



CARDIFF NATURALISTS' SOCIETY

Founded 1867

NEWSLETTER No. 137

June 2026

Charity No. 1092496

LIST OF OFFICERS 2025/2026

President

Mike Dean

mike@deanlislane.co.uk

Secretary

Position vacant

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Treasurer

Rhian Kendall

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Membership Secretary

Elizabeth Morgan

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Indoor Meetings Secretary

Hilary Wicks

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Field Meetings Coordinator

Position vacant

Newsletter Editor

Stephen Nottingham

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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: Hummingbird Hawk-moth (Macroglossum stellatarum), by Phill Blanning.

President's Report

Mike Dean

I am sure many of you, like me, will have watched David Attenborough's programme "Secret Garden" and been amazed at the diversity of wildlife that can potentially be in our gardens. It is a sobering fact that our gardens support a wider diversity of wildlife than that which exists in much of our intensively-farmed countryside. We must be grateful to David Attenborough for raising the awareness of the fragility of so much of the world's wildlife, and by doing so inspire others to take action to preserve what remains and to hopefully reverse the downward trend. He is certainly a remarkable man, and we must congratulate him on becoming a centenarian.

It will be a bit different in my garden this summer, as in line with the RSPB recommendations I have removed my bird feeders to hopefully reduce the incidence of trichomonosis which is particularly prevalent in the finch family. I have always tried to keep my feeders clean, but I am sure I should have been cleaning them more often. Let us hope that this initiative reduces the incidence of this disease.

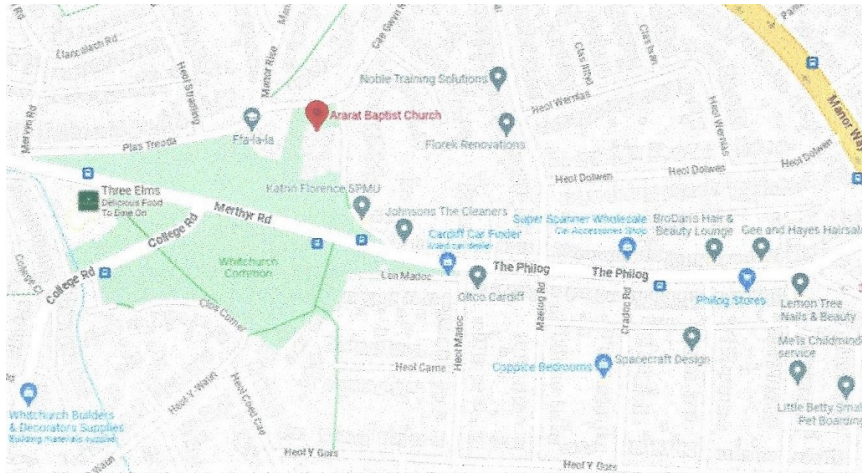
We have completed our Indoor Meetings for the 2025 / 2026 winter session. Generally, they have been well supported and already we are planning for the next session. If you have any ideas or suggestions, please contact me.

We have two "Field Trips" planned in June, thanks to Andy. Full details are included in this Newsletter. We intend to organise a few more, so again all suggestions welcome and watch out for details via email & social media.

This Newsletter includes many regular features, such as the report of the annual Cardiff Birdwatch and the yearly weather report for Cardiff, and I must thank our regular contributors for without them we would not have a Newsletter.

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

An Indoor Meeting programme will be published in the next issue of this newsletter (September 2026). In the meantime, the dates for your diaries (all speakers to be confirmed):

Monday 28 September 2026 (including AGM)

:

Monday 26 October 2026

Monday 23 November 2026

Monday 14 December 2026

Monday 25 January 2027

Monday 22 February 2027

Monday 22 March 2027

Monday 26 April 2027

Outdoor Meetings

Tuesday 2nd June 2026

Monks Wood, Wick—led by Stephen Cotter

We are meeting at 10 am for our walk (about 2 hours) and then people can either leave or take a packed lunch or visit a suitable local establishment (e.g. The Nook cafe).

The location is about 700m NE of the Plough and Harrow pub or a similar distance ESE of Wick village (exit on Tripit lane and turn left onto Heol Las. Grid reference SS 913 716. Google maps (will also be sent via email) <https://maps.app.goo.gl/BaaQsaWCMCsTak9m8>. If using sat nav the closest address and post code is Heol Las, Cowbridge CF71 7QN.

Further details and a map can be found on the local group's website, search for: [Monks Wood / Coed Y Mynach – Sustainable Wick Community Group](#)

Those who stay on after lunch can meet up with the team doing conservation work at 1:30 pm for further discussions

On Facebook there is a selection of videos from their trailcam (Blackbird, Fox and Woodcock) that are in the wood which we may (or probably may not) see - these video clips kindly provided by the Sustainable Wick Community Group <https://wickscg.wordpress.com/projects/>

Saturday 20 June 2026

Hendy Nature Reserve—led by Mark Johnson

For this visit to the Hendy Nature Trail (<https://www.facebook.com/HendyNatureTrail/>), meet at the Canolfan Gwili centre Bryngwili Rd, Hendy, Swansea SA4 0XB (<https://www.facebook.com/canolfangwilicentre/>) at 10 am and have a walk for a couple of hours led by excellent Nature Photographer Mark Johnson (<https://www.flickr.com/photos/133688957@N08/albums/>), BTW there are a lot of his pictures taken in the reserve area on the Facebook page for the nature trail so do look at that

[more information on next page]

Outdoor Meetings

Saturday 20 June 2026. Hendry Nature reserve (continued)

Google maps link (will also be sent via email): <https://maps.app.goo.gl/5kpPYEikSpJb3gUGA>)

After the walk, people can either leave, have a packed lunch or visit the onsite café. An option is to visit other places on the way back to Cardiff, close to the M4, such as Margam or Kenfig.

For this trip, as it is a greater distance than many, we are hoping that people will car share as much as possible. If you need or can offer a lift please contact Andy (cardiffnats@cardiffnaturalists.org.uk) or Mike (secretary@cardiffnaturalists.org.uk) giving email and a mobile number and an approximate location where you live so that we can hopefully put people in touch who are able to help or be helped. We will then with your agreement share contact details only to those who will be partnered up



@MJ224

Canada Geese at Hendry. Photo by Mark Johnson.

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Further Outdoor Meetings are being planned for 2026, including a visit to Dyffryn Gardens. Look out for the latest information and additions to the meeting programmes in emails to members, on social media, and on our website:

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



Curlew at Hendry. Photo by Mark Johnson.



Stonechat at Hendry. Photo by Mark Johnson.

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Deadline for submissions to next newsletter:

Tuesday 1 September 2026

Cardiff Birdwatch
Cosmeston Lakes Country Park: 10th January 2026

The Country Park of over 100 hectares of wetland, meadow and woodland now has a natural feel that belies its past. From limestone quarry to a tip for household rubbish, in the 1970s the site was reclaimed by the Vale of Glamorgan Council, who now own and manage it. Some areas are designated as SSSIs (Sites of Special Scientific Interest).

A January morning, and not even a Cardiff venue – would anyone turn up to our traditional first event of the New Year? Well they did, 17 of us, with some stalwart and regular CNS members joined by local residents and, encouragingly, a young couple of ecologists at the start of their environmental careers.

As the recent cold weather continued, it was certainly chilly with parts of the lakes under ice and a white covering of frost on land surfaces. But it was calm and clear and the sun gradually made its presence felt to produce a lovely day, provided you were well wrapped up.

We started at the Eastern Lake where a mix of gulls (lesser black-backs, herring and black-headed) loitered by the viewing area ready to squabble over any hand-outs.



Surprisingly there were few ducks, geese or swans with them, but across the lake the bright white-sided tufted duck drakes in a large flock drew our attention. Further on we admired the red-sided drake shovelers in a small group that had placed themselves in a quieter spot mid lake. Fluffy-bottomed little grebes tucked under the far bank were harder to pick out.

Negotiating the icy boardwalk brought us to a patch of woodland where we first encountered at close quarters some of the small passerines, mostly tits, working the trees and bushes for natural prey and coming nearer in the hope of finding human supplied food.

On the Western Lake dispersed groups of tufted ducks were again in the majority, but the pochard with their deeper-hued plumage made them harder to pick out across the water. A few cormorants had taken possession of the highest of the wooden posts, with black-headed gulls perched in the inferior positions.



Tufted ducks

We then stretched our legs to walk northwards over the bridge and up the central hard surface track., We crossed to Cogan Wood over a meadow which is often soggy underfoot but, thankfully for us, still crunchily frozen. Looking into an adjacent field revealed a couple of bulky rabbits tucked down by the hedge and enjoying some warming sunshine. One of the delights in taking a track through woodland frequented by people is that it's popular to leave a few items of bird food on prominent posts, seats or fallen trees. This attracts small birds that can then be seen at close quarters, with attendant interactions and hierarchical behaviour. Primarily blue and great tits, but also robins, coal tits, nuthatch and chaffinch were attracted in this way. Feeling the light touch of such small birds trusting (or hungry) enough to brave landing on a hand offering food is a particular pleasure.



Proceeding past the Mediaeval Village and the Dipping Pond only a few of us were near enough to hear the squeal of a water rail hidden in the reeds. Returning to our starting point some of the party dispersed while others enjoyed a rest and chat over food and drink in the warm café.

Bird list for Cosmeston Lakes (not everyone saw all these species):

Great Crested Grebe	Little Grebe	Cormorant
Mute Swan	Canada Goose	Mallard
Shoveler	Pochard	Tufted Duck
Water Rail	Moorhen	Coot
Black-headed Gull	Lesser Black-backed Gull	Herring Gull
Woodpigeon	Feral Pigeon	Wren
Dunnock	Robin	Blackbird
Song Thrush	Coal Tit	Blue Tit
Great Tit	Nuthatch	Magpie
Jackdaw	Carrion Crow	Chaffinch

Refreshed, four of us moved on to Penarth to explore along the River Ely from near the Pont y Werin footbridge towards the Barrage. Carefully negotiating the still icy slippery brick riverside footway, we spotted a few great crested grebes and the usual moorhens, coot and gulls, but were disappointed not to find any waders or wagtails working the watery edge of the stony riverbank where we have encountered them in the past. A line of about fifty cormorants perched on the barrage wall had overview of a variety of boat traffic moving through the locks into and out of the Bay.

Only Linda and I ventured further to look out over the expanse of the largely bird-free estuary. Linda then suggested foregoing the sunny return marine-side route and instead try the shady riverbank again. We were rewarded by finding three redshanks, a common sandpiper, a meadow pipit and pied wagtails – where were they earlier? A pair of goosanders fighting overhead on their way down river provided a fitting finale to the day.

Additional species at Penarth:

Goosander	Redshank	Common Sandpiper
Collared Dove	Meadow Pipit	Pied Wagtail

A fine day, a variety of birds and good company!



Report by Rob Nottage

Photos on pages 8 & 9 by Linda Nottage, and on pages 10 & 12 by Stephen Nottingham.

Weather Summary for North Cardiff 2025

Note: This weather summary for North Cardiff has been compiled from figures recorded in Thornhill, a location with observations going back to 1986.

Following the trends of recent years, 2025 was another year with records being broken. After the wettest winter at this location in 2023/24, the winter of 2024/25 was much drier with just over half the rainfall of the previous year. This was followed by the third driest Spring recorded, only 0.1 mm higher than 2022, with 2011 the driest. Summer was also the third driest. Once again 2022 was drier, with the driest being 1995. However, Autumn was the fifth wettest, which must have been a relief for the water authorities.

January started wet on the 1st but then it became very cold, with just one mild day on the 5th. There was a small amount of snow late on the 6th and a trace of snow in a shower overnight on the 7th. Sleet and snow fell early evening on the 8th but didn't settle. However, the hills to the north were white next morning. It became milder from the 11th, but the nights were still quite cold. It was dry apart from the 23rd – 27th. The Met Office said January was colder and sunnier than average.

February had a reasonable start, but after the 5th it became cold and grey. Fronts tried to push in from the west but made little progress until a very wet day on the 23rd. After this, high pressure became established giving plenty of sunshine by day but cold nights. March was the driest ever recorded with only 19.3 mm. It was also sunny but cold at night. It became quite warm from the 19th bringing an early spring. It was the driest March in Wales for 60 years.

April had a very dry and sunny first half, but the third week was wetter. It became very dry and warm again at the end of the month with a temperature of 27.3 °C on the 31st. May was also very dry, even a thunderstorm on the 13th only produced 2.6 mm. The Met Office said it was the sunniest spring on record in Wales.

Weather Summary for

<u>Annual Weather for North Cardiff 2025</u>					
	<u>Jan.</u>	<u>Feb.</u>	<u>March</u>	<u>April</u>	<u>May</u>
	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>
Total Rainfall in mm	135.7	99.0	19.3	79.0	41.0
Highest in one day in mm	26.5	48.6	5.3	23.7	10.0
Date of Highest Rainfall	4th	23rd	6th	18th	24th
Highest Maximum Temperature Deg. C	12.4	14.0	20.4	27.3	28.0
Date of Highest Temperature	5th	20th	20th	30th	31st
Lowest Minimum Temperature Deg. C	-3.2	0.7	-1.6	3.3	6.0
Date of Lowest Temperature	9th	6th	3rd	17th	21st
Although exposures for both rainfall & temperatures are not Met. Office standard the above figures are reasonably representative of the suburban conditions.					

for North Cardiff 2025

<u>May</u>	<u>June</u>	<u>July</u>	<u>Aug.</u>	<u>Sept.</u>	<u>Oct.</u>	<u>Nov.</u>	<u>Dec.</u>
5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
44.1	87.4	38.3	49.9	207.4	112.4	213.2	216.2
16.9	17.8	9.4	14.6	37.0	25.0		30.8
27th	5th	16th	30th	11th	3rd		5th
28.5	31.6	35.2	35.0	23.7	19.8	15.8	15.1
1st	20th	11th	12th	6th	8th	13th	9th
5.0	6.9	10.6	10.5	6.6	2.5	-2.0	-1.0
5th	8th	3rd	6th	24th	26th	20th & 21st	31st
			Total Rain fall			1301.9	mm
					51.3	inches	
			Long Term Average			1513.1	mm
					59.6	inches	

Weather Summary for North Cardiff 2025

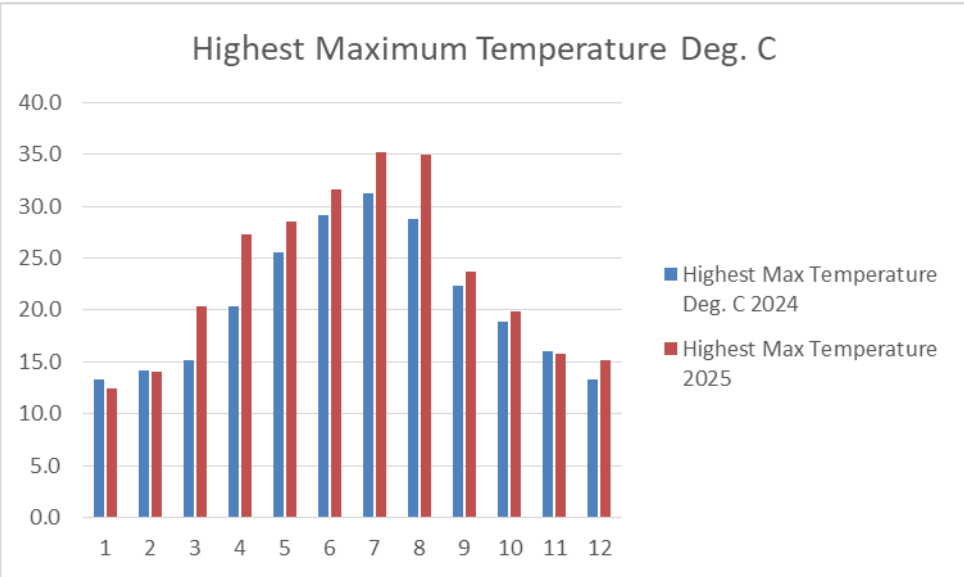
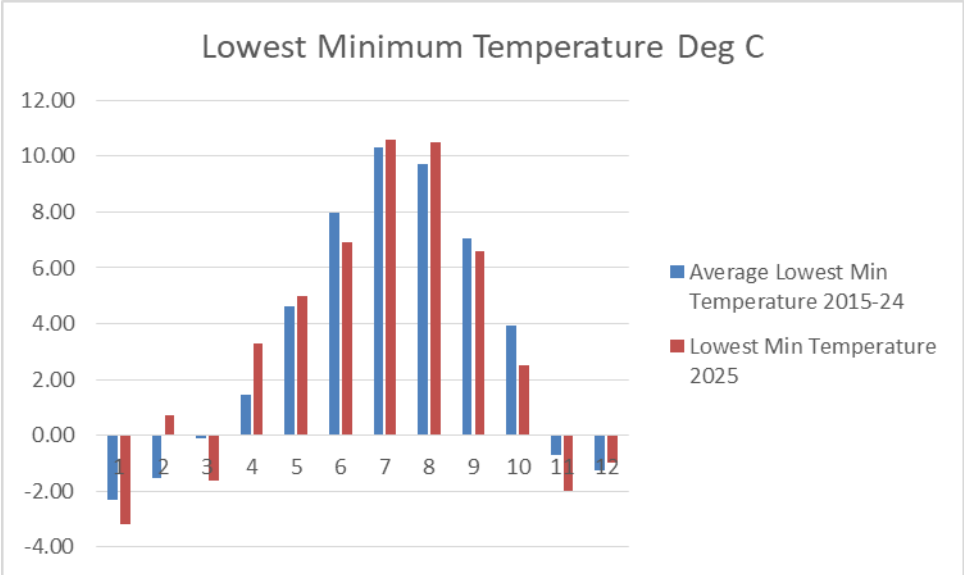
June saw small amounts of rain each day in the first half but the second half of the month was drier and even very warm with two heatwaves. It was the third warmest on record in Wales. July also produced a warm dry first half with a heatwave around the 14th. Small amounts of rain fell in the second half, but it was still very dry. There were reports of 10 mm of rain the Cardiff on the 31st, but only 0.4 mm in Thornhill.

August was very dry till the last week when it became much more unsettled. It was the fourth driest August recorded and the third driest summer.

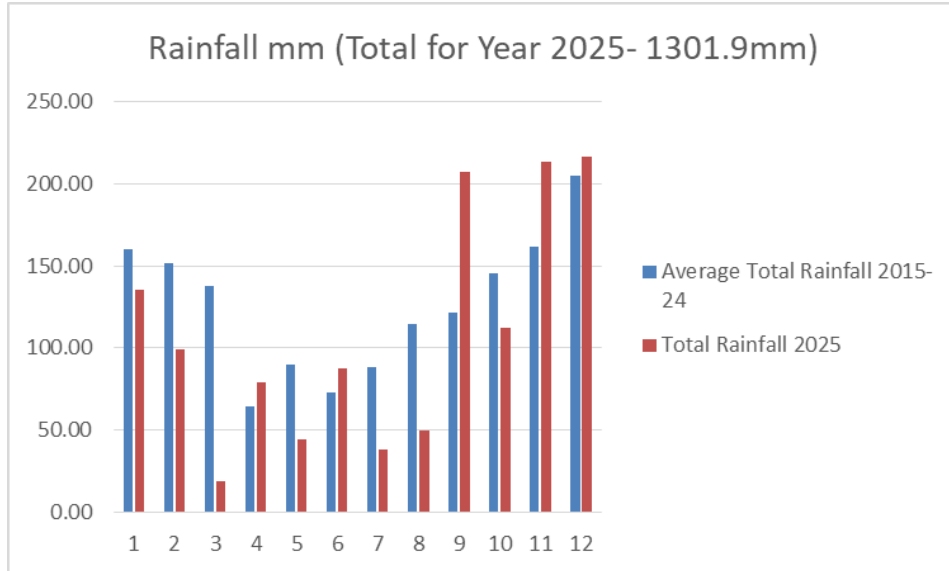
September was wet and unsettled for the first 3 weeks, then it became drier and more settled. It was the second wettest recorded. October had two wet days at the beginning, followed by two weeks of dry cooler weather, before it became unsettled for the remainder of the month. November was generally fairly mild and wet, but with two quite cold days on the 19th and 20th. On the 19th the maximum temperature was only 5.5°C and there were several cold nights at this time with 4 air frosts. Unfortunately, it was not possible for me to take measurements every day during October and November. It is possible that the wettest day of the year occurred during Storm Claudia on the 14th November. This was when the flooding occurred in Monmouth.

December was mild and wet for the first 3 weeks, but then high pressure brought strong winds from the east, which made it feel very cold. The wind kept the temperatures from dipping really low at night so there was only one air frost on the 31st, but ground frosts occurred on several nights.

The Met Office has said that 2025 was the warmest on record across the U.K. as a whole, and the third warmest in Wales.



Weather Summary for North Cardiff 2025



Weather summary by Liz Kerley.

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*Holly Blue,
photographed by Phill
Blanning.*

Celebration of Nature at St Fagans

Amgueddfa Cymru's Celebration of Nature will this year take place on Saturday 11th July at St Fagans National Museum of History. The annual event celebrates everything about nature in Wales, and the projects helping to restore habitats and biodiversity. The event offers craft activities, games, specimens and lots of information about Welsh wildlife. Cardiff Naturalists' Society are again planning to have a stall at this event, to tell visitors about the great work we do and especially about the Morrey Salmon Project. All members are welcome to come and help out with the stall on the day. The event is free for everyone to attend.

Joint GBC/BTO East Glamorgan Bird Conference

The joint Glamorgan Bird Club (GBC) and British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) conference is on Saturday 24th October in Sport Wales, Sophia Gardens, Cardiff CF11 9SW. The programme is wide-ranging, encompassing many aspects of birdwatching and conservation in East Glamorgan. CNS have been approached to give a presentation on the Morrey Salmon Project. Representatives of the BTO will be promoting their upcoming national bird atlas, due to be launched in 2027.

Registration opens from 9:15 am on the day, with presentations beginning at 10 am and the conference finishing at 4 pm. Entry tickets are available from the BTO at £20 (£10 for concessions e.g. students) via their website. Teas and coffees will be provided during the breaks. Lunch can be purchased in the cafeteria on the top floor.

For further information on Colonel H. Morrey Salmon and the Morrey Salmon Project:

<https://cardiffnaturalists.org.uk/htmlfiles/150th-05.htm>

<https://museum.wales/blog/2869/Preserving-a-legacy-the-photographic-work-of-Harry-Morrey-Salmon/>

Asian hornets

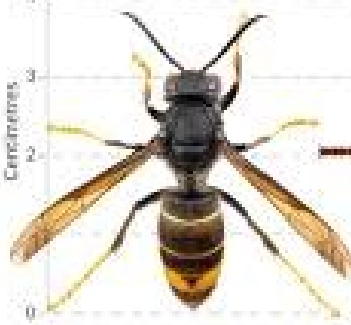




We had a fascinating talk from Bev Price (April 2026) where she warned us about the danger from the Asian Hornet to our bees and other insect populations.

There is an Asian Hornet Watch App available for both iPhone and Android. So please be vigilant and share the **WATCH OUT** message.



Report an Asian hornet sighting!

Download the Asian Hornet Watch app or report online

Yellow-legged (Asian) hornet	European hornet	
		
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Head dark from above• Thorax dark brown/black• Dark abdomen except for 4th segment• Brown legs with yellow ends	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Larger than Asian hornets• Yellow band across the head• Abdomen yellow with black stripes• Brown/amber legs	
		

New Thomas Henry Thomas plaque at Cathays Cemetery



A plaque devoted to Thomas Henry Thomas has recently been installed near his grave in Cathays Cemetery in Cardiff. It was paid for by a generous community grant from Cardiff Arts Society and a contribution from the Friends of Cathays Cemetery.

T.H. Thomas was an active member and 16th President of Cardiff Naturalists' Society:
<https://cardiffnaturalists.org.uk/htmfiles/150th-02.htm>

Thomas Henry Thomas (1839-1915)

Thomas Henry Thomas was born on 31st March 1839, in Pontypool, where his father, also Thomas Thomas, was the president of the Baptist College. He studied at Bristol School of Art, and the Royal Academy schools in London, before travelling to Paris and Rome to further his artistic education. When he returned to the UK in 1861 he settled in London where he worked as a portrait painter and book illustrator.

When his father died in 1861 Thomas Henry inherited his parent's house at 45 The Parade, Cardiff and moved to the city.

He worked for the Daily Graphic, a weekly illustrated newspaper, where he depicted in his illustrations scenes of modern life, like the work on the Severn Tunnel, and Royal visits to Cardiff.

He was one of the founders of the National Museum of Wales. A patriotic Welshman he was a leading force behind the use of the Red Dragon as a symbol of Wales.

He was responsible for much of the pageantry and ritual associated with the modern Eisteddfod. He became the first Herald Bard of the Gorsedd in 1895.

Thomas was also interested in botany, geology, history, and archaeology. In 1878 he discovered a set of fossilised footprints in a slab of Triassic sandstone at Newton Nottage, Porthcawl. These were identified as having been made by an unknown dinosaur, which was named, *Brontozoum tomassi* in honour of Thomas. The slab of sandstone is still on display at the National Museum in Cathays Park.

In 1888 he was president of the Cardiff Naturalists Society. In 1890 on a visit to Grassholm to see the gannets Thomas and his colleagues witnessed a party of sailors from HMS Sir Richard Fletcher slaughtering the birds. Thomas' sketch of the massacre appeared in the Daily Graphic. Questions were asked in Parliament, the sailors were prosecuted by the RSPCA, and this led to further bird protection Acts of Parliament in 1894 and 1896.

But it is as an artist that Thomas is best remembered. His paintings have been compared favourably with those of John Ruskin. He painted portraits, landscapes, and scenes of Welsh life. He was commissioned to draw examples of trees for the publication *Silva Silurica*. In 1881 he became the vice-president of the newly formed South Wales Art Society. He was also a fellow of the Royal Cambrian Academy of Arts. He made many donations to the National Museum, and some of his paintings are still on display there.

He died in his sleep in his home in The Walk on 5th July 1915, at the age of 76. He designed this gravestone for his wife Ellen, who died in 1879.



Photo with kind permission of the Cardiff Naturalists Society. Llan gyda cheiniadau caradig Cymdeithas Naturiaethwyr Caerdydd.



Ganwyd Thomas Henry Thomas ar yr 31ain o Fawrth 1839, ym Mhont-y-gwŷl. Ie'r oeddi ei dad, hefyd o'r enw Thomas Thomas, yn llywydd Coleg y Bedyddwyr. Astudiodd yn Ysgol Gelf Brysis ac ysgolion yr Academi Frenhinol yn Llundain, cyn sefyll i Benri a Rhufain i barhau â'i addysg gelfyddydol. Pan dychwelodd i DU ym 1861, fe yngartreffodd yn Llundain lle bu'n gweithio fel arlywydd portreadau a darlunwyd llyfrau.

Pan fu farw ei dad ym 1861, etifeddiodd Thomas Henry ôf ei niad yn 45 Y Parade, Caerdydd, a symudodd i'r ddinas.

Gweithiodd i'r Daily Graphic, papur newydd darlunadol wythnosol, lle portreadodd yn ei ddarlunau olygfeydd o fywyd modern, fel y gwaith ar Dwnael Hafren, ac ymweladau Brenhinol i Caerdydd.

Ef oedd un o sylfaenwyr Amgueddfa Genedlaethol Cymru. Roedd yn Gymru gwladgarol ac yn llais cryf o blaid defnyddio'r Ddraig Goch fel symbol o Gymru.

Ef oedd yn gyfrifol am lawer o'r rhwyg ar defodau sy'n gysylltiedig â'r Eisteddfod fodern. Ddech yn Arwyddfardd cyntaf yr O'rseid ym 1895.

Roedd gan Thomas ddi-ddordeb mewn botaneg, ddiwyg, hanes ac archaeoleg hefyd. Ym 1878, darparia set o olion trasei ffosileidd newu darn o dywodfodol o'r cymrod Triasig yn y Drenewydd yn Notas, Porthcawl. Nodwyd bod y dalu wedi'u gwneud gan ddiwydor anhysbys, a gafodd yr enw *Brontozoum tomassi* er anrhydedd i Thomas. Mae'r darn o dywodfodol o lyd yn cael ei arddangos yn yr Amgueddfa Genedlaethol ym Mharc Cathays.

Ym 1888, ef oedd llywydd Cymdeithas Naturiaethwyr Caerdydd. Ym 1890, wrth ymweld ag Ynys Gwales i weld yr llynganod, roedd Thomas a'i gydweithwyr yn dychi i grŵp o forwyr o HMS Sir Richard Fletcher yn lladd yr adar. Cyhoeddiwyd darlun Thomas o'r gyfrifau yn y Daily Graphic. Gofynnwyd cwestiynau yn y Senedd, etlyswyd y maswyr gan yr RSPCA, ac arweiniodd hyn at Ddeddfau Seneiddol pellach ym 1894 a 1896 i amddiffyn adar.

Ond fel artist y caiff Thomas ei gofio orau. Mae ei beintiedau wedi cael eu cymharu'n ffrifol â rhai John Ruskin. Paentiodd portreadau, tirfannau, a golygfeydd o fywyd yng Nghymru. Cafodd ei ganuysu i ddarlunio enghreifftiau o goed ar gyfer y gyfres *Silva Silurica*. Ym 1881, daeth yn y-lywydd Cymdeithas Gelf De Cymru a oedd newydd ei ffurfio. Roedd hefyd yn gymrudd o Academi Frenhinol Cymreig y Celfyddydau. Cyflunodd lawer o roddion i'r Amgueddfa Genedlaethol, ac mae rhai o'i beintiedau'n dal i gael eu harddangos yno.

Bu farw yn ei gwsg yn ei gartref ar Y Rhodfa ar 5ed o Orffennaf 1915, yn 76 oed. Dyluniodd y garreg feidi hon ar gyfer ei wrraig Ellen, a fu farw ym 1879.

M1446

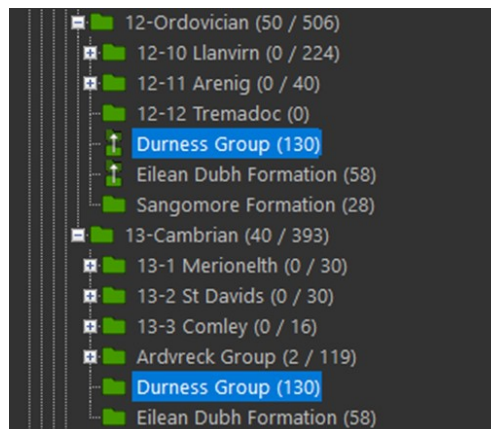
Identifications in the world of DAM, AI and online information systems (or should that be Damn AI and online information systems?)

Andy Kendall

Recently (after being asked for a picture of something I knew I had taken, but could not remember where or when, which is how I filed my pictures on my computer) I decided that I needed to get on top of the thousands of digital images that I have taken since 2006 when I got my first digital camera.

I knew that cataloguing detailed biological and geological information was going to take a lot of time and effort and that simple keywording wasn't going to get me where I wanted to get to. So I searched for and trialled a few Digital Asset Management systems and settled on a product called IMatch (<https://www.photools.com/>) which is powerful, but also easy to use in a simple way and I can learn how to do more with it as I go along. The key feature I am using in this system is the cataloguing which allows more complexity than simple keywording.

You can see some of that in this example where the Durness group is both Cambrian and Ordovician in age. Adding an image to either of these locations puts it in both. If I knew specifically which age the rocks I was taking pictures of I would need to add some more complexity, but in this case I don't.

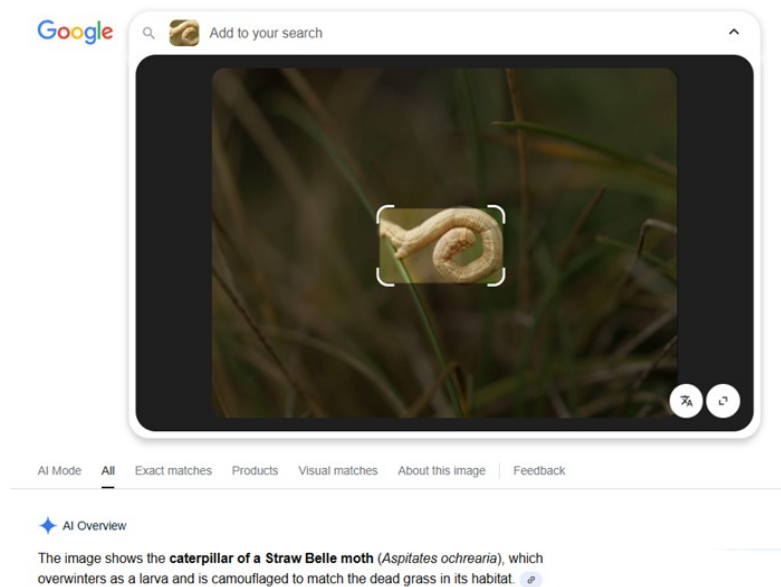


The next challenge was to identify everything so I could put it in the catalogue, many things I remembered, or could easily look up, but I decided that I wanted to put scientific names as well as common names, and for that it was easier to look them up online than in books because I could copy and paste the text with less errors than typing complex names.

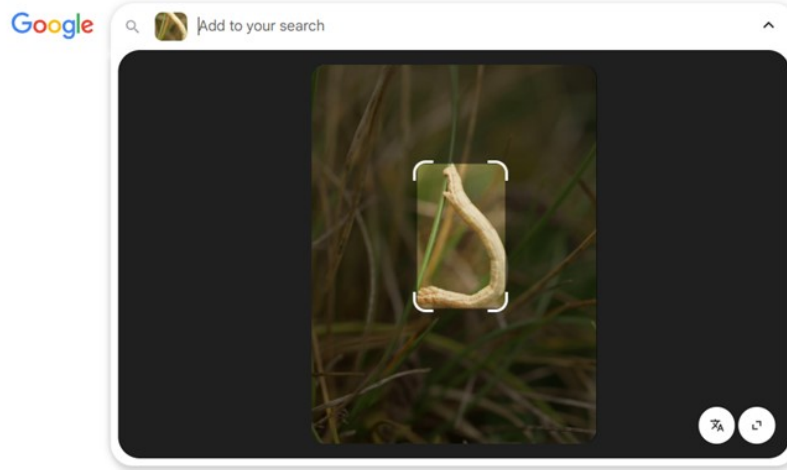
This brought me to the things I could not identify and for that I decided to turn to AI. A number of us are regularly using AI based systems in the field and at home these days (such as the excellent Merlin bird song identification app (<https://merlin.allaboutbirds.org/>) in order to make or support our identification skills but here is a cautionary tale. In this case the AI tool is Google Image search (<https://images.google.com/>) which is convenient to use when sitting at home on the computer even if just to get the common and scientific name as mentioned earlier.

Three pictures of the same caterpillar, taken moments apart came out with three different identifications:

1)



2)

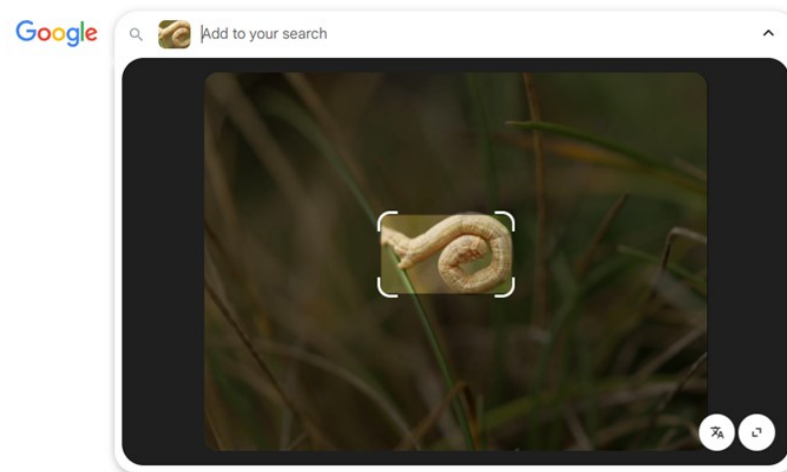


AI Mode All Exact matches Products Visual matches About this image Feedback

◆ AI Overview

The image is of a moth caterpillar, which is likely a **Smoky Wainscot** (*Mythimna impura*) or a similar species in the *Mythimna* genus. [🔗](#)

3)



AI Mode All Exact matches Products Visual matches About this image Feedback

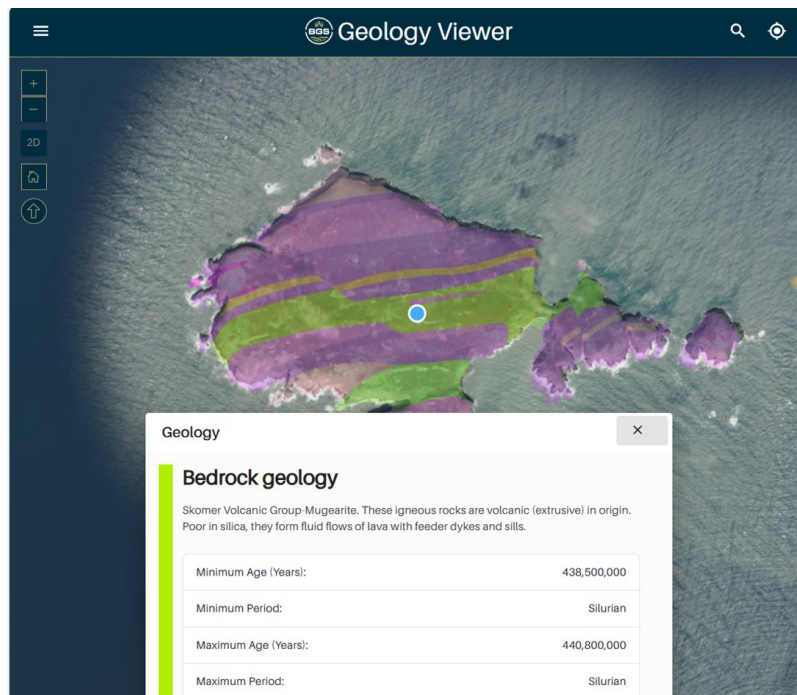
◆ AI Overview

This appears to be the larva (caterpillar) of a **Mother Shipton moth** (*Callistegem*). [🔗](#)

In this case I have simply catalogued it as “moth caterpillar” for now. Later on, I will get my books out and look at these general categories and see what I can do. My simple rule for now is that if I upload 3 pictures of something I can't identify and they all come back the same it's probably OK, certainly good enough for me at the moment. BTW this also works on places, rocks fossils and minerals and many other aspects.

So what about geology?

Luckily, there are a lot of excellent resources coming available with online geology maps and information. As I mentioned at Members' Evening (26 January 2026) there is one of Malta (<https://continentalshelf.gov.mt/geological-survey/geological-map/>) and there are a couple of excellent resources on British geology. The easy to use <https://geologyviewer.bgs.ac.uk/> which also works on smartphones and the more complex version <https://mapapps2.bgs.ac.uk/geoindex/home.html> are best used on a big screen.



If you are needing information about the US then the excellent National Parks website has excellent resources e.g. <https://www.nps.gov/yell/learn/nature/volcano.htm>

So what have I achieved so far

220,000 files imported into this system. It automatically paired up the RAW and JPG files so just half that number to catalogue. A few less again because versions of a picture (such as a cropped or reduced size version can be linked to that master as well) and I started at about the beginning of November. I now have only 184,500 files because this exercise is helping me filter out where I have better pictures (of e.g. Moorhen) at one place than I did at another and therefore apart from one record shot I can delete the poorer images. I have catalogued 70,000 images (that is over 140,000 files) with the rest still to do, so I hope to be on top of it before the better weather comes and I take more pictures.

Going forwards

I have identified that I do need to get back to taking some more detailed notes in the field especially when taking geology pictures as I can't remember what some specific features, which I have pictures of were. Something I have already been doing is writing a short note on my smartphone screen and taking a picture of that which makes it easier to deal with the pictures later.

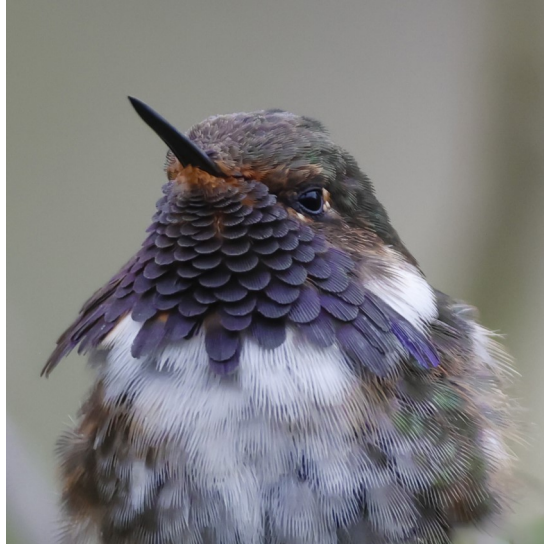
Regarding AI ... it's a debate as to whether systems like Google images will get better or worse. If they are trained on good data sources then you would hope they get better, but if they just browse websites which have already got misidentifications on them then they will degrade quickly. Some researchers say that the latter is already happening.

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Correction:

In the previous newsletter (January 2026), on page 23, line 8: Ophthalmological should have read Ornithological.

Feisty Volcano Hummingbird, photographed in Savegre Valley, Costa Rica, in January 2026, by Patrizia Donovan.



Two-toed Sloth, in Cahuita National Park, Costa Rica, photographed February 2026 by Patrizia Donovan.



Yellow-throated Toucan, photographed in Maquenque Lodge, Costa Rica in January 2026, by Patrizia Donovan.

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