



# FRIENDS

OF FOREST FARM COUNTRY PARK  
AND GLAMORGANSHIRE CANAL  
LOCAL NATURE RESERVE

NEWSLETTER  
33  
SEPTEMBER 1999

## Editor's Forum

by Ken Patterson

**1999** has been designated the **United Nations International Year of Older Persons (IYOP)**. Many events are taking place throughout the year to highlight the contribution of older people to society. But it is also about moving towards a society for all ages.

One event in which young and old can participate is the **"Global walk"** initiated by the World Health Organisation (WHO); it is taking place world-wide.

My role during the year is that of IYOP Project Manager for the Retired and Senior Volunteer Programme (RSVP).

You must be wondering what this has got to do with the **"Friends"**. Fortuitously, an excellent opportunity has presented itself to be involved on the day chosen for this world-wide event. Here is a date for your diary ...

**Saturday 2nd October 10.00 am - 12.30 pm**

there will be a combined RSPB/Friends walk led by our chairman, Mr Ted Edwards, at ...

### Forest Farm Country Park.

Please bring as many family and friends as you can muster. This should be an occasion as much about healthy fun and enjoyment as information.

Excellent contributions to this month's Newsletter are much appreciated.



## From the Membership Secretary

NOEL GALE

### MEMBERSHIP

**F**amily membership numbers are approaching last year's record figure of 237. One final push could well see us beyond.

Welcome to those members who have joined us since our last Newsletter, especially those who 'signed up' at our stand at the recent Craft Fayre. It was encouraging that so many folk stopped and took an interest in our display and discussed with those on duty the purpose and aspirations of our Group.

**8 Heath Park Drive  
Heath**

**Cardiff CF14 3QH**

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### HIDES

**O**ur thanks to **Mike** and **Paul** who have now completed the work on the new viewing area either side of the "Friends" hide overlooking **Llyn Brwynog**. This will allow people who do not wish to enter the hide to see what is on the pond; it also means that people with dogs can have a quick look.

They are also proving very useful for the overspill from a group too large for everyone to fit into the hide.

E.O.Edwards

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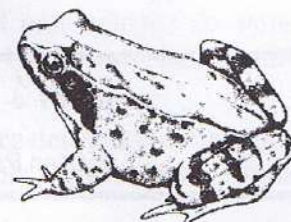
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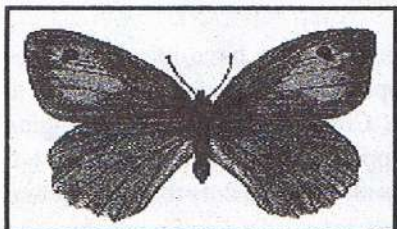
# Reserve News

by  
**Mike Wiley**  
Countryside Warden

It has been a good summer, depending upon your point of view, but the warm weather has taken its toll on our wetlands. The canal has been well down and the new pond half empty. (A leak through the clay bed contributed to this.) The frog population on the wetlands exploded this year with young frogs everywhere. I was walking along one of the Reserve tracks with a party of school children, and we had to stop every couple of yards while the children scooped them up to remove them from danger — i.e. us! The walk took quite a while.



You would have thought that the fine weather would have meant good numbers of butterflies, but the vagaries of the weather (a wet summer last year and snow in April this year) resulted in the number of some species being well down. I've seen good numbers of **Speckled Wood**, **Meadow Browns** and **Hedge Browns** (also known as the *Gatekeeper*).



The **Peacock**, **Small Tortoiseshell** and **Comma** have been very thin on the ground. Perhaps this is something to do with the way they over-winter. The **Meadow** and **Hedge Brown** over-winter as caterpillars, the **Speckled Wood** as a caterpillar or chrysalis, whilst the **Comma**, **Peacock** and **Small Tortoiseshell** all hibernate in the adult butterfly stage.

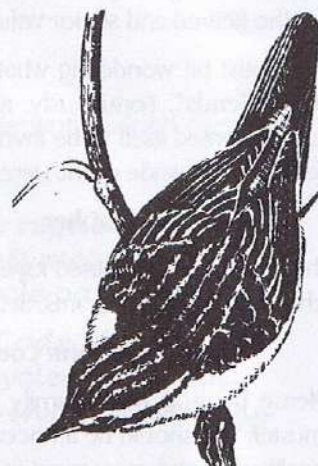
As well as breeding **Reed Warbler** this year we had **Sedge Warbler** on Llyn y Gamlas (the older pond).

Hearing the raucous cries of gulls overhead one morning I knew something was being mobbed. On looking up I saw the dark silhouette of a **Hobby** with its scythe-like wings easily outmanoeuvring the gulls.



The Friends have kindly agreed to fund the reworking of one of the *scrapes* this year in order to stop it vegetating over completely; in the process this will recreate the ideal

habitat for Snipe. So don't be alarmed if you see a JCB doing a bit of digging.



P.S. One pair of **Sandmartins** returned to our cliff in June to nest. This in itself is quite unusual, as Sandmartins are gregarious birds and generally breed in colonies.

## HISTORY OF FOREST FARM

The **British Trust for Conservation Volunteers**, who are based at Forest Farm, are at the moment compiling a handbook on the above. One of our members, **Mr C Mackintosh**, who is the BTCV manager down there, would be very grateful for any information — old pictures, or memories — about the Farm. His phone number is **624900**.

As you will see from another article in this Newsletter, BTCV are in the process of developing the area around the Farm and are looking for volunteers to help in this work. So, as Friends of Forest Farm Country Park, how about getting in touch with Mr Mackintosh and offering your service. Go on, give him a surprise!

E O Edwards



## GOOD NEWS ?

Over the years little has been done to develop the use and enhance the appearance of the buildings and gardens at Forest Farm. Apart from the 'big barn', the stables and the Warden's Office, the buildings and land (including the 'dipping pond') are leased to British Trust for Conservation Volunteers (BTCV). The lease is shortly due for renewal.

Recent changes in management structure and the introduction of new staff at BTCV have resulted in a review leading to a plan to create at Forest Farm an introduction to conservation. It would provide information about the work of BTCV and affiliated groups, and act as an educational gateway to the Nature Reserve. This means the opening up of the site to the public, creating new 'mini' conservation habitats, and demonstrating conservation skills and related crafts.

For our part, for years we have argued for the big barn to be developed as a Warden's Office (upstairs) and an information centre with snack bar. A toilet block should be provided with facilities for people with disabilities. Also safer car parking, and a new path leading from the farmhouse directly to the Reserve via a footbridge across the 'feeder'.

Recently we have also put forward a proposal for the stables area to be converted into a small complex of traditional craft workshops.

BTCV asked for discussion with the officers of the Council, and we were invited to join them. We are encouraged by the discussions to date. If the three organisations can work together, there are obvious benefits. The cost of providing and maintaining toilets, providing secure car parks, and 24-hour care-taking, as well as advertising, can be shared.

There can be no question about the attraction and value of the site as part of the Country Park and Nature Reserve. It will not happen overnight. It will need to develop incrementally over a period of time as resources become available. To do this we need a master-plan, and this is the stage at which we are at present.

We have been impressed with the commitment of BTCV, and for the first time we feel a sense of enthusiasm from the Council's officers. We hope our confidence is not misplaced.

This plan is confined to the buildings — we are still waiting for the management plan for the Country Park and Reserve.

Dennis Davies

## YOC

The **Cardiff and District Young Ornithologist's Club** migrated to Forest Farm for the summer as they have done regularly now for three years. Pond dipping (in the Canal) has now become an annual ritual; the delight at finding **Crane** and **Damselfly** larvae, **Sticklebacks** and tiny **Frogs** never seems to diminish. We also found **Leeches**, which were viewed with fascinated disgust. All were carefully replaced.

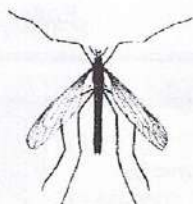
We checked the nest boxes that YOC members had made last year, visited the hides, examined flora and fauna on dry land and played lots of games that encourage acute observation and appreciation of natural surroundings.

We were sad the summer term had come to an end in July, but consoled ourselves with a picnic.

Some older members are leaving us to pursue other interests, and a couple will go up to the RSPB Phoenix Group in the autumn. They will have a different relationship with the Reserve as the Phoenix Group undertake conservation work there as well as bird watching.

We will be inviting younger members from our waiting list to join us, and we look forward to introducing them to the Forest Farm Reserve next year.

Jacque Linck





## WELCOME LACEWINGS - FAREWELL APHIDS !

**G**ardeners everywhere will welcome the success of developing the **Green Lacewing**, which is a natural predator on garden pests.

Articles on a partnership between the Forest Farm Watch Group and entomologist **Dr Peter McEwen** following his National Lottery award were featured in our August 1997 and March 1998 Newsletters (numbers 26 and 28 respectively).

Dr McEwen and his assistant at Cardiff-based Insect Investigations Ltd have developed a method of encouraging the lacewing to lay its eggs on peelable stickers, which can be sent to gardeners in the post.



When the sticker is attached to an aphid-infested plant the lacewings eggs hatch into larvae, which then devour the aphids.

The Friends are delighted to have helped with the research work done in the meadows on the Nature Reserve in 1997.

Gardeners who are interested can contact **Insect Investigations Ltd** on (01 222) 388952.

Editor

### A Letter from a Friend

**F**ollowing our last Newsletter we received a very complimentary letter from recently joined members, **Mr David Lockwood** and his wife ...

*"Many thanks for Newsletter No. 32 ... We are very regular users of Forest Farm Reserve ... One of your observations interests me, and that is the article by Mr Edwards regarding safety on the cycle pathways.*

*Cyclists are required by law under the Highway Code to have an audible warning device fitted together with lights! I cycle quite a lot and always make sure that brakes, lights and bell are in good working order.*

*May I just say in closing how much enjoyment we get from our visits, and how kind and helpful the Warden, Mr Mike Wiley, always is and has become quite a friend to us ..."*

Thank you very much for your observations on the subject of Ted Edwards' article concerning cyclists. Unfortunately, having checked with the police, I am informed that the fitting of an audible warning device on cycles is not mandatory.

I'm sorry, Mr Lockwood, that this is so, but thank you for your contribution.

Editor

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## RADYR CHAIN

**D**uring a visit to the **Pugh's Garden** centre I picked up a copy of "Radyr Chain", which gives news of happenings in Radyr and Morganstown. A most informative read!

An article on vandalism and airguns could very well be applied to the Nature Reserve, and that is why the article on the "Use of Air Weapons" is reproduced here — with thanks to Radyr Chain. [See page 6]

Another snippet of information in this publication was that one of our members had written another book due for publication in October ...

### **"Cardiff's Green Mantle" — on and around the Garth**

It is a mix of Narrative, Natural History, Social History and comment, freely illustrated by the author **Dr Mary Gilham** of Gwaelod-y-Garth. So look out for it!

E O Edwards

## **BITS AND PIECES FROM E O EDWARDS**

**DID YOU KNOW ?** If you want to stop those annoying 'direct marketing' calls, you can register with the **Telephone Preference Service (TPS)** by ringing

**0171 766 4420.**

They claim to be able to stop them. I wonder !

## **WINTER MEETINGS**

The first meeting will be on **Wednesday 10th of November** in **Tabernacle Church Hall, Whitchurch.**

Our last indoor meeting was "The History of the Glamorgan Canal", and it showed how that canal led to the creation of Cardiff Docks. So it is appropriate that we start off this session with an illustrated talk on "**The Port of Cardiff, its shipowners and seamen**" by **Dr David Jenkins**, Curator of the Maritime Collections National Museum.

Make sure you have that date in your diary.

## **STILL NO NEWS ...**

About the Public Inquiry into the Hospital Meadows. I wonder why.

## **MY NEW TELEPHONE NUMBER ...**

**400297**

## **AN ADVANCE REMINDER**

The Woodlands Skills day at Forest Farm as part of National Tree Week is on

**SATURDAY 4TH DECEMBER** from **10 AM**

There will be various demonstrations of woodland skills, and an opportunity to take part.



## **AIR WEAPONS**

### **THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION IS GENERAL GUIDANCE ON 'USE OF AIR WEAPONS'.**

#### **It is illegal:**

- ◆ To carry a loaded air weapon in a public place.
- ◆ To use an air weapon on private land without the owner's permission.
- ◆ To possess or use an air weapon if you have been sentenced to any form of custody for a term of three months or more.
- ◆ To shoot at any bird or animal unless you are an authorised person as defined by the Wildlife & Countryside Act.
- ◆ To discharge an air weapon in the street or within 50 feet of the centre of a highway.

#### **Youngsters between 14 & 17:**

- ◆ May not buy or hire an air weapon, but can receive one as a gift or on loan.
- ◆ May only have an air rifle (but not a pistol) in a public place providing it is securely fastened in a cover which prevents it from being fired.
- ◆ May not possess an air pistol unless in an approved rifle range or at a shooting gallery.

#### **Children under 14:**

- ◆ May not buy, hire, be given or otherwise own an air weapon.
- ◆ May only carry an air rifle (but not air pistol) in a public place providing it is securely covered and they are supervised by a person over 21.
- ◆ May only use an air weapon in a private place while supervised by a person over 21.
- ◆ May only use an air weapon providing they are supervised by a person over 21, and must not shoot beyond the premises on which the air weapon is being used.

#### **Maximum penalties can be severe:**

- ◆ Possessing an air weapon or ammunition with intent to injure a person or damage property, or using to resist arrest ... **Life imprisonment or a fine or both.**
- ◆ Carrying an air weapon with intent to commit a crime ... **14 years or a fine or both.**
- ◆ Carrying a loaded air weapon without lawful authority or reasonable excuse ... **Six months or a fine of £1,000 or both.**
- ◆ Trespassing with an air weapon:
  - a) in a building ... **Six months or £1,000 fine or both.**
  - b) on land ... **Three months or £200 fine or both.**
- ◆ Shooting at any bird or animal if not an authorised person under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 ... **A fine of £1,000.**
- ◆ Discharging an air weapon near a highway ... **A fine of £200.**
- ◆ Discharging an air weapon in the street ... **14 days or fine of £200.**