

Something From the President.

I cannot understand mankind, we seem to be a rapacious lot, the more we have the more (some of us) seem to want. I am quite sure that if the sun, moon and stars had been nearer than they are to predatory human hands they would have disappeared long ago. Now not content with raping the countryside with buildings and motorways, more motorways are to be built in order to create more revenue. The vicious circle is, the revenue obtained will no doubt be recycled into more of the same kind.

We have forgotten how to be good guests, how to walk lightly on the earth as other creatures do. It is a pity that the most important thing about the creation of this earth, is that an instruction book did not come with it. As the bible says- the meek shall inherit the earth- or should it be- pity the meek for they shall inherit the earth, either way as a geologist I know one certainty and that is the meek will never get their hands on its mineral rights, but! I believe that one-day people will wake up and look around them and hopefully cry enough. One just hopes so.

I believe that perhaps this is the last article I shall do as President but hopefully not as a contributor to the Newsletter.

I would like to thank you all for the support I received during my term of office. Please do the same for Dr Joan Andrews who will be the next in office. Our next Vice President will be Trica Wood. We need two members to come forward to serve on the committee. Please come forward, do not be shy. The duties are not onerous, the Society cannot function without you.

Once again, thank you all especially the council members who have been more than staunch in their support.

Michael Sullivan

Field Meetings June to September 2002.

Thursday 27th June.
Woods.

Radyr

Start time 7.00pm

Join us at the northern end of Radyr Woods for a short evening walk taking the flowers and insects of one of Cardiff's smaller parks. The walk will take you through areas of both woodland and grassland and will also look at the historical and geological aspects of the area.

Meet at the northern entrance to the park at ST 134 802, just south of Radyr station. This is a public walk so everyone is welcome to attend.

Sunday 7th July.

Whitford.

Start time 10.30 am.

Packed lunch.

A guided visit to this National Nature Reserve on the north of the Gower by David Painter of the Countryside Council for Wales. Whitford has one of the most diverse collections of wildlife of any sand dune area in Britain and it will be interesting to contrast what we see here with our previous month's visit to Brean Down for those who attended. The chalk rich dunes provide a refuge for many chalk loving flowers and the damp hollows {or slacks}

support several rare flowers and insects.

Meet at the gate at the reserve entrance - we can park inside the gate - at Cwm Ivy at SS 439 937.

Saturday 20th July.

Seaside B-B-Q.

Start time 7.00 pm.
barbecue and drink.

Bring food to

Meet at the Southerndown beach carpark at 7.00 pm SS 885 738. We will be doing a circular walk from the coast inland on a farm which has just joined the Tir Gofal agri-environment scheme before returning to enjoy some 'al fresco' food and drink.

Sunday 28th July.

Grangemore Park.

Start time 2.30 pm.

One of Cardiff's newest parks and already becoming an extremely rich wildlife habitat with nearly 300 species of plants and animals recorded in only 5 hours of study by the Cardiff Naturalists in 2001. A gentle

afternoon stroll will be taken to the top of the 'hill' where we can look over the entire park. From there we'll drop down to the waters edge to take a look at how the changes to the bay have effected the rivers edge.

This is a public walk so everyone is welcome to attend.

Meet next to the ponds at the entrance to the park nearest McDonalds at ST 176 736.

Sunday 11th August.

Nature Study Day.

Start time 10.00 am

Packed lunch.

A second trip to the Llanishen and Lisvane Reservoir site to see the changes in flora and fauna that three months further on in the year has brought about. As before the starting point will be at the southern end of the reservoir where the path from Nant Fawr Woodlands crosses into the meadow area at ST 189 815. There is a small car park outside the reservoir.

Sunday 1st September.
'workshop'.

Tree identification

Start time 10.30 am.

Packed lunch.

Tony Titchen needs no introduction to more established members but suffice to say, for all those who do not know him, the day will be entertaining and informative. Tony will be our guide for this field meeting at Bute Park. Meet at the Cardiff Museum steps.

For all field trips it is expected that members will have read and agree to comply with the Field Meetings Safety code {copy in September 2001 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. Contribution towards driver's petrol is expected.

Tricia Wood.

NEW HOME NEEDED

The University has informed us that they are no longer hiring their accommodation to outside organizations- such as CNS. We therefore need a new venue for the Indoor evening meetings. Our requirements include seating for 50 persons, car parking, a central venue,adequate blackout and access to public transport.

Any suggestions to Margaret Leisham

Thanks Joan

EDITORIAL

The Members at the Extraordinary General Meeting, held at the Cottage public house on 11th May 2002, voted unanimously in favour of the change in the constitution, as required by the Charity commission. This has now been referred to them for their approval.

Thanks to the contributors of this newsletter, especially to those who contributed for the first time.

Copy deadline
for the September newsletter is
14th August.

ELAN VALLEY AND GIGRIN FARM _ 20th FEBRUARUY 2002

On a clear frosty morning we set off on our journey north. Soon after seeing cormorants on a riverside tree near Pontypridd, we met mist, which was with us, off and on, until just beyond Builth Wells. Then it was clear, sunshine all day.

The Tarell Valley was beautiful being full of white mist with the sun on the hills above. It was good to see sheep with their lambs in the fields, although not as many as in previous years. Snowdrop and Primroses were in bloom in banks and hedgerows.

After a brief stop at Rhyader, it was on to the Elan Valley alongside the chain of reservoirs to the 'top' dam of Pen-y-Garreg. The majority of the party opted to walk back along the far side of the reservoir to the lower dam where the bus would meet them.

A small flock of Redpoll was at the start of the path (a 'lifer' for at least one person). When met, all said it had been a very enjoyable walk. Red Admiral and Peacock butterflies had been seen and Song Thrush,



Yellow Hammer, Tree Creeper, Blue, Great and Coal Tits were heard singing. Here we met up with our Vice President for a short while as she was travelling further north.

Then it was back to Gigrin Farm where we took our seats in the hide. Few Kites were visible (except one with very few tail feathers) but the Corvids came flocking in. However, as soon as the food was put out in the field the Red Kites appeared from all directions. They did not land but seemed to enjoy swooping down through the feeding Crows, Rooks, Jackdaws and Raven to pick up food in their talons.

It was wonderful to watch them drifting along and twisting their tails before making their dives. Possibly more than 60 were present but it was impossible to make an accurate count. Walking about the area was very pleasant and the small birds were busy at their feeders.

We left Gigrin at 4.00 p.m. and immediately saw Rabbits in the fields. A good journey back to Cardiff ended a very successful day out - all parts of the day being enjoyed.

Thank you Linda for leading the visit.

Birds seen during the day were: -

Cormorant

Blackbird

Buzzard

Redpoll

Swan

Great tit

Heron

Magpie

Redwing

Chaffinch

Wren

Red Kite

Crow

Mallard

Kestrel

Robin

Blue tit

WoodPigeon

Greenfinch

Collard Dove

Raven

Mistle Thrush

Tufted Duck

Starling

Song Thrush

Golden Eye

Yellow Hammer

MARY B THELWELL

BEACHCOMBING AT OXWICH

Saturday, 16th March 2002



We assembled at Oxwich Bay car park at 12.30pm - about 2 hours before low tide- the day was light grey with very little wind but not too cold. In his introductory talk, Morton Jenkins explained that Oxwich was interestingly just at the limit of the range for a number of southern species. In a particularly cold winter southern species could be lost as happened in the winter of 1962/63. Some of these have since returned, but one species of toothed topshell (*Monodonta lineata*) has not been seen at Oxwich since the 62/63 winter. Morton Jenkins will be looking out for it, and it would be a really good find if it turns up this afternoon.

We set off towards the rocky pools along the west shore. Razor shells were abundant on the sand, and we noted the position of the hinges on the shells to distinguish between species. We saw Venus shells, carpet shells, otter shells and necklace shells (*Veneridae*, *Mactridae*, *Naticidae*), and we were shown a small round hole in a Venus shell made by a naticid (necklace shell) These carnivorous naticids attack and feed by boring small holes through the victim's shell.

Reaching the rocks, we looked at orange and black lichen and the vertical zonation of seashore lichen was pointed out- with grey above high water, orange in the tidal and black extending below the intertidal. We saw winkles and their method of feeding on diatoms was explained. Then we looked at shore crabs (*Carcinus maenas*) and noticed the variation in their green/grey patterning and barnacles (*Balanus balanus* and *Balanus crenatus*), We were shown Bryozoa, Flustra and sea mat (*Membranipora membranacea*), and we found a crab which had recently cast off its shell (ecdysis). We found a masked crab with its long antennae for breathing when it has burrowed down into the sand. We were then shown a flat top shell (*Gibbula umbilicalis*) with the mother of pearl lining which distinguishes this family from winkles.

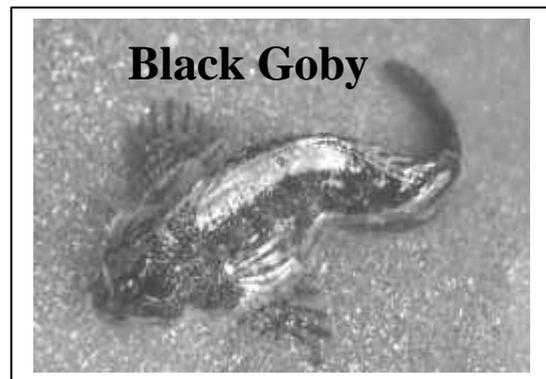
By this time, much encouraged by Morton's enthusiasm, we were all happily scrambling and searching about the rocks and pools - presenting our finds for Morton's unfailingly clear and interesting comments - we were enjoying it enormously and - a bonus - the afternoon had become sunny and warm ! There were scallops (*Chlamys*), fanworms

(*Sabellids*), paddleworms (*Eulalia*), with their green slimy egg mass star fish, orange sponge, Corallina, dog whelks, hermit crab, sand mason worms, sea anemones, brittlestars, an Australasian barnacle which had first turned up here in the 1940s, a chiton which is a primitive mollusc of the polyplacophora class, limpets, sea lettuce (*Ulva lactuca*), and a seaweed which likes brackish water (*Fucus ceranoides*). We compared the tubes of sabellid and serpulid worms. The reproductive methods of sea anemone were explained. We saw how the flat winkle resembles a seaweed bladder. Linda found a pullet carpet shell (*Venerupis pullastra*). Trish caught a shrimp.



We spoke to a person fishing from the rocks using razor shell and squid as bait. He had only caught a small goby, but was hoping for bass. Continuing with our finds- these included - limpet grazing marks, a green paddleworm of the Phyllodocidae family which feeds on barnacles, a hairy crab (*Pilumnus hirtellus*) which reached the area from the Mediterranean in the 1920s, a Harmothoe scaleworm, a female shore crab (*Carcinus maenus*) in berry (carrying eggs), edible crab (*Cancer pagurus*), long clawed porcelain crab (*Pisidia longicomis*), broad clawed porcelain crab (*Porellana platycheles*), an American slipper limpet introduced to this area in the 1960s, the variously coloured shells of dog whelk, grey top shells, egg masses of flat winkle, common whelk, a velvet swimming crab (*Necora puber*), some red algae which secretes lime, and the holes of boring bivalves which can be

induced to spurt water. Linda's next find was a beautiful three bearded rockling- a very pretty fish with small spikes on its head. We found some more sea anemone- including an unusual one- snakelocks anemone- which looks as its name suggests-and the 'locks' do not retract. We were able to observe the 'beads' on a beadlet anemone. There was bladder wrack, spiral wrack and sea oak, and some worms -sand mason worms, terebellid worms and a red worm possessing haemoglobin, which can soak up oxygen. By now the tide had turned, we scrambled back from the rocks to the sandy beach and walked along the water's edge. Here there were 'mermaids' purses' which are the egg cases of dogfish and skate, and there were brittlestars, various shells - venus, carpet, banded wedge, razor - including a very small razor (*Ensis ensis*), and heart urchins - we were lucky enough to find a live one. Now came one of our favourite finds - a sea mouse (charmingly named *Aphrodite aculeata*) which is a large scaleworm with bronze/orange iridescent flanks. We noticed in shallow water the egg masses of paddleworm, and in the wet sand there were rings indicating the presence of sea urchin. There were also lug-worm casts, and a live dog-whelk was found on the sand - which is not where one would expect it to be. And there it ended - a memorable and outstandingly interesting day. We didn't find the *Monodonta lineata*- and we didn't get to the kelp beds - but perhaps that just gives us some good reasons for arranging another beachcombing session - soon.



Margaret Evans

Visit to Betty Daws Wood Newent

Sunday 24th March 2002

We were met at the entrance to Betty Daws Wood by Edna Riley and Ginny James, both of the Gloucester Wildlife Trust, who were to be our guides for the morning walk. We learnt that part of Dymock Wood, which includes Betty Daws Wood, was declared an S.S.S.I. in 1990 largely because of the presence of quality Sessile Oak. These oaks form part of an ongoing research programme.

The wood is currently managed, by the Gloucester Wildlife Trust and Forest Enterprise. Forest Enterprise is responsible for Hardwood Timber production in the forest. This shows a considerable change of emphasis since the 1920's when it was planted as a conifer plantation, by Colonel Groves, after whom the eastern part of the wood is named. It is a semi natural planted wood of approximately 22 acres, the species being native to the area. We learnt that the management objectives were to encourage broadleaf species; coppicing; provision of nest boxes; maintenance of Dormouse rides.

The main established standing trees were Oak, Ash, a small quantity of Beech together with some Birch of inferior quality. We also saw one splendid old Yew and a Service Tree. Hazel has been coppiced here for many years and some coppiced stumps are believed to be extremely old.

Ginny is currently involved in a Birmingham University research project recording winter roosting of birds in nest boxes. We were surprised to see that the boxes were positioned quite low down on the trees. This was to enable her to access them easily and as there was no problem with vandals, the boxes did not need to be high up. We learnt that the boxes had proved to be very successful, being taken up by birds within days of being installed.

Great Tits and Blue Tits made most use of the boxes. Ginny told us that they exhibited different roosting behaviour.

Blue Tits, on the other hand, fluff themselves up to keep warm. There has also been a measure of success in attracting Pied Flycatchers to the boxes. Some of the trees were marked with silver foil to enable Ginny to spot her trees by torchlight when visiting the boxes by night. We noticed a few Treecreeper boxes which took a different form to the others in that they had a slit at the bottom and a hole at the back of the box at the top

As we continued our walk, we came across several Dormouse nest boxes each of which had an entry space at the back and was positioned at an angle out from the tree. Care had been taken throughout the wood to provide travelling ways for dormice particularly among the hazel and honeysuckle.

The woodland floor was extensively and most beautifully carpeted with wild Daffodils. In selected areas brambles had been removed in swathes releasing a vast expanse for daffodils to spread well. Wood Anemones and Lesser Celandines, also in abundance, benefited from the additional light.

Wood Violet, Sweet Violet and Primroses were also present with Bluebells about to come through. Among other flowers noted were Yellow Archangel, Wood Spurge, Common Woodrush, Figwort leaves and, in one dry area, the leaves of Common Spotted Orchids. Pendulous Sedge was present in one of the marshy spots.

In the lower tree storey, there was Blackthorn and Wild Cherry - both in flower. One small parcel of the wood had been sectioned off with rabbit fencing to allow the vegetation to grow undisturbed. We saw many holes indicating the presence of Rabbits and

Great Tits sit at the bottom of the box and have the ability to lower their metabolism.

Foxes. In an adjoining field there were very distinct paw prints and claw marks of Badgers in a tractor rut. The Grey Squirrel population of the wood is



controlled by shooting.

Some of the birds we observed were Chiff-Chaf, Dunnock, Buzzards and a Green Woodpecker.

Margaret Morgan

We came across several small ponds which are thought to have been dug originally as clay pits. They were overhung with trees and showed little evidence of life.

We were very fortunate to have a warm sunny day for our walk although it was quite wet underfoot. It was a most enjoyable and informative visit due not only to the splendour of the woods, but also to the enthusiasm of our knowledgeable guides.

Barnsley Warren and Clattinger Farm

April 28th 2002

Fortune favours the brave the saying goes, and fortune did indeed shine on the 24 souls who braved the weather forecast for this field trip. Despite predictions of heavy showers we all managed to remain dry, although windswept, throughout the day.

Our first stop was Barnsley Warren, which we approached along the Foss Way, where we hoped to find Pasque flower in bloom. However, the majority of plants we found had gone over probably due to the early spring, but by diligent searching we were able to find several specimens in perfect condition. Other species of plants though were flowering to perfection and there were many patches of the bright blue Chalk Milkwort amongst the Cowslips. Geoff identified Bastard Toadflax, in leaf only, followed by the tiny Dwarf Mouse-ear Chickweed. We walked along the top of the ridge towards a large patch of Gorse where we hoped to, (and indeed did) find some Early Purple Orchids in flower, but were amazed to find on clearing the Gorse that the hillside was covered in literally hundreds of specimens, with a few scattered Green Winged Orchids amongst them. Personally I had never seen Early Purples on this scale before.

After all the photographs had been taken



we meandered on to the ancient Winter

Flora Recorded at Barnsley Warren
Early Purple Orchid
White Dead Nettle
Cowslips
Kidney Vetch
Common Mouse Ear
Dog Violet
Common Rock Rose (in leaf)
Sweet Vernal Grass
Crosswort
Bastard Toadflax (in leaf)
Dwarf Mouse-ear-Chickweed

Well which Geoff explained filled with water in the winter months and drained into a nearby stream, but due to the recent dry weather (imminently coming to an end) the well was dry. We then slowly made our way back to the

bus along the valley bottom noting many more Green Winged Orchids en route.

After a challenge to Tricia's numeracy skills we set off for Clattinger Farm where we hoped to find Snake's Head Fritillary in flower. We met up with the voluntary warden, Martin Buckland and his son who, after a brief introduction to the reserve, led us across several of the reserve fields. The flora seeming to change from field to field. Masses of Cowslips in some and virtually none in the next. Several thousand Green Winged orchids in one field and about fifty in the next. In fact this field trip was turning into an Orchid extravaganza, at least in numbers if not in species. But we had come to see the Fritillary's, however like the Pasque Flowers the early spring had done it's best to spoil our fun, most of them having again gone over, but again as for the Pasque Flower we did manage to find enough in perfect condition to satisfy the photographers and the Fritillary 'virgins'.

Clattinger Farm however is not specifically a site for Snake's Head Fritillary, for, as well as the Orchids and Cowslips there was Dyers Greenweed, Marsh Valedan, lot's of Adders Tongue Fern and Geoff and Martin managed to find another rarity the Downy Fruited Sedge. But the surprise for me was the Meadow Saffron, many plants, (in leaf only at this time of the year) along one of the hedgerows,

Returning to the bus, just ahead of the rain, we noted several fine clumps of Marsh Marigold and on boarding the bus our driver told us he had seen four Fox's crossing the road as he awaited our return!

Phill Blanning

Green Winged Orchid
Chalk Milkwort
Early Forget-me-Not
Pasque Flower
Ground Ivy
Dwarf Thistle
Gorse
White Bryony (in leaf)
Dogs Mercury
Common Winter Cross

Flora Recorded at Clattinger Farm

Comfrey
Green Winged Orchid
Downy Fruited Sedge
Meadow Saffron (in leaf)
Cowslip
Meadow Rue (in leaf)

Adders Tongue Fern
Cuckoo Flower
Dyers Greenweed
Marsh Madgold
Marsh Valedan
Snakes Head Fdtillary

Birds Recorded During the Day

Mistle Thrush
Swift
Swallow
Sand Martin
Skylark

Great Crested Grebe
Dabchick
Mute Swan
Linnets
Chiff Chaff

Birds Recorded During the Day

Other

Green Veined White Butterfly
St. Marks Fly
Frog
Rabbit

Red Fox (four seen by our driver)

The Graig at Lisvane.

11th May 2002

Our walk started at the entrance to Cefn Onn Park after a successful extraordinary general meeting. CNS member Mike Dean was our guide to one of the walks on his 'local patch'. He remarked on the increased numbers of song thrushes he had noted - unlike some areas of the UK and he also hoped we may find where the buzzards were nesting this year.

The blooming rhododendrons and azaleas in the park were a spectacular sight but we were more intent on investigating what lay beyond the man made environment of the park. However some native flora was also seen here including bugle, yellow pimpernel, ramson and small patches of bluebells.

A grey squirrel was spotted in characteristic 'nibbling' pose followed by another scampering up on one of the trees. Sanicle and wood sedge were also seen plus other plants typical of limestone woodland such as pendulous sedge.

We took a detour to the pond in the park, which unusually contained no tadpoles although small fish were present. The statue that once decorated the pond was long gone!

Here Jeff Curtis gave us a quick resume of the history of Cefn Onn which had been established as a Country Retreat for a Mr. Prosser, Chairman of the Cardiff Railway, hence the close proximity of the railway line. Mr. Prosser never had a dwelling here as such but did have a summerhouse

built of aromatic cedars for his son who suffered from tuberculosis.

Our route was to take us on a well made footpath following the valley in which the Nant Fawr flowed, to the top of the Graig, one of the three hills directly to the north of Cardiff, where we could enjoy good views over the city.

Leaving the country park we skirted alongside the golf course spotting soft shield fern, heart's tongue fern and yellow archangel growing in the old red sandstone soil.

Pignuts were found next with an explanation from some of the members on how good they tasted The next plant seen was one not to taste -

despite its resemblance to celery - hemlock water dropwort being responsible for occasional deaths in livestock plus a few unwary humans! The arrow shaped leaves of the next plant spotted explained its common name of hedge woundwort leading to some speculation as to its efficiency at healing arrow wounds.

As we ascended up through the scrub and into the woodlands on the slope of the Graig typical woodland birds were heard e.g. robin, blue tit and chaffinch plus a few spotted e.g. male blackcap, green woodpecker and a sparrowhawk.

Two worthy grass species en route included Good Friday and sweet vernal grass. We added common sedge to the sedges seen plus more yellow pimpernel, golden saxifrage and Birds-foot trefoil.

The large volume of broom in flower to the bank to the right of our ascent contrasted with the spectacular carpet of native bluebells on our left further up the path - the rusty colour of scaly male fern also stood out among the surrounding 'blue' plus we noted some dogs mercury and barren strawberry. However the vibrant colour of large numbers of bluebells cannot be matched I feel.

Further example of man's influence was shown as we passed by a ventilation shaft for the railway line tunnel below the hill.

A number of nestboxes were just evident through the rapidly increasing foliage and the great tit fluttering nearby could well have been making use of one of them.

Damper ground further along yielded golden saxifrage, greater stitchwort, and wild garlic. An old mineshaft was also found in this area.

More 'human influence' was evidenced by the coppice beeches alongside the path, some of which showed signs of some very old coppicing activity having large beech stands from the coppice base.

A crab apple and wild raspberries were seen just before we came upon the quarry tip - the spoil left from taking out the limestone rock thought to be mainly for the steel industry.

Maidenhair spleenwort fern, primrose and milkwort were noted as we nearer the top of the hill. Large numbers of birds could be heard 'mobbing' to the left of the track - typically the blackbirds being the loudest, though we could only speculate as to the cause eg. buzzard or tawny owl??

As we came to the summit, a few of us branched off over to the Ridgeway path to look over towards Caerphilly to the north. Here the vegetation was of a completely different type with stemless thistle, wall speedwell and a small ladies mantle.

At the top of the Graig we rested at the old quarry enjoying the views over Cardiff and the Bristol Channel to the south. Ourselves being watched by the local buzzard perched on a pylon - the site of the buzzard's nest still remains to be found.

We retracted our route back down to Cefn Onn Park and our journeys home.

A few of us having excellent views of a male green woodpecker on our decent.

My thanks go to Mike Dean for guiding us on a splendid afternoon's walk plus he even managed to provide perfect walking weather for us as well!

Tricia Wood.