

**THE 1968 REPORT OF
THE SCHOOLS HEBRIDEAN SOCIETY**
(Founded in 1960)

*** NOTE – The full report contains the names and addresses of all the members and although now over 40 years out of date I didn't think it appropriate to publish them all here.**

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The Editor of the Report is C. J. Dawson

FOREWORD

By S. I. Hamilton, Esq., M. H. I. Department of
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The Hebrides are subject to their own development in the contemporary period of time which is characterised by rapid development in all fields of life and in all directions. For reasons bound up in the qualities of the people, the location, the form of land tenure and religious precepts, development is more limited in instance and slower in tempo in the Hebrides than in many other localities.

Developments which are in progress are found in new approaches to surface treatment of moorland instanced in the re-seeding schemes in Lewis. Hand in hand with that goes the concept of apportionment of land to individuals out of what was grazing held in Common. There is a feature of establishment of small industries instanced in spectacle frame-making in Barra and precision engraving in Skye. Another instance is a new approach to social/agricultural structure in Tiree. Now there is breaking upon the crofting community the concept of a new look at land tenure in the form of possible owner/ occupancy. Development of tourist potential stands out as a main feature and there is growing demand for cottages as family holiday homes.

The region throughout its diversity of islands remains a true recreational region for those who desire detachment from the high pressures of life elsewhere and a mainly undisturbed field for study of natural forms and natural life. Leaving aside development of facilities for recreation, the Hebridean people provide a constant flow of young life of high quality into the professions of the country and into the skills. At home the people follow ways of life uninhibited by massed concrete, unconfined by conurbations, and with an independence of thought not subject to "processing" and therefore the region holds a significant place in the total economy of the country. Such a locality and such a people are deserving of the fullest interest, and the Schools Hebridean Society is developing a most commendable line in opening up to many young minds, knowledge of the territory and the people. Reciprocally the people of the Hebrides are known to appreciate the visit of expeditions and the interest of expedition members sensitive in their approach and the hope is expressed that the expeditions will continue with gathering strength and scope for the linkage they afford appears important and abundantly worthwhile.

S. Lindsay Hamilton

EDITORIAL COMMENT

You may have noticed the disappearance of two familiar names from the list of Directors: "Daz" Underbill and Tim Willcocks. These two have helped with the successful building up of the Society and now feel that they cannot give the necessary time to administration and so have made way for John Houghton and Barry Smith. While we regret "the passing of an age" we congratulate both John and Barry, both of whom have already done much valuable work for the Society.

The appointment of the new Directors was made at the Conference held on the first weekend in January, at Hertford College, Oxford. Adjustments were also made in the positions on the Society Committee. A list of committee members and their jobs will be found at the back of this Report. Many other valuable comments and suggestions came from members at the Conference and it is with these that the rest of this comment is concerned.

During the course of the various meetings there were two unfavourable reports: one on the deplorable condition of the boats and the other on our somewhat precarious financial position. The boats are being renovated under the able guidance of Nick Yates and an attempt to rectify the financial position with a well-organised appeal is now under way.

Apart from these two depressants the Conference activities and entertainment were stimulating, as was the record attendance. Most memorable of all, perhaps, were Peter Parks' fascinating films of water creatures more fantastic than any spacecraft.

Out of the discussions came some varied suggestions and valid criticism: larger cooking utensils needed; the type of tent hired should be looked into; the possibility of establishing a permanent store; a possible fifth expedition lasting three weeks for those over seventeen; that leaders should ask members what projects they were interested in, before the start of the expedition.

John Abbott, in his report on the Saturday morning, confirmed what most of us felt about the Society, its situation and its needs:

"I am sure that the S.H.S. occupies a unique place in the field of expedition activities. It has three important characteristics which make it different to other organisations:

- (a) A very high level of informality;
- (b) An S.H.S. expedition really is a corporate experience dependant on each individual;
- (c) It has a blending of the academic with adventurous projects. There is undoubtedly room for improvement within this general idea:
 - (a) We need a wider geographical and social intake of members;
 - (b) The organisation of all projects—academic as well as adventurous - must be better organised and become more meaningful;
 - (c) The provision of a base to act as a store is now essential both for practical reasons and to answer as "emotional" centre for the Society.

As the more senior members of the Society find it more difficult to take an active part in expeditions so their good will must be held—and utilised.

The urge of the Society makes it more necessary than ever before that all members of the Committee should act with a business-like efficiency.

In planning for the future it is essential that the real financial situation should be realised and steps taken in sufficient time to keep the Society solvent. Long-term planning is now necessary."

My thanks to those who gathered material from individual expedition members. Can we have more drawings in the future? Thanks to those who did contribute illustrations—especially Ken Yates of Stockport Grammar School, who sketched the centre page illustration from one of my slides.

Chris Dawson

COLONSAY EXPEDITION 1968

Leader Alan Bateman

LEADER'S REPORT

For the third successive year, the Junior Expedition spent two weeks on the west coast of Colonsay: that fact is significant because it is our usual policy to vary the sites, so that officers and boys have the greatest possible chance of visiting as many Hebridean islands as possible. As it turned out, only one of the entire company had been to Colonsay before, so we were able to view this much-praised island with unbiased eyes. In retrospect, I can only repeat all the praises that have been heaped upon it since we first went there. The site has so many advantages for the Junior expedition—it is easy (too easy?) of access; climbing, sailing and canoeing are within a few minutes' walk from the marquee, while the whole island can be visited within a day—or very nearly, as those who were stranded on Oronsay discovered! It is true that the beach is exposed to the south-west, but once again the weather was near-perfect throughout, and the spring, the "tobar fuar" after which the bay is named, will surely flow until some latter-day Celtic Saint decides otherwise. During our stay, it was virtually the only drinking water still available on the south of the island.

It will be clear that, as before, the Colonsay expedition proved successful, and from a Director's point of view, it was especially pleasing to find that the boys were such a splendid collection. I hope we shall see many of them in future years, because we were rid of the card-playing-in-the-Icelandic types which have been known to feature on previous expeditions! In passing, it is worth noting that we were the largest expedition yet, with twenty-nine boys from fifteen schools, including Choir, Comprehensive, Grammar, Preparatory and Public varieties!

Apart from the natural advantages of the site, Colonsay has another asset in that one can get to know the islanders very well also—they deserve all the respect with which they are held by the



S.H.S., for on an expedition where arguments rarely occur, much is due to their help, friendly interest, and composed calm which infect us so much in all that we do.

And what did we do, apart from lying in the sun? Fuller reports on some subjects will follow this report, but here are a few facts which will show what went on from day to day:

Vinga was used for sailing and fishing on all but two of the days, one of which was the last, and the other the date of the "Round the Island" walk. We were able to leave her anchored in the bay, and all agreed that she was ideal for our purposes.

We had four canoes, all of which seemed to be in general use, even if canoeing turned out to be harder work than some of the newcomers had realised. Roger went off on a canoe bivouac, and also organised the races, which were deservedly (?) won by Nicholas and Peter.

Rock-climbing parties were out on the hills as often as possible under the care of the two Charles and Mark.

Only two boys couldn't be fitted into the "night away from camp" that proved most popular, although I remain unconvinced that these trips were always undertaken in the spirit which keen camping types might expect! However, they do allow a valuable escape from the fairly organised life at camp, as well as demonstrating to the non-schoolmasters amongst the officers how incredibly casual boys can be!

All the interesting parts of the island were explored, outstanding among which were the Neolithic caves that have recently been discovered near Kiloran Bay. Such was the inspiration of that trip, that three boys spent the night there—and returned without a ghost story.

Of project work as it is understood on the Senior expeditions, there was very little, much to the indignation of Paul Gill, but that

seems to be the way of the younger groups, who have more interest in pottering and exploring than the others. In time, they will want that urge to be channelled into more disciplined study, but there seemed little desire for it amongst our group. At all events, bored people were rare specimens, and I remain certain that one of the great strengths of the Society lies in our easy approach to life: the chances are there, boys at a loose end can be prodded into things, but it is really up to each individual to take his opportunities.

We mixed our activities with those of the islanders, as could be judged from the hundred or so people at the party in our marquee. Roger played and sang at the concert and ceilidh; we lost both the football matches, but they were close things; we had revenge in the cricket; while our prayers were taken by both the Baptist and Church of Scotland ministers. So friendly was the island that I soon realised that I must adjust my ideas as to what S.H.S. expeditions were like, but the more informal mixing soon settled down and hardly interrupted the daily programme. The contact we make with the islanders is one of the best things we do, because only in that way can we really feel that we know the islands on which we stay. It is one of the things that mark us out from other groups of a similar type, such as the Scouts, who often seem to prefer to keep to themselves, although I cannot believe that to be their official policy.

Once again, the Hebrides worked their message of peace and friendliness into the lives of us all, and more than one new officer commented on the amazing effect Colonsay seemed to have on the behaviour and general co-operation of the boys—familiar enough to some of us, but it does seem that strong-arm tactics, on the whole, are only necessary in the wrong environment. All of us who have led expeditions must have remembered that fact after returning to our modern lives, in which we sometimes seem powerless to effect our surroundings.

As the *Locheil* sailed towards the blue hills of Jura and home, we all looked back on two weeks of interest and excitement, with new friends made and lessons learnt. I am sure we all felt we had come to know Colonsay as well as would be possible in so short a time, physically, intellectually (thanks largely to Tony's quiz, won by Section 1), and most of all, personally. An island none of us will forget.

My praise goes to all the Officers and boys—I hope I shall see many of them again—and all our thanks go to Lord Strathcona, to Dr. and Mrs. Halt Gardiner who proved as helpful as it would be possible to be, and to all those on holiday or resident on Colonsay, whether they met us in the pub, gave us rabbit or lobster to brighten the rather ordinary menu, or were just the people who waved from cars to us all. I know many of us want to return, and wish them well as they settle into the comparative isolation of another winter.

Alan Bateman

HAPPY HEBRIDEAM HOLIDAY

I knew I should attempt to write some article for the report, but I did not return from Scotland until a fortnight after the expedition. So my humble offering of irrelevances is long overdue.

It was a change to be among those who are trying to organise, and make time pass enjoyably, instead of one aimed at destroying the structure of the expedition. From my experience this year I feel bound to offer some tips to all who follow me.

I had as travel officer the horror and harassment of dealing with those vast bureaucratic machines British Rail and Macbraynes. It is written "God gave man the dry land, and Macbraynes the highlands". Often they cater for one very well, but their great bulk is "worrying" (to quote): "Organisations similar to the dinosaur, in which the head does not know what the tail is doing". However, thanks to their exertions everyone arrived on Colonsay.

Once on Colonsay, for what I imagined to be a rest cure, I became involved in helping the specialists in instructing climbing. To this there are two approaches: to start with a long diatribe on the dangers and precautions involved in climbing, so that ideally one is taking worried and nervous boys climbing! Or rapidly to tie on the safety helmets and ropes, smile sweetly at your charges through a beard, second only in size to that of one dubbed "Colonel Lifejacket", and tell them of the bourgeois pettiness of society. Soon I was led up a climb I found much too difficult, and so I tactfully retired from these hazards to the gentle art of bread making—a hobby ideally suited to the Hebrides, and the perfect excuse for a lazy afternoon.

Bread making is very time-consuming, but most of the time it is looking after itself—leaving opportunity for sunbathing and reading. The results were greeted with various noises, but as most of the bread was eaten we can count on some success.

Before I came to Colonsay I was told how civilised a place it really was; tropical gardens, football against the islanders (to the chorus of, "Come on chaps, keep it up S.H.") and lifts instead of having to walk anywhere, although some managed to walk around the island and get stranded on Oronsay (one of the more subtle reasons for returning to camp at 3 a.m.).

But the charming company exceeded all expectations, and provided some with a gay social life. Even the ardent misogynist who thought such things "bad" was eventually converted.

So I hope that everyone arrived home happy after their sojourn in the Hebrides. Although at the time of writing I have, even as travel officer, no idea how many people were lost en route.

Charles Jackson

STRANDED ON ORONSAY

We were on Oronsay. There were four of us, Charles Hooper, Charles Jackson, Paul Gill and myself. While we had been coming across the Strand, the tide had been coming in fairly fast, and now, as we rounded the corner on the track, we saw the whole of the Strand covered in water.

We came to the shore and the water looked deep. We went a little way round the coast and the water still looked deep. At last Charles Hooper decided to see if the water was shallow enough for us to wade across. When he got in, the water was nearly up to his waist, so we decided it was not worth it.

We sat around for about an hour, then because we had nothing to do we walked up Ben Oronsay (310 ft.)- After wandering round the Priory we returned to the Strand and lay down for about an hour. It was very cold. At last at 1.15 a.m. we were able to cross the Strand. The water was above my ankles and it was very cold.

After crossing the Strand we had to walk three miles back to camp cold, wet and hungry. We arrived at a quarter to three very hungry and tired.

Mark Williams

WEATHER REPORT

The weather had been exceptionally good during the beginning of the expedition, but on the last couple of days the good weather broke and we got over an inch of rain in twelve hours.

The islanders had been praying for rain as there had been very little since April.

Our camp site was well situated because a spring, which the locals said never dried up, rose just by our tents. Many of the islanders came and filled up their water containers as their usual water supply had dried up.

With the aid of a barometer, a max.-min. thermometer and rain gauge, and by looking at the clouds and the wind, we were able to forecast when rains and depressions would come over.

The highest recorded temperature was 82°F (27°C).

The lowest recorded temperature was 41.5°F (5°C).

The most rain in one day was 1-1 inches.

The total rainfall was 1-31 inches.

The highest barometric pressure was 29-9.

The lowest barometric pressure was 28-97.

John Burgess

BIVVY AT THE OLD MILL

The Bivvy's members consisted of Chris Knight, Robert Colling-wood, James Roberson and myself. The Site was as the title suggests, at the old mill. We left camp at 4.45 p.m. When about a third of the way a kind person offered to take our gear to the mill. We arrived at 5.50 p.m. after losing a mug (found three days later in a ditch), looked for a decent site which we found between the two buildings, then we pitched camp and waited for the equipment to arrive. This arrived at about 5.45 p.m.

Chris was given a lift to Colonsay House to get a bucket of water (amongst other things) and arrived back with a bucket full of ash. By this time we others had prepared a very good but rather sickening meal. After this I caught a rabbit (by hand) and while wondering what to do with it Pete Cary walked past and I asked him what to do. He said it was riddled with diseases so I had the nasty task of disposing of it.

After supper we got some wood and then burnt it and had a singsong round it. I forgot to mention that we left the cooking utensils out ready to be washed in the morning. Just as we got into our tents a ten-minute cloudburst solved the washing up.

Next morning we packed up and Chris and Rob left James and myself to clear all the rubbish up. Two minutes after they left they were given a lift back to camp. James and I looked after them with envy. We left and walked some way before a very kind islander gave us a lift after his wife and a female friend got out and walked. Altogether I think it was a very successful bivvy. Steve Stuart

SPELAEOLOGY COLONSAY 1968

About four miles north of our camp on the north-west of the island lay the Bay of Kiloran. Skirling the bay, particularly on the southern side, are a number of caves which provided an objective for one of our expeditions. On one of our seemingly endless succession of fine days, thirteen of us headed northwards, slightly later than anticipated owing to the generosity of the cooking section who decided to give us, or themselves, a lie in.

The caves themselves vary in character enormously: some arc inundated at high tide, others infested with pigeons and are consequently rather smelly and mucky under foot. Most of them consist of long passageways reaching far into the rock, all signs of light disappearing after the first bend in their course. At some points one has to resort to crawling on all fours, while at others they broaden into large chambers, perhaps 30 ft. wide as in New Cave and as high as 70 ft. in Lady Cave. In this same Endless Cave some of our more adventurous members reached as far as a hundred yards into the rock.

Some of the caves show evidence of having been inhabited in Neolithic and earlier times: implements, bones, including those of domesticated animals such as sheep, oxen, pigs and horses have been found in many of them. In Endless Cave an ancient kitchen midden is easily recognisable.

My own impressions of the caves are of a series of dark, damp and weird but endlessly fascinating passageways, some of which may lead deep into the heart of the island. The locals tell of a legendary figure who disappeared into a cave with his dog: he was never seen again but the dog reappeared on the opposite side of the island with its coat singed!

None of our boys suffered this fate but three intrepid young Hebrideans determined to bivouac in New Cave, thus breaking what was probably a 3,000-year spell of uninhabited peace. No sign of singeing was evident on their return and all appeared unscathed and unshaken by their ordeal. What tales of horror and chaos occurred during that long night none but the three can tell, but I doubt if any of our members achieved a more memorable feat on the expedition and I am sure that they will long remember their night of dark. Perhaps the old man visited and watched over them during the night!

Tony Payne

THE NIGHT OF THE TROGLODITES

It was Wednesday, 7th August when we set off with three full rucksacks and one "Tilley" lamp which, when full of paraffin, was thought to be able to run for a maximum of four hours.

Some time later we arrived at our destination: New Cave, Kiloran Bay. Lighting our "Tilley" we ventured in to find a good sleeping place. About one minute later we left rather rapidly. We left our bags, minus the cooking equipment and food, outside the cave entrance. Climbing a nearby flat rock we set up a kitchen. However, we soon found it was too small to fit both us and the cooking materials. This problem did not take long to solve for a rock quite close provided a good space after the covering of gorse was removed.

We had a very quick dip (the water was icy) and then supper (which by our marvel of cooking was utterly inedible). Quickly we entered the cave with our already inflated "Li-Lo's" and sleeping bags. After finding a suitable spot we left again with all speed.

Until time for cocoa we played cards and told jokes. When we had put out a minor fire and collected together our rubbish it was getting quite dark and, rather bleary-eyed, we proceeded to our cavern. Talking to take our minds off our surroundings we were soon into our "bug-bags" and talked and told jokes till we were too tired to stay awake.

After almost eight hours sleep we woke to find the "Tilley" still burning! By then we had lost our fear of the cave (and its spooks!). We folded our equipment, packed it, ate our breakfast and made our way to camp, where there were not the rather constant drips, which had soaked our "bug bags"!

Chris Butterworth, Brian Clegg, Philip Wilson

FOG ON COLONSAY

We watched nervously as the great fog or mist rolled in from the Atlantic. On it came, pouring into the valleys, blotting out the sun, and obscuring the hilltops.

There were four of us: Robert Collingwood, James Roberson, Stephen Stuart and myself. We were returning from Oronsay, where we looked at the Priory and examined the bones behind the altar.

We crossed the Strand, damply, and struck out for camp.

Then came the mist. We were resting when it started swirling round the hills. "Crumbs!" I exclaimed. "Shut up with that feeble joke, James. We'd better get moving before we're lost in the mist."

We rose and started back. We reached the top of a rise and then discovered that we were heading straight into the Atlantic. The camp was well to our right. We altered course, forded a stream, and got to camp just as the mist swept into the bay.

Chris Hicks

SOUTH UIST EXPEDITION 1968

Leader: John Cullingford

Officers

Pat Bradley, Ray Bradley, Pete Davies, Dick Light, Graeme Longmuir, Philip Reynold, Barry Smith.

Boys

Robert Arnold, Owen Atkinson, Robert Bailey, Paul Baker, Roger Crawshaw, Christopher David, Robert Davies, John Doyle, Stephen Elliot, Andrew Gale, Richard George, Christopher Lumsden, Robert Marchment, Steven Mellor, Neil Mitchell, David Purves, David Rust, Murray Sagar, Humphrey Southall, Martin Sutherland, Eddie Stuart, John Wilkinson.

LEADER'S REPORT

Approximately half the boys on this expedition were new so the proportion of "old lags" to new was good, the same proportions applied to the officers. The camp site was a new one situated beneath an awe-inspiring peak, by the shore of an arm of a sea-loch and with a freshwater lochan only five minutes' walk away, complete with an ideal diving rock and a deserted heronry on a small rock in the middle of the lochan which the camp's fleet of Lilos frequently visited. We were one-and-a-half miles away from the nearest house which was tucked away well out of sight and yet we were able to take advantage of the thrice-weekly visits of the Co-op van, supplementing our stores.

As far as activities were concerned they were varied and every boy had every opportunity of taking part in any of them. On the second day Ray took a party of boys off exploring and they jubilantly returned with the discovery of, in Ray's own words, "The most perfect example of a river capture I have ever seen!" Pete, along with Stephen Mellor and Martin Sutherland already in dedicated tow, then returned to say that they had had the most magnificent view of a golden eagle or two. Then everyone, I think, climbed Beinn Mhor at least once during our stay on the island (some of us at two o'clock in the morning to see from the top a most beautiful sunrise in the early but cold hours of a Sunday morning). We saw many sunsets—the sky drenched with sparkling and amazing colours. On another day some members of the expedition saw, again from the Beinn Mhor triangle, a view which stretched 60 miles to St. Kilda in the north and approximately 60 miles south to some of the islands in the Inner Hebrides which put one in one's place a little.

Continuing further with activities, the island has some prehistoric Earth Houses and, what Graeme hopes is the site and foundation of an early monastic settlement now ruined; and in more recent history—a cave, which local tradition holds as being one of the caves in which Bonnie Prince Charlie hid in his flight from the Redcoats. All three we explored or at least the Society mole, David Rust, had a good snout around in the houses and cave.

Then Dick Light introduced Orienteering to the Society's activities and it seemed to go down (or was it up?) well with all who tried it and to everyone's surprise and astonishment, the Manchester Grammar School Quartet won—but we suspect perhaps it was because they bribed their section leader! Orienteering's physical opposite was sunbathing which everyone indulged in, some more than others! Almost every day, except the last one when we packed up, was ideal for this form of physical activity, and even on the boat journey out, it was noticed that some of the most dedicated participants were already quietly snoring their heads off on the deck. But we did have clouds as well although they were not of the astronomical type - except in size - but rather clouds of miserable, man-eating midges!

We did have our ups and downs, the biggest one being our defeat at the football match where we lost 17-0. Bivouacing was the biggest "up" with a special luxury trip, by mini-bus and ferry to Eriskay led by Pat and Phil and a couple of trips, one for two nights to the bird sanctuary to observe the grey-lag geese breeding, led by Pete and Ray and a night, the last one when it poured with rain, in the cave.

We met many of the islanders, both in Lochboisdale and in the Loch Eynort area and of course at the dance in Bornish or at church. We returned their hospitality by offering at least tea to anyone and everyone who either visited the camp site or just happened to be passing through. We would particularly like to thank Mr. Donald MacDonald and his two sons Alec and John for all their help and advice and frequent cups of tea; to extend our thanks to Col. Greig, the owner of South Uist for the loan of a little sailing dinghy which gave us much fun and amusement; Mr. McIntyre, the factor, for much assistance before the start of the expedition; and Mr. McInnes who fixed us up with the wood - a scarce commodity on the island - for our tables in the marquee.

Especial thanks to the officers and to the advance party, who did a colossal amount of work in getting the camp established and to Mr. Smith, Barry's father, who joined us for a while, for all the work he has done in cleaning and sorting our equipment during the past year. I do hope that because of the success of this expedition many will want to come again next year and in the future. I can truthfully say that I was thrilled to have even been on the expedition and know that we now have much from it to thank God for.

John Cullingford

(And, of course, many thanks to John for leading the expedition so ably!—Graeme.)

SOUTH UIST 1968

South Uist, we found, was an island of tremendous potential. It was unfortunate, however, that some of this was not fully discovered until the last few days of the expedition and the specialists, of whom there were many, have all expressed a desire that the island must be revisited by the Society and this potential, if possible, be fully examined and exhausted. I must also, as Editor of the South

Uist report, make known that I deny all accusations made against me and to instruct the reader to take a pinch of Phil's damp salt with anything he may read about me.
Graeme Longmuir

THE ADVANCE PARTY

I had had no experience of the organisation of the Society before and hence had no idea of what the request involved. Yes, of course, I would go on the Advance Party and help set up camp. Shouldn't be difficult - only words on the postcard - "Take equipment to site and set up camp". Simple enough, as the following five paragraphs will show! The first day gave me some indication of how simple it would in fact be.

The first day set the scene for the rest of the preparations. Barry Smith and Dick Light had arranged to pick me up in Cheshire on their way to Mallaig from Essex. Ten-thirty in the morning was the appointed time for the rendezvous; at 2.30 p.m. I began to feel a little apprehensive, when suddenly the bell went and red-shirted Smith appeared. "Forgot to turn off the MI" he said "ended up in Sheffield!" I nodded sympathetically as one geographer to another. "An understandable mistake."

By midnight we had managed to fight our way through the traffic, to the shores of Loch Lomond, still wondering how we had managed to traverse the Clyde Tunnel twice. Four hours of sleep later and a mad dash to Mallaig where we were to meet some of the stores and transfer them to Stornoway for sorting. We joined Phil Reynold on the boat and arrived in Stornoway with mounds of stores and no means of getting them to the Scout Hut. It was 8.30 on Saturday night and at midnight the curfew would fall—nobody works on the Sabbath. It was then that good fortune came our way and the helpful islanders came to our aid. Within the hour two estate cars had transferred the goods to the Scout Hut and we were made to feel really welcome by the Scoutmaster.

The next two days were spent sorting and packing, lifting and moving, until we were ready to move stores to Tarbet for their trip to Lochmaddy. "Oh, by the way" somebody casually remarked, "We have to pick up a boat in Tarbet." Pick a boat up was certainly right—*Rockbottom* lay moored in the bay, evidently soaking up the water through the gaps in her sides and disgorging it as the tide rose and fell. Unfortunately the pier was 25 ft. higher than sea level and like the day when a 15 ft. clinker-built boat was hauled up a narrow set of steps will long be remembered in South Uist.

On our arrival at Lochmaddy we had a large crate full of stores, a leaking boat and a two-seater canoe both of which had to be loaded on a lorry with no sides. I must be one of very few people who can claim to have travelled the length of North Uist, Benbecula and South Uist by boat as did the advance party and once again the Society gave the islands a sight to remember.

Finally after being joined by Pete Davis and an overnight stay with Donald Macdonald, we carted the tents and stores to the camp site, where we moved them for the thirteenth and final time. The

afternoon was spent erecting the Icelandic tents and grappling with the marquees. The latter was easy to erect the first time but became more and more difficult as it refused to stay up. However, it proved most entertaining and after three or four attempts, the huge wooden framework was lashed into position. By 9 p.m. the main party had arrived and the advance party retreated shattered into their tents to die a thousand deaths, being ably assisted by the midges.

Ray Bradley

THE GEOLOGY OF SOUTH UIST

South Uist consists, like many of the islands, of Lewisian Gneiss, a very ancient crystalline rock. It is transversed in places by Tertiary dykes, part of the vast dyke "swarms" that occur in western Scotland. The gneiss itself consists mainly of dark hornblende, and white plagioclase feldspar in many places it displays foliation.

Veins of pegmatite were observed on the northern side of Beinn Mhor, and quartz veins are generally common in the gneiss. Magnetite occurs on Beinn Ma Hoe, but none was found.

Larger igneous intrusions than dykes were uncommon, but a granitic core to a very ancient dyke was observed to the north-east of Beinn Mhor.

Many minerals were collected, including Brothite Mica, Plagioclase feldspar, Iron Pyrites and Chlorite.

Andrew Gale

THE WEATHER ON SOUTH UIST

John Cullingford asked me to do the weather about four days after we arrived, so that the recordings were made for only one-and-a-half weeks.

The instruments I had were: one maximum and minimum thermometer; one wet and dry thermometer; one "thing" for measuring the humidity. The "thing" did not work and also as I did not have a card for working out the humidity from wet and dry thermometer, no humidity readings were obtained.

The weather was fine with occasional cloud and at one point a front extending right down the island which could be seen as a ribbon of grey cloud in an otherwise clear sky.

The weather broke on the last Tuesday, with rain and high winds.

Maximum Temperature: 75°F.

Minimum Temperature: 41°F.

Average Daily Maximum Temperature: 67°F.

Average Daily Minimum Temperature: 44°F.

Eddie Stuart

ORIENTEERING

This year, for the first time I believe, we held an orienteering competition in which three teams were taking part.

In a sense we did not abide by the full blooded principles of orienteering as we made little use of compass work. The reason for this was twofold. Firstly, to use a compass usefully in orienteering requires considerable experience in compass work which I did not possess and which time would not have permitted me to pass on

even if I did. Secondly, the course was necessarily shorter than the normal course thus curbing the role of compass work considerably.

The two main teams comprised four runners each. The object of the competition was for each team to visit as many stations as possible in a given time. Teams were allowed to split up into pairs and a pair visiting a station was sufficient to allow the team to say they had visited that particular station. On arriving at a station the runners wrote their names on the list at the station and also recorded the station number. This acted as a double check to ensure that stations were, in fact, visited. The stations were in most cases visible from no more than 25-30 yds. away thus forcing teams to read their maps reasonably accurately.

Having been briefed on the object of the competition and so forth the two teams received the map references of the stations and were given fifteen minutes to decide what pairs should visit which station and in what order. In other words teams were at liberty to choose their own courses, i.e. choosing the order of visiting the stations and also the courses between stations. Teams were penalised if any of their members returned after the specified time period and bonus points were awarded if a team visited all the stations in a shorter time than the limit set. Otherwise points were awarded for stations visited as shown in the sketch.

Both teams ran really well and completed the course in well under the time limit and all in all it was quite a close finish. The third team consisted of Humphrey and myself. Confident that quality could be victorious over quantity Humphrey and I set off and visited two stations before, playing it cool, we returned to camp our confidence having quickly dissolved into perspiration—to top it all we had forgotten a pencil to prove that we had slavishly visited two stations!

I think that orienteering (or an adapted form of orienteering) will prove as highly successful in the future as it did in this one instance and I hope that far more time will be spent by future expeditions on this activity as the terrain in The Hebrides, in most cases, seems ideally suited to the sport. Dick Light

ROCK CLIMBING

The majority of the rock within striking distance of the camp site was sound and rough enough to make for good adhesion. Most of it was well vegetated, and gardening operations generally took up a considerable amount of preliminary climbing time.

The best and most ambitious climbs were attempted on the cliffs of Beinn Mhor, a mountain of 2,034 ft. with cliffs and some two hours from camp. It is a pity that there were no really suitable rock areas within a mile or two of camp. Outcrops inland from Sloe Dubh tended to be generally insufficiently steep, too well vegetated, or without facilities for a top belay. Two routes were made on Meall Mhor-Heather Grapple (so named because of the final move) and Helmet Split (an un-bargained for boulder rocketing down from the number two).

The southern cliffs on Beinn Mhor are divided into a number of gullies and buttresses. These range from about 250 ft. to over 500 ft. and from climbs needing almost wholly artificial techniques to reasonably well protected Cliffs. Most routes have a chicken variation or escape routes. These cliffs are mentioned in a general mountaineering book called *Islands of Scotland*, but little serious rock work appears to have been attempted. Two main routes were put up: Improvisation Route (Dick Light climbed this using a series of misplaced and mis-tied Grannies), was of three pitches, and about 300 ft. The second pitch exhibited a marked scarcity of certain holds—those for the hands and feet for instance. Early Morning Route was 400 ft., of three main pitches, and with a tricky last thirty feet or so.

In most of the climbs attempted it was found necessary to supplement the miserly natural protection by ironmongery. An experiment with an artificial climb above the camp proved that pegs are apt to pop out when inserted less than half an inch into the rock. In a similar way it was found that helmets could be dropped from great heights and be retrieved undamaged.

Thus the climbing was, we found, good but of a limited nature and future expeditions to the island would be wise to concentrate on Beinn Mhor and the surrounding cliff area. The bivouac party to that climb, although well midged and watered and somewhat cramped (nine people in two two to three-man tents), proved that the walk was well worth the effort.

Barry J. N. Smith

PRINCE'S CAVE

There is a particular cave with which we become interested on this expedition which had allegedly been used by Prince Charles. (This I am told is not a very distinguishing feature for on the islands most mildly isolated caves, providing they are damp enough, and capable of concealing anything greater than a dog arc hailed as the humble shelters of Prince Charles.)

Besides this damper which we received from well-meaning inwardly chuckling pseudo cave experts in the camp, a talk with Donald MacDonald led us to believe that whatever the "deep" and "mysterious" tales attached to the cave were, we would have considerable difficulty in finding it. Various authors writing on the Outer Hebrides had experienced this difficulty and as a result had unwittingly renamed a cave across the valley as "Chirlie's Cave" and so added yet another plot-breaking twist to the saga of Charlie's Cave. In spite of this unintentional confusion we were not thrown off the trail as we had inside information from Donald as to the whereabouts of the "real Charlie's Cave".

Ray had talked casually to Donald about the cave and had learnt that when Donald had last visited the cave the entrance was no bigger than two feet across. It lay below an eight-foot crag in front of which was a ring of stones. We knew for certain that the cave was to be found in Glen Corodale (completely isolated, two hours

walk from camp), but were uncertain as to whether it was north or south of the river.

We arrived in Glen Corodale by early afternoon and after a short rest began searching. We soon discovered the cave referred to in the literature as "Charlie's Cave" and spent very little time there. For perhaps an hour we went up and down the valley looking for the right mixture of rock and stone wall to produce the eight-foot crag and stone circle mentioned by Donald. Purely by chance it happened that the cave was found. Wandering at random on the south side of the river, the discoverer suddenly stood under the eight-foot crag and knew that when he turned round he would find the ring of stones. They were there of course, adequately hidden by the bracken of many years but looking to the foot of the crag, certainty was dispelled for there was no two-foot opening—just a natural sprinkling of ferns and rocks. Still the other clues fitted perfectly and no time was lost in digging. Things got exciting as it became obvious that there was a cave of some kind which had been blocked (could it be on purpose?). We dug the entrance out until it got to the stage where we could look down a walled passage, one by one, to see it turn at the end, to come out we supposed, on the hillside lower down.

Arthur suggested, and Pm sure he is right from the bones we found in the entrance, that the cave had been blocked up by shepherds to stop sheep from getting in and becoming trapped. We left the cave, having blocked up the entrance again, as time was passing and we still had to travel up the coast. On this occasion no one actually went inside.

It was not until a few days later that three of us had the opportunity of visiting the cave again. When we arrived we quickly opened up the entrance determined to get-inside and make as complete a plan as possible of the cave. After making the opening big enough to slide through comfortably we went in one at a time and explored the interior. Apart from saying that it was wet and quiet in there I think the plan will describe what we found.

Later Barry and John went up to the cave and acquainted themselves with it. On leaving they blocked it up for the last time, perhaps for good.

Dick Light

"ROCKBOTTOM"

I've got to write something, so why not write about the thing that I spent most of my time on, although Pm trying to forget the ill-fated boat. From start to finish it was the cause of most worries, although it was quite obvious that the postman (or was it the barber) at Tarbet did not worry about it.

The first day I jumped into the boat, a fountain of water shot up from around the centre-board. Then followed two days of blood, sweat, and tears, trying to start the engine. When it did give a promising cough, the prop was fouled by the seaweed. Eventually, the engine did start and when we had found ourselves a suitable figurehead (Pat "give him two aspirins" Bradley) we went for the

first trip, but it was not long before we found ourselves rowing back.

Then there was the problem of the other jealous so-called "seafarers"; namely the "Officer in charge of sailing". In case any of the members of the expedition have forgotten who he was, or quite frankly never knew who he was, you will be delighted to know that this position was attributed to Graeme Longmuir, who having found that he was incapable of sailing his own sailing dinghy, was incessantly trying to get *Rockbottom* out, but always seemed to find the fifty-yard wide channel too narrow to get the two-yard wide boat through and slowly succeeded in widening the channel by continuous ramming. In desperation to take command of the *Rockbottom* he tried to get rid of his own boat by setting it adrift, hoping it would not be spotted until it was way out to sea. But his fiendish attempts failed and the sailing dinghy was soon towed back and even then when the painter was found to be cut he still denied any knowledge of the happenings.

Then there was the crew member, who shall remain nameless, but shall be termed as the leader of the expedition, who when asked to throw the line ashore, proceeded to unfasten the line from the boat and throw the whole rope ashore!

Finally the *Rockbottom* gave up the ghost, as it was shipping water faster than anyone could bale it out. The engine also finally gave out too, with the "carbafiuatta" clogging up, and several gaskets breaking, and as anyone knows (except Pat Bradley) two-stroke engines don't run on sea-water.

The *Rockbottom* was almost neglected from then on, with only the occasional brave fool, attempting to get it going. It did get one final voyage, and my thanks to Zombie, who did such a wonderful job with the margarine. (It was towed by Donald MacDonald—T.G.L.)

I have only one more hope, that I'm not on the same expedition as *Rockbottom* next year.

"Captain" John Wilkinson

THE SAILING ON SOUTH UIST

When asked to take on this job at the conference I gladly accepted and until the very day of the start of the expedition I was plotting all sorts of wonderful trips across to Skye—The Minch, and bivouacs all using the dinghy, but when I saw the *Pram* being rowed into our bay all my aspirations foundered. The dinghy had been built in Oslo—and was supplied with "peanut" sails but NO centreboard or tiller. I, with the help of minions contrived to create both a tiller and centreboard. The dinghy was so small and unstable that I refused to accept the responsibility of more than one other crew member on her. Even with the tiller, the rudder still continued to float on the surface of the water and I am afraid that our only means of "going-about" was to use the oars—which, by the way, was the only means I found convenient of taking her out of the bay-back into the bay—and I must confess—all around the bay.

The only excitement which the dinghy offered was, as reported by self-appointed "Captain" John. On one of the especially high tides, which the Manchester Grammar School hydrographers omitted to warn me of, lifted the dinghy off the upper beach and she floated gently and quietly between two of the islets in the mouth of the bay and the first warning given to me was her hull banging against some rocks and the top of her mast above the island. Canoeing frantically out to the indomitable well-named *Rockbottom*—where, knowing its true master (all aspiring "Captains" named John take note!) the engine immediately burst into life on the first pull of the starter and the rescue operation was effected, with the additional hazard of the *Rockbottom* being almost completely water-logged—but the joy of the operation was that I knew what I was doing.

Graeme Longmuir

CANOEING

Canoeing was undertaken by those brave enough to challenge the authority, might and daring of Phil and Ginger who attempted, and it must be acknowledged, succeeded in capsizing all who did venture out. The most spectacular occasion was Phil's unconventional transfer from one canoe to another in the middle of the bay without so much as getting his feet wet while the other canoe's occupant suffered the ignominy of having yet another ducking in the briny.

Graeme Longmuir

TO SEE THE SUNRISE

One night after prayers, our leader announced that he would be taking a party up Beinn Mhor to see the sunrise, which he said, would be fantastic.

Beinn Mhor is the highest mountain on South Uist, being just over two thousand feet high.

Eight boys readily put their hands up, even after knowing that we would leave at 12.15 p.m. and return at 5-6 o'clock. Along with the boys, two officers accepted the challenge as well, these were—John Cullingford, our leader, and Graeme Longmuir, in charge of sailing and smoking.

We set off, heavily clothed with sweaters, anoraks, gloves, tilley lamps, chocolate, mint cake, butterscotch, and a sleeping bag in the event of exposure.

The main idea was to photograph the sunrise, as it came up over the horizon.

From the camp to the main climb was half a mile over boggy ground and I felt a little dubious, having visions of sinking in wet, cloggy, bogs.

Eventually, we crossed a small stream and arrived at the base of the huge, dark mass, silhouetted against the almost dark sky. There we had a short rest before the leader bravely announced that we should carry on. Wielding my torch, lacking power and batteries, I stuck in behind a tilley-bearer so my torch could recuperate.

The stars were very vivid and at one point we saw a satellite moving quickly across the sky. There were also meteorites.

We had several disappointments when the supposed summit turned out to be yet another minor "hill". Eventually, after two hours' slog we arrived at Trig, point and knew we had achieved the feat of walking two thousand feet up.

Up on the top we met our camp administrator who for some reason had gone up earlier and stayed up there. I presume he had gone to be on the spot if we did not arrive.

The night was cold and we opened out Eddie's sleeping bag and used it as a blanket under which three snuggled at a time. Everybody was very cold and getting frustrated at the length of time it took before the sun arrived. In fact, by the time the sun came up, there was only John Cullingford left at the top. However, I managed to stay fairly near the top when the sun arose and the photographers snapped forth. The view as the sun rose was marvellous. I could see to Skye and Barra and other islands round about South Uist.

Arriving at camp we had a drink or maybe two, and collapsed into bed to sleep from 7 a.m. until the afternoon.

It was most refreshing, but not as much as the view from Beinn Mhor.

The complete party was: John Cullingford (Leader), Graeme Longmuir (Officer), Murray Sager, Chris Lumsden, Chris David, Richard George, Martin Sutherland, Eddie Stuart, David Purves, Neil Mitchell.
Richard George

SOCIOLOGICAL REPORT

Two hundred years ago, Loch Eynort used to be a well-populated area of 500 people—chapel congregation—along with those who came in from the hills. Today the hills are deserted and Loch Eynort has a population of about thirty persons. A similar situation exists throughout the Hebrides.

In 1915, families that had been forced to emigrate to Nova Scotia as a result of the Highland Clearances returned to croft on South Uist. Out of interest, the sum total of rents collected by the landlord in 1920 was £40, the same year in which the island, coupled with Eriskay, changed hands for £90,000. In 1958, Colonel Greig, the present owner received it for £140,000.

At present the island has a population of 2,750, which has increased by 290 over the last ten years, whilst the population of almost every other Outer Hebridean island has probably decreased. For example, in 1958 the population of Eriskay was 350, today it is 250.

For the islanders the most common means of support and still the most widespread is crofting. It is said that to make a reasonable living about fifty head of cattle on a croft are needed, but that one can make do with half-a-dozen, and Donald McDonald, who was our camp's most immediate neighbour and most generous too, has only two cows. These are primarily milkers and not beef cattle and he finds it necessary to supplement his living, plus the grant that he

gets from the Crofting Commission, by taking visitors on fishing trips during the summer. The most profitable crofts are on the west of the island where the land is flat and the soil sandy; on the eastern sea-lochs, like Loch Eynort, the inhabitants are fishermen, seaweed cutters, shepherds with grazing rights on the surrounding hills, as well as being busy crofters. There are very few young people in this area; the life in the Loch Eynort area is better suited to those who have seen all that they have wanted to see of most of the world—which most of them have—although one lady has lived by Loch Eynort all the seventy years of her life; but a young couple moved into the area two years ago, themselves possible future settlers in the area.

The children go to school where, amongst the variety of subjects which they learn, English is included, for most of them are native Gaelic speakers from birth. They can remain at the island school up to "O" level standard but after that they must either go to the mainland Secondary school or to another Secondary school on one of the other islands. Although they have a very good football team, badminton club and frequent, rather gay, dances throughout the year there is not the great variety of work open to them that there is on the mainland and they are not encouraged or inclined to stay. There are some good jobs available such as shop-owning; garage work; lorry-driving under the service of MacBraynes; the seaweed industry plus employment at the factory, which brings about £75,000 into the island annually; fishing; hospital work and work on the Rocket Range and many other jobs that one finds in any community of any size. But the young men in particular are inclined to go to sea in the Merchant or Royal Navy. On almost every British ship in any port or on any ocean one can hear the soft lilt of a Highland or Island tongue. The truth of the matter is that they know the island all the year round, without the new faces of visitors and with the dreadful storms that can occur in the winter and they fail to appreciate the beauty that we summer campers can see, or claim to see, after spending only three weeks on the island.

Houses are still going up and not a croft is on the market. (Crofts are not just the houses but, more important, are the houses *and* land surrounding, as well as any other land which belongs to the croft.) A croft can cost £1,000 if you can get one. But this is a very unlikely circumstance unless there is a house for sale. The land will never legally become yours unless it has been willed to you. Electricity is gradually reaching out over the island; North Loch Eynort is one of the few places on South Uist not yet to have already received it.

We all very much appreciated meeting the islanders on the roads, at church, at the dance, or our ceildhi and they all made us far more aware that all nature has something to tell us, if only we have the time and patience to discover what. It is an art worth learning to discover the smell of morning air in all its freshness and to know

the afternoon's weather and many of the islanders have tins ability. We much appreciated all their friendliness and their helpfulness which was so freely offered to us and we wish them the very best for their future life and prosperity.

John Cullingford

BIRD LIFE ON SOUTH UIST

There is a fairly wide variety of bird life to be found on South Uist, due mainly, I think, to the fairly wide range of habitat. This includes mountain, moorland, sea-loch, freshwater-loch, farmland, stream valleys, machair, long stretches of empty white beaches (empty except for the sand of course) and lovely, rocky indented coastline.

There were a good many people on the expedition who were attracted by the bird life (especially Graeme Longmuir, who on several occasions notably Sundays, dressed himself up just to see it). Unfortunately, only three of us took an interest in the feathered variety, myself, Pete Davies and Steve Mellor. Together we brought the total of bird-species up to sixty-nine. This included five species of duck, one species of Goose, six birds of prey, and various other Passeriformes and Podicipediformes.

This contained at least four rare birds, the Golden Eagle, Peregrine, and Greylag Goose, rare as a breeding bird but common in winter, and a Hen Harrier which I identified from my bird-books, and all the Broadstairs Library's books which I returned to Kent. Another bird I was pleased to add to my list was the Corncrake. This is very difficult to observe but we succeeded in flushing two. The first one exploded from our feet as we went to get water and the second we succeeded in flushing after changing our tactics to a desperate final charge at a rasping bird (this is its call note, not mockery). Previously we had been circling the calling birds uneventfully.

Graeme must have got a good list of "birds" too but he didn't tell us about them.

It was an eventful holiday for us all.

Martin Sutherland

GANNETS ON SOUTH UIST

Gannets are large seashore birds, approximately 26-40 in. (some continental species being smaller than our own Gannet) which live around our northern shores. They are ungainly on land but have little occasion to come there as they are magnificent flyers and arc also completely at home in the water. The Gannet is a heavily built bird with a thick neck of moderate length and a large head. The beak is also characteristic, being stout, fairly long and tapering towards the end.

The birds were fairly common on South Uist, more being seen on the east side of the island than on the west. Indeed I can think of no more wonderful sight than sitting in the sunshine at Corrodale bay watching the Gannets wheeling and circling above, then suddenly diving and emerging seconds later with a fish kicking in their beaks.

Robert Arnold

SOME SCATTERED MEMORIES

The first, at Crewc on the way up, eight members weren't there! They got on at Carlisle, together with Ginge who should have got on at Glasgow. Graeme was the travel officer! . The next is of the next day at Oban where we got up, crossed Oban for breakfast, ran back to St. Columbus hall for our gear and then hurtled back to the quay side, just catching the *Claymore* by a few seconds. (John C. please note that MucBruyns' boats are M/V, not, repeat not, HMS!). . The arrival of our pram dinghy. As we brought the dinghy round, John and Ray rowed, I steered with my hand underwater holding the broad part of the rudder because there wasn't a tiller. I might here add that the water was freezing (my actual thoughts at the time are, unfortunately, unprintable)... We finally arrived at the landing place, only to be told by Ginger to please drift back out again as we were disturbing his fishing!... Then, perhaps apart from the dance, the most memorable experience, the night walk up Beinn Mhor (2,034 ft.). We set off at about ten minutes to midnight and climbed what seemed like half-a-dozen Mount Evcrests! Two-and-a-half hours later we arrived at the summit and met Phil who had set off at nine and climbed Beinn Mhor in eighty minutes flat... There was Phil's bivvie. Readers of the articles "Phil's bivvy" and "a bivouac to Oronsay" from last year's Colonsay report will remember that we ran out of gas. Would something terrible like that happen again? . . . This time we went for two days. We had, what was probably the laziest time on camp. When we arrived on Eriskay we walked to an absolutely idyllic camp site on a grassy headland, with a sandy beach on either side and not a midge or horsefly in sight. We swam, we sunbathed, we ate, and so to bed. Nearly twelve hours later we got up and had lunch. We decided to walk round the island in a clockwise direction. Half-way round we cut back across Ben Schricn (609 ft.). Again nearly twelve hours later we packed camp and started the long trek home a quarter mile walking on Eriskay, ferry and Utilabrac to within three miles of camp.

Then there was Phil. At Haun waiting for the ferry he wanted an ice, so he went to the shop, went in, stopped, came out, borrowed a comb, combed his fair locks and then bought his ice—Why? there were two teenage girls serving!

Then there was the dance. It was a case of first in, last out. We arrived ages before anyone else. But it soon livened up. After seeing Graeme and John go round, the rest of us plucked up courage. There was only one trouble, the hall was far too small. The dancing went on and Graeme was distinctly overheard to ask his partner outside; "For a breath of fresh air", was his story! (Completely fictional! —Graeme.)

The next day I collected the post, there were the usual dozen or so, plus a parcel for Ginge (he was fourteen on that day) and Graeme's shirt, which he had left at the dance!

And talking of Graeme, his Lancashire correspondent had been busy, for, even on the last day Graeme held four from her in his hand and asked the postman to check his bag for any more to him! Four letters in one post with the same handwriting on the front.

The haggis-hunt, organised by Graeme. As we combed the hillside for an elusive haggis, we found various oddments which the Haggis had stolen, under Graeme's direction, no doubt. Ginge caught the Haggis using Graeme's patent method—ramming a carrot up poor old Pat's left nostril!... The football match. We had heard of the Army's defeat, 10-0 and got a bit worried. At half-time, however, we were only 3*0 down, so we breathed more normally. At 12-0 they gave us their goalie, so that we had twelve men to their ten. At 17-0 the whistle blew. We had lost!... Then there was the poaching in the bay. We laid two nets, watched one of our friends start yelling at us to buck up as the tide rose (he was standing on a rapidly shrinking islet at the time!) froze to death and finally returned empty-handed . . . Other memories now flash through my mind, the walk across the moors the day the weather broke carrying more mail for Graeme, the night spent in the marquee ... our raft to take the wood back . . . Supper in the hotel—Barry in a bright red-check shirt—me with a bright orange anorak and Graeme wheedling thirty-four pieces of toast out of the waitress only to call her back for more butter... Leaving the main party (for six of us had to take the equipment up to Stornoway) and finding that with a twelve-mile walk ahead at nearly midnight we had no transport. .. George and Sheila Newhall, just catching the boat by a hairsbreadth . . . sleeping under a lifeboat. . . John offering me sugar for my cider, and finally the long journey back to Huston. Roll on 1969. "

Eddie Stuart

THE FISHING

The fishing on the whole was very poor.

Sea-fishing was not attempted because *Rockbottom's* engine could not be started. Otherwise no doubt there would have been a lot done.

The fishing in the two streams was plenteous but no large trout were caught. The best was a trout of about five ounces. The fish were mainly caught on grasshoppers or small spoons. There were two trout lochs nearby but both had been overstocked and so the fish were only small.

The Salmon and Sea Trout which fed in our bay annoyed us so much by not taking an interest in our lures, that Graeme and I tried fly fishing for them. While I was on a bivouac, Graeme managed to lose a shrimp fly claiming that this was "the one that got away". Goodness knows what he would do if he did in fact catch a salmon!

Ginger

FEEDING TIME

"Hey Phil, what's this supposed to be?" "How the..... should I know, you cooked it?"

"I know, but you gave it to us in the first place." This just about sums up the joys of camp administrator. You don't buy the stuff, you don't cook the stuff but you still get the blame!

Phil Renold

THE MONASTERY

We had heard of the legend of a Monastery's existence and being interested in such things I organised a party to investigate the legend. Unfortunately due to the *Rockhottom's* (that boat again!) inaction we decided that the only means left to us of getting across to the sea entrance of Loch Eynort, opposite Rhum, would be to canoe. It was in the second last day of the expedition, when the tides were ideal—i.e. an ebbing tide to help us out and a high tide to help us in, that we set off. The party included myself and Chris Lumsden in a double, Robert Arnold and another nameless pupil of Manchester Grammar School in the "best" double and Murray Sagar in a single. Because of the canoes we were unable to take any equipment with us except the essentials of food, clothing, drawing equipment and cameras. There was a strong tidal race where the sea met the loch, so because the Monastery was beyond the race we had to paddle across to the other side of the loch and then walk over the hill in search of the Monastery. Donald MacDonald had told us that of course the building as such no longer existed, but he did say that the stones had been used in the building of a sheepfold. Our half hour walk over the hill had been extended by Chris and Murray's attempt to scale a rock face and to have lunch before we reached the site. But we other three gallants pressed on. We reached the small bay where the site was—over to our left we saw across the loch the camp site, in front of us the island of Rhum and to our right the continuation of the hill we were standing on. Below us lay the ideal site for any settlement. A bay for easy access to and from the Monastery; an acre of reasonably flat, dry ground; a supply of fresh water from a burn and protection afforded by the surrounding hills behind. Below us—covered in bracken—we could see huge stones. I took some photographs, during our lunch, of the site from above and all of us were infected with excitement because the site was not marked on the Ordnance Survey map of the area.

Because of our lack of equipment there was little we could do other than investigate the site.

Down on the actual site the bracken was five or six feet high and I explained that the best thing we could do was to follow all the lines of stones and to trample down the bracken on either sides of the walls. From below us we saw nothing but back up the hill, above the site, the scene was remarkable. The building, such as it was, had obviously been adapted as a sheep fold because there were the enclosures and sheep dips with concrete floors and cemented walls. But there were small "rooms", three or four stones high and about eight feet long, four or five feet wide—the cells? There were larger rooms—again three or four stones high refectory ?, chapel ?

(facing east). The stones were huge, larger than the normal stones used for sheep folds and the overall appearance was that this was a site of antiquity.

Most of my conjectures are only my own thoughts on the matter. Time was, as I have explained, not on my side—our return to camp was imminent. The Manchester Grammar School boys displayed a hither to unseen sense of fortitude as their "best" canoe snipped water at an alarming rate and they were seen, admittedly from a great distance, doing what seemed to be, baling their vessel with their shoes.

The monastery is yet another example of the necessity for revisiting the island.

DISCOVERY OF THE EARTH HOUSES

The two earth houses were extremely well hidden in Glen Usinish valley, roughly an eight-mile walk from camp. Barry had already found one of them himself, although a later bivouac led by Dick had failed to find anything, except the remains of an old beehive dwelling. However John Cully and Barry took a bivouac (consisting of Richard George, Steve Meller, Humph and myself), and this was to be very exciting and successful.

Barry first of all took us to the earth house that he had originally found. It consisted of a circle of rubble about ten or more yards across. The remains of a wall which was built against the side of the valley was left on the northern side, and we could see a number of hollows in it—obviously man-made, including one leading into the hillside which looked like the entrance to a passage. Barry had seen this before on his first discovery, but he hadn't got a torch, and thought he couldn't fit into it, so didn't try to go in! The entrance was very small—only about two feet six inches square, and so the smaller ones crawled in first with torches, with Barry—and even long-legged John!—squeezing in behind us. The mud on the ground was wet and cracked, about four inches deep in places, and completely undisturbed, therefore we thought that no-one had been in there for years. We crawled along the stone passage (sliding along on his front in John's case!) which bent to the left and then to the right. After about ten yards, we emerged into a small round, stone-lined chamber roughly two yards across, and about six feet high. We came out again very dirty, and looked for any unbroken passages, since the rubble of large stones had obviously been a maze of tunnels and chambers long ago. but had no luck. However we did see the remains of another small chamber to the east like the one we had been in at the end of the tunnel. Humph did some sketching and Steve took some photos—just to prove it was all true!

We then went over to the remains of the beehive dwelling we had found on Dick's bivouac, and soon discovered three entrances (one obviously man-made, the other two just cracks in the rock) leading into a large, low, dry chamber, covered by a huge slab of rock. In here we found bones of cattle, we thought, which had

probably been from the meat taken into the cave by the earth-house dwellers—and also a piece of very old, dehydrated wood. Barry uncovered a passage, and this led into another small chamber-full of long-legged spiders and eerie growths dangling from the roof! Yet another very narrow entrance led into a natural cave, and here we found many more bones.

But time was all too short, and we only just got back to Prince's cave before dark, excited with the thought that we were probably some of the first people to enter some of the passages since prehistoric man had lived there!

David Rust

CONCLUSION

There have been several items omitted from the report, mainly due to the length of some of the more exciting things undertaken, but they too were fascinating. There was John's sociology round the island—suspect as an excuse to sample island cooking—the ornithological expedition to the reserve, the bivouacs, swimming in the Upper Lochan, Pat's curry-making efforts, aided or abetted by glory-seekers, the invitation dinner with the islanders, the exciting stimulus of prayers, the all pervading humour of the camp, the Highland wedding on Eriskay, the exciting prospects still open of furthering our investigations on the earth houses, the Prince's Cave and the Monastery, and the rail journey home, livened up for part of the way from Oban by the appearance of an officer's car.

Our thanks for a most enjoyable expedition are due to John for ably leading us, Phil for ably feeding us and to Pat for ably healing us and, of course, the other officers, Pete, Roy, Barry and his father, and Dick, whom we hope has now recovered from sun-stroke.

Of course, the weather was in our favour, the camp site well chosen and the organisation excellent and the final word from so many of us

"We'll be back again with the S.H.S."

Graeme

LETTER FROM CANADA

"Go west young man", they said. And the result is that I am now studying at the University of British Columbia for a year or so.

Having stayed for a week in New York before driving across the American continent, and having spent three months here, first impressions have nearly had time to settle into focus.

New York was a great big brash city, just like it's supposed to be, and the Statue of Liberty blends into the Manhattan skyline just as it does on post-cards and other people's photos, which takes away so much of the newness of it, leaving it hot and humid in the early morning. Otherwise it's just another collection of people—I liked the downtown "Noo Yoikers" best, they seemed more like reality—and the insularity of the few people I met really staggered me. The museums, galleries, and "sights", are monumental, but some of the art exhibits I shall remember for their own sakes,

as also the fountains; the creative use of water is fascinating, whether cool and frigid or spewing and swirling.

On the Staten Island ferry I met Bill and Laura Nell; (they were helping at a camp in up-state New York—why didn't I go up there for a weekend? So after seeing a guy in the Bowerie area of the real bums, I joined them two hours later to drive back to Camp Rising Sun. This camp is a result of the most incredible foresight of a man thirty-six years ago, who realised the need of people to learn to live together and to communicate; he started a camp for boys lasting each summer for two months, in which they take responsibility for the running of the camp, and together with about eight councillors (there are four dozen boys of average age fifteen), manage the whole set-up. The aims and ages generally fall into a similar perspective to the S.H.S., but the two months period allows much greater scope for projects such as damming the lake for swimming, for building a sauna bath, or for just sitting around discussing life. Finance is provided by the founder who still holds the reins (George Jonas, alias "Freddy"), and boys are selected on a scholarship basis from all over the world—with passage paid. This year the representative from England was absent due to C.C.F. camp!

From New York we drove to Ottawa, a delightful town so long as you don't want any excitement, and also so long as you don't arrive in an open car in a thunderstorm; then back to the U.S.A. at Soult—since American roads are better, the route shorter, and gas cheaper. Through the Mid-west with its small town atmosphere, unconscious of the outside world, and so to the Yellowstone Park. But a snowstorm here turned us around, so we went straight through a thousand miles to Seattle.

Finally, Vancouver.

The first time I went down town it struck me what a small provincial town this was. They say that where Montreal is a woman of great character, Vancouver is a beautiful woman of none, and though this may be largely true—the mountains and scenery here are really superb—there is a character but it is very subtle.

The same does not seem to hold true of the university, however, which is little more than a glorified Tech of 20,000 students with no academic atmosphere, no unity, and a great sprawling campus. However, a gleam of hope shows: the kids are getting rebellious, and last week they were revolting.

This is the west coast, and it is on the move—even up north here—and in spite of the general conformist attitude prevailing, which puts individualism beyond the fringe, change is on the way, and life is perhaps just beginning.

T. J. Willcocks

(Until January 1969 Tim Willcocks was a Director of the Schools Hebridean Company.—Ed.).

SOUTH RONA EXPEDITION 1968

Leader Christopher N. Gascoigne Hart

Officers

Rod Barnes, John Newman, John Houghton, Nick Yates, Bob Pike.

Boys

Michael Bagshaw, Philip Clark, Timothy Colman, Ian Goddard, Christopher Cooper, David Currey, Peter Carlisle, Gareth Firth, Brian Hood, Andrew Howard, Gareth Jones, Marten Julian. David McCarthy, David Martin, Christopher Maughan, Christopher Milton, Nigel Mitchell, Michael Osborne, William Salisbury, Geoffery Scrutton, Neil Souter, Nicholas Stuart Taylor, Ian Wilkinson, Julian Williams.

LEADER'S REPORT

"Perhaps they will grow", the seedling cabbages were carefully unpacked and planted in the freshly dug peat.

"Sheep'll eat them", said my companion.

We left South Rona in the heat of the April sun the seeds of the expedition sown, but as we chugged over the calm sea I was anxious, for I had just tramped over the most primeval terrain ever to be scanned by my rock conscious eyes—there it crouched, low on the misty horizon, would this bare brown island, a maze of twisted scrub and rock, blossom into the normal environment of one of those fresh damp itchy memories which was expected of it? No mountains, no fossils, no crofters, no transport, no communication—I was anxious.

May was fine, June and July too, August—well one fine day in the middle it wasn't—it was then that we arrived. We landed in bits and pieces after the fourth or fifth attempt to get a man with a rope ashore; we had been held up a day by "the weather breaking". In convoy we arrived, eight in one boat with the gas, and twelve in the other with the food. Others were to follow the next trip.

"This is a beautiful island", said Rod.

"Ah," thought I, "things grow in beauty".

The fresh drenched heather, dark, contrasting with the bright green bracken, glittering rock, shimmering willows, reaching conifers, billowing beech, and berry-draped rowan . . . the scene was an utter transformation.

Camp was to be at Dry Harbour, a healthy trek with kit, tents, stores, food, and gas, but rewarding in spite of the precipitation.

We experienced much during the next two sunny weeks, that itself was a refreshing change to the usual Hebridean climate. We did have rain—the day we arrived, the day we left, and on one Friday at about tea-time when a quarter-of-an-inch fell in two hours. It was thanks to the weather that we were able to observe the clearest meteor-ridden skies ever, and our astronomers were happy counting the stars, constellations, and planets—project work by night,

Again we saw something new, no cloud at noon, a clear atmosphere, yet miles high crystals of an ice haze refracting like diamonds, encircled the sun with a halo of rainbow hues, this, complete with false sun to the left, bemused our meteorologist.

One dim evening, after the officers had prepared and offered oblation of spaghetti bolognese to the troops, a small party of "those who would" ventured to the eastern side of the island to search out and worship in a small consecrated cave. Sitting in silence looking beyond the dry stone cross we blended our twentieth-century feeling with the ancient memories of that place. "Before the ending of the day". "Oh come away with me ... to my father's house".

In spite of the lack of the usual Hebridean weather Bob Pike seemed to find plenty to talk about and discuss and our thanks go out to him for conducting his meteorological survey in the way he did, substituting for the daily trek to the rain gauge, instruction in visibility determination. Will he forget the low blanket of fluffy cloud which approached from Skye and enveloped the island — or was he out with the canoes at the time?

John Houghton tramped up and down, round and round, and one or two loyal followers drifted on behind him, spotting what he disturbed, but never what he would believe. His ornithological map is prize worthy. We are grateful for his efforts and assure him that Golden Eagles were seen.

On the shore counting barnacles or in a tent counting blisters, cutting plaster, or plastering cuts, but mostly for his energetic identification of species and drastic efforts to reach peg, for these do we revere the name of "doc" John Newman.

Nick Yates collaborated with the leader over the rebuilding of the cross in the cave, the identification of a particular bird, the sighting of camp, and the quantity of Egyptian P.T. He dealt out chocolate biscuits at the wrong time and commanded the fleet, his administrative activities were useful too.

From Rod Barnes some learned songs, others were acquainted with the field techniques of chemical analysis, others heard of trees: their distribution, names and ages, and we all will remember the Saturday evening camp fire which he organised. The evening of songs and entertainment was threatened by rain but this we defied, and stayed dry and warm by the swirling flames. We listened to one elevated section making goon-like noises, others tried their voices at singing, and one section produced an endless railway-line sketch, the leader did not stand on his head.

The usual recreational projects were a little hampered by the lack of *Vinga* and climbing equipment, yet Nick and most other people went canoeing, and Rod showed a few, elementary scaling techniques with the rope we had. Swimming was safely done for fun and not just to brave the cold once during the holiday, for the record so to speak.

A new recreational pursuit was tried as a result of suggestions made at the conference and those who went orienteering enjoyed it very much, maybe it helped their map-reading too. We had a competition based on the identification of various natural objects be they rocks, plants, animals, constellations, clouds, etc. Brian Hood won this, by making some three dozen original identifications, using the many books in our reference library. We used the old croft as a project room and adorned the walls with maps, diagrams, pictures and explanations, I hope many members of the expedition learned much from these walls—I certainly did.

Well what will be recalled most frequently—the late nights star gazing, the treasure hunt, the orienteering, the competition, the rising of section two at twelve-thirty to finish their clearing up, the energetic and hazardous game of "Peggy", the sing songs ... ?

To measure success I ask "what grew"? Did new friendships? Did new interests? Did memories? During August I felt that the camp environment was so enriched with people, ideas, and material that these things did grow, I liked the democracy which developed and thank everyone for coming and contributing to it.

Alas no one identified "*Brassica oleracea capitata*".

Chris. Gascoigne-Hart

THE FUNGI COLLECTION

Collection of fungi started when the tree survey visited Big Harbour wood and brought back the bracket fungus, *Po/yporus betulimts*. The collection lay dormant for several days until a frantic rush for points brought it to life. Sixteen varieties were found in two days, mainly in Big Harbour wood while people were bird watching.

The sixteen fungi collected were:

<i>Polyporus beulinus</i>	<i>Trametes rubcseers</i>
<i>Agaricm campestris</i>	<i>Paxillus involutes</i>
<i>Hygraphonnts virgincus</i>	<i>Boletus scaber</i>
<i>Sterewn pwpuieum</i>	<i>Daldinia concertrica</i>
<i>Russula alrapurpurea</i>	<i>Lacairia laccata</i>
<i>Russula emetica</i>	<i>Cococybe terera</i>
<i>Lactarius vellereus</i>	<i>B/cwits</i>
<i>Russula ochralema</i>	

Mike Osborne

ASTRONOMY

On this year's expedition, we were very lucky in having excellent weather most of the time. This gave us many clear skies at night, enabling us to practise some basic astronomy under the guidance of Rod Barnes. This proved to be a very interesting activity followed by a large number of our camp.

To begin with we learnt to identify the common constellations and outstanding stars. We were able to make a tripod for the telescope, which proved very useful in our observations in spite of its age and delicacy.

Among the things we used to focus the telescope on was Arclurus, a bright star in the western sky. We were able to see that Arcturus is clearly orange in colour. Vega, the first star to appear in the evening, we found is a blue-white star, signifying its temperature is much higher than the yellow stars. The astronomical highlight came when we focussed on Saturn. We were able to see the rings tilted at an angle.

So, only a background into basic astronomy but certainly an activity which could be encouraged and expanded on future expeditions.

Gareth Jones

THE SEA SHORE

Where have all the lobsters gone? This was just one of several problems which remain unsolved. Despite assurances from local fishermen that lobsters were plentiful this was not our experience; all the bait vanished from the pots but no lobsters remained! Although this aspect of the work on the seashore was unsuccessful other projects, while providing equally puzzling results, were more rewarding.

Most of South Rona is surrounded by steep rocky coast but we were fortunate in camping by Dry Harbour which at low tide exposes a large mud flat providing a quite different kind of seashore life for study. There were numerous sheltered gullies along the west coast of the island which again could be contrasted with the more exposed conditions found on the headlands.

Enthusiasm for work on the seashore was considerable. This was unlucky for the duty section as it meant that bowls, saucepans and the dinner tables were always being used for further study of marine life. However it was a help to me as it enabled more work to be done in the short space of time allowed by the unfavourable tides. The distribution of seaweeds was studied by means of line transects and the usual distribution of lichens followed by Channel Wrack, Spiral Wrack, Egg and Bladder Wrack and then Serrated Wrack was found. Finally around low-water mark thong weed and two species of oar weed abounded. In all twenty-three species of seaweed were identified which is a slight improvement on previous reports. One species not found this year which was reported from Harris in 1966 was *Patalonia fascia*; but since this species is only found between April and November it would appear that they too had their problems!

We certainly had ours: not the least being the unexplained disappearance of limpets and anemones from the rock pools which were being studied. Anemones are supposedly static animals but our studies did not confirm this as their numbers diminished rapidly the longer the pools were studied. It is well known that limpets move within an area of about six inches surrounding their resting site but what was found on Rona was that the limpets left their pool completely and that the total number of occupants varied greatly from day to day. Regrettably neither the time nor equipment

was available to discover the reasons for this unexpected movement but it provides an interesting observation on which future expeditions could work.

Using belt transects it was possible to show considerable differences in the animal populations of exposed and sheltered rock faces. In particular it was found that limpets survive in all areas being well adapted to withstand wave action while anemones and sponges were more plentiful on sheltered surfaces. Dog whelks were totally absent from the most exposed wall studied but in a comparably sized sheltered area only a few yards away no less than 210 were found.

While much of the time was devoted to a detailed study of small areas considerable effort was also made to compile a complete species list, which is appended. Possibly the most interesting findings were those on the last day when the sea gooseberry (*Beroe cucumis*) and the uncommon jellyfish (*Cyanea capillata*) were produced within a few minutes of each other. Our leader made valiant efforts to photograph these delicate animals but not even his ingenuity and the use of every colour container we possessed managed to overcome the problems posed by their translucency. In addition seven kinds of fish, thirteen different molluscs, three types of worm and two different sponges were captured. It was particularly pleasing to find five species of anemone. Of these the cadlet was much the most common but Snakelocks and Dahlia anemones were also widely distributed. The other species found was the beautiful orange *Sagartia elegans*. There was a colony of these animals on the peninsula between Dry and Big Harbours and amongst them was a single species of *S. elegans var iiveti* (the all white variety).

Although during the treasure hunt every pair managed to find a Shore crab it was disappointing that no live edible or spider crabs were found. Several shells indicated their presence but not a single live one was produced. However more success was obtained in the hunt for star fish and sea urchins—enough of the latter being found for most members to take a blown out specimen home as a souvenir.

We were fortunate in having a small microscope with us this year which enabled two species of sea mat to be identified but regrettably neither the knowledge nor the literature was available to permit a study of the plancta.

All in all a most enjoyable project, which even if it did not add greatly to scientific knowledge, provided enough puzzles to keep several members occupied throughout the camp. John Newman

ROCK-POOL

This expedition heralded the first study made of a rock-pool beside the sea shore. Two pools were selected, and both contained mussels, limpets, sea-anemones and periwinkles. One of the rock-pools had more limpets, while the other had more sea-anemones.

Each day, the time depending on the tide variation, the four species were counted.

Unfortunately, we couldn't discover any reason for the sharp decrease in the number of sea-anemones. With more time this may have been possible. The mussels, as could be expected, remained constant in number. The periwinkles decreased, and the reason for this could be that news was quickly travelling under the sea that this particular pond was being interfered with. This is, I feel, slightly unlikely. The limpets were studied in detail in the other rock-pool.

All the anemones were of the Beadlet type. Although three other species were found elsewhere, the Beadlet seems the most common. This can be found in most rocks and crevices beside the sea shore.

None of the anemones found can have any "stinging power" on man. They capture their victims by surrounding them with tentacles, and then they swallow their victims in their mouth in the centre of their body.

Quite a lot was learnt about sea-anemones but more time would have been appreciated to solve one or two of the mysteries which we couldn't understand.

Marten Julian

RONA ORNITHOLOGICAL REPORT 1968

Rona is an extremely rugged island, and on looking at the Ordnance Survey map one could never imagine how long it would take to cover a relatively small amount of ground. Although rising to no more than 400 ft., it is heavily indented by numerous lateral valleys so that terrain rises and falls very frequently along a line from north to south of the island. There are several inlets and lochs on the north and west coasts while the east coast is relatively straight and smooth with ground sloping steeply down to water level. There are no mud-flats or sandy beaches, the coastline being rocky with occasional stony, seaweed-covered beaches only uncovered at low tide. Rough grass and fair quality heather covers the ground, with a fair amount of bog on any flat area on the valley floor; a sizeable wood, three-quarters by a quarter of a mile, containing Larch, Oak, Beech, Silver Birch and Aspen at Big Harbour produced the only trees of mature size on the island apart from the Willows by the camp site, but a large number of Silver Birch and Sallow bushes in small to medium-sized copses were to be found in many valleys.

In comparison with the 1965 Raasay bird list, our numbers (thirty-eight confirmed, three unconfirmed) are considerably lower, although this is hardly surprising considering Raasay's much wider variety of terrain, which includes arable land, higher sheerer cliffs, coniferous woods, freshwater lochs and human settlement. Notable appearances on our list and not on Raasay's are Long-tailed Tit, Tree Creeper, Chaffinch and Peregrine. The topography of Raasay does not, however, account for the conspicuous absence of a number of water birds on our list.

Starting with land birds, Meadow Pipits and Wrens were almost universal, though Meadow Pipits were seen in larger numbers to the north than to the south; this was probably because there was

slightly more bog grass and less rock to the north. House Sparrows had abandoned the island (Dry Harbour was left ? 40 years ago) but Hedge Sparrows were fairly numerous in undergrowth around camp; one Blackbird and the odd Song Thrush were also seen. One Coal Tit was seen in the wood, and a flock of ten or twelve Long-tailed Tits was seen on two separate occasions in the Silver Birch above camp. Goldcrests in the wood were fascinating to watch and appear to confine themselves to an area of about fifty square yards containing Larch trees. Why no Chaffinches on Raasay?— they were seen around camp, often in the wood, and once at the south end of the island.

Buzzards were seen every day; one bird very close seen to have very clear cream and black markings on the underside. No Golden Eagle was confirmed (by me at any rate) and I would rather leave it out partly as our Eagle spotter saw what he claimed to be an eagle at the same place and time as I was watching a Buzzard high in the air from a canoe. Interesting to note that I saw one three or four yards away from me as I came round the corner of the shepherd's cottage at Big Harbour when on Rona in 1964 and was not particularly on the look-out for them that year. Throughout the whole fortnight this year I never saw a bird that I might possibly have confused for one. The confirmed Peregrine was below the cliffs to the south west (the only ones on the island)—although only 150 or so feet high there's the possibility of a breeding pair, although I should have thought Raasay would be preferable.

Three Shag's nests were seen on these same cliffs and the very large amount of droppings might indicate a small Gull/Fulmar colony. Apart from this there was no other indication of nesting seabirds, of which only a very ordinary and small selection was seen—no Terns, Razorbills, Puffins, Skuas, Divers or Duck. One Fulmar only, though several were seen from the boat down the east coast of Raasay. The most common waterside birds appeared to be Oystercatchers, followed by Curlew, Rock Pipit and Heron. An old heronry was found in the north end of the wood consisting of five massive nests, four in the same tree which had been blown down to an angle of about 30'. Remains of about four eggs lay on the ground and some down was found in the nests. At a guess, it was abandoned during the breeding season of either last year or the year before.

Finally, mention of the unconfirmed Short-eared Owl, heard every time we went up to the top of the hill near camp to do some astronomy. The call was low but clear, and it did not need too much stretching to fit the Field Guide's "Boo boo boo"! Habitat didn't really correspond to that of the Long-eared Owl, which was the only real alternative.

On the whole, I was disappointed by the variety of seabirds, but quite pleased by the land birds seen, particularly in the wood. I feel that there are a number of varieties, all existing on the island in small numbers, which we may have missed, and which would be

detected with much more time in the field, for instance Whitethroats or Finches which are so secretive they are very difficult to spot, or seabirds which flash behind a rock before you can reach your binoculars. I say this because it was only by some very patient stalking that we found our Willow Warbler, and only on the last day that we saw both our Blackbird, Kestrel, Wagtails and Wheatear. Others may have escaped us, for this year anyway.

John Houghton

PHOTOGRAPHY ON UONA

We were lucky enough to have a developing tank and chemicals on the island. Four 35mm films were successfully developed in a fine-grain developer.

The first problem was to clean the water as we did not trust the rusty iron pipe which I had rigged up for the drinking supply. The water was therefore set up in a filtering plant of clean orange-juice bottles, this worked very slowly, about an ounce percolating through in an hour, we therefore left it for the night.

The films were loaded into the tank inside sleeping bags.

The first film developed contained no pictures of camp, disappointing, some people. Unfortunately most people had either colour film or were just too cautious to hand in films for processing.

Andrew Howard

GEOCHEMISTRY

As a result of alternative pursuits, little chemistry was done. However, selected rock samples were variously shown to contain silicates, iron, aluminium, calcium, magnesium and copper as their principle constituents. We surprised Chris Gascoigne-Hart, our geologist, because our results agreed with what he thought they were!

A number of soil samples were provided by Chris from selected sites in Big Harbour wood, and their acidity was determined as a start to an ecological study of the wood, unfortunately barely begun before it was time to leave.

A rather wide-ranging chemistry "seminar" proved more popular than the practical project. Perhaps it wasn't all wasted!

Rod Barnes

FORESTRY

A survey of the whole island was carried out, and the location of different types of trees was mapped. Altogether eighteen types were found, including Aspen, Alder, Beech, Silver Birch, Hazel, Holly, Juniper, Wych Elm, Larch, Lime, Oak, Scots Pine, Rowan, Common Sallow, Grey Sallow, Eared Sallow, Sycamore, White Willow.

Generally speaking, most tree growth was found on the east coast and in sheltered inland areas. The important exception was Big Harbour wood, in which was found a selection of trees unrepresentative of the land in general. Within the wood there were differences obviously connected with the nature of the local habitat. The six principal habitats consisted of:

(i) Scots Pine, Larch, Hazel, Sycamore and Silver Birch growing in a very well sheltered and moist location;

(ii) Silver Birch, Scots Pine and Eared Sallow growing on high, exposed rocky ground;

(iii) Fairly tall lime and oak growing in richer soil, open to sunlight but sheltered from wind;

(iv) Beech growing alone in a well-drained, sheltered position;

(v) Rowan growing in very thin soil among mossy boulders;

(vi) Scots Pine, Larch, Rowan and Goat Sallow growing on an open, rocky area.

The Birch seems capable of growing almost anywhere except on very thin soil, which supports only Rowan. Broad-leaved trees favour shelter and comparatively moist ground except for the Beech. Sallow Scrub can exist on rocky ground better than other types.

Favoured sites on other parts of the island were:

(i) Protection from wind for aspen;

(ii) Well-sheltered and moist for Hazel;

(iii) Damp for Alder and Willow.

One other outstanding feature was the large amount of very young growth in sheltered eastern districts. This suggests natural reforestation is beginning to take place quite rapidly, especially of Silver Birch. A start was made in estimating the age distribution of the trees near the camp, with a view to comparing such distributions for different types in different parts of the island. Unfortunately lack of time prevented much being done; perhaps this could be accomplished on a future expedition?

Having had South Rona described as "a barren lump of primeval rock", the variety of sylvan life was very pleasantly surprising. It will be interesting to see how it develops over the next few years.

Rod Barnes

THE RONA SUNDAY-SCHOOL

(Tune: The Darkies' Sunday-School) *Chorus:*

Old boys, young boys, everybody come

To Rona in the Hebrides and have yourself some fun. Try your hand at projects or just eat and sleep and sing, Or bang the breakfast gong to waken every blooming thing.

1. Christopher's the leader of our wild and woolly crew.
He organised a boat for us, then found we needed two.
We finally reached Big Harbour after crossing the stormy sea; But whether he'll get us safely back we've still to wait and see.
2. We have a camp administrator by the name of Nick,
He built a dining-table out of nails and bits of stick.
He rules the stores and feeds us all on marge and mouldy bread, And if you leave things dirty he will get you out of bed.
3. The doctor spends a lot of time paddling in the sea
In search of crabs and bladder wrack and sea anemone. Although he'd like to practise his professional expertise, In spite of all his efforts we are still all in one piece.

4. John's our ornithologist and watches all the birds.
He's had reports of thirty-odd but the eagle's unconfirmed. He's quite adept at peggy and can clout the thing for miles; But he has a mill-stone round his neck in the form of Section Five.
5. Timothy has got a knack of making things go wrong.
We took him orienteering but he didn't quite belong.
He likes the finer things in life like food and food again,
But how to foil the side effects is quite beyond his ken.
6. Chris Cooper is a character who sits upon the shore.
He measures pools and time and tides, then measures them
some more.
He promised us some sea-food long ago, but still we wait. Before
he catches lobster he has first to catch his bait.
7. Pete Carlisle began to map the cottages around.
He dug and found a prehistoric bog-chain in the ground, And ever
since his work has been considered as complete. Now his tongue gets
much more exercise than either of his feet.
8. Section Five are only half awake throughout the day.
But later when the cat's asleep the mice begin to play.
They're pretty good at porridge and some other forms of goo.
But when it comes to cocoa they just haven't got a clue.
9. Rod is our guitarist and a very good one too
In any key, with any tree he'll tell you what to do, With skiing, climbing,
chemistry his repertoire is large And he'll tramp all over Rona with his
hundredweight of marge. 10. And now our Rona expedition's drawing to a
close.
This time next week we'll all be home with drier feet and clothes. We hope
you've all enjoyed yourselves, but just in case you've not, Remember there
is still a chance for us to drown you lot.

90%, by Rod Barnes 10% by John Houghton

LEWIS EXPEDITION 1968

Leader David Cullingford

Officers

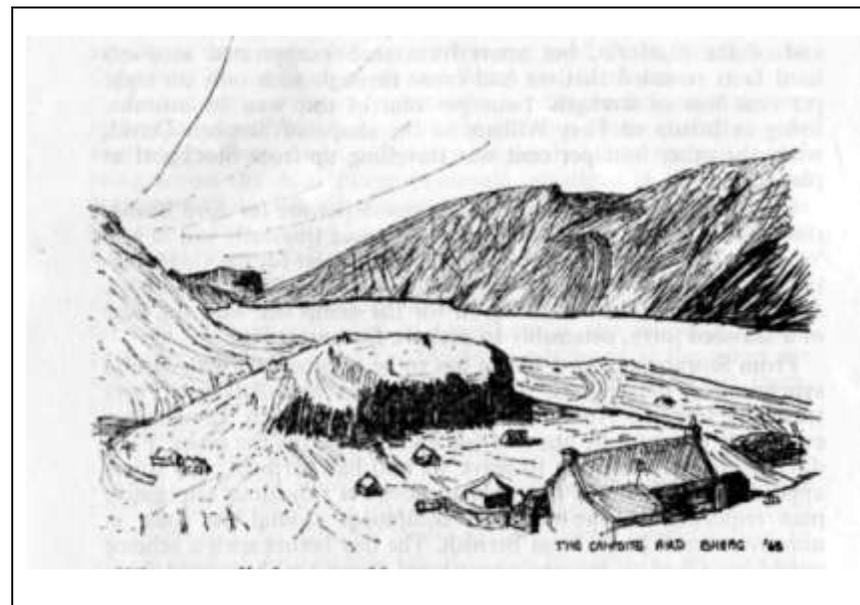
Alistair Chalmers, John Bundock, Paul Caffery, Duncan Davidson, Iain
Robertson, Christopher Berry.

Boys

John Abbott, John Davies, Paul Conran, Peter Forsaith, Christopher
Hood, John Round, Robert Cunliffe, Brian (Eric) Wood, David Vale,
Robin Dance, Robert Braine, Peter Strong, Bruce Kirk, Stephen David,
Stephen Gethin, Murray Sager, Simon Ritter.

LEADER'S REPORT

"All's well that ends well", so they say. I would say that all is well
once ended. The memory mollifies the past; the satisfaction at the end
survives the apprehension at the beginning; all is swathed in rosy
retrospection sitting slightly sleepy by the side of a Sunday afternoon fire.



What actually happened?

I am afraid it is rather difficult to say. Our mollified memory has become such a part of the past.

Then practise a little academic objectivity.

Alas, I find something quite different, indeed a terrible tale. Near death, near disaster; near frustration, near failure; disease, fatigue; the midge. But we enjoyed it.

Mildly masochistic?

I wouldn't say that. It takes all kinds to make a world, and various varieties veer towards our S.H.S. expeditions. In fact I think this is one of the redeeming features of our many excursions.

Unfortunately, our expedition to Lewis needed much "saving grace", as well as any number of "redeeming features", for if ever an expedition succeeded by the skin of its teeth it was this one.

Our camp site was at Aird Bheag, a ruined village above a ruined jetty at the side of Loch Tamunavuy. It is ominously grand, perilous and beautiful at the same time. An expedition had visited the site during the previous year and had discovered its vast potential in providing scope to climbers, sailors, fishers, walkers, canoeists, geographers, archaeologists, historians, botanists, and even campers. Other attractions included a nearby stream, a path to the jetty, and a stout stone weatherproof croft. It is unfortunate that part of the fascination of our site lies in the formidable difficulty experienced in getting to it. Aird Bheag is eight miles from the nearest road across moor and mountain.

We managed to arrive in Stornoway without too much misfortune. There were various tales about certain little sprints made between Glasgow Central and Glasgow Queen Street, and of certain members of the expedition diving into the last carriage

as it swept past the end of the platform, but apart from such exaggerated accounts hard facts revealed that we had come through with only an eight per cent loss of strength. Four per cent of this was, by mistake, living in luxury at Fort William in the shape of Stephen David, while the other four per cent was travelling up from Stockport as planned.

On the following day, scheduled as our departure for Aird Bheag, there was a violent storm; a Bernera boat was tragically lost at sea. We spent the day in a Stornoway closed and quiet for the Confirmation Services, and waited for our eight per cent to catch up with us. Alistair and Iain, however, set off for the camp site with the help of a seaweed lorry, ostensibly to prepare for our arrival.

From Stornoway, Aird Bheag has to be approached with careful synchronised movements. The heavy stores and Advance Party travel by lorry to Ammundsuidh and boat to Loch Tamanavay, everybody else goes by bus to Gisla and foot across the moor. Four days before we were due to leave we still had no boat; the stores appeared stranded. We managed to devise a ridiculous alternative plan requiring that we take our equipment around the coast in numerous small boats from Brenish. The day before such a scheme would have had to become operational Barry Smith phoned from Scalpay to say that he had found the *Vanguard*, and that she would be available to transport our equipment to Aird Bheag. The load lifted, the Advance Party settled down to a leisurely sorting and cleaning of equipment, and various vague attempts to patch up *Rockbottom*^ the canoes and the outboard motor. There was more vigorous activity in other behavioural fields.

Transport provided, the weather cleared, and we arrived a day late at Aird Bheag. The afternoon became hot, and various bodies collapsed under the strain of unloading Bundock-packed crates just after the long walk across the moor. Our weatherproof croft provided the space for storage, cooking and drying, while its warm fireside set the scene for supper and song. We did spend considerable time setting up our marquee which immediately turned into a White Elephant; no-one used it and no-one ever sat at its beautiful tables and chairs.

Once at Aird Bheag, we were so relieved that we enjoyed ourselves. Various projects were attempted, but few got finished. There were efforts at surveying and reconstructing a bee-hive dwelling. Shells and bottles were found in the name of archaeology, some of the latter dating back well into the nineteenth century. The projects that did get finished were mostly individual; ornithology, studies of the sea shore, and the planting of trees were all of this nature. Otherwise people occupied themselves in contributing to the pleasure of general camp life, or in acquainting themselves with the area that surrounded us.

We were restricted eastwards by the Morsgail Estate but the mountains to the north, and the sea to the west, gave us plenty of scope. Although *Rockbottom* was useless, the *May* proved a better

substitute and rode the seas delivering mail from Brenish and depositing bivouacking parties on Scarp and Mealasta.

We had various minor frights. Our terrible landing on Mealasta; return journeys from Scarp with the evening breeze disturbing the swell; Chris Berry and Co. drifting helplessly out to sea and scrambling across the Aird Bheag peninsula, shoeless, in the dark; the bread march to Brenish during the only storm we experienced in the camp. But I think we enjoy the memories. Such frights are only frightful at the time.

The camp was a leisurely one. We wore small in number and had plenty of food. We needed time to eat it. We put our watches forward an hour and rose an hour later in the morning. It was probably this that caused the feeling of not being at the camp site long enough, especially as it took so much effort to get there. However, when we did have to leave, I must confess that I enjoyed the return to civilisation.

I should very much like to thank all those who made this extraordinary and very enjoyable camp possible. Mr. Morrison and the crew of the *Vanguard*, to whom I am most grateful; Dr. Robertson for allowing us to cross his lands; Mr. Buchanan for permission to use the croft at Aird Bheag; the Morrison brothers for transporting our equipment; Hebridean Transport for transporting our personnel; all at the Square Restaurant for our arrival-meal; George and Sheila Newhall for food and clothing, board and lodging, comfort and encouragement; and finally all officers and boys who dared venture on the expedition in the first place. I, at least, very much enjoyed it.

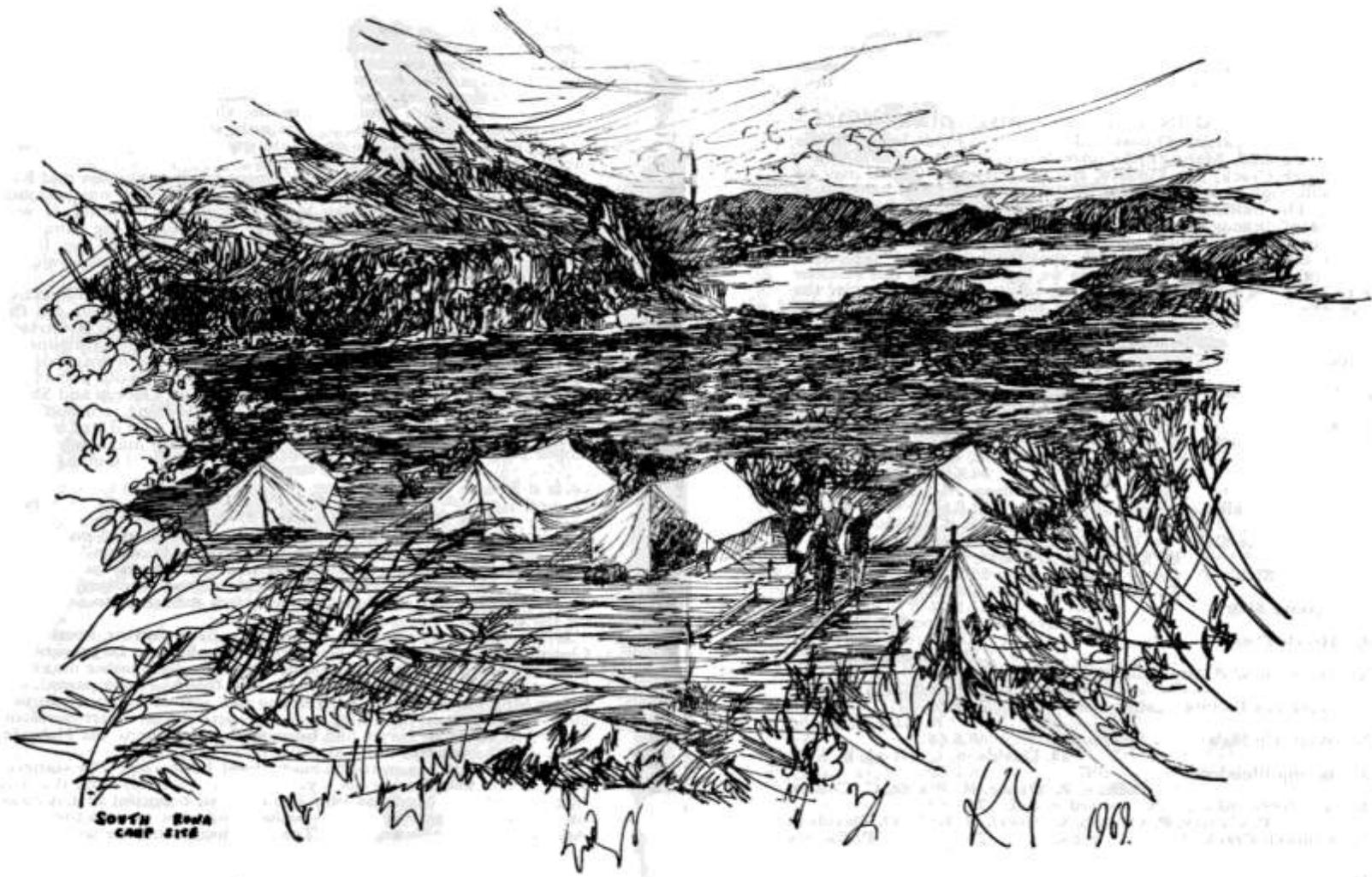
David Cullingford

A WEE BIT OF PUBLICITY? OR DO NOT READ THIS ARTICLE

This article is of rather dubious origin. It all started on Friday, 20th September, when a letter post-marked "Hastings" dropped through the letter box with a loud thud. (Hastings, as any fool knows, is where Cullingford, Cullingford and Cullingford have their headquarters). The gentleman wishes me to write something for the Report. Well.. .

It was the first time that I had ever been further north than Lincoln. One inexperienced southerner was about to be precipitated into the barren islands of the Outer Hebrides, and, rather naturally, I spent the first few days regretting it. But that had soon passed, and before long I was treating Aird Bheag as a second home. Unfortunately so was everyone else, and the permanent insect residents seemed to resent it. Never had I dreamed of coming to the Hebrides to deal with insurrection!

What sticks in my memory most about Lewis '68? The scenery? John Round transferring his loyalties (being rescued) from the Aird Bheag Lifeboat? Mealasta island looking so beautiful that it could have hidden in the Pacific, and perhaps only got up into the North Atlantic by mistake anyway? The sing-songs and the atmosphere



SOUTH BAY
CAMP SITE

K4 1969

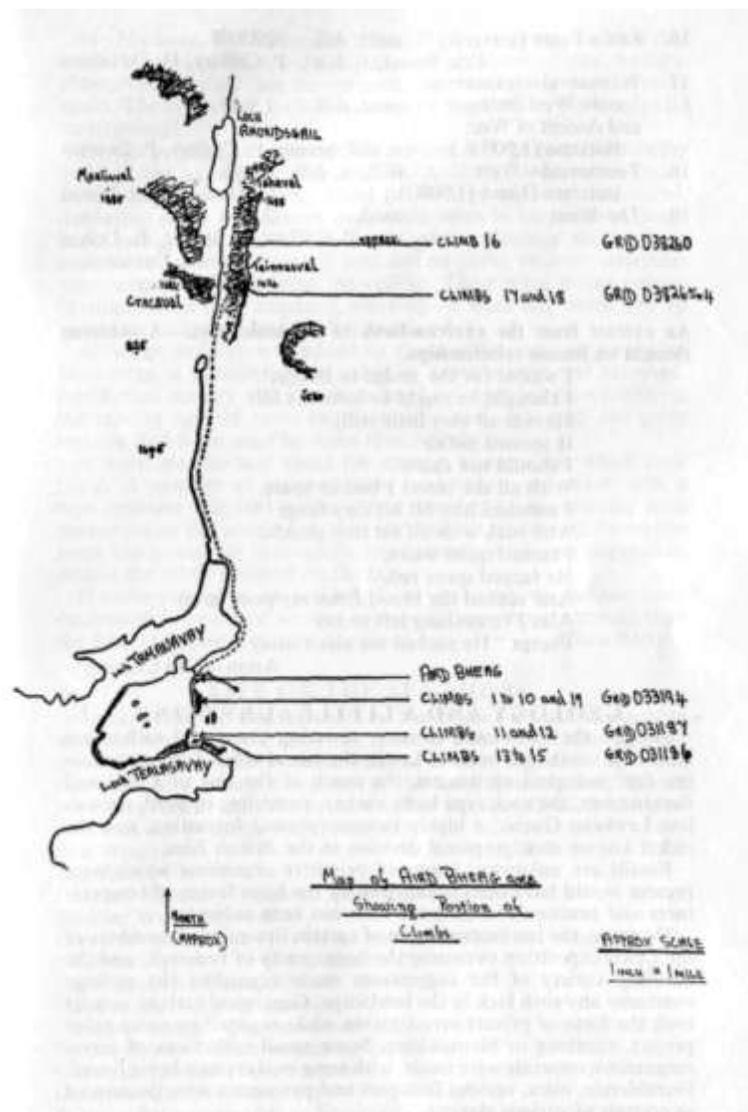
surrounding them in the croft (can anyone beat twenty minutes for "My old man's a dustman")? No, everything rolls together into one glorious memory; it really was worth going, and I'd go again. Oh yes, I'd go again ...
Peter S. Forsaith

CLIMBING IN THE AIRD BHEAG AREA

The rock is Lewisian Gneiss and gives good holds being, in the main, very sound. Many cracks provide very interesting climbing— e.g. Cobweb Crack, The Groove, etc. All grades of climbs may be found, although most of the ones we did were difficult or moderately difficult. The buttresses of Mealisval to the north of the summit, the slabs of Braeaval (east and north-east), and some of the Sea Cliffs around Loch Tealasavay would provide some very much more difficult climbing some of which may well require "pegging". On the other hand climbs like those we have managed this summer are to be found anywhere in the area—even conveniently near the camp site. The Crags of Teinnasval are 700-1,000 ft. high with considerably more "exposure" than anything else we climbed at Aird Bheag and could be made to yield many good routes of various grades,

List of Climbs

- | | | | |
|--------------------------|---------------|---------|--|
| 1. Ellen Borgan | mod. diff. | 24.8.68 | P. Cattery, S. Gelhin, J. Abbott |
| 2. Maya Canz | severe | 24.8.68 | P. Caffery |
| 3. Cookie Crumble | mod. diff. | 24.8.68 | |
| 4. The Groove | diff. | 24.8.68 | D. Davidson, M. Sager, S. David |
| 5. Heather Walk | diff. | 25.8.68 | D. Davidson, M. Sager, S. David |
| 6. Innonimate Slab | mod. diff. | 25.8.68 | B. Kirk, R. Cunliffe, S. David |
| 7. Windy Slab | diff. | 25.8.68 | D. Davidson, S. David, R. Cunliffe, B. Kirk |
| 8. Groove Slab | diff. | 27.8.68 | D. Davidson, S. David, R. Cunliffe, B. Kirk |
| 9. Hoods Crack | mod. | 27.8.68 | D. Davidson, C. Hood, J. Bundock |
| 10. Diamond and Approach | mod. diff. | 27.8.28 | C. Hood, J. Bundock |
| 11. Duncan's Failure | diff. | 28.8.68 | J. Bundock, C. Hood, D. Davidson |
| 12. Walk Up Slab | mod. | 28.8.68 | B. Kirk, C. Hood |
| 13. Braine Bloodrock | diff. | 28.8.68 | D. Davidson, C. Hood, B. Kirk |
| 14. Sir Hereward's Crack | hard v. diff. | 28.8.68 | P. Caffery, R. Dance, R. Braine, C. Conran |
| 15. Cobweb Crack | severe | 28.8.68 | P. Caffery, P. Conran, C. Hood, B. Kirk, D. Davidson |
| | | | P. Caffery |



16. Eric's Entre (traverse) mod. diff. 29.8.68
Eric Wood, B. Kirk, P. Caffery, D. Davidson
17. Teinnasval—transverse
onto West Buttress mod. diff. 1.9.68 and Ascent
of West
Buttress (1,000 ft.) v. diff. severe P. Caffery, P. Conran
18. Teinnasval—West diff./ v. diff. 1.9.68
Buttress Direct (1,000 ft.) D. Davidson, E. Wood
19. The Wrist mod. 2.9.68
P. Caffery, P. Strong, R. Dance Duncan
Davidson Paul Caffery

An extract from (he exercise-book of the stoic poet.—A sobering thought on human relationships.

I waited for the midge to budge,
I thought he ought to have his fill:
He was so very little still,
It seemed unfair
I should not share
With all the blood I had to spare.
I watched him fill his tiny fangs
And suck with all his tiny glands.
I turned quite white,
He turned quite red,
And sucked the blood from my poor head.
Alas I've nothing left to say
Except "He sucked me clean away".

Anon—12th Century

GEOLOGY AND A LITTLE SURVEYING

Despite the "awesome scenery, towering crags and fathomless lochs" of south and western Lewis, the island offers few opportunities for geological excitement. As much of the rest of Lewis will demonstrate, the rock type lacks variety, consisting of hard, crystalline Lewisian Gneiss, a highly metamorphosed formation, and the oldest known stratigraphical division in the British Isles.

Fossils are unknown; traces of primitive organisms which were present would have been obliterated by the huge forces of temperatures and pressure to which the rock has been subjected.

However, the intellectual verve of certain like-minded members of the Lewis expedition overcame the homogeneity of bed-rock, and the dazzling variety of the suggestions made regarding the geology overcame any such lack in the landscape. Geological activity usually took the form of private investigation while engaged on some other project, climbing or bivouacking. Some small collections of ferro-magnesium minerals were made, with some well crystals being found. Hornblende, mica, various feldspars and pyrosceres were discovered in crystals of various size.

On Maelasta, the Hebridcan "Tahiti", a small party insisted that a coal seam had been located. However, the site of this fantastic phenomenon could not be rcfound, and geologists may breathe again. The course of geological enquiry might have been radically transformed!

It was in Maelasta, though, where one of the most interesting finds of the expedition was located. A fairly long narrow cave, etched well into the cliff, along a joint plane, was discovered, displaying some magnificent pegmatitic veins in the mass of more basic intrusive material. The bright pink colouring was striking even in the subdued lighting, and several short, stumpy stalactites were seen protruding from the ceiling. These were either calcitic or siliceous in their chemical make-up—a final test could not be made due to lack of hydrochloric acid.

Although nothing was added to the world's store of geological knowledge, a considerable tonnage of Lewis's rock was removed. Intellectual activity was also stimulated by extended discussions on the relative ages of veins and intrusions and certain of the party insisted that there must be some fossils in the rock.

A word may be said about the attempt at surveying which took place. A number of measurements were taken and made with a tape measure and tent poles, within the camp site, locating such necessities as the comfort station and bakery. However, the equipment was somewhat inadequate, and accurate work was impossible, despite the effort lavished on the task.

If surveying is to be tackled, it is vital that all the necessary equipment is procured so that representations more accurate than the 6-in. O.S. sheets may be produced.

Chris Berry

LIFE ON THE SEA SHORE

Armed with the Collins *Guide to Sea Shore* I set out to scabble and slip around in the seaweeds making a list of all that I found there. This small survey covers the area between high and low water marks in Aird Bheag bay although the Spiny Starfish and Jellyfish were seen further out. An account of the lichens will be found elsewhere. A list of things found follows:

Saw Wrack	
Egg Wrack	
Channel Wrack	} Brown seaweeds
Common Bladder Wrack	
Enteromorpha Linza	} Green seaweeds where the stream
Chaetomorpha	} entered the sea

Great Scallop—One seen
Hone mussel—Fairly common
Common mussel—Very common,
Native Oyster—Often washed up on shore
Common Limpet—Very common,
Common Cockle—Common
Balanus Balanoides (Acorn barnacle)—Abundant on rocks

Common Sea Urchin—Several seen
 Spirobus Borealis on fucus seratus—Common
 Lugworm—A few casts near low tide mark
 Flat Periwinkle
 Small Periwinkle
 Common Periwinkle } Very common
 Rough Periwinkle
 Pheasant shell—A few seen
 Banded chink shell—Common
 Common top shell—Several recorded
 Common Necklace shell—A few present
 Common Shore crab—Common
 Edible crab—Empty shells found
 Hermit crab—One seen
 Beadlet anemone—On rocks
 Spiny starfish—A magnificent specimen, 2 ft. across
 Pomatoceros triqueter
 Jellyfish—One in bay
 Spotted gobbler—Common by jetty and rocks
 4 empty beer cans
 1 rusty engine
 No mermaids (although Erik was seen in bathing trunks)
 One whale skeleton (Loch Tealasavay)

John Round
 (Assisted by Chris Hood)

"THE AIRD BHEAG LIFEBOAT" (The Wreck)

At 6 p.m. on 26th August the Aird Bheag lifeboat left the secret boatyard on her maiden voyage. A finer raft had not sailed the seven seas, at least not Loch Tamanavay. Rear-Admiral Sir John Pugwash Round, S.H.S. strode abroad to discover the phenomenal instability of the worthy vessel. Meanwhile Hornblower Hood was reduced to hysterical laughter in the tug and the Admiral to a nervous WRECK!!

Hastily the Admiral abandoned ship and the *Kon Leaky* was towed round to a mooring in the bay.

Cautiously the Admiralty discussed their next move. It was decided that a stabiliser would not come amiss, so a huge log was lashed to the stern rendering the lifeboat unsinkable, stable but unmovable. She lay six days in the fitter's yard and was then dismantled.

Rear Admiral Sir John Round, S.H.S.
 and Hornblower Hood

TWO ORNITHOLOGICAL REPORTS

On this expedition, I found myself feeling rather disappointed at the lack of land birds. However, the greater number of sea birds that I was able to observe made up for this entirely.

Before the outset of the expedition, I had drawn up plans for building a hide out of natural materials, incorporating brandies from trees; this was my one great mistake! The only trees in the vicinity of Aird Bheag were one or two Rowan trees, which were not suitable for a hide. So the idea of a hide slid into oblivion.

However, by sitting still and keeping my binocular handy, I was able to carry out a fairly comprehensive study of the sort of birds around the camp site, and other places we visited.

The birds which I found most consistent in their behaviour were the Gannets. In fact one could almost set one's watch by them, since they come down each day at almost exactly the same time. They were a joy to watch as their (light, soaring and graceful, was majestic, a cut above other birds.

Firstly, I shall deal with the land birds. The ones I saw most often were the Larks and Blackbirds, and also one pair of Thrushes. The Larks are common enough in this sort of country, but the Blackbirds and Thrushes not so common. In fact I was somewhat surprised to see them so far from human habitation. The female Blackbirds, of which there were two that I saw, were very much lighter than I have seen them before, being an almost auburn colour. The males were not so very different, except that they had white patches in their feathers, which many coastal birds have anyway.

Next come the Wrens. There were quite a large number of these delightful birds, more in fact than I have seen before. They did not seem to be so shy of human beings, and we could come within five yards of them before they flew away.

On Scarp, I saw the only Starlings in the area. There was quite a sizeable flock of them in the trees round the village on Scarp. They seemed to be quite tame, but have obviously been discouraged, because if there was the slightest noise out of the ordinary, they flew away at once.

The same also applies to the Sparrows on Scarp. There was a sizeable flock which flew around the village, although I never saw where they roosted.

Whilst dealing with Scarp, I think it is of interest to point out that there did not seem to be nearly as many Sky-larks on the island as there were about the area of the camp site, although why this should be, I do not know.

In the area around Brennish, and in fact all along the road to Stornoway, there were quite large numbers of Hooded Crows. These rather handsome birds just sat on the road, and surveyed us with what could be described as disgust as we went past. Also competing with the Crows were large numbers of Lapwings, which circled us going their peevish "pee-wit" cry. They seemed to be more nervous than most of the other birds, but whether this was due to human intrusion, or whether they are naturally nervous, I do not know.

Another land bird which was seen on the expedition was one I had been looking for more than anything else. However, it was our esteemed leader, David Cullingford who sighted there one or two Golden Eagles. I was very disappointed at not having seen them myself.

Now to sea birds. The most regular of these to make an appearance, were the Gannets. There were two which one could call local residents, since every day, when they had finished fishing, they flew off to the head of the loch, so it is quite possible that they had a nest hidden away somewhere.

Another species that put in a fairly regular appearance was the I (erring) Gull. These were not so common, as they prefer to be round human habitation, where they can make an easy living on the scraps and rubbish cast into the sea.

Where the Herring Gull has shortcomings, the Fulmar has not. This graceful bird always accompanied us when we went out to sea in *May*. They used to swoop down low over the waves alongside, or soar over our heads, surveying us, or if that did not seem to impress us, they would sweep over the surface of the sea, not more than five yards ahead of us.

Equally graceful on the wing, although a lot larger, were the Greater Black-backed Gulls. They would soar and swoop almost to the very surface of the sea, in a thrilling bravado of aerobatics. Quite often, I found myself waiting for them to plunge into the waves, so close to the surface they came.

The Cormorants and Shags around Scarp, seemed to be very shy, and would make off before we came within fifty yards of them. However, we were able to watch them through binoculars, diving beneath the waves with hardly a splash, and then reappearing, just when one was sure they had drowned. One which I watched stayed underwater for two and a half minutes, and then reappeared without any visible signs of harm.

Oyster Catchers were also abundant round Scarp, flying low over the rocks, with their red bills seeming to glow in the sun. I cannot remember seeing one settle though.

There were quite a number of Divers, Great Northern, Red-throated and Black-throated, although the Great Northern seemed to be the most common. One could hear them flying over the camp site in the early morning and late evening, giving their deep quacking call. They kept well clear of humans, so one could only see them from a distance.

During the two weeks that we stayed at Loch Tomanavay, I only saw two Curlews. One I saw near Brennish, and the other I saw on Scarp. They were both very shy, and flew off at great speed in the other direction.

On the whole then, I had a very enjoyable time studying the bird life around the camp site, and out of the two weeks, there were only two days during which I could not do any bird watching. The sea birds definitely made up for the scarcity of land birds.

Simon Ritter

ORNITHOLOGY (2)

The camp site was at Aird Bheag, the same place as last year, half-way down Loch Tamanavay.

Generally bird watching was poor. Because we were some distance from open sea, few sea birds were seen, and the extreme roughness of the land and time of year possibly explains the absence of many birds. However, Starlings and other domestic birds were fairly common around the camp.

An ornithological bivouac set out to investigate the bird life at Uig sands, but a driving gale restricted observations to our bivouac tents.

Undaunted, the ornithologists canoed to East Tamanavay, but they were frustrated once more, the only result was a piece of driftwood left by their

companions bearing the inscription "no birds, gone home".

Here follows a list of species. The dates and corresponding place-names refer to the first sighting. Other comments follow.

		John Round	Chris Hood
1. Common Snipe	23.8.68	Tamanavay	Common on moors
2. Meadow Pipit	„	Tamanavay	Fairly common round camp
3. Song Thrush	„	Aird Bheag	2 pairs at Aird Bheag
4. Great Northern Diver	„	Aird Bhcag	3 birds often flew over camp
5. Blackbird	„	Aird Bheag	4 birds at Aird Bheag
6. Herring Gull	24.8.68	LochTealasavay	Occasionally in loch
7. Hooded Crow	„	LochTealasavay	Common
8. Common Gull	„	LochTealasavay	Often at sea
9. Gannet	„	Loch Tamanavay	Several dived in loch
10. Cormorant	„	Loch Tamanavay	At the end of the loch
11. Shag	„	Loch Tamanavay	At the end of the loch
12. Fulmar	„	Loch Tamanavay	At the end of the loch
13. Heron	„	Ltxh Tamanavay	Several in the loch
14. Robin	„	Aird Bhcag	One pair at camp
15. Hedge Sparrow	„	Aird Bhcag	Not common
16. Common Tern	„	Aird Bhcag	Occasionally in loch
17. Starling	„	Aird Bheag	Common at camp
18. Wren	„	Aird Bheag	Common on shore
19. Twite	„	Tamanavay	Once seen
20. Curlew	25.8.68	Aird Bhcug	Also at Uig
21. Dipper	„	Aird Bhcag	One seen by stream
22. Rock Pipit	„	Aird Bhcag	Common on shore
23. Lapwing	26.8.68	Aird Bhcag	One at camp. Common Brennish
24. Greenfinch	27.8.68	Aird Bhcag	Two seen
25. Great Black Back	28.8.68	Aird Bheag	Often in loch. Also Uig
26. Golden Eagle	29.8.68	Uig Hills	2 or 3 seen
27. Oyster Catcher	„	Uig Sands	
28. Lesser Black Back	„	Uig Sands	
29. Carrion Crow	„	Uig Hills	One seen
30. Black Headed Gull	30.8.68	Uig Sands	One seen
31. Golden Plover	31.8.68	Uig	
32. Wheatear	„	Uig	
33. Winchat	„	Loch Tamanavay	
34. House sparrow	31.8.68		Very scarce
35. Raven	3.9.68		One seen

"PLEASE DOC, I'VE GOT THIS . . ."

Reflect for a moment, think back to last August. Do you remember... Walking twelve miles in a driving rain to fetch umpteen loaves of fresh bread; Trying to get a 4-knot outboard to push a boat forward against a 5-knot sea; Pitching your tent between the walls of a ruined croft in the hope that the wind wouldn't blow it down; Trying to persuade twenty hungry fellows that Loch Tamanavay mackerel makes better eating than SHS lamb stew; Emptying the dirty washing-up water into the wet-pit only to discover that you hadn't yet removed the washing-up; Calmly eating your lunch in a boat that was drifting back the way you'd come in a Hebridean wind; Do you remember that SHS Expedition you went on? Now think again. Don't these things strike you as a little odd? I mean, as a normal rational human being, do you honestly consider that, when you did all those things you were of sound mind? Or do you agree with me that things weren't quite as they should have been in the grey matter up top?

What can have gone wrong? It cannot have been the Hebridean air, nor even the midges. It can't have been the stale bread or the powdered milk. Whether you like it or not, you are forced to admit that you must have been ill. Yes, you have fallen, another victim to the SHS BUG!

Note: an attack by the SHS Bug leaves you immune to further attacks for six months. After this period you are even more susceptible than before. Avoid, in particular, SHS propaganda—it is a dangerous source of infection.

Stephen Gethin

THE ALL "DAY" WALK

On Wednesday, 28th August a party of four went on a seventeen-mile hike, taking in Islivig where we dealt with the mail, which provided a good excuse for the walk.

The party, consisting of Dave Cullingford, John Bundock, Richard Cunliffe and Stephen David, left camp at 12.30 double summer time—this being quite a reasonable hour for this particular camp, breakfast usually being at 10 o'clock. The wind and driving rain did not deter us in any way as we first made for Tamanavay and then over the moors to Loch Dibidale. Here we saw our first Golden Eagle soaring above the hills on the far side of the loch. It came closer before it disappeared behind us over the moors. The rain eased a little, after first becoming worse as we skirted the west side of Loch Dibidale with the lofty crags of Tamanaival towering high above us. Here we saw a second eagle, much closer than the first as it circled round the crags menacingly observing a pair of deer far below, but he (or she) quickly made off on seeing us.

The glen became darker as the steep slopes closed in around us above the loch, and we found ourselves laced with an arduous climb up to the pass between Loch Tamanavay and Loch Roanagail. It turned out not to be too bad in the end, and on descending the valley we came across several isolated beehive dwellings. The weather had cleared as we picked our way from cairn to cairn along the side of Loch Roanagail to arrive by a loch at the foot of a spectacular rock face, where I took a photograph. We continued on up the valley to Islivig stopping for a snack at a point where we could look out into the Atlantic with only St. Kilda between us and North America; we also saw two people who rather unwittingly avoided us by going up the mountain. We stopped at the Post Office to post and collect mail, continued on to Brennish over the hills overlooking Mealasta to Tamanavay and Aird Bhacag arriving at camp rather late for supper. Nevertheless it had been a well spent and memorable day: we had walked far, seen plenty and of course collected long awaited news for some members of the expedition.

Stephen David

LICHENS AT AIRD BHEAG

The lichens surrounding Loch Tamanavay are not particularly varied simply because the terrain is not either. However I was able to find and identify twenty-four different lichens. There are, no doubt, more species there but it would have been very long and time consuming to search the whole area. Here is a list with a short description of each for use on any further expedition: *Vermicaria maura*

A common species that grows on hard rocks by the sea. It grows in a broad belt at about high tide mark, looking from a distance like a tar stain. *Vermicaria mucosa*

Found in the intertidal zone, it is a fairly thick greenish growth with tiny black spots, these being the reproductive spores. *Athyricia sublittoralis*

This is a lichen that grows on limpets and Barnacle shells, in very small pits.

The next group of lichens occur just above the high tide mark level on rocks. They are given in the order in which they grow, from high tide upwards. *Caloplaca marina*

The thallus (plant-body) consists of orange coloured granules, sometimes in round patches but more often spreading indefinitely. *Caloplaca thalincola*

A bright orange lichen that forms rosettes with narrow radiating marginal lobes, and a continuous but cracked centre. *Xanthoria parietina*

This is perhaps the best known lichen in Britain, it grows in an enormous number of habitats. In this case it was above high tide. The thallus when growing in the sunlight is bright orange but in the

shade it is a yellow or greenish colour. When the thallus is young it is circular in outline but when old the centre tends to die away leaving the growing margin or series of arcs; the edge has very distinct lobes while the centre is more continuous and crowded with apothecia (reproductive spores). *Lecanora atra*

This is a common rock lichen close to the sea. The grey thallus is fairly thick and rough and often cracked into sections. The apothecia have black discs and entire thalline margins. When the apothecia are cut open they are seen to be black inside, this feature separates them from a similar species *Lecanora gangaleoides* which wasn't at Aird Bheag. *Ochrolechia parella*

This is another grey lichen that is similar to *Lecanora atra*. It has a narrow white rim and the older parts contain the apothecia, they are disc-like with a thick thalline margin. *Lecania prosechoides*

This is a reasonably rare lichen, it is whitish or grey with an orbicular thallus, the apothecia have a thalline margin and a very powdery appearance. *Ramalina siliquosa*

This lichen grows best where there is constant sea spray, perhaps this explains its scarcity in Loch Tamanavay. Well-developed plants are composed of coarse tufts unbranched thongs. *Anaptychia fit sea*

This lichen forms rosettes up to 10 cm across, it is brown in colour when dry and dark green when wet.

TERRESTIAL LICHENS

Evernia furfuracea

This species grows on rocks, the thallus is greenish when wet, white below near the tips, and grey or black in the older parts. *Parmelia saxialis*

A grey lichen that occurs on stone as well as trees. The upper surface of the young lobes is marked by a fine network of white lines; the lower surface is dark with rhizinae (hair-like attachments) up to the edge.

Parmelia omphalodes

This species is often confused with the last one mentioned. The lobes are square cut and the lichen forms rather loose mats on boulders and walls.

Parmelia physodes

This lichen grows just about anywhere and is very common everywhere. The lobes are hollow and tend to ascend.

Corsicium viride

It is the only species in the genus; it has a bluish-green colour when wet. It grows on wet peat and is common on Scottish moors.

Cladonia inifwxa

This is a very common lichen occurring on heaths, moors, bogs etc. The plant has a yellowish-grey colour, with the tips of the branches spreading in all directions. It is rarely fertile. *Cladonia suhcervicornis*

Occurs in mountainous regions where it forms compact cushions of thickish grey scales on boulders and walls. *Cladonia pyxidala*

It is sometimes called the common cup lichen and is very common over the whole country. The cups are on top of short stalks (podetia) 1 to 2 cm high. The surface of the cup is coarsely warted or granular. The apothecia are borne on short stalks around the rim of the cup. *Cladonia squanwsa*

Grows on moorland and in wet woods. The podetia are covered especially towards the base with numerous small scales; on moors the lichen is usually brown but at Aird Bheag the lichen was green probably because of the damp peat. *Cladonia jimbriata*

This species is often confused with *C. pyxidala*, the difference being that the podetia are usually taller and more slender and the stalk region, which is more pronounced suddenly expands into the cup at the top. It is common on soil, trees, fence-posts etc. *Cladonia macilenta*

This is a very common lichen on peaty soils; the basal crust of scales may be conspicuous, the podetia are tall and branched with red apothecia. *Cladonia fioerk eana*

This is rather similar to the last species the difference being that the podetia are shorter and the **apothecia** are large in relation to the size of the plant. This species is also common on peaty soils. *Cladonia coccifera*

The plant has red apothecia, is common on peaty soils and resembles *C. pyxidala* in every other aspect except that *pyxidata* has brown apothecia. *Cladonia coniocraea*

This species was found on a fence-post, and consists of basal scales of a green or grey-green colour. On the scales are borne the awl-shaped podetia, \ to 2 cm high. *Thamnolia venicularis*

The only species in this genus, it is never fertile therefore its classification is uncertain. The chalky-white, worm-like thallus is very characteristic. The individual stems are unbranched or only very sparsely forked; they are erect or prostrate. The lichen grows amongst mosses on peat in mountainous districts of Scotland, it is quite rare. *Cetraria nivalis*

This is an Alpine and Arctic lichen and is found on high Scottish moors where it is sometimes abundant. It is usually found at a height of 2000 ft. or more, in this case it was found between 1,300

and 1,600 ft. The pale lemon-yellow thallus, rather irregularly forked is thin and its surface is thrown into a reticulate system of ridges and hollows. The margins are frilly and again tend to be incurved. References

The Observers Book of Lichens—Kershaw & Alvin.

A Guide to the Study of Lichens—Duncan U. K.

The Biology of Lichens—Hale M. E., Jnr.

Other books do exist but are hard to obtain because they are out of print.
David Vale

SITTING ON A HEBRIDEAN ROCK

Sitting on a rock where it all began

The grand beginning of worthless old man.

Did it begin or was it just ending?

Another repeat, the will of God. bending?

The sea is all clear now the birds are still flying.

The baby is crying, the old man is dying.

But where are they now?—not near me,

Sitting on a rock, staring out to sea.

Oh look there, an insect; the world is not dead

Or at least I hope not I've still to go to bed.

Wonder how Marie is, and my Mum and Dad.

Oh I forgot I've finished with her; hope she's not too bad.

Then of course there's Margaret I must not forget.

Just think, next Saturday I'll be taking

Dad's bet. But where are they now?—not near me

Sitting on a rock staring out to sea.

Brian Wood

BIVOUAC TO UIG

This venture must surely rank along with some of the great feats of human endurance and courage of our time. A tale which includes the flagging down of a Co-op van and the Quest for the lost ale house. The party was hand chosen and consisted of John Round (general nuisance), Pete Forsyth (cook), Robert Cunliffe and Steve David (specially selected odd bods) and a mysterious fellow with a sadistic laugh-CULLINGFORD.

We set off very merrily and made our way to Brennish. From (here not so merrily we made our way to Uig Sands where we pitched camp by some sheep pens. Up till now everything was very civilised and not unusual for a bivouac—we even had a gentle romp over the sands after dinner.

No sooner had we got to bed than the wind rose, and wig-warn number one collapsed. Among the muffled groans from beneath the respiring canvas, John and I gathered that we had been elected to get out and put it up again. This was done under the influence of orders yelled from within by our (most gracious) leader! Next day the wind continued to howl but with the addition of rain. We all left camp to walk to Uig in search of refreshment, which alas, we

found was just down the road—ten miles. We returned immediately to the sheep pen where we slept for twenty of the next twenty-four hours. Some of the time we spent telling absurd jokes which when told in sane conditions would have probably resulted in the loss of life for the performer.

The weather cleared up the next day and we moved back to Aird Bheag, and such ridiculous comments as "Had a good time?" and "Where is the booze then?"
Christopher Hood

AIRD BHEAG BREAD; AS BURNT BY P.S.F.

3 lbs. plain flour

11 teaspoons salt

1 quart lukewarm water

1 oz. yeast dissolved in 1 gill
of water

1. Put flour and salt in bowl; add 1 pint of water to the dissolved yeast, pour into well in flour.
2. Stir in flour from sides until the mixture in centre is thick, (like batter) sprinkle with a little flour.
3. Cover with (clean!) cloth and put to warm on dryer until surface is covered with bubbles.
4. Stir in rest of flour and use as much of the water as necessary to make a moist dough.
5. KNEAD!
6. Replace in bowl and stand on dryer to rise for about an hour—until it doubles its bulk.
7. Knead again, put into greased, floured baking tins (warmed). Stand to rise for 20 minutes.
8. Bake in hot oven for 1 1/2 hours.

P. S. Forsaith

MEALASTA

Strolling past Cook's Travel Agency at Aird Bheag one day, Paul Conran and I happened to notice a small poster in the window. It was advertising a holiday on the Mealastan Riviera nearly free of charge; we thought we would like to go, so we assembled: Bruce Kirk, Robert Braine, Robin Dance, Pete Strong and Paul Caflery as our leader.

We set out in the morning in the *May* with David Cullingford taking the helm (everybody was wearing a life-jacket). After fifty minutes we reached the golden sands of Mealasta; but this is where David made his mistake for he tried to surf the *May* on to the beach. Consequently when the boat hit the sand it tipped over and all our food tipped into the bottom of the boat which was very oily. After unloading wet bread and soggy penguins we decided we needed a rest; stripping off we lay down on the sand and rested in the hot sun. Satisfying each biological urge that came along we thought we would have lunch, so we collected drift wood and built a fire. While heating up some water for a cup of tea we heard a boat approaching the island, and going down to a cove where the boat came in, we saw people disembarking, clutching cameras; we thought that they might be American tourists. However we discovered that it

was Sir Hereward Wake who owned the island. He wished that he had brought some goodies for us and that he and his party could spend the night with us. Unfortunately Sir Hereward departed after about an hour and left us to the sun. We returned to our fire to find that our water had boiled over and our fire was practically out.

When the sun became too cold for us we decided to make our supper. Cooked by Pete Strong this turned out to be an extremely good meal (Pete happens to work in a steak-house in Chelmsford). The evening became quite chilly, so to warm ourselves we decided to have a game of cricket. Two logs imagined themselves as stumps, part of an oar served for a bat, and an old Fairy Snow bottle filled with sand as a ball. When we had warmed up we went down to the beach and watched the sea, which by this time had become rather rough and had washed an enormous crab on to the beach. We tried to get hold of it, but unfortunately it escaped, because none of us fancied the loss of our fingers. We retired to bed after Paul Conran and I had drunk a bottle of Sauternes.

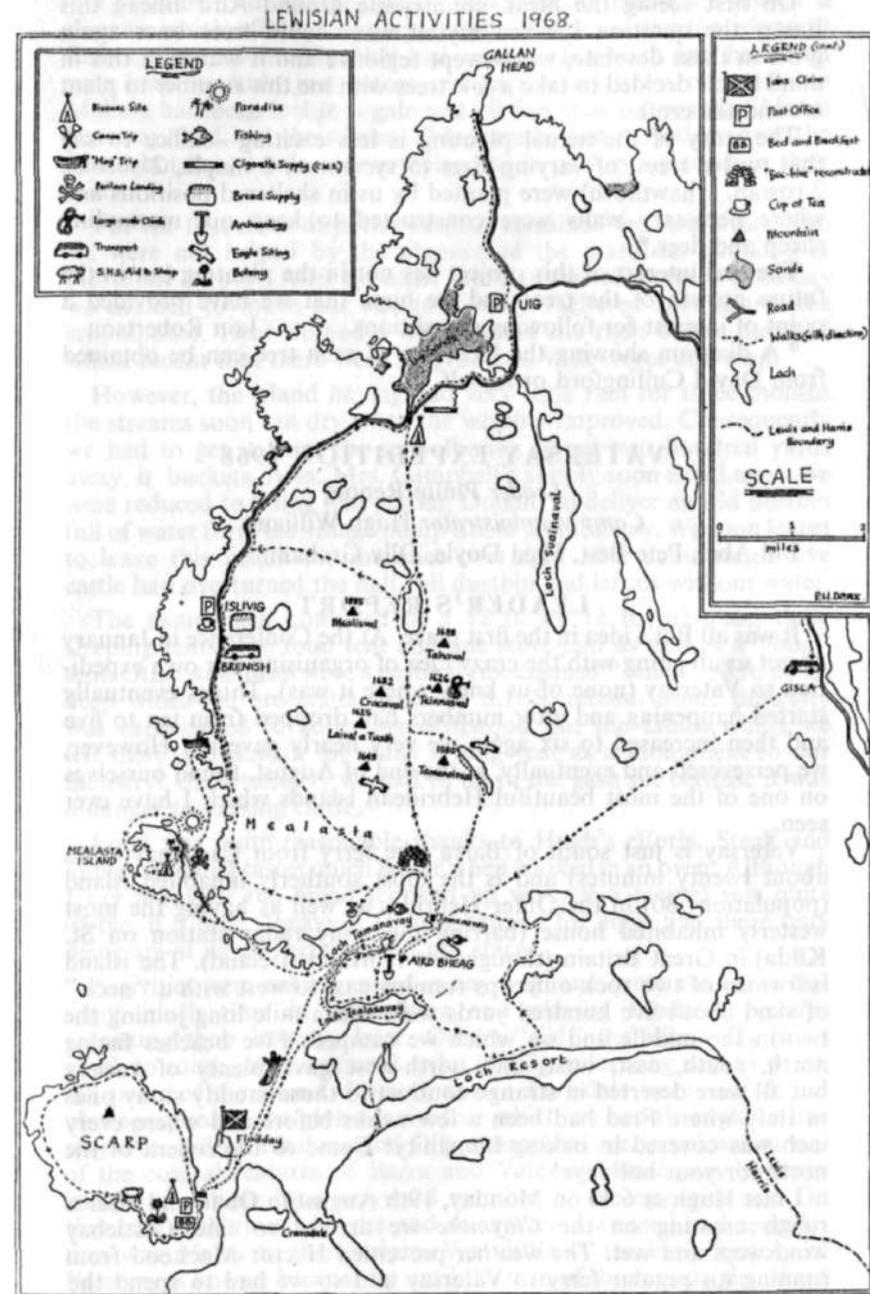
We struggled out of bed at around 10.30 and had breakfast at 11 a.m. consisting of a couple of boiled eggs and soggy Corn Flakes. The sea was rough so we were hoping that the *May* would not come to fetch us and that we might have another day of lazing about on the island. But unfortunately the boat turned up on time with Chris Berry at the helm. We all left the island burnt by the sun, some more than others.

Dave Vale

LEWIS OF THE MOORS

Travelling from Gisla to Aird Bheag one could be forgiven for not realising that one had passed through the Forest of Morsgail for to see even one tree during the journey is no small accomplishment. But for the handful of firs which huddle round the Lodge itself there are no trees between Morsgail and Aird Bheag; and then a mere half-dozen stunted Rowans make up the total "forest" covering of the peninsula itself. A similar situation exists throughout the whole of the "Long Island"—mile after mile of bleak, soft-curved moors, bald hills, featureless valleys, and always the same story—not a tree in sight. Why then Morsgail Forest and the Forest of Harris?

The Lewisians will tell you that Lewis, like the rest of Britain, was once covered by forests but—so the legend runs—they were burnt down by the Norse during their rule of the island (c. 888-1158) to prevent the Islanders from hiding in them and ambushing the invaders. This tradition has been superseded however and it is now believed that the trees destruction occurred over a long period of time during the unsettled centuries when internal clan wars flourished and the highlands were under attack from the Lowland Scots and the English. Now the names alone survive a constant reminder of the large forests which centuries ago covered the islands.



On first seeing the bleak countryside around Aird Bheag this Easter the question I asked myself was—could trees once again grow in these desolate, wind-swept regions? and it was with this in mind that I decided to take a few trees with me this summer to plant around the croft.

The story of the actual planting is less exciting—suffice to say that twelve trees, of varying sizes (5 sycamore, 2 maple, 2 sorbus, 2 rowan, 1 hawthorn) were planted by us in sheltered positions and where necessary walls were constructed to keep out marauding sheep and deer.*

The real interest of this project lies not in the planting but in the future growth of the trees and we hope that we have provided a point of interest for following expeditions. Iain Robertson

* A diagram showing the locations of each tree can be obtained from David Cullingford or myself.

VATERSAY EXPEDITION 1968

Leader Philip Renold *Camp Administrator* Hugh Williams, Bill Abel, Pete Best, Fred Doyle, Olly Graham.

LEADER'S REPORT

It was all Bot's idea in the first place. At the Conference in January he got us all going with the crazy idea of organising our own expedition to Vatersay (none of us knew where it was). Things eventually started happening and after numbers had dropped from ten to five and then increased to six again we very nearly gave up. However, we persevered and eventually, at the end of August, found ourselves on one of the most beautiful Hebridean islands which I have ever seen.

Vatersay is just south of Barra (the ferry from Castlebay takes about twenty minutes) and is the most southerly inhabited island (population: 80) in the Outer Hebrides as well as having the most westerly inhabited house (barring the army radar station on St. Kilda) in Great Britain (though not Northern Ireland). The island is formed of two rock outcrops running east to west with a "neck" of sand about five hundred yards wide and a mile long joining the two in the middle and on which we camped. Five beaches facing north, south, east, west, and north-west gave plenty of variety but all were deserted in strange contrast to those muddy stony ones in Italy where Fred had been a few weeks before and where every inch was covered in baking humanity! Come to the riviera of the north for your holidays!

I met Hugh at 6.30 on Monday, 19th August in Oban and after a rough crossing on the *Claymore* we arrived to find Castlebay windswept and wet. The weather prevented Hector MacLeod from running his regular ferry to Vatersay and so we had to spend the night camped in Castlebay.

The same bad weather which hindered us had also caused a disaster which affected us very closely. When visiting the island at Easter, Angus John MacNeil had acted as ferryman and had been very helpful. Alas, just before our arrival his boat, on a trip to Mallaig had been lost in a gale and all five crew on board, all from Vatersay, had lost their lives. This tragedy cast a shadow over the island but the islanders nevertheless made us very welcome in their midst.

For the first three days the weather remained wet and windy and we were not helped by the absence of the marquee, stranded at Northbay Airport. After the other four had arrived on the Wednesday we decided to move our site to a more sheltered spot nearer the schoolhouse. Here we had a well drained site right beside the road which meant that there were no problems with stores and mail.

However, the island having had very little rain for three months the streams soon ran dry when the weather improved. Consequently we had to get it from the schoolhouse, about two hundred yards away, in buckets. Alas, Mrs. Campbell's supply soon dried up so we were reduced to filling and getting Donald to deliver an old dustbin full of water from the village pump about a mile away. We soon learnt to leave this inside the marquee overnight after some inquisitive cattle had overturned the half-full dustbin and left us without water.

The camp itself consisted of a 12 ft. by 12 ft. marquee, three sleeping tents, one food tent and one store tent as well as a "bog" tent. Other amenities were a gash pit (nicknamed "Janice") 8 ft. 2| in. deep which we are claiming as an S.H.S. record. Some difficulty was experienced in collecting driftwood but the tables which we left there will remain for many a long year as a monument to our industry. Unfortunately we had to fill in the gash pit because it was a danger to passing cattle.

Food was quite reasonable thanks to Hugh's efforts. Steak and kidney pudding tastes much better when cooked in an oven. Although I say it myself the bread (cooked up without a recipe) was quite edible, if a little "heavy". Having catered for eight and there only being six of us we certainly did not starve.

Activities were not organised in any way, and some unused to this spent much time in sunbathing and playing football, perhaps regretting their lethargy later. Others "did" the island (2| miles north to south, each section 2 miles and 34 miles long east to west). All parts of the island, from Coalis to Earisdale were visited and photographed in the glorious weather which we had throughout our stay. Pete did ornithology and Oily attempted a geographical survey of the coastal features of Barra and Vatersay which was however hampered a little by a wayward member of the opposite sex. On Vatersay itself round houses and duns were examined and speculation was rife as to their origin. Very little of the early history of Vatersay is known because up until the turn of the century the island was owned by the Gordons and occupied by a tenant farmer.

In 1907 (?) eleven men from Mingulay landed on Vatersay and refused to return to their island because they were too isolated and badly off there. Known as the "Vatersay Raiders" they demanded to be allowed to stay and occupy the island and eventually the Ministry of Agriculture stepped in and bought the island, and split it up into crofts. The following poem was written about them:

Presented to the Vatersay Raiders (in recognition of the valour) by the Lochs Land League.

VATERSAY

Giving to our country glory,
Bright for aye, Shall be heard in song and
story,
Vatersay. For the dragon,
Devastations
Shows the ray, Charg'd with its
annihilation,
Vatersay. Here's a health to the
eleven,
In the fray. Whose devotion raised to
heaven,
Vatersay. May their children's children
never
Homage pay To the power from which they
sever,
Vatersay. As with life endowed, a-
thrilling
Rock and clay With joy that
now is filling
Vatersay. All the Islands
Hebridean,
Soon may they Follow with the
victor's pean—
Vatersay

Vatersay was the first island to throw off the yoke of the tenant farmer whose house can still be seen, in ruins, above the village.

Playing cards was our main evening activity. I never want to play Solo, Whist or Black Maria again. We are claiming another S.H.S. record for playing Black Maria (we had another name for it) for twelve hours non-stop (10 p.m. to 10 a.m.).

By way of thanking the islanders we painted the inscription on a monument overlooking the west bay which reads:

ON 23RD SEPTEMBER 1853 THE SHIP ANNIE JANE WITH EMIGRANTS FROM LIVERPOOL TO QUEBEC ABOARD WAS TOTALLY WRECKED IN THIS BAY AND THREE FOURTHS OF THE CREW AND PASSENGERS NUMBERING 350 MEN WOMEN AND CHILDREN WERE DROWNED AND THEIR BODIES INTERRED HERE.

Perhaps this small service will in part repay the islanders for all their help in time of another great tragedy, with the loss of the "Marie Dhone" in the Minch.

In particular our thanks must go to Mrs. Campbell, the schoolmistress who lent us everything from a dustbin to methylated spirits and in whose house we had many a cup of tea. I would also like to thank Mr. MacQueen at Oban High School, McCulloch's in Oban, the S.C.W.S. Castlebay, Hector MacLeod the ferryman and Donald Campbell the postman as well as Mr. S. L. Hamilton of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food for Scotland who gave us permission to use the island.

The expedition suffered from being too small in numbers but apart from this it was successful and I enjoyed myself and intend to return to Vatersay someday soon.

Philip Renold

THE CAMP

After a few days on Vatersay we managed to find a camp site which was ideal in most respects. The soil was sand, the surrounding dunes sheltered us and, when it rained, the hills provided water. We were very close to the sea, there being two magnificent shell-sand beaches on either side of our site.

Apart from our lack of numbers (only six) and the fact that two people had to leave early, our greatest disadvantage was our closeness to civilisation. Our glorious leader (quickly renamed John B. Dob Mk. II) was frequently to be found in local houses, sitting down under the excuse of sociology, drinking tea or anything stronger that was offered (just jealous, that's all—P.N.R.).

The camp set-up was good. The marquee was divided into two parts, one for preparing food and the other for playing cards in the evenings, drinking coffee and eating (in that order!). Use of gadgets (self-emptying ash-trays, mug racks etc.) made camp life much easier.

When all is taken into account the expedition may have left something to be desired but it was certainly an experience, and a most enjoyable one at that! Hugh Williams

ORNITHOLOGY REPORT, 1968

Introductory

I cannot help but feel a little frustrated when I view this summer's results. While we now have surveys of two islands new to us, South Rona and South Uist, we still are not precise enough in our records.

It is true that the expeditions are rather too late for investigation of breeding birds, but next year must see us (a) attempting more counts than we now achieve, especially of sea-bird colonies, and (b) giving grid references for those colonies.

Until we can supply that information, our reports remain of little help to the more expert bodies that would like us to give them facts about the Hebrides. In particular, we should be able to help with the national sea-bird count of next year (Operation Seafarer),

and possibly with the ornithological atlas being prepared by the British Trust for Ornithology. We are uniquely well-placed for doing so.

General

Here follows the reports from South Uist and South Rona; I am at present compiling a full list for Colonsay, which I shall compare with Loder's results in his book published in 1935. I hope it will be in the next report.

South Uist (29th July 16th August)

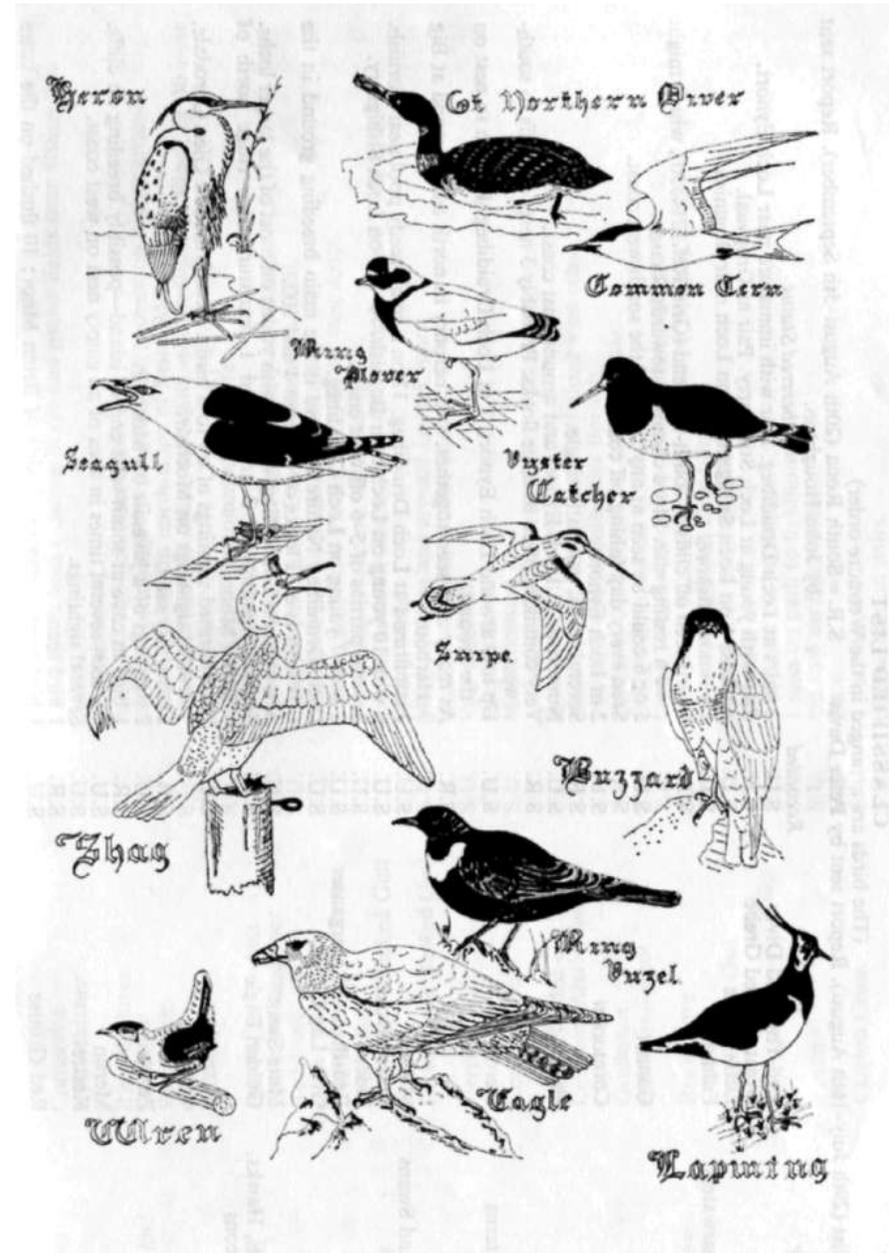
On our first visit to this island, the home of the Nature Conservancy's Loch Druidibeg reserve, we made a complete general survey. South Uist is remarkable for the contrast between the craggy east coast, with its mountain streams, boggy valleys and sea lochs, and the flat sandy west coast, with much cultivation of the land. There is no woodland except a small island of pine and laurels in the Loch Druidibeg reserve, hence the absence of warblers and other species from the list.

Mention should be made of the fact that the Loch Druidibeg reserve is the main breeding centre for Greylag Geese, and also that the number of Buzzards seen was low, despite the many rabbits on the island.

South Rona (20th August 5th September)

This small, uninhabited island lies to the east of Skye, being extremely rugged with no mud-flats or sandy beaches. There is a wood at Big Harbour containing Larch, Oak, Birch, Aspen and Beech, but otherwise trees are of immature size. A conspicuous number of sea birds were absent, although there was evidence of Shags, Gulls and Fulmars nesting on the cliffs in the south west of the island (Grid Ref. 614550—Sheet 25).

An old heronry was found in the north end of the Big Harbour wood consisting of five massive nests, four in the same tree which had been blown down to an angle of 30°. Remains of four eggs lay on the ground, and at a guess, it was deserted during the breeding season of last year, or the year before.



Family

Species

Recorded

Observed Status

Tits

Common everywhere.
Occasional birds on shore at low tide.
6 birds seen at north-east end of Big Harbour.
Often seen in Big Harbour wood.

Creepers
Wrens

Common in willow and birch; also Big Harbour.
1 bird in Big Harbour wood.
Flocks of 10-12 in Silver Birch.

Dippers
Thrushes and Chats

2 in Big Harbour wood.
All around rocky coast, and alongside rocky streams.
Almost universal. (Warbling song noted—very confusing!)

Warblers

3 at Loch Hellisdale.
2 seen—1 in crofter's garden.
More often heard than seen.

Goldcrests

1 seen.

Accentors
Pipits and Wagtails

Abundant.
1 bird seen.
Seen with young on most areas of east coast.

Starlings
Finches and Buntings

2 pairs south-east of Big Harbour.
2 juveniles, north Loch Eynort.
Often seen in Big Harbour wood.

1 seen among Silver Birch.

Confining to very restricted area at Larches at north end of Big Harbour wood. 8-10 birds.

Sparrows

Very secretive, though common near camp.

Abundant.
Common on moorland and bog—more to north than south.
On east coast—many unconfirmed, several confirmed.

Relatively common on shore.
Only seen for 2 seconds, identified by call. (May have been pied.)
Flocks of up to 40 around crofts near Stilligarry.

Party of 4 near Stilligarry.
Flock of about 20, south side of Beinn Mhor, and north Loch Eynort.
10-15 seen in Big Harbour wood, and in groups of trees at south end of the island.

Several singing on Mochair near Stilligarry.
Single birds seen at various places—Bormick, Stilligarry, etc.

Common around house near Stilligarry—less common on eastern half of island.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

- Chairman:* John Abbott
Secretary: Clifford Fountaine *Finance:* Anthony Bradshaw
Membership and Recruitment: John Houghton
Officers: Alan Bateman *Stores:* Philip Renold
Provisions: David Vigar *Boats:* Nick Yates
Maps, Charts, Surveying and Meteorology:
 John Abbott, 2 i/c Hugh Williams
Travel: Gavin McPherson, 2 i/c Charles Jackson
Ties: Gavin McPherson *Editor of Report:* Christopher Dawson
Conference 1969: John Houghton *Stationery:* Mike Jeavons

PROJECT ADVISERS

- Natural History:* John Dobinson
Ornithology: Alan Bateman
Geography/Cartography: John Abbott
Archaeology: Geoff David

EXPEDITIONS 1969

- GROUP H (12 1/4-14 1/2 years) *COLONSAY EXPEDITION*
 19th August-5th September Leader; Roger Trafford
- GROUP G (14—15 1/2 years) Leader: Chris Guscoigne-Hart
 29th July-15th August
- GROUP F (15-16 1/2 years) *LEWIS EXPEDITION*
 18th August-5th September Leader: John Hutchinson
- GROUP E (16 1/2 and over) *SOUTH U/ST EXPEDITION*
 29th July-19th August Leader: John Cullingford
- SHETLANDS (17 and over).
 A reconnaissance expedition of twelve people.
 16th August-4th September Leader: Chris Dawson

*** 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**