

PREFACE

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This volume celebrates the history, development and flourishing of research and teaching in Zoology and related subjects at the University of Glasgow since the opening of the Zoology Building in 1923. Zoology is, and continues to be, an eclectic subject. It seeks to characterise and understand the diversity of animal life at all biological levels, reaching upwards from the molecules through to cells, individuals, populations, species, communities and ecosystems. The concept of a “model” species is not one that a zoologist can easily embrace. Rather, zoologists revel in differences, recognising that each species has its own unique history, and that its form, distribution and abundance change through time and space in response to environmental challenges. At the core of Zoology is the scaffold provided by evolutionary theory.

While Zoology as a named Department in the University of Glasgow no longer exists, the subject is still very much part of the life sciences research and teaching portfolio. Indeed, Glasgow is one of only a few Universities that has retained a Zoology degree, the various attempts to give the subject a “catchier” name having been valiantly resisted. The degree remains immensely popular with undergraduate students. As in other sciences, research areas rise and fall in their topicality and perceived importance. They come to the fore, fade and often revive, as documented in the descriptions of various areas in this volume. For example, animal taxonomy has risen in importance again as we urgently seek to measure biodiversity, whilst we chart (and hopefully halt) its decline in the face of the rapid changes to the climate and habitats that we have brought upon

the Earth.

The contents of this volume romp through the years, with the various authors, myself included, giving their personal takes on the history and development of particular aspects of teaching, research and associated facilities. A defining feature of life in the Graham Kerr Building, amidst the fires and floods of recent years, has been the collegial, co-operative and “can-do” atmosphere created by those who work there. Staff and students now come from many different countries, and the ethos of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion is inspiringly led by Professor Heather Ferguson and others. Not for nothing was the current School given a Silver Athena Swan Award in recognition of its work in promoting gender equality for all.

Scientists we may be but dour we are not. Lots of fun is had in the Graham Kerr Building. Neil Metcalfe has literally faced the music, morphing the diverse local talent each year into an accomplished Christmas band. Jason Matthiopoulos developed our very own rockstar-studded Black Fox band, that provides an in-house gig every so often in the Zoology Museum, sometimes alongside other bands linked to the building. The animals hanging from the museum ceiling literally shake their heads, no doubt in wonder, and the post graduate-led Friday Fox bar plies its trade. Everyone has a good time. Probably no other section of the University has had its own beer, brewed for the centenary celebration of life in the Graham Kerr Building. I’d like to also thank Roger Downie for his dedication and drive in whipping everyone into shape to produce this fine historical record. Read all about it!