

# GLASGOW NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

November 2023

David Palmar  
(Newsletter Editor)

Next Newsletter Deadline  
10 January 2024

GNHS is a Registered Scottish  
Charity Web-site:  
[www.gnhs.org.uk](http://www.gnhs.org.uk)

## GNHS Talks Programme, Winter 2023-24

**Roger Downie**

Our talks programme for November to March will all be in-person presentations either in the Boyd Orr Building Lecture Room C or the Graham Kerr Building, University of Glasgow. Most talks will be on the second Tuesday evening of the month at 7pm, as usual, but watch out for a few irregular dates and times. Talk abstracts will be circulated later by email.

### November

**Wednesday 1st:** Graham Kerr Building at 5pm: the annual BLB lecture: Prof Helen Roy: 'Documenting and predicting biological invasions globally'. Jointly with staff and students of the University's School of Biodiversity.

Helen Roy MBE is an eminent entomologist and ecologist active in the effort to control biological invasions.

**Tuesday 14th:** Boyd Orr Building, 7pm: Keith Watson and Michael Philip: 'The flora of the Clyde area: past, present and future'.

GNHS was heavily involved in the huge botanical recording effort that led to the publication of *The Changing Flora of Glasgow* (2000). Keith Watson was part of the team for that work, and with Michael Philip, will update us on what has happened to the local flora since then.

**Thursday 16th:** Boyd Orr Building at 7.30pm: Laura Gusberti of the Woodland Trust: 'The Atlantic rainforest'. Jointly with Friends of Glasgow Botanic Gardens and the Glasgow Tree Lovers Society.

The many fans of Guy Shrubsole's best-selling book on the *Lost Rainforests of Britain* will be especially interested in this talk.

### December

**Tuesday 5th:** Graham Kerr Building at 7pm: Roger Downie: 'Sir John Graham Kerr and the flourishing of Glasgow zoology'. This is a special lecture to celebrate the centenary of the opening of the Graham Kerr (Zoology) building. Jointly with staff and students of the School of Biodiversity.

John Graham Kerr was Regius Professor of Natural History (soon re-badged as Zoology) at the University of Glasgow from 1902-1935, then progressed to being MP for the Scottish Universities until 1950. His early life included two hazardous expeditions to the wildernesses of Argentina; at Glasgow, he was responsible for the construction of the Zoology building and his ideas determined many of its features. This lecture will give an overview of his life and assess his contributions to zoology at Glasgow.

**Tuesday 12th:** Christmas Social: see below

**Some of the following events are coming up soon and need to be booked, so to avoid disappointment, please do so before the deadlines.**

## **Events from GNHS Members and Friends**

### **TWIC/BRISC Conference, Stirling**

**Natalie Harmsworth**

Bookings are now open for the TWIC/BRISC Autumn Conference on 11/12 November! **To finalise catering arrangements, bookings close at the end of 3<sup>rd</sup> November.**

Join us on Saturday 11 November 2023, 10:00 – 16:00, at Stirling High School, Stirling for a full and diverse programme of talks, a chance to catch up with friends and meet new people in the recording community. This year's event will be a joint conference with our friends at BRISC  
<https://www.bris.org.uk/conferences>

Talks will centre round how we go about attracting and supporting new recorders, including younger naturalists, and the role that technology can play. The event will also host TWIC's AGM and the presentation of the Bob Saville Award. We'd welcome contributions of displays, posters and/or short 5 mins talks during the 'open mike' session. If any of these options are of interest, please provide details on the booking form.

On Sunday 12 November delegates will have the opportunity to participate in field meetings in the local Stirling area. Details are to be confirmed, but please register your interest to attend a field meeting on the booking form so we can gauge interest (we won't hold you to your choice!). Sign-up sheets for outings will be available on the Saturday.

The cost is £17 (students £11), including teas/coffees and a buffet lunch. **Booking is essential** via Eventbrite (see conferences link above), where you will find further details including the programme of talks.

**Anyone interested in wildlife recording and conservation in Scotland is welcome to attend.** Please pass on the details to anyone you think would be interested in attending.

## **NBN Conference**

**Richard Weddle**

The annual NBN Conference is on Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> November at the National Museum of Scotland in Edinburgh, on the theme of "Making data work for nature". The cost is £75 for a member of the NBN Trust, £105 for non-members or £45 for students.

**Please book by 3<sup>rd</sup> November** to ensure that your badge is printed and your dietary requirements are met.

For details see <https://nbn.org.uk/news-events-publications/nbn-conference-2/nbn-conference-2023/>

## **Christmas Social - Dinner in the Botany**

**Pat Thomson**

**Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> December 2023 at 7pm**

As we have previously enjoyed our Christmas social event at the Botany restaurant, Maryhill Road, I have now booked and paid a deposit for our social. The Menu is similar to last year, and the price has gone up by £4 to £34 for the 3 courses.

### **Starters**

Lightly spiced parsnip soup  
Gravadlax of salmon with dill  
Smooth parfait of chicken livers with red onion chutney  
Brie and cranberry tart

### **Main Course**

Roast turkey with roast potatoes and traditional trimmings  
Pan fried hake on crushed minted potatoes with tarragon cream  
Breast of chicken with Stornoway black pudding mash  
Spinach, red pepper and pine nut gnocchi

### **Dessert**

Christmas Pudding with brandy butter  
Vanilla crème brûlée with biscotti  
Warm soft chocolate cake with ice cream and chocolate sauce  
Vanilla ice cream with raspberry sauce.

Can anyone wishing to attend please contact me, Pat Thomson, **before 5th December**. This is to collect numbers, and could those wishing to attend please give menu choices.

For payment for the meal, can you send a cheque or arrange a bank transfer to Richard Weddle. Please can you pay at the same time as you book and either send a cheque for £34 payable to GNHS to Richard Weddle at 89 Novar Drive (1/2), Glasgow G12 9SS or please email Richard if you need bank details on [info@gnhs.org.uk](mailto:info@gnhs.org.uk).

## **New Year Plant Hunt**

**James Harding-Morris, BSBI**

BSBI is looking ahead to our winter citizen science initiative - the New Year Plant Hunt.

The New Year Plant Hunt is a remarkable citizen science venture that unveils winter's floral secrets and sheds light on climate change. Warmer winters may be changing the flowering times of plants but BSBI needs your help to track this.

Perhaps surprisingly, many plants are still flowering in midwinter, with nearly 500 different species recorded during last year's Hunt. Many of these are widespread, common and easy to identify, but we will provide a handy spotter sheet to help everyone, including total beginners, recognise the top 20 species recorded in previous years.

It's easy to take part. During the four days around New Year, 30th December - 2nd January, take a leisurely walk outdoors, noting wild flowers in bloom. Submit your finds via our online form and you'll be contributing to vital climate research.

Embrace winter's beauty, learn more about our wonderful wildflowers and make a difference by participating in the New Year Plant Hunt. Start 2024 by joining the journey to uncover nature's response to our changing world. Register now at <https://bsbi.org/new-year-plant-hunt>

James Harding-Morris, BSBI Countries Support Manager

## **Darwin's Earthworms**

**Richard Weddle**

Online talk (free) by Kerry Calloway of The Biological Recording Company at 7pm on 12<sup>th</sup> February 2024, to coincide with International Darwin Day.

To book, see the following link:

[www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/darwins-earthworms-a-groundbreaking-piece-of-soil-ecology-tickets-734547971757](http://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/darwins-earthworms-a-groundbreaking-piece-of-soil-ecology-tickets-734547971757)

## **Talks Programme Winter-Spring 2024 January**

**Roger Downie**

**Tuesday 9th:** Boyd Orr Building at 7pm: Suzanne Livingstone: 'Offsetting biodiversity losses: can we mitigate the damage from major developments in biodiverse countries?'

### **February**

**Tuesday 13th:** Boyd Orr Building at 7pm: Photographic Night.

### **March**

**Tuesday 12th:** Boyd Orr Building at 7pm: Heather Ferguson: 'Mosquito vectors of avian diseases in Scotland' followed by the Society's AGM.

## **2024 Subscriptions**

**Richard Weddle**

Subscriptions fall due on January 1<sup>st</sup> 2024 (except for those who have joined since September 2023). Members who pay by standing order need take no action; others will receive a subscription renewal form either as an email attachment or in the envelope containing this newsletter.

## **GNHS & BRISC Bursaries**

**Richard Weddle**

Since 2009, BRISC (Biological Recording in Scotland) and GNHS have been offering bursaries towards attending a training course in natural history field studies.

These bursaries are open to anyone living in Scotland who wants to improve their skills and contribute to biological recording.

From 2024 we are pleased to be able to offer bursaries of up to £400, up to £100 of which can go towards transport costs, to make it easier to attend courses, particularly those outwith Scotland.

The closing date for applications is January 31st 2024.

An application form and full details of the bursaries on offer can be found at [www.bris.org.uk/bursaries](http://www.bris.org.uk/bursaries).

The bursaries are not restricted to GNHS members, so please feel free to forward this information to anyone you think may be interested.

## **Updated Constitution**

**Alison Park**

We are pleased to announce that our review of the GNHS constitution has now been completed, and the current version is available on our website here:

[http://www.glasgownaturalhistory.org.uk/documents/GNHS Constitution May 2023.pdf](http://www.glasgownaturalhistory.org.uk/documents/GNHS%20Constitution%20May%2023.pdf)

In short, the new constitution updates and clarifies many aspects of the 2014 version, but there has also been some expansion and addition of several clauses. Apart from spelling and grammatical corrections, all proposed amendments were communicated to members as motions for AGMs in 2022 and 2023. Updated areas include the following: membership (categories, voting and termination), trustee roles and responsibilities, online banking, investment strategy, accounts verification, AGM reporting, provision for holding meetings and voting online, and approval of variations to subscription rates.

At this point Council considers that our constitution should stand for the time being but as stated in Section XVII constitutional changes may be considered at an AGM. We encourage members to read through the current constitution and let us know if they feel there are any points that may require further consideration for revision.



## Prestigious Awards for GNHS Members - Iain Wilkie and Alison Park

The Society for the History of Natural History (SHNH) promotes research on the history and bibliography of natural history in all periods and all cultures. Founders' Medals are awarded on the nomination of the SHNH Council to individuals eminent in this field of research who have a sustained record of high-quality publications in the field and have made a sustained contribution to dissemination of the history of natural history through practice or curation.

Of late, two GNHS members have received this prestigious award. We send our congratulations to both award winners.



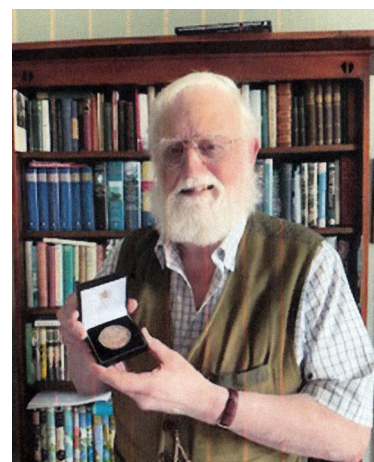
Geoff Hancock

Geoff Hancock (E. Geoffrey Hancock) was awarded the SHNH Founders' Medal in 2021. The awarding panel highly rated his wide-ranging publication list of over 220 papers at least 48 of which directly concerned the history of natural history. He is the former Curator of Entomology at The Hunterian in Glasgow and is now an Honorary Research Fellow there. The SHNH website refers to him as a 'compleat naturalist' - a generalist and a specialist with an outstanding knowledge of zoology, botany and geology. His work on the history of entomology is foundational, having inspired many of the current practitioners in the field.

Much of his published work arose from William Hunter's 18<sup>th</sup> century collections, especially the historic insect specimens. His meticulous skills as a hands-on curator are also recognised in the award; he has made an enormous contribution to the physical preservation, data integrity and accessibility of The Hunterian's historic and contemporary collections, and has publicised these through his co-editing of the book *William Hunter's World – The Art and Science of Eighteenth-Century Collecting* (Routledge, 2018).

The 2023 SHNH Founders' Medal went to Geoff Moore (P. Geoffrey Moore), Emeritus Professor of Marine Biology at the University of London. His selection recognised an outstanding record of high-quality publications numbering over 260 papers including many on the history and bibliography of natural history.

Geoff was president of the SHNH from 2009 to 2012. Much of his career was based at the former University Marine Biological Station Millport (UMBSM) on the Isle of Cumbrae, Firth of Clyde, which inspired many of his publications on marine issues, including ecology, taxonomy, pollution and conservation.



Geoff Moore

Since his main professional interests were related to fisheries and marine ecology, he is particularly knowledgeable about the history of work on marine natural history in waters around Great Britain. He has been especially interested in those

naturalists who have been notable for teaching and writing and the institutions to which they belonged and, by extension, in broadcasters, writers and illustrators of popular natural histories.

GNHS members will also be aware that both Geoff Hancock and Geoff Moore have contributed many articles to *The Glasgow Naturalist*.

*Further detail on awards made to Geoff Moore and Geoff Hancock - see here:*  
<https://shnh.org.uk/awards-honours-medals/founders-medal/>

## **BLB Grant Awards in 2023**

## **Alison Park and Su Futter**

Investment income earned from the Blodwen Lloyd Binns Bequest enables GNHS to provide funding to members (including members of GU ZooSoc) to support projects that have a direct benefit for natural history in Scotland, and to some extent further afield. After careful consideration of grant applications received earlier in 2023, GNHS Council has awarded funds towards the following projects:

- Community biodiversity surveys at Malls Mire LNR, Glasgow
- Student expedition to Egypt exploring marine biodiversity topics.
- Student expedition to 'Remote Scotland' exploring otters, bees, birds and dogwhelks.
- Student expedition to Thailand exploring biodiversity of coral reefs.
- Student expedition to Iceland exploring local geomorphology and populations of seabirds, arctic fox and mink.
- Student expedition to Trinidad looking at bats, snakes, coral and the motmot (bird).
- Student research into coral degradation by the crown-of-thorns starfish in the Philippines.
- Student research on microbiomes of lichens in west Scotland woodland.
- Provision of public viewing opportunities for the Glasgow Peregrine project.
- GNHS Herpetology Conference 2023 for event and publication of proceedings.
- Celebration of centenary of Graham Kerr Building for event and publication.
- Trialling nanopore sequencing to assess health issues of Scottish marine mammals from stranded animals.

The executive of Blodwen Lloyd Binns Bequest Council met most recently on 12th Sept 2023. Following this meeting we are pleased to confirm that grants have been awarded for two local projects as noted below.

- Gill Smart in association with the Scottish Wildlife Trust: Habitat Improvements at Shewalton Wood Wildlife reserve – Can GPS cow collars be used to create wood pasture on busy urban wildlife reserves.

- Nicole Digruber: Assessment of impact of dogs on biodiversity of ponds.

The above list covers a wide range of themes all with significant natural history interest and, in most cases, elements of relevance to nature conservation objectives. Do look out for updates on the progress of these projects in upcoming GNHS Newsletters, *The Glasgow Naturalist* and presentations during our winter talks programme.

The next round of awards will take place in February and applications should be submitted for consideration by 15<sup>th</sup> January 2024. Please see the GNHS website for the application form and eligibility criteria.



Cows at Shewalton, by  
Gill Smart

## Articles received following awards of BLB Grants

### Identifying dragonfly larvae and exuviae

**Emma Plant**

On the 24<sup>th</sup> of September I went down to FSC Preston Montford, Shrewsbury, to take the identifying dragonfly larvae and exuviae course. I am grateful to a BRISC/ GNHS bursary for allowing me the opportunity to go on the course, which was very interesting and informative.

The course started with some background information on the ecology and life cycle of dragonflies, which is essential information when it comes to going out into the field to look for adult dragonflies, pond dipping for larvae or collecting exuviae specimens. I learnt that some dragonfly larvae can take up to 7 years to develop into the adult stage, particularly when inhabiting cold water.

After the introduction, we turned our attention to identifying exuviae using microscopes. When surveying for dragonflies and damselflies, exuviae are considered the best evidence of breeding at a site as they indicate that the eggs laid by females have matured through the larval stages and successfully emerged as adults.

To get our eye into identification using Steve Cham's field guide, we each started with mystery exuviae.

Firstly, the exuviae are matched to silhouettes which narrow down the number of species it could be. For example, Hawkers have longer abdomens than Darters and while Emeralds have a similar body shape to Darters, their legs extend well beyond the abdomen.



Southern Hawker  
larva found while  
pond dipping, by  
Emma Plant



After the first exuviae were identified as a Southern Hawker, we had 18 other mystery exuviae to identify including damselflies. The damselflies are easy to separate from dragonflies as they possess three caudal lamellae; however they are much more difficult to identify to species due to how small and delicate they are. Again, picture matching helped to narrow down the species of damselflies and particular attention was drawn to different banding patterns on the caudal lamellae as a good identification guide. Sometimes the caudal lamellae can be missing as a result of escaping predation, adding to the difficulty of damselfly identification.

After lunch, we headed into the field for some pond dipping to practise identifying larvae. This proved to be much trickier than the exuviae; as live animals they did not sit perfectly still to get our hand lenses in place! On top of this, the larvae go through different instars (growth stages); it is only in the latter instars that larvae can be easily identified. In fact, some damselfly larvae are so similar that they have to be reared to adults to be confident of their species. Whilst out pond dipping, we looked for exuviae on the vegetation around the pond; this was like looking for a needle in a haystack!

Overall, the course was enjoyable and I'm excited to look for exuviae next spring with the skills that the course has provided me with. As part of my volunteering at the Hamiltonhill Claypits, I hope to share the knowledge with other volunteers and the local community by putting on pond dipping events in the future. Identifying the exuviae will also complement the DragonflyWatch, a citizen science project that I aim to carry out at the Claypits, as evidence of breeding dragonflies.

## **Identifying grasses in the Lake District**

### **Rochelle Kennedy**

In June this year, I was lucky to have the opportunity to attend a biological recording training day run by the Field Studies Council and funded by BRISC, as a part of their initiative to improve biological recording and awareness across Scotland. The course ran over two days in the Lake District at Blencathra Field Studies Centre and gave me an excellent foundation in identifying different species of grass.

But why would anyone be interested in identifying grass? There can't be that many grass species...

In fact, there are around 10,000 known species of grass across the world, and 160 different species found in the UK. This makes grass one of the most diverse and successful plant families. Grasses form the main dietary component of many wild and farmed mammals, as well as providing food and shelter for insects.



Blencathra landscape  
by Rochelle Kennedy

Grassland covers around two thirds of Scotland. However, the increase in intensive farming practices, such as fertilising and ploughing has led to a rapid reduction in the number of grassland species found in our pastures. Species-rich meadows are now one of the rarest habitats in the UK - see NatureScot website:

<https://www.nature.scot/landscapes-and-habitats/habitat-types/farmland-and-croftland/lowland-grassland>



Grass Field Notebook by Rochelle Kennedy

Widespread recording of plant species in our meadows by citizen scientists can help scientists better to understand the extent of biodiversity loss and can help governments to put in place effective schemes to increase biodiversity in our pastures. Unfortunately, grasses are a particularly difficult plant family to identify and are vastly under-recorded.

Attending a grass identification course gave me key skills needed to identify grasses.

Having an expert on hand to show us subtle

differences between grass species was far more helpful than trying to identify a species with the use of images from books. The course also gave me practice at using identification keys, a skill that is rarely taught to young people, but is essential for identifying grasses where no seed heads are present, such as in grazed meadows.

Over the last few weeks, I have been able to put these new skills into practice. As part of my PhD, I have been investigating whether regenerative grazing can help to improve biodiversity in pastures, with a particular focus on grassland moths. A key part of this research is to understand how grazing management and plant diversity can interact to affect species higher up the food chain such as insects. To answer these questions, I have been carrying out plant surveys in 26 pastures across Scotland, ranging from improved grasslands to semi-natural meadows. The records that I am collecting will not only help with my own research, but will also be submitted to national recording schemes, helping to build a better picture of grass species distribution in Scotland.



Identifying grasses in floodplain meadow by Rochelle Kennedy

## Book Received for review by GNHS

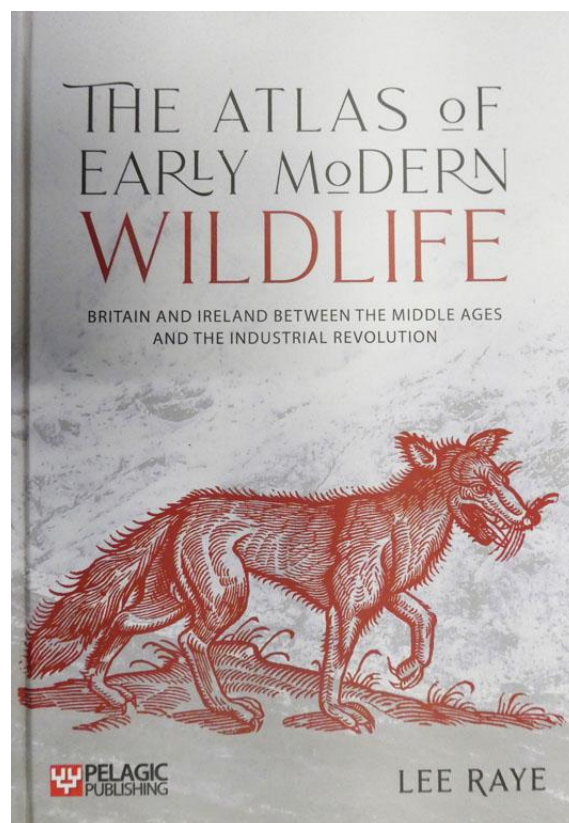
**Anthony Payne**

*"The Atlas of Early Modern Wildlife: Britain and Ireland between the Middle Ages and the Industrial Revolution"* by Lee Raye (2023) Pelagic Publishing. 408pp HB £45.00.

This unusual book examines the wildlife of the British Isles as reported in what is largely the pre-Linnean age (c. 1519-1774). It includes over 160 species based on over 10,000 records, many of which use local names (with varying reliability) in multiple languages from Gaelic to Cornish. It encompasses an age when beavers swam in the River Ness un-introduced, and wolves, lynx and wildcat generated hunting parties and not scientific conferences.

What people chose to record leans heavily towards things we ate or things which competed with human self-interest. Mammals are reasonably covered but there is nothing smaller than a rat; invertebrates are limited to edible molluscs, crustacea and starfish; birds include very few passerines; newts are lumped into a single species which includes lizards; fish do well. Each species has 2-3 pages devoted to it. Topics include its modern conservation status, how early naturalists spoke or wrote of it, its distribution and a map. There is an explanatory chapter at the beginning of the book and a short one at the end which looks at species which have increased or decreased since. The voluminous references occupy nearly 30 pages in small print.

It is hoped that a full review will appear in *The Glasgow Naturalist* in due course.



## Professor Alex Antonelli

## Richard Weddle

Following the excellent lecture on biodiversity in September by Professor Alex Antonelli, you may like to note the following:

The Life Scientific - Alex Antonelli on learning from nature's biodiversity to adapt to climate change - BBC Sounds

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/m001qm68>

**General Correspondence to the General Secretary Alison Park**



## Excursion Reports

### Ardmore Peninsula, 30th July 2023

Alison Moss

To my delight, 12 people turned up on a day when I seriously thought of calling off the excursion. We agreed to go round the Peninsula in an anti-clockwise direction, giving us protection from the blustery wind and the predicted downpours. This plan worked very well. We were able to take tree cover from the heavy shower and the sun shone for the rest of the day.

The tide was high and just turning when we arrived at the salt marsh and sandy bay. This bay is well protected and the birds were gathering in anticipation of a meal with the great expanse of sand, salt marsh and mud. The first excitement was spotting a Little Egret, *Egretta garzetta*, landing at the tide line. This was followed by 2 Ospreys, *Pandion haliaetus*, coming down to fish. They were surrounded quickly by gulls eager to hassle them for their catch. Many different bird species were seen to the continued delight of the keen bird watchers amongst us. I was cheered at the



Gypsywort by Pat Thomson



Small Copper  
by Pat Thomson

sight of a Linnet, *Carduelis cannabina*, no longer a common species. There were easily over 20 species of bird in the bay and surrounds. This theatre of birds went on for about an hour during which some of us were happy with the array of colourful salt marsh plants and visiting insects.

I was very grateful to Michael Philip who had sent me a complete plant list for the Peninsula. He and Angus Hannah had added to existing records in 2022, producing a list of 389 species of flowering plant and fern. This shows the huge diversity of habitat which is more or less one monad in area. It has mixed shoreline, mixed woodland, marshes and bogs, pathways, meadows and hedgerows, hence the variety of plants and associated invertebrates. Salt marsh highlights were Parsley Water-dropwort (*Oenanthe lachenanii*), and Sea Aster (*Aster tripolium*).

Gypsywort (*Lycopus europeaus*) has increased enormously with the upgrade of the circular path. The little sheltered patches just off the main paths and the path hedgerows were where the butterflies and other invertebrates were best observed.



Shaded Broad-bar  
by Pat Thomson

Pat Thomson's photos of Small Copper butterfly (*Lycaena phlaeas*), and Shaded Broad-bar moth (*Scotopteryx chenopodiata*), illustrate a few of the several moths and butterflies seen that day. Other observations included hoverflies, damselflies, a shield bug and ladybirds.

I was pleased to note the

beginning of the fungus season. We detected a Stinkhorn, but nobody found it despite the overwhelming odour. The bright red Waxcap, *Hygrocybe helobia* with its scruffy cap was far more endearing (photo) and nice, too, to see Blushers, *Amanita rubescens*, in the woodland edge.

A good time was had and much to be enjoyed and learned painlessly by all of us.



Hygrocybe helobia  
by Pat Thomson

## Balloch Castle Country Park - 8th Oct 2023

**Alison Moss**



Porcelain fungus  
by Pat Thomson

This was a joint excursion with the Clyde and Argyll Fungus Group led by Stan Campbell. After a deluge on Saturday 7th, it was good to see 14 people able to beat the floods and take part in the foray. Unfortunately, those planning to take the train to Balloch Station were unable to come, as no trains were running. We were well prepared and Stan had arranged with the West Dunbartonshire Council Ranger, Mary-Anne Collis, to make a lovely warm room available for our use.

We met at Balloch Castle upper car park and headed out along a woodland edge and mature trees, many oak, on the grassed area. Gill Smart very kindly did the recording for us with the help of Alfie, her dog. He had his waterproof coat on and had a slightly resigned look on his face. However, the rain had eased a lot and Gill made a great success of recording electronically instead of soggy note book.

We retreated for a nice, warm, dry lunch and then headed out in the opposite direction past more mature trees and shrubs, along the driveway to the top entrance.



Over 70 species were recorded, with everyone enthusiastically diving under bushes and into woodland edges. There has been a sad lack of mycorrhizal fungi this year and the grassland species have not been abundant yet either so this was a good number of species for the area covered. It included the Edible Bolete, (*Boletus edulis*), and the brilliantly coloured Scarletina Bolete, (*Boletus luridiformis*).

Pat photographed another interesting species, the Porcelain Fungus, (*Oudemansiella mucida*), (see photo) on a dead deciduous tree. I particularly enjoy when I walk into a recognisable fungus smell, and this I did when I was hit by a smell of aniseed and tracked, under a shrub, a cluster of about 20 Fragrant Funnels, (*Clitocybe fragrans*). Hen of the Woods, (*Grifola fondosa*), was another highlight and everyone enjoys finding Jelly Babies, (*Leotia lubrica*). The whole species list, tabulated by Gill, is available.

We will return to this site another time when the lower path is not under water! There is plenty more to see. Special thanks to Stan, Mary-Anne and Gill as well as all the hardy souls who made a damp day very productive and enjoyable.

## Excursions 2024

**Alison Moss**

I would welcome any ideas for 2024 excursions. Also, any willingness to lead an excursion would be appreciated.

I gather ideas for excursions up to the Christmas break and assemble dates, leaders, destinations and any fresh suggestions in time to submit to the newsletter editor David Palmar in mid March. The programme is tidied up by David and sent to the membership in the April newsletter.

Please give this some thought. Excursions were well enough attended, but it would good to interest as many people as possible with new ideas and suggestions.

## LNR Bioblitzes - September 2023

**Richard Weddle**

In the August newsletter there was an invitation from Nicole Digruber to join in a Bioblitz at Malls Mire with NatureScot staff; it ended up being just me and Nicole in addition to the NatureScot staff on that occasion; though there was also a further such event at Fernbrae Meadow LNR a few days later which was led by the local South Lanarkshire Ranger, Karen, with a mostly different NatureScot group, and myself again.

The NatureScot staff were from a team that had been administering improvement projects at a number of urban sites in the Central Belt, and even as far afield as Aberdeen, that had been part-funded by EU money, with the aim of improving accessibility to green-spaces particularly in 'deprived' areas. With the funding coming to an end, they were keen to see what had been achieved.



Sallow moth  
by Richard Weddle

Each day started with a tour of the site, followed by a picnic lunch, and a bioblitz in the afternoon. I don't need to describe the site tours as there are excellent accounts on-line in The Glasgow Naturalist 28 (1) as part of the proceedings of the Brownfield Conference. The Malls Mire bioblitz yielded about 24 species, mostly insects – rather disappointing, but this year has generally not been a good year for insect numbers, and September was particularly poor; the most interesting was a small black digger-wasp found by one of the NatureScot people which turned out to be *Crossocerus annulipes* – an under-recorded insect in Scotland. The main interest in the bioblitz at Fernbrae arose from pond-netting in the SuDS pond, and the highlights there were a large water-beetle (*Colymbetes fuscus*) and a Common Backswimmer (*Notonecta glauca*); elsewhere in the site we also disturbed an autumn moth, the Sallow (*Cirrhia icteritia*).

## **Natural History Museums Recording Resource Launch and Eurobioblitz - October 2023**

**Sarah-Jayne Dunn**

RSPB Scotland held a two-day nature event to celebrate the Europe wide wildlife recording event EuroBioBlitz and to launch the Natural History Museum London's Urban Nature Project resources and network. The long-term aim is that these resources will be a 'one stop shop' for people who want to monitor and improve outcomes for nature in urban areas.

As part of this event there were talks and practical activities aimed at interested individuals and members of community groups who want to learn more about wildlife ID and biological recording.

This event included a Bioblitz, a large-scale recording event aimed at taking a snapshot of all the species present at a site at a given time. This will be contributing to the study of Europe's wildlife, helping to shape conservation efforts and support scientific research. This took place on two sites with some of the talk attendees doing some recording in Kelvingrove Park and a more family friendly community BioBlitz at Claypits Local Nature reserve.

### **Objectives of the talks and demonstrations**

RSPB Scotland's *Giving Nature a Home Glasgow* team and Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum are the only Scottish partners in the UK wide Urban Nature Project, working with school children from P4-S3 examining the importance of nature in our towns and cities. Providing teaching resources, regional workshops and teacher professional development.

Talks and demonstrations were held in Kelvingrove Museum and included Introduction to the Urban Nature Project resources and Urban Nature Network from the NHM. This network will hopefully bring people interested in nature recording together and provide resources and guidance to increase



Museum talks by Colleen Turner



Bioblitzers in Kelvingrove Meadow by S-J Dunn

access to recording wildlife in an urban setting.

The Natural History Museum also provided some fascinating information about and some of the eDNA/acoustic monitoring techniques and how this can be used alongside traditional recording methods to record nature. This work highlighted many groups that are widely under recorded or even understood.

There were also talks from Glasgow Museums/Glasgow Natural History Society, Glasgow University GALLANT project and RSPB GNAHG. In these talks it was clear that there was a lot happening to record nature in Glasgow through individuals and projects. From GALLANT and RSPB the importance of wildlife corridors was highlighted and both talked about work to study and create more of these habitats.

The two day event included a range of activities in addition to the Bioblitz:

- Natural History Museum Urban Nature Project, and Nature Overheard project Introduction.
- Talks from Glasgow Museums/Glasgow Natural History Society, Glasgow University GALLANT project and RSPB GNAHG.
- Tour of Kelvingrove from Glasgow Museums.
- Bioblitz activities in Kelvingrove Park

### Claypits Bioblitz

- Stalls staffed by many conservation and wildlife organisations: RSPB Scotland, Froglife, The Conservation Volunteers, Glasgow Natural History Society, Friends of Hamiltonhill Local Nature Reserve and the Natural History Museum Urban Nature Team.



Guided bat walk with Graeme Wilson by Colleen Turner

There was also a guided bat walk by ecologist Graeme Wilson. Details of the NHM "Recording Urban Nature" project resources toolkit will appear in the January issue.

GNHS stall at the Eurobioblitz by Angela McCormick



## EuroBioblitz weekend, species

Though the above account focuses on the events at two locations in Glasgow, the EuroBioblitz itself was Europe-wide, in W Central Scotland it yielded 240 observations encompassing 186 species made by 34 observers, and including records from Girvan, Loch Ard and Bellshill (as an indication of the area covered). Restricting the counts to the immediate areas of the above two Glasgow locations gives 40 records (31 species) for Kelvingrove and 66 (56 species) for the Claypits; I'll focus only on these in the following remarks.



Water Forget-me-not  
by David Palmar

the less-welcome non-native Harlequin Ladybird (*Harmonia axyridis*).

There were no surprises among the plants: Giant Hogweed and Himalayan Balsam by the Kelvin (Sarah-Jayne Dunn), but it was nice to see Water Forget-me-not (*Myosotis scorpioides*) in the pond and Field Scabious (*Knautia arvensis*) in the wildflower area beside the car park.

## Richard Weddle



Nut Leaf Weevil (*Strophosoma melanogrammum*) by Robyn Haggard

The 31 Kelvingrove taxa is a minimum number – at the time of writing, three are reported as unidentified spiders, which may or may not be identified by other iNaturalist users. 40% of the records were insects, 37% higher plants and 10% birds, with small numbers of spiders, fungi, woodlice and molluscs. There would probably have been more aquatic species recorded from the pond-dipping, but they were mostly very small and only identifiable to family. The undoubted highlight is a Nut Leaf Weevil (*Strophosoma melanogrammum*), found on a Hazel by the pond by Robyn Haggard, there are only two previous records in Glasgow, both earlier this year.

Robyn also spotted a Silver Y moth (*Autographa gamma*) a migrant which can be quite frequent in autumn, and



Common Toad  
by Colleen Turner



Pond Olive Mayfly nymph  
by David Palmar

The 56 taxa on the Claypits list, on the other hand, is probably a maximum number, as a few records are identified only to genus and, as the list already contains species in that genus, it's very possible that the vaguer records will be duplicates. 39% of the taxa were higher plants, 34% insects and 13% fungi, with small numbers of amphibia, spiders, woodlice and molluscs. A toad (*Bufo bufo*) was found by Louise Smith of Froglife also small Smooth Newts (*Lissotriton vulgaris*) and a Pond Olive Mayfly nymph (*Cloeon dipterum*). The fungi

included the Collared Earthstar (*Geastrum triplex*) at two locations, and the Alder Tongue (*Taphrina alni*). The higher plants included Black Medick (*Medicago lupulina*), and both White Melilot (*Melilotus albus*) and Golden Melilot (*Melilotus altissimus*), and there were imposing specimens of Mugwort (*Artemisia vulgaris*) and Teasel (*Dipsacus fullonum*).



Mugwort  
by David Palmar

There were several interesting insects (in addition to the inevitable Harlequin Ladybirds): I swept a Magnificent Sun Beetle (*Amara aulica*) and a Two-spined Grass Bug (*Stenodema calcarata*) from low herbage north of the former boat-builder's inlet, and David Palmar photographed the caterpillar of a Brown-line Bright-eye moth (*Lacanobia oleracea*).

We hope to present a more detailed analysis of the species recorded in *The Glasgow Naturalist* in due course.



Brown-line Bright-eye  
caterpillar  
by David Palmar

## Glasgow Museums Biological Records Centre: recent additions and remarkable records

**Richard Weddle**

We have had the intention for some time now to report on significant species added to the GMBRC database, and as we are now so far through the year, this is potentially quite a task, particularly since the additions include significant numbers of records from the online databases iNaturalist and iRecord, where several enthusiastic new recorders have been contributing significant numbers of records, most of which are identified or confirmed by experts (or other reasonably knowledgeable people).



Thus we now have more people recording leaf-mines and galls (in addition to those which Paul Cobb has told us about in recent newsletters); also spiders, which have tended to be rather neglected among recorders in recent years, with the notable exception of dedicated surveys at The Necropolis in 2014 and the Botanic Gardens in 2018-20.

Also various groups of recorders have formed to concentrate on recording at specific sites – regular readers will know about the current activity in the LNRs at Fernbrae Meadow, Hamiltonhill Claypits, Holmhill Community Woodland, and the greenspaces in the Yorkhill area.



Lime Hawk Moth  
by Alice Howlett

There are also further greenspaces, mainly but not exclusively in the Greater Glasgow area, where significant recording effort is taking place. It is gratifying too to see the amount of recording being done by students on the various campuses of the University of Glasgow.

At the time of writing, 83,514 records have been added since January 1<sup>st</sup> 2023, and as Robyn mentions in the article following, we recently added the one millionth record. Of the records added this year, about 90 seem to represent species that haven't been previously recorded in the GMBRC database. I should point out that the number would be much larger were the records to be broken down by local authority, for example the number of new species for Glasgow City alone would be around 130. The species mentioned below are just a few of them; I shan't mention many recorders' names as most are not GNHS members.

In February the Striate Earthstar fungus (*Geastrum striatum*) was seen in Lambhill Cemetery; the Collared Earthstar (*G. triplex*) is now becoming rather commonplace around Glasgow, so care needs now to be taken as the two are superficially rather similar. We mentioned in an earlier newsletter that the Horse-Chestnut blotch fungus (*Guignardia aesculi*) had been recorded in Glasgow for the first time in the Botanic Gardens; I'm surprised there haven't been more, as there have now been several more records of the mines of the Horse-chestnut Leaf-miner moth (*Cameraria ohridella*) in Glasgow. Another micro-moth, *Bankesia conspurcatella*, was recorded at Newarthill and at Anniesland. This species was known only from Peeblesshire and Dumfriesshire in Scotland, although found in both places only recently. It is one of the Psychid moths, which are also known as 'bagworms' on account of their larval cases.

It's also notable that there have been several sightings of the Lime Hawk-moth in Glasgow this year. Readers of *The Glasgow Naturalist* may remember a recent account by Tony Payne, who found a larva in Jordanhill a few years ago, which referred to an earlier record of a mating pair in Renfrew by Norman Tait. So it's very pleasing to report that adults have been seen this year in Victoria Park and in Dowanhill, and a larva in a car park at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital – together

these seem to indicate at least two breeding populations, the only known in Scotland.

Among other insects, on our excursion to Shewalton Woods in June, Paul Cobb recorded the Viburnum Leaf-beetle (*Pyrrhalta viburni*); another leaf beetle, the Black-margined Loosestrife Beetle (*Galerucella californiensis*) was found on Purple Loosestrife at Knightswood Park, and during the event at the Hidden Gardens at the end of August I found the weevil *Polydrusus formosus*, a species that inhabits broad-leaved trees. And one of the new iNaturalist users recorded *Reesa vespulae*, a Dermestid beetle that can be a domestic pest, in North Kelvinside. None of these species is common in Scotland. The same new iNaturalist user found another under-recorded species, the nymph of Birch Catkin bug (*Kleidocerys resedae*) in the Botanic Gardens, I myself found an adult in Hyndland Old Station Park a couple of months later.

In September I found a Water Ladybird (*Anisosticta 19-punctata*) at the SuDS pond of Hamiltonhill Claypits; I thought this might be the first for Glasgow, though I subsequently discovered that Nicole Digruber had found one a few weeks previously at Auchinlea Park; it had already been seen several times over the last 3 years at Baron's Haugh, but this group seems to comprise the only Scottish records north of the southern parts of Dumfries & Galloway. More worryingly increasing numbers of the Harlequin Ladybird (*Harmonia axyridis*) have been recorded this year, particularly around Glasgow.



Water Ladybird  
by Nicole Digruber

Other iNaturalist users recorded a number of insects as galls or leaf-mines, I'll not name them individually except to say there were 5 acarine mites (one found by Paul Cobb at Shewalton), 7 Hemiptera, 5 wasps and 8 Diptera. Other larger Diptera included the marsh fly (*Sepedon sphegea*) at the Claypits SuDS, again I was



Alder Sawfly caterpillar  
by Louise Smith

pipped by Scott Shanks, who found one at Victoria Park in the spring of this year, but these seem to be the only Glasgow records.

Also at the Claypits, there were several sightings of Alder Sawfly caterpillars (*Eriocampa ovata*) in September (photo); these are the only records for Glasgow, the nearest existing records being on the Ayrshire coast; we suspect they may have been brought in on saplings planted there in recent years. And finally, Emma Plant managed to catch a Long-tailed Silverfish (*Ctenolepisma longicaudata*)

on the main University campus – quite an achievement, which I've never managed, as they're so elusive.

I haven't listed any higher plants, because the additions so far all seem to be species which have been planted or garden escapes. There were however two confirmed *Peltigera* (lichen) species reported from Glen Park, Gleniffer; and returning to fungi, there are 16 new species in addition to the two already mentioned above. No doubt there will be more after the joint excursion with CAGF to the Necropolis.

And finally, I feel it necessary to anticipate possible quibbles, by saying that this is merely a report on 'work in progress'; we are well aware that a great many other records pertinent to our area already exist, some in the online databases mentioned earlier. We intend to add more of these in the coming months and years, and to report on them in future newsletters. There is some scope for volunteer assistance, should anyone feel inclined!

### **Glasgow Museums Biological Records Centre update** **By Robyn Haggard**

As readers might already know, Glasgow Museums Biological Records Centre is currently closed. This closure is temporary, and necessary to facilitate a review of the Centre's structure and operation. Glasgow Museums is looking to invite the Association of Local Environmental Records Centres (ALERC) to help produce a thorough business review. The aim is to engage relevant stakeholders in the discussions and create a robust development plan for the Centre's future. The review will be aware of the work being done across the country, including the Scottish Government's Biodiversity Strategy and National Planning Framework 4, and the Better Biodiversity Data project.

Despite the closure, the Centre is still accepting new wildlife records and datasets to ensure the database is up to date when it reopens. In fantastic news, the database recently passed 1 million records and now holds 1,035,083 taxon records. The millionth record was a sighting of a Pellucid Hoverfly (*Volucella pellucens*) in the Botanic Gardens in August 2021, but not downloaded from iNaturalist until June 2023. The earliest dated record is of Few-flowered Sedge (*Carex pauciflora*) in the Arran hills on June 21st 1772, and the latest record the Centre now holds is of Fringecups (*Tellima grandiflora*) in Pollok Country Park in April 2020 (another recent download).

### **The Better Biodiversity Data project** **Christine Tansey, Partnership Officer**

The Scottish Biodiversity Information Forum (SBIF) Forum was established in June 2012 as community-led forum that brings together stakeholders from organisations actively involved in the collecting, managing, using and sharing of biological data in Scotland. From the start, discussions within the group and the wider recording community made clear that obtaining a complete and up-to-date account of species in Scotland is hampered by a declining pool of amateur expertise, complex data flows, and gaps in data collection and service provision. In November 2018 the SBIF Forum published the SBIF Review, which detailed 24 recommendations to improve biological recording in Scotland. In December 2019 a

project proposal was submitted to the Scottish Government to deliver the recommendations. This was unsuccessful, however in late 2022, NatureScot and The Scottish Government agreed to provide £580,000 over two years for a smaller project: The Better Biodiversity Data project (BBD). This funded project will help build the foundation of a stronger infrastructure for biological recording and biodiversity data in Scotland.

The Better Biodiversity Data project (BBD), led and managed by the NBN Trust, commenced work in March 2023. It aims to develop the first steps in a strategic approach to the collection, collation and sharing of biological data across Scotland. The BBD project is addressing some of the key recommendations set out in the 2018 SBIF Review. The BBD team will continue to work alongside the SBIF advisory group and other key partners to address three key objectives:

1. The establishment of a National Hub that supports Local Environmental Records Centres (LERCs) and Recording Groups in Scotland.
2. The creation of a shared online data management and digital services system that can be used by LERCs, Recording Groups and other partners to streamline biodiversity data flows and help deliver data services in Scotland.
3. The development of a more connected and better supported biological recording community in Scotland.

The first six months of the BBD project have seen Mike Tetley – Scotland Programme Manager, and Christine Tansey – Partnership Officer, meet with LERCs, Recording Groups and other key partners both online and in-person around Scotland. These discussions have highlighted the differing circumstances faced by LERCs and Recording Groups, and demonstrated the need for central support and tools to facilitate the work they undertake. The next phase of the project will continue to scope out what is needed to enhance biodiversity data flows for the biological recording community in Scotland, including attending more recording-related talks and events throughout Scotland. The BBD team will be joined by a Data and Digital Services Manager and Business Analyst in Autumn 2023, ready to lead the development of the new online data management and data services system.

Mike joins the project with an academic background in marine biology and oceanography and with extensive experience working on marine mammal projects for the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). Christine's background is in research and conservation, with a focus on phenology and citizen science and she has previously worked on developing research and training partnerships for conservation NGOs.

More information on the BBD project is available at <https://nbn.org.uk/news/better-biodiversity-data-project/>



## Contributions from GNHS members

### A New Scottish Gall? Cobb

Paul



At Auchincruive Arboretum in Ayrshire on September 30<sup>th</sup> I found agamic generation galls of the gall-wasp *Pseudoneuroterus saliens* plentiful on leaf midribs on a large Lucombe Oak (*Q. x hispanica*) - (the hybrid between Turkey and Cork Oaks, and a single gall on a nearby Turkey Oak (*Q. cerris*), the latter being its normal host. It was first recorded in the UK in 2006 in London, and is spreading, but apart from a 2020 record of *Pseudoneuroterus saliens* in Edinburgh on iRecord, interestingly also on *Q. x hispanica*, I am not aware of any previous Scottish records. The sexual generation gall is on Turkey Oak acorns.



### Giant Mulleins

Paul Cobb

On a visit to the open day of Doon Valley Railway at Dunaskin near Dalmellington I found a remarkable colony of enormous mulleins, reaching at least 8 feet in height. Expecting it to be a rare alien species I took some bits home for certain ID, and was surprised when it turned out to be just the common *Verbascum thapsus*. I don't know if it's significant that this is on the site of a former ironworks.

### Killer Great Tit

Paul Cobb

While looking out of my window in Catrine I noticed one branch of my *Buddleia* was moving when all the others were still. Binoculars revealed it was caused by a Great Tit attacking a bumblebee. It knocked it to the ground and continued pecking at it until the bumblebee stopped moving and was presumably dead, then the Great Tit picked it up and flew off with it. Searching online I find this behaviour by Great Tits has been observed by others before me.

### Clyde Grasslands Project Information received from Norman Still

We at Glasgow & Clyde Valley Green Network (GCVGN) were delighted recently to launch our new Clyde Grasslands initiative that seeks to reverse the decline of grasslands and meadows across the Glasgow City Region. Supporting the launch was a new study, Mapping Species Rich Grassland Networks:

<https://www.gcvgreennetwork.gov.uk/publications/796-clyde-grasslands> which we hope will act as a catalyst for action and a framework for delivery.







Species-rich grasslands  
photo (after GCVGN)

The work was led by GCVGN on behalf of partners Plantlife Scotland, Butterfly Conservation, Bumblebee Conservation Trust, and funded through NatureScot's Nature Restoration Fund (NRF) development stream.

The study sought to identify remaining species-rich grassland habitat, map their associated dispersal networks, identify opportunity areas for future restoration and expansion, and finally, to map grassland Nature Networks to target future work.

The work was carried out on our behalf by SAC Consulting, and we are now using the study outputs to work with local authority, NGO and utility provider partners to develop a programme of work planned within a framework that will maximise grassland habitat connectivity across our region.

<https://scottishpollinators.wordpress.com/2023/10/19/clyde-grasslands-a-new-species-rich-grassland-project-for-glasgow-city-region/>

### **Glasgow Museums Job Cuts Drawn to our attention by a GNHS member**

The following information is from Unison, Glasgow Live and BBC News.

GNHS is not a campaigning organisation, but members may wish to be aware of this issue, and if you wish to comment to:

Councillor Susan Aitken (Leader of Glasgow City Council)

Councillor Annette Christie, (Chair of Glasgow Life)

The city's Museums and Collections department run by Glasgow Life, will see nearly a third of jobs cut with 37 posts from a total of 128 to be lost this year to save £1.5M. The jobs cull affects the behind-the-scenes staff across Glasgow Museums and the City Archives and Special Collections staff at the Mitchell Library. Posts to go include Curators, Conservators, Technicians, Outreach and Learning Assistants, Collections staff, and staff from Photography, Editorial and Design.

The Museum Conservation department is being reduced by 40%. Curatorial staff and Collections Management are facing heavy cuts. Savaging cuts to the professional teams will result in a loss of skills, knowledge, creativity and essential care of Glasgow's world-renowned museum collections. Public programmes, displays, exhibitions and online content will be vastly reduced as a result.

Strikes in October closed Kelvingrove, the Burrell and Glasgow Museums Resource Centre. Glasgow Life, which runs the city's museums, said it had to make £7.1m of savings because of the city council's budget deficit.

### **Next Newsletter - copy to David Palmar by 10<sup>th</sup> January 2024 please.**

Thank you very much to all the contributors. Please send contributions by email. If sending photos, please submit only a few as separate jpg files.