



Rhenigidale Track End 1989

Monday 2 August 1976

Monday morning was again rather dismal but after a late breakfast and a good deal of deliberation I decided to go over to Rhenydale for the night. Brian, Simon and Iain decided to come along too and in fact when we left it was brightening up and everyone came into Tarbert with us. Quite a few places were shut because of a local holiday but we managed to get extra food we needed and then Stuart dropped us off at the end of the track. The only access apart from by sea is round a 4 mile footpath, the well made path leaves the road about 2 miles from Tarbert. Just as we set out a shepherd with his dog appearing carrying a sack of peat with a rope over his shoulders and we talked for a few minutes, his people came from Rhenydale but he didn't live there now. The path climbed nearly 1000 ft over the hillside and then dropped steeply down a spectacular series of hairpin bends to a small bridge where we stopped to recover for a while. The proper path climbed over another hill so we followed an alternative along the shore for about a mile. Soon after rejoining the



The road to Rhenigadale

path we came to a neat gate and a bridge over a small ravine at the beginning of the deserted township of Gavy-abotegeu. There were several ruined buildings and one still with a roof but looking rather derelict, the grazing round about was very good and there were dozens of lazy beds everywhere. Another gate marked the end of that village where we were amazed to see 3 lazy beds about 6ft by 12ft planted with oats - the first sign of civilisation.

As the path continued high above the sea more lazy beds came into view and then a couple of tethered cows - must be near now.

Down below was the roof of a single occupied house but another gate brought us out looking down on to Rhenigadale village itself. We had to stop to take it all in, there were about 5 houses clustered in the tiny glen, washing was drying in the good breeze and everywhere there seemed to be activity. Children, sheep, cows and children wandered about and on the far side down by the sea was a large white Marquee and a number of green patrol tents.

As we walked down into the village



John Ireland at Rhenigadale Hostel

we passed the post box and several houses to reach the hostel on the far side. In residence we found a New Yorker, a German girl, John Ireland and 2 lads from Staffordshire who gave us a proper bothy welcome and put the kettle on straight away.

We soon had an excellent meal organised including alphabet noodle soup which Brian had to make his name with, beefburgers and to finish instant whip with fruit. After this we met Roddy the warden busy clearing a space for a new sheep byre. The peat was dug away and the two enormous rocks left he was splitting by lighting coal fires on the tops of them. The method was proving highly effective as one had already split right through after some persuasion with a sledge hammer.

Simon was out exploring the village so the rest of us went up to the wooden hut which houses the VHF transmitter for the telephone link. We put it to the test by visiting the telephone call office Rhenigatalel X which is in "The Residence of Mr D McLunes")

I telephoned Dave Dixon as a long standing friend and Brian telephoned his parents in Plymouth except that only his brother was in.



Roddy McIlmes, warden of Rhenigadale

Exploring round the coast afterwards we found a dying sheep with a rather distressed lamb, we ~~but~~ told Roddy and then tried to catch the lamb but without success.

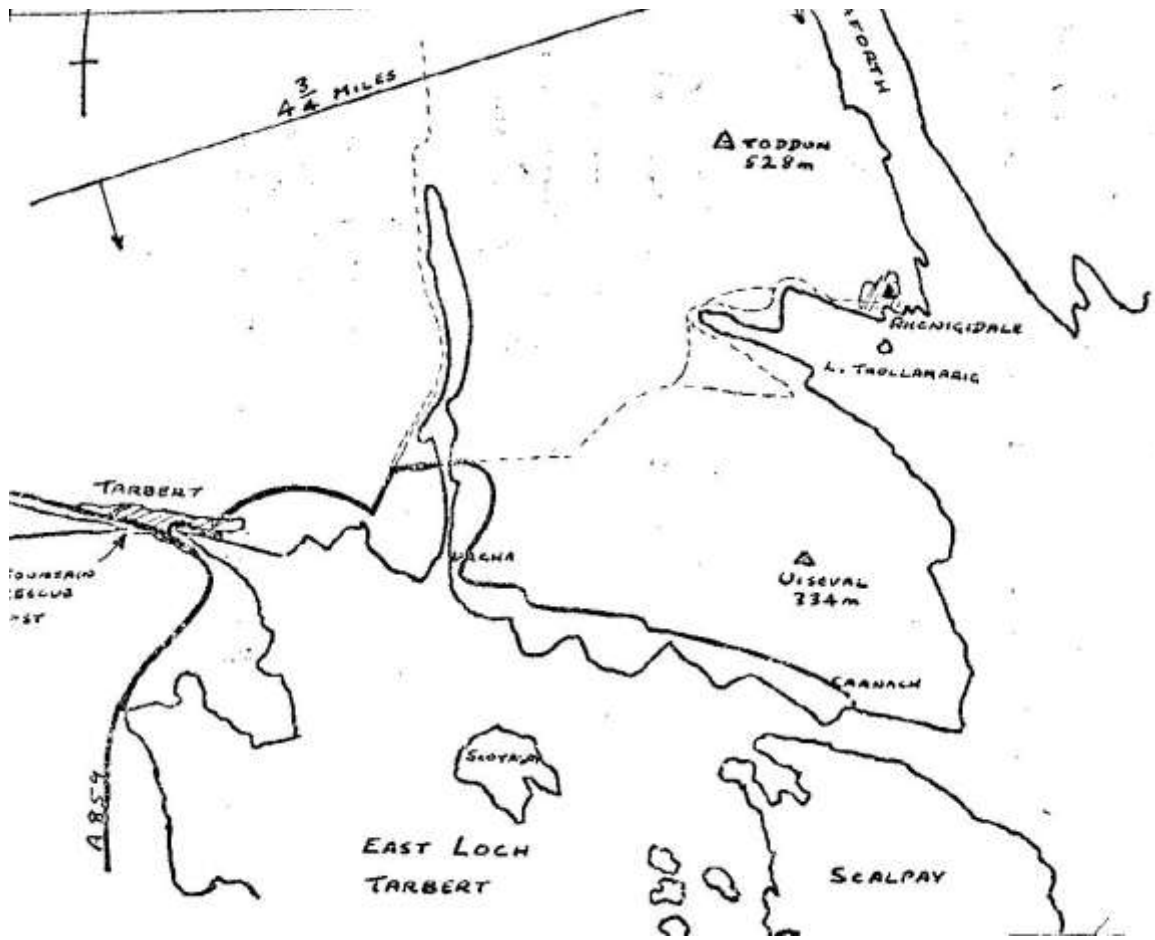
The owners of all the tents were the Schools Hebridean Society and as it was their last night the whole village, including the hostel, was invited to a 'Concert'.

This turned out to be a sing song with plentiful supplies of cocoa, biscuits and cake which were greedily fought for. Three small girls from the village showed their prowess at cards while waiting for the proceedings to start and later on entertained everyone with two songs one of them the 'Jelly pie' song. The evening passed very pleasantly with a good deal of well organised song, some terrible corny jokes and some very original verses to the Lincolnshire poacher.

Finding our way back to the hostel proved difficult in the pitch dark night and we one by one fell in the mud laughing at each others misfortune.



Rhemigadale High Street





Iain, Simon and Brian on Toddun

Tuesday 3 August 1976

Sunshine at Rheingisale! The unexpected morning rays coaxed us out of comfortable camp beds and down to the kitchen. After two nights camping at Seileboot luxury is a sink with a tap that works and a flush toilet.

We decided to climb Toddun, the spectacular 1721' hill behind the village, in the morning, ~~in the morning~~ being assured that it was only an hour to the top. It was a steep climb but very rewarding as the views south to Skye opened up and the small group of houses could be seen nestling below us.

The campers were busy taking down all their tents and staking the gear on the rocks where a boat can put into.

After numerous stops we found a triangulation station on the summit and a fantastic view North to Stornoway, South to Skye, East to the mainland mountains and West to St. Kilda.

We crowded on to the top of the concrete pillar for photographs and then dropped down to the loch below, Simon chose his own way sending stones and sheep flying in all directions while the rest of

us kept well out of the way and proceeded at a more sedate pace.

When we met again at the bottom we found the German girl sitting on a rock and writing. Brian tried out his German, she smiled and answered in English. After trying to soak each other drinking from the loch we dashed back to make sure we felt like a swim in the sea when we got there. A small fishing boat was tied up loading the school gear so we went right to the end of the point. I stripped off and jumped in first and tried to stay in long enough for the others to join me, about a minute later I was back out rubbing vigorously with the towel to restore circulation. Brian got as far as his knees, Iain bravely dived in and did a quick U-turn and Simon got in to his neck and just did a couple of strokes.

Feeling greatly refreshed we had a cup of tea and some rather stinky cheese pieces at the bothy, paid Roddy and made our comments in the log book before leaving.

On the walk out we stopped at the bottom of the zig-zags and brewed up Coppa song while watching a seal watching us



School's out . . . Friday will be the last day at Rhenigidale school for Duncan MacKay, the only pupil in the remote Harris township. From next term Comhairle nan Eilean propose to bus Duncan from Rhenigidale to Tarbert, via Maaruig and Ardvourlie — adding considerably to expense and his school day. With the road to Rhenigidale now virtually complete the council's decision represents for many the ultimate in their "educational rationalisation" programme which has already led to the closure of small schools in the Uists. WHFP 30/6/89.

from a safe distance out in the loch.
Brian set off ahead with a mug of Oxo
and we followed shortly afterwards to
find first a complete pair of boots and
then 2 odd boots lying in the track!

We met the Postman returning from
his three-wickly trip to Tarbet, his wife
was with him carrying an empty creel and
he was loaded with a very full looking bag.
We had arranged to meet Stuart in Tarbet
so the walk finished with 2 miles of tarmac
we were lucky however that the shops were
still open. Brian put his mug down on the
counter while buying various goodies and was
quite to spot when the bill was added up
that he had been sold his own mug! We
had to assure the shopkeeper that he had noticed
in with it and the remains of Oxo concluded
the proof.

Stuart was in the car park and had

What — No Chip Shop?

Scalpay Junior Secondary School have produced a very worthwhile magazine 'Boill-sgeadh 77' which features many interesting and amusing items in Gaelic and English. It is always difficult to select one item from school magazines, but how about this flight of fancy from seven year old Jamie Hislop of remote Rhenigidale:

"I like Rhenigidale and my mummy likes it too, but she wishes there was a launderette and I wish there was a fish and chip shop."