



Friends

of FOREST FARM COUNTRY PARK
and GLAMORGANSHIRE CANAL
LOCAL NATURE RESERVE

Issue No: 96

June 2015

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website: www.forestfarm.org.uk

This is a partial view of how the new wetland area adjacent to the Wardens Centre now looks. It has been fenced off and some suitable planting has taken place. My thanks to Raj for his work and supplying the list of plants. So far those include Ragged Robin (*Lychnis flos cumuli*), Brooklime (*Veronica beccabunga*), Cotton grass (*Eriophorum augustifolia*) and Yellow Iris (*Iris pseudacorus*) - and the 3 illustrated below

You may remember that this area was part funded with some of the legacy from Dr Mary Gillham and is to be named in her memory.



Far left: Flowering Rush (*Butomus Umbellatus*) - photo Ivar Leidus;
Middle: Fox and cubs (*Phloxella Aurantica*) - photo wikimedia commons by Orchi; Right: Marsh marigold (*Caltha Palustris*) - photo Jasper 33.

All photos from Wikipedia.

The Community Ranger Service Impact of the Council Cuts

So many of you were supportive of the Community Rangers and concerned about the impact of the Council cuts on their service. Members of the Friends of Forest Farm and visitors to the Reserve have been asking what happened. Therefore it is good to be able to report back to you on the effect (this year). Here is a statement from Nicola Hutchinson, Conservation Officer, Cardiff Council.

"Since April's budget cuts of £220k were accepted at Cabinet, the Ranger Service as a whole is working to minimise the effects on service delivery. We are still finding out how the effects will impact on service delivery long term as they change through the seasons with the effects of late and early shifts.

The loss of posts on the urban side of the service has meant that the Community Ranger and Woodland Ranger Teams are having to bridge the gap and in particular, assist with the locking of parks. This does mean that their work patterns may not be as flexible as previously and in turn can impact on the type of work that is undertaken because of late shifts. "

Editorial

Welcome to you all, especially new members. Things never stand still on the Reserve, whether it's a new bench by the canal, (P5) developing the new wetland by the Wardens Centre or the forthcoming installation of 2 Archimedes screws by the weir! This necessitates diverting the Taff trail in that area so please be careful where it is routed down Longwood Drive (P8)

Nature never stands still either - with the flush of spring growth and the rush of new life. Trying to maintain the balance of habitats and species in such a small area so that the Reserve can reach its potential is a constant problem. It is a shame that scarce manpower (volunteers) has to be spent collecting litter instead of on more constructive tasks. So, there is much to do but also so much to enjoy. We look forward to seeing you at one of our events, at one or both of the forthcoming local festivals - or even on the Reserve! Take a photograph there and enter our competition (P11).

Sheila Austin

Committee members

At the A.G.M in April, the following were elected on to your committee for 2015/2016:-

Chairman	John Harding	tel. 07977881757
Secretary	Martin Chamberlain	tel. 07952926145
Treasurer	Phil Baker	tel. 07748642945
Membership Secretary	Pauline Fisher	tel. 029 20412586
Newsletter Editor	Sheila Austin	tel. 029 20614245
Speaker Secretary	Gavin Blackmore	
Events Secretary	Duncan Hockridge	tel. 029 20626111
Web master	Matthew Lock	tel. 07731806040
Management plan	Chris James	
Committee member	Barry Clarke	

We could do with some more ordinary members, or just come on an informal basis. Many hands make light work!

Deadline for articles for next newsletter - 8th August 2015

See back page for contact details

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Reserve Report

by **Paul Pinnell - Ranger**

Well, Spring is here and Summer is on its way again with all the beautiful flowers and aromas; the birds are singing their hearts out after getting through the winter with the help of donation of bird feed from the Friends of Forest Farm - thank you. The birds are now feeding their chicks.



This lovely picture of a moorhen chick was taken at Forest Farm by Colin Harvey. It is on the Friends of Forest Farm flickr group. My thanks to Colin for allowing me to publish it. Ed

The work being carried out in the meadow across from the Wardens' Centre is by Natural Resources Wales and the River's Association - its to create a fishery to restock the Taff.

We have some projects on the go for this year. We will be turning Scouts Field back into a meadow by cutting back all the brambles and bracken to give the wild flowers a great chance to come though again. Also, we will be filling in some of the towpath. The Friends have agreed to buy some stone dust for us to use - but the Ranger service will use as much natural material as we can!

Other work is planned and we need the help of volunteers to get it done. Our grateful thanks to the regulars. The Friends volunteering group come on the second Sunday of the month - if you can spare a couple of hours. Its a great way to put something back into nature - and you will enjoy your Sunday lunch better when you get home!

One last bit of news, the Ranger Service is moving their base. Imminently we are about to relocate to Forest Farm along with the arboreal team (the tree gang). We are of course continuing to look after the rest of the sites in Cardiff but Forest Farm Reserve will be used by the Ranger Service as its flagship site.



Membership

The current membership stands at 363. It keeps creeping up!

Many of our members are electing to have the newsletter via e-mail, which is the colour version. If you do want to change from a hard copy please let me know.

Pauline Fisher (Membership Secretary)
Tel:02920 412586

Bad news ...

It has been reported on Twitter <http://t.co/pYBzQzH1iP> - a **Signal Crayfish** has been spotted at Forest Farm.

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

. . . Doing something positive

Our March visit saw us revising our plans for the morning as we no longer have a volunteer (Chris) who, daily, litter picked the area. Litter is once more becoming a major problem. This is partly due to the two food outlets and the ease with which household rubbish can be dumped. The mind boggles how somebody takes the time to cut up a cupboard into small sections, then puts them in bin bags, and drives to the Reserve and dumps the lot. After the morning we filled in excess of ten large bin bags.

April found us changing our work plans once again. It has now been decided to carry out a programme of spraying the Japanese knotweed instead of cutting. The morning was spent cutting fresh growth on pollarded stumps and also clearing sycamore and dogwood saplings. The brush cutter was in operation tackling the first flush of rosebay willow herb and other invasive weeds. One of the group decided to tackle the litter and soon had two bags full. Unfortunately, we had no more bags.

Programme 2015

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

June 27th Balsam clearing/cutting Rosebay willow herb
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)*

***Friends of Forest Farm Coach trip
27th June***

It appears that the coach will be probably be fully booked by the time you receive this newsletter, but if anyone wishes to go on a reserve list in case there are any cancellations, please contact Duncan on 02920626111 or email duncan3@hotmail.co.uk

***Friends of Forest Farm
Annual Accounts***

***If any member wishes to receive a copy of the
annual accounts distributed at our A.G.M.,
please contact Phil Baker by emailing***

treasurer@forestfarm.org.uk

Barry Clarke, one of our committee members, has at last succeeded in getting a new bench erected at the first entrance to the canal off Forest Farm Rd. It has been over 2 years since he first put forward the idea. He has been so committed to seeing it through that some of us feel it should be called 'Barry's bench'! (Ed)

Bench for the ambulant disabled

A new bench, suitable for people who are unable to walk far and who simply want to see the ducks, wildlife and beautiful view at the junction of the canal and water feeder, has been installed (at the request of the Friends of Forest Farm) and by our Wardens.

The bench has deliberately been put in so that the height from the ground varies up to 1'-9" (525mm) high. This is so that people at the high end can find it easier to get up from.

Barry Clarke



Photos left and above from Barry (top right - in the green fleece). photo below from Matt Lock



(It is also planned to install another such bench beside the Taff trail path, Forest Farm/Wardens Centre end.)

Monthly Walks

Forest Farm Nature Reserve



Bird walk - April

13 people met me at the Warden's centre on a cold, blustery but dry April day - and 2 were new to the walk. We headed off to the Taff trail and made our way to the bridge across to Radyr station. The wind was very cold, and not much bird life was in evidence, so we didn't stop that long!



Long tailed tit

Heading into the Reserve though, we started to see and hear a good variety of birds; dunnock, blackcap, blackbirds, robin, great tit, blue tit and long tailed tit to name a few.

Those with more expertise than me were able to identify the birdsong of goldfinch, chiff chaff (though I should know that by now as its so distinctive) and woodpecker.

We also heard - indeed you could not miss it - the wren. What a loud song for such a little bird! Buzzard and heron flew above us and then, by the hide, some saw a colourful male bullfinch. Other members of the group, who lingered a bit longer, spotted a moorhen with her black, fluffy chicks, so that was a treat. Going along the canal we also had a good sighting of a nuthatch.



Chiff chaff
photo from Wikipedia



Wild garlic

The floral evidence of spring showed with celandine, wild garlic, wood anemones and lady's smock in flower.

So, all in all, a very pleasant couple of hours. If you can join us next time, you are most welcome.

!0.00 hours, Wardens Centre, Forest Farm Rd, 3rd Saturday of the month.

Sheila Austin

John Harding led the May walk and he reported that "the highlight of the last nature walk was when the Great Tits came out of their bird box and took food from our hands to take to their young in the box. We were there quite a while."

A taste of what the Reserve was like 45 years ago!

Extract from "A New Nature Reserve: Glamorganshire Canal between Tongwynlais and Whitchurch and the adjacent Long Wood" by Mary E Gillham B.Sc., Ph.D

(Published 1969 in the Transactions of the Cardiff Naturalists' Society. Centenary Year Volume

Extract from the introduction

" On the outskirts of the city, hard against one of its more populous north-western suburbs, lies a stretch of the old Glamorganshire Canal, a little more than a mile long, bordered on one side by steep woodland and on the other by grassy flats leading westwards to the River Taff. It is a sanctuary for birds and a haven for wild plants, including not a few aquatic rarities and the invertebrate life which goes with them. It can be sanctuary and haven also for the town-weary humans living in close proximity if it is sensibly managed as the reserve all nature lovers would like to see it.

At present it caters for all tastes. The young go there in pursuit of water beetles, the slightly older in pursuit of love, the more mature in pursuit of peace. Their activities are rudely disturbed at times by youths with guns, but many of the younger generation are on our side.

There was, for example, the diminutive freckled urchin who hurtled up on a bicycle when I was collecting algae. " Watcher doing Missus?" he demanded, with the urgent interest of the unsophisticated. 'Gathering plants' I said meekly, holding aloft a fingertip draped with mucilaganeous blanket weed. He looked pityingly at the dripping mess and tried to deflect my thoughts to higher things. " Cor Missus, but its smashin' fer birds. We just seen a kingfisher". Across the canal a big winter flock of siskin dipped in yellow-green relays to drink and bathe; mistle thrushes mingled their churring calls with the harsher cronk of a moorhen among the alders and a cock blackbird let forth a full throated song of spring although it was as yet still January. It was, indeed, 'smashin' fer birds", and, as such, merits our attention as conservationists. Long before another century has passed it will be too late.

Only a couple of decades ago, there was a wealth of water plants in adjacent stretches of the canal which are now filled in and partially built over. As trains slipped out of Llandaf North station towards Radyr, passengers were once able to look out to their left onto a golden stretch of fringed water lily ... the plants had spilled over into the now defunct canal from a garden pond at Radyr Mill House and formed a magnificent spectacle during the two summers following draining.

(This is a most comprehensive report which includes lists of canal and canal bank plants, woodland plants, birds and invertebrates at that time. It also contains illustrations and photographs. It would be interesting to compare the 'then' with 'now'.

Friends of Forest Farm will know Dr Mary Gillham who was listed as Technical Advisor - Natural History to our very first Committee, contributed articles to this newsletter and had taken an active interest in the Friends until her death in 2013. Ed.)

Radyr Weir Hydro Scheme

Soon you will see the start of work for this scheme. Work on the diversion path from the Taff trail is due to start imminently. The scheme is now due to be completed by the end March 2016.

There will be updates about the scheme and the diversion on Twitter.

This is the latest press release from the Council.

“Work on a £2.6 million hydro-electric scheme to harness the power of the River Taff will begin on June 1 after the City of Cardiff Council signed a contract with construction firm Dawnus Construction Ltd.

The Radyr Weir scheme will channel water through two Archimedes turbines adjacent to the river and use it to generate renewable energy that can then be fed into the electricity grid.

Cabinet Member for Transport, Planning and Sustainability, Cllr Ramesh Patel, said: “This innovative scheme is going to have real benefits for the environment and shows just how serious we are about backing our One Planet vision with action.”

“When work on the scheme is completed it should generate enough sustainable electricity to power 550 homes. It will also provide us with an additional income stream, bringing around £140,000 into the authority each year.”

“We’re already taking advantage of cutting edge technology such as photo-voltaic panels, landfill gas and hydrogen extraction to create a greener, more sustainable future for Cardiff and the Radyr Weir scheme is another exciting part of that journey.”

Construction work on the project is scheduled to be complete by the end of March 2016. During that time a short, clearly marked diversion via Longwood Drive will be in place on the Taff Trail to enable the safe completion of the scheme.”

The Taff Trail is to be diverted on to Longwood Drive for up to 10 months.

Work on the Radyr Weir Hydro Project begins shortly and as a result, the Taff Trail will be diverted on to Longwood Drive. The diversion will be from just behind the Wardens Centre, taking people out to Longwood Drive just before the BT depot, and will end opposite the entrance to GE Healthcare.

The Committee of the Friends of Forest Farm raised our deep concerns about this during consultation. We are obviously concerned because that the road is primarily used by large HGV's and includes two relatively blind corners.

We had suggested the diversion not go along the road but go along the top of the flood bank but we have been advised this was not acceptable. It is unfortunate that the diversion will be in place during the summer months when the Taff Trail is used more than in the winter months.

At the time of going to press, 28th May, no signs were evident about this diversion so many users may still be unaware.

Litter

Does the amount of litter seem to you to be increasing? I know I am 'preaching to the converted' here, but this means a corresponding increased detrimental effect of litter on wildlife and biodiversity in nature reserves.

Chris Price (a volunteer), regularly used to pick up litter on Longwood Drive, but is not able to do it at present. ** (His tally of litter volume was in the Dec 2104 newsletter). This area has an endemic litter problem as it is favoured by drivers who stop just off the motorway junction for their lunch. The problem is exacerbated by the proximity of fast food outlets. We do what we can by litter picking, as do other organisations, and in the past the Rangers have visited the stores up at Coryton roundabout to highlight the problem and ask for their help.

Glass and metal injures birds, plastic blocks their digestion and litter generally makes areas unsuitable for nesting and feeding.

I suppose education is really the answer but that is really long term.

A little while ago I noticed an article reporting that the *Commons Committee on Communities and Local Government had stated that there should be bolder action on our 'endemic litter' problem.* Some of the suggested action was that takeaway restaurants be forced to clear up litter outside their premises, there should be a tax on tobacco to give to councils towards the cost of clearing up cigarette butts and fines for dropping litter should be increased to £80.

I wonder if these suggestions will be taken up?

Sheila Austin

** You will have also read about this in Hugh's report for Cardiff Conservation Volunteers on Page 4



We've lost a Committee member...

Rosemary Waters is not missing of course, she has decided to retire from the Committee!

Over many years of active involvement with the Friends, Rosemary has made a real contribution. She has been active on the Reserve, written articles for the newsletter and many of you will have seen her helping out with refreshments at the Wardens' Centre and at our evening events.

We thank her, will miss her and wish her all the best for a long, healthy and happy future.



Advance notice

Friends of Forest Farm

Open Day

Saturday 10th October

Wardens Centre Forest Farm Rd
Whitchurch CF14 7JJ



Friends Volunteering - May 10th

By Albyn Austin

We had a cool, dry morning. About six of us set off with Ranger Paul Pinnell to cut up some fallen trees behind the middle lock. We were shortly joined by a couple of young ladies, who help the Rangers with volunteer jobs. Our task was to cut off the smaller branches so that the Rangers could more easily use the chain saw on the main trunks. We then used the smaller branches to make a habitat pile; this provides a refuge for small birds and animals as well as homes for insects and fungi which depend on dead wood for food. Clearing an area like this allows light in to enable woodland flowers to recolonize.

Working with loppers and hand saws we gradually dismantled the thinner sections of the trees. Some larger branches needed a bit of care, as a tree had been entangled in an adjacent one, but it was eventually dislodged and made safe. It did delay proceedings a little as the path had to be shut while the job was underway. We had to stop work in places and post look outs.

The two young ladies were very hard working and declined to stop for a break, carrying on with their lopping while the rest of us sat down, munched biscuits and drank coffee.



The area behind the by-pass channel to the lock is well wooded with various small trees and woodland



flowers such as the white flowered and pungent smelling ramsons (wild garlic), the lovely yellow flowers of lesser celandines and the attractive white flowers of wood anemones (and loads of others - but my knowledge of botany is rather limited).

This area is also infested with the dreaded invasive Japanese Knotweed which is spreading, together with brambles and bracken that gradually cover over the open areas and smother the flowers and grasses. In nature, trees then naturally recolonize the area and in turn smother out brambles and bracken by grabbing all the light. It takes a lot of management and work to try to maintain a balance between these three sets of habitat plus the Knotweed.

We also noticed that the bypass channel masonry was leaking water and this will have to be repaired at some time. We're certainly not short of jobs to help the Rangers who are now ever more thinly stretched.

Photo competition

From 1st June to 30th September.

Open to **members of the Friends of Forest Farm**
and their children (or grandchildren)



One entry only per person

2 categories ; Adults / Children under 16

Photos submitted must include the name of the member. If the photo is from a child or grandchild, their name must be included AND the parent/grandparent's name who is the member.

Photographs MUST have been taken on Forest Farm Nature Reserve within the last 12 months.

Photos to be submitted via the following email address:-
photocomp@forestfarm.org.uk

If anyone has difficulty with this, please contact the editor or our website.

By entering the competition, all entrants agree that the photos can be used for publication by the Friends of Forest Farm and will not shared with third parties.

Winners' names will be publicised first at our Open Day in October. on our website and then in our December newsletter along with the winning photos

There will be a prize of a photographic nature for each of the winning entries

Events at Forest Farm June - September 2015

DATE	EVENT
Sunday 14th June 10.00 - 13.00	Friends Volunteering Event. ALL WELCOME. Contact Martin on 07952 926145. Meet at the Wardens Centre Forest Farm Rd Whitchurch
Saturday 20th June 10.00 - 12.30	Friends/RSPB Nature Ramble. ALL WELCOME. Meet at the Wardens Centre Forest Farm Road, Whitchurch.
Saturday 27th June 10.30 - 12.30	Cardiff Conservation Volunteers. Balsam Clearing/cutting rosebay willow herb. Meet Hugh at the Middle entrance Longwood Drive, Whitchurch. (Off Jct 32 M4)
Saturday 27th June	Friends of Forest Farm Coach Trip. See P4.

Events at Forest Farm - June - Sept cont'd

DATE	EVENT
Saturday 27th June 10.00 - 12.00	Wildlife Watch Club. For children aged 8-12 . <i>The Stream Shuffle Nant Fawr.</i> Get close up and personal with the creatures in Natn Fawr stream. Meet at Llanishen Reservoir Car park off Rhydypenau Rd. For more details email Gareth at gstamp@cardiff.gov.uk or phone Community Rangers on 029 2044 5903
Saturday 4th July From 10.00	Rhiwbina Summer Festival. The Friends will have a stand, so come along and see us!
Saturday 11th July Afternoon	Whitchurch Festival. On the Common. The Friends of Forest Farm will have a stand there too, so come along and say hello.
Sunday 12th July 10.00. - 13.00	Friends Volunteering Event. ALL WELCOME. Contact Martin on 07952 926145. Meet at the Wardens Centre Forest Farm Rd Whitchurch
Saturday 18th July 10.00 - 12.30	Friends Nature Ramble. <i>Tree Walk led by Barbara Brown - OPAL community scientist.</i> Meet at the Wardens Centre, Forest Farm Rd. ALL WELCOME.
Saturday 25th July 10.00 - 12.00	Wildlife Watch Club. For children aged 8-12 . <i>Bug Hunt!! Sweep nets at the ready! Let's go Bug Hunting!!</i> For more details email Gareth at gstamp@cardiff.gov.uk or phone Community Rangers on 029 2044 5903
Sunday 9th Aug 10.00 - 13.00	Friends Volunteering Event. ALL WELCOME. Contact Martin on 07952 926145. Meet at the Wardens Centre Forest Farm Rd Whitchurch
Saturday 15th Aug 10.00 - 12.30	Friends/RSPB Nature Ramble. ALL WELCOME. Meet at the Wardens Centre Forest Farm Road, Whitchurch.
Saturday 12th Sept 10.00 - 12.00	Wildlife Watch Club. For children aged 8-12 . <i>Moth Trap - examination of last night's catch.</i> For more details email Gareth at gstamp@cardiff.gov.uk or phone Community Rangers on 029 2044 5903
Sunday 13th Sept 10.00 - 13.00	Friends Volunteering Event. ALL WELCOME. Contact Martin on 07952 926145. Meet at the Wardens Centre Forest Farm Rd Whitchurch
Saturday 19th Sept 10.00 - 12.30	Friends/RSPB Nature Ramble. ALL WELCOME. Meet at the Wardens Centre Forest Farm Road, Whitchurch.

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; 20614245 email: editor@forestfarm.org.uk