

# CARDIFF NATURALISTS' SOCIETY

Founded 1876

## NEWSLETTER NO.56



## DECEMBER 2002

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## Bontebok, Ferrarias and Red Bishops

I must admit to being a little apprehensive about this trip, my previous two holidays had been in mountainous regions looking at Alpine plants, whereas this trip was going to be mainly at or about sea level, but I need not have worried, this was a marvelous tour. Billed in the Naturetrek brochure as 'The Wildflower's of the Cape and Namaqualand' it was indeed a botanical tour but also much more. We began with three nights based in Cape Town, from where we explored the native Fynbos flora of the Cape Town surrounds and the Cape peninsula, and of course paying our respects to that great botanic garden, Kirstenbosch. The Fynbos flora is characterized by the Erica, Protea and Restio (grass's) families with over three quarters of its species being endemic. Beautiful plants such as *Erica plukenetii*, and *E.cerinthoides*, for example both with large red tubular flowers and the beautiful pink and white *E.perspecua*, and the surprising Green Heath, *Erica sessiliflora*. *Protea cynaroides*, the King or Giant Protea was the one we all wanted to see and indeed did see, but beautiful as the flower was I personally found the flower bud equally if not more attractive. Of course other plant families are also found in the Fynbos, and we found representatives of the Orchids, Lobelia's, Sundew's and Boraginaceae amongst others.

Driving around the Cape Peninsula we came across our first Mammals, Springbok, Blesbok, Bontibok and Eland, with a few Zebra and Wildebeest amongst them. But Mammals also live in the sea and we had some quite amazing views of Southern Right Whales no more than thirty metres from the beach! Hilary, one of our local guides, was also an excellent birder, and was forever pulling up the minibus to point out various birds, Jackal Buzzards and Pale Chanting Goshawk were two of many raptors, wherever we came across Mammals they were usually accompanied by Cattle Egrets. Sacred Ibis and Hadedda Ibis were both seen on a daily basis, but it was the smaller birds that were often the most attractive. Malachite Sunbirds, Mousebirds and the brilliant orange and black Red Bishops were some of the more outstanding species.

As we moved north we came across our first 'carpeting' annuals. *Dimorphotheca pluvialis* a white daisy was carpeting a disused rugby field and beyond. At the edge of the field we came across a few plants of *Albucca cooperi* with lovely drooping white and green flowers. In amongst the daisies we found a Tortoise contentedly grazing on the flowers. Moving on, and spotting birds such as Blue Cranes and African Spoonbills, our next stop was at the roadside to see our first Renosterveld, a vegetation type of small shrubs and Geophytes, (plants with bulbs, corms or tubers). The plants here were amazing, unfamiliar genera such as *Spiloxenes*, *Morea*'s, *Lachenalias* and *Wurmbea*'s. *Gazanias*, *Nemesias*, and *Diascias*, were amongst shrubs such as *Muraltia species*. We moved on to the Darling wild flower reserve and here found our first wild Gladiolus, *G. gracilis* and the beautiful *G. alatus*., and at the top of the hill was the black flowered *Ferraria crispa*. In the car park we also found the red Darling Romulea, *R. eximia* endemic to this tiny area. The car park was separating two halves of a cemetery, one side a fine church and very ornate gravestones, the other obviously for the poor black population, overgrown, with simple graves, sad to see in this post apartheid era. Later that day we picnicked amongst a sea of blue *Heliophila coronopifolia* and found two forms of the red Sundew *Drosera cistiflora*, with white and pink flowers.

Not far from our picnic spot we stopped at a bird hide overlooking the Olifants river estuary and had spectacular views of Greater Flamingos, Black Winged Stilts and Avocets amongst many other wading birds. As we headed for the Bokkeveld mountains we passed through and indeed stopped to look at some true Namaqualand landscapes. A succulent desert is how Namaqualand is often referred to. This at first glance appeared barren, but on entering the weird landscape we soon found masses of Stoneplant like succulents, *Conophytums* and *Crassulas* all growing in amongst weathered quartz pebbles with the occasional homed skull and bones testifying to the aridity of the dry season.

We ascended the Bokkeveld escarpment and began a two night stay at the town of Nieuwoudtville.

We awoke here the following morning to a landscape of white. Frost covered the ground and ice the vehicles, the last thing I expected to see in Africa, but it was still late winter and, as we were told several times Spring didn't begin until September 1<sup>st</sup>! However after breakfast we headed off to see some more Renosterveld. Glen Lyon farm is a working sheep farm, farmed sympathetically for the flowers, the land not grazed until the plants had set seed. We were given a tour by the owner who gave us the staggering statistic of 24,000 bulbs per square metre on his land! A figure difficult to believe but at dinner that evening we met the young Kirstenbosch botanist who had done the research. He had been given a figure of 10,000 per square metre which he didn't believe so had repeated the work himself and come up with the 24,000. Here we found new Geophytes three different species of *Bulbinella*, orange, yellow and white, the beautiful yellow and black *Hesperantha vaginata* and *Homeria's* more *Romulea's* and *Morea's*. Amongst all the flowers was the occasional enormous burrow. These were the homes of Aardvark's a nocturnal mammal which even the land owner seldom saw. The following day we left Nieuwoudtville and headed for the town of Springbok via the Kamiesberg mountains. More carpeting annuals were on display here, this time the brilliant orange *Osteospermum pinnatum* and interestingly at the roadside the shrubby perennial *O.grandiflora*, exactly the same shade of orange. These carpets of colour are only semi natural, they are almost always a sign of overgrazed or disturbed ground. Another interesting plant we found in this area was *Albucca spiralis*, spiralis due to its curiously spiral leaves an adaptation of several S African plants that has yet to be satisfactorily explained.

At Springbok we visited another succulent reserve mainly to see the curious Halfmens trees, *Pachypodium namaquanum*, these occur naturally in the Richtersveld, further north than we were going and also only accessible by four wheel drive. They are so called because when seen in silhouette against an evening skyline they seem like ghostly humans. The Quiver tree. *Aloe dichotoma*, was also here, not just part of the collection but also growing wild in the vicinity.

On- route to our last stop, the Au-grabies National Park, we began passing telegraph poles hosting the nests of Sociable Weaver birds. We had seen Cape Weavers earlier in the trip and these built individual nests but these 'Sociable' nests were in some cases absolutely enormous, obviously the work of several generations. We also found nests in trees but the favoured sites seemed to be telegraph poles where they presumably did little harm since there didn't seem to be any attempts to remove them.

The environment in the park was arid, despite the principal attraction of the park being an impressive waterfall on the Orange River. Despite it being the dry season the River was in spate the roar of the waterfall being heard widely. We drove around the park and spotted Three Banded Plovers, a single Goliath Heron and watched a pair of Black Eagles near their nest. But the best 'spot' was the Pygmy Falcon sitting atop a trackside post. Nearly every large rock had a resident Dassie, or Rock Hyrax sunning itself on top, we saw yet more Springbok, our first Klipspringer antelope and a herd of Gemsbok, an animal with beautifully spiral horns. We also had our only sighting of the trip of Giraffe, three animals peacefully grazing in the distance, on what was difficult to say as the park seemed bereft of much greenery. However we did find a few interesting plants, a species of *Sutera* with pale blue flowers and a pungent aroma that lingered on one's fingers for hours, the Green Hair Tree, *Parkinsonia Africana*, and a Myrrh tree, *Coriphora Gracilefrondosa*, with a swollen trunk and very fine aromatic leaves. Amongst the rocks overlooking the waterfall multi coloured Cape Flat Lizards, the males resplendent in shades of orange, green and blue scuttled about, these and a few Tortoises were the only reptiles we came across in the two weeks..

We finally flew back to Cape Town to catch our connection back to London, but as we had several hours to kill we opted to make the ascent of Table Mountain, unfortunately table Mountain had its 'cloth' on. With the cloud bank disappearing out to sea and despite being told by taxi drivers that it was going to be a beautiful day we instead took taxi's up to the top of nearby Signal hill, which was clear of cloud only to find the cloud breaking up and the temperature soaring, revealing Table Mountain in all its glory. It was September 1<sup>st</sup>, spring had arrived!

Phill Blanning

## FUNGUS FORAY : CASTELL COCH on 6th OCTOBER 2002

This joint meeting of the Society with the Glamorgan Fungus Group was led by Teifion Davies, with his Swansea colleague Mervyn Howells providing technical support. Teifion and Mervyn organise the Group's activities, sampling the different habitats around the county with the main aim of recording the species present and mapping their distributions, while encouraging wider interest and knowledge of fungi.

Teifion started proceedings by addressing the gathering of 26 members, visitors and guests. He emphasised two important aspects when recording or collecting fungi. The first, on the health and safety theme, is "never eat anything unless you can identify it with complete confidence and it is classified as edible". He added that when eating a species for the first time it is advisable to try only a little, as taste and, more critically, digestive reaction can sometimes be unwelcome. The other point is that where a specimen is growing - whether on or under oak, beech, hazel, etc - is a highly relevant factor in determining its identification and should be noted.

With those thoughts fresh in our minds, we set off, scouring the beech woods clothing the slopes beside the fairytale towers of Castell Coch. Cloudy at first, the sun soon broke through to continue the good spell of autumn weather enjoyed through September and into October. Unfortunately, as a result, the ground was very dry. Such conditions are not conducive for the toadstool-shaped spore-bearing bodies that we recognize as fungi to push up from their underlying network (mycelium) beneath the soil. Consequently most of the species we found were those that develop on tree stumps, dead branches or fallen twigs. But a steady stream of specimens was brought to Teifion's attention, revealing a variety of form and name. And what names! Was there a reluctance to get too familiar with species called Butt Rot, Wood Woolly-foot or Dead Man's Fingers? After climbing the path to the top of the slope and gently meandering through the broad-leaved and larch plantations of Fforest Fawr, by the time we encountered Plums and Custard we were ready for lunch. We had by then also admired a group of that most readily identified toadstool, the Fly Agaric, with several good-sized specimens showing their picture-book white-dotted scarlet caps.

After eventually returning to our starting point and lunch, a few members of the party then made a brief foray from the car park at the eastern end of Fforest Fawr. This yielded little more of interest, but Teifion and Mervyn left for home with a few tricky specimens to, dare I say it, pore over with microscope and identification books. We were very grateful to them for their patience and expertise in making the day an enjoyable and fruitful outing.



This is a provisional list of what we found. Unfortunately, many do not have English names. These are taken from Roger Phillips' excellent photographic guide "Mushrooms".

<i>Amanita muscaria</i>	Fly Agaric	<i>Clitocybe phyllophila</i>	
<i>Lepiota</i> sp (one, very small)		<i>Laccaria laccata</i>	Deceiver
<i>Armillaria mellea</i>	Honey Fungus	<i>Collybia peronata</i>	Wood Woolly-foot
<i>Oudemansiella radicata</i>	Rooting Shank	<i>Collybia dryophila</i>	
<i>Tricholomopsis rutilans</i>	Plums and Custard	<i>Flammulina velutipes</i>	Velvet Shank
<i>Clitocybe infundibuliformis</i>	Common Funnel Cap	<i>Marasmius ramealis</i>	

Marasmius rotula		Suillus grevillei	Larch Bolete
Mycena pura		Polyporus squamosus	Dryad's Saddle
Mycena haematopus		Polyporus varius	
Mycena sp		Ganoderma sp	Artist's Fungus
Lactarius pyrogalus	(under hazel)	Heterobasidion annosum	Root Fomes (Butt Rot)
Russula densifolia ?		Inonotus hispidus	
Russula ochroleuca	Common Yellow Russula	Daedaleopsis confragosa	Blushing Bracket
Pluteus cervinus		Daedalea quercina	Maze-gill
Paxillus involutus	Brown Roll-rim	Coriolus versicolor	Many-zoned Polypore
Gymnopilus penetrans		Bjerkandera adusta	
Pholiota adiposa		Stereum hirsutum	Hairy Stereum
Hebeloma crustuliniforme	Poison Pie	Phlebia merismoides	
Inocybe sp		Lycoperdon perlatum	
Galerina mutabilis		Scleroderma verrucosum	
Hypoholoma fasciculare	Sulphur Tuft	Chlorosplenium aeruginascens	Green Wood-cup
Coprinus comatus	Shaggy Ink Cap	Xylaria hypoxylon	Candle-snuff Fungus
Coprinus atramentarius	Common Ink Cap	Xylaria polymorpha	Dead Man's Fingers
Coprinus lagopus		Hypoxylon fragiforme	
Chroogomphus rutilus		Daldinia concentrica	Cramp Ball

**Rob Nottage**

## Editorial

At the our AGM on 2<sup>nd</sup> Oct 2002 Mike Sullivan retired as President and our new president Dr Joan Andrews took office. Unfortunately Mike was unable to attend due to ill health. Joan expressed the societies thanks to Mike and our wishes for a speedy recovery. Dr Mary Gillham is also recovering from an operation, our best wishes go to Mary.

Below is a list of the current officers and council members.

Mike Sullivan	Immediate past President		
Dr Joan Andrews	President	Tricia Wood	Vice President
Phill Blanning	Hon Secretary		
Eric Renshaw	Hon Treasurer		
Margaret Leishman	Hon Membership / indoor Secretary		
Trica Wood	Hon Field Meetings Secretary		
Corinne Renshaw	Hon Publicity Officer		
Brian Bond	Hon Newsletter Editor	Mr J R Kenyon	Hon Librarian

### Council Members

Jeff Curtis	Linda Nottage	Mike Dean	Chris Price	Graham Duff
Margaret Morgan	Roger Milton	Dr Susan Howard	CCW Ex Officio	

### Copy Deadline

For the March 2003 newsletter is  
February 14<sup>th</sup> 2003

## Field Meetings January to April 2003

Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> January.

Start time 9.00am

Cardiff Birdwatch

Packed lunch.

### PLEASE NOTE CHANGE OF MEETING PLACE

Our annual birdwatch will start with a walk around Forest Farm, the change of venue due to the draining of Roath Park Lake and we are unsure how much water will be in the lake in early January. Meet by the entrance to Forest Farm on Longwood Drive, just past ASDAs at Coryton.

Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> February

Start time 8.30am

Llanelli WWT

Packet lunch.

Our first coach trip off the year is to the WWT reserve at Llanelli. As usual the coach will pick up at the museum at 8.30am and soon after at Whitchurch. A booking form is included with the newsletter. We may drop into another site on the way home but I would expect to be back in Cardiff at between 4 and 4.30pm.

Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> April.

Start time 10.30am

Gwent Levels.

Packed lunch.

A springtime return visit to see how the reserve is developing. Once again we will be guided around the reserve certainly for part of the day but would expect to continue at least for the early part of the afternoon.

Meet at the reserve car park as before. From M4 junction 24 roundabout take the A445 to Llanwern, turn left at the next roundabout, straight over the following roundabout, at the 3<sup>rd</sup> roundabout bear left towards Pye corner then follow this road for 2 miles, then turn right towards Nash and the power station- the reserve car park is on the left before the power station entrance.

For all field trips it is expected that members will have read and agreed to comply with the Field Meetings Safety code a copy of which is included with this newsletter. The field Meetings Co-ordinator will also have a copy on the day.

As always it is useful to know who is coming on the trips including car trips so that lifts can be arranged for those in need. Contributions towards driver's petrol is expected.

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### Trip to Skokholm

Due to a change of policy by the Wildlife Trust we cannot run our trip to Skokholm in July 2003. Therefore the dates for the trip are now Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> May to Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> May 2003. Please would you let me know if you may be interested - there is no commitment at this stage. At the time of going to press I have no information of prices.

Unfortunately this will possibly necessitate the rescheduling of our trip to Stack Rock on Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> May 2003, until 2004. See in later newsletters for details

## HAPS, SAPS AND LBAPS

I continue to represent CNS at meetings in both Cardiff and The Vale of Glamorgan concerning Local Biodiversity Action Plans for both these Unitary Authorities. Familiar faces form part of both forums with representatives from organisations as diverse as the Farmers Union of Wales, Coed Cymru, the Glamorgan Moth Group and the Wildlife Trust of South and West Wales. It is always a pleasure to chat informally over coffee about environmental matters with these acquaintances. Such was the case when the Vale of Glamorgan Council launched its LBAP in late September at Ogmere-by-Sea in a meeting chaired by Dr. Madeleine Havard. Brief presentations celebrating the diversity of local wildlife and measures already in place for managing and enhancing the best sites were followed by workshop sessions to discuss ways of implementing the various Habitat and Species Action Plans. Publication of the LBAP is intended to promote action and involvement by a wide range of interested parties. Residents of The Vale can use a voting form to choose the animal and plant which they think is most special to the area. Our Society is not directly involved but, as with the Cardiff LBAP, any contribution we can make towards monitoring the flora and fauna will be much appreciated. (Incidentally, one of the delegates at the launch was Guy Ingram, the great grandson of Geoffrey Ingram a past president of CNS who published ornithological findings with Colonel Morrey Salmon.)

After the morning “talk-shop” indoors, it was a pleasure to spend the sunny afternoon walking part of the Heritage Coast from the Centre at Southerndown with wardens Paul Dunn and Belinda Ashong to see the results of their management work. We strolled around the Witch’s Nose and peered down at the rare Shore Dock on an inaccessible wet seepage on the cliff. Regeneration of woodland is slowly taking place on slopes where sheep are fenced out, allowing Snowdrops and Spurge Laurel to flourish. We followed the cliff path to Cwm Mawr where we were impressed by the skill and fortitude of workers who somehow balance on the steep slopes to mow and rake the grassland annually. Their efforts encourage special plants such as Purple Gromwell, Clustered Bellflower and Tuberous Thistle. None of these were in flower but we did see Devilsbit and Yellow-wort. Our return route took us alongside the wall which enclosed the former deer park and past the derelict Grand Lodge using paths opened up under the Tir Gofal scheme. Paul has built up an excellent relationship with the farmer who has now “gone organic” and they work together to improve the environment for wildlife. I look forward to hearing more about the Heritage Coast at our indoor meeting next month.

Linda Nottage

## Trip to Skokholm

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## Parc Slip Nature Park September 21<sup>st</sup> 2002.

Unfortunately for our first trip of the season our arranged leader Mike Clark was unwell. Luckily Linda and Rob Nottage agreed to lead the trip for us.

After meeting at the visitors' centre we walked up to view the northern wetland area. On the way we saw common darter and migrant hawker dragonflies - plus a meadow grasshopper was 'potted' for closer inspection. From the hide overlooking the wetland area we saw heron, mallard, a pair of mute swan with five cygnets, teal and coot. To the left of the pool there were approximately twenty lapwings resting in the short grass meadow. On leaving the hide the sun was shining so encouraging a few butterflies to take flight - clouded yellow, common blue and small tortoiseshell.

We then walked down to the hide overlooking the scrape near the centre of the site but only saw two snipe here. We then continued further towards the western side of the reserve and across the bridge over the Nant-y gedd stream. We then took the path down alongside the stream going south and were accompanied for most of the walk by a party of long-tailed tits.

We then walked along the southern border of the reserve back out to the road. We noted the good crop of sloes this year, which started conversations on the method of making and subsequent enjoyment of sloe gin!

Once out on the road we crossed over to the conifer plantation and walked through here back up to the visitors' centre. Just inside the

area was 'Fountains Pool' where we saw coot and mallard. Within the plantation area a number of fungi were found *Suillus grevillii* [larch bolete], *Suillus luteus* [slippery jack], *Suillus aeruginascens*, *Paxillus involutus* [brown roll-rim], *Russula sanguinea* and *Lactarius deterrimus*.

Other bird species noted on our walk around the reserve were wood pigeon, green woodpecker, swallow, wren, robin [singing], coal tit, blue tit, jay, magpie, jackdaw, crow, greenfinch and goldfinch. Meadow brown and speckled wood butterflies were also noted.



Flowers on the reserve included purple loosestrife, fleabane, devilsbit, sneezewort, wild carrot, angelica, eyesbright and meadow cranesbill.

My thanks go to Rob and Linda for deputising at short notice to lead the walk plus for notes for this write up.

Tricia Wood.

## Presidential Amblings

As the year ends and my Presidency of Cardiff Naturalists' Society begins, it is inevitable that one looks back to the past and forward to the unknown future.

In this first year after the horror of the Foot and Mouth epidemic we all looked anew at the countryside from which we had been excluded. Surprisingly, from the view of a Naturalist, some good things resulted. Both on our visit to the Sennybridge ranges and to the Welsh Water controlled site at Llandegfedd reservoir we heard how the wildlife has all benefited from the period of exclusion of the public – it must always be difficult to balance public access and protection of species.

Many of us enjoyed – perhaps for the first time - visiting sites that we had previously ignored as having little to offer the naturalist. In particular I remember the walk around Barry Island with its surprisingly good flora and the two visits we have made to Roath Park – and have been reminded not to ignore what is on my doorstep.

Driven to Ireland by our still closed footpaths I had a memorable week walking on the Sheep's Head peninsula – in particular sitting on a wild headland just south of Bantry Bay, looking out to the Atlantic and enjoying the view – choughs a few feet from my head, iridescent blue green as they landed to probe the short turf with their cleverly designed curved red beaks; gannets diving just offshore and a tame herring gull getting his easy meal from scraps; a stonechat singing as a family of young great tits danced on the telephone wire, and while I idly wondered where they nested in such a treeless place, raven, hooded crow and jackdaw joined the aerial dance. Later as I rounded the headland and came to the more sheltered waters of the bay I puzzled for some long time on the scores of small grey-white diving birds sitting on the water, only as one or two came nearer, did I recognise the Winter plumage of black guillemots. It was a fabulous few days of bird watching and walking in a very friendly place.

We must all hope that wiser planning for British farming results and the tragedy that befell so many farms is not repeated. One hopeful sign has been the introduction of Tir Gofal agri-environment scheme, a policy of maintaining unploughed corridors for wildlife around fields – certainly at Southerndown we found it made for easier walking and better viewing.

As a society may we continue to try and give a balanced view when consulted on matters of conservation – considering ways for securing safe havens for our flora and fauna as well as the needs of our fellow humans for homes and livelihood.

Joan Andrews

## VISIT TO THE MYNYDD EPYNT ARMY TRAINING AREA IN SENNYBRIDGE – OCTOBER 13TH 2002

This was a very interesting and enjoyable day, in spite of very wet and windy weather for the duration of the field trip! We were made very welcome by Lt.Col. Pat Butler, and given an Introduction to the various areas and activities relating to the Army's role both in providing suitable environment for training soldiers as well as their important responsibility in conservation and management of a vast and very bio-diverse area – public access and increasing awareness that the training area can also be used for car rallies, trail riding, horse riders and a possibility of a 56-mile footpath across the Epynt being created in the near future.

We were each given a printed sheet describing the recent SSI designated area within the Epynt which supports a rare and protected green feather moss – *Hamatocaulis Vernicosus* – along with a diverse group of grassland fungi with more than 20 species of waxcap – *Hygrocybe calyptiformis* – both being UK Biodiversity Action Plan priority species.

We travelled around the range in two Army Land Rovers for about two hours, stopping at several places of interest. We viewed a Bronze Age stone circle – apparently the only one in Wales in such a complete state. This was situated on a raised part of the moor, giving us an excellent view of the extent and diversity of habitats within the range. Celtic gorse, bell heather, tormentil, and some cotton grass were still in flower; the moorland grasses and sedges were a beautiful yellow/orange colour.

We were shown a large area of blanket conifer forestry that the Army were gradually removing and replacing with broadleaf and softwood trees. Incorporated into this area were large 'flushes' suitable for a helicopter to land or for soldiers and tanks to manoeuvre. As well as being 'soldier-friendly' Col.Butler had to make every effort to create an eco-friendly woodland with its many biodiverse implications.

The Sennybridge training area supports one of the largest semi-natural habitats with associated wildlife in mid-Wales. Only limited survey work has been carried out, but in the future, with more resources, it is anticipated that this will yield some interesting features. There are usually some 40,000 sheep being grazed by 90 farmers although on the day of the visit they had all been gathered for dipping. A strict count is kept to ensure that the number of sheep does not increase – with the problems that are associated with overgrazing – such a common feature in Wales.

I think some of us were very pleasantly surprised to know that the Army now has a definite duty and responsibility to maintain and replace damaged habitats where possible and also actively monitor and, when finances allow, carry out research into the number and distribution of mammals, plants, butterflies etc. that inhabit this rich area.

We were invited to join the annual bird count on the Epynt which happens the last weekend in May – with bed and breakfast into the bargain! We were also encouraged to join the public walk (long or short) which the Army leads some time in June.

Soaked and hungry, we returned to the officers' mess to find a delicious lunch with wine laid out for us - Joan gave a vote of thanks, and we all felt this would be a difficult field trip to match!

Elaine Harper.

## Tree identification day - Bute Park, September 1<sup>st</sup> 2002.

We started our tree identification day a little late due to the Cardiff Marathon which was also scheduled for the same Sunday so necessitating some rather tortuous journeys for some of our participants.

After a brief introduction by Tony Titchen we strolled up past City Hall to look at the common broad-leaved lime *{Tilia vulgaris}* which had been planted along the roadside looking at the characteristic red twigs and bracts each containing three fruits.

Further along in the museum carpark we saw the first of many maidenhair tree *{Ginkgo biloba}* - a popular tree in Cardiff. Tony explained that most trees so sited were males *{the ginkos having separate male and female plants}* so not shedding large numbers of fruits.



We then proceeded through Alexandra Gardens looking at flowering cherries or village cherries from China with its serrated leaves and brown coloured new foliage, Japanese cherries again with serrated leaves, and palmate leaf maple and Acer japonica in flower - the white flowers producing blue and red berries for ornamentation

only.

On our way to Bute Park itself we also noted a eucalyptus species and oak or hard oak with galls and acorns on stalks.

Our first tree of note in Bute Park itself was the tulip tree *{Lirodendron tulipifera}* - a member of the magnolia family. By the castle wall was a foxglove tree *{Paulownia tomentosa}*. We then investigated a large weeping beech *{Fagus pendulous}* grafted onto beech, a red chestnut grafted onto horse chestnut but were unable to find 'conker' cases to compare the smooth red chestnut with the pointed cases of horse chestnut.

Other trees noted included Japanese larch *{Larix kaempferi}*, Ginkgo biloba horizontalis, and a shrub dogwood *{Cormus sanguinea}* with its alternate leaves and also a weeping willow *{Salix babylonica}*. We then spent a little time on the large number of magnolias, which look so impressive in the park in the spring. Many of the magnolias had a few late flowers which were now very hidden by foliage. Tony explained that magnolia were pollinated by beetles before the flowers opened. We found a ten-year-old specimen of magnolia which flowers in June/July with beautiful large flowers.

We then looked at the grove of Japanese maple relatively recently planted which were starting to show their autumn colours. Other trees we looked at included paper bark maples *{Acer griseum}* from China, sugar

bark maple {*Acer saccharophorum*} a native of North America, plus snake bark maple from China , Caucasian wingnut, and holm oak with its tessellated or mosaic like bark.

We then stopped for lunch {and ice creams for some!} at the stone circle before looking further.

Dawn red wood {*Metasequoia glyptostroloides*} - a deciduous fossil tree which is old in geographical terms - a specimen being found in 1940 in a valley in China - with its flattened larch like leaves, variegated Spanish chestnut, fern leafed beech and the 'paper hanky' tree were all examined. A pendulous form of white mulberry {*Morus alba*} was more fully examined - a



tasting session was included for those who found the ripe berries - the leaves being the preferred food of silk worms. Other species of note included eastern cedar, golden ash with its black buds, bird cherry {*Prunus padus*} with spiral buds and shiny black fruits and Highclere holly {*Ilex altaclarensis*} grafted onto common holly. A tree of heaven {*Ailanthus altissima*} was then examined with its extra piece of the leaves with contained extra

nectaries, and the downward turning of its last branch was a useful identification feature in the winter.

Tony also instructed us in telling us the difference between firs and spruce - spruce having needles on a peg whereas firs do not and firs have their cones at the top of the tree.

Our last few trees looked at included a number of conifers including *Abies alba* , Californian or coastal redwood - a primitive evergreen with spongy bark and a number of recently planted *Pinus* species. We also noted honey locust {*Gleditsia triacanthos*}, silver lime {*Tilia tomentosa*}, Japanese crab apple {*Malus floribunda*} and Japanese knotweed!

Tony had kindly given out identification keys which unfortunately we didn't make too much use of - too busy looking at the trees. Hopefully we can do a repeat session at another venue {I've learnt I've a lot to learn!} and there would be merit in doing the repeat day at a different time of year - even in the winter.

Tricia Wood {from notes supplied by Mary Cleaver and additions from Hilary Wicks}.

## **OUT OF THE WOODS FESTIVAL, Forest Farm 20 October 2002**

What a pity that another wet Sunday should reduce the number of attendees at this family event organised by Chris Powell and his team of Rangers at Cardiff County Council. A great deal of effort had been put into the demonstrations of traditional woodland crafts and skills as well as entertainment from a troupe of Morris Dancers and their musicians, who found enough room to perform under cover in the cafe. We were glad to have been invited to promote our Society (at no cost) and given the opportunity to sell CNS Walks Booklets and other goods.

Rob and I refurbished the Society's display boards on a woodland theme, thanks to some new colour photographs prepared by our President. We were allocated space and provided with a table and two chairs in one of the stables at Forest Farm where we set up our stall in preparation for the opening at 1pm. It was rather draughty but more or less dry and we shared our accommodation with displays on a Forest Education Initiative, wood-carving and butterfly and leaf mobile making activities so it was very popular with children. They enjoyed trying our leaf-shape identification quiz and their parents showed interest in the fungal specimens we brought.

Although, because of the appalling weather, visitor numbers were lower than expected, we did have the opportunity to chat to County Council staff such as ecologists Vaughan and Melissa and Rangers including Mike, Raj and Kevin as well as some of the Conservation Volunteers. We managed to sell £17.50's worth of goods and hope to have recruited new members. Brian and Rosanne Bond with her brother John Harding were tending the Friends of Forest Farm stand so it was pleasant to chat with these CNS members.

We were grateful to another member, Hilary Wicks, who helped all afternoon at the stand, enabling us to take time off to look around at other displays including one on ecologically friendly coffins! I could have built a bird box but spent my money instead on a beautifully turned piece of yew wood in the shape of a small toadstool.

From our stable we had heard the ringing cries of falcons so I was not surprised to see a display of birds of prey in an adjoining barn. Many of the birds including Peregrine and Saker Falcons as well as Harris Hawks were sitting bedraggled and miserable on perches exposed to the elements so their complaining calls were easily understandable. Kept in the dry was an amazing hybrid between a Gyrfalcon and a Merlin. Falconers often cross-breed by artificial insemination to obtain the most desirable hunting characteristics in their birds. This strange hybrid apparently allied the stamina of a Gyr with the speed and manoeuvrability of the little Merlin.

Any opportunity to publicise our Society and attract new members is always welcome. We enjoyed the day despite the damp and hope that CNS will participate in similar events in the future. In the meantime, the display boards are packed away under my spare bed but if any member wishes to use them for promotional purposes they are always available.

*Linda Nottage*