



GLASGOW NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

**Next Newsletter Deadline
22 March 2022**

**GNHS is a Registered
Scottish Charity**

February 2022

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2022 Spring Talks Programme

Roger Downie

Our talks will continue to be delivered via Zoom for the time being, on Tuesdays starting at 7pm (except on 11th March - see below). Summaries of talk topics and Zoom links will be emailed to members nearer the time.

8th February: Photographic night (see separate item).

PhotoScene Photographic competition slide show and results; **Darren O'Brien**

8th March: Mike Rutherford on 'Bioblitzing in Trinidad and Tobago – from Tucker Valley to the backyard': this is a chance to transport ourselves to warmer climes.

Followed by the Society's AGM: see separate item.

11th March (Friday): Clifford Bain on 'Peatlands' (a presentation on his beautiful new book, and an opportunity to purchase a signed copy). This is our joint meeting with Paisley NHS and Hamilton NHS, and will be held **in-person in Hamilton**. Further details will be emailed soon to members.

12th April: Andrea Hudspeth and Daniela Muir on Dragonflies.

10th May: Richard Lilley on Project Seagrass.

Photographic Night

David Palmar

The society's photographic night will be held by Zoom on 8th February, when Darren O'Brien will present many of the entries and of course the winners of the competition, which has been judged by GNHS and the Institute representatives. If any members wish to offer short talks by Zoom at this meeting, please contact David Palmar.

AGM Information

Alison Park

Our Annual General Meeting will be held on Tuesday 8th March when there will also be a talk on Bioblitzing in Trinidad and Tobago from Mark Rutherford. A reminder will be sent nearer the time along with the link to enable joining the virtual meeting on Zoom.

As last year members will receive a set of documents in advance of the AGM: Agenda, Minutes of previous AGM, provisional financial report and annual reports from Office Bearers and several other Council members. To facilitate smooth-running of the online meeting an overall presentation that summarises all the individual reports will be given. Afterwards there will be an opportunity to raise queries regarding any of the aspects covered. The AGM will also elect Council for the next session. We would be pleased to hear from you if you would consider joining the Council. Further information on roles and responsibilities can be provided on request.

Brownfield Biodiversity Conference

Roger Downie

A small team (Savanna van Mesdag, Richard Weddle, Roger Downie) is putting together a plan for a conference on Brownfield Biodiversity, as a contribution to the 2022 Glasgow Science festival. Current plans are for talks on **Saturday 4th June** followed by **excursions on 5th June**. Anyone able to help, please contact Roger Downie and we hope everyone will note the dates in their diaries. Further details will be announced as soon as possible.

Talks Programme 2022-2023

Roger Downie

I will soon start inviting speakers to take part in next session's programme, when we hope to return to in-person meetings. Anyone with suggestions for speakers should contact me. Thanks.

2022 Subscriptions

Richard Weddle

Subscriptions fell due on January 1st 2022 (except for those who have joined since June 2021). 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.

If you do receive a reminder, and will be paying by cheque, it would still be best to send it to my home address: 89 Novar Drive (1/2), Glasgow G12 9SS, as our visits to the Graham Kerr Building are less frequent than they were pre-Covid. This information will be given in the reminder, but I thought it worth repeating.

BRISC / GNHS Bursaries

Richard Weddle

As in previous years, GNHS & BRISC (Biological Recording in Scotland) and other organisations are offering bursaries towards attending a training course in natural history field studies skills.

The bursaries will be for £200 or 75% of the cost of the course, whichever is the lower. The closing date for applications is January 31st 2022; an application form, and full details of the bursaries on offer will be available via links at www.bris.org.uk/projects

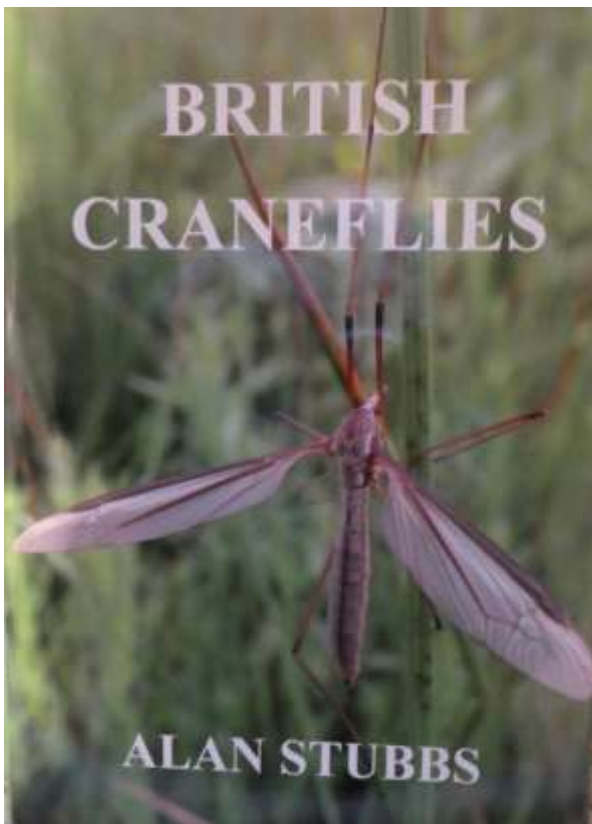
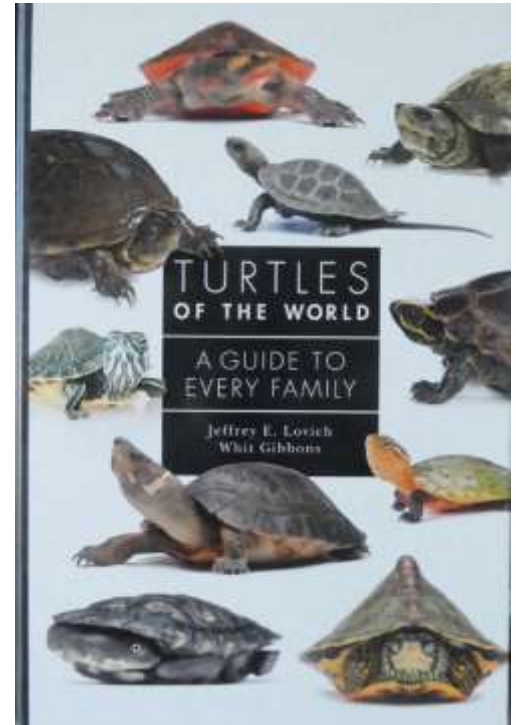
Feel free to spread the word; the bursaries aren't restricted to GNHS or BRISC members.

Three books have been received recently:

Turtles of the World - A guide to every family (2021) Jeffrey E. Lovich and Whit Gibbons. Princeton University Press, 240pp HB £25.00

At the start of this book, the authors explain that "turtle" is the only term they recognise as correct (tortoises and terrapins being mere idioms), so this beautifully illustrated book actually covers all the shelled reptiles.

The first 45 pages are devoted to many aspects of evolution and taxonomy, anatomy and physiology, behaviour (feeding and reproduction), distribution and conservation. The bulk of the book describes families within the two living suborders Cryptodira (turtles which retract their heads in a vertical plane) and Pleurodira (those which retract their heads sideways). Each family is given 1-4 pages which include descriptions, a distribution map, a full species list and several colour photographs.



British Craneflies (2021) Alan E. Stubbs. British Entomological and Natural History Society, 434 pp + 31 b/w plates and 32 colour plates HB £36.00

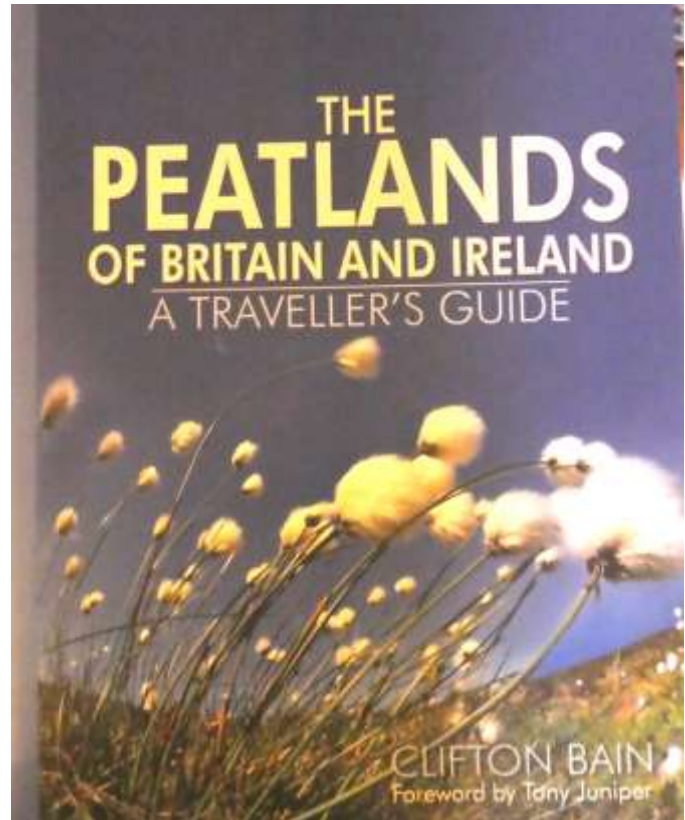
A beautiful and highly detailed identification key to the 6 families and 350+ species of British craneflies.

There are short introductory chapters covering many aspects of crane fly biology including lifespans, behaviour, movement, pest status and predators, habitats, seasonality, collecting and recording. However, the bulk of the book is devoted to an identification key with species descriptions and distributions. The b/w plates deal with the genitalia of each species, while the coloured plates show wings and whole specimens. If you are only familiar with the "daddy-long-legs" which hatch from your lawn, be prepared for a pleasant surprise.

The Peatlands of Britain and Ireland - A traveller's guide (2021) Clifton Bain, Sandstone Press* 256pp HB £24.99.

This book, which was launched at Cop26, is the third title in a series by this author (who has already covered British Rainforests and Ancient Pine Woodlands) and it follows the same successful format.

The initial part of the book deals with definitions (peatland v bog v fen) and, as well as their specialised plants and animals, there is much on peatland history and archaeology, exploitation and preservation. The bulk of the book takes the form of a gazetteer, devoting several pages to each of some 30 specific peatland areas – many in Scotland. Each is covered in 5-6 pages and includes a large map and travel notes of how to get there, as well as details of the site and its biology. The book is profusely illustrated.



*The publishers will give a 20% reduction on books ordered direct from <https://sandstonepress.square.site> using the code *GlasgowNaturalist20* until May 2022.

Connections

Paul Cobb

Obituaries I have read over the last year or two have made me aware of connections in natural history linking southwest Scotland with Norfolk.

Basil Ribbons was better known in Scotland (he edited *The Glasgow Naturalist*) than in his native Norfolk, which he left early in his career. It was therefore a surprise to the Norfolk and Norwich Naturalists' Society when they received a substantial legacy from his estate. At first no-one knew who he was, and there was no record of him ever being a member of the society. Some of his legacy was used to establish a Naturalists' Library at the Ted Ellis Trust's Wheatfen Broad nature reserve, and guest of honour at the official opening was Basil's long-term partner John Watt. Quite by chance it was a fitting choice to spend Basil's money on, as he and John had visited Wheatfen as students, and had known Ted Ellis.

Not actually in Norfolk, but not far over the county boundary is Peterborough, where John Mitchell came from. I knew John back in the seventies, when I was doing a lot of voluntary conservation work in Scotland, including several times at Loch Lomond - and yes, I've had a pint with him in the Salmon Leap at Drymen.

Robin Stevenson was a leading bryologist and Norfolk's county recorder for bryophytes, as well as a botanist, geologist and many other talents. I knew him for

many years with no idea he was actually a Scot, as he spoke with an English accent, so I was amazed to learn he was born in Aberdeen. He once mentioned a visit to his family's "ancestral home" of Renfrewshire.

And of course I'm continuing this tradition with my own relocation from Norfolk to Ayrshire.

Glasgow Herald article from 1951 David Palmar

It's over 170 years since the foundation of the GNHS in 1851, according to this article from the Glasgow Herald, printed over 70 years ago in August 1951. I have included it at this time as I discovered it amongst material which my father, a former Vice President of the Society, had collected.

There are some remarkable similarities with the present Society, such as the existence of sections and conveners, the publication of the Glasgow Naturalist, the excursion programme and exhibitions, relationships with the University and Glasgow Museum, the GNHS Library and the need for new members as well as some obvious differences, not least the developing name of the society and the location of the Library, now in Glasgow University.

We marked the 150th anniversary in 2001. Perhaps it would be good to celebrate the 175th anniversary of the society in 2026!

Next Newsletter - copy to David Palmar by 22nd March 2022 please.

Thank you very much to all the contributors. Please send contributions by email, preferably as .rtf, .doc or .docx (Word 2007) format. If you have time, please italicise taxonomic names, and use Verdana font, size 12 points.

If sending photos, please submit only a few as separate jpg files (not as part of a Word document), and make them under 100Kb each for emailing).

NATURALISTS' DISPLAY

Society Centenary

FROM A CORRESPONDENT

An exhibition to be held in the Glasgow Museum, Kelvingrove, from September 1 to 30, depicts some of the activities of the Glasgow and Andersonian Natural History and Microscopical Society, now 100 years old.

In July, 1851, "nine gentlemen interested in the pursuit of natural science" met in the Thistle Temperance Hotel, Glasgow, and founded the Natural History Society of Glasgow. It was probably the first such society to be formed in the West of Scotland. Later, amalgamations with other bodies, such as the Andersonian Naturalists' Society, took place.

The president, Professor K. W. Braid, presides over the society at their monthly meeting and the seven sections carry on their own meetings and excursions under separate conveners. The Botany section observes, collects, and studies wild flowers and other plant life, other sections deal with birds, insects, mammals, fish, and other animals, and there are also sections for microscopic studies and nature photography. There are also the geologists, who, armed with hammers, go out to study rocks and the fossils they contain.

NEW POINTS OF INTEREST

Points of interest (and sometimes longer work) by members, appear in the annual "Glasgow Naturalist," which thus often contains information new to science. The society's library is housed in the Mitchell Library and contains many rare and valuable periodicals. It has been consulted by scholars from places as far apart as the Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh, and the great Smithsonian Institution in Washington.

The centenary exhibition illustrates some of the interests of members of the society. It will be opened on September 1 by Bailie John Taylor. On Sunday, September 2, there will be a thanksgiving service in Glasgow Cathedral at which Professor Ian Henderson will preach.

Professor C. M. Yonge will talk on "Marine Biology in the West of Scotland" on Saturday, September 8, in the Glasgow Museum. Films, introduced by the photographic convenue, will be shown in the museum each Wednesday evening at 7.30.

EXCURSIONS ARRANGED

Members of the public will be welcomed at the meetings and also at excursions to Allander Woods, Milngavie (September 15), Fossil Grove, Victoria Park (September 22), and Botanic Gardens (September 29). Particulars may be had at the exhibition.

A centenary dinner is also to be held. The "father of the society," Mr John R. Lee, has written a short history of the society. It will appear as an attractive centenary brochure, and will be available at the exhibition. It will include a description of the exhibits.

The society's membership is open to all. Newcomers will find experts ready to help them. Glasgow has one of the oldest natural history societies in Britain, but new members are constantly required to keep it flourishing.

Maryhill Park 22nd July, 2021 and photos by Bob Gray

Article

This delayed visit to Maryhill Park took place on Thursday evening with a turnout that included visitors from Paisley NHS. In addition we welcomed Ben, a park volunteer who carries out much of the maintenance here.

Despite its name the park is not located on one of the city's many drumlins but instead is located on a glacial till of Devensian age (last glacial period from 115,000 to 11,700 BP). The hill is described as diamicton, i.e. it consists of poorly sorted sediments clay, silt, sand and gravel derived from rocks on

land that was above water. This material was deposited on a bedrock of Clackmannan Group limestone of the Carboniferous period between c. 326 and 313 million years ago. The name of the park is derived from Mary Hill, the last heir of the Lords of Gairbraid estate and who married Robert Graham of Dawsholm of Forth & Clyde Canal and Kelvin Aqueduct fame. Robert Graham gave land for the development of a village around the canal on condition that the village was to be "in all times called the town of MaryHill".



1. Lime avenue



2. Crimean lime leaves

Maryhill Road entrance where we met leads into a gently sloping avenue of mainly common lime (*Tilia x europaea*)¹, interspersed with occasional Crimean lime (*Tilia x euchlora*)², which we looked at first of all. These display no epicormic shoots such as occur at the base of the common lime and their leaves are distinctly glossy, which makes the tree unfriendly towards aphids and so more city friendly than other limes. It also possesses distinctly weeping branches, a winter diagnostic feature. It does share with common lime a common parent, the small-leaved lime (*Tilia cordata*).

A group of trees clumped behind the avenue near here contained a sizeable

Ben pointed out to us that some original 1880's plantings still remained. Some

alder trees date from the 1930's and there has been much more recent planting. The



3. Pear leaves & flowers

green alder (*Alnus viridis*) which, unlike the common alder, has almost stalkless, pointed buds and leaves with sharply pointed double teeth. Another tree we observed here was common pear tree (*Pyrus communis*)³ with glossy green leaves unlike apple and no thorny twigs like wild pears.

Farther on, below the steps leading to the tennis and bowling green area we encountered a common oak (*Quercus robur*) which had leaves and fruits near ground level, so we were able to examine easily the auricles associated with the stalkless leaves and, conversely, the peduncles supporting the acorns. Found growing on acorns of this tree later in the year were some knopper galls (*Andricus quercuscalicis*)⁴. These galls, found only on pedunculate oak, contain the asexual generation of a gall wasp that produces its sexual generation on Turkey oak catkins in spring.



4. Pedunculate oak knopper galls and acorns



5. Silver maple leaves

A coppiced silver maple (*Acer saccharinum*)⁵ grows beside a large laurel in a corner of the old bowling greens. It displayed its silvery leaf undersurface whenever the wind blew.

At the east edge of the bowling greens and above the sloping exit path is to be found a fairly rare hybrid rowan, *Sorbus pinnatifida*⁶. The pinnate leaves of this tree are similar to those of the more common Finnish whitebeam (*Sorbus hybrida*), each of them having 2/3 pairs of leaflets; but this rowan's leaves are narrower. Its parents are the Swedish whitebeam (*Sorbus intermedia*) and common rowan (*Sorbus aucuparia*).

Across the path from this tree grow three smooth Japanese maples (*Acer palmatum*) with their deeply lobed leaves. At the foot of the path is a double crimson-flowered Midland hawthorn 'Paul's Scarlet' (*Crataegus laevigata*)⁷. Its leaves are less lobed than the common hawthorn and its fruits have 2/3 instead of single styles.

Several ash trees (*Fraxinus excelsior*) suffering from ash dieback (*Hymenoscyphus fraxineus*)⁸, a disease



6. Hybrid rowan



7. Midland hawthorn 'Paul's Scarlet'

caused by a windborne ascomycete fungus, were noted from this point onwards. Waiting for the appearance of resistant strains appears to be the main response to this devastating disease. Infected trees are removed when they become a danger.

Hollies are a feature along the path at the foot of the slope leading to the Whitton Street entrance. Many of these trees are Highclere hollies (*Ilex x altaclarensis*). This hybrid arose in the early 19th century when tender Madeira hollies were taken out of a greenhouse at the end of winter and then crossed with common hollies. The leaf spines of the resultant hybrids



8. Ash dieback

grow in one plane, unlike those of the common holly. The hybrid is very pollution tolerant. The male version of this dioecious tree is Hodgins' holly ('Hodginsii')⁹ with glossy leaves; the female is Henderson's holly ('Hendersonii') and has matt leaves.



9. 'Hodgin's Highclere holly

Both forms were found growing here. Near the Spence Street entrance grows a very big common cherry (*Prunus avium*) as well as a finely shaped, mature horse chestnut (*Aesculus hippocastanum*). This species survived the Ice Ages in Northern Greece and Albania and was discovered in 1576 in Turkey by the Flemish ambassador. It was

subsequently introduced to this country. Its lack of tannin or resin renders its timber non-durable but its conkers have made it desirable to generations of youngsters.

Continuing our route round the park we noticed a few fastigate hawthorns (*Crataegus monogyna* 'Fastigiata')¹⁰, a relatively uncommon tree and interesting to find so many located in one place. A few Norway spruce (*Picea abies*) grow along the N boundary and growing on some of their branches



10. Fastigate hawthorn



11. Adelgid galls on Norway spruce

A single example of the relatively uncommon Caucasian oak (*Quercus macranthera*)¹² grows near the spruce. It was introduced in 1874 by Holford. It has hairy buds similar to the Turkey oak but its leaves are quite distinctive.



12. Caucasian oak leaves



13. 'Balsam Spire' row

Another single example was a fairly craggy specimen of the insect pollinated manna ash (*Fraxinus ornus*) growing near the Acre Drive gate in the NW. Silhouetted against the western sky was the outline of a row of balsam spire poplars (*Populus* 'Balsam Spire')¹³ that demonstrated their typical, well known outline of a spiky fan rising from many steep branches.

These canker resistant trees are hybrids of Eastern and Western balsam poplars and are a female clone¹⁴. We found many woolly covered seeds, which subsequent germination proved to be fertile.

As we headed towards the 64m trig point with its outstanding view¹⁵ towards Dumgoyne and the Campsies we passed by a row of whitebeam that included occasional *Sorbus aria* 'Lutescens', with their downy upper surface, but were mainly *Sorbus decipiens*¹⁶, thought to be a hybrid between common whitebeam and wild service trees, with leaves having grey felt beneath, triangular lobes at the end of the chief lateral veins and with pinkish fruits (confirmed later). A relatively clear



14. 'Balsam Spire' leaves and fruits



15. View of Dumgoyne and the Campsie Fells

The slope itself is covered with a mixed plantation of Sitka and Norway spruce mainly as well as some Japanese and European larches; but the most outstanding find was a maple-leaved crab apple (*Malus trilobata*)¹⁷ unfortunately being crowded out by one of the many Norway spruce.



17. Maple-leaved crab apple

area above the steep slope leading down to Maryhill Road contained a lot of silver birch (*Betula pendula*) regeneration, which patently demonstrated the light demanding properties of this pioneer species.



16. *Sorbus decipiens* leaves and fruits

This apple has maple-like leaves but which are downy beneath and alternate unlike the *Acer*s. It is pretty unusual and seems to have been introduced from NE Greece in 1877. If anyone is aware of another example in Glasgow I'd be interested to hear about it.

Near the entrance gate on Maryhill Road grow a few Scots pines (*Pinus sylvestris*) with their distinctive orange coloured upper bark, a "spot" character. The paired needles are held together by means of a non-deciduous sheath, which is a characteristic feature of all "yellow" or hard pines. The glaucous coloured needles of these trees means they belong to var. *scotica*, the tree that was voted 'Tree of Scotland' in a 2014 poll.

In this article it has been clearly not been possible to cover all the trees found in the park, but hopefully most of them are included in the tree list and accompanying map available on request to the author.

General Correspondence to the General Secretary:
Alison Park

City Nature Challenge

Not a GNHS event, but members might like advance notice of the 2022 City Nature Challenge, which takes place in 2 parts.

April 29 - May 2: Taking pictures of wild plants and animals.

May 3 - May 8: Identifying what was found.

Results will be announced on Monday May 9th.

For further details see:

<https://citynaturechallenge.org/>

A new use for Japanese Knotweed?

This article in the Telegraph, reported on Yahoo News, highlights a new process for burning it and making it into charcoal.

<https://uk.yahoo.com/news/root-evil-no-now-japanese-161520961.html>

Comment from Richard Weddle: "I think it's illegal to harvest Japanese Knotweed, but you might get away with it if you carbonised it on-site!"

Mogens Hansen

James H. Dickson

A GNHS member since 1996, my good friend Mogens Hansen sadly died in early November 2021 at the age of 84. Often known as Bill, Mogens and I did various things together because he had wide interests including natural history, photography and cookery. In Glasgow Mogens had been a professional gardener with an interesting garden at his home close to mine in Milngavie. He often grew seeds that I had brought back from my various foreign travels. Mogens was Danish and like so many Scandinavians spoke fluent English.

In 1974 Mogens married Dorothy Milliken and there are two sons and two grandchildren. The fine service at the Glasgow crematorium was watched remotely by Mogens' family in Denmark.

GNHS Activities during 2021

Alison Park

In 2021, despite challenges brought by the Covid-19 pandemic, the Society found ways to maintain its activities. Our Council meetings and a varied winter programme of "indoor talks" took place exclusively via the online Zoom platform. Happily, our summer excursions resumed this year and included a weekend trip. We also held a most enjoyable Summer Social at The Botany restaurant, preceded by a visit to nearby North Kelvin Meadows, and subsequently returned to The Botany for our Christmas Social.

Other notable achievements during 2021 included publication of The Glasgow Naturalist 27(3) and distribution of frequent newsletters and emails that kept members informed. I for one appreciated being notified of webinars and online training run by various UK organisations and taking advantage of the opportunity felt good alongside the many downsides of the pandemic. Unsurprisingly, grant awards from our Blodwen Lloyd Binns Bequest Fund were much reduced from pre-pandemic levels. Nearly all student expeditions were cancelled, and all bursaries postponed, but some projects in Scotland and Iceland went ahead with BLBB funding.

As I approach the end of my first year as Secretary, I am still discovering the many tasks that our volunteers provide towards making GNHS a friendly and successful organisation for its members. Please contact me, in the first instance, if you have any comments or queries on the AGM or other GNHS matters.

Contact Alison Park.