

As autumn advances around us we can look back at a busy summer for the Society and forward to a full programme of events and activities for the coming seasons. It has been a busy summer for the Museum and Society, book events, a film, field meetings and more were held in the Museum. Although the Museum no longer hosts Bute Noir events, Anne Speirs, our History Curator is still heavily involved and the Museum is still used as a co-ordination hub for the event.

The film made about the life of Sir William MacEwan, "The Boy from Bute" was shown in the Museum. It is hoped to show this again over the winter months for members who would like to see the film but were not able to come to its first showing. Angus Hannah's book on the Flora of Bute saw him awarded the President's Medal of the BSBI a few years ago. We launched his new book on Scottish Brambles in the summer. In addition in the summer the most recent volume of the Transactions was published. If you have not yet received a copy and would like one you can collect from the Museum when it is open or at a Society meeting night. If you wish to receive one but cannot get to the Museum we are happy to post or deliver one to you. Let us know and we will organise it for you. (Call Dawn on 504429 or email her, dawncollis@hotmail.com)



Angus Hannah with his book on Scottish brambles



IBAC weekend in the Museum Library

In July the Museum Library hosted three artists for the Open Studios weekend (IBAC). This was the second year of this venture and is clearly successful. We have free entry for the weekend to encourage more visitors.

Some of our members may recall that for a number of years we had organised visits from coach tour holiday makers. In the last two to three years we have started welcoming tour groups from cruise ships, an interesting change in holiday style.

Upcoming events and activities

There will be a book event in the Museum on Wednesday 29th October at 7 o'clock when Amy Gray will talk about her book 'Red Duchess: Kitty Atholl. A Rebel in Westminster'. This is the story of the first Scottish woman MP and first Conservative woman minister. Tickets are priced at £5 and all proceeds go to the Museum.

We now have a very smart Bute Museum banner to take with us when we are out and about at events. The banner was gifted to us by Bute Signs and Graphics and we are also indebted to Brain Large who designed it for us.

We are very busy with school visits, with children from North Bute and St Andrews benefiting from not only the collection that is on show to the public but also the items from the reserve collection. They have been studying Victorian school life and Victorian technology. We have also had home-schooled children who were finding out about the Victorian tourist industry.



The Bute Noir team



Polished stones and fossils available in the Museum shop

The Museum funds got a significant boost with a donation from Bute Noir in recognition of the hard work put in by the Museum Team of Anne, Jean, Isabel and Colin. There will also be a donation from a film company in recognition of the long hours put in by the volunteers from the Bird Group (with a few other Museum people) acting as Extras posing as birdwatchers for the short film 'The List'.

Please remember the Museum Shop when buying gifts. The range is always changing and fossils are our current number one seller. Anne will be happy to allow members to purchase items at the evening meetings if they are unable to visit the shop at any other time.

New membership year and winter programmes

A reminder to everyone that the new membership year starts on 1st October, while many members now pay by Standing Order, some prefer to pay by cash or cheque. Membership is £30 and can be paid at the Museum either when it is open, at an evening meeting or by putting your remittance in an envelope, along with your details and popped through the letterbox. Do remember that as of the 1st October the Museum moves to its winter opening hours, that is, Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays from 1.30pm until 3.30pm. There is one exception as we are opening the Museum on Sunday 19th October for the final cruise of the year for the Waverley.

Card copies of the syllabus card giving information on the winter lecture programme for both the main programme and the Bird Group indoor programme will be available from Wednesday 24th September from the Museum. To whet your appetite the details are listed here. We look forward to seeing you there.

BMNHS Lecture Programme 2025-2026

2025

- 7th October Stuart Nisbet, local historian: 'From the Clyde to the Caribbean'
- 21st October Scott McFie, University of Glasgow: 'The Bute Agricultural Society, the Early Years 1806-1850'
- 4th November Sophie Shields and Michael Amos, Clyde Dolphin and Cetacean Group: 'Cetaceans of the Clyde'
- 18th November Helen Spenser, Head of Research, Society of Antiquaries of Scotland: 'Archaeological Research in Argyll and Bute'
- 2nd December Paul Unwin, Bute Museum Natural History Curator: Biodiversity monitoring on Bute

2026

- 6th January tbc (possible talk on excavation at Creag Liath, Kilfinan)
- 20th January Rebecca Synott, South-Eastern Technical University in Ireland, and Malcolm Newdick: 'Getting DNA from Bute's red squirrels'
- 3rd February 'Lucy Lapwing', naturalist and broadcaster: The BIG drama of little lives of Bute: Stories of the tiny life under our noses
- 17th February Harriet Tatton, DigVentures: 'The work of Dig Ventures in Cowal and the west of Scotland'
- 3rd March Leif Bersweden, naturalist and author: Couch to 10 Mosses: Bringing Bute's bryophytes to life
- 17th March Annual General Meeting followed by the Annual Social Event



Bird Group Lecture Programme

2025

- 14th October Malcolm Newdick: My Favourite Bute Bird - an audience participation evening. Audience members can name their favourite Bute bird and say why. Our panel of local bird experts will discuss the bird, adding their thoughts and knowledge. With some nibbles.
- 11th November Paul Unwin: Owl pellet dissection – a fascinating, microscopic delve into an owl's diet.
- 9th December Ray and Jackie Eddie: A review of 12 highlights of the year. The audience are encouraged to participate again, providing their own particular highlights. Wine and cheese too.

2026

13th January Malcolm Newdick: Why do birds lay eggs?

10th February Ron Forrester, Ian Hopkins & Ray Eddie: A beginners guide to gull identification. Covering:

- The gulls regularly seen around Bute
- How to identify them in summer and winter
- Clues to help with immature birds

10th March AGM followed by a bird trivia quiz. Cheese, wine and nibbles. Chris Moss



Bird Group Field meetings Please check with Organiser for details if you intend to attend an outing so that car sharing and final arrangements can be co-ordinated.

2025

18th October Bute – finding our favourite birds. A follow on from some of the birds discussed at the talk on the 14th Oct Organiser Malcolm Newdick

17th-20th Nov 4 day/3 night winter trip to Islay. Accommodation and ferries to be confirmed. Organiser Ron Forrester

6th December Bays of Bute – Bird spotting round the island's bays. We hope to incorporate a beach clean, and finish with a coffee/lunch afterwards. Organiser Jackie Eddie

2026

10th January Bird race – our annual, hotly competed bird finding race. Teams will have 3 hours to find as many species as they can. Organiser Chris Moss

21st February Bute – Looking for our winter gulls. A chance to practise gull ID following on from our talk on the 10th Feb. Organiser Ron Forrester

21st March Gigha trip – with the option of either a day trip on the 21st, or staying overnight and coming back on the 22nd. Organiser Ron Forrester

15th April Loch Winnoch, Castle Semple and Barr Lochs Organiser Ray Eddie