

PART 1

SCHOOLS HEBRIDEAN
SOCIETY ANNUAL REPORT
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North Uist	Steve Paynter
South Uist	Simon and Rose Atkinson
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1981 EXPEDITION LEADERS

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Jura	Roger Weatherly
Lewis (Tananavay)	Peter Fale
Rhum	Alan Smith
Loch Shiel	Steve Paynter

OBITUARY NICHOLAS ROBERTS

It is with the greatest regret that we report the death of Nicholas Roberts in a climbing accident last February.

Nick who was a student at Durham University was with friends climbing on the snow covered 3,700 ft. Creagh Maaghaidh Mountain, in Invernesshire, when he fell after reaching the top of the crag.

Nick who was on Lewis Mealista 77 and Knoydart 78 will be remembered for his ardent passion to mountaineering and climbing and for his serious and enthusiastic approach to expedition life.

Those who were with Nick on Expedition will sadly miss the outstanding contribution which he made to the spirit of the Society and its loss in future expeditions.

We extend our deepest sympathy to his family at his premature demise.

Paul E. Caffery
Lewis 77.

EDITORIAL

At the third attempt of writing, the report has finally gone to press. Many of the proposed plans have indeed been realised and the machinery for the 1981 expeditions has clicked into top gear.

The proposed leaders and assistant leaders Easter Expedition to the Lake District will have taken place and have doubtless been recorded as an astounding success.

As with other years 1980 has again produced some superb Expedition accounts and project reports. Sadly however there is no material from the Mingulay Expedition.

Perhaps the Societies biggest change this year is the election of Steve Paynter to the Chairmanship, and we hope you will join in wishing him well in his term of office.

As in the past the report is divided into two sections: Expedition accounts, and Project reports. Without any further delay may we suggest you read on and judge the success of the Expeditions for yourselves.

PAUL AND SUE



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OUTGOING CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

I am delighted to be able to introduce my successor as Chairman off the Board. Stephen Paynter has been a member of the Society for five years and the Board was unanimous in agreeing that his experience, personality and youth were exactly what the Society needed. There is an unwritten rule that when a Director is 30 he should think about giving way to someone younger - Steve will doubtless apply this to himself, but he has nearly a decade to go yet, and his closeness in age to expedition members will serve us well.

I mentioned the retirement of Mary Jones in my last Report. Mary has gradually handed over her many responsibilities and now we welcome Mrs. Jill Jenkins and Collette Armitage, who have taken over from her. Many thanks also to Mrs. Armitage, Collette's mother, for her secretarial help for a period over the summer.

Two directors have retired this year, each personal friends of mine since University days, and servants of the Society for many years. Peter Liver went on his first expedition, to Gometra, in 1963; since then he has (with Anne) edited this Report, led expeditions, driven lorries and been a very efficient Secretary to the Board. Many thanks, Peter, and also to Anne, who copes so serenely with Peter's world-hopping, and who loves the S.H.S. in spite of our demands. We have also said thank you to Mark Rayne, also an expedition leader, a Director for Travel and a wise counsellor. Mark is one of those people blessed with the ability to say a little very wisely, and we shall miss him.

It is always a pleasure to welcome a new Honorary Adviser to the Society. Bishop John Kirkham, the Bishop of Sherborne, has a great interest in the outdoors and has led many expeditions himself. He hopes to join one of our expeditions this summer, and we will benefit enormously from his experience and expertise.

I am so conscious this past year of the responsibilities that Board and Executive Committee members have assumed and the degree of commitment they have shown. Sometimes we forget that the Society is run by volunteers! This year we have again made a small financial surplus, and this is due to careful budgeting, sensitive spending and eventually satisfactory recruitment. Please do all you can to help in this respect in 1981 - the spectre of inflation makes recruitment more and more difficult, and we need the help of our members to keep expeditions full. Once again we have a great summer to look forward to, and I hope to see many friends in the islands in 1981.

ROGER WEATHERLY

INCOMING CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

It is not without a considerable degree of surprise that I find myself being introduced to you as the new chairman of the S.H.S. Nothing could have come so completely out of the blue as when Roger first approached me about the Chairmanship at last year's conference. I have been with the society since an expedition to South Uist in 1975 and led an expedition for the second time to North Uist this summer. I accepted in the belief that the society is easily worthy of all the time and effort that was clearly going to be required and was pleased to be made a part of something I consider to be both valuable and exciting.

So what of the society's future?

There is another set of six expeditions already being planned for next summer, which should once again enhance all the variety of events and opportunity that goes to make up the unique character of an S.H.S. Expedition. For example, new experiences, new people and friends, characters and personalities, fresh challenge and new skills to learn, the special peace and beauty of the Hebrides, fun and laughter, responsibilities and freedom, group spirit and adventure, just to mention a few. The sites have been decided, the leaders are being organised and by the time this report reaches you expedition bookings will be underway.

We are a nationally based society, spread out all over the country and because of this we would like to increase contact between ourselves during the expedition interval. There would seem to be many advantages to gain if this could be achieved. There are three ideas, very much in their early stages which are being considered.

Firstly, the forming of smaller local S.H.S. Groups in areas where there is a concentration of enthusiastic members. These groups could arrange to meet as often as they liked and plan their own meetings and activities. The potential is enormous: Hiking, canoeing and climbing trips which could be sponsored to raise funds for maintaining and renewing this society's equipment; Arranging entertainment or displays etc. for the conference or helping with the recruitment within the groups area. Simply as a social activity, perhaps to discuss expeditions.

Secondly, to establish a S.H.S. News and Views communications paper. As well as including various humorous pieces and material related to the Hebrides, one of the editors could observe at meetings and report what is going on, hence keeping everybody much more up to date.

Thirdly, to run an expedition at Easter for leaders, prospective leaders and assistant leaders. Board and Management committee members. I believe such an expedition could greatly improve our summer set of expeditions, help in filling future society roles and provide much needed time to discuss the society and what we should be doing.

These then are a few of the possible ways of improving the contact and responses within us as a society. Another step forward in the future might be the introduction of a working party at some point. This would be a positive and constructive way of giving something back to the Hebrideans from whom we have received such a great deal. Also in the near future I feel there will be more new faces around to plan and organise the S.H.S., as a few of our longer serving members decide to hand over the reins.

In conclusion then, there would seem to be much to work towards over the coming months that will be new to the society as well as many more familiar goals. There will be the summer set of expeditions to plan, organise and eventually go, and I look forward to working with you on many of these.

STEPHEN PAYNTER



i) MEMORIES FROM S.H.S. GOMETRA, 1962 EXPEDITION
WHERE THE WIND BLOWS

A patchwork of the Western Isles made from
anecdotes and wanderings

As the grey sea heaves and crashes against the eternal rocks a spume of white spray darts up like a stormy petrel, hangs in the air a minute, and reluctantly falls once more back. Another great surge and again a spume rises as if leaping away from its captor now chuckling gurgily as it sucks at the rocks like a hungry child; but even as it reaches its zenith an angry snatch of wind rapes it of like, dashing it in hidden fury against unyielding rock.

For a space there is silence. Everywhere now there are the tinkling, trickling sounds of salty streams as they run down their wall of death, glistening in the washy sunlight.

The waves continue in their timeless dance and the dappled light splashes and scatters across the water. Each crest is highlighted; each trough of sea blackens in its depth.

In the lazy warmth of a summer afternoon drowsed the slow syllable of a Gaelic accent:

"Aye... chust so And I have your pail by the door
here the chickens are well on the scraps you brought. There's six
more eggs and I put some rhoobrub there for you."

Angus lay back on the warmth of the grassy heather, blinking quietly in the sunlight, as we also sat down and stretched. Way to the south lay Staffa, with Iona in the haze behind; and there, heaving in the slight swell was Scotland's contribution to the world of anachronistic pleasure cruisers. In picture postcards and on a drowsy day when the air hangs motionless under the sun the 'King George the Fifth' looks a splendid sight, and like the first great war deserves all the connotations of that adjective. What majesty in her gliding form, what balance of design in those two great funnels, what austerity in her towering black sides as they rise sheer from the water like some archetypal Noah's Ark. And on a day such as this the trippers swarm to the dinghies to be rowed to Fingal's Cave, to consume with sticky fingers lollipops and ice cream beneath the cool black arches.

How formed were those great pillars of basalt? Some say that in that Herculean fight of long ago great Finn McCool who was at that time in Ireland took a scoop of native rock to fling at his foe far-hidden in the north; ever after was the landscape scarred by the great rent of Lough Neagh, and the rain of debris scattered in the seas like falling hail from the Giant's Causeway away to Staffa.

LEADER: John Round

ASSISTANT LEADERS; Colette Armitage, Roger Butler, Paul Caffery, John Ringrow, Janet Simpson

MEMBERS: Howard Battersby, Andrew Bishop, James Clegg, Nick Close, Tim Dewhurst, Jonathan Douglas, Craig Eason, Tim Gallagher, David Gooberman, Alan Holt, George Johnson, Maurice Patel, Nick Pender, Scott Russell, Jes Smith, Steven Ward, Simon Webb.

LEADER'S REPORT

The passage of time, the final healing of my blistered feet and the comfortable security of my midge-free armchair at home, have already coloured my memories of our expedition to Colonsay with a warm glow of rosy retrospection. Looking back our time on the island appears to have been a kaleidoscope of different events and activities -infinitely varied, exciting and eventful.

We saw all sides of the islands character during our stay. Shortly after we had pitched camp at Tobar Fuar the wind rose to gale force, the heavens opened and we spent much of one night into the early hours banging in extra marquee pegs to the sound of snapping poles in some of our smaller tents. Resourcefully we dug pretty drainage ditches around the site, passing in the front door and out of the back door of a rabbit warren, much to the surprise of its occupants, and Roger Butler pitched his tent inside the marquee - perhaps the height of insecurity? However the bad weather didn't stop our activities. Within the week the island relented and the legendary Colonsay sun began to shine.

Our main activity was walking and exploring the island. Colonsay is large enough to provide a lot of variety and yet small enough to get to know well. During the expedition we covered the whole island as our route map shows. Few people will forget the beauty of our site, the pounding of the surf at Kiloran Bay and the wild country to the North with its heather clad hills. We journeyed to see the ruined village, the remarkable gardens at Colonsay House with their rhododendrons and ostiches [Ostriches ? NS] and the Priory at Oronsay where St.Columba landed in times long past.

However we didn't confine ourselves to walking. Canoeing and boating in the bay by the campsite was popular and we went climbing on the nearby rock faces. During the evening various events of the 'Colympics' were staged - surely our athletes outshone those at Moscow? We also had sing songs in the marquee to the hiss of tilly lamps and the grunts of hand wrestlers locked in mortal combat. I think by the end of the expedition we had improved to the extent that we were all singing the same song at the same time, if not to the same tune.

Be that as it may, but indeed Fingal's Cave has been the abode of many a giant, from the days of a nine headed Monster to the quieter times of Fingal himself. Hatching the glory of an Atlantic storm in the days of St. Columba he once espied a monk in danger of drowning in his boat. Stretching out his hand Fingal rescued him and set him at ease in the cave with the rest of his family; there they talked together for long hours and finally, Fingal being converted to Christianity, he wished to be baptised. But the monk was still only a novice, and must perforce seek the advice of St. Columba himself concerning the baptism of giants: All was finally arranged and settled, and on the appointed day Fingal was baptised at the alter. So tall was he that he had entered the church upon his knees, but great was the joy of all when he rose to leave, for he stood upright and was reduced in stature to that of other men.

"Aye, but times are when the weather is no so good.....you would see her rolling aye, from the one side to the other."

A smile lit up the corners of Angus' face as he considered this; but then gave way to a look of consternation as a new thought arose.

"Nearly a thousand people every day.....yess.....I am sure it would be too and they would all pay a pound I think.....aye, I think so, now."

The thought was great, and a little sigh escaped across the heather.

"Aye.....yess.....noo."

Slowly the reverie passed and slowly turning his head around, he continued:

"Chust along there now on Ulva.....ay,. chust by the road there was a house.....yess, yess, that's right - over the Bru with the others....Well, it must be a long time ago now.... I never saw a roof on any of them. Mind you my father wass buried on Ulva.....last war too they buried three seamen chust over the hill here."

He paused a minute for breath.

"Well now, they used to say that the man who lived there would keep all his money in a certain place.....no, no, I'm sure he'd not have much...and what he'd do is he would put the lamp on the table..yess...and where the shadow fell out of the window from the lamp it's there where he buried his gold. And there's nobody ever found it yet....."

"Oh, no, no....I wouldn't be knowing which house it wass".

Angus spat.

TIM WILLCOCKS

Projects suffered a little through the bad weather, but we did some bird watching and I think everyone (apart from Nick) saw the Golden Eagles. We counted goats for the Nature Conservancy and Colette even found a use for our dissection trays as cake tins in her doughnut project. We went butterfly counting and some people went wax rubbing on Oronsay, we even had a go at dyeing wool with lichen and a simple botany project.

Throughout the expedition we had a lot of contact with the Islanders. This ranged from lifts on Davy's tractor and taking part in the Regatta to, two "football matches" against the Colonsay Crackers, which we marginally lost, only 10-1 and 11-2, suffering a sprained ankle and three cracked ribs in the process.

On our last night we entertained the local people to a barbecue at which we burnt our driftwood furniture and (for those who could stand the pace) sang songs to the early hours of the morning. Looking at the burning fire (obliterating for ever those slanderous graffiti) it was difficult to accept that the expedition was nearly over. Soon we would be on our ways home, each taking our own particular memories but sharing a common debt of gratitude to those who made the expedition possible. To Lord and Lady Strathcona, the Islanders on Colonsay and those on the S.H.S. Board and Management Committee we owe a great deal. Lastly to the members and leaders of our expedition, I would like to add a personal thank you for helping to make the expedition the success it was. I for one left Colonsay with regret and with thoughts of return.

JOHN ROUND



THE COLONSAY STORM

It was a Saturday night, when all was dark and the wind was rough. Everyone had gone to the barbecue following the regatta. John Round, Steven Ward, Janet Simpson, Colette Armitage and myself were left behind. The wind blew stronger and all the tents were blowing everywhere. I went to the barbecue to fetch the others back and while I was gone John Ringrow's tent was hit by the wind and ripped out of the ground. John rushed to it and pulled out the pegs and dragged it into the marquee.

Pick Fender's fly sheet had flown up into the night sky, (the following morning he found it near the beach) Meanwhile John Round was hammering all the pegs down and tying the doors together. By 12.00 p.m. everyone was wet, cold and miserable, so Colette made us all some hot chocolate. All the kids went to bed while the leaders stayed awake looking at the bottom of a whisky bottle from the inside and caring for the tents. We all slept soundly while the wind blew and the rain poured.

ANDREW BISHOP

S.H.S. XI v COLONSAY

It was 2.30 p.m. on Sunday 17th and just half an hour before the kick off when the wind blew up and it began to rain. At first we all thought that it would just pass over, but when it started to rain 'cats and dogs' it did not daunt us and out we went for a quick pre match warm up.

Our eleven team mates were: J. Clegg, S. Ward, R. Butler, S. Russell, N. Close, J. Round, A. Holt, C. Eason, A. Bishop, P. Caffery, J. Douglas. All these players had been hard in training and we were odds on favourites to lose, but we did not bother.

The ball was in the centre, the rusty whistle blew and we were off. Having possession of the ball the islanders broke. Despite brave efforts by Roger the ball was taken down the left wing and crossed into the goal area. Up went the goalie and in went the ball. 1-0 to them and only a few minutes gone.

By half time it was 4-0 but we did not give up. A little upset by the further 6 goals, we succeeded in getting the ball into their area and after a goal mouth scramble we managed to get one back to make the final score 10-1.

As we walked off and Mick Close was carried off with a sprained ankle we thought, how lucky! They even scored our goal.

STEVEN WARD

BIVVY TO BALRANARD

When we started off from camp at approximately 11-00 a.m. it was cloudy but warm. Altogether we were six people on our little bivvy including myself.

We walked along towards Colonsay House hoping for a lift from one of the various tractors that passed by. Unfortunately we were unlucky and walked all the way to the junction at Colonsay House, where it immediately started to rain. Along the road to Kiloran Bay we met up with a stray dog who we know as 'chips'.

At Kiloran Bay we stopped for lunch and decided to press on to our bivvy camp site. We followed a rough land track to about 100 yards from a possible site but in the end we found a sheltered spot in the dunes. By now we were all soaked so we put up one tent and while Jeremy Smith and I climbed inside and changed our wet clothes the rest helped to put up the other tent. In about 10 minutes we were all settled down with our soaked rucksacks in a bivvy bag. Janet Simpson and Simon Webb made some Irish Stew for our tea and then we settled down for a long restless night.

Early the next morning we all arose and packed our rucksacks and tents. The weather started off dull, but brightened up to become a warm sunny day. We decided to take our time going home and on the way back the dog chips caught a rabbit so George and I tied it up and carried it with us. Janet wanted to go to the most northerly point on the island and after surveying the scenery we walked up there and than began our long walk back.

At Kiloran Bay I saw a large tractor towing a trailer, we all ran to the road and managed to hitch a lift to our main campsite in a quarter of the normal time it would have taken us.

ALAN HOLT

THE CLIMB

On Friday morning, Paul, some others and I set out to do some climbing behind Port Mor Cottage. Paul climbed ahead putting in chocks as he went. When secured to the top by Paul, Tim Dewhurst went up first, the rest of us following, one by one. This climb was an easy warm up one.

The second climb was a lot harder and in some places we were over a drinking water supply reservoir. Again Tim went up first but soon came back down again because he was stuck. This meant I was the one who had to take the chocks out. There were two overhangs I had to get over and a narrow ledge. I eventually got to the top where I took the harness off. Paul threw it down to the next person together with the rope. Unfortunately the wind caught it and the whole lot went into the water supply. This meant that we had to return to camp because of the wet rope.

I had only one comment to make when I reached the top "I forgot I was scared of heights"!!!

DAVID COOBERMAN

THE 2nd FOOTBALL MATCH

On a sun drenched, cow pat filled, football pitch at 3 o'clock, the match of the year took place. From the first match on the previous Sunday we knew what to expect more or less. As we arrived the Islanders started to warm up with the match ball. We appointed a referee of almost neutral standard and began.

It was a most amusing, interesting match, with goals (goal) and excitement at either end. The Islanders took first blood early on in the game and then gained control, to end the first half 8-1 up.

The first half was a warm up for a bustling action packed second half with a fair share of activity on either side. Paul unfortunately had to miss the second half because of an injury, but we did not miss him at all. (Course you did, Ed.) We also lacked a good goal keeper because our normal one sprained his ankle in the last match, and consequently suffered a few goals through the keeper not being able to speed off the line and gather the ball from the Scot's feet.

Eventually the game ended at a score line of 11-2 in favour of the Islanders.

ALAN HOLT

MOUNTAIN WALK

On Monday the 18th August, Paul, myself and George Johnson went for a scrambling walk. Paul took a rucksack packed with emergency equipment and a rope. We had made ourselves a packed lunch consisting of sandwiches, an orange and some Kendal Mint cake.

We left the campsite at 10-15 a.m. and climbed up Beinn Nan Caorach. As we walked down the other side we found some white heather which we put in our hats for good luck. The ascent of Beinn Nan Caorach was to be our only climb. We had decided to walk round the inner circle of mountains in an anti clockwise direction, finishing up at the campsite after clearing four main peaks.

Crossing the valley we walked along a ridge over ninety-one metres high. It was on this ridge that we saw Colette with a group of boys going to the ruined village by road. At the end of this ridge (called Sliabh Riabhagh) we had to cross swampy ground. There were also great fields of heather which were shin deep and exhausting to wade through. In the middle of this we came across a stone wall with barbed wire on top, overcoming this was quite difficult. We climbed another mountain and from there we had a good view of Scalasaig.

We had our lunch on top of a small rocky hill nearby and then struggled up Beinn Nan Gudairean (136 metres) which offers superb views of Loch Fada, the North east coast and the area around Colonsay House. After this we had an exhausting walk back through thick heather and marshland. The monotony of this was only broken by small pips and hills, the thick heather concealed ditches and streams. It was hardly surprising then when I accidentally slipped into one of these, soaking my arms and feet. We arrived back at camp at 2-00 p.m. after skirting the coastguard hut and stopping to look at the lifting stone.

MAURICE PATEL

THE COLONSAY REGATTA

The Colonsay Regatta took place on Saturday 16th August. When we arrived the sea was choppy and we noticed at least one sailing dinghy capsize. Steven Ward and David Cooberman entered the canoeing race and as they were the only two entering I thought I might have a go myself as I have quite a bit of experience, certainly at river canoeing. (B.C.U. Stage 1).

With about twenty minutes to go I slipped into the water to practice my turning. This was when Janet told me to lean away from the waves to counteract the roll. At this moment a late participant entered. He was about 20 years old and used a canvass kayak; he was Lord Strathcona's son.

Only five minutes to go and Ross one of the islanders rowed out past the pier as a marker. It seemed as if he did not know when to stop and was way out beyond the pier. Eventually he stopped and we were off. The young man got a good start while David and I battled it out for second place. I got ahead and caught up with the man. Unfortunately as I got near him we collided, then he prevented me from going ahead by continually cutting in front of me. When we reached the marker boat I had drawn level. After the turn it was a straight race but I was not quite sure where the finishing line was and I had to turn towards the line at the last moment.

I came second and was given a cup for being the first visitor home.

CRAIG EASON

(A SOMEWHAT DISSIMILAR) BIVVY TO BALNANARD BAY

We got up at the usual time, around 8-00 a.m. We had breakfast as normal and finished our readiness activities in time for the 12-05 bus going to Kiloran Bay, which we would catch up at the road.

We waited at the roadside for about fifteen minutes, then decided to walk in a clockwise direction along the round-island road. About half a mile along the road we waved down the bus, which was coming towards us. It cost us 45p each, which was a lot for the few miles we drove.

At Kiloran Bay we walked along the beach then up onto the grass where we sat down and ate our sandwiches. After lunch we followed a track between two hills. Caman Eoin 148 m. and another unnamed at 48m.

The sun was shining and the grass was dry when we stopped for a rest after passing Balnahard Farm a mile back. Colette our leader went to look for water. Ten minutes later she returned and we decided upon a campsite, sheltered by the dunes and about fifty yards from the stream. When we had set camp we walked down to the sea about 200 yards away. Leaving Andrew and Maurice at the rocks Colette and I walked round the coast to the most northerly point. When we returned to the camp, the other two claimed to have seen a sea otter. After dinner we would all go and have a look.

We started dinner, with boiling water for smash, but the water was knocked over into the tent. We got the meatballs and ate them without smash. (Poor Andrew was sick after eating a can and a half). At about 8-15 we put water on for coffee but this too was knocked over, twice. Eventually we did get our coffee at 9-00 p.m. sang some songs and went to bed.

The following morning Colette decided to be nice (for a change) (This is not our comment, Ed.) and have the porridge ready for us when we woke up. Unfortunately - she knocked it over. When we did get up we had half an hour to wait for the new batch to cook. We left for main camp a little after 12-00 hoping for a lift from some hapless farmer. Alas we didn't get one and had to walk, just managing to crawl into camp late that afternoon.

SCOTT RUSSELL



NORTH UIST EXPEDITION 1980

LEADER: Steve Paynter

ASSISTANT LEADERS: Angela Newton, Judith Pielou, Jo Haddock, Nicholas Grice, Martin Walker, Simon Lord, Timothy Short.

MEMBERS: Angela Greetham, Ruth Jessup, Claire Dempsey, Jackie Jowitt, Karen Nunns, Helen Rush, Alison Webster, Michael Costin, Peter Davies, Michael Kell, Kevin Daines, John Easton, Gordon Seabright, Deborah Robertson, Andrew Kirby, Iain Martin, Sarah Walker, Richard Bradbeer, Mark Norman, Mark Johnson, Tom Clark, Dan Walker, Kieren Dempsey, James Hester. David Wilson.

LEADER'S REPORT

....Tony said that Beryl said that Michael said that Sarah said that Steve said, "this is a tock!" "A what-?" said the rather bemuddled recipient of the peculiar comment while gazing perplexed at the very obvious gap between the speakers forefinger and thumb. The Speaker frowned and turned to Tony standing on his other side and said "A what" Tony turned to Beryl and said "A what", and Beryl turning on Michael (who took one step back) said "A what"...and so the exclamation of confusion passed back around the circle, a bit like a sequence from a Hollywood dance routine, until it reached the idiot who thought of the idea in the first place. He replied "a tock" and this stunning revelation which everyone knew all too well by this stage was pasted back to the original source of the inquiry. He did not seem much better off with his newly acquired knowledge but thought he'd pass it on anyway. Meanwhile, rapidly approaching from the other direction in a similar fashion was an equally unidentifiable transparent tick! The end of this odd behaviour, other than the learning of a few names, a lot of laughter and confusion was the beginning of the North Uist Expedition, 1980.

It had been the first evening together on site, and we had all crammed into the small marquee in front of the old crofters cottage at the southern foot of Mount Eaval. Stretching away in front of the cottage was a sea loch which penetrates inland a short distance from the labyrinthine channel which divides North Uist from the next small island south, Grimsay. North Uist lies about midway down the chain of islands which make the Outer Hebrides. It is a very bleak and rugged Isle with its mainly lying heather clad moorlands only broken by the abrupt angular dwelling which dot the Islands flatter regions, and the many freshwater lochs, irregular in shape, which cover a large proportion of the Islands surface. Trout and wildlife abound and the delicate highland flora always adding a touch of finesse to the wild scene. So, amidst this array of splendour and far from the noise and pollution of man and city came thirty-nine, to experience in the raw, all that a Hebridean expedition can offer.

One of the first major activities to get underway was the canoe capsizing drill. I was very impressed that almost the complete expedition showed such willingness to be strapped into a canoe and then to invert themselves for three seconds before releasing the spray deck and executing a forward roll out. For many it was their first time in a canoe and credit is due to Angela and Nicky who put everyone through their paces with such proficiency and in not altogether welcoming conditions. However to my amazement the result was a spat of regular swimming sessions in the loch, the logic behind which I have to admit left me confused! Canoeing was a strong activity throughout the whole expedition and included an all comers regatta, as well as two overnight canoeing bivvies on Loch Obisary. It was to the demeanment of male chauvinism that the canoeing honours were taken by a certain Yorkshire lass, Angela Greetham, who gave a fine display of canoeing ballistics, and earned the first prize - half a Bar Six!! This was not the meagre, even ridiculous reward that you may at first think. The trading power of a tent was very much dependent on its chocolate reserves, and the price of a milligram of Cadbury's Milk Chocolate at the end of the day on the Eaval Stock Exchange would be dependent on the timings of a store run by any particular group. Mark Hopwood, our Camp Administrator kept a tight control of camp reserves with an almost uncanny intuition for market trends.

So Angela carried off the chocolate for aquatic supremacy in the field of canoeing and it is indeed a pity that supremacy in the highly technical sport of lilo racing was never established. In the first heat both delicate hybrid machines were accidentally rendered inoperable after a spell of scrummaging on the part of Martin Walker (Definitely not encouraged by his opposition) Hence dashing the leaders hope of 'chocolate'. Both bungs were lost. However, thanks to Dave Wilson, Mark Johnson, Mark Norman and Kevin Daines, for so enthusiastically preparing the most fiendish course possible.

The only other aquatic activities other than regular and liberal dousing tactics of certain groups for each other, was the sailing of the 'Harvey Wall banger' on Loch Obisary. Once in operation the magnificent surroundings added to the fun and enjoyment of sailing her, and some sailing instruction was achieved.

Rock climbing was led by Simon Lord and many of the expedition received their first introduction to the sport on a small cliff not far from the camp. The basic techniques, principles and safety procedures were instructed before the climbing of a few short rock pitches was undertaken.

Exploring of our surrounding environment, including Islands further afield, mainly on foot was another major expedition activity. There must have been a party ascending Eaval most days of our stay as well as walking the North Uist coast line. Overnight bivvies of one or two nights were undertaken to the bird reserves at Balranald; to Loch Eport where a successful fishing bivvy took place; two to the South Uist mountains; and two real bivvies, one to the island of Ronay and one to the summit of Eaval itself, taking no tents, the night is spent in the wonderful organic properties of a plastic bag! A number of groups undertook project work and some interesting findings are displayed in the appendices.

The ornithologists led by Tim Short took a look at the flight directions of the birds and at the relation between the numbers of common and rarer species of birds observed at a particular location along the coast. Angela Newton led some Marine Ecology doing two small studies, one on seaweed, and the other on limpet shells. Jo Haddock and her team produced quite a number of delightful sketches and these will hopefully go on display at the conference.

Evening activities proved both a valuable and enjoyable part of the expedition as well as being quite diverse. One afternoon Nicky and myself carefully and diligently laid out an orienteering course to be done without maps but on bearings and paced distances. A fair course we thought and not without the odd surprise (one check point was on a 'dun' in the middle of a loch, with the next out over the water opposite the little stone stronghold). Competitive spirits were at fever pitch as group after group dashed off at ten minute intervals. The resulting mayhem which followed contrasted strongly with the quiet peacefulness in which the course had been laid. One group threw away the compass after the second check point, others were seen high up on the Eaval ridge! Nicky spent much of the evening as acting orienteer warden in the seemingly impassable mid-section of the course. However a victorious group arose to claim the 'chocolate', and comprised Claire and Kieren Dempsey, and Iain Martin. Participants held the course organisers firmly responsible for the apparently unrealistic check point distances, and no energy was spared in the defending of their case.

A lively camp 'wide game' ended with a precise night evacuation of Kieren by fishing boat after he very unfortunately received a badly sprained back. Kieren's early departure is the one sad note of the expedition.

The remaining evenings held little pattern. Vocal expression was tried on many occasions, with the help of S.H.S. song books, mental acrobatics performed on some lateral thinking exercises, some interesting recitals resulted from a game of 'Just a Minute' and a great deal of confusion over what the man in the 'Land of Nog' was wearing. A camp song was written, a very interesting and worthwhile debate was held on the subject of the distribution of the world's wealth, and a new team came up with a frisby called 'Ultimate' was introduced to the Island. The last night became the occasion for all those individual talents to come out and much cultural (?) edification resulted from the ensuing collection of poems, sketches, stories, verse and jokes. The evening was rounded up by Stephen Bradley who gave us a magic show involving a short routine of very fine illusions.

It has been a good expedition and the next day we arose early to pack up camp and head for home. The Hebrides had once again provided their magic on which to build another unique SHS expedition. I remember the evening peace and tranquillity that reigned supreme in the camp as a reddened moon huge and very low over the waters in front of the cottage and the last remains of the deepest blue sky were slipping below the horizon to leave in its wake the first stars. It was occasional breath-taking beauty like this coupled with the physical challenges of the environment, shared with a group of very alive people, which made it for me. No doubt each individual had his/her own reasons for what went towards making the expedition, but I feel the overall conclusion of most of us that North Uist '80 was a very enjoyable and worthwhile experience.

STEVE PAYNTER

THE CAPSIZE DRILL

On the second day that we were in camp, canoe capsize drills began. It was a cold day and the water was freezing, certainly too cold for swimming. However, disregarding this, myself and a few others went to do a capsize drill.

I think that it was an experience of a lifetime, but the water was so cold that I vowed never to do one again, and so did a lot of other people come to think of it! On the whole I think that canoeing is a lot of fun.

BERYL PEARSON

CLIMBING REPORT

'The climbing done was good' -

Mainly using a side of crags about half a mile from the camp. The climbing was from 'difficult' grade to 'very difficult' grade, and although the rock was not that strong, most people who tackled the climbing thoroughly enjoyed themselves.

With all of Simon's protection falling out each time, and people who were be-laying from the top bribing the climber to bring up biscuits, or else they might let go of the rope! Everyone was scared at some stage, especially when we told them we were to abseil! Leaders were in fits of laughter as they saw frightened little faces walk slowly backwards over the side of the cliff!

A climbing party of four set off to do some excellent climbs on the North face of Eaval; unfortunately this was cancelled due to weather conditions.

Overall the climbing on the expedition was great. Thanks to Simon, Judith and Steve.

DAN WALKER

North Uist – menu

Breakfast; Spam 'n eggs
Spam 'n beans
Spam shake

Lunch; Spamburgers
Spam stroganoff
Spam fritters
Spam au vin
Spam bolognaise
Spam au Uist
Spamaloni (from Italy)

Supper; Roast Spam
Boiled Spam
Deep fried Spam
Grilled Spam
Poached Spam
Smoked Spam
Barbequed Spam

V.R.T. deducted (Value Reduced Taxi)

DAN WALKER

THE BIVVY TO BALRANALD (i.e. Dead Bird Watching Bivvy)

We left camp at ten thirty, and reached Claddock Garnish at twelve. Half the group took the Post bus, the others hitched lifts. The group that hitched a lift managed to get a lift all the way to Balranald and arrived there at one o'clock. The group in the Post bus (Jo Haddock, Angela Gretham, Ruth Jessup and Peter Davies) ended up at Loch Maddy. We arrived in Balranald at about five o'clock, having had to walk all the way from the junction of the road to Balranald.

We had just got the tent with no pegs up when it started to rain. We all went to sleep and slept until about eleven o'clock next morning. Then for breakfast we had the previous evening's meal, along with rhubarb which Jo brought.

After breakfast Tim Short and I went to look at prehistoric remains whilst Jo, Angela, Ruth, Tim, Richard and John went to the show. Tim and I arrived at the back entrance after seeing the remains (which were disappointing), to find that Steve had brought a group to see the show. Jo and her group had gone to see the beaches. We had a look around the show until we met Jo by the gate.

We then went and camped on the beach near the bird reserve.

The next morning we went to Tigharry to catch the Post bus back to Claddock Garnish. For lunch we ate the fresh potatoes we had bought on the way there. It's amazing how you appreciate ordinary food, after camp food.

PETER DAVIES

(O.K. Dan - who forgot the tent pegs? - Ed.)



THE GREAT DEBATE

Not content with simply being one of the greatest SHS expeditions ever fun-wise(!) the merry folk of North Uist '80 were determined to exercise their vast intellects in a good healthy discussion.

It was first the idea of Mark Hopwood after he had to break up a neo World-War-Three situation(!) which ensued a minor tête-à-tête about the virtues and vices of the United States of America (i.e. Stephen Bradley versus the rest of the world). He suggested an organised discussion which everyone agreed sounded like jolly good fun. All that was needed was a topic to debate. Several suggestions were made (for example: "is there life after Spam?" And 'This house believes that Angela Newton is a Womble') but these were discarded due to lack of support. Eventually a title was decided; a light little number entitled. 'This house/marquee/cottage believes it is satisfactory to have an uneven distribution of wealth in the world'.

The big night arrived with 38 people and Humphrey Southall crammed into the projects room of our cottage at Eaval. A deathly hush hung heavy in the expectant air as the door slowly creaked open and Mark 'Parky' Hopwood entered.

"Good evening ladies and gentlemen. And on my show tonight I have.." The familiar nasal Yorkshire tones rang clear.

Before the arguing, sorry, debating could start a note had to be taken: 17 for the motion, 11 against and a few abstentions from those undecided or too lazy to raise their hands!

Dan Walker started the ball rolling with some very valid and convincing points in favour of the motion. Unperturbed, Mark Norman rose to the challenge with an equally impressive reply which must have lasted for almost 15 seconds. Kev Daines also added some intelligent comment against the motion, before the topic was thrown to the rabble, sorry, floor for general discussion with Mark Hopwood doing his best to preserve; the peace.

Almost everybody had some valuable comment to make on the issue, and the talking continued well into the night until the inevitable and devastating cry rang from the kitchen "Cocoa!"

This was taken as a good opportunity to formally close the debate and a final vote was taken: now only seven for, and 22 against, some strong debating from Tim Short, Steve Paynter, Mark Hopwood among others had won the day, despite some valiant defence by James Hester, Dan Walker and others.

So, as the sun sat in the western sky and the last soggy remains of Digestive biscuits were scraped from the bottom of plastic mugs, life returned to normal on North Uist.

MICHAEL KELL

SOUTH UIST BIVVY

On a warm Monday morning our small bivvy party of five set out to Grimsay in the inflatable. As we were going down the loch, we sighted an eagle. We drew closer to Grimsay; the engine was lifted and the oars were lowered. When we reached the shore after a minor problem (one oarsman was stronger than the other which made us travel in circles) we found the road.

As soon as we were on the road, we started to hitch a lift. This was not too successful at first. Nichola Grice (A.L.), Peter Davies and I hitched in one group. Tim Walker and Steve Paynter (L) hitched in another.

The last lift we had on the way was with a National Trust Warden. He told us of a "wee mountain bothy" below Mt. Hecla. As soon as we reached Loch Skipport, we trekked off to find the bothy. On the way we were eaten alive by midges, bothered by flies and were worn out. When we reached the bothy, we found it very "wee", as even I had to bend down to get through the door. We ate a supper of meatballs and steam pudding and settled down for the night.

After approximately thirteen hours sleep, we woke up to discover the rats had eaten some of our porridge oats and cheese. At twelve o'clock we had our breakfast (the bits the rats didn't eat!). At one o'clock we left the bothy and started our ascent of Mt. Hecla. This was more difficult than it sounded. The mist, cloud and rain came down and the rock was magnetic, which made maps and compasses not very useful. After getting lost on a steep, rocky and precipitous side of Hecla and trekking half-way round the mountain, we found the peak. We then had to think about coming down again. This wasn't too difficult once we had found the general direction.

As soon as we reached the bottom of the mountain, we had a 4 o'clock lunch and pitched our tents. We were in a cloud. We all crammed into the fly-sheet of a one man tent and Steve cooked us a meal. (I hold my stomach as I write the next bit). We had SPAM (yuk) fried in margarine (even more yuk!) and Smash (with lumps to chew on!) and unhydrated, dehydrated, dried, burned onions. After contemplating whether or not to eat it, I had to leave the tent at top speed and take a short walk over a hill. I enjoyed the walk and returned to the tent to find half a raw, undercooked steam pudding and a mug of instant watery whip, which Tim described as, "The pink medicine that everyone was taking a few years ago!"

After another good night's sleep, we had breakfast and set off to climb Ben Corodale without too much difficulty. We were still in clouds and could barely see ten feet in front of us and the rocks were still magnetic. The climb down was harder than going up. We carefully made our way down a wrong ridge, and then we climbed a mountain we shouldn't have. We came down again and started to climb Beinn Mhor. By this time the rain was starting to get quite heavy, and so were my boots. On we walked and made the most of the only view we enjoyed on the whole bivvy, since we had dropped below the cloud line for the first time. Beinn Mhor seemed to go up into the mist and further up until we reached what looked like the top, but no - on we walked along a narrow ridge, which was very steep on one side and vertical on the other. When we reached the peak, the view was wonderful. It was the same as the view from the other mountains -nothing but cloud!

After coming down Beinn Mhor, we had lunch and a handful of ginger cake crumbs. We drained the water from our boots and promptly filled them up again trying to find our road. We hitched back again. Again Steve and Tim had more luck. Our hitching party had a lift in a grit lorry. Our rucksacks were with the grit and we were in the front trying to make polite conversation with the driver, who we couldn't understand. He swore in Gaelic at the sheep. The lorry was a bit cramped and I was sitting on the gear stick and had to move every time he put his foot on the clutch.

When we arrived back at camp, we all collapsed and groaned as we discovered there was SPAM (yes, SPAM) for supper:

SARAH WALKER

BALRANALD BIRD RESERVE - Dead bird watching bivvi

Brief summary of the basic qualities of the two assistant leaders: incompetence, unreliability, incapability and irresponsibility. Complete inability of one to map read, compass read, and generally tell the difference between the East and West of North Uist. (Another one is false modesty: Leader).

In ignorant bliss of the adventures that were to befall them, our 6 intrepid ornithologists, followed us with inexplicable trust and confidence. On reaching the village, four of us managed to bundle into the post bus for an unexpected tour of the island. We knew perfectly well that it wouldn't take us where we wanted to go - that we would be stranded on the East Coast when we were making for the West Coast!

However, this intentional mistake did nothing to dampen our enthusiasm and we finally retired, drenched, to our bivvy bags, in high spirits and ignoring the hunger pangs after our supper had been washed out. We emerged after a relatively wet night, just slightly drier than the previous evening. After a hearty breakfast of Irish stew, meat balls and porridge, we set off for a splendid day at Hosta Agricultural Show and our hunt for dead birds.

The following night, spent at the foot of the dunes on a beautiful beach compensated somewhat for the disasters.

Our return to camp was accompanied by several million flies and we eventually arrived, ravenously hungry, plus a few blisters but satisfied with our bird count - one juvenile gull, dead; one puffin, dead; one yellow wagtail, dead; one oyster catcher, sprained wing.

We were just a touch curiously concerned as to the fate of the thieving herbivorous sheep who had dined on our plastic bag full of hot dog sausages!

JO MADDOCK

CANOEING REPORT

North Uist was very much a canoe activity expedition, with inland lochs and one sea loch close at hand it wasn't surprising. All the members appeared to be keen to learn the basics of canoeing and were all eager to do their capsizing drills.

I was pleased to get the capsizing drills over so quickly, as I was the one who demonstrated how it should be done! The water was beautiful, it was so cold you lost all feeling after the first couple of seconds and the only way to get rid of the numbness was to return to camp and have some hot coffee, which for a few privileged people had a wee drop of a well known Scottish aid in it!

All the capsizing drills were done in the small loch, which was really part of the medium sized loch called Loch Dun an t-Siamain, but the waterway between the two was too shallow for canoes to go through so they were always thought of as two separate lochs. The small loch was also the scene of the canoe sports day which was just one rare. Angie won - no not me, Angie, I wasn't going to show myself up by losing in the first heat. No I was the person who said 'Ready, steady, Go...!'

Apart from the gentle paddles in the small lochs we also had two very strenuous canoe bivvies on Loch Obisary. Nicky and Martin took the first with Sarah, Helen, James, Debbie. Kieran and Mike C, while Tim and I took the second, which was a very similar bivvy to the first, with Angie, Alison, Paul, Steve and Mike K. Both of these were a great success. I especially enjoyed mine, having both breakfast and lunch not only in my tent but in my sleeping bag as well, while it rained outside. We waited for the rain to stop before we canoed back to camp.

Apart from the two bivvies I took Mark J, Kev and Richard B canoeing on the sea loch to the Little Minch, this was a long but enjoyable trek, especially when we were joined by seals.

Half the camp went on long distance canoe trips and all but one did the capsizing drill. I won't say who the one was, but although she didn't do her drill she was a very active member of the expedition, so I won't hold it against her.'

ANGELA NEWTON

1ST CANOE BIVVIE REPORT: Thurs..July 31st (2 days)

Loch Obisary
Nicky, Sarah, Helen, James,
Martin, Debbie, Kieron, Mike C.

Canoes packed with Bivvy equipment, food and tents waiting for us on an island the far end of the loch, just a leisurely paddle along Obisary. Or so we thought...

We set off at around eleven following faithfully behind Harvey Wallbanger. It was hard going, the strong wind not only causing problems for the sailors but also making paddling quite a task too. Unfortunately Harvey had to turn back, we the canoeists were to continue and meet the others later when they had walked up. The wind certainly seemed to get more powerful and once out in the more open water it was rough and arms soon began to ache. The canoes did seem to have collected rather a lot of water too so it was decided to take a short rest. After emptying the water laden canoes we once again took to the water ready to do battle with the elements. A battle it was too, for Helen and Sarah especially it was a matter of survival keeping the canoe upright and straight rather than moving forwards. At the risk of capsizing with bivvy equipment, which appeared quite likely I decided to abandon our mission for a while. So we sat and had our lunch intending to wait for the others to arrive. However, the prospect of sitting being pestered by flies wasn't that welcome, so we decided to make a start moving the canoes further round the loch to the peninsula opposite our island. How timely, Martin's walking party reached us just as we had carried the canoes round! Beryl had not joined us to replace Debbie who had decided that she had had enough with sailing carrier! Four of us then agreed to canoe across to the island and transport all the food and equipment back to the mainland. It would have been too rough to try and ferry everyone plus packs across to the island. Eventually after walking the entire length of the island (so big!) we hunted down The Black Box containing food and equipment. What food had we been left was the vital question. Surprise, surprise!! Sausages, peas, K.M.C. and ...Spam. So, well loaded up with food, tents and cooking gear we made our way back to the others. Kieran was entrusted to transport our ½ opened tin of rice pudding safely across.

Soon with tents pitched, camp set up, we eagerly waited for our evening rations. We had in fact forgotten the meths so volunteers had to canoe back to fetch it. Luckily by now the loch was relatively calm and paddling caused no problem. After the 'superb' meal, we entertained ourselves with a game of 'Give us a clue', interspersed with shrieks from Helen as certain members continually threatened her with spiders. She did seem to like running into the water and getting wet though!

Any intentions of making an early start next day were soon lost. Stewed tea for breakfast at eleven was simply marvellous. Whose idea was it to boil the tea leaves in the pan of water for 20 minutes? Finally the canoeing party set out to paddle round to Loch Eport and the walkers set off over Burrival, meeting us for lunch. Our intention then was to walk along the 3 mile stretch of road to the Tweed Shop. However, the 3 miles stretched to 4 to 5 and so on meeting up with a mobile shop we got no further. Full of mars bars, biscuits drink and chocolate we returned to our sandy beach camp-site. Once packed up we waited for the inflatable to arrive to transport our gear back to Eaval.

I think we all had a good 2 day Bivvy away from camp - when we eventually got there -, we had a lot of fun and certainly those rough water conditions provided some excitement and experience for most of us.

NICKY

Le bivvie sar le sommet de L'Eaval

(guess who pasted his French 0-Level).

Government Warning: Simon's bivvies do not carry a Government Health Warning.

To venture upon ont of Simon Lord's bivvies you either have to be:

- 1) a keen masochist/super keeno/potential suicide
OR
- 2) an avid follower and admirer of the 'swinging sixties' music.
OR
- 3) a deaf mountain goat.

People present in body, even if not in mind, included one (thank heavens) Humph. Southall, 'Fresh' from a new and exciting bog-pit excavation; Mark 'Barry's nephew ' Norman; James 'Jimmeh' Hester; Gordon 'Winco' Seabright; Tony Clark; your humble scribe and last and most of all least, his 'Lordship' Simon.

The ascent up (quite commonly done) was to prove enlightening to some us.

We set out at about 7 p.m. at a reasonable pace considering we had all just suffered supper and one or two people were even CHEERFUL. But soon it was obvious that our poor little enzymes could not cope with this form of torture known under the code name 'camp food' which ravaged our stomach linings, and the pace slowed.

About a quarter of the way up, everybody informed Simon that everybody else looked tired and could do with a rest. But this turned out to be a fatal decision. Squadrons of mosquitoes flew up the mountainside closely followed by herds of stampeding midges to join us. Not content with the people down in camp they had decided to dine out and we were their main course. To anyone who had not yet suffered the Hebridean species of midge, I can only compare them to the monsters on the 'Space Invader' machines - they continually gnaw away at your defences and if you should succeed in knocking out one, another drops in to take its place. Even the gallons of Midgex applied before the sortie proved useless against the beasties.

By the halfway stage it was becoming blatantly obvious to the rest of us that Humph, was persistently bringing up the rear of the column. When questioned as to this predicament, the reply made, in between gasps for air, was that it was the most important position in the group and held the highest responsibility (a likely story).

Meanwhile, at the head of the rabble, Simon was viciously threatening punishments of bog-pit digs to anyone who dared to go in front of him until it was pointed out that they had all been dug by Humph already. Caught off his guard, we thought we had him at our mercy but the most callous threat of all had been left for last - Simon's continual droning, laughingly called singing. We pleaded forgiveness and being the sporting chap he is (creep) he ceased (-not permanently however, unfortunately).

It was around about this time that the conversation of bivouacking for the night arose and I found myself to be a little unprepared with only a can of beastie (non-) repellent, comb, whistle and compass, map, camera, sleeping bag, rucksack and the clothes I wore. This caused profuse merriment to Humph and Simon. "Still, we've come to rough it, and rough it I shall'.". I said, trying to put on a brave, defiant outwardly appearance while inwardly, desperately trying to humour myself.

Finally, we reached the top. Simon proceeded to show us the better places in which to bivvy i.e. places free from potential rivers should it just happen to rain (how unlikely) and sites which gave the trooper a reasonably strategic position of defending himself against the dawn air attack by the flights of midges. He also pointed out minor things like not sleeping with your head down the slope or too near to the edge of the cliff because he couldn't be bothered to pick up the pieces and anyway, he hadn't brought a spare plastic bag to put the pieces in.

It was only now that I properly realised the extent of my plight. While everybody else was putting karrimats, karrimor bivvy bags and generally creating 5 star bivvy accommodations, I was seeing how many different ways I could arrange a comb, a can of people repellent, a whistle and a compass, on a nearby rock.

I felt slightly comforted, however, when I found somebody else, alias Mark N., had fallen foul of the same cruelty. But this new-found easiness was soon crushed by 'horribly helpful Humph! who gleefully told us that even if, by some quirk of fate, it did not rain, we would still be soaked by the dew. Who needs enemies.....

So Mark and I decided we would be highly unsociable and sleep on the outer limits of the defined area.

Having found a comparatively flat, smooth slab of rock, and plunged into the murky depths of my sleeping bag, along came not so simple Simon claspng a bivvy-bag between his paws. I suggested heroically (and foolishly) that Mark should have use of this 'souped up' dustbin liner and I had a high-quality Navy mobile sleeping pit which was water proofed with a hood giving me the appearance of a Khaki caterpillar when inside of my cocoon like sleep-bag. Knowing a sucker when he saw one, Simon gave the bag to Mark who didn't seem to care one bit about having to get out of his temporary bed to obtain the afore mentioned posh plastic bag. We then proceeded to get to sleep.

This would appear to be the end of the epic adventure - not so, the saga continues.

I drifted off to sleep much more quickly than I had expected (to my delight). All went well until about 4 am. when I was awoken by Mark, who informed me, amid fits of laughter, that Simon's bivvy-bag had blown down the mountainside never to be seen again (shame). Again, I drifted back into hibernation but about an hour and a half later I was rudely awakened by Mark (again) with a swift kick up the 'derrier'! This time a bleary-eyed specimen vaguely resembling our beloved Simon was with him. He claimed he wanted to know the time and to check we weren't dying from frost-bite but we know what he was really looking for (don't we Judith....).

The final awakening from my coma like sleep was to the quaint holla for breakfast. I had not exactly expected V.I.P. grub but I didn't much care for water on cornflakes, especially without any sugar. Actually, I tell a lie, the water did contain one or two (only one or two mind) traces of milk powder - just enough to create white streaks in the water.

After this extravagant nourishment we proceeded down the mountainside back to camp, guided only by the succulent smell of fried spam, burnt eggs and beans, which were to await us at the end of our perilous ordeal.

IAIN MARTIN

HOSTA AGRICULTURAL SHOW

The agricultural show is an annual event held at Hosta, North Uist, and is run by the Aberdeen Agricultural College. It is a very popular event and people come from Benbecula and South Uist as well as North Uist to visit the show; although competitions are only open to the inhabitants of North Uist.

The competitions organised included a handicrafts section, cakes and biscuits, flower arranging with home-grown flowers, and a vegetables section. It was amazing to see such beautiful flowers and large vegetables which matched up to those grown in England, but which had been grown on a very infertile island. The main attraction of the day was the cattle and sheep competitions. The cattle competitions included the best Aberdeen Angus and Aberdeen Angus X beef cattle, the best highland cattle including the supreme champion. There were also competitions for the best veal calves and future beef cattle.

The sheep competitions included mostly Scots Blackface, but there were also a few Scots Blackface and Cheviot. Competitions were run to find the best within each breed, as well as the best overall winning animal.

I found the show very enjoyable; it was interesting to see how the agriculture on North Uist can in some aspects reach nearly the same standard as produce in England.

TIM WALKER

NORTH UIST EXPEDITION.
JULY/AUGUST 1980.

THE FOUR FRIENDS

Humphrey was an elephant a great big fellow.
Steve was a lion with a six foot tail,
Simon was a goat and his beard was yellow,
And Juddith was a very small snail.

Steve had a stall and a great big strong one,
Humph had a manger and it's walls were thick,
Simon had a pen but I think it was the wrong one.
And Juddith sat down on a brick.

Humph started trumpeting and cracked his manger,
Steve started roaring and shivered his stall,
Juddith gave a cry of a snail in danger.
And nobody heard her at all.

Humph started shouting and caused such a rumpus,
Steve started roaring and trying to kick,
Juddith took a journey with Simons new compass
And she reached the end of her brick.

Humph was an elephant and very well intentioned.
Steve was a lion with a brave new tail,
Simon was a goat as I think I have mentioned.
But Juddith was only a snail.



LAST DAY OF THE EXPEDITION BEFORE PACKING.....

and what an eventful three weeks.

Judith, Jo and I took a party of eight members on a gentle stroll to Obisary, which was far enough away from camp. Jo wanted to do some sketching, I wanted to find some white heather and Judith wanted to sleep. No-one wanted to walk far and I think we found the most beautiful place on the island to stop, sit down and think in silence of the days passed.

What wonderful memories:-

Dan going mad when the South Uist bivvy returned with his chocolate, Steve Bradley and his magic tricks and our stroll over very slippery rocks. The walk with Jackie when we did Marine Biology at high tide! Dave enjoying calling me 'titch' as at last he'd found someone smaller than himself. The development of certain relationships. The rats which ate my cream cakes at night in my tent while I was sleeping. Sharing a two man tent with Angie and Alison. Humph turning up unexpectedly and attempting a capsized drill. Canoeing in the sea loch with Kev, Mark Johnson, Richard Bradbeer and the seals. 'Steve says this is a tick' 'What is it?' The fantastic views from the top of Eaval. The games that we played unsuccessfully such as the spoons - 'I'll choose Paul because I know he likes me really'. The unfortunate accident in the wide game that no-one ever did find out the score although the P's won. Kev, Mark and Dave with their denim jackets. Mike Kell and the breakfast in bed I never did get. Tony and Peter who I did manage to differentiate between eventually. Judith who was always lying around camp! Simon who was bivvy mad and helped me climb, just. The sing songs in the evenings and how I ever managed to obtain the nicknames of Womble. Wellington and Orinoco! The wet sleeping bags which stank of spam fritters after drying in the kitchen. The spam and tea and the lack of chocolate, midges and dry clothes. The other evening occupations such as story telling and lateral thinking sessions. The excellent discussions which always ended up on Christianity - Then Harvey came round the corner, the memories are broken but not forgotten. A new one is made and more are still to come.

ANGELA NEWTON

Dan Walker

SOUTH UIST EXPEDITION 1980

LEADERS REPORT

The South Uist Expedition 1980 will be remembered by those who were on it, as the year of the beer and . The members of this expedition must be among the most active and enthusiastic ever teen on an S.H.S. Expedition, this ia probably due to the Loch Eynort ridge. On certain days the only way to escape the hordes of nasty, biting insects was to get away from the campsite by whatever means were possible:- boat, sailing dinghy, canoe, foot or by swimming. Every morning and evening certain assistant leaders and leaders were seen trying to perfect the Hebridean wind dance, hoping to encourage a nice breeze to whisk away our unwelcome visitors.

The expedition did not start as well as we had hoped, through some confusion on the part of the North Uist Expedition our equipment did not arrive until 8 p.m. The tide was getting lower and lower, the light was fading, and the long, long wait had enabled a great deal of boredom to set in. Nonetheless the expedition members responded in a typically enthusiastic way once the equipment did arrive. There were screams of delight from Gwen during her first experience of putting up a marquee, particularly as it was nearly dark. However, in the manner of all crises on S.H.S. expeditions, everything worked out in the end.

Probably for the first time in the history of S.H.S. expeditions absolutely no projects were undertaken. This may be as a result of a lack of enthusiasm on the leaders and assistant leaders part or perhaps more likely, due to the fact that most of the members had just completed '0' levels and required a rest from their studies. However, where there was little enthusiasm for projects there was an abundance for more physical pursuits such as sailing, canoeing, climbing, wide games and murderball, to mention but a few.

Some of the most popular pastimes seemed to be related to the stomach and the filling of it. Rose carried out several cooking demonstrations, showing the captivated audience (including assistant leaders) how to prepare such delicacies as;- Hebridean crunch, toffee a la Lock Eynort, pommes de toffee, fried cheese butties and fried jam butties.

Another favourite pastime was rabbiting. No catching rabbits for culinary purposes using a spade and a Hebridean dog (on loan from one of the Islanders). This proved to be most fruitful. Mussels and oysters were also collected and eaten with much relish; except by Paul Newton who was nearly sick after his first raw oyster. Ever tried an oyster butty?

Many bivvies were undertaken but perhaps the most popular was the one to Polachar. I never really understood why I became so popular when I asked who would like to come with me to Polachar for a bivvy. Gwen's bivvies were always most eventful, but many people consider that she never went anywhere that was more than then minutes walk from a hostelry where one could purchase an alcoholic beverage (this girl should go far).

But what of our intrepid leader? What activities did he partake in? Well, he spent such of his time afloat, (no midges - except when collecting huge logs from small islands) His expertise at the helm of the P4 became legendary - ask Giles or Tim (Haley) - and he developed a new technique in observing seals. After getting stuck whilst climbing, our hero "jumped off" because of cramp (that's my excuse and I'm sticking to it) and decided to turn to more gentle pursuits such a drinking tea and eating bread and butter at Angie's, a much frequented spot at Loch Eynort. But what of Rose, our other partner in crime? Rose spent much of her time cooking (just for a change), sleeping, yelling at poor unfortunates (like me) and sleeping in strange tents at Polachar.

Lee found a novel way to reducing the numbers of the vast population of midges. Smoke bombs. This technique proved to be most successful but next time you wish to de-midge the bog tent, please make sure that there is nobody in it. Poor Sara came out looking like a kipper!

The extremely clever society rat reared it's ugly head once again, this time at Loch Eynort, managing to evade the various rat traps set for it. Good rat traps must surely become standard issue so as to avoid losing large quantities of cheese, cake etc. Also honey and sugar puffs would be useful just in case that Hebridean bear should once again make a bid for freedom. The society could engage itself in an unusual "bear trapping" project.

The expedition would not have been the same without the vociferous support of Gwen during the evenings. Green Grow the Rushes O will never be the same again.

Like all good things the expedition had to come to an end and off we all went on our separate ways. This was a marvellous expedition to have been on, certainly a more friendly, likeable and enthusiastic group of teenagers would be difficult to find. My thanks go to my extremely capable assistant leaders, the many hard working S.H.S. officials, the owner of the island for permission to use the site, and last but certainly not least to all the islanders for their marvellous hospitality, particularly the MacDonald family.

SIMON ATKINSON

THE POLLACHAR BIVVIES

If you should go to South Uist, be sure to visit Pollachar on the southern coast, this location offers beaches, views of Eriskay, and the nearby ferry which crosses to this beautiful island; a shoreline campsite; and of the two houses, one is licensed.

After Simon had painted the above picture, his memory enhanced by four years absence (and possibly other factors) no less than fourteen people wanted first-hand experience. To hitch in one direction all at the same time was obviously impossible, so the party was split by some strange logic into groups of ten and four, everyone to stay two nights. Rose went with Tim and the first group. I think possibly that this was a ploy to enable Simon to do the hitch with intelligent female company, however, this turned out not to be so (cryptic sentence).

After variously hitching (Kaye and I), walking (Douggie and Louise), and talking (everyone except Nigel and Debbie) out way down, we gathered at the pre-arranged meeting place, which was well used.....

However, it was soon found necessary to pitch camp. This was done, a meal arranged, and the sleeping arrangements discussed. It was discovered that although we had tents to sleep ten, sexual segregation was not possible. Tim by his usual tortuous logic stated in short, that someone had to sleep in a mixed tent and it may as well be him. Nobody argues with Tim. If any other assistant leaders would like to know how to get to sleep in the same tent as the leaders wife, see Tim Haley for lessons involving destructive brain surgery.

Next morning - Porridge: Heat water until patience runs out; add oats to correct consistency, reheat until lukewarm. Best served with jam and apologies. Nearly all was actually eaten (or used to plug holes in the ground sheets), the last half portion clung tenaciously to the bowl, despite inversion for thirty seconds, then fell out and proceeded to crawl back up the beach. Washing up resembled the removal of spilt rubber solution.

It was some hours later, after the arrival of the second party and the news that there would be net another group the following day, and after deciding on a trip to Eriskay that Simon was called to the bar for a telephone call. It seemed that camp had been left attended only by one leader and four members, the rest having gone to a bird reserve. We all knew what this meant, but the Creagorry Hotel on phoning said that they weren't there. It was decided that as their party could not be contacted, a task force would return to the camp to take any urgent action until they returned. A lift was offered by someone overhearing our discussion. The conversation in the land-rover revealed such gems as "..... our leaders the one that was on the phone".

"Oh! Is he the short one with half a beard?", and an interesting take of a couple of sodden wayfarers given a lift down.

The first view of the alleged disaster area (? Ed.) led to several well chosen words directed towards a nearby party due to the obvious lack of anything meriting a panic. However, a rescue party has to act like heroes, so after a rest in the marquee from the monotonously unpleasant weather, and fuelling with fried sandwiches which could only be described as "sans parcil", Tim suggested we tow the Harvey to a safer mooring. "How deep is it?" he asked. "Only two feet", came the reply.

This proved to be slight underestimate, in fact about 150%. Towing a Wayfarer in a strong tide and wind whilst wading in five feet of freezing water on a muddy bottom is not easy, but is the stuff of which rescue missions are made.

By this time, the two junior members of the 'rescue party' had become somewhat enraged by the false alarm. This condition was not improved when, only a couple of hours after our arrival, the rest of the camp returned, oblivious of the unnecessary curtailment of our bivvy and quite capable of handling any disaster.

The night was spent in the Atkinson tent in anticipation of a return to Pollachar the following day with the third party. The hitch down was uneventful as was the day at the site. The bivvy ended without spectacle when after discussing whether to stay another day and taking my tent down, I couldn't be bothered to put it up again, and so left. The journey back, however, was not less than eventful but that's another story.

Morals

When returning to camp in answer of distress calls, allow for additional expense in doing the same bivvy twice.

Phoning for exam results on an expedition has many advantages, but leads to vandalism and personal injury.

Never turn down an offer to sleep in a married leaders tent.

When hitching a lift in a flat-bed truck, be aware of the consequences.

Never give me food to take back from a bivvy.

P.S. If there are any leaders who have not been derogated in the above please write to me enclosing a S.A.E. for offensive reply.

PAUL BLOOMFIELD

CLIMBING ON SOUTH UIST

A SHORT ACCOUNT OF THE POLLACHAR BIVVY

Getting there was extremely wet; The bivvy tended to revolve around one particular centre of attraction; All those who were able to stay thoroughly enjoyed themselves.

ORIENTEERING

With enthusiasm the first couple trundled off, compass and map in hand. It teemed easy enough, all you had to do was find about eight points, write down the letters found at these points, and return to camp inside the set time limit. The weather appeared better than usual, it was drizzling, cold and wet under foot. The closer points were very easy to find, but these only brought in a few marks, so most people decided to go for the "Big One", on top of a peak quite a distance from camp.

By cheating a little we thought we could make a better job of the course. So we split up, one going to the top of the peak and the other going to a distant lochan. After an hour of relatively fruitless hunting we met up again, thoroughly exhausted, and having gained only about sixty points. We gave up the idea of going separate ways and eventually returned to camp.

We won't mention the winners for fear of them becoming big-headed. Even the couple that came last did try to make-up for it by inventing the missing answer !

As a special consolation prize for one and all - there were toffee apples for tea.

JULIA MURRAY and ALEX LONGDON

Climbing activities on South Uist were curtailed not by the lack of enthusiasm of the members but rather by the weather and the midges. Who can belay safely with millions of midges around them? To this must be added the fact that with a total of 35 it was rather a large expedition with a slight shortage of interested climbing instructors and an average knowledge amongst the members as high as nil.

It started quite well, as on the first day it poured down with rain, but with members quick and keen to learn I was able to teach a few of the necessary knots which were promptly forgotten. During that afternoon we rigged up a rope from the ridge pole of the marquee so that most of the members were able to have a go at prussiking, which was enjoyed by most.

Our climbing activities were mainly confined to a buttress of 50 - 70 ft. high, some half an hours walk away from camp, and in spite of a slight shortage of good belay points provided us with several interesting one pitch climbs, most of which were extremely difficult without aid:-i.e. heather, which most members seemed to trust their weight on.

During our several exploits there most members climbed at least one route and did some abseiling. Some of the best climbers were the girls who in spite of their continual cries of "I'm scared" climbed the easier pitches with nonchalant ease.

Although I would very much have liked to have done a lot more interesting climbs, I was pleased to have introduced a number of people to the sport.

One last point is that I am very pleased with the way in which the equipment has steadily improved over the past few years.

MARK BANKES

THREE PEAKS

After several days of dull, wet weather, that sunny morning and a view of Beinn Mhor clear of cloud brought life to the camp again. Too much time (and food) was taken over breakfast leading to the late departure of all three walking parties, intending to make the most of the fine weather.

Our party's particular aim was to do the three main peaks of South Uist that day. The ridge of the big hills begins in the south with the highest of the three; Beinn Mhor at 620 m, the smaller peak of Ben Corodale 527 m is sandwiched between Bienn Mhor and Hecla 606 m, the big hill to the north.

We (Mark, Dougie, Paul N, "Fiona and Jim" and myself) trudged eastwards across the bogs to the slopes of Beinn Mhor, and up to a col above our climbing cliff, on Beinn nan Caorach. The sun was smiling relentlessly while the wind was notably absent, making progress slow.

In due time we reached the col and began the ridge walk northwards. On nearing the limit, the ridge became fairly level, as easy as a stroll on the downs, but an eagle gliding from the summit into the corrie below, reminded me where I was. At the top we ate and rested while admiring the hazy view of the Hebrides spread out before us. Later Tim's Trio arrived, so we promptly left.

We continued along the brick-edge ridge and descended across the big scree to the col under Ben Corodale where we had lunch. An hour later, I was woken up by the groans of the others waking up. Half an hour later we began to move winding our way along ledges and over cliffs, up 220 m to the top. We sheltered from the wind behind the cairn while Jim found comfort in Fiona. After a short spell we moved on again and tried to identify the silhouettes of Gwen's party on Beinn Mhor.

We descended a double-barrelled chute, the wind funnelling up at us like a bullet. Later Mark was hysterical over a twenty foot scree slope - Dougie looked at the sky in despair. After a short nap on the col below Hecla, we began climbing, reaching the summit just as Gwen's party surmounted Ben Corodale. Bridget and Helen arrived later on.

Clouds began to shroud Beinn Mhor - a sign to move on. We descended into Glen Dorchay then climbed over Maola Breac over broken ground and burnt heather. This was very tiring, even Dougie stopped once.

We were now over the north spur of Beinn Mhor and glided southwards across the Coire Dubh and downhill around Spin - home ground. Consequently the pace speeded up. Dougie was suffering from "The Straights". We arrived at camp at five o'clock, a little tired.

DAVID HUNT

A BIVVY TO BALRANALD

(Judy, Nina, Fiona, Paul N. Simon, Rob and Myself)

Our primary aim was to get out of camp but we also wanted to go to the R.S.P.B. reserve at Balranald on the west coast of North Uist.

The bivvy was a supreme success not only because we went there but because everything went perfectly, not as planned but with no hitches: an immediate response from a partially empty tar lorry, an unexpectedly long lift from Mr. Brown the Nature Conservancy Warden, and a warm 'Earl Grey' welcome with real milk at the ex-warden's house in Tighharry.

Late in the afternoon we left the house with the warden on a tour of the reserve. Our party was notable in that none of us were ardent birdwatchers. The warden was a fine Liverpoolian who left us awe-inspired by his over-flowing knowledge of the life on his reserve. Nothing outstanding was seen, only where he had seen an otter, where he was hen harriers and where the terns nested - it was not a good day for the birds. Through rain smeared binoculars we saw various waders on the beaches including a Bar-tailed Godwit.

The colourful machair fields contrasted vividly with the greys and browns of camp. We examined a rock outcrop and visited the derelict church with an equally derelict graveyard. We had learned a lot from him which made up for the bad weather.

That night we slept midge-free at Hosta next to a quiet strand of white sand.

The morning was bright and airy but the porridge was thick and setting. Thankfully we all survived.

The return was a free for all: (Fiona, Nina and Paul took a drunken tour of the island) but everyone managed to stock up at the Bayhead shop.

It was a pity to spend that sunny day on the road, so once at Loch Eynort, little Tim and I visited Ormaclett Castle only to be greeted by cries of "D'ye want to see Porky?" Porky's the 'King of the Castle'. Yes, Ormaclett Castle is a pig sty.

Unfortunately on the way back we met a man who with the aid of upward movements of his clenched fist and deep noises, discussed what he thought Prince Charlie and Flora MacDonald did in hiding at the Back of Beinn Mhor.

DAVID HUNT

THE VALS WALK

Walking party: Simon (Atkinson), Tim (big Tim) Haley, Dave (the bionic Scotsman) Hunt, Tim Baxter, Simon Linggard and myself.

Saturday the 23rd of August dawned brightly and I woke early, stretched and wondered what I was going to spend the day doing. Then it hit me like a cloud of midges, I have agreed to go on Tim's 'Val's walk.

After breakfast we got our gear together and then moved the inflatable down into the loch. It was a quick trip across and Simon pointed out what he considered to be a reasonable landing place. We landed, Judy roared off in the boat, then it hit us, we have been landed on an island, fortunately it was low tide so we could walk off.

"Alright Dave", said Simon, "You lead us up the first one". So we set off up Trinaval, it seemed that Dave led us up the most difficult route he could find but soon we stood at the top and admired the incredible view. Still, not much time to rest so we descended into a saddle and took a stiff climb up Arnaval. The view was even better, most of the island was visible. Next came Stulaval, a longer climb than the previous two. After a welcome break for lunch we went down the southern side of Stulaval and took a look at nearby prehistoric dwelling which proved to be nothing more than a heap of rocks so we didn't stay long. From there to Layaval entailed a long walk over an expanse of boggy moorland and we arrived at the top of Layaval as a light rain started. From there it was just a question of getting back to the pick-up point and a quick ride back across the loch.

GEOFF KING

AN ACCOUNT OF SOME WATER ACTIVITIES ON SOUTH UIST

(The numerous and various attempts in and out of the water)

The expeditions water exploits started in earnest on the first Sunday. We and our four (whoops. One was smashed up before we got it) canoes were transported to a nearby loch to become involved in Chris Spray's swan catching and ringing project. It was an early reminder that, yes, the lochs on South Uist are still as cold as I feared.

The cold water (12°C) was not a deterrent for those keen to try the society canoes. After the compulsory capsizing drill in the smaller loch above the campsite, aptly named the swimming loch, the enthusiasm to get on (and into) Loch Eynort was complete. Most of the canoeing instruction was done in small groups either from the canoes or in the swimming loch from the bank. The majority of canoeists we taught, demonstrated and participated in all the basic canoeing skills, rescues etc.

On Loch Eynort we naturally had the inflatable with the powerful Yam' 15 h.p. outboard, which after a rigorous servicing by "Mr. Fixit" served us well. After an initial shakedown and a trial cruise by the leaders there was considerable doubt about what to do with the Seagull engine, but we brought it back. The inflatable was mainly used as the rescue boat, but occasional short pleasure trips to see and photograph the seals along with business trips to collect driftwood and transport walkers were allowed. Following considerable practice the 'Simon Spin' was perfected, although barely permissible it was quickly established that 'Skywalker' couldn't walk on water.

The Society's 'Havey Wallbanger' was our sailing dingy, unfortunately this required pre-commissioning maintenance by 'Mr. Fixit' and his able assistant. The Harvey was finally rigged, our manufactured halyard held fast, but the dingy still leaked. Although we were short of a specialised sailing instructor this did in no way curtail our sailing adventures. We had of course the now famous 'Bear Hunter' (from a former colony across the sea) who could helm and instruct.

On one particular day the excitement of a clear, warm and nearly calm day encouraged all to take to the water. The scene is set. The 'Bear Hunter' and the O.B. Crew on the 'Harvey', running gently with the wind. The canoes paddling peacefully, exploring the coves and lagoons exposed by the low water. 'Mr. Fixit' and his assistant in command of the S.H.S. inflatable (it really ought to have a name) with a crew of two Ms. Hat and Ms. Scratch (who had given up canoeing for the afternoon so forced her friend, the galloping gourmet to change places).

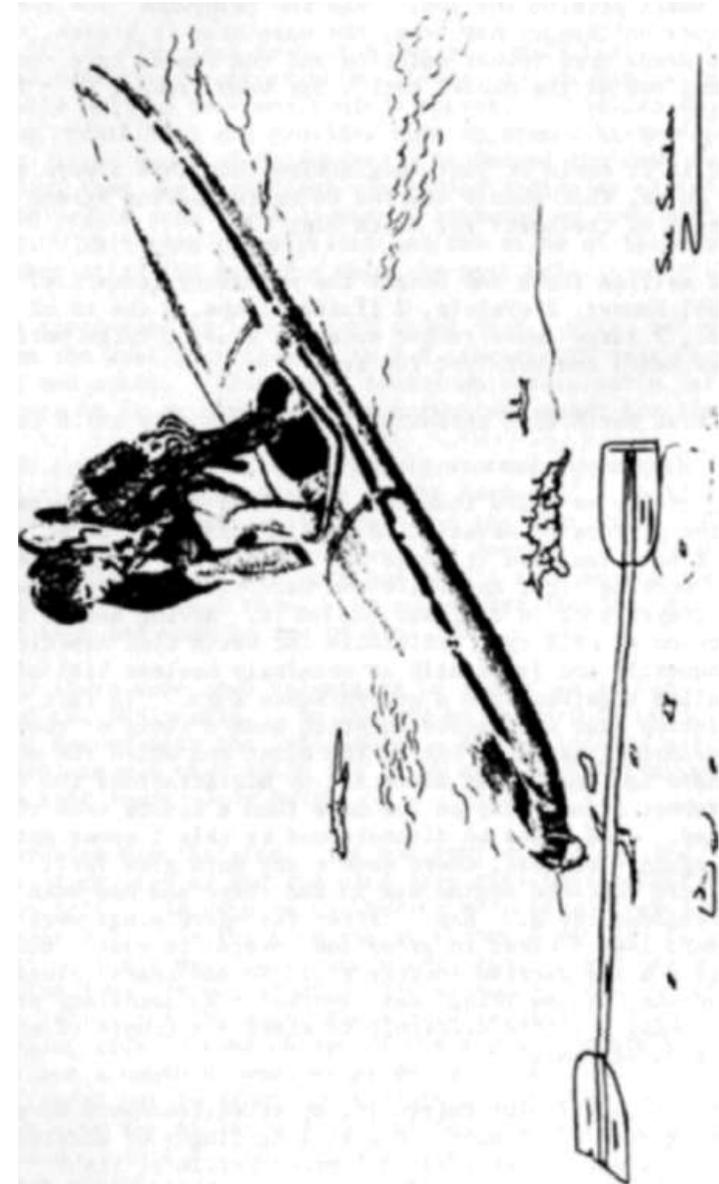
The inflatable cruises slowly up to the 'Harvey' to point out (in her role as the rescue boat) that the tide was ebbing and the days activities were drawing to a close. Whoosh! Suddenly, 'Captain Fixit' is expectantly soaked, with shouts of clear off (corrected for publication). So you want to wash then, buccaneers it is? What followed was a spontaneous water fight. The S.H.S. Inflatable, unarmed had first to obtain a method of projecting water in volume, with velocity. This involved boarding 'Harvey', taking a prisoner, and nicking a bailer. Naturally everybody got wet, including the retreating canoeists. After about 40 minutes all the participants were soaked, but were not satisfied until 'Captain Fixit's' assistant had nearly been drowned in 12 inches of water by the 'Arithmetic Wizard' from Bristol, and his crew.

There were thankfully no mishaps or accidents to the equipment whilst in our care. On one occasion somebody tried to moor the inflatable without tying a knot, needless to say it floated away, but was dutifully retrieved. We thought so much of the 'Harvey' that we left it there.

Some quite serious sailing and canoeing were enjoyed, weather permitting in truly delightful scenery. Our thanks must go to Archie who took quite a few of us in his C.P. or our Wayfairer for some very exhilarating sailing.

P.S. There is no truth in the rumour that Hr. Fixit left early because the petrol was nearly finished.

TIM HALEY (Asst. to Mr. Fixit)



BOATING REPORT - 1980 SOUTH UIST EXPEDITION

"I have a small problem for you." said the telephone "The forestay on the Harvey Wallbanger has gone, the mast stay is broken, the inflatable needs more rubber solution and the canoes have run out of resin and one of the canoes back's has been broken, er - I think that's all".

I wondered if it could be just imagination that this always seemed to happen to me, that when I started to regret having agreed to "take charge" of the boats for South Uist '80.

However, I sallied forth and bought the necessary items i.e. :-25 ft. steel hawser, 2 eyelets, 2 fixing clamps, 5 sheets of coarse glass paper, 2 large tubes rubber solution glue, 1 large bottle Fibre glass Resin and Catalyst for same.

It seemed that North Uist certainly got their moneys worth from the boats.

The fixing of the se boats took much more than I had expected although the picture of devastation that was painted for me wasn't as bad as I have imagined it would be. I decided to get the inflatable working first and while the main party went off swan ringing I stayed back in camp and tackled it. Having had no instruction in the rection[??] of a PIV type inflatable the North Uist expedition was cursed eloquently and frequently as seemingly useless bits of wood finally gelled together into a recognisable form. In fact the rubber solution glue was needed to stick back a strip of rubber from the transom (that's the bit at the blunt end which the motor goes on). I hate to admit that after all my ministrations the dam piece of rubber didn't stay on for more than a minute once the P.4 was launched. And I was so disheartened by this I never got around to trying again - besides, there wasn't any more glue left. I had also been told that the engine was in bad shape and had been spluttering badly throughout the N.U. Exp. After the spark plugs were removed I wasn't surprised - caked in grime and covered in rust - the result of the engine being carried incorrectly. So new spark plugs were applied and the "Yellow Thing" was launched - No immediate problems other than being a little difficult to start - a couple of minor adjustments cured that.

The inflatable functioning correctly, my attentions were directed towards the Harvey Wallbanger - our sailing dinghy of uncertain vintage. This was a completely different kettle of fish. I had never actually rigged a sailing dinghy before but I had watched plenty of times. Not wanting to seem incompetent at this early stage in front of all these "sprogs" I didn't explain my problem but just got on with it (providing much amusement to all concerned I'm ashamed to say).

The mast was put in place and the forestay rigged (after the problems of manufacture were ironed out)

"Are you sure it's strong enough?" they asked - do they know something I don't I idly pondered.

"Of course it is" flew back my blithe reply. With that all hands were removed from their supporting positions and the disgusting thing promptly fell on to yours truly's napper. This really put the kybosh on my credibility and provided more enjoyment at my expense for the now large crowd of onlookers. It seemed the news had travelled fast that the camp clown was giving a display of talents, so to try to regain some of my dignity I attacked my task with venom in my blood. This time to my relief and the sighs of the crowd disappointment after the end of a show the mast held.

Next it was discovered by some bright spark that a vital bit was missing from the mast housing and the N.U. scapegoats were dragged, through the mud again. After what seemed an interminable period of glaring cracks in my composure the Harvey was ready for the sea.

"Is there NO end" I cried as I was gently steered towards the pile of canoes littering up the entrance to the marquee. I could see the vultures gathering inside all ready for the next verbal onslaught on my capabilities. I struggled on. The result - one irreparable, three that I wouldn't have got in (that didn't stop anyone else though) and one leaf proof once. So our entire flotilla was ready to take the Loch and undergo sea trials.

Surprisingly there were many volunteers to assist me in the launching of the inflatable. In the end we decided to coincide the launching of Harvey with the inflatable. The inflatable was to carry the replacement crew while the first crew took Harvey out with out valiant leader Judy Smith.

The first problem was the wind. It was very strong and the combination of my rigging and the wind gave rise to a rather shaky start to the sail. As soon as the Harvey was clear I tried to get the inflatable out. As the wind was so strong I decided to pull the P.4 out a little way, start the motor, jump in and roar off. The first time I was driven straight back onto the rocks - the second time (this time the water about at waist level) I got one of the replacement crew to take charge of the engine (Louise Woodward). Poor Louise got a mouthful when we piled up on the rocks again. This time I waded out to about chest depth and started the engine. Louise again took the tiller and at last the P4 was free of all rocks and weed. In fact Louise did very well and I feel I must apologise for my language etc. but the water was damn cold.

After the initial hiccups the Harvey seemed to handle very well and was being sailed expertly by Judy. Putting the inflatable through its paces was exhilarating and fun - everyone had a go at steering and "driving" and all concerned agreed it was good fun. We practised boarding swoops on the Harvey for when the crew would change over. This manoeuvre perfected the inflatable repaired to what had become known as "Seal Rock". Seal Rock was a small rock in the water about midway up the inlet called Sloe Dubh where seals would congregate and bask in the non-existent sun. By the end of our stay they seemed quite reticent about our visits. Eventually we could get to within 10 ft. of them before they dived off only to bob up about 30 ft. away and then again silently slide beneath the waves.

The sail over we went back to camp and later that day Simon Atkinson (our marvellous Leader, along with his wife, of course) asked to be trained properly in the art of using the P.4. So our little band of not-so-ancient mariners took to the waves. The sun was low and it was like something out of a futuristic Three Musketeers, what with the sunset and us skimming off into it.

I steered us out of the main channel, stopped and motor and showed Simon the controls, while Tim Haley looked on. Tim was another leader who shares life I'm sure with the lunatic fringe - more of his antics later. With a look of pure glee in his eyes Simon put the engine in gear and we shot off. After a minute or so at full bore he turned around and shouted, "Doesn't this thing go any faster?"

He was that sort of driver and before I could say no he shouted something else.

"What happens if I do this?" Without waiting for an answer he rammed the tiller over to one side. Immediately Tim and I cannoned into each other while simultaneously the boat stood on its side with the engine screaming. The boat fell with a crash back to the sea and more bruises dished out. The prop blade was now in the water and screaming at full revs. - this resulted in neck breaking acceleration throwing yours-truly and Tim towards the stern (blunt end) this time. Throughout this episode Simon had been punctuating our antics with bursts of maniacal laughter.

The reason the engine screams is because when you put it in a very tight turn at speed the prop blade has no water behind it causing an air pocket. This in turn provides no resistance for the prop to "bite" on therefore it screams. This is in fact harmful to the engine and if done too much will cause much damage. After this display of appalling seamanship I taught him how to do a right turn properly. This is done by decelerating almost completely as the tiller is shoved over and as you come round accelerating sharply again. Things were a lot safer for Tim and I after that.

We headed out through Sruthan Beag - effectively the mouth of the Loch where treacherous currents and eddies prevail. So heading towards the head of the Loch the swells had become noticeable bigger and stronger. The little P IV handled well and no-one talked as we ploughed on. We were over-awed by the sounds of the wheeling Gannets; and the sight of ponderous waves gnawing at the base of these majestic cliffs. One could imagine the force of the water hitting the rock and finding a minute crack and pounding into it relentlessly, enlarging it to form a blowhole or cave. Over-awed too by the thought of these seas and their never ending journey around the globe, they'll still be there long after we're gone.

Enough of this Purple Passage stuff - lets get on with the story. The waves were getting bigger and since we had reached the limit of our "legal" presence in the loch I thought it advisable to turn around. When I reached and tapped Simon on the shoulder he turned his head dreamily and I'm sure that at that moment he didn't see our little inflatable but an old Tea Clipper bound for India braving a storm. I could just imagine his knarled old hand upon the salt encrusted tiller while his trusty Briar smoked gently, wedged between his teeth. I think I even heard faint strains of the "Onedin Line" coming from him but I couldn't be sure.

When camp was eventually sighted darkness was drawing in and in the gloom the form of Rose was discernable.

"Where the Hell 'have you been?'" she demanded.

"Just out on the loch", Simon replied a little sheepishly - the 'dominated man syndrome' I think the psychiatrists call it.

Whatever we said Rose would not be placated and wouldn't come in the board with Simon driving.

"If he's driving I WILL NOT get in that thing," she stated, "he's bad enough in a car - let along a boat".

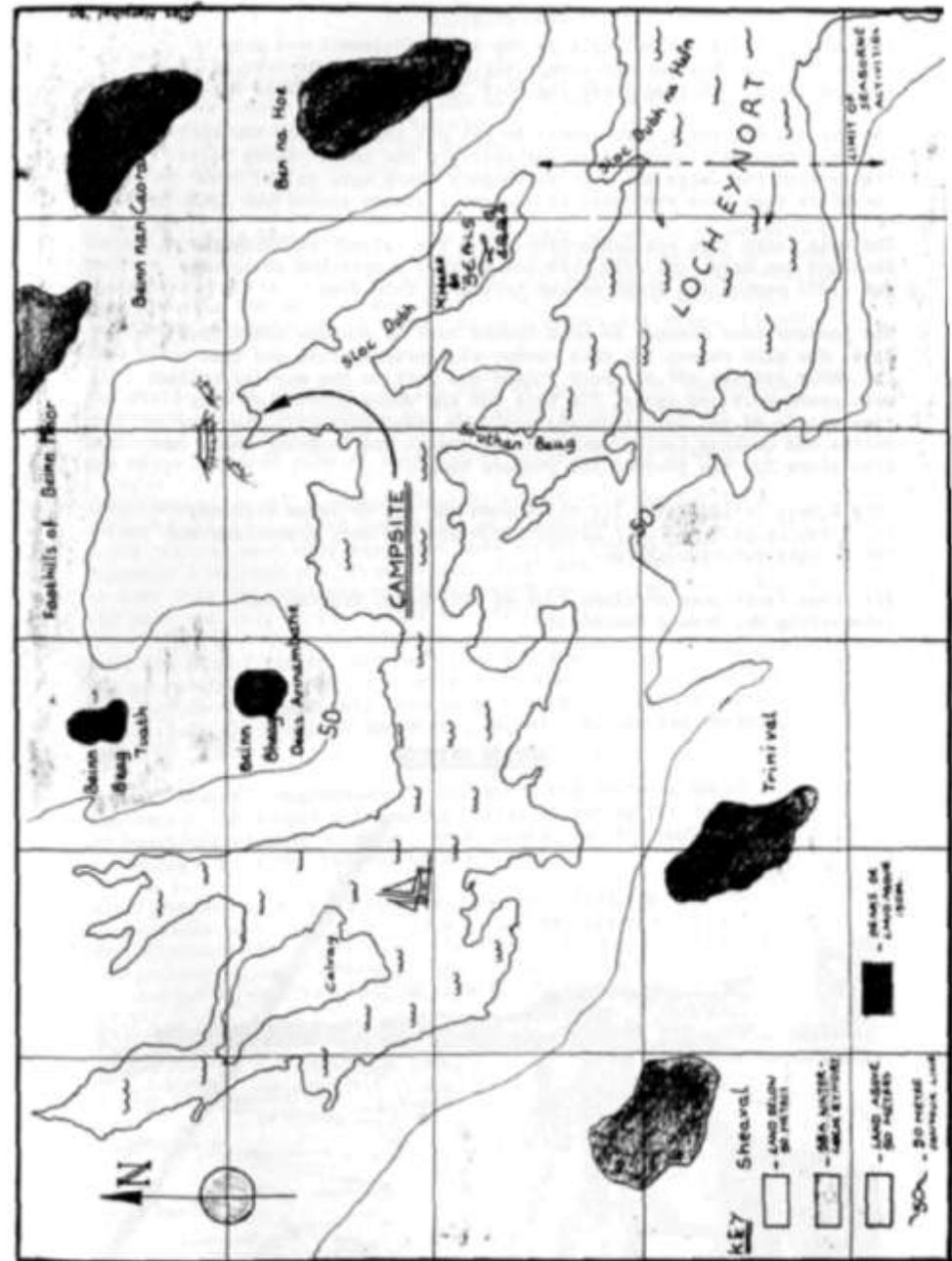
"I knew I shouldn't have agreed to this," she shouted above the engine noise and spray a little later, as once more the loch reverberated to the inflatable's wild moves.

A few days later our Bear Hunting leader extraordinaire, Gwcn McConkey, took the Harvey out with Jim Sheppard, Helen Lennon and Brigid Hopper as crew. Meanwhile the canoeists decided to go out too. This meant that the inflatable had to be out as well. We took with us a replacement crew for the Harvey -consisting of Myself, Tim Haley. Kaye Vandervelden, Debbie Byrne and Alex Langdon. The canoeists were Paul Newton, Lee Cullinane. Louise Waite and Julia Murray. Alex and Louise changed placed later on.

With all these people on the loch - it being a hot day - and us being mainly lunatics a water fight occurred between power and sail. It started because of an unprovoked attack on the inflatable by the Harvey. We retreated and discussed revenge, the battle was on. During the course of it we took 2 balers, one oar, a prisoner and a lot of water from the Harvey. The prisoner was duly made to 'walk the plank' - well thrown overboard in fact. In her (BRIGID HOPPER) struggles to get back on board she managed somehow to grab hold of my legs and get me overboard too, much to the amusement of the Harvey. Well done you son-uvva-gun now ya wanno get 'em all out, ya'awl?" Gwen bawled in her best Canadian drawl. However I was not amused and Brigit promptly went over again. This time she regained home territory. The Harvey was now swamped and so a truce was called. Everyone it seemed was soaking except the canoeists. They didn't stay that way for long however. After a good chase they were all doused thoroughly. When camp was reached a deputation was waiting for the crew of the inflatable and, notably, Tim and I were chased and soaked. In conclusion to this terrible long and boring diatribe I would like to thank all concerned for making that expedition a very memorable and enjoyable one. In short, it was great fun - even Kaye V. enjoyed herself (I always said I would get the last word).

GILES HENSCHEL

'Boats' - 1980 South Uist Expedition.



A HISTORY OF LOCH EYNORT

Even though today Lochboisdale is the main settlement and port on South Uist, this was not always the case, for in the days of sailing ships Loch Eynort was the port into which the ships docked.

The big sailing ships were unable to get all the way into the loch and thus they were anchored at the entrance and small rowing boats transported the cargo and what passengers there were to and from the piers that were scattered at strategic places around the loch.

The main cargo that was transported from the island to mainland Scotland was sheep, and this provided a large proportion of income for 2,000 people who lived on the island at this time.

The journey from Glasgow to Loch Eynort took on average about four days, the main reason for this rather slow journey time was that the ships stopped off at every island and port on the way (to collect more passengers and cargo. The fare for the whole journey at this time was 7s 6d and this provided would be passengers with sleeping berths and cooking facilities (the passengers had to bring their own provisions for the journey and prepare them).

Loch Eynort relinquished its title when the age of steam arrived, the steam ships found that Lochboisdale was far more convenient and has to this day remained so.

All these facts were obtained from an extremely helpful and interesting Mr. Donald Macdonald.

ANDREW GRIFFIN



A GRIZZLY END

By the time this report comes out most of you will have forgotten the heroic struggle of Hercules, who went missing during the South Uist Expedition, and whom for 3 weeks seemed to catch the imagination of the British public - well the National papers at least. In fact he became the subject of "the Daily Telegraph" editorial on the 15th September.

The editor's personification of Hercules made me wonder if we should perhaps invite the bear to come along as a Assistant Leader next year. The editor's words "It was a heroic gesture against the commercialism that provides our society and an epic bid for freedom against all odds" made me wonder if he wasn't in fact describing myself rather than a bear. You could almost sense the editor describing an S.H.S. expedition with such well oiled phrases as "he wanted to live in sweet seclusion" and "During his 22 day ordeal". What is an expedition to the midge infested site of Loch Eynort other than an ordeal?

This comparison may be further extended, though allowing for the editor's extended use of hyperbole, with the bear's loss of 15 stone - his rations must have been even more meagre than the S.H.S. ones. Moreover I believe the "tranquilliser dart" that he was shot with was no more than the millions of midges which the crofters let loose to end both our stay on the island and the bear's.

When the editor suggest the fact that the bear relished life with the prospect of no more lavatory paper commercials", I though of our directors who not only gave us no commercials but no paper as well. (Sorry I shouldn't exaggerate, we had 3 pieces per person per day).

We must however congratulate the director for thinking about all the aspects of danger which might befall us during the expedition, by providing us with an expert bear catcher in the shape of Gwen McCunley (don't you believe me Ed).

May I venture to suggest that as a way of filling up our expeditions next year we should send all the bears we know and a further thought is that this editorial should be reprinted in the prospectus as I believe it gives a more accurate picture than at present of what is required in a S.H.S. member.

LONG LIVE HERCULES. MARK BANLEY.

HARRIS 1980

LEADER: Jonathan Orr

A/Ls: H[J?]Jeremy Biggs, Andy Brettell, Peter Fale, Ray Snook,
Chris Venning.

MEMBERS: Andrew Bartle, Neil Bell, Timothy Bennett, Stephen
Collins, Andrew Cotton, Andrew Fale, Gael Gerragu, Paul Garnett,
Simon Lorimer, Peter Miles, Justin Pitcher, Richard Pitts, Mitchell
Stubley, Simon Watson, Andrew Westmacott, Paul Williamson,
Richard Yound.

LEADER'S REPORT

Normally when the SHS goes to the islands every effort is made to lessen the impact on the community in the area, so it was with some surprise that I realised the expedition was to camp within a village.

From the outset the expedition to Rhenigidale presented an interesting set of logistic problems but thankfully by 7th August most had been resolved, primarily because of Jim Turner's hard work with the travel. The train journey up from Euston had two faults: double reservations at both the front and back of the train and in addition a heart-stopping 1½ hour delay on the single track section into Fort William. Chaos was averted by the MacBraynes Mallaig to Armadale service running one hour late and the helpful faces of the entire Knoydart expedition on the quay with all the kit ready in cages.

We stayed the night on Skye at the campsite in Uig and caught the ferry to Tarbert the following morning. The evening was spent playing the Skylanders at football ("Scotland versus England"). Regrettably the score was 7-1, but it was a good chance for the expedition to get to know each other and be introduced to the midge.

In Tarbert the 'Margaret Rae' lobster boat was waiting to load the equipment and take it around to the village. It was this journey that provoked the words of the song "Oh you'll never get to heaven on the Margaret Rae ... because you'll get drunk on the way". The bulk of the expedition walked overland (the "breath; taking" path) and arrived just ahead of the boat which zig-zagged its way into the bay at Rhenigidale.

Despite 14 of the 17 expedition members being new to the society the camp was quickly set up and functioning smoothly - due mainly to the tireless efforts of Ray Snook the CA. The marquee perched pimple-like on the only flat ground, a ridge 30 feet from the shore. It was to survive all the winds except one. (The three rips in the sidewalls will presumably mean it is another 10 years before we again hire from Blacks).

To those in the society who don't know Rhenigidale - it is the last village in Britain without electricity or a road. Halfway through our stay the BBC News at Nine team arrived after approval for the new road was announced. The village has 10 inhabitants including the teacher and the only pupil. They are all most charming, friendly and helpful (which makes me wonder whether I would be - if 25 thugs pitched a marquee 40 feet from my back door). The expedition was made to feel part of the community during its stay and was given introductions throughout the island.

The end of the first week was brightened by the arrival of the Royal Yacht Britannia and H.M.S. Leander 2 km off-shore. H.M. was on her way to Balmoral and stopped for a break. The first bivvy party had a major problem on its return in foul weather the next day - Paul Williamson's back gave-out on the approach path to the west of camp. Three hours after collapsing he was in Stornaway Hospital courtesy of the communications on the Britannia and the helicopter of the Leander. Luckily there was nothing very seriously amiss and Paul rejoined the expedition a week later.

Climbing on the trip had a slow start because of: the weather, wet rock, midges and Chris Venning, the climbing A/L. having a monumental dose of the Rhenigidale-runs. Towards the end of the stay good use was made of the excellent local rock and as a finale the climbers put a fence for the villagers on a hair raising cliff-face.

The canoeing bivvy was replaced by a trip to the Shiant islands -the offer to help the shepherds was too good to miss and also regrettably two of the four canoes had given up the ghost. The P4 inflatable worked endlessly ferrying parties to the path in the west and up Loch Seaforth to the north. The home-made lobster-pot failed to attract shellfish despite being sunk in the channel five feet two deep for its float line. Luckily it was retrieved at the neap tide two days before our departure.

Six bivvies were undertaken to the west coast of North Harris, to Maarig (to play bridge), to the Shiants (to shear sheep), to Scalpay (only to find there was no pub), to South Harris (Toe Head) and "Up Toddun" - the local hill (to see the sun rise).

It was an expedition of activity rather than projects but useful work was undertaken on Lichens and the birdwatchers worked very hard, especially in the vicinity of the youth hostel.

The memory I most come away with is how welcome we were all made to feel - which reflects on the previous expeditions. Hopefully the work which we did in the village in helping to build Kenny's home extension will lay a similar foundation for those who follow. I would go again tomorrow.



ALL THAT GLITTERS IS

The 1980 Harris Expedition will be remembered for many things; the friendly and homely atmosphere that the villagers and their friends made for us; Willies close encounter of a different kind; the zig-zags (give me Siberia any day); my curries; the night the marquee blew down and numerous other occurrences and events that will linger in memories for a long time to come. However, for me perhaps the most awe inspiring and exciting happening took but more that a minute one day in the middle of the second week.

I was leading a small walking party of four over to the Scalpay Ferry, mainly to investigate the times of ferries for planning a future bivvy. We had walked at a very reasonable pace around the path from the campsite and diverted eastwards from the base of the zig-zags (coward-Ed) to the shielings on the opposite side of Loch Trollamarig.

The ground proved fairly easy to cover and continuing on we elected to take lunch on top of Scoraclett (Grid Ref: 230 995). Overlooking H.M.Y. Britannia and her escort H.M.S. Leander at anchor in the bay. "We nibbled our Kendal Mint Cake". Proceeding onwards after the break we descended into the vale below Uiseval and taking up the rear I suddenly looked up. Across the valley something caught my eye. Quickly I focused on a large majestic bird swooping low over the ground little more than 200 yards away.

I gave a stifled shout to bring this magnificent sight to the notice of the rest of the team. Needless to say we stood absolutely still. Eagerly taking turns at the binoculars as our very rare host gracefully winged its way further down the valley, seemingly unaware of our excited presence.

I had seen Golden Eagles before in the Hebrides but always from a distance and through binoculars, never so close and so clear as this time. Regrettably our regal feathered friend didn't stay long he obviously had another date, and rapidly disappeared over a ridge leaving us all slightly dumbstruck by its domineering presence.

In such a short time it was difficult to get an accurate description of the bird but sufficient was noted so that our camp ornithologists could confirm a young Golden Eagle. The first of the camp and a truly remarkable sight at that.

RAY SNOOK (CAMP ADMINISTRATOR)

THE "SCALPAY" BIVVY

Surely this must have been one of the most carefully planned bivvies of all time it being proposed in the first week of camp and executed in the final week-end. During this time a reconnoitre was held to spot a likely campsite and obtain ferry times, Scalpay being an island off Harris, east of Tarbet.

The bivvy was held over one night and was attended by Ray Snook, Simon Lorimer, Neil Bell and myself. Our main purpose was to have a good nights sleep (i.e. on the level) as well as see some of Scalpay. We set off on the 22nd on a clear day and with the promise of good weather to come. Our route from Rhenigidale took us along the path to Tarbet as far as the cairn at the top of the zig-zags.

we then headed along the ridge running south west to Uiseval where we ate dinner looking out over Scalpay below us.

With this completed we headed down to Kyles Scalpay to catch the 2.35 ferry. From the pier on Scalpay we went straight to our campsite on a small peninsula on Loch AnDuin.

Having pitched the tents on a level peat floor and had a cup of coffee we set out for the light house on the east coast of the island and taking in Ben Scoravic at 104 metres, Scalpay's highest peak. At the light house we were able to see main camp at Rhenigidale and after a careful look around the light house building we headed back to our camp site. Here the advantages of bivvying with the C.A. were realised as we ate half a sponge pudding each.

Porridge and scrambled eggs were on the menu for breakfast and putting the scrambled eggs on, Neil took them off with his boot, so we set off for the ferry. After our one course breakfast.

Our route home took us along the road from Kyles Scalpay via Urgha to Tarbet and the Macleod Motel!! After refreshment and a plate of chips we bounced home to Rhenigidale rested and with the feeling that Scalpay could easily have harboured a longer visit.

HOW TO WIN AT ORIENTEERING IN TEN EASY LESSONS

1. Bribe organisers with chocolate:- Easy when you're C.A.
2. Always start well down the list, therefore getting other minions to lead the way.
3. Wear, "You can't see me" jackets so that minions can't follow you.
4. Carry metal detector to locate check points from mega distances.
5. Carry universal punch in order to punch card if you miss a checkpoint.
6. Never believe grid references that are given you - invariably 1 Km out.
7. Always travel in straight lines for quickest route, disregarding marshes, lochs and crags. (Wet suit and climbing gear advisable).
8. Run route in reverse in order to see from which direction other participants come.
9. Wear red underpants over your trousers so that mountains can be leapt in a single bound.
10. Run, last leg fast and pant frantically after crossing the finishing line (Gives false impression that the course was hard and that strenuous efforts had to be made.

ANON

KNOYDART EXPEDITION 1980 LEADERS REPORT

The Chairman paced the floor.....

"What are you doing this summer Ian?"

"I - We"

"The board were wondering if....."

Thus the wheels of fortune turned and my sister and I found ourselves wending our way across Rannoch Moor. Well we took a short break to help a hapless lorry out of a ditch - a big orange one I think it was.

The following morning in Mallaig, the expedition was really under way. A great pile of equipment was growing on the pier and the Western Isles' was quietly standing by as the expedition members descended on Mallaig Station. With surprising efficiency, the gear was carefully deployed over every inch of the Western Isles' deck. I was informed that this was to create better upholstered seating arrangements. As we passed Airoir the rain started. We were getting a true welcoming. The expedition worked like demons to get the gear to the bothy, we were installed.

From the beginning the activities of the expedition were the most energetic I've known. Within the first few days nearly everyone had got to know the area around camp and was itching to go further. Bivvies were the order of the day, quick bivvies, fishing bivvies, high altitude bivvies. One hardy group walked to Inverie and took the boat to Tarbet. Here they obtained a souvenir frank on their maps from the Post Office (collections Monday and Friday). Marching east they took in the Five Munro's and many miles before returning to Samadalen. They returned just in time for Sue's 'run around'. A grand orienteering tour of the foothills behind camp.

On the water the canoes were being sent through their paces, not content to paddle around the bay. Mike and Stephen undertook an assault on the Inverguseran River, quite an epic adventure in which Stephen lost his red carpet slippers. Visited again in spate the estuary provided some real white water sport.

In camp bread runs were undertaken as though they didn't exist, the trip to the shop at Inverie being very popular. The first two people there bought the place out of Mars Bars. Richard established a record of 22 loaves carried back to camp.

The high point of the expedition for me must have been a night spent the top of Chadar Ben. Clive Martin and myself met up with Stephen, Jane, Roger, Ian and Keith who had gone up via Na Chruchan Ben Sa Caillich. From the top we could see the sun fall beyond the whole of the western chain. Then the lights of Portree, Broadford and the shipping in the sound of Sleat began to twinkle. To the south east was Scurr Na Ciche, the highest point on the peninsular. To the north. Loch Hourn, (the scene of Gavin Maxwells tale) in its dark blue veil. It was fascinating to see the sharp clean lines of Ben Scrill.

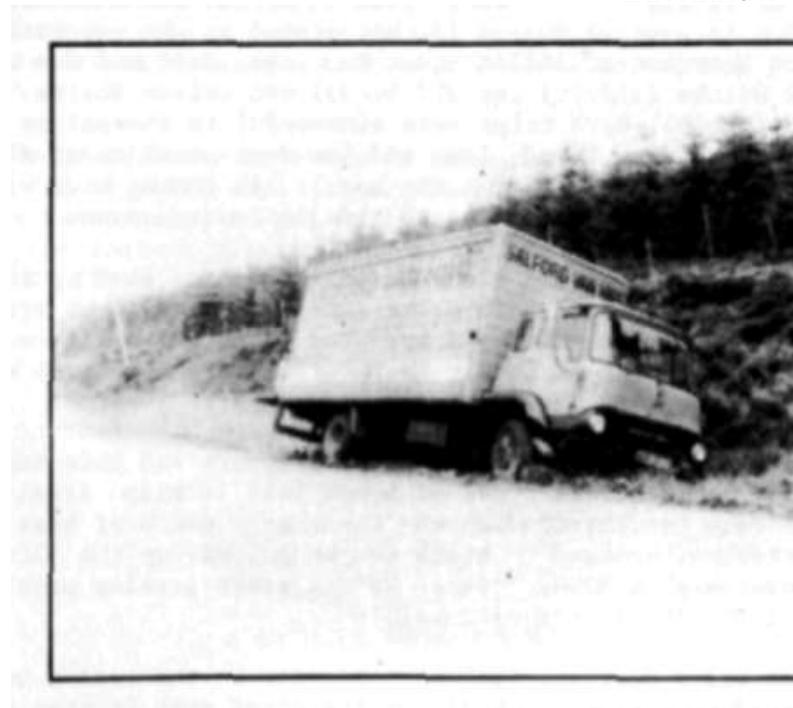
As people were aware the expedition was drawing to a close. Matthew and Dave arranged a camp sports day. There was a scramble to get out on David's boat (David the crofter from Airoir). Roy, John, Andy and Craig set out on a mammoth round the peninsular tour.

The expedition was not without its quieter moments. After a grand A.L.'s meal, (nothing to do with me I only arranged the flowers and lit the candles) a wonderful evening was spent round a massive beach fire, (courtesy of Walkers) when the camp musicians Ian and Janet really hit top gear.

My thanks must go out to the factor Mr. MacDonald, Bruce, the backroom boys of the S.H.S. and the motley crew of Knoydart 80 for making it such a success.

As we sailed away early on the last fine morning the sun suddenly blazed from above Na Chruchan and picked out in fantastic contrast the ruggedness of the Cullin. I knew there was more than one person who had set their heart on returning one day.

IAN ARROW



SCHOOLS HEBRIDEAN SOCIETY KNOYDART EXPEDITION

Climbing Report.

After many long and exciting hours looking all over the Knoydart Peninsular for the superb climbing we had heard of we eventually arrived saturated at the base of a 80ft vertical cliff. An excellent wet mossy flora, festooned the crag; the top occasionally came into view through the twirling mist. After a short discussion we decided it would be abseiling instead of climbing after rigging up and casting an excellent vertical Abseil and losing one member in the mist. Everyone descended safely and some even had a second go.

The crag was the proud discovery by our Leader Ian Arrow on the 2nd attempt; the 1st missed the crag in the mist by only a few 100 yards.

Although a local 'Big' crag was absent we were not put off and a small Aid route (climbing using artificial aids) 6 pegs which traversed along the lip of an overhang then surmounted it was set up close to base camp. Most people spent many hours hanging in all positions trying to reach the next peg. This provided many hours of fun and amusement for everyone (including the midges who usually got a good meal most nights).

The search for a suitable crag was extensive. Groups were sent far and wide (all walking except for Jeff and Sue who would run claiming it was faster). David and Richard went south to Tarbet and back Via Camusroy taking in several Munros (3000ft peaks) on the way including the highest on Knoydart at 3412ft Sgurr Ne Ciche. Jeff and Sue went east to Meall Buiòhe (3107ft) (me old buddy) and Luinne Bheinn (3083ft) (lunnie bin). Both trips were successful in themselves but no large good crags were found. Jane and Sue went north on an all female party and Ian went west (in the boat). All coming back with news of a small 30ft slab on the north side of Inverguseran.

The search now gained pace and a small canoe trip was sent up the Inverguseren river but found nothing. A rare appearing night crag was heard of (we must of been getting desperate) so an all night watch was mounted on the summit of Ledhar Bheinn (3343ft), but again we were defeated by the mist and rain.

As our days were now limited I had lost my slippers and Elie had started looking at different types of bumps (all totally irrelevant). Our interests were concentrated on the small crag north of base camp. Eventually everybody managed to climb (or be pulled) up the 30ft slab in all whethers. A harder crack 'VS' (a steep jamming problem) provided sport for the more ambitious.

Although there was a distinct lack of big crags in the area I hope everyone enjoyed themselves looking for the crags even if they didn't know it. For further expeditions to Knoydart here are the grid references of the 3 crags:-

Aid Route NG 728 062
30ft Slab NG 74S 081
80ft Wall NG 737 026

NB Some of the details may not be exact but please don't sue me, I can't afford it.

STEPHEN J. MARTIN

ORIENTEERING ON KNOYDART

Even before setting off for Knoydart I had a slightly sadistic idea of setting up an orienteering course. What I was hoping for was something fairly short but not too easy, well I had to make life reasonably difficult. Having dreamed up the course, which was about 9km (or 5½ miles for the un-metricated amongst us), I wasn't totally exempt from running round as I had to set up the checkpoints the day before.

I used plastic bottles gathered from the beach for the markers, and set off from Samadalan with a rucksack full of them, dropping one off at each carefully designated checkpoint. It turned out to be a really worthwhile afternoon, with superbly clear views across to the Cuillins of Skye and down the Sound of Sleet to the Islands of Rhum and Eigg. I was also fortunate enough to have fairly close sightings of a buzzard and half a dozen stags.

The next afternoon was the time of the event, so at three minute intervals teams of two, or in some cases individuals, were sent out to find their way round and to arrive back having found all the clues. It was then beautifully peaceful in camp for about an hour, until the winner of the event came home. The hero of the afternoon Steve Martin came home in 1 hour 33 minutes, being the fastest and the only person to find all eight checkpoints.

Other excellent performances were seen from Ian Swan, with a time of 1 hour 52 minutes and Richard Young in 1 hour 55 minutes. Ruth Arron was the fastest female, completing the course in 2 hours 44 minutes. Some people actually managed to take over four hours, but I'd better not say who.

Host people appeared to have really enjoyed the afternoon. However I did get a bit of stick about a certain checkpoint on a certain knoll, which only two people managed to find. I'm absolutely convinced that it was in the correct position, so it was just everyone else who was incompetent. (That's my story anyway).

SUE

'KNOYDART OLYMPICS' 1980

All the eyes of the world were turned to Moscow in July/August 1990, for the most controversial sports meeting in Olympic history; but away from the limelight, on the Western shores of Scotland, in the shadows of the Isle of Skye, the SHS were holding their own Olympics. The contestants coming from all parts of the British Isles and France.

Facilities did not provide for the most popular track events, 10,000 metres etc. although we did have one willing contestant, John Wheeler, who was willing to prove his ability on the track, but alas had no grand stadium to house multitudes of spectators to cheer his to victory.

The field events seem more appropriate to our enthusiastic competitors. and we were more able to provide equipment and facilities necessary on our restricted resources. A small buoy, who's life was intended to sail the lonely seas of the world, found itself the centre of attraction on land at our 'Olympics', in the Shot Put event. "Wellies", which are considered necessary equipment on any Hebs. Exp. found themselves being flung around the sports arena, after their long hibernation due to the extraordinary dry weather. Our 'discus' came from the camp canteen, at great expense, in the form of a plastic plate.

The most elaborate piece of equipment for the games was needed for the Volley Ball match, so the regulation height of the net could be attained. Two paddles from the canoes were sat apart at the required distance and anchored to keep them erect, with fishing boxes which were found on the nearby shores; A fishing net was found and hung over the paddles. Therefore the scene was set for the opening of the 'Knoydart Olympics'. The teams being led by Ian A. and Richard Young. The victorious team of the event was the one entered by Richard. I say entered by Richard, because whilst the event was taking place, he had ventured into the hills for a spot of climbing. However, Ian's team soon made the score equal by winning the three-legged football match which followed.

Trying to keep as near to our international rivals as possible for variety of events, our teams took to the water. The intention was to paddle the canoes to an island, off shore, not to turn the event into a skill in capsizing - although this is what it turned out to be - but perhaps the competitors were being guided by Ian A's skills.

With everyone recovered from the sea; the games continued on land with an obstacle race and chariot race, before the final event -the tug of war.

At the end of the day, when all the points were added up by Dave Ward and myself, it was obvious that the Gold Award had been achieved by Ian A's team, but all the competitors deserved to stand up for the victory ceremony, because they had given as much entertainment and pleasure to the onlooker as the competitors of that other Olympic games, far away in Moscow.

MATHEW SETTLETON

KNOYDART QUOTES:

Wed 23rd Porridge was Epic. R.A.

Spotted blue sky 1.26 p.m. Jeff

"And this is probably the most difficult part of the climb which climbers call the crux. This is where all the hairy things begin to happen."

"I'm NOT going in the sea - I've got clean underwear on"