



## **CARDIFF NATURALISTS' SOCIETY**

Founded 1867

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Charity No. 1092496

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<http://cardiffnaturalists.blogspot.com>

Cover: Dark green fritillary at Kenfig. Photo by Linda Morris (see pages 14-17).

## **Indoor Meetings 2018/2019**

All meetings start at 7.30 p.m. in Room 0.23 (ground floor) of the School of Management, Cardiff Metropolitan University, Llandaff Campus, Western Avenue, Cardiff CF5 2YB - unless otherwise indicated (\*).

### **AGM**

**Monday 24th September 2018**

Our AGM will be followed by:

### **Natural Wonders of Alaska**

**Eirian Edwards**

A presentation of the wildlife and landscapes of Alaska, including wilderness, national forests, misty fjords, soaring cliffs and spectacular glaciers.



*Photo: Eirian Edwards*

## **Wildlife responses to habitat fragmentation and degradation in Sabah, Borneo**

**Tuesday 16th October**

**Benoit Goossens**

An overview of the wildlife research undertaken in the Lower Kinabatangan Wildlife Sanctuary, eastern Sabah, at the Danau Girang Field Centre (DGFC). During the past ten years, students working at DGFC have helped develop research programmes on several flagship species, including Bornean elephant, sun bear, Sunda clouded leopard, Sunda pangolin, Bornean bearded pig, proboscis monkey, slow loris, and reticulated python. An array of innovative tools has been used, such as satellite collars, infra-red camera traps, airborne drones, LiDAR, land surveys and population genetics. Dr Goossens, Director of DGFC, will highlight how this work contributes to wildlife conservation.

## **Big beasts, birds and Buddhas of the Indian subcontinent**

**Monday 29th October**

**Linda and Rob Nottage**

An exploration of the wildlife and scenery of some nature reserves in India and Sri Lanka, including close encounters with tigers (below), elephants, whales, monkeys and blue magpies. Rob and Linda also describe their experiences of local culture.



## **Wildlife crime**

**Thursday 15th November (\*)**

**PC Mark Goulding**

PC Mark Goulding may be familiar from 'Rhys to the Rescue' on TV. Please note this talk may be dependent on no significant wildlife crime incidents being reported at that time! Please check emails, website, or social media nearer the date for confirmation.

(\*)This is a combined meeting held with WTSWW and the student wildlife group WILDSOC

The combined meetings are held in the Wallace Lecture Theatre, Cardiff University, Park Place, Cardiff CF5 2YB.

## **Plant hunting in Wales**

**Tuesday 27th November**

**Alan Parfitt**

Alan is primarily a landscape photographer but with a passion for plants, particularly orchids. His main purpose is to photograph plants in the context of their environment and he has developed a technique not widely used. The photos have been taken all over Wales within approximately the last ten years.

## **Xmas Bash / Bute Park honey bees**

**Monday 17th December**

**Meriel Jones**

In addition to our annual social, Meriel Jones, of the Bute Park Education Centre, will talk about the bee hives in Bute Park. They once supplied honey to the Bute family and their guests in Cardiff Castle. More recently, there was a period of over 60 years when no honey was produced in the park. Then, in 2016, Meriel became the new bee-keeper. She describes how honey bees have returned to Bute Park.

**2019**

**Members' Evening**  
**Monday 14th January**

CNS members contribute short illustrated presentations. Please contact Hilary Wicks (indoor@cardiffnaturalists.org.uk) if you wish to make a short presentation.

**Restless Planet: volcanoes, earthquakes, mountains, and shifting continents**  
**Tuesday 22nd January**  
**Geraint Owen**

The Earth's surface undergoes constant change, much of it driven by forces from within the planet causing earthquakes and volcanic eruptions. Over longer timescales, these are linked to the formation of mountain chains and the relentless motion of the continents over the surface of the Earth. Dr Geraint Owen of Swansea University will talk about how earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, mountain formation and the drifting of continents are linked through the process of plate tectonics. He will also touch on the earthquakes in South Wales in 2018.

**Title TBC**  
**First half of February**  
**Cardigan Marine Wildlife Centre**

The first of our talks in February will be a speaker from Cardigan Marine Wildlife Centre—exact date to be confirmed. Please look out for our emails, or visit the website/blog or social media for updates (see page 2).

**Recapturing, enhancing and celebrating the unique  
Gwent Levels Landscape: the work of the Living  
Levels Landscape Partnership**

**Thursday 28th February (\*)**

**Gavin Jones**

The Living Levels Landscape Partnership is a Heritage Lottery Funded scheme which is aiming to promote and reconnect people to the heritage, wildlife and wild beauty of the historic landscape of the Gwent Levels. The partnership is led by RSPB Cymru and includes Gwent Wildlife Trust, National Resources Wales, and several other partners. This is a chance to learn about some of the 24 exciting projects being conducted and what they are delivering across this unique stretch of South Wales coastline between Cardiff and Chepstow.

(\*) This is a combined meeting with WTSWW and WILDSOC. The combined meetings are held in the Wallace Lecture Theatre, Cardiff University, Park Place, Cardiff CF5 2YB.

**Student Bursary evening**

**Monday 11th March**

Award of Student Bursary, in memory of Prof Ursula Henriques and Dr Mary Gillham, to a Cardiff University School of Biosciences second-year student for their outstanding fieldwork. The student will give a presentation on their work.

Our second speaker TBC.

**Butterflies, flora and fauna of N E South Africa**  
**Tuesday 19th March 2019**  
**Phill Blanning**



*Photo of hyenas: Phill Blanning*

**Please look online for all the latest information and additions  
to the CNS Meetings Programme:  
<http://cardiffnaturalists.blogspot.co.uk/p/programme.html>**

## Insole Court Tree Walk

Bruce McDonald



As part of Insole Court's Heritage Day, on Saturday 9th June 2018, Cardiff Naturalists' Society agreed to organise a tree walk which was led by Chris Powell, ex-Cardiff City Parks Department and currently leading walks in Dyffryn Gardens.

There is only limited information on the trees at Insole: a list of champion trees on the Cardiff City website and another list derived from a previous walk around the garden with Tony Titchen in 2002. The notes from Tony's walk were helpful although, inevitably in the intervening 16 years, some trees had disappeared and there has been some new plantings, principally of Acers.

Chris kindly passed on his own notes that were the basis for this walking tour, and what follows is essentially what was covered on his perambulation. Fine weather was on offer and a large group of 31 assembled outside the Visitor Centre to look at the trees. With some of the paths narrow and winding a group of around a dozen would have been ideal, as with over 30 it was inevitable that people at the back did not always hear what was said. It seems that a self-guided tree trail would be a good idea and we hope that the Society will be able to design and publish one as part of its decades long involvement with Insole.

The house was acquired in 1856/7 by James Harvey Insole (1821 -1901) who had extensive coal and shipping interests. The garden was developed initially in 1861 by local nurseryman William Treseder. Then Insole's daughter Violet added a national collection of irises and a large rockery containing an extensive collection of alpines, which has since disappeared. A horse chestnut avenue was planted in 1882. Cardiff Council acquired the house in 1932 by compulsory purchase for the creation of Western Avenue and new housing.



*Acer glade*

Today there is a large collection of interesting trees some of which are Glamorgan and Welsh National Champions. The mid Victorian period was a time of great interest in gardening spurred on by the plant hunting expeditions that were introducing new plants from North and South America, Asia and in particular China.

Plant hunters like George Forrest introduced Rhododendrons from the Himalayas and Ernest Wilson added new species from China. The fashion for planting exotics was spurred on by the new found wealth acquired as a result of the Industrial Revolution and there was considerable competition to outdo neighbouring estates such as Bute Park, Dyffryn Gardens and the Plymouth estate in St Fagans. Insole Court includes a good range of New Zealand plants as well as others from the northern hemisphere which were able to thrive in this area of Wales.

Chris Powell's notes on the trees seen during the walk can be found in the longer version of this article published on our blog:

**<https://cardiffnaturalists.blogspot.com/2018/07/insole-court-tree-walk-saturday-9th-june.html>**

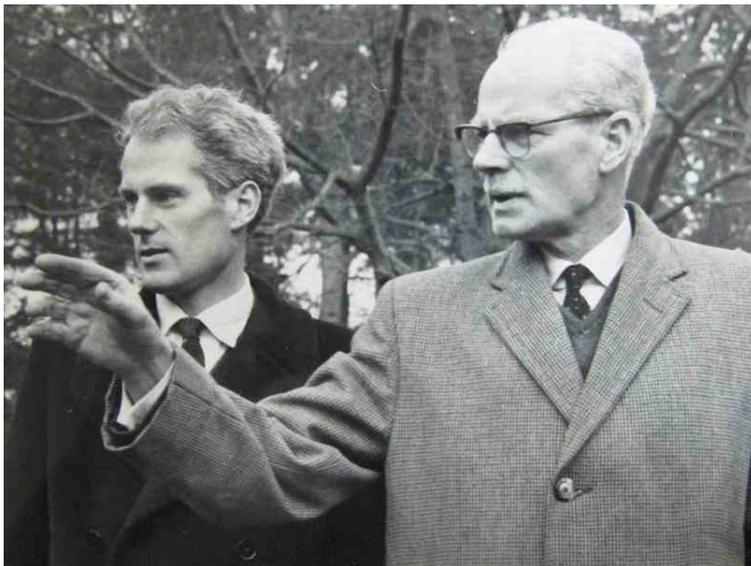


*Kowhai*

*Insole Court photos (pp 9-11): Bruce McDonald*



*Edwin Seward*



*William Nelmes Junior and William Nelmes Senior*

## **Cardiff Naturalists' Society and Insole Court**

### **Andy Kendall**

There has been a long and deep relationship between Insole Court and Cardiff Naturalists' Society. This was set out on panels at the Society's stall at Insole Court's Heritage Day, organised by Glamorgan Family History Society, on 9th June 2018.

James Harvey Insole was a member of Cardiff Naturalists' Society, joining in 1869 according to our membership records. Other members of the Insole family were also members (e.g. J.W. Insole joined 1869; G.F. Insole joined 1901).

The death of J.H. Insole was reported in the Society's Transactions, and our 9th President, Clement Waldron attended his funeral on 25th January 1901. In due course, Fred Insole attended Clement Waldron's funeral on 22th September 1906.

Our 10th President, George E Robinson (1832-1914), was an architect responsible for a number of key buildings in the developing borough of Cardiff. Together with Edwin Seward (1853-1924), our 21st President, he was commissioned to enlarge Insole Court in 1873. Seward would return to work again at Insole a few years later.

Insole was one of Seward's first jobs. He would go on to design many important buildings in Cardiff, including the Cardiff Free Library in The Hayes, the Cardiff Royal Infirmary, The Coal Exchange, and Cardiff Workhouse (now St David's Hospital).

William Nelmes (1902-1993) and his son William Nelmes (1932-2005), our 80th and 94th Presidents, respectively, were both directors of Cardiff Parks. Therefore, they were both involved in the upkeep of the gardens at Insole Court during their times in service (1936 to 1967 and 1967 to 1982).

## Summer orchids at Kenfig NNR

Linda Morris

The forecast promised 27°C on 25th June, so Phill & I got up early to visit Kenfig (NNR and SSSI) near Porthcawl to see the Marsh Helleborines (*Epipactis palustris*). These orchids were practically invisible, as arching green stems and flower buds hidden down in the grass, a couple of weeks ago but were likely to now be flowering with the dry sunny weather.



Back then, we had gone to see the rare Fen Orchid, *Liparis loeselii* (photo above). Kenfig is one of only two sites in the UK where it flowers. A guided walk with the Hardy Orchid Society had helped to locate the site and we were not disappointed. We marvelled at this tiny green orchid, took photographs and felt humbled to realise that were it not for habitat management and dedicated naturalists, this plant could be lost to Wales, and indeed the UK; its counterpart in East Anglia being a slightly different variant.



Returning to the area where the Marsh Helleborines were in bud, we passed Pyramidal Orchid, Common Spotted Orchid, and Early Marsh Orchid subspecies *coccinea* (photo above). Turquoise Damselflies danced around over the vegetation, Small Skipper and Dark Green Fritillary (see front cover) were on the wing. The Fritillary pausing briefly on the purple Meadow Thistle and Knapweed. By now we had a distant view of the sea, between the dunes, a strip of blue. It was hot and the lazy summer sound of a small plane was heard overhead as we started to see a few, then large spreads of Marsh Helleborine in perfect condition.

Keeping to the track that had been made round the edge of the area by previous walkers, we enjoyed the spectacle, noting pink Ragged Robin and Honeysuckle, whilst a Skylark sang overhead, dipping down to the ground as we took our photos. On the sandy soil, where the Fen Orchids were still visible, pale pink Bog Pimpernel was flowering and one pink flower of a Centaury species was seen.

We headed back towards the Visitor Centre as the temperature was climbing. A brown Grass Snake slithered across the damp grassy track unexpectedly, presumably disturbed by the vibrations of our feet. There were small frogs jumping in the damp grass, providing a ready meal.



*Marsh Helleborine*

We then noticed three spikes of the Marsh Helleborine variant *albiflora* (photo below), which are more green, yellow and white in colour, rather than the normal brownish pink, yellow and white. Skimmer or Chaser Dragonflies were fast flying on the edge of Kenfig Pool but we left them, having spotted the ice cream van in the car park!

It's easy to take for granted what an amazing resource this National Nature Reserve on our doorstep is. It's just a pity that Bridgend Council don't have the resources to open and manage the Visitor Centre when visitors come from Wales and beyond to see its rarities.



*Kenfig photos (pages 14-17): Linda Morris*

## Dare Valley Country Park

**Stephen Nottingham**

On Saturday 14th July, Liam Olds led a group of Cardiff Naturalists' and Wildlife Trust members on a walk to look for invertebrates on Dare Valley Country Park's colliery spoil tips.

This was the first dedared industrial land park in Wales. The coal spoil tips we explored were from a colliery that closed in 1936. Vegetation naturally colonised the tips and they became a species-rich mosaic of habitats. In fact, many colliery spoil tips support habitats and wildlife of considerable local biodiversity value.

Liam's sweep net soon collected many insects, although on this very hot day many of the less common species were lying low. You can find the rare grayling butterfly here, for example, and many species of the appropriately named mining bee. In fact, over 85 bee species have been recorded on coal tips in recent years (almost half the Welsh bee fauna).



The dry grasslands and heathlands that have developed on spoil tips provide a much-needed refuge for numerous species that are rapidly declining elsewhere. Losing these habitats could lead to local extinctions of many invertebrates of local and national importance.

The problem is that these sites are now becoming undergrown with shrub, and management is needed to conserve their unique biodiversity. This includes recovering some of the nutrient-poor bare spoil areas on which a rich biodiversity of early successional flora colonises. However, coal spoil tips are underappreciated as wildlife habitats, so resources for conservation are limited.

Therefore, Liam founded the Colliery Spoil Biodiversity Initiative to raise awareness of the biological importance of colliery spoil tips, in order to aid the conservation of these sites.

Find out more: <https://collieryspoilbiodiversity.wordpress.com/>



*Dare Valley photos: Stephen Nottingham*

## **Wenvoe Orchard Walk**

**Bruce McDonald**

Fine weather greeted us, on 17th May 2018, as we set off on our tour of some of Wenvoe's traditional and community orchards. We being 31 walkers plus 2 dogs, included a good mix of members of the Society, local residents and walkers from all over South Wales, as the walk was also part of the Vale of Glamorgan Walking Festival programme. Working our way out of the village and through The Grange, a new housing development, our route brought us to a good example of a wildflower verge covered in Red Campion, Stitchwort, Yellow Archangel and residual native Bluebells (below).



The first stop was the Elizabethan Orchard with a variety of fruit trees dating back to Elizabethan times, including apple, pear, cherry, fig, walnut, quince and medlar.

Those arriving first were lucky enough to glimpse a grass snake basking in the sun before it escaped. The corner of the adjacent field is a good spot for arable weeds, including Dwarf Spurge and Corn Mint.

From there the path moved along the edge of the golf course and down through Goldsland Woods, where reserves of malachite have been found. Here an investigation by The University of Central Lancashire revealed examples of exhumation (defleshing), letting the body decompose naturally and then burying or placing the skeletal remains elsewhere - possibly at nearby St Lythans burial chamber.

As we emerged from the wood we passed the newest orchard with 9 trees planted and 7 still to go. As befits a farming location this includes a number of cider apple varieties along with perry pears. This was also a chance to introduce very local apples such as Gabalva and another called Holstein, as the eponymous cows were grazing contentedly nearby. Cider was an important element in the remuneration of farm workers so cider apple orchards were common on farms.



*Blakeney Red Perry pear*

We were now within Goldsland Farm and the track took us down to the watercress beds, possibly the only specially constructed beds in Wales. A circular pond, divided by walls into three sections, is fed by a spring with the water flowing steadily through the area and replicating the movement of a stream. Whilst the beds have not been used for maybe 100 years, watercress still grows abundantly along with a host of aquatic plants including Water Mint which was displaying a good number of the Mint Leaf beetle. A well is marked here on an estate map of 1700 and the obituary of Captain Jenner in 1883 includes this passage:

*‘He had a piece of water in his grounds known as Goldsland pools and this was well-stocked with water-cresses. Numbers of girls and women walked regularly from Cardiff to these pools from whence they gathered their water-cresses for sale in the town. He has often seen them sitting on the bank resting after the fatigue of a six-miles walk.*

*He would then take them some bread and cheese and distribute it among them. As they were trespassers the police wished to stop them, but he would never allow it and gave strict instructions that they were not to be interfered with.’*



*Mint Leaf Beetle*



The bee hotel (above) was in use with a number of solitary bees taking advantage of the holes to lay their eggs. From there we passed the Grade II listed barn and followed the lane to New Wallace farm. Our next footpath took us through buttercup-strewn meadows in a classic Vale of Glamorgan pastoral landscape. As we skirted woodland we took a moment to talk about galls and were delighted to find an example of the Oak Apple Gall, not the ubiquitous Marble Galls which were the subject of a previous article on gall ink (December 2017 newsletter). Rob and Linda Nottage have confirmed the occasional sighting of the Oak Apple in the surrounding parishes but they remain an unusual find.



*Oak Apple Gall*

We scuttled past the St Lythans burial chamber as hunger pangs were in evidence and settled down for lunch in the Welsh Orchard where the real Deadly Nightshade grows in the herb garden. Many visitors believe they have seen it elsewhere locally but in most cases the confusion is with Woody Nightshade.

Whilst Cardiff Naturalists have visited this location three times, on this occasion we offered walkers a chance to wander through a nearby private woodland which is carpeted with Bluebell and Wild Garlic. Early Purple Orchid contrasted with the blues and whites. Returning via the Wild Orchard and Upper Orchid Field we noted the first signs of Common Spotted Orchid along with Common Twayblade, the latter growing tall in the woodland but also hunkering down in the meadow.



*Deadly Nightshade flower*

The final section through Wenvoe provided an opportunity to look at some specimens on the local Tree Trail, including Loquat and Clerodendron.



*Lunch amidst the grasses*



*The 'secret woodland'*



*Loquat is rarely seen with fruit*



*Clerodendron in flower*

*Wenvoe Orchard Walk photos: Bruce McDonald*

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## **Unknown Wales Conference**

Members might like to know that this year's Unknown Wales Conference, organised by the Wildlife Trust of South & West Wales, will be held at the National Museum of Wales in Cardiff on Saturday 27th October 2018 (10 a.m. to 3.30 p.m.). It is a free event, but booking is required. Email: [info@welshwildlife.org](mailto:info@welshwildlife.org)

<http://www.welshwildlife.org/unknown-wales/unknown-wales-2018/>

**Deadline for submissions to next CNS newsletter:  
Monday 3rd December 2018**



Photo: Insole Court by Stephen Nottingham (see pages 9-13)

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