



GLASGOW NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

April 2012

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(Newsletter Editor)
email:

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GNHS is a Registered Scottish
Charity Web-site:

<http://www.gnhs.org.uk/>

Forthcoming Meetings

David Palmar

April

Tuesday 10th

Venue: Davidson Building (Biochemistry) Lecture Theatre (Graham Kerr lecture theatre is being refurbished)

6.30pm Tutorial: Bats. Keith Cohen (a follow-up to his November lecture)

7:30pm FILM: 'Taking Root: the vision of Wangari Maathai'. This is about the inspiring tree-planting work in Kenya, carried out by the Nobel Peace Prize winner who sadly died last year.

Friday 13th

7.30pm Lecture: Wild flowers and gardens. Roy Sexton. Jointly with Hamilton and Paisley NHS

Venue: Old Parish Church Halls, Leechlee Road, Hamilton.

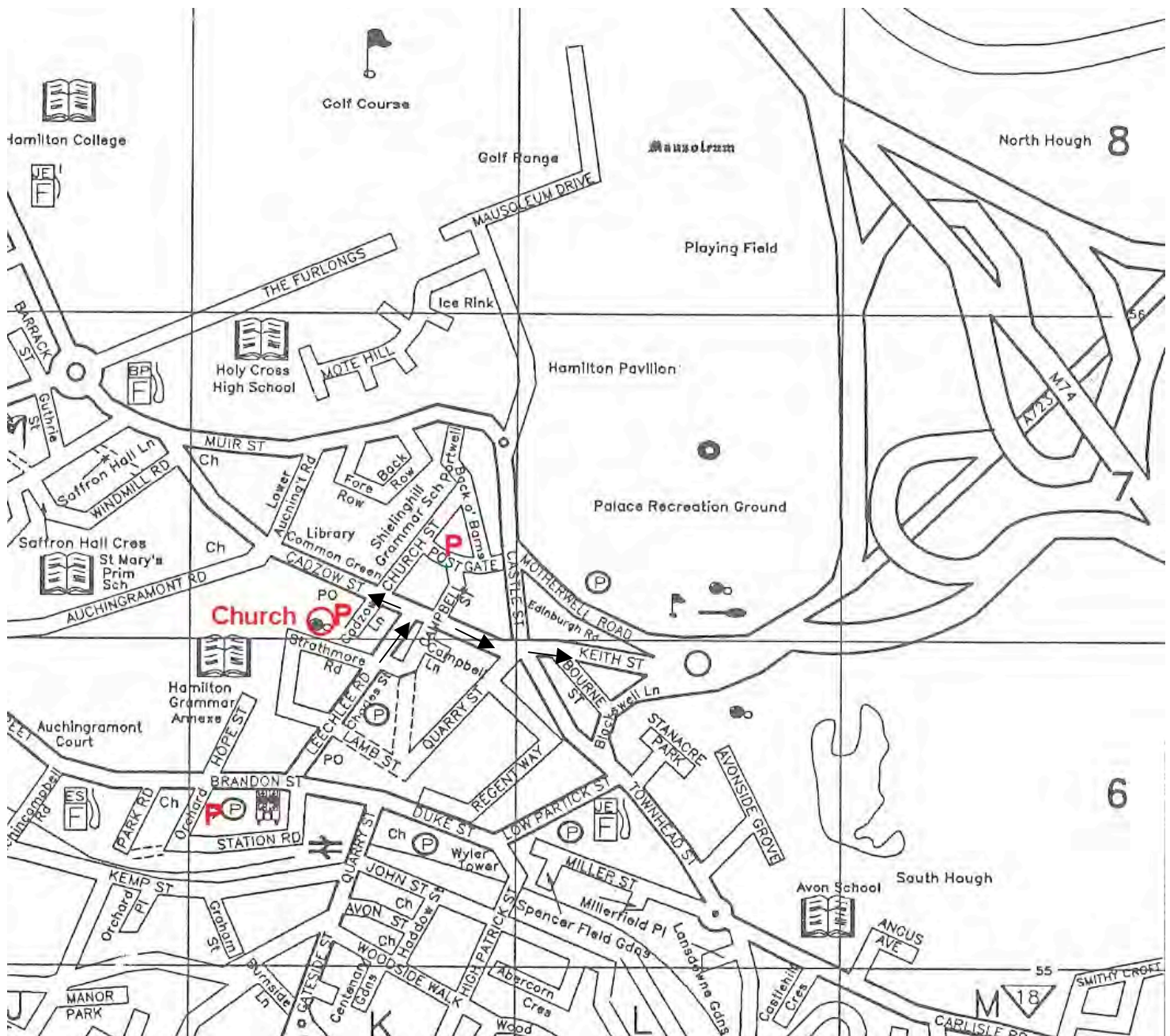
The third in the series of joint meetings GNHS started with our neighbouring societies is on Friday 13th April in the Old Parish Church Halls, Leechlee Road, Hamilton at 7.30pm (see accompanying map). The speaker is Roy Sexton, formerly of Stirling University, always a popular speaker especially with plant enthusiasts. His topic is 'Wild flowers and gardens'.

Since our membership is scattered, it does not seem sensible to organise a bus, especially since public transport to Hamilton is fast and frequent. However, our friends in Hamilton would like to have an estimate of numbers in advance, to help with catering. So, if you intend to go, please let Mary Child know so that she can pass on the numbers to Hamilton.

The venue is only a short walk from either the bus or railway station. Trains leave Glasgow Central at 18.27, 18.37 and 18.57 and take about 20 minutes, so all those departure times should be ok. There are return trains every 15 minutes. The postcode for the venue is ML3 6AQ for those in cars using satnav.

The map shows the locations of car parks. I hope we have a good turn-out for this meeting. Hamilton and Paisley members have brought good numbers to the previous joint events.

HAMILTON TOWN CENTRE



P = Parking Places. **→** One way streets

- A small area off Strathmore Road in Church grounds
- A small public Car Park off Church Street
- A large public Car Park off Orchard Street

All car parks are free after 7.30pm. Do not park on double yellow lines. Beware of one way streets.

From railway station go through bus station, and cross at the lights at Brandon St. Walk down left side of Leechlee Road and Parish Church halls are on the left in about 200 yds.

May

Tuesday 8th

Venue: Boyd Orr Building lecture theatre A on level 4.

6.30pm Tutorial: Local adaptation: Scottish frogs in a changing climate. Anna Muir

7.30pm Lecture: 'Going bald on top: the past, present and future of the Arctic ecosystem'. Anuschka Miller, Dunstaffnage Marine Laboratory

Wednesday 16th, 6.30 for 7pm – Incorporation of Gardeners' Lecture

Professor James H. Dickson FRSE - *Hogweed Hysteria and Naughty Knotweed: Invasive Plants in Glasgow and Elsewhere*

Venue: Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow, 232-242 St Vincent Street, Glasgow

Not a GNHS event, so to reserve a place.

June

Tuesday 12th - Summer Social. Details of this are still being finalised. They will be sent out by email nearer the time. Members who do not have email should contact the secretary Mary Child about the beginning of May on 0141 643 1650 for details.

Excursion Programme - Additional Information

Anne Orchardson

This year we have tried to provide as much prior information as possible about excursions, so that it is easier when making arrangements to attend. Listed below are additional details *not* shown on the Programme Card.

Please contact leaders before event to indicate your attendance and whether you can offer or would like a car space.

April

Thur 5th - Endrick Water and SCENE, Lamprey biodiversity in Loch Lomond and other photographic opportunities.

Directions to Drymen Bridge: By car follow Stockiemuir Rd (A809) or Strathblane Rd (A81) from Milngavie; or Old Military Rd (A811) from Balloch; until signs for Drymen, where you will cross the Endrick Water river via Drymen Bridge. Parking immediately after the bridge. Alternatively parking nearby in Drymen, near Spar shop.

Public transport: bus: 11A or 8/C8 Glasgow-Balfron. or 508 bus from Balloch. Please check as times can be variable.

Notes: John Hume will check lamprey traps and discuss adult fish, as well as carrying out electroshock in the river and discussing larvae. No special photographic equipment is required to photograph the lampreys – please enter the competition! Afternoon will be spent in/around SCENE where there will be opportunities to see other wildlife with a view to photography for the competition. Wet weather alternative will be to go to SCENE in the morning as well where lampreys are in tanks.

Terrain: Easy walking. If anyone wishes to go into the river bring waders or request a pair *in advance*. This is only recommended for people steady on their feet as river access is via a steep bank and footing can be difficult in rivers for those not accustomed to it.

Bring: normal outdoor clothing/footwear. Packed lunches, or lunch can be bought in Drymen. Tea/coffee available at SCENE.

May

Sun 6th - River Ayr Way, Auchincruive, spring woodland plants and insects

Directions to Oswald's Bridge: By car from Glasgow via the A77 to Ayr; at the first Ayr roundabout (Whitletts) take first exit onto B743 Mauchline road. Auchincruive is first right (about 1 km from the roundabout). Follow minor road to the river/bridge. There is a car park nearby. Leave your car there and walk to the bridge to join the group. The walk will return to the same point.

Public transport : The 43 bus from Ayr Bus Station passes Auchincruive College gates (10 min walk to bridge) every 30 mins. *Car sharing recommended*

Terrain: surfaced footpath, generally level but may be a few steps.

Bring: Waterproofs, sturdy footwear, packed lunch/drink

Notes: We will be recording for the BSBI atlas and other relevant recording schemes.

Sun 13th - River Gryffe, Bridge of Weir, birds, plants and local history.

Directions to Bridge of Weir main car park. A761 Brookfield - Bridge of Weir - Kilmacolm Road. Car park is marked with big P and is on right, travelling West through village.

Public transport - hourly bus service from Buchanan St. Nearest railway station is Johnstone.

Car sharing recommended

Length 1.5miles each way. It will be possible to leave a car at Craighends if anyone wants to walk one way only.

Terrain: Easy, but walking boots strongly advisable

Bring: Packed lunch

Sat 19th - Froglife at Palacerigg, Cumbernauld

Directions to Palacerigg Country Park Visitor Centre: By car from Glasgow follow M80 north and take the Cumbernauld exit (A8011). Follow until signs for Palacerigg Country Park, B8039, then turn left onto B8054 following it up the hill until you reach the Park entrance.

Public Transport: None direct. Train from Glasgow Queen Street to Cumbernauld. 2.5 km uphill walk from station. *Car sharing recommended.*

Terrain: paths and off-paths in wet uneven ground.

Bring: preferably walking boots, or shoes with ankle support; water proofs, warm clothes for cold weather. Packed lunch, but there is a cafe at the Visitor Centre, as well as public toilets.

Sat 26th Millersneuk Marsh, Lenzie. Newly established wetland: birds, water voles, invetebrates

Directions to Lenzie railway station car park: By road from Glasgow follow M8 east to J13 (M80). Take 3rd exit from the M80 to Lenzie. First left at the exit roundabout, then first left again at the next roundabout (B757). Follow for 2 miles until the railway station is reached after passing under railway bridge.

Public Transport: By train take 09.48 from Glasgow Queen Street (Scotrail) to Lenzie. Journey time 12 mins. The car park is on the side you exit the train.

Length of excursion: approximately 2 hours, but there will be an option to head down to the Bothlin Burn (5 mins walk) afterwards which is rich in aquatic invertebrates.

Terrain: Marsh/bog

Bring: Wellies or waterproof walking boots. Warm waterproof clothing.

June

Sat/Sun 9th/10th - Glen Affric Weekend

A visit has been organised to learn about the ecology of the Caledonian pinewoods of East Glen Affric over the weekend of 9/10 June. This iconic area is well worth visiting. Accommodation has been arranged in the Glen Affric chalet park, near Cannich, and so early booking is essential. Please contact Bob Gray if you'd like to attend.

Sat 16th Hamiltonhill Claypits Botanical/invertebrates/historical (poss. mammals)

Directions to meeting place: from M8 follow signs to Aberfoyle (A81, Garscube Road); at the lights where A81 bears left, take the right fork into Possil Road; after crossing the canal take the first turning to the left (un-named on the map) and then left again at Applecross Street. From Milngavie, take the A879 (Balmore Road) through Possil Park and turn right into Possil Road at the lights (Keppochhill Road is to the left); turn first right into Ellesmere Street and then first left into Applecross Street.

Public transport: By bus take 54, 68, 71A, 72, or 75; there's a bus stop on Possil Road opposite the end of Dawson Road

Terrain: mainly tracks which can be very muddy, some quite steep; we'll also be going to steep shaly bank, though walking on this surface is optional.

Bring: waterproof shoes or boots

July

Sat 14th RSPB Baron's Haugh, Motherwell The management of an RSPB reserve.

Directions to meeting place: By car: From Junction 6 of the M74, take the A723 to Motherwell. Bear right at the next traffic lights, signposted to Wishaw. Turn right at the third mini-roundabout (Adele Street), and follow the road to the end: turn left then immediately right to enter the reserve – the car park is on the right.

Public Transport: By train, the nearest railway station is Airbles. From the station, turn right on to the main road, Airbles Rd. Turn right at the second mini roundabout on to Adele Street. Follow to the end of the road, then turn left and then right on to Manse Road to reach the reserve entrance.

Bus: To Airbles station and then as above. If bus route Forgewood–North Lodge Circular, it runs to North Lodge Avenue and Adele Street – from where again see above.

Terrain: Footpaths and surfaced walkway (but can be muddy)

Bring: Suitable footwear, waterproofs, packed lunch etc., binoculars.

Sun 15th Robroyston Daytime Moth Recording Joint with Butterfly Conservation.

Directions to meeting place: from M80 J12: keep left at 2 major roundabouts alongside the retail park, then straight on at small roundabout (don't go down Robroyston Way); turn right into Robroyston Road after about 400m. Or leave M8 at J12 to Hogganfield Loch; before you get to the end of the Loch, turn left into Royston Road (very sharp turn, beside Millerston Church); turn right at the second roundabout into Robroyston Road, then 2nd left (which is also Robroyston Road).

Public Transport: Number 8 or 11 bus to the stop near the E end of Quarrywood Road

Terrain; mainly rough grassland / woodland, some of which can be boggy, though wellies not necessary if you avoid getting close to the pond edges.

Bring: waterproof shoes or boots (or wellies, see above); optional: butterfly net, magnifier

Sat 21st Lenzie Moss - Invertebrates and botany

Directions to Lenzie railway station car park: By road from Glasgow follow M8 east to J13 (M80). Take 3rd exit from the M80 to Lenzie. First left at the exit roundabout, then first left again at the next roundabout (B757). Follow for 2 miles until the railway station is reached after passing under railway bridge.

Public Transport: By train take 09.48 from Glasgow Queen Street (Scotrail).

Journey time 12 mins. The car park is on the side you exit the train. Meet at the end of the car park beside the start of the Moss.

Length of excursion: until approximately 14.00.

Terrain: Dry boardwalk and off path uneven marsh/bog

Bring: Packed lunch. Wellies or waterproof walking boots. Warm waterproof clothing.

Further note from George Paterson - Lenzie Moss is made up of three quite separate nature domains: raised peat bog, birch woodland and unimproved grassland, covering in all some 40 ha (NS 648718). The site's raised bog is one of the few such features still remaining in central Scotland, making it a rare habitat of international significance. The three habitats support a variety of flora and fauna, including several rare and endangered species, such as bog rosemary (*Andromeda polifolia*). The deciduous woodland is mainly birch, which is proliferating and threatening to invade the other areas. Additionally, this area provides a feeding ground and, in some cases, a breeding ground for a variety of wild life – including roe deer, fox, snipe and long-tailed tits. There are also several varieties of orchids and many different types of butterfly and moth.

August

Sat 11th - Lower Nethan SWT Reserve and Craignethan Castle - biodiversity, moth trapping, spiders

An all day event, with most of the day spent at Lower Nethan Reserve with Steve Blow the warden. For those who wish, there will be the opportunity to go on to Craignethan Castle to look for a rare cave spider which is reputed to live in the dungeon. Chris Cathrine is a spider expert with Buglife and will be with us.

Directions to meeting place: Take the A72 Clyde Valley road to the village of Crossford. Follow the brown tourist signs to Craignethan Castle which takes you up the hill behind the Tillietudlem Inn, down into the Nethan valley and then back up into the village of Tillietudlem itself. At the end of the houses, another brown sign directs you down the Castle's access road and the car park is at the end on the left. NB: we will probably leave some cars here and go in fewer cars to another part of the reserve with less parking space, returning to the Castle car park at the end, before going to the Castle to look for the spiders.

Public transport not applicable. *Car sharing recommended*.

Terrain: The part of the reserve we are visiting is steep in places with no formal maintained footpaths. Brambles and deadwood can make moving around the site a little awkward at times.

Bring: Packed lunch. Stout footwear and waterproof clothing.

September

Sun 16th - Strathblane Fungal Foray

Repeating last year's foray, but hoping to find the superb *Boletus calopus*.

Directions to meeting place: From Milngavie take A81 to Strathblane. The Primary School is just west of the inn at A81/A891 junction, on the left going west on A81.

Terrain: paths and uneven ground

Bring: Packed lunch, sturdy footwear, waterproof clothing etc., magnifier

OTHER EVENTS OF INTEREST

Toads on Roads

John Sweeney
Clyde Amphibian and Reptile Group

Assistance is urgently sought by local volunteer Andrew Lenihan, to help transport migrating toads across the busy Market Road in Kirkintilloch. Each spring hundreds of toads attempt to cross this road while moving between their hibernation sites and their breeding ponds and, each year, many are killed by passing cars in the process. Andrew discovered this crossing point last year and was able, with the help of others (including CARG members), to save many that would otherwise have perished.

Andrew expects the crossing to become much busier over the next few weeks and is again appealing for help.

If you would like to help reduce the mortality among this toad population and can spare a few hours between 6.30 and 9pm on any mild evening, then please contact Andy who is co-coordinating the effort, either –

1. through a Facebook page he has set up www.facebook.com/toadcrossingkirkintilloch,
2. by email alenihan@hotmail.co.uk or,
3. by phone (if you email me back I can let you have the number).

Website: <http://c-arg.webnode.com/>

Froglife: Last year we joined Froglife for night lamping for newts, which was popular. This year they are not organising a particular event for GNHS, but if anyone is interested in joining in on one of their events, contact Eilidh Spence.

Sat 30th June

Hamiltonhill Claypits - Bats, Beasties and Buried Treasure. Family day. See www.fopg.org for details

Sat/Sun 4-5th August

Ardrossan/Stevenson/Saltcoats, Ayrshire (VC 75) BSBI Recording

Leaders: Dave Lang and Gill Smart

As may also be the case in some other Vice Counties, there is a feeling that relatively little of the botanical recording in Ayrshire to date – including that represented by the most recent Atlas date class – has been focussed on the county's more urban areas. This field meeting will attempt to redress that balance by trialling techniques developed to take on the unique challenges of botanical recording in a more urban environment. The outcome will hopefully be the first comprehensive list for at least one tetrad within Ayrshire's "Three Towns".

For those concerned that urban recording might all be aliens and garden escapes – do not despair! Though we are likely to find our fair share, the area is coastal, which has an influence on the vegetation, and also includes disused railway line and other patches of semi-natural vegetation – so who knows what else the first reasonably systematic recording of this area might reveal! We also intend to visit nearby Ardeer, where the long-disused ICI works have been re-colonised by such rare and threatened taxa as *Salsola kali* subsp. *kali* (prickly saltwort), *Coincya monensis* subsp. *monensis* (Isle-of-Man cabbage) and *Gnaphalium sylvaticum* (heath cudweed).

The area is very easily accessed by frequent trains from Glasgow Central - and there is plenty of accommodation both in the city and locally for anyone planning to join us from further afield. For more details (as they are firmed up), for any queries and to book - please contact Dave Lang.

**PhotoSCENE 2012 - A Natural History Photographic Competition
sponsored by Glasgow Natural History Society and Glasgow University
Institute of Biodiversity, Animal Health and Comparative Medicine
David Palmar and Dan Haydon**

GNHS and the Institute will be organising a second photographic competition this year. Information will appear by email and on the GNHS website soon. The aims of the competition are to promote an interest in natural history and the work of the Institute, to promote a greater linkage between GNHS and the Institute, and to provide photographs useful for publicity.

Entry is restricted to members of GNHS, and students and staff of the Institute. Winning entries will be published in *The Glasgow Naturalist*. Entries should be submitted by 31st October 2012, and have been taken recently.

Entries should have a natural history/biodiversity content, i.e. featuring animals, birds or plants, and/or the work of researchers and natural historians in science – e.g. work in a lab, students on field courses etc.

Entries will be limited to five per entrant, and each entry must include at least one image from East Loch Lomondside.

Images must be accompanied by a note detailing when the image was taken, with what equipment, and detailing any digital enhancement.

Simple digital enhancements are allowed, but must be declared, e.g. cropping, boosting contrast or sharpness, but whole scale alteration of pictures, such as superimposition of one picture on another, is not allowed. Panoramas consisting of more than one picture are acceptable.

Permission must be given to the organisers to use submitted images for non-commercial purposes for 5 years. The copyright holder may continue to use the images for his/her own purposes.

All photos should have been taken in Scotland, or on University expeditions including abroad, or on GNHS excursions.

At least one picture should have been taken since October 31st 2011. Entries should be submitted digitally by high quality jpeg suitable for printing, at least 6 megapixels.

Up to four prizes will be awarded by a judging committee, on the combined basis of photographic, artistic, and biological interest. The judging committee will be drawn from GNHS and the Institute. The judges will be looking for images which have impact. Judges and their immediate family members will be ineligible to enter the competition.

The total prize fund will be £800 per year, paid for jointly by GNHS and the Institute. First prize will attract £400, second £200 and third and fourth £100 each. Full arrangements and rules will be published by email and on the GNHS website. Questions can be addressed to David Palmar (dpalmar2000@yahoo.co.uk) or Dan Haydon (Daniel.Haydon@glasgow.ac.uk).

A Skull in an Ant Hill

Peter Macpherson

The well presented talk by Dr Jennifer Miller at the recent meeting of the Society depicting body parts (including skulls) in different habitats, reminded me of an escapade from my youth.

When I was a medical student back in 1944 we had to pay a fee for the part of the body which we dissected in the Anatomy Class. When we had completed our work on the skull, I asked my fellow dissectors if they had any objections to my taking it – we had paid for it! None had, but they (and I) wondered how the remaining little pieces of muscle and tendon could be removed.

One suggested that I take it home to Inveraray and put it in an anthill so that they might clear it. This I did, but on returning a week later, found that it had cleared the ants! There was now a new anthill three yards away. The formalin was too much for them. I took it back to the house and on a Sunday afternoon when the family were in the garden, boiled it for three hours in a cooking pot. All that was required then was a little scraping.

I have often wondered how the police and Forensic Specialists would have interpreted such a find - a skull in an ant hill?

The Changing Flora of Glasgow

Richard Weddle

We have obtained 50 copies of *The Changing Flora of Glasgow* (JH Dickson, P Macpherson, K Watson and TN Tait (2000)) from the publishers at a special discount price and are offering copies to members for only £14.00, considerably less than from other sources (eg Amazon £51.00).

Not only does this book show where individual species of plant are to be found in and around the City, it also gives historical notes from earlier Floras and includes accounts of the city's natural, social and economic history and their bearing on wild plants.

We recommend you collect your copy in person, as it would cost at least £4.50 to post. We will have copies on sale at meetings.

Who were they? More on James Croll

Roger Downie

In the February Newsletter, Ian McCallum drew our attention to two 'forgotten' Scottish scientists: Patrick Matthew and James Croll. Readers might like to be reminded that *The Glasgow Naturalist* published a substantial article on Croll by George Farrow in 2001 23(6):9-18 well worth reading. However, there has not been anything similar, as far as I know, on Patrick Matthew. Any historians of science out there?

Friend or Foe? Would you like to know?

Jeanne Robinson

Did you know that Glasgow Museums has an insect specialist who is happy to help identify the insects you find in your garden? If you are worried about or just interested to know more about an insect you have seen in your garden or allotment please get in touch.

You can e-mail or phone Jeanne Robinson, Curator of Entomology to arrange an appointment to look at your specimen, or you can take your specimen into either Kelvingrove Museum and Art Gallery or the Glasgow Museums Resource Centre and mark it for her attention.

Specimens should be sealed in a plastic pot and labelled with when (date), where (name of allotment) and on what (plant species, in soil, under stone) you found your specimen/specimens and your name and contact details. Remember to use separate pots if you have more than one type of insect.

If you are happier taking digital photographs and submitting those they can be sent to the e-mail address given below. Please keep in mind that submitting real specimens is more likely to result in a more specific diagnosis.



Gooseberry sawfly (*Nematus ribesii*)

The details of your insects will be shared with our Local Biological Records Centre so that we have a more reliable picture of the distribution and frequency of garden pests and will be able to see how this distribution changes over time.

The information you supply is accepted on the understanding that the data provided will be entered into a computerized database and will be used for nature conservation, research, education and public information. The information remains the property of the recorder at all times.

Jeanne Robinson, Curator of Entomology, Tel: 0141 276 9551; Email: jeanne.robinson@glasgowlife.org.uk. Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum, Argyle

Street, Glasgow G3 8AG. Glasgow Museums Resource Centre, 200 Woodhead Road, Nitshill, Glasgow G53 7NN.

Excursion Reports

Visit to the Kingdom of Fife, 11-12th June 2011

Bob Gray

Nine of us were met by Geoff Hill of the Ladybank Forest Users' Group, who kindly guided our walk around **Heatherhall Wood**, one of the woodland blocks surrounding the village of Ladybank. The group collaborates with Taybank Forest District of Forestry Commission Scotland who manage the wood as continuous cover forest for amenity purposes and for the benefit of wildlife. So, when trees reach maturity, instead of clear felling, only selected trees are removed in order to maintain a permanent forest cover. Regeneration occurs in the areas opened up to light. An understorey thus develops. Although the woodland apparently dated back to the mid-19th Century, most of the trees are even-aged conifers, mainly Scots pine (*Pinus sylvestris*) and occasional Douglas fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*), thought to have been planted about 1920. We counted c.75 rings on a stump that itself was a few years old.

The soil parent material consists of sands and gravels that were clearly demonstrated on the banks of a very deep drainage burn. In fact the central, more low-lying, water-logged part of Fife (the Howe – 'hollow' – of Fife) was quite unproductive before drainage in the mid-18th Century. Here and in other open areas, much Scots pine regeneration was in evidence. The understorey consists of birch (*Betula* sp.) and rowan (*Sorbus aucuparia*) with occasional holly (*Ilex aquifolium*). The ground flora consists mainly of fine grasses, bilberry and lady's mantle indicating acidic conditions suitable for the growth of Scots pine. Alongside the well maintained dog walking paths the presence of nettles indicated nitrogen rich conditions.

We then headed for **Birnie Loch**, although an accidental diversion led us via a water-filled gravel pit where many sand martins were observed. Birnie Loch itself is a local nature reserve set up in 1990 by the Fife Rotary Club on the site of an old quarry. It was of particular interest on account of the 28 'rotary oaks' (*Quercus petraea*) planted in recognition of the 28 founder members of the local rotary club. We were confined to our vehicles owing to the rain but were able to view a number of pear trees planted beside the loch. The site was made even more attractive by the presence of a few black-headed gulls and mallard ducks.

Having travelled eastwards to the National Trust **Hill of Tarvit** garden we were met by the most knowledgeable head gardener, Peter Christopher who has worked on the garden (40 acres) and estate (279 acres) for 25 years. He drew our attention to the Arts and Crafts' style of the garden that immediately adjoined the house, both of which were designed by Sir Robert Lorimer in 1906 for the family of Frederick Sharp, a Dundee jute mill owner. The symmetry of the yew hedges and two blue Atlas cedars in front of the south facing house was immediately obvious. Behind the house the policy woodlands exhibited a number of interesting trees, including the tallest *Eucryphia x nymansensis* 'Nymansay' in the country. Nearer the car park, were a lovely Tibetan cherry (*Prunus serrula*) and some grey alders (*Alnus incana*). Close to the house is a big sweet chestnut (*Castanea sativa*) with a girth of c.5.9 m,

an approximate age of 290 years. Near here we were shown a large 'fiddle-back' sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*), (the rare ripple figured wood is used to manufacture the backs of violins) and were surprised to find scattered on the ground a number of great spotted woodpecker feathers, suggesting it had been struck by a sparrow hawk. In 1924 Frederick Sharp constructed a 9 hole golf course on part of the estate but the tragic deaths of both himself in 1932 and his son in the Castlecary rail disaster of 1937 followed by World War 2 led to the course being used for farming. However a "hickory" course (the wooden shafted clubs are made from strong, flexible hickory, *Carya* sp. wood) was re-established in 2008 and this has been landscaped with the help of the head gardener. So it includes "rough" areas that have been planted with many wild flowers including an abundance of the partial parasite yellow rattle. A few of the exposed golf course trees had been blown over by the recent gales, a problem associated with trees planted on the shallower soils of the higher ground here (c.350 m). The wooded perimeter of the golf course contained a few interesting specimens such as a common walnut (*Juglans nigra*), Austrian pine (*Pinus nigra* ssp. *nigra*) and a pretty rare golden oak (*Q. robur* 'Concordia'). Bird sounds, such as chiffchaff and other warblers, were much in evidence as we made our way towards the early 18th Century dovecot overlooking the golf course. In the woodland here we came across larch bolete, *Suillus grevillei*. It has been suggested that the production of some fungal fruiting bodies at this time of the year is a sign of root stress, brought about unseasonably by the recent high winds. Root shaking may bring about a chemical reaction that stimulates fungal fruit body production. Finally on our way back to the house we passed along a relatively young (perhaps 20 years old) avenue of broad-leaved lime (*Tilia platyphyllos*), which, strangely, some authorities wish to thin out. This does not seem a particularly wise proposed expenditure, especially as the Trust is apparently strapped for cash.

The ruined Cistercian abbey of **Balmerino** (founded 1229) is located on the south side of the river Tay on the narrow coastal plain formed on a raised beach above Lower Old Red Sandstone rocks. To get there we crossed over the easterly extension to the Ochil hills. The abbey is steeped in history with connections to early Scottish kings and Mary, Queen of Scots. Reflecting this history is the ancient sweet chestnut (*C. sativa*) that grows in the old garden. Tests on it by the National Trust for Scotland gave an age of 400-435 years supporting the suggestion that it was planted by the famous queen in 1565. It is a Heritage Tree of Scotland and is probably the second oldest sweet chestnut in the UK with a known planting date (the oldest is the 1550 Castle Leod tree). We measured its girth as 8.22 m. Daniel Defoe (1727) noted the presence of this tree and also an ancient walnut that has disappeared. In order to celebrate the 750th anniversary of the founding of the abbey a common walnut (*J. regia*) was planted in 1979. This has now grown into a fairly tall specimen. Of further interest in the grounds was finding a sessile oak (*Q. petraea*) with chorotic foliage as well as some unusual yellow-veined elders (*Sambucus nigra*).

Ian Douglas of the Friends of **St Andrews Botanic Garden** met us on Sunday morning at the entrance gate in front of which are three groups of giant redwoods (*Sequoiadendron giganteum*), coastal redwoods (*Sequoia sempervirens*) and Japanese red cedars (*Cryptomeria japonica*). The garden was moved in 1960 by the University to its present 7.5 ha (18.5 acre) site that was previously a market garden. Since 1987 it has been leased to Fife Council but currently its funding is in

doubt and the Friends group is trying to support the work of the garden. Despite its relative youth the garden contains about six champion trees (some planted earlier) recorded for the Tree Register of the British Isles (TROBI) in 2004.

The aspen (*Populus tremula*) we did not re-measure but a birch, *Betula cordifolia*, has increased its girth (height measurements can be tricky!) and an apricot (*Prunus armeniaca*) has increased in both height and girth, although it is infected with honey fungus (*Armillaria mellea*). Of the other three, the Lijiang spruce (*Picea likiangensis* var. *montigena*) is arguably unique in that the other competitors in height and girth for Great Britain and Ireland may be different varieties. The other two are Scottish champions in height and girth: *Sorbus semi-incisa* (increased in size) and musk willow, *Salix aegyptiaca* (not measured). Amongst a plethora of interesting trees in this well thought out garden with its specialised ecological zones we encountered the willow *Salix x boydii*, discovered in Glen Clova in Victorian times, known only in cultivation and possibly a hybrid between *S. reticulata*, also growing here, and *S. lanata*. A lot of work has gone into creating an artificial scree bed, built with 3 feet depth of gravel to provide the good drainage typical of the area between the tree line and permanent snow. Smooth Tasmanian cedar (*Arthrotaxis cupressoides*) was one of the rarer trees grown here and, amongst exotic forms, were a very rare mutant form of Japanese cedar, *C. japonica* 'Cristata', *Chamaecyparis* 'Wisseli' and a form of Bosnian pine, *Pinus leucodermis* 'Schmittii'.

St Andrews possesses some well-planted gardens but we made a special effort to visit the quadrangle of **St. Mary's College** which contains no less than two Heritage Trees of Scotland. The fine, open grown holm oak (*Q. ilex*) thought to have been planted in 1740, is the largest recorded for this species in Scotland. We measured its girth as 393 cm. The other was Queen Mary's thorn (*Crataegus monogyna*) reputed to have been planted by Mary, Queen of Scots. The original stump was clearly of considerable girth but now several younger stems are growing from its base. This is a tree of considerable import, redolent of history. We also found and measured in the grounds of this college a big hornbeam (*Carpinus betulus*) and keaki (*Zelkova serrata*) – related to the elms – each over 2 m in girth. We then took ourselves to the grounds of **Wardlaw Hall** where we had been told to seek out an original 1948 planting of a dawn redwood (*Metasequoia glyptostroboides*) seedling obtained from Kew. This was 224 cm. in girth and >15 m tall. An added bonus was the sight of a pair of both blue Atlas cedars (*Cedrus atlantica* f. *glauca*) and knobcone pines (*P. attenuata*) (3 yellowish green needles help to identify) on either side of the halls facing the sea.

Our final visit of the weekend (with diminished numbers owing to time constraints and the weather) was to see the **Cockairnie** sweet chestnut (*C. sativa*) near Aberdour courtesy of the owner in whose garden the tree is located. Another Mary, Queen of Scots putative planting from about 450 years ago, this is the largest girthed of its species in Scotland. We measured it as 918 cm. in girth which made this a fitting end to a memorable weekend.

General Correspondence to the General Secretary: Mary Child

Next Newsletter - copy to David Palmar by 22nd July 2012 please.

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 send jpgs under 100Kb each.