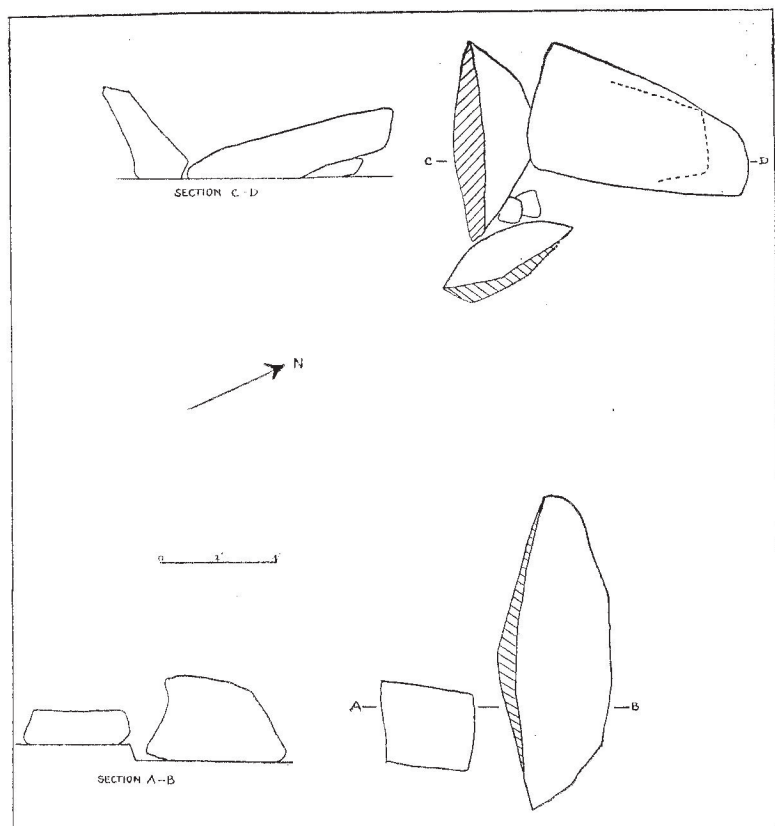
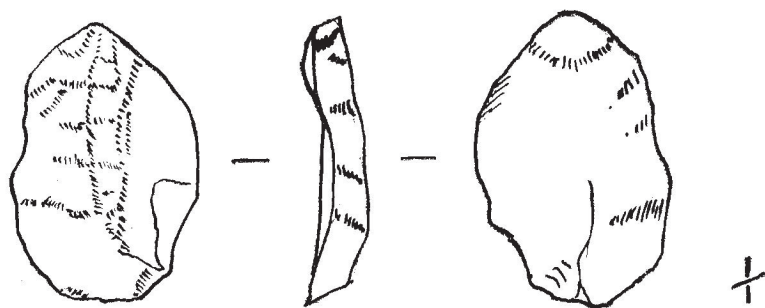




Plan and Sections of Stones at Kingarth



Flint Scraper from Kingarth

THE BUTESHIRE NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY (1955 - 1962)

By MARY A. SMITH, M.A.

It was confidently expected that the Jubilee celebrations of 1955 would give a strong impetus to the work of Buteshire Natural History Society, nor was that trust misplaced. There has been a growing readiness on the part of members to contribute papers on subjects already familiar to them, or to share the fruits of experience gained in developing new interests. This spirit has been fostered by the arranging of Magazine Nights. With Mr. Ferrier as genial and witty compère, short papers have been read on a wide and varied range of topics, and these nights may well prove a training ground for future lecturers.

In the Archæological Section there has been much activity. Under the ægis of Miss Dorothy Marshall various members have assisted in the work of excavation at Little Dunagoil and on Inchmarnock, notably Mr. Ferrier to whom Archaeology is a new sphere of interest.

Among the younger members Miss Isabel Milligan undertook and carried out with success, the excavation of a kiln for corn-drying near Ardmaleish Farm, presenting her findings on the 1962 Magazine Night with skill and charm. Since then, she has dug a kiln at St. Blane's, the site of which had been detected by Miss Marshall.

Further afield, Miss Marshall has taken part in "digs" in South Uist and at Loch Glashan, and proposes to run a "dig" at Selkirk in return for help given by two Selkirk Antiquarians. These contacts and the fact that she herself frequently addresses learned societies, make her a valuable liaison officer when lecturers are being sought for the yearly syllabus.

Her work with the British School of Archæology abroad at Jericho, Petra and Jerusalem, is followed with interest by our members.

The Society has also played host to other bodies. When the British Association for the Advancement of Science met in Glasgow in 1958, the principal excursion of the Archæological Section was a visit to Bute. Here they spent some time in the Museum, and with Mr. Nelson Blair as guide, made a pilgrimage to St. Blane's Chapel. Miss Marshall and Mr. J. G. Scott, of the Kelvingrove Museum conducted them over the two sites at Dunagoil.

That year also the Glasgow Botanical Society was given the use of the Museum premises after hours, at the Spring Holiday weekend.

In 1961 the Scottish Group of the Council for British Archæology decided to hold its annual meeting at Glenburn Hotel, Rothesay. There was a give-and-take of information and entertainment between the visitors and the Bute members. The Museum was visited, excursions were shared, and it was a highly stimulating experience for those of us who took part.

During session 1960-61, the British Council included Bute in an itinerary enjoyed by forty students drawn from the far-flung Commonwealth. So successful did this venture prove that the guide returned last session with a new contingent. In the Museum Miss Marshall gave a masterly outline of the Island's history from remote ages until the present day. The visitors entered whole-heartedly into a discussion covering many aspects of our economy and island life. In a farewell session, under the auspices of the Rotary Club, the guests collaborated with local artistes in a rendering of folk-songs and dances.

Mention of Botany reminds us that the Minute Book of the original Bute Botanical Society was presented to the Library by the secretary, the late Mr. R. D. Whyte. Latterly this section has been strengthened by the interest of Dr. J. E. Paterson, who until his death, joined forces with Mr. Charles Kirkwood. The latter still keeps the flower table supplied with fresh specimens, and maintains his interest in the Ornithological Section, of which he is Honorary Curator.

There have been changes in the Meteorological Section. As Mr. McDermott was no longer available at Arden Craig, it was decided to transfer the weather station to Rothesay Academy. There the Janitor, Mr. Marshall Farmer, was responsible for all reading until he took up another post midway through 1962. At the Annual General Meeting in March, 1959, Mr. McDermott was cordially thanked for his eleven years service in preserving our link with the Meteorological Office.

In the sphere of Natural History the Society is greatly indebted to the Staff of the Marine Biological Station at Millport, who have come over to lecture on various aspects of Marine research, both in the Clyde and in more remote waters. Drs. C. H. Mortimer (Director), A. P. Orr (Deputy Director) and Richard Pike, with Messrs. Timothy Bagenal and H. I. Powell, have all read papers of absorbing interest, while the visits of our own Dr. Sheina M. Marshall are especially appreciated.

The Photographic Section under the care of Mr. D. Nicholson goes from strength to strength. Each Annual General Meeting brings a display of great artistry, both in black-and-white, and in colour. Their stall at the recent Careers and Hobbies Exhibition in the Pavilion showed some delightful work.

A new way of sharing the fruits of experience was introduced when a Transparency Box was installed in the Museum Vestibule. Through this window on our little world we get glimpses of work on archæological sites, scenes of interest on the island, and studies of birds' nests with eggs in colour, this last being a really beautiful series taken by Mr. Alex. Stephen. Miss Margaret Macnab is responsible for changing the transparencies at intervals.

From time to time the Society gives house-room to Exhibitions showing aspects of our town's development. In 1959 a public appeal for the loan or gift of pictures, photographs and books dealing with the Rothesay of earlier times met with an excellent response, and resulted in a display which aroused great interest. Some of the items have become the permanent property of the Museum. Such are

the photographs of old Rothesay given by Mr. Cameron Somerville: the models of Clyde Steamers made by Mr. W. Chrystie of Paisley and presented by his widow, and a volume of Dr. McLea's sermons. The last-named was the gift of Mr. A. M. Orr, Headmaster of Rothesay Public School, whose researches into the development of Education in Bute have made a notable contribution to local history.

The whole Exhibition was greatly enhanced by the art treasures from Mount Stuart House, graciously loaned by the Marquess of Bute. Here it may be appropriate to record the satisfaction of members that Lord Bute has announced his intention of continuing his father's close association with the Society, and their deep appreciation of the interest taken by the Bute family in the past.

In addition to the above gifts the Museum is indebted to the High Kirk of Rothesay for the permanent loan of some Beggar's Badges dies for making communion tokens, and an Irish Bible. This originally reached Bute through the hands of Robert Boyle, the distinguished scientist. (Every school-boy knows Boyle's Law!). Maps have been acquired — a reproduction of Roy's map of Scotland and a map of Bute dated 1823.

It will be seen that the exhibits are constantly changing, presenting fresh points of interest to the visitor. Indeed there is a special case reserved for recent acquisitions or temporary exhibits. Just lately, Miss Marshall has arranged a Cotton Industry show-case, while Mrs. Scott of Kelvin-grove Museum kindly advised rearrangement of the Geological specimens. A model of the "Sheila," given by the daughter of the late Captain Bell of Ardbeg, and now in the vestibule, is another reminder of the early days of Clyde transport.

The membership of the Junior Naturalists' Society now stands at the fifty mark, which allows the youngsters to take an active part in the "spot" competitions. Under the guidance of Miss Marshall, capably assisted by Mrs. C. Young and Miss E. B. Anderson, talks are arranged, accompanied by slides or films. Invaluable help is given by Mr.

Edward McKenzie as projectionist, and his private collection of films is always at their service.

This winter particular interest was taken in the life of the seashore; a display illustrating this was an attractive feature of the Natural History Stall at the Careers and Hobbies Exhibition. Their excursions included walks along the foreshore, and along Thom's Water-Cut; visits to the Dhu Loch, the Slate Quarries and Millport; as well as a meeting in Paisley with the Junior Naturalists of that town. Members made a survey of ant-hills at Balnakeilly Burn, helped with the survey on Burnt Island, and provided labour for some of the Archæological excavations. They also took a practical part in the care of the Museum, helping to clean cases and deputising for the caretaker during his illness.

Tribute must be paid in passing to the late Mr. Neil Dobbie for time so freely given to the Junior Naturalists. His great interest in, and knowledge of, bird life was of great value to them, while his untimely death robbed the parent society of an active member, with ever-widening spheres of interest.

The Careers and Hobbies Exhibition in the Pavilion sponsored by the Rotary Club of Rothesay merits further mention here for two reasons. First, because the Natural History Society's Stall presented such a comprehensive picture of our activities, and secondly because their Secretary, Mr. James Mackenzie, is a former president of the Society. One of his most effective pieces of work was the drawing up of a catalogue which is a permanent record of the contents of the stalls.

The lay-out was dominated by a handsome picture of Rothesay in the middle of last century, with Fyfe's ship-building yard in the foreground, and in the background the chimneys of the Cotton Mills. This was flanked on the right of the Stall by a copy of an old map of Bute now in the British Museum, and the Transparency Box showing birds' nests with eggs in colour; on the left were photographs taken during the excavations at Little Dunagoil and Inchmarnock, while underneath was Mr. Kirkwood's flower table. At right angles, Mrs. Young's miniature seashore,

some sketches of birds' heads, and the neatly arranged bones of a rabbit represented the interests of the Junior Naturalists. A table in front bore some stuffed birds and a relief map of Bute made by the geography students in Mrs. Malinski's department at Rothesay Academy. Round this were ranged specimens of rock collected by Mr. R. Milligan and Mr. Alex. Stephen, with a ribbon leading in each case to the locality from which it came.

Miss Marshall's History of Bute was a source of interest to scholars and antiquarians, four dozen copies being sold to visitors. This booklet has now made its way into the class-room, where it proves an excellent aid to the teacher interested in the links between Bute and the wider world. The stall was a magnet for school children, and we may quote a verdict of one grown-up "This is a breath of fresh air."

In addition to studies in the open air by individuals, the Society as a body has made a variety of excursions. Rhubodach, Inchmarnock and the Wee Cumbrae have all been visited in the past seven years. On the mainland we travelled to the Weaver's House at Kilbarchan, the gardens at Crarae, and were privileged to see over Falkland Palace, Dumfries House and Dean Castle. This year the venue was the vitrified fort at Ardmarnock and the old church at Kilmodan.

The Society continues to be fortunate in its office-bearers. The Presidents who are listed on page 72, had all taken an active part before reaching their high office. It is only just to mention the name of Mr. Alex. Stephen, who declined the honour of the chair, but had in fact carried out the duties of President during Miss Marshall's absence at Jericho. Since then his professional skill, so freely given, has proved an asset in field work. Here too, Mr. R. Milligan has been most helpful to the Archæological Section, while his knowledge of crofting, local farming conditions and island life generally have made him a valuable contributor to post-lecture discussions.

The appointment of Dr. John Morrison to the Presidency for the coming session left a double vacancy,

for in addition to the Vice-Presidency he relinquished the post of Honorary Minutes Secretary which he had filled with distinction for several years. His minutes, drawn up with meticulous care, give an excellent survey of lectures delivered during his period of office. He has been succeeded by Mr. Alec Hunter.

The resignation of Mr. H. D. R. Adam after eighteen years service as Honorary Treasurer was accepted with regret, but once more the Clydesdale Bank provided a worthy successor in the person of their manager, Mr. R. Hutcheson.

The Library which has benefited by the care of Mrs. Isabel Hill, and the late Mr. Cameron Somerville in turn, has a new Librarian in Mrs. C. Young, who has already had some experience in this kind of work. A new catalogue is in the course of preparation, and additions are being made to the existing collection of index cards. In her report at the Annual General Meeting, Mrs. Young urged members to make more use of the wealth of interesting reading on the shelves.

Under the care of Mr. Alex. Stephen, as Master of Works, the Museum has been redecorated throughout, and is faithfully looked after by Mr. Bryce Martin. Thanks are due also to the Auditors, Mr. Ian Munro and Mr. David Cuthbert, who succeeded the late Ex-Provost Muir in that office. As for Mr. Edward McKenzie, the Society is indebted to him, not only for his services as projectionist, but also for his film recordings of happy moments at the Annual Excursions.

With such a lively, well informed and enthusiastic team of workers, Buteshire Natural History Society is ensured of success for many years to come.

PRESIDENTS OF
BUTESHIRE NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY

1905 - 1920	J. N. MARSHALL, M.D., Ch.B.
1920 - 1922	Rev. W. GALBRAITH
1922 - 1925	Rev. J. M. McWILLIAM, B.A.
1925 - 1928	A. G. BURGESS, M.A., D.Sc., F.R.S.E., F.E.I.S.
1928 - 1932	JAMES SMITH, J.P.
1932 - 1936	R. D. WHYTE, J.P.
1936 - 1947	DOROTHY N. MARSHALL
1947 - 1949	J. V. THOMSON, M.B., Ch.B.
1949 - 1951	MARY A. SMITH, M.A.
1951 - 1953	JAMES D. MACKENZIE, M.A., B.Sc., LL.B.
1953 - 1955	HAROLD HILL, A.M.I.M.E., F.R.S.A.
1955 - 1957	DOROTHY N. MARSHALL, F.S.A., F.S.A. Scot.
1957 - 1958	JAMES D. MACKENZIE, M.A., B.Sc., LL.B.
1958 - 1960	R. A. MILLIGAN, F.R.I.C.S., F.L.A.S.
1960 - 1962	A. M. ORR, B.Sc., M.A., F.E.I.S.
1962 -	JOHN MORRISON, O.B.E., F.R.C.S.

WEATHER REPORT

Detailed particulars of the daily weather record may be obtained from the meteorological records in the Society's Library at the Museum. Until February, 1959, these daily readings were collected by Mr. J. McDermott at Arden Craig Gardens. Shortly after Mr. McDermott left the island the Weather Station was transferred to Rothesay Academy grounds where daily readings are recorded.

During the last twenty years the highest rainfall of 70.18 inches occurred in 1948 and the lowest rainfall of 42.31 inches in 1955. The 1961 rainfall of 61.30 inches was only twice exceeded in this period.

The average rainfall for Rothesay is 56.2 inches. In this period under review, 1955 was the sunniest and driest year with 1602 hours of sunshine, and May, on the whole, appears to be the sunniest month.

This report, including tabulated data and graphs, was prepared by Mr. Marian J. Malinski, B.Com.