

A late spring and a late Easter follow on from one of the wettest winters on Bute. The spring and summer activities will soon be upon us and here is hoping for some good weather so we can enjoy the delights of Bute without getting drenched!

Gloria Fear, who has served as Membership Secretary for several years has stepped down from this role with immediate effect. This leaves us with a vacancy for the role of Membership Secretary. If any member of the Society would be interested in fulfilling this role as a co-opted member of Council please let Dawn Collis know (504429 or email [dawncollis@hotmail.com](mailto:dawncollis@hotmail.com)) as soon as possible. If you wish to know more about the role, again, contact Dawn.

At the end of March the Museum Trustees hosted an evening for people running holiday accommodation on Bute. We need to increase visitor numbers and are very aware that many people who visit the island never become aware of the Museum. We are also always pleased to welcome new members to the Society, so if you encounter people who may be interested in joining BNHS and/or visiting the Museum please spread the word, recommendations are invariably the most effective means of publicity. A membership application form is now downloadable from the website ([www.butemuseum.org.uk](http://www.butemuseum.org.uk)).

We are back to summer opening hours at the Museum so Dawn is looking for volunteers to help with door duties on Sundays (1.30 to 3.30) and Mondays (10.30 to 1pm & 1pm to 3.30) each week and Ellen's holiday dates. Copies of the rotas are in the Museum office, please sign up if you can help out. Without the hours put in by volunteers from BNHS the Museum would not function effectively. We benefit from a very high level of volunteering, both hours and number of people, and can be proud of this commitment from so many people. The flower rota, where members take responsibility for gathering wild flowers for the display in the Natural History Gallery, is also in the office. If you would be willing to have a go at helping with this, again, please sign up. Support on identification of flowers if you are unsure is available and should not inhibit you from having a go.

### Beached Bird Survey

Once again, Members of the BNHS have volunteered to take part in the RSPB's 'Beached Bird Survey' to monitor trends in mortality and oiling in seabirds. Seventeen BNHS members participated in the February 2014 Survey, walking a total of nearly 40 km of Bute's shoreline and contributing to the 1,900 km walked throughout the UK. Although no oiling incidents were reported, an unusually high number of dead seabirds was recorded - 13 Razorbill, 4 Guillemot and 1 Puffin. The RSPB advise that the constant stormy weather this winter and inability to feed as a result, is the factor behind this with the birds showing no oiling but being emaciated. It appears that the main 'wreck' of seabirds is off France with a lower number in the UK – figures in Cumbria are higher than in Scotland. Bill Stein would like to say 'thank you' to all the Volunteer observers.

### Deserted Building Survey

The survey has continued apace with two surveys completed and a third almost finished. We have done Ballianlay Old School, Ambrismore farm and are finalising Meikle Kilmory. As well as the survey work we continue to do a social history for each building. We have, unfortunately, not been blessed with good weather, particularly at Meikle Kilmory. Our grateful thanks go to those stalwarts who have regularly attended to help with the survey.

As always we welcome interest from any of our members, whether an indoors contribution on the social history of the buildings or outdoor activities at the sites.

Please contact Isabell McArthur (Email or phone 831643) or Paul Duffy (503351) if you would like to join us.

## Refurbishment of the Museum

As many of you will know, we have had a succession of leaks in the roof of the Museum. These leaks are often difficult to trace and repair. Escalating fuel prices are also a major headache. The Museum, built in the 1920s, is not insulated, but adding insulation to a leak-prone roof is not a realistic option. As a result, the Museum Trustees have concluded that a major refurbishment is needed to make the Museum building fit for the next ninety years. As any repair of this scale will require more money than the Trustees would be able to raise from standard means, and involve major works, the Trustees are hoping to obtain a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF). Two issues, (i) the level of disruption inevitable if the roof has to undergo major work (ii) the requirement by HLF that their investment will result in substantial benefit to the community, have led the Trustees to consider a rather more ambitious project than merely repairing the roof. HLF has agreed that the project falls within their remit, and the Museum Trustees hope to submit a 'stage one' bid quite soon. If this is successful, money will be awarded to work up the main 'stage two' bid. News of progress will be reported via the newsletters, at meetings, and once appropriate by information displayed at the Museum.

It is hoped that the works will include creating improved work space and storage areas upstairs. To do this it is proposed to extend the currently small upstairs area (above the lobby and office) to the full depth of the building above the existing library. This will leave the frontage of the building unchanged. There will be proper fire escapes from the upstairs area and from the galleries, a small lift to the upper floor, and toilet facilities more in keeping with a modern semi-public building. Both the Trustees and the architect with whom we have been consulting are very conscious that the Museum is housed in a beautiful, heritage-rich building and that people love the traditional feel of the Museum. We all feel that these things are worth protecting and preserving. The front lobby area will be essentially unchanged, except that the wooden panelling, doors and stairway will be repaired and refurbished to its original design.

## Summer Programme of Events

### **Bird group trips**

Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> May: Tay Reed Beds, Perth / Vane Farm, Loch Leven, Leader Ron Forrester. Meet for 8am ferry

Friday 6<sup>th</sup> June to Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> June: Lancashire RSPB reserve at Leighton Moss and Cumbria RSPB reserve at Hodbarrow. Leader Doug Menzies. Meet for 8am ferry.

### **General Natural History**

Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> June: Joint walk with the Glasgow branch of the Scottish Wildlife Trust. Meet our guests at Rothesay Pier at 10.50. Car space for transporting everyone down to Kilchattan would be useful. Contact Glyn who will be co-ordinating the groups. (504429)

Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> June: Geology Walk with Stuart Redwood. Meet at the Museum at 11am to rationalise car sharing. Please contact Glyn (504429) if you are interested in going so you can be informed of any last minute changes.

Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> July: National Moth Night. Bute Forest Work area from 9am. Contact Glyn for more information (504429)

Any further activities arranged after this newsletter has been printed will be advertised in the Museum & on the website [www.butemuseum.org.uk](http://www.butemuseum.org.uk)