





ANNUAL **REVIEW**

Year ending 31 December 2016











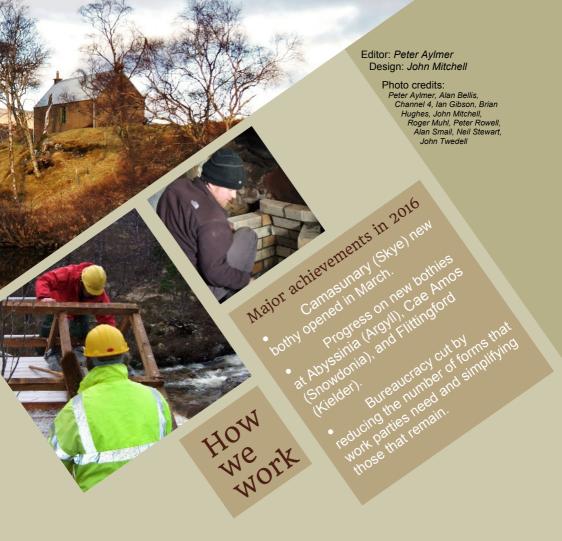


We maintain simple shelters in remote country for the use and benefit of all who love wild and lonely places.

Across Britain, we maintain more than 100 bothies, most of which are in highly demanding locations, surrounded by rough and mountainous terrain.

The MBA owns only a single bothy. Elsewhere, we work with the bothy owner – such as an individual, trust or public body – to keep the building in good order, and open for public use.

In this Annual Review, we show how we go about our work.



The MBA is a membership organisation, registered in Scotland as a charity. We have no paid staff. The board of Trustees and the management committee both meet regularly during the year to set priorities, monitor finance and ensure good governance. All members of the MBA can attend and vote at the annual general meeting held each October.

Bothies are organised into nine geographical areas, each of which has an area organiser and committee. Each bothy has a maintenance organiser (or joint MOs); aided by reports from users, they monitor the condition of their bothy, and effect minor repairs. Larger-scale work, such as installing a new hearth or roof, fall to work parties, often of several days' duration.

We value our strong links with bothy owners, and are grateful for the support they give to ensuring these wonderful buildings remain available for public use.

All administration is carried out by volunteers, apart from key tasks relating to finance and membership.



Flittingford

In 2015, a tiny forgotten ruin – once a shepherd's shelter – was discovered during treeharvesting deep in the Kielder Forest. We obtained permission from Forest Enterprise England to turn it into a cosy bothy that will cater for just three at a time.

The first task was to draw up planning proposals to go to Northumbria County Council for approval – planning regulations apply to bothies as much as new housing estates or skyscrapers for the corporate world. Approval duly came through in late May 2016, and work could begin.

Six work parties during the year carried out tasks ranging from reconstructing the crumbling gable end, installing new lintels, fitting a new roof and chimney, and rebuilding the dry stone walls of the sheep pen.

(Flittingford opened to the public in April 2017.)

Cae Amos

This former farmhouse was the club hut of Leeds Mountaineering Club for many 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.

Much work had to be done, from adding stone-filled gabions to re-roofing and pointing. Though good progress was made in 2015, work parties continued in 2016 – 41 volunteer days in August alone. It's a substantial complex, not only the main building but also a barn at each end. Area organiser Tony Blackburn reports that "we lost count a long time ago of how many bags of sand and cement have been used".

The bothy, sited on the margins between pasture and rough sheepwalk that extends to the very crest of the fine Nantlle hills, opened to the public in May 2017.



Abyssinia

At the very start of 2016, Tom Turnbull of the Strone Estate in Argyll sent us an email.

"I have a bothy near the Rest and Be Thankful adjacent to several Munros. I was wondering whether the MBA would be interested in helping me open it up for walkers?"

A glance at the map revealed the potential: sheltered by forest, away from the rough track through Glen Kinglas, and beneath the Munros of Ben Vane and Beinn Ime, their massif not served by any other MBA bothy.

The MBA joined Tom in a site visit, and set about making plans. We also found that part of the Estate's motivation in opening the bothy to the public was to improve communication between walkers and the Estate, especially during the stalking season – again showing the importance of partnership between the MBA and bothy owners.

This bothy too opened to the public in May 2017.

Flittingford



Cae Amos



Abyssinia



The project at **Camasunary** on the Isle of Skye shows the value of strong links with bothy owners, and the difficulties that the weather can cause to MBA projects.

A few years ago the bothy owner Alan Johnson signalled his intention to take the then bothy back into family use. He was however concerned that this popular area should not be left without an unlocked shelter and arranged for a replacement bothy to be built further east along the loch side.

The shell of the new bothy was built – during appalling weather – in 2014 by 59 Squadron Royal Engineers. Kitting out however was to prove a significant challenge, for in 2015 torrential rain meant that the first priority was to improve drainage and access.

Though much of the remaining work, including carpentry and painting, was completed that autumn, final works were carried out in early 2016. The old bothy has been retained for family use.

The new bothy became available to bothy users in March 2016. With a spectacular location on Loch Scavaig below the Munro of Blabheinn, it is highly popular with all manner of outdoor folk, including sea kayakers and those following the new 128km Skye Trail which passes its door.





Over Phawhope, in Ettrickdale on the Southern Upland way, is an exception among bothies – it is the only one that the MBA owns, as we were unexpectedly and very generously left the bothy in the will of Harry Fairhurst.

The landscape in the area is changing, following timber harvesting early in 2016, and our own tree planting will be part of that change. Our plans were for a mix of native deciduous trees. Partly this was to help screen the bothy from the forestry access road, but more importantly we chose trees that would improve the environs of the bothy and attract wildlife.

So birch and willow trees to the south help suck up water from the boggy ground, while alders will help stabilise the bank of the burn behind the bothy. Fruit trees including rowan and cherry to the east will be great for birdlife, and their blossom could lead to idyllic premidge spring-time evenings for bothy users. A hazel coppice between the two buildings will help with screening, as well as prove a useful source of kindling.

Once these trees mature we'll have grand surroundings for the only MBA-owned bothy. The lessons we learn will no doubt be applied elsewhere, with landowner support.

And we can be confident in the bothy structure too. 2016 saw a brand new roof, courtesy of Rory Little Roofing of Linlithgow, who donated their labour while the MBA paid only for materials.



What a difference a day makes!

Other major projects

Though it's great to open new bothies, the core task of MBA area and maintenance organisers is to make sure that the current bothies are in good order, safe and welcoming to the travellers that use them. Here are some examples of work undertaken during 2016 – but there are dozens more smaller jobs, all requiring significant planning and support from MBA volunteers, bothy owners and quite often local businesses too. New floorboards for **Invermaillie**, painting at **Ryvoan** and replacement windows at **Tarf Hotel** are just three examples among many.

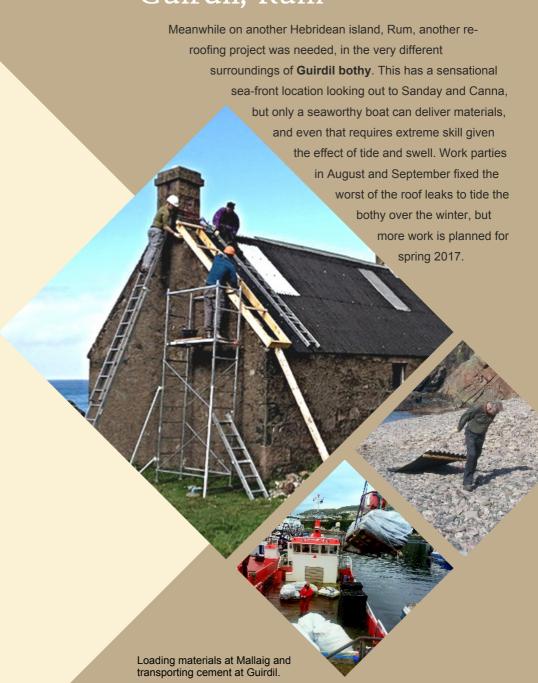
A nasty case of nail sickness

Tomsleibhe bothy on the Isle of Mull has become increasingly prey to 'nail sickness'. Though the roof slates themselves are good for another 100 years or so, the nails that hold them have become so corroded that slates regularly fall off.

Make do and mend was no longer an option. The sensible solution was to replace the whole roof, taking the opportunity to replace the covering beneath the slates ('sarking'), though many slates were reusable and the roof joists were repairable. With a work party of up to 14 on site, scaffolding was essential: but it was far more practical for the team to make its own wooden scaffolding – project organiser Jim Ross had seen it in use in Reykjavik – than hire in, and transport with great difficulty, the usual steel.

April in the Inner Hebrides can be a challenging month, and snow towards the end of the project both caused a halt to work and, when its melt put the burn in spate, a delay to homeward journeys for the crew. Two more, smaller work parties were needed to complete the work but by early June the project was complete.

Guirdil, Rum



In January 2015, aged 31, Neil Mackenzie fell to his death in the Canadian Rockies. Growing up in the Highlands, it was his love of mountains and wild places that took him to Vancouver when he was offered a post at the University of British Columbia in 2013.

"Neil was a regular visitor to bothies in his favourite mountain areas – Skye, Cairngorm, Glencoe and the North West Highlands – where he enjoyed a dram and the craik," as his mother Margaret remembers.

Donations in his memory helped kit out **Camasunary**. The Neil Mackenzie Trust continues with fundraising to help people take part and train in outdoor activities in Scotland and elsewhere. To donate, or apply for a grant, visit theneilmackenzietrust.wordpress.com



Memorial Bothies

Many bothies carry with them a dedication, the most recent being the new **Camasunary** bothy, which was fitted out in memory of Neil (Bell) Mackenzie. And a few months before that, **Gelder Shiel Stable** bothy in the Cairngorms was renovated in memory of Ernie Rattray, a former President of the Ballater Charitable Chiels, who played a major role in the refurbishment of the Gelder Shiel Stable bothy.

As well as those listed on this page, many others have benefitted from specific legacies, or indeed just from the desire to 'put something back' on behalf of a loved one.

One such example is Anne Ling, who in 2012 took over the MBA membership of her late partner Chris Barnes. In June 2016, she achieved what Chris had always intended but never managed: to join a work party, by painting doors and windows at **Kearvaig** bothy in Sutherland. Later seeing the bothy from afar "shining out like a white gemstone", as she recalled, "it was like seeing Chris's beaming smile of approval".

Memorial bothies

An Cladach, Bearnais, Blackburn of Corrieyairack, Camban, Camasunary, Gleann Dubh-Lighe, Glenpean, Greg's Hut, Guirdil, Hutchison Memorial Hut, Ollisdal, Rowchoish, Taigh Tormoid Dhuibh, Uisnis, The Lookout.

Please let the MBA know if you have others to add to this list.



Live in London, and the world of the bothy can seem far away. In the great city, no door is left unlocked, no stream is safe to drink, no spade is needed for life's essential rhythm. But the MBA has a healthy membership this far south, and since 2012, twice a year there have been get-togethers to reminisce about life in wild and lonely places.

"We get a mix of new members, old hands, active and armchair members, usually around a dozen" says organiser Chris Hutchinson. "At our last meeting, I was pleased to see Russian and German members too.

"We can give answers to questions you can't get elsewhere, inspiration, reassurance, and the sense of wellbeing you get from a pint with likeminded individuals."

There's usually a focus to the meetings. Ricky Allen of Channel 4's *Hunted* spoke of

his experience at the spring 2016 meeting, and the *Bothy Life* film – unavailable on TV in England – was screened at the autumn meeting.

Chris was an active mountaineer in Scotland in the late 1960s and 70s, but opportunities dropped off after moving south. "The sound of the MBA journal falling through the letter box was one thing that kept me sane," he asserts. "I'm not the only attendee at the London meetings to have said that."

And though the world of the Savoy Tup pub off the Strand might seem a long way from the world of the bothy, the opportunity is there to head north-west for a mile or so (compass not needed), get to Euston station around 9pm, and settle down on the Caledonian Sleeper. Breakfast in Staoineag or Allt Scheicheachan beckons.





Need to mend a roof? Get up a ladder. Not bad for unplugging a gutter, but long periods up a ladder is both tiring and potentially dangerous. So let's use scaffolding – if you can get it down a five-mile rutted track and across bridges swept away by the latest named storm from the Atlantic. (At Tomsleibhe on Mull, the work party used wooden scaffolding – see page 7.)

Thankfully, for the practicalities of bothy maintenance, there is another option, fall restraint, as MBA Trustee and training officer Liz Bibby explains.

"Lightness and ease of use was our priority, so we devised a system of fall restraint, using equipment that was easily carried in a rucksack. We used high-quality gear usually used by rope access workers, plus an empty 1-tonne builders bag to use as a rope anchor when filled with rubble or stones.

"Initially three volunteers were trained by Lyon, a well-known rope access training company, and these volunteers have in turn run training courses for over 30 volunteers from all the MBA areas.

"Since then, fall restraint has been used at many remote bothy work parties, including Cruib on Jura, Strabeg and Suileag in Sutherland, and Craig in Wester Ross. Volunteers who have used it remark on how safe they feel when working high up on a roof!"

Back to their roots

Many bothies were once homes for generations of Scots (and sometimes English and Welsh folk too). But perhaps the best-known, maybe because it's still an active memory for many bothy-goers, is the 32-year habitation of **Strathchailleach** bothy in Sutherland by James 'Sandy' MacRory.

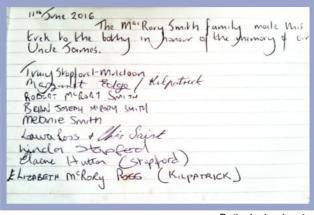
The early MBA had an uneasy agreement with Sandy, that he would occupy one room, while walkers would use the other. Trouble was, as often as not he would refuse entry. For all that, Sandy's presence looms large in the bothy, not least because of his wall paintings, which remain to this day.

So when some of Sandy's family – spurred on by the TV programme *Bothy Life*, which featured his tale – planned a visit to Strathchailleach in June, it was natural they invited maintenance organiser Bob Tateson.

In all 30 family members came to the nearby town of Kinlochbervie, and ten of those braved the 14-mile return walk along the rough track to the bothy – Sandy's only link with the outside world. "The nephews and nieces were interested but subdued," said Bob. "Perhaps they were coming to terms with the idea of their uncle living all alone, for so long, in such a remote place."



Bothy mural



Bothy logbook entry

Taking the rough out of Roughside

Vandalism alas is not unknown in bothies, with those easiest of access at greatest risk. **Roughside** bothy, in Kielder Forest, is barely 500m from a public road, and suffered greatly in years past.

MBA volunteers visited often to stop dereliction from setting in, and Northumberland Police kept an eye open too – signing the bothy book so users would know of the surveillance. This led to identification of the main culprits, but instead of confrontation we tried negotiation. And – so far – it's worked: to the extent that the one-time perpetrators have since helped with maintenance at nearby Kershopehead.

Area focus

Area organiser David Moorat found out about bothies on an army exercise in Scotland – he found them a great way of escaping from the hunter force during a three week escape and evasion exercise. He's been an MBA member for 30 years, maintenance organiser at Kershopehead for 15 years, and area organiser for six.

The name is a bit of a misnomer, for the Scottish Borders fall within the Southern Scotland area. Perhaps surprisingly, the Lake District has only three bothies – a measure of how compact the district is. But anyone who has walked the empty spaces of the North Pennines or the Cheviot Hills, or enjoyed all the recreation options around Kielder Water, will know how welcome the sight of a bothy can be.

Major work in 2016 included a new stove and windows at **Greg's Hut**, removal of stone to cure rising damp at **Dubs Hut**, and new sleeping benches and stove for **Warnscale Head**. At **Haughtongreen**, a series of work parties undertook internal painting, repaired the roof and doors, and installed new windows. See also p.3 for news of the new bothy at **Flittingford**.

Mosedale Cottage: On the very edge of Lakeland, with the rarely-visited Shap Fells to the east.

> Northern England and Borders

Cross Fell: Better known as Greg's Hut, this could well be the MBA's most-used and highest bothy, well over 2000ft up and on the Pennine Way's toughest day.

Haughtongreen: The most southerly of the bothies in the Northumberland National Park.







Spreading the word

Although this year was never going to match 2015, our 50th anniversary year, for the volume of news coverage, there was still a healthy volume of media coverage. Most of the specialist outdoor magazines, and blogs and websites run by outdoor enthusiasts, regularly feature bothies, and there are occasional features in mainstream media too. The volume of press enquiries continues to increase, as does the global spread – enquiries this year came from as far afield as Brazil and Alaska.

For many bothy users, their first point of call for information is our website. Though the existing website has done a great job, it is now showing its age, lacking for example an effective link to the membership database. In 2016 we awarded a tender to Strut Digital of Fort William for a new website which will include an on-line shop, a facility to send in photographs along with a bothy report, and an interactive individual member page.



During the year we also started a closed MBA Facebook group and a monthly email Members' bulletin. Both have helped advertise work parties, vacancies and temporary bothy closures.





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, for example those who donate to the MBA following talks and in the Lookout bothy collection box, but we are delighted to record our sincere appreciation to them all. Following is a list of those who have made significant donations in 2016; it includes all of the legacies and the donations that we received 'in memory' and also donors to any specific funds where balances remained during the year. We also received a number of anonymous donations.

The total given during 2016 was £46,664.

HM The Queen

An Teallach Mountaineering Club

David Baldwin

Helen Cameron

David Carrick

Alastair Cozens

Robin Dickinson

Ian Elsey

Jonathan Emmins

Roger Everard

Fargher-Noble Trust (Invermallie)

Lee Farmer

Derek Finnie

J D Goodall

Colin Groom

Philippa Hill

Raffael Hochreutener

Stewart Huntington

International Munro Pineapple Society

Andrew Jensen Memorial Fund (Gameshope)

Blomeier Konrad

Ian McTavish

Tarik-John Merdad

Laura Monlezun

Bernard Pearson

Guido. Erika and Luca Pechacek

Pennine Way Association (Greg's Hut)

Quinces Trust (Warnscale Head)

Caroline Ramsav

Nicholas Randall

Andrew Rathbone

Susanne Rudolphi

Scottish Scouts Mountaineering Club

John Skinner

Lewis Stewart Memorial Fund

Strathspey Mountain Club

Tweed Foundation (Tree planting)

Mick Venters

Rhys Waters

Richard Watt

Rebecca Wearn

J Williamson

Peter Yates

Ian John Yorkston

Donations in memory of

Denis Cornforth

Alan Cunningham

David Evans

Paul Gurner

James Henderson (Glenpean)

Ann Hobbiss

A Langside Mountaineering Club member

Euan Turner

Dr Peter Whewell

Legacies

Rupert Hughes CBE

Clifford Frank May

Fiona Piggins

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 Gelder Shiel Stable

Aberchalder Estate Glenbuck

Andras Ltd Faindouran

Mrs Rosemary Anthony Greensykes

Applecross Estate Trust Uags

Ardtornish Estate Co Ltd Leacraithnaich

Assynt Foundation Suileag

Trustees of Atholl Estates Allt Scheicheachan, Tarf Hotel

The Bacon Trustees Craig

Ben Alder, Dalwhinnie and Strathmashie Estates Ben Alder Cottage, Culra

The Block and Fooks Families Coire Fionnaraich

Borders Forest Trust Gameshope

Michael Bostelman and Julian Whately Dryfehead

The Bothy Trust Glenpean

Mrs AK Boyd Brattleburn

erov Estates Itd Luib Chonn

Braeroy Estates Ltd Luib Chonnal

Scott Bremner Blackburn of Corrieyairack

The Buccleuch Estates Ltd Burleywhag, Kettleton Byre

The Trustees of Lindsay CN Bury Cruib

Donald Angus Cameron of Lochiel Invermaillie, Kinbreack

The Corriemulzie Trust Coiremor, The Schoolhouse

Dalhousie 2006 Trust Shielin of Mark

Mark Z de Ferranti Oban

Dunlossit Trustees Ltd An Cladach

Dwr Cymru (Welsh Water) Arenig Fawr, Dulyn, Grwyne Fawr

Elan Vally Trust Lluest Cwm Bach

Mr Enghart Clennoch

Eriboll Estate Trust Strabeg

Fasque and Glendye Estates Charr

Philip Fleming, Robert Fleming and Trustees Gorton

Andrew Fletcher Glengarrisdale

The Forestry Ministers (FCE) Flittingford, Green, Haughtongreen, Kershopehead,

Roughside, Spithope, Wainhope

Glendale Estate Trust Ollisdal

The Glenelg Sheepstock Club Suardalan The Proprietors of Glenfalloch Estate Doune Byre

> Glenfeshie Estate Ltd Ruigh Aiteachain

> > Mr RA Green

Croft House

The Trustees of Gruinard Estate Shenavall

The Honister Slate Mine Company

Dubs Hut

Invercauld Estate Callater Stable Alan Johnson Camasunary

Cross Fell (Greg's Hut) RHF Le Fleming

Timothy Leslie Essan

Earl of Mexborough A'Chuil

Over Phawhope Mountain Bothies Association

> Mr Edward Naish Cae Amos

The National Trust for Scotland Camban, Corrour, Hutchison Memorial Hut

> Mr TP Radford Tomsleibhe

Mrs Richardson and Mr Richardson Warnscale Head

Rio Tinto Alcan Highland Estates Lairig Leacach, Loch Chiarain, Meanach, Staoineag

The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds Fords of Avon. Rvvoan

> Peter Stewart Sandeman Peanmeanach

Neil Scobie Knockdamph

The Scottish Ministers (FCS) Mark Cottage, Resourlie, Rowchoish, Taigh

Seumas a'Ghlinne, Tunskeen, White Laggan

The Scottish Ministers (SGRPID) Achnanclach, The Lookout, Strathan,

Strathchailleach, Taigh Thormoid Dhuibh

The Scottish Ministers (SNH) Dibidil, Guirdil

Secretary of State for Defence Kearvaig Smech Properties Ltd

Maol Bhuidhe

Easan Dorcha Trustees of Philip R Smith

The Honourable Rupert Christopher Soames Sourlies

> Storas Uibhist Uisinis

Cadderlie Sarah Troughton **United Utilities** Mosedale Cottage

The Welsh Ministers (NRW) Moel Prysgau, Nant Rhys, Nant Syddion,

Penrhos Isaf

The West Highlands Woodlands Gleann Dubh-lighe

> **Westminster Estates** Glencoul, Glendhu

Captain NJNH Wills Bearnais Mrs CW Wilson Carron

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 2016 ...

We ran 106 work parties, spread out over the year but concentrated in the longer days of spring and summer, at 50 different bothies. More than 25 days were spent at Camasunary (both old and new bothies), while there were five work parties adding up to a total of 30 days as we prepared the new bothy at Cae Amos.

The new bothy at Flittingford was made ready for its opening in 2017, and we laid plans for further additions to the MBA portfolio with potential new bothies at Abyssinia in Argyll and Red House in the Cairngorms.

The number of different people volunteering at work parties rose to 257, delivering a total of 1404 days' work – more than five days each on average. Of these, 89 people attended more than one work party, and three people were each at 10 different work parties in the year.

Membership was nearly stable, at 3,792 by the year end – up by four on 2015, despite an increase in the subscription fee.

Our income, entirely from our members and donors, rose by 10% to over £157,000. Once again, there was a surplus of income over expenditure.

Spending on bothy maintenance rose by more than a third, to over £85,000. This reflects both a rise in planned work and an increase in the MBA's capability to achieve those plans.

maintaining simple shelters

