

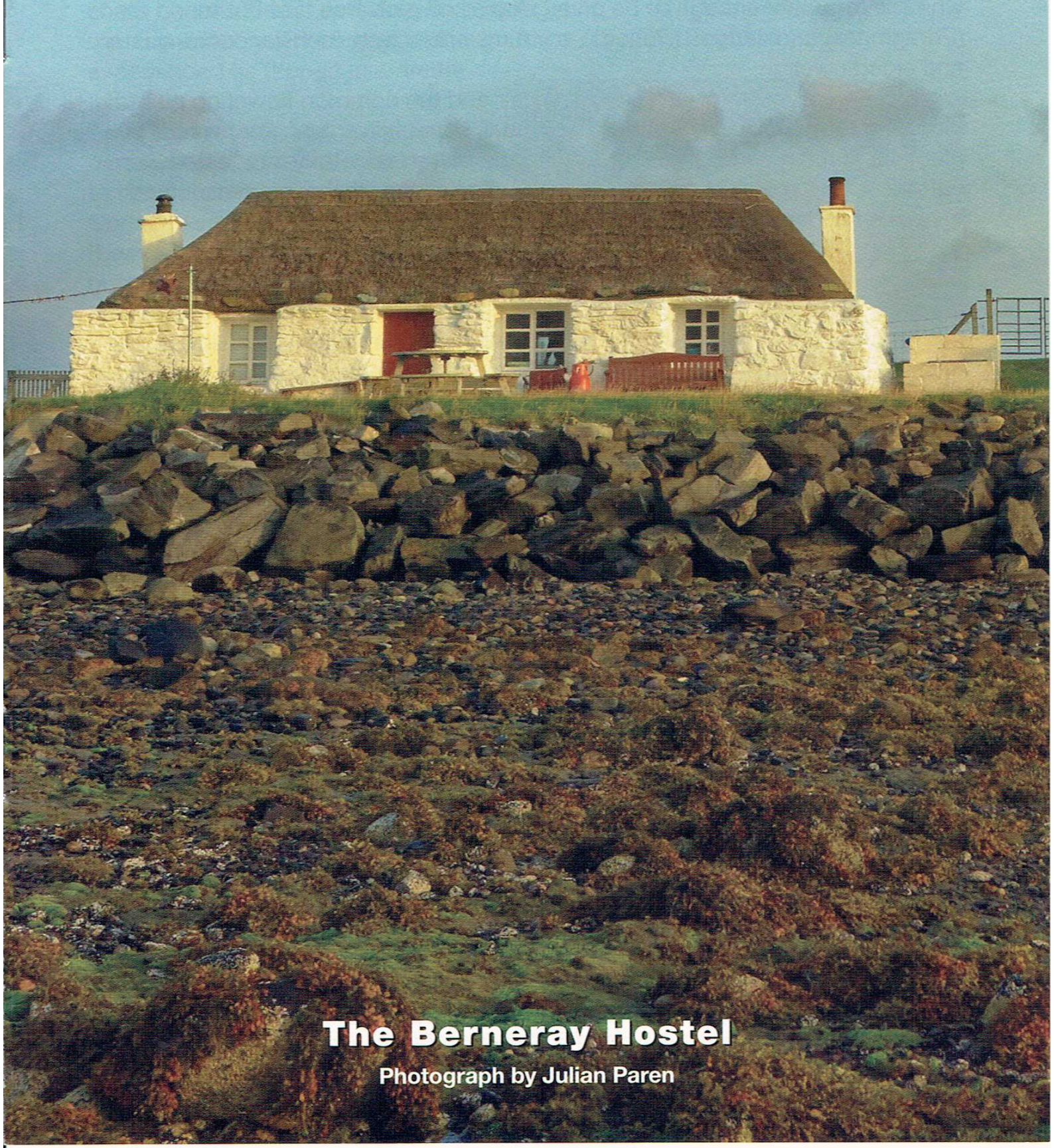
Hebridean Hostellers

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The Berneray Hostel

Photograph by Julian Paren

Grid Discovery

Humans love going places and, wherever possible, taking short cuts. In the late 19th Century, when universal literacy and the mass production of books became established features of British life, the phrase 'armchair traveller' could be applied. A hundred years later, the general availability of computers and new technologies provided new dynamics for getting around.

Soon after the start of this century, in March 2005, a charity was registered and people's interests were aroused. Here was Geograph Britain and Ireland, a web-based project that displays freely-accessible, archive photographs of significant or typical vistas from each of the one kilometre square grids of the Ordnance Survey or Irish National Grid reference systems.

It sounds easy, but there are 331,957 such grids and it has taken some 13 years to file over five million photographs by 12,900 contributors who have covered over 97% of Great Britain and 40% of Ireland. That's about 20 images per grid. This is certainly sufficient to encourage us to log in to www.geograph.org.uk and begin what could become a time-consuming interest.

The site can be looked at with or without registering and, probably, many first-timers will see how their home grid square is depicted. Then it's time to venture further afield, perhaps explore more remote settlements with finger-tip control. Where better to go than the areas immediately around Rhenigidale, Berneray and Howmore? Sites and sights, previously unknown personally, will spring onto your screen.

The Rhenigidale hostel appears twice and there is a 26-year gap between the two images, with the 1986 shot by Julian Paren, whose work is frequently featured on the system. Skip along the coast to Molinginish and see the almost aerial view of the houses, pictured here, by another prolific contributor, Alan Reid. Drag the map to note the state of Kenny Mackay's rusting tractor, now possibly decomposed, at Nostar.

Getting around Berneray is comparatively easy on foot, but this device enables you to pick and choose before setting off. The beach panoramas impress and the Chairstones inform about Viking folklore. With its many ecclesiastical and historical sites, Howmore has attracted photographers. Reaching out to Lochsklipport and Ushinish shows the less-travelled, but nearby, ways. All in all, becoming acquainted with Geograph leads to an extravaganza of locations.

