

Newsletter - May 2022

Nurse's Cottage

The Cottage opened on Monday 16th May.

Membership

Membership subscriptions are an important part of our income. Annual membership, open to over 16s, is £10 (£5 for additional adults at the same address).

Payment can be by cash, cheque or standing order made out to Comunn Eachdraidh Bheàrnaraigh
sort code 80-05-60
account. 00108189

Membership, Standing Order and Gift Aid forms can be printed from our website. Please post to the Secretary, or hand in to Berneray Post Office during opening hours.

Gift Aid

If you pay income tax, then completing a Gift Aid form is an extra benefit to the Society at no extra cost to you.

Comhairle Grant

The Historical Society receives an annual grant of £350 from the Comhairle nan Eilean Siar. This makes a big difference and we are most appreciative.

Berneray Historical Society

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More shops

Berneray Shop is the only place to buy groceries nowadays but it is not the only "buying opportunity" on the island. Visit the Coral Box for attractive gifts, the Birlinn Yarn Studio at Sunhill for wool from island sheep and the Historical Society in the Nurses Cottage for cards and books on local history.

Remembering Berneray's Shops

Berneray is fortunate to have a grocery shop, and a very good one, when so few shops remain on the islands. In 2022, it's hard to imagine that once Berneray had a number of shops but this was when Berneray had three or four times its present population, cars were a rarity and the causeway was far in the future.

In the past shops were not usually purpose built but created in a room or shed. A shop could be handed on through generations and a shop's location could change if the owner moved house. Shops sold groceries and hardware and a wide range of other goods – anything from dinner sets to expensive shoes. Goods were fetched by boat from Lochmaddy, a practice that continued until a satisfactory road connection was completed in 1955.

1861

The census record of 1861 has the first two mentions of shopkeepers. Both shopkeepers were young men, one born in Berneray and the other born in Uist but lodging with a Paterson family in Baile, including Angus Paterson, then in his teens.

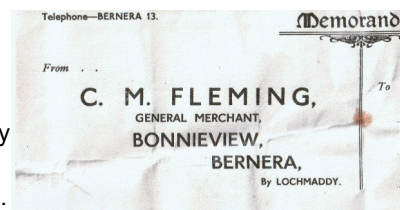
Shopkeeper Angus Paterson

Angus spent most of the 1860s in Canada but in the 1871 Berneray census he is one of eight people listed as shopkeepers, grocers or assistants. Seven were based in Rushgarry and only one in Borge, a consequence of the Borge clearance. In 1871 three shopkeepers were widows or unmarried women. It seems that Angus opened a shop at Geo Dubh and then moved to 20/21 Borge following the re-crofting of Borge in 1900. He continued to run a shop in Borge until his death in 1925. At the same time his son Finlay ran a shop at Geo Dubh.

20/21 Borge continued as a shop run by Angus's son Norman and, at Geo Dubh, Finlay Paterson was succeeded by his daughter Bessie Paterson.

Some other shops

At Bonnieview, 9 Borge, Roddy Macleod and his sister Christy Mary Fleming had a shop, later run by Roddy's widow, Mary. Christy Mary opened her own shop at Baybank. At Backhill, Bùth Ailig was a shop owned by Alec MacLean.



The 1980s and beyond

But change was on the way. By the 1980s a vehicle ferry to North Uist allowed regular visits by the Clachan van and others, as well as easy travel further afield. Akram's from Stornoway would fill the Community Hall with a wide range of clothing and hardware. People could also shop from catalogues such as J D Williams.

In the late 1980s Berneray had just one shop, run by Angus MacAskill and his wife Mary at Quay. It closed in the early 2000s.

Angus MacAskill in Quay Stores



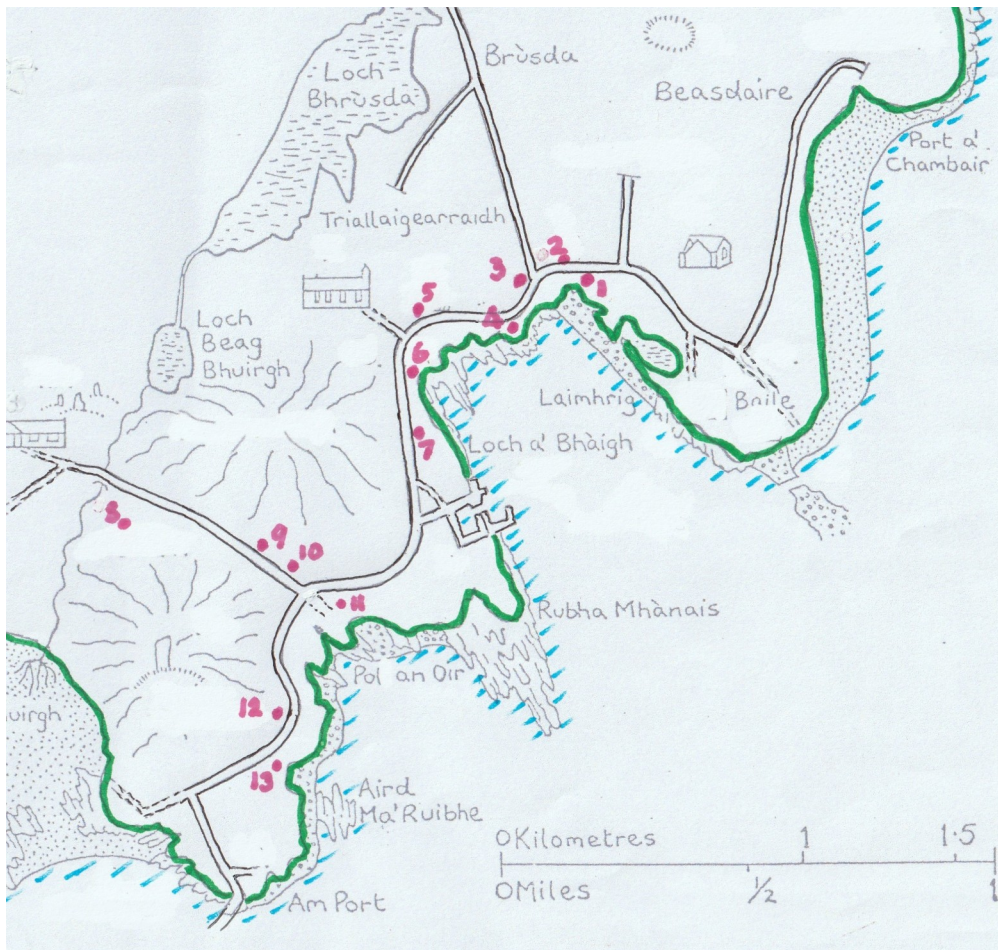


Berneray Shop and Bistro

However in 1992 John Angus and Kate MacKillop built Ardmaree Stores, now Berneray Shop and Bistro owned by Abi and Ruairidh Nicholson. It's an excellent shop and now the only place to buy groceries on Berneray.

A shop is not just for shopping; it's also a place to meet people and catch up with local news. Long may Berneray have a shop.

There were more than a dozen shops on Berneray at different times during the twentieth century. The map shows their locations. If you are aware of errors or omissions please hand in a note to the Nurse's Cottage (11-3, weekdays in the summer) or write or email the Historical Society. Additional information, photos and dates would be very welcome.



1. Calum MacIsaac – Shop and slaughter house, then Angus and Mary MacAskill
2. Angus and Mary MacAskill, Quay Stores
3. Alec MacLean, from 1923
4. Angus then Finlay then Bessie Paterson, Geo Dubh
5. Christy Mary Fleming, Baybank, from 9 Borge
6. Alec MacLean (Bùth Ailig), then John MacLean, now Sealview
7. Lachie and Mary Ann MacKinnon, Greenhill
8. Finlay MacKinnon, 1 Borge
9. Roddy MacLeod, sister Christy Mary Fleming then his widow Mary MacLeod, Bonnieview, 9 Borge
10. Peggy MacLean, 8 Borge
11. Catriona MacKillop, Pol an Oir
12. Angus then Norman Paterson, Marine Parade 20/21 Borge
13. Ardmaree Stores and Lobster Pot Cafe, John Angus and Kate MacKillop, John Forshaw, Iris and Bob Steedman, then Berneray Shop and Bistro, Abi and Ruairidh Nicholson

Recent History – The Queen's Diamond Jubilee bonfire on Borge Hill. June 4th 2012. The full moon is in the background.

