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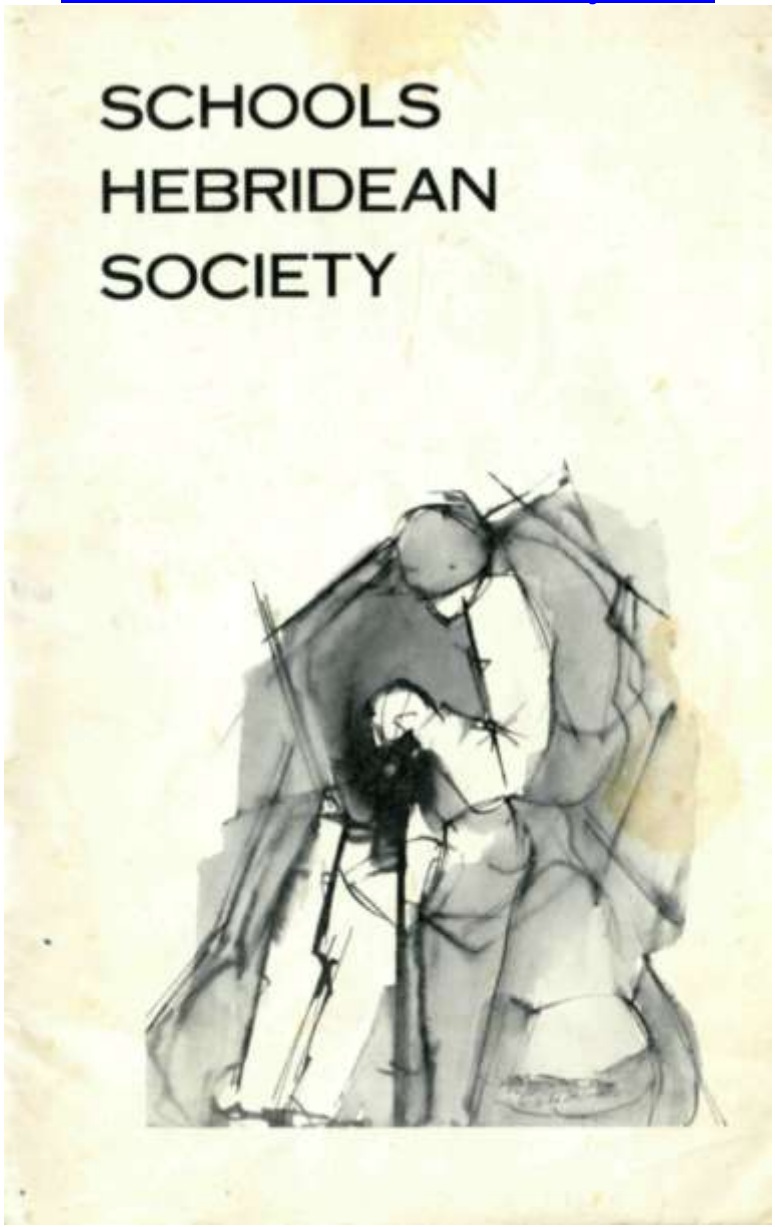


1964 Report.

# THE 1964 REPORT OF THE SCHOOLS HEBRIDEAN SOCIETY

(Founded in 1960)

*Proprietor*

THE SCHOOLS HEBRIDEAN COMPANY LIMITED

*(Registered as a Charity)*

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## FOREWORD

By T. G. Henderson. Esq.
Director of Education for Argyllshire

The Western islands of Scotland have much to offer to young people who visit them as members of a Schools Hebridean Society expedition. They are assured of all the comradeship and fun of camp life against a background of mountain and moorland, loch and sea, with every day presenting a new challenge or evoking a new interest.

It is an important part of education today to help a boy to realise himself through organised activities outside the classroom and any lad fortunate enough to share in a camping expedition to such wonderful islands as Gometra or Rhum. Jura or Eigg. will assuredly come back not only with memories of a rare experience but with an awareness of exciting new potentials within himself that hitherto he had barely suspected. I cannot think of anything finer than that both for the boy himself and for the school that encouraged him to go.

The Society's Report is a vivid and detailed account of what goes on during these expeditions but what it cannot easily convey is the strange fascination of those beautiful little islands and the kindliness and courtesy of the folk who live there. These are things that once experienced draw one back again and again.

Perhaps, then, not the least of the many benefits that a Schools Hebridean Society expedition has to offer is to open a door to a magical bit of country that the members would not readily have discovered on their own and to which, in later life, because of some awakened interest or maybe for nothing more than refreshment of mind and body, they will be very glad to return. For its lasting as well as its immediate values I commend very warmly the splendid work that the Society is doing for the welfare of the young.

**T. G. HENDERSON, M.A., J.P.**

## S.H.S. NEWS

Lectures. Since the last Report was published, lectures have been given at the following places:
Epsom College; Malvern College; Millstone School, Malvern; Seaford Court, Malvern; St. John's, Leatherhead; Rossall School; Lawrence House, St. Annes; Preston and District (parents); Trinity Academy, Edinburgh; Broughton Secondary, Edinburgh; Geographical Society of Ireland; Bishop Foy School, Waterford; Newtown School, Waterford; Ifield, Sussex; Terrington Hall, York; Bramcote, Scarborough; Marlborough College; Rainsford Secondary, Chelmsford; King Edward VI, Chelmsford; Rudheath Secondary, Cheshire; Verdin G.S., Winsford; Malsis School, Cross Hills; Brathay Hall, Ambleside; St. Faith's. Cambridge.
Congratulations: To Anthony Bradshaw (Rhum 1963, Gometra 1964) and to James Emerson (Gometra 1963, 1964) on their marriages. We wish them much success and happiness, and thank them both for (somehow!) managing to find so much time and energy to help the Society during the past year.
To John Abbott and Tim Willcocks on obtaining their degrees at Dublin University. As many members know, Tim soon afterwards was badly injured in a pot-holing accident in Ireland. Fortunately he has made a remarkably quick recovery, which can be gauged from the fact that he was able to attend a Board Meeting on September 27th, much to the delight of all. John Abbott is staying on at T.C.D. to do research.
To Dan Hearn (S. Rona 1964) on being awarded his rugger Blue for Oxford against Cambridge at Twickenham on December 8th.
Newsletter. Following the two successful experimental Newsletters this year, edited by Robin Lord, it has been decided to produce one annually during the Easter holidays. This will give members a chance to catch up on each other's news and to find out the latest details about the expeditions. Robin Lord and Martin Child will be pleased to receive news from all members for insertion in the Newsletter.
Reunion. This year's Reunion was again held at Preston, on January 4th. In 1965 we hope to be a bit more ambitious and hold a weekend Conference, which will not only be a reunion and social occasion, but will also enable us to discuss Society matters in detail and with the help of as many members as possible. The Conference will be from Friday, January 8th (evening) to Monday, January 11th (morning). Full details are being sent to all expedition members.

## EDITORIAL COMMENT

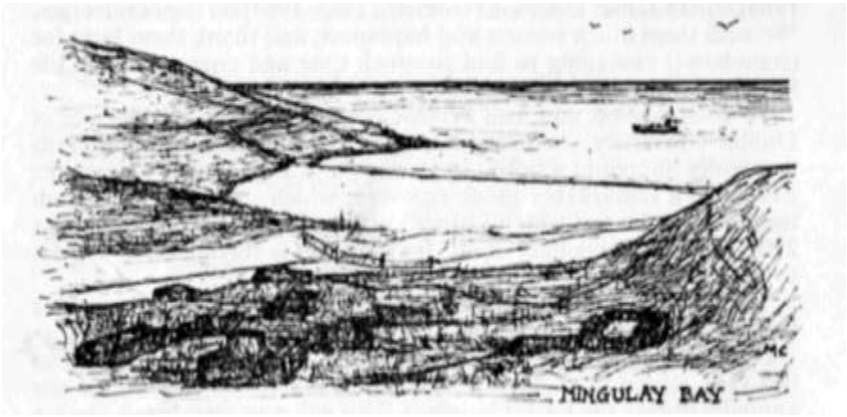
Because of the larger number of expeditions this year, the Report is taking a slightly different form. In order to avoid too much duplication of material, it was decided to devote rather more space to one of the expeditions than to the rest—the Raasay Expedition being chosen because of that island's great variety. I must here acknowledge the invaluable help of Richard Fountaine, who collected a great deal of material in compiling the "Raasay Journal", much of which is reprinted here.

As usual the policy of having as much of the Report as possible written by the boys themselves has been followed. This year, however, we do include a few more consciously "scientific" articles—notably the ornithological reports by Richard Gardner and Peter Mawby, and the beautifully illustrated articles by Peter Parks. These, I feel, will enrich the Report without spoiling its essential informality.

The cover, too, has undergone a change, and I am grateful to Reg Gadney, Editor of Cambridge University's magazine "Granta', for so kindly providing us with an exciting new design.

Finally, I must not forget to express the Society's thanks to Mr. Leslie James and the Southwold Press Limited for once again making such a good job of what is becoming an increasingly more difficult task!

Editor




**MINGULAY EXPEDITION 1964**

August 6th -August 20th

*Leader:* Martin Child

*Camp Administrator:* Jonny Ker

*i/c* Ornithology Peter Mawby

Roger Stalley, David Vigar, Roger Wilkinson and Andrew Wilson

**LEADER'S REPORT**

There is something about an uninhabited island—is it the glamour or the challenge?—which makes many of us, perhaps in a moment of disenchantment or exasperation (or sanity), long to visit one. This summer the Society decided to send a small Reconnaissance Expedition to a deserted island, to find out whether it could be used profitably in future years by larger parties, and what form these panics should take. Originally we planned to visit St. Kilda. but transport presented such a problem that we were forced to look elsewhere; eventually the island of Mingulay, at the southern end of the Outer Hebrides, was chosen.



This proved to be, on the whole, a happy choice. Of all the islands in the Hebrides, Mingulay is probably St. Kilda's closest rival for both beauty and desolation. It has all the ingredients: the ruined village in the bay; the sheer cliffs and stacks towering to over 700 feet on the western coast; the sheep and the colonies of birds; and above all the lingering sense of its history of violence, poverty and disease —of men fighting a losing battle against the elements. In our ten days on the island we sampled its varying moods—from the hot, cloudless days when the air hummed with insects and birds and the sands gleamed like ivory; to the last few days of strong winds and rain, when the colour of the sea had changed from deep blue to green and white and the hills were hidden in cloud. We saw it at its bleakest and at its best, and we were impressed.

Of the activities undertaken, ornithology was the most rewarding. Some minor geographical projects were carried out, but we had neither the time nor the numbers to do anything extensive in this field. I am very grateful to Peter Mawby, who has had so much experience on Foula and Iceland with the Brathay Exploration Group, for taking time off this year to organise the ornithological project on Mingulay. His results, which appear below, speak for themselves; I would only add that had not the high winds necessitated taking down most of the nets before the end of the expedition, the total of birds ringed would have easily topped the 200 mark.

Although we slept under canvas, we were fortunate enough to have the use of a derelict school house standing above the village, still in a reasonable state of repair. This was used as the store and living quarters, and was made almost luxurious by some careful planning from Jonny Ker and a great deal of sawing and hammering of drift-wood by the others. There was a good stream nearby, and even a flat(-ish) cricket pitch—the only drawback of the latter being that "rabbits" did not in this case mean tail-end batsmen.

We were helped in various ways by so many people that it is impossible to acknowledge them all here. Mention must be made, however, of Archibald MacDonald and Neil Sinclair of the Barra-head Isles Sheep Stock Co., who own Mingulay. Our thanks go to them for allowing us to go there; and also to Stanley Duncan of Mallaig for so kindly helping us out on our return journey. My thanks too go to all the members of the expedition for making the fortnight so enjoyable. Many things stick in the memory: David Vigar's brilliant (for a Sassenach) imitation of Fyfe Robertson; Andrew Wilson's kilt and sugar with porridge; Roger Stalley's bowling and ability to get up so early; the quick, gasping dips in the Atlantic, followed by sunbathing and agony that night; the visit by the lighthouse-men from Barra Head; the seals; the smell of the fulmars—all these and many more. Am I alone in hoping to return one day to Mingulay? I doubt it.

Martin Child

## BIRDS ON M1NGULAY

Most of the breeding birds were leaving the island by the beginning of the expedition, and the main object of the party was to observe migration. However, the first week was fine and sunny, more suitable for sun-bathing than for grounding migrant birds. The weather broke on August 15th, and the 16-18th produced gale-force north-easterly winds, which only just moderated in time for our departure on August 19th.

**Birds ringed on Mingulay, 7th-19th August**

| | |
|---|---|
| Meadow Pipit | 98 |
| Wheatear | 43 |
| Fulmar | 21 |
| Song Thrush | 11 |
| Wren | 8 |
| Rock Pipit | 5 |
| Ringed Plover | 5 |
| Snipe | 2 |
| Starling | 1 |
| Common Sandpiper | 1 |
| Dunlin | 1 |
| Knot | 1 |
| Whitethroat | 1 |
| Twite | 1 |

TOTAL 199

One recovery has been reported to date; a Wheatear, No. AN 81,345 ringed August 12th 1964 Mingulay (56° 48' N); recovered September 9th 1964 Vitoria (Alava) Spain (42° 51' N). Found wounded, possibly shot.

**Breeding birds still present on the cliffs**

Fulmar; Shag; Greater black-backed Gull; Herring Gull; Kittiwake; Razorbill; Guillemot; Puffin.

Other resident birds

Eider; Golden Eagle (one present throughout our stay, and two from Aug. 11th 14th); Rock Dove; Raven (minimum of 8 birds present); Hooded Crow; Wren; Song Thrush (about 8 pairs seen); Rock Pipit.

Resident and migrant birds

Oystercatcher (ca. 70 birds, Aug. l0th-llth); Lapwing (max. of 60 on Aug. 17th); Ringed Plover (max. of 6 on Aug. 15th); Snipe; Skylark; Wheatear (maximum numbers present in fine weather, with a marked decrease on Aug. 15th); Meadow Pipit; Twite; Starling.

**Migrant Birds**

Gannet (maximum passage 100-200 per hour going north, Aug. 18th); Sparrow Hawk (a female present throughout our stay); Teal (one seen on Aug. 18th); Golden Plover (maximum of 30 on Aug. 16th); Turnstone (maximum of 6 on Aug. 18th); Whimbrel (one



seen on Aug. 19th); Curlew (maximum of 20on Aug. 15th); Common Sandpiper (one present throughout stay); Redshank (maximum of 25 on Aug. 18th); Greenshank (one heard on Aug. 15th); Knot (3 seen on Aug. 18th); Dunlin (one present throughout stay; 2 on Aug. 18th); Sanderling (one on Aug. 8th); Lesser black-backed Gull (one on Aug. 16th); Common or Arctic Tern (one on Aug. 18th); Whitethroat (one on Aug. 12th); Willow Warbler or Chiffchaff (one seen on Aug. 18th); White Wagtail (one on Aug. 16th; 6+ on Aug. 17th; 14 on Aug. 18th; 40+ on Aug. 19th).

Additional birds seen on the expedition

Red-throated Diver (one heard, Tiree); Buzzard (Sandray); Great Skua (one seen, Sandray).

Peter Mawby

## CADENZA

A moment ago
you were free;
soaring, plunging,
croft-hopping like a yoyo
chasing after the world.
Suddenly
in the middle of a gay,
carefree tarantella
the world stopped . . .
and here you hang
suspended—
a little bundle of
frightened flesh and feathers.
An occasional flutter-
Then . . . ?

M.C

## WILD FLOWERS ON MINGULAY

The following were in flower during our stay on the island:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| •Bearberry * | Hardhead | Sea Pink |
| Birdsfoot Trefoil | Hawkweed | Self Heal |
| •Bog Asphodel | Heather | •Sheepsbit |
| •Bog Pimpernel | Lousewort | Silverweed |
| Butterwort | Meadow Buttercup | Speedwell (various) |
| Chickweed | Milkwort (While | Spotted Orchid |
| Clover (Red and While) | Nettle and Blue) | 'Sundew (Common) |
| ••Cranberry | ••Pink Stonecrop | Thyme (Wild) |
| Creeping Buttercup | Plantain (Sea) | Tormemil |
| Cross-leaved Heath | Primrose | * Viper's Bugloss |
| Daisy | Ragged Robin | Wild Angelica |
| Eyebright | Ragwort (Common) | **Wild Azalea |
| •Field Gentian | *Rose-root | Yarrow |
| Forget-me-not | **Sea Kale | |
| Ground Ivy | | |

• Only locally common Britain.

•* Scarce in Britain, growing only in limited areas, or thinly scattered over a wide area. + Rare in Scotland.

P.M. and M.C.

**MINGULAY WEATHER**

August 8th- 18th

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Maximum Day Temperature | 70° (F) | August 11th |
| Minimum Day Temperature | 49° | August 18th |
| Maximum Night Temperature | 62° | August 10th and 14th |
| Minimum Night Temperature | 48° | August 10th |
| Average Day Temperature | 57.0° | |
| Average Night Temperature | 54.8° | |
| Number of days without rain | 7 | |
| Heaviest rainfall in 24 hrs. | 0.82' | August 17th |
| Total rainfall | 1.21' | |

David Vigar

## SOUTH RONA EXPEDITION 1964

August 27th—September11th

*Leader:* John Abbott

*Officers*: Roger Bray, Chris. Dawson, Roger Dennien. Dan Hearn, Jimmy McCully, John Shipman and Brian Lowe.

Boys: John Bin, Roy Carr, David Cullingford, John Cullingford. William Davidson, George Gandy, Colin Haines, Mark Hayden, Lyulph Hesling, John Houghton, Robert Jones, Roger Jones, John Lace, David Leathley, James Norman, Michael Ogden, Angus Pimblett, Barry Smith, Hubert Staub, John Stirrup, Stephen Thompson, Robert Warrack, David Wilson, Richard Wilson, David Wrigley and Nick Yates.

The ages of the boys, who were from eighteen different schools, were from nearly 16 to 18½. (For a full list of schools and home addresses, see page 46).

### LEADER'S REPORT

On looking back on this expedition, I think the first thing which will be remembered is the extraordinary atmosphere of good will and co-operation that existed amongst everyone. With such a feeling prevalent it was impossible for South Rona to be anything but a success. We were lucky of course, in several ways. Many of us had been on expeditions before; for many this was their third year, and for Roger Jones it was the fourth S.H.S. expedition. We were extremely fortunate in having such an excellent group of "novices", both boys and officers.

Unlike previous years it is difficult to pick out any particular incident around which the expedition revolved. We were spared any gales while actually on (he island—perhaps we missed those wet but highly enjoyable night watches which we had on Rhum last year but I. for one, and I suspect all the rest of us on board the "Dougal's", will never forget that passage from Mallaig to Tober-mory -especially the section from Eigg to Ardnamurchan! The highlights this year were on a smaller but more continuous scale. Comic and amusing incidents abounded. For the first three days we had no cutlery—it had gone to Raasay by mistake—and many tried



to carve wooden implements (commonly called spoons!); others simply ate stew with their fingers! Road building feats reached a new zenith in the B.I. A twenty-four hour watch was kept on our tide gauge in Big Harbour, and it recorded a tidal range of seventeen feet. Sending messages on the V.H.F. proved difficult.

The South Rona Group produced music, the like of which had never been heard on the island before. I sprained my ankle and had to spend a week on crutches—made by a Frenchman out of Scottish wood for an Englishman educated in Ireland, as the staff of Broad-ford hospital were quick to point out! The F + + +-a men, drilled by the " Doc ", erected 165 yards of sheep fencing for the grazing tenants, meteorological records were kept at two separate stations on the island, corrections were made to the 6" O.S. map, a new, and more detailed chart was made of Big Harbour, fishing was more successful than in previous years, and what expedition could ever boast such a magnificent six hole golf course with so many "natural1' obstacles? The "Orcadia" (did someone change its first letter?) undertook prodigious tasks when her engine deigned to work and when she was not beached for repairs.

I believe that this expedition proved that many of our teething problems have been resolved. Much, however, still remains to be decided on the nature and purpose of the practical project.

In conclusion I should like to thank the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, the Admiralty and the grazing tenants for the use of the island, and the lighthouse keepers for their help and hospitality.

John Abbott

## ADVANCE PARTY

On arriving at Euston second class ticket office at 6.45 p.m., one didn't need any directions to find the other members of the party. Five people all vaguely clad in an assortment of jeans, anoraks, sweaters, boots and shoes, gathered round a similar number of rucksacks decorated with yellow labels. With a dull thud another rucksack joins the heap and when the smoke around his person clears, we sec that George Gandy has arrived. Five minutes later there is a screech of tyres and a mini-van pulls up outside. To our great surprise the Chairman emerges; surprise not only at his being at the station but that he can get in the mini-van. At 7.15 we find a suitable train and pile into our reserved compartments. A few minutes later Barry Smith arrives and with two minutes to spare, the Cullingfords turn up trailing a variety of rucksacks, guitars, and sleeping bags.

For most of us it was a sleepless night; not so the Cullingfords. Sharing one scat and tying themselves in an inextricable knot they slept for 9 hours. At Oban a snack breakfast was welcomed, on meeting Robin Lord and Martin Child; we then set about loading the Dougal's. In two lorry loads we managed to move all our equipment from the Society's store to the pier. We loaded the "Dougal's" and grabbed a quick lunch before leaving. At 1.30 we "put to sea", leaving Martin Child in Oban.


10

We had glorious weather for our journey to Mallaig and had marvellous views all round the Sound of Mull and Ardnamurchan. We also had a good view of Rhum and Eigg and the Cuillins. After the long journey, during which John Cullingford showed us his skill at making tea and several of us showed our skill at sleeping, we arrived at Mallaig at about 8.30 p.m.—just too late to find any cafes open for supper. We had to go to the West Highland Hotel in our dirty jeans, anoraks and boots.

The large plates of sandwiches and the coffee were very much appreciated. After sampling Mallaig's "night life" we bedded down on the Dougal's, two in the cabin, one wrapped round the wheel, four in the hold and four on deck. Unfortunately for those of us on deck, it started to rain at 4.30 a.m. A quick move to more sheltered places was executed and we slept on to the morning. On waking, we all descended once more upon the Hotel for a large breakfast and then relaxed until the main party should arrive. Just after eleven we went up to the station. In came the train. One moment the platform was empty: the next it was full. Everything that the main party had brought was loaded on to the Dougal's and we were soon in the Sound of Sleat, heading for Raasay. As was to be expected the tide was out and the pier was some fifteen feet above the boat deck. Ropes appeared and in half an hour we had the Raasay equipment off the boat. The rest of the Rona expedition landed and we were off again for South Rona.

Mark Hayden and John Lace

## THE CAMP SITE AT DRY HARBOUR

On an island which for the most part appears very barren to the eye, we were very fortunate to have such an attractive and natural camp site. As Dry Harbour was the centre of a settlement in earlier days, there were ruined cottages in existence and a chapel and manse which still had sound slate roofs on them.

The manse we used as a cooking store and drying room after renovations had been made. This saved us the task of erecting the large marquee, the smaller one serving as "living" tent. This was erected on a piece of flat ground in front of the manse and chapel, overlooking the harbour. Suitable protection was given from the wind by small trees growing on and around the slope below the marquee. The sleeping tents were pitched on a level patch of ground adjacent to the beach and about two feet above high water mark.

A short cut was constructed up the slope from the sleeping tents lo the marquee, but the safety of the apparatus was questionable- especially in wet weather!

John Stirrup

## THE B.I. -A SHORT HISTORY

Having pitched camp, the following day our Minister of Communications Mr. John Abbott, decided that the road, as it stood, was inadequate for the needs of those members of the expedition who felt a need to hurry from the sleeping accommodation to the living quarters (for meals). The result was, needless to say, that work

began immediately. The day was spent blistering our hands on saws while cutting through trees, usually about fifteen inches in diameter and as heavy as a truckload of "Skippers'.. Once these trees had been removed we discovered that John's road was sighted up a mud bank, later discovered to be the bed of a stream. Pessimism gripped the workers.

Having cleared a way—about one in four—up to the marquee, and John having removed the nettles from the last four feet (the only work he managed to do on it owing to his other camp responsibilities such as photography! ! !), we then went about filling up the holes with rocks and levelling up the path. Meanwhile a few scoundrels at the top had found a rock the size of an armchair and decided that it should be moved. I joined them. Slowly, as we levered the rock forward, the earth gave way and with an enormous roar it rolled, or rather bounced down the slope only to block the road as efficiently as possible at the bottom. Pessimism gripped the workers.

Having discovered that there was a gap between the rock and the tree we pressed on that night and under international supervision, steps were built up the steeper slopes, and planks were laid down the lower plains. The result was the B.I. David Leathley

## AN EVERYDAY OCCURRENCE

The moon glinted dully off the oily seaweed-strewn waters of the bay below; dark clouds were looming up over the islands to the westward, casting them into shadow. As he came to the edge his heart began to pulsate with the throbbing beat of a drum: but he knew there was no other way; to take the alternative route would be to court an even greater disaster.

The jungle of trees, their tops silhouetted in the harsh moonlight effectively blocked all light from that vegetation-free strip of rock and earth, which someone had called a path, a path which even Blondin would have hesitated to descend at his usual tightrope speed. The sweat was standing in small icy beads on his forehead as his right hand reached out for the rope, the only barrier between him and a violent fall.

Once he had located the beginning of the path, the first step was easy, broad and fairly firm. The second step was a mere four square inches of rock just showing above the muddy earth. He reached this in safety, or so he thought, but the next second, with his left foot in mid air, his right foot slipped and he jerked through the air like an epileptic corkscrew.

Regaining control of himself, he swung back to the path. The tension in his arms released, he stood still for a few seconds, his breath coming in slow pants. For a few steps now, the going was easy, but soon he would have to leave go of the rope as it wandered too far over to the right to be of use. He reached the first gangplank with, comparatively speaking, no further incident. He negotiated both planks with u dexterity that would have pleased even the maestro of the tightrope himself. Regaining the safety of the rope, he



almost walked the last half dozen steps to the grass below. With both feet on firm ground again, he peered in amazed relief back up the dark path from the marquee to the lower camp site where he was standing. Picking his way through the now familiar tangle of guy ropes, he had almost arrived at his tent when he stumbled over a guy, and, as he fell, he could have sworn the mud rose up to hit him. He was just scraping a good sample of South Rona soil from his face when a voice, speaking in a plaintive Edinburgh accent, issued from the nearby tent. "What are you playing at out there? Get to your bed!"

David Wrigley

## THE SEA AT SOUTH RONA

The sea featured a good deal in the life of the South Rona Expedition not only because Rona is a small island but because it offered an alternative source of food to Baked Beans and Spaghetti.

The first attempt at cooking the fish was unsuccessful—it consisted of roasting a 4 lb. pollock on a spit. Of course the delicate flavour was lost. Later on we had several very good mackerel to eat, with the odd whiting. The pollock were used to bait a lobster pot, but it only caught a few small crabs—and "Wriggles", who fell in. The fishing from the rowing boat was much more successful than from the rocks in front of the camp.

While we were at South Rona the highest and lowest tides occurred, which meant that a lot of the sea-bed which would normally be covered was not, so that many sea urchins were exposed. Some were collected and scraped clean, but were so fragile that they were almost impossible to carry home.

Every quarter of an hour for several hours including a night tide readings were taken from a pole in Big Harbour. Roger Bray plotted these and succeeded in getting a sine curve.

He was also in charge of taking readings of the depth in Big Harbour for the Admiralty.

A few of us, including the Bishop of Norwich, tried swimming. The water was beautifully clear but only an Eskimo could have stayed in long. The water certainly seemed a lot warmer in Big Harbour than just outside Dry Harbour.

There was unfortunately no sailing but we did have the Orcadia (powered by a 4 cylinder car engine more often than not firing on two) and a rowing boat. For transport we had Hughie's " Dougal's and Coragle's "Virgin". Stephen Thompson

## METEOROLOGY

It has been said that when two Scotsmen meet they probably play a round of golf; that when Welshmen meet they start a chair; but that when Englishmen meet they talk about the weather. Certainly the weather is something which effects everyone and to know something of its ways can add interest to one's conversation if nothing else.

This year on all four of our expeditions we tried to employ a little more method in our taking of weather readings than we have done in the past. The most accurate meteorological equipment is naturally very expensive. We therefore expected to have a certain degree of inaccuracy in our readings; although, for our purpose, so long as the inaccuracy was constant, this did not really matter.

The readings we were able to make were of rainfall, barometric pressure, maximum and minimum temperature, humidity, and with the aid of the camp flag and the smoke from the wash-house fire, wind-direction. Plotted on charts and graphs these figures show quite clearly the trend of the weather. One can see for instance, the relationship between wind and rainfall or between wind and pressure.

Weather observation and forecasting is not something to be learnt wholly from textbooks. To be able to make an accurate forecast is something which comes with experience. However, even with our limited experience and with the aid of a textbook or two and our readings, we attempted to make short-term forecasts. I'm glad to say that we broke even with our predictions.

Judging from interest shown, the making of weather-recordings is something worthwhile doing on future expeditions. Certainly I found that there was even satisfaction in waking up to the sound of water beating on canvas, when one had predicted "heavy showers continuing". Chris Dawson

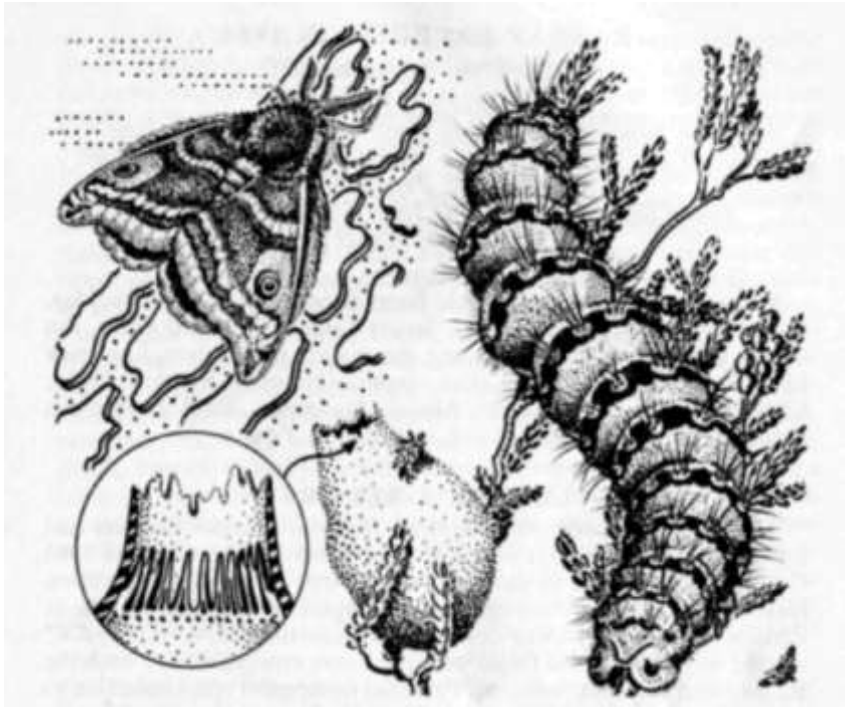
## 'HEBRIDEAN BEAUTY, HEBRIDEAN SPECTACLE'

The Inner and Outer Hebrides, in common with much of the west coast of Scotland, support a prolific insect and marine fauna. One of the most beautiful insects found there is the Emperor Moth. One of the most spectacular inhabitants of the sea in this region is the Basking Shark.

The Emperor Moth (Saturnia pavonia), is not peculiar to the Hebrides but is here found in greater numbers than in many other heather clad haunts which it frequents further south. The chief food plant of the larva is Bell Heather. On this food plant the normally bright green larva is adorned with purple tubercles arranged in rings, one ring round each segment. Each tubercle subtends stiff black spines, and these with the black surround to each tubercle serve to contrast with the purple. These caterpillars may also feed on Bramble, Hawthorn and Meadowsweet. On Bramble the tubercles turn to bright yellow and the amount of black tends to increase. In Glen Harris, on Rhum, in 1959, we came across a larva that was almost entirely black except for the yellow tubercles. This excess of black may have reflected the generally dark nature of the rock (Volcanic) which covered the ground in this Glen, thus affording better cryptic colouration and camouflage to its owner.

A full grown larva measures nearly 3". In spite of their almost perfect camouflage, several have been collected by expedition members in the past. On keeping the caterpillars together with suitable food plant, they have pupated before our return to the





mainland, to hatch as the most handsome British moth the following April or May. It is said that red/green colour blind people can pick out these larvae at a considerable distance in open heath land, by virtue of the different appearance they have to such people.

The pupa consists of a delicate chrysalis which is surrounded by a two or three layered silk cocoon. These moths are indeed Saturnids, or true silk moths. The cocoon is very resistant to the elements. The neck is closed by a lobster-pot device, enabling the moth to emerge, but preventing the entry of parasitic Ichneumon flies. The teeth of this one way device arc composed of hardened silk and are beautifully regular. How ihc larva executes their construction, when the rest of the cocoon case is very much more haphazard in plan, is a mystery. While the insect is in the process of spinning, it might be possible to cut away carefully part of the case and so reveal the technique employed. The teeth are not visible from the outside. Only cutting open a vacated cocoon reveals their structure.

The adults lack mouth and tongue and so rely, for food, upon that taken in and stored by the previous year's larva. Females produce an abdominal scent from between their last body segments. The males are capable of detecting this scent in monomolecular amounts at distances of well over a mile. Several males thus usually "assemble" to one female. Only one inseminates her, at which point the unlucky suitors disperse once more. Males live for three or four weeks. Females die after laying their eggs. Peter Parks

## RAASAY EXPEDITION 1964

August 27th—September 11th

*Leader* Richard Fountainc

*Camp Administrator* Robin Lord *Doctor* Tim Roe

*Climbing etc.* Bill Wilson *Ornithology etc.* Dick Gardner

*Ropework etc.* Patrick Bradley

*Junior Officers* Brian Dale, John Garrett, Ken Hunter, Terry Leeder and Alister Newton

*Boys*

Martin Bed well, Andrew Black. Barry Brookshaw, Robert Buckley, Philip Carpenter, David Crews, Stuart Cullum, Richard Gibb, Ian Green, Peter Hannam, Colin Lang, Brian Lett, Peter Liver, Frederick Markham, Archibald McKcllar, James Osmond. Richard Perks, Clifford Reeves, Alister Reid, Alistair Stevenson, Paul Thompson. Graham Turner, Michael Ward, and Simon Young.

## LEADER'S REPORT

The Raasay Expedition comprised 24 boys. 5 Junior Officers and 6 Officers. 14 of the boys and 3 of the officers had been on the 1963 Gometra Expedition, so many old hands met again. The expedition travelled to Mallaig overnight on 27 August, picking up groups at various stations on the way north. In the meantime M.V. " Dougal's arrived at Mallaig from Oban with the heavy equipment for both the Raasay and Rona expeditions. Personal equipment was loaded on to " Dougal's". while personnel took the MacBrayne's boats to Raasay Pier via Kyle a beautiful trip. Unloading from Dougal's was difficult as the Raasay pier is high, and the tide was still fairly low. This necessitated hauling everything up 20 ft., most of it on ropes. Meanwhile the first group had taken the van up to Brochel, and when equipment began to arrive a start was made with the setting up of camp. The site was below Brochel Castle by the beach, on a patch of grass used by the salmon fishermen as a drying area for their nets. As it was a good quarter of a mile from the end of the road down to the camp site the work of bringing the equipment down was long and hard, and was continued long after dark. Enough of the camp was set up on the first night to enable us to sit down to a good meal by 11.30 p.m. The last lorry load of equipment and stores was brought down the next day, and with the building of tables, benches and shelves in the marquee the camp was more or less established. But throughout the fortnight additions and improvements continued to be added- the building of the corrugated iron sea wall, the rebuilding of a protective stone wall, the construction of steps down off the path, the digging of an involved system of flood canals round the tents, the brilliant rehousing of No. 3, the brackening of the marquee floor, and Alister Reid's kitchen improvements, which resulted in the wonder of grassless soup.

During the fortnight numerous events and activities took place. Two rafts were built, the first one proving very versatile Andrew



Black and Alister Reid discovered that it floated very well upside down. Alister Reid also dyed and made up the very tasteful plum-coloured ex-pillowcase camp flag. A library, largely of reference books, was set up in the marquee, which was popular and useful. Tim Roe gave a general hygiene and medical talk, and boys were instructed in first aid in small groups. Tim also led the team which carried out a survey of the bay. Bill Wilson gave a talk on hillcraft and mountain safety. Much climbing was done on the Castle Rock, right by camp, and so there was plenty of opportunity for the introduction and practising of this activity. A route up the big cliffs at Screpadal was pioneered, but as these cliffs are virgin climbs there was much loose material about, and so no further routes were attempted. A bivouac camp was set up under the Scrcpadal cliffs by Bill, Phil Carpenter. Dick Perks, Alistcr Stevenson, David Crews and Terry Lceder, with the object of inspecting the cliffs for future reference, but very wet conditions made it impossible to achieve much. Patrick (Knotty) Bradley showed people the ropes, and led a team of aerial runway constructors. Dick Gardner, in addition to working on the ornithology, dissected fish caught, showing internal workings, stomach contents, and other biological horrors. A microscope was also used for related purposes. Camp administrator Robin Lord, leading byexample, ensured that everyone consistently over-ate. He also acted as general salvager of wet clothes and bedding, and somehow contrived to keep clothes-drying ahead of the floodwaters of the last few days. Graham Turner, with assistance from Patrick Bradley and John Garrett, played the hymns. John Garrett took charge of the weather recording operations, and also ran the Raasay Radio Station. Andrew Black and Robert Buckley led the astronomical observations. Ken Hunter undertook a survey of the island's grasses. Fossils were dug; loch fishing yielded only two trout, but sea fishing was very successful; and Philip Carpenter caught a lizard. Paul Thompson and Stuart Cullum led the local Beatles group. A jam-butty blowing mania seized the camp. Martin Bed well, Barry Brookshaw, Stuart Cullum and Robert Buckley all being sometime champions.

Bad weather conditions led to the last minute cancellation of the Scalpay trip, which was a great pity as this island has not been visited by any members of the Society as yet. The 16 people who got up at 5.30 a.m. thought it was a pity for other reasons. Two parties visited and stayed overnight on South Rona, and members of that expedition visited us in return. A number of parties spent the night away from camp in the Home Farm loft in the south of Raasay. We were very glad to be visited by a number of people, including members of the Young Naturalists Association, and a small party of the islanders, who were entertained to supper in the marquee one evening. We greatly enjoyed the visit of the Bishop of Norwich who stayed with us for a night, both before and after his time on Rona, and who on the second occasion held a memorable evening communion service in the marquee.

Camp was struck during the day of September 10th. It had been raining for the previous four days, so conditions were very wet and muddy. This made the work of carrying everything up to the road even harder, but at least there was no food to go up and the job was done remarkably quickly. By 10.30 p.m. the last load was on the pier. The last night was spent in the loft of the Home Farm, after a memorable performance by both cooks and eaters—some of these reaching "fifths" on the stew. We were up in the dark at 4.30 in order to be ready for the early boat. And so we left the island. Just to be on the boat in comparative cleanness and warmth and among other passengers gave one a strange feeling. As the island dropped astern, if one was not too tired, one felt a mixture of relief and regret that it was all over, and one began to realise how wonderful it had been.

Our thanks are due to very many people for their help towards the well-being and success of the expedition. In particular mention should be made of the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland for permission to use the island; Mr. Graham for the use of the Brochel site; Mr. MacLeod for clearing out the wells prior to our arrival; to Mr. Ellicamp for the use of the Home Farm loft. We are grateful to many of the islanders in addition for making us so welcome at their homes and for all the help they gave us with information about the island and its history.

Finally, our thanks are due to the officers who put in such an enormous amount of hard work, and provided a wonderful example of a happy and closely knit team; and to everyone on the expedition for their enthusiasm, cheerfulness, and spirit of excitement, which gave rise to a sense of unity in the camp, and in the individuals the urge to explore new fields. These qualities are essential for the full success of an expedition. They gave added purpose to, and were the most important attributes of, all the activities undertaken. That the expedition was so highly enjoyable and so very rewarding was due to the combined contributions of everyone. Ft was a privilege to lead such an expedition. Richard Fountaine

## BOATING

After the arrival of our boat, a twelve foot clinker-built dinghy, a number of structural alterations were carried out. First, after the outboard bracket sheared, a couple of blocks were screwed to the stern, and the bracket was almost rebuilt. After that if anyone was seen walking near the boat with a piece of wood in his hand, he was immediately asked if it was being repaired again.

The engine itself was very good, being a British Seagull, and usually started after a couple of pulls, unless, of course, the lead to the plug was oft. or the petrol was not turned on.

The boat had several uses: for fishing—many good catches being taken out in the way; the "doc" and his team used it for their sounding operations; trips around the bay; transport of the heavy bivouac equipment to Screpadal; collection of fossils from the fossil beds.



All in all the boat was a very enjoyable "plaything" from which most of the boys on the expedition extracted much pleasure.

Dick Perks

## A HYDROGRAPHIC SURVEY

A suggestion by Lieutenant-Commander James osBond R.N.(ret-) led to a small but intrepid section spending many hours doing extensive work in the bay. Early work was largely frustrated by inaccuracy of map drawing and bearings taken by prismatic compass from a boat bobbing in the bay. In fact depths of several| fathoms were found well inland and large areas of dry ground were discovered well out to sea. Following brilliant suggestions by Bill Wilson and Robin Lord a survey of the high and low tide lines of the bay was done. This was followed by plumbing work in the bay. James osBond sat on the bow plumbing the depths, Andrew Black sat amidships offering intellectual advice and imitating Mike Jagger. Fred rested (literally) in the stern and tried not to upset the boat. The man who did most of the work was Peter Hannam sitting on the shore taking bearings on the boat and being generally abused for all shortcomings. It may be added that most of the work was done under adverse weather conditions and that the results comprise the most complete sounding of the bay yet taken as the official chart is on a very small scale. A chart plotting the sounds is being prepared. Tim Roe

## GRAM1NOLOGY ON RAASAY

200,000,000,000 grass plants have been estimated to grow on Raasay. 43 species have been collected and identified. 100 miles have been walked over the island by the author in compiling this survey.

The island, with its great geological variation, provides numerous and varied habitats for life. Much information on this was gained prior to the expedition from Durham University under whose auspices an expedition undertook many surveys of the natural history of the island in 1935-36.

However, difficulty was experienced over the nomenclature adopted by Durham University Expedition, which, owing to recent advances and research in Graminology and subsequent changes in nomenclature, have become difficult to translate. Those grasses collected for examination were identified with the aid of C. E. Hubbard's Penguin book "Grasses".

From the Graminological survey conducted by the D.U.E. many species were located and by comparison with the information gained from both surveys, some species recently introduced and relative growth of other species can be observed. The following are observations made by comparison with the two surveys and represent changes which have occurred on the island over the past thirty years.

1. Two grasses have been introduced. Lolium Multiflorum Lamarck, the Italian Rye Grass was probably introduced as hay and thence escaped from cultivation. It was found by the roadside and along the borders of cultivated land in the south near the village

of Clachan. Phleum nodosum L.—the smaller cat'stail grass probably similarly introduced was found cut and stored for hay in the loft of Home Farm, Raasay, and of rare occurrence on meadow and grassland in the south.

2. Many grasses have increased their range on the island. The most notable cases of this are:

Bromus sterilis L. - the Barren Brome Grass—was collected from the waterfall on Altl a' Bhraghad at M.R. 553421 and elsewhere although still of uncommon occurrence much more common than "Very rare indeed" recorded by the Durham University Expedition. Similarly Alopecurus Pratensis L. and Aira Caryophyllea L. have become more plentiful.

3. In contrast many grasses have become rarer, Alopecurus geniculatus L.—the floating foxtail grass—recorded as common by the Durham Expedition has now become very rare and was not found during this expedition. Similarly Floteus mollis and Calamagrostis epigeios Both have become rare.

These conclusions were reached on comparing the results of the two surveys. The remainder of the grasses have remained much as they were when surveyed thirty years ago. Ken Hunter

## WALKING

A considerable amount of walking was done in the fortnight. It is estimated that some 2000 miles were covered in walks away from camp. Brochel is very well placed for walks to different parts of the island. One of the most used routes was the track through the birch woods to Arnish. Toran and the tidal island of Fladda. A number of trips were also made up to Eilean Tigh, another tidal island, through the barren and rocky northern part of the island. Southwards. Screpadal could be reached either overland down the forest track, or, when the tide was out, along the rocky coast past the caves. From Screpadal one could go up on to the high central spine of the island, and so up to Dun Caen, 1,456 feet. This was a fine walk with wonderful views on a good day. From Dun Caen, one either went on down to the village, or cut down on to the road, and so back to camp. The other route from Screpadal lay under the big cliffs. A path was marked on the one inch map, but soon after Screpadal it disappeared, and the going was quite hard. The very beautiful Valley of Brae was explored with an eye to the possible siting there of a future expedition. One possible spot was found. Parties took a look at the abandoned villages of Manish Beg and Manish More, with a view to surveying prospects. The site of Manish More is very interesting, as it is governed by the geology of the area.

Use was made of the south part of the island, as parties were able to stay the night in the loft of the Home Farm at Clachan. This area abounds in interest—the broch. the iron mines, the chasms, the Hallarog waterfall which goes straight off the top of a headland, and so on, apparently without end. Altogether, Raasay proved to be an ideal island for walking, both because of its size, and the variety it offered.

R.M.F



## ASTRONOMY ON RAASAY

Conditions this year were considerably more favourable for observing the sky from Raasay than they were from Gometra last year. For a start it was later in the year and therefore it got dark rather earlier. The weather also tends to be better in September than it is in August in the Hebrides. Brochel is situated at about 75½° N of the equator and 6° W of the Greenwich Meridian so observations were able to start by about 2300 hours B.S.T. at the start and soon after 2200 hours B.S.T. at the end of our stay.

The sky was much more translucent than in suburban areas because there was no smoke, and hardly any artificial lighting to illuminate the sky. We could thus observe under about the best conditions in the British Isles. We also had a good all-round view of the sky. During the first week nearly every night was absolutely clear, but in the second only brief and infrequent clear intervals occurred. As to our equipment we had one telescope which magnified 40 times and numerous pairs of binoculars. They all performed well under the good conditions and we were able to see quite a lot.

We were not able to see much of the moon as it was only observable to any advantage on the first few nights of our stay. It was close to Jupiter in the sky on the 28th August and by about midnight we were able to sec it well since it had risen sufficiently clear of the horizon mists.

Saturn was the planet which was most readily observable. Rising before sunset, as it did, it was well above the horizon for evening observations. We could easily make out its disk and rings and we also saw Titan, its largest satellite. Titan is large compared to moons of other planets and is larger than Saturn's other moons. It would be visible with good binoculars if Saturn did not overpower it with its brightness.

Jupiter rose at 2300 hours at the beginning and 2200 hours at the end of our stay. It showed a disc more than twice the size of Saturn's and through the • 40 telescope it appeared about half the size of the moon as seen by the naked eye. Its four moons were easily seen although the planet was near the horizon. We also see changes in their relative positions from night to night as they revolved around Jupiter itself.

Venus was u morning star and thus unobservable in the evenings, however it was seen in daylight once, and through binoculars like a half moon. Mars was not seen on the expedition, nor were any of the other planets. Many meteors were seen in the first week and we were organising a series of recording sessions for the second week but we were hindered by the weather.

One artificial satellite was observed in the first week but most satellites pass south of Northern Scotland. We did not observe anything spectacular like a comet or a nova on Raasay. Many of us expected to see brilliant displays of the Aurora Borealis or the Northern Lights, but sunspot activity was near minimum, and we did not see anything in that line.

Everyone who observed the sky enjoyed themselves and what is better, several people who were formerly not interested in astronomy learnt to find their way among the different constellations and become generally interested. Altogether we had a most rewarding and encouraging time and I think that everyone enjoyed our stay on Raasay.

Andrew Black

## FOSSILS

Two parties went to the fossil beds at the base of Creag na Buaich cliffs, both being very successful in their findings. The most common fossils seemed to be belemnites, oysters, mussels and shells. Only one complete ammonite was found but several remains were embedded in the rocks. It appears that once the area was a large oyster and mussel bed and Robert Buckley found a large and very well preserved mussel. A possible bird fossil was found but as it was of such poor quality no one can be sure of it. Fossil hunting has really been successful this year and I am sure that on future expeditions even better results will be obtained.

Graham Turner

## A ROUGH SKETCH OF RAASAY'S HISTORY AND POPULATION

The island of Raasay lies to the cast of Skye, and is divided from it by the Sound of Raasay. The island is about 15 miles long, and is inhabited by nearly 400 people, the majority of whom live at the southern end. The terrain is rocky, with marshes and occasional fields which are just enough to keep their owners going.

The first race to disturb Raasay's inhabitants were the Norwegians, who colonised it to the extinction of the original inhabitants. They also constructed the castle to be found at Brochel, now unfortunately ruined. It is believed that before the Norwegian's arrival the entire island was covered with a forest, which they burned down so exposing the naked rock. Evidence of this is provided by the islanders who say that they have found large roots deep in the ground in the course of their ploughing, and one was even found on the top of the moors.

The next known event in the island's history is the coming of the Scots. At this time for some reason Brochel castle fell into the hands of the king of the Isle of Man. Indeed, the crest of the Macleods, a family which dates back to this period, still holds a three-legged man in the upper left hand corner.

There is a large bank of pebbles 20 feet above sea level to be found on the north of Fladda. It is said that on the night the sea threw them up, Macleod of Raasay returning home with his men in a whale-boat from Lewis was wrecked and all hands were lost. The sea has only come up to these pebbles once since, and that was in a force 13 gale on the night that the Victoria, the Stranraer-Larne ferry, was lost.



At the time of the Armada many bodies were washed up on the shore and the islanders, as they did not know their characters, buried them in unhallowed ground as near the beach as possible. At the beginning of the nineteenth century the island was bought by a Scotsman who had made his million in tobacco in the Southern States of America. When he took over he decided to turn most of the island into a deer forest, so treating the inhabitants like his slaves; he evicted them North of a boundary running between Am Feadan and Arnish Bay. The island then passed into the hands of the Army and from them to the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries to which it now belongs. The telephone came to Raasay in 1935, but they still rely on Calor Gas lighting and they have been waiting for a road from Brochel to Fladda since the end of the First World War.

In 1854 the Ministry decided to turn the islands over to sheep-farming as opposed to crops, so they evacuated 98 families to make way for the sheep. After the First World War 30 more families were evacuated as they could not support themselves.

At the present time the population of Arnish is six and of Fladda 12. The population is slowly decreasing as the children who go to school in Portree, get (to quote an islander) "Big Ideas'* and do not wish to continue crofting, but instead to go into industry or to see the world. There are several infant schools on the island, one at Fladda which is empty, one at Torran which has two pupils and one in the south. These send their pupils to Portree when they are twelve.

Michael Ward, Brian Lett and Peter Hannam

## KNOTS AND ROPE WORK

During the fortnight in camp there was an opportunity for most boys to handle ropes and tie knots. Although the more common and hence useful knots were illustrated and practised it was the more decorative knots that held most fascination. I had always thought knotting and splicing had peaceful inoffensive uses, but the realisation that "a monkey's fist" when tied round a pebble made a skull cracking sling was quickly hit upon by the fiends at Brochel. Hangman's nooses were perfected with gay abandon, and Turk's heads were soon seen in circular handles of sheaf knives.

Skull cracking by another method, but fortunately unaffected, seemed a possibility after the overhead ropeway was constructed. Using two blocks and tackle to tighten a hawser, a fairly rapid means of descent was made over the 100 feet of rope into the side of the Castle rock, feel and legs being used as natural buffers. After shrinking, caused by overnight rain, the ropeway became even more tight and a brake was added. During the striking of camp the ropeway was re-built so as to run from the camp site up to the top of Castle Rock and was used to uplift some heavy equipment on the first stage of its journey back.

During the first week, a raft was built using oil drums, planks of wood and many odd pieces of rope. The first effort leaked and sank; however, after pitching the holes in the drums, the raft was redesigned into something looking like a biplane of the 1920's and was much more seaworthy.

The only difficulty now was in its propulsion, and a large amount of effort was required to move it any distance. This raft too sank eventually but only after a battle when boarding-parties were successfully repelled. The sea was never warm enough for too long a dip and the oil drums made good targets for the pebble-throwers from the beach. Perhaps next year we may be able to procure the forty gallon drums which we had hoped to have at one stage this year and make a real aircraft carrier of a raft.

Patrick Bradley

## GEOLOGY ON RAASAY

Raasay is a very interesting island from a geological point of view as it is composed of rocks of very many different ages and varieties. The north end of the island is composed of Lewisian Gneiss—one of the oldest rocks in the world. The upper central portion and Fladda is of Torridonian Sandstone; the lower central and southern parts of the island are mainly of various mesozoic rocks but there are also large areas of granophyre and of basalt with more Torridonian sandstone on the southern extremity. The island contains an estimated 10 million tons of ironstone, which was mined during the 1914-18 war, but not since, and also a certain amount of oil shale. A collection of some of the various types of rock was made, the object being not so much to form a complete collection, but to familiarize the collectors with the different types.

Robert Buckley drew a geological map which was pinned on the noticeboard and on which new finds were listed. Many interesting geological features were observed; there are many fine dykes on the island, one of the most striking being that at the Fladda ford as it is utilized by the islanders, being part of the pathway up to the three crofts. Some of the fault lines could be clearly seen and where these coincided with changes in rock types some dramatic contrasts in land form and vegetation were clearly apparent. Brochel itself is one such spot, the barren and very worn and rounded pink gneiss of the north giving way to the well wooded and more slab and step characteristics of the torridonian sandstone to the south. Brochel Castle itself is situated on an old volcanic rock, consisting of a conglomerate rock which, in spite of its ragged appearance proved very hard and was much used by the climbers. One of the most striking features of the island is the great line of cliffs that runs down the east side for 6 miles. These are composed of Jurassic rocks, and it was at the foot of these that the fossil beds were found.

Owing to the cancellation by the officer who was to have been in charge of the geology, not as much as had been hoped was accomplished. Nevertheless, considerable interest was aroused, and it is to be hoped that on a future expedition here even more use will be made of the wonderful geological opportunities.

Richard Fountaine



## THE WEATHER ON RAASAY

After the first week, which was completely fine, there is no need to comment on the weather on Raasay; some figures were kept for mean (max. and min.) temperature, humidity; wind speed and direction, cloud cover and type, pressure and rainfall. A few figures might be interesting:
Max. temp. 72° F, Thursday, September 3rd.
Min. temp. 42° F, Sunday Monday. August 30th-31st.
Max. wind speed, 30 m.p.h. S.E. in camp site, Monday, September 7th.

John Garrett

## A VISIT TO RONA

On Friday evening the plan was to go to Rona on Saturday morning and come back sometime Sunday.

When we woke up on Saturday there was a fair wind and it poured with rain so we thought the journey would be put off until at least Sunday. In mid-afternoon, however, two boys arrived from Rona saying that we were to go then. So we shoved some things into a rucksack and set out carrying some bread with us. We got to Fladda about an hour later and took the boat to Rona. When we finally arrived we sat down in front of a fire to dry out because it had rained , all day. That night we slept in an old church which unfortunately had immovable rocks sticking out of the floor.

Next day it was decided that the Bishop would go back without us and so shortly after having taken a service in the morning, he left in the "Orcadia" (the Rona boat) with a group of Rona people who were coming to Raasay for the night. We, meanwhile, went over to the lighthouse and had a very interesting time there, including a very nerve-racking ride in the light-house landrover. Shortly before we left we were made to sign the visitor's book which has been in the lighthouse for all its 107 years. When we got back we stayed around the camp doing various things like going out in the boat and playing golf. That night was spent in tents as many of their people were out of camp. The only snag was that John Abbott was frightened of being haunted on his own in the church and for this reason Dick had to stay in the church to keep the ghost away.

In the morning as the weather was foul we were doubtful of being able to return. Anyway we stayed and did some odd-jobs around the camp. In the early afternoon we were just setting out to visit a cave when messengers arrived saying we were leaving immediately in the Fladda boat. The return crossing was very rough and but for a tarpaulin that was put up, we should all have been soaked to the skin. We were very glad we were not in the "Orcadia" which would probably have sunk.

While we were there, we noted many differences between the two camps. Theirs consisted of a little marquee, an empty cottage together with the sleeping tents a little way away. The little marquee was u>cd for meals and the cottage for cooking and drying as they had a log fire in there.

Secondly, there were differences in the food: their breakfast was the same but when there were a lot of people in camp they had a cooked meal and a lunch like ours only if most people were out. They also had tea in the afternoon. Their dinner was very much the same but served an hour to an hour and a half later. As for the food itself, it was in many ways as good as ours and in others better, but general opinion decided that their tea was superior to ours but our cocoa was better than theirs!

The third and most major difference was that a large portion of their personnel spent its time hobbling from place to place on crutches or otherwise.

Richard Gibb

## BROCHEL-TOWN IN RAASAY

The Raasay boat drew up to the pier.
The wind fell still in icy fear:
There came from the hold a sound of rumbling,
Out of the boats the rats came tumbling.
Black ones, brown ones, big and small,
Long ones, thin ones, fat and tall.
All came tumbling on the shore.
And as many as came so followed more.
The islanders took one quick look,
And in their boots the whole lot shook—
"Pack them off the Brochel Castle,
Let us be rid of the smallest rascal".
Just then the strangest man appeared.
With long thin nose and one day beard.
And led them whistling over the hills.
To the land of bogs and volcanic sills;
There they stayed for two whole weeks,
Solidly eating with squawks and squeaks.
They travelled for miles by land and sea.
Merely to take the islanders' tea.
And they ate their way straight through the store,
Always returning, demanding more.
Cup-cakes, rhubarb, cuban heels.
Red-hot 'burgers and conger eels.
With shouts and laughter, grasping paws.
All went through those ravenous jaws.
A round little man dished out these goods.
And numerable other delightful puds.
Until one day the tent lay bare.
Not a single butty remaining there.
So the piper laid his pipe on his lips
And the monstrous horde trekked south to the ships,
Returning again in winding trains
Where the food is free and it never rains.
Now quietly among the island's vales
The invasion is spun into epic tales.



CAMP RECORDS

Longest distance walked in a day: Dick Perks—24 miles.

Speed:

Camp to Invararish P.O.: Dick Perks and Bill Wilson 1 hr 50 mins.

Invararish P.O. to Camp: Brian Dale. David Crews, Alistair Stevenson - 1 hr. 53 mins.

Largest fish caught:

Barry Brookshaw's 8 lb. conger eel.

Largest Dogfish: Barry Brookshaw's 5¾ lb.

Largest Mackerel: Graham Turner's 1 lb. 2 oz.

Largest Port: Graham Turner's 1 lb. 9 oz.


## RAASAY BIRD REPORT 1964

### Advantages of island as study area

The island of Raasay occupies an area of some 27 square miles. It lies within the vast embrace of Skye to the west and south, is hemmed in by the mainland province of Applecross to the east, and broken by a narrow sea channel from South Rona to the north. The advantages of such an island from the viewpoint of ornithological or other biological studies are obvious. A smallish island provides an almost unique unit of terrestrial environment, being at once small enough an area to lend itself to regular overall inspection, and also encompassed by a boundary of such extent as to impose definite limitations on the movements of smaller resident birds. Furthermore, Raasay is sufficiently close to both the mainland and Skye, to gain seasonal or casual population boosts from migrants, and larger, wide-ranging Scottish species.

### General description of the island

The island boasts but a single farm (Home Farm) in the south west, and apart from a few scattered strips of pasture, hand cut for hay, in the Ardnish area to the north, cultivated farmland is confined to the former area, and is limited to a few hay-fields even there.

The main human settlement is in the south west al Clachan and Inverarish, with two dwindling ones to the north of Brochel, at Ardnish and Torran. By far the greater part of the island consists of rough stony grassland and moor, with frequent peat hois, heights and rocky outcrops. The above is the domain of hardy, black-faced sheep, which, left largely to their own devices, roam wherever they will. The bulk of the island, neglecting for the moment the withered limb beginning below Ardnish and extending north cast, is ridged by a prominent backbone of high ground, displaced somewhat to the east of centre, and finding its climax in the impressive peak of Dun Caen, the highest point on the island (1456 ft.). There are a number of small lochs on the island, three of which are fairly high above sea-level in the region of Dun Caen; a fourth is above Home Farm. The largest is Loch An Uachdair, little over a quarter mile long, and bearing two small well-vegetated islands.

The island of Fladda hugs the north west coast of Raasay, and is in continuity with the latter by means of a ford that is negotiable at most times. Fladda, only a mile and a half long, is similar in character to its parent, but is somewhat lower and flatter, with two inland lochs, limited pasture, and a settlement comprised of but three occupied dwellings, opposite the ford. Fladda is, however, treeless. Raasay bears several fairly extensive tracts of woodland, which are nonetheless a poor remnant of its former state of forestation. Fringing the sea loch of Amish between Ardnish and Torran. there is a fairly extensive deciduous wood, of which the southern approach is dense birch scrub. Below Brochel lies a young conifer plantation tended by the forestry commission. This stretch is over a mile long, \\ilh a maximum width of half a mile. A similar, but smaller plantation lies half-way down the west side of the island at Brae, and both conifer plantation and mixed woodland is fairly extensive round Inverarish and Clachan. A last woodland fringe lines in the extreme south-southeast, and can best be seen from a boat.

Vast numbers of small burns tumble from the higher ground, and their water is generally very clean. Sandy beaches, or mudflats, so desirable for the attraction of wading birds, are not found on the island. Typically the coastline consists of narrow, very rocky beaches, backed by eroding dill's, and shelving steeply into the icy water. The five and ten fathom lines run close to the coastline, and in the northeast are indistinguishable from it.

**Recent past-history of Avifauna**

It is essential, in trying to grasp how the present bird community came to be, to consider at least some of the more recent past history of the environment in which it developed. By the term environment I mean much more than the mere tangible complex of rocks, soil, vegetation, and water, that make up the physical basis of the island. I mean in essence every force, thing or being that influences a particular bird during its life, or more broadly, influences the life of



the entire bird community. This includes such possibilities as other birds, animals, man, temperature, humidity etc. Such an environment is thus extremely complex, and may best be regarded as a vast interacting system with almost infinity of variables, the whole being in a state of mobile or dynamic equilibrium. Any change in one or more factor will upset the state of balance, which will slide until a new equilibrium is found. Some of the most quick-acting and striking illustrations of this equilibrium concept are wrought at the hands of man, as is certainly true of the bird life of Raasay.

After being made into a sheep farm between 1852-4, the island was eventually turned into a sporting estate. Game keepers recklessly pursued a policy of indiscriminate destruction of birds of prey, and in consequence the Peregrine Falcon, Merlin and Hen Harrier soon disappeared. War was also waged on vermin, nest raiders and fishing birds; thus crows were severely depopulated, the Rookery vanished, and the Heronry was destroyed. The result of all these changes was a marked increase in both number and diversity of woodland birds, and passerines (scientific term applied to the group of perching birds) generally.

However, during the First World War, the estates were short- staffed, and were, in consequence, heavily plundered by poachers. Vermin and raptors were no longer vigorously controlled. Crows multiplied while ground-nesting, especially game-birds, declined in number, despite the fact that the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland had recently taken over the island. My impression this autumn was that the number of crows had recovered with a vengeance, while birds of prey, with the exception of Buzzards and sparrow-hawks, were singularly lacking.

**1964 Bird List**

The total number of birds species whose presence was confirmed on or around Raasay and Fladda between August 28th and September llth, is listed below, together with notes on status and distribution, and by whom first spotted or identified if other than myself. A further brief list includes species believed to be present, but whose presence did not receive confirmation. These lists are followed by a chart indicating the habitats in which some of the more abundant species were found. The division of habitats is a purely arbitrary one, not based on strict ecological considerations, but affords a convenient type-division of the island. It is hoped that it will be replaced in the future, by a rather more exhaustive ecological survey.

The chart is followed by short notes on species whose status has changed significantly from that noted in the 1937 bird list. This list is based on the work of the following observers:

1896-1902 Collier—lived on island in heyday of game protection era. He recorded 140 species in six years, 89 of which actually bred on the island.

1916 Mrs. J. H. Gaskell—six week visit 16th June-August 9th. Refers to only 39 species.

1932 J. H. M. Munro and A. G. S. Bryson—one week visit June 28th-July 4th. Noted 61 species (this would include some summer visitors that would have left before our arrival). The species and their status, agreed closely with Temperley. They saw in addition, two pairs of Grey Wagtails, one or two spotted Flycatchers round Raasay house. Swift party flying south. A golden eagle—apparently a solitary, non-breeding resident. One snipe heard and a diver—probably a Red-throat, was spotted.

1935 Miss D. Blackburn (Armstrong College expedition). Three-week visit—July 23rd-August 10th. Noted 52 species.

1936-7 G. W. Temperley—Two-week visit May 2lst-Junc 4th 1936. Nine-day visit June 13th-21st, 1937.

**List of confirmed species recorded on more than one occasion**

| Species | First spotted or identified by | Notes on status and distribution |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Fulmar Petrel | Simon Young | Occasional sea visitor. Recorded between Oskaig and Skye also off north west of Raasay. |
| 2. Gannet | | Recorded daily—usually solitary regularly flying over island, over sea loch Arrish and between Brochel and mainland. |
| 3. Cormorant | | Not numerous—appear to be mainly on east coast, also S.W. |
| 4. Shag | | Very numerous, especially north-west Raasay and West Fladda. Not definitely recorded on east coast to my knowledge. |
| 5. Heron | | Regularly seen, 4 at once off Oskaig point—3 flying over Home Farm way, mainly appearing off sea rocks. |
| 6. Golden Eagle | R. Fountaine | Along eastern heights, also said to be at north. |



| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 7. Buzzard | | Common bird of prey, generally distributed, more in the north. |
| 8. Sparrow Hawk | M. Bedwell, B. Brookshaw | Several records, appears to be generally distributed. |
| 9. Red Grouse | | Several records, moors in mid-island and opposite Fladda. |
| 10. Oystercatcher | | Not very numerous, rocks off Brochel, off Oskaig point. |
| 11. Curlew | | Several, especially west coast. |
| 12. Great Black-backed Gull | | Well represented, generally distributed around coast. |
| 13. Lesser Black-backed Gull | | Not many confirmed records. Both British sub-species Lanis fuscus graellsii and Scandanavian L. F. fuscus. |
| 14. Herring Gull | | Most abundant gull, coast and over Inverarish. |
| 15. Common Gull | | Regular records, 8-12 once—south of Oskaig point. |
| 16. Kittiwake | | Occasional records, 1 Loch Arrish, several between Raasay and Rona. |
| 17. Black Guillemot | | Common, especially off east coast, gregarious. |
| 18. Wood Pigeon | K. Hunter | Several records, especially south. |
| 19. Skylark | J. Osmond | 2 on Fladda, several on moors north of Dun Caen. |
| 20. Raven | S. Young | General in wilder areas, especially to north. |
| 21. Carrion Crow | | Common, probably more so in south. |
| 22. Hooded Crow | S. Young | Very abundant, moors, settlements, pasture, shore. |
| 23. Rook | S. Young | Status? unknown. |
| 24. Jackdaw | | North of Home Farm, I saw large party going north to roost somewhere, at dusk. |
| 25. Great Tit<br>26. Blue Tit<br>27. Coal Tit | | Usually associated with Blue and Coal Tits, in Ardnish birch scrub, plantation below Brochel; in general where trees. Coal most numerous. |
| 28. Wren | | Very common, wherever suitable cover, trees, scrub, bracken. |
| 29. Song Thrush | | 2 seen at Inverarish, also in Torran region. |
| 30. Mistle Thrush | R. Fountaine | South, rare. |
| 31. Blackbird | R. Fountaine | Torran and Inverarish, only around human settlement. |
| 32. Stonechat<br>33. Winnchat | | Several of each species recorded by roadside south of Brochel, and also on heather and bracken-clad slopes, rocky outcrops, between Brochel and Ardnish. |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 34. Robin | | Human settlements and wooded areas or plantations. |
| 35. Willow Warbler | | Several in scrub above Brochel Castle—Forestry Commission land. |
| 36. Hedge Sparrow | | Abundant where human habitation and also trees or scrub, i.e. forestry Commission land where very numerous. |
| 37. Meadow Pipit | | Very abundant, moorland and pasture—cliffs, rough grassland. |
| 38. Chaffinch | | Very abundant, competes with Meadow Pipit for most abundant land species; found open grassland, scrub, plantation, woods, in last 3—usually with Tits—in more open ground—with Meadow Pipits. |
| 39. Bullfinch | | 1 in garden at Inverarish, others heard in association with Chaffinch parties, but small numbers. |
| 40. Common Scoter | | 3 north west of Fladda, 1 off pier at south. |
| 41. Black Throated Diver | R. Lord | 3 birds Brochel bay below camp, September 9th, 1964. |
| 42. Mallard | | Single. ♀ |
| 43. Eider Duck | | 3 Drakes, September 3rd, 1964, offshore west coast north Oskaig. |
| 44. Common Partridge | B. Dale | |
| 45. Common Snipe | | 1 peat bogs, moor, north of Dun Caen. |
| 46. Whimbrel | | Fladda, first noted by call. Then flew overhead, seen by A. McKellar, J. Osmond and myself. |
| 47. Rock Dove | | Single record, 1 bird northwest cliffs of Fladda. |
| 48. Chough | A. McKellar | Off neck a little north of Brochel. |
| 49. Redstart | | Solitary ♀ in scrub above camp. |
| 50. Lesser Whitethroat | | Single bird, seen by S. Young also —see notes. |
| 51. Chiffchaff | | 1 in trees on Oskaig points. |
| 52. Pied Wagtail | | Single bird on house roof, Inverarish. |
| 53. Grey Wagtail | S. Young | Stream near bridge, Inverarish. |
| 54. Starling | R. Fountaine | |
| 55. Yellow-hammer | J. Osmond | Vegetated cliff ledge, opposite Fladda Gordon Raa. |
| 56. Puffin | Y.N.A. | Off north end of island. |
| 57. Merlin | Y.N.A. | |

**Additional list of unconfirmed species**

1. Peregrine Falcon.
2. Kestrel.
3. Rock Pipit.
4. Tawny Owl.
5. Common Redshank.
6. Common Whitethroat.



| | Offshore. | Intertidal. | Seacliff and rocky islets. | Mixed wood. | Deciduous (Birch) scrub. | Conifer plantation. | Inland cliffs and rocky peaks. | Rocky moorland and peat bogs. | Rough pasture and hay fields. | Homesteads and village. | Inland freshwater lochs. | Open sea. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Shag | × | | × | | | | | | | | | × |
| Heron | | | × | | | | | | | | × | |
| Buzzard | | | | × | × | × | × | × | × | | | |
| Oystercatcher | | × | × | | | | | | | | | |
| Curlew | | × | × | | | | | | | | | |
| Great B. B. Gull | × | × | × | | | | | | | | × | × |
| Herring Gull | × | × | × | | | | | | | × | × | |
| Common Gull | × | | × | | | | | | | | × | |
| Black Guillemot | × | | × | | | | × | | | | | × |
| Raven | | | × | | | | × | | | | | |
| Carrion Crow | | | | | | | | × | × | × | | |
| Hooded Crow | | × | × | | | × | × | × | × | × | | |
| Great Blue Coal Tit | | | | × | × | × | | | | | | |
| Wren | | | | × | × | × | × | | | × | | |
| Song Thrush | | | | | | | | | | × | | |
| Blackbird | | | | | | | | | | × | | |
| Robin | | | | × | × | × | | | | × | | |
| Hedge Sparrow | | | | × | × | × | | | | × | | |
| Chaffinch | | | | | × | × | | | × | × | | |

This chart is by no means exhaustive, but may serve as a rough guide to the distribution of some of the more abundant species in early autumn.

**Notes on confirmed species whose present status is different from that noted up to 1937**

The Heron. According to the 1937 list solitary birds were often seen about lochs and sea coast. Groups of three to four birds were seen by us on several occasions, and the records of solitary birds are quite extensive. Off Brochel and also the west coast Herons have been seen making out to sea, and it is most likely that those found on the island communicate both with the mainland and Skye. Herons breed in loose, small colonies at the top of tall trees. Despite their lofty and apparently secure domain, the birds will only too easily desert a colony indefinitely if disturbed. Dick Wolfendale, one time warden of Minsmere bird reserve, told me how he fought to establish a Heronry on the reserve. After twelve years of patient attention, the colony reached the level of five occupied nests. At this stage a negligent photographer erected an elevated hide amidst the

nests. The Herons promptly deserted and have not attempted to breed on the reserve since; just how long the bitter memory lasts, no one knows, but it is to be hoped that the increasing number of Herons about the island indicates that the destruction of the Heronry during the sporting era may be made good.

The Fulmar Petrel. This is a pelagic sea-bird, with grey upper parts, white head and neck and white under parts (light phase). It may best be distinguished from a gull by its thicker set body, and stiff-winged flight (gulls have rather floppy flight), and also its tendency to glide low over the waves on rigid outspread wings. Before 1878 the Fulmar bred only on St. Kilda in the British Isles. Nowadays, it attempts to breed on all suitable coastal cliffs round almost the entire British Isles. Despite the fact that it lays but one egg per clutch, the population increase has been more than tenfold in under a century, and is believed to be associated with the trawling industry. On our return journey from Raasay to Mallaig aboard m.v. "Dougal's," fair numbers of Fulmars were seen, as also Gannets, a few Razorbills and common Guillemots (some bridled). The same afternoon off Eigg in a force eight gale, even more Fulmars were spotted, together with Manx Shearwaters and a solitary arctic Skua. All Fulmars seen were light phase, as opposed to the dark phase, where plumage is smokey grey all over, with darker wing tips.

Status of Cormorant and shag 1937. Former not large numbers, but some always fishing round coast. Shag commoner than Cormorant. Breeds Sgathlan caves, north west coast.

Our own observations on the Cormorant agree broadly as to numbers, but most of the records appeared to be on east coast, i.e. between Raasay and mainland. They were often in loose associations of up to three birds. The Shag, on the other hand, on the west coast, and especially in the north west strikes me as being very abundant. On a trip to Fladda with Archie and James we counted a minimum of 109 different individuals, in the sea, resting on outlying rocks and ledges beneath cliff overhangs. Since this count was based on the number of individuals visible at an instant, followed by the number flushed from a rest point under the cliff on which we were standing, we can fairly say that the result is a definite underestimate. On my trip to and from Rona, further large numbers of Shags including a large clement of immature birds (pale breast and belly-as opposed to white in Cormorant), were encountered in the sea, and on rocky ledges off the north end of Raasay. A total autumn population of 200 birds would not be an over-estimation.

Golden Eagle. We had a number of reports of large soaring birds noted in likely situations, but few people, I think, are aware of the ease of confusion of an Eagle with a Buzzard at range. I only saw one definite eagle myself, and that was on a drizzly day over the heights of Druim an Achaich on the east coast. Reports from the islanders themselves were confusing. One of the shepherds put the number of Eagles at about eight, grumbled that they were too numerous and stated that he'd like to shoot them all, if he had his way



Another put the figure at three birds to be found in the region of Dun Caen, and also towards the extreme north of the island. All our records were in the Dun Caen area. The average territorial requirements of a breeding pair of Eagles is 12,000 to 15,000 acres (I must apologise to certain members of the expedition for grossly exaggerating this value). Doubtless the Eagles on the island freely roam from both the mainland and Skye.

Sparrow Hawk. 1937 list "occasional, becoming rare visitor"-
Temperley saw none. Mrs. Blackburn two. This bird seems to have recovered its numbers fairly well now.

Wood pigeon. 1937 list "plentiful—breeds in woods round Raasay House". Although I did not spend very long in the south I would certainly not say that the species was plentiful, especially as this time of year is in the peak of the breeding.

Oyster-catcher. 1937 list "plentiful—commonest shore bird". 1964 comparatively scarce; few birds about, may be merely a seasonal phenomenon, rather than a gross change in status.

Carrion Crow. 1937 list "completely replaced by Hooded Crow, only rare, accidental visitor." 1964. Common but not as abundant as Hoodie. While on our trip to the south, we saw a rather interesting spectacle: three Carrion Crows perched together on one fence inspecting a hayfield, and about half a dozen Hoodies forming a distinct group on a parallel fence. Segregation—hybrid viability.

The status of the Rook and Jackdaw—not known for 1964.

Coal tit—1937 by far the commonest tit on the island. I would hesitate to say so nowadays.

Song thrush. 1937 very common everywhere. 1964 only in regions of settlement, or close to same.

Blackbirds, common in wooded parts, but not as common as Song thrush. 1964 common only in wooded parts near settlement. 1964 with both the above species it was found that there was a close adhesion to human settlements, especially in the south.

We can boast the inclusion on our list of five species that are absent from the list dating up to 1937. These are as follows— I. Chough; 2. Black-throated Diver; 3. Lesser Whitethroat; 4. Common Partridge; 5. Whimbrel.

The Chough is, as many will know, an extremely rare British bird, and all the credit for its inclusion here must go to Archie McKellar. The inclusion of the three Black-throated Divers, was to the credit of our camp administrator, and the story behind it is well worth telling.

Fred Markham, Simon Young, Richard Gibb and myself had set out to check the plantation south of Brochel to see if we could add any further species to the list, as this was September 9th, and the last active day, since camp had to be struck on the following day. We were a good twenty minutes walk from camp, descending the plantation back, with an open bay before us. Three largish dark birds were spotted well out in the bay, but poor light, drizzle, etc. contrived to prevent us coming to any definite conclusions as to their

identity. However, knowing that they were certainly a new species for our list, we hurried back to camp and armed with binoculars and a heavy telescope, set out in the dinghy. The outboard was uncooperative, so we rowed in turn for nearly an hour, out into the delicate mist. We eventually located the birds, but despite several frantic sprints, never seemed to be gaining on them. Eventually we had to turn back, disappointed, to get back to camp for lunch.

As I was finishing lunch, Robin Lord hurried into the marquee and reported that three largish birds were just out in the bay below the camp. I rushed out and was able to see quite clearly that they were Black-throated Divers. Thereafter Robin became an obsessed ornithologist, and everything that moved on or over the water was pointed out with urgency, but no more birds were added to the list.

The Lesser Whitethroat was also a very interesting find, since although a fairly common British summer visitor, its breeding range does not extend north of Cumberland, with isolated breeding records in Scotland. A possible explanation of its occurring so far north at this season, is based upon the phenomenon of reverse migration. (Brit. Birds Magazine vol. 55 No. 2, page 74). Briefly it has been found that certain summer visitors to East and Central Europe (Barred Warbler and red breasted Flycatcher) which normally migrate S.E. in autumn, have been found at Fair Isle and elsewhere in Scotland, on a line almost directly opposite that which they should take, and several one hundred miles north of their normal range. The incidence of such birds on Fair Isle has been correlated fairly well with periods of warm-calm weather. Just how this weather deceives the birds into flying the wrong way—if in fact it does, is not known. But the Lesser Whitethroat winters in North East Africa, which means it too would exercise a south east autumn hop. Reversal of this would bring it to the Hebrides. The weather was at that time very warm, sultry, as it had been for the previous five days.

The ornithological work done this year was of a very general nature, main objects being to get some idea of the habitats the island has to offer, and a rough idea of the species to be found there, and their abundance. Building up an impressive bird list can be quite fun, but is really only a means to an end, and not an end in itself. It is something of which the more curious will soon tire. The bird life of the island offers many more exciting and challenging problems for the future, that can yield no end of interest and ultimate satisfaction. For example, the relationship between Hooded and Carrion Crows; the individual colour marking of small land birds such as Robins, with an aim to working out their territory size for comparison with mainland values; a study of the food habits of the limited number of birds of prey; censuses of bird life at a particular season.

I would like to thank the many competent observers on this expedition for very valuable aid in compiling the bird list, especially Archie McKellar, Simon Young and Richard Gibb, who also made many valuable contributions as to the status and distribution of the species included. Richard Gardner



**GOMETRA EXPEDITION 1964**

July 29th—August 13th

*Leader* James Emerson

*Officers:* Mike Baker (filming), Chris Bazley (canoeing). Frank Beloe (climbing), Antony Bradshaw (sailing), Stuart Bramwell (doctor), David Evans (Camp Administrator), Jim Hardy (archaeology), Howard Hazlitt. Gavin Mcpherson and Mark Turner (surveying).

*Boys:*Nigel Broughton, Nicolas de Boinville, Andrew Burnett, Paul Conran, James Edwards, Marcus Evans, Hugh Fleming, Peter Gaskell, David Godwin, Keith Godwin. Robin Goodbody, Charles Jackson, Raymond King, Matthew Kuipers, James Orr, John Parish. Charles Pimblett, Robert Piper, Michael Powell-Brett. William Purcell, Barnaby Renold, Jonathan Rought-Rought, Robert Salisbury, Gerald Welford, Hugh Williams and Kenneth Wilson.

The ages of the boys, who were from fifteen different schools, were from 12¾ to 14¾

(For a full list of schools and home addresses, sec page 46)

## LEADER'S REPORT

There were, I feel, two outstanding features of this year's Gometra Expedition. One was the appalling weather that we had to endure for the first week, and the other, the tremendous enthusiasm shown by all members of the expedition. At one time I feared that the weather would eventually lower the morale of the camp; not a bit of it. The more it rained, the more people seemed to want to be out doing things. Maybe it was just bravado, but it was still an inspiring performance. Only in the last few days—when the sun really did shine--were the officers permitted the luxury of a few moments in which to appreciate their surroundings.

Most of the old Gometra "records" were broken, and many new ones claimed. Even the Camp Administrator claimed a record, but as he was the only one who witnessed the effort it is doubtful whether it will be allowed!

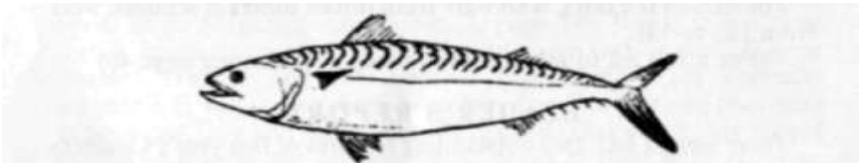
For the first time canoes were introduced on Gometra. Thanks to a good deal of hard work put in by our canoeing instructor, this was a very successful innovation and well worth repeating. For the first time we were able to establish real contact with Little Colonsay and to explore the small islets off the south side of Ulva.

Thought we did manage to hire a Cadet sailing dinghy this year, it was really too small, and the Society's problems in this field are not yet adequately solved.

Francis Beloe coaxed boys up rocks which they would never have dreamed of climbing before. Jim Hardy conducted the archaeological side of the expedition with his usual optimism. Unfortunately this year nothing remarkable was found! Howard Hazlitt provided us with a weather forecast so worded that it invariably proved to be accurate.

Gavin Macpherson walked and walked and walked. Mark Turner successfully mapped the old settlement behind the camp site, and Tony Bradshaw was warned of the horrors of married life! Mike Baker preserved our activities on celluloid for the benefit of posterity, and the Doctor got fed up with other people's blisters. David Evans introduced the members of the expedition to Bridge.
All things considered I think we can claim that the expedition was highly successful. Many new friendships were made and old ones renewed. I certainly enjoyed myself immensely, and sincerely hope that everyone did likewise. The role of Leader is not an easy one, and I thank all who made the job easier. We were lucky on this expedition in that a first class bunch of boys were matched with a first class group of officers. I thank them all for making the expedition a success.
Once again our thanks go to Lady Congleton and Colonel and Mrs. Howard for allowing us to use their lovely islands.

James Emerson



## FISHING ON GOMETRA

Fishing this year was much improved. During our two weeks' stay on the island at least 70 mackerel were taken on spinner and feathers. The majority of the fish were taken at the mouth of the Bru. but on one occasion when the sea was like a millpond the big boat had to be rowed right round to the channel between Little Colonsay and Mull. which is exhausting even to think about! But the trip was quite rewarding for seventeen mackerel were taken in that one afternoon.
Robert Salisbury

## I REMEMBER MOST

I remember most walking, walking for miles in the rain and mist. After we had walked for several miles we were wet through, and as we came back on the track across Ulva we waded through the puddles to cool our hot feet. Then, when we were halfway back, the sun started to shine; so we avoided them. I think the last thing I ever did on Ulva was to put my foot in the largest mud patch in the Hebrides —which happened to be just by the causeway to Gometra.

Hugh Williams

## CANOEING

On the Gometra Expedition this year we were very fortunate to have some good calm weather which enabled us to canoe to some of the nearby islands, after we had gained some knowledge of the sport in the Bru. Trips were made in the canoes to Little Colonsay and to



the Isle of Stafla to sec the famous Fingal's Cave. Nearing the end of our visit to Gometra a canoe trip was made to the cottage on the south side of Ulva to pick up the things that had been left by parties who had stayed the night there.
On the way back we had trouble unloading the canoes at Crewe but it turned out all right in the end. Those boys who did some canoeing enjoyed themselves very much and we owe our thanks to Chris Bazley, the canoeing instructor.

Hugh Fleming

## THE CANOE TRIP TO STAFFA

After breakfast on the 11th I put my name down for canoeing expecting to go for a trip round the south side of Ulva to the small cottage there. However, Chris Bazley, our canoeing instructor, dreamt up the idea of canoeing over to Sulla, which was about 3½ miles away, so that we would be able to see Fingal's Cave at close quarters. Soon after this proposal had been put forward Colonel Howard sent a message saying that he would take some boys to Iona and Staffa in his launch. This weeded out some of those planning to canoe to Staffa, leaving Charles Pimblett, Gerald Welford, myself, and of course Chris. We preferred to canoe because we could land on Staffa, whereas the Colonel could not, as the only quay was privately owned by MacBraynes Limited.
At about ten o'clock we took our packed lunches down to the canoes, (we were taking two). We set out at a leisurely pace. The sea was as calm as a millpond, there being little or no wind and hardly a cloud in the sky.
After an easy one and a half hours' paddling we arrived at Staffa. Colonel Howard had overtaken us on his way to Iona, with the party of boys, and we had met him on his return just before landing, when he pointed out a suitable beach at which we duly arrived. After carrying the canoes up the beach, which consisted of small stones, we went oil to see Fingal's Cave. It had two huge entrances, both about twenty feet high. MacBraynes had built a quay and had put railings and steps all round the entrances. The rock formation was quite remarkable, apparently only to be seen elsewhere in the Giant's Causeway in Northern Ireland. It consisted of hexagonal pillars of which the whole place was made. One could go right into the South Western entrance thanks to MacBraynes, and I took one or two valuable photos.
When we returned to the other entrance (the South Eastern one), we saw two lighters waiting at the quay and a few minutes later, to our horror, we saw a huge passenger steamer, the George V, making its way towards the island. It was bringing sightseers to the islands, ft anchored about two hundred yards off Staffa and the lighters started ferrying passengers onto the island. There must have been five or six hundred people on the boat.
Soon after their arrival we made our way back to the canoes and ate our lunch. After that we strolled around the island noting one or two other caves. We returned to the canoes, and after struggling to

get them into the water (the tide had gone out leaving slippery seaweed), we paddled round past Fingal's Cave and the last boatloads of passengers and made our way round to a very wide but shallow cave. We had seen this from the island, but had been unable to reach it. The place was filled with odd driftwood and rubbish, ranging from an empty Squeezy bottle to two unused naval flares inscribed with the words, "If found, do not handle"—these we carefully avoided! We found Glasgow Whisky cases (devoid of content), buoys galore, glass net floats (Chris took some as souvenirs), a broom, which we also took, a net-mending needle and other indescribable odds and ends.

After spending an enjoyable time there, we went back to the canoes and decided to paddle back to Gometra, and land on a small island situated in front of Colonel Howard's residence. The island was blessed with one of those unrememberable, unpronounceable and unspellable Gaelic names, beginning with "M".

When we had accomplished a harder paddle across a more choppy sea, we eventually arrived there and ate the remains of our lunch. Then we examined the driftwood, which was less exciting than that found in the cave on Staffa, and after sunbathing for a bit, we made our way back towards the Bru. After a tough bit of canoeing dead into the wind, we arrived safely at the landing place after a memorable trip.

James Orr

## "ANYONE FOR RABBIT HUNTING?"

Eight of us wanted to go and Mike gave details of what he wanted to do. Mark and four others were to go round to the far side of a bit of ground with a cliff on one side, and Mike and the rest were to spread out on the camp side. Mike was to take his camera and film the hunt group.

When Mark and his group were ready they were to advance and in this way we would surround some rabbits. We were all armed with sticks, mallets or nets.

We closed in and found there was one rabbit enclosed. When the circle we had formed was about 12 feet in diameter it darted out. Chris darted after it and we followed. When we were pretty close to it, it turned round and ran back to its original position. We circled it again and Percy managed to hit it firmly on the head with a mallet. It then walked (half stunned) in my direction. Somebody then picked it up by its ears and Mike photographed it.

Later, Gerald gutted and skinned it and it was eaten for supper.

James Edwards

## "JOLLY WALKING WEATHER"

It was with some absurd notion of breaking a record that Messrs. Bob Piper, Michael Powell-Brett, Hugh Williams, James Orr and Peter Gaskell set out with Mark Turner and myself one very wet and very miserable morning. We had been informed that the greatest distance walked by a section in one day at a Gometra Camp was



21 miles, and had all decided that it was time that this two year old record was broken, and our sole purpose was to do just that.

Our route took us along the now familiar track to Ulva Ferry, where we stopped to admire one or two blisters, before crossing to the comparative civilization of Mull. Here, we followed a road that called itself the B8073 (you could see the tarmac if you looked hard enough) along the shores of Loch Tuath to a school at a place called Kilninian, our only stops being for lunch beside a splendid waterfall that can be seen from Ulva, and to scrounge a drink of water (but alas!—nothing else) at the Post Office at Torloisk.

The walk back was a long one. although everyone reached Ulva Ferry in good time. The final miles over Ulva, however, were very slow and very weary, but were nevertheless tackled by the five boys with the same spirit and determination they had shown throughout the walk. For this, full marks to all of them. We were officially credited with 29 miles, and when I was fourteen I should never have dreamt of walking that distance, never mind actually doing it.

One more thing came from the walk: the Gometra Song. With apologies to all Etonians, to the tune of whose Boating Song it was "sung" as the rain at last cleared and we wound our weary, but happy, way back across Ulva, and at times repeated later in the comfort of the camp site. I record it for posterity:

## "THE GOMETRA SONG"

*(arr. Macpherson* Turner, and others)*

Jolly walking weather
This is the place for you.
Cattle and sheep and heather,
Jock[1] and his Irish Stew.
Not a fag[2] in twenty miles
And you'll walk every inch of the way.
If you come to the Western Isles
You'll wish you were going away.
Gometra has its sunshine:
Can't say I've noticed it yet[3];
It seems to have rained all the time
I wish it wasn't so wet.
But I've walked for thirty miles
Over the misty moors
But these are some of the trials
Of life in the great outdoors
The Schools Hebridean Society:
Its Chief aim in life is this:
To encourage great sobriety
It's something you shouldn't miss.
So come join us on the islands
This is the life for you
Walking over the highlands
From Mull to the rocks in the Bru.[4]

Here, for the benefit of those not fortunate enough to have been on Gometra, are one or two notes on the lyrics:
1 Refers to a particular officer whose cooking was almost as good as mine.
2.Not that we wanted them, anyway!
3..With apologies to Howard Hazlitt. who brought us some glorious weather after this was written.
4 Bru and Stew (verse 1 line 4), have, as far as I know, no connection.

Gavin Macpherson

## SAILING

"Dismal weather we're having!" But despite this fact for the first eight days of the Gometra expedition a sailing boat (Cadet Class) was seen pottering to and fro across "An Bru". Occasionally when the weather was calm or the crew felt rash the small dinghy pointed her bows towards America, and battled for at least ten minutes at a time into the Atlantic. This then was the sum total of the sailing on Gometra.
Some insurmountable problems; a jamming mainsheet, an almost permanent lee shore for landing, and the fact that bodybuilding life-jackets prevented movement under the boom, all added to the basic experience gained by a few.
Ideally an expedition needs a larger, more stable craft, that can be permanently moored in the water; and with this craft more ambitious cruises could be attempted. However the Cadet provided the first stepping stone in what I hope will become a flourishing activity of the Schools Hebridean Society.

Tony Bradshaw

## A TRIP TO LITTLE COLONSAY

It all started at breakfast when James Emerson came round asking everybody what they wanted to do that morning. I opted for this trip in the rowing boat to Little Colonsay. The party was made up of Jim Hardy, Mark, and four boys including myself.
It was low tide when we left and the boat had to be pushed on rollers down to the water's edge. We climbed aboard and after several futile attempts to start the outboard motor the boat was rowed out of the Bru.
At the entrance to the Bru as the mist was down a compass bearing was taken in the direction of the Skerries which could not be seen at the time. We reached the Skerries without mishap but we could not see Little Colonsay in the mist. It was about now that it became obvious the canoes would accompany us as the sea was very calm.
As we could not see Little Colonsay we took a bearing of 330° from the Skerries. After about ten minutes rowing we lost sight of the Skerries and could not see Little Colonsay. It was at this time that we lost our compass bearing and rowed for some time in what we thought was the right direction but was in fact almost due north. Soon afterwards Dave Evans in the canoe came alongside to discuss where we were and where we were going. It was decided that he



would take the compass in the canoe as he could follow it better there. It was also decided to go on for about another ten minutes and then to turn back if we did not sight our objective. We then turned in the direction of the noise of surf we heard and shortly after we sighted Little Colonsay. The mist was still down when we landed on the island so we only stayed there twenty minutes. We were able however to bring back a relic—an old lamp which was in the cottage on the island. The return journey was much quicker as soon after we left Little Colonsay the mist rose and we could sec the Skerries and the entrance to the Bru and we could row straight back. Charles Jackson

## RAFTING

At first this sounds easy, but as you progress it gets harder and harder. You obtain some oil drums, wood, nails and rope. Oil drums are easily obtained as there arc some especially taken for the purpose. Wood, too, is readily available, but nails. . . !
First you approach the Camp Administrator meekly and say
"Dave! Can I have some nails?"
"How many?" he says.
"Only about 40." you say.
"What! !" he says.
Half an hour later after much arguing and reasoning he counts out eight large nails and about twenty small ones.
You start! First you make the wooden frame, and then strap on the drums very tightly with cord. At this stage you get one boy to help you. Then you drag the raft down to the shore.
Next day you try it. You step carefully on it and paddle out about five yards; you then fall in fully clothed. At this, two people whom you have brought with you collapse in fits of laughter.
After that you always do it secretly with no one watching to laugh at it. But at least you have made one point clear: you can make a raft buoyant.

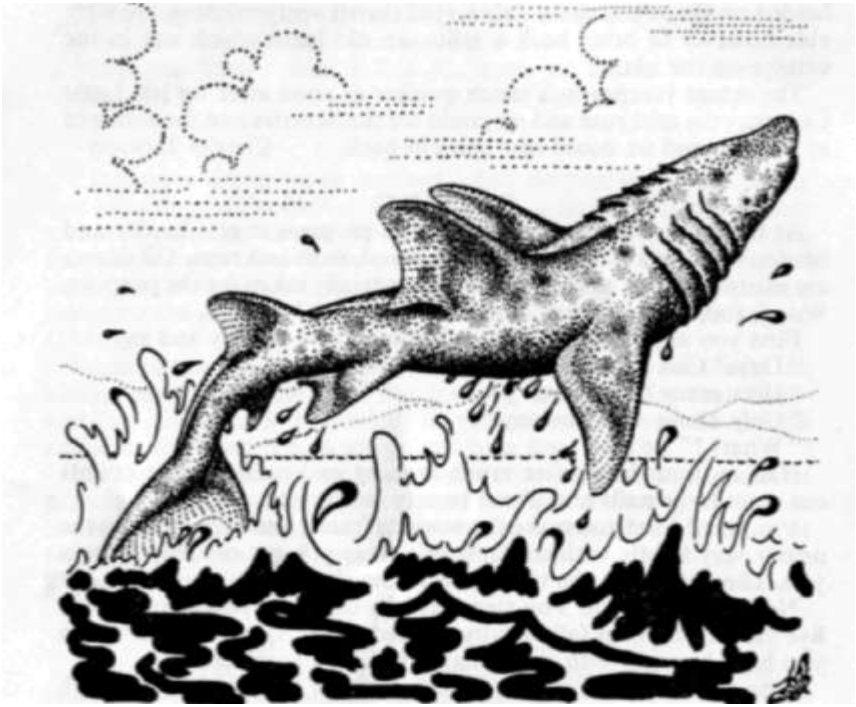
(Also, use swimming trunks.) Michael Powell-Brett

## STAYING AT THE COTTAGE

During the expedition groups of us took it in turns to walk to an old cottage and spend the night there. The cottage was four miles away on the island of Ulva, which is joined to Gometra by a small causeway.
There is no road to the cottage, so we had to walk "cross country".When we were within sight of it, we found that we had to go down a very steep slope to reach it—but somehow we managed. We immediately set to work collecting firewood, which was pretty scarce.
Evening drew on, and darkness came quite quickly. We sat on the grass in the half light and watched the many different colours in the sunset. When it was dark we had a mug of cocoa and swapped ghost stories— frightening each other to the extent that one boy took a hatchet to bed with him! When we woke up in the morning

(after a none too comfortable night!) we had a fine breakfast of damsons and fried bread. (!—Ed.)
Later that day we made our way back to camp—and comparative luxury.

Robert Piper



## THE BASKING SHARK

The Basking Shark. (Cetorhinus maximus), may be 35-40 feet long and weigh ten tons. Even so it has a brain only the size of a golf ball, and feeds on plankton. It is the second largest fish in the world. All sharks have skeletons made of cartilage, though calcium is used to strengthen it in some species, for instance the teeth of Mackerel Sharks.

In the same way that whales have to have a grid to sieve plankton from the water, so Basking Sharks have gill rakers. In order to pass a sufficient volume of plankton containing water into their mouth, over the rakers and out through the gills, the mouth and gill slits of these fish are enormous. The gill slits almost meet above and below the head. By cruising slowly (1-2 knots) in the plankton rich surface waters these sharks pass several thousand tons of water a day. If they moved faster a pressure wave would build up ahead of them, and the water would then by-pass the mouth so preventing plankton uptake. This gives rise to the apparent basking habit near to, or at, the surface.



Every year these monsters turn up in large numbers off the West coast of Scotland, Every autumn they disappear, but no one knows where. They do not breed during their Hebridean holiday. Only three of these sharks have ever been caught (and these by a trawler) during the winter. They were caught deep in the North Sea (bearing in mind that the North Sea is shallow throughout). These fish were found to lack gill rakers.

It is believed then, that during the winter the sharks dive deep in the Atlantic, (the North Sea catches were believed to be strays), and there slough old gill rakers, reproduce, and then grow new gill rakers. They are thought to be viviparous (i.e. produce live young rather than eggs). The habit of deep diving is further substantiated by reports, from several sources, that these fish leap several feet into the air, only to re-submerge with a colossal smack. For a fish of this size and weak musculature to do this it is estimated a mechanism other than a tail flick must assist. Surfacing fast from a considerable depth could facilitate this behaviour. There are several comparative "deeps" off the Hebrides.

Bruce Watt, who has done much ferrying to and from Rhum on behalf of the Society, was one of several to try to make Basking Shark harpooning, off Soay, a commercial proposition, several years ago. It was not a deficiency of sharks that prevented its success. but such sales problems as "What to do with the very large durable vertebrae?" For a full account of this project see Gavin Maxwell's "Harpoon At a Venture".

Peter Parks

PLANS FOR 1965

GROUP A Leader: John Abbott

16½ years old or more Harris First two weeks in August approx.

GROUP B Leader: Jonny Ker

15-16½ years old or more Jura First two weeks in August approx.

GROUP C Leader: Clifford Fountaine

14-15½ years old or more Raasay Last two weeks in August approx.

GROUP D Leader: Jim Hardy

13-14½years old or more Morvern Last two weeks in August approx.

**CONFERENCE**

It is proposed to hold a Conference between January 8th (Friday evening) and January 11th (Monday morning) to which all members of the Society will be invited. The purpose of this will be to discuss matters relating to the Society and its expeditions as well as being a re-union and social occasion. Full details will be sent to you as soon as they are finalised but in the meantime please keep these dates free.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Society receives so much help from so many people throughout the year, that it is impossible to mention them all individually; our first "thank-you" is therefore to all those whose names do not appear here, who have nevertheless helped us.

We do take this opportunity of thanking the following:

The Dulverton Trust, for a most generous grant towards overhead expenses.

The London Parochial Charities, for a grant to enable us to assist boys in the paying of expedition fees.

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The Admiralty.

The Dept. of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland.

The Director of the Scottish Tourist Board.

The Army School of Artillery, Larkhill.

The Ordnance Survey, Chessington.

T. G. Henderson, Esq., and the Argyllshire Education Committee.

K. Greyson, Esq., and Malvern College C.C.F.

The Station Master, British Railways, Oban.

J. McKcrchar. Esq., and the staff of Donald MacCulloch Ltd., Oban.

H. Carmichael. Esq., the owner of the " Dougal's"

Stanley Duncan, Esq., the owner of the "Fairmorn".

The owner of the "Northern Dawn".

K Mackay, Esq., Piermaster, Castlebay.

Field, Roscoe A Co. (London).

J. Black, Esq., B. C. Gadney, Esq.. Miss M. P. Woodmansey. D. H. Wrigley. Esq., John F. Robertson, Esq., (Glasgow University Mingulay Expedition). Neil Sinclair, Esq., The Islanders of Raasay, Gometra and Diva.

We also acknowledge with thanks the help received when obtaining supplies and equipment from the following firms:

Bovril Ltd., The Nestle Company Ltd., Unigate Ltd., Smedley's Ltd., Raasay Co-operative Society Ltd., Cadbury-Fry Export Dept.. C. & T. Harris (Calne) Ltd., William Macdonald & Sons (Biscuits) Ltd., Van den Berghs Ltd.. J. & J. Colman Ltd., Batchelors Catering Supplies Ltd., Knorr Anglo-Swiss Ltd., Joseph Dunn (Bottlers) Ltd., James Robertson & Sons Ltd., J. Lyuns & Company Ltd., C. Shippam Ltd., Lincolnshire Canners Ltd., George Romney Ltd., MacDougalls, Ship Chandlers, Oban, Black's Camp A. Canvas Hires Ltd., Oban Transport A Trading Co. Ltd., Castlebay Co-operative Society, and Tobermory Co-operative society.

The list of names and addresses have been omitted from the internet version.