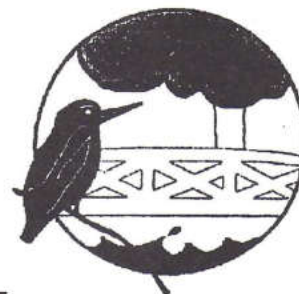


# FRIENDS OF FOREST ARM



## and Glamorganshire Canal Local Nature Reserve

### EDITOR'S FORUM

The focus of the **Friends** activities is now on the formation of a volunteering project called "F.O.R.T." All is revealed in the article by Dennis Davies.

I trust you will enjoy all the contributions, which are wide-ranging and deserve the fullest appreciation. Thanks also to Robin for his skillful layout.

It only remains for me to convey the Committee's Best Wishes to you all for a

**VERY HAPPY  
CHRISTMAS**

and a Peaceful New Year.



Ken Patterson

### GCLNR TOP VENUE

**GLAMORGAN CANAL LOCAL NATURE RESERVE** was the venue for a quarter of the City Council's Guided Walk Programme for 1994.

The choice of the venue by the Leisure and Amenities Department for their Programme reflects the attractiveness and interest value of the area.

All walks were well received and covered by a range of topics, from General Interest to History and Natural History. The **Friends** played a prominent role in providing guides for these events.

Watch out for next year's Programme!

Chris James

FOR GUIDED WALKS

### New and Old Dragonflies

The long hot summer with the hottest July for 300 years is becoming a memory as the winter evenings shorten. As a reminder of those glorious summer months, Dragonflies flourished at the Reserve. **Fifteen** different types were seen over the fields and water between May and October.

In early July a new species, the **Black-tailed Skimmer** (*Orthetrum Cancellatum*) was seen at Llyn y Gamlas. This was a particularly exciting moment as measures had been taken to encourage this species to the Reserve by creating suitable habitat around the new Pond. The beautiful powder blue insect provided watchers from the Hide with spectacular displays of aerobatics during July and August.

A further exciting event occurred in August when Mike Wiley caught and released a **Ruddy Darter** (*Sympetrum Sanguinum*) a species not seen since the 1960s. Both of these dragonflies being observed on the Reserve are indicators that active site management is increasing the diversity of animals and plants appearing on the Reserve. Next summer, look out for these spectacular insects.

**Seventeen** different types have been recorded at the Reserve during the last three years - making it a site of regional importance for dragonflies.

Chris James

MEMBERSHIP enquiries to MR TOM COLSTON  
15 Coed Arian Whitchurch CARDIFF CF4 2ND  
Tel: (0222) 624606



## F. O. R. T.

New to you ...??? Stands for "**Friends of River Taff**", an initiative by "Keep Wales Tidy", whereby groups are asked to adopt approximately 2 kilometre stretches of the river; in our case, from the Red Railway Bridge (near the Water Wheel) to the Iron Bridge (near the M4). The aims of the project are to:

1. Assess litter problems and identify key black spots.
2. Identify stretches of river bank with wildlife or conservation interest which could be developed as river bank walks or as a local nature reserve.
3. Assist in the preparation of a management plan.
4. Raise awareness in the community of the river as a local amenity.

"Keep Wales Tidy" (KWT) will supply technical support and expertise, and assist groups in planning and executing their management plan. Funds can be made available to finance improvement and clearance work, and provide training for volunteers.

The thrust of the project is to raise the awareness of the community to the river as a valuable amenity. For instance, although there will have to be a periodic clean-up, the more important activity will be to try and identify the litter and tackle the problem at source. Programmes to encourage people of all ages to value and enjoy the river will require volunteers with differing skills and interests.

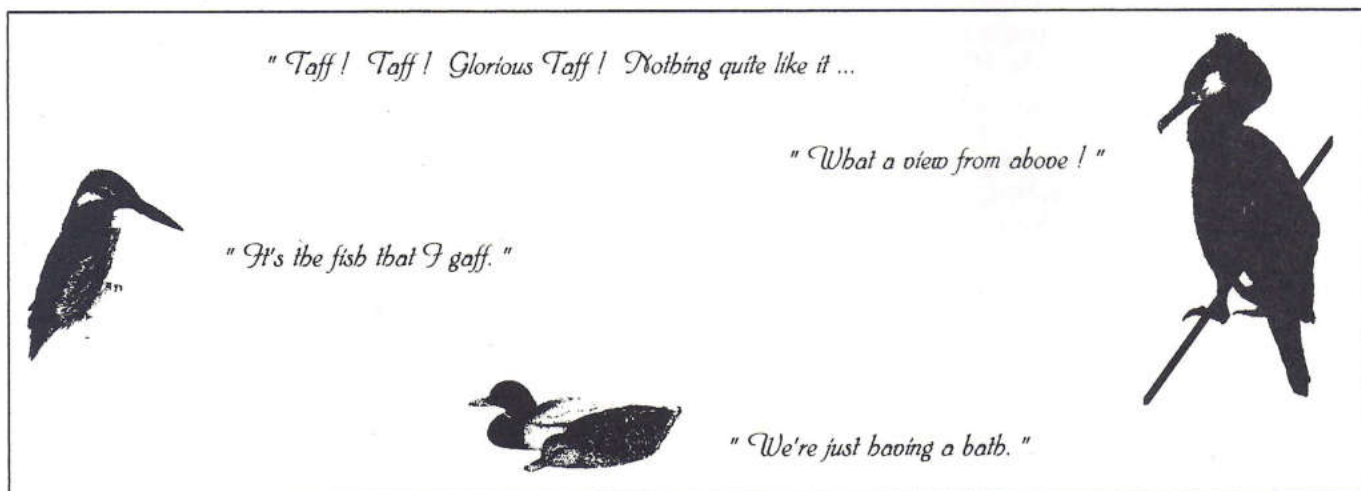
Your Executive Committee has agreed to form a FORT group as a sub-group of the Committee; it can then coopt members of our "Friends" as well as others who have a special interest in the River Taff.

Discussions are now going on about the structure and working of our FORT group, e.g. we have affiliated to the **British Trust for Conservation Volunteers** (BTCV) in order to join their Insurance Scheme, and all fees are being paid by KWT. Safe working practices have to be prepared and be strictly adhered to by volunteers working near the river.

KWT wants an initial survey carried out quickly and, in order to do so, committee members have themselves undertaken the task. In future we hope other volunteers will help. We are going to need a lot of help if we are to succeed. Can you help? If you have an interest in the River Taff, we are certain there will be something you can do. The number of people we need actually to pick up other people's litter will probably be quite small. Many more will be needed for survey work and the very many tasks associated with creating a greater public awareness of the River as a community amenity, and in enhancing its contribution to the Country Park.

*Interested? Willing? Tell a Committee member !!!*

Dennis Davies





## 100 Years Pent-up Energy

### Severed

It was midday on Wednesday 3rd August 1994 when it happened. I was deep in the differences between dragonflies and damselflies with some small boys at the Forest Farm Pond, when there was a loud report, as of gunfire, followed by a rending and a crashing - a sound all too familiar on TV programmes relating to tropical forest.

"Are they tree-felling, then?" "Don't know."

Fifteen minutes later, walking the Taff Embankment towards the Radyr Station footbridge, my way was barred. A Black Poplar branch, full tree-size in its own right, had become severed in the lightest of summer breezes from a 2m long black rift of heart rot well up in the mighty trunk. These trees are much the biggest hereabouts, dwarfing oak, ash and beech: towering skywards massively, we are well endowed with them along this stretch of river.

The main weight rested on the path, topping the new flood defences; the lesser branches had crashed through a small Horse Chestnut into the river, and were already being investigated by three fluttering Grey Wagtails. Swathes of bark had been stripped off and some of the outer sapwood shredded to fibres. Sap oozed from the freshly exposed white wood, making it difficult to get a grip to lower myself down the steep inner bank and haul myself up the other side, but a forking produced too formidable a barrier to riverward.

Most of our black poplars are hybrids (*Populus x serotina* or *Populus x canadensis*), with a heavier crown than the dinkum but rare *Populus nigra*, and taller - to 40 metres. The pale sappy wood is tough but easily worked, although lightweight. With its size in mind, it seems ignominious that some of the principal uses are for matches, match boxes, chip baskets and plywood.

Have you ever wondered about the profligate waste in the red carpets of male catkins, their pollen unused, beneath the trees in April - well ahead of the unfurling of the young bronzed leaves? The reason - all our trees are male - this valuable commodity is an extraneous luxury!

Mary E. Gillham

## A Summer Landscape Project

Our new Wildlife Pond has proved itself already, bringing new species of bird and dragonfly to the Reserve. The Hide has been popular, with daily sightings of Kingfisher and Heron.

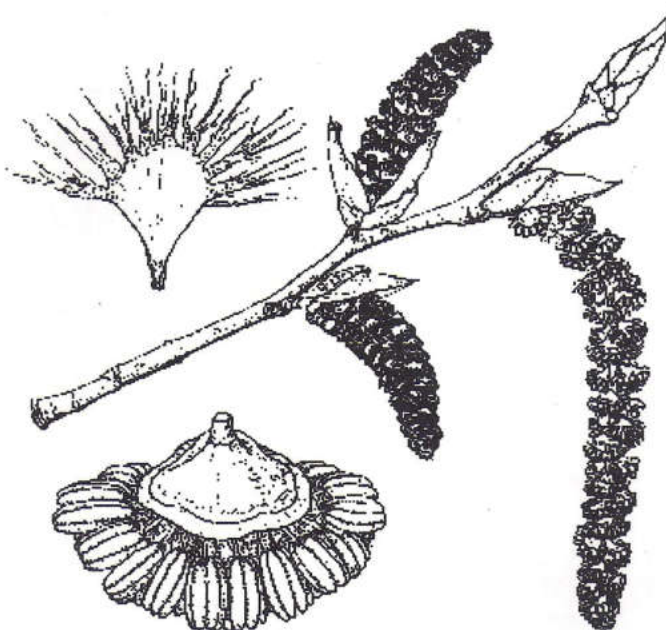
The open aspect of the Pond, although good for wildlife, tends to lose water naturally through wind and evaporation during the summer months. We had overcome this by the laborious process of hiring water pumps and topping it up from the Canal. So we planned to instal an all-year-round feed from the Canal. Because of summer water levels, this had to come from above the lock, some 200m away. Now all we needed was the labour.

A joint Summer Landscape Project between ourselves and the Prince of Wales Committee was set up for the middle of August. Forty children from the Ely area of Cardiff, along with five supervisors, were to work for a week on the Reserve. The job entailed excavating a trench by hand and burying a 200 metre length of alkathene water pipe.

The work commenced on a sunny Monday morning. Digging was hard going, but the children enjoyed it, especially uncoiling the huge blue coil of pipe. By the end of the week the whole length was in; the only real incident was when one of the lads poured pop down a girl's back, and was promptly hit over the head with the first thing to hand - a shovel! Blood was staunched and the lad taken to hospital for stitches, the girl in question taking no further part in the proceedings.

The final and hardest part was digging through the towpath and breaking through the canal wall. The water was diverted, the job completed, the diversion removed, and it was simply a question of turning on a tap!

Mike Wiley





## The Secret of a Time Capsule.

Most of us are more than ever conscious of our local history. Participation in helping to provide a record of the present for future generations is an exciting prospect. I had this pleasure in the Autumn of 1988 at Forest Farm Conservation Centre.

The 17th century farmhouse conversion was well under way when a coin was found in the foundations. Though not of any value, from this find grew the idea of putting a contemporary record within the building. A container was required, so what better than a stout plastic box from the nearby superstore!



That was the easy bit. The vital question was, what items would interest future generations? This was anybody's guess; the new building could stand for a further 200 years! However, one thing seemed certain - there would be curiosity about the changing development of the farm, and the activities of the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers. There would be interest in information which reflected life in the 1980's. Bearing in mind that many items of interest which seemed obvious would be well recorded in archives and museums up and down the country, it was decided to concentrate on Conservation and Local issues.

The Publicity Department had black and white and colour photographs and transparencies documenting the conversion of the farm from dilapidation to rebuilding over a period of five years - which I had helped to produce. Similarly covered were the activities of the various conservation groups based at the farm. Copies were made, and these formed the basis of the "Time Capsule". Conservation magazines, reports and leaflets were added, including details of the **Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981** and the **New Community Programme**.

Then followed practical items. The found coin, various badges representing conservation activities, and eight sealed packets of seeds, which included varieties of delphiniums, wallflowers, snapdragons, broom and pentstemon. A touch of humour would not go amiss in this record of the 1980's, and so was added a staff payslip and, finally, a **Tea Break Rota** with attached to it - a tea bag!

A prominent person, with due ceremony, placed the 'Time Capsule' in a special cavity in the farm, and it was then sealed over. (Sorry, but my lips are also sealed!) We can only speculate as to what future generations will think of those folk who lived in the late 20th century.

Ken Patterson

## The WOODLAND FAYRE

**Sunday 27 November - 10 am - 4 pm**

The Woodland Fayre is in its 3rd year, and this year it forms part of the **National Tree Week** celebrations in Cardiff.

Displays in hurdle making, charcoal burning and coracle construction will take place at Forest Farm, along with many fun activities for children. It's all completely free, so why not come along and meet local conservationist groups and learn more about the many uses of home grown Welsh timber!

Chris Powell



Published on behalf of Friends of Forest Farm and Glamorganshire Canal Local Nature Reserve  
by Mr Ken Patterson, 12 Manor Court, Whitchurch, CARDIFF CP1 1BJ. Tel: (0222) 627077.

The Editor wishes to state that all views expressed by contributors are their own,  
as is the responsibility for them.

