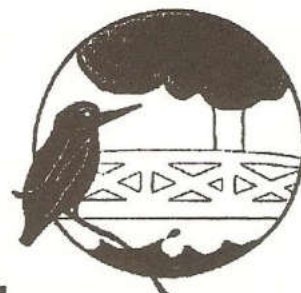


FRIENDS OF FOREST ARM

Newsletter No. 22

Price to Non-Members : 20p

June 1996



and Glamorganshire Canal Local Nature Reserve

EDITORIALS FORUM

It was with deep regret that I heard of the death of Norman Dell on my return from holiday at the end of May.

I share the opinion of everyone who knew Norman that he was not only a staunch supporter of **The Friends**, but a shining example to us all in his strength of character coping with a distressing illness. He was greatly supported by his wife Jacqueline, to whom we all send our sympathy.

Our contributors are again on form, and I was pleased to receive a new contribution - no matter that it was 'Anon' ! £5 is on offer for the best suggestion or story concerning **The Country Park** from any of our members.

Ken Patterson

HOSPITAL MEADOWS

(an UPDATE)

Latest information is that the application will come before the July meeting of the Planning Committee, when they will have available a further report from the Director of Highways.

The good news is that, according to the South Wales Echo, all the local Councillors are against it.

If you oppose the proposal and have not written to somebody to say so, please do so as soon as possible. Letters should be sent to

The Planning Officer,
County of Cardiff,
Wood Street,
Cardiff.

If you have the time, other letters can go to Councillors, M.P.s. and the Hospital Trust, as well as to the Welsh Office.

Denis Davies

MEMBERSHIP

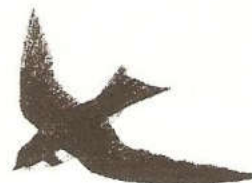
Many have renewed their membership for the 1996/97 season. If your renewal has slipped your attention, please send your subscription (£3 per family) to our Membership Secretary -

Noel Gale, 8 Heath Park Drive, Cardiff CF4 3QJ.

A membership card listing our future meetings and events programme will be sent to you on receipt of your membership fee.

SAND MARTINS and COOTS

A flash flood on the Taff on May 24th swept away part of the bank where Sand Martins were established. There was frantic activity all along the bank the following morning as they strove to find the entrance to the various burrows, most of which had disappeared or were damaged. As it is early in the season, there is every chance they will have another go at rearing a brood.



The Coot was seen on a nest early on, no chick reported yet. The last time a Coot was recorded on the Canal was by Betty and Ron Williams in 1986.

E.O.Edwards

RESERVE NEWS

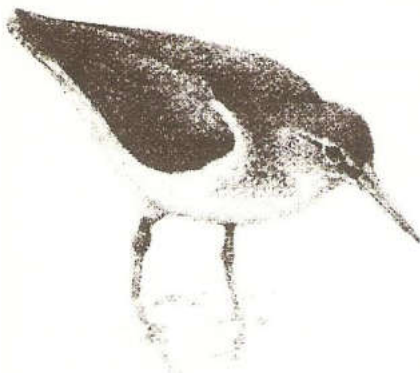
A LATE SPRING

This year Spring has been late in coming. As I write this article (late May) I am still waiting to hear my first Cuckoo. I have just heard that this May has been the coldest this century, but the conditions must have been ideal for the **Blackthorn** and **Hawthorn**, for they have been a mass of flowers. Everything has been late. The **Oak** has only just come into leaf - this year, after the **Ash**. According to the old saying:

*'Oak before Ash - you're in for a splash,
Ash before Oak, you're in for a soak!'*

This lateness of the Oak can make life difficult for the **Tits**, who have to time the hatching of their eggs to coincide with the appearance of the fresh, young oak leaves.

The new **Wetland** is now full and holding water after some teething troubles. By the time you read this newsletter the new **Hide** should be in place and open to the public. The Wetland will look a bit desolate and empty at first but, when eventually planted with **Common Reed** it will become an exciting new habitat. We have already had a **Mute Swan** visiting, when the Wetland was only half complete.



One morning, when walking the perimeter I came across a **Common Sandpiper** lying on its side. The bird was clearly dead. On closer examination, I found the bird to be still warm and supple and apparently in good condition. I contacted a colleague, Chris James (voluntary warden), who confirmed the identification and found a small bruise on the bird's left breast. Chris works at the University of Wales; he said he would take it to work and have it examined. The news came back that it had in all probability been shot. It seems a shame that such a beautiful bird, which had flown all the way from Africa to nest here, had had its life ended in this manner. Whether or not it was shot on the Reserve or elsewhere, and had limped in before dying, we shall never know, but you can be sure we shall be keeping an eye on things.

Meanwhile, **Llyn y Gamlas**, the wetland we created a few years ago, is now holding a pair of nesting **Coot**, a new breeding record for the Reserve - something must be working!

The other day, after completing a fencing repair, as I was bending down to pick up my jacket I noticed a slight movement. As I watched, a **Weasel's** head poked out of one of the sleeves. It ran a couple of yards, turned, sniffed and disappeared into the vegetation. I shall be a bit more careful where I leave my jacket in future!

Mike Wiley

NORMAN DELL

The death of Norman Dell on May 10th brought sadness, not only to his nearest and dearest, but to all who were privileged to know him. During the last months of his life his cheerfulness and fortitude in the face of his progressing illness won the admiration of us all.

Norman and his wife Jacqueline supported the 'Friends' right from the start, and their local knowledge and readiness to help on all occasions proved to be a valuable asset in establishing the 'Friends', with Norman a very energetic member of the Executive Committee.

We thank God for the privilege of knowing and working with Norman, a kind and gentle friend, and extend our deepest sympathy to Jacqueline and family.

E.O. Edwards

THE ABERDARE CANAL

An Act of Parliament was passed in **1793** authorising the construction of ...

"A Navigable Canal from the Glamorganshire Canal to or near the village of Aberdare".

The **Aberdare Canal Company** was formed with an authorised capital of £22,500 and power to raise a further £11,000 if necessary. Work on building did not start until **1810**; it was completed by August **1812** at a cost of £26,000.

The canal was 6¾ miles long and ran from the Glamorganshire Canal at **Abercynon** (Navigation) to Canal Head at Ty-draw near **Aberdare**.

It was built with sloping sides and averaged 30 ft in width at the surface to about 14 ft at the bottom. Most canals were 'puddled' to prevent seepage, but because of the clayey nature of the subsoil, it is possible that this was not the case in the Aberdare Canal. An unmetalled towpath ran along the right bank for its entire length. There were two locks, in addition to a 'stoplock' at the junction. These were at Cwmbach, below the Dyffryn Arms with a fall of 3ft 10in and at Mountain Ash, near the Deep Dyffryn Colliery with a fall of 9ft 4in.

The boats were the same size as those of the Glamorganshire Canal, measuring 60ft x 8ft 9in, with a draught when empty of 13in and, with 20 tons just under 3ft. It was possible under favourable conditions to make the return journey from Aberdare to Cardiff in 30 hours, but in practice probably two journeys were made each week.

Within two years of opening in 1812 the Canal had ceased to operate due to a recession in the iron industry, and it was allowed to deteriorate.

In 1818, **William Crawshay** bought and renovated the Hirwaun Ironworks and also began to buy Aberdare Canal shares, and by 1826 he virtually controlled the canal company. The Canal was repaired, strengthened and heightened and was in profit until about 1872, when heavy repair bills and competition from the railways took their toll.

In 1883, the Aberdare Canal was bought by the **Marquis of Bute**, who had already acquired the Glamorganshire Canal. Its condition was improved and traffic temporarily revived, but by the 1890's receipts were abysmally low and in 1900 it closed. Bute sold his interest to the Aberdare and Mountain Ash Urban District Councils in 1923, and in the 1930's that part of the canal between Abercynon and Ynyscynon was converted to a road - the A4059.

The Canal Company went into voluntary liquidation in 1955.

(Information kindly supplied by T.J.Evans, Aberdare)

E.O.Edwards

PHOENIX TAKES OFF

'RSPB Phoenix' is the new name for 13-18 year old members of the RSPB. The name was announced nationwide in March this year, our group being known before that as 'Cardiff Senior YOC'.

Commitment to our conservation work on the Reserve continues. We began this year with a 'litter-pick' on the middle section of the Reserve on March 23rd to clear the rubbish which had accumulated during the winter period, some of it was windblown and some the result of the edges bordering Longwood Drive being used as a dumping ground by our more careless citizens.

In early May the first of the two-cuts-per-year of the Japanese Knotweed was made, again on the middle section and along the tow path towards the Weir. The growth was noticeably less vigorous than last year, but whether that was due to the late Spring or our efforts last year will only become clear later in the season.

When the nest-boxes were cleaned in March, the woodpecker box had a sleeping Squirrel in it - quite a shock for the person up the ladder who put his hand in to remove old nesting material and encountered a warm, furry body! The squirrel was left in peace to finish its sleep, and the box was cleaned at a later date.

We will be back in late July/early August for the second Knotweed cut, to inspect nest-boxes and to keep paths clear of encroaching brambles.

Pauline Linck (Leader)

WHAT A LOAD OF RUBBISH!!!!

On March 31st over 30 volunteers gave up their Sunday Mornings to undertake a 'litter-pick' at Forest Farm. Four leaders - Howard Davies, Mike Wiley, Pauline Linck and myself took groups to different parts of the Reserve. We were hunting those well-known animals, the *Drinks Can*, *Crisp Packet* and *Fast-food Wrapper*.

Our first objective was the F.O.R.T. area - the footpath alongside the Taff. Then followed the Longwood Drive and finally the Canal towpath itself. The middle lock area had been cleaned in the previous weekend by the local R.S.P.B. group.

Within two hours we had collected over 100 black bin-bags of rubbish, which together with other items completely filled a large builders' skip. May I thank all those who turned up for their help.

We now have 3 new Objectives for the rest of 1996:

1. **Reduce Commercial and Retail Litter.**

We have consulted local companies to reduce litter caused by their operations; this is already having a big impact.

2. **Adopt a Litter-free area.**

Now that we have undertaken this exercise, we aim to keep the Reserve as clean as possible. Last year we observed that people are less likely to drop litter if the area is clean. Any members who may want to adopt a part of the Reserve to help keep it free of litter (no matter how small or how often), please contact me. Black bags and gloves will be supplied.

3. **Task Force.**

At certain times there occur unplanned events requiring volunteers to undertake work on the banks of the Taff within the F.O.R.T. area. If you feel you can help in any way, please contact me.

Martin Chamberlain (01222-691421)

WANTED

NEWSLETTER DISTRIBUTOR

We urgently require a person to distribute Newsletters (about 16, quarterly) in the Radyr area. If you can help, please contact

Noel Gale

01222 - 756771

UNIQUE SIGHTING ON TOWPATH

Young mother, two small but very lively, happy children, one dog, one pushchair ...

Dog defecates on path ...
Children try to join Mallards in canal ...

Mother retrieves children ... takes two shopping bags from pushchair ... wraps one around her hand ... picks up dog's excrement ... puts the lot in second bag ... hooks bag on pushchair ...

Family continue their walk.
Other walkers look on in amazement, stunned by young mother's consideration for other visitors to the Reserve.

'Anon'

Volunteers would be appreciated for litter tidying around **Melingriffith**.

If interested, please give one of the Committee members a call.

FOREST FARM 9th COUNTRY CRAFT FAYRE

SUNDAY 30th JUNE

You may expect the usual high standard of entertainment and exhibitions at Forest Farm this year.
Don't forget to call at the **Friends of Forest Farm** display.

For further details please refer to the leaflet issued by the Leisure and Amenities Department.

Thanks to Robin Sotheby for the layout of The Newsletter.

Published on behalf of Friends of Forest Farm and Glamorganshire Canal Local Nature Reserve by
Mr Ken Patterson, 12 Manor Court, Whitchurch, CARDIFF CP4 1BJ. Tel: (01222) 627077.

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

