

# FRIENDS OF FOREST FARM

Newsletter No. 21

March 1996



## and Glamorganshire Canal Local Nature Reserve

### EDITOR'S FORUM

Greetings to old members, a warm welcome to new ones!

As noted by our Chairman, there is a lot going on at the moment to do with our Country Park. The Committee has had to keep eyes firmly on the ball, tracking the procedures which involve the **Reserve Land**. Your support is more than ever necessary.

**Funding** of our projects has also been highlighted. Thanks to our contributors for keeping us abreast of these developments.

As you receive this Newsletter, could there be hopes of a sign of Spring? Anything will be welcome to chase away the Winter blues.

Looking forward to seeing you at the **AGM**, if not before.

Ken Patterson

### INDOOR MEETINGS

The last indoor meeting - the **AGM** - is on

**Wednesday 17th April**

There will also be an illustrated talk by **Mrs Linda Nottage** on the activities of the first established Naturalists' movement in Cardiff, 130 years old next year.

The support so far this year has been disappointing, so please make an effort to attend this last meeting and catch up on all the latest news. A lot is going on at the moment, and it is all to do with the Country Park!

E.O. Edwards

### Projects Under Way

Visitors to Forest Farm will know that work has started on the Wetlands / Access projects.

You will remember that we set ourselves a £35,000 target!

Although there is still a small shortfall, we are sufficiently well funded for most of the work to proceed. We are grateful to the following for the financial help they have given us:

All Wheels International  
Amersham International  
Barclays Bank Whitchurch  
Bank of Wales  
Cardiff City Council  
Environment Wales  
Ford of Britain Trust  
Halifax Building Society  
James and Jenkins Vauxhall & Suzuki Garages  
Janes Hodge Foundation  
Joseph Stringer Frazer Trust  
Lloyds Bank Whitchurch  
Midland Bank Whitchurch  
National Rivers Authority  
Wales Gas

Some 150 appeal letters were sent, and there were many disappointments. We are particularly disappointed with the poor response from large firms located on the periphery of the Reserve. Still, thanks to the generosity of the people who have donated, we are nearly there!

Dennis Davies

### Membership

The 'Friends' membership for 1995/96 totalled 223 families. Subscriptions for the 1996/1997 year will shortly become due.

**To renew your membership, please return the attached slip to the Membership Secretary.**

Noel Gale

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

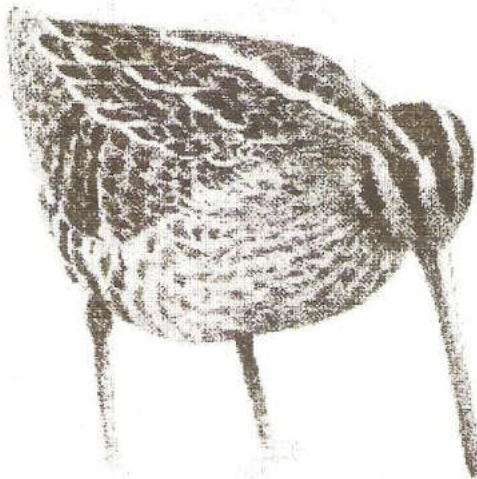
Price to Non-Members : 20p



# RESERVE NEWS

## SOME LIKE IT COLD !

This winter's spell of prolonged cold weather has brought plenty of birds to the Nature Reserve, including up to 17 **Common Snipe** seen on the Wetland, a **Coot** (first time recorded on the Reserve), and large flocks of **Redwing** searching out any berries left over from the autumn.



The harsh weather has not come without its problems. The weight of snow on the trees, combined with freezing conditions, brought down many trees, blocking roads and footpaths.

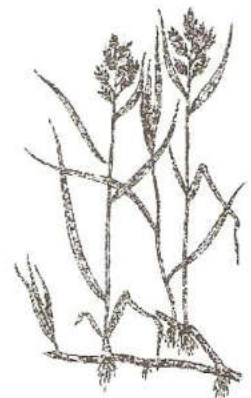


In early February a start was made in constructing our new **Wetland**, a joint project between Cardiff City Council and the Friends. The chosen site, adjacent to the existing wetlands, takes in over an acre of rough grassland, making the combined wet area very substantial.

One habitat so far lacking on the Reserve is that of **Common Reed** (Phragmites). This will be planted in the margins, creating an open water with reed bed ecosystem. Hopefully, this will attract birds such as **Reed Warbler**, **Reed Bunting**, **Snipe**, etc.

Some of the subsoil from the excavation will be used to form new ramps around the Reserve, and the stiles will be replaced with gates, thus making the Nature Reserve more 'user-friendly'. Finally, a **new hide** will be erected overlooking this new waterland. Let us hope that this one will not be vandalised!

Meanwhile, the **Mallards** are sporting their bright breeding plumages and are starting to mate. **Frogspawn** is beginning to appear in the ponds, and the **Arum** is pushing its vivid green leaves through the soil. The year moves on.



Mike Wiley

## Spring Clean at Forest Farm

As you may know, we receive funding from the Keep Wales Tidy campaign towards our efforts to improve the environment of the River Taff within the area we have adopted.

On Sunday 31st March at 10.00 a.m. there will be a 'Spring Clean' of the river banks and the Reserve. This will not be heavy manual work, but mainly a 'Litter Pick'. Bigger tasks will be noted for action later in the year. It is important that litter is removed before the vegetation begins to grow and the number of visitors increases. All equipment will be provided.

If you require more information, please ring me on 01222 - 691421.

Martin Chamberlain



# The PENTYRCH IRON WORKS and

## MELINGRIFFTH RAILWAY

Iron was initially transported to Melingriffith using pack horses. Then 'Tub' boats were used on the River Taff, passing on to the Feeder through a lock at Radyr Weir. Part of this lock can be seen there today.

In 1815 the 'Tub' boats were discontinued, and a Tramway was constructed from Pentyrch along the west bank of the Taff to a new bridge at Gelynys Farm; then it followed the east bank to the Melingriffith Works.

Horse-drawn trams were used on it until 1871, when it was converted into a railway. Two saddle tank-type locomotives were used until the works closed in October 1957.

The east bank section, looked after by the Friends under the Keep Wales Tidy campaign, is today part of the path and cycle track.

Remains of the original tramroad have been found (i.e. stone sleepers) and it is intended that these will be assembled to show its construction and placed alongside the cycle track.

An information board giving the history of the Railway will be placed near Radyr Weir.

Three seats have been erected at various places on the river bank. It is intended to place more nest boxes on that stretch of the river.

E.O.Edwards

### Nest Box Survey

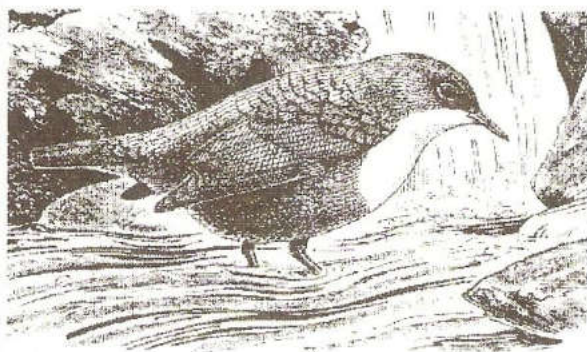
The Y.O.C. are looking after the middle section of the Reserve, and have put up an additional 9 boxes. The Guides have put up another 3 near Forest Lock. 5 boxes have been placed in the oak woods on the river bank south of the M4 bridge in the hope of attracting the Pied flycatcher.

This made a total of 96 nest boxes for 1995.

On inspection it was found that 63 boxes have been occupied.

28 were empty and 8 so badly damaged by Squirrels and Woodpeckers

that they had to be replaced. 23 dead chicks were found - much more than in previous years, due either to lack of food or the fact that there were more Sparrow-hawks around.



The estimated number of chicks was 504, down by 48 on last year.

A Dipper was seen by Radyr Weir last year, carrying food, so keep your eyes open and let us know if you see anything interesting.

E.O.Edwards



## **Hospital Plan Proposals**

The **Cardiff Community Health Care Trust** has published an amended plan for the development of **Whitchurch Hospital and Meadows**. The report gives the impression that they have significantly reduced the meadow-land to the developer, whereas the actual reduction is only 0.97 hectares.

We have again objected and called for much more of the meadow-land to be retained as an open space.

The plan proposes a **new hospital of 200 beds** to be located on the site of the present Adolescent Unit off Velindre Road. The hospital will be used for the Elderly Mentally Ill (60 beds), Acute Psychiatry (80), Rehabilitation Psychiatry (10), Forensic Psychiatry (30) and Neuro-Psychiatry(20).

The existing hospital will be given over to 180 flats. Although the main entrance to the new hospital will be via Park Road, "service" traffic will use Velindre Road.

The total number of houses on the site will only be reduced by 40, and the traffic flow generated will still exceed the recommendation of the Highways Authority. For residents and road users, it is not difficult to foresee the inconvenience of these proposals on the village and the Velindre Road area.

If you feel strongly about any aspect of the plan, you can tell your local councillor, M.P., the City Planning Officer (Wood Street) or the Director of Highways, South Glamorgan County Council (Atlantic Wharf).

Dennis Davies

**DONT FORGET THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING - WEDNESDAY 17TH APRIL - 7.30 PM**

### **Feeling the draft**

The Council has published a Draft Plan of the services it will seek to provide and has invited public comment on the proposals.



We have taken the opportunity to put forward our concerns about the low priority given in local authority budgets to Nature Reserves and open spaces. We have also pointed out that the lack of a "Management Plan" and a "Development Plan" for Forest Farm makes it particularly difficult to attract external funding for the Country Park and Nature Reserve.

Dennis Davies

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.

