



# Friends

of FOREST FARM COUNTRY PARK  
and GLAMORGANSHIRE CANAL  
LOCAL NATURE RESERVE

Issue No: 89      September 2013

Website: [www.forestfarm.org.uk](http://www.forestfarm.org.uk)



A view from the tower over part of Slimbridge Wildlife and Wetlands Reserve and looking out to the Severn. Photo taken by Rosemary Waters on the Friends summer coach trip June 2013. See pp 8/9

Friends of Forest Farm

**OPEN DAY**

Saturday

October 12th

11 - 4 p.m.

... and much more

Refreshments available too!

Childrens' Nature trail ...

Pond  
Dipping

Willow Weaver

Fruit  
Press  
bring along  
your  
apples

'paddle'  
a coracle

History

*Editorial*

*Hello again Friends! First of all, a very warm welcome to our new members. We do appreciate your support to add to that of members who have renewed. I wonder who is our longest continuous member?*

*It is a great disappointment to hear of the problems with dogs or rather their owners, especially in the canal and hides. This is particularly so when the Rangers and volunteers work so hard to maintain and improve the Reserve. As always, it is a small minority's actions who spoil the pleasure of the majority .*

*What a busy last few months - and some decent weather this year! Guided walks with Chris James and Stella Wells, summer coach trip to Slimbridge, the strawberry treat and the pop up cafe all organised by Duncan Hockridge and the Community Rangers Spring Watch event - all in this edition. And, as you see opposite and in the seemingly longest list of events at the back of the newsletter, there is as much over the forthcoming 3 months. We'd be delighted to see you.*

*Sheila Austin*

**2 - 4 p.m.  
Saturday 26th September**

**Herb Walk and tea tasting  
with Laura Carpenter**

Wardens Centre Forest Farm Rd  
Whitchurch CF14 7JH

*Friends* of Forest Farm

**Wednesday 20th Nov 7.30 p.m.**

**Evening talk by Simon Morgan  
"Through the eyes of a Stonemason"**

All Welcome  
Whitchurch Community Centre,  
Old Church Rd. Whitchurch

**Remember**

**Alternate 1st Sat/Sun**  
monthly 11.00 Melingriffith Water  
Pump working

**2nd Sunday monthly 10.00**  
*Friends* volunteering

**3rd Saturday monthly**  
10.00

**Deadline for articles for next newsletter - 8th November**

**See back page for contact details**

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## **Reserve Report**

by **Paul Pinnell - Ranger**

### Problems on the canal - dogs.

A moorhen and a mallard had attempted to nest on the canal - but to no avail, due to disturbance particularly from those dog owners who irresponsibly allow their dogs into the canal. The moorhen had constructed two nests, one in the reeds on the edge, and the other right in the middle of the canal. Unfortunately, both were aborted; sadly no eggs or chicks in this instance.

*We would like to ask the owners of dogs not to allow their animals into the canal as this is having a detrimental effect on the ambience and potential breeding success of the wildlife as a whole.*

In addition, the destruction of the towpath is being accelerated due to dogs being allowed into the canal thus damaging the bank whilst they scramble to get back to the path.

### Longwood Drive update - Litter picking.

Sadly, Longwood Drive is the worst area for litter in the Reserve. Lorry drivers, contractors vans, customers using Macdonalds, Asda and the petrol station and others are spoiling the area with the paraphernalia from eating, drinking and drugs etc. This is having a drastic detrimental impact on the Reserve. We are collecting a bag of litter a day from this corridor.

### Butterflies



L - R. Small tortoiseshell, Brimstone, Gatekeeper, Comma

On a good note though, the dry spells throughout June, July and August have attracted large numbers of butterflies. The Reserve was awash with many different species including Red Admiral, Painted Lady, Large White, Brimstone, Meadow Brown, Gatekeeper, Small Heath, Speckled Wood, Comma, Small Tortoiseshell and Common Blue.



The nectar sources which attract them are many and varied, notably butterfly bush, hemp agrimony and common fleabane to name but a few. These sugar-rich plants are important in the protection and conservation of butterflies by day and moths by night. Other good nectar sources are bramble blossom, umbellifer plants and common ragwort.

And finally ... there have been a lot of orange tip and white tip bumble bees about as well on the Reserve.

## "HISTORY ON OUR DOORSTEP"

### A strawberry treat event at Forest Farm on 28th June in aid of Breast Cancer Care.



Many thanks to Duncan, who organised the event, and Barry who gave invaluable assistance on the walk around the Reserve. From the look of the happy faces on the bridge, they got a good day and were enjoying themselves. The walk ended with a strawberry treat in the Wardens' Centre.

Not only that, but the event raised funds for Breast Cancer Care - as Duncan reported to the Committee.

"Yesterday I thought that we had made £55 for Breast Cancer Care but in the afternoon the coach company (First Coaches) phoned me to say that as the coach was used for a charity event they were not now going to charge us for it. The result is that we made £100 for Breast Cancer Care."



Sheila Austin

Photos Duncan Hockridge

*Sorry we were not at **Rhiwbina** Festival. We did not have enough people available to man the stand. But we did manage **Whitchurch** this year, (the weather was really good!) and so was the interest in Forest Farm generally and in volunteering.*

**Thanks for all your support.**

Sincere thanks mainly to **Duncan, Pam and Barry** but also other members of the committee who ran the '**Pop up Cafe**' in July and August at the Wardens Centre.

These are only occasional but are greatly appreciated !

**Cardiff and District RSPB Group  
Conservation Group . . .**

**. . . Doing something positive**

Our last visit to the Reserve before the summer break was in June and proved rather disappointing - only one person came along. there were plenty of things to tackle; the two main jobs being the Balsam and the Rosebay Willowherb. We decided to scrap pulling the balsam. Paul went off to cut the Japanese knotweed, something you can enjoy slashing with a billhook.

It seems the poor weather has affected the growth of the Balsam - being succulent the snow and cold damp spring has knocked it back ... a job for September. However the weather has not affected the growth of the Rosebay Willowherb, still 5 - 6ft tall. The brush cutter was soon put to good use cutting large swathes through this weed. The rewards of keeping this area open are more and more groups of common spotted orchid. Each year the number have increased and they looked splendid amongst the grass and buttercups.

**Programme**

Conservation work will be held on the coming  
**Saturday mornings 10.30 - 12.30**  
**at Forest Farm Longwood Drive Whitchurch**

- |                  |  |
|------------------|--|
| <b>Sept 28th</b> | Clearing summer growth/balsam<br>Middle entrance         |
| <b>Oct 26th</b>  | Scrub/coppicing clearing<br>Middle entrance              |
| <b>Nov 30th</b>  | Cleaning nest boxes/ general clear up<br>Middle entrance |

The group works for a few hours during the morning roughly once a month. It is not particularly strenuous, similar to an active gardener (you just work to your own level).

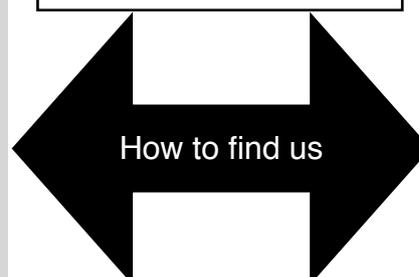
If you would like to get involved ... just turn up or better still, give me a ring

**Hugh Harrison**  
029 20704889

Cardiff Conservation  
volunteers meet at  
**Longwood Drive.**

At Jct 32 of M4, take the  
superstore (Asda) road off  
the roundabout and keep  
straight on at the mini  
roundabout.

You should see Hugh in  
the first section as you go  
down the hill (before you  
get to GE Healthcare and  
the pathway to the Taff  
trail and Gelynis Farm)



**Wardens Centre**  
Forest Farm Road,  
Whitchurch.

SATNAV - postcode is  
CF14 7JH. Our website  
has a schematic map,  
google map and Youtube  
route from Velindre Rd.

One route is to take the  
Velindre Rd, at the  
roundabout at north end  
of Whitchurch, past  
velindre hospital, straight  
on at mini roundabout,.  
Stay on road down hill  
bearing right. This is  
Forest Farm Road, keep  
going past canal  
entrance to Reserve,  
past houses, the sports  
ground. Road bears to  
the right - car park on  
your right, farm buildings  
on your left. the  
Wardens centre is round  
the corner, beyond the  
old barn on your left.

**Nature Walks June/July  
Forest Farm Nature Reserve**

**by Stella Wells**



On a day of sunshine, clouds and showers, eight of us strolled along the river and around the reserve. Swifts, swallows and martins gleaned the sky above us as we enjoyed looking at the early summer plants such as bramble blossom, flag iris and bulrush.

A fox cub eyed us warily from his look out point across the pond at the first hide. A joy to behold. Reed buntings darted around, barely sitting still long enough to be observed. A buzzard circled lazily above us.



Chiffchaff

At the second hide we were lucky enough to see the kingfisher if only for a brief moment. On a tree above us we were treated to a prolonged view of a very young and fluffy jay, who hadn't yet learned to be afraid of humans.

My morning came to an interesting end as I took advantage of the open visitor centre and the loo. I looked into the toilet pan and discovered a tiny froglet! How it got there I do not know, but suffice to say I managed to rescue it and gave it to a warden to return it to its home.

On a hot and sunny July day, seven of us enjoyed a quiet morning. The leaf cover made it very difficult to see any movement in the trees. There was lots of birdsong to make up for the fact that we didn't see that many birds. Chiff chaffs and black caps sang loudly, though the chiff chaff isn't exactly melodious is it? There were several speckled young robins hopping about and a

single young moorhen on the pond.



Robin phot by simon Brown

Butterflies seen were the speckled wood, comma and large white - I'm told we are not allowed to call them 'cabbage whites' anymore.

The Reserve felt peaceful as if everything was slowly recovering from the energetic antics of spring and early summer.



Moorhen photo by simon Brown

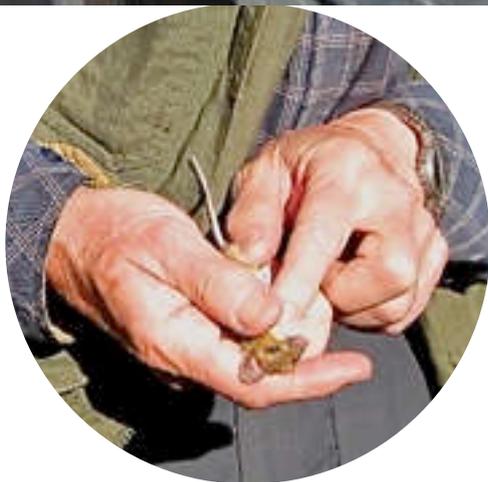
*Some photos taken in Forest Farm May - July*



Left: Mint moth on leaf of mint planted in the herb bed (right) near the Wardens' Centre



Left: Refurbished stable  
Below left: View from new bridge across the Taff from Hailey Park  
Below: Young visitors Sam and James with Ranger Alec pond dipping - Spring watch weekend



Spring watch Weekend  
Left: Tiny wood mouse  
Right: Sam with a slow worm (both released later!)



## **Slimbridge Visit June 2013**

### **The *Friends* Summer Coach Trip**

Congratulations must go to Duncan once again for his meticulous arrangements on the annual Friends of Forest Farm coach trip on June 15<sup>th</sup>.



The weather of course could not be arranged and all of us were dressed for the inclement conditions which prevailed. However, it did not dampen our spirits and after a very pleasant coach journey and a refreshing coffee at the centre we met our guide for an introduction to the Reserve. She gave us an excellent resume of how Peter Scott, once a duck shooting man in this area, changed to become its saviour and set up the Wetlands Trust in 1946. He hoped this would save the area and its wildlife, while encouraging us, the public, to care about the natural world and the value of wetlands to life on earth.

From the observation room, the first view out across some of the scrapes included more common ducks and geese, but also Black Tailed Godwits, Avocets, Common Terns and a small party of Lapwings.

Then outdoors, and we met a pair of Nene geese, the rarest geese in the world, who were happy to feed on the grain which can be bought at the centre. A pair of Shell duck with 17 ducklings, grey and white striped, were an amazing sight: the male being so protective and aggressive to any duck that came close.

The flamingo lagoon is very colourful with 6 different species of flamingo. The habitat has been built to mimic their natural home. Mounds of earth are built up on

which the female lays her eggs above the water level in case the water rises- so sensible.

We enjoyed the New Wild Garden and Shelter; this had been transferred from the Chelsea Flower show where it had won 'Silver Gilt'. The pond dipping area was busy and, we made a visit into the dark to see the Fruit Bats.

Newly built since my last visit was a Tunnel Area where more conservation is undertaken for small mammals. It included American otters, water vole, harvest mice and pigmy shrews. Beavers have also been added to list of "must see" mammals- unfortunately their pool was empty, they were probably in their lodge.

We had distant view of a Crane, part of the captive breeding scheme, and there are several pens where different ducks and geese from all parts of the world are on view and, overlooking the River Severn, we sat in the hide and watched a little Egret feeding in the reeds.

Time is a constraint on how much we could see. There were various plants and trees to admire on our way back to the centre, where we took the lift to the observation tower. This gave a panoramic view of the Reserve, the canal and the river beyond.

No visit is complete without a visit to the shop; here I purchased some assorted 'flavour' fat blocks for my ever hungry garden birds.

**Rosemary Waters**

**(Photo Duncan Hockridge)**

### *Walks with Chris James*

This is a photo of the last walk Chris James led which included the old railway cutting.



Photo above  
Sheila Austin

Below, you can just see the 1900 date of the Cardiff Railway bridge, Tongwynlais end of the Reserve



Photo left  
Glenys Care

\* \* \*

**Sunday 10th  
November  
from 10.30**

Meet **Chris James** at the Wardens' Centre, Forest Farm Rd, Whitchurch for a stroll around the Reserve to see its **'Autumn wildlife and their inhabitants'**

Learn about the site improvements to increase the area's biodiversity.

Refreshments available provided by the Friends of Forest Farm

## ***Medicinal plants in the Reserve*** ***by Laura Carpenter***

After moving to Whitchurch a few years ago, I was thrilled to find Forest Farm Nature Reserve on my doorstep, and one with such diverse plant life was the icing on the cake. As a herbalist I am constantly looking at plants, (even while stopped in traffic) and the Reserve has so many rare and wonderful specimens.

Last year I saw *Solanum dulcamara* (Woody nightshade) for the time in the reserve and also the first time anywhere. The particularly wet summer saw an increase of this poisonous plant.

This year the warmer weather has shown some more wonderful specimens, *Filipendula ulmaria* (Meadowsweet) which was rarely seen last year is now out in abundance. This wonderful herb was used as the base of aspirin along with willow bark, and is used today in modern herbal medicine as an anti-inflammatory for arthritis and rheumatism.



Woody nightshade



Meadowsweet

It's not only the rare plants that interest me, the cleavers and plantain have all been prolific and all still hold an important place in treating skin conditions such as eczema and psoriasis.

A hugely under rated plant is the humble nettle, still used in herbal medicine today for its high mineral content and as an anti histamine, but it has so many other uses.

In the First World War nettles were used to make military uniforms, and they are also wonderful in soups and sauces (if picked early). In 1693 it was recorded that nettle was used to treat kidney stones, and today research shows that nettle has a diuretic effect.

**If you are interested in learning more about herbs in the Reserve and their medicinal and historical uses, come along to the herb walk on 28<sup>th</sup> September, 2pm till 4pm.**

The herb walk will start (and end) at the Warden's Centre and last approximately an hour and there will then be herbal tea tasting (and cake). **Everyone is welcome, we only ask a £3 donation which will go to the Friends of Forest Farm.**

If you would like to know more about me and herbal medicine please visit my website [www.lauracarpenter.co.uk](http://www.lauracarpenter.co.uk), or pop in to The Whitchurch Clinic, Merthyr Road (above the mobility shop).

**Membership** - currently 281, this includes 6 new members from the July 'pop up cafe'. A warm welcome to them! Thank you all for your support. To join or renew see [www.forestfarm.org.uk](http://www.forestfarm.org.uk) or contact the Membership Sec, 8 Woodland Rd., Whitchurch Cardiff CF14 2BU

## Events at Forest Farm September to December

DATE	EVENT
Sunday 1st Sept 11.00	<b>Melngriffith Water Pump</b> Ty Mawr Rd Whitchurch. See the pump in operation and hear all about it.
Sunday 8th Sept 10.00 - 13.00	<b>Friends Volunteering Event. Hayraking - if weather permits.</b> Meet Martin at the Wardens Centre Forest Farm Rd Whitchurch
Wednesday 18th Sept 18.00	<b>Foods of the Forest.</b> Led by Nicola Hutchinson and the Community Park Rangers. Take a pleasant stroll around Forest Farm, discover the tasty treats Nature has in store at this time of year, then taste some delicious delicacies. Meet at the Wardens Centre Forest Farm Road Whitchurch. <b>ALL CHILDREN MUST BE ACCOMPANIED BY AN ADULT. Charge £3.00 per person.</b>
Saturday 21st Sept 10.00 - 12.00	<b>Wildlife Watch Club</b> for children aged 8-12 <i>A conservation task helping out on the Reserve</i> For more details email Gareth at <a href="mailto:gstamp@cardiff.gov.uk">gstamp@cardiff.gov.uk</a> or phone the Community Rangers on 029 2044 5903
Saturday 21st Sept 10.00 - 12.30	<b>Nature Ramble with the RSPB.</b> Meet Stella at the Wardens Centre Forest Farm Road, Whitchurch.
Saturday 28th Sept 14.00 - 16.00	<b>Herb walk.</b> Meet herbalist Laura Carpenter at the Wardens Centre Forest Farm Rd for about an hour's walk followed by tea tasting and cakes! Suggested £3 donation to the Friends of Forest Farm. See p10 for more details
Saturday 28th Sept 10.30 - 12.30	<b>Cardiff Conservation Group Volunteering</b> - Help clear summer growth/balsam. Meet Middle Entrance Longwood Drive Whitchurch See p5 for details
Saturday 5th Oct 11.00	<b>Melngriffith Water Pump.</b> Ty Mawr Rd Whitchurch. See the pump in operation and hear all about it.
Saturday 12th Oct 11.00 - 16.00	<b>Friends of Forest Farm OPEN DAY.</b> See front page and our website for details.
Sunday 13th Oct 10.00 - 13.00	<b>Friends Volunteering Event. Activity to be confirmed.</b> Meet Martin at the Wardens Centre Forest Farm Rd Whitchurch
Saturday 19th Oct 10.00 - 12.30	<b>Nature Ramble with the RSPB.</b> Meet Stella at the Wardens Centre Forest Farm Road Whitchurch
Saturday 26th Oct 10.00 - 12.00	<b>Wildlife Watch Club</b> for children aged 8-12 <i>Create a bug hotel out of interesting items!</i> For more details email Gareth at <a href="mailto:gstamp@cardiff.gov.uk">gstamp@cardiff.gov.uk</a> or phone Community Rangers on 029 2044 5903

*Events at Forest Farm September to December cont'd*

DATE	EVENT
Saturday 26th Oct 10.30 - 12.30	<b>Cardiff Conservation Group Volunteering</b> - Help with scrub/coppicing clearing. Meet Middle Entrance Longwood Drive Whitchurch See p5 for details
Sunday 3rd Nov 11.00	<b>Melingriffith Water Pump.</b> Ty Mawr Rd Whitchurch. See the pump in operation and hear all about it.
Sunday 10th Nov 10.30	<b>Autumn Wildlife and their Habitats.</b> Join Chris James for a stroll around the Reserve to see autumn wildlife and habitats. Learn about site improvements to increase the area's wildlife diversity. Refreshments will be provided by the Friends of Forest Farm
Sunday 10th Nov 10.00 - 13.00	<b>Friends Volunteering Event. Hedgelaying. Booking necessary.</b> Contact Martin on 07952 926145. Meet at the Wardens Centre Forest Farm Rd Whitchurch
Saturday 16th Nov 10.00 - 12.30	<b>Nature Ramble with the RSPB.</b> Meet Stella at the Wardens Centre Forest Farm Road, Whitchurch.
<i>Wednesday</i> 20th Nov 19.30	<b>Friends Evening Talk "Through the eyes of a Stonemason"</b> Simon Morgan from Mossfords. Whitchurch Community Centre, Old Church Rd, Whitchurch. Tea and biscuits.
Saturday 30th Nov 10.00 - 12.00	<b>Wildlife Watch Club</b> for children aged 8-12 <i>Autumn leaf art and helping out on the Reserve</i> . For more details email Gareth at <a href="mailto:gstamp@cardiff.gov.uk">gstamp@cardiff.gov.uk</a> or phone Community Rangers on 029 2044 5903
Saturday 30th Nov 10.30 - 12.30	<b>Cardiff Conservation Group Volunteering</b> - Help cleaning nest boxes and general clean up Meet Middle Entrance Longwood Drive Whitchurch See p5 for details
Saturday 7th Dec 11.00	<b>Melingriffith Water Pump.</b> Ty Mawr Rd Whitchurch. See the pump in operation and hear all about it.
Sunday 8th Dec 10.00 - 13.00	<b>Friends Volunteering Event. Hedgelaying. Booking necessary.</b> Contact Martin on 07952 926145. Meet at the Wardens Centre Forest Farm Rd Whitchurch
Saturday 14th Dec 10.00 - 12.30	<b>Nature Ramble with the RSPB.</b> Meet Stella at the Wardens Centre Forest Farm Road, Whitchurch.
Saturday 14th Dec 10.00 - 12.00	<b>Wildlife Watch Club</b> for children aged 8-12 <i>Yuletide log and wreath making at the Victoria Park Bowls Club.</i> For more details email Gareth at <a href="mailto:gstamp@cardiff.gov.uk">gstamp@cardiff.gov.uk</a> or phone Community Rangers on 029 2044 5903

Published on behalf of The Friends of Forest Farm and Glamorganshire Canal Local Nature Reserve by Mrs Sheila Austin, 1 Heol Gwrgan, Whitchurch, Cardiff CF14 1PP email: [editor@forestfarm.org.uk](mailto:editor@forestfarm.org.uk)  
The Editor wishes to state that all views expressed by contributors are their own, as is the responsibility for them.