CNS

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Presidential Amblings

Well the swifts are back and despite the present night temperatures this must mean summer is just around corner. So the Society has come to the end of indoor meetings and embarked on our summer outdoor only programme.

I hope all members will endeavour to join us on a least a few of our summer forays which vary from short, easy local strolls to day walks and longer trips to further locations. Once again we have two public walks in the Cardiff area advertised in the Cardiff Park Events and Guided Walks booklet to which all are invited. Plus we have an evening public walk following rather than in Biodiversity week – my apologies but I was unable to get confirmation of dates in time! I hope members will join the public walks also to encourage others to join the Society.

Our autumn programme begins again on Thursday, September 22nd. Apart from our short AGM we will be having a presentation using our newly purchased digital projector by Graham Duff, so expect some superb images from Graham himself plus other CNS members. As usual this meeting will close with our start of season 'social' with drinks and please bring along a few 'nibbles' to share.

Patricia Wood

Subscriptions increase

At the last meeting of Council it was decided to raise membership subscriptions across all categories from September this year. Subscription rates for the Society have remained static despite our rising costs for a number of years now and the small increase will still represent good value for members.

Field Meetings June to September 2005.

Wednesday June 8th. River Ely.
Start time 7.00pm.

For our first public walk we will be returning to the river Ely for an evening walk. Meet at the beginning of the public footpath at the bottom of the road to the Museum of Welsh Life, St. Fagans - this is on the left-hand side going into St. Fagans where Michaelstone road goes over the river just after the railway crossing ST 119770.

Saturday June 11th. Barbecue at Southerndown.
Start time 7.00pm PLEASE BRING FOOD TO COOK

A return to Southerndown for the barbecue. Meet at the lower carpark at Dunraven Bay adjacent to the Heritage Centre SS 885732 (parking fee may apply). We will be looking at some seashore/coastal areas dependent upon tides (please note on an incoming tide the beach here is covered very quickly), before working up an appetite walking up to the barbecue area.
Lifts will be available for those who do not wish to walk.

Sunday June 19th. Martin Down.
Start time 8.00am.

Places are still available on this coach trip. One of the largest areas of chalk downland in England, the site includes grassland habitats, together with scrub and woodland, supporting a wide range of downland flowers such as horse vetch, chalk milkwort, salad burnet, dropwort, rockrose, burnt-tip orchid, dwarf sedge and field fleawort; insects such as silver spotted skipper, Duke of Burgundy, silver-washed fritillary, white admiral and Adonis blue butterflies and birds- yellowhammers are guaranteed. Plus the scrub attracts warblers and nightingales; corn buntings and turtle doves are possible; stone curlew have bred on the site and last year Montague's harriers nested nearby. The English Nature site manager will be guiding us around the reserve. Booking form for this trip is included in this newsletter - please ensure I receive it by June 10th.

Wednesday June 22nd. Grangemore Park.
Start time 7.00pm.

Following on from Wales Biodiversity week we are repeating our investigations at the reclaimed tip. Meet at the entrance to the park across
the road from McDonalds, Cardiff Bay Retail Park. This meeting will also be advertised for non-members.

Saturday July 2nd Kenfig.
Start time 10.00am. Packed lunch.

Kenfig Nature Reserve is a superb example of wild Welsh coastal landscape. The sand-dune system spreads across a vast area, with a range of special orchid-rich habitats at a good time of year to see the orchids 'on show'. Please note the terrain is sandy and severely undulating in parts. Meet outside the visitors' centre. Kenfig reserve is reached by leaving the M4 at junction 37 onto the A4229. After ¼ mile take the B4283 through

Cornelly and turn left on the minor road just outside the village which is signposted to the reserve. The carpark is on the right-handside ½ mile past the Angel pub.

Sunday July 17th. Cwm Colhuw.
Start time 10.30am. Packed lunch.
PLEASE NOTE LATER THAN ADVERTISED START TIME.

This 11.5ha reserve within the South Glamorgan Heritage Coast consists of under-grazed grassland and scrub. Guy Ingram who works on the site will be our guide. There is a steep climb involved in this trip albeit up steps with a hand rail. If the weather is favourable we will continue the day after lunch with a walk along the coast to St Donats. Meet at the Llanwit Major beach carpark at Colhuw point SS 955674 (parking fee may apply).

Sunday July 31st. Howardian Reserve.
Start time 2.30 pm.

For the second of our public walks and a leisurely Sunday afternoon stroll we will be exploring the Howardian reserve. Meet at the entrance to the David Lloyd Centre, Ispwich Road, off Newport Road, Cardiff.

Sunday August 14th. Cwm Clydach.
Start time 10.30am. Packed lunch.

Hugh Harrison, local RSPB committee member and conservation co-ordinator, will be our guide for this walk around our nearest RSPB reserve. The natural woodland and fast flowing river habitat is similar to those of mid Wales but only eight miles north of the centre of Swansea. The reserve, established in 1986, has good trails including sections of raised boardwalk through damp areas to allow access to the different types of woodland. Take junction 45 on the M4, through the village of Clydach on the B4291. The entrance and car park, where we will be meeting, are next to the New Inn pub in Craig Cefn Parc.

Saturday September 3rd. Magor Marsh.
Start time 11.00am. Packed lunch.

Magor Marsh holds a special place in the history of the Gwent Wildlife Trust being the first reserve purchased by the Trust. It has now been successfully managed for wildlife for over forty years. In 1979 the site gained SSSI status being the largest remnant of the once extensive fenland of the Gwent Levels. The reserve is flat but wet and marshy. Boardwalks provide access through the reserve including to the bird hide that overlooks the large pond. Please note that due to sensitive wildlife dogs are not allowed at Magor Marsh. To get to the reserve take the A48 east from Newport towards Chepstow. At Langstone turn right onto the B4245 for the village of Magor. On reaching Magor continue through the village and then take a turning on the right signposted Redwick. Take a further right soon afterwards (also signed Redwick), and then follow the road past the ruins of the Priory on your left and over a narrow railway bridge. Immediately after crossing the bridge, turn left and follow this road for about half a mile. The reserve entrance is on the right. Park in the small carpark, beside the Derek Upton Centre. We will meet at the centre entrance. (ST 428869)

For all field trips it is expected that members will have read and agree to comply with the Field Meetings Safety Code.
It is useful to know who is coming on the trip especially if you are willing to give a lift to those without transport. Please contact me if you need a lift and hopefully I can arrange one. Contributions towards drivers' petrol is appreciated.

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GEOLOGICAL TRIP TO BLORENGE

Led by Tom Sharpe, Cardiff University, 13th March 2005

It was an extremely cold day with snow flurries and a north-west wind as we gathered at the Foxhunter car-park to be given a very informative and interesting introduction to the day by Tom. It is a remarkable area made up of many different layers of rock - of course not so long ago it was a thriving industrial area - coal, iron ore and limestone were mined or quarried here.

We made our way to the summit of Blorenge, which is located on the north east edge of the South Wales coalfield. It is part of a steep scarp which marks the edge of the coalfield, separating the industrial and agricultural landscapes of Monmouthshire. The slopes and summit of Blorenge expose rocks spanning a period of about 100 million years, from early Devonian to late Carboniferous; the rocks record changing environments during this time, as a wide coastal plain crossed by rivers was submerged beneath a shallow sea.

We had some good views of the Brecon Beacons, the southern part of the Black Mountains and the limestone edge of Mynydd Llangattock, the Pennant sandstone plateau above Big Pit, Blaenavon, and the Severn Estuary looking west. From the summit we took a path onto lower and much damper ground with some muddy limestone areas and then over hummocky ground, a change in the vegetation marking the outcrop of the Castell Coch limestone formation. In the summer there would be some interesting plants growing on this soil. We had fine views of Abergavenny looking east and the confluence of the Afon Gavenny and River Usk. Tom explained how the Gavenny was a 'misfit' stream occupying a wide valley cut by the Grwyne Fawr, Honddu and Monnow rivers, which drained from the Black Mountains to the River Usk before the Darensian glaciation. Glacial erosion played a big part in the drainage pattern of these rivers; the rich agricultural land east of Abergavenny is underlain by Old Red sandstone, the lower slopes are Brownstone Formation. Some red sandstone-quartz conglomerate caps the summit.

On the Natural History front, things were quiet save for three red grouse that we flushed from the heather and several pairs of ravens, calling and displaying over the tops. Crowberry, bilberry and whitlow grass were in evidence. We made our way for lunch along what was an old parish road between Blaenavon and Abergavenny, taking our picnic down by the Punchbowl which is a fine example of a glacial Cirque - a hollow excavated by a developing glacier in the shaded north eastern slope of Blorenge. The present lake and dam are man made.

We walked back to the car-park via the Llanfoist incline, a series of three inclined planes which connected a near horizontal early 19th century tram road (Hill's tram road) on the side of the Blorenge, with the Brecon and Abergavenny Canal at the

foot of the hill. The coal, limestone and iron were transported from Blaenavon, Pwll Du and Garnddyrus along the tram road and down the incline to the canal and on to Hereford, Brecon and Newport. Imported iron ore made the return journey. The remains of buildings, retaining walls and stone sleepers can be seen in Cwm Craf.

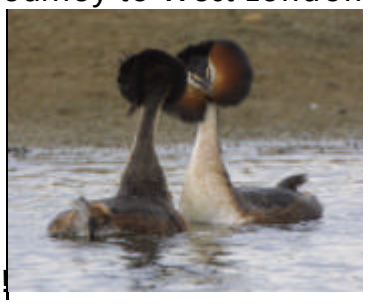
We made our way up the road, past Keepers Pond. Between Garnddyrus and the Pond, road-cuts expose the rock sequence from limestone to sandstones underlying the Garw seam. The Pond, also known as Forge Pond or Penfforddgoch pond was built in 1828 to supply water to Garnddyrus Forge.

Tom kept us fascinated the entire trip. His enthusiasm for his subject must really inspire his students on both field trips and in the lecture room! Thank you Tom, for giving us a great day. We felt privileged to have had you as our guide in this special area.

ELAINE HARPER.

Visit to the London Wetland Centre, Barnes.

The first combined trip between the Cardiff Naturalists' Society and the local Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) Cardiff group on April 17th 2005 was a resounding success. From our pickup at Whitchurch we had an uneventful journey to West London and straight to the reserve with out any mishaps!



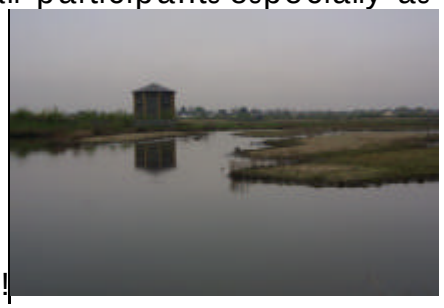
Built on the site of Victorian reservoirs the 42 hectare site was given SSSI designation in 1974 due to the high number of wintering diving ducks, but as we were to discover spring was a good time to visit also. In keeping with most WWT (Wildfowl and Wetland Trust) reserves 12 hectares is divided into 2 exhibit areas – one dedicated to the wetlands of the world with captive birds and the other to the relationship of people with wetlands.

The remaining 30 hectares of the site is dedicated to wildlife designed to maximise feeding, roosting and breeding opportunities for a diversity of wetland wildlife – and breeding in all stages was being exhibited by the birds, it being Spring from copulation, sitting on eggs to feeding young in various species.

Water control is all important at the site to maintain the diversity of habitats from the old water retention function of the Barn Elms reservoir. The north lagoon is maintained at a constant water level to provide a head of water to all other habitats. The source of water is the Thames/Lee Tunnel supply pipe which transfers water from the River Thames at Hampton to the Lee Valley Reservoirs to the east of London.

All the major habitats have independent hydrology with a range of suitable water controls. The mosaic of pools with differing water depths, and islands allow for the provision of reed beds, grazing marsh, wader scrapes plus a number of smaller ponds and scrapes all connected by bridges, boardwalks and paths designed for easy access by visitors without disturbance. An added bonus was the constructed sand martin bank which was already in use during our visit. Hides varied from 5 single storeys to a 2 and 3 storey tower with lifts. The Peter Scott Visitor Centre has all the usual WWT amenities with a good café and shop included.

Everyone went round the reserve at their own pace which allowed for maximum enjoyment of all participants especially as we had glorious spring sunshine for the day!



Total birds seen on the trip:

Little Grebe	Great Crested Grebe	Cormorant
Grey Heron	Mute Swan	Greylag Geese
Teal Gadwall	Mallard	Tufted Duck
Pochard	Ruddy Duck	Coot
Moorhen	Lapwing	Snipe
Little Ringed Plover (nesting)		Green Sandpiper
Redshank	Herring Gull	Lesser Black-backed Gull
Woodpigeon	Green Woodpecker	Ring-necked Parakeet
Yellow Wagtail	Pied Wagtail	Sand Martin
Blackcap	Ring Ouzel	Blackbird
Dunnock	Robin	Starling
Wren	Blue Tit	Great Tit
House Sparrow	Greenfinch	Chaffinch
Reed Bunting	Carrion Crow	Magpie
Shoveler		
Hybrid Greylag/Canada Goose		Canada Geese (nesting)

Egyptian Geese (two free flying birds, so assume not part of WWT collection)

Also seen:

Cowslip	Slow Worm	Peacock
Snakes Head Fritillary	Large White	Marsh Marigold
Brimstone	White Dead Nettle	

(all above in bloom)

Patricia Wood (with thanks to Sue Stevens of the RSPB for providing the species list and Graham Duff for the photos)

Cefn Mabley Woods
7th May 2005

We were met at this site by Dee Ashurst, the Community Ranger for the Ebbw area from the Forestry Commission, who opened the gates for us to park inside the barrier rather than filling up the small car-park at the site and who explained to us the site as it relates to the Commission's holdings in South Wales.

Dee explained the way that the Forestry Commission's role has changed as its remit has been changed from one of purely timber production to a wider commercial and conservation one. She explained that they now focused timber production into larger sites that were more cost effective and that sites like this were more focused to conservation

This site is designated a Planted Ancient Woodland site (PAWS) as it contains aspects of both old woodland and inter-planting with modern introduced plantings. Dee explained that because of this, and the fact that this site is too small and isolated to be of significant commercial value, it will be returned to one based on native broad-leaved forest. This will be done through a planned program of selective clear felling and thinning over many years, allowing natural regeneration.

Our walk took us along the main path through the woods where we saw the fruits of the recent felling activities neatly stacked for removal. Along the way we were entertained by an excellent variety of birdsong with highlights being a Mistle Thrush that displayed itself at the top of the crown of one of the conifers, Song Thrush, Garden and Willow Warblers. Buzzard, Jay, Wren and Goldcrest were also among the 17 species we saw.

In the more open area of the wood we had a number of butterflies spotted including Orange-tip, Brimstone, Green Veined White and Peacock, but in many ways these were outshone by the mating displays of the small *Adela reaumurella* moths with their spectacular long antennae fluttering as they displayed in front of one of the sycamores.

We had started the walk near coniferous planted areas where we could see the effect of the almost complete light exclusion that results from close planting of trees like Western Hemlock, Cypress (probably Lawson's) and Norway Spruce, where the only small plants were things like the Pendulous Sedge, Bugle and Tutsan on the sides of the roadway. As we went further on we were able to see the clear difference between the open broadleaved woodland areas populated with Beech, Alder, Oak, with an under-storey of coppiced Hazel and their rich carpet of Bluebells and Ferns. As well as the Hazel we unusually saw coppiced Sycamore.

At the Eastern end of the site we were able to get into a more open area of the site where we were able to see effect of daylight on the woodland floor and Foxglove, Wood Anemone, Creeping Buttercups and Yellow Archangel abounded.

The only mammal spotted on our walk was a rabbit and the only amphibians were a number of tadpoles in a drying-out puddle. Dee persuaded us to move these to some deeper water and whilst this was going on Rhian was finding Caddis fly larvae in cases of

bark and leaf litter in the small stream nearby.

In this area 2 small stands of Elm were seen which were of particularly welcome note to Dee. Luckily technology smiled on us and I was able to get the GPS unit working because the canopy was open here and get here a grid reference for them. She had previously provided some copies of a map of local woodland sites and made a plea for records for any wildlife records to be sent either directly to the commission or to local ecologists or recording centres as we have collectively more eyes than they do and they can only take such things into account if they are aware of them. You can find appropriate contact details on http://www.forestry.gov.uk

Whilst there were no specific rarities noted the site proved to be well-varied with 104 species being seen on our short ½ day walk, and I would thoroughly recommend a look at this little gem of a site at other times in the year to see what it may hold. I think it could be especially worth looking down some of the sidetracks into areas less managed than those we looked at.

Andy Kendall

TO LET

BIJOU RESIDENCES ON FOUR FLOORS

SUITABLE FIRST TIME SAND MARTIN BUYERS

EXCELLENT VIEWS FROM TWO PENTHOUSE SUITS

AVAILABLE AT COSMESTON COUNTRY PARK

Photo by Graham Duff