morning started with a service in the College chapel followed by very interesting and instructive talks on: "Mountaineering" by Barry Smith; "Camp Cooking" by Chris Gascoigne-Hart; "The History of the Hebrides" by John Abbott.

In the afternoon the Committee meeting and Society general meeting were held. While the former was in session a photographic competition took place. The winner was Tim Willcocks.

After tea, to give the more hard-working Conference goers a rest, there was a very interesting and educational talk by Captain

Kirkwood, on Antarctic expeditions. Captain Kirkwood was in command of "The Endeavour", which was supply ship to the Fuchs/Hillary Antarctic expedition. He showed some excellent slides of the area, especially of Mt. Erebus.

More basketball was played before dinner by some of the more energetic members of the Society and at the same time the Board Meeting was held.

After dinner John Abbott gave a resume of the history of the Society from its early beginnings with the Rhum expedition in 1959. The inevitable sing-song followed and went on far into the night.

A very enjoyable weekend drew to a close on Monday, 8th January after breakfast and everybody had left the College by 10.30 a.m.

GENERAL MEETING

The Chairman said that recruitment for Colonsay and South Rona was good but that more people were needed for South Uist. The uncertainty over South Rona's leader had been resolved as Chris Gascoigne-Hart had agreed to lead it. The Lewis expedition was

giving him some concern as recruitment was poor and certain potential members seemed to regard the site as second-hand because a Junior expedition visited the site in 1967. This attitude worried the Chairman as he regarded the site as having excellent potential and thought that it had been wasted on the Junior expedition. The Society was having trouble with the Morsgail estate authorities, who had refused us permission to cross their land. This meant that the expedition was confined to the mountainous section up to Loch Tamanavay. However, it was generally agreed that there was in fact plenty to do on the island and the members present undertook to do all they could to boost enrolment for Lewis, especially of "new blood".

Philip Renold said that he would be leading an officers' training expedition to Vatersay. There would be difficulty in obtaining equipment as there were two full-sized expeditions on at the same time. The members of the expedition would spend about a week on Vatersay then spend days travelling around, probably on Barra.

The Chairman suggested the possibility of there being an Easter expedition to Aird Bhaeg to repair a croft there thus making it suitable for Society use.

Charles Hooper who will lead this expedition outlined his intentions:

1. To be based at Aird Bheag and travel around.
2. To investigate and enlarge the croft.
3. To investigate the possibilities of running a full sized Easter expedition.

The Chairman asked the Society to thank John Houghton and John Dobinson for the excellent way in which they had arranged the conference.

The suitability of Chester as a conference centre was discussed. Daz Underhill said he thought that Chester was geographically poor.

Many people suggested various places, and people from the south suggested that it should be held there. John Brooks said that as expedition fares were cheaper for northerners it would be fairer if the conference were held in the south to make conference travelling cheaper for southerners.

Oxford was approved as a venue for next year but the final decision was left until the next committee meeting.

John Houghton said that he would arrange next year's conference but pointed out that his work would be easier if we visited Chester again. It was decided that Chester should be provisionally booked in case a suitable place in Oxford could not be found.

The Society agreed with the Chairman that the cost was reasonable and that Monday breakfast was a good time to finish. Next year's conference would be held during the first week in January.

John Dobinson said that the quantities of food given to the senior expeditions were the same as those given to junior ones and thought

that older boys should have more to eat. He thought that breakfasts were insufficient.

Various people wondered how steak and kidney pies could be cooked without an oven. Daz's method was rejected.

It was suggested that wall-mounted tin openers should be used as hand ones often failed to work.

As two expeditions in 1967 had baked bread the question of camp ovens was discussed. John Dobinson said his had cost around 30/-. Barry Smith said that he would look into it.

It was decided that tins packed in cardboard boxes were a nuisance when much loading and unloading had to be done as the boxes tended to disintegrate. Wooden boxes would be preferable.

The Chairman asked for a message to be sent to Dave Vigar who was confined by foot and mouth restrictions, asking him to look into this and also into the possibility of more dehydrated food.

John Dobinson thought that two-man bivouac tents were highly suitable for senior expeditions and as Malvern had some for sale he thought the Society should buy some. Members of the Rhum expedition said that they were very comfortable and light to carry as well as being easier to pitch than Icelandics. He said storage facilities were available from certain firms who would also check the tents over each season. The issue was left for Barry Smith to talk over with Anthony Bradshaw.

John Lace raised the question of leaders' references and their viability. The Chairman said that these were especially useful in the case of misfits. He thought that there should be two categories

1. Completely unsuitable and asked not to apply again.
2. Attitude at fault, should be written to on renewed application and told to mend his ways.

It was noted that people who fell into either category did not apply themselves to the expedition work or consistently disobeyed ***text missing***** ability to tighten up on responsibility and safety

Certain people thought too much fuss was being made of the issue and hoped this could not be used by a leader to over-exert his will. Cliff Fountaine said that this was not possible, as according to the constitution, the leader must consult his officers before making any major decision of this nature.

It was learned that Jim Hardy had had to send home one of the members of one of his expeditions but emphasised that he would have had no hesitation about taking the boy on another expedition.

John Lace said that his question had been misread. He was concerned that references were becoming irrelevant and were not helpful to new leaders as they tried to be psychological when in fact simple notes about ability, likes and dislikes were all that was required.

The Newsletter was given a miss this year as the report would be late.

The Society adjourned for tea.

JUNIOR EXPEDITION DISCUSSION GROUP

The Group thought that cooking bread was a good idea and that the Society should purchase some bread tins and ovens. It would be possible to supply the whole expedition in this way.

They thought that it would be a good idea to have two duty sections for each day—one to do the cooking and one to wash-up.

On the subject of activities they thought that organisation was a good thing for the first few days, then a choice was better for the rest of the time. Everybody should be asked every day, what they wanted to do and there should be a balance between projects and recreational activities. Bored people should be organised!

They thought that each evening there should be a short talk on a particular project and that a broadsheet of projects should be sent round as a circular to all members before the expedition began. Projects should only become important by the third year and in addition survival craft, map-reading and signalling (Morse and semaphore) should be taught.

They felt that more time should be spent on projects and were enthusiastic about the rebuilding of crofts.

Sailing boats and motor boats were felt to be essential to each expedition and canoes, with proper spray coverings, were a very great advantage. They thought that rubber dinghies were a good idea.

PLANS FOR 1968

The following expeditions have been arranged for 1968. Further details and application forms from: C. M. Child, Schools Hebridean Society, Kent College, Canterbury, Kent.

GROUP G (12 ³ / ₄ -14 ¹ / ₂ years)	COLONSA Y EXPEDITION
July 30th-August 16th	Leader: Alan Bateman
GROUP F(14-15 ¹ / ₂ years)	SOUTH UIST EXPEDITION
July 29th-August 16th	Leader; John Cullingford
GROUP E(15-16 ¹ / ₂ years)	
August 20th-September 5th	Leader: Chris Gasgoine-Hart
GROUP D (16 ¹ / ₂ and over)	LEWIS EXPEDITION
August 20th-September 6th	Leader: David Cullingford

In addition to the four main schoolboy expeditions the Society plans to run two smaller expeditions during the course of the year. Vaiersay Expedition—u small expedition organised by members of the Society other than officers or directors.

Tamanavay Expedition—a small, scientific expedition taking place in the Easter holidays. Anyone interested in this should contact the Chairman, John Abbott, Chasefield Mews, Park Road, Bowdon, Cheshire.

Project Co-ordinators, to whom relevant queries should be addressed—for addresses see directory.

Boats: Ian Christmas
Climbing: Bob Warrack

Geology: David Carter
History: Jim Hardy
Hydrography: Steven Harris
Maps and Charts: Simon Rogers
Ornithology: Alan Bateman
Sociology: Tim Willcocks
Surveying: Simon Rogers
Medical Officer: Dr. P. K. Peace

Hon. Membership Secretary: C. M. Child, assisted by J. E. R. Houghton.

Footnote (April) to Plans for 1968:

Colonsay - full
South Uist - several
vacancies South Rona - a
few vacancies Lewis -
several vacancies

CMC

***NOTE – The full report contains the names and addresses of all the members and although now over 40 years out of date I didn't think it appropriate to publish them all here. Nick Smith**