



FRIENDS

of Forest Farm Country Park
and Glamorganshire Canal
Local Nature Reserve

NEWSLETTER
30
SEPTEMBER 1996

Editor's Forum

Greetings!

This issue of the Newsletter has once again received excellent contributions for which, as the Editor, I'm truly grateful.



Everyone is a volunteer with busy lives, whether earning a living or retired. "If you want something done, ask a busy person" is a very apt saying - and it applies in this instance.

New and renewed membership reported is good news. Please spread the word around of our flourishing Country Park, which is so vital to preserve in these times of encroachment on green belt areas.

May you continue to enjoy its attractions, come rain or shine!

Ken Patterson

TWO for the price of ONE

With this issue of the Newsletter you will also receive a newsletter

'Countryside on your Doorstep'

published by Cardiff County Council.

It deals with countryside issues and events in and around Cardiff.

The Council plan to produce this 4 times a year, which the Friends will endeavour to deliver with our own Newsletter.

Eric James

MEMBERSHIP

Family Membership numbers have passed the 200 mark and are closing on last year's total of 223. One final push will give us the highest membership since the formation of the 'Friends' in 1990.

Might I take this opportunity of thanking those who send us a 'little extra' over and above the annual subscription. This is always appreciated, and goes toward the cost of the many projects in which we are involved, some of which are highlighted in this issue of our Newsletter.

Noel Gale

(Membership Secretary)

8 Heath Park Drive

Heath

Cardiff CF4 3QI

Tel : 01222 - 756771

WHITCHURCH HOSPITAL DEVELOPMENT UPDATE

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RESERVE NEWS

This summer hasn't been a particularly good one. The seemingly incessant wet weather has taken its toll on the wildlife. Hardly any butterflies were seen on the wing, and the number of dragonflies, which rely on warm sunny days in order to gain enough energy for flight, was certainly down.

We've been busy on the Reserve continuing with our annual programme of rebuilding sections of the **Canal wall and towpath** - at last we seem to be winning the battle.

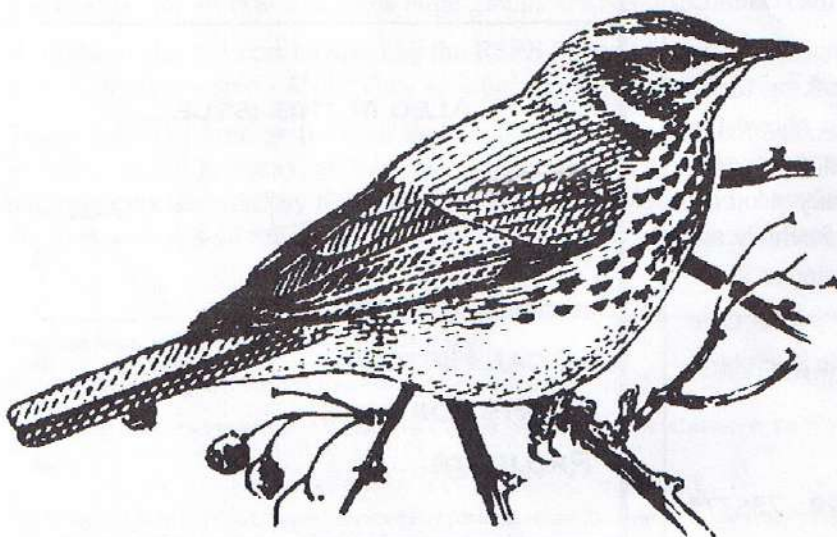
We had a problem earlier in the summer with one of our oldest ponds (**Llyn y Gamlas**). As well as losing water naturally by evaporation, we were also losing water from seepage through the clay. With our much larger newer pond only about 25 metres away, overflowing into the feeder, it seemed the obvious thing to do was to try and divert the overflow discharge into our problem pond.

This could only be possible if the levels allow this. Fortunately enough, they did. When I explained the situation to the Friends of Forest Farm Committee, they were only too pleased to help by agreeing to fund the operation. A few pipes, a JCB, some able volunteers from **BTCV**, and a couple of weeks later the work was complete. The much needed extra water supply gave a real boost to Llyn y Gamlas !

A couple of other jobs are also in the pipeline, both of which are being funded by you, the Friends :

1. Viewing screens outside the bird **hides** giving a view over the wetlands for those people who do not wish to enter the hides.
2. A **new pond dipping platform** at Forest Farm to complement the one already there, enabling larger school groups to use the pond.

These are good examples of a positive working relationship between the Friends and Cardiff County Council Sports and Leisure Department.



As I write this article, autumn is fast approaching, the leaves are yellowing and the summer migrants have gone. It won't be long before we see our first **Siskin** and **Redwing**, both of which appeared in our garden last year. Hopefully we will have a few sunny autumn days to make up for the sunless summer.

Mike Wiley
(Countryside Warden)

INDOOR EVENTS

Our Winter Programme starts on

WEDNESDAY 11th NOVEMBER

at 7.30 pm in the

Tabernacle Church Schoolroom, Whitchurch.

The well known Cardiff historian **Dennis Morgan** will give an illustrated talk

'Cardiff at War'.

It will bring back a host of memories to us old-uns, and will show the young-uns the hazards and tribulations of a city at war. No doubt Mr Morgan will have some interesting items for sale as Christmas presents.

The next meeting will be on **Wednesday 10th February**. It will be an illustrated talk by Mr **Kevin Hogan** on the **Flat Holm Project**. He will give a brief outline of the island's history, which has been interesting, to say the least. He will then explain how the natural habitat and its various wildlife is now being protected and cared for. The visiting arrangements will also be made clear.

So, do come along, not only to enjoy the talks but also to meet and get to know other Friends, and hear all the latest news about developments and action in the Reserve

E. O. Edwards

RSPB PHOENIX and YOC groups

The RSPB Phoenix group met in late August to clear the overgrown path in the middle section of the Reserve. The patches of **knotweed** were also cut back. After several years of cutting the knotweed on a regular basis, we thought we were winning the battle, but this year's wet summer has encouraged it into stronger growth again.

The steps from **Longwood Drive** down to canal level in the middle section of the Reserve need renewing; the surface is eroding, and the spacing and depth of the steps does not make access easy for the less agile members of the public. This is a project that the Group felt able to tackle, and have successfully made an application to **Environment Wales** for a grant to purchase the necessary materials. We plan to start the work in early November.

The **YOC** group (7-12 year olds) held their summer meetings at Forest Farm and were able to spend at least part of each meeting out on the Reserve listening and trying to identify birds by their song and calls, and examining other flora and fauna in its natural habitat.

Pauline Linck

(RSPB Phoenix Leader)

Sweatshirts, T-shirts, Polo shirts

Pauline Linck : 01222 - 617012

Shirts with the Friends of Forest Farm logo are on sale with a choice of colours and sizes.

Sweatshirts: **£16.50** (children's sizes **£10.75**). Polo shirts: **£14.50**. T-shirts also available.

A PIECE OF LOCAL HISTORY

Tapping the memories of some of those who have been associated with either the Canal or the Melingriffith Works can be most interesting, and certainly add to the enjoyment of a walk on the Reserve.

Apparently the **Melingriffith Feeder** as we call it today was known as '**The Pound**' locally, and that was because it cost *a pound a yard* to be built.

The **Forest Lock** was known as '**Witts Lock**' as it was the custom to name the locks with the surname of the *lock keepers*. Witts was a sailor; his hobby was collecting exotic butterflies on his trips to foreign lands. The walls of the cottage were covered with these butterflies in glass cases. His son was the first in the area to have a motor bike, and he was always inventing various gadgets.

E. O. Edwards

WHITCHURCH HOSPITAL DEVELOPMENT UPDATE

After consulting with all the interested parties during the early months of this year, a revised Plan was submitted by the **CARDIFF COMMUNITY HEALTH CARE TRUST** to the City's **PLANNING DEPARTMENT**.

The previous plan had been rejected on the grounds of '*loss of open space*'. To overcome this a further 5.21 acres of the meadows is offered to the L. N. R. - making a total of **11.41 acres**. This is 5.21 acres more than in PLAN 2, and represents **60%** of the meadows saved.

One football pitch had been used for housing in this plan, and when it came before the Planning Committee on July 31st it was rejected on the grounds of '*Loss of one football pitch*'.

An amended plan has now been submitted, giving back the football pitch and juggling things around a bit, leaving the meadows as in the previous plan. It was hoped that this would have been before the Planning Committee on September 30th, but the Highways Committee want to look at it; they meet on **November 5th**.

Over the long years of negotiation the Friends have come to the conclusion that, by hook or by crook, this site will be developed, so we have to get the best compromise that we can. The PLAN 2, which the Trust says they have submitted to the **Welsh Office** to be used if there is an appeal, could result in the loss of 5.21 acres of meadow land. That is why the Friends do not want this to happen. We believe this latest plan is the best that we will ever get.

E. O. Edwards

Our Projects for 1998/99

These are the projects the Friends are funding this year :

- **Signs** to be erected at all entrances to the Nature Reserve. They are ready for the sign makers but are being held back until the result of the Hospital planning application is known. This decision could alter the shape of the map, which will be on the signs. £500 will go towards the cost of these signs. The Environment Dept. of the Cardiff County Council Planning Dept. will pay the rest. The staff of the Sport and Leisure Dept. will mount and erect the signs.
- A new **pond dipping platform** alongside the pond at Forest Farm. The pond is so popular that the existing platform is unable to cope with the numbers. Our contribution - £450.
- The **connecting pipe** between Llyn y Gamlas and Llyn Brwynog. Our contribution - £500 approx.
- New **viewing platforms** and windows at the two Hides to facilitate those who do not want to enter the hides, and to cater for an overflow when large groups are being shown around. Our contribution - £1,000 approx.
- Underwriting the cost incurred by the RSPB Phoenix group in replacing the wooden steps in the middle section of the Reserve - £500. They are applying for a grant to cover this cost.

There is a lot of **leakage through the Canal wall** at the southern end near the iron bridge. Should this bank be undermined and give way, all the water would flow out of the canal. It has been suggested that a barrier be placed across the canal by the old Sunnyside Cottage wall just below the normal water level so that, if the bank did give way, not all the water would be lost. Our contribution will depend on what is finally decided.

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

MR KEN PATTERSON 12 MANOR COURT WHITCHURCH CARDIFF CF4 1BJ

TEL : 01222 - 627077

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

