

# FRIENDS

OF FOREST FARM COUNTRY PARK  
AND GLAMORGANSHIRE CANAL  
LOCAL NATURE RESERVE

Issue 41

September 2001

## Editor's Forum

by Ken Patterson

*Welcome to the Autumn edition of your Newsletter. I hope you get as much enjoyment from reading the contributions made each quarter as I do. Certainly the high standard makes my job as Editor very easy. Good news, too, that our membership is keeping up to strength. To leave Robin space for his layout I'm keeping the editorial comments short and sweet.*

## Ronald Lockley

The ashes of pioneer environmentalist Ronald Lockley, who died in New Zealand last year, have been returned to Skokholm.

The island off Pembrokeshire was Lockley's home from 1927 to 1940, and was the inspiration of some of his books.

His ashes were scattered by his children, who travelled from New Zealand and the United States for the ceremony.

They also unveiled a plaque in his memory.

## MEMBERSHIP

Current Family & Group membership has passed the 200 mark. With a few more renewals hopefully to come in, we expect to finish up close to last years figure of 245.

A note received from one of our members in Rhiwbina, thanking the person who delivers her Newsletter, prompts me to thank all those who every quarter distribute our Newsletter so promptly. The thirteen persons involved between them save over £300 annually in postage and stationery – money which is badly needed to help fund projects and urgent work needed to be carried out on the Reserve.

**N.J.Gale 029-2091 5665**

R P  
S H  
P O  
B X  
E N  
I

UP-DATE

As the Reserve had restricted access during the foot-and-mouth outbreak, I thought we might have to curtail our work. I am pleased to say we made our first visit as scheduled on the last Saturday of April.

It is amazing how much litter we retrieved in a couple of hours – mainly due to the fast-food outlets – together with a large amount of beer cans. June saw us back again on the Reserve on three occasions:

First, **nest box** checking. We soon found boxes either missing or vandalised. We've lost 7 out of 16! Of the remaining boxes, only two have possible success.

An evening stroll around the Reserve for a spot of **bird watching** was our second visit. What better than to watch a Dipper working the river on a still evening? And it's pleasing to see the Sandmartins and hear their shrill cries as they swoop into the artificial nest bank.

Our final visit was to tackle that invasive **Knotweed**. Some areas are looking pleasantly free at last.

T-shirts Polos

Sweatshirts

... with Friends of Forest Farm logo.

Good quality Raglan sleeve

Price: £16.50 Children's: £10.75

Pauline Linck 029-2061 7012

<i>In this issue</i>			Page
<i>Ronald Lockley</i>	<i>Membership</i>	<i>Phoenix</i>	1
<i>Reserve News</i>	<i>Wildlife Explorers</i>		2
<i>What next ?</i>	<i>Events, Walks, Meeting</i>		3
<i>Meltingriffith</i>	<i>Water Pump</i>		4

## Reserve News

by **Mike Wiley**  
**Countryside Warden**

It has been a mixed summer, with above average rainfall. As I write this article in mid-August it is pouring down. Certain tasks, like rebuilding sections of the Canal Wall have to be booked months in advance with the BTCV (British Trust for Conservation Volunteers). It's a difficult job at the best of times, with very limited access. We try and do this work when the canal is at its lowest (mid-August), but for the last few years (this year has been no exception) with the canal level full, rebuilding a wall is a \*\*\*\*\*!

The same applies with pond management. Again, we have to book the volunteers well in advance and hope for a nice hot sunny day. The surface area of open water in our ponds is rapidly diminishing, while the so-called marginal vegetation marches relentlessly inwards. One Sunday morning in mid-August saw the Cardiff Conservation Volunteers and myself stooped in the middle of Llyn y Gamlas. Heavy rain was pouring down our necks and pond water pouring over our waders as we wrestled with **Reed Mace** and **Burr Weed**, which invariably snap off as they are pulled. Then you have to reach down into the water at full arms length and haul the rhizome out of the oozing mud. You must try it! We did manage to rescue a few bedraggled dragonflies that were clinging desperately to the reeds, and remove them to safety.



Earlier in the year we continued with our annual maintenance work to upgrade our footpaths. We resurfaced approximately 250 metres of the towpath. Again I would like to thank the Friends for their help in funding both this work and the canal wall rebuilding project.

While walking the Reserve the other day I heard the unmistakable plaintive alarm calls of a pair of Sand Martins. I entered the bird hide which overlooks the sand martin cliff, and was in time to see a **Green Woodpecker** clinging to the face of the cliff with its head inside one of the holes, pecking out the sand. After a few minutes it gave up and flew off. I watched as the adult sand martins returned to the same hole. Obviously the woodpecker had heard the young martins calling inside the tunnel, and was hoping for a free lunch. As the martins nest up to a metre in from the hole entrance the woodpecker had little chance!



I was talking to Rosemary Morgan earlier (she is our resident BTO bird-ringer), and she was telling me how she caught one of our sand martins which had been ringed six years previously on the River Taff. It is amazing to think that this little bird had made at least six return trips to Africa. She also recalled a recent morning when she had a tiny Chiffchaff in one end of the mist net, and a large Buzzard in the other end. Luckily her husband Peter was on hand to help out.

I am looking forward to a nice warm and dry autumn, to shorten the winter. Let's hope we get one!

### **RSPB**

### **WILDLIFE EXPLORERS**

We have had a very enjoyable two months at Forest Farm. We have also visited Radyr Woods and Cosmeston Park. A full Autumn programme is planned, to include ...

**The Polar Regions**

**A Quiz evening**

**Ladybirds**

**Seabirds & Seashore**

**Craftwork**

**2 guest speakers**

**The always popular Christmas Party in December**

Unfortunately in July two of our leaders left. If anyone is interested in helping to run the group, please let me know. If any children (7-12) would like to join, there is no waiting list at the moment. Please ring ....

**Sue Walters** (Registered Leader)

**2075 1760**

## THE FOREST FARM COUNTRY PARK – "WHAT NEXT ?" - A PERSONAL VIEW

Every visitor to the Country Park and Nature Reserve will have their own individual impression of it. Perhaps a sense of atmosphere, of the changing seasons, the wildlife, or just the pleasure of walking in agreeable surroundings. However, it recently occurred to me that, apart from some obvious changes required, will it fundamentally remain the same? I have some reservations.

Apart from the surrounding building development which is *fait accompli*, how do we perceive the Country Park in the future? My view is first to decide what would be undesirable. A "Theme Park", for example – so popular these days – is fine for children on a holiday jaunt. As it would destroy the essence of what the Country Park has to offer, it would certainly not get my vote.

With regard to other disturbances, I can only hope that the new property owners will respect the needs of those who wish to enjoy the peace of the remaining pockets of the urban countryside such as ours. It may help if we extended an invitation to them to join the Friends.

However attractive in its natural state the Park may be, some amenities are recognised as desirable for visitors. For example, more seating, sensibly placed (particularly for the elderly and infirm), ease of access to certain areas, and better paths.

More signs and information boards at strategic spots would help to provide greater knowledge of the richness and diversity of flora, fauna and wildlife that exists. The Friends have already helped towards these ends. Sadly, this has been threatened by mindless vandalism, to which there is no easy answer.

I would like to see conservation organisations making greater efforts to increase funding of schemes such as ours, where small is not only beautiful but relevant. Your Committee have fought long and hard for this, and will continue to do so. Much work still remains to be done.

Is it a reasonable view of the future? Perhaps our readers have a few views of their own. Please write in and let us know.

**Ken Patterson**

### Park Events, Walks and Meetings

(All events free – except where noted)

**Bird Weekend at Forest Farm**      Saturday October 13th 2-4 p.m.      Led by the Park Ranger Service.

Save your pennies, save the environment and help the birds by converting household junk into waterproof bird feeders. Meet at the **Wardens Centre, Forest Farm Road, Whitchurch.**

**Nest Box Building**      Sunday October 14th 2-4 p.m.      Led by the Park Ranger Service.

Build your own bird box. Meet at the **Wardens Centre, Forest Farm Road, Whitchurch.**      £3 per box.  
Children must be accompanied by an adult.

**Out of the Woods Festival**      Sunday October 21st 1-4 p.m.      The Park Ranger Service and Chris Powell.

Demonstration of woodland skills and traditional crafts.      In association with **BTCV (Wales)** and **Coed Cymru.**

**Wood Carving**      Saturday December 1st 11 a.m. – 3 p.m. Led by Park Ranger Service.

Bring your own chisels if you can. Meet at the **Wardens Centre, Forest Farm Road, Whitchurch.**  
Suitable for adults and children over 11 years.

**Winter Birds of Forest Farm**      Sunday December 16th 10 a.m.      Led by Mike Wiley and Chris James.

Meet at the **Warden's Centre, Forest Farm Road.**      Bring binoculars if possible.      3 km      2 hours

**Making your Wildlife count**      Wednesday 14th November 7.30 p.m.

Illustrated talk by Robert Nottage, Glamorgam Wildlife Trust.      **Tabernacle Church Hall, Merthyr Road, Whitchurch.**

## THE MELINGRIFFITH WATER PUMP

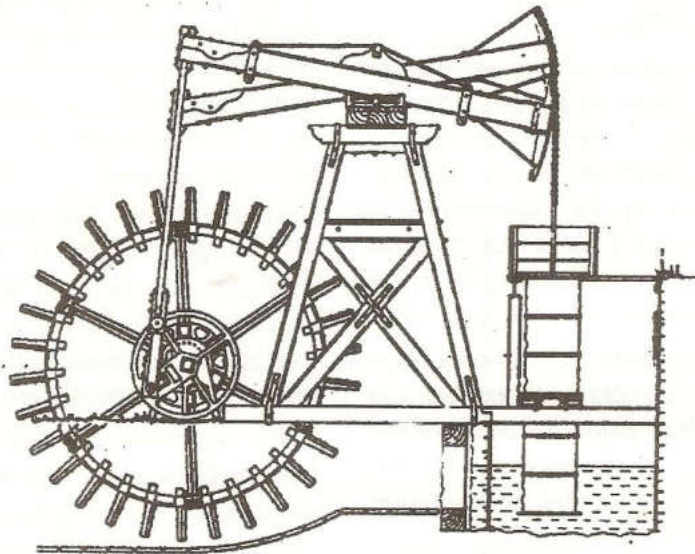
**T**he Mills at the Melingriffith Tinplate Works were driven by a huge water wheel powered by water brought along the Feeder from the River Taff at Radyr Weir. When the Glamorganshire Canal was built it also drew water from the Taff from above the weir. The result was that in a dry summer there was not enough water to drive the large water wheel.

In 1806, following litigation between the Melingriffith works and the owners of the Canal company for depriving the works of its essential water supply, provision was made, with a contribution from the Canal company of £700, to build a water lift pump in the tail race from the works to pump water back into the canal, thus reducing the amount needed to be drawn from the river. This pump, situated at the south end of the housing estate built on the old Melingriffith site, became derelict after the works closed, and would have disappeared for ever but for the magnificent restoration work carried out by the Oxford House Industrial Archeology Society based at Risca.

The water lift engine comprised an undershot water wheel 20 feet in diameter by 16 feet wide, having thirty paddle blades each 22 inches deep. The wheel drove two cast iron drive rods, and rocked two 20-foot long beams connected to two 30-inch diameter pistons with flap valves.

These would lift two 6-foot columns of water for each revolution of the wheel.

The work was started in 1974, and by 1989 the Chairman **Mr Robin Williams** was able to say, "Although there is a lot of work to be done, it is now structurally complete, although it is not yet working and will not be for a couple of years."



Unfortunately, twelve years have passed with nothing more having been done.

Now CADW have shown an interest and, together with the Parks & Highways and City Planning Department, moves are afoot to get things going again. The Friends have been invited to become

involved and give what help they can.

It would be a great help if residents on the three new estates surrounding the pump could form their own "Friends of the Melingriffith Water Pump". They could help to preserve this unique relic of the industrial revolution. The site of these estates has a fascinating history of industrial development. Progress and every effort should be made to keep a record of the old days.

**E.O.Edwards**

Refs:

*Historic Melingriffith* by Edgar L. Chappell  
*Old Whitchurch* by Edgar L. Chappell.

Layout by **Robin Sotheby**

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

**Mr Ken Patterson 12 Manor Court Whitchurch Cardiff CF14 1BJ Tel: 029 - 2062 7077**

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