Friends of Forest Farm

Country Park
and
Glamorganshire Canal
Local Nature Reserve

Editor's Forum

November 1997

Newsletter No: 27
Price to non-members: 20p

Greetings to our regulars and a warm welcome to many new friends.
You will observe a change in the newsletter's format. Regretfully I have to report that Robin Sotheby has been taken ill at this time. We all send our very best wishes for his quick recovery.

Ken Patterson

UPDATE!!!

The latest news on the Hospital land is that the plans held at the Welsh Office are now in abeyance. Patience will be needed as the wheels of decision making turn slowly.

Look out!!!

For a new Welsh oak bench on the reserve constructed by the countryside staff. The bench has a brass plaque inscribed: "To commemorate the Golden Wedding Anniversary of William and Jennie Cuthbert 24th May 1997 Friends of Forest Farm."



Coming soon!!

Sweatshirts for sale carrying our logo.
If interested, contact Pauline Linck on:
Cardiff 617012.

Membership

For the third year running our Family Membership has passed the 200 mark. A special welcome to our 24 new family members. I hope they will enjoy walking the Reserve and that they will be able to attend our Indoor Meetings this Winter. New members are always welcome, please contact me for application forms.

N. Gale, Membership Secretary
Cardiff 756771

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RSPB PHOENIX

The group were unable to be active on the Reserve during the summer as the majority of our members were on Ramsey Island for part of August helping with conservation work. However we were able to make the second knotweed cut in September, this was a bit late in the season but because there had been recent rain the week had not started to die back. Also we found a previously missed patch of the weed near the road and that was demolished by one of our more intrepid members who fought his way in through brambles and over barbed wire — detemination knows no bounds!

A coppicing session had been planned for half term week but too many members were away with their parents to make it viable. Another date will be arranged. Nest box cleaning also needs to be done in the next few months.

Pauline Linck Leader

RESERVE NEWS

This summer, part of our ongoing programme of access improvements saw us in the canal. We had planned to do this work in August when the canal would be at its lowest, but a very wet start to the month brought the water up to winter levels, causing not a few problems. (Have you ever tried building a wall under water?) It is difficult to believe but these large holes in the wall/towpath are caused predominantly by dogs. Some owners encourage their dogs into the canal by throwing sticks etc, then the animals, in trying to claw their way out, massively erode the sides. We managed to rebuild and backfill several of the worst affected areas, with the help of the BTCV mid-week group and will continue next year when hopefully the water levels won't be so high. We also managed to resurface a long length of the towpath.

The canal was also beginning to suffer from a lack of light, with trees growing out from both sides. Walking along the towpath weas beginning to feel like entering a tunnel. To alleviate this two years ago we started a programme of thinning/coppicing. Each year two plots of some fifty metres in length are tackled. Light is very important for obviously without it there is very little life.

SWALEC are in the process of burying their high voltage cables underground and eventually removing their overhead cables from the reserve. This will be a major improvement both aesthetically and benefitting wildlife, as we have asked them to leave the poles in place where we hope to erect kestral nesting boxes.

I have written before about being fooled by a jay mimicking a tawny owl. Well, I've been had again. Whilst walking through the reserve one day I heard what I thought to be the plaintive cry of a buzzard in distress. Fearing the worst I went to investigate, only to find the call emanating from a large beech where a jay was perched. Once bitten!

As autumn takes a hold, large flocks of redwing have already been seen on the reserve, making the most of this years berry crop. Snipe are appearing on the scrapes and the odd siskin has been sighted.

Some reports are for a very cold winter - lets hope they-'re wrong.

Mike Wiley, Countryside Warden

The Pentyrch Iron Works and Melingriffith Light Railway

As reported in a previous issues stone sleepers from the original Tramroad were found alongside the river and cycle track at Radyr Weir.
These have now been laid out, as in the original Tramroad construction, on the side and slightly above the cycle track just south of Radyr Weir.
Unfortunately we have not found any of the old Tramplates so lengths of angle iron have been used to give an idea of how the Tramroad was constructed.
An information plaque showing the route of the railway, its histroy and the method of tramway construction was prepared and (continued on page 3)

Whitchurch Hospital Development Update

An amended plan put forward by the Hospital trust in the summer involved the building of 200 new houses, 180 flats, 36 sheltered units for the elderly, a 100 bed new psychiatric hospital, shops, a pub and restaurant and community health facilities. Compared with the previous proposals this scheme showed a reduction of 39 houses, an extra 1½ acres of meadow land left undeveloped and included was the donation of the redundant stores building to the Council for use as a sports hall. One of the local councillors has questioned whether the Council could afford to equip and run such a facility given the financial problems it is already having with Llanishen and other leisure centres.

The new proposals were turned down by the Council's Highways Committee in September because of the inevitable increase in traffic that would be generated in an already very busy area. On 29th October the Council's Planning Committee also rejected the plans on the grounds of the loss of open space. This decision requires approval from the full Council who meet at 2.30pm on Wednesday 18th December at Atlantic Wharf, Cardiff Bay.

The Whitchurch Action Committee continues to carry out the mandate given to it by the residents of Whitchurch at the last public meeting and members of the Committee spoke in opposition to the developments at both the Council's Highways and Planning Committee meetings.

You can show your opposition to the proposed development by attending the Council meeting on Wednesday 18th December at Atlantic Wharf or, if you are unable to attend in person, write now to the Chairman of Cardiff City Council, Atlantic Wharf, Cardiff expressing your views.

If you are attending the meeting you should arrive at Atlantic Wharf at 1.45pm for 2.30pm.

Proposed expansion of the Cardiff Athletic Facility on the Diamond Ground Forest Farm Road



This expansion calls for 2 cricket pitches, 1 all-weather hockey pitch, 4 all-weather tennis courts with floodlights, bowling green with clubhouse, and new pedestrian river crossing to 3 new rugby pitches on the land owned by Welsh Water.

We have objected to these proposals both to the Planning Dept: and to the Hyder Environmental Dept.

We have pointed out the danger of increased traffic on an already congested road, the implications of floodlighting on wildlife, and the need to safeguard the proposed second entrance to the Nature Reserve.

We have registered our complete opposition to the proposed rugby pitches on the land on the other side of the river owned by Welsh Water.

When the Forest Farm Country Park was formed it was envisaged that this land would eventually become part of the Park and would be linked to the streamside pedestrian access and become part of the Public Rights of Way system. The return of wildlife to this stretch of the river after the clean up by Welsh Water and the Environmental Agency has been quite spectacular and shows what can be achieved with proper management.

Now that money is becoming available from various sources the expansion of Forest Farm Country Park is possible and every effort should be made to keep these fields for wildfile and an open space for the enjoyment of the public looking for a little bit of peace and quiet.

E.O. Edwards

P.S. The ideal solution would be for the Athletics to move to the other side of the river and for the Diamond ground to be incorporated into the Reserve!!

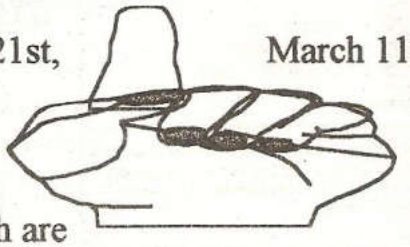
The Pentyrch Iron Works and Melingriffith Light Railway (con't)

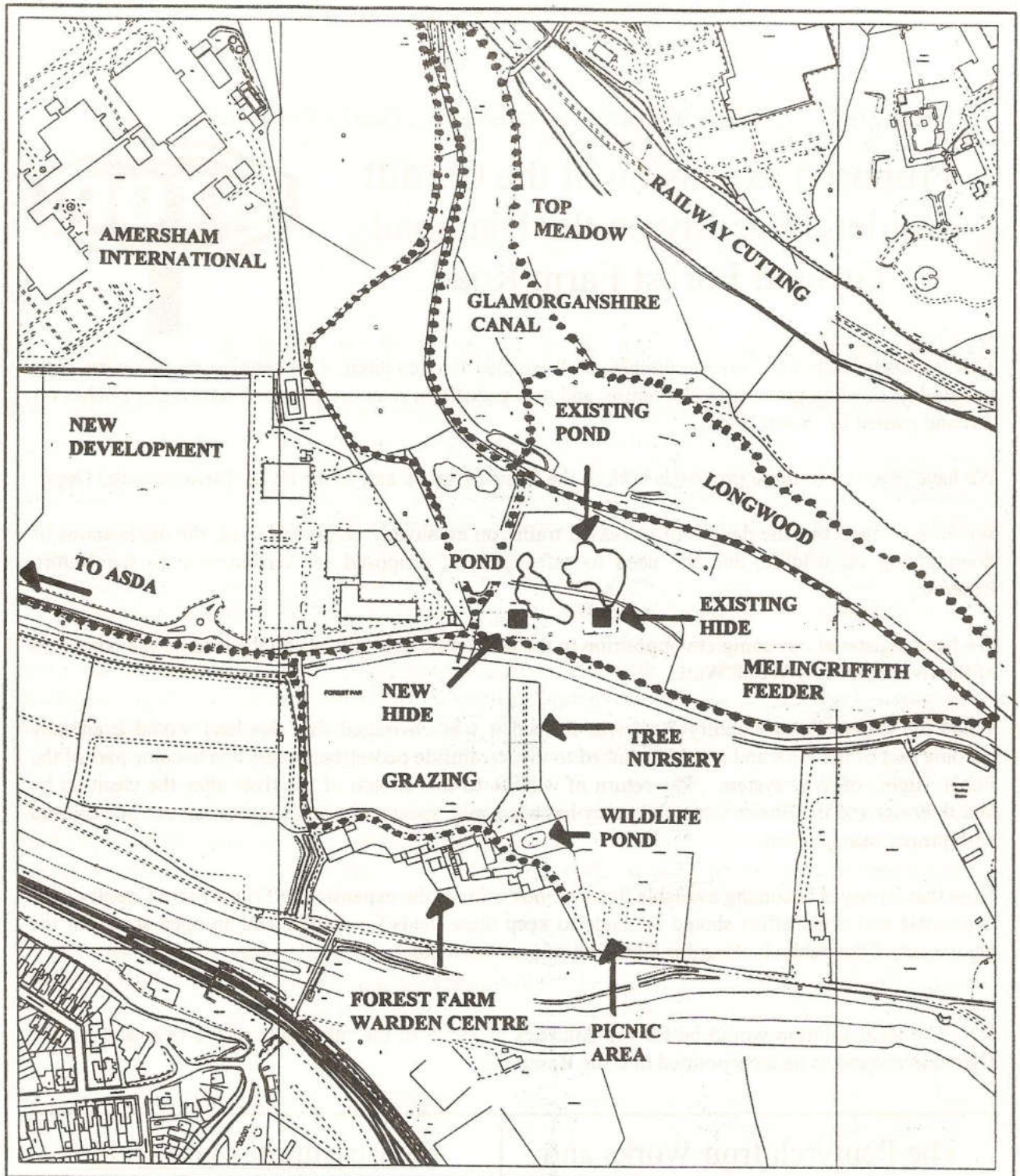
passed to the Pathway Dept: of the now Cardiff City County where it was made into an outdoor plaque apprx: 18" x 36". With the permission of the Environmental Agency this will be mounted alongside an existing plaque at Radyr Weir thus adding another bit towards our knowledge of the local history.

E.O. Edwards

Please Support Our Indoor Meetings

January 21st, March 11th and April 15th. Details of which are in your membership card.





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HIGHWAY & TRANSPORTATION SERVICES

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The editor wishes to state that all views expressed by contributors are their own as is the responsibility for them.

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