

THE DONCASTER NATURALIST



THE DONCASTER NATURALIST

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CONTENTS

A Railway Year	Ian Macdonald	66
Mostly about Bumble Bees	Albert Wright	69
Peter Inchbald 19th Century Doncaster Naturalist	Stewart Rayner	74
The Royal Fern	Betty Rivett	76
Bad Weather from Old Records	Donald Bramley	78
Occurrences of the Clouded Yellow in the Doncaster Area	David Carroll	80
A Natural Dilemma	George Chapman	86
Sandal Brickyards and the Case of the Grass Vetchling	Colin Howes	89
Garden Weed Survey	Dorothy Bramley	93

EDITORIAL March, 1984

This spring issue of the Doncaster Naturalist is our fourth attempt at producing articles of interest about our locality. David Carroll has kindly put together information about the Clouded Yellow invasion of Summer, 1983, and Rev. Stewart Rayner of Adwick-le-Street has drawn out attention to Peter Inchbald and plants noted by him in the nineteenth century. On some of our fieldtrips this summer we hope to re-trace Inchbald's footsteps and see how many of the old sitings still exist. Articles for the Autumn Publication before September 1st, please.

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Doncaster.

A RAILWAY YEAR

Ian Macdonald

Some observations during 1983, made whilst travelling to and from work and while walking along the line.

January	27th	Coltsfoot in flower near Balby Bridge
	28th	A dead pheasant and a dead stoat near Dormer Green. I suppose the pheasant was killed by a train, the stoat saw the chance of a meal and met the same fate.
	31st	Near Bentley, a kestrel and red campion in flower.
February	1st	Pussy willow and dandelion in flower
	2nd	Two magpies at Shaftholme. Redwings and Fieldfares at Fenwick.
	3rd	A kestrel at Daw Lane
	4th	A heron near Thorpe Marsh. Four swans in flight at Arksey.
	11th	Twelve magpies in a hawthorn bush.
	16th	A kestrel near Arksey. Two swans on a pond north of Toll Bar
	21st	Two magpies at Daw Lane. A kestrel at Balby.
	24th	A dead partridge at Balne. A dead sparrow at Bentley.
	28th	Two swans on a pond north of Toll Bar, also two swans on pond near Joan Croft.
March	1st	One yellowhammer near Joan Croft
	7th	A small tortoiseshell butterfly at Doncaster
	10th	Coltsfoot is widespread now.
	11th	Lesser Celandine in flower near Joan Croft.
	14th	A pair of curlews near Haywood. A pair of mallard near Barcroft. Fieldfares near Heyworth.
March	17th	Three Tufted duck on pond near Bentley Tilts. Dead hen pheasant Dormer Green. A pair of little owls near Bentley Tilts.
	18th	Magpie building nest at Daw Lane.
	21st	Pair of curlews at Haywood. Blackthorn in flower.

	23rd	One kestrel at Daw Lane.
	28th	Three Canada Geese on pond north of Toll Bar
	29th	Primroses in flower, also Cow Parsley, near Fenwick.
April	6th	Curlew near Dormer Green
	7th	Flock of fieldfares Moss. Pair of Curlews Holme. Cowslips in flower Joan Croft
	11th	Grey squirrel dead on road north of Toll Bar. Three curlews and one kestrel Barcroft.
	14th	Group of mallards in field near Fenwick One pair of curlews Heyworth
	20th	Mallard in field at Haywood, Cuckoo near Barcroft
	22nd	Two jays Shaftholme
	26th	Dead cock pheasant Arksey
	27th	Wood anemone in flower near Bentley
May	4th	A swift and a cuckoo Daw Lane
	6th	Moorhen on pond Daw Lane
	9th	A small fox being kicked by ponies in a field, near Holme
	10th	Garlic, green Hellebore, Bluebells, a Wheatear, near Bentley
	11th	A tawny owl, a curlew, near Joan Croft.
	17th	Dead hedgehog, mignonette in flower, near Balne
	20th	Forgetmenot in flower at Shaftholme
	25th	Greater celandine in flower at Arksey.
	26th	A snipe at Moss
June	2nd	Dead racing pigeon, an orange tip butterfly, little owl at Tilts Farm, Shaftholme
	20th	Vipers Bugloss in flower at Decoy.
	22nd	Tufted vetch, yellow meadow vetchling, mouse-ear hawkweed and yellow iris in flower, near Daw Lane
	23rd	An oyster catcher Heyworth, three curlews Barcroft
	27th	Blue fleabane in flower near Hexthorpe
July	26th	Dead female teal, near Balby Bridge
August	3rd	Dead magpie, Shaftholme
	8th	Read bartsia in flower at Daw Lane
	10th	White melilot in flower at Doncaster Carr
	17th	A curlew at Fenwick

Sept.	5th	Dead wood pigeon Shaftholme
	13th	Heron and kestrel near Fenwick
	26th	Dead crow near Joan Croft
	27th	Dead rabbit Shaftholme. Two dead rats near Bentley
Oct.	25th	Dead rabbit at Joan Croft
	28th	Dead rat Moss. Dead hen Fenwick.
Nov.	2nd	Flock of golden plovers Fenwick
	8th	Dead pheasant, eleven mallards, four swans, one kestrel Shaftholme
	9th	Dead seagull, dead rabbit, Balby Bridge
	11th	Dead rat, Balby Bridge
	17th	Three swans, three fieldmice, one heron, Shaftholme
	22nd	Tawny Owl ? Snipe, Fenwick
	28th	Large group of lapwing and golden plover, Fenwick
	29th	Bullfinches and jay, Arksey.
	30th	Fourteen swans in field, three magpies, one kestrel,
December	1st	Flock of golden plovers, Toll Bar
	2nd	Canada Goose near Thorpe Marsh
	6th	A weasel Moss
	8th	A dead blackbird, near Arksey
	12th	A snipe, Shaftholme
	13th	Long tailed tits Shaftholme
	14th	Dead moorhen on road north of Askern
	29th	Red campion, white deadnettle near Bentley
		Four swans Arksey pond
	30th	Flock of fieldfares Toll Bar
		Spotted Woodpecker Shaftholme.

The number of birds and mammals killed on the railway line that

I noted were:-		Seagull	1
Pheasants	4	Blackbird	1
Partridge	1	Hen	1
Sparrow	1		
Racing pigeon	1	Rats	4
Wood pigeon	1	Rabbits	3
Teal	1	Hedgehog	1
Magpie	1	Stoat	1

MOSTLY ABOUT BUMBLE BEES

Albert Wright

It was a great day when 'Dear Mum' trusted me with one of her large, though blunted kitchen knives. This made it so much easier to reach the nests of bees and sometimes wasps, and then to carry them home in my two pound jam jars. But as time went on and the business prospered, there was some concern when bees were swirling round on wash-days!

Whilst never being outrightly forbidden this activity my parents gave stern warnings that bees could suddenly swarm on me. Their fears were a little unfounded, however, one day I was a bit fidgetty at the teatable with the intermittent zizzing of a great red-tail queen which had been lodged under my coat collar!

When I was still young and my fingers were small I found out that even when a bumble bee was held correctly with folded wings between finger and thumb, the elastic abdomens of the bee could place the tip of their dart in the cuticles of my nails. Another lesson I learned was that bees lying on their backs in a defensive position would lock their mandibles in an unbreakable hold on to a sleeve or other garment and I could not remove them easily without decapitation.

As for attacks by bees - the common carder bee (*Bombus agrorum*) and the early bumble bee (*Bombus pratorum*) are gentle and delightful little bees that never venture an attack, and I have found the large garden bumble bee (*Bombus ruderals*), and the small garden bumble bee (*Bombus hortorum*) with similar dispositions.

THE NESTS OF BUMBLE BEES

The first surface nest I ever found was of an *agrorum* beneath an overturned linnet's nest under a hedge, and this later gave me the following idea:- when the crusty nest of a thrush was picked up from the road, this was inverted over a nest of *Bombus lucorum* in my greenhouse bee-box. The result was pleasing, for as the bees' nest grew the thrush's nest was cut and expanded in sections,

the interspaces then being filled with wax. The whole thing looked like a cranium or restored pottery in a museum, in which the spaces created by missing pieces are filled with darker cement.

The success of the nest idea encouraged me to try further experiments, listed below:-

1. A nest of *B. pratorum* which was re-queened with *B. terrestris* was put in a bulb bowl about eight or nine inches across and placed under a box. A strong colony developed from this and took on cauliflower proportions. Bees from this entertained me by forming a banded circle as, side by side, they took diluted honey from a circular receptacle.
2. A clay pot was fashioned and fixed in the hedge, to house a nest of *B. pratorum*, but this was insufficiently ventilated and was taken down.
3. Boxes were arranged in rows on the lawn after the manner of beehives. In this case the boxes tended to harbour more predators and parasites than usual and bees were entering one another's boxes.
4. An upturned bottomless bucket sunk into the ground proved very good, and a cursory inspection could be made without disturbing the bees. Shoe boxes also do well for surface nesters if they are kept under cover.

At present, as I have not so much time to devote to my interest in bees, I use only four or five boxes in my small garden. These are of wood, perhaps eight to ten inches across, and seven or eight inches deep, and bottomless. These are then sunk to ground level, covered with a piece of close fitting board and earthed over. In addition to methods used by others, drainage stones are put under the bottom level of the boxes with perforated zinc or small mesh above to hold the nest. Nesting material is made by cutting the dried grass into short lengths which is then softened by rubbing between the palms. Softened leaves or bracken are likewise suitable and a transferred nest of mouse or vole has a natural attraction to queens.

A hole made first by driving an iron rod into the ground and then enlarged by the handle or a rake or hoe serves as a bee tunnel. Metal pipes are occasionally used for transferred nests but, with me, queens will not voluntarily enter them. Pipes which are bendable are first rammed with sand so that they do not flatten at the bends. Curved tunnels are made by moulding channels of soft mud, which has been mixed with short pieces of straw or grass. These are then covered with stone tile or board before covering over with earth.

Laid tunnels are trailed with a little nest material as an inducement. Mud is also used for filling and levelling around boxes and for moulding non-crumble entrances. Mice destroy many early nests and after the queen adopts a box, the entrance is reduced to a small finger size as a deterrent. In his book Sladen refers to the use of a washer for this, which seems a good idea.

Details about the development of the bee from the egg onwards are well known, but the following are some of the observations I have made:-

- *B. pratorum*, *B. locorum*, *B. terrestris*, all early bees, make their appearance from late March, notably on Sallow blossoms. Headed by *B. pratorum*, they begin nesting about mid-April.
- A queen adopting a nest box climbs on top of the material provided and from this forms a spherical cell of an inch or so across and, as the nest develops, the other material is drawn around.
- After this, the queen marks the nest by flying at first in expanding circles, and then by flying up and down. This occurs about twenty minutes after making the initial nest. Then she goes to collect nectar and pollen to feed the forthcoming larvae; to generate wax for making a honey pot and for making a purse or container for the brood. Flights may be for twenty minutes or so, but become as often as ten minute intervals later when the developing brood need the warming presence of the queen. The first brood of three small workers fly from the nest in just four weeks and may take thirty five minutes in foraging. Larger broods of bigger workers appear later and at shorter intervals. From

mid-June onwards, drones and then queens appear. The drones leave never to return, the queens find a mate and bring home for the first day.

- The nest may last only eleven or twelve weeks, sometimes a little more; for by mid-July the nest becomes deserted and cool, with mildew spreading through it. Workers still active sleep out, as do drones, under the flowerheads of thistles, knapweed etc. Late starters and late nesting species naturally have a later sequence and *B. agrorum* workers are working fuchsias along with wasps through much of October.
- Hibernating queens seek various places. One was found in a rotten standing stump, one or two under accumulated leaves; several were dug from below a privet hedge and several also were seen whilst digging into a clay bank. Yet another queen was seen to leave, and later return, to a bee-sized hole in a motorway bank in autumn.
- A queen *B. terrestris* was seen to reserve a site - after forming a rudimentary nest in a box with two tunnels; she stopped both entrances with fragments of earth and pieces of litter. After marking the spot she left, and was not seen again; she was not apparently ready to start raising a brood.
- On one occasion a *B. lapidarius*, after adopting a nest provided, left for several days. (A spider's web across the entrance confirmed this). The queen unexpectedly returned, to find that I had removed her nest. Soon an adjacent nest was adopted and then deserted.
- Another *B. lapidarius* was introduced to a few workers and a little brood of *B. pratorum*. These she deserted after turning the nest upside down, but was seen trying to make an entry several days later.
- A *B. terrestris* systematically visited and re-visited three nest boxes in turn in one instance, and in another a *B. terrestris* and a *B. hortorum* visited in turn a nest begun, as though awaiting the efforts of another.
- Dead queens at the nests of *B. pratorum* indicate more contesting or semi-parasitism in this species.
- Cells of beeswax filled with diluted honey appear to be no inducement to queens, but these cells were accepted in a going nest where a wax neck was added to them.

- A late starting *B. terrestris* was introduced to a declining nest of her own kind and although ova and larvae were produced, the cooling nest had run its course and could not be regenerated.
 - An underground nest was found, that of *B. lucorum*, in which there was no sign of nesting material. In this case, possibly, a mammal's nest made of a small amount of material had been adopted and then been enveloped in the bees' waterproofing wax.
 - In large *B. terrestris* nests a few workers can be found the size of a bluebottle. These never leave the nest. Even a large *B. terrestris* queen can be swallowed easily by a toad. I have noticed that queens will fly so late in the day when establishing their brood that they are not able to see the entrance to the nest, and there is much wandering about before it is found.
- I think the most unusual nest I found was that of *B. terrestris* in a chest of mattress flasks, which was standing in a yard! The bees were entering through a chink under the corner of the lid. Sometimes they can be found high up a tree in a bird's nest.

The two books which have helped me in my lifelong study of bumble-bees are:-

Bumble Bees by Gladen (I first read this forty years ago)
 Bees, Wasps, Ants and Allied Insects of the British Isles,
 by Edward Step F.L.S.
 Frederick Warne & Co. Ltd. 1932.

Since boyhood I have derived much pleasure from transferring and attracting 'bumbles' to the garden and watching them.



PETER INCHBALD, 19th Century Doncaster Naturalist

Stewart Rayner

Our knowledge of nature owes much to the enthusiasm and careful observation of naturalists of the past. One Doncaster born naturalist of note was Peter Inchbald (1816-1896) who himself had been influenced by his father - also named Peter Inchbald (1778-1838) to the confusion of historians.

The Rev. Dr. Peter Inchbald (senior) was a well known figure in Doncaster. He came to the town in 1800 after an education at Sheffield Grammar School and Oxford, and numbered among his friends, Francis Chantrey, Joseph Hunter and Asiline Ward. X He had a wide interest in local history, educational, literary and scientific affairs and was also a friend of John White who had created a private museum at his home on South Parade. Inchbald had been responsible for the publication of the Book of Poems by his short-lived son, John Nesbit White.

He established a private school at Carr House and it was there, in 1816, that his first child, Peter, was born. Inchbald then 38, having married Sarah Shipton, who was only about half his age. The couple produced three more boys whilst still living in Doncaster and, after moving the boarding school to Adwick Hall in 1827, produced six girls. Perhaps Peter (junior) took up his study of nature to escape from all his younger brothers and sisters!

Adwick Hall was owned by the sister of John White, who relied upon its income to support her in her widowhood in Paris. When the school suffered an economic crisis and Inchbald defaulted on his rent as well as accruing tradesmen's debts of £2,700, John White brought a cause of insolvency against him in 1833. He was duly committed into the Fleet Prison at London. Peter (junior) had to stand by whilst among other effects his father's library of 2,000 volumes was sold. Even all the children's clothing had to be valued.

However, through the goodwill of some friends, including Francis

Chantrey, the school was saved in order to provide Inchbald and family with a job and home for the future.

After his father's death in 1838, Peter assisted in the running of the school which moved to Storthes Hall near Huddersfield in 1849. Through his observations and notes Peter became a noted ornithologist, entomologist and botanist, contributing particularly to the knowledge of galls and their insects. He was a Fellow of the Linnaean Society, Zoological Society and Entomological Society. He died in 1896.

Among his articles to various journals the one most likely to interest Doncaster naturalists is on "Rarer Plants occurring in the neighbourhood of Adwick", printed in the Phytologist 1849. Vol. 3, P. 445.

Some of his comments will whet the appetites of local field botanists. I append a few:-

of Grass of Parnassus - the boggy pastures at Askern gay with blossoms.

Lily of the Valley	- flowers freely, woods abound.
Autumn Felwort	- everywhere abundant on dry uplands
Herb Paris	- common throughout the country.

I have submitted to the Editor a copy of Peter Inchbald's article which makes interesting reading for the botanical enthusiasts.

Footnote (Ed.)

This fascinating account of the rarer plants in the Doncaster area is being studied carefully and it is hoped to accumulate, in the coming months, up to date records of the plants he "spotted".

X In case you do not know!

Francis Chantrey (Sir) was the famous sculptor of Norton, Sheffield, who left the bulk of his fortune to form a fund for the promotion of British Painting and Sculpture.

Joseph Hunter - the Rev. Joseph Hunter, author of "South Yorkshire".

Asiline Ward Thomas Asiline Ward of Sheffield, born 1781, died 1871 - aged 90. A school friend of Francis Chantrey. West Riding magistrate and Master Cutler of Sheffield in 1816.

THE ROYAL FERN

Betty Rivett

It rained and it rained and it rained - for all of four hours. The first outing for a newcomer to the NATS. Thorne Moor in May. At one point during the progress, someone said, "down there is the royal fern." A small party left the main group to inspect the small bottle-green plant, hardly to the uninitiated a spectacular sight. But the name remained in my memory, and recently I have acquired a little information about the royal fern, which I have been persuaded to record for this issue.

The royal fern (*Osmunda regalis*) was once more common in England than it is now, but worldwide it is found all over the place from Sikkim to Ireland. It grows to a height of four or five feet, but some specimens attain to ten feet. It has a spirea-like "flower", which is green while the spores are ripening and brown when the spores have been shed.

The plant is an example of the "alternation of generations". Tiny spores scattered this year by nature, if they fall on wet, peaty soil, will give rise to small leaf-like growths (prothalli). These have male and female organs. From the fertilised egg cells of this growth rises the next spore marker to the heights mentioned.

Years ago in Cumbria and Furness the root of the plant was known as the "bog onion" and a starchy liquid was prepared from it which when applied externally relieved bruises and sprains and suchlike afflictions. By the same liquid in northern Europe linen was stiffened.

The family of ferns known as *Osmunda* is according to Collins Dictionary derived from a 13th century French word, origin unknown, but there is a less prosaic meaning according to the following legend.

At Loch Tyne lived the ferryman, Osmund, with his wife and young daughter. They loved to watch the bright dipping of his oars as he rowed his boat. One day, however, their peace was shattered by a fugitive band, flying for their lives from a party of fierce Danes. When Osmund heard with terror the shouts of the approaching band, he ferried his wife and the girl speedily to an island; here grew the massive royal fern and beneath it the two lay down. Osmund returned to his work and, as the Danes wished to cross the ferry they did him no harm. All that day and through the night Osmund ferried the dangerous men and, when the last company were on shore, he "returned heartfelt thanks to Heaven for the preservation of his little family. The story ends thus: 'Often in after-years did Osmund speak of that day's peril; and his fair child, grown up to womanhood, called the tall fern by her father's name'.

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Collins' English Dictionary

William T. Palmer F.R.C.S. Nature's Calendar
Skeffington & Sons Ltd.



BAD WEATHER FROM OLD RECORDS

Donald Bramley

The recent spate of spectacular bad weather in the Doncaster district (whirlwinds, fireballs, falling trees), has prompted the making of comparisons with disasters from past years. Two sources of past local history have been consulted - one is the Doncaster Review for 1894 and the other the list of Doncaster Mayors, with notes on remarkable events during each term of office. The following gems have been abstracted, retaining as far as possible the original style.

- 1609 A great frost from December to April
- 1684 A great frost held thirteen weeks.
- 1692 An earthquake in England
- 1716 A great frost
- 1750 February 7th. Two shocks of earthquake felt in London
- 1762 February 21st. A great snow with a violent wind by which a great number of vessels were lost in the Humber. Also a number of people lost their lives in the Kingdom.
- 1765 A mild and open winter until ye 12th of Feb. when it began to snow and snowed three days and three nights until there fell the greatest snow every known in the Memory of Man
- 1768 Appearance of a Comet
- 1771 February 20th - a very long and sore Winter begun at Michaelmass and continued until the middle of March, never was known so violent a winter in the Memory of Man. April 19th. Attendance of ye Mayor at Church on Sunday was prevented by a prodigious Snow.
- 1776 Jan 6th. A very sharp frost began and continued until ye 4th Feb. following as sharp a one as the last 13 weeks frost for the time it continued. Numbers of people perished at the same time.
- 1779 A long and severe frost from Nov.20th to Feb.30th(!) 11th April. A fiery Meteor appeared and gave a most luminous light to the astonishment of every Beholder

that saw it, it seemed to dart from ye Moon.

- 1795 Feb.7th. A great Flood in which a large Keel was carried over the bank of the river Dunn and next morning lay across the Turnpike Road a little below the Mill Bridge so that neither Horse nor Carriage could pass.

1836 Nov. 3rd. Christ Church struck with Lightning.

1860 Coldest Christmas Day for 50 years.

There are no more bad weather comments in the Mayors' list.

Doncaster Review 1894, Saturday December 22nd

Great Storm of Wind

Saturday Dec.22nd will be recorded as the day when the wind blew with such force throughout England that 124 lives were lost, houses blown down and trees uprooted. Fortunately in Doncaster no lives were lost. One man was seriously hurt and had to be taken to hospital. Stalls in the market were blown down and many country people were compelled to stay at home.

Two women walking along the river bank were nearly blown into the water. They were coming to Doncaster across the fields, and on getting on to the river bank the wind was so terrific that they had to clutch hold of the stakes in the fence for safety and dare not let go for nearly two hours when the wind somewhat abated and with the assistance of a male passer-by they ventured on their way. Slates and chimney pots were blown off buildings and there were narrow escapes from fallen debris. Footpaths were guarded by the police because of the danger of falling chimneys and tiles. Several of the large hoardings belonging to the Doncaster Bill Posting Co. were levelled at an estimated cost of £100. Trees were uprooted in the grounds of Mr. J. Stirling J. (of Railway Engineering Fame), it fell on the premises of Mr. Frood in St. Mary's Road doing considerable damage. Another tree behind the Hall (Miss Denison's) was blown down and one fell across the telegraph wires on Bentley Road and cut off communication and also stopped vehicular traffic for a time.

If the above summary reveals anything, it is that February is a bad month for extremes of climate; also that over 400 years Doncaster has had a climate that is mainly equable.

OCCURRENCES OF THE CLOUDED YELLOW IN THE DONCASTER AREA

David Carroll

Eye-catching clouded Yellows Colias croceus were seen at many localities around Doncaster during the long, hot summer of 1983. The following paper reviews historical records of this butterfly in our area, and lists 1983 records obtained from Doncaster Museum.

The Migrants' Provenance

The Clouded Yellow's ancestral home appears to be in North Africa and Southern Europe from where it spreads over the greater part of Europe. This migrant is of very irregular occurrence in our region, although in exceptional years it may be common.

No one has satisfactorily explained why migrants arrive in Britain in such large numbers during some years. Amongst various probable reasons is the degree of breeding success in the main breeding stations around the Mediterranean. A large build-up of the local population inevitably leads to a northwards movement by many individuals in search of fresh supplies of nectar-rich flowers. Having moved further north in Europe, some of the butterflies may then be caught up in weather conditions near the coast which transport them here on south-easterly winds. There is further indication that on some occasions the butterflies become involved in abnormal weather conditions much further south, so they are carried here directly on warm airstreams from north-west Africa.

When the Clouded Yellows reach our country in spring and early summer, given suitable weather conditions they will produce a new generation. In 1983 local residents report of specimens in "excellent condition" clearly indicate that some late summer and autumn records were indeed of British offspring. To what extent these augmented the immigrant population is not known.

Historical Records

1877 was an especially plentiful year for the species in Yorkshire (Porritt 1883) and one in which Lincolnshire's first county record was made (Duddington and Johnson 1983). Doncaster's earliest Clouded Yellow records were also documented in the same year. Porritt (1883) listed occurrences at Askern and Wath-on-Dearne in 1877. The latter year was also stated by Corbett (1893): "This species was also taken here (Doncaster) in 1877 when var. Helice was taken here". Helice is a variety occasionally found in females of the species. The main characteristic of this form is a replacement of the typical orange-yellow colour by a pale yellowish white.

The next occurrence was one in Edlington Wood on 29th May, 1891 (Potter 1892, Garland 1981). Corbett (1893) wrote: "Common in August 1892" around Doncaster. At the Doncaster Scientific Society's A.G.M. held on 10th October, 1900, the zoology recorder's report for the past twelve months stated: "The year has been a remarkable one for the number of species that belong to the British fauna only as migrants, that have made an appearance. Among these (was) the Clouded Yellow (Colias edusa) ..." including one specimen in a lane near Wadworth Wood (Hewitt 1901). Garland (1981) includes a record of one at Norton in 1934.

1947 will long remain as "the great croceus year" (Howarth 1973). The status of the Clouded Yellow in Yorkshire is described as "Absent most years, though has been seen in all parts of the county during its years of plenty. 1947 was, undoubtedly, the croceus year of the century". (Lip. Committee, Y.N.U. 1967). At an ordinary meeting of Doncaster Scientific Society on 1st October 1947, G.E. Hyde reported on the "relative abundance this summer of the Clouded Yellow Butterfly." In a letter to M. Limbert, Doncaster Museum, George Hyde commented: "In 1947 the Clouded Yellow was very common in much of Britain. The examples that I saw were mostly in local clover fields, especially in the Bawtry and Barrow Hills area". There were no further records for thirty-seven years.

Apparently 1983 records were less numerous in the northern part of Yorkshire than in the southern part. This can be attributed probably to the higher density of observers in southern Yorkshire, but may perhaps also be partly due to a petering out of the species' north-westward penetration of Britain? One point of interest demonstrated by Fig.1 is the frequency of records made in close proximity to rivers.

In 1983 there were three separate records of the pale female form helice occurring in our area. Copulation was reported on several occasions. This species does not hibernate and the butterflies and their early stages are soon killed by the onset of our country's cold damp winter.

Doncaster Area Records - 1983

The Clouded Yellow is a swift flying butterfly, but its resplendent orange-yellow upperwings with broad black borders make it quite eye-catching when on the wing. However, when settled to feed and at rest, the insect has a habit of keeping its wings closed. This offers some disguise and unfortunately prevents the observer from fulfilling the most desirable views.

1983 produced a memorably hot, sunny summer. The heat wave regularly raised local daily temperatures into the high 70's, the 80's and even 90° was recorded. Good weather, with minimal amounts of rainfall, prevailed for around ten weeks beginning towards the end of June, through July and August, into September.

Clover Trifolium and Lucerne Medicago sativa are the preferred food source for adults. In addition to these, larval food plants include trefoil Trifolium and melilot Melilotus. My first encounter with the Clouded Yellow was at Hexthorpe Ings, part of which is profusely vegetated with a variety of plants, notably clover, thistle Cirsium and ragwort Senecio. Colin Bailey had seen and photographed two specimens of croceus at this site from 6th August, but was informed by another observer that they had appeared there two weeks prior to his discovery. The two remained at least to the end of August, proving the suitability of this habitat.

List of 1983 Records

Although the list is thought to be complete as far as localities are concerned, some of these localities probably had additional records to those tabulated below. An appeal for records by Colin Howes, Doncaster Museum, was published in the Doncaster Star on 9/8/83 and received a good response. I take this opportunity to ask for any 1983 records not listed below, to be forwarded to Doncaster Museum.

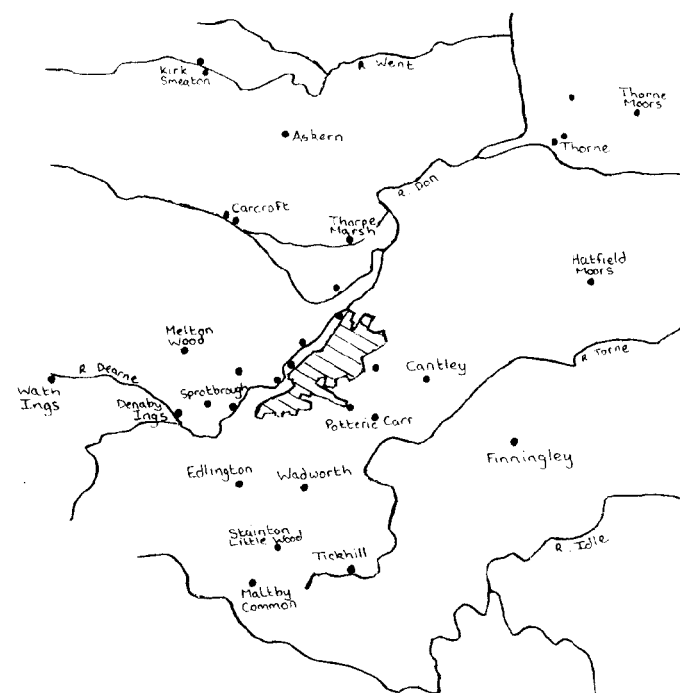
19.6.83	1	Sprotbrough Flash
c30.6.83	1	Sprotbrough Flash
1.7.83	1	Thorne Moors (The next sighting on the moorland was 31.7.83. Thereafter records of males and females extended to 22.9.83. Limbert in preparation).
1.7.83	1	Potteric Carr
22.7.83	1f.	Thorpe Marsh
23.7.83	2	Hexthorpe Ings. (Remained there to at least the end of August, feeding on clover, thistle and ragwort)
30.7.83	2m	Tickhill, feeding on Hemp-agrimony <u>Eupatorium cannabinum</u>
31.7.83	4+	Wath Ings
31.7.83	1m	St.Mary's Bridge, Doncaster.
31.7.83	3.2m.1f.	Thorne Moors
5.8.83	c6	Carr Hill, Doncaster (inc.3 m and a pair in copulation on clover, the female of which was judged to be var. <u>helice</u>)
7.8.83	1 f	Maltby Common (var. <u>helice</u>)
7.8.83	4	Kirk Smeaton
7.8.83	1	Denaby Ings
9.8.83	1	A quarry at Sprotbrough
9.8.83	1	Mooredge Road, Thorne
11.8.83	1	Wadworth, on clover.
11.8.83	3	Tickhill (inc.a pair in copulation; the female was var. <u>helice</u>)
First half of August 83	2	Banks of Eau Beck, Carcroft/Skellow
Second week of August '83	3	Carcroft
12.8.83	1	Askern
12.8.83	3	Thorne Mooreds allotments

13.8.83	4	Bentley Ings
13.8.83	10+ m	Tickhill (all in one field)
13.8.83	1	Melton Wood
14.8.83	1 m	Stainton Little Wood
14.8.83	1m	I.C.I. Fibres factory grounds, Doncaster
14.8.83	2	Brockadale
15.8.83	6	Kirk Smeaton (along railway track)
15.8.83	1	Edlington
16.8.83	2	Potteric Carr
17.8.83	1	Ascot Avenue, Cantley
17.8.83	3	Banks of River Don (SE/5805)
18.8.83	1	Potteric Carr
18.8.83	1	Balby Bridge, Doncaster.
18.8.83	c20	Thorpe Marsh (inc. 12m, 1 f.)
19.8.83	2	Miller Lane, Thorne, on <u>Buddleia Buddleia davidii</u>
c21.8.83	1	Hatfield Moors
21.8.83	1	Sprotbrough (in a garden)
21.8.83	13	Thorne Moors (maximum count)
25.8.83	1	Finningley
27.8.83	1	Sprotbrough Flash
27.8.83	1 m	Tickhill on sow-thistle <u>Sonchus</u>
27.8.83	1 m	Banks of Eau Beck, Carcroft/Skellow
22.9.83	1	Thorne Moors (The last appearance there)
1.10.83	1 m	Denaby Ings
3.10.83	1	Doncaster Common

Other Butterflies expanding their Range in 1983

Though no other migrant species arrived here in above average numbers, 1983 was climatically very favourable for butterflies. It is not surprising, therefore, that a number of non-migratory species were seen in hitherto unrecorded localities. For example, Melton Wood, studied by the writer since 1970, with a list of eighteen butterfly species (Carroll 1982) increased these by three additional species in 1983. Three Gatekeepers Pyronia tithonus and one Ringlet Aphantopus hyperantus appeared as well as a Clouded Yellow. Interestingly 27 Ringlets on Thorne Moors on 21st July was the largest ever count there. This species made significant progress from its usual stations during the year (S.M. Jackson personal comment). Similarly a number of other local sites either recorded additional species or greater numbers of the usual ones.

Fig. 1. Distribution of Clouded Yellow Records in the Doncaster Area - 1983



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A NATURAL DILEMMA

George Chapman

If being a fully paid-up member of the Doncaster Naturalists Society encourages me to call myself a naturalist I suppose I can class myself as a gardener, being the proud possessor of a tenancy agreement for a 'four hundred' plot on Hyde Park allotments. What I do know for certain is that the two interests are not always compatible.

During the past week, owing to hard frosts, followed by heavy falls of snow, gardening has been a non-activity - the main outdoor activity has been snow shifting. I don't know about you but I find work of that nature gives me plenty of time to turn my thoughts to other things - I also find that weeding has the same effect and, believe me, having an allotment consisting of rich loamy soil, weeding comes well into the 'top ten' of my gardening tasks.

There was a time, before joining the 'nats' when being at the garden meant just that. In recent years, however, I have become more aware of what is going on around me. Nowadays, when I 'take five' and lean on the spade to rest my weary bones, my eye takes in more than the crops I am tending and so it was today. I'd cleared the snow away, had put down some scraps for the birds, and was having five minutes when my thoughts turned to the wild life that raid my allotment for food and what a lean time they must be having with five or six inches of snow everywhere.

Here at home they're on a comparatively cushy number - as I watched in they came; the greedy grabbing starlings outnumbered the rest, always first down - sparrows next, darting in and out, making sure they got their share, to be followed by the blackbirds, who seem to go about their feeding in a more leisurely manner but, nevertheless, don't go hungry. Taking care of their needs in this way during the hard times tends to make you think of them as 'your own' - however all such illusions are shattered when spring arrives and they systematically slaughter the crocus flowers.

Mention of pheasants bring me back well and truly to the point in question - my two activities are not always compatible. To arrive at the allotment early in the morning and 'set up' a cock pheasant, to see its marvellous colours as it wings its way to some other plot immediately sparks off the naturalist in me - for the time being never giving a thought to the havoc it has wrought. On other occasions I have spent some delightful moments watching a mouse forage round in a heap of garden rubbish and, although not with as much pleasure or delight, I have watched with interest as a rat has worked its way along the bank of the dyke. A few years ago I saw a stoat cross the path about ten yards ahead of me - or was it a weasel? Only the other week a moorhen came paddling up one of the newly drained dykes.

Nevertheless, in spring and early summer when we are busy sowing and planting, it is the pheasant who is the greatest threat to future crops - given half a chance whole rows of newly sown seed will be gobbled up overnight. For the same reason mice and rats are a bit of a curse, and let us not forget our furry friend, the ubiquitous rabbit, who is very partial to newly planted brassica or the tender shoots of runner beans and the like.

It is when such things occur that dilemma descends upon me - my interest as a naturalist clashes with my frustration as a gardener. I try to be philosophical about it and, with a shrug of the shoulders, plant some more and taken even further precautions against a repeat performance. If I am unlucky and the bullfinches pay me a visit and devour all the buds on the fruit bushes I must admit to finding it very hard indeed to have any fond feelings towards them, colourful though they may be.

For the chap on the neighbouring plot life is not so complicated - his answer to the problem is starkly simple - "What they need is a blast from my bloody 12 bore". I only hope I'm not around when the day dawns - I feel pretty sure the pheasants and rabbits will be safer than me.

Among the blackbirds who visit us is a female which quite clearly has established our garden as her territory - this in itself is not unusual, but what I do think is remarkable is the fact that her left leg is 'off at the knee' so to speak and has been for some months. In spite of this handicap, she has managed to survive and is more than capable of defending her territory when the occasion arises.

Whilst writing this I glanced through the window and has an excellent view of a solitary redwing searching for and finding the few remaining rose hips in the neighbouring garden. At the same time a gull swooped down and snatched up a morsel of food that was lying on the snow. Not having seen this happen before, I take it as a sure sign that, because of the snow, pickings are not so good elsewhere.

As for the birds and mammals at the allowment, I suppose they are as hard put to as the gulls. More than likely, some of the mice and rats will have gone into sheds and out-houses in their foraging for food. The frogs, of course, will have hibernated in the dykes and, hopefully, will emerge in the spring ready to carry on the good work of devouring slugs and the like - a gardener's friend indeed is the frog. When the thaw sets in life will become a lot easier for the birds and then we shall just have to hope that the pheasants aren't too greedy when they come marauding among the brussel sprouts.



SANDAL BRICKYARDS & THE CASE OF THE GRASS VETCHLING: A STUDY OF ONE OF DONCASTER'S RAREST PLANTS

Colin A. Howes

The grass vetchling (Lathyrus nissolia L.) that member of the pea family which does its best to masquerade as a few non-descript blades of grass, can be very difficult to spot in its rough grassland habitat, the only clues to its existence being the tiny jabs of colour afforded by its solitary or paired crimson flowers supported on long hair-like stalks. This spindly, hairless, barely visible plant, which at full stretch only reaches about two feet in height, put Doncaster on the botanical map in 1897, when Dr. Henry H. Corbett - leading light in the Doncaster Scientific Society and Doncaster Museum's first Curator - revealed its presence at Sandal Brickfields (SE/6105;6005). Up till its discovery on waste ground in Leeds in 1983, this was the only West Riding locality, indeed were it not for a specimen found by a Mrs. Wharton near Sigglestone (TA/14) in the East Riding (Dillwyn and Turner 1805) and never seen again, the Doncaster site would have had the distinction of being the only Yorkshire locality.

The grass vetchling is basically a plant of the Mediterranean region, extending east to the Caucasus and Syria, north through France and Germany and has been introduced into Belgium and the Netherlands (Clapham, Tutin and Warburg 1952). Predictably, the Atlas of the British Flora (Perring and Walters 1962), clearly shows it to be a southern species in Britain with its main strongholds centred around the Home Counties, particularly Kent and Essex, with another concentration in areas by the Bristol Channel and the river Severn, notably Gloucestershire and Worcestershire. North of Bedfordshire and Huntingdonshire its occurrence becomes decidedly scarce with only isolated records from Derbyshire, South Nottinghamshire and Lincolnshire, the historical Doncaster and Sigglestone records being easily the most northerly sites.

Although Corbett had known the plant growing in the Sandal Brickfields since about 1890 or 1891 he only realised the significance of his discovery after failing to trace any mention of the species in F.A. Lees's (1888) encyclopaedic tome on 'The Flora of West Yorkshire'. On 24th June, 1897, he revised the site, confirmed its presence and published a note to that effect in the Naturalist (Corbett 1897 a). The occurrence of this scarce southern species in Yorkshire caused considerable interest and on 3rd August 1897 Dr. Corbett conducted Dr. Lees and Mr. Pickard to the site for them to verify the identification. At Lees's request Corbett submitted the following fascinating site study and report to the Naturalist (Corbett 1897 b).

"Geologically the isolated patch of clay forming the brickfields is interesting. The whole way from Doncaster the soil consists of post-glacial gravels, with Bunter sandstone below. But here the Bunter appears to have been locally denuded at some pre-glacial time, while during the glacial period when the Scandinavian glacier blocked up the Humber and subsequently the Don, the hollow previously formed was filled with water which gradually deposited a fine bluish laminated clay, showing no trace of organic remains, nor containing any pebbles or boulders. It is to all appearance a warp clay, but is situated far above the true warp lands, being about forty feet above sea level. This clay has been worked for the manufacture of bricks since.

Latterly, however, the brickmaking has not paid, and the ground has been pretty much left to nature. The irregular surface left in the old workings provides suitable situations for a very varied florula, the majority of which have evidently come since the clay was dug out. Wind dispersal will account for many species; others probably have been carried by waterfowl. But all these species are well-known West Riding plants with one exception, Lathyrus nissolia. How did this plant get there? Wind dispersal is out of the question. The seed is not such as would pass undigested through the alimentary canal of a bird. It is not a plant of cultivation, nor is it likely to be introduced as a cornfield casual. But here it is, flourishing and apparently native far from its hitherto known localities. Can the seed have lain dormant for countless years until

the accumulated clay was artificially removed, giving them a chance of germinating? Is the plant a relic of a pre-glacial flora? These questions, easy to ask, but very difficult to answer, suggest a possible, but in my own opinion, a barely probable solution.

If the plant had been an integer of the West Riding flora continuously and independently of the removal of clay, it is difficult to conceive how it should have escaped notice. Tofield worked the Doncaster neighbourhood very thoroughly and surely had L. nissolia been here he would have found it. Since his day, many good botanists have worked here, but no record of L. nissolia is to be found from any of them.

Among other interesting plants noted on August 3rd were Lycopus europaeus (Gipsy-wort), Sparganium simplex (small Bur-reed) Rosa tomentosa (Downy Rose), Utricularia vulgaris (Greater Bladderwort), Myriophyllum alterniflorum (water-milfoil), Helioscadium inundatum (Marshwort), Lotus uliginosus (Large Birdsfoot-trefoil), Nepeta cataria (catmint), Oenanthe fistulosa (Tubular Water Dropwort), Epilobium palustre (Marsh Willow-herb), Senecio erucifolius (Hoary Ragwort), Chara foetida and two introduced aliens Medicago falcata (Sickle Medick) and Sisymbrium austriacum."

The botanical revelations from Sandal Brickfields were also brought to the attention of the Doncaster Scientific Society, for in the minutes of its A.G.M. 13/10/1897 it is recorded that -

"In Botany Messrs Corbett and Lawson have undertaken the compilation of a Phanerogamic Flora of Doncaster and its vicinity. More than 400 species have been recorded during the year among which are several new species not hitherto recorded for the lower Don and Trent watershed and one species new to the County (Lathyrus nissolia)."

Clearly the Doncaster area had become the place for Yorkshire botanists to visit as on 30th May 1898 the Yorkshire Naturalists' Union held one of its annual field meetings here with the purpose of "investigating areas of Balby, West Moor, Armthorpe, Sandal Brickfields, Wheatley Wood etc." For the Y.N.U. advertising the meeting Dr. Corbett (1898) furnished the following note:

"At Sandal Brickworks the ponds and marshy ground yield many interesting plants of which the most noteworthy is Lathyrus nissolia..."

On 27th July 1898 Corbett took the famous botanist John Henry Payne of Mexborough to see the area, an entry in Mr. Payne's diary reads:-

"Dr. Corbett and I at Sandall Brickfields - we found Utricularia vulgaris (Bladderwort) (flowering), Helioscadium inundatum (Marshwort) (flowering), and Lathyrus nissolia (Grass Vetchling) (in seed). He also showed me a locality for *Potentilla argentea* (Hoary cinquefoil) on the right side of Thorne Road."

It is interesting to speculate as to whether the specimen in Corbett's herbarium at Doncaster Museum, labelled Sandal Brickfields July 1898, was collected on this occasion.

Although Corbett's first 1897 record was quoted in 'A supplement to the Yorkshire Floras' (Lees, Cheetham and Sledge 1942), nothing was heard of the species until the early 1930's when A.A. Dallman (1935) confirmed its presence "within two miles of Kirk Sandall". William Bunting re-located it at Sandal Brickfields during the 1950's, his record coming to light as a result of threats to the area by the construction of the M 18 link road at Edenthorpe (Bunting et al. 1971).

Most of the old brickworks area is now either under the plough or has been developed as the Shaw Lane Industrial Estate. Odd wild or unkempt corners, a few wet ditches and the fishing pond still survive, however, all of which would be worth re-investigation by the present generation of Doncaster naturalists.

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GARDEN WEED SURVEY APRIL - OCTOBER 1983 D. M. Bramley

Many thanks to all members of the Doncaster Naturalists' who took part in this survey last summer. Unfortunately, the number of filled-in sheets returned was too small for any significant conclusions to be made from the sample, there being only 12! However, it was interesting to note the most commonly occurring weeds, and also the areas which produced the most uncommon ones.

The largest list came from Trice and Eric Bingham of Whin Hill Road - not because they do not fight the weeds in the main part of their garden, but because they consciously encourage flowers which we would regard as weeds in a large wild garden. They notched up 78 species.

The most common weed, occurring at all times in all garden surveyed was Chickweed (*Stellaria media*). Close behind came Dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale*) and Groundsel (*Senecio vulgaris*).

Mr and Mrs Whetton sent in an interesting list from Tickhill Road, Balby. This included that pretty, dainty flower of the Field Madder (*Sherardia arvensis*) which occurs with them as a lawn weed. They are also lucky to have Enchanter's Nightshade (*Circaea lutetiana*) - I wonder if this indicates that there was once a wood where their house now stands? They also have Coltsfoot (*Tussilago farfara*). This year they had a most beautiful specimen of *Acanthus* which just arrived from nowhere and flowered spectacularly! Some people have all the luck.

Mr and Mrs Keble who live in Thorne Road, not far out of town, have Wood Sorrel (*Oxalis acetosella*) as a weed. I am told that they root this up yearly but it still persists. Again, I fancy that this must indicate a woodland in previous centuries. Wood Sorrel normally grows in shady positions in woods.

Pellitory of the Wall (*Parietaria judaica*) was a strange weed for Mr and Mrs G. Mitchell to turn up in their garden in Jossey Lane. One usually finds this on old ruins, e.g. Roche Abbey. They did admit to importing most of their weeds in a load of manure two years ago!

Bessacarr seems to be the only area which favours Spring Beauty (*Montia perfoliata*). I must admit that I encourage it in my garden as it has such a pretty flower. Asparagus and Soft Cranesbill (*Geranium molle*) along with Field Pansy (*Viola arvensis*) also thrive on the light sandy soil.

I think that, given a sample of say 50-100 from the different areas around Doncaster, we could see a pattern of distribution occurring. Theoretically those gardens on the magnesium limestone should produce a more interesting set of weeds. Perhaps we could try a more comprehensive survey another year?

Here are a few figures from the present survey:-

Largest number of weeds in any one garden	78
Smallest number of weeds in any one garden	9
Average per garden	30
Total number of species recorded	103

Again, thanks to one and all who submitted lists.

AN EXTRACT FROM THE PAST

The Doncaster Review

1895

March

Correspondence to the Editor

Dear Sir,

I shall be greatly obliged if you will allow me to reply through the medium of your paper to W.B.G.'s request for information respecting the presence of a nightingale in a wood at Wheatley. It was in the month of July last year when this sweet songster first attracted the attention of the public on Thorne Road. It took up its quarters in a plantation at the extreme end of Mr Cockill's park and, what is very unusual in its habits, close to a fair amount of pedestrian and vehicular traffic. The warbling could be best heard - even as early as between 8 and 9 in the evenings in the lane leading up from Thorne Road to Armthorpe Road but, owing to boys disturbing it, the bird penetrated deeper into the plantation and then the best coign of vantage was from Armthorpe Road. During a few days cessation of warbling it was thought that the bird had emigrated to Elmfield Park, where one was said to have been heard, but this idea was dispelled on the return of its voice and it could be heard on and off for some 2 - 3 weeks. It was responsible for several parties visiting its retreat and lingering all night to catch the beautiful notes, and some were rewarded, whilst others caught nothing but colds.

SUMMER PROGRAMME 1984

Unless otherwise stated, meetings start 1.30 p.m. from the Museum.

Evening meetings start at 6.30 p.m. from the Museum.

Saturday April 28th	Spring in Melton Woods.
Saturday May 19th	Campsall Country Park.
Saturday May 26th	YNU Excursion to Aberford.
Saturday June 2nd	Cambridge University Botanic Gardens (Details later)
Wednesday June 6th	Sandall Beat Wood
Saturday June 9th	YNU Excursion to Elland.
Saturday June 16th	YNU Excursion to Seamer (R.Hertford)
Wednesday June 20th	Shaw Wood, Armthorpe
Saturday June 23rd	Epworth Turbary and Rush Furlong Nature Reserve
Sunday June 24th	YNU Excursion to Caydale, near Hawnby.
Saturday June 30th	Brocadale (Wentbridge)
Sunday July 1st	YNU Excursion to Allerthorpe.
Wednesday July 4th	Roman Ridge; Sunnyfields to Woodlands
Saturday July 7th	YNU Excursion to Colsterdale.
Saturday July 14th	YNU & YWT Excursion to Grass Woods.
Wednesday July 18th	Castle Hills (Near Highfields)
Saturday July 21st	Owston Wood
Saturday July 28th	YNU Excursion to Hebblethwaite Gill
Saturday August 4th	River Torne Banks, Auckley to Torne Bridge and Auckley Common.
Saturday August 18th	Conisborough Castle and Conisborough Mill Piece
Sunday August 19th	YNU Excursion to Gilberdyke.
Saturday September 8th	Fishlake.

N.B. For details of the YNU Excursions, contact -

D.Bramley, Telephone Doncaster 535246.

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