

Dundee Naturalists' Society

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Hon President	Dr. J. Berry
President	Mr. Adam Ritchie
Hon Secretary	Mrs. E. McClure, 3, Clive Street, Dundee Tel: 44461
Editor	Mr. R.T. McLeod, 65 Johnston Avenue Dundee. Tel: 825427

FORMER EXCURSION SECRETARY MISS DOROTHY FYFFE

One of the acknowledged pleasures of Membership of Dundee Naturalists' Society is the Summer programme with its wide variety of outings from April to September. These have increased in number and in interest in the last eight years. These years were in the hands of our Excursion Secretary Dorothy Fyffe. The members reacted almost with shock, when they heard in late August that Dorothy felt the time had come to be, "just a member on the outings." We realized what a splendid job had been done, as we thought of the planning of buses, the collecting of cash, (latterly large sums, due to inflation) the fine art of getting the right size of bus or buses for constantly fluctuating numbers and the arrangements for teas. The initial shock having registered a desire to show our thanks followed. The members contributed generously and Dorothy was presented on Tuesday October 13 by Mr. Ritchie, our President, with a china ornament of a squirrel, which she had chosen, and a gold wristlet watch. We hope she will be able to have many happy hours on excursions, "as just a member."

(A WORD FROM DOROTHY)

May I have a few lines in the bulletin to thank you for the beautiful gifts received when I retired as excursion secretary? I have very much enjoyed carrying out these duties, but the success of the outings has been entirely due to the co-operation I received from yourselves, the council members and the staff of A & C McLennan.

Thank you,

Best Wishes,

Dorothy Fyffe.

1983 EXCURSION SECRETARIES

Two gallant ladies, Mrs. Ina Fraser and Mrs. Betty McBride have stepped into the breach and are arranging their first programme. We welcome them and thank them.

We could perhaps show our appreciation of the good work Excursion Secretaries do in three ways:

1. Firm Booking in time
2. Cancellations in time
3. Minimum use of the telephone.

OUTINGS

Good resolution for 1983: No one to be left behind !!

By a remarkable series of unforeseen circumstances last summer members were left behind on three occasions, - ladies in each case. On our successful boat trip to Inchcolm, we returned to South Queensferry to learn that one member was still on the island. Luckily, the boat was making an afternoon run, and Mrs. Crusoe rejoined the party safely later.

Then, in Glensesk, two ladies flinched from the moorland crossing and made a late decision to turn back. But the bus had already left for the rendezvous in Glenclova. So the two had to face the road and the miles to home by a mixture of hoofing it, lifts and phoning for transport.

Our Wednesday afternoon outing was a success - except that the bus for Alyth Den was heading up Lindsay Street when the Arbroath contingent were scurrying round the corner - just too late.

LECTURE PROGRAMME

The 1982 winter season had a good send-off with the husband-and-wife team of Margaret and Fred Duncan. Mrs. Duncan showed excellent slides of fungi while her husband exercised his photographic skills on clouds and skies. Mr. Bob Mitchell, back from remote China, used two cameras on October 26 to describe his journey and the hosts of marvellous flowers he found. November 9 was our joint meeting with the Scottish Wildlife Trust which took the form of a promotion evening for the World Wildlife Fund, with Mrs. M. Davidson in charge. Mr. Peter Kinnear, Nature Conservancy Council Warden at Tentsmuir, showed us his slides of Falkland Islands birds on November 23, followed by Dr. C. North with his extensive knowledge of wild orchids on December 7. Members' night on January 11 was an entertaining evening of slides of all subjects shown by Misses Seymour and Doig, Mrs. J. Ingram, Mrs. P. McLeod, and Messrs. Hamish Petrie, A. Fraser, W. Milne, and J. Davidson. Members were to the fore again on January 25, with Mrs. Joan Thomson (Iceland), Brian Allan (French Alpine flowers) and Jim Cooke (from dampest south-west Ireland). Mr. Chris Eatough had progress to report of the Montrose Basin Reserve on February 8, and Dr. S. Hubbard enthralled our joint meeting with the R.S.P.B. branch on February 22 in describing the University expedition to Trinidad. The lecture season was wound up on March 8 by Mr. A.D. McAdam with his lucid description of the geology of the Lothians.

LOOKING AHEAD

The council has again arranged an attractive programme for the coming season. After a geological prowl of Angus with Chris Dingwall on April 23, we will take the forest trail in the woodlands around Loch Tummel on May 7. It's back to the coast on 4th June, from Boddin round Scurdyness. Then comes a botanical survey on Mount Blair on 18th June, and a sail to the Bass Rock and its teeming birds on 2nd July, followed by a ramble in Glen Fincastle on 16th July. On 30th July comes a visit to Ben Lawers. August attraction is an outing to Loch of the Lowes and a ramble up the glen from Birnam to Rumbling Bridge on the 13th. Glen Muick is next on the programme, on August 27. A coastal walk from Boarhills to Fife Ness takes place on September 10 and the outdoor season winds up with a fungus foray in Templeton Woods on 24th September.

In addition, two mid-week outings have been arranged - to Kinnordy bird reserve and Caddam Woods on Wednesday May 25, and the coastal path from St. Monans to Pittenweem on July 6.

WHERE WERE YOU?

Where were all the Naturalists' Society members when "Wild Watch" was recorded for B.B.C.'s Radio Scotland on January 27? Of the rather meagre audience in the Art Gallery only about a dozen were Naturalists. Not many had responded, either, to Adam Ritchie's appeal for questions to be handed in. The panel, including our own Alf Robertson, provided an entertaining half hour.

A sub-committee has been drawing up notes to assist leaders of our outings. One suggestion is that efforts should be made to list the plants or birds, etc., seen on the ramble. It would be helpful if members got together on this. Two or three friends with a reference book could enjoy listing the flowers.

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While the Naturalists' Society has been considering organising a nature reserve, Dundee Tree Group has been active in a similar direction. Members who were planting trees round the perimeter of Michelin's huge factory site at Drumgeith had noticed a pond and a stretch of wetland where ducks, snipe and other birds were feeding. The group suggested to Michelin that this was a perfect nature reserve, private and secure behind chainlink fences, and offered to plant alders and willows, etc., to improve the habitat. Michelin accepted the offer of help, and a few members combined to plant scores of willow cuttings (provided by the University Botanic Garden) on the wetland, with some birches and rowans on the northern slope. Alders will be added in the spring. Even while they worked, the "Treemen" (and woman) observed pheasants, mallard and snipe.

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THE FIFE COAST -- 24 JULY 1982

The outing to Fife last summer was to Elie Harbour and Shell Bay. The weather was glorious: there was a bright summer sun in a blue sky, strewn with a handful of high cirrus clouds. It was very warm and a light sea-breeze blew now and then. We spent a rewarding morning at Elie Harbour unearthing a wealth of wildlife. The tide was out and the shallow pools left behind were teeming with life. Those who preferred dry land explored the surrounding dunes where there was a large variety of wild flowers to be found and a spectrum of butterflies to be seen.

We were next bussed to Shell Bay where we had our lunch (here too the air was full of butterflies mostly common blue and six-spot burnet (a moth). After a lazy lunch hour we moved off, following the beach for a short while to a point from where our track began to rise. It rose reasonably steeply and we had to watch our step. Plodding steadily upwards, in single file our group was brought suddenly to a halt when one of the party, overcome with heat, decided to discard one or two garments. However, we managed to retain our balance and reached the top, from where we got a most magnificent view of Earlsferry with its backdrop of blue. Our path took us down a grassy embankment, to an area of open links, and across the golf course. Looking back towards the cliffs we saw a beautiful mosaic of wild flowers, of black knapweed Centaurea nigra, agrimony Agrimonia eupatoria, upright hedge parsley Torillia japonica, angelica Angelica sylvestris, field bind weed Convolvulus arvensis, viper's bugloss Echium vulgare, rest harrow Ononis repens, ragwort Senecio jacobaea (which we had noted was hanging thick with cinnabar moth caterpillars) and a host of others.

A leisurely stroll then took us through Earlsferry and to the hotel where our party were having tea. We boarded the bus for the homeward leg, after what had been a lovely day, and settled down for a tranquil run home. However, we suffered a setback as the bus was unable to enter the main road, since the exit to the car park was so steep. The front of the bus dug into the roadway making cuts into the tarmac, and so to lighten the load we were asked to leave the bus. Thereafter the driver returned to the carpark, and with much manoeuvring managed to reverse the bus out. After giving the driver a cheer we all re-embarked and from then on had a pleasant journey home.

Gillian Law.

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WEDNESDAY AFTERNOON OUTING TO ALYTH DEN. - 9TH JUNE 1983

Thirty three Naturalists boarded the bus at Lindsay Street for an afternoon's outing to Alyth Den. The day was grey and coolish but the travellers were of an optimistic frame of mind and hoped the sun would appear as the bus journeyed inland away from the cloudy east coast. But although in this they were disappointed, nevertheless it was good to be out of doors and into the countryside on a dry June day.

Alyth met us banked with rhododendrons and showered with lilacs and laburnums. The village had its usual tidy, well-scrubbed look, but wore a Sunday air - after all twas Wednesday half day. When the bus parked in the Den it interrupted a cricket match being played by one man, one boy and five dogs !

The Burn Weir running through the Den was low but we could see small fishes darting about in the clear brown water. One of the watchers with piscatorial expertise said that they were trout and that there were also stone fly nymphs, caddis fly larvae and fresh water shrimps - surely a healthy burn!

Wild flowers there were in abundance and Mrs. Methven and Hamish made a list of 63 different kinds whilst those of us not so knowledgeable had a simple enjoyment in merely looking, recognising some, guessing at others and shaking our heads at the many "dinnaken" varieties. An eagle eye spotted a rarity, the Bird's Nest Orchis.

Birds - the ubiquitous blackbird was there, a chaffinch, heard but not seen, a wagtail flitting about the stones in the burn and a dipper.

Beasties and insects weren't all that numerous, but some of the party who took an overgrown rutted path at the top of the Den saw lots of clouded border moths, some slugs and many snails (Candidula intersecta).

But it was primarily a day of trees and, thankfully, mostly deciduous ones. Beech predominated and there was one specimen which drew oohs and aahs. Cathedral like, it stood in its own clearing and one wondered at its strength to draw up enough water to supply its myriads of leaves. When Thomas Hardy wrote in one of his poems

"And the May month flaps its glad green leaves like wings
Delicate filmed as new-spun silk"

surely he meant the beech. But of course there were plenty of others - oak, ash, sycamore, a hazel copse, rowan, birch, hawthorn, chestnut, willow. And there was quite a bit of regeneration but unfortunately the rabbits (or roe deer?) had debarked some of the saplings so putting an end to any hope of their maturing. Alan Mitchell, the tree expert, would have been happy as there wasn't one copper beech in the Den ". . . that dark, blackish-purple colour which disfigures so much of our landscape .. grossly overplanted..". But outside the Den there was one such magnificent copper beech, each leaf as far up as one could see, ruined by the aphids and sticky with honeydew. Would it recover? or would it remain leaf disfigured for the rest of the season? (Jim Cook's opinion was that drought might have been the cause - not necessarily the aphids).

Departure time came and all returned safely and happily having enjoyed a pleasant and leisurely afternoon.

Lorna Cowper.

P.S. Members may have noticed many things that have been omitted here owing to the ignorance of the writer!

IT WAS TOUGH IN GLENESK

Our moorland walk in Glensesk was so tough that the bus got lost in Dundee before we found the Forfar road! Under grey skies we tramped past the castle ruins and paused to examine the old gravestones at the foot of Loch Lee. After a very few miles we spread out over the rocks by a burnside for lunch as the first heavy drops fell. On past the Falls of Unich, and up the steep rocky pass to the moors. Here a wasps' nest was spotted, and a peregrine and an eagle were reported in the murky sky.

At the Falls of Damff (or should it be Damp?) all cagoules were in evidence and it was a hard ca' along the burn. Eventually it was clear that there was no dry crossing and a wide, stone-studded stretch was chosen for the ford, but at least two ladies (both over '21) came to grief. Next came a long drag uphill through peat bogs and wet heather into the mist. On Green Hill we gathered to be counted and to wait for stragglers before comparing compass readings. Then we straggled down the hillside to Clova where our bus was waiting with the dry, happy gang who had opted not to undertake the moorland crossing. Members who succeeded, however, were recommended for a medal, but did not get it. The wet day and strenuous journey rather spoiled any attempts to botanise seriously.

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ON THE SUNNY SHORES OF THE FORTH

We had Mediteranean weather for our "voyage" of 29th May. All agreed that a journey through Fife by double-deck bus was scenically delightful, and the trip by Maid of the Forth from South Queensferry over smooth waters to Inchcolm was equally memorable. With just two hours ashore there was just time to ramble round the twin hills and glance through the abbey ruins on the lower isthmus. It was possible to lunch while watching the seals basking on the rocks and the ducks feeding in the shallows. Back to the mainland we set off along the shore path through Dalmeny park, passing Barnboogle Castle and Dalmeny House. We passed through woodlands of varying ages, with many wild flowers but saw no rare species. It was over the Almond in the tiny ferry boat to Cramond, where the little cafe was soon swamped by ramblers tasting the excellent ice-cream. There was time for some to explore the Almond, which once was a busy port, before joining the bus.

* * * *

The sun shone throughout our excursion to Struan on 8th May. The first stage was a climb through larch woods alongside the Falls of Bruar. Soon after leaving the river most of the party found picnic places in the heather before carrying on through the woods - mostly half-grown larch, with Scots pine as we neared the open moors. An unexpected treat on the open hill was the sight of a large herd of deer, variously estimated at 200 to 400. They milled about uncertainly and Hamish was able to get near enough to take a slide. After a stretch of bare moorland, the track entered the Blair Castle grounds and we were able to admire the enormous firs and spruces. It was a Duke of Atholl, of course, who was responsible for the first large scale planting of larch in Scotland.

* * * *

Warden Chris Eatough was our guide when we went to Montrose Basin on 18th September. In pleasant, mild conditions we lingered along the embankment, spotting insects (small copper butterfly and shield beetle were among those reported) and numerous flowers. Swans and ducks were numerous and Mr. Eatough brought us up to date with his work on the reserve. Every few minutes a large salmon leapt clear out of the water, but this is one reserve where angling, wild-fowling, water sports, and bird protection all seem to fit in harmoniously.

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RESERVED FOR WHOM?

May 1979 A 2p.m. business meeting in Manchester. This usually meant a half-hour flight from Edinburgh to Manchester Airport, followed by a rather longer bus run into the centre of Manchester. But I could go by car with Margaret, and if we started early enough we could call first at the Croall-Irwell valley, the site in the midst of Greater Manchester where there were said to be orchids by the thousand.

The site is none too easy to find, but we had time for a quick survey. We didn't see the Orchis morio we'd hoped for, but everywhere new leaf growth gave the promise of a wonderful display of other orchids in a few weeks. We found Blue-eyed-grass (*Sisyrinchium bermudiana*) in opening bud, and even some adder's tongue fern. A really amazing place. The surface of the site has numerous small hummocks, formed long ago by the dumping of loads of alkaline waste. Over and around some of these hummocks were the tracks of motor cycles. There were one or two motor cyclists there enjoying the delights of traffic-free open space in the middle of Greater Manchester. They kept to the tracks, and did no apparent harm to the wonderful plants, of which they were doubtless quite unaware.

June 1979 We just had to come back, four of us this time. What a wonderful sight it was. The blue-eyed-grass had almost finished flowering, but the orchids were magnificent - *Dactylorhiza incarnata*, *purpurella*, *fuchsii*, *Gymnadenia conopsea*. There was broomrape. The scent of clover was everywhere. The adder's tongue was still there - and so were the motor cyclists.

June 1982 We were heading for the ring of motorways that circles round the west side of Manchester, when we decided to call again at the Croall-Irwell valley. We knew it had been made officially a Nature Reserve - what did that mean? We soon found out. At every entrance steel frames had been erected, designed to allow entry to pedestrians but not to motor cycles. Within the site there were cycle tracks everywhere. Here and there a flower still struggled to survive, but the whole place was a mockery of its former glory. Presumably, the experts expect that with the passage of years, free from motor cycling, the site will recover, to be a place of wonder in the midst of a great industrial area. But, can you hear those neighbours chatting as they pass by the site - "Eh - what a shame they've stopped the bikes getting in. What fun the lads had there, and never did harm to anyone."

Bob Philip.

SUMMARY OF ACCOUNTS 15.2.83

<u>Income</u>	<u>£</u>	<u>P</u>	<u>Expenses</u>	<u>£</u>	<u>P</u>
Brought Forward	550.87		Bulletin	46.97	
Advance to Loch Awe Weekend	31.00		Stationery	4.51	
Subscriptions	219.50		Printing	37.48	
Badges	3.00		Printing - Plant record sheets	63.00	
War Stock Interest	1.74		Wildlife Society -		
Bank Interest	40.31		(a) Film Hire	£14.05	
Loch Awe credit balance	10.64		(b) Half Share advt.)	£15.75	29.80
Summer outings credit -			Scottish Rights of Way subn.		2.00
(a) Saturday outings £6.35)			Habitat subscription		3.50
(b) Wednesday outing 1.25)	7.60		Insurance		25.00
	<u>864.66</u>		Museum Rental		82.30
	<u>=====</u>		Lecturers' Fees and expenses		49.00
			Postage		44.77
			Office-bearers' telephone expenses		14.79
			Balance in bank -		
			(a) Investment A/C. £454.81)		
			(b) Cheque Account 6.23)		461.04
					<u>864.66</u>
					<u>=====</u>

Summer Outings

(a) Saturday outings:		(b) Wednesday outing:	
Total Income	£1719.80	Total Income	£50.25
Total Expenditure	1713.45	Total Expenditure	49.00
	<u>£ 6.35</u>		<u>£ 1.25</u>
	<u>=====</u>		<u>=====</u>