

# FRIENDS OF FOREST FARM

## and Glamorganshire Canal Local Nature Reserve

---

### The battle for our little bit of green and pleasant land, by Dennis Davies

By now most members will not only be aware of the threat to the meadows, officially referred to as 'surplus' hospital land, but will have played some part in the battle to save them from the Planners.

Following an early warning from Councillor Riley, who made available to us a pre-publication copy of the Draft Local Plan, we were able to arrange an on-site meeting with some of the senior professional planners. We soon realised that there was no prospect of getting them to withdraw their proposal. We had the usual reassurances about getting 'sensitive treatment of the boundaries' and our response was to make them take a good look at the B.T. building and what had happened there. It was clear at this point that our major battle would be with the professional planners.

The meeting was useful because it made us realise that not only had we to 'win the hearts and minds' of the politicians, but also argue the case on valid technical planning grounds.

The Committee quickly got down to developing a strategy and tasks were allocated to share the work and make sure that the best use was made of the skills and knowledge available to us. Ted Edwards, Clive Williams, Dave Jennings and Chris James produced some papers and notes. Clive Williams, Neil Salmon and Victor Riley made sure that I was aware of, and had access to all other relevant publications and documents to prepare our Statement of Objection. Chris Powell and Mike Wiley gave helpful advice whenever needed. Dave Jennings' skills with the word-processor and other technology produced a very professional looking document and with Chris James' help sufficient copies were made available.

In our Statement we object because of the loss of open space and landscape value, and the damage to wildlife. We are of the view that the Planning Officer's proposal:

is contrary to the Council's own policy on the environment is out of accord with the Welsh Office guidelines fails to satisfy South Glamorgan's Structure Plan and Policies and most of all it is not acceptable to the citizens who live in the adjacent communities and very many others who live elsewhere in the city and beyond.

We also object because it will generate additional traffic on the already congested and dangerous roads of Whitchurch, the loss of recreational ground facilities and the demands it will make on the provision of infrastructure and services in the Village.

Whilst all this was going on, you and many non-members were hard at it getting people to write personal letters of objection and inviting them to sign the petition, which now stands at over 5000 signatures. Petition forms were also sent to other organisations with very good results. Members have put a terrific effort into this, and particular thanks to Pauline Linck who co-ordinated the work for Coryton and parts of Whitchurch.

We are fortunate to have the support of all the local political parties, particularly the four sitting City Councillors and the two County Councillors. At one stage our M.P. Gwilym Jones, according to a Press report, did not object to the plan provided the site could be accessed from Longwood Drive. Mr. Jones willingly met us on site and quickly saw for himself the implications of the proposal. He has now written to the Planning Officer strongly objecting to the proposal and has also made public statements to this effect. We are also very grateful for the help and support we are getting from Mrs. Julie Morgan, the prospective Labour Parliamentary candidate. This widespread support across all political parties must surely be the clearest indication of the strength of feeling in the community against this ill-conceived proposal.

The media have also taken an interest. Most of the local 'freebies' have used some of our publicity material and carried statements by the political parties. The Echo printed a long letter of mine alongside a letter from Elizabeth Jones of Llandaff North who has worked very hard at the Petition. Chris James was interviewed on Radio Wales one morning. Ted Edwards, Ken Patterson and I were interviewed by S4C for a 'Heno' news item which also included interviews with children and parents.

So where are we now? We are certainly getting a lot of support from influential individuals and organisations. A possible setback has been overturned by one of our members and his colleague councillor. The City's Draft Local Plan has to conform to South Glamorganshire's Structure Plan. The South Glamorgan Officer recommendation was merely to call for the number of houses to be reduced. I am glad to be able to report that County Councillor Neil Salmon went to work on this one with the result that the County's Environment Committee decided that the proposal was out of accord with the Structure Plan. Good news indeed!

The next stage is the presentation of the Petition to the City Council's Planning Committee by our Chair-

---

## Newsletter N°6 June 1991

---



*continued from page 1*

man, Ted Edwards, on 27th June, when he will also be able to speak for three minutes. Senior members of the main political parties in City Hall have already received a copy of our Statement, and all members of the Planning Committee will be circulated nearer the date of the meeting.

We now have to wait until the June meeting, and if we are successful then, let us hope that there will be no subsequent Welsh Office intervention. Of course, if the Welsh Office does become involved, we will approach that one too with the same determination and conviction.

In the meantime what can you do? Keep lobbying your City Councillors, wherever you live. Send letters to the Press - Councillors (and Officers) read them. The Welsh Office reads them, too, and probably files them away to surface again should the Welsh Office become involved in the issue. Must 'keep the pot boiling'!

Understandably, some people have been concerned that the Health Authority needs the money. If we take this argument to its logical conclusion, we have to say that all public bodies, who are short of money, should sell off their valuable capital assets. The City Council needs money - should it sell off Bute Park in the City Centre for housing development? What about the magnificent Welsh Office building in Cathays Park? It would certainly be attractive to commercial concerns, and the Civil Servants could be housed in some prefabs on an industrial estate. It is all part of the public purse - our money. Clearly, the concept of selling off valuable assets is not absolute; there has to be some discretion and reasonableness. These meadows are as important to us as Bute Park is to the centre of Cardiff.

There is another very important side to this. Probably the most authoritative guide on Local Plans says:

'It is generally accepted that people living in towns and cities have a particular need for contact with a rural environment'.

The pace of life and the pressures of living and working in an urban area like Cardiff are enormous. For some people the stress can lead to mental illness. All of us need to get away, whenever we can, to a more relaxing and peaceful environment and it is why these areas of countryside in urban settings are so important. People walk or jog here early in the morning before going to work or after they return from work; it is in use all day and every day by people of all ages. The lovely landscape and the wildlife take you back to the simple things of life.

The Reserve and the meadows make a contribution to the physical and mental health of the community, and the Health Authority should recognise this. Handing over the meadows to the Reserve should be seen by the Health Authority as a commitment to their declared objective of promoting good health and as a long term investment with savings in manpower and drug therapies. I believe the Bute family gave this land to the local authority to care for the mentally sick. It is no longer needed for the original purpose, but it still has an important role to play in the mental health of the citizens of Cardiff. Let the land now return to the City Council so that it can again fulfil the original intention of the Bute family.

The Cardiff North Structure Plan sector has in the last five years given up more open space for housing than any other sector in the City or the Vale. It is time the City Council started thinking of derelict land, other than the Docks, for housing developments so that its policy decision of a presumption against using green open spaces for this purpose can be fully implemented.

---

## Editor's Forum

The Friends have had their first birthday. The official title is of course the Annual General Meeting, but it represents an occasion to say - we are on our way.

When the Steering Committee was formed, its purpose was to help develop the Country Park. It was never envisaged that we would have a continuing fight to prevent unpleasant bits being added to the surrounds. However we soon found the will to gird our loins and enter the fray.

I do not think it necessary to go over the message so well covered in Dennis Davies' article. One aspect which should be highlighted is the wonderful co-operation, harmony and good spirit engendered by all working together on the various projects.

Workers on the Butterfly Garden, the role of our technical advisers, newsletter contributors, producers and distributors enhance the prospect for future developments. Not least we recognise that every Friend is a valuable link in the chain encouraging these efforts. Our total membership is now 102.

What needs to be constantly publicised is that we all hold a legacy in trust for future generations. May I leave you with these thoughts.

The Reserve

If it is your wish to take a walk,  
And companions seek a spot to talk,  
For the finest place that you will find,  
The Reserve is there to bear in mind.



## Forest Farm Butterfly Garden, by Mike Wiley (Reserve Warden)

### Why have a Butterfly Garden?

Surveys carried out by entomologists throughout Britain have confirmed that most of Britain's butterflies are undergoing a severe decline, and that some have already reached a crisis point. In 1976 came the extinction of the Chequered Skipper in England, and in 1979, the Large Blue was declared extinct in Britain.

The reasons for the decline are all too familiar, principally the destruction of habitat, ie the reclamation of marshland, abandonment of coppice, the loss of over 100000 miles of hedgerow in the last 50 years, the piecemeal erosion of S.S.S.I.s. and the loss of meadowland (some to so called improvement by adding tons of fertiliser thus killing off the wild flowers) and some to urban sprawl (eg the proposed development of the Health Authority's meadows).

Almost throughout Britain butterflies have been driven off the land, after being confined to road verges, scraps of hedgerows, and patches of wasteland, and ever declining woodland edges.

Incidentally, we on the Reserve are helping to halt this decline by creating new wet areas the reintroduction of coppice the planting of many new hedgerows and by sympathetic and traditional meadow management.

Below is a list of endangered species

CONCERN	GRAVE CONCERN
Marsh Fritillary	Heath Fritillary
Glanville Fritillary	Silver Spotted Skipper
High Brown Fritillary	Adonis Blue
Black Hairstreak	Large Tortoiseshell
White letter Hairstreak	Swallowtail

There are around 66 species of butterfly native to Britain (with some migrating in), 29 of which have been recorded on the Reserve (but I am sure if they were properly surveyed more would be found).

A brief life history of the Butterfly is as follows:

A butterfly will go through three distinct stages before finally emerging as the complete Imago (the adult butterfly).

Egg, caterpillar, chrysalis

The length of time that each of these forms remain varies greatly and is very much dependent on the species.

Chalk Hill Blue overwinters as eggs

Hedge Brown	"	a caterpillar
Holly Blue	"	a chrysalis
Brimstone	"	an adult butterfly

After mating the female butterfly carefully selects the correct plant on which to lay her eggs (as the emergent caterpillar depends on this plant as its food source). The caterpillars of different species vary greatly in size, shape and colour. Some take on a drab camouflaged colour, while others bear bright warning colours, and are distasteful to birds. These skins are shed several times.

The next stage is the pupa or chrysalis. Some caterpillars cocoon themselves in a silk thread which they spin, thus affording themselves some protection while others merely hang from a suspended silken thread. Complicated changes take place at this stage, with the body breaking down into a fluid state before building up again into that of the new imago. Finally the chrysalis splits apart and the emergent butterfly pulls itself up out of the shell. After a short period fluids are pumped into its wings expanding them so it can fly. Thus the full metamorphosis completes.

Our butterfly garden, designed and constructed by the Friends, with the help of Forest Farm Watch group, and funded by the Prince of Wales Committee, Shell Better Britain and Cardiff City Council, has begun to take shape.

*continued on page 4*

---

## Annual General Meeting

At the A.G.M. on 24th April, the following were elected to the Executive Committee:

Chair	E.O.Edwards		
Secretary	D.Davies		
Treasurer	E.James		
Members	S.Crocker	C.James	D.Jennings
	P.Linck	K.Patterson	C.Williams

At the meeting of the Executive Committee on 14th May the following were invited to join the committee for 1 year as co-opted members

	N.Dell	R.John	C.Powell
V.Riley	N.Salmon	M.Wiley	

## Note from the Membership Secretary

Please be sure that you renew your membership subscription within the three months deadline from 1st April. If it lapses, you will not receive the newsletter or other information which would be a pity. It is more important than ever that we maintain and increase the membership.

Membership enquiries to Mrs.Stephanie Crocker, 45 Penlline Road, Whitchurch Cardiff. (0222 610043).

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

Published on behalf of Friends of Forest Farm and Glamorganshire Canal Local Nature Reserve by Mr.K.Patterson, 12 Manor Court, Whitchurch, Cardiff CF4 1BJ (0222 627077).



A rough disused plot of the farm was chosen as the site. The aspect being ideal, as it is in a sunny position, and had an old wall on the western side, giving shelter from the predominant westerly wind.

Once used as a silage pen, and a compost tip, parts were found to be thick with stinging nettles (*Urtica dioica*) (a definite sign of man's intrusion), and a vital plant for certain species of butterfly. While other areas were found to be part of a roughly cobbled courtyard.

A central area was chosen as a wildflower meadow, and a footpath with benches was constructed around it.

On three sides shrubs were planted, carefully selected, as a butterfly garden must contain food plants for caterpillars.

### Shrubs Planted

Hawthorn	<i>Crataegus monogina</i>
Guelder Rose	<i>Viburnum opulus</i>
Gorse	<i>Ulex europaeus</i>
Broom	<i>Cytisus scoparius</i>
Buckthorn	<i>Rhamnus catharticus</i>
Hazel	<i>Corylus avellana</i>
Blackthorn	<i>Prunus spinosa</i>
Buddleia(Butterfly Bush)	<i>Buddleia davidii</i>

A few trees were planted, again being carefully chosen.

The meadow area was firstly treated with an herbicide (to try to eliminate the weed ground elder - *Aegopodium podagraria*) and the invasive dominant grasses. Then one sunny winter's day, a work party of Friends and Watch spread approximately 65 tons of subsoil over the whole area with the two fold aim of increasing the depth of the soil and reducing the soil fertility. The area was then cultivated to a fine tilth and a mix of wildflowers and fescue grasses was sown.

The wildflower seeds chosen are all native flowers with the seed collected in Britain. Again the species were carefully chosen with principally butterflies in mind. These wildflowers will be their nectar source.

As this spring has been unusually dry I have had to water the area, so the seeds will be a couple of weeks late germinating.

Why not have your own butterfly garden? By planting the flowers that butterflies need it is quite easy to attract them into your garden giving you a chance to observe them close up.

With the hard work done, hopefully, we can now sit back (on one of our benches) and enjoy the butterflies.

The next 'Friends' work session on the butterfly garden will be on Sunday 14th July, from 10 till 12. The work will be of a general nature, and everybody works at their own pace. Why not come along?

### Wild flower species sown

Spring	Summer
Cowslip	Birdsfoot trefoil
Meadow Buttercup	Ladys bedstraw
Salad Burnet	Musk Mallow
Selfheal	Greater Knapweed
Yellow Rattle	Oxeye daisy
Wild Pansy	Agrimony
Clustered Ballflower	Carrot
Ribwort plantain	Field scabious
	Lesser Knapweed
	Vetches

### Cornfield annuals

Corncockle	Tufted vetch
Cornflower	Common vetch
Corn marigold	
Field penny cress	
Field poppy	

A team of contractors working for British Telecom on their new building had to stop work recently when it was discovered that a wren had built its nest on the side of one of their excavations. The JCB driver (a keen nature lover) spotted the parent bird carrying food to the nest. The site agent was called and agreed that work on that section should cease. British Telecom were notified and concurred. I have been promised that no work will continue until I give them the go ahead after the young have flown.

A Wren has succeeded where everybody else has failed!

## Events - Summer 1991

### 25th July at 7.00 p.m. -

Barbeque at Forest Farm Warden's centre.

This is an evening organised jointly with the Watch Group. We had a successful and enjoyable evening last September. Please bring your own food and drink - a wood fire will be provided for cooking, and some distractions for the children.

The Friends meet regularly on the second Sunday of each month at 10 a.m. for a walk (or other activities) from the Warden's Centre at Forest Farm. Please come

along! July's meeting will be a working party on the Butterfly Garden - please see the article above.

23rd June craft fair 10 a.m. till 5.00 p.m.

27th June Cardiff City Council Planning Committee!

### Watch events

20th July Pond dip 10 - 12 a.m. meet at Warden's Centre.

21st September Llandaff City historical and natural history walk - meet at the Cross at 10 a.m.

19th October Radyr Woods meet at Forest Farm Warden's Centre, 10a.m.

For further details of the Watch Group please contact either Chris Powell on Cardiff 751235 or Chris James (611342)