

FRIENDS OF FOREST FARM

Newsletter No. 19

June 1995



and Glamorganshire Canal Local Nature Reserve

EDITORIALS FORUM

Sorry, folks, for the missing March issue of the Newsletter, due to several unforeseen circumstances, but we are now back on course.

Here are a few reminders of forthcoming events ...

THURSDAY 13th JULY at 7 pm

Barbeque with Forest Farm Watch Group at the Warden Centre, Forest Farm. All are welcome to what is always an enjoyable occasion for young and old. Bring your favourite chow and whistle-wetter.

SATURDAY 4th OCTOBER 10am to 12 noon

Work on the Reserve with Forest Farm Watch Group. Your help will be appreciated, and the organisers promise it will not be too strenuous.

Many thanks as always to our contributors. A happy summer to you all!

197 families
joined
'The Friends of Forest Farm'
in the year 1994/1995.

The 1995/1996 membership fee is now due. Could you please take a moment to pop the fee in the post to Noel Gale

8 Heath Park Drive Cardiff CF4 3QJ

OIL SLICK FOILED !

Following an act of vandalism, on Friday March 3rd, approximately **200 gallons of diesel fuel** leaked into the Glamorganshire Canal.

A team of contractors, working on behalf of **British Gas**, were laying a new section of pipeline opposite Castle Coch in Tongwynlais. A bowser filled with diesel oil, left on site overnight, was vandalised; the contents flowed into a nearby stream which feeds the Canal.

Due to the speedy reaction of the **National Rivers Authority** and our Countryside Ranger **Paul Kent**, the damage was minimised. A large proportion of the oil was trapped above the top lock, where it was taken off by tanker with a sludge pump. Oil booms were hastily erected, trapping and soaking up the remainder.

The next day approximately 200 large, and numerous small fish were seen - some dead, others gasping for air but recovering. Eventually, after much hard work, the Canal was cleared of oil.

The Riparian bird population - **Mallard, Kingfisher** and **Heron**, seems mercifully to be unaffected. To what extent the invertebrate population has been affected, only time will tell; the ongoing Dragonfly Survey may shed some light on this.

I understand a donation has been made to 'The Friends' by British Gas.

The layer of scum currently to be seen on the Canal has nothing to do with the oil spill; it is a natural phenomenon, made up of microscopic organisms called **Diatoms** (Algae to you and me), caused by a mild winter and a warm spring.

Reserve News by
Mike Wiley
page 3

Mike Wiley

Price to Non-Members : 20p

MEMBERSHIP enquiries to MR NOEL GALE
8 Heath Park Drive Heath CARDIFF CF4 3QJ
Tel: (01222) 756771

MONEY MONEY MONEY ...

... could make a big difference to visitors to the Reserve. More people would be able to visit, and there would be more to see.

"The Friends are committed to make it possible for wheel-chair users (and pram-pushers) and other people with mobility problems to enjoy roaming around the Reserve. Much time has been spent this last year surveying and planning ways of improving paths and removing barriers, and we now have detailed plans and costings for the project.

The new Pond and Bird Hide have been a great success. We have been encouraged to add more wetlands (slightly different habitat) and one or two more hides. Again, the project has been planned and costed in detail.

The big spin-off of undertaking the two projects together is that the excavated material would be available for building ramps and so on.

The total cost is a massive **£37,000 !!** We are working hard on fund-raising. Our strategy is to attract 50% of the cost from publicly funded agencies and bodies. We are concentrating on three such bodies; two have already agreed, and we shall hear from the third within a week or so. BUT - these grants will be payable only if we are able to raise the other 50% from industry, commerce, trusts or other private sector sources.

We have made a good start with the private sector, and we are having a lot of encouragement when representatives visit Forest Farm to discuss our plans. For instance, the Administrator of the **Ford of Great Britain Trust** came down from Dagenham to discuss our application. He thought it quite remarkable that it was possible to have such an amenity in the suburb of a big city, and he was most enthusiastic about our projects. The Trust will consider our application in July. There have also been disappointments. Not all firms approached have been quite so helpful.

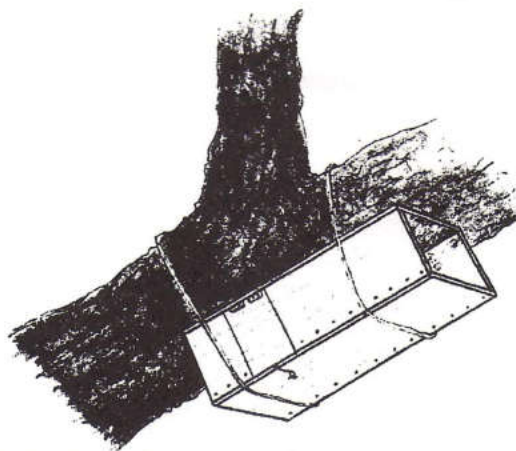
Can you help us? Personal contact through work, banks, building societies, local firms, associations, etc. are often the best way to attract help for local projects. If you are able and willing to follow up any possible source of help, we can let you have plans and costings. Every £1 helps because it will attract another £1 from the public sector.

Dennis Davies

SENIOR Y. O. C. ASSISTS RESERVE

In January the Group agreed to undertake a programme of conservation work at the Reserve. The work will be on the stretch of ground which lies between the M4 and Longwood Drive, and will consist of erecting and monitoring **Nest-boxes**, cutting down the invasive knotweed; some coppicing and keeping paths clear, etc. Some nest-boxes were made and put in place in February; the first knotweed cut is planned for 13th May.

An **Owl** nest-box and a **Woodpecker** box, made in the Christmas holidays, were put up in Roath Park in January as part of an ongoing project. In February, a Woodpecker box, four **Tit** boxes and one open-fronted box were made to order and erected in a Lisvane garden which has a stand of mature trees and an active bird population. So many nest-boxes have been made by the Group that monitoring them all is beginning to be a problem.



(continued on page 3)

RESERVE NEWS

A new **oak bridge** has recently been built on the Reserve, replacing the old one crossing the Canal just below Forest Lock. A section of the towpath has been widened and two new benches erected.

As I write this article (10th May) the sun is shining through the office window. Most of our summer birds have arrived - **Chiff-chaff**, **Willow Warbler** and **Blackcap**. **Cuckoos** can be heard calling from Long Wood, and **Swallows** are nesting in the Barn.

A **Mistle Thrush's** nest, which I have been keeping a watchful eye on, is now empty, the four young birds fully fledged - no thanks to a pair of **Magpies**. They were trying their utmost to rob the nest of the young birds, but were constantly beaten back by the frantic parents. Incidentally, a Mistle Thrush is quite a large bird; when its young are threatened can be very protective.



The Reserve has recently acquired a new Voluntary Warden, **David Rogers**, who is a canal enthusiast and is currently undertaking the mammoth task of dredging sections of the Canal by hand. David says it is a labour of love!

Mike Wiley

However, it is not all hard work. During February half-term, a three-day trip to Devon was enjoyed by eight boys and three leaders. **Richard's Pipit**, **Cirl Bunting**, **Cetti's Warbler** and **Avocets** were among sixty species seen on the first day. **Iceland Gull** and **Glaucous Gull** were exciting finds, along with good 'birding' on the following days.

The two most senior of the group, **David Owen** and **Gareth Stamp**, spent 7th May on a sponsored 'Bird Race', a nationwide event for Y.O.C. funds. On a day when many birds seemed to have absented themselves from their expected habitats, the boys managed to record a total of 95 species, and hope to add more than £50 to Y.O.C. funds.

Well done! **Arctic Skua**, **Mediterranean Gull** and **Nightjars** were part of an impressive list.

A **Barn Owl Survey** and a **Hedgerow Survey** are among the activities planned for the coming months.

Pauline Linck

1995

GUIDED WALKS

PROGRAMME

The City Council, backed by a team of expert volunteers, has arranged a series of walks, demonstrations and 'activity days' to take place in the various parks and places of interest throughout Cardiff.

Next year the programme will be expanded to reflect the increased area of the new **Unitary Authority**, but there is plenty of interest and variety this year, ranging from short informative strolls to a 19-mile Route March around the City, which is being arranged by the **Caerphilly Mountain Countryside Service** and the **Ramblers Association** to celebrate their Jubilee.

In addition, there is a number of activities for children involving games to stimulate their imaginations and 'learning by discovery'. Hopefully the programme contains something for all and that we have an excellent summer to encourage members to venture out beyond their normal walking routes.

If you require a leaflet on the walks, these will be available at the

Country Craft Fayre,

or else please contact ...

Chris Powell

on Cardiff 471612.

Chris Powell

F. O. R. T.

"The Friends" joined the "Friends of the River Taff" project, managed by Keep Wales Tidy, in October last year. The group 'adopted' a stretch of the Taff from the M4 road bridge to Radyr railway bridge (known locally as The Red Bridge); a small number of members has been active conducting a detailed survey of the adopted stretch. As a result, a management plan has been produced, summarising all the information gathered, and developing work projects along the riverbank.

The first of these projects - to remove a fallen tree, acting as a barrier to litter - took place on the 5th February this year. Seven members put in a hard but very successful day's work, removing the tree and about three tonnes of litter and debris, which was put into skips provided by Cardiff City Council.

A second project took the form of a general "cleanup" of the Reserve and riverbank as part of Keep Wales Tidy's National Spring Clean Week in April. Despite being widely publicised around the Melingriffith Estate, only fourteen members turned out. However, the event achieved its aims, around forty black bags of litter being removed.

The group is now concentrating on new projects, including trial management of invasive plants, such as Japanese Knotweed, on the river banks during June, and putting up Nesting Boxes to encourage breeding of river birds - particularly the Pied Flycatcher and Dipper. It is hoped that seating can be arranged along the river to allow walkers to rest and enjoy the river; also, managing vegetation growth and clearing rubbish to improve views.

The group's Management Plan will be presented to several organisations, including the National Rivers Authority and Welsh Water, who help fund the project, at a press event on the 26th of May. Three members of the Committee will attend.

If you have any ideas regarding the project, or want to get involved in practical work, please get in touch with a Committee member.

Ryland Jones

FOREST FARM EIGHTH COUNTRY CRAFT FAYRE

10am on SUNDAY 25 JUNE until 5pm

This is the 8th show, and this year, in recognition of European Conservation Year, the theme is "Animals", which includes domestic and other forms. In addition to the normal sheep-dog displays, there are Hawking and Horse-riding demonstrations and farm animals provided by City Farm.

The entertainment will include traditional folk-, brass- and jazz-bands and dancing displays, including a team from Germany who are attending the Gwyl Ifan Festival, which takes place in the City at this time.

There will be a lot more children's activities this year - which give more freedom for older family members to enjoy the 40 or more craft demonstrations in the main marquee and farm outbuildings.

The Friends of Forest Farm will provide a small display, so we look forward to seeing you on the day.

There is an entrance fee of £1 for adults; children - free if accompanied by an adult.

Chris Powell



Published on behalf of 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.

