Friends

of FOREST FARM COUNTRY PARK
and GLAMORGANSHIRE CANAL
LOCAL NATURE RESERVE

Issue No:111 ***March 2019***

website:www.forestfarm.org.uk

Welcome to our annual, colour, 16 page edition!

To set the tone, as you see, I have started with a couple of great pictures taken on Forest Farm by two of the 'regular' photographers there.



Picture of a fox cub from Cliff Woodhead.
He took this - and several other photos of the vixen and her 5 cubs in May 2015. He was able to watch and photograph them over 15 minutes and writes about it on Page 13. Ed

A Reed Warbler



This lovely photo was taken last year by Colin Harvey in Forest Farm Nature Reserve. I have been waiting to use it in a colour edition of the newsletter. Ed.

Sadly, the photo below shows the 'other' side, and why we need you and all visitors to be on the alert.

It is of **pollution flowing into the canal** at 16.30 on February 16th.

It *was* reported to Natural Resources Wales **(NRW).** The picture was taken by Raj, one of the Rangers. We have heard of this before but this is the first photograph we have.

If your see this happening PLEASE report it to NRW. Its an environmental incident.

- call 0300 065 3000
- select 1 for Welsh language
  or 2 for English language service
- press 1 for the 24 hour incident reporting line

https://naturalresources.wales/about-us/contact-us/report-an-incident/?lang=en



Fortunately, this is the exception. For an amazing number and range of beautiful photographs, visit our website **http://forestfarm.org.uk/.**

Under Photos, look for **Forest Farm Nature Reserve Flickr group**

and on our Facebook page, **'Forest Farm Wildlife' Facebook group**

Hello Friends of Forest Farm,

Well, we promised you one colour 'bumper' edition per year - and here it is!

I do like to be able to print the photos in colour for ALL members to see - not just those who receive their copy by email. There is such a lot of beauty on the Reserve and Spring is a great time - my favourite I think. If you can't get down there and have a computer - do access our website for photos. Talking of the website, this is up and running again and is up to date, so thanks to Jon for his efforts.

As ever, I am grateful to our contributors for their articles and photographs. Whitchurch Library (or is it Hub now?) had a display there, thanks to Vicky for that and raising awareness about the Reserve (P8). Cliff Woodhead offered his article about a sighting of foxes he has never forgotten (P13). Albyn Austin has written up the two winter talks (Pp10/11, 14) and Jim Hill (P6) sent in a report of the monthly nature walk he kindly led. I have dug into archives of various sorts about a French Cannon (P9) and Cardiff Railway on the Reserve (P4.5). And … the annual treat of the Coach Trip is coming up (P7), thanks to Duncan.

'Many hands make light work' and we are very grateful for the generosity of members and volunteers for their help in many ways. We can always do with more help of course - not least on the Committee. These things are less onerous if shared out.

Don't forget the March evening talk and the AGM in April. Hope to see your there. Enjoy Spring!

Best wishes,

Sheila Austin

Peter Roberts
("The Bee Man"at Forest Farm)



Photo from Janice and Paul

We were very sad to hear that Peter died suddenly on 27th December 2018 at the age of 74.

At Forest Farm he was 'the bee man' - a quiet, courteous man, friendly and helpful. We sent a sympathy card to his wife Janice and son Paul and flowers from the 'Friends' to his funeral. Some of the Committee were able to attend.

Although most of you did not meet Peter, perhaps you tasted his Forest Farm honey (which sold really fast at our Open Days in October). It was delicious.

Peter's son Paul sent me the following information. "My dad had been looking after the bees down Forest Farm for almost 10 years – he began in May 2009. There was no one prior to him – as far as I'm aware, he instigated it by requesting the Ranger at Forest Farm if he could have a beehive on site as he was looking into it as a hobby. I think it just developed from there."



Peter will be sadly missed.

Sheila Austin

On behalf of the Committee and all the Friends of Forest Farm

Deadline for articles for next newsletter 8th May 2019
See back page for contact details

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Reserve Report

by ***Alec Stewart - Ranger***

I am starting this report with a bird sighting. On the 5th December 2018 I saw a **swallow** flying low over the orchard and field opposite. A very lost swallow!


The neatest habitat pile!

We started our winter woodland work around the reserve with sycamore clearance around the woodlands behind the BT buildings. This was to thin the tree cover and create gaps of light for the ground flora to establish and to encourage a better diversity in age and growth of the tree structure within the wood. The Friends have kindly agreed to fund native bulbs such as bluebell, wood anemone and daffodil which we will plant in these areas.

On the Friends volunteer day, they were working hard in the woodland coppicing, thinning and creating habitat piles which can be seen from the parish road path. We had a challenge to see who could produce the neatest habitat pile this was easily won by John Harding! Other volunteer groups (Welsh Assembly, Greening our city and of course the Rangers volunteers) have been involved in the woodland work removing sycamore, laurel and thinning out some field maple.

We have a continuing problem with the wetland area consisting of the pond and scrapes with water levels being unusually low. The hot dry spell earlier in the year did not help; even with the rain that came later in the year the scrapes have not recovered to the true winter levels and have dried out on numerous occasions. Rainfall in general has been low. Raj and I have spent some time clearing, digging and checking water levels to try to address the situation. We have identified a number of problems and continue to work to sort these out. We have applied for a grant to help fix them and wait to see if we have been successful in the application. If we get the funding next season, we may see work carried out on the scrapes and pond involving an excavator.

As I write, we are having our summer - yes ,20 degrees in Wales in February! It is lovely though to have some warmth with all the **hazel catkins** out, **snowdrops** and **daffodils** in flower. It is especially good to see all the bulbs supplied by the Friends and others starting to come through with a great display at the end of the canal car park, and by the two hides as well. Indeed we were very pleased that the winter aconite have flowered this year as they have always been tricky to get to grow.


Male Teal

The **frogs are spawning**; we have some spawn in most of our ponds even though the herons are doing their best to eat as many frogs as possible. We have also got **a pair of teal** popping into the second pond and being chased by the resident **moorhens**. A kingfisher pair have been chasing each other around with the male being very interested in the female but at the moment she seem less interested. I saw my first butterfly at Forest Farm from the second hide, flying fast it was **possibly a red admiral**.

Well this time last year we were under snow and ice from the 'beast from the east', this year I am off out to top up my tan!

Photos: top Jon Wallis, bottom Cliff Woodhead.

'Friends' Volunteering - February

A dozen volunteers spent a sunny... cloudy... showery... sunny morning cutting down laurel and building habitat piles in the woodland that borders the GE Healthcare site.

The laurel was planted some years ago to screen the security fence, no doubt because laurel is fast-growing and forms dense foliage.

The problem is that laurel is invasive, spreads quickly, and can grow 40-50 feet tall, casting dense shade, which prevents lots of other woodland species thriving - a problem that's exacerbated because it's evergreen.



One habitat pile made from the smaller branches.



You can see the size of some of the branches they had to deal with.

We could only deal with the branches that are growing back into the woodland and, in many cases, overhanging a path -- 'topping' the rest to leave a screen of reasonable height will need specialist attention - but it's a good start!

Thanks to everyone who came along. Our next volunteer session will be on 10th March.

Jon Wallis

(Photos and text from the Friends of Forest Farm Facebook page, which also lets you know about forthcoming events.)

"Glamorgan Canal Local Nature Reserve and the Cardiff Railway" by Chris James

From second edition of our newsletter - June 1990

The land of the Glamorgan Canal L.N.R. has been shaped by natural forces and by the activities of man. The River Taff, for example, has had a great effect on the landscape during the last ten thousand years, flattening and widening the valley after the last Ice Age. Man's impact by his agricultural and industrial activities has left us with features that are of historical and environmental interest.

The agricultural legacy is the the hedges and meadows with their special fauna and flora (Latin for animals and plants). Industrial activity has left two waterways (the Melingriffith Feeder and the Glamorganshire Canal) both with aquatic and waterside plants, animals and plants. The third industrial feature is the path of the Cardiff Railway.

(Paraphrased from Chris' article) - the Cardiff Railway was built between 1898 and 1911. It was promoted by the Bute family, owners of Cardiff Docks, to divert traffic from the Taff Vale railway at Treforest to take it to Heath Junction on the Rhymney railway which ran directly into the docks. The Taff Vale prevented a junction being made at Treforest. Government control in 1914 caused all the railways to be run nationally. In 1923 all the South Wales railways were amalgamated into the Great Western. The end of competition made the line redundant.)

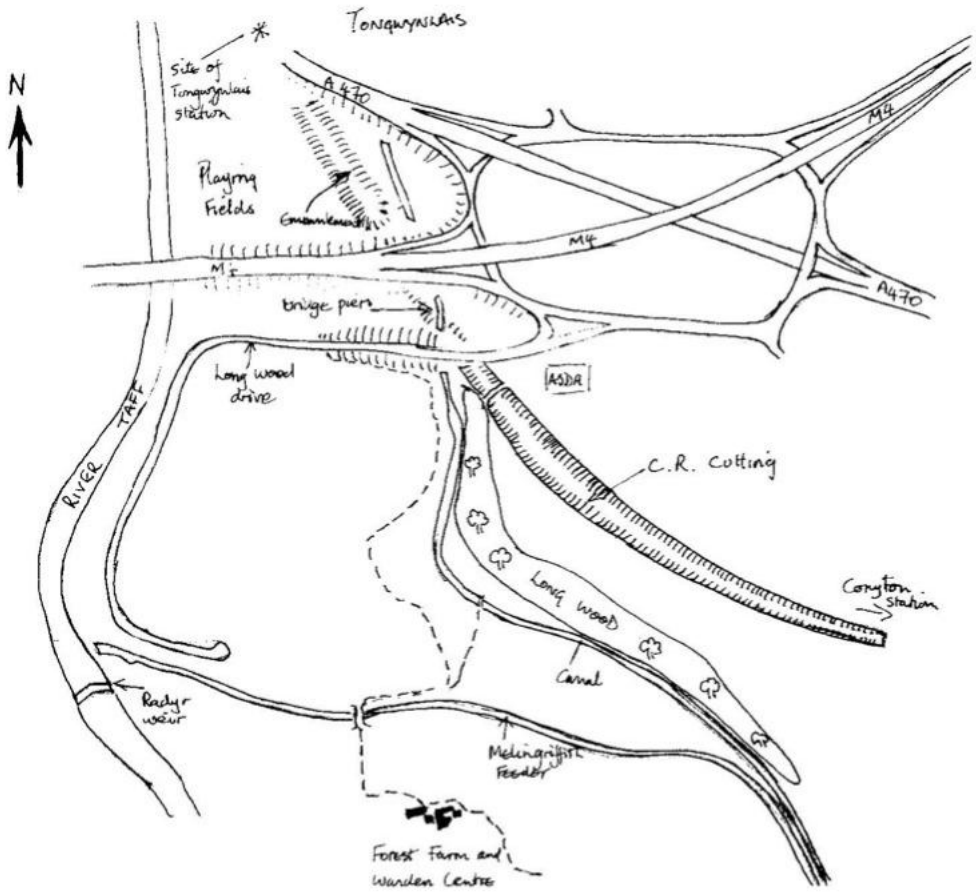
"Glamorgan Canal Local Nature Reserve and the Cardiff Railway" by Chris James

From second edition of our newsletter - June 1990 (continued)

Parts of the line fell into disuse and were closed between the two World Wars. The passenger service running to Coryton was begun by the Cardiff Railway and continues to this day. The section of line from Coryton to Tongwynlais station crosses Reserve land. At Coryton, the line ran through a deep cutting to a girder bridge across the canal and then to Tongwynlais station on an embankment. Remnants of these features can still be seen, although Tongwynlais station was demolished around 1972 when the M4 and A470 roads were under construction. The cutting is an important area of the Reserve and is under active management to improve the habitat by coppicing*.

The piers of the old girder bridge at the canal crossing are to be seen between the M4 and Longwoood Drive. The embankment, running to the site of Tongwynlais station, stands between the canal at Ironbridge Road and Tongwynglais playing fields.

Map showing part of Cardiff Railway on the Reserve



The line was infrequently used beyond Coryton until the Second World war. At this time, the then new Nantgarw colliery (closed 1988) was producing much needed coal for the war effort and the easiest way to move the coal to Cardiff Docks was via the old Cardiff Railway. All trains ran regularly from Nantgarw through the Reserve and into the docks until the summer of 1952 when a new connection was made to the Main Valley Line.

The well drained slopes of the cutting and embankment are home for a wide range of plants which attract insects and other animals. The ivy clad stone piers of the old bridge at the canal crossing provide nest sites for birds. Thoughtful management of the habitats will ensure that a variety of fauna and flora are retained and even improved. If left untended, bramble scrub will take over with the loss of many species of plants and animals.

(*Coppicing - the practice of cutting down trees approximately every seven years, to encourage a variety of plants around the new growth of wood from the cut stumps. In the past, the practice was used to produce poles for building and to provide space for oaks to grow long sagging boughs suitable for boatbuilding.)

Nature Walk in January
Forest Farm Nature Reserve

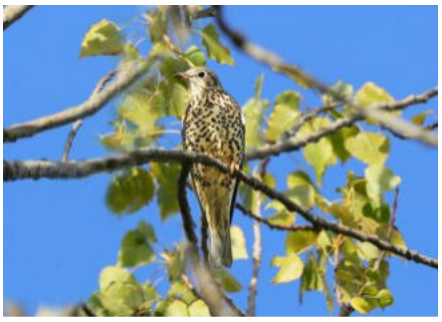
Ten people turned up for the first nature walk of the New Year on a grey and slightly damp Saturday morning. From the Wardens Centre hide, Great tits, Blue tits and Coal tits took turns on the feeders while Robins and the resident House sparrows cleaned up the spilled seed along with two Nuthatches and the inevitable Grey squirrel!



Nuthatch. Photo: Steven Turner

On to the banks of the River Taff which was running quite high and cloudy. Several Cormorants were diving for fish and Black-backed gulls flew upriver towards Radyr weir. Many of the trees along the way bore catkins, an early sign of spring?

Coming back past the allotments, three Mistle thrushes chased through a tall tree with their rattling calls.



Mistle thrush. Photo: Steven Turner

Along the feeder path, Song thrush and Blackbird were seen and heard perfecting their songs for the coming season and at the hides, two Jays sat and watched from the trees - but no Kingfisher this time.



Song thrush. Photo: Cliff Woodhead
Taken from the hide, December 2018..

Some scattered seed attracted Great and Blue tits,Robins and a Dunnock.

Back on the path, a bold male Chaffinch came for seed and a Wren and Long tailed tits were heard. In the wet Meadow, Crows, Magpies and Wood pigeons foraged and Jackdaws and a lone Heron flew over.



Wren. Photo: Tony Fisher

Then onto the canal where Mallards and Moorhens greeted us and a Buzzard flew from its vantage point on an old telephone pole.

Walking back to the wardens centre we listened to the varied bird songs and calls, trying to identify them. Finally, on the wild flower plot near the centre Snowdrops were showing their white blooms--- a sure sign of the coming Spring.

Jim Hill



Long-tailed tit.
Photo from Forest Farm cd
Photographer unknown

(My sincere and personal thanks to Jim, not only for this lovely article but for stepping in to lead the walk on 19th January.

Do come and join us. The nature walk is always on the third Saturday in the month, 10 a.m. starting from the Wardens' Centre. Ed)

FRIENDS OF FOREST FARM

COACH TRIP TO THE NATIONAL BOTANIC GARDENS AND THE ADJOINING BRITISH BIRD OF PREY CENTRE, CARMARTHENSHIRE (SA32 8HN)

SATURDAY 22ND JUNE 2019

8.45 am. Coach outside the side entrance of **Bethany Baptist Church**, Heol Uchaf, Rhiwbina CF14 6SS. Cars can be parked in the side road just across Heol Llanishen Fach.
9.00 am. Depart and travel to the entrance of the Deri Inn car park.
9.05 am. **Pick up at the Deri Inn**, then travel along Heol Y Deri to the lay-by in front of Canolfan Beulah.
9.10 am. Pick up Canolfan Beulah, via the Monico lights and Penlline Road, to Whitchurch High School.
9.20 am. Pick up at Whitchurch High School opposite the Royal British Legion, then north to the bus stop opposite the Holly Bush at Coryton.
9.30 am. Pick up at the Holly Bush and travel direct to the Botanic Gardens and British Bird of Prey Centre.
10.35 am. **We arrive at our destination.** The day will be at your leisure visiting one or both sites depending on your booking below.

THE NATIONAL BOTANIC GARDENS:- The garden is a blend of modern and historic with a range of themed gardens, the world's largest single span glass house, an award winning restaurant in the stable block /courtyard and 2 other catering outlets. There is a gift shop, art gallery, tropical Butterfly house, Bee Apiary, Fairy wood, Orchid meadow, Japanese garden, and a play area. These are all set within a Regency landscape over 500 acres of grounds. The Garden has a shuttle service to help visitors to the Glasshouse and restaurant. Most of the main paths are surfaced to accommodate wheelchairs and mobility scooters.

THE BRITISH BIRD OF PREY CENTRE:- The Centre has a special display and collection of over 20 different types of British raptors, focusing on the welfare, breeding and conservation of our native species. On the day there will be 45 mins. flying displays at 11.30am and 2.30pm, a 30mins. Owl show at 1pm. and a 30 mins. conservation talk at 3.30pm. Species seen could be Buzzard, Sparrowhawk, Merlin Falcon, Kestrel, European Eagle Owl, White-tailed Eagle, Red Kites, Hobby Falcon, Peregrine Falcon, Snowy Owl, Goshawk, and Golden Eagle, Barn/Tawny/Little owls.
5.00 pm. **Coach pick-up** at the location where we were dropped off, then travel direct to our Whitchurch and Rhiwbina pick up locations. We expect to be back at Coryton at 6.10pm.

If you would like to come on this trip please complete the tear off slip below and send it, together with your cheque made out to The Friends of Forest Farm, to Mr. D.Hockridge at 5, Clos Cromwell, Rhiwbina, Cardiff. CF14 6QN, together with a STAMPED, self-addressed envelope, AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. Seats will be allocated in the order of your booking date. Any queries, please contact Duncan by telephone (02920626111) or email (duncan3@hotmail.co.uk). All are very welcome. Members of the Probus Club of Cardiff West will be joining us on this trip. You will receive confirmation of your booking, your seat numbers and coach number.

…….

Coach trip to the National Botanic Gardens and the British Bird of Prey Centre, Carmarthenshire FF
SATURDAY 22nd JUNE 2019.

Name …….. Address ……. ……..
Post Code ……. Tel …….. Email ……..

Please book me the following seat/s AND entry for this coach trip:-

…..No. Adult/s **seat on the coach** at £13. =£……
…..No. Child/ren (under 15) **seat on the coach** at £10. =£……
.....No. Adult/s, group discount entry charge to the **GARDENS** at £7.50. =£.....
.....No. Child/ren, group discount entry charge to the **GARDENS** at £5.00. =£……
…..No. Adult/s **optional** ALL DAY entrance to the Birds of Prey Centre at £3.50 = £……
…..No. Child/ren **optional** ALL DAY entrance to the Birds of P. Centre at £2.50 = £…….
I enclose my cheque made payable to Friends of Forest Farm for the total of = £.....

I /we wish to be picked up at Bethany**, the Deri**, Canolfan Beulah**, the High School**, the Holly Bush**.
***Please circle desired pick up location**.*

Please list the names and addresses of persons, other than yourself, you are booking for, on the reverse of this form.
Please remember to enclose a stamped S.A.E. for confirmation.

Photographic Exhibition at Whitchurch Library

When I was six months into my Library Archive and Information Services qualification, I was set a task of putting together a display. Part of this was to show a paperwork trail to ensure the display adhered to a community based theme. The problem was: what on earth should I put in the display? We had recently had a photography exhibition by the students at Whitchurch High of the photographs they had taken of the St Mary's Garden project.

Being a regular visitor and volunteer at Forest Farm I see a lot of fabulous photographs and they are all on people's cameras and phones or I see them on Facebook. I thought how nice it would be for a wider audience to see some of these photographs. Then I thought it would be a good idea to include other pictures such as flowers and scenery as well as wildlife. That was when I had the idea of "A Year at Forest Farm" because there is always something to see in every season. No two visits to Forest Farm are the same so I wanted the pictures to change, albeit subtly, over the term of the display – provided I could get enough.

Following delays in getting permission for the display to go ahead it meant that I could not approach as many people as I had originally planned but thanks to: Colin Harvey, Cliff Woodhead, Jane Steere, Clive Bailey, Paul Sheppard and Alec and Raj at the Ranger Service for coming to my aid with a supply of photographs at such short notice. Thank you also to AWEN for letting me use their display boards.

The feedback on the display has been very positive. Visitors to the library have genuinely enjoyed seeing the photographs of Forest Farm and it has been a great talking point.





Photos:Vicky and Sheila

Above: Vicky in front of the first display.

Left:One panel of the second display.

Sorry the photos are not bigger/clearer. Do come down to Forest farm to have a look at all there is to see for yourself.

Good news about our website!!

Space for names/addresses for coach trip

In our last newsletter (December 2018) we included a note apologising for the fact that our website — http://forestfarm.org.uk/ — had become badly out-of-date, due to circumstances beyond our control.

We're very happy to report that this situation has now been sorted out and that the website is back in action, complete with an up-to-date list of future events, an archive of recent newsletters and a new privacy policy (which we'd encourage you to read).

We will, of course, continue to post about events and activities at Forest Farm on our Facebook page at https://www.facebook.com/forestfarmuk/

Space for names/addresses for coach trip

French Cannon found in the Glamorganshire Canal!

Don't get ***too*** excited - this is historical information and the cannon was not found in the part of the Glamorganshire canal which runs through Forest Farm. However, I hope this is still of interest to you.

One of our members (Rosemary Waters) drew my attention to this story after visiting the National Museum of Wales store in Nantgarw. There, she saw a French Cannon found where the Glamorgan Canal crosses James Street, a section of canal built in 1794-98.

This article is about another French cannon which was found in November 2002 (and returned to the finder after recording.) With the kind permission of Mark Lodwick of the *Portable Antiquities Scheme* (PAS), I am using their information and photograph, but you can visit both the National Museum and the PAS websites yourselves to get more information and see more photographs (see end of article).

This cannon was found near to the one mentioned in paragraph two. It is presumed to have been used as a bollard as it was found embedded vertically in brickwork. Markings on the cannon show it was made in the third year of the French Republic (from about 22nd September 1794 to 16th September 1795). It is cast iron and was made at the Nevers Foundry in Central France.



Photo: Rights Holder: The Portable Antiquities Scheme CC

Its dimensions are 2400mm long, 560,mm wide, 375mm thick and 105mm diameter (Approx 9ft long, 22ins wide, 14ins thick and 4ins in diameter).

The big question is, how did these come to be in Cardiff? The Portable Antiquities Scheme Website says the following "It has been pointed out that at the Battle of the Nile (1 August 1798), ten captured warships yielded 750 cannon. It is possible that the two related Cardiff guns were spoils of war from the same source, and may have reached Cardiff as part payment to one of the ironmasters producing guns for the Admiralty/Board of Ordnance, such as the Crawshays. It seems likely that more may survive in similar re-used buried contexts along the Glamorgan Canal."

Sheila Austin

Website links:
National Museum of Wales
https://museum.wales/collections/online/object/e76a07a5-928d-325e-a71f-b5a3d48a0059/French-naval-cannon-from-Glamorganshire-Canal/?field0=string&value0=cannon&field1=string&value1=french&index=0

Portable Antiquities Scheme
https://finds.org.uk/database/artefacts/record/id/49855

Want to watch an old film of the Glamorganshire Canal?

It was filmed in **1945** by Chris Jenkins, from Cardiff Amateur Cine Society. Just click on the link below and you will find it (6 minutes long) and a bit more information about the locations in the film.

https://player.bfi.org.uk/free/film/watch-along-the-glamorganshire-canal-1945-online

Talking of Glamorganshire…

Come along to our ***March evening talk*** *by*

Linda Nottage

"Wildlife in the Vale of Glamorgan"

7.30p.m. WednesdayMarch 20th

at Ararat Baptist Church, Whitchurch,
(see P15 for details)

Plantlife Cymru– What's on in Wales?

On 21st November 2018, Colin Cheeseman, the head of Plantlife Cymru, gave us a most interesting and informative talk about their activities. Professor David Bellamy founded the organisation in 1989 to promote plant conservation for important plant areas around the world. As well as plants, they help protect fungi, mosses, lichens and algae.

Plantlife has about 10,000 members, but only 380 in Wales. The Welsh section is based at Forest Farm and currently has 3 staff. As well as Colin, one specialises in outreach especially to schools, the third in fungi. Plantlife Cymru have a very extensive website (www.plantlife.org.uk/wales) and produce several leaflets promoting particular habitats such as coastal cliffs, dunes, woodland and traditional meadows. They are setting up groups to monitor meadowland plants and lichens.

In Wales there are 23 (of 150 in the UK) Important Plant Areas (IPA's), and 2 nature reserves. With very limited funding, Plantlife depend on raising grants and working with organisations such as the RSPB and the National Trust (NT). **They try to influence government policy, deliver projects using grants, run campaigns and promote projects to increase the numbers of rare or threatened plants in nature reserves.**

Most important bird areas are important plant areas too. The nearest IPAs to Cardiff are the Kenfig nature reserve and the Brecon Beacons. Other important areas are the Gower peninsula, which has very rich plant life because of the varied habitats, and the Great Orme, Llandudno. This is a limestone promontory and has some of the best unimproved grass and heathland in the UK. After persuading the NT to buy Parc farm on the Great Orme, it is now being managed to improve the remaining rough grazing for plant diversity and hopefully increase the number of the rare Hoary Rock Rose (Helianthemum oelandicum).

In Wales, Plantlife have **influenced** legislation e.g. "The Well-Being of Future Generations Act", and are members and trustees of the "Wales Environment Link" (represented in the Assembly). They are currently looking at how land use might change after Brexit, developing a Nature Recovery Action Plan and projects for re-seeding meadows with wild flowers.

Plant Life develop individual **projects.** A current one is looking at preserving oak woodlands in North Wales, working with the NT and the RSPB to help lichens, liverworts and brachiophytes by, for instance, reinstating coppicing and using limited woodland grazing by cattle to remove brambles. Another is a lichen survey - to be repeated in seven years after clearance, to assess the changes. A €7 million grant from the EU is enabling vast areas of rhododendrons to be cleared from unmanaged forest.

Colin told us about "Dynamic Dunescapes", a £13million joint project at Merthyr Mawr. Dunes are a dynamic ecosystem so "stabilising" them by planting invasive species like conifers and marram grass eventually destroys them. Only 11% of the dunes are now open sand without which, pioneer species e.g. the dune gentian cannot survive.

Changes in farming practices mean many plants become **threatened species** or even become extinct. This is due to arable land being converted to grass and most traditional meadowland being improved by replacing the traditional meadows with rye grass, and the use of fertilisers. Wales has some unique but highly threatened species such as the Weasel's Snout or Lesser Snapdragon (Misopates Orontium) and the Cornflower (Centaurea Cyanus). The last known site in Wales of the Corn Buttercup (Ranunculus Arvensis) is scheduled for housing.

Plantlife are trying to identify more "SSSI's". In the Brecon Beacons, 22 different sites have been identified on cliff faces. Many habitats are threatened: limestone cliffs are threatened by invasive species like Cotoneaster, as is the unique Yellow Whitlow grass, Draba Aizoides on the Gower. Other sites are being damaged by Japanese Knotweed, Himalayan Balsam and Rhododendrons.

Colin outlined **some other action** being taken; helping to develop a revised Welsh Government agricultural environment scheme to increase its uptake, an outreach scheme to increase the use of public green spaces. Also Plantlife Cymru are trying to increase awareness of the importance of lichens - the types present tell us about air pollution. Local rangers and amateur naturalists are being trained in lichen monitoring activities. (continued over)

Plantlife Cymru– What's on in Wales? - continued

The 2 nature reserves they own are both types of meadow and grassland containing rare plants including orchids and fungi. They were purchased with a grant from Unilever. One is near Lampeter and the other on the Lleyn Peninsula. (see www.plantlife.org.uk/wales).

They also run **campaigns**; to improve road verges (hoping to revise the government's guidance on their maintenance), look at the disposal of manure from intensive poultry and cattle farms (which are releasing large amounts of nitrogen into the environment) and conserve traditional grasslands.

Rare surviving areas of unimproved acid grassland are at risk while Wales has 80,000 hectares of unmanaged or poorly managed woodland.

There are many questions to answer, such as:

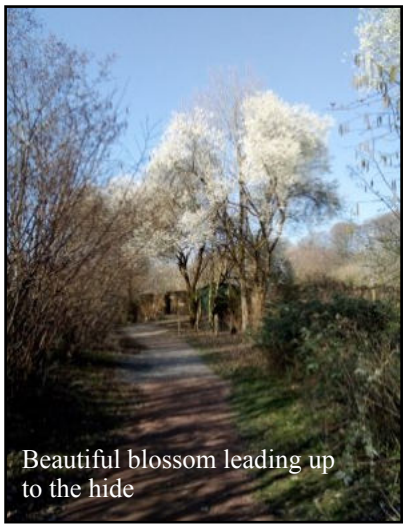
urban meadows - how are they to be managed?

with targets to plant more woodland, what habitat is being destroyed in the process?

As you see there was lots of information and I would encourage you to look at their excellent website - and, perhaps, join as a member?

Albyn Austin

A Spring walk



Beautiful blossom leading up to the hide

Hasn't the weather been lovely? Unseasonably warm, but very welcome nonetheless.

My husband and I took the opportunity to go for a walk and decided on Forest Farm! We decided go to parts of the Nature Reserve we hadn't visited for a while. So, our entrance was near the Hollybush estate, under the first bridge of the railway cutting and up to the meadows. We walked right across the middle, relishing its peace, and exited near to Asda. From there we crossed Longwood Drive and took the steps down to near the remains of the old railway bridge near the M4 (see P6 para 2 of Chris James report). This area was looked after by Cardiff Conservation Group for many years under the excellent leadership of Hugh Harrison of the RSPB. We saw a lot of fungi, moss and lichens, heard many birds and spotted a Red Admiral butterfly.

From there to the Ironbridge with a lovely view up a very calm River Taff to Castell Coch, then retraced our steps down the Taff Trail, and along by the Feeder to the hides. We had a magical half hour seeing moorhen, a heron, reed warbler, reed bunting, a kingfisher and last but not least two snipe right on the edge of the water. We might have missed them but an eagle-eyed photographer pointed them out. Also we saw a lot of quite tame Great Tits coming for food right into the hide, Bluetits, Nuthatch, Robin and Blackbird. Last but not least - a large rabbit.

It was an impulse to go out, but we were well rewarded!

Sheila Austin



I thought this a lovely fungus.
Perhaps someone can tell me was it is?

Some Spring photos


Triangle at bottom end of canal


3 ducks sheltering by canal wall


Ferns growing up a tree trunk over the Feeder.

Photos:

Top left John Harding
Above : Lucy Morgans
Centre: Sheila Austin
Bottom right: John Harding
Bottom Left: Sheila Austin


Heron by the Wardens' Centre pond


Snowdrops in 'Scouts' Field - previously covered with Himalayan Balsam

Our Constitution - ***Please read this***

When the Friends of Forest Farm was formed in 1990, a constitution was written to govern how the Friends should operate.

Over the years, our constitution has remained mainly unchanged. The only major change has been altering the financial year to run from January to December, rather than the original April to March; this was to allow time for our annual accounts to be audited and presented to the AGM in April.

As other Friends groups have been formed throughout the city, they have adopted a standard Friends group constitution produced by Cardiff Council.

Your committee has reviewed our present constitution and is recommending that The Friends of Forest Farm should also adopt the Council's standard Friends group constitution.

The documents are very similar, the Council's document having more detailed wording.

To change the constitution, we will need the formal agreement of members at the AGM.

If you would like to view the two documents, they are available on our website at http://forestfarm.org.uk/about-us/constitution

If you are unable to view the documents via the website please contact me and I will arrange for paper copies to be sent to you.

Martin Chamberlain
Secretary, Friends Of Forest Farm
07952 926145

"A Magical 15 minutes"

"When I visited Forest Farm early morning on 8th May 2015 I could have had no inkling of what was about to unfold at the first hide. The light was quite poor so I set my camera accordingly.



After a short while a fox appeared through a gap in the reedbed and quickly disappeared into cover. A few moments later, a cub appeared at the same spot followed by 4 more with the adult. Then followed a period when the cubs seemed to be just having playtime.



It was not until I looked at the images on my PC that I realised they were also having a feed from mum, partly hidden by vegetation.

I was afraid to move my position in the hide as the vixen had noticed me.

Eventually the family returned into cover and I was able to reflect on that 15 minutes of magic that I had witnessed".

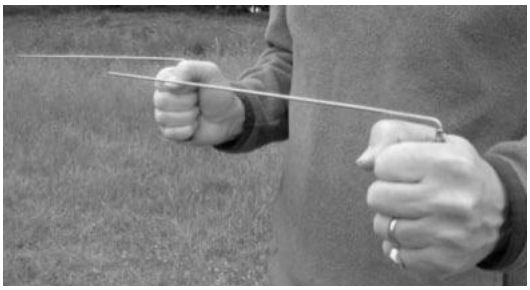
Cliff Woodhead

(Thank you Cliff for sharing this with us in words and pictures. These moments are indeed magical. Ed)

Dowsing - A Talk by Grace and Andrew Edgar

This was the subject for the Friends talk in January. Both are members of the Cardiff group of the British Society which has 34 local groups in the UK and was set up by Colonel Bell in 1933 to promote dowsing as a simple, cheap method of finding water. It has an ethics system - members must not dowse unless they have permission, and be honest, trustworthy and fair to other dowsers. As well as a water group, the Society has other specialist groups e.g. an archaeology group – who can map underground features and even look for features /objects of a particular period. Another group dowse for health and well-being, using a pendulum and another maps Ley lines - a local one runs through the Tinkinswood Neolithic burial chamber near Dyffryn Gardens.

Using dowsing to find water has been used since ancient times. It is a sensory response in humans, reacting to the presence or absence of substances/entities with wider applications than finding water such as people and objects. Although people have come up with experiments and theories about how it works e.g. a reaction to magnetic anomalies, there is no scientific explanation, prompting the label of quackery. However, water companies still use the method, especially to find underground leaks.



There are two main methods in use, rods or pendulums. Rods are either the traditional "V" shape stick, with the ends held in the hands, which dip if for instance you pass over water. Alternatively you can use two "L" shaped rods held vertically, loosely in each hand with the one arm pointing ahead. When the dowser passes over water, the arms of the rods cross. The other main method for dowsing is using a simple pendulum which turns clockwise or anticlockwise when asked a yes or a no question.

Experienced dowsers don't need either device but sense bodily changes. Some can identify the general area where water can be found remotely by using a pendulum over a map, getting answers to depth and potability. Findings need to be confirmed in the field. It seems anyone can dowse but some people do it naturally better than others. Being relaxed, in good health and not tired or stressed enables good results.

At the end of the talk, several of us tried using the pendulums. Responses were varied, but some of the members were surprised with their apparent aptitude. Grace and Andrew run one day courses on dowsing and guarantee success to all participants with practice. If you are interested, contact grace.edgar@hotmail.com

Albyn Austin

Forest Farm Summer Open Day
Saturday 1st June - 10.00 - 16.00

Join the Community Rangers and RSPB Cymru for a fun day for all the family.

See Page 16 for details

Thanks to ... John Wilkins

John, member of the 'Friends', offered his computer expertise to help us.

He has scanned most of past newsletters. All are now on the Cloud and a memory stick. It's a 'belt and braces' approach to preserving our archive.

We are planning to give the original paper copies to Glamorgan archives.

Cardiff Wildlife Detectives - for children aged 8 - 12 years

How to join? Email cymru@rspb.org.uk or call 02920 353000 to register. To cover the cost of resources each session costs £1.50 per child or a year's membership is £9.00 per child. You can pay on the day and all adults get to enjoy the fun for free. See 'Events' pages 15- 16.

Mrs Valerie Fulljames.

Sadly, we have another death to report. Mrs Valerie Fulljames, a long-time supporter and Friend of Forest Farm Nature Reserve, passed away on 6th December 2018. Her daughter, Rosemary, contacted us to say it was her family's wish that contributions in lieu of flowers be donated to us and wished it to go for a specific project.

The committee agreed that the **donation will go to a raised pond.** This will be suitable for disabled people (of all ages) and enable them to do pond-dipping, which they cannot do from the main ponds. We are pleased that the family are happy with this decision.

As we cater for educational (school) groups, as well as community groups, we are sure this will be well appreciated by our members and visitors

Phil Baker (Treasurer)

Velindre

In our last newsletter, we said that our Chairman and Secretary were meeting with the Trust for an update on the new Velindre Cancer centre.

The meeting took place in January. At that time, design was moving forward in readiness for tendering for the preparation works.

We raised the subject of footpath improvements on the site before the commencement of any works.

For now, there is nothing further of significance to report.

One column or two?

In the last newsletter, I asked for your opinion about whether you preferred a one column or two column page layout.

Thank you to Glenys and Hugh for responding. Unfortunately, they both made different choices! So for the time being, I will stick with the present format.

I would welcome any feedback on the layout, content etc and of course any contributions from you of articles or photos.

Sheila Austin

Events. March – mid June *2019*

DATE	EVENT
MARCH	
Sun 10th Mar 10.00 - 12.00	**Friends Volunteering Event.** ALL WELCOME. Contact Martin on 07952 926145. Meet at the Wardens Centre Forest Farm Rd Whitchurch. CF14 7JJ
Sat 16th Mar 10.00 - 12.30	**Nature Ramble.** Meet at the Wardens Centre Forest Farm Road, Whitchurch. CF14 7JJ for a gentle ramble around the Reserve to see the wildlife. Bring your binoculars if you have them ALL WELCOME
Sun 17th Mar 10.00 - 12.00	**Cardiff Wildlife Detectives for children aged 8-12. Wildlife gardening and making homes for nature at Forest Farm.** For more details email Gareth at gstamp@cardiff.gov.uk or phone Community Rangers on 029 2044 5903
Wed 20th Mar 19.30	**Evening talk. "Wildlife in the Vale of Glamorgan" by Linda Nottage.** Meet at Ararat Centre for the Community (The Church on the Common), Plas Treoda, Whitchurch, Cardiff . CF14 1PT. Tea and biscuits. ALL WELCOME
APRIL	
Sun 14th Apr 10.00 - 13.00	**Friends Volunteering Event.** ALL WELCOME. Contact Martin on 07952 926145. Meet at the Wardens Centre, Forest Farm Rd Whitchurch. CF14 7JJ
Wed 17th Apr 19.30	**Evening talk and A.G.M . Wildlife photographs from Alec Stewart, one of the Rangers, followed by our A.G.M.** Meet at Ararat Centre for the Community (The Church on the Common), Plas Treoda, Whitchurch, Cardiff . CF14 1PT. Tea and biscuits. ALL WELCOME
Sat 20th Apr 10.00 - 12.30	**Nature Ramble.** Meet at the Wardens Centre Forest Farm Road, Whitchurch. CF14 7JJ for a gentle ramble around the Reserve to see the wildlife. Bring your binoculars if you have them ALL WELCOME.

Events. March – mid June *2019* continued

DATE	EVENT
APRIL cont'd	
Sat 20th Apr 10.00 - 12.30	**Nature Ramble.** Meet at the Wardens Centre Forest Farm Road, Whitchurch. CF14 7JJ for a gentle ramble around the Reserve to see the wildlife. Bring your binoculars if you have them ALL WELCOME.
Sun 21st Apr 13.00 - 15.00	Join the Rangers team for some **egg-citing Easter-themed arts and craft activities.** Meet at the Warden Centre, Forest Farm Road, Whitchurch. CF14 7JJ. **£2.00 per child. All children must be accompanied by an adult.**
MAY	
Wed 8th May 18.00	**Foods of the Forest.** Take a pleasant stroll around Forest Farm Country Park with the Community Park Rangers and discover the tasty treats Mother Nature has in store at this time of year. Round off the walk by tasting some of the delicious delicacies. Meet at the Warden Centre, Forest Farm Road, Whitchurch, Cardiff, CF14 7JJ. **£4.50 per person**. Wheelchair accessible
Sun 12th May 10.00 - 13.00	**Friends Volunteering Event.** ALL WELCOME. Contact Martin on 07952 926145. Meet at the Wardens Centre, Forest Farm Rd Whitchurch. CF14 7JJ
Sat 18th May 10.00 - 12.30	**Nature Ramble.** Meet at the Wardens Centre Forest Farm Road, Whitchurch. CF14 7JJ for a gentle ramble around the Reserve to see the wildlife. Bring your binoculars if you have them ALL WELCOME.
Sun 19th May 10.00 - 12.00	**Cardiff Wildlife Detectives for children aged 8-12. Pond dipping and Bug hunting at LLanishen Park.** For more details email Gareth at gstamp@cardiff.gov.uk or phone Community Rangers on 029 2044 5903
JUNE	
Sat 1st Jun 10.00 - 16.00	**Forest Farm Summer Open Day.** A day of fun packed wildlife activities **with the Community Park Rangers and RSPB Cymru** is perfect for families. Pond-dipping, bug hunting and bird spotting. There will also be a fun dog show, please be prompt for 12.30pm if you would like to enter. A day of family wild time with nature and a chance to explore, discover and relax.Meet at Forest Farm Conservation Centre, Forest Farm Road, Whitchurch, Cardiff. CF14 7JJ. **Free activities and free parking** available on site.
Sun 9th Jun 10.00 - 13.00	**Friends Volunteering Event.** ALL WELCOME. Contact Martin on 07952 926145. Meet at the Wardens Centre, Forest Farm Rd Whitchurch. CF14 7JJ
Sat 15th Jun 10.00 - 12.30	**Nature Ramble.** Meet at the Wardens Centre Forest Farm Road, Whitchurch. CF14 7JJ for a gentle ramble around the Reserve to see the wildlife. Bring your binoculars if you have them ALL WELCOME.
Sun 16th Jun	**Cardiff Wildlife Detectives for children aged 8-12. Moth ID session at Forest Farm, led by George Tordoff of Butterfly Conservation.** For more details email Gareth at gstamp@cardiff.gov.uk or phone Community Rangers on 029 2044 5903
Sat 22nd Jun 10.00 - 13.00	**Wildlife Photography Workshop** Want to take pictures of your local wildlife? Join the Community Park Rangers for an introduction to some basic photographic techniques and field craft skills - how to set up a feeding site, use of hides and other tips to improve your wildlife images. Meet at the Forest Farm Conservation Centre, Forest Farm Road, Whitchurch, Cardiff, CF14 7JJ **For more information contact the Ranger Service on: 029 20445903.** Free 2k Easy Wheelchair symbol

Published on behalf of The Friends of Forest Farm and Glamorganshire Canal Local Nature Reserve by
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