

annual

REVIEW

YEAR ENDING 31 DECEMBER 2015



Celebrating 50 years



50 years of the MBA

In 2015, our fiftieth year, the MBA was honoured at the highest level, generated much comment in the media, and continued in our core task of maintaining simple shelters in remote country.



QAVS presentation: Simon Birch, Dr Timothy Chambers, Vice Lord-Lieutenant of Bristol, Mary Prior, Lord-Lieutenant of Bristol

The Queen's Award for Voluntary Service

The MBA was honoured in June 2015 with the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service, the highest award given to local volunteer groups across the UK.

Award winners must have been operating at a high standard for at least three years, and more than half the people in the group must be volunteers. Volunteer activity has to be 'exceptional' – in our case, for example, every

bit of bothy maintenance at more than 100 work parties over the year is undertaken entirely by volunteers.

We received a certificate, signed by the Queen, and a commemorative domed glass crystal. We are also entitled to use the Queen's Award emblem on our website, stationery and other printed material, and our chairman also attended a Buckingham Palace royal garden party.

Editor: *Peter Aylmer*
Design: *John Mitchell*

Photo credits:
Robert Barton, Alan Bellis, Alyson Boyes, Braemar MRT, Michelle Methan, Alan McQuiston, John Mitchell, Hugh Munro, Neil Reid, Peter Sharpe, Shine productions, Richard Spencer, Matt Stokes, Ann Young



Bernard & Betty cut the birthday cake

Celebrating the anniversary

We celebrated both the QAVS award and our anniversary at our annual general meeting, held on a gorgeous autumn day in Newtonmore.

Founder members Bernard and Betty Heath had pride of place in cutting our anniversary cake, fittingly decorated with a welcoming bothy beneath a snowy hill.

Former MBA chair Denis Mollison – who apologised for having known them a mere 41 years – told the story of the Heaths' role in founding the MBA.

"In 1965, Bernard, a rough-stuff cyclist and hill-goer from Huddersfield, took up a casual suggestion in the visitors' book at Backhill of Bush and organised the first MBA project at Tunskeen and then the

inaugural meeting (note the order – work first, bureaucracy later).

"Bernard as first secretary drove the ethos of the association: getting permission from bothy owners, and organising work parties or encouraging others to do so. Fifteen of the best-loved bothies were saved in those first four years. At the last two of these, Camban and Kinbreack, he met again Betty Taylor, who had been introduced to him at the inaugural meeting as "your first woman member".

Bernard and Betty married in 1970 and have given much support both to bothy projects and the running of the MBA. They became our first honorary life members at our 21st AGM and were awarded British Empire Medals four years later.

Major MBA projects in 2015

Cae Amos

This former farmhouse in north-west Snowdonia has been the MBA's major project during 2015. Work has continued into 2016 with opening planned for later in the year.

The building had been the club hut for Leeds Mountaineering Club for most of their 50 year history (they too were founded in 1965) but their visits to Cae Amos had grown fewer in recent years. In 2013 they took the noble decision to introduce us to owner and local farmer Ed Naish, who was keen to see the building continue in similar use.

We agreed a provisional budget of just over £10,000 over a planned three-year schedule. In 2014 a surveyor's report suggested adding stone-filled gabions in response to our concerns at cracks in the walls.

We ran eight work parties in 2015. The first half of the year was largely devoted to gabion filling and pointing of stonework; August onwards saw reroofing start on the north barn (there's a barn at each end of the building) and more pointing.

Cae Amos is on the margins between pasture and rough sheepwalk that extends to the very crest of the fine Nantlle hills. Their ridge forms one of the region's best hill walks but it can be difficult to fit into a circuit, so the bothy will be well-placed for this and other nearby hills.

As of early spring 2016, much remains to be done, notably roofing and woodworking. Until then, for safety reasons Cae Amos remains locked and inaccessible outside of work party visits.



Gelder Shiel Stable

Prince Charles joined in the official opening of the refurbished Gelder Shiel Stable bothy in October. The bothy, on the slopes of Lochnagar on the Balmoral Estate, is the only one owned by the Queen.

The MBA's Eastern Highlands area representative Neil Reid, blogging as cairngormwanderer, recalls what had been "a cold, unwelcoming doss" in need of major renovation. The MBA drew up plans alongside the Estate, which came to fruition in May, courtesy of what he describes as "the experienced and tooled-up tradesmen" of the Ballater Charitable Chiels. This local group adopted the project as a tribute and memorial to their former president Ernie Rattray, and the bothy is now also known as Ernie's Bothy.

The opening celebration involved drams of Lochnagar 12-year-old malt and the unveiling of a plaque by the Prince and Ernie's widow, Dot. Charles spent an hour at the bothy – sharing concern about the amount of litter some users leave – and signed the bothy book before going back down the road.



...projects in 2015

Camasunary

We reported in detail on the replacement of the bothy at Camasunary in the 2014 Review. The shell of the new bothy was built – during appalling weather – in 2014 by 59 Squadron Royal Engineers.

Since then, one of the wettest springs and early summers on record “transformed the surrounding land from a normal Skye bog to a black, boot-sucking mire”, according to MBA owner liaison officer Roger Muhl.

The first priority for the May work party was therefore to improve drainage and access, before an 11-day work party in July carried out snagging work and built fixed tables, benches and bunks. Internal painting took place in the Autumn.

After preparing the old bothy for its return to owner Alan Johnson, the new bothy finally opened for use late in March in 2016.



Flittingford

This is a new project in Northern England. In 2015 we obtained permission from Forest Enterprise to renovate the building as a bothy and drew up planning proposals which have been submitted and we are now awaiting approval.





Glencoul

This bothy in the Northern Highlands, close to Eas a Chual Aluinn, the highest waterfall in Britain, was completely renovated in the spring. Fireplaces were improved, a sleeping platform constructed, roof repairs undertaken and the building repainted.

We are grateful to the owners the Westminster Estate, who transported all the materials and volunteers to and from the bothy in their landing craft, earlier used in the Falklands conflict, at no cost to the MBA.



Other major work

We repaired storm damage to the roof at Craig (NW Highlands & Islands) and started to deal with serious woodwork problems caused by damp and woodworm.

We replaced a collapsed gable wall at Faindouran (E Highlands) and increased the bothy's capacity by building a new floor in the adjacent stable. In the same area, we also undertook major works at Callater Stable and the Tarf Hotel.

The MBA in 2015

Planning

In autumn 2014, organisers in each of our nine areas met to determine maintenance priorities for the year. Their plans were reviewed by the Management Committee and Trustees against the available budget and priorities set accordingly, in time for spring area meetings to set detailed plans. A new round of planning, for 2016, began in autumn 2015.

Liaison

Only one bothy is owned by the MBA. For the rest, it's essential to stay in regular touch with owners – from private individuals to large estates and major companies – so that they know and concur with what we propose and ensure that we are responsive to their own needs, such as access.

Management and accountability

We welcomed Ian Furlong to the Trustees and thank Jill Dhanjal for her service. We held our AGM in October and approved our Annual Report and Accounts the following March. We reduced in number and simplified all our forms, for example those to be filled in during work parties. We agreed to introduce electronic voting in 2016 as an alternative to postal ballots.

Publicity and promotion

We dealt with many requests – often as a result of the anniversary – from national and specialist media preparing articles about bothies, many for those with little previous knowledge.

The publicity team produced a poster to deter the cutting of live wood for fuel, unfortunately a growing problem: continual lopping harms wildlife as well as the trees themselves.

We continue to send our members a quarterly hard-copy newsletter, which as well as updating members on bothy maintenance, includes many articles on bothy life written by our users. The summer newsletter included an anniversary car sticker.

We started work on a new MBA website, the source of increasingly many public enquiries.





Braemar MRT at the Hutchison Hut

Bothies and mountain safety

In deep Cairngorm snow in January, hillwalker Kate Smith suffered one of those small accidents that can lead to tragedy – losing her boots in a bog. “I didn’t even notice until I looked down to see my bare feet in the snow”, Kate told the MBA. For her, the Hutchison Memorial Hut – a high bothy, 2500ft up in Coire Etchachan – was a lifesaver.

Earlier, she and her walking partner had set off from Bob Scott’s bothy, 7km down the Derry Burn, but were caught up in a snow blizzard. Darkness hit, the boots were lost, and they ended up bivvying out for a “frightening, hypothermic night”.

“When daylight came we managed to use what strength we had left to find the hut,” says Kate. “Ironically it was barely 300 metres from our bivvying spot. When we

got in some angel had left us some firewood to put the fire on and we cooked up some pasta and all simmered back to normal again. It’s safe to say the hut saved our lives.”

The couple were helped to safety by the Braemar Mountain Rescue Team.

“Bothies are one of the first places checked by Mountain Rescue teams”

At the MBA AGM in October, our keynote speaker David ‘Heavy’ Whalley spoke of the major role bothies play in mountain safety. He explained how bothies are one of the first places checked by MRTs, if not to find those missing as in this rescue, then to look for clues as to where they might be.

Heavy is one of the most experienced mountain rescuers in Britain, having spent 36 years with RAF Mountain Rescue, including spells at Leuchars and Kinloss.

Bothies and the arts

With MBA agreement, two of our bothies were used for arts projects in 2015.

Environmental arts at Burleywhag

Burleywhag bothy, high in the Lowther Hills of the Scottish Borders, was a site for the second Environmental Art Festival Scotland (EAFS) in August 2015. The festival aims to increase awareness of our environment and our place in it. The theme for the year was water: the bothy is situated beside the Capel Burn, which drains the slopes of the Donalds Queensberry and Earncraig Hill.

Many photographs of local farming families, curated by Aleyne Jones of the “Vanishing Scotland” project, were displayed in the bothy. Most were taken over thirty years ago. Aleyne stayed at the nearest farm, Mitchellsacks, 5km down the track, to add to her story and answer questions.

The main festival site was Castle Norton, in Nithsdale to the west of the bothy. A troop of horses rode over Queensberry, past Mitchellsacks farm and onwards to the Castle, to which also a relay of cyclists and horses carried “healing water” from the Hart Spring near Moffat.



Vanishing Scotland

Burleywhag bothy



Wainhope bothy, including the temporary outbuilding

Role play at Wainhope

Wainhope bothy, above Kielder Water in Northumberland, became a World War Two Royal Navy medical centre for a weekend in February/March 2015.

The 'live action role-play' was created by Newcastle-based artist Matt Stokes. During the war, a farmhouse nearby, now deep below Kielder's waters, housed a mental health treatment centre for Navy personnel who had become overwhelmed by stress.

The role-play "patients" were housed in a prefabricated shed by the bothy while the building itself was used for "treatment" by practising psychiatrists and psychotherapists. Portaloos were hidden from view behind the bothy. All taking part were dressed in world war two clothing, but none were told the exact location: instead they were met at Kielder Castle by uniformed "guards" and taken onwards in a vintage ambulance.

Matt Stokes's company took out public liability insurance, carried out a full risk assessment, and made a donation to us for allowing the bothy to be used. For the MBA, it was important that the bothy was returned to its original state as quickly as possible after the re-enactment. Changes had included removal of the sleeping platform.

As well as advertising the closure on the MBA website, we placed notices on forest tracks leading to the bothy, and area organiser David Moorat was on hand in case any bothy users did turn up, though none did.



Role-playing Royal Navy sailors outside the bothy

Area Focus: the Northern Highlands

The first in an Annual Review series looking at our nine area teams.



Area organiser Robert Barton has been using bothies since about 1980, finding bothies “through wandering about the hills”. After retiring from scouting (latterly as area commissioner for Caithness) he became joint maintenance officer at Strabeg along with the late John Dargie before stepping up to AO.

The area covers 13 bothies to the north of the Dingwall to Ullapool road and includes bothies in coastal, mountain and moorland locations. Once, the area also covered the North-West Highland and Islands, and although the two are now separate, they still hold their annual autumn meetings at the same time and place (currently the Crask Inn), though in different rooms.



Founder members Bernard and Betty Heath were active here for many years after moving to Thurso.

No major work is planned for 2016 but bothies with minor works planned include Kearvaig, Strathchailleach, The Schoolhouse and Suileag.

Strathchailleach: The reclusive James McRory-Smith lived here late last century. His many remarkable paintings survive on the walls.



Strathan: On the tougher path to Sandwood Bay.



Glendhu: A lovely spot easily reached by a good footpath from Kylestrome.



Glencoul: Completely renovated in the spring – see Bothy News.



Shenavall: Used as a bothy by Inverness Mountaineering Club before the MBA took it on.



Kearvaig: Has its own private beach in a stunning location.



Strabeg: Not far from the road, but the bogs and the Eriboll river deter visitors. Roof repairs here in 2015.



Achnanlach: A great place for viewing the Northern Lights.



Croftthouse: a planned major wind farm may cause us to review the bothy.



The Schoolhouse: It's no longer a school, but we have even installed desks and blackboard!



Knockdamph: One of many Northern Area bothies popular with Cape Wrath Trail walkers.



Coiremor: Stunning views of Seana Bhragh.



Suileag: magnificent views of Suilven. Rebuilt from a ruin by the MBA some 30 years ago.



Media coverage



Our fiftieth year led to unprecedented coverage of bothies in general and the MBA in particular.

Television and radio

Scotland-based production company Hopscotch Films spent much of 2015 preparing *Bothy Life*, a one-hour documentary celebrating the work of the MBA, “the unsung heroes of Scotland’s mountains”. The film was shown in December, both in English (BBC2 Scotland) and Gaelic (BBC Alba).

In that same month BBC Radio Scotland aired a lengthy segment on bothies in their Saturday morning BBC Radio Scotland programme *Out of Doors*.

Earlier, BBC1 Breakfast had reported from Lliest Cwm Bach in October, and two pieces were aired in July: BBC Radio 4 *You and Yours* from Camasunary, where a visitor commented: “*It’s incredible. We are from Switzerland and so we have lots of huts but [for] everything we have ... to pay*”; and a BBC2 series on the Pennine Way, which featured Greg’s Hut.





Hopscotch filming at Craig bothy

Print

National broadsheet newspapers including the *Guardian* and *Independent* showed how bothies could be used for adventure experiences; but since the former recommended waiting for a non-existent ferry to take one away from Glencoul, readers might have had more of an adventure than they anticipated. In Scotland, the *Daily Record* (perhaps the only national newspaper in Britain with a 'peak of the week' feature) ran a photo spread in December about bothies and the views that 'hardy travellers' can enjoy from them.

Among books that describe the bothy experience, the MBA's own anniversary book, *Mountain Bothies: Celebrating 50 years of the MBA*, published November 2014, continues to sell well.

Features on the bothy experience have appeared in specialist hill-walkers' magazines.

"The bothy code is a code for life. Turn no-one away, leave no trace, respect each other and the place you stay in."

David Lintern, The Great Outdoors, July 2015

Social media

Many specialist blogs from hill-walkers, mountain bikers, kayakers and similar expand on the day-to-day freedom which bothies allow them. As Munro Moonwalker (munromoonwalker.com) put it in December,

"get logged on to the MBA site and join up. Your contribution can be vital. It's a small price to pay to help this dedicated group keep up the good work".



Hunting the hunters

Gleann Dubh-lighe in the Western Highlands (pictured above) had a starring role in the Channel 4 series *Hunted*, shown in September.

The series challenged “fugitives” to avoid detection for 28 days by a chasing team armed with all the resources of the surveillance state. Kent GP Ricky Allen, who first got into bothying while a doctor at the Belford hospital in Fort William in the early 90s, looked to that earlier experience by spending a few days at Gleann Dubh-lighe, around 30km from the town.

“Opposite the bothy there was forestry cover for high vantage point observation, Ricky told the MBA. “I tempted the hunters up to the bothy using a burner phone’. I’d left a microphone in the bothy and it was soon apparent that they were furious as well as being soaked through and cold. They eventually tramped off back down the hill, dejected and defeated.”

Alas, Dr Allen was later captured at Euston station after returning south, but he joined the MBA straight away after and promises he “will remain a member for ever more”. And next visit back, he will “handsomely replenish” the bothy’s fuel supply.



Ricky Allen on the lookout near the bothy

Donors to the MBA

Every year we benefit from the generosity of individuals, their friends, and various funds who provide substantial donations for specific projects or for our general expenditure. We regret that it is not possible to list each and every donor, but we are delighted to record our sincere appreciation to them all. Following is a list of some of those who have donated in 2015; it includes all of the donations that we received "in memory" and also donors to any bothy-specific funds where balances remained during the year.

Legacy, Clifford Frank May
Jo Argyle-Robinson
Pennine Way Association (Greg's Hut)
Craig Sephton
Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme
Andrew Jensen Memorial (Gameshope)
Professor Eric Furness
Lakeland Lanequests
Peter Turnbull
David Brown (The Lookout)
HM The Queen
Morris Michael Rigby
Langside Mountaineering Club
Legacy, Ian Macmillan
Alastair Humphreys
Derek Finnie
Stan Pearson
Adrian Coats
BP Foundation
Earl of Mexborough
Fabian Harrar
Bill Budge
Colin Smith
Laura Beck
Strathspey Mountain Club
Anne Ince
Polmont Hillwalking Club
Stewart Huntington
Simon J Harris

Stonehaven Mountaineering
George MacQuarrie
Adam Wujkowski
Monet Wood
Jeff Feet
James Alan Fox
Neil Gibbons
John Harris
Marcin Filipiak
Jan ter Haar
Robert Parks
Robin Corlet
David Gault
Julian Hall
Helen Winslow

Donations in memory

Kay Mills-Hicks
Neil Mackenzie (Camasunary)
David Evans
Nicholas Randall
Jean & Charles Gledhill
Jack Duncan
Jim Taylor
Professor Eric Furness
Mike McLaughlan
Simon Andrew Robinson
Mike Wigglesworth
John Needham

Bothy owners

It is common for people to ask MBA officers where all the money for the work we do comes from; much less often we are asked about the bothies themselves. Each bothy is the property of an individual, trust, company or public body which has decided to make it available for public use. In the following list we express our thanks to the very generous owners of the bothies we maintain

HM Queen Elizabeth II	<i>Gelder Shiel Stable</i>
Aberchalder Estate	<i>Glenbuck</i>
Andras Ltd	<i>Faindouran</i>
Mrs Rosemary Anthony	<i>Greensykes</i>
Applecross Estate Trust	<i>Uags</i>
Ardtornish Estate Co Ltd	<i>Leacraithnaich</i>
Assynt Foundation	<i>Suileag</i>
Trustees of Atholl Estates	<i>Allt Scheicheachan, Tarf Hotel</i>
The Bacon Trustees	<i>Craig</i>
Ben Alder, Dalwhinnie and Strathmashie Estates	<i>Ben Alder Cottage, Culra*</i>
The Block and Fooks Families	<i>Coire Fionnaraich</i>
Borders Forest Trust	<i>Gameshope</i>
Michael Bostelman and Julian Whately	<i>Dryfehead</i>
The Bothy Trust	<i>Glenpear</i>
Mrs AK Boyd	<i>Brattleburn</i>
Braeroy Estates Ltd	<i>Luib Chonnal</i>
Scott Bremner	<i>Blackburn of Corrieyairack</i>
The Buccleuch Estates Ltd	<i>Burleywhag, Kettleton Byre</i>
The Trustees of Lindsay CN Bury	<i>Cruib</i>
Donald Angus Cameron of Lochiel	<i>Invermaillie, Kinbreack</i>
The Corriemulzie Trust	<i>Coiremor, The Schoolhouse</i>
Dalhousie 2006 Trust	<i>Shielin of Mark</i>
Mark Z de Ferranti	<i>Oban</i>
Dunlossit Trustees Ltd	<i>An Cladach</i>
Dwr Cymru (Welsh Water)	<i>Arenig Fawr, Dulyn, Grwyne Fawr</i>
Elan Vally Trust	<i>Lluest Cwm Bach</i>
Mr Enghart	<i>Glennoch</i>
Eriboll Estate Trust	<i>Strabeg</i>
Fasque and Glendye Estates	<i>Charr</i>
Philip Fleming, Robert Fleming and Trustees	<i>Gorton</i>
Andrew Fletcher	<i>Glengarrisdale</i>
The Forestry Ministers (FCE)	<i>Green, Haughtongreen, Kershopehead, Roughside, Spithope, Wainhope</i>

**Culra was closed during 2015 and currently remains so.*

Glendale Estate Trust	<i>Ollisdal</i>
The Glenelg Sheepstock Club	<i>Suardalan</i>
The Proprietors of Glenfalloch Estate	<i>Doune Byre</i>
Glenfeshie Estate Ltd	<i>Ruigh Aiteachain</i>
Mr RA Green	<i>Croft House</i>
The Trustees of Gruinard Estate	<i>Shenavall</i>
The Honister Slate Mine Company	<i>Dubs Hut</i>
Invercauld Estate	<i>Callater Stable</i>
Alan Johnson	<i>Camasunary</i>
RHF Le Fleming	<i>Cross Fell (Greg's Hut)</i>
Timothy Leslie	<i>Essan</i>
Earl of Mexborough	<i>A'Chuil</i>
Mountain Bothies Association	<i>Over Phawhope</i>
Mr Edward Naish	<i>Cae Amos</i>
The National Trust for Scotland	<i>Camban, Corrou, Hutchison Memorial Hut</i>
Mr TP Radford	<i>Tomsleibhe</i>
Mrs Richardson and Mr Richardson	<i>Warnscale Head</i>
Rio Tinto Alcan Highland Estates	<i>Lairig Leacach, Loch Chiarain, Meanach, Staoineag</i>
The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds	<i>Fords of Avon, Ryvoan</i>
Peter Stewart Sandeman	<i>Peanmeanach</i>
Neil Scobie	<i>Knockdamp</i>
The Scottish Ministers (FCS)	<i>Mark Cottage, Resourlie, Rowchoish, Taigh Seumas a'Ghlinne, Tunskeen, White Laggan</i>
The Scottish Ministers (SGRPID)	<i>Achnanclach, The Lookout, Strathan, Strathchailleach, Taigh Thormoid Dhuibh</i>
The Scottish Ministers (SNH)	<i>Dibidil, Guirdil</i>
Secretary of State for Defence	<i>Kearvaig</i>
Smech Properties Ltd	<i>Maol Bhuidhe</i>
Trustees of Philip R Smith	<i>Easan Dorcha</i>
The Honourable Rupert Christopher Soames	<i>Sourlies</i>
Storas Uibhist	<i>Uisinis</i>
Sarah Troughton	<i>Cadderlie</i>
United Utilities	<i>Mosedale Cottage</i>
The Welsh Ministers (NRW)	<i>Moel Prysgau, Nant Rhys, Nant Syddion, Penrhos Isaf</i>
The West Highlands Woodlands	<i>Gleann Dubh-lighe</i>
Westminster Estates	<i>Glencoul, Glendhu</i>
Captain NJNH Wills	<i>Bearnais</i>
Mrs CW Wilson	<i>Carron</i>

Land in the ownership of the Scottish Ministers is managed by the Scottish Government Rural Payments and Inspections Directorate (SGRPID), the Forestry Commission Scotland (FCS), and Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH). Land in the ownership of the Forestry Ministers is managed by the Forestry Commission England (FCE). Land in the ownership of the Welsh Ministers is managed by Natural Resources Wales (NRW).

In 2015 ...

We were awarded The Queen's Award for Voluntary service.

We celebrated our fiftieth anniversary.

We ran 112 work parties, concentrated in the longer days of spring and summer, at 58 different bothies. A total of 247 different people volunteered at them, doing a total of 1,333 days work - more than five days each on average. Special thanks to Kenny Freeman, David Moorat and Alex Scott, who each attended 11 work parties during the year.

Our membership reached nearly 3,800 by the end of 2015, an increase of nearly 300 on 2014.

Our income, entirely from our members and donations, was over £50,000 above target and helped us avoid running an anticipated deficit.

We spent nearly £64,000 on bothy maintenance, up over £3,000 on 2014.

maintaining simple shelters

Scottish Charity No: SC008685

Company Number: SC191425, limited by Guarantee

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mountainbothies.org.uk

