



# Friends

of FOREST FARM COUNTRY PARK  
and GLAMORGANSHIRE CANAL  
LOCAL NATURE RESERVE

Issue No: 95      March 2015

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

## A star visitor to Forest Farm - the Little Bunting

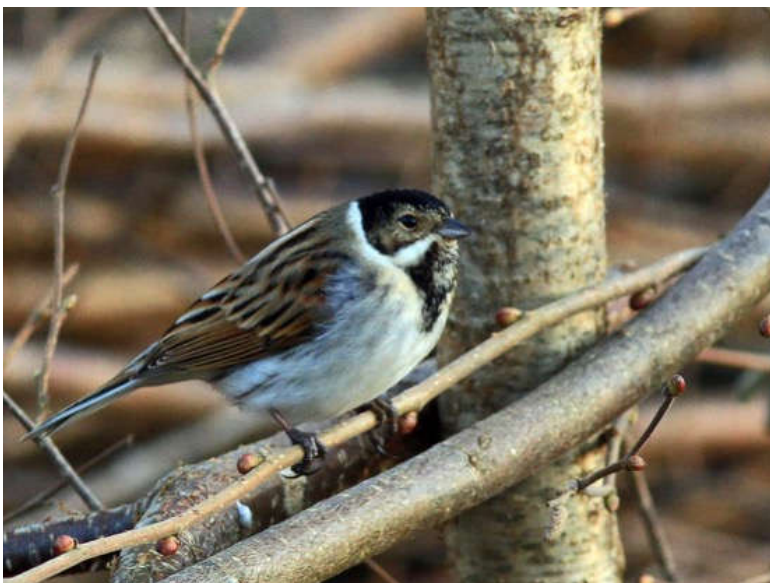
This lovely little bird has caused a huge amount of interest from far and wide. We have heard that visitors have come to see it from as far away as Essex and Southampton.

This photograph was taken by 15 year old **Katie Horrocks** from the Bristol area, on 7th February.

More information on the **Little Bunting** (right) is included in the Ranger's report inside.

For comparison, below, is a photo from **Cliff Woodhead** of a **Reed Bunting** taken on on 9th February. also at Forest Farm.

The new scrape by the Wardens' Centre has certainly been a bonus.



Radyr Hydro project - latest news see Page 7

### Council Cuts

As you probably know, the full Council considers the final budget proposals for 2015/16 at its meeting on 26th February.

So, by the time you read this, the decision will be made and we will know the full impact of the proposals on the Rangers Service generally, and Forest Farm in particular.

We would like to thank those of you who have publicly expressed your concerns about the impact of these cuts on the Reserve. We will continue to need your support to protect it as much as we can.

Please see Martin Chamberlain's fuller article about this on page 4.

**Editorial**

*Hello Friends*

*A warm welcome to our new members. This amazing number (of 360) is mainly as a result of our events and our website. However, the arrival of the Little Bunting has really put the Reserve on the map and spread the word about the 'Friends'. We need all the support we can get to protect the Reserve and, through volunteering, to do our bit to maintain it. The new bird hide near the Wardens' Centre (built by the Council) and the scrape next to it (thanks to Dr Mary Gillham's bequest) - being near the pond and orchard, have resulted in an excellent area for wildlife. With the forthcoming arrival of the Rangers at Forest Farm for their base, it truly will be a special Conservation Area (p5)*

*There is much more to explore. Martin's post Christmas walk introduced people to areas of the Reserve they had not known before (see Duncan's report P10), Paul Davies, the Warden mentions a few of the many birds on the Reserve. Look at the flickr group on our website to see the huge variety.*

*I am really glad to hear the junior Watch Club is back for this year - see pp9, 11-12. If you have any children or grandchildren who are interested, do get in touch with Kevin or Gareth.*

*We will watch with interest for the start of the Radyr Hydro project but I thought you would like to see what the end result will look like (p7). I expect the interest will be well beyond the Friends of Forest Farm!*

*Sheila Austin*

**Membership**

Hi Again

Our membership is now 360! We had new members join us from the post Christmas walk and after the very successful evening talk on Fungi and there were two renewals. Welcome to you all!

You know that you can join on line and pay via Paypal if you wish; and you can receive the newsletter by email - which will be in colour, or by post or through your door if you live locally.

I would like to give a special thank you to all those who, for many years, have kindly given up many hours to deliver the newsletters. Your help is really appreciated by all the committee.

**Pauline Fisher**  
**Membership Secretary**  
**8 Woodland Rd**  
**Whitchurch**  
**Cardiff Cf14 2BU**

Thank you!

**Whitchurch Health Foods** for the donation of the money they receive from the sale of carrier bags in the last 12 months.

**Deadline for next newsletter - 8th May 2015**

**See back page for contact details**

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## **Reserve Report**

by **Paul Davies - Countryside Warden**

On or about the beginning of February a rare visitor arrived in the orchard. The Little Bunting (*Emberiza pusilla*) is a scarce passage migrant, usually seen in autumn and mainly visiting the Scottish highlands and east coast of England. However, its appearance here has caused a great deal of interest - this bird's main breeding grounds are in northern Russia.

Bird watchers have arrived from far afield including a gentleman who left Southampton in the early hours to visit us!



Photo by Katie Horrocks

Other sightings on the Reserve have included; an otter on the Taff, a stoat on the wall outside the Wardens' Centre here at Forest Farm and goldfinches feeding on the lavender, also adjacent to the Wardens' Centre. There have been 25 herons on the dead elms in the Conservation meadow, a fox crossing the orchard and regular appearances from kingfishers, treecreepers and the lesser spotted woodpecker. The latter has not been seen here for several years!



Photo above Sheila Austin,

Photo right Jeff Slocombe

All photos taken on Forest Farm



Tree creeper

Thanks to Cardiff Conservation Volunteers for their hedge laying (see above left), and the Cardiff Rivers Group and Keep Wales Tidy for 'blitzing' the litter on Longwood Drive on 21st February.

Many thanks yet again to the Friends of Forest Farm for the provision of bird food and for their volunteering, and to various individuals leaving bird seed for the new bird hide next to the Wardens' centre.

## Council Cuts

In our last newsletter, our Chairman John Harding reported on the proposed budget cuts to the Park Ranger Service and the impact on Forest Farm.

Since the initial announcement, there has been a period of public consultation which ended at the beginning of January. During this period, the committee have been involved in discussions with local councillors and council officials highlighting the wide impact these cuts will have. We have also had meetings with the other Friends groups throughout the city to exchange ideas and promote a unified approach.

What is apparent is that many elected representatives and council officials outside the Park Ranger Service were not aware of the 25+ Friends Groups within the city. There was also little understanding of the amount of volunteering that is undertaken each year which will be at risk if these proposals are implemented.

Importantly, in recent years, many of the improvements within the city's green spaces have been funded by matching volunteer hours against a financial grant. These grants which are valued at £100,000's are also at risk. For ourselves, the Friends of Forest Farm, this is important as we progress our plans to restore the canal and other parts of the Reserve.

We will keep you informed of any developments as they are implemented and the impact they will have.

**M J Chamberlain**  
**Secretary**

## Exit March - Enter April

*(A poem by the late Ken Patterson, former Editor of this newsletter)*

Daffodils are flowering  
Comes the end of March,  
Trees around are leafing  
Oak, Elm, Beech and Larch.  
Rain is slowly showering  
Skies turn from grey to blue,  
Spring shades softly saturate  
Flowers of every hue.

While bird life swiftly wings its way  
Creatures scurry to and fro,  
Building homes with firm foundations  
Above the earth and way below.

*Friends of Forest Farm*  
 *A.G.M and talk*  
*'Wild Glamorgan' by Paul Denning*  
*Wednesday 15th April 7.30 p.m.*  
**CHANGE OF VENUE**  
**ARARAT BAPTIST CHURCH, PLAS TREODA,**  
**WHITCHURCH CF14 1PT**  
*Refreshments*  
*ALL WELCOME* 

## *Friends of Forest Farm/RSPB* - Nature Walk

About 18 people met Pauline for the regular 3rd Saturday in the month walk around Forest Farm. It was a bit cold, but not a bad day for February.

We had a good start, seeing a kingfisher by the feeder, and the eagle-eyed saw the snipe from the bird hide. There was a good variety of birds from great tits to heron, nuthatch to mallards, robins to a jay, blue tits to moorhen - and a very greedy squirrel!

I think we had about 7 people who had not been to Forest Farm, before so I hope they will come again. It was a pity our current star attraction, the little bunting, decided not to grace us with a viewing - at least not when we were all together! Do come and join us next time.

*Sheila Austin*

## “Forest Farm Conservation Centre”

I expect that those of you who have visited the Reserve in recent weeks cannot have failed to notice the new gates just before you get to the Wardens Centre, (see below).

The former BTCV base, and it is of course the original Forest Farm, is soon to be the base for the Rangers when they move from Wedal Road. We will be very pleased to have them there!



### **VOLUNTEERING**

In recent months we have been promoting volunteering at Forest Farm under the “get involved” banner. In January, 15 volunteers undertook hedge laying in the car park and coppicing next to the small bird hide. The objective of the work is to improve biodiversity by maintaining/developing habitats.

As detailed in my article on the council cuts, volunteering is important to obtain funding for projects using sources that are not available to the Council. (This single volunteering sessions if matched pound for pound is worth c£300 in grant funding). At a time of reducing resources, we hope to use our increasing number of volunteers to help maintain/improve the Reserve.

We usually meet on the second Sunday of each month meeting at the Wardens Centre and working from 10:00 to 13:00. All tools/equipment supplied and suitable for all abilities/ages (see Events pp11/12)

From April, we are also looking into developing a mid-week volunteering group for those who cannot attend on a Sunday. If you are interested please contact me on 07952 926145 or via email at [m.chamberlain1@ntlworld.com](mailto:m.chamberlain1@ntlworld.com).

**Martin Chamberlain**

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

**. . . Doing something positive**

Our return to the Reserve in January 2015 saw us taking out spindly and rotten trees. The work went smoothly with the help of the Warden and his chain saw- reducing the large timber into manageable lengths to handle. We are using the cut timber to make a habitat pile in the form of a barrier alongside the footpath. The clearing of this old and neglected timber will enable more light into the rest of the area and will improve the understorey.

After the morning session, one was able to see the improvement due to our labours.

\*\*\*\*\*

**Programme 2015**

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

**March 28th      Clearing undergrowth/checking for dumped rubbish**  
Middle entrance\*\*

**April 25th      Cutting first flush of Knotweed**  
Middle entrance\*\*

**May 30th        Nest box and wildflower survey**  
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***

*(\*\* Location, off Jct 32 M4, past Asda - approx 50yds down hill on the right)*

*The Friends Summer Coach Trip*

**27th June 2015**

We are visiting Newport transporter bridge with the opportunity to ride across in the gondola - or walk! Then on to the Tintern area, including a lunch stop at the Old Station.



Further details on the insert or see our website [www.forestfarm.org.uk](http://www.forestfarm.org.uk)

## Radyr Hydro Project

### The latest news

The Council have confirmed that tender responses for the above project are back. At the time of writing, these were being reviewed "with the intention to award the contract in late February/early March." "We are expecting construction to be complete by 2016."



Photo from Matt Locke, taken May 2014 when the site had been cleared.

The project has been delayed because firms able to tender were fully occupied elsewhere due to last year's flooding.



Artistic impression of the Radyr Hydro project when finished. You can see an illustration of 2 Archimedean screws to be used in the scheme.

## **“Fungi – The Good, the Bad & the Ugly” - a talk by Professor Lynne Boddy**

**report by Albyn Austin**

On 21<sup>st</sup> January Professor Lynne Boddy gave us a fascinating talk on fungi. We had a record attendance with about 60 people present, including fungi enthusiasts who had heard about the talk by this distinguished lady.

First of all, she outlined the many different types of fungi such as Agarics, Bracket, Stink Horns and Puff Balls and numerous others. These were the fruiting bodies of the fungus that produced the spores from which new ones could grow. The main body of the fungi was the mycelium – interconnecting tubes with rigid walls which ended in tiny hyphae, a few thousandths of a mm thick - far too small to see with the naked eye.

We only see the aggregated structures known as cords. These often spread out from the spore in a ring shape, the active part of the fungus expanding in a ring leaving an area empty of fungus in the centre. The mycelium grows out in straight lines and can't go backwards. these form the well known fairy rings. Not all fungi grow in circular forms. In trees the fungus spreads along vesicles. The fungus excretes enzymes to break up molecules enabling the fungus to soak up food.

The size of the mycelium structure can be very large. In the UK, Lynne had found fungi spreading 30 m or more in woodland. In North America some were known to cover 7 hectares. Fungi are very dynamic, expanding to search for food. When they find a richer source of food elsewhere, they die back forming thick cords connecting different active areas of the fungi.



**Blushing Bracket**

blushing bracket in situ - on moss covered fallen willow



**Amanati muscaria (Fly agaric)**

It is thought that fungi allowed plants to spread from the sea on to the land. Lichens are fungi growing with green algae. The algae produce sugars while the fungi provide water, nutrients and shelter for the algae. The tundra is a giant mat of lichens.

Photographs from Mark Steer of the Glamorgan Fungus Group.



Fungi are responsible for many problems such as Dutch Elm Disease, Ash Dieback and other plant diseases, and ones such as Athlete's Foot in humans. However, they are also the major agent for decomposition of plants, enabling plants to feed on the nutrients released - 90% of plants require fungi to feed their roots, so our food supply depends on fungi.

Also, fungi provide foods such as mushrooms and Quorn. Another type of fungi are yeasts, needed to produce cheeses, alcoholic drinks and citric acid and ferment cocoa beans to develop their flavour. Cows require fungi in their ruminant stomachs to help digest cellulose. Springtails and termites eat fungi, the latter making fungal gardens that they feed with plant matter.

Fungi are useful as biocontrols of such pests as nematodes and they are used to aid bioremediation of industrially contaminated soils. Medicines such as antibiotics and statins are produced from fungi. Thus fungi are essential for human health and wellbeing.

NOW AT  
ARARAT BAPTIST CHURCH,  
WHITCHURCH  
CF14 1 PT  
You are welcome to our talk on  
**"Cardiff Bats" by Dr Alexandra Pollard**  
Wednesday 18th March at 7.30p.m.

**'Friends' volunteering sessions**  
**Wardens Centre, Sundays 10.00 - 13.00**  
**March 8th                  April 12th**  
**May 10th                  June 14th**

## The Watch Club has started up again!!

For children aged 8 - 12 years. See below and pp11-12 for the dates of their events

### Forest Farm Wildlife Watch Club

Welcome to our 2015 Programme of Activities.

#### Parents – IMPORTANT please note the following:-

We hold our meetings from 10.00am – 12.00pm at The Warden's Centre, Forest Farm Country Park, Whitchurch, Cardiff (unless otherwise stated).

All children must be accompanied by a parent or guardian to meetings

Children must be suitably dressed for the outdoors and the activity on the day i.e. warm clothes, waterproofs and suitable footwear e.g. wellies / hiking boots or old trainers.

Children should bring a drink and snack in a rucksack if needed e.g. warm weather or doing physical work.

Annual Membership is £8.00 per child or £1.00 per child for each meeting.

**For further details please contact Kevin or Gareth on 029 20445903  
or e-mail: [gstamp@cardiff.gov.uk](mailto:gstamp@cardiff.gov.uk)**

## *Friends* post-Christmas Walk - **Duncan Hockridge**

The usual route for this annual walk is though Radyr, Danescourt, and on to Hailey Park and then returning via Ty Mawr Road and Forest Farm Road passing the Water pump and back to the Wardens Centre. However, in view of the period of heavy rain the week before, a reconnaissance was carried out showing long sections of this route were flooded, very muddy and consequently dangerous for walking. In the circumstances Martin took us on a very interesting alternative route.

We left the Centre and pathway running towards the canal, two bird hides. On the way we

made our way along the eastern end of the Feeder alongside the Feeder passing the hides. On way, we



shown location narrow railway which western side of was used in the last war equipment/supplies from the area in the fields alongside the present Wardens Centre. We were also shown the site of the Sunnybank cottages immediately alongside the eastern side of the canal. It was here that the 1851 census showed that this terrace of housing incorporated 13 dwellings . These formed both the upper and lower parts of the building and at that time there were 66 people living there.

the of a gauge ran on the the feeder. This to carry various

Melingriffith Works to a storage

Onwards then to the canal end. We returned along the upper path running along the boundary of the hospital grounds and made our way down onto the trackway of the former Cardiff Railway which now has overgrown trees running along both cutting slopes. After 20 mins we came to a flight of steps leading up the cutting slope to the higher fields. After climbing these, we then had an enjoyable ramble through Long Wood leading down to the northern end of our section of the canal. Here we inspected Middle Lock - an area now right under the M4 embankment. It was here we could also see the culvert bringing water through the embankment from the former canal areas on the northern side of the embankment.

Returning to the Centre, the committee had arranged to provide everyone with very welcome drinks and refreshments.

## Newport Transporter Bridge - a talk by Maureen Hendon

The growth of Newport in the late 19th century necessitated a crossing lower down the river Usk than the town bridge. The high tidal range of the river, and the need for high masted ships to be able to pass under the bridge at high tide, meant that both a tunnel or a conventional bridge would be prohibitively expensive.

Matters became more urgent in 1896 when Lysaght's announced they were to build a new steel works on the east bank of the Usk. Some form of bridge for the employees to cross the river was required. In 1897 the existing ferry sank due to overloading and 7 men were drowned. In 1899 the Borough Engineer, Robert Haynes, was asked to look at options and visited Bilbao where the French engineer Ferdinand Arnodin had developed a transporter bridge. Passengers boarded an aerial ferry or gondola suspended by wires from a trolley mounted on rails that crossed the river at high level. An electric motor drew the gondola back and forth across the river, enabling the main channel to be kept free for ships.

Following a visit to the Rouen transporter bridge in 1902, Newport Council decided to build one. Work commenced in 1902 and the bridge opened on 12th September 1906. The contractor was very proud that no fatal accidents occurred during the construction. In the 1960s the bridge shut for repairs and again in the 1980s when the cost was £2.6 million.

The money for restoration was eventually found and the bridge restored. It now operates from May to September, but the Friends of the Newport Transporter Bridge (FONTB) exhibition and shop is usually open all year. Maureen is a member of FONTB.

Worldwide, about 20 transporter bridges were built from the 1890s until 1916. The end of sailing ships and the use of larger steam ships too big for rivers meant there was no longer a need for them. 6 are still working and 2 more still exist. The Newport one is the largest survivor and considered by many as the most elegant. In the UK there are another 2, Warrington and Middlesborough, with the latter still working.

**Albyn Austin**

## Events at Forest Farm Reserve March to June 2015

DATE	EVENT
Sunday 8th March 10.00 - 13.00	<b>Friends Volunteering Event.</b> ALL WELCOME. For details contact Martin on 07952 926145. Meet at the Wardens Centre Forest Farm Rd Whitchurch CF14 7JJ
Wednesday 18th March 19.30	<b>Friends Evening Talk "Cardiff Bats" by Dr Alexandra Pollard.</b> NOW AT ARARAT BAPTIST CHURCH, PLAS TREODA, WHITCHURCH <u>CF14 1PT</u> Tea and biscuits. <i>All Welcome</i>
Saturday 21st March 10.00 - 12.00	<b>Watch Club. For children aged 8-12 Wildlife Garden.</b> A spot of wildlife gardening. Charge £1. Please see Page 9 for more details or email Gareth at <a href="mailto:gstamp@cardiff.gov.uk">gstamp@cardiff.gov.uk</a> or phone Community Rangers on 029 2044 5903
Saturday 21st March 10.00 - 12.30	<b>Friends/RSPB Walk</b> Meet at the Wardens Centre, Forest Farm Road, Whitchurch. CF14 7JJ

## Events at Forest Farm Reserve - March to June cont'd

DATE	EVENT
Saturday 28th March 10.30 - 12.30	<b>Cardiff Conservation Group Volunteering</b> Help with clearing undergrowth and checking for dumped rubbish. Meet Hugh at the Middle Entrance Longwood Drive Whitchurch See Page 6 for details
Sunday 12th April 10.00 - 13.00	<b>Friends Volunteering Event.</b> ALL WELCOME. For details contact Martin on 07952 926145. Meet at the Wardens Centre Forest Farm Rd. Whitchurch CF14 7JJ
Wednesday 15th April 19.30	<b>Friends Evening talk and AGM. "Wild Glamorgan" by Paul Denning.</b> NOW AT ARARAT BAPTIST CHURCH, PLAS TREODA, WHITCHURCH <u>CF14 1PT</u> Tea and biscuits. <i>All Welcome</i>
Saturday 18th April 10.00 - 12.30	<b>Friends/RSPB Walk.</b> Meet at the Wardens Centre Forest Farm Road Whitchurch CF14 7JJ
Saturday 25th April 10.00 - 12.00	<b>Watch Club. For children aged 8-12 . Wildflower hunt - in search of Spring flowers.</b> Charge £1. Please see Page 9 for more details or email Gareth at <a href="mailto:gstamp@cardiff.gov.uk">gstamp@cardiff.gov.uk</a> or phone Community Rangers on 029 2044 5903
Saturday 25th April 10.30 - 12.30	<b>Cardiff Conservation Group Volunteering.</b> Help with cutting first flush of knotweed. Meet Hugh at the Middle Entrance Longwood Drive Whitchurch See page 6 for details
Sunday 10th May 10.00 - 13.00	<b>Friends Volunteering Event.</b> ALL WELCOME. For details contact Martin on 07952 926145. Meet at the Wardens Centre Forest Farm Rd. Whitchurch CF14 7JJ
Saturday 16th May 10.00 - 12.00	<b>Friends/RSPB Walk</b> Meet at the Wardens Centre Forest Farm Road Whitchurch CF14 7JJ
Saturday 30th May 10.30 - 12.30	<b>Cardiff Conservation Group Volunteering-</b> Help with a nest box and wildflower survey. Meet Hugh at the Middle Entrance Longwood Drive Whitchurch See page 6 for details
Saturday 30th May 10.00 - 12.00	<b>Watch Club. For children aged 8-12 . "Spring Watch" - get involved in our spring Watch weekend.</b> Charge £1. Please see Page 9 for more details or email Gareth at <a href="mailto:gstamp@cardiff.gov.uk">gstamp@cardiff.gov.uk</a> or phone Community Rangers on 029 2044 5903
Sunday 14th June 10.00 - 13.00	<b>Friends Volunteering Event.</b> ALL WELCOME. For details contact Martin on 07952 926145. Meet at the Wardens Centre Forest Farm Rd. Whitchurch CF14 7JJ

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](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.