

As we look forward to a summer full of activities and hopefully, good weather we can look back at the last winter with some relief. The cost of living crisis has hit everyone and the BM&NHS is no exception. Our fuel bills have escalated to a horrifying extent. We were customers of one of the many companies that went to the wall last year so our annual fuel bill for 2022 was more than two and a half times greater than that of 2021, a situation which will only increase in 2023 as we face a full year of higher prices. If it had not been for a generous boost to our funds from Bute Victoriana, the group responsible for the refurbishment and running of the Victorian toilets we would have been in serious deficit. It has meant we have needed to increase both visitor entrance fees and membership fees this year. We had, through prudent management on behalf of Ron Forrester and latterly Neil Owen, our Treasurers, been able to maintain membership fees at £20 for over a decade. The AGM voted to support a motion to increase membership to the Society from 1<sup>st</sup> October 2023 to £30 per year. Thus, we need to ask those members who pay by standing order or bank transfer to change their instructions to their bank to the new amount. To that end there is attached to the newsletter a new standing order form which you can use for this purpose. Even at £30 membership still offers great value for money as it includes a wide range of meetings, events and special interest groups as well as free access to the Museum and use of the Library and archive. We have also been fortunate over the years that many people remember us in their wills, leaving us funds that we can use for a range of expenses. With an aging building repair bills seem to arrive with increasing regularity and there are new items to be added to the collections, conservation work on artefacts and all the normal running costs

The Museum was built in 1926 at a time when the new 'wonder material' of concrete was seen as a solution to so many building plans. Most of us will be familiar with some of the negative consequences for the Pavilion but we share the same type of legacy and it has produced a particular issue for us. You may be aware that for many years we have had repeated damp patched and leaks affecting the walls between the galleries and the library in particular. Investigations and repairs would be made and solve the problem for a while but then the problem would re-emerge. We think we have at last discovered the underlying problem. We are all familiar with the use of lead flashing to seal joints and gullies on roofs, on our beloved Museum building these 'skews' are concrete. Concrete has two problems compared to lead, it does not flex as buildings move so eventually it starts to crack and as it ages it becomes more moisture absorbent. We now need to replace the skews with lead, a job that will be undertaken in the near future. As the job is a repair we cannot access any grants from Museums Galleries Scotland and will need to fund this ourselves.

### **Friends of Bute Museum**

This year the 'Friends' are ten years old. Some may be unaware of the Friends. It was set up initially as an affiliated organisation to support the Museum, but when the Society and Museum re-amalgamated the Friends was also brought into the fold. The Friends is a means of raising extra revenue for the Museum. Membership, paid annually, is a minimum (there is no maximum!). There is a social gathering each year and usually at that meeting Friends will get an opportunity to see artefacts or other items that the Friends have paid for over the previous year. In recent times the Friends fund has paid for new diffusers in the galleries improving the lighting in the display cases. If you have not been into the Natural History Gallery in recent times you may not be aware we now have a beautifully restored relief map of the island thanks to Brian Large who

did the work and the Friends who paid for the materials. It is once more a joy to behold. If you are not already a member of the Friends do seriously consider this very simple way of supporting our Museum.





The Friends has helped fund the purchase of Treasure Trove items found on the island

### **Botanical group**

The group started last spring as the Florilegium Group has broadened its perspective and is now a botanical group. The group meet regularly on Tuesday afternoons in the Museum over the spring, summer and autumn. More information about the group from Anne Bissell (Tel: 831019)

### **Red squirrel project**

The red squirrel project group have been monitoring the island to discover the presence/absence of red squirrels. Up to date information plus photographs can be found on the Museum website. We clearly do have a small population on the island.

### **Bird group**

The bird group continues to thrive and is holding an open invitation to people, both members and non-members who may enjoy a gentle introduction to bird watching. On Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> April there will be an opportunity to spend some time at Ettrick Bay and Drumacloy Burn where experienced birders along with a gazebo and 'scopes will be on hand to help. The area will have people available from 10am till 2pm so feel able to drop by if you can. Malcolm Newdick is co-ordinating the day (07768874214). See the list of summer events at the end of the newsletter for the full summer programme.

### **Mothing**

The regular moth trapping events are starting up again, if you fancy learning a bit more about moths come along to one of the morning sessions where light traps are opened and moths identified. Call Ron Forrester for more information and dates (505352). As good mothing nights are very weather dependent decisions on dates tend to be made at quite short notice. However, there is usually at least one morning per month when traps are inspected at Mount Stuart.

### **Archaeology group**

Work on the deserted farmsteads is likely to restart in the near future as there are a number of buildings that can be surveyed. The third volume of the ACFA survey of the coast of Bute has now been printed and is for sale in the Museum shop. Work on the surveying of the fourth and final section will be undertaken this spring. Sue Hothersall is also undertaking survey and research work to create a new trail, on early Christian sites on the island.

### **Help required**

As was explained at the AGM by our retiring President, Anne Bissell the organisation belongs to our members and without the volunteering roles fulfilled by so many people the Museum and Natural History

Society would not be able to function. Every event and activity is organised and run by volunteers. Importantly, we are always in need of more volunteers to help with everything we do, Could you help? There are specific areas where help is particularly required, however getting involved in any aspects of the activities is always welcomed.



Volunteer door duty. In the summer months (April to September) we are open seven days a week and although we do employ a custodian, Eugene, he like anyone does not work every day and does get holidays. Every week we require cover for Sunday afternoons (1.30 to 3.30pm), Mondays (morning from 10.30 am to 1pm and afternoon 1pm till 3.30pm). Eugene tends to have his days off on Fridays, Saturdays and Tuesdays. Can you help with any of these duties? The full list is kept in the office at the Museum and it would be wonderful if you could sign up and volunteer for a session or two. Please help if you can. If you are unsure what is involved either pop into the Museum and talk to Eugene, or call Dawn on 504429 to find out more. The Museum shop pictured above is a valuable source of income to the Museum, so beside helping out with covering the opening hours encourage everyone you know to buy gifts from our display.

We are still looking to recruit people to help with aspects of running the Society and Museum. If you would be willing to help please call Dawn to discuss where you may enjoy helping out.

### **Bird Group Summer programme of events**

**22nd April;** Open day - Ettrick Bay - leader - Malcolm Newdick (07768874214) 10am - 2pm

The plan is to combine a few hours birding at Ettrick Bay and Drumacloy Burn with a gazebo and scopes near the tearoom.

**15th - 18th May;** Lancashire summer trip - leader - Ray Eddie (07742023266)

Three night trip to the Lancashire area visiting Leighton Moss RSPB, Martin Mere Wetland Centre and other nature reserves. Staying first night in Country Lodge & Brasserie, Cranford then other nights in Red Lion Inn, Rufford. If interested please contact Ray for more details ASAP as rooms are limited.

**10th June;** Loch Lomond RSPB Reserve leader Ron Forrester (07773470324) meet at harbour for 8am ferry

Our visit to Loch Lomond reserve will include a guided walk with assistant warden Kay. There will be a charge of £5.50 for RSPB members (£6.50 for non members)

**5th July;** Hunting for night jars - leader - Liz McKirdy (07484836221) meeting at 8pm Guildford square

We will spend an evening listening for the distinctive 'churring' call of Night Jars at dusk. We will also have the use of the new thermal camera.

**26th August;** Barons Haugh and Gartcosh Lochs - leader - Ray Eddie (07742023266) meeting at Guildford Square at 10am

Barons Haugh's reserve is primarily made up of different wetland habitats with star species Kingfisher and Gadwall

*With the exception of the Open Day please contact the leader in advance to ensure you have all information and car sharing can be organised.*

### **Natural History Society Summer Events -2023**

Covid is not yet a thing of the past, but we'll try to keep the summer programme as informal as possible. Therefore it is no longer essential to pre-book places at our summer outdoor events, although you may wish to contact the leader in advance to check that there are no unforeseen last-minute changes to the planned activity. For the Commonwealth War Graves and Geology walks, just turn up at the arranged time, ready to start promptly.

#### **Tuesday 27<sup>th</sup> June 2023**

#### **Wild Flowers**

An afternoon walk from Ballianlay Hall to St Ninian's Bay and Point. Meet at Ballianlay Hall Car Park at 14.00. Leader Angus Hannah (504023).

#### **Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> July 2023**

#### **Commonwealth War Graves**

Meet outside St Mary's Chapel (The United Church of Bute), High Street, Rothesay at 14.00.

Terry Wright (a speaker and tour guide for Commonwealth War Graves Commission) will accompany members for a walk around the War Graves lasting 45-60 minutes, when he will discuss an interesting selection of those buried in the cemetery who have fantastic stories.

#### **Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> July 2023**

#### **Archaeology**

A morning walk to Bicker's House, a Neolithic burial cairn on the moor above Scalpsie, combined with a look at a section of Thom's cuts, the system of small canals devised by Robert Thom to bring water power to Rothesay cotton Mills. Meet at upper Scalpsie Car Park (by 'Seal View' watchpoint) at 10.00. Leader Sue Hothersall (503835).

#### **Saturday 15th July 2023**

#### **Wild Flowers**

A morning walk at the 'Wee Bay' to see wild flowers. Meet at the grass parking area (NS098556) just before reaching Kilchattan Bay village at 10.00. Leader Roger Connard (500390).

#### **Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> July 2023**

#### **Moth morning**

At Rhoda House, Hydro Road, Port Bannatyne (courtesy of Patrick and Janet O'Sullivan) at 10.00 when overnight traps will be opened. Leader Ron Forrester (505352).

#### **Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2023**

#### **Geology walk**

A morning walk from Scalpsie to Ardsalpsie Point lasting c.4 hours. Meet outside Bute Museum at 09.00 to share cars. Walk (grade 2) on a rocky shore and cobble beach. This shore walk is along the Highland Boundary Fault, where we will see a variety of metamorphic, sedimentary and igneous rocks, as well as raised beaches, old cliffs and an old sea stack. Leader Stewart Redwood.

#### **Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2023**

#### **Geology and history walk**

An easy morning walk in Rothesay, which lies on the Highland Boundary Fault, lasting 2 to 3 hours. We'll be looking at the geology and see how this has influenced the development of the town, from its layout, to the stone used for its buildings. Start outside Bute Museum at 10.00. Leader Stewart Redwood.

#### **Saturday 9th September 2023**

#### **Archaeology**

A morning's archaeology walk with Sue Hothersall. Details to be arranged. Leader Sue Hothersall (503835). Nearer the time, please contact Sue for details.