

# Dundee Naturalists' Society

Instituted 1874

## Annual Bulletin

1984-85

No 9

## Annual Bulletin 1984 - 85

|                    |  |
|--------------------|--|
| Hon. President     | Dr. J. Berry   |
| President          | Mr. Brian Allan  |
| Hon. Secretary     | Mrs. Jean Pollard, 12 Hyndford Place, Dundee<br>(Tel. 60336) |
| Editor             | Mr. R.T. McLeod, 65 Johnston Avenue, Dundee<br>(Tel. 825427) |
| Technical Convener | J. Cook, 55 Strathern Road, Dundee<br>(Tel. 78311)           |

A WORD FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear friends, This issue of your annual bulletin sees the end of my first year as President. That year saw many changes, none more important than our change of meeting place. The new venue in the University tower seems not to have affected attendances, the numbers being equal to if not greater than at the museum.

The opportunity should not be missed to say proper thanks to the museum staff, in particular Adam Ritchie and Richard Brinklow, for the many happy trouble-free years we held our meetings there.

I should like at this point to thank Adam for the last three years as our President, a duty he carried out unstintingly.

One of my first duties during this winter's meetings was to honour Mrs. Betty McClure, our Secretary of many years standing, who retired at the last A.G.M. Betty, who tirelessly worked behind the scenes for the good of the society, was presented on your behalf with engraved crystal and a bouquet of flowers. Many thanks, Betty, for all your hard work. Our new Secretary is Mrs. Jean Pollard, and I am happy to report we have indeed been fortunate in finding someone of Jean's calibre to fill Betty's shoes so ably.

The forthcoming summer outings promise many new areas to explore, and the winter talks equal to our normal high standard.

Finally, let me wish you all a successful year and I look forward to meeting you in the months to come.

Brian Allan  
President

ANGUS AUTHOR

The death of Miss Ursula Katharine Duncan, of Parkhill, by Arbroath, is a great loss to the world of natural history. Miss Duncan, who was 74, took a B.A. and M.A. in the classics as an external student of London University. She began a lifelong interest in botany at the age of ten with the help of her father. Particularly interested in mosses and lichens, she wrote many books and articles on the subject of botany, including "A guide to the study of lichens" in 1959, "Lichen illustrations" in 1963, "A bryophyte Flora of Angus" in 1966 and "Flora of East Ross-shire" in 1980, for which she trod many miles of coastline in spite of failing health.

An honorary degree of Doctor of Laws was conferred on Miss Duncan by Dundee University in 1969.

#### NEW VICE-PRESIDENTS

With Brian Allan's elevation to the chair, and Miss Joyce Halley's retiral after a long and valuable spell as vice president, two new vice presidents were chosen. The members chose Richard Brinklow, Keeper of Natural History at Dundee Museum, and Miss Eileen Kidney, retired science teacher and a lady very active in a number of associations.

The election of Gillian Law and Hamish Petrie, both university students, to the society's council, brings a welcome infusion of young blood to an association more noted for experience than youth.

#### CONGRATULATIONS TO :

Miss Joyce Halley who was awarded the Gold Medal of the Royal Caledonian Horticultural Society. Miss Halley, who recently retired from the office of vice-president of the Naturalists' Society after many years service, does a great deal of work as honorary manager of the Angus Group Seed Exchange for the Scottish Rock Garden Club.

#### BRICKBATS TO :

Members who keep the bus party waiting after an excursion. Complaints have been made by several people who have suggested that, where there seems to be no real excuse, the latecomers should be "fined" £1. This could be used to compensate the driver who is forced to work later than expected, or help to meet the expenses of any member who is put to extra expense through missing a train or bus. Perhaps the thought of earning an official reprimand would hasten the footsteps of the laggards!

#### MORE MEMBERS' NIGHTS?

The ever increasing number of members with top-class slides brings the suggestion that this event is worth spreading over two nights. This year we had Margaret Doig (Morocco), John Thomson, Dorothy Fyffe and Brian Allan (the Peleponese), Frances Towns (New Zealand), Miss Seymour and Miss Dryburgh, with Jim Cook, Richard Brinklow, Gordon Kirkland, and Mr. and Mrs. Redfern with a varied bag of subjects. It's a shame they have to rush through such an interesting programme.

#### GLENCOE IN MAY

Details are now buttoned up for the Glencoe weekend (May 17-19), with headquarters at Alltshellach, near Onich. After a visit to the Glencoe visitor centre on Saturday there will be a 5½-mile walk to Glen Etive by Lairig Gartain. On Sunday the first call will be to Cuil Bay to watch seabirds, mergansers and other birds, before visiting a woodland reserve. There should be time to call at the Sea Life Centre at Barcaldine before returning to Dundee.

## BUDDING BELLAMYS

Our Naturalists' outings and surveys are not exactly hotching with young folk, although we are always glad to welcome them. It was a Nat granny (we do have some) who suggested outings for children. Perhaps a couple of cars, depending on demand, with the drivers or friends to act as escorts and instructors. Experts would not be required - it could be an opportunity for members of average knowledge to get the youngsters interested. Anyone proposed to help?

## LET THE NATURALISTS' VOICE BE HEARD

Do you feel that the Naturalists' Society should do more to conserve wild life and protect habitats now in danger? I have been involved with the Tree Group in protests and appeals and have given evidence at public inquiries when some site in our area has been imperilled. We opposed the erection of a VHF station on Auchterhouse Hill (the idea was dropped); we helped to fight against the ploughing up of Baldragon Wood (the preservation order has now been confirmed); we have worked for over a year on behalf of Brighty Wood and Huntly Wood, Longforgan (both now safe from the plough); we protested at the idea of a burial ground in Templeton Woods (proposals defeated); we have publicly campaigned against the damage caused by stubble-burning.

The Friends of the Earth have lined up with the Tree Group, but where was the Naturalists' Society?

Are you satisfied that the society should meekly record when the last butterfly, the last frog, the last orchid was seen before the flames, the plough or the bulldozer went in?

Should not the society line up alongside conservationists who have done their best to save the shrinking wild places?

R.T. McLeod

## REPORT OF SUMMER ACTIVITIES, 1984

It is more than a cliché to say that the Activities Group had a busy summer. But it is still true.

A small party spent several spring evenings re-surveying the localities of clumps of Few-flowered Leek, *Allium paradoxum*. Two sites were examined in detail. If any of you passed a couple of peculiar characters peering into the roadside verge along the Arbroath road don't be too alarmed. We hadn't lost anything. The patterns of distribution of this plant suggest that it is spread by vehicles along the verges, particularly by tractor mowers cutting the grass.

Also in spring, Mr. Nick Stewart, the N.C.C. representative for Angus, drew our attention to Sea Pea, *Lathyrus japonicus*. This plant is a different variety - *acutiformis* - in Angus, compared with the plants on English shores. The leaves are pointed, the growth habit is slightly different and it grows on sand. The southern variety - *glaber* - grows on shingle. Accordingly, four carloads visited one of only two sites in Angus and surveyed/crawled over the area. One gets used to peculiar looks from passers-by! Apparently the only other locality of this variety in Britain occurs in Shetland. Perhaps you can imagine our interest - and our concern - since the patches seem to be getting smaller.

The activity group's two main projects were in conjunction with the Dundee and Angus branch of the S.W.T. Firstly, it seems that there are plans to utilise several of the disused railway cuttings in the Forfar area as dumps. We thought that each should be surveyed as soon as possible to see if any were of outstanding wildlife interest. The survey was completed by late summer.

Two cuttings of interest just to the south of Forfar were located and another two not far from Dundee. Apart from one at Kingsmuir and another at Monikie the cuttings did not seem under immediate threat of infilling.

The major activity was a survey of the natural and semi-natural birch woodlands of Glens Prosen and Esk. The task was daunting for our limited resources. The woodlands are scattered along the lengths of both glens and contribute greatly to the scenery. They appear to have developed at roughly the same time, probably soon after the clearances in the glens. They consist largely of old stands of birch, some quite dense, but much sparse and scattered woodland on the drier ground. In the glen bottoms, particularly of Prosen, alder predominated. Scattered about were rowans, willows and a few hawthorns. In a few places, aspen groves were developing.

The trees were found to be old, even moribund, in many areas. A few patches of vigorous regeneration occurred in both glens. A few had obviously been fenced in the past, showing that protection from grazing was important for regeneration. Other areas of young trees were growing in places where grazing continued apparently unrestricted. This regeneration is much more difficult to explain. Along the lengths of both glens the dry heather areas near woodland proved to conceal numerous small birch seedlings. Obviously the birch seeds well and germinates readily. However, grazing - probably by sheep and to a lesser extent rabbits and hares - is responsible for preventing further growth and development. Almost certainly these areas, if protected against grazing, would naturally develop into birch woodland. Rowan and willow seedlings were also found to suffer from grazing. The only plant, notably, to be left ungrazed was Aspen. In some places dense stands of aspen seedlings grew untouched, yet other plants round about were considerably damaged.

J.K. Cook.

#### WINTER TALKS

Once again we had a varied winter programme of talks, beginning on October 9 with Mr. Bruce Philip, who described his work on the Hebridean machair. The joint meeting with the Scottish Wildlife Trust on October 23 brought Mr. Stephen Warman to talk about his life as ranger at St. Abb's Head. We were in the Australian outback with Mrs. Joy Ingram on November 6, and heard about the Scottish otter survey from Mrs. Rosemary Green on November 20. Members donated over £31 towards the work of the survey. Mr. D. Tattersfield came with his slides of Branklyn Gardens on December 4. We resumed after the Christmas break on January 8, when Miss Joyce Halley took us into the Dolomites. Members' night on January 22 brought out the usual exciting show of slides on a wide variety of subjects, then Mr. Henry Taylor followed on February 5 with his lovely slides from the Pyrenees.

#### BE KIND TO BUTTERFLIES

Although some butterflies and moths are pests the vast majority of Lepidoptera are harmless and play an important part in maintaining the delicate balance of our natural environment. It is the extreme versatility of butterflies and moths that make them such interesting objects of study. They colonise land which man has disturbed in various ways, for example roadside verges, railway cuttings, embankments, and now the verges of motorways are providing new habitats that are relatively undisturbed once established.

Yet even so the majority of butterflies and moths are becoming more and more rare each year. Some people argue that this is due to 'natural' enemies like birds and spiders and parasitic wasps, yet these play a minor role in this compared to man's actions against butterflies and moths.

It is not so much the Lepidopterist or collector who is to blame, although he has been known to hunt some of the rarer species to extinction, e.g. The Apollo (*Parnassius apollo*) and in Britain the Large Blue (*Maculinea arion*), it is the wide-scale destruction of the natural habitat which causes the most problems. It is not possible to conserve a particular species of butterfly or moth in isolation as each is part of an interdependent natural complex of plants and animals. It is essential to conserve whole habitats where the entire community of animals, birds, plants, insects and the land on which they live can exist together.

Some people think that conservation is not needed and that the extinction of a few of the rarer species will not matter; however the fact remains that the natural habitats of butterflies and moths are being destroyed at an alarming rate, and this is not likely to be slowed down in the near future as the pressures on land use increases from improvements in agriculture, road and housing development, and thus it can be seen that even some of the more common species now could become rare.

Neil Burford

Members have already had an opportunity to admire Neil's beautiful collection. Now he has started to photograph butterflies rather than kill them, with equal expertise.

#### START WITH PENNY BUN SOUP

The summer of 1984 was warm, dry and unusually long. So the Naturalists had quite a number of pleasant outings. But when the time for the yearly fungus foray approached and we went to have a preliminary look at Backmuir Wood, there was just a handful of starved specimens. We came again a fortnight later, and Jim Cook came too. More luck this time: two handfuls. Fortunately, some field mushrooms (*Agaricus campestris*) appeared on our village Common. We picked them and pickled them and on the day before the outing we searched the Common again very thoroughly.

By the time the fungus foray was due, the dry spell was over. Heavy rain threatened to come down any minute but it held out until the Naturalists' were about to leave the place. Miraculously, the Backmuir Wood was now reasonably well supplied with a wide variety of fungi and Jim and Margaret could produce a long list of specimens found.

While Jim expounded on the biology of the specimens, the imported field mushrooms and some penny buns - found by Messrs Fraser and Philips - were fried with the very active involvement of Gillian Law. It is to be hoped that you enjoyed these samples of very simple fungus cooking; for it is not only pleasant to stroll through the forest spotting all sorts of fungi, it adds tremendously to the enjoyment if you can pick the right ones to enrich your diet.

If you are not fungivorous yet, try to start with Boletus edulis, also known as cep or penny bun.

Here is a traditional Hungarian recipe for penny bun soup. You need 250g of penny buns, 1 small onion, 1.5 litres stock, 1 tablespoon fat (butter, oil or whatever you prefer), 1 tablespoon flour, parsley leaves, salt and pepper. Clean the penny buns: wipe young specimens with a paper kitchen towel, from older specimens remove tubes if they are no longer white. Cut into slices. Fry in hot fat together with the finely chopped onion, salt pepper and a small amount of parsley. When the mushrooms are soft, stir the flour in and add the stock. Add more parsley before serving.

And here is my favourite recipe for cep soup. You need 2 or 2½ ceps, 2 big potatoes, 1 onion, 1 small carrot, 1 clove of garlic, 1 tablespoon fat, pepper, salt, marjoram, parsley leaves, 1 litre of water. Cut the ceps and the potatoes separately in pieces, slice the onion, grate the carrot and crush the garlic: put the garlic on a chopping board, chop it finely, add a generous pinch of salt and with the flat blade of a table knife crush it until there are no hard bits left. Heat the fat and fry ceps, onion, carrot and garlic until the onion is brownish. Add water, potatoes, salt, pepper and marjoram and cook until the potatoes are soft. Liquidise, run the soup through a strainer to remove coarse fibres, add some cream (if any happens to be at hand), and sprinkle parsley leaves on top when serving soup.

Everybody has a different taste. Mushroom recipes, like any other cooking, can and should be modified to your own liking. Bon appetit.

Mrs. E. Liebscher

#### SUMMER OUTING: MONEGA PATH

The bus let us out beside the road a little to the north of the Cairnwell ski centre car park. It was a beautiful day - Naturalists' luck again! A short way up the hill we stopped and began the first of a series of random quadrat measurements on the heather. From the results the abundance of various plant species could be calculated. At first it was difficult to distribute the quadrat without including a naturalist in it. Their abundance at that locality was high! You have heard of the name for a group of naturalists', have you? A trample, believe me, is a good description. Within about 15 minutes, however, the party was strung out up the hillside as they made for the high tops.

On the way up an interesting wet flush was well explored. Several spikes of *Tofieldia pusilla*, Scottish *Asphodel*, were easily visible, while in the longer grass on drier ground a few heads of Frog Orchid *Coeloglossum viride* were well concealed.

Higher up, a wide vista opened; the Grampians rearing up to the north. The vegetation was very short on the plateau. It consisted mainly of dry grasses and sedges, brightened by pink-flowered clumps of Trailing Azalea, *Loiseleuria procumbens*, in places. On the very summit of Glas Maol, reached after a short detour off the path, the stone patterns caused by frost heaving of ages past was clearly seen. The vegetation was extremely sparse, being largely sedges, mosses and lichens. Members were lucky enough to see a variety of birds on the high tops - ptarmigan and golden plover among them. Probably the most interesting was a lone Dotterel. From then on the path led down, over the Monega ridge and down into Glen Isla. As clouds closed in and rain threatened the party made for the bus lower down the glen.

J.K. Cook

RESULTS FROM GLAS MAOL QUADRAT SURVEY

Recorders: Gillian Law, Marjorie Tennent, Joan Thomson, Richard Brinklow, Jim Cook,

Date: 16th June 1984

Three recording sites were chosen on the NW shoulder area of Glas Maol. At each site 10 quadrats were randomly distributed. The % abundance values calculated from the records. They are simplified by ignoring some of the less significant species. Because of the relatively few records at only 3 sites, the results should not be regarded as highly reliable. But they do show some trends in mountain vegetation.

| Site & Map   |                     |                     |                   |
|--------------|---------------------|---------------------|-------------------|
| Reference:   | 1) 149790           | 2) 157794           | 3) 169767         |
| Description: | Dry Heather<br>Moor | Damp Rocky<br>Slope | Mountain<br>Heath |
| Altitude:    | 500m                | 700m                | 1,000m            |

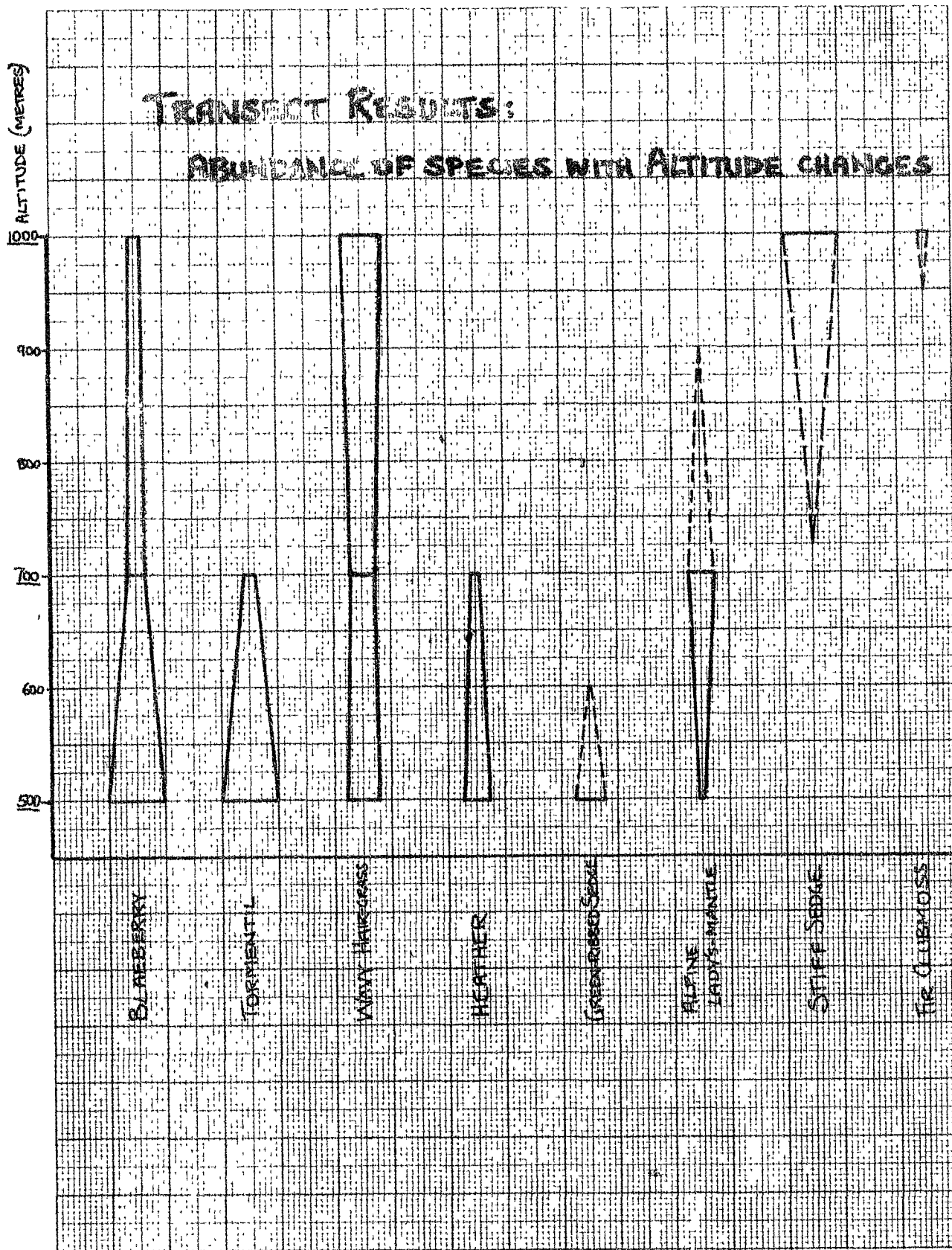
| <u>Species</u>        |     |    |     |
|-----------------------|-----|----|-----|
| Blaeberry             | 100 | 30 | 20  |
| Mosses                | 100 | 90 | 100 |
| Moor mat-grass        | 100 | 90 | -   |
| Tormentil             | 100 | 20 | -   |
| Wavy Hair-grass       | 60  | 50 | 70  |
| Heath Bedstraw        | 80  | 80 | -   |
| Heath Woodrush        | 60  | 50 | -   |
| Sorrel                | 60  | 20 | -   |
| Velvet Bent-grass     | 50  | 30 | -   |
| Heather               | 50  | 10 | -   |
| Sweet Vernal Grass    | 40  | 90 | -   |
| Cowberry              | 40  | 80 | -   |
| Heath Rush            | 40  | 30 | -   |
| Common Sedge          | 40  | 30 | -   |
| Sheep's Fescue        | 40  | 20 | 10  |
| Green Ribbed Sedge    | 50  | -  | -   |
| Chickweed Wintergreen | 30  | -  | -   |
| Wood Anemone          | 20  | 30 | -   |
| Lichens               | 10  | 60 | 100 |
| Alpine Lady's-mantle  | 10  | 50 | -   |
| Crowberry             | 10  | 10 | -   |
| Compact Rush          | 10  | 10 | -   |
| Yorkshire Fog-grass   | 10  | 10 | -   |
| Marsh Violet          | -   | 40 | -   |
| Tufted Hair-grass     | -   | 30 | -   |
| Stiff Sedge           | -   | -  | 100 |
| Fir Clubmoss          | -   | -  | 20  |
| Least Willow          | -   | -  | 10  |
| Spiked Woodrush       | -   | -  | 10  |
| Bare Rock             | 10  | 60 | 50  |

J.K. Cook



# TRANSECT RESULTS:

## ABUNDANCE OF SPECIES WITH ALTITUDE CHANGES



MORRONE BIRCHWOOD RESERVE 28 JULY

What is it that makes for a successful Naturalists' outing? Whatever it is, this outing must have had the right ingredients - it was voted a winner.

The Morrone Reserve was new to many of us, and, being quite near to Braemar, is easy of access. The birchwood itself is of much interest, and the area has a good selection of flowers, of which one of our members made a full list. A red deer obliged us by posing at fairly close range. We were fascinated by the wood ants at their nests. Our leader kept us "on our toes" by organising a number of quadrats in different habitats. This exercise helped to hold our interest - why not keep it in mind for other outings?

It was really delightful to spend a fine summer day in countryside so beautiful as the Morrone Birchwood.

A.R. Philip

ST. ANDREWS TO KINGSBARNES

On a rather dull morning in April, a 'trample' of Naturalists set forth for the sleepy, unspoilt village of St. Andrews. By the time the bus reached St. Andrews the sun was shining gloriously, enabling us to observe the Geologists from all over the world searching for the world famous fossil Golfus balli (Owen, 1982), in front of the hotel.

On reaching our destination we set off along the cliff path, the party then splitting into two groups at Maiden rock, one group continuing along the top path, and the other group practicing its mountaineering skills along the bottom. The two groups met later at the Rock and Spindle for lunch, where a Geologist was found removing large Diamond crystals from the ash cone of the vent (well almost, mostly Augite and Felspar). After lunch, we continued round the coast, all the time noticing the numerous Stigmara roots and Cordaites leaves, until a brave attempt by the leader to drown half of the group just narrowly failed when the time came to cross the stream at Boarhills. On reaching the oar park at Kingsbarns a marked reluctance to board the bus was displayed by many members, who were warming themselves in the sun before returning to their own firesides to tell many stories about the fossil that got away.

Hamish Petrie

ROWARDENNAN/INVERRNAID - 11TH AUGUST 1984

The prospect of walking part of the West Highland Way was most inviting and we set off bright and early with high hopes that there would be no break in the prolonged spell of sunny weather to quench our enthusiasm. Apart from the magic surrounding the words "West Highland Way" there was the magic of Loch Lomond itself and this history-crammed area. And who knew what ghosts from the past might be conjured up - the Wordsworths and Coleridge, or Dr. Johnson, or Southey, Mendelssohn, Hans Christian Andersen, or even Queen Victoria, all of whom penned comments on their visits. Dr. Johnson even remarked that he was "much pleased with the scene" - praise indeed!

Arriving at Inverbeg we crossed, a few at a time, on the little ferry boat to Rowardennan and, smothering any impulse to veer right and climb the Ben, set off (with occasional brief pauses to examine any interesting plant) to tackle our 7½-mile walk to Inversnaid. A mere dawdle thought those of us who chose to keep to the Forestry Commission way-marked trail which climbs steadily upward from the loch through mixed woodland till at 650ft. we were able to enjoy a magnificent panoramic view up and down this queen of Scottish lochs. Back down the loch some of its 36 islands could be seen, but the biggest thrill was the breath-taking sight of the Arrochar Alps and notably of that old warrior the Cobbler. Another mile or so on brought us to the track to Rowchoish the memorial shelter provided by the Forestry Commission and the Rights of Way Society in memory of William Ferrier one-time president of the Federation of Scottish Ramblers.

So much for those who took what up till now had been the easy route. The more adventurous had opted to follow the loch-side beach where a deal of scrambling over boulders had to be accomplished - even one where the authorities had felt it advisable to provide a chain to hang on to! I don't think any of the party were able positively to identify Rob Roy's prison, a recess in a cliff just short of Rowchoish, where it's said Red Rob kept his captives and, when they proved "difficult" had them lowered into the loch at the end of a rope

North of Rowchoish our two routes merged and the nice easy forestry track ended, to be replaced by an undulating path, steep and rough in parts with jutting roots to catch the unwary, but through mixed trees, mainly pine, oak and birch, and with a fleeting glimpse of a yaffle in one of the clearings. A welcome pause by the picturesque bridge over the Snaid burn before descending en masse on the hotel for ice-creams and cups of tea - and other refreshments. Weary of foot perhaps but triumphant and with another unique and satisfying Nats outing to look back on; and grateful too to our leader for her careful preparatory groundwork beforehand.

Tailpiece: NO, we didn't see any ghosts! But we did have some missing bodies. Come time to board the 5.50 (and last) ferry from Inversnaid to get us to Tarbet to rejoin the coach, there were several absentees and though the odd one or two came panting along the lochside just in time and the ferry skipper delayed his departure, we had to sail with fewer Nats than we started off with. However, a phone call from Tarbet, an obliging boat-owner, and the laggards eventually got over to the correct side of the loch, and we got back to Dundee late but intact.

F. Towns

#### PALACE RIGG COUNTRY PARK AND THE ANTONINE WALL

By 11am the bus had delivered us at Palace Rigg Country Park, near Cumbernauld. After a few minutes the bus party from Edinburgh Natural History Society had arrived, totalling a joint party of over 60. With a cloudy sky and rain threatening, Mr. Thomson, the park manager welcomed us and led us off to the nature trail. A variety of habitats, scrub, rough grass, heath and lowland heather moor - some burned - were looked at. Most took the opportunity of a ride in a hay-bale trailer back to the centre. The sky became even more threatening but after a quick lunch the party inspected the animal enclosure and were introduced to the polecats, wildcats, foxes and wolves. By early afternoon the visit was over and the buses took the party to Bonnybridge. On the way we slowed down past the Seabegs Wood site of the Antonine Wall but couldn't stop. From Bonnybridge a brisk walk took us to the Rough Castle site. Here a substantial ditch was still visible along with part of the rampart, some signs of the fort itself and, nearby, a number of small pits or 'lilia'. By this time the rain was coming down smartly and those remaining made off at speed back to the buses.

J.K. Cook

## SPRING WEEKEND

The 1984 weekend was held at Kindrogan Field Studies Centre a few miles from Enochdhu at the foot of Kindrogan Hill. In an effort to take full advantage of the opportunities offered by the area the weekend's programme was very varied, focusing on a variety of habitats and activities.

About twenty keen naturalists arrived at Kindrogan House on Friday 18th May; the House provided quite adequate accommodation and meals for the weekend. Some people found time to explore the grounds of the House that evening and were able to watch two dippers feeding their young on the bank of the River Ardle which ran nearby.

On Saturday we walked to Kirkmichael. Our walk took us up through the coniferous plantation of Kindrogan Wood, by Loch Couran onto open moorland where there was evidence of an old settlement with its old strip field system. We then followed a stretch of the Tullochcorran Burn down through the wood into Kirkmichael where we watched a grey wagtail darting from boulder to boulder on the River Ardle, and a buzzard soaring on high, far in the distance. Our walk then took us along the banks of the River Ardle back to Kindrogan. At one point we stopped at the Heather Triangle where we carried out some point sample quadrating which gave us an idea of the variety and abundance of plant species over the area.

The RSPB reserve at Killiecrankie was where we spent Sunday morning. Unfortunately, the weather which until then had been fine, was rather dreich. However, this did nothing to spoil what was an interesting outing. The warden Martin Robinson showed us round in groups. One group followed a higher path onto moorland while others took the lower trail through deciduous woodland predominantly oak and birch. We saw a variety of birds such as goldcrest, redwing and wheatear and a diversity of plants including the unusual moschatel and the delicate beech fern.

In the afternoon some of us looked at the animals to be found in a pond near to the Field Centre. It was fascinating to see such creatures as palmate newts, damselfly nymphs, waterboatmen, daphnia and leech at close hand.

Kindrogan proved to be a successful choice for a weekend outing. There was a wealth of wildlife to be found close at hand against a magnificent backdrop of upland scenery - providing something to suit all tastes.

Gillian F. Law

## SEA-DREDGING IN VICTORIAN TIMES

Almost 110 years ago, on 18 August 1876, the Dundee Naturalists' Society started a new venture as part of their programme of summer excursions. They hired the steamer "Excelsior", and with equipment and advice from the famous marine zoologist Dr. W.C. McIntosh, they set out on a sea-dredging expedition. The weather was bad, the "catch" was small, and some members suffered from sea-sickness, but it was the only well-attended outing that season.

The following year, two more successful and popular expeditions were held, and in 1878 the society purchased its own dredging equipment. Two expeditions to the Bell Rock were held. Two more were held in 1879, to St. Andrews Bay and the Bell Rock. Disaster struck on the latter outing when the main trawl, worth £13, snagged on a wreck and was lost. Despite this, the expeditions were hailed as a great success. The Council reported "these expeditions afford not only marine specimens for museums, and profitable improvement in marine zoology, but in the opinion of all who join them a most enjoyable holiday, beneficial alike to health and energies." And certainly plenty of people were prepared to pay 6/- for a ticket (which included luncheon, dinner & tea on board ship), although the other outings that year were so poorly supported that they had to be cancelled.

In 1880, with a new trawl having been bought by subscription, four dredging trips were held, to the Bell Rock, the Scaup Bank, Lunan Bay and Red Head, and the Isle of May. Although some people did attend the outings on land, the Council reported "the dredging expeditions are particularly well-attended; indeed, it would almost seem as if their great popularity would interfere with their scientific value. Good work has, however, been done..."

In 1881 the three dredging expeditions, to St. Andrews Bay, the Bell Rock, and Lunan Bay were again the most popular. By this time the collection of marine invertebrates in the Society's museum was quite large, and included an octopus. The specimens were preserved in "spirits of wine" and unfortunately have not survived to the present day, although some were probably given to other museums and these may still exist. A few specimens even became curiosities in the homes of members!

Two dredging expeditions were made in 1882, to St. Andrews Bay and the Bell Rock. A newspaper report revealed that "a few hours were pleasantly passed in fishing, shooting, and all the usual occupations"!

Of the two expeditions the following year, the first was organised jointly with the Kirkcaldy Naturalists' Society, but was an unlucky trip, involving the loss of a trawl, much seasickness, and few specimens. The second trip was rather more successful, but in 1884 only one dredging trip was made, and none in following years. The reason for this is not clear. Probably loss of novelty value, a succession of days with less than ideal weather conditions, overwork for the organisers, and the amount of the Society's resources then being put towards extravagant exhibitions and conversaziones were all factors in the decline of the dredging trips.

Not until 1896 was an attempt made to revive sea-dredging, when the Society hired the paddle-tug "Renown" for an expedition between the Bell Rock and St. Andrews Bay. Once again the seas were choppy, another dredge was lost, and they failed to catch a "sea-serpent" that had been reported in the area a few days earlier. This seems to have been the Society's final dredging-trip.

Our Society was far from being the only one to undertake such work, and some others such as the Northumberland, Durham and Newcastle-Upon-Tyne Natural History Society were much more ambitious, collecting many thousands of specimens on major expeditions.

Unfortunately, inflation has put such large-scale dredging excursions beyond the pockets of small societies nowadays.

(This article was based on information from the Society's archives, most of which are in Dundee Museum.)

Colin McLeod

#### CROMBIE PARK FROLICS

The fifteen or so members who turned up at Crombie Park on January 3 came well happened up, but the sun shone from a cloudless sky and conditions were like June (well, almost). Teams eagerly listed the birds, trees and flowers - there were one or two weary specimens. When points for extras (such as wearing three pairs of socks) were added, the team comprising Gillian Law, Neil Burford and Treasurer Frances Towns were awarded the valuable prizes. Special thanks to Miss Ella Gracie for supplying soup, garlic bread and sandwiches. Also the sausages which she had inadvertently left behind on the kitchen table. Coffee and tea was in plentiful supply and all voted it a grand start to the year.

## CARSEGOWNIEMUIR QUARRY

In October 1984 Dundee Naturalists' Society was fortunate in receiving an offer of land for management for the encouragement of wildlife. The site is called Carsegowniemuir Quarry and is located on the north slope of Turin Hill, east of Forfar and is about 10 acres in extent. The quarry has a number of large trees which we believe were able to germinate and grow on during the worst years of myxomatosis. Now, however, there is very little sign of regeneration. If the site is left to rabbits and roe deer we might expect the mature trees to die and no more to come on. The challenge to the Society is to take over the management from the rabbits and try to improve the value of the site for a variety of wildlife.

When the Naturalists' Council received this offer they formed a sub-committee to look into the matter. The remit of the Sub-committee is to survey the site and prepare a management plan to present to the Council, the members and to the owners of the site, the Compton family. This plan should indicate our aims for the site, how we would manage it to achieve our aims, what costs would be involved and whether it was feasible, given the members' potential skills and funds available!

The point is that a small sub-committee can only coordinate a study - it can't undertake the whole job itself and this in any case would limit the value of the project to the Society. If we go no further than the production of the basic plan it could widen and deepen our interests in the countryside and give us more contact with those who make their living there. We can only proceed if the membership is interested in taking up this opportunity and is prepared to read up on native habitats, talk to experts in various fields and tackle individually some of the lines of enquiry which open up. The proposal was introduced to the Society on Members' Night and it is hoped that this article will remind members what is involved.

The Sub-committee has thought about some of the possible problems of the site but feel that the unique opportunity to try our hand at actually managing a site and making the decisions about it would make it well worth tackling the problems. After two brief visits it has already posed some interesting questions which we could pursue. The most frequent tree on the site is willow, followed by ash and rowan. There are very few birch. A large carpet of crosswort, along with the h and the lack of birch suggests that the soil may be slightly alkaline. The site has four ponds but no alder; there is also no hazel. Are these plants missing because they have difficulty distributing their seed or does the soil or climate not suit them? These are the sort of questions we could investigate.

So far we visualise the necessity for:

1. A reliable survey grid system for plotting existing plants and animals and to show change throughout future years.
2. We would like members to take on the organisation of surveys of groups - such as bird territories, insects and plants and to make suggestions for possible enhancement of the habitat for these groups. We might ask outside experts for advice on surveying difficult groups but the aim would be to learn the necessary skills and tackle as much as possible ourselves.
3. We need information on defences against rabbits and deer.
4. A soil survey might reveal answers to some of the mysteries of the site if we can gain the necessary expertise to carry this out and to interpret the results.

5. We would need advice on encouraging natural regeneration or on germinating native seeds and growing them on ourselves for planting - if we decide planting is necessary.
6. Research into the history of human activities at the site might yield clues to the natural history and widen the interest of the site to members.

Some of these activities would have to get under way quite quickly because the basic management plan should probably be ready by the end of the next growing season - possibly November should be the deadline. We have a lot of new skills to learn in that time! I look forward to it and hope you feel the same.

In the spring the Sub-committee propose to organise a members' group visit to Carsegowniemuir and to nearby quarries which have better established tree and ground cover vegetation - to help assess the possibilities.

The Sub-committee wish to involve as many members of the Society as possible in this project. It is not necessary to be on the Sub-committee to initiate studies of the site. If you let me know of any particular line of research you would like to undertake I shall publicise the fact to other members and try to arrange transport to the site. The Sub-committee would also welcome notes on books or snippets of information which might prove useful.

Of course, the management plan may show that it is not feasible for the Society to take over Carsegowniemuir Quarry, but even if this is the case, we will have gained very valuable experience which might be applied to other sites in future, and the plan would be helpful to the landowner in managing the site.

#### MEMBERS OF THE CARSEGOWNIEMUIR SUB-COMMITTEE, JANUARY 1985

|            |  |
|------------|--|
| Convener   | Mrs. Margaret G. Duncan,<br>37 Windsor Street,<br>Dundee<br>(Tel. 67479) |
|            | Brian Allan  |
|            | Colin R. McLeod  |
|            | Miss Ruth Arnold   |
|            | Alastair J. Fraser   |
|            | Angus Wildlife Support Group (SWT) member (to be nominated).             |
| Consultant | Alf Robertson  |

M.G. Duncan

#### LOOKING AHEAD

Plans are well ahead for the new season's excursions. First, on 27th April, Hamish Petrie will lead us to Stonehaven and Dunnottar, and on 11th May we are again up the coast with Dr. Jones at Carlingheugh. The spring weekend starts on 17th May. On 1st June vice-president Eileen Kidney is in charge to Dalbrack in Glenesk. It's the coast again on 15th June for the wild life of Fowlsheugh, with Matt. Morrison in charge. Brian Allan takes over on 29th June, covering Keltnyburn and Schiehallion. The Edinburgh naturalists join us at Tynninghame on 13th July. Still in July, on 27th, the objective is Glen Fearnach with Treasurer Frances Towns. Dr. and Mrs. Liebscher are leaders to the Water of Leith and Edinburgh Botanic Gardens on 10th August, and on the 24th the destination is Faskally Woods with the McLeods. R.S.P.B. local group organiser Fraser Kiddie introduces us to bird-ringing and shore life on September 7th. A fungus foray takes place at Tentsmuir on 14th September, with Mrs. Margaret Duncan, Matt Morrison winds up the season on October 12th with a visit to Cameron reservoir and the Eden estuary.

he popular experiment of evening get-togethers is repeated, starting Tuesday 28th May, at Balmerino, with Mrs. McClure. Curator Les Bisset will lead us round the University Botanic Gardens on 4th June, and on 13th August Adam Garside and Jim Cook will be leaders at Crombie country park, which will finish with a bring-your-own barbecue.

#### THINKING OF HOLIDAYS?

Among places catering especially for naturalists is the recently established Bodmin Moor Nature Observatory at Winestones Farm, Common Moor, Liskeard, Cornwall. It offers a wealth of flora and fauna. Both north and south coasts are less than an hour's drive, as is the Camel Estuary with its mudflats and sandy beaches. Over seventy bird species breed within three miles of the observatory, and botanically the moor offers tremendous scope. Further details from Mrs. Pollard, our Secretary.



SUMMARY OF ACCOUNTS 15 FEBRUARY 1985

| <u>Income</u>           |                 | <u>Expenses</u>              |                     |
|-------------------------|-----------------|------------------------------|---------------------|
| Brought Forward 15/2/84 | £385.86½        | Stationery                   | £ 29.13             |
| (excluding applicable   |                 | Printing                     | 50.28               |
| to summer outings)      |                 | RSPB - Film Hire             | 27.26               |
| Subscriptions           | 349.00          | Subscriptions -              |                     |
| Badges                  | 6.00            | (a) Scottish Rights of Way   |                     |
| War Stock Interest      | 1.74            | Society                      | £ 2.00              |
| Bank Interest           | 23.09           | Donation                     | <u>2.00</u> 4.00    |
| Donation                | 5.00            | (b) Habitat                  | 5.00                |
|                         |                 | (c) Scottish Wildlife Trust  | 6.00                |
|                         |                 | Insurance                    | 25.00               |
|                         |                 | Museum Rental                | £ 87.40             |
|                         |                 | Less: Recovered from SWT     |                     |
|                         |                 | and RSPB                     | <u>8.04</u> 79.36   |
|                         |                 | University of Dundee         |                     |
|                         |                 | (October/December 1984)      |                     |
|                         |                 | (a) Rental                   | £ 40.00             |
|                         |                 | (b) Hire of Projector        | <u>20.00</u> 60.00  |
|                         |                 | Lecturers' Fees and Expenses | 51.00               |
|                         |                 | RSBI Leaflets                | 2.80                |
|                         |                 | Postage                      | 35.01½              |
|                         |                 | Office-bearers' telephone    |                     |
|                         |                 | expenses                     | 5.75                |
|                         |                 | Miscellaneous                | 9.45                |
|                         |                 | Balance in bank -            |                     |
|                         |                 | (a) Service Account          | £ 3.73              |
|                         |                 | (b) Investment Account       | 376.11              |
|                         |                 | (c) Cheque Account           | <u>- .53</u>        |
|                         |                 |                              | £380.37             |
|                         |                 | Cash in hand                 | <u>- .28</u> 380.65 |
|                         | <u>£770.69½</u> |                              | <u>£779.69½</u>     |

Summer Outings Account

|                            |                |
|----------------------------|----------------|
| Total expenditure          | £1290.25       |
| " income                   | <u>1286.45</u> |
|                            | £ 3.80         |
| Balance from February 1984 | <u>4.00</u>    |
| In TSB Monifieth 15/2/85   | <u>£ - .20</u> |

Spring Weekend Account (Kindrogan)

|                            |                |
|----------------------------|----------------|
| Total expenditure          | £ 731.50       |
| " income                   | <u>726.00</u>  |
|                            | £ 5.50         |
| Balance from February 1984 | <u>44.37</u>   |
|                            | £ 38.87        |
| Bank interest              | <u>3.71</u>    |
|                            | <u>£ 42.58</u> |