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The Flourishing of Glasgow Zoology: roots of a celebration, and thoughts on the future

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A few years ago, Maggie Reilly, Pat Monaghan and Roger Downie had mooted the idea of a celebration of zoology at the University of Glasgow, in the context of 2023 as the centenary of the opening of the Zoology (now Graham Kerr) Building in 1923. Discussions began in early August 2022, around the idea of publishing John Graham Kerr's memoir as the core of a centenary publication. The Glasgow Natural History Society (GNHS) agreed to fund this and produce it as a supplement to *The Glasgow Naturalist* in recognition of the close ties between the Zoology Department and the Society.

Over the next year, an organising committee (Roger, Maggie, Regius Professor Pat Monaghan, Professor Neil Metcalfe, Mike Rutherford (Zoology Museum curator), Jennifer Crawford (School administrator), Zara Gladman (Public and Community Engagement Manager) and representatives from the Estates Directorate) met several times to develop a programme of celebration events.

£2-3K funding from the College of Medical, Veterinary and Life Sciences was obtained and GNHS also agreed to fund refreshments. The Estates representatives described the extensive refurbishment work taking place in the foyer and the teaching laboratory over summer 2023: these works were planned to be completed by September and should therefore not interfere with the celebrations planned for the autumn. Table 1 shows the components of the celebratory events and activities on 16th September, 30th November and 5th December 2023.

Attendance at the Doors Open Days event on 16th September was 180. In the run-up to 30th November, there was some concern over numbers and it was agreed that representatives of undergraduate student societies could attend, but that other undergraduates would be invited to attend the 5th December lecture. With current and past staff and postgraduate members, Lecture Theatre 1 was full on 30th November (Fig. 1), and the reception in the museum packed and greatly enjoyed (Figs. 2-5). The 5th December lecture in the Boyd Orr building was also well attended and enjoyed.

For the centenary publication, the original plan was that it would be launched at an event during the Glasgow Science Festival in June 2024. As work progressed, the scope of the publication expanded, as it became clear that this would be a once in a century opportunity to assess the work done in the department and to reflect on its impact and all the people who had contributed. News came that a major refurbishment of the main lecture theatre was to take place during summer 2024, and so the launch of the publication was postponed until 21st September 2024 where it could be linked to a second Open Doors Festival event. The 2024 Open Doors theme - *We're all here: diversity and diaspora* - was an excellent fit with the modern Zoology department with its focus on biological diversity and its origins, and its

1. Glasgow Open Doors Days Festival (16th September): guided tours of the Graham Kerr Building, plus family activities on animal senses in the Museum.
2. One Hundred Objects: a continuous slide show in the Zoology Museum of selected specimens from the Hunterian zoological collections, illustrating their diversity and history.
3. Celebratory event (30th November):
 - a) Four short lectures in Lecture Theatre 1 (Fig. 1), introduced by Head of School Chris Loughrey:
Roger Downie - The Graham Kerr Building: Centenary 1923-2023.
Nick Haynes - University of Glasgow, Centenary of the Zoology Building.
Pat Monaghan - Evolution of Zoology in the Graham Kerr Building: Adaptation, Drift, Polymorphisms, Hybridisation, Extinctions, Environmental Change and Catastrophes.
Roman Biek - Zoology Research at University of Glasgow: Into the Future.
 - b) Reception in the Museum (Fig. 2), including a cake competition (eaten after judging) (Fig. 3), a special celebratory beer produced by Loch Lomond Brewery (Fig. 4), buffet and drinks, and music by departmental band Black Fox.
4. Centenary Lecture (5th December): Roger Downie - Sir John Graham Kerr and the Flourishing of Glasgow Zoology. Part of Glasgow Natural History Society programme.
5. Centenary T-shirt & hoodies (design by Mike Rutherford, incorporating a picture of the building's snake door-knocker) for sale (Fig. 5).

Table 1. Centenary Celebration, Autumn 2023.



Fig. 1. Panoramic view of the Lecture Theatre 1 event, 30th November 2023. (Photo: Andy Wilson)



Fig. 2. Celebrators in the Museum, 30th November 2023. (Photo: Andy Wilson)



Fig. 3. Example of a celebratory cake. (Photo: Andy Wilson)



Fig. 4. The specially designed label for the centenary beer.

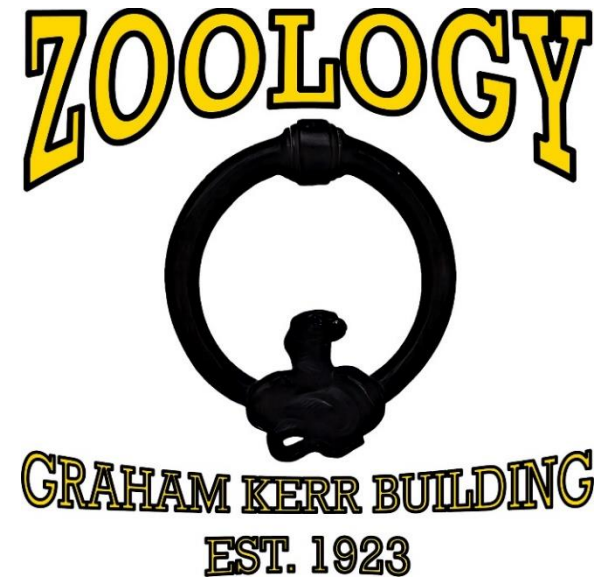


Fig. 5. Mike Rutherford's T shirt design.

international reach (Figs. 6-8). The publication has developed into a substantial book, with several sections (Table 2). The section on the department during the last 50 years was originally intended to provide a short overview but expanded to include articles on the very varied research and teaching activities and developments, and on the people involved. It was very gratifying to find how willing some very busy people were to write on the history of the department's involvement in their area of expertise.



Fig. 6. The 2024 Open Doors organising team at the Graham Kerr Building entrance: from the left, Martha Stone-Shepherd, Emma Plant, Roger Downie, Maggie Reilly and Mike Rutherford. (University of Glasgow Photographic Unit)

1. A Gallery of Memories: Sir John Graham Kerr's memoir, with an introduction and notes by Roger Downie and illustrations arranged by Maggie Reilly.
2. Dr Flo's Lecture Notes: John Graham Kerr's Lectures on Protozoa as recorded by Flora Livingstone, 1917, with a commentary by Stephen Phillips and biographical note by Alasdair Whyte.
3. University of Glasgow Department of Zoology 1923-1973: reprint of articles from 1973 pamphlet with notes by Roger Downie.
4. The Department of Zoology and the Hunterian Zoology Museum, by Maggie Reilly.
5. The Flourishing of Glasgow Zoology: 20 articles by multiple authors on different aspects.

Table 2. Sir John Graham Kerr and the Flourishing of Glasgow Zoology: main sections of the supplement.



Fig. 7. Lydia Bach and daughter finding out about oysters from Anna McGregor, right. (University of Glasgow Photographic Unit)



Fig. 8. Maggie Reilly describing features of the newly refurbished Graham Kerr teaching laboratory to Open Doors visitors. (University of Glasgow Photographic Unit)

A website on the history of Glasgow Zoology is also being developed where it will be possible to include the many more photographs, and other illustrations discovered during research, than could be included in the printed publication. The website is intended to be augmented as more information comes to light.

What of the future? On our educational role, it is unlikely that the fascination of young people for the natural world will wane, and there will therefore continue to be a demand for a sound education in all aspects of biodiversity. How new technology will influence the delivery of higher education in the future is under debate, but we think that the place for interaction with enthusiastic, innovative and knowledgeable communicators is unlikely to disappear.

On our research role, the last few decades have demonstrated the crucial place of investigation into how the natural world works and how human activity can damage it. The COVID-19 and bird flu pandemics are two examples where Glasgow Zoology has had an impact: the “One Health” strand of our teaching and research will remain vital. The climate and biodiversity crises are also areas where our teaching and research are important, through local, national and international contexts. The work of SCENE is part of this, and also the recently-begun interdisciplinary ten-year project GALLANT (Glasgow as a Living Lab Accelerating Novel Transformations), which aims to deliver a resilient city through a city-university partnership.

Can we foresee any changes? After recent history, another departmental re-organisation cannot be ruled out. But more usefully, perhaps, we think there is unfulfilled demand for attention to plant, fungal and microbial diversity, given the close interactions between animals and these lifeforms. Renewed focus on these organisms would broaden and enhance the existing highly successful studies on molecular aspects of plant function.

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