



## **CARDIFF NATURALISTS' SOCIETY**

Founded 1867

**NEWSLETTER No. 129**

**September 2023**

Charity No. 1092496

**LIST OF OFFICERS 2023**

**President**

Position vacant

**Secretary**

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**Treasurer**

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**Membership Secretary**

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**Indoor Meetings Secretary**

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**Field Meetings Coordinator**

Position vacant

**Newsletter Editor**

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**Also on Council**

Mary Salter, Gill Barter, Stephen Howe, Patrizia Donovan

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

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

<http://cardiffnaturalists.blogspot.com>

*Cover photo: Bird ringing at Magor Marsh (Sedge Warbler). Photo by Andy Kendall. See article on pages 15-21.*

## **Announcement from the C.N.S. Membership Secretary**

All C.N.S. subscriptions are due to be renewed in September. You will find your 2023 - 2024 Membership Renewal Form enclosed with this C.N.S. Newsletter.

After the enforced lull, and to ensure our Society records are correct; I look forward to *everyone* completing and returning their form. This request is irrespective of whether or not you are long-standing Members, who automatically pay by direct debit, or standing order.

Please fill in and return the form, so that I can check all our Members' personal contact details, method, and date of payment, are current.

Many thanks,

Elizabeth Morgan.

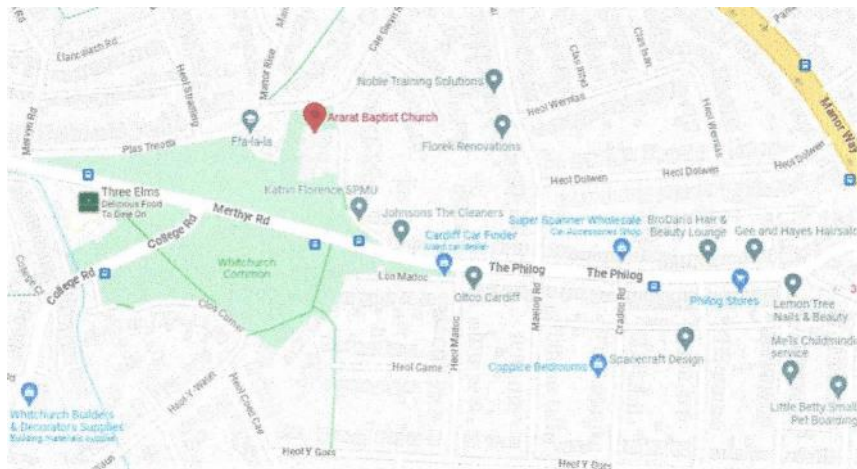
C.N.S. Membership Secretary.

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**Deadline for submissions for next newsletter:  
Monday 11 December 2023**

## Indoor Meetings

Cardiff Naturalists' Society have a new venue for their indoor meetings: Ararat Community Centre, next to the Ararat Baptist Church. The address: Plas Treoda, Whitchurch, Cardiff CF14 1PT.



Meetings started at this venue on Wednesday 10 May 2023, with our AGM followed by a talk from the CNS Bioscience Prize winner Angus Menzies.

We plan to hold a series of indoor meetings at this venue starting in September 2023 (see page 5 for talks announced so far).

**Look out for all the latest information and additions to the indoor and outdoor meeting programmes in the next newsletter, in member emails, via social media or on our website/blog:**

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

## **Indoor Meeting programme**

All indoor meetings at the Ararat Community Centre Whitchurch, starting at 7 pm and finishing 8.30 pm.

### **Monday 25 September 2023**

'The Shetlands'

Rob and Linda Nottage.

### **Monday 23 October 2023**

'Magor Marsh Nature Reserve'

Andy Karran (Evidence manager, Gwent Wildlife Trust).

### **Monday 20 or Wednesday 22 November 2023**

AGM (date to be confirmed) followed by a short talk (to be arranged).

### **Wednesday 13 December 2023**

Xmas event.

## **Outdoor Meetings**

### **January 2024**

The annual Cardiff Birdwatch (date and location to be confirmed).

# **The Morrey Salmon Project**

## **Update by Andy Kendall**

The volunteers working on the Morrey Salmon project have taken a well-earned break across the summer, as the National Museum of Wales have held events in their room at the National Collections Centre in Nantgarw that we use, and both the Museum and ourselves had people on holiday.

At the point when we finished in June, over 800 of the glass plate negatives have been cleaned and moved into new archival envelopes where the surfaces are protected. Nearly 600 have been photographed by CNS and positive images created from the negatives. This makes it a lot easier for the next part of the process, which is to confirm the bird identification and location details. Over 350 of the slides have already had this last part of the CNS processing done as well.

That of course will not be the end of the project, as the Museum will be professionally scanning the negatives and putting them online to make them available for people to use. We are also hopeful to get some more information from the Salmon family to be able to add further information to the pictures from Morrey Salmon's diaries.

We have also located the following which were "lost in time" and worth our future consideration (but as yet we have made no commitment). The Museum thought that they had Morrey Salmon's diaries, but these have turned out to be those of Geoffrey Ingram his birdwatching and photographic partner. They have also identified to us that they have about 1500 of Ingram's pictures. It is likely that some of those were taken with Salmon's help, so to be able to tell the whole story of their work it would be good to get these into the same cleaned state as the Salmon collection.

The news that we are working on the photographic collection has been gathering some interest online. This is excellent, as a key part of the reason for doing this work is to re-invigorate the memories of Salmon and Ingram's pioneering work.

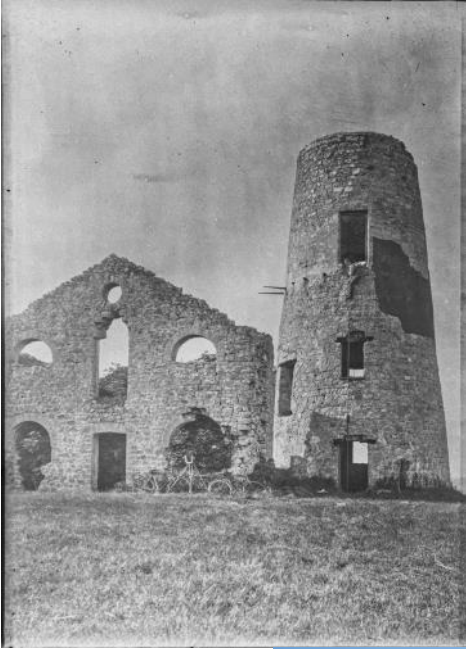
With 3600 slides to do in total you can see that there is still a lot of work ahead for the volunteers. We will be starting again at the end of September at Nantgarw, on most Fridays (depending on room availability), at 9.30 am (a timetable will be circulated). **If anyone who is not already involved wants to join the volunteer group to help, please contact Mike Dean: [secretary@cardiffnaturalists.org.uk](mailto:secretary@cardiffnaturalists.org.uk)**

Over the summer I took a little time to look at some of the pictures that we have already processed, and took a walk with Mike Dean to the old St-y-Nyll mill and ponds. This was a favourite location that featured in quite a few of the pictures (see pages 8-9). It was nice to see that the old mill still stands, even if the outbuildings have in the main collapsed. We were also able with permission of the landowner to take a look at the ponds one of which she hopes to "rewild" having excluded some fishermen from the site who were not behaving as she liked (see photo below). CNS have been invited to take a further look at the site some time, so we will be following up on that.

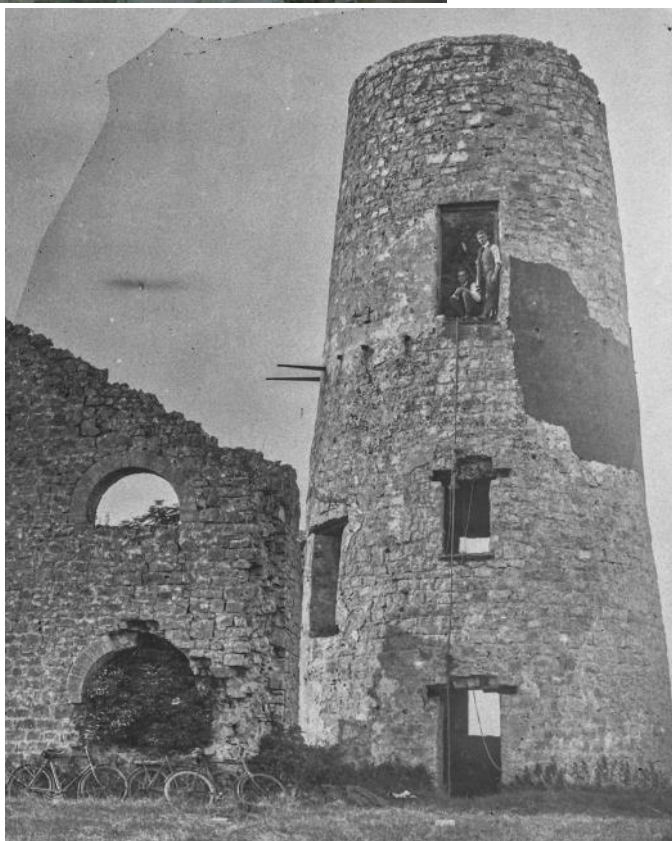


## St-y-Nyll windmill

A comparison of photographs taken around a hundred years' ago by Morrey Salmon, with photographs taken this summer by Andy Kendall, of the St-y-Nyll wind-powered corn mill near St Brides-super-Ely in the Vale of Glamorgan.







## **The Salmon family visit the project**

The volunteers working on the Morrey Salmon photographic project were visited on Friday 16 June 2023 by Hugh Salmon and his two daughters, Jennifer and Fiona.

We described the process, and Hugh made a short but moving speech about how much the family was feeling honoured by the dedication of all these people putting in their own time to clean and conserve the photographs.

As you can see from the pictures, we were hosted on this day by Jana Horak and Julian Carter from the National Museum of Wales. NMW staff have been overseeing us and helping with all of the work.



*Mike Dean (CNS) explains the cleaning process to Hugh, Jennifer and Fiona, as Julian Carter (NMW) looks on and Julian Carter (CNS) cleans a negative.*

*Text and photos on pages 10-11 by Andy Kendall.*



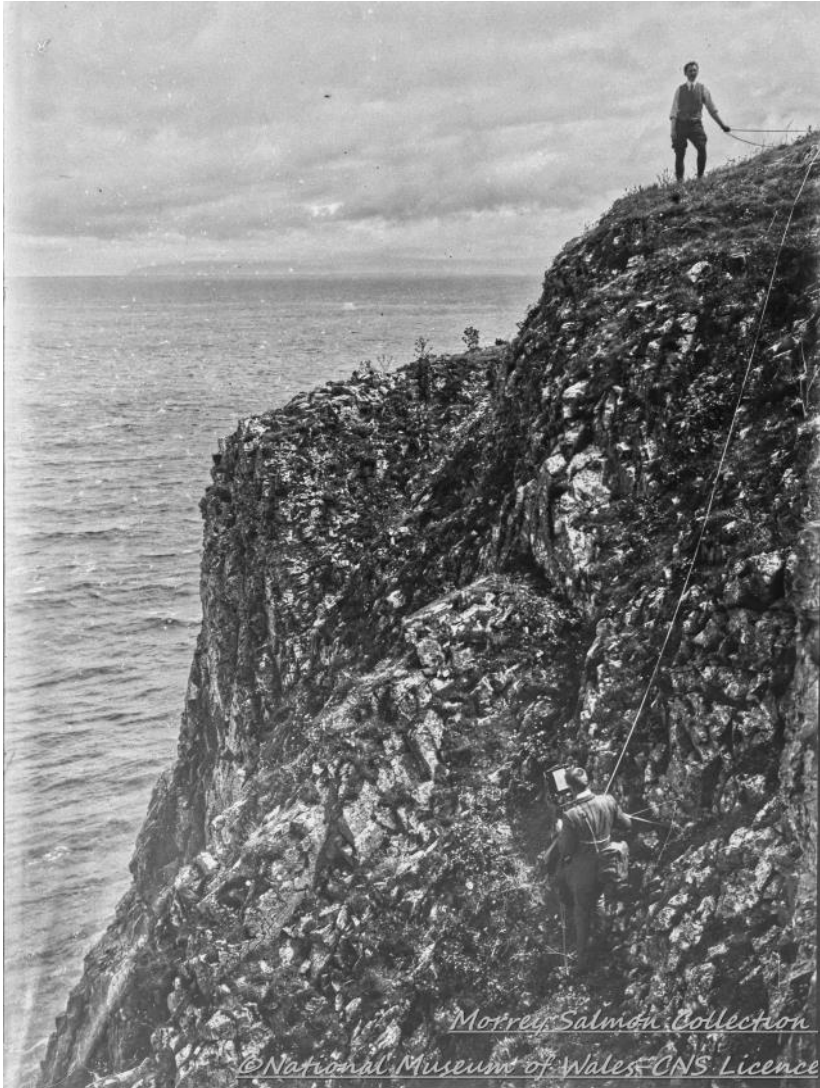
*Fiona, Hugh and Jennifer, with Morrey's picture in the background.*



*Hugh Salmon (seated) with Jennifer and Mike Dean to his left and Jana Horak (NMW) and Fiona to his right.*

## Photographers in action

These pictures by Morrey Salmon give a flavour of the difficulty involved in early bird photography. In particular, manoeuvring large, heavy camera equipment into place to photograph seabirds in their natural habitat. Here, Geoffrey Ingram is photographing herring gulls on the 22 June 1911.





*Morrey Salmon Collection*

*© National Museum of Wales - CNS Licence*





*Lapwing, 1909. Photo by Morrey Salmon.*



*Morrey Salmon in 1981 with an old plate camera.*

# **Magor Marsh**

## **Report by Stephen Nottingham and Andy Kendall**

Stephen:

On the morning of Monday 21 July 2023, nine Cardiff Naturalists' Society members enjoyed a guided tour of Magor Marsh Natural Reserve, led by Andy Karran (Evidence Manager, Gwent Wildlife Trust). Magor Marsh (36 hectares) is one of the last remaining pockets of natural fenland and meadows on the Gwent Levels.

Andy related how Gwent Wildlife Trust have managed Magor Marsh since 1963 (they will be officially celebrating the 60 years in 2024). Water is managed through the maintenance of a network of ditches called reens. A mosaic of habitats are maintained for wildlife, especially reedbeds, ponds, fens and wet woodland, which host a rich diversity of plant and insect species. Water voles were successfully introduced 12 years ago (following the trapping and removal of mink). In 2024, Barecroft Common will be added as an extension to the reserve.

The reedbeds and other wetland habitats host a diverse bird community, including many duck species, kingfisher, reed warbler and Cetti's warbler.

The Cardiff Nats group admired a range of plant species in the wildflower hay meadow, including tubular water dropwort. Insects were also observed and photographed, including dragonfly, butterfly and grasshopper species.

The last stop on the tour was the impressive wicker sculpture of Anne Williams the Brinker. This is one of a series of sculptures across the Gwent Levels depicting traditional activities. A brinker is someone who clears waterside vegetation from land they own, to prevent reens and other watercourses becoming blocked.

## Magor Marsh

Andy:

An unplanned highlight for us was to see the BTO capture and ringing being done by a local volunteer (David) who was very happy for us to watch the whole process. His mist nets were catching birds as we watched (including one he released which went back into the net twice before heading in the direction it had been released). Once they were carefully released from the nets they were identified, sexed, weighed, measured and ringed before release. His list that morning already included Blackcap, Blue Tit, Sedge Warbler, Great Tit, Reed Warbler Chiffchaff and I was able to identify a Long Tailed Tit in the nets still to be processed.

Andy Karran will be giving us a talk on Magor Marsh in this winter's programme (page 5). If you want to visit the reserve the address is Whitewall Road, Magor, Caldicot NP26 3DD (ST 428 866). There is a car park at the reserve's entrance. You get to it from M4, exit junction 23A and follow signs to Magor on B4245. There is more information about it here:

<https://www.gwentwildlife.org/nature-reserves/magor-marsh>



*Long-tailed Tit in mist net. Photo by Andy Kendall.*





*Sedge Warbler being ringed by David. Photo by Linda Nottage.*

Place					Habitat:		Coordinates		Inventor/Organizer
Ring number	Species	Age Sex	Act. MLT	Wing	Wght	Time	Init		
491	BLACA	3F		72	17.7				
523	CHIFF	3		54	6.5				
492	BLACA	3F		71	15.4				
493	SEDW	3		63	9.8				
496/471	GRETI	3		74	17.7				
494	SEDWA	4		65	10.5				
495	BLUTI	3		59	9.1				
496	SEDWA	4		65	9.9	11:25			
497	BLACA	3F		77	17.7				
498	RSEWA	3J		57	9.8				

*Bird ringer's notebook. Photo by Linda Nottage.*



*Blackcap juvenile in net. Photo by Linda Nottage.*



*Gatekeeper (female). Photo by Linda Nottage.*



*Grasshoppers. Photo by Andy Kendall.*



*Views of Magor Marsh. Photos by Stephen Nottingham.*





*The Brinker. Photo by Stephen Nottingham.*

# Y BRINCIWR THE BRINKER

'Brinciwr', neu 'brinker' yw'r enw o hen iaith y Gwastadeddau am berson sy'n berchen ar dir ar un ochr i ffos, wal neu gilfach ac sy'n gyfrifol am y gwaith cynnal a chadw. Yn draddodiadol, byddai brinciwr yn defnyddio pladur i glirio llystyfiant.

Rhestrir dynion a menywod fel 'brinkers' yng nghofnodion Llys y Carthffosydd, a gedwir yn Archifau Gwent.

Mae ein ffigwr wedi ei ysbrydoli gan Anne Williams, a oedd yn cadw fferm gymysg ac yn berchen ar dir ar y Gwastadeddau ar ddechrau'r 1700au. Mae hi wedi ei chreu o helyg wedi'i wehyddu dros ffrâm ddur.

A 'brinker' is old Levels lingo for a person who owns land on one side of a reen, wall or pill and is responsible for its maintenance. Traditionally, a brinker would use a scythe to clear vegetation.

Both men and women are listed as brinkers in the Court of Sewers records, held at Gwent Archives.

Our figure is inspired by Anne Williams, who ran a mixed farm and owned land on the Levels in the early 1700s. She is made from willow woven over a steel frame.

Cerflunydd / Sculptor: Sarah Hatton & Melanie Bastier



#### MWY O WYBODAETH

Sganiwch y cod QR neu gyffwrdd eich ffôn smart sydd wedi'i alluogi gan nfc i'r plac.

#### MORE INFORMATION

Scan the QR code or touch your nfc-enabled smartphone to the plaque.

[www.livinglevels.org.uk](http://www.livinglevels.org.uk)

Darganfod **Lefelau Gwent**  
Discover **Gwent Levels**



*The Brinker information board. Photo by Andy Kendall.*

## Lanlay Meadows – 25 June 2023

Gill Barter

A group of ten Cardiff Nats. members met in Peterston-super-Ely, by the footbridge over the river which leads to Wyndham Park. Rain and strong winds were forecast for the afternoon, but the morning stayed fine, with some sunshine.

Lanlay Meadows are a secluded group of fields owned by the National Trust, some of which border the River Ely. They include species-rich grassland, marshy vegetation, hedgerows and small streams. There is also a small community orchard.

A variety of plants and insects were spotted from the start, while walking along the Wyndham Park access road towards the entrance to the fields, which is close to where the main road crosses the river. The strip of scrub and woodland between Wyndham Park and the river produced both Harlequin and Fourteen-spot Ladybirds as well as the Marmalade Hoverfly. The influence of invasive non-native plants was obvious, with Japanese Knotweed, Himalayan Balsam, and a very robust bramble which may have been the garden variety Himalayan Giant.

The first two fields showed signs of having been grazed, probably at some stage during the past spring. However, as the stock had left some weeks ago, there were plenty of plants in bloom. These included Meadowsweet (*Filipendula ulmaria*); the rayed form of Common Knapweed (*Centaurea nigra*); Common Marsh-bedstraw (*Galium palustre*) and Heath Spotted Orchid (*Dactylorhiza maculate*). Butterflies were represented by Common Blue, Ringlet and Small Skipper. The nymph of a Conehead was seen, the first of several, and meadow grasshoppers were abundant. A feature of the first field was a fine specimen of a mature oak and there were others on the field boundary.





*Cardiff Nats group at Lanlay Meadows and 6-spot burnet moth. Photos by Linda Nottage.*



*Longed-winged Conehead nymph and Emperor Moth caterpillar. Photos by Linda Nottage.*



Cutting diagonally across the next field, we joined the riverside path. This led to two more fields where the vegetation was taller and less accessible as there had not been any recent grazing. This path, part of the Millennium Heritage Trail, continued beyond the National Trust boundary and we ventured on it into the adjacent farmland for a short distance. Several Banded Demoiselles fluttered over the riverbank, and an Emperor Dragonfly was patrolling.

Retracing our steps back into Lanlay Meadows, we took a path away from the river to complete a loop. This took us through a patch of particularly interesting marshy grassland with a suite of plants that indicate the influence of base rich groundwater: Meadow Thistle (*Cirsium dissectum*); Flea Sedge (*Carex pulicaris*); Marsh Valerian (*Valeriana dioica*), Fen Bedstraw (*Galium uliginosum*), and Blunt-flowered Rush (*Juncus subnodulosus*). Near here, two of the group watched a Dark Giant Horsefly laying eggs.

During the morning we heard the songs of Blackcap, Chiffchaff, Willow Warbler and Wren, as well as the call of a Great Spotted Woodpecker. An Emperor Moth caterpillar was found crossing one of the paths and adult moths included Six-Spot Burnet; Silver Y; Straw Dot and Lesser Cream Wave. With more time we would certainly have found more, but we returned to our cars before the weather deteriorated.

Lack of time also precluded a visit to the community orchard where, as well as the 20 or more fruit trees, there is a small pond, a bench and a willow structure. Lanlay Meadows are clearly an asset to the community and much appreciated by the local people, some of whom we encountered and chatted with during our walk.



*Dark giant horsefly with egg mass. Photo By Linda Nottage.*



*St John's Wort and the community orchard at Lanlay Meadows.  
Photos by Gill Barter.*

## **Investigating Seasonality of Otter Breeding in Britain, Using Newspaper Articles, Camera Trap Footage and Photograph Data.**

**Kirsten Oliver** contacted the Society with the following request:

I am a postgraduate student at Edinburgh Napier University, at the university's Centre for Conservation & Restoration Science and Findlay Ecology Services, investigating breeding seasonality in European otter (*Lutra lutra*). The aim is to improve our understanding of this vulnerable species and contribute to a robust evidence-base for survey and conservation efforts. Therefore, we are trying to obtain information from a wide array of sources across the UK. Previous studies have noted seasonality peaks based on prey availability. However, otters are thought to breed all year round in the UK, although this observation has been mainly based on roadkill carcasses or sightings. I aim to look at seasonality trends through a collection of data, including photographs, camera trap footage and newspaper articles on a national scale.

I am looking for participants to take part in my research and if you agree I would appreciate any photographs or camera trap footage that you may possess which shows a female otter with her cubs from any year. It is important the cubs are with mum so I can estimate the birth date based on their size compared to mum. I will only require one photo of the family not multiple. If you record a family over an extended period, I would appreciate either the earliest images you have, or those that best show the relative size of the young compared to the mother. Alongside the photograph or footage, I would need the date (month and year) and the location where the family was seen. Grid reference coordinates or "what three words" location will be preferable; however a rough location (town, or postcode) will be sufficient if those are not available. You may withdraw from this research study at any time.

If you can help, please contact me at my email address below, and title the email "Otter Helper" and I will happily send further instructions on how to submit your picture/footage. All the information you give will be stored safely and secured in a password controlled hard drive account which will be accessible to myself and my supervisors, Dr Patrick White (Edinburgh Napier University, MCIEEM, IUCN Otter Specialist group member) and Dr Melanie Findlay (Findlay Ecological Services, MCIEEM, IUCN Otter Specialist group member). The information you give will be anonymous and will be kept confidential.

If you have any questions about the research, feel free to contact me or my supervisors:

Researcher: Kirsten Oliver: 40504684@live.napier.ac.uk

Supervisor: Patrick White, P.White@napier.ac.uk

Supervisor: Melanie Findlay, mel@findlayecologyservices.co.uk



*Lanlay Meadows entrance sign. Photo by Stephen Nottingham. Read Gill Barter's report on the trip to Lanlay on pages 22-26.*

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