

# **CARDIFF NATURALISTS' SOCIETY**

Founded 1867

**NEWSLETTER No. 135**

**September 2025**

Charity No. 1092496

## LIST OF OFFICERS 2024/2025

### **President**

Mike Dean

*mike@deanlisvane.co.uk*

### **Secretary**

Position vacant

*secretary@cardiffnaturalists.org.uk*

### **Treasurer**

Rhian Kendall

*treasurer@cardiffnaturalists.org.uk*

### **Membership Secretary**

Elizabeth Morgan

*membership@cardiffnaturalists.org.uk*

### **Indoor Meetings Secretary**

Hilary Wicks

*indoor@cardiffnaturalists.org.uk*

### **Field Meetings Coordinator**

Position vacant

### **Newsletter Editor**

Stephen Nottingham

*stephen@cardiffnaturalists.org.uk*

### **Also on Council**

Mary Salter, Gill Barter, Patrizia Donovan

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

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

**<http://cardiffnaturalists.blogspot.com>**

The role of Secretary remains vacant, and we hope to fill the position at the upcoming AGM. If anyone is interested in this role, or at least the role of Minutes Secretary, please email Mike Dean.

*Cover photo: White-letter Hairstreak at Lisvane Reservoir. Photo by Mary Salter, who reported on Facebook that it was the first time she had seen the species at the Reservoir (2 June 2025).*

# **President's Report**

## **Mike Dean**

As I write this, we are coming to the end of what will be potentially the warmest summer on record. It has certainly been very dry for some considerable time, and I will be interested to see the weather statistics in our next Newsletter. I am somewhat surprised that we have not had a hosepipe ban and it is to be hoped we get a reasonably wet winter not like in the years 1975 /1976 where a fairly dry winter was interposed between two dry summers.

Unusual weather patterns are not a new phenomenon, but what is worrying is that they are getting more frequent. This puts a strain on our wildlife without giving time for recovery, especially in our rivers. So, this Autumn we are having talks at our Indoor Meetings that focus on wetlands and rivers—the state of them and what is being done to help them.

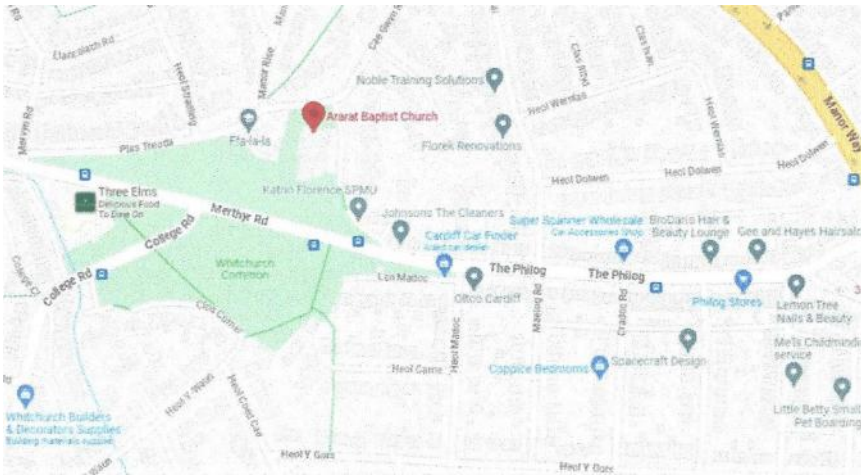
Many organisations, companies and individuals are striving to mitigate the effects of climate change but too often we read of isolated acts of vandalism that frustrates these efforts. Also, many initiatives bring along downsides which work against nature:

- 1) The new large efficient Wind Turbines can rotate with blade tip speed of 150 + mph which gives migrating birds very little chance to avoid them should their route intersect.
- 2) A new more extensive National Grid to cope with all the new forms of energy creation such as solar panels brings its dangers. We are used to seeing smaller birds hop on and off power lines with impunity, but they can form a collision hazard for larger birds. Also, larger birds who have landed on power lines near insulators and then decided to stretch out wet wings have met an unfortunate but instant end.
- 3) Tidal lagoons / barrages plus tidal turbines have the potential to interfere with wildlife disturbing the ecosystem or posing a particular threat.

We must move forward to mitigate climate change, but all we can hope is that design takes into account nature and efforts are made to minimise the potential dangers to wildlife.

## Meetings Programme

Indoor Meetings are held at Ararat Community Centre, next to Ararat Baptist Church: Plas Treoda, Whitchurch, Cardiff CF14 1PT. Meetings start at 7pm and conclude by 8.30pm.



### Indoor Meetings

#### Monday 29 September 2025

**AGM** (see pages 22-23 for Agenda), followed by a presentation by this year's Bioscience Prize winning student, **Hannah Mofeez Croft**, on freshwater macroinvertebrate communities in urbanised and natural river habitats in the Cardiff area.

#### Monday 27 October 2025

**Chris Harris**, the Living Levels Programme Manager, will talk about the Living Levels Partnership and its mission to promote and protect the Gwent Levels.

#### Monday 24 November 2025

**Oliver Wicks** will talk about the work of the South East Wales Rivers Trust (SEWEC).

#### Monday 8 December 2025

Xmas Special, including a quiz.

Indoor Meetings (speakers tbc):

26 January, 23 February, 23 March and 20 April 2026.

## **Outdoor Meetings & other events**

### **Sunday 5th October 2025**

#### **Geological Walk at Porthcawl led by Andy Kendall**

Starting at 10am Rest Bay car park CF36 3UP (which is where the walk will end) we will first walk to the RNLI Porthcawl Lifeboat Station, Eastern Promenade, Porthcawl CF36 3BN. If people do not want to walk both ways they can meet there (10:30 approx) and may be able to get a lift back. The main part of the walk will be a guided walk across the beach (beware uneven surfaces) looking at the geology, but there is a chance to see some sea life, bird life and even some late coastal plants as we work our way back across Locks Common to Rest Bay.

### **Saturday 11 October 2025**

#### **Unknown Wales Conference 2025**

##### **National Museum Wales: 10am to 1pm**

Cardiff Naturalists' Society will give the first presentation, on the Morrey Salmon Project, at this year's Unknown Wales Conference in the Reardon Smith Theatre at the National Museum Cardiff. Tickets (£5) can be purchase online, where you can also find the full programme (<https://museum.wales/cardiff/whatson/12712/Unknown-Wales-Conference-2025>), or on the door.

### **Friday 7 November 2025**

#### **Botany Department, National Museum Cardiff**

Dr Heather Pardoe will give us a tour of the Botany section, with reference to the work of Eleanor Vachell (1879-1948) - a past President of Cardiff Naturalists' Society (see <https://cardiffnaturalists.org.uk/htmfiles/150th-03.htm>). Further information in email & on social media nearer time.

**Look out for the latest information and additions to the outdoor and indoor meeting programmes in emails to members, on social media, and on our website/blog:**  
**<http://cardiffnaturalists.blogspot.co.uk/p/programme.html>**

## **Celebration of Nature, St Fagans**

Cardiff Naturalists' Society had a stall at the Celebration of Nature event at St Fagans National Museum of History on Saturday 12 July 2025. The stall focused on the Morrey Salmon Project, including a slideshow of images that were cleaned and scanned during the project.



*Photo by Andy Kendall.*

## **Morrey Salmon exhibition National Museum Cardiff**

On Tuesday 19 August 2025, Mike Dean, Rob Nottage and Andy Kendall of Cardiff Naturalist's Society met with Hugh Salmon and his daughter Jennifer to look at the newly installed mini-exhibition dedicated to Morrey Salmon in the Insight Gallery of the National Museum Cardiff in Cathays.

Hugh and Jennifer were absolutely delighted to see the Museum recognising their father and grandfather's (respectively) pioneering work in Bird Photography in this way. Showing them around the exhibition was Ben Rowson, who put together the displays with the help of several Museum colleagues.

Ben supported us throughout the 4 year's of the Morrey Salmon Project, and the exhibition recognises the hard work done by the Cardiff Naturalists' Society membership. Ben's model of a Royal Navy Destroyer used as transport during the 1937 International Ornithological Congress, built based on Morrey Salmon's photographs, is a delightful addition to the exhibition.

The exhibition is towards the back of the Zoology gallery, and is set to run for two years (until August 2027). This is just the first phase of recognition of Morrey Salmon's work, which will culminate in the photo collection being made available online via the Museum's website. Visitors to the exhibition can view some of these images in a slideshow, alongside Morrey's favourite camera that he used for 50 years.



*Rob, Hugh, Jennifer, Mike and Ben by the Morrey Salmon exhibition. Photo: Andy Kendall.*

## **Insole Court, Botanical Diaries, and how it led to a pleasant Cathays Cemetery Tree Walk (19 July 2025)**

**Andy Kendall**

This was an extra event arranged at short notice when we had an offer from Andy and Anne Bell who are experts in many things related to the parks and open spaces in Cardiff and who maintain the excellent Cardiff Parks (and other open spaces) website (<https://www.cardiffparks.org.uk/index.htm>). As it says on their website: "Here you will find old postcard views, history and information about notable trees in some of Cardiff's parks and gardens".

Whilst I have known them for about 40 years we had in more recent years gone in different directions, as the demands of our working lives got in the way. It was a pure chance reconnection when during the CNS 150th anniversary in 2017 I had cause to ask the owners of that website for some information, and it was a complete shock to me that the enquiry was answered by a friend. Since then, we have helped each other with information exchanges especially during the Morrey Salmon Project (and you can now see some of those pictures on their website per the free for non-commercial use agreement that the Salmon family and the Museum agreed to).

More recently they asked for our help in determining what to do with an important diary, which we were happy to do and met at Insole Court to pass it over and what followed was an impromptu tree walk in the gardens (very pleasant). See the CNS Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/CardiffNaturalists/posts/23866755393007686/>) for a detailed write up and some sample pages. They then offered to lead a more formal walk in Cathays Cemetery, which was what brought this extra outdoor event about. So that is how a dozen of us ended up going on a wonderful walk to look at trees (and a bit of geology on some gravestones).



Having met at the chapel we were given a great introduction and each given a copy of the tree list and the path that we would be following, along with a brief safety talk reminding people not to fall over things - especially gravestones.

Armed with our list of 54 important specimen trees, which also included information on whether they were rare or not and whether the tree in question was a Glamorgan, Welsh or even a Great Britain champion tree, we set off to explore. I am not listing the trees here as there is an excellent up-to-date list of the important trees in the cemetery (<https://www.cardiffparks.org.uk/trees/cathayscemetery/index.shtml>). What is also worth noting is that whilst we had a wonderful walk it is impossible to see everything at its best without multiple visits and they have included many photos taken at different times of the year on that website.

What we saw were a lot of impressive trees which included some Oaks with Spangle and Knopper galls, and some Sorbus with spectacularly coloured fruits. We also saw something of CNS history with the gravestone of Thomas Henry Thomas (<https://cardiffnaturalists.org.uk/htmlfiles/150th-02.htm>) whom amongst his other notable achievements championed the red dragon as the symbol of Wales.

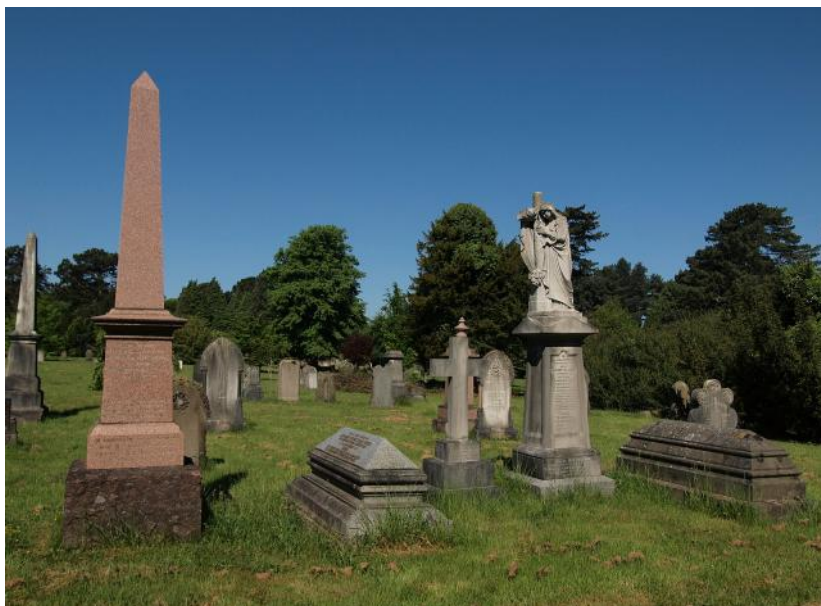
We did note that some of the specimen trees were being overwhelmed with the surrounding brambles and it was very useful that there was a member of the Friends of the Cemetery group along for the walk who was able to take back some notes of things that needed to be done and we look forward to a future visit to see some of those trees at their rejuvenated best.

All in all a very excellent afternoon walk.

*Knopper galls on Oak.*



*Sorbus Golden Wonder.*



*Trees in the cemetery.*



*Gravestone of former CNS President T.H. Thomas.*

*Photos pp 10-11 Andy Kendall*

# Dyrham House - “Nature will find a way”

**Andy Kendall**

You may remember the line from the movie *Jurassic Park* where Jeff Goldblum as Ian Malcolm, a mathematician and chaos theorist, issues the statement “Nature will find a way” when it is discovered the dinosaurs are actually breeding even though they should not be. Well, I found a couple of recent examples where nature has thumbed its nose to man’s influence.

Rhian and I were at Dyrham House for the tulip festival leading up to May bank holiday and one of the things on show was the Dyrham House tulip which is advertised as pure white .. we bought some for her to start painting at home and were amazed when the first flowers came out yellow (although they did turn mostly white after a couple of weeks). At the house they had planted hundreds and clearly there is still some mix of genetic material in there as the odd pink one was showing in the collection.





I took a walk whilst she was being “artist in residence” and was chatting to one of the volunteer gardeners who was saying that they removed an island from the formal lake last year, but the Coot then brought in a load of material to create a nesting island of their own and have been quite successful using it as you can see.

I was intrigued with the feeding of the chicks (almost dinosaurian, but of course they are given that all birds are actually dinosaur descendants) as the parents kept bringing something round for them. When I looked at the pictures at home it was clear, they were bringing up planorbis-type snails for the youngsters to consume.



# **Meadow Surveys in the Vale of Glamorgan**

**Stephen Nottingham**

There has been increasing acceptance of unmown grass verges and unmown areas (having a single late mowing) in public parks. However, councils and others managing these areas have little information on the relative merits of late mowing in different locations in terms of increasing biodiversity.

Last year, the Vale Nature Partnership ([www.valenature.org](http://www.valenature.org)) introduced an adopt-a-verge scheme, in which volunteers surveyed verges to see what grassland indicator species were present in unmown compared to nearby regularly mown areas.

This year, the scheme was expanded, again with Welsh Government funding under the Local Nature Partnerships Cymru scheme, to survey unmown areas of grassland, including meadows, across the Vale of Glamorgan.

Plantlife work with the Local Nature Partnership to organise plant identification courses for volunteers in species-rich grasslands, such as late-mown areas on the clifftops above The Knap on Marine Drive in Barry.

The Meadow Monitoring survey form includes a checklist of grassland plant species, especially indicator species for semi-natural grasslands. The information gathered should help focus the management of these areas across the Vale of Glamorgan over the coming years.

My allocated locations are the road verges on Castle Drive, by the Valley View shops in Dinas Powys, and the large unmown strip on the Bryn-y-Don playing fields that extends from the skate park back towards the main road from Dinas Powys towards Barry.

Ideally, the areas left unmown during the summer will be mown in September, and the cut grass collected and removed.



*Examples of late-mown grass areas in the Vale Nature Partnership's survey: roadside verges on Castle Drive in Dinas Powys and the area adjacent to sports fields in Parc Bryn-y-Don. Photos: Stephen Nottingham.*

The verges on both sides of the road near Tesco on Castle Drive have been sown with native wildflower seed over recent years by the local group, Dinas Powys Wild About Nature. There are now established patches of birds-foot trefoil, tufted vetch, knapweed, yarrow, and other species on the grassland plant indicator list.

Most of the Parc Bryn-y-Don site is frequently mown short as playing fields, where local football, rugby and cricket teams play. However, it was formerly meadow so there is presumably a large grassland seedbank retained in the soil. After only a couple of years, this unmown area boasts impressive seasonal displays, with cuckoo flowers and daisies in April, a sea of buttercups in May, to knapweed and umbellifer species, especially wild carrot, later in the summer. Patches of the key grassland indicator species Yellow Rattle were recorded for the first time this summer.



*Yellow Rattle, Knapweed and Wild Carrot, at Parc Bryn-y-Don.*

*Photos: Stephen Nottingham.*



Meanwhile, up on Dinas Powys Common on Monday evenings in late July and early August, Dinas Powys Wild About Nature organised community raking events to collect the recently cut grass in areas left unmown over the summer. The collection of cut grass helps reduce nutrient levels and thereby promotes biodiversity in years to come. Here's a photo of the evening I helped out, using one of the new wooden rakes donated by the Vale Nature Partnership.



*Community hay raking, Dinas Powys Common. Photo: Dinas Powys Wild About Nature / Geraint Thomas.*

# Hensol Forest: A Gallling Day out with Hoverflies!

Andy Kendall

Rob and Linda Nottage led a dozen of us on what was a lovely walk in a local (to them) reserve at Hensol Forest on the 26th of July 2025.

We met in the Forestry car park north of Welsh St Donats which for many of us meant driving through an interesting set of country lanes from the M4. Thoughtfully Linda was on duty at the entrance to make sure that we knew that we were in the right place. For anyone visiting please be aware that it's a popular dog emptying area so watch your footing when you are close to the cars.

The title of this write-up was spawned because we did not even leave the car park before we were looking at some of the different forms of galls on the leaves and deformed flowers of the Oak trees. With Artichoke and Silk Button Spangle galls the first to be seen. Later, we also saw Marble gall on another Oak.

Once we had finished our look at those we headed off into the maze of paths around the reserve. Along the path edges there were a lot of flowers and we especially noted the umbellifers were alive with Flies and Hoverflies many moving so fast it was hard to take a picture. As we went, it wasn't just the Oaks that were being impacted by pests, with the leaves of Horse Chestnut, Nettle and Beech being deformed by in this case fungal infection.

Talking of pests, there was a massive infestation of Himalayan Balsam along the roadside verges and this was sadly spreading along some of the footpaths and even into the open area that is being developed as lowland heath after the Larch trees were felled because of *Phytophthora ramorum*. Looking that up for this article I was struck by the various websites that refer to it as "fungus-like" or "algae-like" without describing it much further, so with the help of Wikipedia it is a "Water Mould" or Oomycete which are within the Protists which is a catch all group as described:

*“A protist is any eukaryotic organism that is not an animal, land plant, or fungus. Protists do not form a natural group, or clade, but are a paraphyletic grouping of all descendants of the last eukaryotic common ancestor excluding land plants, animals, and fungi.”*

I guess that this accounts for the “-like” appended to so many of the descriptions. Anyway, as the NRW website says about the area where the Larch were removed:

*“When an area of Hensol forest, which had been planted as a commercial forest to replenish timber stocks after the first and second World Wars, was felled in 2020 due to infected larch trees, the landscape started to naturally regenerate. Officers from Natural Resources Wales (NRW) who manage Hensol forest found rare lowland heathland plants growing, some from seeds in the soil that could have been dormant for more than 60 years. They have removed tree felling brash and will manage scrub until the heathland plants are more established.”*

See <https://naturalresources.wales/about-us/news-and-blogs/news/rare-heathland-regenerating-after-trees-felled-in-hensol-forest/?lang=en> for further details.

We took a walk around this area and with Gill’s permission felt free to pull up any Himalayan Balsam that we saw in this potentially important area.

Back on the paths, the umbellifers were in full flower and showing what an important food source they are for many insects by the sheer number of flies, but it wasn’t long until we found another pest which are the leaves damages by the Horse chestnut leaf-mining moth which has spread rapidly since it was first identified as present in Britain in Wimbledon only as recently as 2002.

It was great to be out learning a new (to me) area and doing a bit of conservation at the same time.



*Artichoke gall on Oak.*



*Marble gall on Oak.*



*Silk Button Spangles on Oak.*

*Photos of galls in Hensol Forest by Andy Kendall.*



*Holly Blue. Photo by Phill Blanning, who noted on Facebook that it was only the 2nd time they had seen the species in the garden in 17 years.*

### **British Library Web Archive**

Cardiff Naturalists' Society's website, including links to past issues of this newsletter, is now being archived in the British Library's UK Web Archive ([www.webarchive.org.uk](http://www.webarchive.org.uk)).

Unfortunately, the Archive was unavailable earlier this year due to the disruption caused by a cyber-attack on the British Museum's computer system.

You can find the newsletter archive under the publications tab on the Cardiff Naturalists' Society website:

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

**Deadline for submissions to next newsletter:**

**Thursday 1 January 2026**

# Cardiff Naturalists' Society 157th AGM (2025)

Dear Member,

**The 157th Annual General Meeting of the Society will be at 7:00 pm on Monday 29<sup>th</sup> September 2025. It will be held at the Ararat Community Centre Whitchurch, CF14 1PT.**

## AGENDA

1. Apologies for Absence.
2. To Approve the Notes of the 156th AGM. (Only notes rather than full minutes as the Society does not have a secretary)
3. Matters Arising.
4. Hon. Secretary's Report.
5. Hon. Treasurer's Report.
6. Officers' Reports. (Hon. Membership Secretary, Editor, Indoor Meetings Secretary)
7. Election of Officers and Council Members.
8. The Colonel Morrey Salmon Project.
9. Any Other Business.

## Officers

President	Mike Dean
Past President	Professor Tony Campbell
Vice President	Vacant
Hon. Secretary	Vacant – <b>there is an urgent need for this role to be filled even if the role is split.</b>
Hon. Membership Secretary:	Elizabeth Morgan
Indoor Meetings Secretary	Hilary Wicks
Hon. Publicity Officer*	Vacant
Hon. Treasurer	Rhian Kendall
Hon. Newsletter Editor	Stephen Nottingham
Hon. Field Meetings Secretary	Vacant

\*Please note that the Hon. Publicity Officer position is a co-opted one and not an elected position.

## Council Members

Sitting Members:  
Bruce McDonald  
Mary Salter  
Gill Barter  
Patrizia Donovan

The aim is to fill the vacancies of **Hon. Secretary, Vice President & Field Trip Secretary at the AGM.**

Nominations from members of the Society for the above positions on Council should be sent in writing (letter or e-mail) to the Hon Secretary, to arrive not later than five days before the date of the Annual General Meeting.

Currently the Society also has four members who have been elected to Honorary Membership, these are:

Stephen Howe      Jeff Curtis      Linda Nottage      Brian Bond

Honorary membership is bestowed in recognition of the contribution that these individuals have made to the Society as Council Members and Officers both currently and in the past.

Mike Dean (Hon acting Secretary)  
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Lisvane,  
Cardiff. CF14 0TD  
Tel 029 2075 6869  
E-mail: [secretary@cardiffnaturalists.org.uk](mailto:secretary@cardiffnaturalists.org.uk)

After the formal proceeding which will be kept as short as possible, **Hannah Mofeez Croft** the winner of the CNS Bioscience Prize 2025 will give a presentation of her work:

**“Comparative Analysis of Structural Diversity and Freshwater Macroinvertebrate Communities in Urbanised Natural River Habitats”**

The evening’s proceedings will have to end at or before 8:30 as the room is not available after then.





Photo: *Sorbus aucuparia* in Cathays Cemetery, by Andy Kendall. See pages 8-11 for a report on the CNS Cathays Cemetery walk.

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