FRIENDS

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

ISSUE 78 79 MARCH 2011

Editorial *Sheila Austin*

Welcome, especially to new members, and to the first edition of your newsletter in 2011.

Uppermost in our minds is the threat to the Reserve from the proposed development at Whitchurch Hospital. Once again, we have a fight on our hands. We want the existing planning permission on Hospital Fields to be cancelled and a new planning application presented. Please do what you can to support us and the many residents in the area who care about the future impact of further environmental damage and loss of biodiversity to a much valued local nature Reserve.

I hope that the articles (as they always do) demonstrate how much the Reserve is valued and used. Apart from the work of the Countryside Wardens and Woodland Management Team, RSPB walks, the Watch group for the children, Cardiff Conservation and the Friends volunteers (and many other groups formal and informal) who give their time. You—the members—help with donations for bird feed, plant trees in the orchard. Many visitors, both local and further afield, come to see the wildlife or just for a walk. My thanks as always to all our contributors.

There is much to look forward to—signs of Spring to cheer us up, interesting evening talks, the Friends Summer trip and opportunities to volunteer in better weather!! Best wishes.

Deadline for the next newsletter 7th May. Contact details - see back page

Membership

Our present count of membership for the current year stands at 270 families and 2 groups. This is just a little down on last year, but hopefully by the time of the A.G.M. we will have reached last year's figure of 281.

Our new year (2011/2012) will shortly be on us. **A *Membership Renewal Form* can be found on the A.G.M notice enclosed with your newsletter.**

We have kept the annual subscription at £5 for Groups, Families and individual members.

Thank you all for your continued support.

Noel Gale (Membership Secretary)

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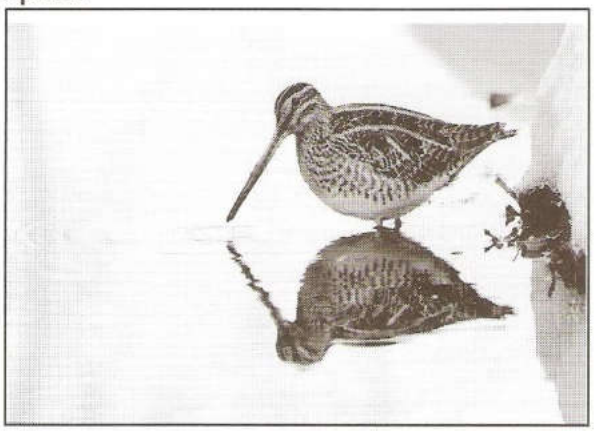
Forest Farm Reserve News

In the last week, average temperatures have risen higher than expected for this time of year and birds have been more active with woodpeckers heard drumming and also what sounded like an early dawn chorus at Cefn Onn park this morning!

At Forest Farm – on 15th December – about 20 goosanders and 10 cormorants were seen on the River Taff near Gelynis Bridge. Over the last few months a solitary little egret has been seen here too. Both water rail and snipe numbers have increased since Raj and Alec (Community Rangers) carried out remedial works opening up the vegetation and canopy around the ponds and the 2 scrapes.



An egret I spotted on the canal during a lunchtime walk 16th Feb - apologies for the quality of the photo! Ed



Snipe— taken on the Reserve by Alec Stewart

The woodland team have also been carrying out some overdue thinning both here and in the Cwm Nofydd/Wenallt areas.

We are currently looking at creating another pond in the orchard field which will also be fed from the new roof on the stable block.

Finally, a big thank you to Gareth Fish and his team of volunteers who were a great help in surfacing the new path near the Wardens' Centre.

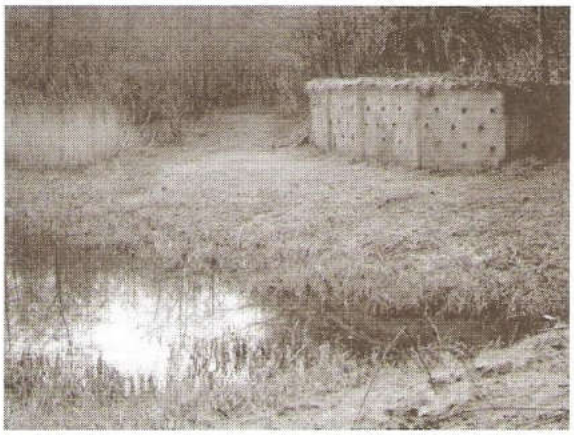
Paul Davies
Countryside Warden

Supplementary report

Management of the Reserve during the last forty years has included hedge and small woodland planting, the formation of ponds and scrapes and the maintenance of all areas. Many areas established over the years are reaching a level of maturity which threatens the diversity of the Reserve. Without active management: grassland areas would become overrun by bramble thicket; ponds

would become full of vegetation; hedges and wooded areas would overgrow. As a result, changes to the ecology of the site would lead to the loss of many animals and plants. To maintain and increase the range of animals and plants, the following actions are being followed:

Wetland areas: Larger areas of open water are needed. For example, and martins have not bred on the Reserve for several years because their usual site at the sand martin cliff does not have sufficient open water, the surrounding hedges are high and encroachment of the open ground around the pond by saplings restricts good flight paths.



Hedgerows along some paths are very tall and are not providing good nesting sites and also are blocking light, preventing the growth of ground plants. The process of trimming these hedges will continue: some will be laid, others will be box cut and others "A" cut to encourage a wider variety of nesting birds. During the last decade whitethroats have ceased to nest on the site.

Some **wooded areas** have become leggy and require thinning to allow more light at ground level, encouraging more woodland floor growth which will result in more ground flora with their associated insects and ground nesting birds such as willow warblers.

In addition, **safety matters** are being addressed such as removing overmature and dangerous trees. An example is that of native elm trees which grow on the site from seed and become infected with Dutch elm disease then die after about thirty years, and have to be removed.

Many such tasks are best carried out in Winter; but this Winter's heavy snow caused damage both on the Reserve and other areas of the City diverting resources away from reserve maintenance to removing many dangerous trees in the City. So this year there is more than the usual amount of active management work to be done.

Chris James

(Thanks to Paul and Chris for their reports. A recent walk around the Reserve reveals that a lot of work with the trees and hedgerows has been done but there is plenty more to do!! If you would like to join any of the volunteering groups who help out on the Reserve, we'd be delighted to see you. Ed)

WHITCHURCH HOSPITAL DEVELOPMENT UPDATE

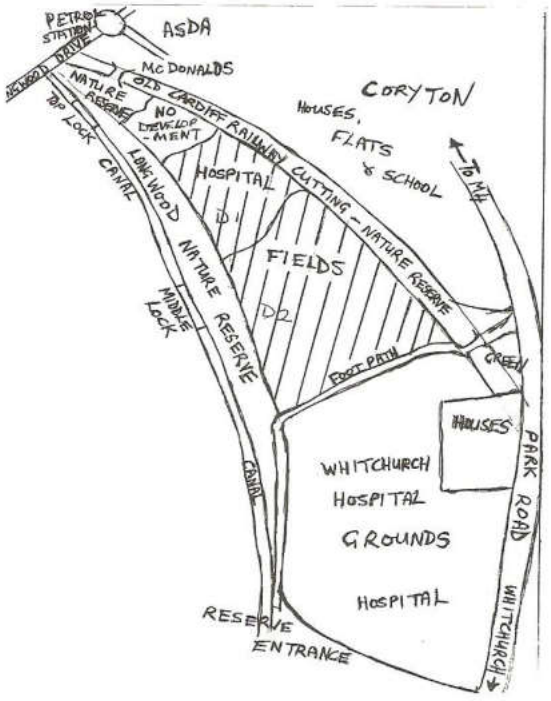
Dear Member,

As you are aware the local hospital Trust have decided to sell off the whole site for development of 300 + houses and apartments. They have recently requested to extend the existing planning permission for another 5 years.

This was only discovered when the signs went up around the hospital and, despite many request over the years, the Planning Department at Cardiff County Council did not contact us. The final date for any objections was the 3rd March allowing little time for a unified approach before our March newsletter was issued.

The Council also refused to extend the communication to the greater community even though the footprint of the development extends well beyond the Hospital boundaries.

We have contacted our local councillors, AM and MP who are supporting our opposition as this development will obviously cause major environmental damage. The councillors have requested that the planning extension is not "rubber stamped" and is brought before the planning committee where we will have an opportunity to present our objections.



Sketch by A Austin

We want the existing planning permission to be cancelled and a new planning application presented.

The Trust will have vast amounts of tax payers' money to spend on "experts" who can prove anything, but the Committee feel that for present and future generations we must take this action.

We will keep you informed of any developments but from past experience, and the evidence of Llanishen Reservoir, this will be a long battle that we must win.

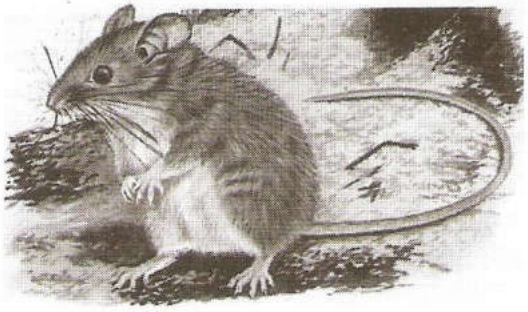
Martin Chamberlain

This is a sketch (not to scale) of the plan that was issued with the planning application to extend the time limit another 5 years. The two shaded areas (denoted D1 and D2 on the planning application) are those on which development is planned and for which there is existing planning permission, Lying as it does between the old railway cutting and the Glamorgan canal, this sketch may help members not so familiar with that area to understand why we are so concerned about this development

Forest Farm/RSPB Walk

What a winter we have had so far - I'm not being too optimistic as yet! During the last quarter of the year the walks were quite successful as far as numbers were concerned, both avian and human. The rain stayed away, but December didn't happen because I couldn't get out of Penarth. My apologies to anyone who was brave enough to turn up!

It was good to see so many species of birds in January. How the tiny tits and kingfishers managed to survive the cold amazes me. We had great views of the kingfisher struggling to swallow a fish. The fish must have suffered an awful death! We were thrilled to have good views of a water rail in front of the hide with no door. We saw a little field mouse scurrying through the hedgerow alongside the allotments. I'm sad to say that we didn't see the little egret or a bittern but maybe this month will be more successful. It's good to see several bullfinches, red-listed birds, on the site.





Bird song is already increasing in volume and variety and I'm sure it won't be long before we see nesting materials being collected, and courtships, with the associated rivalries and territorial disputes, being acted out before our very eyes.



I am looking forward to seeing the first spring flowers and leaf burst and hearing the long and melodious song from the song thrush, black caps and other birds as they prepare



for the busiest time of their year.

I would like to thank all those people who supported the walks last year, braving the elements. I hope to see you all again soon.

Stella Wells

(RSPB walks around Forest Farm—3rd Saturday in the month, see back page)

Letter to the Editor:

Re: Hides at Forest Farm

With regard to Ron Davies letter, the only option we have at present is to prioritise repairs to the hides as and when vandalism occurs. As you state in your response, locking the hides would cause problems and could be instrumental in further acts of vandalism. I am afraid that in society today we have an element of people with no sense of worth or value. We must show these people that we care. If we demolish the hides, they will have won.

Regards
Robin Simpson

THE FRIENDS OF FOREST FARM SUMMER OUTING

Saturday 16th July 2011

Brecon town centre and then Rhayader to see the feeding of red kites

Adults £18, children under 11 - £13

Details of the trip and a booking form will be published in the next edition, but if you can't wait that long contact Duncan (see below) or complete the booking form now.

Mr D Hockridge, 5 Clos Cromwell, Rhiwbina Cardiff. CF14 6QN.
Phone Duncan on Cardiff 20626111, or Email duncan3@hotmail.co.uk

NAME.....ADDRESS.....
..... POST CODE.....
Tel. No.....Email.....

I enclose my cheque made out to Friends of Forest Farm for £..... for No .....adults and No... ...children for the Brecon/Rhayader trip Saturday 16th July 2011

I/we wish to be picked up at:- Bethany H.L.F.*, Canolfan Beulah*, Penlline Road*, The Holly Bush*.

I wish to stay in Brecon all day...YES/NO.

* *Please circle your desired pick up stop.*

Friends of Forest Farm Volunteers' Day
Sunday 30th January 2011

We had a fantastic turn out for this crisp but dry and sunny morning. A big thank you to you all!





Tree planting in the orchard on Sunday 30th January 2011. On the left, in memory of Mike Owen who had a workshop on Forest Farm and walked his dog on the Reserve— a tree donated by Ann and Graham Walters. On the right, donated by the Chamberlain family in memory of their Dad. Another tree was donated by Martin's daughter for her friend's 21st birthday.

We planted the 8 fruit trees in the orchard (3 of which had been donated). These were:

Bramley's Seedling "cooker"
Merry Weather Gage
James Grieve "apple"
Jonagored Supra "sweet desert apple"
Discovery "eating apple"
Jonagold "desert apple "
Cherry Stella "colt bush"
Laxtons Superb "apple "

We also planted 50 small hazel for hedging in front of the gate.

All these had all been in my back garden since the last week in November 2010 waiting for a suitable day for planting.

When we finished these we continued with some coppicing, with a welcome short break for vegetable stew and bread. It was a very successful morning, and I would like to thank all those who turned up to help.

John Harding (Chairman)

(The next volunteers day is Sunday 27th March when we plan to do some work on the paths and litter picking. Subsequent days will be announced on the website—www.forestfarm.org.uk) - and on notices around the Reserve nearer the time)

Cardiff and District RSPB Group - Conservation Group

Doing something positive

The last visit for the year 2010 was in November. The job in hand was to prune overhanging branches on the main path leading up to the steps on the Longwood Drive section of the Reserve. This should improve the access of the bridleway we are trying to establish.

The start of our 2011 programme saw us down on numbers; fortunately we had 2 new helpers who joined us (6). The morning session saw us planting extra hedging with the intention of bulking out the hedge we planted a few seasons ago and filling in the gaps which have died or been attacked by rabbits. We did hope to tackle a fallen tree that had fallen down in the canal ... next time.

Conservation work will be held on the coming Saturday mornings **10.30 – 12.30** at Forest Farm, Longwood Drive Whitchurch.

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Programme: March – May 2011

March 26th	LITTER PICK Middle entrance
April 30th	Knotweed first cut of the season Middle entrance
May 28th	Wildflower and nestbox survey Middle entrance

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The group works for a few hours during the morning roughly once a month. It is not particularly strenuous work, similar to an active gardener, (you work to your own level). If you feel you would like to get involved ... just turn up or better still, give me a ring.

Hugh Harrison (029 2070 4889)

"The Glamorgan Canal from Start to Finish"
a talk by
Mrs Christine Soughton.

At 7.30 p.m.
Wednesday 16th March

Whitchurch Community Centre
Tyn-y-Pwll Rd Whitchurch

Opportunities for volunteering!

Cardiff Conservation Group
Mostly monthly, Saturday mornings.
See above or 'Events' - Page 12.

Friends of Forest Farm
Usually the last Sunday morning in the month. See events at the back of the newsletter or look on our website www.forestfarm.org.uk

Bird Feed



A feast for a nuthatch

I'm sure that if the birds at Forest Farm could speak English (or Welsh!), they would be very grateful for our efforts in feeding them – and that includes the Wardens who put out the seed daily, John Harding who purchases and supplies the seed to the Wardens, and, of course, all of you who kindly donate towards the cost – it really helps.



Not really intended for this grateful recipient!

Last year, we received a total of £209 in donations, which went a long way towards covering the cost of the £292.42 that we spent on purchasing bird feed.

We recently spent a further £224 on seed, which should last the rest of the Winter, and of course, donations are always welcome.

Phil Baker (Treasurer)

And from ***John Harding*** ...

I'm sure that with such heavy frost and snow a lot of the smaller birds might not have survived that very wintry weather before and over Christmas.

For those interested in the type and amount of food bought was.

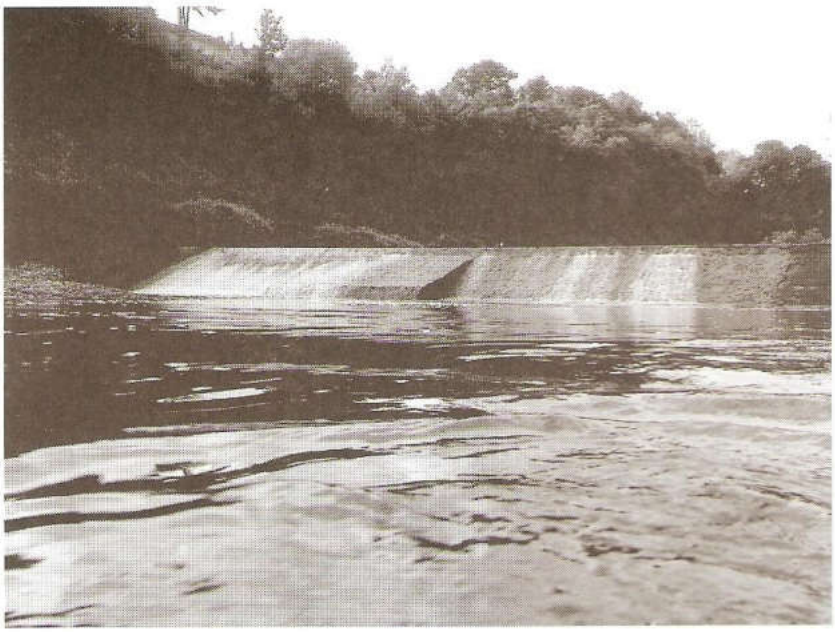
100kg British Finch Food
100kg Robin, Tit, with insects
100kg Peanut Granules
80kg Black Sunflower seeds

Thank you very much to all who have made donations .

Do you get your newsletter by email?

Please don't forget to renew your membership for 2011/12. Details will have been on the separate attachment with last year's minutes and AGM for April sent with this newsletter.

Radyr Weir



Members may have noticed a recent article in the local press concerning the possible development of a hydro electric power scheme at Radyr Weir. Whilst we are at an early stage of the development, we have held an initial meeting with the County Council.

As an environmental organisation there is always a balance between protecting the environment and reducing the impact of our day to day living. There is already an existing installation in place on the River Monnow near Monmouth and we will be undertaking a site visit to see how it has been achieved.

An initial site plan identified that the Taff Trail would have to be moved to the east and that the fish pass would be rebuilt. We have obvious concerns over the impact this development would have on fish and other wildlife, but this is known technology with no adverse impact.

The Council would receive payments from the organisation who developed the site for the generation of electricity under the Government's feed-in tariff and local companies have recorded an interest in using the energy.

We have asked that the funding released from this project be used for environmental projects/education within the city rather than on general Council spending.

This project may not come to fruition. However, harnessing the power of the River Taff without damaging the environment can only be a beneficial use of this natural resource.

Martin Chamberlain (Secretary)

Pontypridd Canal Conservation

The Pontypridd Canal Conservation Group was notified this week that their application to the Inland Waterways for grant aid had been successful..

Bill Hockey Group Project Leader said "The group is now in the second phase of its campaign for the restoration of the Glamorgan Canal at Pontypridd. The next 12 months and beyond are going to be very busy as we seek further funding sand liaise with those responsible for the major development at the former Brown Lenox site"

The £2000 grant will be used to fund a series of land and structural surveys essential to the early planning phases of the restoration.

(Extract from the full press release. Ed)

AGM
and talk on
Melingriffith Water Pump

(Speaker to be announced)

Wednesday, 20th April 2011

7.30 p.m.

Whitchurch Community Centre,
Tyn y Parc Rd Whitchurch

* Please note *

Car parking spaces are also available in the Car Park behind the British Legion on Penlline Road, Whitchurch.

This is just a short distance from the Community Centre



Events—March to June 2011

Wednesday 16th March 7.30 p.m.	**EVENING TALK** **"The Glamorgan Canal from Start to Finish" by Mrs Christine Soughton.** Whitchurch Community Centre Tyn-y-Pwll Rd Whitchurch
Saturday 19th March 10.0 – 12.30	**Monthly bird walk with RSPB** Meet at the Wardens Centre, Forest Farm Road ,Whitchurch
Saturday 26th March 10.00 – 12.00	***Wildlife Watch Club - for children aged 8-12. Bird walk around the Nature Reserve.*** Meet at the Wardens Centre, Forest Farm Road, Whitchurch. Contact Kevin or Gareth on 029 20445903; email: communityparkrangers@cardiff.gov.uk
Saturday 26th March 10.30—12.30	**Cardiff Conservation Group LITTER PICK** Meet at the Middle Entrance, Longwood Drive (see Page 8)
Sunday 27th March 10.30—12.30	**'Friends' Volunteers Day Work on the paths and litter picking planned** Meet at the Wardens' Centre Forest Farm Road, Whitchurch
Saturday 16th April 10.00—12.30	**Monthly bird walk with RSPB** Meet at the Wardens Centre, Forest Farm Road ,Whitchurch
Saturday 16th April 10.00—12.00	***Wildlife Watch Club - for children aged 8-12. Mini Nature Reserves. Create your own using an old window box and lots of natural materials. (Small charge may apply)*** Meet at the Wardens Centre, Forest Farm Road, Whitchurch. Contact Kevin or Gareth on 02920445903; email: communityparkrangers@cardiff.gov.uk
Wednesday 20th April **7.30 p.m.**	**A.G.M and talk on Melingriffith Water Pump** (Speaker to be announced). Whitchurch Community Centre Tyn y Parc Rd Whitchurch
Saturday 30th April 10.30—12.30	**Cardiff Conservation Group KNOTWEED CUT** Meet at the Middle Entrance, Longwood Drive (See Page 8)
Saturday 14th May 10.00—12.00	***Wildlife Watch Club - for children aged 8-12. Spring Photo workshop. Learn how to get the best from your camera. Experts are on hand for guidance. Bring your own camera .*** Meet at the Wardens Centre, Forest Farm Road, Whitchurch. Contact Kevin or Gareth on 029 20445903; email: communityparkrangers@cardiff.gov.uk
Saturday 21st May 10.00—12.30	**Monthly bird walk with RSPB** Meet at the Wardens Centre, Forest Farm Road ,Whitchurch
Saturday 28th May 10.30—12.30	**Cardiff Conservation Group WILFLOWER and NESTBOX SURVEY** Meet at the Middle Entrance, Longwood Drive (See Page 8)
Saturday 18th June 10.00—12.00	***Wildlife Watch Club - for children aged 8-12. Small mammal trapping. Discover what mice and voles have been attracted to our traps overnight.*** Meet at the Wardens Centre, Forest Farm Road, Whitchurch. Contact Kevin or Gareth on 029 20445903; email: communityparkrangers@cardiff.gov.uk
Saturday 18th June 10.00—12.30	**Monthly bird walk with RSPB** Meet at the Wardens Centre, Forest Farm Road ,Whitchurch

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

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Email: Sheila@forestfarm.org.uk

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