

FRIENDS

OF FOREST FARM COUNTRY PARK
AND GLAMORGANSHIRE CANAL
LOCAL NATURE RESERVE

Issue 40

June 2001

Editor's Forum

by Ken Patterson

Over the past eleven years much has been achieved through the financial, practical and moral support given by *The Friends* to the development of the Country Park.

This was evident also at our A.G.M. in April which confounded the view that A.G.M.s are usually poorly supported. The Committee were heartened by the excellent turn-out.

The illustrated talk on the work of the *BTCV* given by Ann Meikle, National Director of Wales, and Calum MacIntosh, the Forest Farm Manager, gave us an insight not only into its activities, but the close liaison that exists between them and *The Friends*.

Thanks to our contributors and the informative letter received from a member. Please keep them coming. And enjoy the summer, whether home or away.

FOREST HALL

A letter from Margaret Hallin

My husband and I always enjoy reading about the Reserve. Regarding Rodger Fuse's enquiry about Forest Hall, I understood that the manager of Mellingriffith Works lived there circa 1967.

The Taff carried so much water, probably with melting snow, that the whole area was flooded. We stood at the end of Velindre Road and looked at it!. Perhaps Forest Hall was too badly damaged then, for it was demolished soon afterwards.

Also demolished at about the same time was the weigh-bridge beside the railway line adjacent to the river. The water main, then horizontal, was breached, and was replaced with the present high arching one.

MEMBERSHIP

Membership renewals for the current year are flowing in. The final figure for last year was 245 Family/Group Members, and it is hoped that this year we can achieve and even improve on this figure.

For those members whose minds it may have slipped, or who have mislaid their renewal forms, I have arranged for another slip to be delivered with this quarter's newsletter. Thank you for your continued support, and a warm welcome to those new members who have recently joined us.

May I also say 'thank you' to those members who send in 'a little extra' with their subscriptions. Last year individual members' donations boosted our funds by some £122.

Sweatshirts

... with Friends of Forest Farm logo.

Good quality

Raglan sleeve

Price: £16.50

Children's sizes: £10.75

Pauline Linck

Tel. 029-2061 7012

N.J.Gale New telephone number 029-2091 5665

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'The Reserve is Closed'

by **Mike Wiley**
Countryside Warden



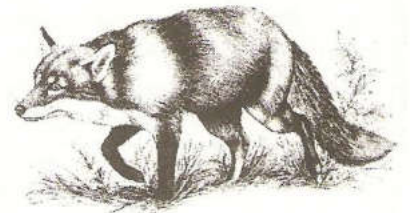
This was the stark message which greeted visitors from the end of February. Due to the **Foot and Mouth** outbreak, and because of the fact that we had grazing cattle slap bang in the middle of the Reserve (which we weren't allowed to move), the advice from Wales' Chief Vet was to close.



So far, we have been fortunate and, although the Reserve is open again, we are still taking precautionary measures, such as a disinfecting straw mat on the approach to Forest Farm, and keeping the public away from the grazing meadows. (I did have one case of a woman leaning over the fence and stroking the cattle whilst feeding them bread.)

For six weeks the Reserve seemed a ghostly place with most people heeding the signs and staying away, although on two occasions a number of lethally pointed airgun pellets were found in the bird hides – which I passed on to the police. There is always someone ready to exploit every situation. Obviously jobs were using the hides and taking pot shots at anything that moved. The third night, myself and three voluntary wardens – Howard Davies, Huw Evans and John Baynam – stayed on and visited the hides, but they didn't show.

It was mid-February when I received a message from a member of the public informing me that an injured fox had been seen on the Reserve. After an hour's search of the area I was about to give up, when a passer by told me of a fox lying down some hundred yards away. As I got to within ten yards, I realised that clearly something was badly wrong. Normally you would never get this close. I approached cautiously as I wanted to see the extent of its injuries, but it rose to its feet and managed to limp a short distance before lying down again. I could see that it was a fully grown vixen, and obviously had some injury to its right foreleg. An injured fox, even on three legs, can be an extremely difficult animal to catch, so I knew that I needed help with this.



I called the RSPCA. They have all the equipment needed for this sort of thing. With their help, we soon had it cornered between a fence and a hedge. A 'grasper' (a steel pole with a loop at one end) was placed around its neck, and it was finally pulled out and put into a cage. The full extent of its injuries could now be seen. The injured leg was severely cut to the bone. The injuries looked consistent with those caused by snares. The poor thing looked pathetic in its cage – a beautiful wild animal reduced to this.

The RSPCA inspectors told me that they would take the fox to a local vet. As there is no wildlife hospital in this area, I knew that it would be hopeless. That afternoon, as I went around checking all the rabbit burrows for snares, I saw the vixen's mate, the dog fox. The following day I rang the vet. He told me that the fox had been put down, and confirmed my suspicions that it had been snared. It never ceases to amaze me that in this day and age, snares and spring traps can still be legally used – the only qualification is that the snare must be free-running.

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Reserve News

On a happier note, as I write this article in early May, everything is nesting like mad. The Little Grebes have successfully raised and are busily feeding four chicks. At least two pairs of Reed Warblers are singing away in the reed beds, along with **Sedge Warblers**. The Reserve seems to be full of singing males holding territories, and at least ten pairs of Sand Martins are currently nesting in our cliff.



ST MARY'S GARDEN – WHITCHURCH – CARDIFF

by DAVID CLARK (Concluding part)

Notable Memorials Among those buried were some who received the highest respect in the community of their time. These included Henry Lewis JP DL, father of the late Col. Lewis. The family seat was a mansion at Greenmeadow, Tongwynlais, now demolished and replaced by an attractive housing estate. His family was of ancient descent and could be traced to the princely families of Wales, before the coming of the Normans. A brother of the first Henry Lewis was Wyndham Lewis, a Member of Parliament from 1820 to 1826. His widow married Benjamin Disraeli, Prime Minister and later Lord Beaconsfield.

Many of those buried in the old churchyard were connected with the Melingriffith Tinplate Works. The works, now demolished and cleared away, was one of the oldest established industrial undertakings in South Wales. In the 1780's it was owned by Messrs Harford, Partridge & Co., Quaker ironmasters of Bristol. They were exemplary employers. The works at one time were perhaps the largest in the kingdom.

An early servant of the Works was Joseph Vaughan of Velindre, the Agent, from the 1770's until his death on 15th June 1796. His memorial stone, originally a wall plaque inside the church, but

*"To relieve the wretched was his only pride
And his spirit lean'd to virtue's side.
In his duty prompt at every call
He watched and pray'd and felt for all."*

A more celebrated character, T.W. Booker-Blakemore, was a later managing director of the Melingriffith works. He was a JP for Glamorgan and Hereford, High Sheriff of Glamorgan in 1848 and MP for Hereford in 1850.

In regard to Forest Farm, it is noted that a John Brown died on 12th January 1849 (Gravestone number 143). This may be the John Brown aged 61, farmer at Forest Farm according to the census of 1841, who lived there with his wife, six sons and four daughters. This was an example of the large families that were usual in those days.

Another stone is a memorial to Thomas Phillips, who died on 4th January 1858 aged 66, after being a school master of the village for 35 years. His wife Mary was the niece of Joseph Vaughan already mentioned. The Ton or Village School was in an outbuilding of the present Fox & Hounds public house, opposite the churchyard in Old Church Road. The building was demolished in recent years for the enlargement of the car park.

Conclusion Much can be written of the old churchyard and its connections with the locality – which of course includes Forest Farm. The present improvement of the site will enable its significance and attraction to be better appreciated.

Acknowledgement must be made of the great amount of information drawn from the books published by the late County Alderman, Edgar L. Chappell, entitled "*Historic Melingriffith*" (1940), "*Album Monasterium*" (1942) and "*Old Whitchurch*" (1945). Assistance has been received also from Cardiff Parks Department and the Glamorgan Family History Society.

Park Events & Guided Walks

(All Walks & Events free)

Forest Farm Bat Walk Thursday August 30th 7.45 p.m. Led by Mike Wiley and Chris James.

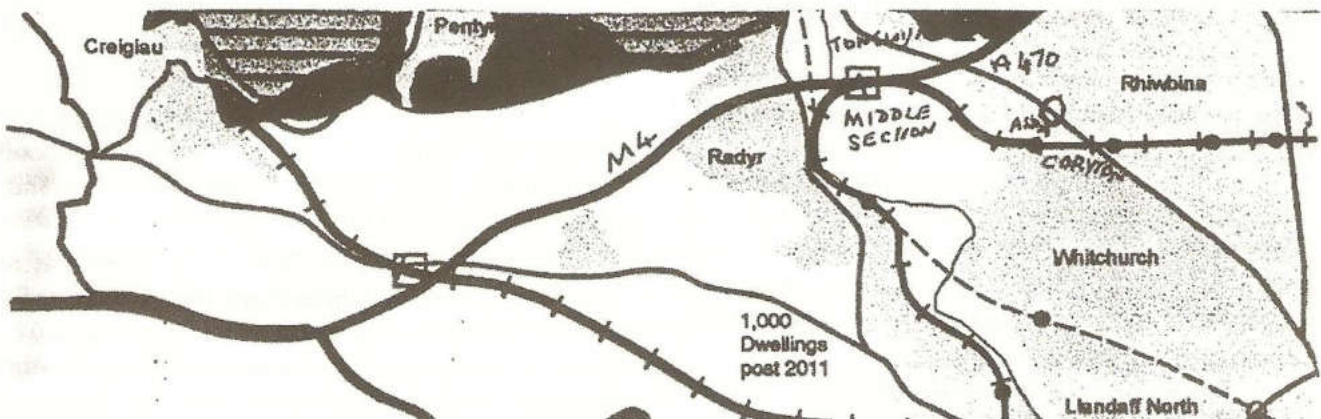
An ever-popular walk led by experienced bat watchers. Duration approx. 1 1/2 hours.
Places must be booked in advance (029 2044 5920). Meet at **Forest Farm Car Park**.

Medicinal Plants & Healing Weeds Saturday Sept. 8th 10.30 a.m. Led by Heather Henderson.

A walk around Forest Farm, looking for healing plants & autumn fruits, discussing their traditional and modern usage.
Meet at the **Warden's Centre**, Forest Farm. Duration 1 1/2 - 2 hours.

CARDIFF UNITARY DEVELOPMENT PLAN (1996-2016)

Under this plan it is proposed that the **City Circle Line** will be converted to Diesel Light Rail over the plan period, and a loop could be created by joining Coryton to Radyr and, thereby, creating a link between west and north Cardiff. New stations would be provided on this loop, as well as a new *Park-and-Ride* facility at Coryton.



It sounds simple, but how will it affect the Local Nature Reserve? Well, the railway cutting from Coryton would have to pass through the re-opened tunnel under **Longwood Drive** to get into the Middle Section. There a bridge would have to be built over the canal, and the railway would proceed down the Middle Section alongside the M4, and eventually cross the River Taff to join the Radyr railway. The Reserve would lose the railway cutting and the Middle Section. There are no firm plans as yet, so it's guess-work at the moment.

We are asked to comment on the proposals. So your Committee will be addressing the problem.

R S P B WILDLIFE EXPLORERS

The group has had another excellent and enjoyable six months with very good attendance.

Our activities have included various guest speakers, projects on Otters, Penguins, Bird Beaks, Birds and their habitats, Craft-work and a Halloween surprise party. At Easter we held our first competition for paintings, poems and craft-work. The quality of the work produced by the children was amazing. All their work was exhibited at the Central Library in Cardiff.

Over the next two months we will be holding our meetings at Forest Farm, but we will also be visiting **Cosmeston Park** and **Radyr Woods**.

There is no waiting list at the moment, so if any children (age 7-12) are interested in joining the Group, please contact ...

Sue Walters (Registered Leader) **2075 1760**

Layout by Robin Sotheby

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

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