

# Region 9

Glasgow and the Western Isles (*Glasgu agus nan Eilean Siar*)

## **Failte gu Stornabhaigh agus nan Eilean Leodhais**

Like that other less well-known institution The Scottish Government, the Committee of the Glasgow and Western Isles Region like to move around for their meetings. It was the turn of the Islanders to play Mine Host, so a bunch of Glesca Keelies headed off to Stornoway in some trepidation - Remember the episode of "Still Game" where Jack and Victor visit the Isles and so upset their hosts they get chucked out the pub, well we needn't have worried. Our Islander friends were not so easily offended and the welcome they extended was magnificent. We were the first outside group to visit the Hebridean Housing Partnership and they treated us like royalty.

With little space at my disposal I shall have to be selective, and report firstly on what was for me the high-point (business wise) of the visit. Stewart Wilson's presentation where he led us through a series of developments of differing sizes, types and locations, describing as he went an amazing variety of difficulties to be overcome, was exceptional. Stewart is the director of HHP's development partner; *Tighean Innse Gall*. Surely this is the way to explain at least some of the mysteries of that very confusing subject "housing".



We later visited some of the developments mentioned by Stewart and went on to have a look at an earlier type of house, the blackhouses, built by the crofters. These were in use right into the seventies and were constructed of stone with thatched roofs. They had a peat fire in the middle of the living room, but no chimney – the crofters didn't go in for unnecessary luxuries. They also had a spare room where the animals, coos and nanny-goats etc., spent their nights. George McGuinness remarked that they have something similar in Baillieston that they keep for stashing the mother-in-law.



A bonus from the visit is the more intimate knowledge we now have of the other committee members. When your acquaintance is limited to a ninety minute meeting every couple of months you never really get to know one another. But two days spent almost wholly together make an enormous difference. Future meetings should be both pleasanter and more productive.

To all at HHP we owe a debt of gratitude for the time and care they devoted to us. And to Kevin and Barney, the Island representatives on our committee, we are especially grateful for overseeing the arrangements and for their outstanding personal contribution to the progress of our committee.

There is one other matter I should like to clear up – The Stornoway Black Pudding. Is it as good as they say? I brought one home and handed it to a carefully selected panel of experts. After thorough investigation, and scoffing the lot, she tells me that while a handsome and distinguished representative of the (Black) Pudden race the Stornoway just fails to nick the Championship Trophy from the possession of the Denny Black Pudding - *“I cannot say how the case may be, I tell the tale as 'twas told to me”*.

*Jack McGuire*

