FRIENDS

OF FOREST FARM COUNTRY PARK
AND GLAMORGANSHIRE CANAL
LOCAL NATURE RESERVE
WEBSITE REF: www.forestfarm.org.uk

ISSUE 68 JUNE 2008

EDITOR'S FORUM

by Sheila Austin

Suddenly its summer and last week we were sampling the delicacies of 'Foods of the Forest' on a lovely warm evening. We had the opportunity to look at the new pond and orchard. In his report, Reserve Warden Paul Davies tells us of the good progress with the pond, and I can report that the apple trees seem to be doing well!

In this newsletter, we also have some pictures of the canal repairs for those of you who have not seen the work done. There is still plenty to do though. You have always given us great support - articles, volunteering, extra funds and in other practical ways. This time you'll notice several requests for help in varying ways and if you can assist, this would be greatly appreciated.

Finally, welcome back to Reserve Warden Mike Wiley who is now back at work.

Contributions for the next letter to reach the Editor by 7th August 2008 ...

Mrs Sheila Austin, 1 Heol Gwrgan, Whitchurch, CF14 1PP ..
or email to: albynaustin@ndsl.org.uk

MEMBERSHIP

Membership renewals are steadily flowing in. For those members whose mind it may have slipped, or who have mislaid their renewal form, I have arranged for another slip to be delivered with this quarter's Newsletter.

Many thanks to those members who have sent in extra with their subscriptions towards our funds, it is very much appreciated.

Our final Membership figure for last year was **286 Families** plus **1 Group**.

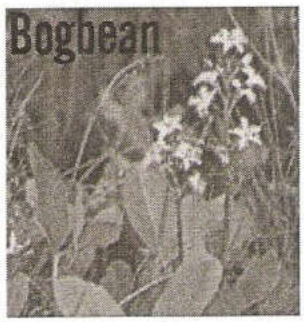
Thank you all for your continued support. **Noel Gale (Membership Secretary)**

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Forest Farm Reserve News

Paul Davies

Repairs to the pond were completed in early March and the water level is showing no signs of dropping apart from natural evaporation. The area has been planted with a variety of wetland plants including **bog bean**, marsh marigold, **water mint** and hornwort which is a good oxygenator. Tadpoles, toadspawn, water boatmen and pond skaters are all in evidence. The next step is to fence off some of the area to keep any livestock away.



The wild bird seed crop has been sown and already shoots are starting to come through. We have left an area unseeded due to an influx of aspen seedlings which have grown rapidly but will give some cover to the feeding birds.



Watermint

Some more good news – Reserve Warden Mike Wiley has made a good recovery and returned to work. It will be beneficial to have staff levels back to full capacity. A big thank-you to Alec Stewart for helping out in Mike's absence.

And finally… for many years the meadows have been grazed by cattle and horses belonging to Mr and Mrs Coles formerly of Rhiwbina and Radyr. They have now decided to pass on the tenancy. Thank you Jill and Ron and we hope they and their family do well and wish them all the best for the future.

LOCAL HISTORY WALK WEDNESDAY, 2nd JULY

As part of this year's Whitchurch Festival, there will be a local history walk around the Reserve and the surrounding area starting at 6:30 p.m. at the Mellingriffiths Water Engine, Ty Mawr Road.

The walk should finish at 8:30 p.m. and cover a distance of no more than three miles over mainly flat footpaths.

Martin Chamberlain

WARDENS' CENTRE IMPROVEMENTS

The Friends of Forest Farm will now be well aware of the changes around the Wardens' Centre i.e. the new pond and orchard.

One of the objectives is to be able to use the facility as a dipping pond for organised parties of schoolchildren. The Friends have also 'floated' the idea of being able to use the Wardens' Centre to encourage use of the Reserve. One of the basics is to have improved toilet facilities. These are not currently available for use by visitors.

This idea (to improve the toilet facilities) has been under discussion with the relevant Council departments. A cost of £30,000 has been given. However, since this is only an outline price, we are seeking to prepare more detailed proposals that can be costed more accurately.

The Friends have been asked to enquire if any of the members have any technical expertise in this area e.g drawing up plans, or carrying out the work. This would be a project in conjunction with the Council.

If anyone does have such expertise, please would they get in touch with the Chairman, John Harding or Secretary, Martin Chamberlain.

Sheila Austin

ANNUAL SPRING LITTER PICK - 2008

On behalf of the Committee, can I thank members and non members who attended our annual spring litter pick on March 30th.

Over the years, the amount of litter around the Reserve has improved but Longwood Drive continues to be the main area of concern with fly tipping and discarded packaging from the local fast food outlet. We have over many years tried to get the organisation to take responsibility for their products wrappings but to no effect; therefore we are not "loving it".

Whilst this may not be the most pleasant of conservation volunteering, without our volunteers' work, the Reserve would not be the enjoyable area it is.

Martin Chamberlain

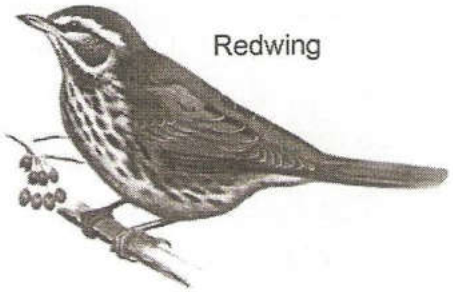
MONTHLY FRIENDS / RSPB WALK

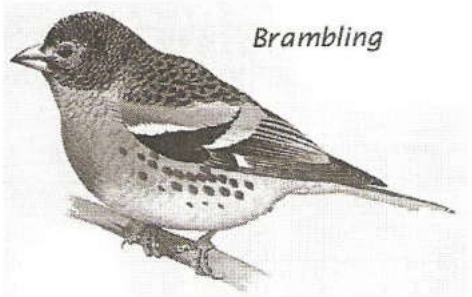
Phil Baker

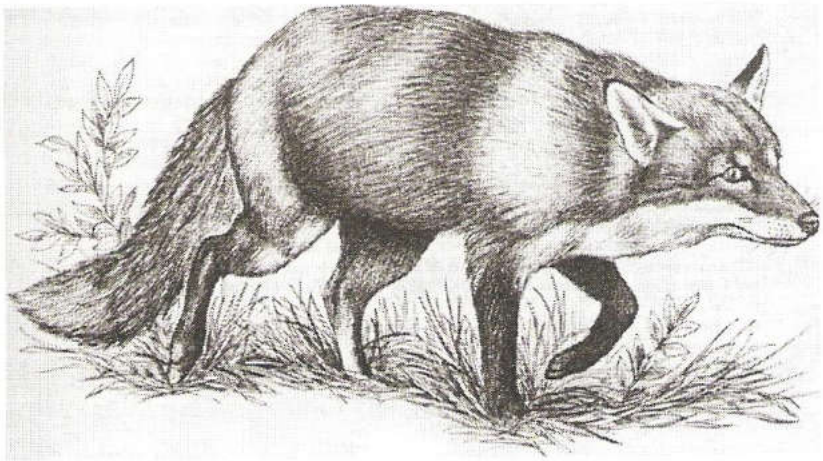
The joint Friends of Forest Farm Nature Reserve/RSPB/Glamorgan Bird Club monthly walks continue come wind or weather (and we've had both!), with friends new and old walking around the reserve, observing the birds and other wildlife.

The year started on an unpromising note with just 4 people on a miserable day in January, but nevertheless rewarded with a total of 30 species recorded, mostly from the first hide.

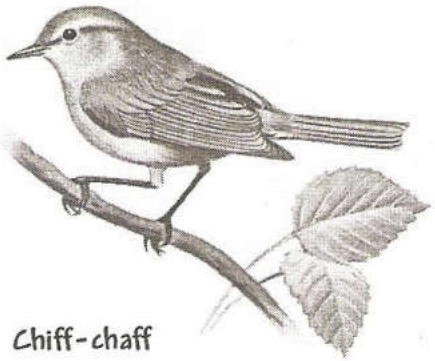
February's walk was a different matter, and 22 of us set off on a sunny, but cold, morning. Along the river we saw Grey Wagtail, Dipper and a Kingfisher. A lingering **Redwing** was seen, and there was also a good variety on show at the first hide, with Bullfinches and Chaffinches in abundance, together with a **Brambling**. It was good to see Reed Buntings and Little Grebes as well. We also spied a **Fox**, apparently dozing behind the reeds!


Redwing


Brambling



Would March's date give us a fine day, on the verge of spring? Well, no, actually – it started damp, but soon deteriorated to become similar to January's excursion, but the 17 of us still enjoyed the birds, with a total of 35 species recorded. On reaching the river we soon spotted a Green Woodpecker working its way up a tree trunk on the bank opposite. As we walked along the riverbank a **Chiffchaff** could be clearly heard. The river was still quite high and there seemed little visible from the bridge, although a Raven flew upstream with a brief call, its wedge-shaped tail clearly visible.


Chiff-chaff

At the bridges over the feeder, we paused to watch a couple of Grey Wagtails, before heading for the shelter of the hide. This haven gave us plenty to see, including 2 Water Rail, 3 Brambling, Reed Buntings and Kingfisher. Moving on to the second hide, another Green Woodpecker was seen, along with 2 Snipe. A Fox appeared briefly, but soon turned and retreated the way it had come.

A month on, April's walk started overcast and grey, turning to light drizzle later, but was not as bad as it sounds. 14 people (again with some newcomers) set off to try and find spring migrants and it wasn't very long before we heard, then saw our first Blackcap, quickly followed by Swallows and House Martins feeding over the river. Not much further along the riverbank we spotted a Chiffchaff and a little later found Willow Warbler. Besides the migrants, we noticed a few other differences along the way – the difference at the first hide, now that feeding has stopped, was the obvious lack of finches and tits on the ground. Several Mallard, however, were busy chasing each other around, and one particular male was rather vicious with another male, grabbing it by the neck! It was good to see a Little Grebe there also. For me, perhaps the biggest surprise of the day was a pair of Canada Geese in Sheep's Bane Meadow!

I am looking forward to some better weather over the next few months, so why not join us and enjoy the varied bird life at Forest Farm? We meet at 10 a.m. on the third Saturday of every month (whatever the weather!), near the Warden's hut, and all are welcome.

NEW LEADER FOR FRIENDS/RSPB WALKS

As you know, Phil usually leads these monthly bird walks around the Reserve on the 3rd Saturday. He has just changed his job and will no longer be able to do this.

We give our sincere thanks to Phil for his interesting and instructive talks. He will be a hard act to follow!

Is there anyone who could volunteer to take this over or – more likely – be prepared to participate in a rota to cover this role. Please let any of the Committee know if you might be able to help.

Sheila Austin - Editor

WHITCHURCH FESTIVAL

The Friends Committee will also have a stall at the Whitchurch Festival event at Whitchurch Common on July 12th starting at 1:00 p.m.

Please come along and see our display and meet the Committee. We are always looking for feedback from our members concerning what we have delivered and what we are planning for the future.

Martin Chamberlain

RSPB CARDIFF CONSERVATION GROUP

Doing something positive

Another mild winter has passed us by though it has a downside. Thousands of Balsam seedlings have survived, but the unseasonable weather has allowed us to make steady progress in clearing the meadow area. That was our task in February. Our numbers have been small of late, nevertheless we have achieved a lot…cleared brambles, piles of dead wood and cut back some stunted trees.

The March litter pick went well with the help of a few extra hands. Part of the morning was dry though the rain did settle in later. We ended the morning with roughly 14+ bags of rubbish partly due to the Highways department kindly taking some of our filled bags away.

At the moment we have a splendid showing of wood anemones on the north bank all due to our effort in the autumn clearing dense undergrowth etc.

Our main task for April was our first cut of Knotweed. We were expecting to be confronted with a lot of fresh growth due to the mild weather but I am pleased to say the growth was sparse … perhaps we are winning the battle. The extra time allowed us a final sort out in the meadow area.

Conservation work at Forest Farm, Longwood Drive, Whitchurch will be held 10.30 to 12.30 p.m. on:

Saturday June 21st Second cut of knotweed and weed between new hedge Middle entrance

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The group meets for a few hours during the morning roughly once a month. Not particularly strenuous work, similar to an active gardener (you work to your own level). An extra pair of hands are always welcome.

If you feel you would like to get involved …
just turn up or better still, give me a ring

HUGH HARRISON 029 2070 4889

MELINGRIFFITHS WATER LIFT ENGINE

Friends of Forest Farm will recall reading in their last newsletter that this 18th century machine was deteriorating and seemed unloved.

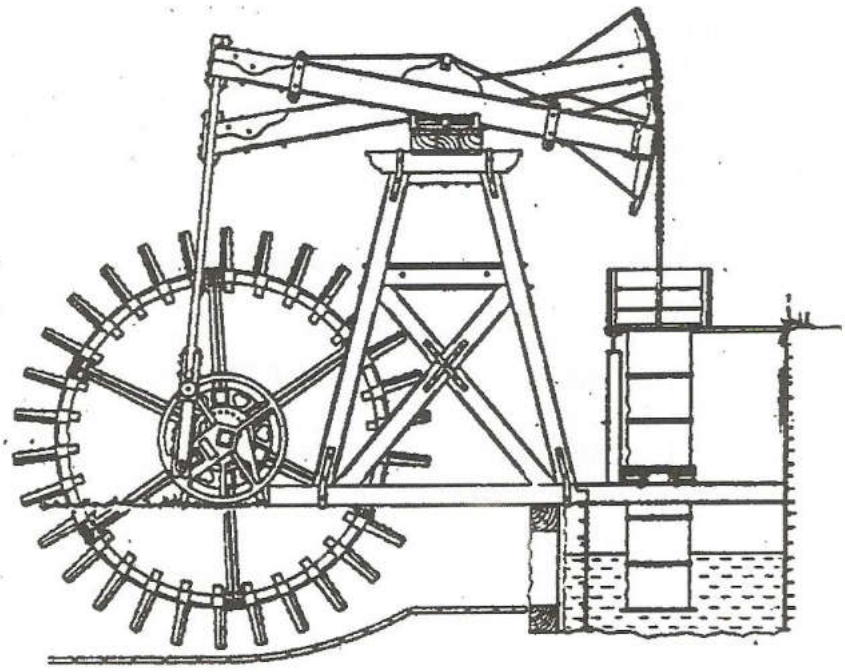
A public meeting was organised by Martin Chamberlain, Stephanie Wilkins and Chris Powell. The meeting heard that the engine was a listed ancient monument owned by Cardiff County Council. An excellent talk by one of the restoration team recounted how a ten year project by volunteers had restored the derelict engine about twenty years ago. The engine was a very rare survivor, rebuilt in its present form in the early 1800s, and perhaps the first such engine ever built. Local councillors present at the meeting promised to expedite funds for the upkeep of the engine.

It was decided to form a support group to foster interest in the engine and help ensure its future, along the lines of the Friends of Forest Farm and the Friends of Hailey Park.

A second meeting in March obtained volunteers for an organising committee and an initial committee meeting was held in April. A draft constitution for the group has been drawn up with a view to holding an AGM in June or July to formally elect officers and agree a programme of support. It is a requirement of the Council that any recognised Friend's group is properly constituted and run.

Meanwhile the Council have carried out the most urgent repair work by removal of trees and undergrowth from the masonry structure that supports the waterwheel and directed the water flow under the wheel.

Albyn Austin - Acting Secretary



FRIENDS OF FOREST FARM

Fifth Annual Coach Trip to Pembroke Town and the National Trust's Stackpole National Nature Reserve, Pembrokeshire. On Saturday 19th July 2008

ITINERARY

8.15a.m. Our coach will arrive at the lay-by, outside Canolfan Beulah, Rhiwbina.

8.30a.m. The coach will depart from Canolfan Beulah and travel to the front entrance of Whitchurch High School, Penlline Road, Whitchurch, arriving at 8.40am.

8.45a.m. The coach will depart and travel to the bus lay-by opposite The Hollybush Inn, Coryton, Whitchurch, arriving there at 8.50am.

8.55a.m. The coach will depart and travel along the M4 direct to Pont Abraham for a short comfort stop, arriving there at approx. 9.45am.

10.00a.m. The coach will depart and travel direct to Pembroke Town, arriving outside the Castle at approximately 11a.m.

11a.m. -1.40p.m. An individual self guided visit, as required, to the Castle and Town. A full list of the various tourist places of interest within the Town will be given on the coach.

1.40p.m. The coach will depart and travel direct to the Stackpole Outdoor Centre for Outdoor Learning. If required any Member may also stay in Pembroke Town for the afternoon and then will be picked up at 4.30p.m.

2.00pm.-2.20p.m. The Warden of the Centre will give us a short talk about the various environmental courses run at the Centre for schools and groups.

2.30p.m.-4.00p.m. Some of the staff at the National Trust Centre will lead two groups on a walk through the mature woodlands and around the freshwater lake being part of the Stackpole National Nature Reserve. This Reserve is managed by the National Trust in partnership with the Countryside Council for Wales. Lake wildlife includes otters, herons, wildfowl and more than 20 species of dragonfly. There are eleven species of bat on the estate, some of which live in the outbuildings of the former mansion of Stackpole Court, which was demolished in 1963. You will be able to see a small exhibition about the history of the mansion.

4.15p.m. Our coach will depart from the Centre and travel to Pembroke Town to collect any Members who stayed there. This pick up point will be at the same location as the morning drop off point.

4.30p.m.-6.30p.m. We travel back to our original morning pick up locations.

Due to restrictions at the National Trust Centre, there can only be 35 people on that part of the visit. However we can accommodate a total of 49 members on the visit provided the other 14 members remain in Pembroke. Please indicate your requirements on the booking form below. All bookings will be processed strictly in accordance with date of receipt i.e. FIRST COME - FIRST SERVED.

THE COST OF THIS TRIP IS £16 *PER PERSON.*

Please turn to page 9 for booking.

FOODS OF THE FOREST

As visitors to Whitchurch, my wife and I were invited to attend Forest Farm for an evening stroll and to discover Nature's tasty treats. It was a lovely warm and sunny evening. How could we resist?

The stroll, illuminated by information and wit from Warden Raj, had Pat my wife enthralled but made me somewhat anxious. I have been the world's faddiest eater since the 1930's. The thought of nettles, dandelions and dock leaves etc, however carefully boiled/dried/cooked in butter or whatever, turns my stomach over. I muttered to my wife "just feed me whatever's in the fridge"..

When we all returned to the Wardens' Centre, the charming young lady behind the food smiled us welcome and we were urged to go and eat. At the table I settled for homemade bread and pea and mint soup. It was delicious. I went back for more. I hadn't been intending to, but then tried everything else, finishing with elderflower ice cream and fruits of the forest. *Wonderful.*

Reading through 'Food for Free', I am persuaded that we ought to think seriously about this food all around us for several reasons, all relevant and , if you'll excuse the pun, all current.

Many thanks to the Park Ranger Service

John and Pat Rayfield - Wrexham

VOLUNTEERING SUMMER

Our next volunteering event will be footpath repairs on Sunday, 22nd June, meeting at the Wardens' Centre at 10:00 a.m. and finishing at 1:00 p.m. Refreshments will be provided. Everyone can work at their own pace and will make a major improvement to the access to the Reserve for everyone.

Martin Chamberlain

Please return this booking form to Duncan Hockridge, at 5, Clos Cromwell, Rhiwbina, Cardiff. CF14 6QN, together with a S.A.E and your cheque made payable to Friends of Forest Farm. If you have any queries please Telephone Cardiff 20626111.

Please tear off Please tear off Please tear off

FRIENDS OF FOREST FARM. ANNUAL COACH TRIP TO PEMBROKESHIRE 19TH JULY 2008

NAME.....ADDRESS.....
.....POSTCODE.....
Tele.....Email(if available).....

I enclose my cheque for £.....for ....No. places for this coach trip.
I wish to remain in Pembroke during the afternoon. YES*/NO*.
If I am unsuccessful in being able to go on the visit to the Centre I am/we are prepared to remain in Pembroke Town during the afternoon. YES*/NO*.
I wish to be picked up at Canolfan Beulah* Whitchurch High School* The Hollybush Inn*
*Please circle your requirements and your desired pick up location.
A confirmation letter will be sent back to you within 7 days of receipt of your booking form.

MELINGRIFFITH WORKS - 1927

Most Thursdays my wife and I go to lunch at the Hollybush Carvery. There I meet two of my cousins, Betty and Barbara. Betty is 81 years old, and her father was Mr Idris Weeks; they lived on Cross Street in Maindy. He worked in the pickling plant, which meant dipping the tinplate into acid tanks; the plant was down the bottom end of the Works by the Water Wheel.

Somehow, Idris fell into the acid tank. They managed to get him out, but he died in hospital within 3 days at the age of 21 in1927.

Betty never knew her father. Her mother Ena, aged 20, remarried my father's brother Wilfred Bodman, and had 4 more children (my cousins) - Frances, Wilfred, Barbara and David; they lived in Cathays. My father Howard had 6 brothers and 3 sisters, and as far as I know they all worked at the Tinplate Works at some time or another. They were Tom, Ted, Will, Wilf, Charlie and Francis (Mick), and the girls, Ginny, Eddie and Dorcas.

I worked at the Works from 1951 to 1957, when they closed, which was about 2 months after I got married.

Lyn Bodman

TO REPRESENT THE FRIENDS

We are a membership-led organisation and are looking for another person who may be interested in representing the Friends of Forest Farm by joining the Committee. We need just one more member. This is just as an ordinary member, not an officer post.

If you think you might be interested but would like to see what its all about before making any commitment, we are more than happy for you to attend our meetings which are held monthly. Please contact myself or any of the Committee.

Martin Chamberlain - Secretary m.chamberlain1@ntlworld.com





BCTV undertook this Canal repair work in 2007.
It was funded by ENVIRONMENT WALES.



This photo was taken by John Harding.
April 2008 before the planting.

EVENTS - JUNE to mid-SEPTEMBER 2008

Saturday 7th June **8:30 p.m.**	National Moth Night. £2 per person. Meet at the Wardens' Centre, Forest Farm Road.
Sunday 8th June 10:00-12:00	Summer Wildlife in the Park. An easy walk around the Reserve. Free. Meet at the Wardens' Centre, Forest Farm Road.
Saturday 14th June 10:00-12:00	**Watch Club Age Group 8-12. Big Bug Hunt** at Llanishen Park. **£1** per child. Celebrate Wales Biodiversity Week and join in the hunt for woodland mini-beasts, large and small, at Coed Cochwyn woods (Llanishen Park). Meet at the changing rooms car park, Newborough Avenue.
Saturday 21st June 10:00-12:30	Monthly Bird Walk on the Reserve. Meet at the Wardens' Centre, Forest Farm Road.
Saturday 21st June 10:30-12:30	RSPB Cardiff Conservation Group. Second cut of knotweed and weed between new hedge. Meet at Middle Entrance.
Sunday 22nd June 10:00-13:00	Volunteering event - Footpath repairs. Meet at the Wardens' Centre, Forest Farm Road.
Wednesday 2nd July **6:30-8:30 p.m.**	Local History Walk around the Reserve. Meet Martin Chamberlain at the Melingriffith Water Engine, Ty Mawr Road. The walk is no more than 3 miles, and over mainly flat footpaths.
Saturday 12th July	Friends of Forest Farm stall at Whitchurch Festival on the Common.
Saturday 19th July 10.00-12.30	Monthly Bird Walk on the Reserve. Meet at the Wardens' Centre, Forest Farm Road.
Saturday 19th July	Annual Coach Trip to Pembroke town, Stackpole National Nature Reserve. (See inside for details).
Saturday 26th July 10:00-12:00	**Watch Club Age Group 8-12. Mapping exercise. £1 per child.** (phone Park Ranger service for further details - 029 2044 5903).
Saturday 16th August 10:00-12:30	Monthly Bird Walk on the Reserve. Meet at the Wardens' Centre, Forest Farm Road.
Saturday 23rd August 10.00-12.00	**Watch Club Age Group 8-12. £1 per child.** (phone Park Ranger service for further details - 029 2044 5903).
Saturday 6th September **6:00 p.m.**	Foods of the Forest. Take a stroll around Forest Farm Country Park, then discover Nature's tasty treats. **£2.50 per person**. ALL CHILDREN MUST BE ACCOMPANIED BY AN ADULT.
Saturday 20th September 10:00-12:30	Monthly Bird Walk on the Reserve. Meet at the Wardens' Centre, Forest Farm Road.

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.