# FRIENDS

OF FOREST FARM COUNTRY PARK AND GLAMORGANSHIRE CANAL LOCAL NATURE RESERVE

WEBSITE REF: www.forestfarm.org.uk

ISSUE 79-80 JUNE 2011


*Editor's note*

*The end of May is nearly upon us already. The proposed development of Whitchurch Hospital and its impact on the Reserve remains an issue (see report P.3) A quarterly publication means there is no chance of keeping you up to date, so please keep up the profile of our serious concerns.*

*We have been planning our 'summer' activities, Duncan has arranged another excellent trip—see Pp 4-5 for details and booking., Rhiwbina and Whitchurch Festivals are in July and there are always opportunities for volunteering! Several interesting 'themed' walks around the Reserve have been arranged and there are the RSPB walks—so plenty of opportunities to be out and about. Perhaps we will see you at Foods of the Forest or our Open Day in September? I hope so.*

*My thanks to all our contributors but especially Chris Powell, Parks Conservation Officer, for sending an article in what must be a busy time in the run up to his retirement. He has a long association with Forest Farm.—and will be greatly missed. Special thanks also to Pauline Linck for writing about Betty Williams, who died recently—another great supporter of the Friends and founder of Betty's Birders who donated funds to us over many years. Enjoy the Summer!*

*Sheila Austin*

**Deadline for articles for next edition—August 8th**
( see back for contact details)

## *OPEN AFTERNOON AT FOREST FARM*

***Following our very successful 'Open afternoon' last year, we have decided to hold another one. Do come along and see us.***

***Wardens' Centre, Forest Farm Road, Whitchurch***

***Sunday 18th September from 2—4 p.m.***

***Light refreshments available. We're looking forward to seeing you!***

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# Forest Farm Reserve News

Paul Davies
Countryside Warden

On arriving back at work on 2nd May, it soon became clear that person/s unknown had smashed through the large doors of the Wardens' Centre, broken in and ripped out the cooker which had only been installed in the new kitchen (as part of the upgrading work of the Wardens' Centre which was done last year). We have decided that the only way to prevent or at least minimise further losses is to install an alarm linked to the police/Council security staff. This will be completed in the next few weeks.

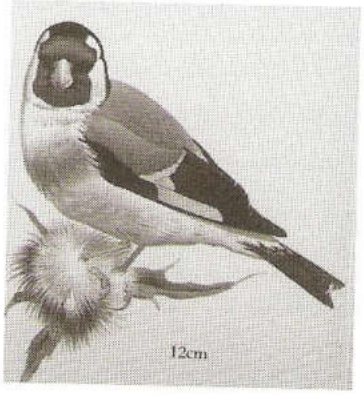
Security has always been an issue but more so since the residents left the farmhouse back in 2005. I think the Council and BTCV should consider having someone living there in the future.



On a more positive note, we have had many birds nesting at this time of year. Two buzzards are feeding young in a nest not far from Long Wood and I could hear the young grey heron chicks calling loudly in some Scots Pines not far from here.



I have also spotted some great tit chicks in a gatepost near the disused Coryton line. My main concern here is that the chicks feeding may well be disrupted by passing walkers and dogs due to the height and proximity of the nest!! Let's hope they survive.




Despite, the loss of the cooker, Gareth, Alec and Kevin coped well with the 20 or so people who came on the Dawn Chorus walk last week (May 8th) Birds heard but not always seen included Black Cap, White Throat, Garden Warbler and Goldfinch!

## WHTCHURCH HOSPITAL DEVELOPMENT

At the time of the newsletter is being printed we are waiting for our opportunity to appear in front of the planning committee to object to the existing planning consent being extended for another five years. Two issues are apparent since the original planning consent was granted.

Firstly, there are more environmental protection policies in force which will hopefully stop these plans being implemented.

Secondly the Trust will not be providing any health facility on the site. Therefore they will be able to build even more than the 300+ houses they already have permissions for.

The Local Development Plan for Cardiff is presently being agreed and the Whitchurch Hospital Development is being proposed as part of this plan for housing. This is where we need your help to write the Council objecting to this development being included within the plan. Details of who to contact are available on the council website www.cardiff.gov.uk or by contacting the Council Planning department at Cardiff City Hall

Martin Chamberlain

## *Melingriffith Water pump — restored*



*The newly restored water pump has had a test run and will be re-opened officially in the next few weeks.*

*It is expected that, in the future, it will be run on occasional afternoons.*

*(Photo Albyn Austin)*

*Do have a look at the wonderful photos on our website. Just click on the 'Photos' tab on the home page and see the slideshow or follow the links. I am just waiting for permission to use some of them to enhance our reports further. (Ed)*

***www.forestfarm.co.uk***

## Membership

Our final membership for the year just ended totalled 277 families plus 2 groups. To date, more than half our members have renewed for the current year i.e. 154 families plus 1 group.

For those who might have mislaid the renewal form, I have arranged for a replacement slip to be included in this quarter's newsletter. For those who receive their ***newsletter by email***, you can of course renew by sending the £5 annual subscription direct to my address below.

This might be a good time to thank those of you who have sent extra on top of the annual subscription. This will help boost our funds/bird feed etc.

Thank you for all your continued support.

**Noel Gale** (Membership Secretary)
8 Heath Park Drive
Heath
Cardiff
CF14 3QH

Have you got a couple of hours spare one Sunday morning?

**The Friends volunteering events** are usually held on the last Sunday morning of the month. In February 2011, the volunteers repaired paths and in March we had a litter pick. Thank you to all those who turned up to help.

Our usual date for April coincided with Easter, so there was no event, but we will be at the Wardens Centre **June 19th**.

John Harding

**BOOKING FOR COACH TRIP**

There are still some seats for this trip **(£18 adult, £13 child under 11)**, so if you would like to join us, we recommend that you send off the booking slip below as soon as possible, to
**For enquiries please phone Duncan on Cardiff 20626111, or Email duncan3@hotmail.co.uk**
Your confirmation and seat number will be returned to you within 4 days.
Refunds for any cancellations, (less a £1 administration charge), can only be given subject to your seat/s being able to be reallocated.

*Please tear off - - - - - - - - - - - - Please tear off - - - - - - - - - - - - -Please tear off - - - - - - - - - - -*

**Send to Mr D Hockridge, 5 Clos Cromwell, Rhiwbina, Cardiff CF14 6QN**

**NAME..... ..... ADDRESS .....**
**.....POSTCODE.....**
**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 SUMMER OUTING

**Come and join us on our fully escorted**

## COACH TRIP to BRECON TOWN, and RHAYADER TO SEE THE FEEDING OF THE RED KITES, on SATURDAY 16th July 2011

In the morning you will be able to look around Brecon Town. There is a choice of being dropped off at any one of three locations.

1. In the main central car park,
2. We go to the Marina area of the Brecon canal. From here it would take you about 20 mins. To walk back up into the main town area, via the nearby Brecon Museum.
3. We travel 5 mins. up to the Brecon Cathedral which is open for visits; maybe you would also like to have some excellent home made refreshments in the adjoining, award winning Pilgrims Café. The cream scones are highly recommended. From here it takes about 25 mins. to walk back down the fairly steep footway into the main town area.

In the afternoon we shall be travelling via Builth Wells to Gigrin farm, Rhayader, to visit the Red Kite Feeding and Rehabilitation Centre. This family run, upland sheep farm, has 4 large hides for viewing the feeding spectacle. Being just 30 metres from where the Kites swoop down, there are excellent opportunities for photography. As well as the kites, ravens, buzzards, and other carrion feeding birds usually also appear. There is also an interpretative centre, and shop, which sells drinks, snacks and souvenirs.

Should you wish to stay in Brecon all day then arrangements will be made to pick you up from outside the Wellington Hotel at approx.5.15pm. There would then be a reduction on the following prices of £3.

**The cost for each seat will be £18, children under 11, £13. This price includes the entry charge into Gigrin Farm.**

### ITINERARY

**8.45am.** Our Door to Door coach (with toilet) arrives in Heol Llanishen Fach, outside Bethany Baptist Church. The coach then departs at 8.55am. and goes direct to the lay-by outside Canolfan Beulah in Rhiwbina village, arriving at 9.00am.

**9.10am.** Coach departs from Canolfan Beulah, goes direct to Penlline Road, Whitchurch Village.

**9.20am.** Coach arrives at Penlline Road, Whitchurch Village, opposite the British Legion car park.

**9.25am.** Coach departs, goes via Park Road and Pendwyallt Road.

**9.30am.** Coach arrives Holly Bush Inn

**9.35am.** Coach departs to go direct to Brecon Town via the A470 Brecon Beacons Road.

**10.35am** Coach arrives at Stop 1, Brecon Town, and then goes on to the other two Brecon stops.

**1.30pm.** Coach departs, ONLY from main central car park (**Stop 1 arrival**).

**2.40pm.** Coach arrives at Gigrin Farm. Feeding takes place from 3.15pm.until 4.15pm.

**4.30pm.** Coach departs Gigrin Farm and travels to Brecon to pick up any Brecon all-day visitors.

**6.00pm.** Coach arrives back at The Holly Bush Inn, Whitchurch and then goes on to the other stops.

# Forest Farm/RSPB Walks

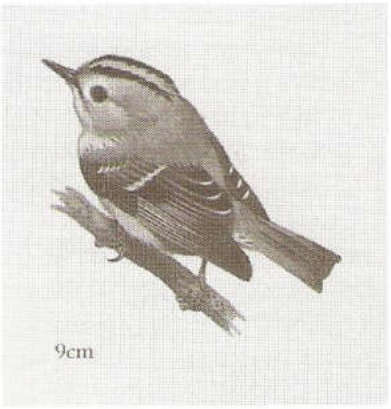
*Stella Wells*



Treecreeper

The weather was dull but dry for our **February** walk and nineteen people gathered in, dare I say, anticipation of what we were going to observe on our stroll around the site.

Our usual friends were seen such as the blue, great, coal and long tailed tits. The male bullfinches seemed to be more colourful than usual, perhaps in preparation for the spring. Nuthatches and tree creepers were busy foraging for food and we were delighted to see the tiny gold crests.



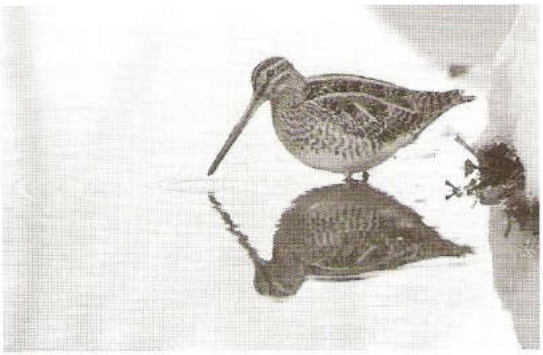

Goldcrest

We split into two groups for the hides and one group shared the hide for quite some time with a robin, which was busy hopping about the floor, presumably looking for crumbs dropped by the public or maybe the odd spider or two. Some of us had an excellent view of a water rail and we could see reed buntings flitting about in the tall reeds. Not a bad day for birds as we counted 30 species (and a squirrel).



In **March** we were treated to frosty sunshine and a goosander on the Taff. Grey and pied wagtails bobbed along the edge of the river and a kingfisher flew past. We watched a buzzard being mobbed by crows and, yet again, I have to wonder why the buzzard (bwncath) doesn't just grab one when they are flying so close.

Herons and the egret were spotted in the boggy area and one of the group spied two snipe on the edge of the pond. They were so still and brilliantly camouflaged that most of us would not have known they were there. Two great spotted woodpeckers chased each



Snipe—photo—Alec Stewart

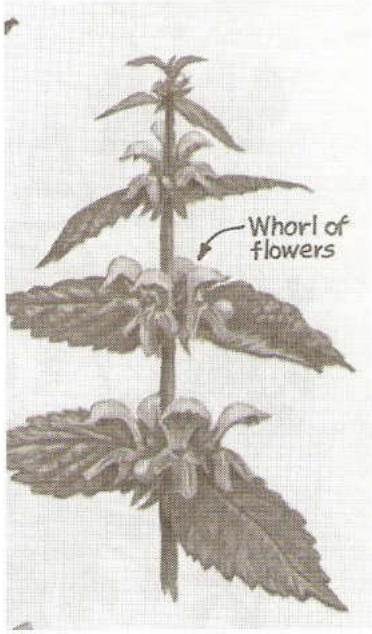
other around a tree, whether in dispute over territory or embarking on a mating ritual was unclear. Blackcaps (penddu) filled the air with their warbling song and we heard a tawny owl calling.

In **April** it was impossible not to note that spring had definitely sprung. Bird song and flowers were in rich profusion. Walking along the Taff we had an excellent view of a mink on the far bank which we enjoyed with mixed feelings. A mallard with chicks was swimming nearby and we wondered how long the chicks would survive with a mink as a neighbour. We also saw a great number of bees flying around the base of a tree on the river bank, presumably wild bees.

Forget-me-nots (glas y gors), daisies (llygad y dydd), dandelions and celandines were in abundance as were cuckoo flowers (blodyn y gog), yellow archangel and herb Robert. Bitter cress, marsh marigolds, wild garlic and wood anemones added to the pageant of flowers.



Common forget-me-not



Yellow Archangel

I find it quite fascinating how flowers can have several names. The wild garlic is also known as ramsons and in Yorkshire we used to call them stinking nannies. Cuckoo flowers, so named because they arrive with the cuckoo, are also known as milk maids or lady's smock. Wild arum is known as cuckoo pint, Adam and Eve, Jack in the pulpit and lords and ladies. Perhaps some of you know of alternative names for our flowers and would like to share them with us?

There were lots of large, black flies with long dangly legs flying around. These are called St Marks flies, and are supposed to hatch out on St Marks day, April 25th. They, like many of the flowers we saw, are out and about well before they should be. Another sign of climate change?

All in all we have enjoyed some lovely sights and sounds and I'm sure we can look forward to more interesting strolls around Forest Farm.

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|---|---|
| ★ | **Important** - if you don't want to miss the August walk with Stella! Please note that RSPB walk around Forest Farm in **August** is on **Saturday 13th**. This is the second Saturday of the month—not the usual third Saturday.<br><br>The walks in June, July and September will be the 3rd Saturday, as usual. |

## It's Goodbye From Me

It's amazing and worrying to reflect that 21 years have lapsed since the Friends were formed.

I recently presented a paper to the Cardiff Countryside Forum reflecting on the changes that had occurred in the Countryside and Green Spaces since I joined Cardiff Council in1982. I must confess that in preparing notes it was hard not to include many of my Friends at Forest Farm and other groups that I have worked with, who have made my job so enjoyable.

We've had quite a few shared successes and today Forest Farm looks as though it could really start to benefit from the changes that we have made over recent years. I am really looking forward to coming back and visiting the Community Orchard in a few years time and seeing the Melingriffith Lift pump in action, and the Warden Centre full of community groups serving as an education centre.

We have also had a few set backs over the years and I was devastated when the bird hide got burnt and also the Warden centre was broken into. Both have survived (just) but suffer from their isolated locations. Since BTCV decided to discontinue using the Farmhouse for overnight accommodation it has increased the vulnerability of the buildings which will need to be addressed by better security protection.

I suggest that we have achieved something unique in maintaining the essential pastoral atmosphere that makes the place so special. It has survived, but as we know it is constantly under threat from development or change of use and it needs a strong champion like the Friends to ensure that this is retained. My biggest worry over the years is that staff would be taken away from Forest Farm and once this happened it would be difficult to make a case for retaining the buildings for parks use and they could be converted for other purposes. This is why I was so pleased with the work undertaken by Duncan and Friends in creating a building that will serve for community and educational purposes. Thanks also for the support received from local Councillors that helped make this possible.

Progress has been hampered by lack of resources at times, but we have kept plugging away and sometimes this is much easier to sustain and ultimately is a more manageable situation.

I think the Friends have done a fantastic job in supporting the Council and maintaining public awareness of the reserve and Country Park. I wrote in my article to the Countryside forum that it is not necessarily the end product that is of value and but it is the process that is so important. This means people working together for the common good and making use of people's expertise and giving everyone a say in what is to be achieved.

I suggest that the past 20years has shown that Friends Group is sufficiently robust and media savvy to withstand the pressures and will continue to thrive in caring for this beautiful and peaceful oasis that is Forest Farm

***Chris Powell***
***Parks Conservation Officer***

## BEAVERS ENJOY FOREST FARM FACILITIES

With the start of Spring and the longer evenings, I had the first opportunity to use the improved facilities for education purposes.

Fifteen Beavers from a local group visited the Reserve and the Wardens centre. I was able to show them the Bird Box Camera unfortunately too early for any nesting birds.

We then undertook some pond dipping and looked at the many tadpoles and other animals we put in the trays.

This was followed by a walk to the larger bird hide where I explained what type of birds visited the different habitats.

What was interesting was the knowledge the different children had of the different animals, what they eat and what we can do to help them survive.

If any members know of any other youth groups that would benefit from visiting the Reserve please contact me via the website or my mobile 07952 926145

**Martin Chamberlain**

***Mrs Betty Joan Williams***

*It is with sadness that I report the recent death, on April 9th, of Mrs Betty Williams who was a long time member of the RSPB and the Friends of Forest Farm. Betty had suffered ill health for a number of years and had dealt with it throughout with determination and bravery.*

*With a good singing voice, for many years Betty was a member of the Snowflakes Choir and loved to sing. After an active life with many other hobbies, and raising a family of three boys, she and her husband Ron became keen bird watchers and spent much of their later life with that as their main hobby.*

*I first met Betty and her husband in the 80's and joined the birdwatching group they founded which became known as 'Betty's Birders'. Many enjoyable and well planned bird watching expeditions to various Reserves and venues in Wales and England were planned for the group each year by Betty and Ron. Later, as we all reached retirement age, coffee mornings and local walks were added on a regular basis. The coffee mornings raised funds which were donated to the RSPB and the Friends of Forest Farm etc.*

*When she became unable to walk any distance, Betty bought an electric scooter which enabled her to spend time enjoying the birds on the Reserve at Forest Farm.*

*Eight of the group founded by Betty remain united as friends and continue to meet on a regular basis. We have many happy memories of the times we spent with Betty.*

***Pauline Linck***

## Cardiff and District RSPB Group
## Conservation Group

### *Doing something positive*

**March** saw us doing our annual Litter Pick. At first glance there seemed less than the previous year but we soon found this was not the case. With a good team of helpers, we spread out to tackle the task in hand. It never seems to surprise us what is thrown away. At the end of the morning, we had filled in excess of 20 bags – these are the large bags, not the normal refuse type bin bags. Our ***previous work in February*** enabled us to admire a carpet of wood anemones.

Japanese knotweed has been very much in the press lately, listed as a real problem. It is such an invasive weed and has been a major problem for us on the Reserve. **April** saw the first cut of the season. We were missing a few of our regulars, but our numbers were swollen by six extra helpers ... everybody soon spread out for the job in hand and the morning went well. We even had the luxury of raking the knotweed up.

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

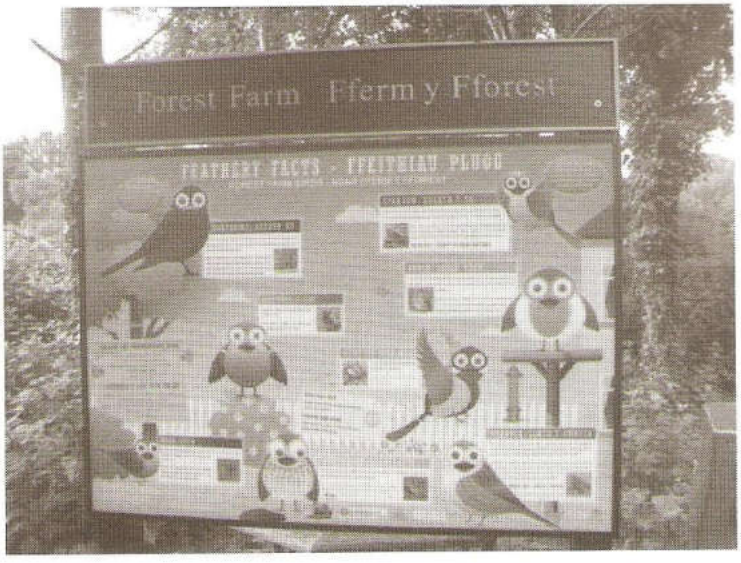
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|---|---|
| **July 9th** | Balsam and 2nd cut knotweed<br>Middle entrance |
| **Sept 24th** | Middle entrance |

**********

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)




This is the bird identification board which has been erected near the Wardens' Centre. It is to help children ( and perhaps some adults as well?) to identify some common birds.

If the 'eagle eyed' among you can just see a grey box shape in the bottom right hand corner, this is a mechanical wind up machine for hearing the sound of the more common birds. You select the 'song' of the bird then wind the handle to hear the sound.

This is all part of using the Wardens Centre as an educational resource. Martin's article on the previous page is just one example of its increasing use.

## THE ORCHARD

All the trees seem to be doing well despite the very dry spell, although the latest rain was badly needed. The trees had their winter pruning on 27th February 2011.

I was sorry to hear of the death of Betty Williams on 9th April 2011. It was the money raised by her group, Betty's Birders, that went towards the start of the orchard. The group donation paid for several trees, fertiliser and delivery costs. One of the first trees planted in 2007 was a 2 year old 'Brithmawr Apple' which is the Friends of Forest Farm tree. There is also a 'St Cecilia Apple' which is a Betty's Birders tree.

When the group was finished a few years ago because of Betty's health, the rest of the group carried on and have also donated money to the 'Friends' They have sponsored 2 trees 'Brownlees Russet Apple' and Winter Nelis Pear.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone for their donations towards the orchard, for bird feed, funds and also to the Volunteers who give their time to the Reserve.

**John Harding**

## ALLOTMENTS AT FOREST FARM

When walking around Forest Farm visitors may wonder what goes on behind the locked gate and fencing. These are the allotments and there are presently 70 plots with a waiting list of a similar number and plans are in place to increase the number of plots to meet this demand.

Like ourselves, the Allotment Committee are constantly looking at ways to provide funding to improve the facilities when Council funding is not available. One of their main fund raising methods is by selling to members of the public vegetables and fruit produced by the plot holders.

**Produce for sale**
**Sundays from 10.00 to 12.00**
**12th June to Sunday 31st July**

**Martin Chamberlain**

## Events - June to September 2011

| | |
|---|---|
| Sunday 12th June<br>14.00 – 16.00 | **Forest Farm History Walk** led by the Ranger Service and Chris James This walk will concentrate on the history of the area from the Industrial Revolution to the end of the 20th century. 3km. Meet at the Wardens Centre Forest Farm Rd |
| Saturday 18th June<br>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 |

# Events - June to September 2011 cont'd

| | |
|---|---|
| Saturday 18th June<br>10.00—12.30 | **Monthly bird walk with RSPB**<br>Meet at the Wardens Centre, Forest Farm Road ,Whitchurch |
| Sunday 19th June<br>10.30 – 12.30 | **Volunteering event with the Friends** Meet us at the Wardens Centre Forest Farm Road for some voluntary work on the Reserve |
| Sunday 26th June<br>10.30 – 12.30 | **Dragonflies and Damselflies** Led by the Countryside Wardens of Forest Farm. FREE. We will look at these beautiful and agile insects in aerial and aquatic form and hopefully see displays of their breeding behaviour. |
| Saturday 2nd July<br>10.00 – 13.00 | **Rhiwbina Festival** We will have a 'Friends of Forest Farm' stand, so come along and say hello |
| Saturday 9th July<br>10.30—12.30 | **Cardiff Conservation Group Volunteering event.** Meet at the Middle entrance, Longwood Drive, Whitchurch. Balsam and second cut Japanese knotweed. |
| Saturday 9th July | **Whitchurch Festival** We will have a 'Friends of Forest Farm' stand on The Green, so come along and say hello |
| Saturday 16th July<br>10.00 – 12.30 | **Monthly bird walk with RSPB**<br>Meet at the Wardens Centre, Forest Farm Road ,Whitchurch |
| Saturday 16th July<br>All day | **'Friends' Summer Coach Trip** to Brecon and Rhayader. See Page 4—5 for details |
| Saturday 16th July<br>10.00 – 12.00 | ***Wildlife Watch Club - for children aged 8 - 12***<br>Meet at the Wardens Centre, Forest Farm Road, Whitchurch. Contact Kevin or Gareth on 029 20445903; email: communityparkrangers@cardiff.gov.uk |
| Sunday 17th July<br>14.00 – 16.00 | **Weeds and Aliens at Forest Farm.** Led by the Countryside Wardens. Looking at the introduced and alien plants and animal species on the Reserve and discuss their impact on the ecology of the area. Wardens Centre Forest Farm Rd. Whitchurch |
| Saturday **13th** August<br>10.00 – 12.30 | **Monthly bird walk with RSPB (Yes it is the 2nd Sat this month)**<br>Meet at the Wardens Centre, Forest Farm Road ,Whitchurch |
| Sunday 21st August<br>10.30 – 16.30 | Cardiff 'Out of the Woods' Festival. A woodland event for all the family. FREE |
| Sunday 11th Sept<br>14.00 – 16.00 | **Spiders and Other Creepy Crawlies** led by the Countryside Wardens. Their role in nature will lead to an understanding of their importance in our world. Wardens Centre Forest Farm Rd. Whitchurch |
| !4th September<br>18.00 | **Foods of the Forest.** A stroll around Forest Farm, then a tasting session of some delicious delicacies. **£3 per person.** ALL CHILDREN MUST BE ACCOMPANIED BY AN ADULT. Wardens Centre Forest Farm Rd Whitchurch |
| Sunday 18th September<br>14.00—16.00 | **'FRIENDS' OPEN AFTERNOON.** Come along to the Wardens Centre Forest Farm Road to see what we've been up to, give us your views. |

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

**Mrs Sheila Austin, 1 Heol Gwrgan, Whitchurch, Cardiff CF14 1PP** **Tel: 029—20 61 4245**

**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.