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Recorder News

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BIOLOGICAL RECORDING AND THE NATIONAL MUSEUMS OF SCOTLAND

by Mark R. Shaw, National Museums of Scotland

Although the National Museums of Scotland (NMS) is not formally a Local Records Centre, it can and does contribute to the process of biological recording (BR) in several important ways. For the purposes of this account I will refer to our role in respect of insects and other terrestrial arthropods, but the principles apply to specimen-based records of all animal groups (indeed we play a major role in marine recording). To help recorders to make the best use of NMS, contact details and responsibilities of the NMS Zoology staff are given at the end.

First, NMS has large collections, as far as possible covering all zoological taxa (but we have no

botanical collections). These serve many purposes but from the viewpoint of BR their main uses are:

(a) as a source of reference material, which can be used behind-the-scenes by visitors both to learn how to interpret the identification literature they use, and to confirm the identifications of the specimens they collect themselves by direct comparison of critical characters against named material; and (b) as a source of distributional records, through the data labels of specimens whose identity can be re-checked. In this respect the collection is especially helpful for interpreting the significance of new finds: a specimen of an un-represented species from an area (and a group!) richly represented by the NMS collection is clearly likely to be of more significance - and perhaps in greater need of careful checking - than a specimen of something that is present in the collection in large numbers. By no means all that is in the collection has been entered into any externally held record system, so the potential of the collection to give this signal is not necessarily taken care of in other ways. In whichever of these ways the collection is used it is of course extremely important that the specimens in it are well organised and correctly identified, and a large part of our effort in collection management goes into those aspects of curation.

Second, NMS has good microscopes and a good library, both of which can be made available to bona fide visitors needing to use them. Taken together with the collection, these provide for a very strong taxonomic resource centre, and we encourage would-be experts in the identification of difficult groups of organisms to come in and achieve the expertise they seek. Without access to extensive collections it is difficult to become really competent at identifying any but the most straightforward groups - and in order to understand and protect our natural environment we all need these abilities to grow and multiply rather than to wither, as has been the recent tendency. Our reference resources are very much

here to be used by those who need them, and we welcome visits from specialists, semi-specialists and beginners involved in BR on that basis.

Third, NMS carries much useful information in variously organised record systems. For example, there is the Scottish Insects Records Index (SIRI) which is a compilation of all published records of the occurrence of named species of insects in Scotland (Shaw, 1987). It is at present largely paper-based, and organised taxonomically, though there are intentions to bring it progressively into an electronic database format, which should enable it to release site-orientated data directly (if initially only at vice-county level). The maintenance of SIRI has involved a huge investment of time over the years, and it has been used by many entomologists, particularly when they suspect they have a highly significant local record. It is certainly rash to claim that an insect is "New to Scotland" without first consulting SIRI (Shaw, 1990). In addition to somewhat impersonal record systems such as SIRI, the NMS collections are amalgams of numerous smaller collections incorporated into one, and these smaller collections sometimes include the field notebooks of the people who made the collection. As an extreme example, the E.C. Pelham-Clinton collection of British Lepidoptera, although sizeable with its 35,000 specimens, is as nothing compared to his notebook system, which runs to 64 volumes, is indexed both taxonomically and geographically, and includes virtually every moth he saw in the British Isles over more than half a century of high activity (Shaw & Agassiz, 1990).

Which brings us to the final function of the NMS collection that seems to me to have a somewhat neglected bearing on BR. Pelham-Clinton's collection, mentioned above, was in part his reference collection to help him to identify further finds, but also the voucher collection for his record system - anything that he felt less than completely confident about, or that was of particular significance, would certainly end up in the collection to support the record he made of it. It is as much because of this as for his greatly respected expertise, care and reliability that his records could be used almost without question by others - for example in compiling distribution maps for standard works on British Lepidoptera. BR faces a major challenge in respect of quality control - both in the reliability and in the verifiability of records. Vetting committees comprised of experts in particular groups who would judge the acceptability of records have been suggested, but this would seem a particularly poor solution, at worst capable only of consolidating what is already more or less known or expected, and at best always open to charges of bigotry and suppression. Would a vetting committee conceivably have accepted the first

record of the Chequered Skipper Butterfly in Scotland? The answer is certainly "not without seeing a specimen". So the way forward must surely be for the BR community to address positively the need for voucher specimens to be deposited in permanent public collections to support certain categories of records (for a general discussion of the importance of voucher specimens see Huber, 1998).

It is for defining the "certain categories" of records that well thought-out guidelines need to be developed, and systems need also to be devised for flagging the correlation between a record and a named depository (which might initially be a private collection - but, if so, perhaps with a long term destination for that collection to be decided and made known). Museums - and especially large ones such as NMS where there is a reasonable guarantee of integrated taxonomic experience and curatorial continuity - clearly must play the very positive supporting role to BR of acting as permanent depositories for significant voucher specimens, not least because there is nobody else to do it, but also for the sake of adding value to their collections. Indeed this depository function - guaranteeing that identities, especially of specimens made significant by publication, can be re-checked in the future - is one of our primary scientific duties, and it is extremely important that the right voucher specimens enter publicly held collections. For museums to play this part efficiently (and forever willingly!), however, some means has to be found of deciding which records need to be backed by deposited voucher specimens and which do not. On the whole the current problem is that not enough voucher specimens are being deposited, but it would be possible to move too far in the other direction. While for some poorly-collected groups and for some surveys the whole lot might appropriately - and very willingly - be received by a museum, as a general solution it is emphatically not as simple, in my view, as trying to ensure that a specimen behind every record or the entire outcome of each survey is accessioned by a museum to cherish in perpetuity. Recorders must be saved from such extremes, and so must museums. The business of long term care and storage is genuinely costly, and huge numbers of commonly collected taxa will not necessarily pull their weight in active, multi-purpose collections: despite the risk of making the wrong choice, strategic choices do have to be made.

This is not, however, to say that NMS has reached a point of refusal. We remain extremely keen to be offered whole worked collections as well as significant individual specimens, and also to participate in BR surveys as an end-point depository. For this latter role to be managed efficiently, however, it is most important to have discussions with the surveyor (or recording organisation) before

specimens are collected, in order to work out appropriate standards of preservation and labelling. Receiving and curating survey material can otherwise be an immense drain on an institution's time, and it is in nobody's interests to silt up permanent collections with inefficiently mounted, inadequately labelled, or dilapidated specimens. With advance planning this is avoidable and the process of deposition can then become fully mutualistic.

In conclusion, it seems to me that realistic policy development for depositing voucher specimens in the course of general BR work seems to be lacking, or at least overshadowed by greater enthusiasms, and this is surely a source of concern if the most is to be made of the available energies and resources. Devising the right policies and practices for voucher specimens can only become even more important if the NBN develops as intended, and it should be strongly and more visibly embedded in the planning of what we all hope will be a meaningful scientific endeavour.

After the above was submitted, Peter Barnard kindly drew my attention to an article by PT Harding (1998, Species recording schemes, museum collections and the role of local museums, *The Biology Curator* 12: 7-10), which addresses similar and related ground.

I am grateful to Keith Bland, Susan Chambers, Graham Rotheray, and Andy Whittington for comments on a draft.

References

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- Shaw, M.R. 1987. Scottish insect records. *Entomologist's Record and Journal of Variation* 99: 37-38.
- Shaw, M.R. 1990. An insect new to Scotland - or is it? *Entomologist's Monthly Magazine* 126: 74.
- Shaw, M.R. & Agassiz, D.J.L. 1990. [Obituary]. Edward Charles Pelham-Clinton (1920-1988). *British Journal of Entomology and Natural History* 3: 107-114.

Contact points in NMS:

(All phone numbers start 0131-247; all e-mails end @nms.ac.uk)

Insects and other terrestrial invertebrates

- Dr Andy Whittington (Assistant Curator. General and visitor appointments) 0131-247 4261; a.whittington@nms.ac.uk

- Dr Graham Rotheray (Curator) 4243; g.rotheray
- Dr Keith Bland (Curatorial Fellow) 4218.
- Dr Mark Shaw (Head of Department) 4246; m.shaw

Mollusca

- Sankurie Pye (Assistant Curator. General and visitor appointments) 4174; s.pye
- Dr Louise Allcock (Curator) 4298; l.allcock
- "Marine" Invertebrates (i.e. invertebrates other than molluscs and terrestrial arthropods)
- Fiona Ware (Assistant Curator. General and visitor appointments; flatworms) 4345; f.ware
- Susan Chambers (Curator. MarLIN rep.) 4247; s.chambers

Reptiles, amphibians, fish

- Geoff Swinney (Curator) 4234; g.swinney

Birds and Mammals

- Bob McGowan (Assistant Curator, birds. General and visitor appointments) 4262; rym
- Jerry Herman (Assistant Curator, mammals. General and visitor appointments) 4328; j.herman
- Dr Andrew Kitchener (Curator) 4240; a.kitchener

FROM THE CHAIR

It is with great sadness that I write to tell members of the untimely death of Bill Brackenridge, our membership secretary, who was tragically killed in a car accident on 4th November 2000. It happened on the A9 as he was on his way back from the Scottish Ornithologists Club annual conference in Newtonmore. The awful weather conditions were apparently to blame. This is a terrible loss, not just to BRISC but to everyone who knew him, for we have lost a dear and valued friend. Bill was involved in practically every aspect of nature conservation in Scotland and his enthusiasm and dedication was boundless. An appreciation of Bill's life can be found elsewhere in this newsletter.

This leads me on to the subject of BRISC's committee, where we are facing major changes. Not only do we need to recruit a new membership secretary, but two committee members, David Mellor and Roger Riddington, have already left, while others have expressed the wish to stand down at the next AGM, including Mark Simmons, our most admirable treasurer. Our constitution requires that we have four office bearers; a chair, a secretary, a treasurer and a membership secretary. I am prepared to stay on as chair, but we urgently need new members on the committee who are willing to take on these tasks as well as some other ones raised by the new Strategic

Document discussed below. The committee only meets four times a year, and with modern technology, much of the business can be carried out electronically. If you have any time at all to spare, **PLEASE PUT YOUR OWN NAME FORWARD** or suggest we contact someone else who might be willing to serve on the committee.

As you will know, the committee is elected at the AGM, which takes place as part of the annual conference and, as usual, we try to move this event around the country. This year it will be in Inverness on Saturday 17th March. I think we have come up with a very topical and most interesting programme, and booking forms are included with this newsletter. The timing of the programme has been worked out to fit in with the train timetables, so it will be possible to do the journey in one day. If, however, anyone wants to do it in greater comfort and stay overnight, there will be a list of B&Bs available on request. The date has also been fixed 3 weeks later than usual to allow weather conditions to improve for anyone travelling by car. Please book early to secure a place.

The minutes of last year's AGM are included with this mailing as well as the chair's report for the current year. Statement of the accounts will be presented on the day.

Over the last few months, a subgroup of the committee has been working on a Strategic Plan for BRISC for the next three years. The intention is for this plan to be approved at the forthcoming AGM, but it is important that members are consulted about the plan at the draft stage, and a copy of this has therefore also been included with this mailing. Please send all comments to me, negative as well as positive, so that the subgroup can take these into account in time for the AGM. The deadline for comments is **Friday 9th March 2001**. I look forward to hearing from you.

The 'Recorder 2000' demonstrations, which were so generously supported financially by SNH and the Esmée Fairbairn Charitable Trust, have gone ahead as planned and I hope that people found the events useful. On average, 15-20 people attended each demo. So far, only Glasgow has been over – subscribed, so a second demonstration was put on here to meet that need. A fuller account is included in the Annual Report. Richard Weddle is now planning proper training courses in 'R2000', and further details can be found elsewhere in this newsletter

Finally I am very pleased to announce that at last BRISC's website has gone on-line at www.brisc.org.uk

This is thanks to our new website manager, Dr Andrew Wakelin. It is still fairly much in the

building stage, but do have a look and let us know what you think.

Anne-Marie Smout

Glasgow Natural History Society are celebrating their 150th Anniversary with a Conference on

Alien Species - Friends or Foes?

15-16th JUNE 2001 in the Boyd Orr Building, University of Glasgow. 16 speakers will cover a wide range of controversial subjects in a programme from 2.00pm Friday June 15th till 5.00pm Saturday June 16th.

There will be the opportunity for questions and debate. A reception for delegates will be hosted by the University of Glasgow, and Abstracts and a 'downloadable' booking form are available on the web site:-

www.gnhs.freeuk.com

or

contact the conference secretary for a booking form or further details:

Mrs Morag C Mackinnon

71 Hillview Drive, Clarkston

Glasgow G76 7JJ

Tel.0141 638 2123 Fax 0141 557 6281

e-mail moragmac@clara.net

HIGHLAND MAMMAL ATLAS PROJECT

by Ro Scott - Mammal Atlas Coordinator
Highland Biological Recording Group

The Scottish Highlands is an area renowned for its mammal fauna. The prospect of seeing an otter, red squirrel or pine marten, or hearing the roar of rutting red deer stags, brings many visitors to the Highlands, as well as delighting local people. For many species, however, basic data on geographical distribution is lacking. The most recently published maps, in the 1993 ITE/HMSO "Atlas of Mammals in Britain", show that although some species are well recorded, there are many more where gaps undoubtedly remain to be filled. Ironically, these are often the smaller, commoner and less charismatic species. Who could really believe, for example, that of 380 10km squares in the Highlands, fewer than 100 contain field voles? Yet this species forms the basis of many food chains, supporting many of the rarer mammalian (and avian) predators.

For these reasons, Highland Biological Recording Group's next big project, following successful publication of the Highland Butterfly Atlas in 1998, is to produce an atlas of mammals in the Highlands. So far, we have formed a sub-committee to co-ordinate activities, and have defined our objectives for the project, which are:

- To increase our knowledge of the basic distribution of mammals in the HBRG area (as a prerequisite for more detailed or systematic monitoring in the future)
- To encourage the habit of keeping written records by resident and visiting naturalists
- To make the resulting information available to inform conservation management, education and land use/development planning

Our first production is the leaflet which is included with this Newsletter. This is aimed at encouraging both local people and visitors to send in their mammal records. In spring 2000 we held a well-attended workshop on mammal identification at Inverness Museum. Several HBRG members have also attended the Mammal Society's "Look out for Mammals" training courses. In an attempt to encourage visiting mammal enthusiasts to send in their records, two committee members took a poster display on the project to the Mammal Society's annual conference in Newcastle last April. The project has also been publicised in the Mammal Society's Newsletter and the RSPB's "Birds" magazine.

We already have data from previous HBRG surveys of bats (1987), otter & mink (1988), pine marten (1989), feral goat (1990), hedgehog (1991 & 1997/8), red squirrel (1991), brown & mountain hares (1992), stoat & weasel (1996) and small mammals in owl pellets (1997/8/9). We aim to update these, and also gather as many recent records of other mammal species as possible. The Atlas will cover all terrestrial mammals including bats and seals, but not cetaceans (as there are several other local groups monitoring these). We hope to spend about five years gathering records for the atlas (having started in 1999), and aim for publication in about 2003.

As well as gathering opportunistic records, we intend to carry out some targeted survey work in under-recorded parts of the Highlands. We hope to obtain grant money to purchase Longworth live traps to improve our knowledge of small mammal distribution. Various committee members are contacting other interest groups whose work or leisure activities involve them in encountering mammals, but who might not be in the habit of sending in records - gamekeepers, pest controllers and hill walkers for example.

Some members have a particular interest in collating historical data. The recent rediscovery in a solicitor's archive of the long-lost records of the Highland Squirrel Club (an early 20th Century organisation dedicated to culling red squirrels because of their perceived damage to forestry!) and Inverness Museum's ownership of the "stuffing books" of a defunct Inverness taxidermy firm, have provided a rich seam of data for mining. We hope to pull together as much recent and historical data as we can, to give as comprehensive an overview as possible of the past and present distribution of mammals in the Highlands.

Mammal recording offers something for everybody - whether you enjoy trawling through ancient journals in the library, picking minute bones out of owl pellets, following elusive trails in mud or snow, identifying otter spraints by smell, searching the forest floor for distinctively-nibbled pine cones, or even squinting through your binoculars at a real live mammal. All of these sorts of records are welcome.

Our main problem is the sparsity of the resident human population in parts of the Highlands, which means we are greatly reliant on visitors' contributions. So if you are spending any time in our area (why not stay on after the BRISC AGM?) please do send in your records. Our recording area covers the administrative area of the Highland Council, which includes the former Districts of Caithness, Sutherland, Ross & Cromarty, Skye & Lochalsh, Lochaber (including the Small Isles), Inverness, Badenoch & Strathspey and Nairn.

If you wish further information about the project or can distribute more copies of the leaflet, please contact Ro Scott, Peddieston Cottage, Cromarty, Ross-shire, IV11 8XX (ro.scott@care4free.net) or Stephen Moran at Inverness Museum, Castle Wynd, Inverness, IV2 3EQ (stephen.moran@highland.gov.uk)

References:

- Arnold, HR (1993) *Atlas of mammals in Britain*. HMSO, London.
- Stewart, J, Barbour, D and Moran, S (1998) *Highland Butterflies a provisional atlas*. HBRG and the Highland Council, Inverness.

UPDATING THE NATIONAL SQUIRREL DATABASE

BRISC has recently received a contract from the Scottish Squirrel Group to update the national Squirrel Database. We are therefore anxious to locate and get access to all squirrel records, both of

Reds and Greys, and especially all new ones since the last update in 1995/6. Working with us to fulfill this contract on time is BRISC member Nicola Penrice, who will be contacting all likely sources, but if you have any squirrel data and have not been contacted by the middle of January, please get in touch with me.

Anne-Marie Smout

FLORA OF NORTHERN IRELAND WEB SITE

Fiona Maitland, web site co-ordinator writes that this site has been under development over the last 6 months and has now gone online with over 300 species included. There are brief species descriptions and 10km distribution maps for each species and most have images of the plant. It is hoped to develop the site further to include a search facility and to reach a total of around 1000 species. In the meantime, she says, please have a look at www.ulstermuseum.org.uk/flora and tell her what you think of it. Any suggestions are welcome.

RECORDER 2000 TRAINING COURSES

Richard Weddle is planning courses in using 'R2000' this spring and if you are interested do contact him. Courses taking place in Glasgow will cost £35 a head, but he is also willing to look at different locations, depending on demand. Other venues may of course have implications for the cost. His address is

Richard Weddle, Canto Information Ltd
89 Novar Drive, Glasgow, G12 9SS
Tel / Fax 0141 339 1343
RichardWeddle@lineone.net

BOOK REVIEW

F. W. M. Vera, *Grazing Ecology and Forest History*. CABI Publishing, Wallingford, Oxon, 2000. Pp. xix + 506. ISBN 0-85-1997-442-3. Hb £55.00

This book makes a startling claim. Extensive, dense closed forests were never the climax vegetation of prehistoric central Europe or eastern North America. That belief arose from mistakes made by Clements, Tansley, Watt, and the early palynologists. Instead our ancestors encountered a park-like landscape of grass, scattered trees and groves with fringes of scrub. Herds of large grazing animals analogous to the fauna of the Serengeti kept the landscape open and dynamic – aurochs, bison, tarpon and deer. The

argument goes far beyond current observations that the closed forest must have had many clearings to accommodate our current grassland species, and even beyond Rackham's identification of savannah as a natural European landscape intermediate between forest and grassland, though the latter comes closest to it. Vera claims, in effect, that savannah was universal and closed forest dates from post-1700.

The claim rests on three observations. Firstly, at high grazing densities, grass pollen hardly shows up, so its absence in pollen diagrams proves little. Secondly, hazel dies in closed canopy woods, but is universal in pollen diagrams – it must have grown in the open. Thirdly, oak is omnipresent in his study zone (bounded roughly by southern Scotland, western France, Czechoslovakia and Lithuania), but it cannot flourish in dense woodland: proof of this comes from every known forest preserve in Europe and America; in each one oak began to die out when grazing was banned, because it was overtopped by other trees. In the original dynamic system, and when domestic grazing replaced the lost wild fauna, oak survived by growing up through the fringes of thorny scrub.

It is sufficient to say at this stage that the hypothesis will be severely tested by skeptical ecologists and historians, but to this reviewer it seemed closely argued and persuasive. As a general proposition it needs to be examined in areas away from the natural distribution of oak, but it is worth recalling that Scots pine and birch are also naturally shade intolerant species, unlike fir and spruce. Eighteenth-century commentators spoke of 'our Highland woods moving their stances' within a matrix of moorland, much as is postulated here. Vera never indicates how large the 'groves' of denser wood might become, though he suggests at one point that the New Forest had groves of up to 500ha, albeit at that size collapsing and opening in the centre. Nor does he say what proportion of the ground would be under grass, though the implication is that it would be 50 per cent or more even on fertile ground, and a very important map of Bia³owieza published in 1830 confirms that.

For those who believe that grazing is essential to biodiversity, Vera's theory must come as great support. Alan Ross in this week's SWT magazine describes a birchwood where, despite fencing, a handful of red deer and roe had remained undetected: it contained six butterfly species, black grouse, tree pipits, wood warblers, frogs, and pine martens. Another, of like age and structure, had been successful in eradicating deer but had none of these species at all. Should we give up the search for the wildwood, and cherish the wild and wooded open spaces instead?

Chris Smout

William Brackenridge: An Appreciation

His love of wildlife, his dedication to its conservation everywhere, and his drive in working towards a greener future were the hallmarks of Bill Brackenridge. His energies were endless.

Or so it seemed until the tragic car crash on the A9 ended his life. Unsurprisingly for Bill, he was returning from a Scottish Ornithologists Club meeting - birds had been his first and continuing love. Over the years he developed and honed his skills in field identification, trained in ecology and became a leading light in the environmental movement throughout central Scotland.

Bill joined North Lanarkshire Council in 1996 as an Ecologist with the Conservation and Greening Section. I had known Bill off and on for many years while he was a Countryside Ranger for Stirling District. His enthusiasm and knowledge of wildlife marked him out early on – about 18 years ago I went on a Habitat Mapping training course in Clackmannan, it was Bill leading it.

Scottish Wildlife Trust got the right person when they chose Bill to kickstart the proposed Jupiter Wildlife Garden project at ICI, Grangemouth. He converted a tract of species-poor grassland into arguably Scotland’s most biodiverse wildlife garden, now producing thousands of wildflower plants annually for other wildlife gardens. A real pioneering project led by a dedicated man. Another successful project masterminded by Bill was the conversion of the old sand and gravel quarries into the Doune Ponds, now an SWT reserve, popular with birds and visitors alike.

And it is this dedication to working for the environment which has been so evident in the last four years of his time in North Lanarkshire. The successfully launched Local Biodiversity Action Plan targeting key habitats and species is a partnership effort across many agencies, but which simply could not have been achieved in this timescale without the knowledge, commitment and persistence of Bill.

His qualities as a field ecologist were unrivalled, forever finding something new, or rare, or at least unheard of by the planners and developers! It was Bill who discovered the rare Blue Fleabane thriving on the industrial dereliction of the Ravenscraig site, and the even rarer Yellow-Wort in the grounds of the proposed Law Hospital site. His surveys found new sites for fritillary butterflies, water voles, otters, black grouse, moonwort, fragrant orchids- little escaped Bill’s trained eye. One important outcome is that we now have a comprehensive mapped system of over 300 Sites of Importance for Nature

Conservation approved by the Council, all offered presumption against damaging development.

Bill’s conservation drive did not stop at wildlife however. He became a champion of environmental issues, re-use and recycling, renewable energies, environmental education for children and adults, all in the cause of a sustainable future. Bill had a low tolerance threshold of anyone who deliberately caused waste or pollution. – on more than one occasion while out on field surveys he came across a Council van, engine idling, going nowhere. To the astonishment of the occupants Bill would reach in through the window or open the door and simply switch off the ignition. Then followed a friendly but firm lecture by Bill on the impact of air pollution caused by diesel fumes. No one argued, many learned. Just days before his death, Bill was interviewed by Louise Batchelor for the BBC on the effects of global warming on Scotland’s wildlife.

The division between work and play for Bill was pretty seamless. Many organisations sought to harness his knowledge and talents, and he was ready to oblige. As well as his SWT commitments, he was Membership Secretary for Biological Recording in Scotland (BRISC), Scottish coordinator for Countryside Jobs Monthly, Conservation Officer for West-Scotland for Butterfly Conservation, Assistant Editor of the Forth Naturalist and Historian, member of the Bean Goose Working Group, and of course a regular contributor on Biodiversity for CSCT’s New Leaf. His many trips abroad became exotic field surveys, broadening his knowledge and deepening his commitment to the natural world.

Bill’s brother and nieces in his hometown Ayr now know the extent to which their Billy was held in high regard throughout Scotland, and can be assured that his friends and colleagues will do all they can to work for the principles he stood for.

Brian Thomson

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In memory of Bill, his family and close associates believe he would have prized any project which could secure new bird habitat or nature reserve. We have started to consider ideas on how this “living memorial” could be created on the ground. Several conservation agencies have promised their support, and individual donations have been arriving.

RSPB have offered to act as the “bank” for the donations, which are ring-fenced for this project. All contributions welcome. Cheques please made out to RSPB and posted c/o Bill Brackenridge fund, Conservation and Greening Unit, Palacerigg House, Cumbernauld G67 3HU

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