



Friends

of FOREST FARM COUNTRY PARK
and GLAMORGANSHIRE CANAL
LOCAL NATURE RESERVE

Issue No: 93 September 2014

Website: www.forestfarm.org.uk

DENNIS DAVIES OBE

1925-2014

Those of us privileged to have known Dennis Davies are saddened to know of his passing away on 28th June this year. Dennis was the first Secretary of the Friends of Forest Farm, a position which he filled from 1990 until 2005 and was a significant and dynamic member who contributed a considerable amount of work and effort to the Reserve and to the Friends.

Dennis was born and brought up in Llanybydder, a beautiful part of Carmarthenshire. In 1944, during the War, he served in the RAF with part of his time based at St Athan. Following his “demob”, he became a student at Aberystwyth and Birmingham Universities. After graduation, he took up a post as a child protection officer, a position which he approached with characteristic enthusiasm and knowledge.

In 1953, he married Marjorie and moved to their home in Heol Don opposite the house where the famous naturalist Ronald Lockley was brought up. In the 1960s, their family increased with the addition of Jonathan and Catherine; Dennis then spent significant energy in building enjoyable play areas for the children. In addition to being an active family man, he was also an active professional worker who soon became the Assistant Director of Social Services for Glamorgan County. When the county changes took place in 1974, he became the Director of Social Services for Mid Glamorgan, contributing significant support for society in the county until his retirement in 1988. During his working life, his good work was recognised and he was awarded the OBE by The Queen at Buckingham Palace.

Following his early retirement, he frequently visited the Reserve. He also enjoyed hill walking with his friends in the Brecon Beacons. During this period, he became associated with people who were considering the benefit of the setting up of a friends group at Forest Farm. This led to primary meetings with interested people and the group was set up and Dennis became the first Secretary in March 1990 with Edward Edwards as the first Chairman.

Once established, the Friends became active and Dennis worked extremely hard, raising funds to improve the Reserve and to prevent building on surrounding meadow land. In fact, he raised £35,000 (equivalent to approximately £100,000 today) by 1996. This money was used towards the creation of two wetland sites with hides and the improvement of pathways which made large parts of the Reserve open to visitors with pushchairs, prams, wheelchairs and for people who found it difficult to negotiate numerous stiles.

... continued on Page 3



Dennis with his family after receiving the O.B.E at Buckingham Palace

Hello Friends,

I often think how lucky we are to have Forest Farm Nature Reserve on our doorstep . It's a haven to remind us of Nature's diversity and bounty and the simple pleasures of life, like watching dragonflies on the canal, seeing a nuthatch, hearing a songthrush.

We could not do this now were it not for the efforts of those, like Dennis Davies, (p1&3) who helped set up the Friends, the time and effort of members like Noel Gale (p4) who has recently retired from the Committee, volunteers - our 'regulars' Cardiff Conservation Group (p8) and the Friends, community support (p10), other committee members who organise activities such as the trip, evening talks in the winter months and our forthcoming Open Day. All this of course would not happen with you, the Friends of Forest Farm. So thank you.

*The Reserve is owned by Cardiff Council and most of the work done there is by the Rangers and the Woodland team. We are truly indebted for their skill, commitment and knowledge. Council cutbacks put extra pressure on what they are able to do, so **our** efforts are all the more important. This is not only in a practical way, but to raise the Reserve's profile in order to preserve and increase biodiversity and an educational resource for the next generation, our health - and please support any fight for funding , not only for improvements needed, but to maintain the Reserve*

Enjoy the late Summer/Autumn.

Sheila Austin

"FRIENDS"

OPEN DAY

SATURDAY

11TH OCTOBER 2014

11a.m. - 4p.m.

*Wardens' Centre, Forest Farm Rd
Whitchurch*

*Apple pressing, Wood turning,
Earthworm survey,
Prize winning domestic fowl
display - fresh eggs on sale,
Lichen study,
Refreshments.*

*Bring along any old photos of
Forest Farm and the
Glamorgan canal, we'd love
to see them.*

All welcome!

Deadline for articles for next newsletter - 8th November 2014

See back page for contact details

Contents	Page	Contents	Page
Greenfinches/Membership/apology	3	Cardiff Conservation Group	8
Reserve Report/Noel Gale	4	Friends Summer Coach trip	9/10
Melingriffith Sports Club Gate	5	Community volunteering day	10
RSPB Report	6	New bird feeder/Events	11
A lovely summer herb walk	7	Events	12

Dennis Davies cont'd

In 2005, he retired from his position as Secretary to spend more time with Marjorie who was not well. He is missed by the Friends as a very amiable, democratic and active member of the group and remembered for friendship, hard work, fund resourcing and raising the level of competence of the Committee.

Chris James

Dennis' son, Jonathan, has subsequently added the following:

His OBE was awarded not just for work in the county but also for work on UK committees which helped to change national policies regarding the care and welfare for children, the elderly and disabled.

and, about Dennis' involvement with Forest Farm:

Dad, Catherine and I used to cycle down to Forest Farm every Sunday morning before lunch when we were children. I used to hate cycling past the factory units because of the humming noises which emanated from them. Once past those, we would have to cycle through the farmyard of the farm itself and end up somewhere in Tongwynlais.

So it was a natural progression for Dad to want to get involved in safeguarding an area we had all enjoyed so much. He enjoyed the Reserve, the challenges of the position and the friendship of everyone at "Friends" and we both are proud of all of his achievements.

Greenfinches - a letter

A rather poorly looking Greenfinch. Picture taken on my birdfeeder in Park Avenue, Whitchurch on the 11th June.

I noticed your piece on them in your latest newsletter. Lets hope this bird survived.

Regards

Mike Rossiter

Phil Baker, our Treasurer, who is also a member of the RSPB, has added the following:- I am a member of the BTO's "Garden Birdwatch" scheme, from which I have got most information about sick birds, as they ask you to report any you see.

There is some info on their website <http://www.bto.org/volunteer-surveys/gbw>



Membership

Our membership creeps up again - and at the last count, was 342. This includes 6 who joined at the Whitchurch Festival in July. A warm welcome to our new members and thanks to all members, old and new for their support.

Pauline Fisher
Membership Secretary

Apology:

I am sorry that I do not have room this time for information received about families who used to live in the Forest Farm area, They are Mary Brown, the Troake family and Bill Gully. I will put it in next time. My sincere thanks to the contributors.

Sheila Austin (Editor)

Reserve Report

by **Paul Pinnell - Ranger**

The new feeding station is becoming a success with the birds (see p11). A great spotted woodpecker has returned with its young and they are actively using the dispenser. Chris Price sighted a kingfisher close to the Wardens' Centre hide on 10th



Whitethroat

Photo by Alec Stewart

August, also a Whitethroat and Garden Warbler. In addition, the kingfisher had successfully nested on the Reserve rearing three chicks in the process. The Common Buzzard has also nested successfully again this year, having reared one chick; it is often heard mewing in the Long Wood.*

A leaf-cutter bee is around the pond. This a solitary bee that makes its nest by burrowing into logs.**



Leaf cutter bee

Work on the tow path has been postponed for the moment due to other commitments but within the next months, work should commence again on the repairs. However, I would like to thank the Friends of Forest Farm volunteers who turned up despite torrential rain on their August volunteers day to help with patching up the path by Forest Lock.

Melingriffith Water Pump Update: - The engineer has taken some paddles away to replace with new ones. So hopefully it won't be too long before the water pump is operational again.

* (Also mentioned in RSPB walk report p6)

** Leaf cutter bees also nest in holes in plant stems, dead wood, cliffs or old walls, and can be seen in gardens. They famously cut discs out of leaves (they particularly like roses), gluing them together with saliva in order to build the 'cells' in which their larvae live. The larvae hatch and develop, pupating in autumn and hibernating over winter. The Leaf-cutter Bee is on the wing from April to August, and feeds solely on pollen and nectar.

(Information from the Wildlife Trusts website).

Noel Gale

Noel has retired from the Friends of Forest Farm Committee of which he was an active member for 19 years. Through the newsletter, the Committee would formally like to thank Noel for all his efforts on behalf of the Friends.

He took over the position of Membership Secretary in 1995 and latterly took on the distribution of the quarterly Newsletter as well. At the A.G.M. in April 2012 he handed over both these tasks to Pauline Fisher but remained an active member of the Committee.

Having given so much time and expertise to "The Friends", he felt now (A.G.M April 2014) was the time to step down and take life a little easier while still remaining a member.

I, and the rest of the Committee, are very much indebted to Noel for his long association with us and with the Friends generally.

So, a big thank you once again Noel.

John Harding (Chairman)

Melingriffith Sports Club Gate

Duncan Hockridge has sent us this progress report.

Work on the gate is progressing. Certain areas of metal are quite thin and these are having to be cut out and replaced with new as they cannot be welded. In order to straighten out the framework properly, it has all been taken apart and each piece is dealt with separately. If one tried to straighten individual pieces whilst the gate was in one piece, the adjoining sections would have become buckled.



The lowest bar running across the whole width of the gate had been buried in the ground for many years, so that has mostly rusted away. Fortunately, Andrew has found another piece to weld in place, of an age which will match the other sections of the gate. This is the piece which will be welded under the sun burst.

In the photo by the way, the gate is up side down with the rusted section now removed.

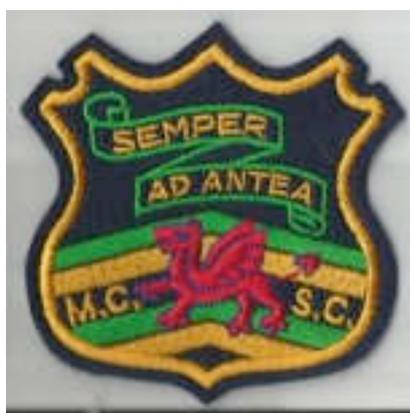
(The letters are also back to front, but identifiable. Ed)

Colours ...

Right picture. The badge of the Melingriffith Sports Club.

I am indebted to **Les Gibbon** who brought it round and sincerely thank him for taking the trouble. He tells me the motto means 'Always to the fore'. It is currently of particular interest because, as you know, we are having the MGSC gate refurbished and were seeking information on the colours.

I thought you would like to see it. Ed



*For those seeing this in black and white, the background of the badge is **black**, the lettering, edge outline and lighter alternate stripes are in quite a bright **yellow**, the other stripes are **green** and, of course, the dragon is red! Ed.*

Stop Press! ...

The renovations of the gate have just been completed and it will be returned shortly to the Reserve.

**Nature Walk - July
Forest Farm Nature Reserve**



After heavy rain, I was surprised that three turned up for the morning walk. On the radio that morning, David Attenborough had suggested counting butterflies that share your garden and parks. What a good idea for a walk - and we did have a volunteer with a butterfly chart. Unfortunately, it was too damp for anything flitting around ... though a Common White and perhaps a Speckled Wood was seen.

The Taff river was in full flow. Around the weir, a grey wagtail was hunting for food and a cormorant drying out on a log; also a couple of black headed gulls - they have now returned from their breeding grounds. Neither of the hides was very productive, a few reed warblers skulking about. A very vocal buzzard was heard; we did locate the bird near the canal - probably a youngster.



On our stroll around the Reserve, we did increase our number to four and also saw a heron and a green woodpecker in flight.

Buzzard and Green Woodpecker photos are from a 'Friends' photos cd in editor's possession. Most photos not attributed.



We finished off the morning in the hide next to the Wardens' Centre. rodents, that's the place for you to watch them making good use of to end the morning, a great spotted woodpecker flew in.

Brilliant.

Hugh Harrison

Stella Wells, who has conducted these walks for us for a number of years, is not able to continue. We thank her most sincerely for all her time and effort and the lovely articles she has written for this newsletter. Grateful thanks also to Hugh for doing the July walk and Pauline for the August one.

We are looking for other people to conduct these walks . Stella says you do not need to be an expert, there is usually someone present with good knowledge. Perhaps this could be done on a rota basis? I have approached the RSPB as well and they are seeing what they can do. Please get in touch with me if you can assist. (see back page for contact details). RSPB walks are the 3rd Sat in the month starting 10 a.m.

Sheila Austin

A lovely summer herb walk

On Saturday 9th August we chanced the rain showers and embarked on a herb walk starting at the Melingriffith water pump. Thirteen people attended, which is the largest group I've had for a Whitchurch herb walk; it was lovely to see so many people.

A herb walk in August is usually still full of medicinal plants in flower but unfortunately a lot had gone to seed already. We didn't let that stop us though; there were still plenty of medicinal plants and trees along our circular route along the Taff trail and across the footbridges.

The first plants we saw were the ever present bramble and nettles. Bramble leaves were used traditionally for dysentery but they are also used for coughs and sore throats. The nettle was in seed and everyone tried some as they are a fantastic British superfood, high in essential fatty acids, vitamins and minerals. They have been studied recently for use in the treatment of prostate cancer.

Next came the hawthorn trees, which had already begun to fruit, well known as a traditional heart remedy and blood pressure regulator. Chamomile was a lovely surprise plant find as we crossed the Taff, still in flower and an excellent example of a panacea plant, a medicinal plant with a multitude of different uses. Well known for its ability to reduce bloating and digestive discomfort, it is also a fantastic anti-inflammatory, particularly in skin conditions.

On the opposite bank of the river we found the last of the St John's wort, which I collected to make an infused oil, an external remedy for bruises and nerve pain. Although now well known as a remedy for anxiety and depression, this was actually only discovered as a side effect of the plant in the 1980s. Traditionally it was a liver and blood cleanser, which is why it interacts with some medications.

We spotted many other medicinal plants, including; coltsfoot, mugwort, plantain, horsetail, dandelion, oak, ash, elder and birch.

Please take care when picking medicinal plants, you must be 100% sure of the plant and its uses. If you are going to take herbal medicine it is important to seek professional advice from either your GP or a medical herbalist.

I will be leading another free Forest Farm and canal herb walk on Sunday 5th October, meeting outside the warden's centre, 2pm – 3.30pm.

For more information on herb walks and other herbal medicine events that I am running, please visit my website www.lauracarpenter.co.uk,
or email info@lauracarpenter.co.uk,
or call 07946150721.

By Laura Carpenter
(medical herbalist)



‘Bug hotel ‘
just outside
the Wardens
Centre
constructed
by the
Watch Club

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

. . . Doing something positive

Nest box and wildflower survey. On a bright sunny morning at the end of May, it was difficult to remember it had been a poor Spring. This was soon borne out by the results regarding the nestboxes - though on checking previous records - this seems to be about average for the past years. Out of 18 boxes most had at least one dead young - not uncommon; 2 boxes had 5 dead - in both cases young ready to fledge ... adult bird predated? There were 2 empty boxes, one with a tree wasp nest. the rest had reasonable success.

The wild flower survey was also affected by the vagaries of our weather, much like our own gardens. The few doing the survey did not have an easy task as many flowers like the bluebell had made an early showing and gone over by the time of our visit. Our current wildflower count is 68, we roughly record about half in a morning. At the moment, we seem to have an abundance of woodland fern (Bucklers) - giving a tropical look.

Our June visit, the last before the summer break, looked as though the weather might intervene, but the morning stayed dry. It was decided to leave the Japanese knotweed and tackle the Himalayan Balsam as numbers were low. The strimmer was in action tackling the Rosebay Willowherb as it has spread at a phenomenal rate. The Common Spotted Orchid has suffered slightly being smothered by the late flush of Spring growth.

Programme 2014

Conservation work will be held on the following Saturday mornings 10.30 - 12.30p.m. at Forest Farm, Longwood Drive, Whitchurch.

September 27th	Meadow area/general clearing; Balsam Middle entrance
October 25th	Scrub/coppicing clearing Middle entrance
November 29th	Cleaning nest boxes; general clearing 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 work to your own level). If you feel you would like to get involved ... just turn up, or better still give me a ring.

Hugh Harrison 029 20704889

Friends coach trip to Ross on Wye and
the International Birds of Prey Centre Newent



A happy group in Ross on Wye, on the Friends annual coach trip which was superbly organised by Duncan, who took this photo.

After visiting Ross, most opted to continue the day out at Newent - see below.

**The International Centre for Birds of Prey, Newent
- report by Pam Clarke**

The majority of people stayed on the coach and arrived at The International Centre for Birds of Prey, near Newent, Glos - well prepared by Duncan with maps listing the numerous resident bird species and showing the locations of the aviaries within the 11 acres of beautifully landscaped gardens.

There were around 240 birds of prey, from over 70 species, living at the Centre - which is the oldest dedicated centre for these species in the world. We were all amazed to see, at such close quarters, varieties of Buzzards, Caracaras, Eagles, Falcons, Hawks, Kites, Owls and Vultures from countries throughout the world.



While at first it seemed a little disquieting to see such magnificent birds held in captivity, we learned that the Centre is dedicated to the conservation of all birds of prey through captive breeding and public education, including the treatment and rehabilitation of injured birds. It was certainly wonderful to see the chicks and young birds born to so many breeding pairs, especially the tiny owls.

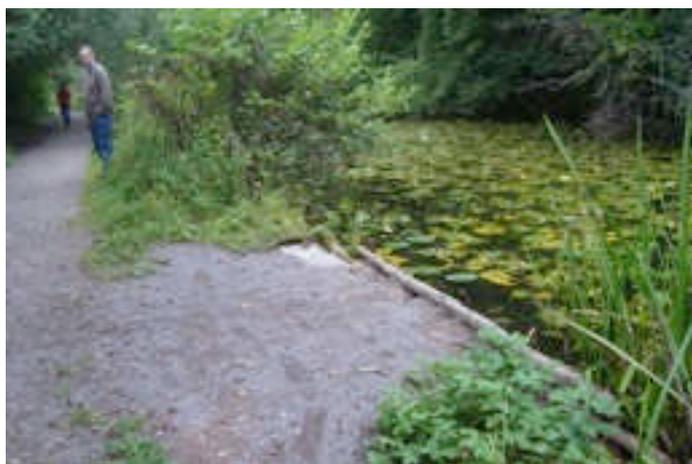
Cont'd next page

Birds of Prey Centre, Newent, cont'd

We enjoyed two Flying demonstrations during the afternoon with trained birds such as falcons, owls, kites and eagles soaring into the air and then zooming down and even gliding just above our heads. Staff were really friendly and knowledgeable. Delightful to see the demo of six tiny Burrowing Owls happily popping into tunnels made in mounds of earth and then emerging out of different tunnels.

Tea and cakes in the café completed a visit which everyone raved about.

Volunteering in Forest Farm



Above is an example of where the canal tow path is in need of repair and right showing a repair done. by volunteers. All such repairs are inevitably of a temporary nature. Ed

In June 2014, a team of volunteers from the Principality Building Society Head Office in Cardiff swapped their desks for a day in the great outdoors - to help out at Friends of Forest Farm.

They helped clear an outdoor learning area, prepare a wetland area for wildlife and even helped fix the banks of the Glamorgan Canal.

Throughout the summer period, Principality staff have been busy volunteering their time to help various community groups across Wales. So far this year over 900 hours of volunteering has been completed.



Caroline Mitchell
Senior Branch Manager - Canton

New bird feeder donated

I would like to thank Jenny & Steve Turner from Newport for donating a 4 foot, 12 hole bird feeder. This was to replace the old one which they had noticed was the worse for wear, having had to be taped up at the bottom!

A big thank you to them from us all.

John Harding



Don't forget!
Saturday October 11th

Earthworm survey 2p.m.
Lichen study 3p.m.

Meet the OPAL community scientist Barbara Brown at the Wardens' Centre, Forest Farm Rd Whitchurch



Events at Forest Farm September - December 2014

DATE	EVENT
Sunday 14th Sept 10.00 - 12.30 approx	Friends of Forest Farm volunteering group. ALL WELCOME. Meet at Wardens' Centre. Contact Martin on 07952926145 for more details.
Wednesday 17th Sept 18.00	Foods of the Forest. Wardens Centre. £3.00 per person. Suitable for the disabled. "Take a pleasant stroll around Forest Farm Country Park and discover the tasty treats Mother Nature has in store this time of year. This is followed by a tasting session of some delicious delicacies".
Saturday 20th Sept 10.00 - 12.00	RSPB/Friends Nature Walk. Meet at the Wardens Centre Forest Farm Rd.
Saturday 27th Sept 10.00 - 12.30	Volunteering Event with Cardiff and District RSPB Conservation Group. Meadow area/general clearing + balsam. Meet Hugh at the Middle Entrance Longwood Drive Whitchurch. (M4 Jct 32 signed to Forest Farm, straight across after Asda turn off)
Saturday 27th Sept 10.00 - 12.00	Wildlife Watch Club for children aged 8-12 Fruit and nut Forage - in search of Autumn's bounty. For more details email Gareth at gstamp@cardiff.gov.uk or phone Community Rangers on 029 2044 5903
Saturday 11th Oct 11.00 - 16.00	Friends of Forest Farm Open Day! Apple pressing, Earthworm survey, Wood turning, Lichen study, Prize winning domestic fowl - eggs for sale. All welcome. Refreshments available.
Sunday 12th Oct 10.00 - 12.30 approx	Friends of Forest Farm volunteering group. ALL WELCOME. Meet at Wardens' Centre. Contact Martin on 07952926145 for more details.

Events at Forest Farm September - December cont'd

DATE	EVENT
Saturday 18th Oct 10.00 - 12.00	RSPB/Friends Nature Walk. Meet at the Wardens Centre Forest Farm Rd.
Saturday 25th Oct 10.30 - 12.30	Volunteering Event with Cardiff and District RSPB Conservation Group. Scrub/coppicing clearing. Meet Hugh at the Middle Entrance Longwood Drive Whitchurch. (M4 Jct 32 signed to Forest Farm, straight across after Asda turn off)
Saturday 25th Oct 10.00 - 12.00	Wildlife Watch Club for children aged 8-12 . Ghoulish art - Halloween art attack. For more details email Gareth at gstamp@cardiff.gov.uk or phone Community Rangers on 029 2044 5903
Saturday 8th November 10.30	Lichen Study. FREE. Meet Barbara, Community Scientist with OPAL, to find out how clean the air is at Forest Farm with an OPAL air quality survey. Please note this event is not really adapted for children under 10. Meet at the Wardens Centre Forest Farm Rd. Whitchurch. 15 places only - to book, Tel: 029 2057 3233 or email Barbara.Brown@museumwales.ac.uk .
Sunday 9th Nov 10.00 - 12.30 approx	Friends of Forest Farm volunteering group. ALL WELCOME. Meet at Wardens' Centre. Contact Martin on 07952926145 for more details.
Saturday 15th Nov 10.00 - 12.00	RSPB/Friends Nature Walk. Meet at the Wardens Centre Forest Farm Rd.
Wednesday 19th Nov 19.30	Friends of Forest Farm Evening talk. "The History of Newport Transporter Bridge" by Maureen Hendon. Whitchurch Community centre Old Church Rd. All welcome
Saturday 29th Nov 10.30 - 12.30	Volunteering Event with Cardiff and District RSPB Conservation Group. Cleaning nest boxes/general clearing. Meet Hugh at the Middle Entrance Longwood Drive Whitchurch. (M4 Jct 32 signed to Forest Farm, straight across after Asda turn off)
Saturday 29th Nov 10.00 - 12.00	Wildlife Watch Club for children aged 8-12 . Snail search - get out in your park and help scientists find 'alien' snails. For more details email Gareth at gstamp@cardiff.gov.uk or phone Community Rangers on 029 2044 5903
Saturday 6th Dec 10.00 - 12.00	Wildlife Watch Club for children aged 8-12 . Activity to be confirmed. For more details email Gareth at gstamp@cardiff.gov.uk or phone Community Rangers on 029 2044 5903
Sunday 14th Dec 10.00 - 12.30 approx	Friends of Forest Farm volunteering group. ALL WELCOME. Meet at Wardens' Centre. Contact Martin on 07952926145 for more details.

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 Tel: 02920 614245 email: editor@forestfarm.org.uk
The Editor wishes to state that all views expressed by contributors are their own, as is the responsibility for them.