



Welcome to the first 'Newslink' of 1986. It's a bit jam-packed and for once it's been a real editorial struggle trying to accommodate all the articles. I hope you enjoy it, remember that I welcome all views whether constructive or cynical.

REUNION '85

I must confess that I was a little cynical about the idea of having the annual reunion over New Year's Eve. So it was with ecstatic relief that it turned out to be one of the best New Years that I can ever recall. A modest seventy-odd turned up at the High Leigh Conference Centre on Monday 30th. There were lots of new faces amongst the old, familiar crowd of staunch supporters. The occasion followed the usual format with slide show of the year's expeditions. On New Year's Eve we all turned out in our finery for the Annual Dinner, all except Jonathan Orr who insisted on dressing up as Santa Claus! After the speeches and toasts, we all retired to begin the show-down of festivities. The sketches revealed that acting talent is not entirely absent in SHS Expeditions. Bob Geldof, due to make an impromptu visit, failed to show up. Instead, some three-foot midget wearing a large hat of approximately equal size, trotted in, danced and trotted out again. Jonathan Orr denied any association. Old Father Time (Alan Smith) stepped in and chased the Grim Reaper (Richard Pitts) out just before midnight. Then we all boogied well into 1986 until VERY late to the Robert McDermott "light 'n laser" Road Show Disco. The one turntable held up for the entire night!

A few hours later most of us were up in action at the breakfast table followed by a look ahead to next year and the group discussion where everyone's views were strongly voiced. A summary of the minutes is written below.

It was a great Reunion and we all rejoiced in making many new friends as well as meeting again those we knew well. On behalf of SHS, 'Newslink' would like to thank Tony Ball for once again stage managing an epic three days.

TOPICS DISCUSSED AT THE GROUP MEETING - ANNUAL REUNION 1/1/86

What image do members have of SHS? People were asked why they went on SHS expeditions and it seemed that three main reasons were prevalent, i) Because of the Hebrides themselves, ii) because of the challenge that expeditions created and iii) because of the people one met. They felt one disadvantage was the cost of expeditions, especially for older age groups. Some people felt that we ran adventure holidays. Idle members were universally disliked. Somebody felt our expeditions were not REAL expeditions. Most agreed that overall they got a lot out of SHS expeditions and we did a good job.

Boats: The current engines were adequate and we did not need a bigger engine. The P4 was used for ferry purposes more than safety. How about an idiot's Guide to the engine?!

Sailing: The call was for more Toppers. Two per expedition would be great - more people could sail and could compete against each other.

Canoes: The quality of canoes it was felt was a little below standard. The rims of the cockpits were a bit sharp and tended to cut legs. The spray-decks were a little inadequate.

Reports: It was a good job to get it out by the Reunion. It was felt the design of the cover could be done by members. It needed MORE photo's. The content was good but in terms of presentation it needed more care with clearer print or better quality paper. (My copy was OK - Ed). Most thought it was ace. Well done Kirsten and Bridget. Thanks to Gavin.

Reunion: More time should be put aside for small group discussion. A Bring and Buy Sale would be a good idea for next year. More encouragement should be given for people to come.

Projects: Need more project AL's.

Assistant Leaders: On the whole AL's were good this year. Ideal AL's should be fun, interested, able to communicate and teach. They should be competent and skilful in a particular field. A wide range of ages was a good aim. How about recruiting some nurses as first aid AL's ?

SHS Enterprises: Pullovers with the SHS motif was a good idea. Car stickers were worth considering although as advertising, they are worthless as they do not tell people who we are.

Recruitment: This was held to be very important although people were worried as to what they could do. People are apathetic about recruitment. The new brochure was welcomed and showed signs of improving the SHS presentation and image.

Passenger Travel: Coaches were not popular.

Why do SHS members not return? It was felt a study via a post-expedition questionnaire should be started to investigate this subject.

Newslink: It was felt that 'Newslink' was a good idea but needed brightening up. It should be more libellous and more should be printed per year. There was a cry for quizzes, crosswords and recipes. Newslink should supply useful addresses and dates (Will do - Ed !)

Members'Observer to the Board: Four people stood for election for this post: Steve Brown, Morag Warburton, Frank Farnham and Roy Tooth. After a fierce session of candidate canvassing and voting, Roy was elected. His job is to attend Board meetings and voice members' views and report back via 'Newslink' on any relevant decisions.

If you have any views to comments about 'SHS Expeditions' please write to 'Newslink' (address on back page).

LOST PROPERTY

A pair of green over-trousers were left at the reunion: If anybody feels they could be the owner of the above item then please contact Tony Ball. Who was wearing green over-trousers ?

ISLAND NEWS

Colonsay Cut-Off: Once again Colonsay was cut-off for over a week by the severe storms that swept across Scotland in the middle of the month. Mr Kevin Byrne the landlord at the Scalasaig Hotel was reported as being well stocked with drink despite the isolation. Our own Mike Young was last seen heading for Colonsay. No-one quite knows if he made it. The Colonsay Appreciation Society were marooned last year over New Year and had an extended holiday as the MacBrayne's ferry couldn't get out of Oban. Too bad, I say.

Money for the Western Isles: The EEC is to aid the Outer Hebrides by giving them £15 million in aid to improve living and working conditions on the Islands. In addition, it will encourage tourism and small-scale industries. The money is to be spent over five years. £12 millions will be to improve farm production and other rural projects. £2 millions will be directed towards housing development, tourism and small industries and £500,000 is for environmental protection.

The Islands badly need financial assistance. The standard of living in the Outer Isles is decaying and this aid will help in keeping the Islands less behind that of the rest of Europe. At the moment the standard of living is well below any to be found on mainland Britain.

JURA 1985

Alison Townend has send 'Newslink' an account of her Jura expedition which was printed in her school magazine. It would be a good idea if other members could write similar accounts and send them into your own School mags, the local press or even your head master. It would give us excellent publicity. Thanks Alison.

The Schools Hebridean Society brochure was placed in front of me one evening and I was asked "How do you fancy that then?" That was the first I heard of my three week summer holiday to Jura, the southern most Island of the Hebrides.

After filling in and signing various forms I was on the coach along with one, large, heavy rucksack to Glasgow. I was met at the coach station by one of the Society's Assistant Leaders (AL's) and taken to the central station where thirty-two other members and leaders were waiting. After getting everybody together we were taken back to the coach station by our leader, Rob McDermott (known by the members as "Budgie"). We boarded a coach for a hundred and four mile drive to Kennacraig ferry terminal. When we arrived we found we had a six hour wait and the only building in sight was locked. The ever- promising Scottish weather gave way again, it rained and rained and rained !!!!

We eventually boarded a large ferry and had a 2½ hour crossing to Islay. We left the ferry and boarded another coach across Islay where we were due to get a World War II landing craft to Jura ! Eventually we arrived. We walked for about ten minutes to Jura's village hall where we were to spend our first night. Absolutely shattered, I ate my tea, unrolled my sleeping bag and settled down to a welcome night's sleep.

We were awoken next morning at 6.00 am of all times !!! Our sacks, along with some members were loaded onto a mini-bus and taken to the boat-house on the edge of Loch Tarbert. Most of our heavy equipment had already been taken down by lorry and was being ferried to the site by the Estate boat. The Society's inflatable boat (P4) was waiting to transport members to the site. Finally everything had arrived safe and sound by about 4.00 pm. Whilst the rain had stopped we fought with the eight man, Icelandic tents to get them in something like standing order. After the tents had been erected, we had to put up the marquee which would be used for eating in, storage etc. Setting up camp was a tiring job but it had to be done. Where we set up, we had the advantage of an old hunting lodge which we used as a kitchen and a drying room, and believe me, they were well used!! After eating a very nice three course meal at 1.00 am we had a warm tent and sleeping bag waiting for us. Day 2 was spent finishing off camp. We had a stream flowing into the loch, on the opposite side of the stream we erected the two toilet tents!

During an extremely wet but fun-packed expedition, we covered a good number of activities. We experienced rock climbing, abseiling, canoeing and sailing. We did a three day bivvy to the north of Jura, we walked 33 miles to see where George Orwell wrote '1984'. A bivvy is where you sleep out under the stars with just a sleeping bag and a large plastic bag, just in case it decides to rain!! One of the highlights of an SHS expedition is the water fight. One of the two days it didn't rain we had a superb water fight, the whole camp got absolutely wet through, but it was great fun. Our only means of transport was by foot or by the Society's P4.

The expedition was very successful despite the minor hiccups and bad weather. I went up to Glasgow by myself and I came back to Doncaster after three weeks with thirty two good friends. I could recommend this holiday to anybody. Over the New Year we have a three day reunion in Hertfordshire, so everybody can get together again. Overall, I had a great time and can't wait to go again next year.

HOW TO DO WELL WITHOUT REALLY TRYING

'Newslink' thanks Rob McDermott for this article. Believe me he is being modest (quite an achievement for Rob). He has become a Director and now Treasurer out of his amazing energy that he puts into SHS Expeditions.

In January 1984, I applied to take part in 'Operation Raleigh', the 4 year round the world expedition. After my unsuccessful interview, I was given a list of organisations which run expeditions all over the world and told to try applying to these. One of several letters I wrote to these organisations was to the Schools' Hebridean Society. I was not too worried about this one as I had heard (and experienced) what the Hebrides were like so I did not want to appear too keen.

Surprise, surprise!!- within three weeks of my original enquiry, I had suddenly become an Assistant Leader and was part of the North Uist expedition. North Uist?? Where was that ?? I thought these expeditions went to the Hebrides, not to the deepest parts of South Africa. Eventually, I found that it was part of the Hebrides (although it did seem to consist of water, water and more water) and also discovered it's average temperature for the summer (??) months. I can't say I was impressed. I mean, the summer before I had been working in the Mediterranean for a holiday company -enjoying sand, sea, sun and a great time. I also was suddenly very apprehensive.

A few weeks later, there I was - stood on Preston station, at some ridiculous hour of the morning waiting to meet people I had never met before and then go to a place I had never been to before. In fact, I had never even met anyone from the society before. All I had had was a bill from an anonymous treasurer, and a letter and phone call from an equally anonymous Leader. Who was this mythical person? What was he like ? And would he like me? Who were my fellow AL's? At the time, all they were, were names on a piece of paper. However, all went well. The weather was fine, the members great and my fellow AL's out of this world. Even the leader liked me.

More was to come. Within four weeks of returning from North Uist, I was meeting Phil Renold and suddenly found myself leading an expedition after only seven months involvement in the SHS, although even more was to come. Upon my return from Jura, another letter from Phil - this time asking me to become a Director of the Society.

I asked myself if all this was really happening? From what had been a very tentative enquiry, I suddenly found myself in the elevated position of being a Director. I do, however, consider myself very lucky and also very honoured to be a small part of what is really a giant jigsaw. Without you, I could not go on expedition next summer, so get your application forms and fill them in now. Tell your friends about us and get them to go as well, but make sure you yourself go. See you in the Hebrides.

BUDGIE

RECRUITMENT

From early figures, recruitment is going quite well so far. (Touch Wood). However, it is vital for all those who haven't yet applied and would like to go on expedition this summer that you get your applications in as quickly as possible. Not only does it make certain that you get a place but it tells us how well our recruitment drive is going. If you haven't put pen to application form do so soon. In addition, make sure you are letting your friends know about us and that you are handing out brochures and leaflets. If you can organise displays or slide shows you will be labelled an instant star and we will be eternally grateful. If you think you can organise anything please contact Phil Renold (address at end of 'Newslink').

Aspiring AL s should contact: Colette Armitage

Director I/C Assistant Leaders

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Kington

Herefordshire

NOTE: This address is different from that in the brochure

PICTURES WANTED

Phil Renold is currently organising the brochure for 1987's Expeditions. He is looking for any good quality colour photographs or colour slides which can be included in the brochure. Ideally the pictures should include people in them. If anybody has any good photo's then could you send them to Phil (address at end of 'Newslink') He WILL return them to you. All photo's should be labelled with your name and accompanied with the negative.

STORE WANTED

SHS Expeditions has a store which is currently based in Leeds. It is there that all the equipment rests for the winter and is checked and renovated. However, after years of cheap rent, the authorities have increased it to £1,000 per annum which is pretty expensive!. If anybody happens to have or know of an empty store going cheaply could you write to Phil Renold and let him know? We are looking for a store of about 20 feet x 40 feet (approx 6m x 12 m). Phil Renold's address is at the back page of 'Newslink'.

NEW BOARD MEMBER

Jo Walker, Expedition Leader and Miss SHS Enterprises, has joined the Board as a director.

WEDDING BELLS

Expedition Leader, Director and mega-star Richard Young, known to most of you, is getting married in March. He will marry Jane whom some of you met at the 1984 reunion. On behalf of SHS Expeditions, 'Newslink' would like to extend its congratulations and we wish you both well for the very distant future.

SONGBOOK

As you may know, the SHS Songbook is being revised and revamped: Please send any ideas for songs to be included, and preferably copies of words, or other info to tell us how to find out, to me at the address below. All suggestions welcome?! - so please write and let me know what should and shouldn't be included. Ideas BY mid March please. Thanks.

Brigit Hutchinson

St Alban's Road Edinburgh

(Does anybody know where Nina Avery is? .. Ed)

EASTER MEET

Enclosed with 'Newslink' are details of this Easter's excursion to the Lake District. Once again we have managed to lay our hands on Dubs Hut near the Honister Pass. The meet is restricted to Society members of 17 years or over. It should be excellent fun with access to the best areas of the Lakeland landscape. As 'Newslinks' Editor, I strongly recommend it, so much so that I'm going myself: See enclosed sheet for details.

SHS EXPEDITIONS BOARD MEETING - JANUARY 1986 MEMBERS' OBSERVER'S REPORT

The meeting was held in the Civil Service Club on Saturday 18 January. It was a long meeting, but with large blocks of that time being taken up by things like the 1986-87 Budget, I've not a lot to pass on-

Jo Walker, well-known to many of you, especially after her leadership of the Rhenigidale Expedition this year, was welcomed as a new Director.

It was mentioned at Conference that there are to be Training weekends for the budding and current AL's: Mark Bankes and John Bletcher have been putting large amounts of work into organising these. At present they have planned two weekends on 'general skills' of AL'ing, one weekend each on the themes of walking and climbing, and hope to combine a canoeing week-end with one of the Pre-Outer Isles training week-ends.

Looking on to 1987, themes and sites were discussed. A birdwatching study expedition seems likely, early in the summer and probably open to a wider age-range than has been usual for SHS Expeditions. Richard Pitts presented the novel idea of a bat survey, a travelling expedition perhaps, on some of the smaller Inner Isles. This (surprisingly?) met with considerable support, I certainly felt that it would appeal to all those with general wildlife interest, and especially those doing things biological at 'O' or 'A' level. On the sites front, we might have a new site on Rhum in 1987 ... watch this space:

Lastly ... my Job as Members' Observer is to present YOUR views, on everything from loo rolls to marquees, so please, PLEASE write to me and TELL me your views '. Even if you think it's not something vitally important: I don't need essays - scribbles on an old envelope will do, but without information FROM YOU, I'm just another Board 'member' rather than the link between Board and Members I was elected as ...

Next meeting is early May. Write to me at Wilson House, Sussex Gardens London
ROY TOOTH

BOOK REVIEW

The Road to Mingulay. A view of the Western Isles by Derek Cooper. Published by Routledge and Kegan Paul. Price £12.95.

After his 'Hebridean Connection' and 'Road to the Isles' Derek Cooper has written a third. It is based on his ambles from the Butt of Lewis down the Long Isle (the Outer Hebrides) as far as Mingulay. The book is extremely readable and in it Mr Cooper discusses the changes that are transforming Hebridean life. On his travels, he talks to crofters, fishermen, priests and doctors. What he sees clearly depresses him and his concern over the future of the Islands is shared by the people he meets. As an epitaph, he travels to Mingulay where the village, a bleak reminder of the Islands in the past, stands as a warning to what will happen to the rest of the Islands if intervention is not forthcoming. He discusses the declining of traditions and questions the influence of the Ministry of Defence on the Islands.

I enjoyed the book and learned a lot about the Islands and its prospects. Derek Cooper is honest and at times a witty writer. Within the book's pages are some splendid photographs. I would recommend it to anybody with an interest in things Hebridean. For those doing the Outer Islands Expedition this year, it is a MUST.

USEFUL ADDRESSES

Phil Renold (Chairman and Director of Recruitment)

Dobcross

Nr Oldham

Lancs

Sue and Ian Cartside (Administration & Expedition Supplies)

Heybridge

Maldon

Essex

Gill Smith (Membership Secretary)

Pedmore

Stowbridge

West Midlands

CHANGE OF ADDRESS

Robert McDermott has again moved. He is now at:

Heworth Croft

College of Ripon and York St John

19 Heworth Green

York

FINALLY ... :

So endeth yet another 'Newslink'. I have heeded the changes that were suggested at the Reunion and will start implementing them in the next edition. Thanks for everyone who contributed this time round. Please send me articles of any description for publication. I welcome any new ideas or suggestions. The next edition is due out at the end of May and all contributions should arrive by 18 May.

Graham Kramer

'Newslink' Editor

Top Flat

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