

# Dundee Naturalists' Society

Instituted 1874



**Bulletin No 20 1995**

# DUNDEE NATURALISTS' SOCIETY ANNUAL BULLETIN No 20 1995

Hon President	Dr John Berry
Hon Vice Presidents	Mr James D Boyd (Obituary on p4) Dr Derek A Robertson
President	Mr James K Cook (to March 1996)
Vice Presidents	Mrs Margaret G Duncan Mr Gordon Maxwell
Hon Secretary	Mr Doug Palmer, 48 Panmure Street, Monifieth, Dundee (01382 533563)
Hon Treasurer & Membership Secretary	Mr Brian Allan, 18 Grangehill Drive, Monifieth, Dundee (01382 533132) (to March 1996)
Excursion Secretary :	Mrs Marjory Tennant, 39 Balgillo Road, Broughty Ferry, Dundee (01382 480034)
Bulletin Editor	Mrs Anne Reid, 2 East Navarre Street, Monifieth, Dundee (01382 532486)

## CONTENTS

President's Report :	Page 2
Obituaries	Page 3
Winter Meetings 1995	Page 5
Summer Outings 1995	Page 10
Autumn Meetings 1995	Page 20
Members' Reports & Articles .	Page 24

The Bulletin cover illustration is by Leonore Goodliffe nee Fullerton and shows a selection of our area's alpine plants, including the Society's emblem the Dwarf Cornel. Other illustrations by Anne Reid, Mary Reid, Jim Cook, Doreen Fraser and Artfile

## EDITORIAL

This is the first full year that the Bulletin has run for the calendar year, and also my first time as editor. Thanks to all members who have submitted articles and reports, it makes Bulletin production much easier, especially for a novice! Heartfelt thanks to Brian Allan for teaching me to use the computer, and to Doug Palmer for his help and for typing in some of the articles for me.

Contributions for the next Bulletin, both articles and line drawings, are always welcome and may be submitted at any time during the year.

Anne Reid

## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

This year we are able to look back with warm memories, in more ways than one, at the exceptional summer. As a result our usual series of summer outings went very well indeed. Our excursions ranged widely over central Scotland and were well supported by the membership. Although the weather wasn't kind to us on the Oban weekend it was enjoyed nevertheless. Another significant feature of the outings was that the benefits of leadership in depth became apparent. There were three last-minute changes of leaders (a record for your Society that no-one wishes to repeat) and yet we were able to find equally competent replacements and all the outings went without a major hitch. I must thank all those Council members who were able to help at very short notice.

So far the winter meetings have been universally excellent and well attended. Our usual room, T9, has been refurbished and much improved and, although there have been no problems recently, there may be a need for a projector at some time in the future. The speakers during the first half of the winter session have been very good and we intend to maintain that standard.

A new venture for your Society was that we acquired our first computer, mainly for use by the secretary and bulletin editor, but also for flora and fauna records and for other society pastimes. No-one can say that we don't keep up with the trends! The finances came from three sources: a generous bequest of £300 from Peggy Fraser, our own fund-raising efforts which raised another £300 and an excellent grant of £600 from Scottish Natural Heritage, for which we are very grateful. The funds were topped up by two car-boot sales. I must thank all members who contributed so much and who helped, but especially Brian Allan and Doug Palmer who ran the show. Both again were deeply involved in obtaining the grant and in selecting the machine. The Society is very grateful to all involved.

Having run a very successful stand at the Dundee Flower Show two years ago, it was decided that this would be a good year to repeat the venture. Unfortunately the weekend coincided with the monsoon that broke the summer's drought. We desperately needed the rain but not just then! Even so, the show was well attended and our stand generated a lot of interest that may be translated into new members.

Last year we ran two winter morning outings as a trial venture. Since they were so well supported the Council decided to include the two this year in the official programme. The late autumn walk was to Invergowrie and, as you will see from the report later on in this bulletin, was very well supported indeed. Its success confirms the need for an occasional outing in the winter, to maintain interest, although the pub lunch afterwards seems to be highly attractive to members as well!

Our membership just tops 200 and we must keep working to maintain that figure. With the Society that size we are able to keep the membership fees down as low as practicable and guarantee good attendances at meetings. We should always consider new activities to attract more people. In years gone by we used to take high teas after many outings but in the end the prices rose too much. In an effort to promote social contact we planned a social evening in a local hostelry. A buffet supper and entertainment were provided. (Report in next year's bulletin.) However, as always, the best way to attract new members is by word of mouth and all members can help with this. If anyone knows of friends, relatives, neighbours or workmates who may be interested, the Council asks you to bring them along. Remember, the winter meetings are free and do not commit visitors to anything.

Considerations of safety on outings and excursions of all kinds are another topic that has been exercising your Council this past year. We may have to tighten up our procedures and improve our practices but all members should be aware of their own responsibilities as well. This topic is discussed in more detail in an article later on in this bulletin. (page 25)

This past year the local branch of the Scottish Wildlife Trust opened their excellent new visitor centre at Montrose Basin and we congratulate them warmly on their efforts. We will be visiting the centre on an outing later this year. Looked at from another point of view, however, it is a sign of the times, when even the hills and wild places in the open spaces of Scotland will become far more organised. Our freedom to roam widely will be diminished. Visits to Wales and south-west England confirm the view and show us where the future lies - regulated estates, visitor centres and tourist attractions of all kinds and even regulated parking all over the place. To me, our future lies in closer co-operation with all manner of groups and official bodies. We have already made a good start, with SNH and the District Council, for example, and no doubt this trend will continue.

I have greatly enjoyed my term as President of your Society and am very grateful to all those who have contributed so much, particularly the two Secretaries, Doreen Fraser and Doug Palmer, our excellent treasurer, Brian Allan, and superb excursion secretary, Marjory Tennant, the two bulletin

editors, Jenny Allan and Anne Reid, and our two Vice-Presidents, Margaret Duncan and Gordon Maxwell. It has been a pleasure to work with all of them and all of you. My sincerest thanks.

Jim Cook

## OBITUARIES

Sadly, three notable local naturalists have died in the last year, and, though not all were members of the society, they were well known to many of the members.

### GEORGE CRICHTON

We were all saddened to learn that George Crichton, the Brechin ornithologist, had passed away on 27th September 1995 after a long illness.

He was born and bred in Brechin where he was a plumber to trade, but birdwatching was his hobby and passion for more than 40 years. He gained a tremendous knowledge of the wildlife of Angus and eventually put it to work. He began escorting tour groups around our local wildlife sites. With the able assistance of Mary his wife, he combined business with pleasure and provided comfortable accommodation for their guests along with home cooking, fully appreciated after a day's birdwatching with George in the Angus Glens, which he knew so well.

George's contribution to ornithology in Angus is widely acclaimed; he was Angus Bird Recorder for some years, and his "The Birds of Angus" (1976) is still the only publication on the area. He was a well-loved character and was held in high esteem by all those privileged to know him, his warm personality and affability shone through whenever one met him. He will be greatly missed by all who knew him.

Bob McCurley

### T.M. CLEGG

Many members will have been saddened to read of the death in July of Michael Clegg after a long period of illness.

I was fortunate to be in Dundee in the late 1960s and the 1970s when Mike, as Jim Boyd's deputy in the museum, was very active in widening and developing interest in all aspects of the natural history of this area. His knowledge was wide and his gifts as a communicator and teacher unrivalled. He will long be remembered by many when at his best: as a larger than life character, on a windswept coast or hillside, with binoculars and camera round the neck, cigarette and food firmly gripped in the hands, holding forth to a group of followers in a strong, clear Yorkshire voice, on the almost unbelievable variety of wildlife that seemed to parade before him. I will always remember his commentaries as we watched the performances of terns, skuas, divers, gannets and the like, wheeling before us off Westhaven as though he had personally drilled them; while at his wellingtoned feet in a rock pool, low-tide life such as swimming- and spider-crabs, rockling or conger eels would appear to await being lifted out for demonstration. It was on occasions such as this that he would stand out as a complete naturalist, and he always attempted to live up to his own definition of such a person: "*A good naturalist is one who is never parted from his food*".

He will also be remembered for his lectures, because of his unique way with words and turns of phrase, and the almost poetic quality with which he described ordinary everyday natural history events; for example, the rates at which slaters passed through a rock pipit feeding on a wall at Broughty harbour, or the interaction between the jaws of a very large ragworm (*Neries virens*) and one of his fingers, near the end of the Balmossie outfall.

Mike learned his natural history as a boy in industrial Yorkshire where there was a very wide variety of flora and fauna to be studied at all times of the year. He was a keen-eyed and very careful observer who always stressed the importance of field notes, and the inclusion not just of lists of what had been seen at a particular site, but also details of date, weather, and what was being done. Many

were the pleasant times I spent with him at his hut at Westhaven with his first wife Jean and their spaniel Brandy, observing, noting, and enjoying everything on view, to partake later, as did many others, of their hospitality at their always 'open' house when the log was made up. It was then that Mike's qualities as a raconteur were much in evidence as the conversation expanded into favourite topics such as politics, brass-bands, history and the Norse sagas. He had a fascination for the Vikings and their sagas which, with special interests in Orkney voles and sea birds, took him and Jean to Orkney every year.

His departure back to the south was a great loss to Dundee, but, through his freelance broadcasting, a gain to a much wider audience in Yorkshire where he lived with his second wife Pat. He kept contact with Dundee by means of frequent visits to his hut, especially when his notes showed that little gulls or sooty shearwaters should be about, and many locals would make the journey to Yorkshire to sign up for his field courses in that county.

Friends and followers from both north and south were greatly pleased to learn that the degree to which Mike's work had enriched their lives was recognised by the award of an honorary doctorate. Michael Clegg will be greatly missed by many, from whom every sympathy will go out to the members of his family.

Bede Pounder

### **JIM BOYD OBE - AN APPRECIATION**

We were saddened to learn of the death, on 15th January 1996, of Jim Boyd, a former Curator of Dundee Museum, and in his earlier days a great supporter of Dundee Naturalists' Society. He arrived in Dundee as Curator in 1949 and remained in post for 33 years. During that time he transformed the museum and organised and encouraged almost a revolution in associated services. One of his philosophies was to take the museum into the community. With that aim he was responsible for encouraging and supporting museum staff in making links with a variety of organisations. One of them was your Society, and we benefited greatly. We were able to make use of one of the museum galleries - complete with paintings - for our winter meetings over many years. The lecture series that he encouraged brought in many members, and his general support greatly encouraged us. In recognition of his efforts he was, deservedly, appointed one of our Honorary Vice-Presidents. We will remain forever in his debt.

Jim Cook

1995 also saw the society lose four more long serving members, ironically three lived close to each other in Monifieth.

Molly Palmer, wife of our Secretary Doug Palmer, died peacefully in Roxburghe House hospice, after a long illness. Molly often accompanied Doug on our summer outings and to our winter meetings, in fact it was Molly who first persuaded Doug to join our Society. She was always good company, was very popular with a great sense of fun and loved walking and the 'outdoor life'. For almost a year Doug looked after her devotedly, scarcely leaving her side. We will all miss her in the Society and Jenny and I will miss a very dear personal friend.

Frances Stewart was, like Molly Palmer, often to be seen at our Society's outings together with her daughter Helen Law and grandchildren. Indeed it was Frances who encouraged her family to join our Society and her granddaughter Gillian Law who, prior to leaving the area to study, was an enthusiastic member of Council. Despite latterly being unable to attend any outings, Frances always took an interest in our society, looking forward each year to reading of our progress in the annual Bulletin.

We will also all miss Margaret Edwards who was until quite recently to be seen on most of the Society's trips and weekends. Despite, in latter years, becoming profoundly deaf she was always keen to join us and to enjoy the trips we arranged. Margaret's last outing with us was to Skye in 1994.

Like Margaret, Agnes Webster, who also died in 1995, enjoyed the weekend outings and especially the new year barbecues, where this year (1996) at Tentsmuir she was sadly missed.

Brian Allan

# WINTER MEETINGS 1995

## WINTER BARBECUE

2nd January

The winter barbecue was held in Dorothy Fyffe's garden in Carnoustie. It was a cold but sunny day, just right for a bracing walk along the beach and a return to hot soup, mulled wine and lots of other goodies. A great time was had by all. A group photograph was taken at the outset by a 'Courier' photographer which duly appeared in the press. A quiz prepared by Dorothy and Doris was undertaken with varying success, and quite a lot of aluminium cans (ex hogmanay) were collected en route, helping to swell the collection of the Tree Group. Specimens of **seaweeds** and other seashore life were identified and analysed and then everyone went home about 2.30 p.m., by which time it had got very cold indeed.

Doreen Fraser

## TAIWAN

Sidney Clarke 17th January

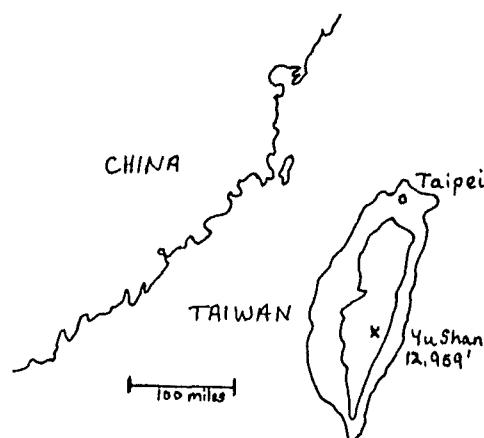
Sid Clarke is well known to our Society since his talk two years ago on the Wild Orchids of Scotland and at sometime previous to that a talk on wildlife photography. Sid is Principal Photographer at the Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh and as well as carrying out his photographic duties he has become involved with a project to collect seed from endangered species of conifer. The Conifer Conservation Project is funded, in the main, by a donation from the Sainsbury Group and Sid and his colleagues firstly collected plant material from Oregon and California in North America. A year later, in the autumn of 1992, an expedition to Taiwan was mounted to collect seed from 38 species of conifer which it was felt could adapt to our European climate.

Taiwan is situated 100 miles from the east coast of communist China, and is approximately 200 miles long north to south and 85 miles wide, roughly the size of Scotland. It has a spine of mountains down the centre, many in excess of 10,000 ft. The east of the island dips steeply to the Pacific Ocean while the west slopes more gently to a fertile plain where the majority of the 20 million population live.

The five member team met in Hong Kong and after a few days collecting in the New Territories headed to Taipei, the capital of Taiwan, to meet their hosts from the Taiwan Forestry Institute. The expedition was to take the form of 2½ weeks in the north of the island followed by 2½ weeks in the sub-tropical south. The habitat for the first part was dominated primarily by **tree ferns** and **dwarf bamboo** and some of the flowering plants noted included *Polygonum cuspidatum*, one of 32 polygonum species found here, a small white

everlasting, *Anaphalis margaritacea*, and a beautiful small tree *Hibiscus mutabilis*. Swards of **bamboo** often encroach into forest areas where trees have died through fire or other causes. The party stayed at outstations belonging to the Forestry Institute and each evening was spent pressing herbarium specimens, and recording the seed collected that day. Moving on to an area near to the spectacular multiple cascade waterfall near Lishan, *Impatiens uniflora*, *Aralia decaisneana*, a prickly shrub, and *Ilex micrococca* were recorded.

Sid explained that since he was also a bird watcher he made special note of any new birds seen. These included **red-headed tit**, **eastern turtle doves**, and the endemic **Formosan laughing thrushes**. There are 64 poisonous snakes in Taiwan with one having the frightening name of the **100 pacer**. Presumably, after you are bitten, you expire after a mere 100 paces, a countryside not for the faint hearted.



The conifers collected during the trip included *Abies kawakamii*, *Cunninghamii konishii*, *Tsuga chinensis* var *formosana* and *Chamaecyparis obtusa* var *formosana*. Cones were collected from all of these and many more, the seed checked for viability, and then dried using special drying bags and packed ready for onward transportation to RBGE. The physical collection of the cones was carried out either with long poles with cutters at the end, or by professional tree climbers who accompanied the team on their collecting sorties.

Before returning to their base in Taipei, some alpine and sub-alpine plants were seen. These included *Triptospermum lanceolatum*, a member of the gentian family; *Disporopsis arisanensis*, an endemic lily; *Viola philippica* and a member of the Diapensia family, *Shortia exappendiculata*, also an endemic. We were told that there are 23 native species of 'ginger' on Taiwan and 282 species of orchid; one of the most spectacular being *Calanthe formosana*.

The second part of the trip was to follow the Yu Shan trail which was to take the members to the 13,000 ft summit, the highest mountain in east Asia. Since the location and more particularly the altitude where any plant is collected or recorded is of prime importance, the team used a Magellan Satellite Navigation System throughout the expedition to plot their position to within inches. While on the Yu Shan trail a number of birds new to the team were spotted, **large-billed crow**, **vinaceous rose finch**, **Taiwan firecrest**, **Formosan blue magpie** and **little forktail** were the ones described to us in detail. The endemic *Pinus taiwanensis* was one of the main objectives and seed from this rare pine was successfully collected. Other plants of note included *Lilium formosanum*, *Gentiana scabrida* and *Duchesnea indica*.

Before completing his most fascinating lecture Sid showed a number of slides showing some insight into the culture and the architecture of Taiwan, both old and new, and a number of shots of Taiwanese fishermen among the **mangroves** near to Taipei, which in themselves are a fascinating habitat, but alas he had no time to study them in detail.

Brian Allan

## MEMBERS' NIGHT

31st January

Jim Cook compered the showing of the photographic competition entries. The entry categories had changed from the previous year with slides being judged individually (in groups of three in previous years) and an additional 'Joke slide' category. The changed rules had resulted in an increased number of entries which were all of a notably high standard, as commented on by the judges, who were Dr Donald Stewart (photography) and Dr Derek Robertson (wildlife content).

The winning entries were:

British wildlife slide taken in 1994:	Gordon Maxwell
Foreign wildlife slide taken in 1994:	Dr Alban Houghton
Landscape slide taken in 1994:	Margaret Duncan
Joke slide, any year	Brian Allan
Wildlife print taken in 1994:	Dr Alban Houghton

A selection of slides from members followed with Brian Allan as Master of Ceremonies. They were:

Brian Allan	Orchids
Doreen Fraser	New Year Barbecue, Carnoustie
Bob McCurley	Majorca
Gordon Maxwell	Various
Marjory Tennant	Bulgaria
Bede Pounder	Nats Outings
Jim Cook	Nats through the ages
Alban Houghton	Bass Rock

At the end of a thoroughly enjoyable evening Brian Allan thanked all contributors for their photographic efforts.

Anne Reid

## NEW ZEALAND'S OTHER ISLANDS

Dr Dick Byrne 14th February

Dick Byrne is a psychologist working at the University of St Andrews. He took a sabbatical in New Zealand to write a book, "The Thinking Ape", just published, and the illustrated talk was one result of that sabbatical.

The early slides were mainly views of the popular tourist scenery in both the main islands. These included the mountains, water-falls, fjords and glaciers so typical of the South Island, and the products of volcanic activity in the North Island.

The western coast of the South Island is very wet and an abundance of birds and flowers are found. Many of the birds are comparatively "tame" and can often be readily photographed from short range. A characteristic bird of the South Island is the **kea** which is incurably curious and playful.

The North Island is where the main population of Maoris reside. Contrary to public folklore it is believed that most extinctions of New Zealand's endemic species were due to Maori colonisation before white settlers arrived.

The remainder of the talk was about the 'other islands' of the title and the first one visited was Tiritiri Matangi. This is about one hour from Auckland and, following serious environmental damage is now being returned to its natural state with the generous assistance of the New Zealand conservation authorities. Successful reintroductions include the **flax tree**, the **tea tree**, the **North Island robin**, (really a **fly-catcher**), and the **saddle-back** or **waffle bird**.

The next visit was to Little Barrier Island where visits are very strictly controlled in order to maintain its near pristine state. This island is considered to be the closest thing to the natural state of New Zealand in Captain Cook's time. The removal of non-indigenous animals such as feral **cats**, **Polynesian rats** and **opossums** has ensured the survival of such birds as **fan-tailed fly-catchers**, the **North Island tom tit**, the **New Zealand wood pigeon** and the **hawk owl**. The exclusion of **opossums** in particular allows good growth of native plants, particularly the many epiphytes.

Chatham Island was next visited. This is the northernmost of a chain of small islands some 500 miles due east of South Island. Bad weather prevented the party reaching the best sites but many sea birds were spotted including a **grey-backed storm petrel** (a boat passenger) and a **flightless rail**.

Pyramid Island was next. This is a very steep sided conical island and is the only home of the **Chatham albatross**.

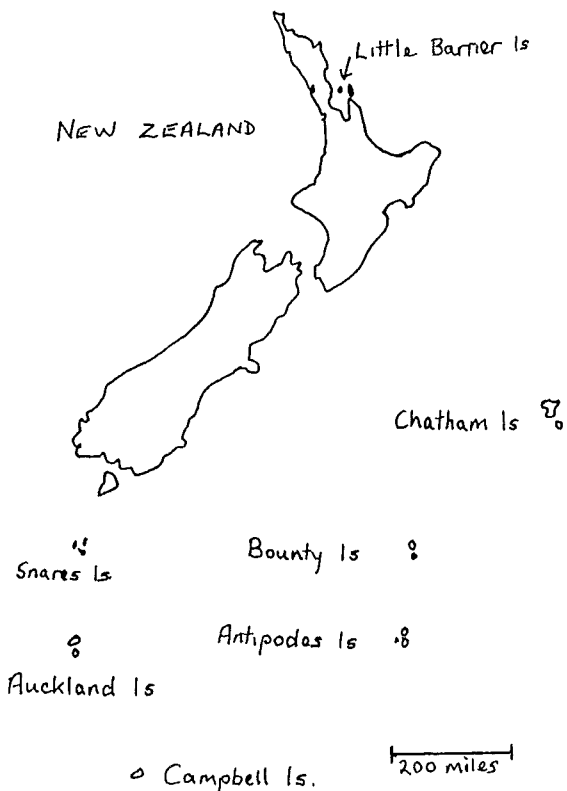
The Bounty Islands are heavily populated with **albatrosses** and **penguins**.

The Antipodes Island Permission was not granted to land here but two types of penguin spotted were the '**erect crested**' **penguin** and the '**rock hopper**'

Snares Island. An endemic species of **crested penguins** (not erect crested) is found here, and large numbers of **sooty shearwaters** also roost on Snares Island.

Auckland Islands. Early attempts to colonise these resulted in imported cats, dogs and goats destroying much of the native wildlife. Birds spotted here included the **Australasian pipit** and the **wandering albatross**, and the islands are also home to a **one-leaved orchid**.

Enderby Island is home to a large **sea-lion** colony and a large number of '**French Blues**' **rabbits**, said to be descended from six rabbits released from a pet shop! Birds included **red-fronted**





**parakeet, giant petrels, double-banded plover, bell-birds**, a sub-species of the **Auckland Islands tom tit**, and a **flightless duck**.

Campbell Island was the last on the tour. This is the most southerly regularly inhabited island and is noted for its large plants, dubbed mega-flora. A species of **horizontal orchid** was found and colonies of **elephant seals** and **sea lions** inhabit the island.

Douglas Palmer

## BIRKHILL SATURDAY WALK 25th February



Lesser celandine

Twelve members gathered in Birkhill on a lovely and sunny, but rather chilly, morning. Jim Cook led the group briskly over to the Roundie to explore its possibilities for wildlife and to admire the environmental improvements. A few **lesser celandines** were showing signs of life and many buds were starting to swell in anticipation, but the keen wind kept the birds out of sight. There were, however, plenty of mosses and lichens and a few troops of fungi, most notably the **winter fungus**, *Flammulina velutipes*.

After nearly an hour we walked along to Birkhill woods to explore the parts that were about to be the subject of an appeals campaign of the Woodland Trust. We admired the health and vigour and sizes of many trees, found a few fungi and looked at the degree of regeneration.

The sun was still bright and encouraged flocks of **tits** and other small birds above our heads. By lunchtime we were all ready for - and had - an excellent bar lunch in the Birkhill Inn.

Jim Cook

## FROM THE OLYMPICS TO YELLOWSTONE A NATURALIST'S VIEW OF N.W. USA Prof James Cormack 28th February

Professor Cormack has visited Seattle many times over the last thirty years, and is well acquainted with the area from the Pacific seaboard, over the Olympic mountains, across the plain to the Cascade mountains and the desert beyond. He is also an excellent photographer and the slides he showed us were a joy to behold.

In springtime millions of **sandpipers** congregate along the shores of Puget sound (a long inlet from the Pacific) with only a low fence between them and the crowds who come to see them. The coniferous forest on the lower slopes of the Olympics reaches almost to the shore line and even the off-shore rock stacks have their topping of trees. There is a heavy rainfall on the coast, 200 inches in a year. Climbing up through the forest to the open scree and loose gravel plains is a tedious business but worth it to see the several endemics including *Gentiana calycosa*, the dwarf rose-red *Allium crenulatum* and especially *Campanula piperi*. **Mountain goats** eat a lot of flora, they were introduced but have now reached nuisance status and are having to be controlled. The meadows on the dry eastern side of the range are ablaze with *Penstemon* and *Aquilegia* in June and there are wonderful views across Puget Sound to the distant North Cascades. *Rhododendron macrophyllum*, the state flower of Washington grows here, and *Arbutus menziesii* with its lovely red-brown trunk, a tree that never seems to be far from salt air. **Whales** are often found in the sound, the **bald eagle** flies overhead, and **sea lions** are in such large numbers that they have to be

removed south by boat to the Californian coast where, of course, they just turn round and make their way slowly back north again. The temperature in the sound is 10° F warmer than in the UK so butterflies are much more active and difficult to photograph; dragonflies are everywhere.

Next we saw some shots around Seattle, lying in the plain between the two mountain ranges. A **nightjar** on the University campus, with a group of students within 5 yards. *Trillium* and *Corallorhiza*, the **twinflower** *Linnaea borealis* and **huckleberries** all grew in the woods where there were **blacktail deer** and some of the tree trunks showed signs of **beaver damage**. Before the 1840s when the first settlers came to Seattle, there were only North American Indians, so it is a comparatively modern city.

We then moved to the Northern Cascades, so called because of their numerous torrents rushing down the mountainsides. By the middle of May they are still deep in snow which lingers until *Rhododendron parviflorum* is in flower with *Cassiope* and *Phyllodoce* growing as profusely as heather, with the pink and white flowers of **blueberries** mingling among them. Again there is a long climb up through the forest with twenty zigzags and no views before coming out onto avalanche talus where **ground squirrels** and **coney**s stay above ground all year without hibernating and *Erythronium montanum*, the graceful **avalanche lily**, blooms close to the melting snow.

The Mt Rainier National Park in the Southern Cascades has fifty different glaciers with Mt Rainier at 14,500 ft. its highest peak. On 1st July, spring still had not come except at the roadsides where there were a few other species of *Erythronium*, and this was only fifty miles from the warmth of Seattle on the coast. **Steller's jay** has a silent flight, so much so that a sandwich in transit from hand to mouth can disappear without warning, hence its other name, the camp robber.

Further south still, Mt. St. Helens blew its top in 1980, losing 1,000 ft of height in the process. When the Cormacks visited in 1986, there was little sign of recovery apart from some growth under the shelter of fallen tree trunks, but already a new cone had grown to 1,000 ft near the crater. Returning in 1994, they found a new lake had formed, called Clear Water Lake, with plenty of wildlife in it, and trees were beginning to regenerate.

Over the crest of the Cascades and coming down eastwards through the **Ponderosa pine** into a much warmer, more continental, climate, there were **swallowtail butterflies** and **tree frogs** with *Dodecatheon* the '**shooting stars**' and *Cypripedium montanum*, one of the **slipper orchids**. Lower down, the **maples** and **cottonwoods** are a riot of colour in autumn, and **Douglas squirrels** can be seen stripping the pine cones of their seeds. Still further down into the grasslands where *Sisyrinchium* and *Calochortus* grow, one hot morning, Professor Cormack was called back by his wife to see what he had unwittingly just walked over. Understandably still shaken by the experience he had only known in retrospect, his slide of the **snake** failed to take in the all important **rattle!**

Out into the Sagebush desert, ash from Mt. St. Helens was spread over a hundred miles to the Columbia river. First they had to cross the dry barren ground where the **wild turkey** didn't seem wild at all, apart from not liking a red Frisby being flung around nearby, and kneeling down to photograph *Lewisia rediviva* on the hot lava field was a rather uncomfortable experience. And so on to Yellowstone, past **bison** in the grass, **moose** standing at the roadside for photographs, and mile upon mile of the locally named **GYCs**, (goddam yellow composites). We saw a few spectacular shots before being whisked back to Seattle for the final slide, a **Calypso orchid** growing in a garden there.

When the lights went up in T9, a somewhat transfixed audience took a while to return to reality, after all the wonders we had seen.



*Erythronium montanum*.  
'avalanche lily'

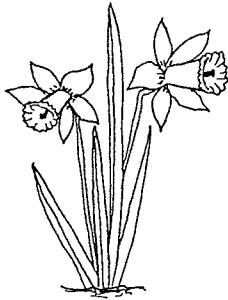
Doreen Fraser

# SUMMER OUTINGS 1995

## BRANKLYN AND KINNOULL HILL

22nd April

For our first outing of the summer season, we went on a grey April morning, to the National Trust garden at Branklyn, Perth. A recent hard frost had savaged some of the **rhododendrons**, but there were carpets of **erythroniums** and **anemones** under the bursting buds of **viburnum** and **magnolia**, birds were singing, and everywhere a promise of things to come.



A thin sun helped us up the steep slope of Kinnoull, with **daffodils** spilling over from neighbouring gardens. Those who made it to the summit were able to look down the cliff on the rare **wild wallflower**, tantalisingly beyond the reach of even a half decent photograph. Some of us went on to the Scottish Rock Garden Club's spring show, where a riot of colour from countless flowering bulbs, both familiar and unfamiliar, awaited us. On the way home we stopped by Walnut Grove and listened for a **hawfinch**, rumoured to be in the area, all in vain. But who cared? It was just great to feel that things were under way again.

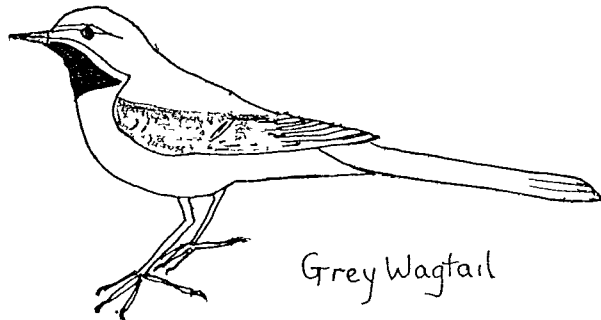
Doreen Fraser

## GANNOCHY GORGE

6th May

The gorge can be a wonderful place to visit in spring and attracted a good bus load of enthusiastic Naturalists. The weather lived up to our hopes. We were fortunate to have a bright sunny day to enjoy the scenery and wildlife and we began botanising before even reaching the site. At the stop in Edzell the leader took the party over to the pine wood to the north and we spread out to look for the leaves of the orchid, **creeping ladies' tresses**. They were rather inconspicuous at this time of the year but before long the eagle eyes of Dorothy Fyffe had found several small patches 20 - 30 yards away from where they had been seen last year. One up for the Naturalists!

At Gannochy our route first took us over the road to the south of the bridge, a new place for the Society to visit, and along beside the river to the old lodge. There was plenty to see. Spring flowers, **violets**, **primroses**, **lesser celandine** all abounded. **Grey wagtails** flitted out from the sheer rocky banks on the other side and **robins** and **blackbirds** sang around us. A patch of lanky etiolated **blaeberry** grew near the dense cover of the path-side **beech** trees but the shade allowed an area of very well-developed cushions of mosses to flourish.



Grey Wagtail

Back north of the road, after lunch, we stopped to inspect the stand of **aspens** and **sanicle** beside the bridge and then walked on to the Rocks of Solitude. The roar of the churning water and clouds of spray over the rough and rounded bare rocks made a fine spectacle. An excellent selection of plants, including **early purple orchid**, **northern marsh orchid**, and even **butterwort**, was located. Soon afterwards a **buzzard** was heard calling overhead. From this point the nature of the river changed, the banks became lower and several **sandpipers** were heard and seen. We were able to see the change in the rocks and the small re-entrant that marked the position of the Great Highland Boundary Fault, one of our principal objectives.

Again the banks became steeper as the party moved into the gorge. We were puzzled at first to hear voices below but then a party of white-water canoeists swept past. The very hard nature

of the highland rocks became evident in this geologically complex area. At least there was a range of plants to find, such as **early purple orchid**, **spleenworts** and **melick grass**. By this time the party was fairly well spread out but all arrived in one piece, and in good time, back at the bus in the layby.

Jim Cook

## RUMBLING BRIDGE TO THE HERMITAGE 20th May

After a short stop in Dunkeld, where **terns** were seen over the Tay and **jackdaws** were much in evidence in the car park, the bus took the party of 29 and dropped us off at the footpath close to Rumbling Bridge. Gordon, who had mistaken the departure time, followed in his car and joined us shortly after!

On the walk through the **oak** woodland towards the river Braan there was a carpet of **woodrush** and scattered patches of **wood sorrel**, **golden saxifrage**, **wood anemone** and **celandine**. Some old **red squirrel** dreys were pointed out. Beside the river, on the water smoothed rocks, a **pied wagtail** was seen and a **treecreeper** crept up and away on a nearby tree trunk.

The river at the bridge itself was comparatively tame. Back in March, on the recce for the trip, it truly lived up to its name of Rumbling Bridge with the road being liberally soaked by spray from the river - hard to believe on a sunny day in May.

In the **hazel** bushes beside the road a newly started **wasps'** nest was found hanging from a branch, and **horse's hoof fungus** was seen on several **birch** trees nearby. **Primroses** decorated the roadside banks, with **cuckoo flower** in the ditches and damp ground.

Lunch was taken on the open field just above the Hermitage woodland, near to the **erratic rocks** probably deposited by the last glaciation. While here a **cuckoo** was heard in the distance and a **buzzard** was seen overhead.

Once in the conifer plantations of the Hermitage we attempted to measure trees by both triangulation and estimation based on a person of known height - me - almost exactly six foot! The results were reasonably consistent by the two methods but this was only suitable where a good sight line for the trees was available. Further down the Hermitage we measured the girth of trees as a comparison of size. Some of the largest planted trees in Britain are found here, including the tallest, a **Douglas Fir** (whose height I failed to write down!!)

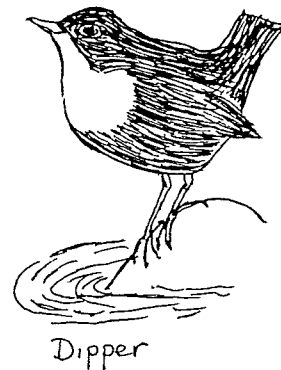
In the conifer woodland a **goldcrest** was seen by some at quite close range, and **coal tits** were glimpsed and heard. Bat and bird boxes had been put in some of the trees near the river. Down near the car park Gordon pointed out where a **dipper** had its nest on a ledge of the railway bridge.

After many people, including George the bus driver, had eaten an ice-cream from the van in the car park we went back into Dunkeld for afternoon tea or a short walk before returning to Dundee.

Anne Reid

## OBAN WEEKEND 2nd to 4th June

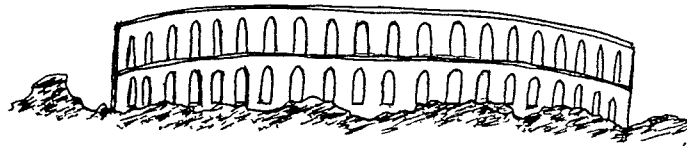
It's wet in the west, you know. Last June we found out - again. The weekend was marked by changes - to the leader, the venues and in the weather, but it was the weather which dominated the proceedings. On the Friday the journey down was a little damp and gave a taste, (or was it a splash?) of things to come. By Saturday morning the rain beat down steadily but it didn't put off our hardy and intrepid band. Most people opted to take the specially-arranged ferry over to the Island of Kerrera. We landed in the rain on the Mount Pleasant jetty and made our way round to the monument to an Oban benefactor at the northern end of the island. In places sheets of **heath spotted orchids** covered the moorlands, and ferns clustered on the rocks. The rain started to ease



off in the later morning as the party rounded the headland of Rubha'a' Bhearnaig (try pronouncing that one!). Several **ravens** came over to inspect us while we inspected the seashore and then walked over to Rubh'Ard an Duine. By this time the rain had stopped, at last, and lunchtime called. Some people in the group walked further down the coast and then had to trek back to reach the jetty but all arrived back in time to catch the ferry back to Oban.

In the afternoon most of the members took the coastal road past the isolated stack of the Dog Stone and round to Dunollie Castle, which yielded good views over towards the islands. We inspected large stands of a range of spring plants beside the road, on Camus Ban sands and the sea caves on the raised beach line. From the caravan site at Ganavan bay a few people walked round Dunollie Beg to join the main road and arrive back in Oban. After a good, and very welcome, dinner in the hotel a few of the keener members made their way up to admire the view from McCaig's Folly.

McCaig's  
folly



Sunday, in contrast, was superb. The coach dropped the party off at Connel Bridge. Bill Gardiner opted to sit beside Loch Etive and watch the ducks on the Falls of Lora under Connel Bridge. Most of the rest walked in bright sunshine south along the minor road beside the Lusragan burn. We turned off onto a hill track and made our way over to Kilvaree and the Black Lochs. It was a very interesting area with good reed beds and patches of native woodland. Birds and plants abounded - a **kestrel**, **ravens**, a **buzzard**, **sedge warblers**, **stonechats**, **orchids**, **sundew**, **sedges**, **butterflies**, several **click-beetles**, and many others. We eventually circled round back to Achlaven and the waiting coach. The complete party left in mid-afternoon for the trip back to Dundee.

Jim Cook

## TENTSMUIR

17th June

It was a fine sunny day, the start of a period of real summer weather, but the outing almost got off to a disastrous start when we found the barrier across the forest path at Kinshaldy to be welded shut. However, the time spent in abortive attempts at effecting an entry for the bus gave Brian Allan an opportunity to find a splendid specimen of **yellow slime mould** at the base of a nearby conifer. The barrier problem had one solution only; a brisk walk of about a mile along the forest path to what should have been the official start point at the Tentsmuir Ice House. Here we saw lots of **cinnabar moths** flitting to and fro over the grass, a welcome sight since June 17th was a rather in-between date for Lepidoptera, being late for some species and too early for others.

Close by the Ice House, a large pond thick with **water crowfoot** was visited and here we saw **amphibious bistort**, more **slime mould** and plenty of the round leaves of **marsh pennywort** along the path. From the pond, we headed coastwards along the path through **birch/willow** scrub towards the wartime concrete arrow and watchtower near the front of the dunes, keeping all the time a sharp lookout for **coralroot** and **northern marsh-orchids**. Both of these were soon found, despite the loss of what would have been a fine specimen of **coralroot**, possibly eaten by the **rabbit** that had sat watching the careful activities of the leader on a previous day's recce, in accurately marking the position of the orchid with sticks and stones. Many more **northern marsh-orchids** were found amongst the 'grey' **cladonia** stabilised dunes and the **creeping willow** in the dune slacks. **Coralroot** was easy to find amongst the **creeping willow**, and especially at one site where they were of such stature as to be visible without the need to drop down on all fours! Although it was nice to make the acquaintance of this not too often seen species, it must be said the visual impression is probably not one that will linger long in the memory. While at the watchtower, several **green woodpecker** yaffles were clearly heard from the direction of the forest while members of the party were listening for the moaning calls of a large group of **common seals** lounging on the sandbanks. Such are the contrasts which make this such an attractive area.

Progress through the dune slacks eventually led us to the mobile dune systems near the beach, where we could see clearly how **marram** and **rosebay willowherb** both go about stabilising the drifting sands to make it possible for species such as **catsear**, **mouse-eared hawkweed**, and diminutive **whitlow-grass** to flourish. A surprise bonus right at the edge of the dune 'cliff' above the beach at one point was the sight of **Scots lovage** in flower. The mobile dunes were followed to Tentsmuir Point where we were able to examine the early stages of salt marsh formation at an extensive area of silt covered ground, thick with tiny **annual seablite** and **glasswort**. This certainly was a day for micro-flora.

From the Point we backtracked a little and moved towards the goat pens to gain access to the forest and a beautiful marshy 'meadow' with scattered **willows**. **Coralroot** growing beneath the **willows** had been 'marked' here also, but again, they had been found by **rabbits**. We did, however, find many more **northern marsh-orchid** and a single **early marsh-orchid** together with the first of the **common wintergreens**. The damp ground was quite a picture with scattered clumps of rushes and a covering of flowering **meadow buttercups**, **silverweed**, and **lady's smock**, and a lush mat of the green leaves of **lesser skullcap** (in full flower in early July), **marsh pennywort** and **meadowsweet**.

The excursion now followed the main forest track running parallel to the coast, and a rich flora was admired. This included **hemlock water dropwort**, **water mint**, and **valerian** in the drainage channels, and an abundance of **heath speedwell**, **heath bedstraw** and **common vetch** along the sides of the path. The path was left shortly after reaching a very interesting section where there were plenty of **creeping lady's-tresses** and **common wintergreen** to be seen, as well as the antics of green **tiger beetles** hunting in the sandy patches. These little brutes seemed much more efficient killers than their big stripy brothers of the jungle, having bigger jaws in the proportion to their body size, and the ability to fly as well as chase and pounce.

The last section of the walk back to the bus at Tayport took us along the beach, in some places covered by stones and seaweed from which clouds of **sandhoppers** would leap when disturbed, and in others by mature saltmarsh. The saltmarsh is quite different from that at the Point, being covered by *Festuca rubra* subsp. *glabra*, **marsh arrow-grass** and **sea clubrush** and a host of other plants varying in size from **grass-** and **spear-leaved oraches**, through **scurvy grass** to small **glasswort** and the tiny mats of **sea milkwort**. The **milkwort** was a quite handsome flower, but what a pity a hand lens was needed in order to appreciate its charms.

This was a most varied and interesting outing, and resulted in the compilation by Brian Allan of a comprehensive list of flora and fauna seen, with habitats and site locations, both for our Society's records and those of the Natural History Museum in Dundee.

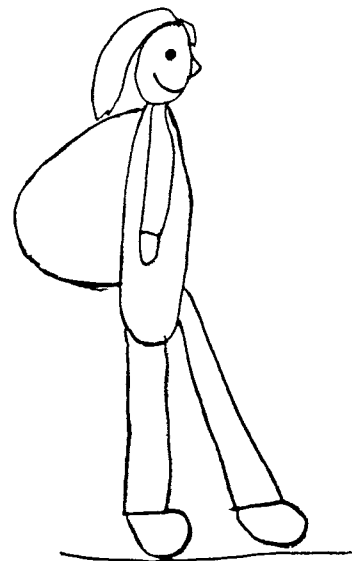
Bede Pounder

## A YOUNG NAT TENTSMUIR AND BALKELLO

When I went to Tentsmuir in June I saw lots of things I had not seen before. I liked the shells I got. I think the one at Tentsmuir is the longest walk I have ever done. I saw lots of things. Here are some of them: **toad**, **cinnabar moth**, **northern marsh-orchid**, and an **eleven spot ladybird** which I found myself, and lots more. I went with Mummy and Christine.

I liked the walk at Balkello in June. It was quite a long walk. I saw lots of plants at Balkello. I went home at about eight o'clock. I went with Mummy, Christine and Daddy. I was tired after them but I liked them both.

Mary Reid Age 7



## BALKELLO COMMUNITY WOODLAND

27th June

This evening walk was blessed with fine weather. At the commencement of the walk Rowland Parke, the owner of the enterprise, gave a brief talk to about twenty people present on his plans for the area, and impressed them with the scale of the project, especially the huge number of trees of all types, running into many thousands. A recce of the area, by yours truly the same afternoon, had identified a list of butterflies including; **green veined white, small heath, common blue, northern brown argus, meadow brown, dark green fritillary** and **small pearl bordered fritillary**. These were all within a very small area of damp ground on the hillside above the main park area. During the evening walk few of these were observed due to the late hour, but some of them were found roosting on grasses, to prove to the group that they were in fact there. One species of Lepidoptera was, however, much in evidence, the **wood tiger moth**, which I had previously found only occasionally by day, was flushed many times from the grass by the group and is obviously a night-active species. Whilst showing the group a clump of **cowslip** (by no means common in Angus) the professional eye of Richard Brinklow spotted a **moonwort**, a rather unusual type of fern, also by no means common but possibly often overlooked.

As the shadows grew longer people drifted away one by one. The few stalwarts remaining in the closing light were rewarded by a last bonus of two **short-eared owls** patrolling the area near the car park.

It had been a very interesting evening and proved that, despite pressure from walkers, bikers, shooters, etc the Sidlaws, on Dundee's doorstep, still held a goodly number of flora and fauna, the last word being heard from a **cuckoo** as the light faded.

Gordon Maxwell

## BARON'S HAUGH, MOTHERWELL

1st July

A fair complement of Nats, (40 to be precise) left Lindsay Street at 9.00 am prompt on a rather cloudy morning. As we travelled west this gradually improved to sunny intervals and the scene seemed set for a pleasant visit to this RSPB reserve near Motherwell. A brief stop at Stirling to refuel (the Nats) and we arrived at the reserve at approximately 11.00am, to be met by an assistant warden who gave us a brief history of the reserve.

Already, in the car park, a **grey squirrel** and a **magpie** were seen, the first still uncommon in the Dundee area and the second virtually unknown north of the Tay. A small group were loath to leave the car park area where a few **common spotted orchids** were found and a few butterflies were recorded, including **meadow brown, common blue, small heath, ringlet, small tortoiseshell** and **small copper**. The warden, Russell Nisbet, informed us that the **orange tip** is also found on the reserve in May/June. This last is still a rare species for Angus. By this time the rest of the company had shot off to all points of the compass, to be reunited later on to relate their various sightings and interests.

The reserve, adjoining the river Clyde, contains large stretches of open water and marshland. Many of the group were enthusiastic about the sighting of a **wood sandpiper**, a passage migrant which had been reported. Another small group enthused over the sighting of a **great crested grebe** catching and consuming a fair-sized fish (unidentified). Margaret Duncan reported something hanging over her head in the shape of a large **wasps'** "byke"; the old Scots word for building always seems more descriptive than "nest" which does not convey the frantic activity involved in such a construction. Margaret however refused to move in closer to determine which species was involved! Meanwhile, a small group including Davie Stein, myself and others had sighted a **kingfisher** on the river; this was surpassed later on when Alastair Fraser's group reported they had seen three. All this, including the many **warblers, tits**, and other small birds, in the trees bordering the Clyde made the river walk very popular. On the open water, a fair selection of ducks and other birds were noted including **gadwall** (with family), **wigeon** and **heron**.

During all this activity Jim Cook had been compiling his customary list (as long as his arm) of botanic species, many of which an impressed warden Nisbett had not realised existed on the reserve.

In conclusion it was generally agreed that this haven for wildlife on the Clyde, a river more associated with ocean liners and heavy industry, was a revelation and worthy of a future visit

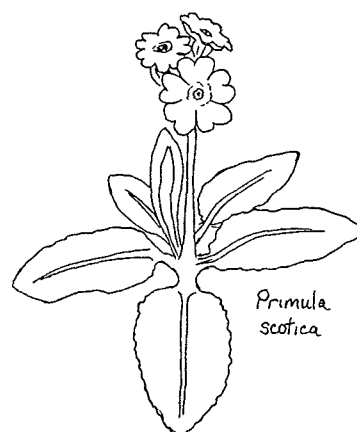
Gordon Maxwell

## A GREAT TIME WAS HAD BY ALL - ORKNEY WEEK

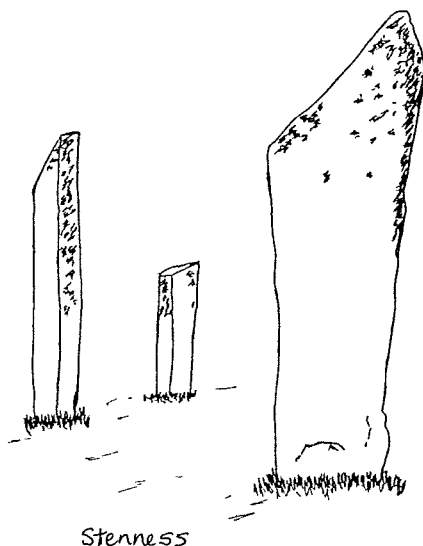
10th to 17th July

The problems are where to start and how to condense the story. We had such a busy and productive time and were very lucky with the weather. On Monday evening the main party stepped off the ferry at Stromness to find the minibus waiting as planned. We left immediately for our B&B. Its location was excellent. From the front window the hills of Hoy could be seen looming over Scapa Flow. Mrs Swannie fed us well and we certainly needed the walk up the hill afterwards.

Our first stop on Tuesday morning was Yesnaby, and within five minutes we were hunched over the **Scottish primroses**, being careful not to damage either flowering or non-flowering rosettes and yet anxious to take good photographs. Mollie Lind drove up from Kirkwall and joined in. It was the first time most of us had seen her for several years. Small parties of **bonxies** glided past, it was difficult to keep an eye on both the plants and the birdlife. We walked over towards the cliffs to the south of the carpark and Chris Booth, president of Orkney Field Club, and his wife joined us. He was kind enough to direct us to a good display of **stromatolites**, ancient fossilised algal colonies. Our next stop was the deservedly famous Neolithic village of Skara Brae. We had lunch and then joined the scrum admiring the beautifully preserved sunken stone houses. The third and final site of the day was the spectacular cliff and seabird colonies of Marwick Head. It was dominated by the Kitchener memorial but for the naturalist the main interests were the clifftop plants and the **kittiwake** and **auk** colonies. After another good evening meal we decided to visit the Neolithic chambered cairn at Unstan, one of the most famous such tombs in the islands. Good clumps of **Magellan ragwort** were found and photographed. All in all it had been an excellent first day.



Primula  
scotica



Stenness

On Wednesday the minibus took us past the location of a rare **harrier** nesting site but nothing was seen. The bird had flown. There was more of interest on Burgar Hill. We spent time admiring and trying to photograph the enormous wind turbines on top and then moved on to the hide beside a hill lochan with its complement of nesting **divers**. We had lunch at the Loons RSPB reserve while searching, mostly in vain, for interesting birds. The breeding season was past although we did see a few **ducks**, a **heron**, **bonxies** and various **gulls**. We spent most of the afternoon in the ruined shell of the Earl's Palace and then on the tidal island of the Brough of Birsay, with its plants and birds and the especially well preserved Viking settlement and ancient kirk. The evening trip was to the Standing Stones of Stenness, with associated ancient village, and the Ring of Brodgar.

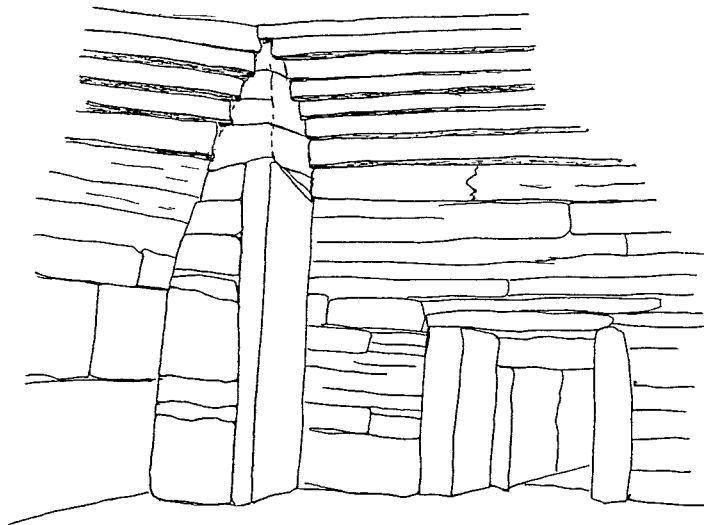
Thursday's plan was to take the inter-island ferry from Houton over to the island of Hoy. Several pods of **dolphins** were seen from the vessel but visibility was poor. As we drove up the length of the island from Lyness towards the Old Man the mist lifted slightly. The party

stopped off to walk up a small hill to the Dwarfie Stane, a large boulder with an ancient tomb cut into it, and while we were photographing it the clouds lifted and the sun came out. A few miles down the road was Rackwick and we stopped there. Most of the party opted to walk over to view the Old Man of Hoy, a dramatic rock stack, a couple of miles along the coast. The steep hill above Rackwick Bay



yielded superb views - as well as pounding hearts and aching lungs! Unfortunately heavy low clouds swirled back and rapidly obscured the view. Only Alastair Fraser walked fast enough to get a good sighting of the Old Man. Meanwhile, the rest of us endured diving attacks by enraged nesting **bonxies**. The ferry returned early, which gave us time to examine the ruins of the round kirk at Orphir and Viking longhouse outlines. In the evening we heard a **corncrake** on the hill above our B&B.

The clouds were lowering, with rain on the wind, as we drove into Kirkwall on Friday morning. It wasn't long before the weather clamped right down. The party spent time exploring the magnificent St Magnus cathedral and associated Bishop's Palace complex and then moved on to the museum and shops. The plan in the afternoon was to drive out to Deerness, the eastern-most part of the mainland, and explore the coast. Sheeting rain soon changed our minds. We did get out of the minibus to view the famous gloup, a long and very narrow sea-cut cleft, but the visibility was so poor that we couldn't see one end from the other. All was not lost, we had the opportunity for a spot of Jean-eology (!), with Jean Colquhoun, looking for the farms of ancestors, and then were able to go on and visit the Italian chapel on Lamb Holm, along the Churchill barrier to the south of the mainland.



Inside Maeshowe Tomb

We spent most of Saturday, fortunately a superb day, exploring the island of Rousay. The main interest was chambered cairns and we stopped off at four of them, in particular the immense tomb of Westhowe, the 'great ship of death', and the nearby broch. A group of **grey seals** basking on seashore rocks allowed us to approach fairly closely. None of them moved. Back on the mainland we visited the small village of Evie for a conducted tour of a superb alpine garden - a tremendous effort, considering the conditions. The final visit of the day was to Maeshowe tomb.

Sunday, our last day, took us down the Churchill Barriers to a first stop to see excellent clumps of **oysterplant** on roadside and beach sands. The party enjoyed the sunny weather walking further along the beach to do a spot of beachcombing and to look at the remains of one of the blockships. Later we moved further down and spent an hour or so in the excellent new fossil museum on Burray and its tea-shop! We finished the day - and the week - by driving down to Isbister at the southern end of South Ronaldsay to visit the famous Tomb of the Eagles. After a tour round the small display at the farmhouse, and the opportunity to handle specimens, the party walked over to examine burnt mounds and the tomb itself, a fitting end to our trip!

Jim Cook

## LOCH CALLATER

30th July

Any concerns about adverse weather conditions were dispelled as the bus stopped at the lay-by near the AA box about five miles short of Braemar. The sun shone as the 40 plus members and friends prepared to tackle this hill and moorland walk. Firstly the group split into two sections, one to cross the more arduous route through the Dubh Gap (this being the only name I could find locally for this narrow defile), the other smaller section to move, by bus, nearer to Braemar to walk the wide track from Auchallater Lodge (the end of Jock's Road, from Glen Clova). This track is the easier option and leads directly up to Loch Callater and was to be led by David Stein.

The main group was soon engrossed in a variety of reeds and sedges under the knowledgeable eye of Jim Cook. A few **heath spotted orchids** were also found in this area at the start of the walk. Carrying on up the gorge, with the attractive burn gurgling below, a few **ground**

**beetles** were found, to be identified later as *Carabus granulatus*. In long heather beside the narrow path a number of **lesser twayblades** were found, and also **starry saxifrage**. The large herd of deer seen on the recent recce was, unfortunately, absent, or had retreated before the massed advance of Naturalists' footwear. By this time the group was well strung out; the incline plus the hot day were taking their toll and some were to regret not choosing the easier route. Dropping down to Loch Callater few, if any, spotted the group of **great sundew** in marshy ground by the small burn. Most seemed intent on reaching the loch in order to steep weary feet in the cooling liquid. Few on the walk had crossed this route before and most appreciated the fine vistas of the Cairngorms behind Braemar and, to the east, of the hills between Braemar and Glen Clova.

Reaching the loch the two groups joined and exchanged details of their various 'finds'. A **common lizard** was seen, and some butterflies, probably **dark green fritillaries** and, at last, a small herd of **red deer** in a small corrie on the way down to the bus.

Gordon Maxwell

## NORTH QUEENSFERRY to ABERDOUR

12th August

The Dundee Nats have walked much of Fife's coastline over the years but this particular part probably has the most contrasting scenery.

We began our walk with the mighty rail bridge towering high above the path, past the **whinstone** quarry and round Inverkeithing Bay where the **ducks** and **waders** don't seem to mind at all about the metal recycling plant or the paper mill!

Rounding Downing Point we had good views over the River Forth and could see **terns** and **gannets** fishing. Then on to view the 'mansions' at Dalgety Bay, (how many were tempted to view the show house?)

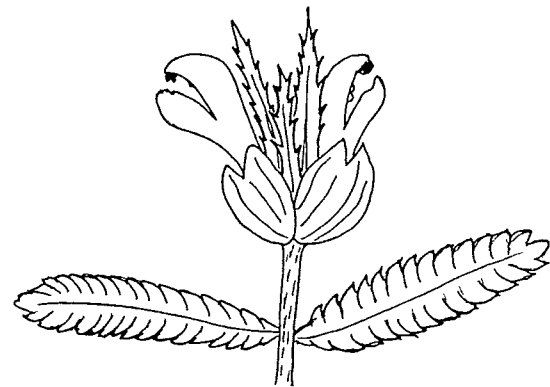
After visiting the 12th century St Bridget's Church the path left the coast and we climbed the hill to look down on the Braefoot Installation. Walking by the golf course we had wonderful views of Inchcolm Island and Edinburgh beyond. Then on to Aberdour for refreshments and a quick look at the floral displays at the railway station.

Dorothy Fyffe

## NIGHT CATCHFLY WALK AND BARBECUE

18th August

We should have titled this the other way round. The food came first and the **catchfly** only much later, but it was a good turnout; one of the best for our barbecues. Thirty-seven people attended. We started by lighting the fire, with only a little fanning, and then left Brian to give the glowing coals his usual tender loving care - and to look after the mulled wine (I wonder why he volunteered to stay?) The rest of the party went off to find and survey the red data book species, **greater yellow-rattle**. We spread out in a line and then, after checking that everyone knew what the plant looked like, walked slowly over the patch to try to estimate the numbers. Although the count was very rough, we arrived at a number of approximately 650 plants - a very respectable total. By this time it was nearly dark - time for the food, and there was (almost) more than we could eat.



Greater yellow-rattle

A few hours earlier Jim had sugared some fence posts near the barbecue site, and when the food was finished we went to take a look. There were two **antler moths** and one **rustic**, several **micro** species plus large numbers of **earwigs** and even a fair number of **woodlice**

Afterwards we went along to the evening's highlight - what we'd all been waiting for - the **night-flowering catchfly**, beside the level crossing on the way back to Carnoustie. And there it was. Some of the party could catch its strong sweet smell but others couldn't. There was some doubt as to identity since the specimens were not very well grown and there were **white champions** close by. (Afterwards, one doubting Thomas admitted that he'd gone back to look at the plants in daylight - when the difference was obvious, since the **night-flowering catchfly** flowers were closed.)

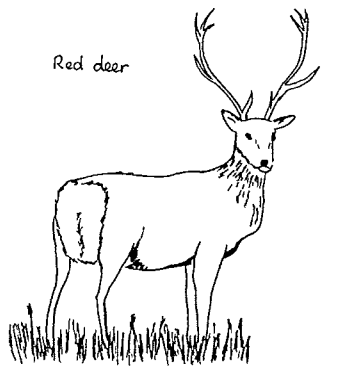
The final part of the evening's activities was a night walk up Craigmill Den. We'd taken the precaution earlier of warning the householders in the cottages beside the road not to be alarmed. We didn't want them to call the police if there were strange noises outside! Botany by torchlight was a novel experience for some. A few **moths** fluttered on the sugared tree trunks but not many other signs of wildlife were seen. No **squirrels**, nor **bats**, but a lonely wandering **cat** did follow us along the path.

Jim Cook

## TARFSIDE, GLENESK

27th August

The long hot dry spell had ended by the date of this excursion and it was in quite a cold, stiff breeze, with rain threatening, that the party made its way up the hill. Most of the wildflowers were past their best, but especially by looking carefully along the damp ditches, the list of typical moorland and glen species steadily grew to quite a respectable length. Hybrid **monkey flower** (*Mimulus cupreus x guttatus*) and **spear mint** (*Mentha spicata*) were among the less usual flowers noted.



From the highest point on the walk, we were able to enjoy excellent views of Glensesk stretching away below us, while on another hillside in the direction of the Clash of Wirren, a herd of **red deer** was spotted.

A good track led back down the hill to the relative shelter of a side stream valley for the lunch stop, and the starting of another species list for the keenest members! Then it was along by the river, past signs that the glen had previously been much more highly populated; a derelict farm, an old lime kiln, and signs of enclosures and shielings.

We completed the circuit, recrossing the soundly built, but rather dilapidated, bridge over the River North Esk. The **fairy foxglove** (*Erinus alpinus*) was known to be naturalised on a number of Glensesk bridges, and sure enough it was soon found growing on the stone and mortar bridge piers. Meanwhile, the returning sunshine brought out the only butterfly of the day, a **small copper**.

Some members didn't tackle the whole walk, choosing to stay much nearer the bus quietly enjoying the countryside. They were rewarded with other interesting wildlife sightings, including one of an **adder** basking at the foot of a drystone dyke.

Richard Brinklow

## FALLS OF CLYDE

9th September

Unfortunately, the leader, Margaret Duncan, had to pull out at the last moment. One of the benefits of several people going to do the recce immediately became apparent. Jim Cook was able to take over. Another problem was the lack of rain. Most people might crave good weather, but not naturalists, at least not at this time of year when the point of the excursion was to look for fungi. The

coach arrived on time at New Lanark. The party made its way through Owens' Mill complex down to the SWT room to meet the rangers and start the way we intended - with food. By this time it was mid-day

The party was escorted round by ranger June Fleming. There was a good range of plants but at first very few fungi. The board walk beside the river Clyde attracted interest and thoughts about the effects of flooding. Small fish could be seen in the river and a variety of birds were seen and, in the end we recorded a fair range of fungi, most of them common. Included were **sulphur tuft fungus**, **candle-snuff fungus**, a lot of **honey fungus**, (the notorious wood-destroying species), several species of **Russulas** and **milk caps**, a well-developed and dripping **beef-steak fungus** on an **oak tree** and various **ink-caps** and **Mycenas**. The Falls of Clyde themselves were spectacular and were seen especially well from our good vantage point. Further along Gordon found a well-grown **wasps'** nest right beside the path and it was photographed very warily. The smaller plants in the woodland abounded with many species of **spiders**. Many of us remarked that we had never seen so many. Perhaps the continuing good weather had encouraged a spider population explosion. Near the weir at the top of the walk we found the most interesting plant of the day, **woodland cow-wheat**, a rare plant in eastern Scotland and not common anywhere. But what interested some members most was a good clump of **blackthorn** in fruit. They set to collecting berries with a right good will. Sloe gin in the making, obviously!

Jim Cook

## EDEN ESTUARY

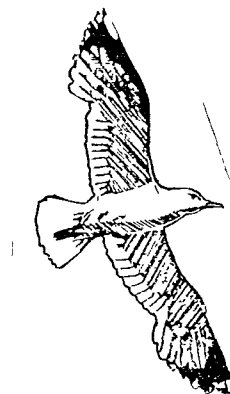
23rd September

An equinoctial gale driving heavy rain across the country had been forecast for this day and conditions looked ominous as we gathered to meet Les Hatton, the Eden Reserve Warden, at the Out Head on the south side of the mouth of the estuary. However, as if by a miracle, the rain passed us by, the wind was nought but a minor inconvenience, and the sun even managed to grace us with a wee keek once or twice.

The day got off to a good start when a **pomarine skua** flew towards us across sandbanks on which were **common seals**, **oystercatchers**, **herring**, **black-headed** and **greater black back gulls**. It parked itself on the beach, giving everyone a good view and making possible a size comparison with **arctic skuas** which appeared soon after, flying over the calm sea and beach, once or twice at quite close range. The **skuas** were sometimes chasing **arctic** and **sandwich terns**. Scans over the sea soon yielded **gannets**, all dark plumage juveniles, and rafts of **common scoter**. A few **eiders**, **red breasted mergansers** and **cormorants** were also seen from Out Head.

We walked along the south shore across muddy sands filled in places almost to saturation with *Arenicola*, and on which were piles of storm deposited **sand mason tubes** and a mass of shell debris, all indicating the major importance of this estuary as a feeding place for water and shore birds. Les Hatton drew particular attention to one common shell, *Donax vitatus*, the **banded wedge shell**, the syphons of which are grazed by juvenile **flatfish**, providing a valuable renewable food supply. He also gave a fascinating commentary on a variety of other topics, ranging from **common seal** ecology, and **house sparrow** ecology to the relative merits of 'hard' and 'soft' engineering methods of defence against shoreline erosion.

As the tide rose, small groups of waders became common along the shoreline nothing spectacular until we realised that a typical group of about 20 birds could contain 7 or 8 of the following species: **curlew**, **bar tailed godwit**, **knot**, **redshank**, **grey**, **golden** and **ringed plover**, **turnstone**, **dunlin** and **oystercatcher**. We walked as far as the reserve hide to the east of Coble Point, and as the tide rose to high, had beautiful views in weak sunlight of **shelduck**, **mallard**, **wigeon** and light-bellied **brent geese**. A skein of **pinkfeet geese** was also seen later on from the Guardbridge layby.



The flora on view was unspectacular because of the lateness of the season, but interesting none the less. There were plenty of shrivelled remains of **hastate orache**, **prickly saltwort** and **seablite** along the foreshore. **Sea spurrey**, **sea milkwort** and **scurvy grass** looked much greener and healthier, and some **sea aster** and **scentsless mayweed** were even in flower. In the dunes, **ladies' bedstraw**, **harebells**, **white campion**, **common storksbill**, **rest harrow**, **yarrow**, **prickly sowthistle**, **birdsfoot trefoil**, **goatsbeard**, **hawkbit** and **creeping thistle** were all seen in flower, but **rosebay willowherb** and **ragwort** were mostly long dead.

We finished the day with a quick stop at the old brig at Guardbridge where a good view was had of roosting **herons** and some **eiders** and **mallard**. An interesting find along the river bank on the other side of the main road was a clump of **bush vetch** which appeared to have set seed despite being still in flower.

This was a most interesting outing, made all the better by the local and expert knowledge of Les Hatton, and spice was added by our having been able to 'cock a snoot' at the Met Office.

Bede Pounder

## AUTUMN MEETINGS 1995

### THREE OF A KIND

Margaret Duncan, Bob McCurley and Gordon Maxwell  
17th October

The first speaker was Margaret whose main interest is trees which, she explained, arose from her earlier interest in photography. Her first slides were of **beech** trees which, although not native to Scotland, merited her and the meeting's interest if only for their photogenic qualities. Although few plants grow under **beech** a good variety of fungi, another of Margaret's interests, can generally be found, including, in this case, an **avenging angel** (*Amanita virosa*). By way of contrast the next series of slides were of examples of the ancient Caledonian Forest in Glen Tannar. This type of woodland usually supports an excellent variety of wildlife. Views from Blackwood of Rannoch, Carsegowniemuir and Methven Wood followed, including evidence of damage from grazing **rabbits**. We then saw a slide of a **bird cherry** completely covered by the web of the **small ermine moth** (*Yponomeuta padella*). Margaret concluded her talk with a fine view of one of her favourite trees, the **Corstorphine plane**, growing outside the University buildings on the Perth Road.

The second speaker was Bob McCurley who talked about birds and their associated habitats. He opened with a slide of one of the earliest migrants, a **wheatear**, seen on the Glen Doll road about the end of March, in its favoured stony habitat. Also seen in the same area were a **peregrine falcon** and chicks and a **golden eagle**, both Schedule 1 birds, followed by shots of **ptarmigan** and **dotterel** near the Cairnwell summit.

Moorland habitat birds included a **hen harrier** (a much persecuted bird, especially by estate owners) a **merlin**, smallest of the falcons, a **ring ouzel**, a **cuckoo**, and a **kestrel**. A **curlew**, **common sandpiper** and a **dipper** were seen in their upland habitat, followed by slides of birds associated with coastal and reed-bed habitats. These included **red-throated divers**, **little tern**, **arctic tern**, **water rail**, **Jack snipe**, **sedge warbler**, **marsh harrier**, **bearded tit**, **redshank**, **spotted redshank** (passing through), **green sandpiper** and a **whimbrel**, which is described as a migrant although it breeds in north Scotland.

Gordon Maxwell was the final speaker and his slides covered a wide cross-section of plant and animal wildlife "hilltop, moorland and glen". These included, on Mount Capel- **great sundew**, **dwarf cornell**, caterpillar of **northern eggar moth**, and **purple saxifrage**.

Rottmell Loch, and Mill Dam- **fallow deer**, **tawny owl**, **Canada geese** and chicks, **curlew's** nest, two **adders**, white and purple **cross-leaved heath**, and white **lousewort**.

Long Loch - **northern brown argus** (said to be the first coloniser after the ice age), **red grouse**, **common lizard**, **red-stalked boletus**, **scarlet waxcap** and *Clavulinopsis*.  
Sea shore.- **six spot burnet moth**, **tiger moth** and its caterpillars, **knot grass moth**, **emperor moth**, **red admiral**, **painted lady**, **peacock** and two **common blues**.

Doug Palmer

## OTTERS, OSPREYS AND OTHERS

Alan Barclay 31st October

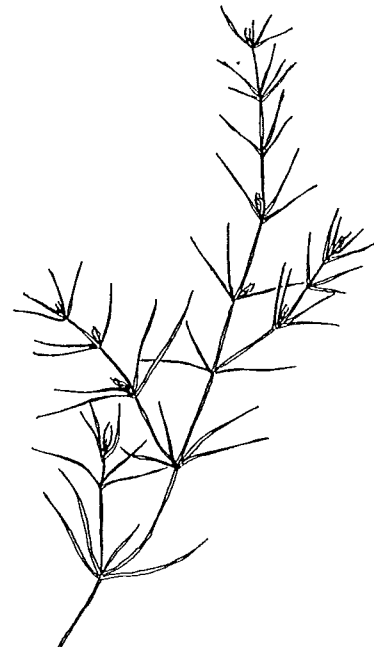
The SWT currently has 104 reserves of varying sizes - ranging from the large to the very small (eg a bat cave) with some reserves owned and some managed. Loch of the Lowes itself is owned by SWT and the adjacent Loch of Craiglush is managed as part of the reserve. Loch of Craiglush and Butterstone Loch are all an SSSI and form a series of increasing nutrient richness, connected by the Lunan burn.

The underwater plants of the Loch of the Lowes are particularly important, there are 11 species of *Potamogeton* pondweeds and the red data book plant *Najas flexilis*. The presence of the latter has led to the proposal that the loch should be given Special Area of Conservation status. *Najas* or **slender naiad** is an annual plant which moves around within the lochs from year to year, and there has been recent underwater survey work to map its distribution to enable it to be effectively conserved.

The visitor centre at Loch of the Lowes serves a number of purposes, not least of which is to encourage people to one part of the reserve to minimise disturbance elsewhere. The double deck hide provides good views of the loch and **osprey** nest and the centre itself has displays of posters and aquaria of loch species. School groups (137 in 1994) and a number of Watch groups use the centre and reserve, and over 100 volunteers help with osprey watching and manning the centre each season.

Though the **ospreys** are the main attraction the Loch has plenty of other species to see. **Great crested grebes** with their striking courtship display and floating nest are very popular, as are sightings of **roe** and **fallow deer** and the many other species of birds seen. **Otters** are present all year, but are rarely seen in daylight. They have been encouraged by building artificial holts in areas little disturbed by people or dogs, and 3 young cubs were seen in 1991 when the army was guarding the **osprey** nest. In addition to the water based attractions (90% of the reserve is water) there is a small area of meadow where 8 species of butterfly were seen in one season, and the fringing woodland with **treecreeper**, **tawny owl**, **tits**, **chaffinches** and other woodland birds.

There are currently approximately 30 pairs of osprey in Tayside - visitors to Loch of the Lowes reduce pressure on other sites. After the nest was disturbed and failed in 1989 it was moved to a more secure site and they have bred successfully for the last 5 years. Major security precautions are unfortunately necessary to prevent the eggs from being stolen. Eggs are marked with indelible ink and for the 37 or 38 day incubation period a round the clock watch is maintained; currently aided by IR lamps and cameras around the tree base. This has resulted in undisturbed night-time sightings of **fox**, **deer**, and **bats**, and a first for the reserve, a **pine marten**, which was seen to run up the nest tree, through the razor wire and then down again. Once the eggs have hatched the reserve staff are able to relax a little. The young birds are disturbed briefly to ring them so that their fate can be followed.



Slender Naiad

In addition to the work involved at the Loch of the Lowes reserve, Dr Barclay also carries out bird ringing work locally, often liaising with local farmers on species such as **swallows** and **tree sparrows**. He is also responsible for a very small reserve, Brerachan Meadows, between Blairgowrie and Pitlochry which consists of a 10 yd wide strip of land which runs along the roadside. This contains 120 plant species and is cut annually by a non-traditional strimmer!

Anne Reid

## MOUNTAINS, RIVERS AND FISH

Graham King 14th November

This vast subject was made into a manageable and interesting slide/talk covering the coastal areas of Scotland from the Northwest round to Dundee. Our land is stable now but what a history it has!

Four thousand million years is difficult to comprehend but Graham led us through that time journey and left us spellbound. We looked at examples of the oldest continental rocks, the metamorphic **Lewisian Gneisses** - a product of high temperatures and pressures exerted during episodes of mountain building and now looking a bit like stripy toffee. He also showed us examples of rocks laid down as sediments in the seas but which have since been up-lifted and exposed and sculpted by erosion over millions of years to form what we now recognise as the Torridonian Mountains. The products of the erosion have been washed down to the seas by the rivers, deposited as sediments only to be consumed at destructive plate margins, to rejoin the rock cycle.

But we have not always been a cold country. We have drifted from the warm south through many climates and bumped our way north. While in this unstable period, land masses came together and mountains were pushed up in the collision. The Moine Thrust in Northwest Scotland is a good example of a piece of continental crust being thrust over large areas of ground during one of these mountain building episodes.

And we had deserts too, these being formed during periods of arid climate and shallow seas. The **limestones** found at Boddin are the product of such a period, and fossils found in these sediments tell a wonderful story.

**Granite** mountains, like the Cairngorms, formed deep underground from molten magma, cooled slowly to produce the typical coarse-grained rock we recognise. These slowly rose up through the Earth's crust until they were exposed at the surface, where they too suffered erosion by wind, frost, and ice to give us the magnificent grandstand from which to view the land we know.

Marjory Tennant

## WINTER OUTING TO INVERGOWRIE BAY

18th November

A brisk, sunny autumn morning encouraged 30 plus Nats to enjoy a stroll from Invergowrie Station to Kingoodie. Parties of **mallard** and assorted **gulls** floated out in the bay and a few **geese** veered away. We were joined by ranger Duncan Ferguson and began to explore the bank and reed bed opposite the station. A few fungi were seen including an interesting *Ramaria* species, and a **two-spot ladybird** put in an appearance, no doubt tempted by the unseasonal warmth. Some time was spent looking for the remains of the **sea aster** which grows on the small area of salt marsh there, and also turning over stones on the beach to see what small creatures were lurking underneath.



A number of **sea slaters**, *Ligia oceanica*, were found.

We proceeded along the old quayside, a reminder of the days when there were working quarries in Invergowrie and Kingoodie. Stone was shipped from here to locations in England and Scotland, and the old London Bridge (now in the USA) was built with Invergowrie stone. The path

then leaves the shoreline and goes through areas of scrubland which looked rather drab in November, but are alive with flowers in the spring. Bright red **hips** and **haws** were very much in evidence, a reminder that this is very pretty in early summer when the bushes are in bloom. In the scrub **blackbirds**, **robins**, **coal tits**, **thrushes** and a charm of **goldfinches** all made their appearance.

Our walk finished in the quarry at Kingoodie, now flooded and providing a home for **moorhens** and a fishing ground for the occasional **heron**. The keen eyed found the dead stems of several species of **orchid** which have established themselves in the grassy areas. We did not delay too long here, for word got around that the Invergownie Inn was only ten minutes away, and that a selection of good hot meals was waiting to be devoured by a band of hungry naturalists!

Ruth Arnold

## THOMAS EDMONSTONE - SHETLAND BOTANIST

Phil Lusby 28th November

Phil Lusby shared with us his enthusiasm for the achievement filled, though tragically short, life of this famous 19th Century botanist in this fascinating talk.

There have been Edmonstones on the Shetland Islands from the 1500s right up to the modern day. It was into this notable family of ministers, medics and naturalists, that Thomas was born on 20th September 1825 at the family home at Baltasound on the Island of Unst.

Thomas was clearly a very gifted child who thrived in the intellectually stimulating environment that surrounded him. He learned his local plants very young, assisted, no doubt, by visits from eminent botanists such as W.D. Hooker, who called in on his way back from the North Cape in 1836.

In 1837 he was able to show Gilbert McNab *Arenaria norvegica*, which was included in Sowerby's English Botany as new to Britain. In 1840 he made his first visit to mainland Scotland, botanising with the leading scientists of the day, and in the following year he started to study medicine at Edinburgh.

As part of the botany course Thomas made an herbarium containing over 700 species, all collected within a 10 mile radius of Edinburgh. Because 20 of the plants he had found could not be verified, he was disqualified from the competition. In a state of shock he left for London, before making a very slow sea journey home. By this time he was already publishing in the leading botanical journals and crossing swords with eminent botanists on complex classification issues.

In summer 1844 he was botanising in eastern Scotland, visiting places including Braemar and Clova. Winter 1844 saw him continuing his studies at Aberdeen University.

Still short of his 20th birthday, and with a *Flora of Shetland* ready for the press, he was recommended for the Professorship of the Andersonian Society in Glasgow, being accepted on 25th January 1845. Before he could take up the appointment, he received a letter from Edward Forbes offering the chance to join an expedition by HMS Herald to the Pacific. This he accepted by return of post!

The expedition sailed on 26th June 1845 for South America, and it was from the Galapagos Islands that Thomas sent his last letter. On 23rd January 1846 the expedition was moored off the South American mainland and Thomas was ashore collecting specimens. Returning in the late afternoon, as they boarded the rowing boat in a heavy swell, a buffalo gun was accidentally discharged. Thomas was killed by the ricocheting bullet.

Bertold Sieman took Edmonstone's place as Expedition Naturalist and had to write up the account of the entire expedition. He named one of the tropical plants they had collected *Edmonstonia pacifica* in his memory, but this name has since been lost through synonymy.

Locally, back in Shetland, his name still lives on as the unique form of **mouse-ear chickweed**, found only there, is affectionately known as '**Edmonstonia**'.

Richard Brinklow



**CHRISTMAS MEETING**  
**NEPAL-RHINOS AND RAPTORS**  
Alban Houghton 12th December

After his full article on Nepal, which appeared in the 1994 Bulletin (pages 18-19), we persuaded Alban to give our Christmas lecture, and to share with us the wonderful slides of his trekking holiday. The raptors were ever present, but distant overhead, in the mountains, and the rhinos remarkably close, observed from the back of an elephant, in the lowlands. Many other interesting things were seen in between.

After a veritable feast for the eyes we turned to the seasonal (edible) feast to round off a very enjoyable evening.

Anne Reid

## MEMBERS' REPORTS AND ARTICLES

### CARSEGOWNIEMUIR QUARRY RESERVE ANNUAL REPORT 1995

A long grey spring was followed by an exceptionally dry summer. No substantial rain fell until late August. There were a few casualties, mainly of birch planted in 1992, but most trees managed to hang on and put in some late growth late in the year.

- Jan The construction of Exclosure 3 was completed in January and accounts submitted in time for the grant of £160. Hopefully the FWAG inspector who checks our work one year after award of grant will be tolerant, since in practice we couldn't fit in the number of shrubs and trees we planned, so some were planted nearby with individual wire protectors. The exclosure is on a mound, so the trees were planted in large hollows with the aim of trapping any rainfall and sheltering the saplings from the wind. This strategy proved successful in the first dry growing season.
- Feb Tree measuring was completed this month. The oldest trees, planted in 1986, now average 2.5 metres tall but our champion aspen reached 7.5 metres (girth 26 cm). One outstanding oak planted at a height of 40 cm grew to 115 cm in its first year - 75 cm of growth - while its companions made do with 10 - 20 cm of growth.
- Apr Frog spawn was reported by Ronnie Young and 18 rafts of it were spotted on Pond 2. 100 tadpoles were introduced to Pond 5 after being studied at school. One dozen sprigs of bottle sedge were transplanted from the west end to the east end of Pond 2.
- May Attractive blossom was enjoyed on old and new geans. One roe deer was reported in the Quarry by neighbouring farmer, Jim Mitchell.
- July Rather late weeding of willowherb took place; oaks, especially, were inundated by it. A troublesome billy goat belonging to neighbour Andy Duncan caused us a lot of concern. It developed the habit of vaulting the fence from the adjoining field into the reserve to enrich its diet by browsing rowan leaves from our young saplings, leaving the main stem and some leaf stalks. After much pleading the goat was removed and hopefully the trees will get a chance to recover.
- Aug Ragwort pulling continued. The drought conditions led it to flower later than usual. Broom plants which have flourished within our tree protectors and compete strongly with the incumbent trees were dealt with by cutting at ground level.

Informal Wildlife Study evenings took place on 9th May, 13th June, 25th July and 8th August. Many stones were upturned and various styles of insect trap were employed. A number of new species were added to the Quarry lists, though the cold and then the hot dry conditions limited our catch. We are grateful to the following experts who led the outings: Derek Robertson, Richard Brinklow, Anne Reid, Jim Cook.

Owing to rabbit debarking casualties our policy of replacing wire guards with spiral plastic guards has been reversed. Loose wires (no posts) are replacing the spirals.

Grateful thanks to all members who took part in work parties.

SUBCOMMITTEE: Mrs M G Duncan, Mr A J Fraser, Mr J K Cook

Note: Jim Cook has complete lists of species recorded in the quarry, and will be happy to supply one to anyone who is interested, for a small fee.

## ENSURING OUR SAFETY

With recent publicity about incidents involving groups on excursions and impending changes in the law, the Society's Council has been giving considerable thought during the past year to the subject of safety. We want to be able to run our outings as in the past and yet maintain our safety record and improve on standards.

Your Society already takes a number of steps. We select excursion venues carefully to minimise the occurrence of dangerous situations, provide instructions for leaders, brief all members taking part, carry a simple first aid kit and maintain an insurance policy to cover accidents to members. Furthermore, I'm pleased to report, there have been no serious accidents on any excursion and your own common sense plays an important part in maintaining that record. There are, however, a number of points that we should consider carefully. Potentially, the two main problems are a serious incident or accident occurring during an excursion and one or more members becoming lost. What can we do to reduce the risks? Of course, weather conditions are important and both types of occurrences rapidly could become very much worse in severe weather.

The improvements that have been discussed in council are: to take care in selecting suitable venues, with well-marked paths or tracks if at all possible, to arrange for several leaders if required, to improve the maps and instructions issued to members before leaving and to encourage leaders to be ready to change the outing if the weather is poor. But ordinary members' common sense and sensibilities are very important as well.

You play a vital role in our drive to maintain safety. We're sure that all of you are careful and sensible but please remember a number of simple guidelines:

- ◆ Make sure that you are well clad in warm, waterproof and windproof clothing and that, for rough ground, you are wearing walking boots. In some places even walking shoes are not really adequate because they provide no protection for your ankles. In those places trainers and wellington boots certainly are not suitable. Please think of the consequences if you did, by some mischance, have an accident. What effect would that have on everyone else? It could happen to any of us.
- ◆ Consider your own state of fitness before setting out. Please ask yourself: am I fit to undertake this walk in the current and expected conditions? If in any doubt, speak to the leader. He or she will be familiar with the route and may be able to assess conditions.
- ◆ Know where you are going and try to remain aware of where you are at any time during the outing. Carry a suitable map and compass, if at all possible, and know how to use them. If you are unsure of route or terrain, stay with the leader or ask for further information.

- ◆ Pay careful attention to the instructions and any notes and maps issued  
Please don't wander too far off indicated paths or tracks
- ◆ Many people like our outings because they are not usually highly regimented. We wish to continue that tradition and yet ask you to be aware of safety implications. By all means go and look at items of interest but please stay in groups of at least three or four, if at all possible, or close to a leader. Don't just wander off on your own. If you have to leave the group, please make sure that the leader or some other responsible person knows where you are going
- ◆ Be prepared for last minute changes to the programme if the weather is poor or appears to be getting worse
- ◆ If you bring a visitor or a guest there may be a problem; not in the visitors themselves - we welcome guests of many kinds - but because non-members are not covered by our insurance policy. The Council is considering various ways of overcoming this difficulty.

We hope you enjoy our outings and will continue to come out with us. After all, natural history in the field is really the whole point of Dundee Naturalists' Society. And yet we must maintain and improve on our safety standards. Everybody has a part to play and the Council wishes you all many more years of trouble-free, enjoyable and interesting outings

Jim Cook

## SPECIES RECORDS

The Society computer is now functioning much as it was intended to, i.e. to record data obtained on our various outings. We now hold fairly comprehensive records of plants and fungi, and rather less comprehensive records of birds, and insects, etc. recorded on outings to **Tentsmuir, Den of Alyth, Den of Airlie, Glen Callater, Kinnordy, Balkello, Tarfside, Falls of Clyde and Barons' Haugh**, all recorded during the summer of 1995. If any of you would like a copy of any part of the data please send a stamped, self addressed A4 envelope to me specifying which part of the records you would like. A small charge of 50p is necessary to meet the cost of paper, printing, etc.

From time to time I receive copies of various publications of general interest to Naturalists. These include, "**habitat**" the independent digest of environment and conservation news; the **SWT** newsletter and magazine; "**Sanctuary**", the M.O.D. conservation magazine, the Angus **FWAG** newsletter, and various other odds and ends such as **Spring Bulbs** and plants, and holiday offers from **Scotia Travel**. These are sent to the Society and therefore should be available to you. They are too bulky for me to carry to all the meetings but if any of you would like to borrow any of these publications please 'phone me and I will arrange for you to get them.

Doug Palmer

## BACKMUIR WOOD SAVED

Jill Aitken, Woodland Trust officer for the area, in a talk to the Tree Group on 27th November 1995, announced that the fight to save Backmuir Wood was on the point of success. The people of Liff, Muirhead and Birkhill and Invergowrie had done wonders with pledge forms and other enterprises and the local target of £25,000 had been exceeded by over £1,000. Scottish Natural Heritage had come forward with a grant, and final confirmation of a further grant was all that we now required to allow the purchase by the Woodland Trust to go ahead. The Tree Group has done its share with fund-raising, publicity, species lists, maps of footpaths and letters of support, and congratulations are due to all environmentalists of the region who helped to meet this important challenge.

A more sombre note The Woodland Trust had been interested in the West Woods of Ethie, north of Arbroath, owned by the late Brigadier Oliver But we learn that the wood has been sold, although the purchaser's plans are not known It will be a shame if Ethie Woods, the only wood of this size and type between Dundee and Peterhead, should be lost

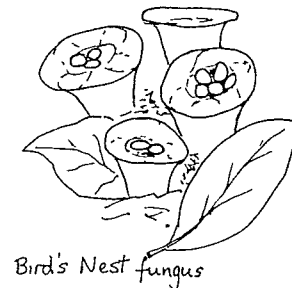
Bob McLeod

## THE YEAR OF THE FUNGI

Although fungi can be found at any time of the year for those keen enough to seek them, the main fungi season, stretching from approximately August to late October, did not really get under way this year until about mid September, when after a week or two of intermittent rain, it all began to happen A number of combined and independent forays turned up (literally) a number of interesting specimens A trip to the banks of the Tay near Inver by Davie Stein, Gordon Maxwell and Jim Cook came across a group of *Amanita phalloides* (the **death cap**), a rare species in Scotland, and, as the name suggests, deadly poisonous. Samples of this were sent to Edinburgh for identification and were confirmed by Roy Watling. He stated that it was nowhere common in Scotland, though it had been recorded from the Den of Airlie. He intended to dry it and place it in the herbarium

That same day we also recorded two tree fungi. *Laetiporus sulphureus*, (**chicken of the woods**), and *Grifola frondosa*, the former a very attractive orange-yellow edible bracket fungus growing on dead or dying wood, usually **oak**. The latter, also **oak** associated, is a large multi-frond fungus, usually growing from the base of the living tree, and is also edible

Later in the year a lead from Derek Robertson took us in another direction, namely the city dump at Riverside, to see the uncommon **birds' nest fungi**, (*Cyathus olla*), a most unusual fungus complete with "eggs" Perhaps we can have the 'coup' re-designated an S.S.S.I? An unusual specimen, *Helvella lacunosa* was seen late in the year at Tentsmuir With its convoluted stem and cap blending in with woody debris, this dark grey mushroom may often be overlooked. Other forays to Templeton Wood (organised by the Ranger Service) and to the Den of Airlie, (The Scottish Wildlife Trust), were also successful and the season turned out to be a very rewarding one despite the slow start



Bird's Nest fungus

Gordon Maxwell

## PUBLICITY

We have received good free publicity this year with the report in the Craigie column, in the Courier, of Gordon Maxwell's find of **death cap** near Dunkeld. That generated considerable interest and we would like to repeat the publicity If any member knows of similar items of wildlife interest, please let us know

Jim Cook

## PEACOCK SUMMER

Mary ran in from the garden. "There's a **peacock** butterfly on the **buddleia**, I'm sure it is " I knew that there were only three records for the species for the last 20 years on Naturebase, so I dropped what I was doing and ran! There it was - a beautiful fresh specimen - enjoying my **buddleia**, where it stayed all afternoon Altogether Naturebase received six records of the **peacock** in 1995 from Forfar, Carnoustie, Crombie Country Park and Monifieth (my garden) and from Tentsmuir and

Newport in Fife. The unusually hot summer tempted these and other migratory butterflies further north than usual. There are a handful of sightings of **painted ladies** most years, but they appeared in my garden for the first time in 1995 and were also seen elsewhere in the area. **Camberwell beauties** were seen in Edinburgh and the Borders, but not, to my knowledge, this far north.

Elsewhere some butterflies were around, but were possibly adversely affected by the hot summer and parched vegetation. The RSPB/SWT outing in early August to Barry Buddon recorded 11 common species, including **dark green fritillary**, **small heath**, **small copper**, **ringlet** and **grayling**, but none in large numbers. The single **grayling** obligingly settled on someone's boot for everyone to look at!

Carsegowniemuir had its usual mixture of **small heath**, **small copper**, **meadow brown**, **ringlet**, **green veined white** and the occasional **small white**, **small tortoiseshell** and **red admiral** over the season. In late July I took the children there one weekday and recorded a single male **common blue**, a new species for the reserve. That same evening, on our study outing, a single individual was found roosting on a grass stem by Gordon; very reassuring since I had only got a quick glimpse of it earlier on.

Never having seen a **ringlet** before this summer, I seemed to find them everywhere I looked, probably only because I happened to be active at the right time this year. They are apparently increasing locally, so look out for them next season.

We shall all have to wait and see what the 1996 butterfly season brings - perhaps it will be a **clouded yellow** year - there were none in 1995. Keep sending in the records please! (See Naturebase, page 30)

Anne Reid

## BRIEF ENCOUNTER

One evening in July 1994, Margaret Duncan and I were finishing our orchid survey of Forestmuir, looking at the last remaining field, containing a light mixed woodland with a band of rough grass between the trees and the roadside fence. We saw one **lesser butterfly orchid**; that merited further investigation, so Margaret climbed the fence, going into the wood, and I continued along the fence scanning the rough grass. Two more **lesser butterflies**. Motionless and leaning on a fence post, I suddenly saw a large black **cat** come out of the trees and pad purposefully towards me, stopping 12 - 14 ft away. We stared at each other while I tried to take in the details. It seemed to be almost twice the size of an average domestic cat, its height difficult to assess because of the rough grass. It had a thick set body with thick black hair, not lying flat, - or could it have been standing on end, which would have made the body seem larger? Being face to face, I couldn't see the tail but it certainly wasn't erect, nor was the spine arched, as in an angry domestic cat. Indeed, traffic moving along the road and voices from the cottages at the cross-roads didn't seem to bother it at all. It had short ears and a flattened nose with emerald green eyes in a pug-like head.

The game of statues got boring after a while, and in the corner of my eye, Margaret was moving through the trees head down, still looking for orchids. How to attract her attention without disturbing the cat? I started to move one arm very slowly which was fatal, the cat disappeared into the woods in a flash as if it had never existed.

Oh well. I continued along the fence up to the cross-roads. No more orchids, so I turned back towards the original spot. Amazingly, the cat came out of the trees again, making for the same spot where there was an old rubbish bag. This time it saw me more quickly, again it disappeared like lightning, again I couldn't make out the tail. Two muffed opportunities in one evening, I'll never make a naturalist.

When Margaret came back over the fence and heard the story, all she said was "Glad I didn't know about that while I was in there"

Doreen Fraser

## A LONDON KILLING

The sun shone warm on our backs and the waves lapped the bank just behind us. It was a fine October day. I was sitting with a small group of people having a late lunchtime snack just outside the Tower of London. Our bench was facing away from the Thames and to our right another bench lay at right angles less than three metres away. One of our party was feeding the birds. A large flock of hungry **sparrows** and **pigeons** jostled round directly in front of us, totally oblivious to anything except crumbs.

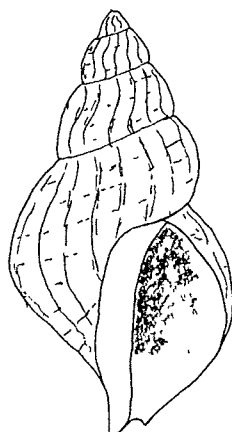
It all happened so quickly. I just caught sight of a brown blur to the left, out of the corner of my eye, and in an instant a male **kestrel** had struck. The feeding birds scattered and disappeared like pound coins on a London pavement, but they weren't fast enough. The falcon grabbed one of the sparrows as it went past, but the force of the strike took predator and prey under the bench to our right, under the feet of the tourists lunching there. The inattentive and unfortunate sparrow gave one squeak of terror and lay still in the raptor's left talon. Before anyone could move, the kestrel stood up, faced the way it had come, and swept off with its late lunch back over the rooftops. The whole drama took no more than two seconds. I'm not sure that some of the people on that bench even noticed. It was a very professional job, far slicker than any gangland slaying. And the other sparrows had suddenly lost their appetites.

Jim Cook

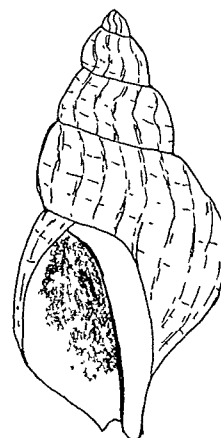
## SEARCH FOR A LEFT- HANDED WHELK

Hold a large **whelk**, *Buccinum undatum*, with the opening facing you and the point upwards. If the opening is on the right, the shell is "dextral". Should the opening be on the left, it is "sinistral". But have you seen one with a left-handed opening? I have grown hump-backed hunting shells on the beaches of Scotland, but all my shells are dextral. Can it be a natural law, just as the natural law dictates that the water always runs out of the bath with a clockwise whirl? And south of the equator the water runs out with an anti-clockwise swirl. Perhaps southern hemisphere whelks birl to the left. Some of you far-travelled naturalists can tell me if this is true. And if you find a left-handed whelk can I have it for my collection, please?

Bob McLeod



Dextral



Sinistral



As many of you will know, the Natural History Museum, Barrack Street, Dundee has a computerised wildlife database [Naturebase] which covers the local area

We are always interested in obtaining any records for inclusion in this project. They can be brought or sent to the museum as extracts from your field notebooks or on one of our many recording forms. The computer is best at processing long lists of species very quickly where details of Locality (with Grid reference), Date and Observer remain constant. All records are welcome, and recording forms are always available at the museum.

Further Information -  
Telephone 01382 432069



## FUND RAISING

Following the success of the car boot sale for fund raising in 1995, we propose to attend further sales in summer 1996. All saleable contributions welcome. Please contact Doug Palmer on 01382-533563 to arrange for uplift if necessary.

## Annual General Meeting of Dundee Naturalists' Society

Minutes of meeting held in Chaplaincy Centre on 14th March 1995

Present 50 plus

President Mr James K. Cook

**PRESIDENTS ADDRESS:** Mr Cook welcomed members and thought they would all agree that the last year had been a very successful one. A well attended series of summer outings had been followed by an excellent programme of winter lectures and he thanked the secretary for arranging these. Council were always looking for new ideas last winter had seen the start of once monthly short winter walks finishing with a bar lunch somewhere. These had proved to be popular and would be continued on the same basis next winter. This coming summer we were also going to start some natural history study meetings at Carsegowanmuir. We would welcome any suggestions from members for future activities. One such suggestion for a 'family fun' day at Crombie by Mr Bob Philip had proved very popular last summer. One of our summer evening outings would be to the new nature reserve at Balkallo. This was to be the Society's contribution to the Dundee Summer Festival and members of the public would be invited to attend. He made a plea for new members and asked those present to encourage anyone they knew, who was interested in natural science, to join the Society.

On a sadder note, he had to report the death of two members. Mrs Jeanette Fullerton, widow of Mr Len Fullerton, a former president of the Society and mother of Leonie Fullerton, who was Vice President of the Society at the time of her resignation upon marriage. Also Mr A.T. Miller who had been unable to attend meetings for some years.

**SECRETARY'S REPORT:** Mrs Fraser gave the membership numbers, - 189, down from 202 last year, so she reiterated the plea from the President for new members to bring fresh blood into the Society. Members would notice that the first and last outings of the coming summer did not provide a hired bus. This was in the interest of economy as both were for short journeys, easily undertaken by public transport or private car. If any members would like a lift in a private car for the first outing to Branklyn and Kinnoull Hill would they phone her and she would try to co-ordinate with drivers who had spare seats if they would also phone her. Heartfelt thanks were expressed to the following people to Council members who took minutes of winter meetings, thus providing the basis for articles in the Bulletin to the Bulletin Editor, Jenny Allan for another bumper edition with a new presentation to Douglas Palmer and Gordon Maxwell for preparing the quiz which members would soon be puzzling over, and to all the kind people who regularly helped with the catering at the Christmas and AGM meetings, whose contributions were greatly appreciated. Once again she asked those members who knew neighbours not present to deliver their envelopes, which would help to keep postage costs down and any used envelopes which could be dispensed with to go in the box provided.

In conclusion, she had enjoyed her time as Secretary, and had every confidence that her successor would serve the Society well.

**TREASURER'S REPORT:** given by Richard Brinklow in the absence of Brian Allan on holiday. Mr Brinklow referred to the details of the Treasurer's report which members had before them. The main account was less in credit than in the previous two years owing to a smaller membership. A separate fund was to be opened for the equipment fund which stood at almost £600. We were £200 short of the amount of £800 required for a computer for the new



secretary. An application had been made to Scottish Natural Heritage for a grant to cover this which we hoped would be successful. Feeling that it would be possible to borrow the sum temporarily from the Carsegow Glen account which was in a healthy state after receiving two planting grants totalling £800. The repayment would have to be met by fund raising but this course of action would be deferred until the outcome of the grant application was known. In the meantime any donations would be welcomed. The summer outings account had been well balanced by Mrs Tennant, and this year's weekend outing to Oban had attracted good numbers, a deposit had already been paid to the hotel. The Orkney week would be self financing. We are giving thought to the insurance position concerning members on outings, this was being looked into, but if any member had insurance experience and could give advice, this would be welcomed.

Treasurer's Report adopted proposed by Miss F. Kidney, seconded by Mrs D. Lyffe

**CARSEGOW GLEN REPORT:** Mrs Duncan thanked all those who had given their help over the past year. 56 trees had been planted in November and a further 44 last Sunday. Some plants had been returned to her nursery for planting next year. Weeding would be the next thing and she encouraged members who had some spare time to go to the quarry at any time provided they made their presence known, and pull a few weeds, or just enjoy a picnic there. There would be study evenings at the quarry this coming summer which she hoped would be well attended.

**ELECTION OF NEW OFFICERS:** A new Vice President was required occasioned by the resignation of the current junior Vice President Miss Dorothy Fyffe owing to family reasons.

Mr Gordon Maxwell was proposed by Mrs D. Fraser and seconded by Mr R. McLeod.

A NEW SECRETARY was required on the retirement of Mrs Fraser. Mr Doug Palmer was proposed by Miss S. Gardiner and seconded by Mrs M. Duncan.

TWO NEW COUNCIL MEMBERS were required to replace those retiring. Mr Hasso Cezanne was proposed by Miss S. Gardiner and seconded by Mrs A. Reid.

Miss Ruth Arnold was proposed by Mrs M. Duncan and seconded by Mrs J. Allan.

**HONORARY MEMBER:** Council had agreed that Mr Bob Philip should be made an Honorary Member in recognition of his long service to the Society. A certificate to this effect was presented to Mr Philip by the President.

**NEW BULLETIN EDITOR:** Mrs A. Reid was taking over from Mrs J. Allan.

**NEW TREASURER:** Mr Allan wished to retire at the next AGM. Members were asked to consider volunteering for the post.

Having concluded the business, refreshments were served while members attempted the quiz prepared by Messrs Maxwell and Palmer with assistance from Mr Brinklow. After three members scored equal top marks, the tie break was won by Mr Peter Ellis.

Meeting adjourned at 9.45pm.