

FRIENDS

OF FOREST FARM COUNTRY PARK
AND GLAMORGANSHIRE CANAL
LOCAL NATURE RESERVE

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Editor's Forum

Ken Patterson

How times flies. The festive season is upon us and thoughts will have turned to Christmas and New Year celebrations, and the meaning of it all. There is much to be planned, and of course the choosing of presents.

Fortuitous that Dr Mary Gillham, whose works many of you will be aware, has produced a new book entitled, "A Natural History of Cardiff." The enclosed leaflet is self-explanatory. It is an excellent present for a friend and/or yourself.

I would personally like to thank all those who have made such excellent contributions to the Newsletter throughout the year.

Your hardworking Committee send all the Friends :

Very Best Wishes

for a Joyful and Peaceful Christmas and New Year.

Membership

Noel Gale Membership Secretary

Our current membership totals **248**. This passes our previous best ever of 245, achieved in the 1999/2000 year.

Thank you all for your support.

MOGGIES - PETS OR PESTS?

by **E.O.Edwards**

Under the above heading "Anon" gave us startling figures as to the carnage wrought on wildlife by cats.

I was aware of figures he quotes because I had to do some research myself on this subject, and I've puzzled over the best way to warn wildlife of the presence of prowling cats.

A bell only clangs when the cat jumps about, but normally a cat's approach is slow and stealthy until the final spring, when it's too late for the victim to flee.

Birds and small mammals rely more on their sight to warn them of danger. Why not make the collar luminous or bright yellow like roadmen's jackets?

(continued on the bottom of page 3)

RSPB Wildlife Explorers

Unfortunately our Autumn session started late as we had to change halls. Our meetings are now held at **Bethel Baptist Church** hall, Whitchurch.

Over the coming months we will be having guest speakers, craft work, video and games evenings, as well as project work.

Anyone aged 7-12 interested in joining, please contact:



Sue Walters Registered Leader

Tel: 2075 1760

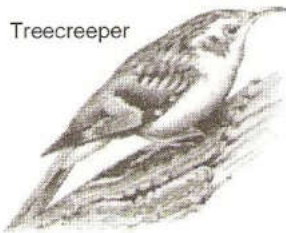
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Reserve News

by **Mike Wiley**
 Countryside Warden

I write this article in early November, and we're still dealing with the aftermath of the gales of Saturday night the 26th October and Sunday morning the 27th. The Reserve did not escape unscathed. Along with most of South Wales, we had trees down. I spent most of the Sunday morning closing off to the public dangerous areas such as Long Wood and the Taff Trail Cycleway, where some big trees had come down. Although it was regrettable that these trees had fallen, at least they were safe. It was the trees still standing but swaying about in the wind, and the ones that had partially fallen and were precariously hung up high above the footpaths, that were concerning me. I had just finished taping off the Taff Trail when a group of joggers came through, totally ignoring the warning signs and hazard tape!

Treecreeper



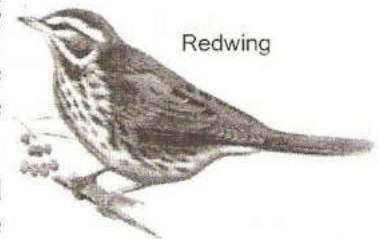
In a nature conservation area such as the Reserve, standing dead trees and fallen ones are usually left unless they pose a hazard to the general public. They form very important micro-habitats in their own right, and are home to everything from fungi to insects, and nesting birds such as the Woodpecker. Sometimes large limbs are torn off by the wind, leaving fissures and holes which nesting birds such as Treecreepers and Nuthatches use. When these gales occur, and large trees come crashing down, the woodland can look a very sorry sight. But these intermittent gales can be beneficial to a woodland; they are a natural form of woodland

management. Where trees come down, holes are left in the canopy allowing light to enter; flora flourish on the woodland floor, and over a period of time this will add diversity to the woodland. An even-aged wood—that is a woodland where all the trees are of the same age—is generally a species of poor wood.

The woods are not the only things that are suffering; the Bird Hides continue to take a bashing. It is a wonder that they are still there. The vandalism continues; idiots abuse the hides most nights, smashing up the internal doors and some of the benches. Every morning we have had to clear up the aftermath of the previous night; sometimes we find up to a hundred candles, and much evidence of drug abuse. It is not a very nice sight. The abuse continued to such an extent that I had no choice but to remove the benches altogether; I apologize to those people who have had to stand to try and peer out. I will be repairing the benches and putting them back soon.

On a brighter note, I have seen large flocks of Redwing and Goldfinches flying through the Reserve. Winter is on its way, and we will be starting our winter bird feeding programme, with seed supplied by the Friends, around Sunday 10th November. We will be using the same site as last year, around the base and side of the Sand Martin Cliff.

Redwing



SPARROWS and STARLINGS

by **E.O. EDWARDS**

It is hard to believe, but apparently there has been a large reduction in the number of House Sparrows and Starlings over the last few years.

A letter in the RSPB magazine, "**Birds**", written by Geoff Lee of Lincolnshire asks, "What have the people who complain about lack of birds done about it? For six years I have had a Starling nest box on the house, producing three broods a year—that's some 70-plus Starlings—and we have three Sparrow boxes—at three broods a year, that's 100 Sparrows. So, come on, moaners. Put up new boxes, or widen the hole in your Blue Tit nest box, and produce more birds."

Who is going to take up the challenge thrown out by Geoff? It will make a change from all those Tit boxes, and it could bring the Sparrows and Starlings back into our gardens.

THE CANAL - 1

by E.O.EDWARDS

Before leaving Forest Lock and moving up the Canal, the question of the migrating "Arrow Head" plant which I mentioned in the last Newsletter needs to be addressed. This plant over the last ten years has moved from Forest Lock down as far as Sunny Bank Cottages. Why? Well, the consensus of opinion puts the blame on the ducks!

It appears that ducks are for ever pulling bits of vegetation from the bottom of the canal, and it is conceivable that they have pulled up a bit of Arrow Head with root attached and failed to eat it; it has drifted on down the canal, and sunk back to the bottom and re-established itself a bit further every year.

If so, could "Homo Sapiens" - wearing appropriate apparel - pluck a bit of Arrow Head and transport it back to Forest Lock and start the process all over again, or would that be contrary to Nature Reserve rules?

Anyway, let us move on up the canal from Forest Lock about 200 yards; on the left you will see the remnants of a Box hedge, now gone wild and grown tall and straggly. This hedge used to be in front of two cottages, both with tidy gardens, which I remember visiting in the early sixties. I wanted some cabbage plants, and my neighbour Bert Sadler said he knew of the very place out in the country where we could get excellent plants; so we jumped on our bikes, and off we went.

Along to the end of Velindre Road and on to a country road, which I found out later was the Parish road between Whitchurch and Tongwynlais. We came to a farmyard, which Bert said was Forest Farm—and did I have a penny in my pocket? The reason for that question became obvious when I saw a closed gate with a lad sitting on the gatepost holding out his hand. The road was deep in cow dung; Bert yelled, "Quick, show him the penny." As soon as I did, the gate swung open and we passed through without having to dismount into the cow dung. The cottages were in a good state of repair and the gardens well kept—and we had our cabbage plants.

Les tells me that there was a raft moored on the canal in front of the cottages, but he never saw it in use. There does not appear to be a photograph of these cottages; you just have to use your imagination.

About 100 yards further up we come to what is now called Middle Lock, but it used to be known as Llwynmellt lock No. 42; it is interesting that this name has been put on one of the streets in the new housing estate in Tongwynlais, built on land named Llwyn-mallt on the 1876 map.

The bridge in the picture of Middle Lock house is carrying the Cardiff Railway running between Cardiff and Pontypridd, built by the Bute family in 1912. It turned out to be a bit of a white elephant; the Taff Vale Railway refused to let it join up with the railway network at Pontypridd, thereby restricting its use. It now only runs between Coryton and Cardiff; that is the line that has been proposed to extend to Radyr through the Reserve to form a ring around Cardiff.



(Moggies - continued from page 1)

I am sure that responsible cat owners, once they are aware of the carnage caused by prowling cats, will find a way to lessen the problem, just as dog owners have discovered that it is quite easy to use a plastic bag to solve the problem of dog poo.

Something that all cat owners must be aware of is the fast growth in Urban Fox numbers (*see page 4*); when food is short and cubs are to be fed, a cat makes an easy meal. **So do not let them out at night!**

THE CANAL - 2

by E.O. EDWARDS

The following gives some indication of the industries that sprang up alongside the Canal—shown at quarter mile intervals. The locks were numbered, starting at Merthyr; this chart shows the lower section of the Canal. Information supplied by **Thomas Shepherd**, Clerk to the Company of Proprietors of the Glamorganshire Canal Navigators.

Miles	Names of places	Miles	Names of places
14.25	Waste weir below Deniah. Corrieg Foundry.	19.75	Under the hill at Tyclun.
14.50	30 yards below Foundry Bridge.	20.00	Opposite Sunny bank. Melinriffith Basin.
14.75	140 yards below Pentre Bridge.	20.25	4 yards below Melinriffith Works Bridge. Melinriffith Lower landing place.
15.00	15 yards below Weavers Bridge. Maesmawr Coal Tip.	20.50	40 yards above Tymawr Bridge.
15.25	Ty-yn-Wern Bridge.	20.75	Opposite Gelly house.
15.50	20 yards below culvert in College land.	21.00	Opposite Hawthorn Cottage. Coal Yard & Llandaff Upper Yard.
15.75	130 yards above Caerty du Bridge.	21.25	Llandaff lock (no. 45). Llandaff Lower Yard. Canal Co's Storehouse. W. Steel's Coal Yard.
16.00	Opposite Caerty du.	21.50	College lock (no.46).
16.25	50 yards above Nantgarw. Upper waste weir. Nantgarw storehouse.	21.75	80 yards above Goleslon lock (no.47).
16.50	60 yards above Graig Bridge. Graigyrallt Colliery and Quarries.	22.00	Opposite Monachty House.
16.75	110 yards above Bryncoch Bridge.	22.25	Below Monachty lock (no.48).
17.00	70 yards below Treble locks (35, 36, 37).	22.50	40 yards above Llystalybont Boat Dock.
17.25	60 yards above Taff's Well lock (no. 38).	22.75	260 yards below Llystalybont House.
17.50	30 yards above Caeglas lock (no. 39). John Morgan's Upper Limestone Quarry.	23.00	360 yards above Black Weir.
17.75	130 yards below Portobello lock (no. 40). Evan Morgan's Limestone Quarry no.2. John Morgan's Lower Quarry no. 3.	23.25	Black Weir Bridge.
18.00	40 yards below Walnut Tree Bridge. Thomas Thomas' Lime stone Quarry no.4	23.50	100 yards above Cathays.
18.25	48 yards above Pentyrch Bridge. John Thomas' Limestone Quarry (4).	23.75	30 yards above Turnpike Gate. Town Coal Yard & North Gate.
18.50	50 yards below Old Stop Gate. Tongwynlais Upper Coal Yard.	24.00	50 yards above Crockherbtown lock (no.50). Coffin & Co's Coal Yard.
18.75	120 yards below Ivy House. Tongwynlais Lower Coal Yard.	24.25	Cock's Tower & Robert Thomas' Coal Yard.
19.00	120 yards below Ton lock (no. 41).	24.50	South Gate. Wharf, Bonded Warehouse, Timber Yard. Entrance cut to Bute Docks.
19.25	20 yards above Llwynmellt lock (no. 42).	24.75	Limekiln on Moors. Brick yard.
19.50	40 yards above Forest lock (no. 43).	25.00	Near the Bank. Railway Dock.
		25.25	Sea Lock.

Urban Fox Menace

Police have identified culprits responsible for attacks on car brakes.



Surrey detectives discovered the offenders were a group of fox cubs. 22 cars had their brake hoses cut. Search for a human offender bore no fruit; detectives suspected that local foxes had been chewing. The cubs had been recently evicted from their dens as they came of age. Seeking shelter underneath cars, they were chewing anything they found. **"We're not bringing any charges,"** a police spokeswoman said.

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Glamorganshire Canal Local Nature Reserve** by**Mr Ken Patterson 10 Heathwood Court Heathwood Road Heath
Cardiff CF14 4BT Tel: 029—2019 8658**

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