FRIENDS

OF FOREST FARM COUNTRY PARK AND GLAMORGANSHIRE CANAL LOCAL NATURE RESERVE

ISSUE 56 JUNE 2005

Editor's Forum

by Ken Patterson

Greetings to all our members.

It was with a feeling of sadness that we heard of the sudden death of Ted Edwards' wife, Mair. Her cheerful greeting and caring enquiry will be missed by all who knew her; also her tea making activity at the Tabernacle Church indoor meetings. Our thoughts will now extend to Ted and his family at this time.

Many changes in the composition of the Committee have taken place, covered elsewhere. We wish them well in their new roles, building on the development of our Country Park achieved so far.

I listened to a programme covering an area of countryside in County Durham. It was required to be an example of tranquillity—an oasis of calm, one of quietude. They wanted it on the local doorstep, and mapped out areas which lacked noise with natural surroundings. This brought to mind our Country Park, which offers much of this. No place can be perfect. People who argue that more facilities should be provided must remember that care is needed in the development of our Country Park.

However, we need not rule out holding a special event which would highlight the area, thereby increasing membership. Regular visitors often comment very favourably on the benefit they derive—the peacefulness in particular.

Once again I am grateful to all our contributors.

MEMBERSHIP

Membership renewals for the current year are flowing in thick and fast. Many thanks to those members who have sent in extra on top of the £5 subscription. For those members who have mislaid their renewal form, or whose minds it may have slipped, I have arranged for another renewal slip to be delivered with this quarter's Newsletter.

The final membership figure for last year was **279** Individuals and Families, plus **2** Groups—another record year. Thank you all for your continued support.

MEMBERSHIP CARDS

I must apologise for the delay in sending out this year's Membership Cards. By the time you read this Newsletter, all members who have paid their subscription should have received one. If not, please let me know.

Noel Gale - Membership Secretary
029-2091 5665

T-shirts Polos Sweatshirts
with 'Friends of Forest Farm' logo

Good quality Raglan sleeve

Price: **£16.5** Children's: **£10.75**

Pauline Linck - 029-2061 7012

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Reserve News

by Mike Wiley
Countryside Warden

In my last article I wrote about the large numbers of Waxwings that were visiting South Wales, and how unusual it was. A couple of days after completing the article I arrived home to find a flock of twenty of these lovely birds in my garden. They were on their way back up from the south, heading north. They stayed with us for two days, and I was awarded some fantastic views before they finally left us, continuing their long journey home.

As I was looking through some past Friends' magazines the other day, I came across one article I wrote back in September 2000, in which I commented on how well the local Buzzard population was doing, and the enjoyment people got from watching these magnificent birds as they soared on the thermals high above the Reserve. Well, at least two of them won't be anymore. Late one Thursday afternoon in mid-May, as I was packing up for a week's leave, I was notified of a dead bird of prey in the allotments nearby. After some searching around I came across the sorry remains of a dead Tawny Owl behind one of the sheds. The allotment secretary then told me of two more dead birds. He led me to another allotment nearby, where I was horrified to find the withered bodies of two Buzzards. To find one dead bird is bad enough … but three … The secretary then told me that he had recently found a dead rat on his allotment, and somebody else had found a dead mouse on theirs.



The penny started to drop. You don't find dead rodents lying about without some cause, and it was then that I also remembered that a couple of months earlier it had been reported to me that a Fox had been found dead in the same area. Possibly someone had been putting down poisoned bait in order to try to control the local rodent population, without realising the consequences of their actions. The police wildlife team were brought in, and the corpses were taken away to be X-rayed, to rule out the possibility of shotgun pellets. Unfortunately the remains were too far gone to be analysed for poisons. On my return to work I contacted one of the wildlife officers, who told me that they were taking the incident very seriously, and that if the birds had been poisoned it would have taken far more than one poisoned rodent to kill them. In his opinion the birds would have had to have eaten the actual poisoned bait.


Tawny Owl

Most of this is obviously pure speculation and conjecture but, however they died, the fact remains that two Buzzards and one Tawny Owl are dead. Let's just hope they were killed accidentally; the other options do not bear thinking about. I would like to thank both the allotment chairman and the secretary for their help in trying to resolve this matter. We will be following it up, and I will let you know of any results. I later learnt from the veterinary surgeons that the X-ray scans were negative, and no pellets were found.

On the subject of Buzzards … while at home one early evening, I was sitting on a bench in the garden when I heard a loud whooshing sound just above my head. On looking up I was somewhat startled to see a large Buzzard carrying a Grey Squirrel not six feet above the ground. Unfortunately our cat, who was sitting next to me also saw it, and in a split second was up and giving chase. The bird had to rise above a group of trees that was in front of it, and was struggling. The poor bird dropped the Squirrel in the confusion and flew off over the trees. On reaching it, I could see that the Squirrel was dead. I don't know if the cat was brave or stupid—I think the latter!

(Continued on next page)

By the time you read this, the CROW (Countryside Rights of Way) Act will be in force in Wales. This new legislation, otherwise known as the 'right to roam', came into force on May 28th, and opens up general access to mountain, moor, heath, down and common land for walkers, although there are some exceptions. Ultimately, when the right to roam comes into force in other parts of Britain there will be some four million acres of open countryside to explore—so you'd better start cleaning up your walking boots!

I would like to end now by thanking Ted Edwards and Dennis Davies, who have recently retired from the Friends' Executive Committee, for the huge contribution they have both made to the Nature Reserve and Country Park. Without their dedicated commitment and hard work, the Reserve would not be what it is today. I was much saddened to hear of Ted's recent bereavement, but I truly hope that he will continue with us in his role as voluntary warden for many more years to come.

LETTERS FROM OUTGOING TREASURER AND INCOMING CHAIRMAN

Out-going Treasurer April 2005

As your retiring treasurer, I wish to thank you all for your donations towards the funds and also donations towards the bird feed. Winter 2004/2005 we spent over £741 on BIRD FEED, of which £410 was received in donations; this was a fantastic sum. "WELL DONE, EVERYONE".

As feeding the birds is an ongoing commitment for the Group, any donations for winter 2005/2006 (Bird Feed) will also be gratefully received.

I am leaving the Treasurer's post in the very capable hands of **Phil Baker**, and can assure him of mine and the Committee's support for the future,

John Harding

As Chairman April 2005

As incoming Chairman, I feel it's going to be very difficult to follow in TED's footsteps; he served us all so well over the years.

Fortunately for me, before retiring from his post he managed to delegate a lot of the work he did to others. This, hopefully, will make my position easier to manage and, with the support of the Committee members, I will do my utmost to continue his good work for the Group,

John Harding

MELINGRIFFITH BOXING CLUB

Whitchurch Rugby Club was opened in 1852 as a church by Thomas William Booker. It's original name was 'The Melingriffith Wesleyan and Methodist Church'. After it ceased as a church it was used for other purposes before it became a gym. After the war years it was re-opened in 1946 as a gym again. Quite a few of us lads from that area joined on the first night. 'The Hall', as it was known, was kept in immaculate condition by the trainer Mr Ernie Hurford; there was a wonderful collection of photographs around the walls. Whatever happened to them?

There were a number of professional champions—Eddie Thomas, Bernard Murphy, Jackie Hughes, Jack Sutton, George Sutton; sometimes Cliff Curvis, Phil Edwards and Dai Dower would come for a night's training.

Amongst the amateur champs were Terry Pudge, Welsh and Schoolboy champ, RAF representative, Lyn Bodman Welsh and British schoolboy champ, Welsh rep, Alan Lloyd Welsh and British schoolboy champ and Welsh youth champ, Les Gibbon Welsh youth champ 1949 and 1950 Royal Signals and Northern Command rep 1952-54, Kenny Paul Welsh schoolboy champ, Keith Phillips Welsh rep, Alec Donne, who won 9 titles on the trot, made up of 5 Welsh and 4 British—a wonderful achievement.

The above boxers were all local lads. My apologies to those I have missed. **Les Gibbon**

MONTHLY FRIENDS / RSPB WALK

Our monthly walks go from strength to strength! This centenary year the walks have been included in the Cardiff "Park Events and Guided Walks" book (at their request); they have benefited from the extra publicity. I believe we have already gained some new members as a result.

A fine February day gave us a total of 32 species, the highlights being the roosting Tawny Owl, drumming Great Spotted Woodpecker and Goldcrest. A Kestrel was also seen, but we didn't spot any Snipe. A total of 13 Herons in the field by the second hide was quite a sight.



Great Spotted Woodpecker

21 people turned out for the March walk—a dry, if overcast, day. We were rewarded with 39 species; the first spring migrant arrival (Chiff-chaff) was spotted, while some winter visitors still hung on. We had another good view of the Tawny Owl, and also saw a Treecreeper, both Great Spotted and Green Woodpeckers, and Goosander and Kingfisher on the river. It was good to see many frogs from the first Hide—another sign of spring.



Treecreeper

An expectant group of 24 people turned out for the April walk; they enjoyed a total of 36 species, as well as a couple of glimpses of a Weasel darting across the path at the end of the morning. Chiff-chaff, Willow Warbler, Blackcap, Swallow and Sand Martin were the migrant species in evidence—what else will we see next month? We could still get a good view of the Tawny Owl, but will it be hidden by foliage next month?



Weasel

If you haven't tried it yet, why not join us and enjoy your Country Park and Nature Reserve? We meet at 10a.m. on the third Saturday of every month, at the wardens' hut; everyone is welcome, young or old, beginner or expert.

Phil Baker

A LETTER FROM JOHN AND DAPHNE PAVITT

We apologise for our absence from the AGM of the Friends on 13th April 2005 We shall not be renewing our membership this year, as we are planning to move from Cardiff in the summer.

May we take this opportunity to thank the Friends, their officers and volunteers, and the park wardens for all they have done to improve the Country Park and the Glamorganshire Canal Local Nature Reserve over many years of hard work and persistence.

We have lived in Whitchurch for 25 years, and have enjoyed the Park and the Canal on our frequent visits. They provide a wonderful lung that helps to make Whitchurch one of the finest areas of the city. We have also found much interest and pleasure in reading the excellent Newsletters.

May the Friends' efforts prove even more successful in the next 25 years!

Litter Pick Success

The annual **Spring Clean** on the Reserve attracted a record attendance. Over 20 volunteers attended, including our local councillor.

There were over 30 large bags of litter collected; this made a big improvement to the Reserve and the surrounding area.

Many thanks to everyone who attended. **Martin Chamberlain (m.chamberlain1@ntlworld.com)**

FRIENDS WEBSITE (www.forestfarm,org.uk)

Due to the skills of one of the Friends (**David Bevan**), the website continues to develop. We are having approaching 500 visits each month, with visitors using much of the available pages. We have added a "contact us" facility; if you have any questions, or see anything interesting on the Reserve, why not use the facility.

Martin Chamberlain **(m.chamberlain1@ntlworld.com)**



Watch



FOREST FARM WATCH CLUB EVENTS

July 30	**Otter Holt Construction**	An opportunity to make a home for an otter!!!
August 27	**Big Bug Hunt** and **Art Competition**	A bug hunt within the Reserve at Forest Farm.
	This is an opportunity to study your favourite bug in detail as you draw it for the competition.	
September 24	**Nest Box Building** and **Pond Dip**	We will be constructing nest boxes for the Nature Reserve or for your garden, if you so wish.
	This is an ideal opportunity to create a home for birds, and can be a good introduction into their study. If time allows we will go for a pond dip.	
October 29	**Autumn Leaf Mobile Making**	Autumn leaves are a great colour, and will look good for months as a mobile.

Meetings are on **Saturdays** from **10 a.m.—12 noon** at the **Wardens Centre**, **Forest Farm**.

Watch is designed for children aged 8 to 10.

Younger children will be accepted if accompanied by an adult or older sibling.

For **FURTHER DETAILS** and **BOOKING**, please contact **KEVIN** on …

02920 445903 or **07976 011 765**

OUR SECOND ANNUAL COACH TRIP
BRECON TOWN AND THE RED KITE CENTRE, RHAYADER
SATURDAY 30TH JULY 2005

Depart … **Whitchurch** (Penlline Road, opposite car park) 9.00 am.
Rhiwbina (Pantbach Road, opposite Canolfan Beulah) 9.10 am.
(Heol y Deri, opposite the Deri Stores) 9.15 am.
(Pantmawr Road, opposite the top entrance to Pantmawr Estate) 9.20 am.

*Please note—other pick-ups can usually be arranged anywhere along the above route to the A470 / Pantmawr Road junction. Please also note that the bus will wait 5 minutes after these pick-up times, should anyone be late. If you have a problem on the day, I may be contacted anytime on my mobile phone—**07870362607**.*

Arrive … **Brecon** STOP 1 (Safeway supermarket) 10.30 am.
STOP 2 (New canal marina) 10.45 am.
Depart Brecon (Safeway supermarket) 1.30 pm.

Arrive … **Red Kite Farm, Rhayader** 2.45 pm. Depart 4.45 pm. Arrive Rhiwbina 6.40 pm
Whitchurch 6.55 pm.

On the day, at Brecon, you may decide which of the two stops you wish to get off. However, we shall **all** be getting off the bus at STOP 1 for the group photograph. Should anyone wish to remain in Brecon all day, I can arrange to call back to collect those persons outside the rear of the Wellington Hotel at 5.35 pm.

It is at STOP 1 that one needs to leave the bus, should you wish to go to the small weekly market held in the Bishop Bevan Hall. Here you usually are able to buy sausages, meat, eggs, smoked meat and fish, cheese, poultry, bread, yoghurt, fruit, juices, herb, cottage plants, pate, and home-made soap. The Organisers never know, until the day, which Producers will be in attendance. You will also need to use this stop to go to the Old Market Hall, where the monthly Casglwr Antique and Collectors Fair is being held. There are usually about 40 traders here, selling a large range of items. Prices are generally lower than in Cardiff antique shops. Use this stop also if you wish to go to Brecon Cathedral, where there is the award-winning Pilgrims' Tea Room (allow 20-25 minutes to walk there).

At STOP 2 is located the new canal marina and Brycheinog Arts Theatre. There is a very nice canal-side walk from the marina. It will take about 25 minutes to walk back from STOP 2 to STOP 1, to pick up the bus to go on to Rhayader.

Brecon itself has plenty to offer the casual shopper and visitor. The town has an established reputation for offering old-style shopping and courtesy from friendly staff. Apart from the Cathedral, there is also the Royal Regiment of Wales Museum, the Town Museum, the Andrew Morton second-hand and new bookshops, the Country Life and Welsh Life gift shop, the Llanfaes home-made dairy ice-cream shop, the new Bethel Square shopping centre, the Brecon Antique Centre (three floors) which is located just past the old Market Hall, opposite Woolworth's. The Tourist Centre is located just 50 yards away from our STOP 1, down a flight of steps, and is considered to be one of the best in Wales for obtaining information about Wales.

When we arrive at the **Gigrin Farm Red Kite Centre** we shall make our way to the 4 hides located at the bottom of the feeding area. There is also an open viewing area in one of the adjoining fields. The feeding takes place at 3 pm. There is a small café on site, which sells hot drinks. Toilets are available, together with a Red Kite interpretative area.

As you know, the weather to the north is often wetter and colder than in Cardiff, so please ensure that you bring clothing suitable for the time of year. You may leave any items on the coach whilst you visit Brecon.

The coach used for this trip will be an EXECUTIVE EDWARDS 49-seater, with on-board toilet.

(continued on next page)

The cost is **£14 per adult** and **£10 per child under 10**. These prices include the entrance fee.

You may book also for any friends or family members. Should you have any queries about the trip, please phone Duncan on Cardiff **2062 6111** or e-mail him at **duncan3@hotmail.co.uk**.
If you wish to come on this trip, please inform …

Duncan Hockridge at **5 Clos Cromwell, Rhiwbina, Cardiff, CF14 6QN** …
as soon as possible, stating the number of adults and children wishing to take part.

Here is an example of what is required (supposing there are 2 adults and 3 children in your group) ...

Please reserve me 5 places for 2 adults at £14 (£28) and 3 children at £10 (£30). I enclose a cheque for £58.

Please send a cheque made out to **Friends of Forest Farm** … together with a **S.A.E.**
A confirmation letter will be sent back to you within 7 days of the receipt of your cheque.

CARDIFF AND DISTRICT RSPB GROUP CONSERVATION GROUP

DOING SOMETHING POSITIVE

During our last two visits to **Forest Farm Longwood Drive** the main task has been tackling the **Japanese Knotweed**; our first cut was in mid-April; the idea is to cut the early flush of spring growth.

Then back in May, for a further cut, this method seems to be restricting the growth and spread.

Our next turn out on the **4th June** will involve the invasive **Balsam**; the idea is to pull the plant out, but that will depend on how much growth it has made during the month of May.

We will also be checking our nest boxes … we then take a summer break till September.

For further information contact **Hugh Harrison** on **029 2070 4889**.

The ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The **2004 - 2005 AGM** resulted in a major change within the organisation of the Friends.

After fifteen distinguished years, both **Ted Edwards** and **Dennis Davies** stepped down as **Chairman** and **Secretary** respectively.

Chris Powell from Cardiff County Council provided Ted and Dennis with an award in appreciation for their work on the Reserve.

The Friends appointed three members of the Committee -

John Harding as **Chairman**, **Phil Baker** as **Treasurer** and myself as **Secretary**.

We can only hope that we will be able to continue with the high standards that Ted and Dennis have set for us.

Martin Chamberlain

PARK EVENTS and GUIDED WALKS

In addition to the already listed Watch Group events and the Forest Farm monthly walks, here are some notices of some events in the next few months …



Sunday 19th June BIODIVERSITY WEEK at FOREST FARM COUNTRY PARK

10 a.m.—12 noon. Distance 4 km. Meet at the Warden Centre. Bring binoculars.

Led by Mike Wiley and Chris James. We shall be exploring this diverse country park and the varied habitats and wildlife of its nature reserve.

Saturday 25th June FOREST FARM WATCH GROUP 10 a.m. - 12 noon

Sunday 17th July A WALK ON THE WILDSIDE at FOREST FARM

10 a.m.—12 noon. Distance 4 km. Meet at the Warden Centre. Bring binoculars.

Led by Mike Wiley and Chris James. A nature ramble around the Glamorgan Canal Nature Reserve, looking at all kinds of wildlife from wild flowers to insects and birds. We will also try and answer any wildlife queries you may have.

Sunday 7th August BIRDS, BATS, MOTHS and BBQ at FOREST FARM

7 p.m. Distance 3 km. Meet at the Wardens Centre. Cost **£4.00 per person**.

An exciting evening of birds, bats and moths. Local bat and moth experts will be on hand.
Places are limited and must be booked in advance.
Telephone the **Park Ranger Service** on **029 2044 5900** to reserve a place.

Saturday 10th September FOODS OF THE FOREST

6 p.m. Meet at the Wardens Centre. Cost **£1.50 per person.**

Take a pleasant stroll around Forest Farm, and discover the tasty treat Mother Nature has in store at this time of the year. Followed by a tasting session of some delicious delicacies.
Led by the Park Rangers Service.

Layout by **Robin Sotheby**

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

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