

FRIENDS

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

ISSUE 67

MARCH 2008

EDITOR'S FORUM

by Sheila Austin

Welcome to your Spring Newsletter. Although as I write it is quite early in the year, already we see signs of spring and Snowdrops, Crocus and Daffodils—in evidence and on the Reserve the first Blackthorn flowers showing.

Spring, to some, means Spring cleaning, and the Reserve is no exception. Cardiff Conservation Group continues their excellent work cutting back the dreaded Knotweed, and clearing up the litter; the latter task repeated by the Friends—unfortunately there is always plenty of this to do. Litter is not only unsightly, but is harmful to the wildlife.

This Newsletter contains an article reporting on a group visit to Forest Farm by Duncan Hockridge, who led the visit with his wife. The subject of Melingriffith continues to stimulate interest, and my thanks go to Roger Pratt for his memories of the railway. Events have progressed with the Water Engine as well, but there is a long way to go yet! I am grateful to Alec Stewart for the Reserve report this time. And there's more to read about, and lots of events too.

Don't forget the AGM on the **16th April at 7.30**. There will be a talk by **Mr Peter Gillard** on 'People and Places of Cardiff'. We look forward to seeing you there.

Contributions for the next Newsletter to reach the Editor by 6th May 2008 ...

Mrs Sheila Austin, 1 Heol Gwrgan, Whitchurch, CF14 1PP ...

or email to: albinaustin@ndsl.org.uk

MEMBERSHIP

The latest Membership count for the current year stands at **283 Families and 1 Group**. During the year some 22 families have joined us and to date, for varying reasons, 37 families have not renewed their subscriptions.

RENEWAL

Our new year (2008/2009) will shortly be on us. A Membership Renewal Form can be found on the A.G.M. notice enclosed with your Newsletter. The annual subscription is kept at **£5** for both individuals and families.

Thank you all for your continued support.

Noel Gale (Membership Secretary)

Reserve News	2	Donation	7
Spring Clean	3	Melingriffith Water Engine	8
Vacancies	3	Melingriffith Railway	9
RSPB Walk	4, 5	New Pond	9
RSPB Conservation Group	5	Walking Club	10
Orchard	6, 7	National & Local Events	11, 12

Forest Farm Reserve News

Alec Stewart

This Winter has seen progress around the Warden Centre on the Pond and outdoor classroom. However, we have had a setback with the Pond, and the contractors have been called back in to resolve the problem; we should be able to report on progress in the next Newsletter. I have started a restoration project on the Butterfly Garden and Two Ponds Field, coppicing **Buddleia** and Willow in the Butterfly Garden, clearing the old wall and opening the site out to let in more light. I intend to keep on top of this with a regular cutting regime for the meadow.



Great
Spotted
Woodpecker

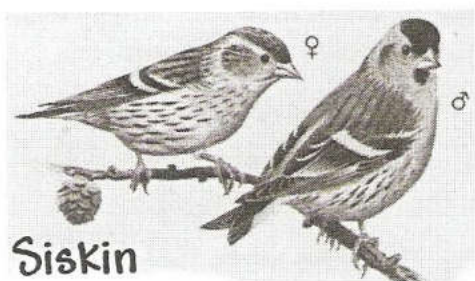
The work in Two Ponds Field involved coppicing and bramble clearance with the help of volunteers again opening the site up, which has been helpful to the bird ringers who use this area. Indeed, there has been some excellent ringing records for the period, one of the highlights being nine individual **Great Spotted Woodpeckers**.

We have also started to lay the hedge on the side of the Conservation meadow, with the BTCV volunteers doing some sterling work. Half the hedge will be finished this year, with the remainder being completed next season.



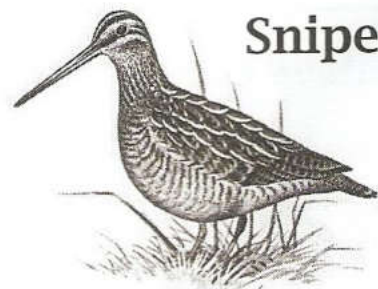
Buddleia

There has been some excellent wildlife around the Reserve with some interesting Fungi putting in an appearance, such as Scarlet Elf Cap, a beautiful red cup fungus, found in the damp parts of the Reserve. Particularly pleasing are the large numbers of **Snipe** using the scrapes we had cut back earlier in the season. I counted in excess of 20 individuals on one occasion with seven feeding very close to the Hide. We have also had good numbers of Water Rail showing well



Siskin

with 4 being spotted by myself early one morning. Large flocks of **Siskin** have been feeding around the Reserve and Brambling being sighted in various places, particularly in the Two Ponds area. On one occasion Paul counted 17 Herons flying above Long Wood drive as the birds prepare for nesting.



Snipe

As I write this, already the signs of Winter seem to be disappearing with Hazel Catkins out since December, Hawthorn leaves emerging and the first Blackthorn flowers showing. Spring is on the way. I hope it's going to be a good one!

SPRING CLEAN at FOREST FARM

On Sunday the 30th March The Friends will undertake their annual Spring Clean of the Nature Reserve. Last year twenty volunteers joined Paul Davies and myself on our annual event now in its thirteenth year.

We need as many volunteers as possible to help us get the Reserve ready for the spring and summer. Whilst litter may not look nice, more importantly it can also be a major danger to wildlife.

This is not hard manual work. It is suitable for all ages, similar to gentle gardening and you can work at your own pace.

Meet at the Wardens Centre at 10:00 a.m. All equipment will be supplied and we should be finished by midday.

For more information please ring **Martin Chamberlain** on **029 20658488** or email ...

m.chamberlain1@ntlworld.com

or visit our website ... **www.forestfarm.org.uk**

VACANCIES

WEBSITE

I'm afraid I don't know anything about running a website, or what it entails, but we need someone who has the know-how and would be willing to take on the task of looking after THE FRIENDS OF FOREST FARM website.

If you can help in this matter, could you please contact a Committee member or myself.

MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY

After 12 years in this position Noel Gale has decided it's time to take a well-deserved break.

This will mean that at the A.G.M. on **Wednesday 16th April 2008** we will be looking for a replacement.

If anyone would be willing to fill this position, or knows of someone else that might be interested, could you please contact any member of the Committee or myself.

JOHN HARDING (Chairman)

Telephone 029 2056 3874

MONTHLY FRIENDS / RSPB WALK

Phil Baker

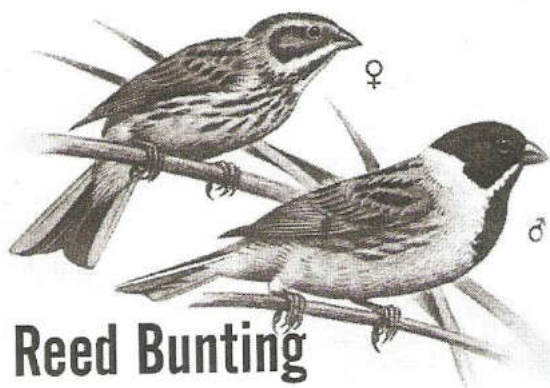


The joint Friends of Forest Farm Nature Reserve/RSPB/Glamorgan Bird Club monthly walks continue come wind or weather, with friends new and old walking around the Reserve, observing the birds and other wildlife.

Our November walk took place on a sunny, if rather cool, day. 20 of us, including 2 children followed our usual route around the Reserve, totalling 31 species, even more than the previous month. Along the river we saw **Grey Wagtail**, Dipper, Kingfisher and a Black-headed Gull on one of the rocks in the river. There was also a good variety on show at the first hide, with Finches, Tits, Thrushes and **Reed Bunting**.



Grey Wagtail



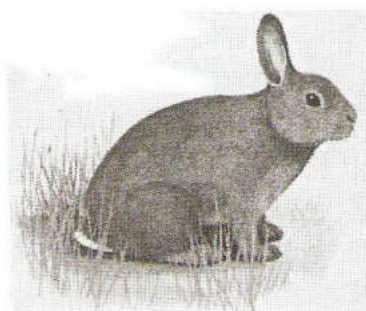
Reed Bunting

We also saw **Fox**, **Rabbits** and of course **Grey Squirrels**. An appearance by Great Spotted Woodpecker by the Canal was satisfying after hearing it call for some time. An attempt to attract birds to the feeding platform by the gate

alongside the notice board was thwarted by horses coming from the field and stealing all the seed!

With December's walk only just over a week before Christmas, it was understandable that only 9 people turned out on quite a cool day, but we were rewarded with 29 species in all.

Blackbirds were everywhere, supplemented by continental birds as usual at this time of year. Cormorants were fishing in the river, with a couple of young birds stationed on a convenient log. The Kingfisher was seen along the canal, always a welcome splash of colour.



Last August, I stated that that month's walk was the wettest and windiest we had ever had – well, this January's must be a contender for that record! 4 brave walkers turned out, and half of them admitted they only came to get out of the darkness of being indoors, and get some fresh air! However, we were rewarded for our efforts, with a total of 30 species recorded, the best viewing, understandably, being from the first hide, over the feeding station. A highlight of that being a Wren coming so close, it seemed to be within touching distance! We also had fine views of a Treecreeper, Reed Buntings, Little Grebe and Kingfisher, as well as Blackbird, Bullfinch, Chaffinch, Song Thrush and Blue, Great and Coal Tits. By contrast, the river was so high and fast flowing that there was nothing to be seen.

I am looking forward to some better weather over the next few months, so 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 (whatever the weather!), near the warden's hut, and all are welcome.

RSPB CARDIFF CONSERVATION GROUP

Doing something positive

Our pre-Christmas visit to the Reserve was to tackle the job of pruning dead wood on some rather stunted old trees and clearing a small amount of Bramble.

In January, we were nearly rained off. The job in hand was to lift a small group of self-seeded trees that were growing on the road edge, and to replant a new hedge line.

.....

Conservation work at Forest Farm, Longwood Drive, Whitchurch will be held on the coming **Saturday mornings 10:30 to 12:30 p.m.**

February 23rd	General clearing—meadow area Middle entrance
March 29th	BIG LITTER PICK Middle entrance
April 26th	Knotweed, first cut and scrub clearing Top entrance
May 24th	Check Nest Boxes and Wild Flower survey Middle entrance
June 21st	Second cut of Knotweed and weed between new hedge Middle entrance

.....

The group meets for a few hours during the morning roughly once a month. It is not particularly strenuous work—similar to an active gardener (you work to your own level). An extra pair of hands is always welcome. If you feel you would like to get involved ... *just turn up—or, better still, give me a ring ...*

HUGH HARRISON

029 2070 4889

ORCHARD

John Harding

You may recall that we had a tree planting day on 1st December 2007. Apart from the significance of the event itself, the day was made more memorable by the dreadful weather – intermittent hailstorms increased the fun!! Fortunately most of the tree planting was finished before the worst of the weather began.

About 15-20 people were present – all ages – and most had a go at planting one of the 11 trees. The Rangers had kindly prepared the 'plots' for us.

The names of the trees planted are:-

1 Machen	1 Brith Mawr	1 Morgan Sweet
2 Lord Lambourne	2 Brownlees Russet	1 Pitmasten Pineapple
2 St. Cecelia	1 Cissy	
Total 11 trees.		

All the trees planted so far are Apple. Next Winter we hope to plant about 30 more assorted fruit trees. As yet I have not ordered them but should have done by the next indoor meeting.





Rosemary Waters has kindly sent in some photographs of the event.

DONATION

Friends of Forest Farm have received another generous donation.

Mrs Susanne Martin has sent us **£250** in memory of her mother, Mrs Shayne Thomas.

This gift is greatly appreciated, and will be used to buy more trees for the new orchard.

Sheila Austin (Editor)

MELINGRIFFITH WATER ENGINE

Martin Chamberlain

Robin Williams, from the Gwent Archaeological Trust, undertook an informative talk on Wednesday 23rd January at Whitchurch Community Centre, at a public meeting.

Robin's talk not only illustrated the historical interest, but also the importance of the engine to the development of Cardiff and the surrounding area.

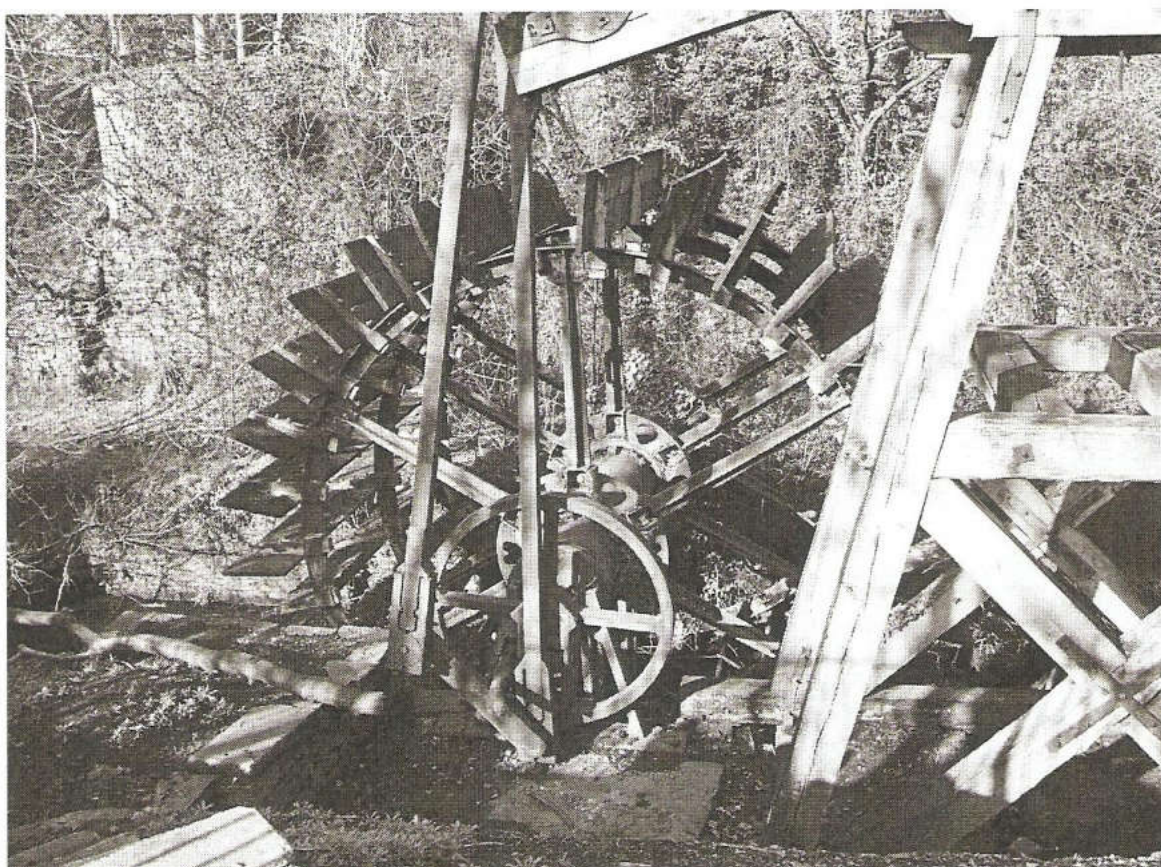
During the talk, the engineering expertise required to restore the engine, as well as the considerable cost involved, was evident to all.

The event was jointly organised by the Friends of Forest Farm and the Friends of Hailey Park. It was apparent that this project is beyond the capabilities of both organisations, although we agreed that we would support and help in any way we could.

As we go to press, another public meeting is being held, with the objective of forming an organisation to restore the Water Engine. With the help of local councillors, Cardiff County Council have also announced that they will provide funding towards the restoration costs.

Regular updates will appear in future Newsletters, and on the Website.

Hopefully the engine will be restored for future generations into the 21st century.



MELINGRIFFITH RAILWAY

Roger Pratt

The December issue of the Friends' Newsletter about the Railway, from the works across the river to Taff's Well, brought back a particular memory for me. This incident with my father happened in 1957, when I was fourteen and Dad was fifty.

Dad had had his leg blown off in an air raid in Cardiff during the war—the same raid that devastated Llandaff Cathedral. This didn't stop him riding a motorbike as he had done since the 1920s. I usually went with him on the back of the bike (a 125 Royal Enfield).

We ended up at Melingriffith one day, and took the road to Forest Farm alongside the railway.

At this time the line was very overgrown—the sleepers disappearing under grass and mud. Where the lane turned right into Forest Farm the railway went straight on, where the Taff Trail goes now. For some reason Dad decided that we would ride between the rails along the line. This didn't seem to be a good idea to me, although it didn't look as if it had seen a train for years.

We set off on the sleepers until we came to a bend, probably near the Weir. A steam engine was heading straight for us! This must have been "Emerald Isle", fortunately only going at a walking pace.

We scrambled off the bike, dragging it into the undergrowth beside the track as it chuffed very slowly past. The driver didn't seem particularly perturbed.

Dad continued on motorbikes into his late seventies, until a skid on diesel stopped his exploits. But he continued on a pushbike until he fell into a road works excavation, and broke his wrist, well in his eighties.

He died at the age of ninety-two in 1999, and is greatly missed.

THE NEW POND

John Harding (Chairman)

The Pond has definitely got a leak! This now can clearly be seen; the seam in the lowest part of the Pond has come apart.

Someone from the firm who laid the Pond is coming to check it and arrange to solve the problem.

Hopefully, by the time you are reading this they might have sorted it out !!!!

WALKING CLUB VISIT

Duncan Hockridge

The Compass Project, in Newport, was set up to help people who are socially excluded from society. Within that organisation a Walking Club has been instigated so as to take their clients, once a month, to visit places of interest.

At the end of January, Joy and I took a party of eleven clients around Forest Farm for a two-and-a-half hour walk, showing all the interesting features.

During the visit we called at the Forest Farm Conservation Centre, and had a snack lunch, kindly provided by the Friends group. At the end of the visit we were able to visit the Melingriffith Waterwheel/Pump. This was of interest, as it was featured in a T.V. news item the evening before. A vote of thanks was given by the project co-ordinator, Graham Cockeram.

In view of the great interest shown during the visit, and the obvious benefits to the visitors, I feel that we should now consider looking at developing this type of weekday visit, for outside organisations, separate from our usual successful monthly walks.

This will be a matter that will be included on the agenda for a future Committee Meeting.



We have received this information from the Community Park Rangers.
It may be of interest to you.

woodlands-junior.kent.sch.uk/customs/questions/specialdays

NATIONAL EVENT DATES for the DIARY 2008

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| • National Science & Engineering Week | 7th—16th March |
| • World Forestry Day | 21st March |
| • World Day for Water | 22nd March |
| • World Health Day | 7th April |
| • RSPCA Week | 28th April—4th May |
| • Compost Awareness Week | 4th—10th May |
| • International Dawn Chorus Day | 4th May |
| • World Environment Day | 5th June |
| • National Moth Night | 7th June |
| • National Bike Week | 14th—22nd June |
| • National Badger Day | 16th June |
| • National Insect Week | 23rd—29th June |

LOCAL EVENTS

MARCH 2008

Saturday 15th March 10:00-12:30	Monthly Bird Walk on the Reserve. Meet at the Wardens' Centre, Forest Farm Road.
Wednesday 19th March 7.30 p.m.	An illustrated talk on the Newport Wetlands by Kevin Dupe at Whitchurch Community Centre, Tyn Y Pwll Road, Whitchurch, Cardiff.
Saturday 29th March 10:30-12:30 p.m.	RSPB Cardiff Conservation Group. BIG LITTER PICK. Meet at Middle entrance.
Saturday 29th March 10:00-12:00	Watch Club Age Group 8-12. Photography Workshop. Guidance on how to create that perfect photograph, using the environment around you.
Sunday 30th March 10:00-12 noon	Spring clean at Forest Farm. Meet at the Wardens' Centre, Forest Farm Road

APRIL to JUNE 2008

Saturday 12th April 10:00-12:00	Watch Club Age group 8-12. Visit Penarth Lifeboat Station. A tour of Penarth Lifeboat station. Meet at Cliff Hill, the Esplanade, Penarth. Please donate £2 per person to this worthy cause.
Wednesday 16th April 7:30 p.m.	AGM followed by talk: 'People & Places of Cardiff' by Peter Gillard, at Whitchurch Community Centre, Tyn y Pwll Road, Whitchurch, Cardiff.
Saturday 19th April 10:00-12:30	Monthly Bird Walk on the Reserve. Meet at the Wardens' Centre, Forest Farm Road.
Saturday 26th April 10:30-12:30 p.m.	RSPB Cardiff Conservation Group. Knotweed first cut, scrub clearance. Meet at Top entrance.
Sunday 4th May 10:00-12:00	Spring Wildlife at Forest Farm. Free. Meet at the Wardens' Centre, Forest Farm road.
Wednesday 7th May 7:00 p.m.	Foods of the Forest. £2.50 per person. Meet at the Wardens' Centre, Forest Farm road.
Saturday 17th May 10:00-12:30 p.m.	Monthly Bird Walk on the Reserve. Meet at the Wardens' Centre, Forest Farm Road.
Saturday 24th May 10:30-12:30 p.m.	RSPB Cardiff Conservation Group. Check nest boxes and Wild Flower survey. Meet at Middle entrance.
Saturday 31st May 10.00-12.00	Watch Club Age Group 8-12. Moth trapping. Come and see what was caught in our moth trap last night!
Saturday 7th June 8.30 p.m.	National Moth Night. £2 per person. Meet at the Wardens' Centre, Forest Farm road.
Sunday 8th June 10:00-12:00	Summer Wildlife in the Park. Free. Meet at the Wardens' Centre, Forest Farm road.
Saturday 14th June 10:00-12:00	Watch Club Age Group 8-12. Big Bug Hunt at Llanishen Park. Celebrate Wales Biodiversity Week and join in the hunt for woodland minibeasts, large and small, at Coed Cochwyn woods (Llanishen Park). Meet at the changing rooms car park, Newborough Avenue.
Saturday 21st June 10.00-12.30	Monthly Bird Walk on the Reserve. Meet at the Wardens' Centre, Forest Farm Road.
Saturday 21st June 10:30-12:30 p.m.	RSPB Cardiff Conservation Group. Second cut of knotweed between new hedge. Meet at middle entrance.

Layout by Robin Sotheby

Published on behalf of The Friends of Forest Farm and Glamorganshire Canal Local Nature Reserve by

Mrs Sheila Austin, 1 Heol Gwrgan, Whitchurch, Cardiff CF14 1PP

Tel: 029—2061 4245

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