



# Friends

of FOREST FARM COUNTRY PARK  
and GLAMORGANSHIRE CANAL  
LOCAL NATURE RESERVE

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

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A flock of herons in the wetland?

No, it's a composite image of the same bird. A clever technique by photographer **Andre Van De Sande**



Path to to the new hide mid April when the primroses were out  
- bottom right. Photo: Albyn Austin.

It was reported on our website that this **new hide was opened during May**; not such great news at all is that already there has been damage to the gate at the side. Sadly, there has also been drinking and lighting fires in the barn area.

We ask that if you see any anti - social behaviour, or anything else that concerns you, please phone 101 or use the online "Report" facility on <https://www.south-wales.police.uk/>.

Every report helps, as it then gets 'registered' as a problem. If it's not reported, it effectively didn't happen. The more reports there are, the more likely some action will be taken.

\* if it's an emergency — e.g. if a serious offence is in progress or has just been committed; someone is in immediate danger or harm, and/or property is in danger of being damaged — please ring 999.

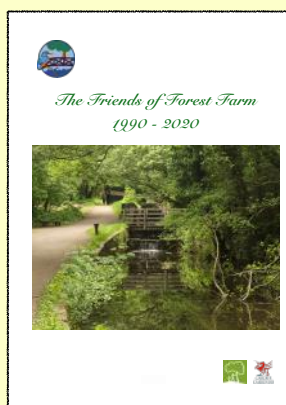
This is the front cover of the long-promised booklet to mark 30 years of the Friends of Forest Farm. The photograph shown is of Forest Lock and was taken by Andy Kendall [Shenstone.me.uk](http://Shenstone.me.uk) who kindly gave us permission to use it.

As mentioned in the booklet's introduction, it is neither a narrative nor a picture book, though it does contain quite a few photographs.

Chairman John Harding had suggested using a compilation of extracts from articles in the newsletters over the 30 years. I thought it was a great idea and I have tried to include a wide variety of articles from the Rangers, the Committee and the members over the period.

*Continued on Page 12*

**Sheila Austin**



## Editorial

*Welcome to Friends old and new. I hope you have kept well and, like me, are hoping to get out and about a bit more - though still following the guidance. At the time of writing, we are still waiting for the go-ahead to re-commence activities on the Reserve.*

*No activities (for volunteers) means more space to fill in the newsletter, so I was especially pleased to get an illustrated article from a young 'fan' of Forest Farm - Grace (P5). Alec, our Ranger has still been busy of course and also sent in his usual interesting report to tell us about the Reserve during March - May. (P3). Lack of articles means I have included one article from Buglife about 'superhighways' for bees and one of 4 articles from the Wildlife Trusts website on Natural Solutions to Climate Change. (Pp 4,8). Both these are topical and relevant.*

*As this is the colour edition for this year, it is a great opportunity to publish the Highly Commended photos submitted for the Calendar for 2021. (Pp 6,7,10,11). A 2022 calendar is being planned - so have those cameras at the ready again!*

*Nearly last, but not least, the 30th Anniversary booklet for the Friends is now available. It was a somewhat bigger task than anticipated. I hope you enjoy it.*

*Finally, we managed an AGM this year, albeit via Zoom. We're hoping for a 'normal' one in 2022. We'll have to see if we are able to arrange our usual October Open Day or any winter talks. It will be so good to meet up again.*

*Stay safe!*

**Sheila Austin**

## Membership

The current membership is 400.

Thank you to all those that have joined since our March newsletter; 10 via pay pal and 2 via letters.

As ever, some members have passed on or have moved away and some have not renewed - so the numbers have remained fairly steady over the past year or so.

Many thanks to all our members for their continued and valued support.

**Pauline Fisher  
Membership Secretary.**



Azure Damselflies captured by photographer **Frank Sengpiel**

This is a photo from the *Wildlife at Forest Farm* pages on our website. There is another one too, *Forest Farm Wildlife*.

**Deadline for articles for next newsletter - 10th August 2021**

**See back page for contact details**

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## Reserve Report March to May 2021

### Alec Stewart - Ranger

*(Please note: any text in bold and/or italics is mine. Ed)*

Things are slowly starting to get back to normal now with staff back in and even talk of volunteers starting back, seems like a lifetime ago!

Spring has been a mixed bag with warm and very dry weather early on but May turning very wet and cold. The spring wildflowers such as the **primrose** and **bluebells** that we planted previously around the Reserve have been



Lovely photo of a Primrose.  
Photographer: **Alec Stewart**

Cuckoo flower.  
Photographer: **Albyn Austin**

Work is progressing on the canal to repair and stabilise the banks and stop erosion and flooding. This work will be carried out at various times during the summer. When this is carried out, we will close the towpath so that it is safe for both the rangers to work and safe for members of the public. *Can people please respect this and not walk through any barriers or hazard tape and help to keep everyone safe.*

We have also started to put back the gates on the section along the feeder canal, up past the hides, then back along the canal to the lock. The gates will be a vehicle access gate with a staggered post and rail; signage will be fixed to this. **The area is a SSSI** and our main area of conservation and haven for the wildlife around Forest Farm. As a Nature Reserve it is important to give areas for the wildlife to exist without too much disturbance. This benefits the wildlife which in turn increases our chances of encountering and seeing the wildlife that is on the Reserve. *So please, in this zone, dogs are to be kept on a lead and no cycling.* You can push and walk your bike down the towpath but please do not ride it. Once the gates and signage are in place we will be patrolling to remind and talk to people.

This is an amazing place on the edge of a busy city and a haven for wildlife. Let's keep it that way as a quiet natural habitat for the wildlife and a great place to walk, stand and stare, and enjoy the beauty of nature.

doing well and beginning to spread. We have plans to plant more especially the bluebells to form large expanses under the trees. Spring **butterflies** such as **Green veined white** and **Orange tip** were very evident and seen in good numbers with plenty of **Cuckoo flowers** around which is a main food plant for the caterpillars. The birds are very busy setting up territories, nesting and some already fledging young. It's a busy time of year for the Forest Farm wildlife with everything on the go. There have been numerous sightings of the local **fox** but the less so of the **Kingfisher**. It's the time of year that it returns to the river and its traditional nesting sites. Unfortunately it has not used our artificial nesting bank, maybe next year they might take up residence.



Below: signs in the canal asking visitors to respect the wildlife.

Photographer: **Albyn Austin**





## **The recently launched B-lines**

### **- a network of wildlife insect superhighways across the UK**

(From [buglife.org.uk](http://buglife.org.uk) - with lots more information and an interactive map of the B-Lines. Ed)

Imagine trying to travel around Britain without our road and rail network. Or imagine if nine out of every ten miles of road just didn't exist – life would be impossible!

Well for much of our wildlife this is the reality – it is confined to tiny fragments of habitat and unable to move across the countryside as our climate and landscape rapidly changes. It has been predicted that 40-70% of species could go extinct if action is not taken to enable species to move through the landscape. (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, 2007)

### **What are B-Lines?**

B-Lines are an imaginative and beautiful solution to the problem of the loss of flowers and pollinators. The B-Lines is a network of 3 kilometre-wide 'insect pathways' running through our countryside and towns, along which we are restoring and creating a series of wildflower-rich habitat stepping stones. They link the best remaining wildflower-rich habitats existing together, creating a network like a railway but 3 kilometres wide from north to south and east to west that will weave across the British landscape.

If 10% of the length of the B-Lines network is filled with pollinator habitat, it starts to provide that essential connectivity that wildlife needs to thrive. This network will support the recovery of threatened species and restore abundant populations of insects that are so essential for pollinating our crops and wildflowers.

Everyone can, and should, get involved to help create the B-Lines network across the UK – to reconnect our fragmented landscape – for pollinators and for people. Dozens of partners across the UK have worked together ... and B-Lines mapping is now complete for the whole of the UK. To date, B-Lines delivery projects by Buglife and partners have delivered over 1,500 hectares of wildflower-rich habitat for pollinating insects. B-Lines has inspired and gained huge support from conservation partners, farmers, and other landowners, as well as the public. Wildlife needs your help to reconnect our fragmented landscape and make space for nature's recovery.

The South Wales B-Lines project has helped one of our rarest bumblebees to thrive. Working with partners, the project has created and restored over 31 hectares of wildflower-rich habitats for the **Shrill Carder Bee** and other pollinating insects.



**Shrill Carder Bee . Bombus Sylvarum.**

### **Photo and Information from Neath Port Talbot Council (NPT)**

This very rare bee is only found in a handful of places in the UK with NPT being a stronghold in South Wales. It's a bit tricky to identify but with a good look you may see the main features: pale blond in colour, with a dark brown band between the wing bases and a ginger tail. The Queens fly very fast creating a high-pitched buzz.

The coastal grasslands of NPT are an important area for the species. They favour wildflower habitats such as sand dunes, with plants with long corolla such as Red bartsia.

Best spot - coast path around Baglan

## **Message from the Chairman**

I would like to thank the members and committee who were able to join us for our first ever AGM meeting April 2021 on Zoom. A presentation of the accounts was made and each of the officers updated the members. It is hoped that we can revert to a full (in person) AGM in April 2022.

Also, I would like to thank all the committee for the work put in during the last year, with a special thank you to Sheila for all the hard work in creating the 30th year anniversary booklet (*which is now available to buy- see P12 for details*). Members new and old should find it very interesting.

We are hoping you will all purchase a copy or two, which is available from most of the committee, or you can contact me by text 07977881757 or email [john.harding@forestfarm.org.uk](mailto:john.harding@forestfarm.org.uk)

## ***Inspiration from Forest Farm Nature Reserve***

### ***A poem, photographs and a drawing from Grace Harwood aged 7***

I am delighted to share these with you.

Grace's family contacted us to say how they used Forest Farm as a retreat over the last year and appreciated 'this haven of peace and tranquillity in an uncertain world'.

Her Mum mentioned the activities they had been inspired to do during their visits. At my request, she has sent these. Grace's talent is evident; these are some of the pictures she took while having photography lessons, her poem (written in Welsh and translated by her Mum), and a drawing.

Thanks and congratulations to Grace on her work. It is a welcome and much appreciated contribution to our newsletter.

Editor.



**Mantell goch -**  
Red Admiral

**Gwyn Mawr -**  
Large White

**Melyn y Rhafnwydd -**  
Brimstone

**Glesyn y Celyn -**  
Holly Blue



Above: **Frogspawn** in the pond near the Wardens' Centre

Left: **Bees** at Forest Farm

#### **Atgofion y Tymhorau**

Dwi 'di gweld Fferm y Fforest trwy'r tymhorau i gyd,  
Dwi 'di bod i Fferm y Fforest o hyd ac o hyd.

Blodeuo yn y gwanwyn, gwenoliaid yn yr haf,  
Afalau yn yr hydref (ro' nhw'n blasu'n braf!).  
Roedd iâ yn ddisgleirio yng ngolau gwan yr haul,  
Ond er oedd yn tywydd yn oer roedd y Fferm dal yn araul.

Does nunlle mor hyfryd na nunlle mor llon,  
Dyma rhai o fy atgofion sy'n codi fy nghalon.

#### **English Translation**

#### **Memories of the Seasons**

I have seen Forest Farm through all the seasons,  
I have been to Forest farm over and over again.

Blossoming in the spring time, swallows in the summer,  
Apples in the Autumn (they tasted so very fine!)  
The ice dazzled in the light of the weak sun,  
But although the weather was cold, Forest Farm was still serene.

There is nowhere so lovely nor anywhere so blithe,  
Here are some of my memories which lift my heart.



These photos are the ones '**Highly commended**' in the **competition for the 2021 Calendar**. It seemed a shame not to be able to include all of them in the calendar. So I thought this was too good an opportunity to miss for us all to see them - just in case we are full up with activities for the September edition!! (probably an unrealistic wish at this stage but we live in hope). Also this will be my last **colour** edition.

I apologise in advance that the reproduction will not be nearly as good as the original.

All 18 photographs are on pages 6,7 and 9,10. I didn't want the pictures back to back in the newsletter.

On page 12 you will see that we are intending to produce another calendar for 2022 and Anthony has given outline details there.

With the quality of the photographs submitted last year, I do not think we will have any trouble filling another calendar with great pictures.

**Sheila Austin**



Photo: Caroline Tidy



Photo Left: Cliff Woodhead

Photo Below: Colin Simpler



June 20



Photo: Ceri Frost



Photo: Adam Challonder



Photo Above: Colin Simpler

Photo Below: Frank Sengpiel



Photo: Gareth Edge







*While we are low on activities to report to you due to Covid restrictions, I thought it an opportune time to use the space for some interesting information I found on the website of Wildlife Trusts Wales [wtwales.org](http://wtwales.org) under "Natural solutions to climate change".*

*There are four categories; Powerful Peatlands, Wonderful Woodlands, Glorious Grasslands and - the one I am going to start with now - **Wonderful Wetlands**. I hope to use the other categories in the next 3 editions. Ed.*

### **What are wetlands?**

Wetlands are special places characterised by high water levels, waterlogged soils, and specially adapted plants. They might be permanently wet or only flood seasonally. Wetlands include marshes, wet grassland, floodplains, and fens.

These are places where water and dry land meet, and are home to a wide range of species, from dragonflies and damselflies, to wading curlew and snipe; from carnivorous plants to flitting butterflies. Wetlands are fantastic places to spot a huge variety of birds. Teeming with insects, rich in plants and a haven for mammals, wetlands offer an unforgettable experience.

### **Why are wetlands important?**

These beautiful areas are a vital part of our natural world – the lives of animals, plants and people depend on them being in a good condition. Healthy wetlands store carbon and slow the flow of water, cleaning it naturally and reducing flood risk downstream. They support an abundance of plant life, which in turn provide perfect shelter, nurseries and breeding grounds for wildlife.

### **A natural solution to the climate crisis**

Plant matter steadily decays and accumulates in the waterlogged conditions of wetlands, meaning they are hugely important for holding carbon. However, the ability of a freshwater wetland habitat to capture carbon varies according to the condition of the wetland.

Good management is critical to ensuring that the habitat can store more carbon for years to come. It is also vital that our remaining high-quality wetlands are protected, as it can take decades for restored wetlands to be able to draw down carbon at the same rate as natural wetlands.

### **Threats and pressures**

Wetlands can accumulate carbon for centuries, but in some areas of the UK we have lost over 90% of our wetland habitat. Between 2006 and 2012, over 1,000 hectares of wetland was converted to artificial surfaces.

Raised bogs especially have been (and in some places still are being) destroyed or degraded through industrial peat-cutting for fuel or use in gardens.

Wetlands vary greatly. Some wetlands are very extensive, such as blanket bog, while others are naturally more localised, such as upland spring and flush. In other cases, particularly in the lowlands, drainage for agriculture and industrial-scale peat-cutting has reduced or destroyed many wetlands. Areas of raised bog, fen and reedbed are now a fraction of what they once were.

Some types of wetlands are now legally protected, but in spite of that many are still not in good condition.

### **Conservation and recovery**

Protecting and restoring the UK's grasslands could play an important role in achieving net zero carbon emissions. It must be recognised that there is some debate over the role of grazing in supporting grasslands' ability to capture carbon, since grazing animals are responsible for carbon emissions and ruminants, particularly cattle, release methane – a greenhouse gas with more heating potential than CO<sub>2</sub>. However, well-managed and low levels of grazing is recognised as increasing soil carbon and biodiversity, while overgrazing can result in the release of carbon from the soil.



There are no walks to report on. but I have been looking at the two wildlife sites on our Facebook page on the web. Over 500 people are now signed up and submit amazing photographs - from a heron eating a rat to a fluffy young Long-tailed Tit.

These are the birds, Insects, plants and animals ***seen in the month of May 2021.***

### **Birds**

Gt. Spotted Woodpecker  
Heron - including young  
Reed Warbler  
Reed Bunting  
Mallard  
Robin  
Blackbird  
Magpie  
Great Tit  
Crow  
Moorhen  
Jay  
Jackdaw  
Long Tailed Tit & juvenile  
Kingfisher  
Wren  
Mistle Thrush  
Lesser Black backed gull  
Song Thrush  
Nuthatch  
Dunnock  
Stock dove  
Carrion Crow  
Black Cap  
Bullfinch  
Goldcrest  
Starlings  
Goldfinch  
Green Woodpecker  
Blue Tit  
Tree Creeper  
Greenfinch  
Chiff Chaff  
Sparrowhawk

Grey Wagtail

Dunnock

### **Insects**

Dragonflies  
Damselflies  
Broad Bodied Chaser  
Bees (inc Swarm)  
Orange Tip butterfly

### **Animals**

Squirrel  
Fox - Dog and Vixen  
Mink  
Rabbit

### **Plants**

Yellow Iris  
King Cups  
Red Campion  
Blossom  
Lords and Ladies

## **Whitchurch Hospital Meadows**



After over 30 years the development of the Whitchurch Hospital appears to be coming to a conclusion. The Welsh Government Health Minister agreed to proceed with the new Velindre hospital and following the Senedd elections it is presumed work will start shortly.

In newsletters of 1999, our Chairman Ted Edwards reported (FFNL31) " This means we are back where we started in 1995 ,and (FFNL34) "the last plan saved 4.6 hectares of the meadow for the reserve; and was the culmination of over nine years work by the friends"



Unfortunately, this was rejected by the Planning Committee and, at the subsequent Public Planning Appeal, the Trust were successful and planning permission was granted for 88 houses on the site.

**Martin Chamberlain**



Photos

Above Left: Paul McKee

Above Right: Fiona Christina

Left: Adam Challonder

Below: Paul McKee



Photo Above: Gabi Simon







Photo Left: Nick Dallimore

Photo Below: Anthony Matthews



Photo: Nick Dallimore



Photo Above: Cliff Woodhead

Photo Left: Ade Ward

## Calendar 2022

Our first venture into producing a calendar proved to be a huge success with all of the 250 printed copies sold within a short period of time.

As a result of this, the committee has decided to produce a calendar for 2022 and we hope to make this an annual feature of our activities from now on.

To recap, this year's calendar was based on a photographic competition which was judged externally by one of the Rangers at Forest Farm (who is a keen photographer himself). The 13 images chosen (1 for each month and the cover image) were of very high quality and many excellent images did not make it into the published calendar.

The format and method of selection of images will, however, change this year to improve upon last year by including images which show the multi faceted character of Forest Farm over the seasons and its wide variety of flora and fauna.

We also intend to redesign the calendar to include more images.

Much work needs to be done in the meantime in organising and selecting the images for inclusion for next year's calendar. It is going to be a tough task selecting the images as we are fortunate to have many talented photographers who visit Forest Farm regularly.

Look out for details on our website Facebook page [www.forestfarm.org.uk](http://www.forestfarm.org.uk)

Anthony Matthews

## *'The Friends' 30th Anniversary Booklet*

### **Continued from front page.**

The extracts have all been previously published in Forest Farm Newsletters. The edition number (FFNL) is beside the extract with the year published. You can look up the full articles on our website.

**Cost:** The Committee have decided to ask for a minimum donation of £1 per copy - you can donate more if you wish of course!

**Distribution:** John Harding has given some information in his Message (P4). Martin Chamberlain and I also have a supply of the booklets. My contact details are on the back of the newsletter.

Committee members will either have copies or be a point of contact to request them.

We are also asking permission to arrange a day/time to be at the barn outside the Wardens' Centre to sell the booklet.

Look out for details on our website  
[www.forestfarm.org.uk](http://www.forestfarm.org.uk)

**Sheila Austin**

## *Sample pages*

**Timeline**

1990 **FFNL 14** Friends group suggested by **Chris James (CJ)** and the idea taken up by **Chris Powell (CP)** (F&F Conservation Officer for the Council). Initially a Steering then a formal Committee with a Constitution. (See F&F for committee members, advisors and Rangers.)

1991 **FFNL 8** A scrape created - just down from Forest Lock, part 1 of article on history of Glamorgan Canal by **Ted Edwards (EOE)** - work started by Oxford House industrial archaeology Society to establish Meirgriffin Water Pump (MWGP). Butterfly garden was designed and built by the Friends and Wainch Group. One of many detailed articles by **Dennis Davies (DD)** about saving the Hospital meadows. **Manchester was 127 - October**. Consultation re proposed Country Park status.

1992 **FFNL 12** The wetland 'scrape' is doing well. A visitor survey conducted in the summer. Insect hunt in July led by **Dr Mark Jarvis**, report by **Dr Mary Gillham (MG)**. Country Park status confirmed after 3 years. **Howard Davies (HD)** was the voluntary work organiser for Disabled Ramp access for wheelchairs and pushchairs which was opened by the Lord Mayor.

1993 **FFNL 11** A new pond created - joint effort from Cardiff City Council and the National Rivers Authority. Article by **N. Del** about residents of Forest Farm Rd: proposal for a light railway at Forest Farm. News from **R and A Coles** of 'new arrivals' at Forest Farm. Advice for the Woodland Fair including traditional woodcrafts. **Ron Coles** and his shire horses: how to construct an Otter Hot, and article on MWGP by **Roger John (RJ)**.

1994 **FFNL 16** 'Autumn Frolics Foray' - CJ's article on a guided walk by Mary Gillham; Rader Fish Pass completed. In May, the rare Green Sandpiper visited the wetland scrape. An entertaining article about a magazine in her garden by **Mairiad Sutherland**; new pond doing well. 1980's 'Time capsule' buried.

**Awards**

Above: 1992 for the Disabled Ramp

Left: 1997 for the Best Disabled Craft Stall

Right: 2020 for the prestigious Green Flag

Below: 1992 for the Disabled Ramp

Below: 1997 for the Best Disabled Craft Stall

Below: 2020 for the prestigious Green Flag

Published on behalf of The Friends of Forest Farm and Glamorganshire Canal Local Nature Reserve by  
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The Editor wishes to state that all views expressed by contributors are their own, as is the responsibility for them.