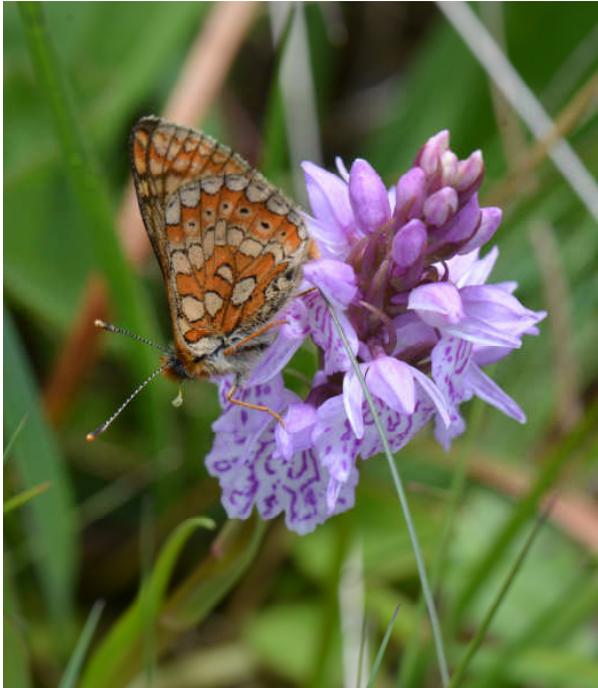


# CNS



Founded

1867

**CARDIFF NATURALISTS' SOCIETY**

**NEWSLETTER No. 107**

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Charity No. 1092496

**LIST OF OFFICERS 2014/2015**

**Immediate past President**

Roger Milton

**President**

Christopher Franks

**Secretary**

Mike Dean

36 Rowan Way, Cardiff CF14 0TD

029 20756869

secretary@cardiffnaturalists.org.uk

**Treasurer**

Dr. Joan Andrews

Rothbury Cottage, Mill Road, Dinas Powys CF64 4BT

treasurer@cardiffnaturalists.org.uk

**Indoor Meetings Secretary**

Hilary Wicks

029 20257012

indoor@cardiffnaturalists.org.uk

**Membership Secretary**

Dannii Roberts

membership@cardiffnaturalists.org.uk

**Field Meetings Coordinator**

Bruce McDonald

5 Walston Close, Wenvoe

outdoor@cardiffnaturalists.org.uk

**Newsletter Editor**

Stephen Nottingham

stephen@cardiffnaturalists.org.uk

**Also on Council**

Mary Salter, Gill Barter, Marie Makepeace, Andy Kendall

<http://www.cardiffnaturalists.org.uk>

<http://cardiffnaturalists.blogspot.com>

[www.facebook.com/groups/CardiffNaturalists](http://www.facebook.com/groups/CardiffNaturalists)

Twitter: @CardiffNats

**Cover photo: Marsh Fritillary on Heath Spotted Orchid at Aberbargoed Grasslands, by Phill Blanning (see outdoor meetings pages 4-5)**

## **Indoor Meetings 2016**

Regular meetings are held in Room 0.23, Cardiff School of Management, Metropolitan University, Llandaff Campus, Western Avenue, Cardiff CF5 2YB.

**Indoor meetings begin at 7.30pm.**

### **Monday 18 April**

**The final indoor meeting of the spring 20016 season will be in two parts:**

#### **1. Bioscience Prize 2016 award**

We congratulate Poppy Mynard for winning this year's Bioscience Prize, awarded annually in the memory of former member Prof Ursula Henriques, for the best second-year field work project in the Biosciences Department, Cardiff University.

At this meeting, following the presentation of the award, Poppy Mynard will give a talk on her work, entitled 'The diversity of wood decay fungi in Sabah, Malaysia'. Her project aimed to assess the diversity and distribution of fruiting macrofungi in the Lower Kinabatangan Wildlife Reserve. The talk will focus on the effects of dead wood age, decay state, and tree species as determinants for the presence of fungal species and fruit body forms.

#### **2. Sydney Johnson film**

The evening will conclude with a screening of 'An Island of Birds', a short film (about 20 mins) by Sydney Johnson, made on a visit to South Uist in the Outer Hebrides in Scotland. The society was recently gifted Sydney Johnson's film archive, and this is one of the first of his films to be digitised (see pages 24-25).

# Outdoor Meetings 2016

## **Saturday 14 May**

### **Waterfall Country near Penderyn**

Meet at 10am at Porth yr Ogof car park.

Steve Howe will lead this walk from Porth yr Ogof to Cwm Porth, then via Scwd yr Eira to Scwd Clun Gwyn and back. This is a fairly gentle walk and it offers a variety of habitats and scenery. It is a bit rough in places, especially the last stretch along the river bank but this is not far and it is fairly flat.

There is a cafe and toilets at the Four Waterfalls car park Porth yr Ogof (Grid ref: SN 928 124; CF44 9JF), and if this is full an overflow one up the road. Bring packed lunch.

## **Tuesday 24 May (evening)**

### **Cwm Nash**

The public footpath through Cwm Nash to the beach is well known. On this occasion, however, we can walk on the other side of the tufa-forming stream, through land which has no public access. This includes a garden with species-rich lawns and old fruit trees and then, closer to the sea, woodland and wind-pruned scrub. Led by Gill Barter.

Meet at the public car park in the field at SS 912700 at 5.45pm. From here we can drive the last 250m to Cwm Nash for 6.00pm, leaving some cars at the field if necessary, depending on numbers.

## **Saturday 4 June**

### **Aberbargoed Grasslands**

Meet 11am at the visitors centre.

A visit to Aberbargoed Grasslands with Phill Blanning. This National Nature Reserve and SSSI is a stronghold for the Marsh Fritillary butterfly, with Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary also present in lesser numbers. It's also an excellent site for Heath Spotted Orchid. Parking at the education centre where the warden, Mark Allen, will meet us (Grid ref: ST 166 996; NP12 0BE). Bring packed lunch if staying longer (centre opens to about 5.15pm). The centre can be found on Heol y Bedw-Hirion (note: no road name signs). If coming from Caerphilly area, pick up A469 through Tir y Berth. At traffic lights on cross road (statue on left), turn right, going past entrance to Bargoed Country Park. Carry on uphill, turn left onto A4049 and after about 1/4 mile turn right. Carry on uphill and at junction turn left and follow brown sign with a duck on it.

## **Sunday 10 July**

### **Pontypool Park**

Meet 11.30am

Led by Tony Titchen and Bruce McDonald

We shall be re-visiting Pontypool Park in the summer after our last trip there was abandoned following excessive rain. Meet at the car park 11.30am for the guided walk (Pontypool NP4 8AT). Later there will be an optional walk up to the viewpoint and shell grotto.

## **Sunday 24 July**

### **Llantrisant Common**

Llantrisant Common includes a mixture of marshy grassland and drier areas, grazed by horses and cattle. Among other things we hope to see the tiny Cornish Moneywort, a plant with only a few sites in South Wales. On the far side of the common is Y Gweira, an enclosed field owned by the Wildlife Trust of South and West Wales. Led by Gill Barter. Packed lunch recommended.

Meet in the Gwaunruperra Road car park at 10.30am, ST 047836. From the old town centre follow Heol y Sarn downhill towards the common and Gwaunruperra Road is on the right before you reach the cattle grid.

There is also a trip being planned to the Llandegfedd Reservoir.

**Please look online for further information and for additions to the CNS Indoor and Outdoor Meetings programmes:**  
**<http://cardiffnaturalists.blogspot.co.uk/p/programme.html>**



Gold Spangle (*Autographa bractea*), at Parc Gwen Darren, by Phill Blanning

## Cardiff Birdwatch

About 12 intrepid bird-watchers met at the north end of Roath Park Lake on Sunday 10 January 2016. Conditions were far from ideal as it was raining and very wet underfoot from rain the night before. We first walked around the woods to the north of the lake and then around the lake itself. However, by the time we returned to the cars, heavy rain and hail commenced so it was decided not to move on to a second location but to return to the comfort of our homes.

Nevertheless, we were able to see some notable birds, namely a Great Spotted Woodpecker, together with Long Tailed Tit, Red-wing and the usual residents of the wood, all to the accompaniment of a Song Thrush. On the lake **we** saw a Pochard, Little Grebe, Tufted Duck, together with Mute Swan, Coot, Moorhen and Mallard.

Thanks must be given to Linda and Rob Nottage for organising the event in spite of the inclement conditions.

Report and photo by Mike Dean



## **Seashore Safari with Judith Oakley**

On Monday 15 Feb 2016, marine biologist Judith Oakley gave an illustrated talk to the Society about life on the seashore, with a focus on the intertidal life of the rocky shores around The Gower in South Wales.

Judith is the author of the book 'Seashore Safaris' and, through her work with Oakley Intertidal, organises educational Seashore Safaris for all ages to visit the intertidal zones at low tide (<http://www.oakleyintertidal.co.uk>).

In her presentation, Judith started by presenting 'The Seashore Code'. Best practice, for example, is not to use nets at all, place overturned boulders and rocks back where you found them, to place only one creature at a time in a bucket or tray for observation, and to always put it back before the water in that bucket or tray becomes too warm or oxygen-depleted.

At low tide, a number of zones on the shore can be identified in terms of their different plants and animals, with biodiversity increasing the closer you get to the low-water mark (where organisms have the lowest exposure to the air). A range of micro-habitats occur on rocky shores. We explored three of them in detail through Judith's photographs: rock pools, overhangs, and under boulders.

Anyone can help improve knowledge of seashore biodiversity, by reporting their findings through the Marine Life Information Network (MarLIN) – see the 'sealife survey' page at <http://www.marlin.ac.uk/>

The many members present at the talk will certainly be looking more closely next time they find ourselves on a rocky shore.

Report by Stephen Nottingham

## Tidal Lagoons

Tessa Blazey, Development Director of Tidal Lagoon Cardiff, sent the Society details of their progress - summarised here.

Tidal Lagoon aim to start work on Tidal Lagoon Swansea in autumn 2016, so marine work can start spring 2017, with power-on planned for 2021.

Tidal Lagoon Cardiff have submitted a scoping report for the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) to the Planning Inspectorate under Regulation 8 of The Infrastructure Planning (EIA) Regulations 2009. In response, they have received a “scoping opinion” on the information to be included in the Environmental Statement. This can be viewed on Tidal Lagoon Cardiff’s page on the Planning Inspectorate’s National Infrastructure Planning website

[<http://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/projects/wales/tidal-lagoon-cardiff/>]

The aim of the EIA is to protect the environment by ensuring that the decision maker, when deciding whether to grant permission for a project that is likely to have significant environmental effects, does so in the full knowledge of those effects. The EIA process informs the project and helps identify mitigation measures where adverse impacts cannot be avoided. Regulation 61 of the Habitats Regulations requires the competent authority (the relevant Secretary of State) to make an assessment of plans likely to significantly effect a recognised European site. A Habitats Regulations Assessment will be submitted with the Development Consent Order (DCO) application, to assess likely effects on European sites (Special Areas of Conservation or Special Protection Areas). If adverse impacts cannot be avoided or mitigated, further assessment will be required that may result in the need for effective compensatory measures in order to maintain the integrity of the network of European sites.

Current work being done by Tidal Lagoon Cardiff includes the collation of historical data from all Severn Estuary survey work over the last 20 years (including past use as disposal grounds and dredging information); hydrodynamic, sediment and water quality modelling; geophysical and oceanographic surveys; Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA) and Water Framework Directive (WFD) screening; adoption of an evidence plan approach across all core EIA topics; and bird and fish surveys.

Tidal Lagoon Power has announced the formation of a Fisheries Peer Review Group to be chaired by Chris Mills, the former Director of Environment Agency Wales. Acting as independent advisors to Tidal Lagoon Power, the Fisheries Peer Review Group will provide additional support to Andy Schofield who has joined the business as Head of Fisheries. Andy worked for Natural Resources Wales and its predecessors for almost 30 years and held various fisheries, conservation, recreation and water quality management roles. Members of the Fisheries Peer Review Group include Steve Colclough, a fisheries scientist and Director at Colclough & Coates – SC2 Limited, and Graeme Harris, also a fisheries scientist and former Chair of the statutory Fisheries, Ecology and Recreation Committee (FERAC) for Wales (2006 – 2013). The aim is to advise Tidal Lagoon Power and the fisheries research contractors on the methodology being adopted for the prediction of impacts on fish as part of a broader environmental impact assessments relating to Swansea Bay Tidal Lagoon and future lagoon developments.

Tidal Lagoon Power do not expect the consultation for Tidal Lagoon Cardiff to begin until later this year (2016), but they will issue regular project newsletters and update their website accordingly.

[www.tidallagooncardiff.com](http://www.tidallagooncardiff.com)

[www.tidallagoonpower.com](http://www.tidallagoonpower.com)



Large  
Pincertail (*Onychogomus uncatus*) in France by Phill Blanning



*Rhyothemis*  
Thailand by  
Blanning

*phyllis* in  
Phill

## **Weather Report for Cardiff 2015** **from a friend of the Society**

The weather summary for Cardiff (see over, pages 14-15) is based on figures recorded in Thornhill. It can be compared with figures recorded over the previous 30 years in this location.

The rainfall for 2015 was slightly above average for this year. There were large variations, however, with October being the driest recorded for 30 years and April the second driest. On the other hand, November was the wettest recorded over this period, and December the fifth wettest. There were only 2 completely dry 24-hour periods in November, and just 1 in December, but there were 19 completely dry 24-hour periods in April and 18 in October. The wettest day of the year was 1 June with 37.0 mm, closely followed by 30 November with 35.5 mm.

The lowest temperature in 2015 was  $-2.0^{\circ}\text{C}$  on 9 February and the highest was  $30.5^{\circ}\text{C}$  on 30 June. Air frosts were recorded on 12 days during January and February, and on 1 day in November.

Note: Whilst the rainfall figures may be taken as representative of the Thornhill area of Cardiff, the non Met Office Standard of exposure of the thermometers means that temperature data is representative of the site only and not of a wider area.

# **Annual Weather Data for North Cardiff 2015**

Note: Exposures for both rainfall & temperatures are not to Met. Office Standards

	<b><u>Jan.</u></b>	<b><u>Feb.</u></b>	<b><u>March</u></b>	<b><u>April</u></b>	<b><u>May</u></b>
Total Rainfall in mm	205.2	126.2	82.5	26.2	172.5
Highest in one day in mm	24.0	28.0	18.0	5.2	32.0
Date of Highest Rainfall	1st	22nd	28th	2nd	2nd
Highest Maxi Temp °C	13.2	13.2	15.5	22.2	22.0
Date of Highest Temp	1st	25th	7th	15th	26th
Lowest Min Temp °C	-1.6	-2.0	1.0	3.1	5.9
Date of Lowest Temp	23rd	9th	5th	28th	2nd & 20th



## RAMBLES

Text and photos by Bruce McDonald

A few snippets from some recent rambles.

First Whiteford on Gower, which Cardiff Naturalists' last visited to look at beetles a few years back with Steve Bolchover. A fine day in mid-June this year and the same stretch of sand on the edge of the dunes around SS 4428 9517 was productively revealing. The key appears to be to find a larger plank of wood or branch or tree trunk that is just above the recent high-tide mark but below the dunes. Lift slowly and see what lies beneath. The black beetle *Broscus cephalotes* was found quite easily. They either stayed put or went scuttling off across the beach.



*Broscus*

*cephalotes*

Not so common but also in evidence was *Nebria complanata*, sufficiently rare to warrant its own Species Action Plan. It feeds on sandhoppers at night and is variously referred to as the Strandline Beetle (as is *Broscus cephalotes*!) or Beachcomber Beetle. Have your camera ready if you find one under timber, as they often burrow down into the sand.

Running around on the surface of the beach in the same area was the Dune Tiger Beetle (*Cicindella hybrida*), and helping to procreate the species were the two in the photo (opposite). They can travel at speed, so are not always easy to photograph but these two had other things on their minds.



*Nebria*

*complanata*



Dune Tiger Beetle (*Cicindella hybrida*)

Whilst on Gower another gall to add to the existing 'collection'. This I take to be *Aulacidea hieracii* described as having ovoid or elongate swelling of the stem, green at first then hard and brown. This was on several Hawkweed plants in the car park at Oxwich Bay (photo p. 18).



Gall on

Hawkweed

The Copthorne Hotel at Culverhouse Cross roundabout, Cardiff, has the usual common shrubs and trees but the Hawthorn was showing examples of the gall shown below. It has been a struggle to identify this one and any expert views would be most welcome. Photographic comparison with web images suggests *Gymnosporangium* as a possibility - caused by a fungus. Whereas *G. clavariiforme* is usually associated with Juniper which does not seem to apply here, this could be *G. confusum*.



Gall on

Hawthorn

... and not far away some Holm Oaks, *Quercus ilex*, with the gall shown below. Again, information on galls affecting this oak is limited, the main reference being to *Aceria ilicis*, caused by a mite.



Gall on

Holm Oak

The next challenge is the gall causing these swellings on the leaves of Hop Trefoil (*Trifolium campestre*), on which I have again drawn a blank. There is little enough on possible galls for this plant, one candidate being the mite *Dasineura trifolii* but the description of this refers to folding of the leaves along the mid-rib, which is not evident here. Again, any insights from readers would be helpful.



Gall on Hop

Trefoil

A walk near Treorchy in late June was something of a revelation. A forestry track starting just north of Cwmparc SS 9472 9617 by a metal barrier is worth trying because of the profusion of Southern Marsh orchids. Up to this point we had been walking through heavily sheep-grazed turf and the only plant you tend to find is Tormentil, *Potentilla erecta*, although it was interesting to note that Lady's Mantle, *Alchemilla* sp., was growing in clumps suggesting it is unpalatable even to the voracious sheep. Once into the sheep-free area, there appeared Pearly Everlasting.

The following extract is from a field trip in 1994 to Kenfig by The Wildflower Society: "Then we came to a first record for Britain, *Anaphalis margaritacea*, Pearly Everlasting, which was recorded in the South Wales valleys in the seventeenth century and is now spreading over Wales."

It is certainly quite common in the Valleys, is visible on the edge of the M4 around the Pyle turn-off, and turned up on Coppet Hill near Goodrich growing under bracken. Despite its local ubiquity it is almost completely ignored by wildflower books. Wouldn't it be nice to know more about this plant?



Pearly Ev-

erlasting

A smattering of Common Spotted Orchid, *Dactylorhiza fuchsii*, was eclipsed by the Southern Marsh Orchid *Dactylorhiza praetermissa*, which appeared to favour the damper runnels alongside the forestry track and stretched for a mile or more giving one of the best displays you are likely to come across in this part of the world.



Southern Marsh Orchid

## **A Year in the LIFE of RSPB Cymru**

At the 28 January 2016 meeting, Daniel Jenkins-Jones talked to the Cardiff Naturalists about RSPB Cymru's varied activities during 2015. The RSPB manages over a dozen nature reserves in Wales. Daniel presented figures for breeding pairs of birds in 2015 at these sites. There was bad news, in the alarming decline seen in the UK for seabirds and other species, but good news in that RSPB Cymru's conservation action is protecting and increasing bird populations.

Landscape work to extend wetland areas (funded by landfill tax) at RSPB Malltraeth Marsh on Anglesey, for example, has increased the lapwing population, and also led to a pair of nesting hen harrier (the last breeding pair here was seen in 1974). Ynys-hir, a wetland area on the Dyfi estuary in Ceredigion, also has breeding lapwing, and notable populations of, among others, redshank, pied flycatcher, wood warbler and Greenland white-fronted geese. At Lake Vyrnwy, the largest site managed by RSPB Cymru, habitat management is helping moorland-breeding birds such as hen harrier, black grouse and merlin.

On Ramsey Island, RSPB Cymru's work is helping protect a number of seabirds, including guillemot, razorbill, kittiwake, Manx shearwater, storm petrel and chough. Daniel described how eradicating rats, by employing a New Zealand company who used baited peanut butter, was a key action in reducing breeding bird mortality. At nearby Grassholm, part of the UK's third largest gannet colony can be seen online thanks to RSPB Cymru (Google 'gannet cam Grassholm'). The organisation does important work releasing gannets trapped by the plastic waste (mainly originating from the Marine fishing industry) that they bring back to their nests. In 2015, 50 gannets were freed (550 in total have been rescued in the last few years). With work on several other reserves noted, the scale and variety of the RSPB's conservation work in Wales during 2015 became apparent.

Political campaigning is an important part of RSPB Cymru's work, and they have a regular presence at the Senedd - the home of the National Assembly for Wales. 2015 was an important year, with the drafting of the Environment (Wales) Bill aiming to put into place legislation for managing Wales' natural resources in a more integrated and sustainable way. However, conservation organisations considered that, under the influence of Natural Resources Wales, it placed too much emphasis on business and not enough on nature; Daniel noted that the first draft did not even mention nature, though lobbying by RSPB Cymru and other NGOs has put nature into the Bill's final wording. Last year, the RSPB was also active in promoting the Nature and Wellbeing Act. In addition, RSPB Cymru were involved in advisory work with farmers, and around 100 case studies ranging from small-scale to large-scale projects such as the Swansea Tidal Lagoon.

Following a report showing low levels of engagement with nature among Welsh schoolchildren, RSPB Cymru committed to more educational work. One new initiative in 2015 was 'Giving nature a home in Cardiff', which involved hands-on practical visits to 90% of Cardiff's schools. This was funded with the help of the plastic bag charge in Wales. As part of the initiative, RSPB Cymru undertook the 'Tape' project in Bute Park, with the help of Arts Council Wales funding. This installation, which involved large amounts of non-sticky tape strung around trees to create a raised structure that could be entered, was visited by around 74,000 people (10,000 venturing inside). All the plastic is being recycled to make wild flower planters to put around Cardiff.

Daniel concluded his talk with a look at how people can help RSPB Cymru, through volunteering (not just habitat management, but also in administration roles), buying collectable pin-badges and joining. For further information:  
<http://www.rspb.org.uk>

Report by Stephen Nottingham

## Sydney Johnson Film Archive by Joan Andrews

Sydney Vivian Johnson died on 7 May 2014, at the age of 95. Sid never married but had many friends. He worked for BP Oil, at their former refinery in Llandarcy, but film cameras were his main interest.

I got to know Sid through the Merthyr and District Natural History Society, where he was a friend and contemporary of Mary Gillham OBE. Mary at that time worked for the Extramural Department of Cardiff University and, as part of her job, organised expeditions to study natural history. Mary and Sid thus were together on many occasions, passing on their own expertise. Sid was a film camera enthusiast and recorded what he saw on varying media as they became available. He showed his films at many local meetings. As well as being an excellent naturalist, Sid was interested in industrial archaeology and recorded many scenes of locally-important industries – especially around the Neath Valley where he lived.

I have two memories to share. Firstly sitting down on Gower with Sid both trying to take a picture of a fulmar and Sid warning me just in time of their nasty habit of regurgitation. The other occasion, on the Isles of Arran in Galway Bay, where Sid joined in every walk – but always delicately balancing his very heavy camera up and over the numerous stone walls.

His close friend Mike Jones shared many of his archaeological expeditions, such as a particular visit to an old lightship at Britton Ferry that had served at the D-Day landings. These outings continued almost to his death and usually ended with a fish and chip supper, and in Sid bemoaning that “all his pals were going”.

Members may wonder why the Cardiff Naturalists' Society is commemorating this man. It is because we were gifted his entire film archive. It is a very mixed bag, with some on very old film stock. Many of the films are of industrial archaeology and mention the Neath Antiquarian Society, of which he was a life-long member. Mary Salter, Mike Dean and I have listed all the material, and we have had two films of good quality digitalised and transferred to DVD: 'An Island of Birds', which we will show at the Monday 18 April 2016 meeting (see page 3), and one about the Glamorgan Canal.

He was certainly the best amateur filmmaker I have known and I hope we can preserve his legacy in some small way. If any members have knowledge of Sid, or expertise in his field, we would really value your advice.

Sydney Johnson (in middle, wearing black jacket) and friends on



a field trip



Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary at Aberbargoed Grasslands.  
Photo by Phill Blanning (see page 5 for details of an outdoor meeting to this site).

## Cardiff Naturalists' Society: A History

The Cardiff Naturalists' Society is the longest established wildlife organisation in the area, having been formed in 1867 at the instigation of Robert Drane FLS. The first general meeting was held on 11 September 1867, at which 24 original members were recorded in the minutes. Early meetings were held in the Museum Room of the Cardiff Free Library, until the National Museum of Wales opened in 1927. Therefore, the Society will be celebrating 150 years in 2017.

One of the original objectives of the society was the practical study of natural history, geology and the physical sciences, but the society also took an interest in archaeology.

The society started a Geological Section in 1875, a Biological and Microscopical Section in 1887 (renamed Biological and Geological Section, 1892) and an Ornithological Section in 1946. The Society published annual Transactions from 1868 to 1986.

The Cardiff Naturalists' Society was the largest scientific society in Wales in 1905, when it urged the formation of the National Museum in Cardiff. The link with the **National Museum of Wales** continues to this day, with the Society's library of over 10,000 volumes being housed within the Museum's library.

The Society has also had close links with **Cardiff University** since the university's inception. These links continue today with the Bioscience Prize, awarded annually in the memory of Prof Ursula Henriques for the best second year student fieldwork project in the Biosciences Department at the University.

Members of the Society have been instrumental, over the years, in protecting many of the wild areas that we all know and love, such as the island of Skomer and the Forest Farm reserve in Cardiff.

A much fuller history of the society, written in 1974 by H. Morrey Salmon, can be found on the CNS website:

<http://www.cardiffnaturalists.org.uk/pdf/history.pdf>



## Pontypool Park by Bruce McDonald (see page 5)

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