



Newsletter

Rivelin Valley Conservation Group

Autumn 2018 no 108

Through The Chair

Welcome to the Autumn newsletter. I've never known a summer like this last one. Many of the doors in my house began to bind as the house distorted in the dry heat. It has no doubt also had a drastic effect on our flora and fauna and we would like to hear about your own experiences of this unusual summer by returning the enclosed form to Joan Buckland.

There will be no Xmas Fayre this year at Wood Lane as they are having some building remedial work done but are hoping to hold the event again next year. There is no more news about the Rivelin Trees or the planned embankment across the Rivelin. We are hoping that other flood relief work along the Loxley and Don will help reduce future risk and the money is just not available for any significant work at the moment. But should we experience another catastrophic flood event then the money may suddenly become available from central government.

I have recently attended a meeting with Don Catchment Rivers Trust which is an organisation planning to improve the River Don and its tributaries such as the Rivelin and the Loxley. It involves clearing out rubbish and debris, improving the water quality – tempting fish back to start breeding and aquatic mammals such as otters to set up residence. They are also helping campaign to improve public access to our rivers; an example is the Porter Brook pocket park just off Matilda Street and have plans to provide a similar scheme where a culvert over the Porter Brook recently collapsed in Decathlon's car park.

Graham Appleby
RVCG Chairman

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Donations

We are always grateful for your donations which currently amount to £449 for this current financial year. There must be a lot of people on both sides of the valley and further afield who enjoy Rivelin Valley so please pass the word on.

Membership remains at £3 per annum and this is for your whole household and renewable in January.

Task Team

Some very recent news: The recent Heritage Lottery Fund has approved the Sheffield Lakeland Landscape Partnership project of which Rivelin forms a small part but gives us access to £20k of funds to make improvements to Rivelin Valley. The Partnership area encompasses the towns and villages of High Bradfield, Low Bradfield, Dungworth, Stocksbridge, Deepcar, Wharncliffe Side, Oughtibridge, Bolsterstone, Midhopestones, Worrall, Loxley and Stannington. We will keep you updated as the project progresses and we ask the RVCG Task Team to prepare for some important work ahead.

Some Recent Events

RVCG Barbecue 29th July 2018

Our summer BBQ took place once more in Ken's lovely garden. Its extensive lawns amid views over Rivelin made good surroundings for our annual event. Perhaps some of you remember our early days when we held this BBQ on an allotment down Hagg Lane when it was standing room only and some people wandered around looking for where we were.

Unfortunately rain was forecast and appeared in the morning but had cleared away by late afternoon.

Fortunately our busy band of workers worked hard putting up the marquees, tables and chairs. This must have taken most of the morning since they all had to be brought in.

We do not lack for food at this party and the tables were groaning. We thank all who contributed cakes and other goodies.

Our burgers came from the local butcher in Crosspool and vegetarians had their own burgers.

Leftover food was taken home in doggy bags.

After all this food we enjoyed the usual musical accompaniment provided by Graham Appleby and Bob and Margaret Townrow. People also enjoyed a good chatter.

We are of course very grateful to Ken for providing this venue and to Sue for her help and support.

As usual the event ended with Ken providing his usual goodbye gift of a Ferrero Rocher chocolate.

Call for Articles

Your past or recent experiences in the Rivelin Valley could make interesting reading for our members. Please contact M Sanderson or email msanderson35@googlemail.com

Open Meeting - Thelma Griffiths A Potted History of Longshaw 11th September 2018

There can hardly be anyone in Sheffield who does not know of our Longshaw heritage so close to us. The estate was once owned by the Duke of Rutland who obtained Longshaw in 1826. He used it to entertain important people by shooting grouse, pheasants, snipe and woodcock which they would eat for their evening meal. Armies of cooks would be ready to gut and remove feathers. Gamekeepers were very important as their job was to ensure that the game was there for their wealthy bosses. Well trained dogs would retrieve the shot birds and no doubt were rewarded with a tasty titbit. While the men were out shooting, the ladies would take their ease by having a picnic in the grounds and we saw photographs of them in their long dresses and large hats sitting on a white cloth while their men folk wielded their guns. In 1895, Longshaw became important for sheepdog trials, the oldest in our country, with the many spectators enjoying a good day out and the beer tents!

Longshaw has long been a focal point for Sheffielders wanting to leave the then smoky city and head for there on Bank Holidays and weekends.

Times change and during WW1 Longshaw was used as a convalescence home for wounded soldiers. It must have been a very pleasant change from the horrors of war.

In 1925, The Holiday Fellowship took over. This was a semi-religious organisation started as a healthy way of getting people away from dirty cities into a semi-religious environment.

Walks in the surrounding countryside would be taken and traditional country dancing in the evening.

Sheffielders can still enjoy Longshaw and its surroundings and now there is a cafe for refreshments.

Blast from the Past What was in our newsletter in 1997?

Here are some notes concerning Stannington Church School Time table in 1848 that were printed in a book loaned to me by a Stannington member of RVCG.

9am School opens with a prayer then Religious Instruction.

10am Writing and arithmetic.

10.45 Exercise in open air.

11am Reading and spelling

12 noon "The Grace of our Lord" Dismiss

1.30pm Reassemble. An object lesson on Natural History, Geography or other useful knowledge.

2.15 pm Re-assemble. An object lesson on Natural History, Geography or other useful knowledge.

3pm Exercise in open air.

3.15 Reading, writing and spelling.

4pm Dismiss with prayer and hymn.

On three afternoons girls were taught needlework.

The children had a long dinner break so they probably went home. Also schools were not "free" then, though the Church probably helped to pay for the poor.

Another article was about Milson Goodison Mosely

Some local people will remember this gentleman from his days of delivering milk from his farm in the valley and will be sorry to hear of his death aged 92 on March 10th 1997. It wasn't so many years ago that he was a familiar sight, never failing to get your milk on your doorstep whatever the weather. His delivery ended when he was 88, after 74 years service and only ended when a car smashed into his stationary milk float.

**The RVCG would like to thank
Valleyside Garden Centre for their
continued support**

Christmas is Coming!

Here are some notes on our traditional Christmas decorations - Holly and Mistletoe.

Holly

Would we be without this? I have a holly tree that has lots of berries on at the moment but birds always eat them as soon as they turn red so this year I am determined to beat them. I have wrapped each clump of berries in a square of garden fleece which looks rather silly but there are plenty of berries higher up for the birds. The seeds pass straight through the bird and so start the growth of new trees. It is said that holly became a Christmas decoration to remind people of the blood of Christ.

Mistletoe

Mistletoe appears on trees by courtesy of birds that eat the seeds then wipe the stickiness on their beaks onto branches leaving the odd seed behind.

For years I tried to implant the berries of some bought mistletoe on my apple tree and at last one started to grow. It is semi-parasitic, drawing sap from its host.

It turned out to be "male" and it needs a female mistletoe to produce berries. Then, much to my surprise a female plant arrived. So, at last I have berries, a piece of which I give to members of my family. It is said that the apple tree is under strain when mistletoe appears, but this tree produces lots of fruit.

The tradition of kissing under a branch of mistletoe was said to bring fertility and it was once hung in porches to give peace and tranquillity.

**We send all our members best
wishes for Christmas and the New
Year.**

THE RECORDER – Autumn 2018

The Recorder

The long hot summer which was the hottest since records began in England, has definitely come to an end, with Storm Ali and heavy rain following. Up until then the ground was still very dry as we have had little rain for several months. It certainly feels like Autumn with some leaves falling early, probably due to the lack of rain, but there are plenty left to give a good colourful show. You will all probably have noticed the abundance of fruit and berries this year. The cold, wet start to the year gave way to a late Spring with plenty of blossom and the long, hot summer provided the ideal conditions for fruit to grow. We had, in fact, a more continental climate, which a lot of our plants prefer. I wonder if this is the pattern for the future.

I have just attended a spider recognition course, which was very interesting and informative. There is nothing to be fearful of spiders in this country. There are 670 species which is a lot less than northern continental Europe due to past glaciations and our island status. Even so, it has been estimated that there could be 800 spiders in one square metre of meadow. Spiders play an important part in keeping down pests. I had a pet garden spider for two years in my kitchen which kept the annoying flies under control, and it was fascinating watching it remaking the web every time it got damaged. The spider does not waste the web, it eats it and reuses the components before making a new one. Humans still have a lot to learn about recycling! The way to tell a male spider from a female is mainly by the size of the pedipalps. These are situated at the front of the spider and look like short legs with boxing gloves on. They are used to transfer sperm to the female, and the biggest spider with the largest palps attracts more mates. At this time of year on a frosty morning or when there is a heavy dew, it is astonishing to see just how many webs are glistening in the bushes. The orb webs, for me, sparkling like jewels, are one of the most beautiful creations in nature. If you are lucky you may be in just the right place to see a field full of shimmering gossamer. This happens when thousands of spiders

(mainly money spiders), which have been floating through the air on their silk threads, all land together. I have only seen this once but will always remember it.

The other week I took the nest box down that the Blue Tits had used. I know some of them fledged as I saw them being fed so I was quite upset to find one unhatched egg and one skeleton of a young bird. The nest was beautifully constructed with grass and lined with yellow and green plastic (a sign of the times). As I took the nest out, I realised it was absolutely infested with bird fleas. The parents probably abandoned the nest when it became unbearable and the remaining chick would not have survived very long. The nest and its unwelcome guests are residing in my freezer until the fleas are killed. It will then be an interesting item on my nature table. This was the first year that the box had been used and the fleas would have remained in it until the next family arrived. It is good hygiene to empty and clean your bird boxes as there are also other insects in them that can be detrimental to the birds.

Pauline Higbid, who has a beautiful garden with lots of birdlife, found a young Greenfinch in the garden that had been stunned. She was not sure what to do so she phoned Roger Kite who suggested she put it into a hanging basket nearby. Pauline kept her eye on it and nothing seemed to be happening and so she turned it round to face outwards. After a good three hours the bird revived and flew to the fence where its parents were delighted to see it. Pauline says they kept jumping up and down and doing somersaults on the fence. It is amazing what unusual behaviour you see if you keep your eyes open. It is always best to leave stunned birds somewhere safe in the vicinity they were found in.

One day I noticed something fluttering on a foxglove in the garden. I thought it was a Hummingbird Hawk Moth, but on investigation it turned out to be a large Poplar Hawk Moth *Laothoe populi*. This was being ferociously attacked by two Ichneumons, that looked like tiny, black and yellow striped, wasps. The moth had been damaged and bright green eggs

were showing at the base of its abdomen. The Ichneumons were trying to lay their eggs inside the eggs of the moth. The moth was completely helpless and I had to intervene. I put the moth on another foxglove some distance away. She was still there that evening but whether she was able to lay her eggs I do not know. Despite the sunny, hot weather I have seen very few coloured butterflies. There have been plenty of Large and Small Cabbage Whites, Speckled Woods and Holly Blues but only the odd Red Admiral and Comma. Why? The food plants are available and the weather was perfect so what is the reason. Maybe they did not like my garden. Perhaps you have a different story to tell. Please let me know how your gardens fared and if you have seen anything on your walks. It is also time to keep your ears and eyes open for migrating geese.

Thank you to the following for sending in their records:-

Susan Thackeray S25 – Susan overjoyed to find the Hedgehogs survived the winter and saw them every night in their garden from 11th April to 31st August. Regularly saw bats over the summer and had a Nuthatch on the 1st and 20th August.

Margaret Sanderson S10 - 1.7.18 – Several Jackdaws; 3 male + 1 female Blackbird most days in garden; 4 Sparrows regularly; 3.7.18 – Small Tortoiseshell Butterfly; also saw Speckled Wood, Large and Small Cabbage Whites in late June/July, and a 22 Spot Ladybird. Anyone else seen any ladybirds?

Kim Bowden S6 – 2.7.18 – Coppice stretch – saw a Dipper dipping which flew off downstream before a photo could be taken. Tip – always have your camera ready when on a nature walk as you never know what you might see.

Neil Porter S6 – It has been a good summer in the valley from Neil's observations. A survey on the 2.6.18 revealed 23 Wrens, 6 Woodpigeon, 11 Blackbird, 3 Moorhen incl. 1 with 2 chicks, 6 Blue Tit including 1 feeding young in RVCG nestbox, 2 Chaffinch, 19 Robin, 6 Grey Wagtail, 19 Mallard incl. 1 with 7 young, 2 Swift mating in flight, 2 Blackcap, 1 Chiffchaff, 1 Stock Dove, 5 Song Thrush, 1 Great Tit, 3 Magpie, 1 Bullfinch, 1 Canada Goose, 1 Dipper, 7 Jackdaw and all that in a 2 hour walk. Neil

also had a good Big Butterfly count in his garden on the 20.7.18 – 4 Small White, 2 Comma's, 2 Gatekeeper, 2 Meadow Brown, 1 Peacock and 2 Silver Washed Fritillaries which were a first for him in this area. 22.7.18 – Holly Blue; also seen Barn Owls hunting and a Little Owl in the valley, 4 young Kestrel and 2 Buzzards mewing over Tofts Lane. What a fantastic valley we have.

Gillian Drinkwater S10 – 2.9.18 – On early Sunday walk along Hagg Lane saw approx. 100 Swallows congregating on phone wires and whirling round a large tree, getting ready for their long journey south. Gillian regularly sees 1 or 2 Rabbits on their walk in the same area. Christine Roe S10 – 5.9.18 – Watched a Peregrine Falcon eating a pigeon it had brought down in the neighbour's garden for about 20 minutes before it flew away. What a thrill.

Pauline Higbid S10 – 11.9.18 – flock of juvenile and adult Goldfinches monopolising the niger and sunflower seed feeders; also had several Siskins, lots of the Tit family, Robin, Dunnock and Greenfinches.

Shirley Foster S10 – 15.9.18 – Buzzard being mobbed by flock of Rooks over Hagg Lane Allotments. As Shirley says Buzzards can now be seen regularly in our valley and it is wonderful to see these magnificent birds soaring on the thermals.

C Dalby S6 – 18.3.18 -Had 2 beautiful, healthy looking Thrushes in the back garden and saw 2 Dippers having a drink in the river then flying to their nest in a hole near Hind Wheel.

Roger Kite S10 – 20.9.18 – Male Sparrowhawk sitting on garage roof for 15 minutes, getting drenched in pouring rain; 28.9.18 -2 Buzzards over Stephen Hill allotments.

Joan Buckland S10 - Regularly gets 20 – 25 sparrows in garden; Dunnock, Robin; Collared Doves, Magpies; pairs of Chaffinch; Coal Tits, Blue Tits; Great Tits and Long-tailed Tits. Recently heard male and female Tawny Owls calling; 1.10.18 – Buzzard over valley; 2.10.18 – 2 Jackdaws.

Joan Buckland 2.10.18

Work At Redmires Dams

Earlier this year, Sue Shaw's sister came across the dramatic scene of an empty dam at Redmires and sent us some photographs and asked if we knew what was going on.



The empty top dam at Redmires

Sue Shaw wrote to Yorkshire Water to ask the question and received the following response:

Good afternoon Mrs Shaw,

I have been asked to respond to your queries over the Redmires Upper and Middle reservoir works. The works we are undertaking at the sites can be split into two:

Redmires Upper reservoir

We are undertaking reservoir safety works to ensure compliance with the Reservoir Act 1975. The work will involve the installation of sheet piles in the reservoir embankment to reduce leakage of the reservoir. We will also be installing a siphon pipe over the embankment to improve the draw down capacity of the reservoir. These works have a statutory compliance date that is imposed by the Environment Agency meaning the works must occur.

As part of these works we have had to empty the Upper reservoir and reduce the water level in the Middle reservoir by 5 meters to allow our contractors (Mott MacDonald Bentley) to access the reservoir basin to reach the central section of the embankment where works will take place. Since we started works on site, we have progressed in creating a temporary access track in to the basin which has resulted in a temporary increase in

the number of trucks accessing the site. The access track works should be completed by 22/06/2018; from this point on the volume of construction traffic on the local roads will reduce significantly. In the next few weeks a crane will be arriving at site to assist in the lifting of materials during the works.

We anticipated the works to the Upper reservoir will be completed by late Spring/early Summer 2019.

Redmires Middle reservoir

We are undertaking reservoir safety works to ensure compliance with the Reservoir Act 1975. The work will involve the installation of two new draw down valves on the reservoirs scour system to improve the draw down capacity of the reservoir. As with the works at Upper, these works have a statutory compliance date that is imposed by the Environment Agency.

These works are scheduled to occur in early 2019 and should be completed by late summer 2019. This work will require the Middle reservoir to be completely emptied and to reduce the water level in the Lower reservoir by 5 metres. An access track across the basin will be required to reach the central section of the embankment where the works will occur.

We anticipate the works at Middle reservoir will be completed by late Summer 2019.

Both sites are served by the same site offices and compound which have set up over the road from the Middle reservoir. This will remain in place until the end of the works in 2019.

I'm the Project Manager for the scheme so please don't hesitate to contact me if you have any further queries.

Regards,

*Mark Broady
Project Manager
Non-Infrastructure MMB/AGT*

RVCG member, Louis Farrington, contacted the RVCG to ask for advice about installing a bird box, built by his son Thomas at cubs. Having no suitable trees in their garden, he wondered if there was a suitable location in the local woodland. I arranged to meet Louis and his children, and we identified an ivy clad tree in a quiet spot which seemed the perfect position. Installed at least 2m high facing North East and away from passing walkers, it will provide good shelter for overwintering birds and hopefully be home to a new brood in the coming nesting season.



Son Thomas, Dad Louis and Daughter Phoebe with Thomas's handy work

Mystery Plant

After sowing all my seeds in the spring, I sometimes find a rogue plant rears its head. This one sprouted amongst some seedlings in a pot and I eventually planted it out when it was mature enough. It has quite large white bell-shaped flowers which are then succeeded by a large spiky green body about the size of my fist and probably full of seeds. Any idea what this might be?



Mystery Plant

Mystery Insect

I rescued this insect from a spider web back in June but have no idea what it is?



Mystery Insect

Viburnum Leaf Beetle

Pyrrhalta viburni is a species of leaf beetle native to Europe and Asia, commonly known as the viburnum leaf beetle. The eggs are laid in the bark and hatch in spring then the shredding begins accompanied by an acrid smell.



Pyrrhalta viburni - larvae

The grubs eventually make their way down to the ground in summer and pupate, turning into beetles which then climb back up the branches to mate and lay their eggs. And so the cycle starts again and 2 or 3 years of this and the shrub will probably perish. It's labour-intensive and difficult to treat and probably best to start again with a different type of shrub.



Pyrrhalta viburni - beetle



Viburnum tinus showing the leaf damage caused by Pyrrhalta viburni



**The Rivelin Valley Conservation Group
WILDLIFE REPORT FORM**

If you would like to report anything you feel would be of interest to our members, then please return this form or contact me on the number below. You can also submit sightings on our website www.rivelinvalley.co.uk under 'Recorder'

Name:Tele:

What/Where/When

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Your personal data may be used to contact you and will be managed in accordance with the new General Data Protection Regulations 2018

Please return to the group recorder:

Joan Buckland, 20 Den Bank Close, Crosspool, Sheffield, S10 5PA.

Tele: 0114 230 5829 Email: joan.buckland@btinternet.com

Garden Fungus

During June this year, I discovered some amazing fungus on the sycamore tree at the bottom of my garden.



Polyporus squamosus

Joan Buckland identified it as *Polyporus squamosus*, commonly referred to as Dryad's Saddle, grows in overlapping clusters and tiers on broad-leaved trees. (A dryad is a mythical wood-nymph.) The fruit bodies appear in summer and autumn. Insects quickly devour these large brackets, and in warm weather they can decay from full splendour to almost nothing in just a few days.

Your nature reports are valuable to us and after a year like this one, there have been lots of unusual sightings of birds, insects, plants flowering at odd times or not at all. Please use the form attached overleaf to send us your observations.

Best wishes for the festive season
Graham Appleby