

FRIENDS

OF FOREST FARM COUNTRY PARK
AND GLAMORGANSHIRE CANAL
LOCAL NATURE RESERVE
WEBSITE REF: www.forestfarm.org.uk

ISSUE 65

SEPTEMBER 2007

EDITOR'S FORUM

by Sheila Austin

Hello Friends. If, like me, you were fed up with the recent poor weather, I hope this Newsletter will cheer you up, as we have good news to report. Volunteers have carried out repairs on the Reserve; work is about to start on the exciting plans for the new pond; we have had encouraging news concerning the Whitchurch Hospital redevelopment and links have been made with the Friends of Hailey Park.

All these are to consolidate and develop the Reserve and stimulate interest and general awareness of its existence and objectives. This is also well served by the ongoing activities. I was one of the fortunate group on the June RSPB walk where the highlight for me was seeing a young Green Woodpecker for the first time. The Warden's report keeps us up to date with what is happening, and on this occasion raises some concern. The summer Coach Trip is not just an enjoyable social event, but helps raise much needed funds for us, and we have a report on this and a historical walk, both well supported events. I am also very pleased to include something a bit different this time—a poem about Forest Farm written by our former editor Ken Patterson. Feedback on the Events list on the back page was positive, so we will keep that there.

Don't forget that any comments or suggestions about the Newsletter are welcome, as are articles—small ones as much as larger ones—as we can slot them in very easily! I hope you are able to join in some of the forthcoming activities but if not, enjoy catching up with what has been happening.

Contributions for the next letter to reach the Editor by 6th November 2007

For contact details, see back page.

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Forest Farm Reserve News

Paul Davies

In early June a further section of the Canal bank restoration was completed. We are now waiting for some soil from the new Pond excavation to be used to complete the task—i.e. filling in the gap between the coir roll and eroded bank. This area then can be planted with species from the Canal bank.

Last week I came across a young couple who were waiting for the RSPCA to arrive. They had seen an injured female Mallard on the Canal, and were convinced it had been shot, as they could see signs of wounding on the bird. I offered to meet the RSPCA as they had been waiting for almost an hour. They walked with me to the point where they had seen the bird, but by this time it had died. I rang the RSPCA to cancel the call-out.



Mallards



Taking a good look at the duck, I couldn't see any injuries on it, which was quite baffling. However, there have been many occasions in the past when birds have been shot at indiscriminately. If any visitors do see people with guns, or any type of weapon, could they please contact the police and ourselves. Many thanks.

I also have to report that the rabbit fence around the bird seed crop has been cut three times recently. The good news is that, as the crop is fairly well established, not much damage has been done to it.

VOLUNTEERING ON THE RESERVE

Visitors to the Reserve this spring and summer would have noticed the number of volunteers working on the Reserve. This has included volunteers from BTCV repairing the canal bank south of Forest Lock using the same process as on other parts of the canal.

This year the Friends were able to obtain funding from Environment Wales for the materials but without the BTCV volunteers this project would not have been possible.

Also working on the Reserve have been staff from GE (previously known as Amersham - a long time supporter of the Friends). They have been clearing fallen trees from the Canal, also laying new paths at Forest Lock and the Middle Section.

The Friends Committee, on your behalf, would like to thank all the volunteers who have given their time to help preserve the Reserve.

The next volunteering project will be Friends footpath project on Sunday 30th September, meeting at the Wardens Centre at 10:00 and finishing at 16:00.

Lunch will be provided and you can stay for a couple of hours or all day if you want to. The project will be to repair the footpath on the middle section that has been badly damaged by erosion and the recent bad weather.

If you are interested (the work is suitable for all ages and experience levels) please contact the Chairman **John Harding** on Cardiff 029 20563874 advising of any special dietary needs.

Martin Chamberlain m.chamberlain1@ntlworld.com

MEMBERSHIP

Our current Membership stands at **253 Families and 1 Group**.

This is not yet up to last year's record figure of 298, but hopefully some more renewals will be received shortly.

There is quite a number of those members who receive their Newsletters via e-mail still to renew their membership. I will ask Martin, who arranges 'Newsletters via e-mail' to give those concerned a gentle reminder. To all who have already renewed, many thanks for your continued support.

Noel Gale

Membership Secretary

MONTHLY FRIENDS / RSPB WALK

Phil Baker



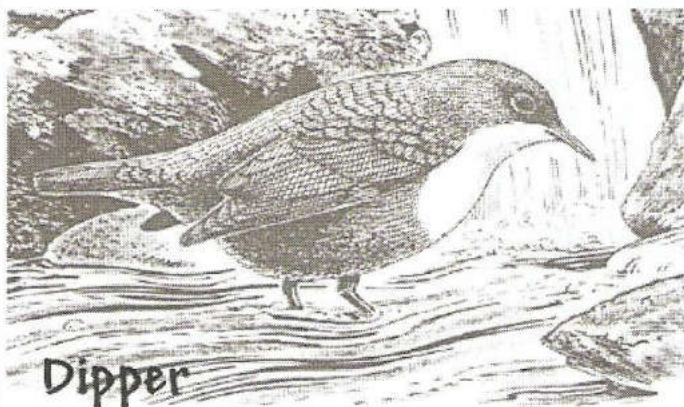
The joint Friends of Forest Farm Nature Reserve/RSPB/Glamorgan Bird Club monthly walks continue unabated with friends new and old walking around the Reserve, observing the birds and other wildlife.

May's walk was well attended, a bit windy, but fine after a showery start. We recorded 33 species in all, with a good view of a **Kingfisher** whacking a fish it had just caught on a railing on which it was perched by the river bridge.

A **Dipper** was briefly seen going down the river, and a family of Grey Wagtails made a wonderful sight.



Kingfisher



Dipper

The other main highlight was finding a **Great Spotted Woodpecker's** nest by the canal.



Great Spotted Woodpecker

Very much sunshine after the rain was an apt description for the June walk, reports Joy Lyman, who led a group of a dozen people, enjoying the improving weather and mixed collection of birds. Joy continues "The usual suspects such as Grey Wagtail and Kingfisher were seen along the

River Taff but the unexpected sighting was a pair of moulting **Goosander**. We would normally expect to pick up these birds on our winter walks so they were a good find for June.



Goosander

"It was hard to pick up many birds amongst the leafy trees but from the hides we had good views of **Reed Warbler**, **Grey Heron** and another brief view of a Kingfisher.



**Grey
Heron**



Reed Warbler

"Along the Canal, we were entertained by the young Moorhens walking across the lily pads. However the highlight of the day for me was the young **Green Woodpecker** we finally caught up with in an oak tree. We could hear the call but it took patience to finally pick up the bird as its drab colours were an exact match for the branch it was on. A good finish to a very pleasant walk with over 30 birds seen or heard"

Joy again led the July walk, reporting that "we had a good walk, 12 people in total and it stayed dry! It felt more like an autumnal day, cool and very still with the Robins singing what I call their sad song. Not many birds around and those that were there were hiding behind the leaves. The Taff was so high there wasn't any gravel or rocks above the water so we only saw a fleeting glimpse of a Kingfisher and Swifts overhead. A total of 27 including Blackcap and Green Woodpecker", so still a good result.

As we continue through the summer and on into the autumn, who knows what may turn up - why not join us and enjoy the varied bird life at Forest Farm?

We meet at 10 a.m. on the third Saturday of every month, near the Warden's hut, and all are welcome.

Green Woodpecker



WHITCHURCH HOSPITAL MEADOWS DEVELOPMENT

As members are no doubt aware this development has been a major concern over the future of the Reserve. It has recently gained importance after I obtained a research paper from the University of Sheffield into the effect of the domestic cat on the wild bird population.

It detailed that, in addition to the number of wild birds killed by cats, it also quantified the impact of loss of feeding and nesting areas. This research again highlighted the environmental damage a large housing estate would have on the Reserve.

It therefore came with some relief that, following communication with the Cardiff and Vale NHS Trust, they advised the following ...

- There are no present plans to sell the land off for housing.
- There are no plans at present to develop the land.
- If there are any plans to develop the land in the future, the proposed use would be for health purposes before any other use.

Whilst this news is not a definitive end to any housing development, and although we would prefer no development, this is an improvement on the previous position.

We will continue to discuss any proposal with the Trust to minimise the environment impact of any development.

FRIENDS OF HAILEY PARK

Members of the Committee have recently been involved in discussions with residents near Hailey Park concerning the setting up of a Friends Group.

Similar to the setting of our Friends group, it was a controversial development that led to the community getting together to form a group of like-minded individuals.

The Friends of Hailey Park are now up and running and, following meetings with Cardiff County Council, have now been accepted into the Cardiff Friends Group.

Volunteers have recently been involved in widening parts of the Taff Trail, and more events are planned. This development has presented us with a unique opportunity to have two Friends groups adjoining each other, and a considerable area of almost two miles along the River Taff is now covered.

I am sure that, on behalf of the Committee, our members wish them well and look forward to working with them in the future.

Martin Chamberlain

m.chamberlain1@ntlworld.com

HISTORICAL WALK

After studying the weather forecast with some apprehension, it was with some relief that the Friends Historical Walk on the Reserve took place on a dry, warm summer evening.

Approximately thirty people took part in the Walk that started at 6:30 p.m. and did not finish until 9:15. It was interesting to talk to some people who actually remembered the Melingriffiths Tin Plate Works and the Canal working; I will include this information in next year's walk.

I was able to arrange a visit to Gelynys Farm; the proprietor, Roger Watt, provided us with a very interesting talk on the history and construction of the Farm House.

One of the main industrial heritage areas is the Melingriffiths Water Wheel, and on the Thursday after the Walk there was a public meeting to discuss the proposed conservation area status.

Unfortunately, this was the same night as our monthly Committee meeting, and therefore we could not attend.

At this time it is not clear what the outcome of the conservation area will be—either to conserve the Water Wheel in its present state or to rebuild it to working operation. Obviously, to reinstate to working order will be a considerable cost, but there are no reasons why this cannot be achieved.

We will continue to work with the Council as the project moves forward. If there are any members who have knowledge of the water pump working, please contact me; I will forward your information onto the relevant interested parties.

Martin Chamberlain

m.chamberlain1@ntlworld.com

ITEMS IN STOCK - SALE

We have a few Friends of Forest Farm clothing items in stock (see below). If anyone is interested, please contact ...

John Harding (Chairman) Tel. **029 2056 3874**.

They will be brought to the next indoor meeting on November 21st.

Tee Shirts	All White	1 Adult (medium)	1 child's (5-6)	1 child's (7-8).
Sweat Shirts	1 Adult (large) in White.			
Polo Shirts	2 Adult (large) in Green		1 Adult (small) Pale Blue	
	1 Child's (9-10) Pale Blue.			

FRIENDS of FOREST FARM SUMMMER COACH TRIP

A party of 47 members, friends and family joined us on this outing to West Wales. The weather throughout was sunny until right at the end when, as we were getting on the coach to come home, the first spots of rain fell. It then continued to rain all the way home, getting heavier as we got towards Whitchurch and Rhiwbina.

Our first port of call was to Carmarthen Town. Having stopped in the main street, right outside the Boar's Head Hotel, some of us went inside to have coffee. The Boar's Head is a famous coaching inn, steeped in history as it dates back to the early 17th century. The comfortable, oak-panelled lounge area had a relaxing atmosphere, even though a party of pre-wedding drinkers was already inside!

Afterwards everyone did his or her own thing. However, most of the party moved on to visit the indoor and outdoor market. This market dates back to Roman times, with the first recorded charter being granted by Henry II in 1180. The present market hall was built in 1981, retaining the original Clock tower as the market office. Inside there were numerous stalls selling a wide variety of fancy and food items. It is little wonder that this market is famous throughout South Wales for the excellent bargains obtainable. In the town itself there were several streets that had been pedestrianised, which made shopping more enjoyable. There were a number of cafes and bars throughout the town, which enabled us to have a good choice for lunch. Some of us went back to the Boar's Head to have their freshly cooked lamb cawl, complete with bread and cheese. All this for just £3.75. It was really delicious.

We left Carmarthen at 1:30 p.m. and then had a lovely journey along the Towy Valley until we came to the start of Llandeilo. Here we came to our second stop at Newton House and Dinefwr Park and Castle. After having a group photograph we were met by the guides from the National Trust, who gave us an informative, introductory talk about the house, castle and grounds. We then split into two groups to have detailed tours of the house. Newton House was built in the 17th century, but now has a 19th century Gothic façade. The house has been the home of the **Rhys** dynasty.

After the tour it was time to visit the new tearoom, which has been built in the old billiard room. From this room we could overlook the medieval deer park, which is home to more than 100 Fallow Deer, and the famous Dinefwr White Cattle. When we went "downstairs" we were able to see the exhibition which explained the day-to-day life of all the staff who used to work in the Rhys household.

Some of our group missed the tour so that they could walk up to the Castle, where Lord Rhys used to hold court. On the walk through the fields and woods one could see the ongoing improvements and restoration work of the classic 18th century Capability Brown influenced landscape. The Castle has been restored by CADW. The parkland is custodian to one of the largest collections of mature trees in the U.K. Some are thought to be over 700 years old. Incidentally a Roman Fort has now been identified, as being within the grounds of the park. Hundreds of Romans would have camped here on their way from Llandovery to Carmarthen. Excavations are shortly to be carried out.



On the way home we had the results of a word game, which was won by Colin and Eunice Towler, who each received a tin of sweets as a well-served prize. A raffle was held with over 11 prizes given out, including a sought-after Japanese-type Kimono.

I should like to thank everyone who supported this event. I must also thank everyone who has contacted me afterwards to thank me for organising the trip and for the souvenir group photograph, which everyone received.

As well as getting our Members together for this Friends' social event, the other reason the trip held is so that money can be raised to further the aims of Friends. I am pleased to report that we did make a profit of over £200, and have to thank both the National Trust and Edwards Coaches for their support on the day.

As you know, this was our fourth annual trip. If you would like us to go to a suitable venue next year, please contact any Committee member with your suggestion. Just bear in mind that the maximum travel time to the venue should be no more than 2 hours.

Duncan Hockridge

MEMORIES AND IMPRESSIONS

This is the title of a recently published collection of poems and prose written by **Ken Patterson**. He was, of course, our former Editor of this Newsletter for 16 years. The contents number 82 and cover a wide range of subjects, feelings and observations over a lifetime. It is enjoyable—sometimes amusing, sometimes thought provoking. Several of the contents reflect Ken's long interest in the Forest Farm Country Park and Glamorgan Canal Local Nature Reserve. One poem is printed below.

Sheila Austin

THE FOREST FARM COUNTRY PARK NATURE RESERVE AND FRIENDS

By Ken Patterson

This Reserve of ours relies
On what we all can do,
Whether it survives or not,
Depends on The Friends and you.
There's variety of Habitat,
Rich in Flora and of Fauna;
The Reserve has woodland, marsh,
And meadow reaching every corner.

Of special scientific interest
Is how Glamorgan Canal is known;
Many are the wildlife
For which this place is home.
The Warden and his team
Have schemes already in formation
But everyone must think about
Their role in nature conservation.

Though knowledge and concern
For the woodland and its life
May seem of little matter
In this world of daily strife.
If we look around, walk with care,
But stick to pathways clear,
The Reserve will thrive abundantly
Through the seasons of the year.

*(Reproduced with Ken's permission. Copies of the publication are available from Ken Patterson
... Tel/fax 029-2019 8658 at £10 each. A donation will be made to RSVP Wales)*

NEW POND

Things all look set for work to start on the **NEW POND** in September 2007 ????. The main digging out and building of the pond has been contracted out. Once they have finished there though, there should be quite a lot of work to be done by volunteers—paths to lay, bushes to clear and also new hedgerows and trees to plant.

The main aim will be to have an outdoor classroom to the rear of the Warden's Centre (at the moment overgrown). A path from here will follow around one side of the pond with dipping platforms. The size of the pond should be 35 x 15 metres by 1.5 to 2.0 metres deep in the middle. The pond will have a hedgerow and fence around it to keep it as safe as possible. In the rest of the field to the rear and the right hand side of the pond, we have plans to turn this into an orchard. We have been told we can obtain fruit trees that are native to the South Wales area, including the Cardiff Apple Tree. Around the edge of the orchard there would be a raised embankment from the excavated material from the pond. It will be topped by a hedge using native species of fruiting trees.

On this note I would like to mention that over the years we have been asked if it would be possible to donate a tree in memory of someone; we thought this would be a perfect place. At the time of going to press we do not know costs of the trees, but we hope to have various sizes, which would mean various prices. The trees or sections of hedgerows could be donated for many reasons IN MEMORY OFAN ANNIVERSARY A BIRTH A SCHOOL CONGRATULATIONS. These are just some that have come to mind; I'm sure there are more.

Anyone interested in details—could you please contact **John Harding** (Chairman) at **63 Fairwater Grove West, Llandaff, Cardiff CF5 2JN** or e-mail taffkiwi@hotmail.com.

There will be updates on how things are going at our indoor meeting on 21st November and on our website www.forestfarm.org.uk.

BIRDFEED

Once again we have to start thinking of the birds this winter. I would like to thank all those who donated last year, and hope you will think about donating again for this winter.

Has anyone noticed that in the field opposite the Warden's Centre there is a large area fenced off from the horses? In that area we have planted a large selection of what we hope will provide natural seed for the birds. The only plants I can recognise are the Sunflowers, but last month there was a lovely splash of colours—REDS / BLUES / YELLOWS.

This is a trial which we are hoping will be successful, but we are still buying Bird Seed as well for this winter.

John Harding

Chairman

Events September to December 2007

Saturday 15th September 10:00-12:30	Monthly Bird Walk on the Reserve. Meet at the Warden's Centre, Forest Farm Road.
Saturday 22nd September 10:00-12:00	Forest Farm Wildlife Watch group. Conservation Morning 8-12 years old. Contact 029 20 445 903 for more details.
Sunday 30th September 10:00-4:00 p.m.	Friends Volunteer Day on the Reserve. See article for contact details.
Saturday 20th October 10:00-12:30	Monthly Bird Walk on the Reserve. Meet at the Warden's Centre, Forest Farm Road.
Saturday 27th October 10:00-12:00	Forest Farm Wildlife Watch group. Halloween Art 8-12 years old. Contact 029 20 445 903 for more details.
Saturday 3rd November 2:00-4:30 p.m.	Wildlife of the River Taff. A 8km walk from Radyr Station car park to the Millenium Stadium led by the Park Ranger service. (Don't forget your return train fare).
Saturday 18th November 10:00-12:30	Monthly Bird Walk on the Reserve. Meet at the Warden's Centre, Forest Farm Road.
Wednesday 21st November 7:30 p.m.	An illustrated talk on the Owls of Gwent and on the Reserve at Treowen including live Owls at the Community Centre, T'yn y Pwll Road, Whitchurch.
Saturday 24th November 10:00-12:00	Forest Farm Wildlife Watch group. Autumn Leaf Art 8-12 years old. Contact 029 20 445 903 for more details.
Saturday 1st December 10:30	Tree Planting at Forest Farm. Celebrate National Tree Week. Meet at the Warden's Centre, Forest Farm road.
Sunday 9th December 10:00-12:30	Winter Birds at Forest Farm. Discover winter visitors arriving at the Reserve. Meet at the Warden's Centre, Forest Farm Road.
Saturday 15th December 10:00-12:30	Monthly Bird Walk on the Reserve. Meet at the Warden's Centre, Forest Farm Road.
Saturday 15th December 10:00-12:00	Forest Farm Wildlife Watch group. Yuletide Logs and Wreath Making Art 8-12 years. Contact 029-20-445-903 for more details.

Layout by **Robin Sotheby**

Published on behalf of **The 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.