

CARDIFF NATURALISTS' SOCIETY

Founded 1867

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CNS

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Presidential Amblings

We are enjoying a spell of classic summer weather – too much for my garden, which has been neglected while its owner enjoyed herself elsewhere.

There is such infinite variety to enjoy and what has particularly struck me is how our own species has had such an enormous effect on the environment for good as well as for ill. From the seabirds on Stack Rocks to all the delights of Tresco in the Scilly Isles and to our own Vale of Glamorgan - what we see and enjoy today is a result of man's influence and management over the years.

The Army manages Stack Rocks and the neighbouring stretch of the Pembroke Coast path. As in the Beacons, while the public may at times be excluded, there are days when the area is open and certainly on Saturday none of us had ever seen such carpets of spring squill and even the auks seemed to multiply in such surroundings.

On Tresco we could still clearly see the legacy of the old bulb fields – many no longer in use from the competition with hothouse imported crops. This does not stop the fields, banks and verges being full of such exotic escapes as *Ixia*, Star of Bethlehem - *Ornithogalum* and *Geranium Madarense*.

Elsewhere in this newsletter I have reported on the excellent field meeting in Penline valley. Here too, despite intensive agriculture, the verges, the neighbouring woods and the trout farm all gave us much in which to delight - only possible when the income from husbandry is ploughed back into an estate - so different from some of the vast fields and monoculture found elsewhere in the UK.

I hope as many as possible will join in our Field meetings and in particular the public walk at Hamadryad Park when CNS members have an opportunity to share their pleasure with members of the public – and possibly recruit new members.

Joan Andrews

Field Meetings June to September 2004.

Wednesday June 2nd.
Start time 7.00 pm

Hamadryad Park.
Public Walk.

For our first public walk of the season we shall be taking an evening stroll through the park bordering the eastern bank of the River Taf looking at the flora and fauna. We will continue to walk out towards Cardiff Bay and out to the newly created wetland reserve.

We hope members will attend to encourage any guests to join the society.

Meet by the entrance to Hamadryad Park at the bottom of Clarence Embankment road.

Saturday June 12th.
Start time 10.00am

Gwent Levels.
Packed lunch.

PLEASE NOTE THIS IS A SATURDAY NOT SUNDAY

A summer return visit to this reserve. Please meet at the main car park to meet our guide.
(ST 333 834)

From M4 junction 24 roundabout take the A445 to Llanwern, following the signs to Pye corner and Nash at the roundabouts on this road. The road to Nash continues for approximately two miles before you need to turn right towards Nash itself and the power station. I am told the signage is much improved. The reserve car park is on the left just before the power station entrance.

Sunday June 20th.
Start time 10.30 am

Nash Point.
Packed lunch.

We will be hosting this meeting also for members of Merthyr Tydfil and District Naturalists, Society. We expect to walk along the cliff and back along the beach, tides permitting, plus there are a couple of good valleys going inland from the area. We hope to see pyramidal orchids and clustered bell flowers; fulmars are present and a peregrine is often seen – plus plenty of other flora and fauna.

Meet at the Nash Point car park (SS 916 682) there is a charge for parking.

I am told there is a very good teashop at the car park and also toilet facilities here

Wednesday June 23rd.
Start time 7.00pm

Grangemore Parc.

As part of Cardiff Biodiversity Week we will once again be hosting a public walk around this newly created reserve. Meet at the park entrance opposite MacDonald's at Cardiff Bay Retail Park.

Sunday July 4th.
Start time 10.00 am

Plymouth Woods.

PLEASE NOTE CHANGE OF START TIME

Richard Cornock, Community Park Ranger will be leading this walk through this last remnant of semi ancient woodland in the Ely valley. View some of its huge trees and encounter some of its wildlife.

Meet in the Plymouth Arms public house car park, St Fagans.

Saturday July 17th.
Start time 7.00pm

Cosmeston Barbeque.
PLEASE BRING FOOD TO COOK

Meet at the barbeque area, adjacent to the eastern lake, at Cosmeston Country Park where you can leave your provisions while pyromaniac, Mike Dean, heats up the coals. We will take a gentle stroll around part of the park and return to enjoy the culinary delights before searching out some glow worms just after sunset.

Sunday July 25th.
Start time 2.00pm

River Ely.

PLEASE NOTE I PUT THE WRONG RIVER IN THE PROGRAMME!

Our second public walk will be along the banks of the river Ely for a Sunday afternoon stroll. Meet at the bottom of the steps at the entrance to the museum of Welsh Life, St Fagans. As before we would ask members to come along to encourage the public participants to join the society.

Sunday August 8th.
Start time 10.30 am

Dare Valley Country Park.
Packed lunch.

A visit to one of the first country parks to be developed from derelict coal spoil tips. The park covers an area of 200 acres from Tarren-y- Bwllfa down to Aberdare and consists of mountain, moorland and woodland. Peregrines breed on site. We shall be guided for the first part of the day by one of the wardens. Meet at the visitors centre (SN 032 980).

Sunday September 5th.
Start time 10.00am

Ogmore.
Packed lunch.

Meet at the coastal car park at Ogmore on Sea (SS 863756). There is a charge for car parking and also toilets here. We will walk along the coast and also along the Ogmore river estuary, if time allows we shall investigate further inland areas of mixed woodland and grassland. The salt marsh area at the river mouth is a designated SSSI for its botanical and geological interest. Plus hopefully we shall pick up some early autumn migrant birds in the area.

P.S. SORRY FOR ALL THE CHANGES.

For all field trips it is expected that members will have read and agree to comply with the Field Meetings Safety Code.

It is useful to know who is coming on the trip especially if you are willing to give a lift to those without transport. Please contact me if you need a lift and hopefully I can arrange one. Contributions towards drivers' petrol is appreciated.

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EXE ESTURAY SUNDAY 29TH FEB

What a glorious day for bird watching, clear visibility and warmth until a cold wind rose in the afternoon.

We travelled to Topsham where we left the coach and met Margaret and Graham. Our first viewing point was the quay. As the tide was coming in there were very few waders but we did see our first Avocets.

A walke along the strand to the raised path called the Goat walk, then left along the road, took us to Bowling Green Marsh RSPB reserve with its hide and viewing platform.

The most exciting bird of the day was a Glossy Ibis which took very little notice of people on the other side of the railings. The most elusive birds were Cirl Buntings which we were assured were about- as far as I know none were seen. Although it was high tide by now, it was not a big tide so fewer birds than hoped for were pushed into the reserve however the variety was good.

The seats on the goat walk proved to be a warm place to eat lunch I watched the waders returning to the mud as the tide ebbed. A gentle stroll back to the coach gave time to study the styles of the attractive houses along the strand.

After lunch we visited Powderham Castle on the western side of the river. We found fewer species of birds here and as the wind was chilly many of us found our way to the café after a walk. Good views were had of the Fallow Deer kept in the castle grounds
The birds seen during the day were:-

Collared dove	Rook	Buzzard
Feral Pigeon	Lesser Black Backed Gull	Mute Swan
Magpie	Starling	Cormorant
Lapwing	Pied Wagtail	Curlew
Redshank	Black Tailed Godwit	Herring Gull
Teal	Black Headed Gull	House Sparrow
Jackdaw	Dunnock	Heron
Avocet	Robin	Blackbird
Blue Tit	Wigeon	Glossy Ibis
Shoveller	Canada Goose	Coot
Greylag Goose	Wren	Shelduck
Little Grebe	Pochard	Pintail
Mallard	Song Thrush	Moorhen
Greenfinch	Crow	Snipe
Dunlin	Pheasant	Meadow Pipit
Greenshank	Red Breasted Merganser	Grey Plover
Reed Bunting	Long Tailed Tit	Wood Pigeon
Chaffinch	Oyster Catcher	Little Egret
Mistle Thrush	Redwing	Golden Plover
Kestrel		
Total 57		

Also seen were Rabbit and Small Tortoiseshell Butterfly

Many thanks to Tricia, for arranging the trip and the weather for us- also thanks to Margaret and Graham for their “Scouting” and information on the bird distribution.

Mary Thelwall.

Coed-y-Bwl.March 14th

Seven of us braved the Sunday morning weather and joined volunteer warden Richard Marks on a tour of Coed-y-Bwl reserve. The reserve was established in 1970 mainly due to the large number of wild daffodils there, which had been planted by a Mrs Michaels of Merthyr Mawr estate in Victorian times. The reserve is a horseshoe shaped six acres belonging now to the Wildlife Trust.

Human influence had also had an impact more recently as a lot of trees had had to be felled due to Dutch Elm disease and replanting had occurred with hazel, ash and wild cherry – although some seemingly resistant elms were thriving on the reserve. Some sycamore trees had also been removed.

The bank on the reserve is limestone so encouraging the growth of wildflowers along with the daffodils especially dog violet and wood anemones. Butterflies present on the reserve include silver- washed fritillary and white- letter hairstreak. The reserve is also excellent for woodland birds including marsh tit and lesser spotted woodpecker. Mammals include moles (some molehills being present near to the entrance), stoat, weasel, and badger. A large two part badger set was present on the reserve and we would see evidence of badger trails at the end of our walk. Fungi included scarlet elf cup or fairy cups which were found first close to the entrance growing on a piece of wood. In autumn birds nest fungus is present.

We then started our walk around the site first through some spindle and lime, and were shown the bird hide and tawny owl box which was presumed used as an owl had recently been seen emerging. In this area were some Star of Bethlehem plants – their original source unknown. Harts tongue fern and dogs mercury were also noted.

The majority of the daffodils grew under mature sycamore trees and were a sight to behold. A small clump of Tenby daffodils had also been planted and stood out being a brighter yellow than the other daffodils.

We passed a number of small quarries in the wood where limestone had been removed for boundary walls. The continued tree cutting had created a number of habitat piles which were now becoming too numerous and were to be moved to the boundary wall to increase the woodland floor space, though logs were used to edge the paths through the wood. Ivy was left on trees for nesting birds. An area had been left as scrub which also provided a nesting area for blackcap and chiffchaff.

The number of daffodils on the northern limit of the reserve were few but increasing slowly, presumably as Mrs Michaels didn't venture this far. Amphibians on the reserve included a number of frogs- seventeen were counted who had taken up residence in a recently cleaned pond by the entrance. Richard also told us of his discovery of an African clawed toad in the adjacent road. These introduced toads live mainly in sheep dips in the surrounding area- a count estimated there were six hundred of them! Along the boundary wall by the pond there was a gap left which was regularly used by badgers.

After leaving the reserve we extended our investigations of the area following the road to an ancient bridge over the river used for crossing livestock during the winter (during the summer the river usually dries up), then onto a quarry. We finished our walk at a ford and stepping stones before retracing our steps to our parked cars and by this time there was even some blue sky.

Tricia Wood.

In Search of the Suicide Gladiolus

We came out of the airport terminal building to be greeted by **European Swallows**. This was an incongruous sight in January, but then we had just arrived in Johannesburg. We were met by our local Naturetrek leaders and whisked off to the first of many reserves on this two week botanical tour to the Drakensburg Mountains of S. Africa and Lesotho.

We drove first to the Suikerbosrand reserve. As we entered the park we were greeted by several **Burchell's Zebra** with **Red Hartebeest**, **Blesbok** and a herd of **Black Wildebeest** in the distance. The first of many **Widow** birds, both **Red Collared** and **Red Shouldered**, appeared to be dancing above the meadows using their long tails as rudders... but it was the plants we had come to see. The first of three species of Pineapple plants, ***Eucomis autumnalis***, the deep purple ***Ipomea tabinia*** and yellow ***Hypoxis rigidula*** were some of our first finds plus, we also came across the attractive **Maidenhair Fern**, ***Pellaea calomelanos***. That night we stayed at the small town of Heidelberg and had dinner in a museum dedicated to a local poet, the dining table decorated with flowers in Ostrich Egg vases!

The following morning we headed off to the Royal Natal National Park for a two night stay. En-route we spotted many more 'dancing' **Widow birds** and a **Black Shouldered Kite** obligingly posing on a roadside telegraph pole. We stopped at the Sterkfontein dam and found our first 'Poker', ***Kniphofia linearifolia*** or **Common Marsh Poker**, a member of the Milkweed family, ***Xysmalobium involucreatum*** and more ***Eucomis autumnalis***. Overhead we were entertained by a **Lammergeir**, several **Yellow Billed Kites** and a **Cape Vulture**.

We eventually arrived at Tendele Camp, a beautiful place comprised of thatched cottages set out beneath a natural Amphitheatre of the Drakensburg. Our 'safari's' from here revealed a bounty of new flowers, including the blue's of several species of ***Aristeas*** and ***Wahlenburgia's***, the Orchids ***Eulophia clavicornis*** and ***Satyrium longicauda***, the almost unpronounceable ***Zaiuzianskya microsiphon***, the large white flowers of the parasitic ***Harveya speciosa***, and the gorgeous orange scrambler ***Littonia modesta***. We entered a small wooded gully and immediately found ***Streptocarpus gardinii*** and orange ***Begonia sutherlandii***. Nearby was ***Dietes iridioides*** a relative of the Iris's and the so called Granny Bonnet Orchid, ***Disperis fanniniae***, one of the few plants we came across with a common English name.

After two enjoyable days at Tendele we headed off for the kingdom of Lesotho, a Hamerkop bidding us farewell with a lone flypast. En-route we stopped at Witsieshoek to see the fascinating spherical inflorescence of the pink ***Brunsvigia natalensis***. Several plants were scattered about a mountain ridge with extraordinary views all around. ***Eucomis bicolour***, another pineapple plant, was common here and a large patch of blue ***Agapanthus campanulatus*** stood in the distance. Other stops found ***Aloe ecklonis***, ***Crocasmia pearsii*** and the orchid ***Schizochilus flexuosus***. We eventually arrived at the New Oxbow Lodge, our base for the next two nights. The accommodation units were built around a courtyard at the head of which stood a tree festooned with the nests of Masked Weavers.

A quick exploration of our surroundings found *Galtonia regalis* on the opposite bank of the river behind the lodge, a subject for binocular botany only. More accessible for the cameras was the scarlet *Phygelius capensis*. The following morning we left for some breathless high altitude botany. We stopped to explore a patch of *Kniphophia caulescens*, the flowers being visited by beautiful **Malachite Sunbirds**, whilst underfoot was the purple *Geranium multisectum*. We moved on to the greatest altitude of the trip, 10,630ft. Lots of alpine plants lived here, *Glumicalyx flanagani*, *Lotononis galpinii*, the aquatic herb *Lindernia conferta* and the endemic *Felicia drakensbergensis* amongst many others. Tinkling bells of goats and sheep being herded by young shepherds and their dogs, echoed around the mountainside. These young men all, without fail, wore black wellies to guard against the damp underfoot. We walked part of the way back to Oxbow along the old road, recording *Romulea thodei*, a second 'Poker', *Kniphophia ritualis*. *Erica woodii* and a species of *Burkheya*, a yellow thistle.

After a glorious sunny day, the following morning dawned very wet so we left the Oxbow Lodge and headed back into S. Africa to the town of Howick. The haunting cry of a **Fish Eagle** drifted across the valley, the sun glinting off a distant waterfall. On the valley floor **Giraffe**, **Zebra** and **Impala** grazed in the warm sunshine. A **Lanner Falcon** floated across grassy hillsides dotted with football sized *Brunsvigia radulosa*. This was the idyllic Umgeni reserve on the outskirts of Howick. Large burrows were the home of nocturnal **Porcupines**, but apparently originally excavated by **Aardvark**. **Red Hartebeest** and **Blesbok** were browsing in the grass amongst *Aloe cooped*, *Striga junodii* and *bilabiata* and *Gazania krebsiana*. But the most dramatic flowers we came across in the grassland were the brilliant yellow orchid *Eulophia ensata*, standing 1 metre tall, *Gladiolus dalenii* and the first *Watsonia* of the trip, *W. lepida*. A **Pintailed Whydah** bird posed on a fence and a spectacular yellow and black **Grasshopper** adorned a grass stem. After a picnic lunch, we descended into a wooded gully to search for *Cycads* in 'cone'. In this we were unsuccessful but did immediately come across lots of *Streptocarpus polyanthus* and a small but beautiful red Freesia, *Freesia laxa*.

Our next stop after Howick was the Sani Pass, at the base of the Drakensburg. Discoveries en-route included the delightful blue, purple and yellow *Monopsis decipiens*, *Crocoshia potsii*, and *Gomphocarpus physocarpus* with peculiarly inflated seed pods. After our arrival we took a walk along the local river passing the Arum Lilies, *Zantedeschia aethiopica* and *Z. albomaculata* growing side by side. We reached a small waterfall, its damp walls decorated with the orange flowered *Cyrtanthus epiphyticus*. Scattered about the rocks above the falls were the remains of several **Freshwater crabs**, 'left overs' from the local **Otter** population. Another species of 'Poker' was spotted on a nearby hill; we ascended, to identify it as *Kniphophia laxiflora* and found a wealth of new plants, including *Watsonia pillansii*, the orchids, *Satyrium parviflorum*, *Disa versicolor* and *Eulophia foliosa*. As we returned to the hotel we watched a flypast of several **Sacred Ibis** and found an impressively large red and black **Grasshopper**.

The following morning we boarded our mini buses to ascend the Sani Pass. It was here we hoped to find the 'title' plant of this article.... the Suicide Gladiolus. Our first stop discovered the orange Christmas Bells, *Sandersonia aurantiaca*. The best specimen was, of course, out of reach without a long telephoto lens but some lower specimens did provide the cameras with fine shots of individual flowers. We moved higher and were given the 'eye' by a passing **Lammergeir**. At our highest point we scrambled up a wet, grassy gully full of Angels Fishing Rods, *Dierama igneum*, this was where we hoped to find our target, but found only leaves.

We began to amble back down the 'road' and found a beautiful new *Gladiolus*, *G. dalinii* and then finally, on an overhanging cliff there it was *Gladiolus flanaganii*, the Suicide *Gladiolus*. Blood red flowers and living up to its name, it would have been truly suicidal to attempt to scramble up and photograph it. So we made do with some more binocular botany and long focus lenses. As we continued our descent we found a second species of the parasitic genus *Harveya*, *H. pulchra* this time a lovely pink colour, *Papaver aculeatum* an orange flowered poppy, (and the only Poppy indigenous to S. Africa) and *Protea roupelliae* with **Gurneys Sugarbird** feeding in its flower heads. Another interesting bird we found here was **Ground Woodpecker**, a bonus since we'd been told we would be lucky to see one. A second bonus during our descent was coming across a bright green **Chameleon** on a trackside tree.

We eventually departed from the mountains and headed for Port Edward on the coast for our last two nights. As usual to break up the journey we stopped at one or two reserves. The most memorable was at Kokstad. Not for the wealth of flowers but because of a **Termite** mound with three extraordinary **Fungal** spikes emerging from it. To date I have no idea of the species and interestingly neither did any of our guides, local or British, none of whom had ever seen anything like it. This reserve also threw up some beautiful birds, **Plum Coloured Starling** and two **Blackheaded Orioles** being outstanding.

We arrived at Port Edward and went straight to the beach. We walked through a wood backing onto the beach looking for Wild Banana in flower but were unlucky, so we then toured some of the dunes for the Flame Lily, *Gloriosa superba* and were more successful eventually finding two or three of the glorious orange flowers.

The following morning we drove to Umtamvuna reserve. Here we found a large display of *Watsonia bachmanii* with the occasional *W. confusa* intermingled with them. But the most interesting, although not the most attractive, was the two species of *Tridactyle* orchids occurring here. *T. bicaudata* was easily identified but the second awaits identification. However they were both epiphytic on rocks. We were also lucky here in finding Wild Banana, *Strelitzia nickolai* in flower, not as strikingly coloured as its better known cousin but an interesting find nonetheless.

Before we left Port Edward to begin our journey home, I was able to sit on the balcony of my room overlooking the beautiful estuary, and watch **Water Dikkop**, nocturnal birds with huge eyes, **Yellow Billed Ducks** and a **Great White Egret**, whilst below my balcony a small jetty was being used as a perch by both **Pied** and **Giant Kingfishers**.

We stopped at a private game reserve en-route to Durban airport, and made for the picnic site, we were immediately joined by the local population of **Village Weavers**. Every tree branch appeared to have a yellow and black face watching us, waiting for crumbs. After lunch I spotted a grey shape in the distance. This revealed itself to be a **Secretary Bird**, a first for the trip. We came to a lake with resident **Hippo's** and lots of water birds, **Egyptian Geese**, **Cormorants** and **Herons** amongst others. **European** or **Barn Swallows** were wheeling about everywhere. A final *Gladiolus* was found here *Gladiolus crassifolius*, a delicate

attractive species. We drove around the park, seeing **Wildebeest, Zebra, Buffalo** and **Giraffe** and had tantalising glimpses of **Nyala** in the trees. As we finally made our way to the exit, and thence to the airport, we were bade a final farewell to the reserve, and **S Africa**, by a family group of **Warthog**.

A wonderful trip

.Phill Blanning

COWBRIDGE

April 2004

After a forecast of bad weather – 17 members led by Roger Milton with his wife Monica and an associate met behind the Old Hall in Cowbridge. We soon left the old town by walking under the bypass and climbed across meadows to the ancient woodland below Penllyn Castle. It had rained heavily the night before and the woods had recently been logged so the going underfoot was wet and slippery. This did not quench our delight in all the woodland flowers, -bluebell (some Spanish escapes), primrose, cowslip, wood anemone, dovesfoot cranesbill, yellow and red dead nettle, wild garlic, dog's mercury, golden saxifrage, early dog violet with dark spur, ground ivy, stitchwort, bush vetch and red campion. There were particularly large stands of purple toothwort, which appeared to be parasitic on both lime and elm. The trees were only just coming in to leaf so we could enjoy the blossom of blackthorn and wild cherry as well as brilliant banks of gorse. Linda identified several fungi – an ink cap - *Coprinus micaceus*, Jews ear (or to be politically correct –jelly ear) - *Auricularia auricula-judae*, scarlet elf cap- *Sarcoscypha coccinea*, and tripe fungus – *Auricularia mesenterica*.

We had several sightings of early-arriving swallows swooping overhead and good views of two tree creepers and a nuthatch in the same tree. The lane could have been 'chiff –chaff row' with the continuous song of this migrant. We heard dunnock singing, a yaffle calling and Rob heard and described for us - the song of the willow warbler. We climbed up past the castle – mostly now derelict with the upper stories open to the heavens and then dropped down to the valley. We did sight an otter even if only on the castle weathervane. Jackdaws were making the castle their home with ivy leaved toadflax and rusty backed fern on the walls.

The Homfray family owns the estate although the castle is now the property of the Cory family. In the woods we had passed both limekilns and several small quarries. From one of these - quartz was extracted to pave the drive for the wedding of one of the Homfray daughters. There was also evidence of pheasant breeding with legacy of ears of maize. We saw one of the melanistic black pheasants in the nearby field.

Roger had permission for us to visit the recently developed trout farm on the estate. In pleasant sunshine we enjoyed a rest and lunch overlooking the pool. One fisherman later passed with two good-sized trout. Other wildlife were the native coot, pochard, tufted duck and swan, with jays, bullfinch and buzzard in the distance. It was however the introduced birds that afforded most entertainment. The Canada geese, Muscovy duck and hybrid mallards were peaceful enough but three barnacle geese seemed to see their duty to bully the lone bar headed goose – even to the length of grabbing its tail. Whether the bird had ever been free and could regret the lack of such persecution in its wild Himalayan home we did not know.

Butterflies were surprisingly plentiful for so early in the year and we saw small tortoiseshell and peacock, which would have over wintered and also some of the new

season speckled wood and orange tip, the latter near its host cuckoo flower - *Cardamine pratensis*. Linda pointed out the trails made by a micro moth on blackberry leaves.

We returned to Cowbridge along the lane through the valley of the R. Thaw walking amid prosperous farmland. Our two associate members enjoying being free to round us up. Roger and I had had doubt whether the two border collies would behave when together but fortunately there was no cross word – canine or human. Freddy had even come prepared with his badge as ‘Trail Leader and Olfactory Consultant’!. Thank you to him and his owners for an excellent day.

Joan Andrews

Stack Rocks Field Meeting

15 May 2004

We approached the venue for this field meeting from **Pembroke** on roads lined with the frothy heads of Cow **Parsley**, flowering exuberantly in the Spring sunshine. As we pulled into the car park we were greeted by the smell of rotting fish, the wind being on shore and telling us the **Razorbills** and **Guillemots** were in residence. This was a wonderful day enjoyed by all participants, the threat of possible sea fog not materialising. The sun shone all day, the birds and flowers at their best, we could not have asked for better weather.

As usual the tops of the Stacks were covered by **Guillemots**, the **Razorbills** seemingly preferring ledges on their flanks. **Kittiwakes** and **Herring Gulls** choosing ledges on the shoreline cliffs. We spent some time admiring the birds here, as well as a single adult **Seal** 'catching a few rays' on a rock. A viewpoint overlooked the magnificent natural arch known as the '**Green Bridge of Wales**' with another bird covered stack just at its seaward end.

The majority of the party set off on the walk back to **Bosherston** where we would later meet up with the coach. **Choughs** were regular companions during the walk, as were **Swallows** and **Martins**, a single **Peregrine** was spotted and a third **Buzzard**, the previous two on fence posts during the drive from Cardiff. **Ravens** were also present, two of which posed on fence posts giving one a real idea of their size in comparison to the **Choughs** and **Jackdaws**. Offshore large rafts of **Guillemots** and **Razorbills** drifted aimlessly, presumably waiting for the chicks to hatch, while further out a couple of **Gannets** were seen.

But this is not just an area for birds, the flowers too were magnificent. **Thrift** was at its best although not as abundant as on other parts of this coast, occasional clumps of white **Sea Campion** appeared amongst the **Bird's Foot Trefoil**, **Kidney Vetch**, **Common Milkwort** and **Violets**, and all the while our senses were assailed by the **Coconut** perfume of the **Gorse**. But the star of the show was undoubtedly the **Spring Squill**. What appeared in patches at **Stack Rocks** gradually became more and more extensive as we walked east. At times the cliff tops were a carpet of blue

We had our picnic lunch amongst **Spring Squill** and **Green Winged Orchids** overlooking the glorious **Flimston Bay** and came across the memorial to '**Trooper Graham Thomas**' who fell to his death from these cliffs in 1990 while still only 17. We carried on, 'ticking' off **Wheatear**, **Stonechat**, **Ravens** and Joan even spotted a couple of **Cnrlew** sitting on the cliff tops. We saw several other natural arches en-route, not all as magnificent as the '**Green Bridge**', but we did come across one with vertically oriented strata

We eventually arrived at **St Govan's Head**, the site of the famous **Chapel** built into the cliff. However of more interest to us walkers was the Ice cream van in the corner of the car park, whose products we consumed with relish while sitting on the grass next to an enclosed patch of grassland dotted with more **Green Winged Orchids**.

Our final quest was to rejoin our companions at the **Lily Ponds** at **Bosherston**, a 'short'walk of about a mile along a country lane lined with **Cowslips**. A quick look at the

first lake was all there was time for, but we did see a **Swan** sitting on its nest and the leaves of the **White Water Lily** preparing to put on their great show next month.

Finally I must apologise to those participants who took me at my word that the walk was only about three and a half miles, perhaps next time I'll look more closely at the map! Still, it was a great day out.

Phill Blanning

**PEN LEWIS CELEBRATES HER ONE HUNDREDTH BIRTHDAY ON THE
27TH MAY, 2004**

Born in 1904 at Kendal in the Lake District to a family of naturalists and hill walkers. Pen, one of our staunchest members in the Cardiff Naturalists, was country lover and conservationist from her early years. Her fitness was nourished on the mountains and her curiosity for 'things natural' by the family microscope. An uncle's egg collection was donated to the National Museum of Wales.

She was physical Education mistress at Burlington School in London before marrying a Welshman and continuing to teach and instruct professionals in Wales - gym, outdoor games and dancing - at Lampeter and Cardiff. David and Madeleine, her son and daughter in law, ran the Cardiff University Gardens at Leckwith for many years. From 1966 she spent many of her summer months in and around Tintern and Tiddinham Chase, returning to the family home in Lake Road West in winter, to attend meetings of the Cardiff Naturalists, the Glamorgan Wildlife Trust and the Extra Mural Department.

Many of our members enjoyed her stimulating company on the various field trips, including 'residential' at home and abroad, and many visited her charming cottage in Miss Grace's Lane to explore her woods for martagon lilies and the like. Many also enjoyed the lemon cheese which she produced, indefatigably over many years, for sale in aid of the Glamorgan and later the Gwent Trust. We missed her from the winter meetings when she moved fulltime to her summer quarters in 1993.

Because of failing eyesight, she gave up driving in 2002 - at the age of ninety eight - but continued to walk the woods and heaths and enjoy her garden and the bird feeders where a number of our members watched, nuthatches, woodpeckers, tits and finches with her.

She is currently at Castell Court Residential Home, Welsh Street, Chepstow, Mon., NP16 5LN, and enjoys receiving letters and visitors.

Mary E. Gillham

GREEN BRIDGE OF WALES AND STACK ROCKS; BOSHERSTON LILY POOLS AND BROAD HAVEN 15th May 2004

A perfect day of sunshine and shirt sleeves, sun hats and sun tan, flawless blue sky and mirror calm sea. Our leader, Phil Blanning, pointed out a stonechat as we alighted from the coach. Then our CNS party hovered around the telescopes, to the chorus of throaty sea-bird calls, before dividing, some for the four mile cliff walk past the Huntsman's Leap to St. Govan's Head and some for a two and a half mile circuit of a Bosherton Lily Pool to the sandy beach at Broadhaven.

The famous Green Bridge of Wales was not so green this time, some of the precariously attached turf scoured from the slender crest by wind and rain. The sea-bird stacks were as green as the massed birds allowed, mostly with flowering tree mallow, embellished with shiny-leaved sea beet.

Guillemots were in almost sole possession of all the offshore stacks, the few razorbills relegated to crevices lower down or on mainland cliffs. Guillemots or murrens exposed on the sunny summits seemed stressed by the heat, sitting with their backs to the sun and beaks pointing towards the land, open and raised at an angle of around forty five degrees. None of the birds on shaded rocks were seen to adopt this panting position.

A few shags shared the lower outcrops and there were some gulls, mostly herring gulls, sitting singly on ledges like fulmars. A raven cronked past, flying low, in pursuit of three jackdaws.

A grey seal, basked on a barnacle-covered ledge a couple of metres or so above the kelp zone. As we watched, the whole jellified mass heaved rhythmically in a bout of sneezing, then the tail and hind quarters flipped up as the animal was spooked by passing guillemots.

Strata of the mainland Carboniferous Limestone cliffs dipped inland at angles varying around forty five degrees. Their most colourful flowers were lady's finger or kidney vetch, with patches of thrift and sea campion. Genuine native ox-eye daisies, chunkier than the common roadside form, were scattered among probable golden samphire, which flowers later, in August.

Constant trampling on the clifftop had dwarfed everything except beet and the greater and lesser knapweeds, still in bud, but open swards of spring squill, like mini bluebells, were a delight. There were a few yellow splashes of bird's foot trefoil and tiny flowers of mouse-ear chickweed among the field daisies, while the rest consisted mainly of cushions of dwarfed sea plantain and mats of flowering buck's horn plantain and aromatic thyme.

Tussocky ungrazed swards back from the cliff edge sported purple heads of red fescue and cocksfoot grass and coumarin-scented sweet vernal, also a few handsome spikes of green-winged orchids. Isolated colonies of heath dog violets occurred throughout, their pale furrowed spurs detracting not at all from the overall drifts of blue. Both communities afforded ample old, hard anthills, the epitome of ancient, unploughed pasture, which made excellent seats at lunchtime.

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The three elongated pools at Bosherton were saline creeks, like those leading off Milford Haven, until dammed to exclude the sea. Their surface was currently covered with newly expanded wine-red discs of water lily leaves, their flowers yet to come - as were those of yellow Iris, purple lossestrife and mauve water mint. Crystal clear water revealed broad stands of different aquatics. On one side of a stone causeway was a dense mat of yellow-green stonewort (the alga, Chara), on the other erect stems of curled pondweed and huge under water leaves of water parsnip, also erect. Rounded mounds of Canadian pondweed and fewer feathery fronds of water milfoil were free of algal scum, while ivy duckweed was, unusually, commonest of the floaters.

Whirligig beetles pursued animated circuits among scudding pond skaters, while slender damselflies, newly emerged from their nymphal stage, changed from colourless to clear blue.

The two nesting pairs of swans were safely separated. Ducks and moorhens were few but two of the coots were attending a lively family of cootlings, which made no attempt to dive as their parents did. A mousy looking reed warbler sang its scratchy song in a pathside reedbed, a change from the monotony of expostulating chiff chaff and great tit. Lush woodland held the usual birds.

It was full of the unfurling croziers of hart's-tongue fern, bobble-headed wood sanicle blooms and yellow-green umbels of Alexanders. Pale primroses mingled with the blue spikes of bugle and bluebells.

Early purple orchids bloomed in shade and sun on both shores, with a few clustered twayblade orchids. On one side of the lake salad bumet and ramsons or wild garlic sprang from the limestone, while on the sandier side was acid-loving tormentil, with budding honeysuckle, black bryony and Clematis scrambling through the prolifically flowering hawthorn.

Tall shade forms of spring squill had crept inland along the path edges from the broad stretch of tide-smoothed sand at Broadhaven, while Portland spurge was a feature of the tall sand dunes on the opposing shoreline.

Mary E. Gillham