FRIENDS OF FOREST FARM

and Glamorganshire Canal Local Nature Reserve

EDITOR'S FORUM

As we enter the second quarter of 1993 the Friends Steering Committee have a number of projects and concerns to report. Please read on for information supplied by our prolific contributors - to whom we give thanks.

Our **Membership Secretary** Mrs Esther Jennings, after a useful service, regrets that she has had to resign because of pressure of work. her place has now been taken by **Mr Tom Colston,** who will continue handling distribution. Thank you to both.

We also welcome a new **Publicity Officer, Mrs Pauline Link,** who already serves on our Committee. We wish her good luck. **Mr Chris James** is now fully established as our **Events Organiser.** Many thanks also to Mr Robin Sotheby for the design of the Newsletter layout.

Your attendance at the **A.G.M.** (Wednesday 21st April), where your views can be heard, would be much appreciated.

FOUNDER MEMBER TO BE 'FIRST CITIZEN'.

Councillor Victor Riley, a founder member and staunch supporter of 'The Friends', will shortly become the **Lord Mayor** of the City of Cardiff. As a member of our Committee, Victor Riley has worked hard, and we have valued his contributions; in particular, we have good reason to be grateful to him for the way in which he has made sure that we are kept well informed of what is happening in City Hall in so far as Forest Farm and the Reserve are concerned. He and Mrs Riley have a busy year ahead of them, but we know that Victor Riley will continue to keep an eye on developments for us.

Our warmest congratulations to Victor Riley and our best wishes to both of them for a successful and happy year of office!

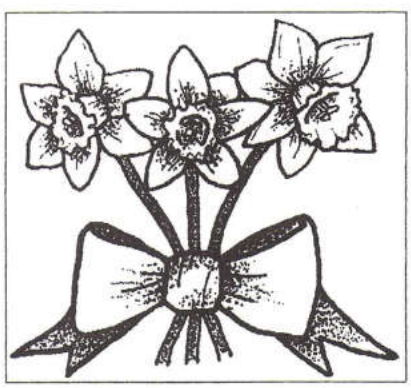
Denis Davies

MEMBERSHIP

The number of 'Friends' continues to increase gradually in spite of the fact that some 30-40 'forgot' to pay their membership dues in 1992. The number now stands at **175 paid-up members.**

Fees for the period 1993-94 will become due on 1st April; a renewal application form is enclosed with this Newsletter. The completed form, together with your remmittance (which remains the same, at £3 per individual or family and £5 per organisation) may be sent to me at the address on the form at any time now.

Tom Colston



HERE WE GO AGAIN!

The next battle for the Health Meadows is about to commence. Objections to the final draft of the Local Plan will be heard at a Public Inquiry starting in May and continuing all Summer.

One of the objections is from South Glamorgan Health Authority, objecting against the City Council's decision to exclude the Meadows for land allocated for housing.

We cannot give evidence at the hearing as of right, but we have had discussions with senior Planning personnel and have offered to give evidence in support of the City's decision. We are also preparing a short paper outlining our views about the importance of the Meadows and how, if they are acquired by the Council, they would substantially benefit the Reserve.

Denis Davies

MEMBERSHIP enquiries to **Mr Tom Colston**
15 Coed Arian, Whitchurch, CARDIFF, CF4 2ND
Tel: (0222) **624606**

A NEW POND

by the **Countryside Warden**



"Oh no, not another pond!" I hear you cry. But this is a pond with a difference - more of a lake really, taking in around half an acre. Anyone walking around the Reserve recently could not but help noticing the excavators and dumpers, moving hundreds of tons of spoil around the site, while large lorries ferried tons of clay in. The digging itself was comparatively easy, as the ground consisted of sand and shingle going back some 10,000 years when the the glacier pushed through the valley, leaving a large river in its wake - now the much smaller river Taff.

The creation of this new pond has been a joint effort between the **City of Cardiff** and the **National Rivers Authority** - the latter doing much of the groundwork. As I write this article, a team of specialists are puddling clay into the bottom of the pond, forming a watertight layer some 14 inches thick, while the NRA are busy landscaping the spoil. When complete, the pond will be fed via an overflow pipe from the Canal. Instead of building islands which take up a lot of valuable water space, we will be constructing timber rafts which will be anchored to the bottom. These floating islands form important safe refuges for wildfowl.

Next will come the planting. The **Cardiff Conservation Volunteers** will be working in the canal during June, thinning out some of the emergent vegetation, which will then be transplanted into the edges of the new pond along with some common reed thinned from other sites, affording cover for wildfowl. The mounds of soil will be seeded with a wildflower-and-grass mix, and special wildflower plugs will be planted directly into the embankment by the **Forest Farm Watch** group.

Finally, a **Bird Hide** will be erected to the west, with access via the newly surfaced feeder footpath, giving views over the new pond and both our winter wetland scrapes. Now transformed from an uninteresting field, this area will form a very important series of new wetland habitats and will provide a haven for wildfowl.



To help bring our new pond to life, would anyone with any surplus frog or toad spawn please contact me; goldfish and garden gnomes are NOT required!

PS. During the excavations, a flock of some 34 **Wild Geese** flew overhead - hopefullya good sign for the future of our new wetlands.

Mike Wiley

LORD MAYOR'S CIVIC AWARDS

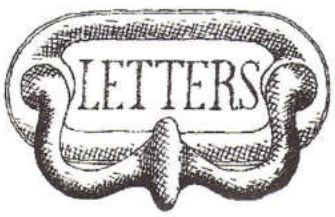
Our first major project - the Access Ramp - won the 1st Prize in the Practical Projects Category of the above award - competing against 32 other entries.

Six of our members who had been closely involved in the project were invited to a Civic Reception at Cardiff Castle to receive the Shield and the £200 prize, which will help towards the cost of the next phase of the work.

The ramp looks as though it has always been there. What a pity that some visitors allow their dogs to foul the ramp - as well as the rest of the towpath and verges! Can anything be done about it?

Letters to the Editor, please.

Denis Davies



TY MAWR ROAD DEPOT

We have taken up with the City Council its failure to find a replacement site for the Skips. The Chief Executive says that they cannot find an alternative site in the area. Our contention is that they should not have closed the well-used facility without first seeking an alternative. In fact, the Chairman of the relevant Committee gave his word that this is what would happen.

Promises, promises! We have already seen the effect - black bags and other waste left about the roadsides.

We have made a formal complaint to the Local Government Ombudsman, that to close Ty Mawr Road without seeking an alternative site amounts to maladministration.

Do you want to complain? The address is Local Ombudsman, Derwen House, Court Road, Bridgend CF31 1BN.

Denis Davies

GARDEN BIRDWATCH

Forecasting weather and the arrival of migrating birds can be frustrating, but I suppose my effort - last issue - was not too far out. Weatherwise, the cold spell was around Christmas, not January or February.

Redwings and **Fieldfares** have not come into the towns, but they are not too far away in the surrounding countryside. A **Meadow Pipit** was a very welcome guest on Christmas Day and made further visits on January 9th and 22nd. **Blackcaps** and **Bullfinches** were very keen on my neighbour's *Leycesteria Formosa* (**Pheasant Berry**) berries until all were eaten. **Siskin** first visited my garden on January 16th, four days earlier than last year.

Following the cold spell, it was noticeable that the number of species visiting the garden increased. Monthly totals for November and December 1992 and January 1993 were 17, 19, 21 respectively. Whilst the birds counted were often in the area, the food available had tempted them into the garden. The **Black-headed Gulls** chose Sainsbury's Angel Cake; the **Lesser Black-backed Gulls**, chicken skins; **Crows** and **Jackdaws** preferred lumps of fat.

It would be silly to think that the Winter is over already; I am sure that the varying weather between East Coast and West Coast will make the birds move about. It is still possible to have a surprise visitor any time, so keep up the feeding, watering and observing. Looking ahead to the Spring, thousands of birds move across Britain, so it is possible that one or two may pay a call at your garden. Keep watching!

R.J.Willams

NARROW - GAUGE RAILWAY

The Executive Committee was shocked to receive a letter from the Director of Leisure & Amenities saying that the Committee had approved in principle the proposal for a light railway at Forest Farm. The final decision will be taken after the company concerned has carried out a feasability study.

The rumour is that 2 possible routes are being considered. One is the Old Railway Cutting - a part of the Reserve and SSSI. It is easy to imagine the impact of this on the wild life. The second is the path alongside the River and joining the other users - pedestrians, joggers, cycles, wheel-chairs, horses and dogs!

We have written objecting to the proposal as indicated by the rumours. We have also expressed concern that the Committee did not consider it appropriate to seek our views.

If you have strong views on the proposals, you can write to **I.L. Davies, Director, Leisure & Amenities Dept, Heath Park, CF4 4EP.**

Denis Davies

REFLECTIONS AND GHOSTS

How many people have ever thought seriously about the previous occupants of their present homes - especially if those dwellings are almost 200 years old?

We who live in **Forest Farm Road** have tried to picture what it must have been like to have lived here all those years ago. Built for the employees of the 'Old Melin' works, there are just 3 of a row of 17, once part of a thriving village community.

The men who sweated long hours in the heat and dust of the works; the women who toiled at home cooking on open fires; washday with the boiler bubbling away in the scullery, water drawn from the well on the other side of the road; bath-night in front of the fire in the ubiquitous 'tin tub'. What of the children? Perhaps they had their excitement in watching the barges plying along the canal and listening to the tales of the bargees and lock-keepers; perhaps the chance of a ride as a bonus.

The evenings would be spent quietly in talk or playing table-top games in the glow of the fire and oil lamps. Heaven be praised - no TV or computers!

But now the once-proud and internationally known Melingriffith Works lies buried beneath a welter of 'semis', whilst the magnificent Canal - once part of the life-blood of Cardiff - is now just a short stretch of water, albeit one of great interest and colour but suffering the great indignity - emerging from a mere pipe under a motorway!

If the ghosts of the inhabitants of that Melingriffith of old are looking down on us now, we feel sure they shake their heads with great sadness. They don't deserve to see the fate that has befallen their old community.

N. Dell

R.S.P.B. / 'FRIENDS' MONTHLY WALK

This takes place **10-12.30 am** on the **1st Saturday** of the month - in all weathers! A damp, foggy morning enabled us to approach the first scrape unobserved, and we had a 'first' for the Reserve - a pair of **Teal**.

The Winter Birds have been very scarce this year; a few **Redwing**, a flock of 12 **Fieldfare** passing through and about a dozen **Siskin**. A couple of **Goldcrest** made an appearance after an absence of 2 years, and also one **Stonechat**. The **Water Rail** spends a lot of time by the old stone bridge over the feeder.

Since October the number of species recorded is 50.

E.O.Edwards

"THANK YOU, TED!"

Chairman **Mr Ted Edwards** is in constant demand for his talk, with slide illustrations, on the Glamorganshire Canal. In the last three years he has spoken to 60 clubs, church and retirement groups. All have enjoyed the talks, and most make a donation to the funds of the 'Friends'; over **£160** was contributed this year. This is an achievement which I am sure will be appreciated by all.

Eric James

An illustrated talk :

"Putting Theory into Practice: Cardiff's Environmental Strategy"

Mr Bret Willers - Environmental Strategy Officer, City of Cardiff

Wednesday 21st April 1993 at 7.30 pm

Bethel Baptist Church Hall, Penlline Road

followed by the 'Friends' ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

SPRING and SUMMER OUTDOOR EVENTS for 1993

Wednesday 5th May at 6.30 pm
Spring Bird Walk led by **Mr Phil Bristow**
1.5 miles ... Meet at **Warden Centre**

Wednesday 16th June at 6.30 pm
History & Geology of Lower Taff Valley led by **Dr Bill Jones & Mr Tom Sharpe**
3 miles ... Meet at **Taffs Well Cemetery** (ST 127839)

Sunday 20th June at **10 am - 5 pm**
CRAFT FAYRE at Forest Farm

Wednesday 14th July at 7.00 pm
See some of the **Small Mammals of the Reserve** with **Mr Chris James & Mr Mike Wiley**
1.5 miles ...Meet at **Warden Centre**

Friday 16th July at **7.00 pm**
BARBEQUE
The 'Friends' will be joining with the **Forest Farm Watch Group** for a social evening with food cooked over a charcoal grill. Soft drinks provided. Please bring your own food and any other drinks.

Wednesday 8th September at 6.30 pm
Autumn Fruits Walk led by **Dr Mary Gillham**
Meet at **Longwood Drive outside AB Electronics**

For further information contact **Mr Chris James** (0222 611342)

Published on behalf of Friends of Forest Farm and Glamorganshire Canal Local Nature Reserve
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The Editor wishes to state that all views expressed by contributors are their own, as is the responsibility for them.