



CARDIFF NATURALISTS' SOCIETY

Founded 1867

NEWSLETTER No. 136

January 2026

Charity No. 1092496

LIST OF OFFICERS 2025/2026

President

Mike Dean

mike@deanlislane.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://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: Sparrowhawk in garden. Phill Blanning.

President's Report

Mike Dean

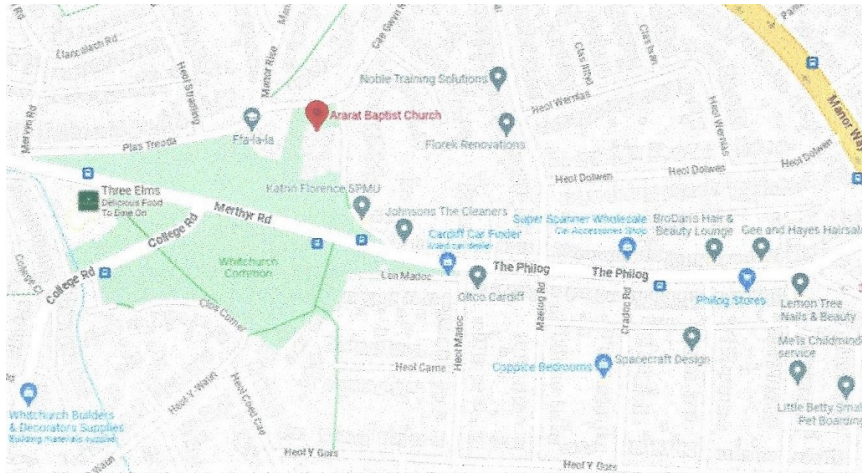
I am pleased to announce that there are now some 800 of the Morrey Salmon photographs available on the Collections Online webpage of Amgueddfa Cymru (National Museum of Wales). The remaining photographs, of those we selected for display, will be added early in the New Year. This is great news after many years of work by a dedicated number of CNS members, plus of course Museum Staff who added them to the Online Collection. Thanks must be given to all those involved and mentioning names can cause upsets, but I think it would be remiss of me not to thank in particular Andy Kendall, Stephen Howe and Rob Nottage; and, of course, Hugh Salmon, as without his financial support the project would never have got off the ground. At last, the public will be able to see and enjoy the remarkable photographs taken by a remarkable man.

Having just written about some good news, I was saddened to read that 3 White-Tailed Eagles (*Haliaeetus albicilla*) have gone missing in suspicious circumstances. Many years ago, when I was on holiday on the Isle of Mull, I saw the White-Tailed Eagles on the island. They were magnificent birds. At that time, some farmers were concerned about the introduction of the birds to the island, claiming they were taking lambs as prey. Since then, monitoring has been carried out and there is good evidence to suggest that lambs do not form a significant part of their diet. Any raptor is going to be an opportunist and feed on a dead or dying lamb but will not prey on healthy lambs being cared for by their mother.

I am sure many of you, like me, have been watching the David Attenborough programme, "Kingdom" on TV. I found it fascinating but more so I was impressed by the commitment and bravery of the rangers and some of the local people for keeping the poachers at bay. We must be grateful to these individuals else within a very short time many species would be decimated and the ecological balance destroyed. The film crews also exposed themselves to many risks, but with the high-tech equipment available to them they were able to achieve some amazing photography. When Rhian & Andy were at Chipembele in the Luangwa Valley in Zambia, they met some of the film crew. Andy had a serious attack of camera envy, as their camera equipment is worth about £40 to £50K!

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 26 January 2026

Members' Evening. A series of short presentations by Cardiff Naturalists' Society members.

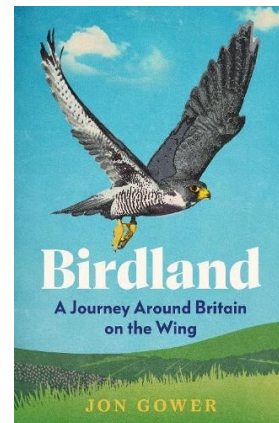
:

Monday 23 February 2026

Jon Gower: Birdland

A journalist, author and lifelong birder, Jon Gower will talk about 50 years of change in British bird life, based on his recent book 'Birdland'.

For the book, he visited some of the best places in Britain to watch birds, searching for both iconic and elusive species. As well as being a celebration of birds, the book is also a call to arms to defend them in the face of biodiversity decline and the challenges of climate change. 'Birdland' examines the future from a bird's eye view.



Monday 23 March 2026

Speaker tbc.

Monday 20 April 2026

Speaker tbc.

Outdoor Meetings

Saturday 10 January 2026

Cardiff New Year Birdwatch

Cosmeston Lakes Country Park, led by Rob & Linda Nottage.

Meet 10 am in the Cosmeston Lakes car park, Lavernock Road, Penarth CF64 5UY, where there is a café and toilets (there is now a charge for parking at Cosmeston).

In the morning, we will make a circuit of the two lakes, where the main interest will be waterfowl, but we will also look for birds and other wildlife in the reedbeds, grassland and woods.

After lunch, there is an option of moving on to the banks of the River Ely in Penarth and proceed to Cardiff Bay Barrage.

Look out for the latest information and additions to the indoor and outdoor meeting programmes in emails to members, on social media, and on our website:

<http://cardiffnaturalists.blogspot.co.uk/p/programme.html>

=====

Deadline for submissions to next newsletter: Friday 29th May 2026

CNS Bioscience Prize 2025

We congratulate **Hannah Mofeez Croft** on winning the CNS Biosciences Prize 2025. She received the award from President Mike Dean at the Society's Indoor Meeting on Monday 29 September (photo below, by Andy Kendall).

At this meeting, she gave a presentation of her research project, about freshwater macroinvertebrate communities in urbanised and natural river habitats in the Cardiff area.

Hannah wrote a summary of her report for the June 2025 edition of this newsletter, which can be found in the online newsletter archive: <https://cardiffnaturalists.org.uk/htmlfiles/newsletter.htm>



Morrey Salmon's Pioneering Bird Photography **Saved for the Nation and Now Online**

Through the efforts of Cardiff Naturalists' Society (CNS), and with support from his son Hugh and the staff of Amgueddfa Cymru / National Museum of Wales, the collection of glass plate negatives and associated archive of Colonel H. Morrey Salmon has been conserved and made available for everyone to see via Amgueddfa Cymru Collections Online.

Since the 1980s, CNS has owned the historically-important photographic collection created by Colonel H. Morrey Salmon CBE, MC, DL, DSc, (1890-1985), and 72nd President of the Society. Morrey, as he was known to all, started photography in 1908, principally the birds of Wales, and amassed a large collection of extremely high-quality glass plate negatives. These were held in secure storage along with an archive of documents that relate to him and his photographic partner Geoffrey C. S. Ingram at Amgueddfa Cymru / National Museum Wales.

The collection includes extensive pictures from the Cardiff and Vale area, but also many scientifically and historically important pictures from the rest of Wales, especially the Pembrokeshire islands of Skomer, Skokholm and Grassholm. It includes species that are now very rare in Wales and the UK.

There had not been a means, until now, for the Society to make these images, and the information contained within the collection, available to scientists, conservationists, and those interested in birds and the history of photography.

The Society and the Salmon family agreed to transfer ownership of the collection to the Museum, and under their guidance, CNS members spent thousands of hours cleaning, conserving, digitising the slides, and identifying the birds in the photographs and transcribing the often hard to read paper information to create a valuable archive.

With generous funding from Hugh Salmon, CNS contracted the Museum to scan the pictures into their systems and make them available to everyone via their Online Collections (<https://museum.wales/collections/online/>).

From the total of 3,500 glass plates, the Society selected for the museum to publish online 1,000 images. These included the best of the bird photographs and/or the most interesting historical aspect (such as the 1934 International Ornithological Congress (IOC) where the birders were ferried around Welsh islands in 2 Royal Navy destroyers—see back cover), and some very early colour wildlife photography).

All 3,500 images were digitised by the Society and given to the Museum along with a digital archive of the project to ensure that there was a good record for future photographers and ornithologists to work with. An exhibition featuring his camera equipment, some of the pictures and information about the IOC congress in 1934, and information about the project is currently on display at Amgueddfa Cymru.

Additional documents and supporting information is available on the CNS website (<https://cardiffnaturalists.org.uk/htmlfiles/Salmon.htm>). This includes the diaries of Morrey Salmon, which have been transcribed by CNS members (<https://cardiffnaturalists.org.uk/pdf/salmon/locations.pdf>).

Previous issues of this newsletter also chronicle the stages of the project and include numerous photos by Morrey Salmon. See: <https://cardiffnaturalists.org.uk/htmlfiles/newsletter.htm>

Andy Kendall (Former President of the Cardiff Naturalists' Society and project coordinator): "The challenges that he overcame to get such excellent pictures are immense. One frame and then you have to change the plate and wait sometimes hours for the bird to return for the next photograph. It is superb to be able to put the work of this pioneering Welsh wildlife photographer and conservationist back into the public awareness, to tell his story and to secure his work for the people of Wales and the world."

Iolo Williams (Wildlife presenter):

“I was aware of ornithologist Colonel Morrey Salmon, known for his work saving the Red Kite in Wales during the last century, but he was not just a conservationist he was an important early bird photographer.

Pioneering techniques such as photography for Gannet colony counting on Grassholm and “high speed” flash of swifts in Aberedw.

He left a legacy of thousands of fragile glass plate negatives and an archive of important historical biological records which have been in storage and have not been looked at since the 1980s.

It's wonderful that a selection of a thousand of these early important bird photographs have been cleaned and linked to their records and are being made available for everyone through the incredible efforts of the Cardiff Naturalists' Society volunteers in conjunction with the staff of Amgueddfa Cymru, and I would encourage anyone with an interest in birds or early photography to take a look at them.”

David Tipling (Wildlife photographer):

“A true pioneer of Welsh ornithology, Morrey Salmon devoted much of his life to inspiring public curiosity about the natural world. His evocative bird photography became a powerful tool for education and inspiration.

Today, this archive stands not only as an important chapter in history but also as a glimpse into a remarkable life and the legacy of one of the early pioneers of bird photography.”

Hugh Salmon (Son of Colonel H. Morrey Salmon):

“I need to express my gratitude to the Cardiff Naturalists' Society.

First the volunteers who spent many months carefully preparing and cleaning my father's photographic glass slides numbering over three thousand. Their magnificent endeavours has enabled the National Museum Wales in Cardiff to commence the work of digitising them for anyone to see. Secondly, my sincere thanks to the members of CNS Committee. It was this Committee that conceived the idea of finding a way to make my father's bird photographs available to a wider public.

I believe my father was modest about his photographs of birds, especially those taken in the first half of the twentieth century. He was a very practical man which I am sure helped with some of his innovative work. I doubt he appreciated that many years later his pioneering photography would create such interest.”

Report on Coed Ty Llwyd, Lisvane, to Cardiff Naturalists, December 2025

Dr Rob Thomas, on behalf of Eco-explore Community Interest Company

Coed Ty Llwyd ('The wood of the grey house') is a small but ancient woodland in Lisvane, located immediately north of the car park of the Lisvane and Llanishen Reservoirs visitors centre. The woodland was purchased by Eco-explore Community Interest Company in 2024, for the purposes of conservation, research and education, in the knowledge of the massive housing developments planned for the Lisvane area under the North Cardiff Development Plan.

Our approach to woodland conservation is first to understand the biodiversity of the woodland, and the threats that it faces, and to design science-led conservation interventions based on this understanding. Over the last year, our exploration and monitoring of the biodiversity in Coed Ty Llwyd has continued with the excellent assistance of two Cardiff University placement students; Jasper Ryall and Bethan Rawles. Notable records have included Weasel, Muntjac Deer, Ghost Slug and White-letter Hairstreak Butterflies, as well as a wonderful diversity of moths, wild flowers (including spectacular displays of Herb Paris), birds and fungi.

Our habitat management work has included several different activities: (1) removal of a large amount of litter and gardeners' waste, (2) substantial removal of non-native understorey shrubs, particularly Cherry Laurel and Rhododendron, as well as (3) pond-digging, (4) creation of log-piles and (5) management of the foot-fall within the wood. To do this, we have used a combination of dead-hedging and placement of plank foot-bridges to channel the foot-fall around and over the particularly muddy sections of the footpaths. This has allowed the previously churned-up muddy sections to begin to recover and re-vegetate.

Over the next few months, we will be adding more of these plank foot-bridges, with the aim of making attractive paths for people to walk around and through the wood, and discouraging people from wandering away from the established paths.

An important current concern is public safety. Coed Ty Llwyd has a substantial number of Ash trees affected by Ash Dieback Disease, as well as trees of Ash and other species weakened by Honey Fungus. As a result, we commissioned a tree safety inspection by the tree specialist contractors Till Hill, who have identified a number of trees needing remedial work, which will be complete over the coming months. In the meantime, we have made the decision to close the footpaths within Coed Ty Llwyd over the winter in the interests of public safety, and we intend to re-open these paths as soon as the remedial work is completed.

Meanwhile, our environmental education work has involved hosting a series of Cardiff University professional training year students (Jasper and Beth, mentioned above) who have received training in many aspects of woodland ecology and habitat management, as well as several MSc project and placement students, who have been involved in moth-trapping, pond-building and trail-camera monitoring of the inhabitants of Coed Ty Llwyd. We have also hosted visits from the Cardiff University Wildlife and Conservation Society and Ornithological Society, who enjoyed seeing wild birds at close quarters, being ringed under license as part of the British Trust for Ornithology's bird-ringing scheme.

The woodland will be open to the public again in the spring of 2026, and Cardiff Naturalists members are very welcome to visit and to record the biodiversity of the woodland. Please contact me on ThomasRJ@Cardiff.ac.uk if you have any queries about access arrangements, or if you would like to be accompanied on your visit. Sightings and news from the woodland are regularly posted on the Friends of Coed Ty Llwyd Facebook group: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1068093271044803>



a) Bethan and Jasper, with Long-tailed tits (ringed under licence)



b) New pond



g) Herb-Paris; an ancient woodland indicator species.

h) A clutch of Song Thrush eggs; one of many nests monitored under the BTO's nest-recording scheme.



<p>c) Newly installed plank <u>foot-bridges</u></p>	<p>d) Re-vegetated footpaths several months later</p>
	
<p>e) Footpath closed for public safety reasons</p>	<p>f) Footpath closed notice</p>
	



i) Ghost slug (*Selenochlamys ysbryda*)

j) Veiled Oyster (*Pleurotus dyinus*)



Rob Thomas, Lisvane, 22nd December 2025.



Photos this page: Waxcap spp. and other fungi by Linda Morris.

Eleanor Vachell Collection

On Friday 7 November 2025, Dr Heather Pardoe gave a dozen Cardiff Naturalists' Society members a tour of the Botany section of Amgueddfa Cymru / National Museum Cardiff, with a particular focus on the collection of Eleanor Vachell (1879-1848), the 64th (and first woman) President of the Society.

The Museum holds an extensive herbarium of plants collected by Eleanor Vachell, along with her dairies, copies of her long-running nature column in the Western Mail, and a range of her publications. In 2006, the Museum published an edited volume of her botanical diaries. We learnt about her family background, collaborators in the field, and her considerable achievements.

Elsewhere in the Botany section, the display of wax models and the seed collection were also of great interest.





Further information on Eleanor Vachell:
<https://cardiffnaturalists.org.uk/150th-03.htm>

Text and photos (pp 16-17) Stephen Nottingham.

GEOLOGICAL WALK at PORTHCAWL led by ANDY KENDALL
Sunday 5th October 2025
Report by Linda Nottage

The main group started at 10am from Rest Bay but owing to mobility problems Rob & I parked nearer the meeting point by the Coastguard Lookout at Porthcawl Harbour & had time to notice the practice launch of the lifeboat & the playground blue whale before the more energetic members arrived on foot, making a manageable group of nine.

After we scrambled down to the shore over Carboniferous limestone boulders Andy explained the geological history of the rocks, the jointing and calcite veining and pointed out brachiopod and solitary coral fossils. Further westwards along the shore we saw where younger Triassic rocks were exposed & further still a dramatic fault gully. A good example of a colonial coral (*Lithostrotion* type coral) was exposed in a limestone boulder.



CNS group by Porthcawl Harbour Wall; Wall Rocket (below left); and Brachiopod fossils in carboniferous limestone (below right).



Recent storms had thrown up strands of seaweed, mainly egg wrack & bladder wrack, while Mike found part of a cuttlefish 'bone'. A few limpets clung to boulders by rock-pools, and further away reefs of *Sabellaria* (honeycomb tube worms) could be seen. Disappointingly, no exciting strandings such as starfish or jellyfish were found.

Gulls on the shore included Black-headed, Herring a few Mediterranean, plus a solitary Lesser black-back. No birds were spotted on the sea. Near the harbour was an energetic flock of Starlings and 2 Choughs announced their presence as they flew over our heads by the lookout.

Plants growing at the top of the beach included Rock Samphire, Tree Mallow, Tamarisk, Buckshorn Plantain and Wall Rocket. Sweet-smelling flowers of the last attracted honey bees, but it was too windy for other insects.

Rob & I left the party before their trek back across Lock's Common but thoroughly enjoyed the bracing & informative walk.

Many thanks, Andy!



Colonial coral (above); Limpets; and Cuttlefish 'bone' and egg wrack (right).



Rock Samphire; Solitary coral fossil (Caninia); CNS group viewing Triassic rocks; and Mediterranean gull (winter plumage).

Photos pp. 18-20 Linda Nottage.



Further info: <https://swga.org.uk/geological-walk-at-Porthcawl>

Dream Island by R. M. Lockley
A book review by Linda Morris

“To dwell alone with birds and flowers in some remote place where they were plentiful and undisturbed was an ambition early cherished in schooldays, as soon as I began to look at, and watch, and so finally to love nature.....This dream became my daily dream as I grew up.”



The words of Ronald Lockley, born in Whitchurch, Cardiff in 1903, which open his book ‘*Dream Island*’. This modest but rich 172 pages walks you through his life, his dreams, and his acquisition of a 21-year lease of Skokholm, an island off the Pembrokeshire coast.

Lockley grew up in Whitchurch in Heol Don, the same street as Col. Morrey Salmon, 13 years his senior. They never met when young, but became good friends later in life. Lockley went to his Mother’s private school whereas Morrey went to Island Cottage Prep school along with his best friend Bert Evans.

Lockley’s childhood was spent in the woods and wetlands around the old Glamorganshire Canal. He learnt from books about birds and their habitat islands. This led him to maps and the start of what he describes as his ‘in vain’ dreams, with the resolve to one day live in austerity on his dream island.

When Lockley left school, he rented a small farm on the outskirts of Cardiff, which attracted many birds. For several years Lockley was happy developing the farm and digging a pond with an island. Each year in midsummer with a farming neighbour he refers to as Admiral, they took time off to explore the Pembrokeshire coast and its islands, with their wonderful birdlife including Ramsey, Skomer and, especially, Skokholm.

Lockley says about Skomer: "The cliffs swarmed with seabirds The island was carpeted with acres of bluebells, campion, thrift and primroses". He learnt from local fishermen that lonely uninhabited Skokholm was similarly adorned but with some derelict farm and outbuildings having been unoccupied for nearly 20 years. When he finally was able to visit, as the seas are treacherous in that location, he was captivated and couldn't wait to return. Whilst waiting out the roughening south-westerly wind to cross to Skokholm the following year with Admiral, they spent time talking to the tenant farmer on the mainland who rented Skokholm, learning about its history. He had 20 years previously lived there with his wife, farming cattle and sheep but had long ago given up visiting it. He gave Lockley permission to spend as long as he liked on the island for his enjoyment.

When the weather improved enough for the crossing, they were rowed out in an open boat, which the fishermen used for shellfish fishing; as they drew into the island they encountered puffins, razorbills, guillemots, gulls and cormorants, to name a few. The fishermen left them on a south-facing landing spot promising to return in 2 days' time.

Lockley was captivated by the natural flower garden featuring white sea campion, pink thrift, bluebells, primroses, blue squill, cowslips, foxgloves, and more, with birds calling and flying everywhere about him. "In complete happiness... I wandered about the island... Here at last was my dream Island!.....I had never been so happy in my life as I was during those 3 days on this wonderful bird island. I felt that I could never be content until I lived permanently here."

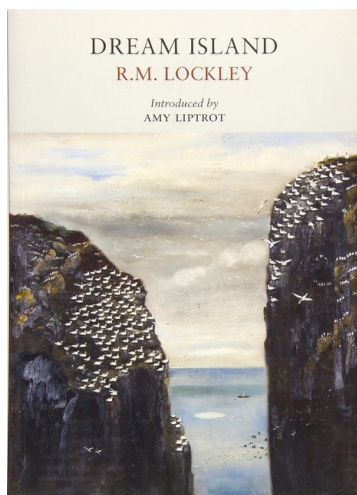
A plan formed in Lockley's mind and on returning to Cardiff he put into motion his plan to realise some capital and set up as an islander on Skokholm. In 1927, over the next two months of emotional see-sawing, negotiations took place and eventually he secured the legal right to live on Skokholm with a 21-year lease, only returning to the mainland to live in 1940 when Skokholm was acquired by the military. He continued to be an active naturalist and conservationist, playing a leading role in establishing the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park.

It was therefore inevitable that he and Morrey Salmon crossed paths, both being passionate about birds and coming from the same street in Whitchurch. At Lockley's invitation Morrey Salmon, his wife and family, spent frequent holidays on Skokholm. When Lockley embarked on building a Heligoland trap on the island, he had the willing help from

Salmon and Ingram. When it was completed five willow warblers were the first birds trapped. By way of thanks for their help with this project, Lockley allowed them to ring the first two birds while he ringed the other three. With the completion of this trap Skokholm became the first migrant marking station ever established. Lockley began a pioneering study of migratory seabirds and established the first bird observatory in Britain whilst on Skokholm. There are images in the Salmon Collection of the men building this trap and of the International Ophthalmological Congress field trip in 1934 onboard a Royal Navy Destroyer "borrowed" for the day to ferry birdwatchers around three islands. Lockley is seated on the left next to the ex-King of Bulgaria (see photo on back cover).

In his book, Ronald Lockley takes you through his early life and passion for birds, nature and the islands of Pembrokeshire. He learnt to sail by necessity, face and manage the challenges of island life, learn new skills, cope with hardship, get married and have a daughter Ann, brought to Skokholm at 3 weeks old who also became a naturalist and writer.

Lockley died in 2000 aged 96 and his ashes were scattered on Skokholm. Life on Skokholm became less lonely as Lockley's writing became better known. Visitors included scientist and film-maker Julian Huxley with whom Lockley made 'The Private Life of Gannets' (1934) This 10-minute film, which used dramatic aerial and slow-motion footage to document gannets nesting on nearby Grassholm, won an Oscar for Best Short subject in 1938. He appeared on Desert Island Discs in 1980 - his luxury item being a telescope.



Dream Island by R.M. Lockley.

Originally written in 1930.

This version (2016) is published by Little Toller Books www.littletoller.co.uk and incorporates Lockley's 2nd book 'Island Days' written in 1934, and an introduction by Amy Liptrot.
ISBN978-1-908213-32-7



Ronald Lockley (left) and ex-king Ferdinand of Bulgaria (centre) at the IOC congress 1934 onboard a Royal Navy Destroyer "borrowed" for the day to ferry birdwatchers around 3 islands (see p.8; pp. 21-23). Photo by Colonel H. Morrey Salmon.

PRINTED BY GLAMORGAN VOLUNTARY SERVICES (GVS)

Published by the Cardiff Naturalists' Society © 2026

In contributing to the Cardiff Naturalists' Society Newsletter you agree to grant us a royalty-free, non-exclusive licence to publish and otherwise use the material through web as well as print publishing worldwide. This will be in the format of a pdf copy of the newsletter unless otherwise agreed with you. And may include the publishing of the material by the National Library of Wales who have requested permission to do so and are prohibited from altering the material in any way.

See the **Newsletter Terms and Conditions on the Cardiff Naturalists' Society website** for the full terms of conditions. It's important to note, however, that you still own the copyright to everything you contribute to CNS Newsletter and that if your images and/or text is accepted, we will endeavor to publish your name alongside it in the Newsletter and/or website wherever it is used.