



# Friends

of FOREST FARM COUNTRY PARK  
and GLAMORGANSHIRE CANAL  
LOCAL NATURE RESERVE  
**Issue No:106**      **December 2017**

website: [www.forestfarm.org.uk](http://www.forestfarm.org.uk)

*Wishing all our members and readers  
A Very Happy Christmas and best wishes for the New Year.*

As discussed and agreed at this year's A.G.M., here is the 2017 copy of a 'bumper' edition of your newsletter and in colour! Also, instead of focussing on specific wildlife, more general shots of the Reserve are included, taken at different times of the year. Some of these are mine and not technically as good as other photographers, but I didn't have much choice! Not unnaturally, most photographs are of birds, flora and fauna.

Put your feet up and have a quiet read! Happy Christmas!  
Sheila Austin



## **Reserve Report** by **Ranger Alec Stewart**

*Have you ever seen anything like this before? Read on ...*



Blue roundhead fungus  
(*Stropharia caerulea*)  
Photo: Gareth Stamp

September, as the start of autumn, is a busy period at Forest Farm with a lot of work to be carried out. Foremost of these tasks are the hay rakes and Wetland clearance. The hay rake was completed despite the rather wet and damp conditions without any problems.

This left the Wetland clearance which takes about two weeks to complete fully. The Rangers carried this work out with the essential help of our regular volunteers, The Cardiff Rivers Group, Greendays and CCV. The ponds were opened up and cleared from reeds.

(continued on P3)

## **NEW VELINDRE HOSPITAL PLANNING APPLICATION - REFERENCE 17/01735/MJR**

**This covers the main points of our submission.**

The Committee of the Friends of Forest Farm have replied to the most recent release of documents for the proposed new Velindre Hospital.

These documents raised the impact on Forest Farm Nature Reserve ("the Reserve") from 'low' to 'medium', so we decided to submit our areas of concern now rather than at the detailed planning stage of the planning process.

As you know, discussions both formally and informally have been held with Cardiff Council Parks Department and Velindre NHS Trust since the start of the development proposal and these have led to changes as the plans have developed.

(Continued on P 5)

*Hello Friends - and a Very Happy Christmas!*

*Its our very first 16 page edition! I am very pleased to have received some articles and some amazing photographs from contributors which I hope you agree have resulted in quite a varied issue. In preparation, it also struck me how much has been done on the Reserve this year. We know it needed it- but I think Nicola and all the Rangers deserve a pat on the back for the effort put in this year. We don't forget all the voluntary groups as well; the Friends of course, but also Cardiff Rivers Group, Greendays and CCV as well as ad hoc days from companies - we would be in a much worse state without them.*

*I hope you enjoy reading about the Reserve from various contributors - the Rangers (pp1 & 3), the September volunteer group (p6) the Nature Ramble (p12), the Bat Walk and about the Spanish helpers (p13). We had a wonderful Open Day again this year - see the photos (p11) and read a young visitor's complimentary view on p4 - and so well written too!*

*I make no apology for another article about Dr Mary Gillham - such a key person in the Reserve and for the Friends. Read a bit about her life and the archive project on p9-10.*

*We need to keep abreast of developments re the new Velindre hospital and do what we can to protect the ecology. Don't forget our talks in January and March, the Big Garden Birdwatch in January too, but also keep an eye on our events (pp15-16) and our website. Those of you with access to our Facebook page can check on these and any unforeseen changes of plan.*

*With thanks to everyone who supports and helps us in whatever way they can.*

**Best wishes Sheila Austin**



## **BIG Garden Birdwatch 27 - 29th January 2018**

**"Count the wildlife  
that's counting on you"**

Well, this has been going for 35 years! I read on the RSPB website that it started as an activity for their junior members and extended significantly after being 'publicised' by inclusion in the BBC Blue Peter programme; from 2001 adults have been included in the counting. Last year's total participants were half a million - making it the world's largest wildlife survey.

Do have a go! Its only **one hour** of time during one of the 3 days during the above dates. **Count the maximum number of each species you see at any one time.** The final date for submitting results is 17th February 2018. You can use the form found on the RSPB website [rspb.org.uk/birdwatch](http://rspb.org.uk/birdwatch) - and return it free (FREEPOST, RSPB Big Garden Birdwatch) or submit your data on line. If you don't have a garden, you can go to a local park or green space.

One or two interesting facts I picked up from the RSPB website are that Goldfinch numbers have increased by 44% since 2007 - these seed eating birds are eating from bird tables and feeders. Blackbirds are now the UK's most widespread bird being found in 93% of U.K. gardens.

Many thanks.

**Sheila Austin**

### **Deadline for articles for next newsletter - 8th February 2018**

**See back page for contact details**

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## ***Reserve Report continued***

***by - Ranger Alec Stewart***

Water channels were cleared and dug out, and the scrape area made ready for the autumn migrants to use. Indeed several snipe turned up immediately and were visible from the second hide. Thank you all for your hard work on these tasks.

You may have also noticed new interpretation signs, way markers and finger posts\* have been installed to inform and guide people around the site. We have more to install and await the art work for the interpretation signs as I write this article.

As part of this, the car park area has been targeted for some much needed attention as well. New children's play equipment\* has been installed. A new path is soon to be completed linking the car park to the main road. Some trees have been removed and lifted or coppiced, to improve access and lines of sight and make the area more inviting for the public to use. Some of these areas will be under planted with spring bulbs such as bluebells, wild daffodils and anemones. Unfortunately, the large Redwood tree in the picnic area had to be removed for safety reasons. It will live on though as part of the main trunk will be carved into a Forest Farm giant!

Checking the scout field\* on a fresh, crisp early morning, the work carried out trying to eliminate the balsam seems to be proving a success. The under storey of plants such as campion, and various grasses are spreading. We cannot be complacent with this though, and will continue to work on the area next summer. We also found several other large areas of balsam still in flower and spreading into the woodlands as well. We decided to strim and cut these areas to try and control them and will monitor them through next year.

Autumn is a special time of year, a time of change, movement and beauty with a variety of wildlife busy preparing for the winter. There is now a cold crisp feel to the mornings, yet still plenty of leaves are hanging on the trees giving some great autumn colour.

This is the time for the local wildlife to stock up on fat reserves or move to pastures new. It is always a good time to keep your eyes open to see what nature has to offer. Notable discoveries such as Birdsnest and Blue Roundhead fungus were seen on the Reserve as well as 15 species of waxcap, including the rare Date waxcap found at Hailey Park by Gareth Stamp. The teasel and thistle seed heads have attracted good numbers of goldfinch, and the birdlife in general can now be seen moving through the trees busy feeding. The pond areas have been a bit quieter due to some juvenile sparrowhawks that seem to have taken up residence. Therefore the kingfisher has spent more time on the feeder canal and less time on the ponds.



Another interesting visitor for November has been redpoll and hawfinch spotted flying over. There has been an influx of hawfinch from Eastern Europe due to food shortages. We had one individual working its way through the trees opposite the farmhouse and I managed a quick glance as it flew off across the river.

On the river itself, Heron and Goosanders have been regulars and the resident dippers have been very active singing and displaying, and occasionally fighting with each other. I guess spring is not that far away already!

(\*See photos pp 7 - 8)



## ***Friends of Forest Farm Open Day October 7th 2017***

**A report by Emily Anwen Bates age 9, Cardiff**

### **Drawing of the Apple Pressing by James Bates age 4**

On Saturday 7th October, I visited Forest Farm Open Day with my family and some friends.

First of all we all went pond dipping, and caught lots of water boatmen! A lady came up to us when we'd finished, and gave us all big stickers with daisies on them, to show that we'd done the pond dipping. Next, we had a go on the apple press. It was hard work turning the handle, but the juice was lovely!

After that we went on the guided walk. We saw the old lock, where boats used to pass through. The metal post, where boats could be tied up while they waited, looked like a giant nail, and the top of it was being used as a bird table! We saw a robin singing in a tree, and then we went to the hide to look for some water birds. At Radyr Weir we saw the big noisy hydro-electricity turbines, and the new fish pass that helps fish to get past them safely. While we were there, a train passed by, and my little brother Jamie waved to the passengers!



Above: James' picture of the apple press equipment and apples in the orchard and both of them enjoying the apple juice. I agree, Emily - it was lovely!! Ed



When we got back to the Wardens' Centre, we bought a little wooden reindeer made from sticks, and a woollen sheep fridge magnet, and a new woolly hat for the winter for Jamie. I made a star wand at the willow weaving table, and I decorated it with curly blue ribbon. I chose blue because it's my favourite colour!

Forest Farm and all the activities at the Open Day were brilliant, thank you to everyone who organised it and took part in it! It would be lovely if even more people came next time.

P.S. Since the Open Day, we've been back to Forest Farm to do a group den-building activity for our friend's birthday. One of the Rangers, Richie, showed us how to do it, and that was brilliant fun too, thank you Richie!

(Very many thanks to Emily and James for the report and the picture. It's always good to get articles but *especially good* when they are from children. Thanks to their Mum and Dad too for bringing them to the Open Day, and for sending their contributions and the photographs in. I'm glad they had such a good time and look forward to seeing them again. Ed)

**For more photos of the Open Day - see Page 11**

**Velindre Planning Application** - continued from front page

We have notified the Council of 5 areas of concern and below is a summary. The full document sent to the Council in November will be in the public domain, but can also be viewed via our website [www.forestfarm.org.uk](http://www.forestfarm.org.uk)

**1. Entrance into the development from Asda Car park**

**Width of the road** - we are requesting that the pedestrian and cycle pathway be provided one side of the road only, and that this also applies to the 'emergency' bridge.

**Biodiversity** - we want details supplied on the species affected and the mitigation proposed.

**Replacement of trees due to the construction of the road** - reference should be made to the biodiversity management plan for Forest Farm.

**Access to the site during and after construction** - we have requested details of how the link between the top meadows and the existing public right of way and all permissive paths is to be maintained

**Financial implications of the effect of the development** - we want any section 106 funding to be directed to the Reserve to mitigate the effects of the development and upgrade existing footpaths to meet the increased use due to the development. We have also requested that any financial benefit to the Council from sale of land be re-invested in the Reserve; we would like reassurance that the land being sold is for the road only and not the whole top field. Finally, we have asked that the land necessary for construction purposes but not for the development, be re-instated and returned to the Reserve.

**2. Location of the Maggie's centre** - we have requested that this is moved further south nearer to the main complex and that their gardens should not be within the 15m buffer zone.

**3. 15 metre buffer zone for the SSSI** - We acknowledge this is the minimum requirement but have requested a 20 metre buffer zone. This is to offer increased protection for the adjacent ancient woodland from the effects of the development. We have asked for the buffer zone to be included in the SSSI

**4. Provision of services**

**Gas supply** - we want details of the proposed tunnelling/route for a new gas supply from the present gas substation near G.E. under the forested plantation on the Reserve.

**Waste water** - we are concerned that the development proposes use of the existing sewer that runs along the bottom of the canal and on to Forest Farm Road and the effects this will have when there have been problems already.

**5. Run-off and/or leaching during construction** - as the SSSI is on a steep slope above the canal, we have requested that plans are provided to show how runoff and/or leaching is to be prevented during periods of high rainfall.

Finally, we have voiced a **general concern** about the level of monitoring to limit the damage to biodiversity and ensure the agreed mitigation measures are put in place.

The Friends of Forest Farm continue with their position on the proposed development i.e. that over many years we have fought against a housing development on this site - a battle which was lost after a Public Inquiry. With planning permission already being in place, we feel that this development is **the least worst option in terms of the ecology**. However, the construction of the access road into the site takes more of the land than was agreed before and that, and the construction of the bridges, are a major concern for their additional impact on the environment and the biodiversity.

Our submission to this latest phase of the planning application says that we need clarification on the points raised to ensure that the effect on the Reserve is minimised.

November 2017

## Volunteering - Forest Farm 10th September

### The Canal

Though the weather was unsettled, 14 volunteers attended. Perhaps the task of digging out silt and stones from Middle Lock (the one by Longwood Drive) appealed?

The rain more or less held off and I guess we must have moved at least 15 tons of material. Paul (Pinnell) brought the equipment up in the little JCB truck.



Hard graft in the canal.

Some of us descended into the fairly dry lock to load buckets of silt, which were then hauled up by rope and tipped over the side of the lock to be carried away by wheelbarrow. Stones, from the top end of the lock where nobody was standing were lifted over the top edge, to be collected later. They were dumped a fair way from the canal in the hope that small boys would not be tempted to throw them back in!

As usual John and Martin arranged for hot drinks and biscuits for all. Paul Pinnell kept an eye on us as well as moving large amounts of silt. We also re-cleared the outlet pipe from under Longwood Drive to

lower the water level upstream of the lock. It was quite hard physical work for some, but you just do what you are able to. One volunteer collected most of a bag of litter from the surrounding area for part of the morning.

Numerous dog walkers and joggers observed our progress! Perhaps they might be tempted to come along and join in next time - or spread the word about volunteering? (Usually the 2nd Sunday monthly - though best to check our Facebook page for an update.)



Some of the volunteers digging, some ready to haul up the silt

All photographs on this page supplied by Estzer Horvath-Papp

**Albyn Austin**



"We're all going on a ..."

### Summer Coach Trip

As you know, the Friends' annual coach day-trip is arranged to take place on either the 3rd or 4th Saturday each June. Generally, we do try to ensure that the journey there takes no longer than 1 hour 45min.

Your suggestions as to where you would like to visit next year would be very welcome even if it is a repeat of a visit made previously. Please send your suggestions to Duncan Hockridge at 5, Clos Cromwell, Rhiwbina, Cardiff CF14 6QN or email [duncan3@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:duncan3@hotmail.co.uk).

### "Wildlife Crime"

**A talk by  
P.C. Mark Goulding  
7.30 p.m. on Wed 17th  
Jan 2018**

**Ararat Centre for the  
Community Whitchurch  
CF14 1PT**

**ALL WELCOME**





An autumnal morning - the canal path

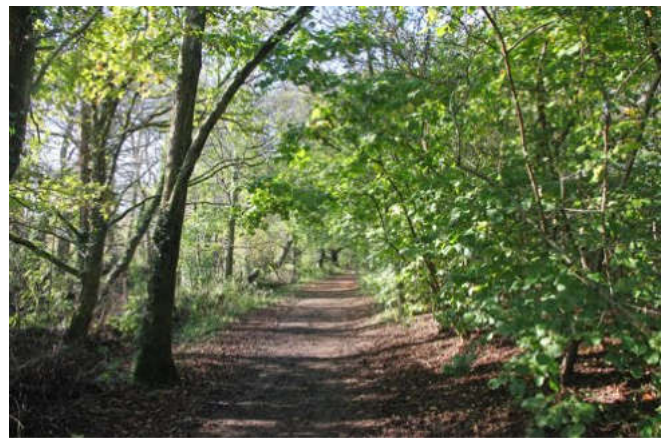
*Some general views of Forest Farm*



‘Scouts field’ without all that Himalayan Balsam!



Stable area hide. Photo; Jenny Turner



The path between the two hides. Photo Jenny Turner



Middle Lock in December



Remains of the old railway viaduct,  
the M4 side of Longwood Drive



# December 2017 Newsletter



July



**New  
on  
the  
Reserve  
in  
2017**



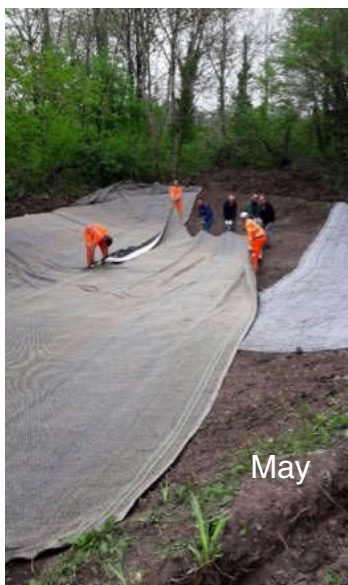
March



November



May



May



October



November

Photos clockwise: Early spring at the Ty Mawr entrance: Butterfly chrysalis wood carving near the orchard pond, snail carving in the developing 'natural play' area near the car park; some of the new signage,\* lining the 'new' pond opposite Forest Farm\*\*, another new carving near the car park; the 'butterfly' area - wild flowers and foxgloves behind.

(Photos: \*Jenny Turner. \*\* One of the Rangers sent this; .The others are mine. Ed)



**A Dedicated Naturalist: Dr. Mary Gillham**

**A Talk by Dr. Al Reeve - 15<sup>th</sup> Nov 2017**

Al Reeve is nearing the end of running a two year project to catalogue the archive of renowned naturalist Dr. Mary Gillham M.B.E. who lived and worked in and around Cardiff for many years. She was one of the principal campaigners for Forest Farm to become a nature reserve, and was a founder member of the Friends group. Mary left a vast amount of correspondence and notes, was also a talented illustrator and left many drawings and paintings of wildlife, plus 37,000 slides. Al gratefully acknowledged the huge amount of assistance from volunteers with this work.



Though all this material will be placed in the Glamorgan Archives, the National Lottery has funded a project to digitise some of the material to preserve it and thus make it more accessible.

Mary had a fascinating life. She was born in 1921 in Ealing, London. She seemed to have kept notebooks from an early age and clearly was fascinated by nature, especially plants. Though bright, there was no question of going to university. She obtained a clerical qualification and worked in an office until war broke out in 1939, so immediately volunteered for the "Land Army" and worked throughout the war on farms. After war service, she was able to go to university and graduated in 1949 with a degree in Agriculture at Aberystwyth University, first class honours in Botany. Her tutor suggested she skipped doing an M.Sc. and study for a doctorate on Island Ecology. She lived (in very basic condition) and worked on Skokholm and Skomer, visiting over seven years. A wide range of other scientists there inspired her interest in looking at the ecology of islands. Mary looked at the effect of rabbits and seabirds on the vegetation for instance. She kept prodigious amounts of notes of all her visits and research throughout her life.

After gaining her doctorate, she worked at Exeter University before the opportunity arose in 1956 to teach in New Zealand where she travelled widely. Her next post was Lecturer at Australia's Melbourne University until 1960. While there, Mary researched "Mutton Birds" (a type of Shearwater) that live on islands in the Bass Strait of SE Australia, and are hunted for food. She travelled widely there too, including several summers spent on the islands.

She was one of the first four women ever to visit Antarctica as part of an expedition to the remote southerly Macquarie Island in 1959. Her return journey to the UK took many months, visiting South Africa, Namibia and Nigeria, living frugally and travelling by local bus into remote areas to study their natural history. Mary returned to the UK, subsequently securing a lectureship at Cardiff University, where she remained till she retired in 1988. Living at Gwaelod, she explored the area around the "Whitchurch Canal" visiting it most days in fact. Mary was a key figure who helped persuade Cardiff Council to buy the area and make it a nature reserve in 1967. In 1970 she went on an expedition organised by the Royal Society to the Indian Ocean Island of Aldabra that prevented it becoming a military base. Mary travelled to different countries during the vacations and even after retirement visited at least 28 countries. She published at least 27 books plus other material on natural history and was involved in setting up several other nature reserves such as Cosmeston. At Forest Farm she recorded 780 species of wildlife including over 500 different plants.

Latterly, Mary lived in Radyr, still attending local meetings such as the Friends evening lectures. In her will she left most of her estate to charities she had supported. The Friends of Forest Farm received a bequest that has been used to fund the bog garden near the old stables.

All the digitised information will be available on line and copyright free, the photos for instance being stored on "The People's Collection of Wales" website

It was fascinating to hear what must have been a brief resume of a very full, active, varied and interesting life of a woman who in many ways was a pioneer in her field. We thank Al for his time in preparing and delivering this presentation which we all thoroughly enjoyed.

**Albyn Austin**

## **M.G.A.P. - the Mary Gillham Archive Project.**

**From a volunteer**

*(One of the volunteers on this project is John Wilkins who has contributed articles from time to time to keep us up to date with the progress of the project. This is from his latest report. Ed)*

At the time of writing, only a few weeks remain for volunteers to contribute to the work of the project. The work continues apace. Three further willing bodies having given of their time over the past few weeks. There is still room and work for more volunteers should anyone want join us for that comparatively short time.  
(contact: alan.reeve@sewbrec.org.uk)

However, we can inform readers that, in addition to transcribing and digitising a myriad of photographic slides, records etc., it is estimated that the MGAP's "workers" have also consumed no fewer than 500 packets of biscuits and between 2 500½ and 3 000½ mugs of coffee / tea - project student Natalie asking regularly for just "half a mug"!

Friends may have gone on-line to watch the MGAP's "film" highlighting aspects of Dr.Mary Gillham's connection with Forest Farm. It was made by MGAP volunteer George Auchterlonie and features your Secretary Martin Chamberlain together with Rangers Alec Stewart and Raj Chettri talking about Mary Gillham and her legacy at Forest Farm. It is still available to view. Search for "Mary Gillham Archive Project at Forest Farm" at youtube.com or click: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kaA\\_VVjHLzU&t=1s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kaA_VVjHLzU&t=1s) to access it.



Photo of George Auchterlonie sent in by John. George is marking the progress - so they must be even nearer the target now.

**John Wilkins**

Dr Al Reeve will be speaking about the project at the **Cardiff Naturalists Society on 1<sup>st</sup> March 2018** and **an exhibition of the project at the Rhondda Heritage Park will be held from April to May.**



A happy young visitor to the Reserve earlier this year. (Thanks to his parents for permission to use the photo. Ed)

### **Membership - Pauline Fisher**

After another very successful Open Day when four new members joined and four renewed their membership. This brings our current total to 403!

Once again, welcome to you all and our thanks for all the support we get from everyone. We really do appreciate all the time and help that you give us. Also a big 'thank you' to all the volunteers who give up their time to hand deliver the four issues of our Newsletter each year.

### **Donation**

The Committee wishes to express its sincere thanks for a donation of £50 to the Friends of Forest Farm.

The donor, who wants to remain anonymous, is a member. It will certainly help with the additional cost of producing the newsletter in colour.

## More pictures of our Open Day



Above: Pond dipping - always a great draw for the children.  
The RSPB stand is behind the apple press- John in charge!

Below: Still pond dipping - but this time at the other side of the pond. Ranger Raj Chettri in charge here.



On the day we also had other activities which the children - and adults could have a go at, or buy some of the items already made.

Apart from the pond dipping and apple pressing, there was willow craft, wood turning, and wool craft. Then there was an organised walk to the canal, then on to Radyr hydro. There was the Mary Gillham Archive Project stand, Forest Farm honey for sale and last but not least, for children of all ages - a model railway! Refreshments were available through the day. I think you could say a good time was had by all!



Jenny Turner centre with your editor (left) and Barry another committee member and helper on the day (right).  
Steve and Jenny Turner donated this cake - with our logo on too (as they did last year.) - and it was delicious.  
I got a small taste this year!



Above: You can see how many apples we had, and there were still more on the trees! I think we picked about 20 varieties from the orchard, some eaters and some cookers. As they are traditional varieties, there are a lot we would not normally taste...

The apple pressing itself - as Emily mentioned in her report - is quite hard work, but the tasting is the reward!

We do have pears and plums as well in the orchard. Some people have 'adopted' a tree. If you are interested in doing this, do contact us.



## Nature Ramble - November 18th

**by Jenny Andrews**

Seven of us braved the drizzle this month. We saw a variety of birds and enjoyed the beautiful autumn colours. We started off in the hide at the Warden's Centre where we saw several great tits, coal tits and blue tits, as well as a bullfinch, a robin, a female blackbird, a nuthatch and some sparrows. While we were watching the feeders a heron flew in and landed in the orchard. A rat was also spotted helping himself to the seed on the ground.



As the drizzle seemed to have abated a little, we decided to venture outside and begin our walk. A light wind sent a shower of falling leaves twirling to the ground as we set out. A grey wagtail was spotted on the river, as were a pair of mallard. We made our way to the first hide and were surprised that there were no photographers in situ. Then we realised why. There were no birds either! Even the rabbits that we usually see were making themselves scarce. Eventually we saw a moorhen and a robin waiting for food. Pauline scattered some seed on the window ledge of the hide and soon the robin was happily eating, not worrying that he was within touching distance of us.

The paths were carpeted with autumn leaves in a variety of shapes and colours ranging from green to gold with a touch of red seen occasionally. A beautiful sight.

There was not much to see at the second hide apart from a pair of moorhens. A gull and some wood pigeons flew overhead, as well as a small flock of unidentified small brown birds. A grey squirrel played in the trees near the entrance to the hide.



**Moorhen photo: Chris Woodhead**

We met a dog walker who told us we had just missed seeing a kingfisher on a perch in the canal. Feeling a bit disappointed we continued on and put out seed for the birds on the feeding posts. Soon there were several tits, nuthatch, robins, a female chaffinch and a dunnock enjoying the food. There were many mallard on the canal and as we watched them the kingfisher returned and sat on the perch for several minutes. We all felt a great lifting of our spirits. This was turning out to be a very good day. Later we also spotted a goldcrest darting about in the trees.



**Kingfisher  
Photo: Katie Horrocks**

As well as the autumn colours of the leaves there were many shades of green to be seen, from the deep dark green of ivy, the vivid green of moss, to the grey green of lichen on the trees. There were few flowering plants, apart from some hogweed.

We enjoyed our stroll and felt better for the fresh air, exercise and good company. We hope to see even more next month.

*(My thanks to Jenny for sending in this article. Ed.)*

## ***Muchas Gracias!***

Perhaps you have noticed two young ladies helping the Rangers over the last couple of months? They are from Spain and I thought it would be nice to go and have a chat with them before they leave in December.

Marta and Natalia come from Cuenca - their nearest city is Madrid. I asked them a bit about their background and I had thought that they were on a sort of 'exchange' but this was not the case.

They did not know each other before they came here, though both live in

Cuenca. Marta was a tourist guide in a protected geological site and has done a course in the interpretation of nature and environmental education. Natalia did a degree in environmental science. At the end of their courses they had this opportunity to apply for a grant offered by the Deputacion Provincial de Cuenca (their regional government) to a foreign country. 25 places were available for what they told me was a range of 'placements' to do with anything from computers to hotels to the environment. Both Natalia and Marta were interested in anything to do with nature so applied - and obviously were successful. Another aspect of the grant was to improve their English. I thought after less than two months here, their grasp of the spoken language was very good. I know from experience that receiving a reply in a foreign language at speed and possibly with an accent as well, is not easy to follow!



Left to right: Marta and Natalia doing some hedge; laying in the garden behind Forest Farm

Their first impression was how green everything was here.

Marta and Natalia said they have had an amazing time. They have had the opportunity to do all sorts of things in many of the parks and green spaces in Cardiff, from the bay to the mountains, the garden areas to the nature reserves. The girls have helped the Rangers with day to day work, volunteer days and special events and learned about traditional ways of doing things, habitats, native plants and trees. They have particularly enjoyed working with the volunteer groups, helping with children's' activities and especially the pond dipping at the Forest Farm Open Day.

It was interesting to chat about this approach to conservation awareness in comparison to Spain. They were impressed with the number of green spaces in Cardiff and amazed at the number of Friends groups and the level of volunteering. There is effort put into environmental education in Spain and activities organised around nature and the environment, for instance at Botanical Gardens. However in their experience, community volunteering such as they had seen here was not as common or as organised.

Both Natalia and Marta are full of praise for the Rangers saying that they have been so kind and patient, (they stressed the patience!), for their abundant knowledge and willingness to share it and how they use it in the course of their work. It is Natalia's first experience of a foreign country and said it had been a unique experience and she felt very lucky. Both of them have had a happy, interesting and busy time here and wanted to use this opportunity to say thank you to the Rangers. I am sure the Rangers would want to thank them for their efforts too. So, muchas gracias all round!!

***Sheila Austin***

## Bat Walk at Forest Farm

by Raj Chettri

On the 8<sup>th</sup> of September, our bat walk at Forest Farm proved to be fruitful. We had 42 members of the public for this walk. At the start of the walk around the Reserve, we picked up signals on the bat detectors of one of the UK's smallest species of bat called the Pipistrelle bats foraging around the hedges and trees around the car park.



This amazing photograph was taken by Tim Lewis. It is a Daubenton's bat feeding over the water at Radyr Weir

After that, we walked along the Taff Trail and soon located the Noctule Bat species. We hit the jackpot when the bat detectors were a staccato of signals from pipistrelles, Noctules and, upstream of the weir, was a feeding frenzy of the water bats called the Daubenton bats.

For next year's events calendar we have therefore put in **two** bat walks. Hope those of you who would like to learn more of these nocturnal wildlife of the Reserve, will join us on these walks. Details of the bat walk and other events

organised and run by the Ranger Service will be published in the Park Events booklet and on the Facebook page, Wild about Cardiff.

## Photographs of Forest Farm

I was asked recently if we had any photographs of Forest Farm when it was a working farm? I know we have printed an aerial shot before and one of a couple outside the front door. It may be unlikely that there would be an 'everyday' photograph but do let me know if you have. Contact details P16.

Sheila Austin

## Nature Walks ...

As you know we hold these every 3rd Saturday monthly - come rain or shine! You may also remember that October was hurricane and storm season - and our scheduled October nature walk coincided with Storm Brian. The official advice from the Rangers was to cancel it because of the high winds and number of trees on the Reserve.

I did go up in case any hardy souls arrived - and altogether there were 4 ladies - so as you might expect we spent a bit of time chatting ...

## ... and the Bird Hides

It was then that one of them asked if we could request that *the bird hides be vacated for about 30 mins around 1045 on the 3rd Saturday monthly* so that the nature/bird walkers could have better access to the hide and not feel that they were an intrusion on the photographers. I took this to the Committee. The Reserve is open to all and it was felt this was not an unreasonable request. So we are asking the Rangers for their view and permission to put up a notice to this effect if it is agreed.

Sheila Austin



## St Mary's Gardens, Whitchurch.

*(This subject has featured in past newsletters and I thought you might be interested in this initiative. Ed)*

Some local concern has been expressed about the state of St Mary's Gardens in Old Church Road Whitchurch. e.g. increasing lack of light because of unrestrained tree growth, invasive undergrowth obscuring the landscaping and design of the Gardens, the general air of neglect, the hazardous state of the paths.

A group of interested residents gathered on site on 26th September. They included two Council staff representing Parks and Maintenance, Cllr Mike Jones-Pritchard, and representatives from Whitchurch W.I., PACT and Friends of Forest Farm. The purpose was to consider what could be done to improve the condition of the Gardens, valued for their local historic links, recreation and education.

In the current straitened circumstances, the Parks Department could provide only basic care with Public Health and Safety prioritised. However, significant improvement could be achieved with the assistance of Community Volunteers. Those present supported unanimously this proposal to form a Community Volunteer Group. The council representatives agreed to be the liaison link between the proposed Group and Cardiff Parks Department and responsible for direction and supervision of the working parties. Mike Jones-Pritchard offered Council support once the Group was formed and undertook to publicise the venture.

It was emphasised that this was meant to be **a community project**, not confined to the organisations attending on the day. though they agreed to publicise the project.

A number of future options for the gardens were discussed but it was agreed that improving the appearance and health and safety of the park was the immediate necessity.

The first working party was held on 14th November; 11 people were present as well as a Ranger - with the necessary equipment. Some work had already been carried out (by the Council) to cut down bamboo and clear the paths. After a couple of hours work, you could see what the group had achieved. There is still a lot to do - including agreement on how people want the gardens to look in the future.

This is not a regular monthly working group but a further session is to be arranged for January. There is a website [saintmarysgardens@gmail.com](mailto:saintmarysgardens@gmail.com) for people interested in helping or contributing their views.

*(From an original report by **Zoe Pearce**, edited and further information added by **Sheila Austin**)*

## Events December 2017

| DATE                                     | EVENT  |
|--|--|
| DECEMBER                                 |  |
| Saturday<br>16th Dec<br>10.00 - 12.30    | <b>Nature Ramble.</b> Meet at the Wardens Centre Forest Farm Road, Whitchurch. CF14 7JJ for a gentle ramble around the Reserve to see (and hear) the wildlife. Bring your binoculars if you have them.   |
| Sunday<br>17th December<br>10.00 - 12.00 | <b>Cardiff Wildlife Detectives</b> for children aged 8-12 <b>"Get your Hands Dirty"</b> . <b>Help the Rangers at Forest Farm.</b> For more details email Gareth at <a href="mailto:gstamp@cardiff.gov.uk">gstamp@cardiff.gov.uk</a> or phone Community Rangers on 029 2044 5903. |
| See Over for Events from January 2018    |  |

## Events January - mid March 2018 cont'd

| DATE   | EVENT  |
|--|--|
| <b>JANUARY</b>                                   |  |
| Sunday<br>14th January<br>10.00 - 13.00          | <b>Friends Volunteering Event. ALL WELCOME.</b> Contact Martin on 07952 926145. Meet at the Wardens Centre Forest Farm Rd Whitchurch. CF14 7JJ   |
| Sunday<br>14th January<br>10.00 - 11.30          | <b>"250 years of Water Power"</b> Take a look at the industrial heritage of Forest Farm and the role water played in powering industry on this <b>guided walk</b> led by and the Friends of Forest Farm. Meet at the Wardens Centre, forest Farm RD Whitchurch CF14 7JJ. |
| <b>Wednesday</b><br>17th January<br><b>19.30</b> | <b>Evening talk. Wildlife Crime by P.C. Mark Goulding.</b> Meet at Ararat Centre of the Community, The Common, Whitchurch CF14 1 PT. ALL WELCOME. Tea and biscuits.  |
| Saturday<br>20th January<br>10.00 - 12/30        | <b>Nature Ramble.</b> Meet at the Wardens Centre Forest Farm Road, Whitchurch. CF14 7JJ for a gentle ramble around the Reserve to see (and hear) the wildlife. Bring your binoculars if you have them.   |
| Sunday<br>21st January<br>10.00 - 12.00          | <b>Cardiff Wildlife Detectives</b> for children aged 8-12 <b>Forest Schools Taster at Forest Farm.</b> For more details email Gareth at <a href="mailto:gstamp@cardiff.gov.uk">gstamp@cardiff.gov.uk</a> or phone Community Rangers on 029 2044 5903.                    |
| <b>FEBRUARY</b>                                  |  |
| Sunday<br>11th February<br>10.00 - 13.00         | <b>Friends Volunteering Event. ALL WELCOME.</b> Contact Martin on 07952 926145. Meet at the Wardens Centre Forest Farm Rd Whitchurch. CF14 7JJ   |
| Saturday<br>17th February<br>10.00 - 12.30       | <b>Nature Ramble.</b> Meet at the Wardens Centre Forest Farm Road, Whitchurch. CF14 7JJ for a gentle ramble around the Reserve to see (and hear) the wildlife. Bring your binoculars if you have them.   |
| Sunday<br>18th February<br>10.-12.00             | <b>Cardiff Wildlife Detectives</b> for children aged 8-12 <b>Explorer Trail at Cefn Onn Park.</b> For more details email Gareth at <a href="mailto:gstamp@cardiff.gov.uk">gstamp@cardiff.gov.uk</a> or phone Community Rangers on 029 2044 5903.                         |
| <b>MARCH</b>                                     |  |
| Sunday<br>11th March<br>10.00 - 13.00            | <b>Friends Volunteering Event. ALL WELCOME.</b> Contact Martin on 07952 926145. Meet at the Wardens Centre Forest Farm Rd Whitchurch. CF14 7JJ   |
| Saturday<br>17th March<br>10.00 - 12.30          | <b>Nature Ramble.</b> Meet at the Wardens Centre Forest Farm Road, Whitchurch. CF14 7JJ for a gentle ramble around the Reserve to see (and hear) the wildlife. Bring your binoculars if you have them.   |
| Sunday<br>18th March<br>10.00 - 12.00            | <b>Cardiff Wildlife Detectives</b> for children aged 8-12 <b>Wildlife Photography at Forest Farm.</b> For more details email Gareth at <a href="mailto:gstamp@cardiff.gov.uk">gstamp@cardiff.gov.uk</a> or phone Community Rangers on 029 2044 5903.                     |

Published on behalf of The Friends of Forest Farm and Glamorganshire Canal Local Nature Reserve by  
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