

OF FRIENDS OF FOREST FARM



and Glamorganshire Canal Local Nature Reserve

Editor's
Forum

February
1977

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RSPB PHOENIX

A warm welcome to all new members with the first Newsletter of 1997!

Good news that our membership continues to grow, with very few failing to renew.



The 'Friends' Committee is currently exercised with questions concerning future plans. Though endorsement of the Committee's work is vital, we have to consider a strengthening of the Committee itself. We now need your help in finding others who will give a little of their time for input into the work of our Committee.

You may read in the Newsletter of the problems which arise concerning the Country Park from time to time. However, we need to remind ourselves that great improvements have been accomplished by the Friends in its development. To name a few ...

... Providing access, the facility of a hide, a new pond, apart from the work which forms part of our ongoing programme. This has been greatly helped by the supervision of the Warden, Mike Wiley. So, though we should not be pessimistic about the future of the Country Park, there is no room for complacency.

Please let me have your comments about the Newsletter, the Country Park, or about any event which you feel might interest our readers.

I hope new members will enjoy a repetition of one of my poems, which was inspired by the Reserve. You will find it on page 4.

MEMBERSHIP

The present number of
'Friends'
is
210

Ken Patterson

Two sessions of work have been accomplished so far this winter by the Phoenix Group, on October 12th and on 30th December. On both occasions coppicing was done on the slope down from Asda's garage. This was the first time the Group had undertaken coppicing. They found it tough on their muscles, but all worked hard at the task.

A further session will be arranged for February, when the task may be the repair of the steps leading down from the Longwood Drive.

There is still some work to be carried out on some of the nest boxes, cleaning, repositioning and so on. This will be done before the end of February.

Pauline Linck
Leader

ACCESS

Our access improvements continue with a new cut linking the towpath with the old parish road, and a lessening of the gradient of the towpath near Forest Lock.

Two new wheelchair chicanes near the allotments will shortly be constructed. These improvements form part of our ongoing programme of making the Reserve more 'user-friendly'.

Mike Wiley

MEMBERSHIP enquiries please to

Mr Noel Gale

8 Heath Park Drive, Heath

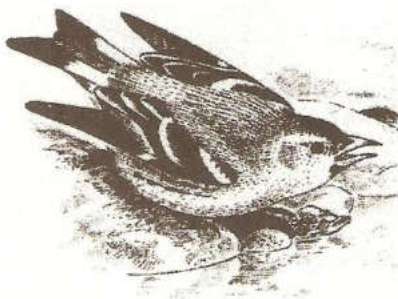
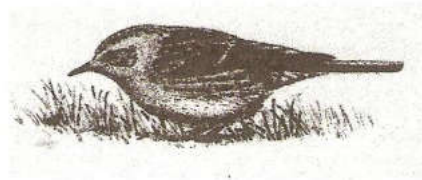
Cardiff CF4 3QJ

Tel: 01 222 756771

RESERVE NEWS

This winter's prolonged cold spell during December and January took its toll on the small bird population. I have had several reports of dead birds being found, including Robin, House Sparrow and Blackbird.

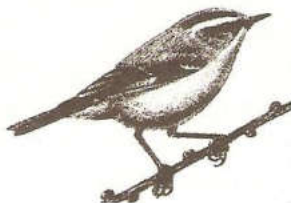
On leaving the Warden's Centre one very cold day, I came across a **DUNNOCK** seemingly lifeless on the frozen ground. On closer inspection I found it still alive, but barely breathing. Cupping it in my hands I took it inside and, after warming it gently by the gas fire, it gradually began to show signs of life until it was strong enough to take some food - crumbs from my sandwiches! Soon afterwards I placed it on the open window sill where, after a quick look around it flew off.



The cold weather brought a lot of wildfowl to the Reserve/Country Park, with counts of over 50 Tufted Duck, several Pochard and Teal and the odd Goldeneye on a small section of the River Taff. Large flocks of Redwing were to be seen on the Reserve, along with smaller flocks of **SISKIN**.

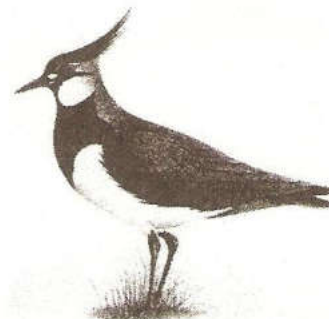
Water Rail gave good views; one was seen unusually swimming in the canal. Several Common Snipe were on the wetland margins, along with one Jack Snipe going through its characteristic bobbing motions.

Ted Edwards (chairman of the 'Friends' and voluntary warden) reported four **LAPWING** in the large field opposite the Warden's Centre picking at fresh molehills - the only ground left unfrozen.



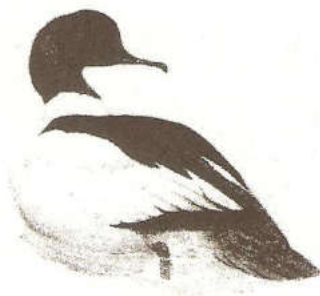
Ted also saw a female Scaup on the river and a **FIRECREST** on the Reserve.

A male **GOOSANDER** in superb black and white breeding plumage was also on the river.



The goosander is the largest of our saw-bill ducks; it feeds mainly on a diet of fish. This is one of the birds that has directly benefited from the Wildlife and

Countryside Act of 1981. Before the Act, it suffered intense persecution because of its fish diet. Now a protected species, it is fast colonising new rivers, such as the Taff.



Following the sudden thaw on January 13th, a quick count of **MALLARD** on the canal showed 84 birds - an unusually high number for the Reserve.

Unfortunately one of these birds has a plastic drinks can collar around its neck. We did our best to catch this bird to re-release it, but it proved impossible. It must be

remembered that these are wild birds These plastic collars are lethal and should always be cut open before being discarded.



Mike Wiley

THE LAST OF THE CANAL WORKERS

Living a simple and quiet life, CYRIL FRAZER holds an unique place in history as the only known surviving Canal Worker. (Is there any other claimant out there?) His father, Thomas Frazer worked on the canal, and his grandfather before him. Cyril is still in the family home in Treble Lock Cottages, Glan-y-Llyn, which are on the left of the A470, about ¼ - mile before the Nantgarw roundabout, going North.

"I started work on the canal at the age of 14, and I was there until I was 18 when it closed. Only the section of canal from Pontypridd to Cardiff was in use by this time. In my father's day the barges carried sacks of flour for the bakers, treacle and all kinds of fruit and vegetables, sugar and butter. We used to take it to Hopkin Morgan's warehouse in Pontypridd in East Street, Trallwn.

"On a good day the barges could travel from Cardiff to Pontypridd and back in 10 hours, passing through 17 locks. One horse went all the way down and back again. We used to call in at Brown Lennox chain works and Forgemasters at Taff's Well to get chain on the way back to Cardiff."

Cyril explained that the working day was first of all geared around making sure the horses were in good shape. The horses belonged to the canal workers, but the boats belonged to the canal company.

"My father used to get up in the morning and feed the horses before breakfast; they always came first. I used to ride down ahead of the barge on my bicycle and fill the locks ready for the boat to come in. When the canal froze over, it would take 14 horses and 12 men to wield the icebreaker."

Cyril said they had a large garden, and their horse was very fond of the cabbage grown in the garden. One day they were waiting to enter the tunnel that went under Queen Street, when a cabbage came floating by in the canal. The horse saw it and lent over for a quick snack - and fell in! The sides of the canal were too deep for it to clamber out, so Cyril had to jump on its back and ride cowboy-fashion into the tunnel until they could find a place to clamber out. Sadly there is little trace of the canal left to see, and only memories of people like Cyril keep its place in history.

(Written with the kind help of Cyril Frazer and the Pontypridd Observer)

E.O.Edwards

TAF TRAIL USERS BEWARE!!

Early in December it was rumoured that the **Cardiff Athletic Club** would be taking over the **Old Boy's Rugby Club** in **Forest Farm Road**, and that part of the deal was for the Athletic Club to be granted the lease of the field opposite the Warden's Office.

We immediately wrote to the Director of Leisure and Sport, with copies to various chairmen and local political representatives, objecting to the proposal in so far as the field was concerned. We had a quick and helpful response from our local representative and in due course were informed by the Director that no such negotiation was taking place, and that the field is seen as an integral part of the Country Park.

We now understand that the Athletic Club has acquired the Rugby Club. We did not object to this proposal but, in our letter copied to the Planning and Highways Department, we expressed concern on two counts about the impact of the probable escalating activity which would result from such a change.

(continued on page 4)

SPRING CLEAN at FOREST FARM

At Forest Farm we receive funding from the 'Keep Wales Tidy' campaign towards our own efforts to improve the environment of the River Taff within our area.

On **Sunday 16th March** there will be another 'Spring Clean' of the river banks and the Reserve. This will be mainly a 'Litter Pick', not heavy manual work. It is important that litter is removed before vegetation begins to grow and the number of visitors increases.

Meet at the **Warden's Hut** at **10.00 am**. All equipment needed will be provided.

For additional information, please ring me on **01222-691421**.

Martin Chamberlain

(continued from Page 3)

We also pointed out that, even at this time Forest Farm Road is a lethal combination of a narrow, winding, often flooded, unlit lane with no foot path. It is extensively used by heavy lorries to 'Alloy Wheels' and by vehicles going to the car parks of the Club and Country Park. Furthermore, it is used by pedestrians, joggers and cyclists using the Taf Trail, which is routed along this lane.

Does not the Council have a responsibility to protect road users from foreseeable danger? If you think so, why not tell them?

Dennis Davies

SPRING

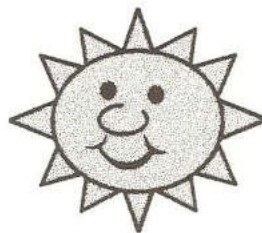
Sunlight

Shafting the boughs of winter

Convinces me as no other thing

That nature, in infinite wisdom,

Will lead us yet, to Spring.



Ken Patterson

E.O.Edwards

INDOOR MEETINGS

TABERNACLE CHURCH HALL

WEDNESDAY - 7.30 PM

The two remaining meetings for the season are:

12th March

An illustrated talk on the 'Cathays Heritage Trail' takes us through the second largest Cemetery in the country. Featured on TV recently, it showed that the layout and monuments have a very interesting story to tell - a story that must not be allowed to be forgotten - so do come along and learn a bit more of Cardiff's history.

16th April

An illustrated talk on the 'Environment Agency and Otter Conservation' by Teg Jones, followed by the AGM.

Otters are increasing on our rivers. Teg will bring us up to date with the latest developments. He will show what the Environment Agency is doing, now that it has been enlarged and given more responsibility.

There was a very good attendance at our first meeting, so keep it up and come along to hear all the up-to-date news on the Reserve.

E.O.Edwards

Thanks to Robin Sotheby for the layout of this Newsletter.

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.

