

As another summer comes to an end and the nights draw in we are once more looking to our autumn programme. If you are one of our less mobile members who would like to get to meetings but finds it difficult because of transport issues please let us know. We will arrange for someone to collect you and return you to your home for the meetings you wish to attend. Please contact either Iona Gray (500167) or Dawn Collis (504429) if you would like to take up this offer.

Anne Speirs, partly inspired by the excellent series on BBC Radio 4 'A History of the World in 100 objects', would like to get your views on our Museum's 'Star Items'. We are inviting you to nominate up to three items in each of the two main galleries. Anne as curator of History and Archaeology along with Glyn Collis as curator of Natural History will use your nominations to find out what BNHS members see as our special items. They will then highlight the leading items as our 'stars' for visitors. Forms will be available for your suggestions in the office as well as in the Library on meetings evenings.

John Neilson, our curator for several years has decided to call it a day and will be retiring from the post at the end of September. I am sure that everyone will want to wish John all the best and give him a big 'Thank you' for all his hard work. The Trustees will be looking to find a new curator, however until the appointment can be made the custodian duties will need to be covered by volunteers. Winter opening commences on 1st October so a duty will be from 2.30 until 4.30pm Tuesdays through to Saturdays. If you would be willing to help out by doing a duty please contact Dawn Collis (504429).

On Tuesday 1st November 2011 it will be the centenary of the day that Captain Scott's ill-fated expedition set sail for the South Pole. To mark the event a joint fundraising evening showing the film 'Scott of the Antarctic' will be held at the Museum. The evening is being organised by George McKenzie and will raise funds for both the RNLI and the Museum.

The dramatic increase in fuel prices has affected the Museum every bit as much as the typical household. To try and keep expenditure down the Museum Trustees are doing more of the routine maintenance themselves. Members with skills that would be useful and who are willing to get involved with some of the maintenance tasks would be welcomed with considerable enthusiasm. Please contact Dawn Collis (504429) if you feel you may be able to help in any way.

Historic Rural Settlement Group

Prior to the dig at Cnoc n' Rath some group members participated in a geophysical survey of the area in May. In June the final conference of the Scotland's Rural Past project was held at Dunkeld. A contingent from Bute attended and Donald Kinnear presented the paper on behalf of the Society. The guest of honour at the Conference was Minister of Culture Fiona Hyslop. BNHS members were delighted to have the opportunity of raising the profile of Bute, the Museum and the Society's activities. We must have made an impression as she referred to Bute and her enjoyable visit to the museum in her after dinner speech!

The dig at Cnoc n' Rath began in mid June and lasted for three weeks. While the end results were not so exciting as the outcome of the Scalpsie dig last year it was an enjoyable exercise attended by many BNHS members and was an opportunity to introduce several new people to the activities of the Society and the Museum. A further geophysical exercise was carried out at St Colmac's circle in July. This was an open survey for members of the public to attend organised by Paul Duffy under the DBLPS umbrella. A well attended follow on meeting was held in the Museum which explained what may be there and showed how the information is interpreted.

To mark the ending of the Scotland's Rural Past Project and to thank members of the survey group for their work over the years a reception was held in the Museum by the project organisers to which Council members and Trustees were invited. The opportunity was taken to formally hand over to the Museum a copy of the Scotland's Rural Past book 'Community Archaeology in Action' to which we contributed. Members are welcome to consult the book by arranging access with Jean McMillan.

August saw work commence on the installation of the swinging signposts for the sites at North/South Kelspoke, Kingaven, Achavoullig Butt, Butt a'Chroit and Balnakeilly. When this work is done the group will have completed its commitment to the Scotland's Rural Past project.

Without the hard work and commitment of a relatively small group of enthusiastic members the substantial achievements of the Historic Rural Settlement Group and its contributions to the SRP project could not have been achieved. They have certainly done the Society proud.

Bird Group

The Bird Group have continued monthly field meetings throughout the summer. The locations and focus of interest are very varied and attract a steady number of members. Remember that all Bird Group events are open to all BNHS members. The winter indoor meetings programme is featured on the Society's syllabus card. Further information is available on the Bird Group website where a terrific set of photographs of the Bute osprey chicks can be seen (www.butebirdgroup.co.uk)

Fund raising

At a recent meeting of the Museum Trustees the need to raise funds to ensure the Museum can continue to function was discussed. Keeping the building warm and weather-tight costs far more than the income generated by entries and the shop. If any members have ideas for raising funds Iona Gray would love to hear from you (500167).

Transactions of the Buteshire Natural History Society 2012

The Society aims to publish a volume of Transactions every fourth year. Contributions are most welcome on any topic relating to the interests of the Society and the Museum. Typical content is readily apparent by browsing recent issues of the Transactions which are kept in the Museum's Library. Articles may be submitted up to the end of 2012 but it is better not to leave it until the 'last minute'. Now is the time to start thinking, planning and writing contributions for the next issue.