



Newsletter



Rivelin Valley Conservation Group

Summer 2002 no 43

Through The Chair

Mussel Power

Actually it was probably the tadpoles or maybe the sticklebacks that drew the crowds out to our stall at Stannington Carnival, not the odd swan mussel that got caught in the dragline at Wolf Wheel pond. Interesting though it was, they do tend to sit there. Far more eye catching is the active section of pondlife. A bit like a Conservation Group! Your representatives on the stall were busy as usual fending Questions about the valley's wildlife, current planning problems and graciously accepting accolades about the recent improvements to the ponds at the top of the Nature Trail. We need to give serious thought to how we follow that success. Will it be more ponds or the Nature Trail itself? Or have you any other ideas? Whatever it is you can be certain it will involve more muscle power from our erstwhile Task Team. New blood as always is necessary to rejuvenate old, tired muscles. Don't just sit on the bottom- let's get active.

Roger Kite

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Task Team News

Sunday 26th May 2002

The weather forecast was horrendous, but being a hardy lot we set off to re-sett the stepping-stones at Roscoe wheel.

Things went well for the first half hour then the heavens opened up. We stood there for thirty minutes trying to gain as much cover as we could from the trees, as we kept assuring ourselves that it was only a shower, but once the rain started to drip through the branches and leaves of the trees we got absolutely drowned. Every one started to look extremely uncomfortable but nobody wanted to be the first to call it a day, but just one look at the most sodden chairman you have ever seen looking extremely miserable and enough was enough.

Totally soaked through to our smaller garments, by the time we had unloaded the trailer it was time for a hot shower. Fifteen minutes after getting out of the shower and the sun came out and it was a glorious day. (The trials and tribulations of trying to run the Task Team but even we can't organise the weather.) Many thanks to all of the brave souls who turned out. We will try again in July.

This task day was advertised in all of the right places as part of the Sheffield Environment Week's programme. The response we got from the general public was very poor.

Sunday 30th June 2002

Hide bound this Sunday and a reasonable turn out as well despite the World Cup Final. Armed with our new brush cutter and a trailer load of strimmers and hedge cutters, we set off to hack our way back into the hide to prepare for the group BBQ. With no time at all, the place was looking quite good (when I think back to the first time we did this without strimmers, it took us all day using shears and two weeks before the blisters healed) the wonders of modern technology! Technology has its downside when one of the strimmers stopped working and all attempts to revive it failed. Then the new brush cutter failed to act as it should (due to the lack of instruction manual) so this was discarded. Then right at the death, Roger's little Flymo strimmer's inner drive shaft wore through the outer tube. It might be a lot quicker with modern technology but it's a lot more expensive. Finishing off the hide, a small group of us moved down to what we call Ruby's bench at the bottom of Hagg Lane, which had become neglected to the point of not being usable. Just enough modern technology left in the trailer to make a smashing job of reclaiming this area.

Thanks to all who have turned out for the last couple of task days but it would be nice to see just a few more coming on a regular basis.

Keith Kendall

Group Recorder

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I am quite a keen gardener but not having a great deal of time leaves a few rough edges. But this I have grown to enjoy more than the immaculate flowerbed and bowling green lawn. What's wrong with a few daisies in the lawn and a few slugs in the hostas? I much prefer the cottage garden with packed borders buzzing with insects. Try leaving patches of lawn to grow long. It's amazing what natural flowers grow and it can easily be cut again later in the season. Speaking of slugs, I have found that slug beer traps are amazingly successful and much more nature friendly than the bright blue slug pellets. I know beer is difficult to pour away in this manner for some of us but watered down and with added salt it is still potent. Has anyone got any better ideas?

Reports this quarter.

Mrs Joyce Wright enjoyed seeing a grey heron strutting around her garden in April. Derek Hastings - 6 curlews and 30 Canada geese in fields around Lower Redmires Reservoir and the first swift of the year off Lodge Moor Road. Roger Kite reported pied fly catcher on Second Coppice end April and 2 sparrow hawks at Swallow Wheel 4 May. Keith Kendall - water vole and several sightings of the woodpecker at Frank Wheel in April and first sky larks at Coppice House Farm. Dan Higbid witnessed a young fox make its way through his garden in May and his wife also witnessed a sparrow hawk in the garden. Maureen Owen is very privileged to have a greater spotted woodpecker as a regular visitor to her bird feeder.

If you have anything of interest or any concerns about Rivelin to share with us please contact me.

Graham Appleby

Pruning and Removal of Mature Trees

Letters of concern have been sent to the Council about the large number of planning applications to remove mature trees in Conservation and Tree Preservation Areas. Many of these are located in the Stannington, Broomhill, Fulwood and Crosspool areas. Comprehensive and helpful replies have been received from the Council's Head of Planning who emphasises that "the City Council policy is to protect healthy trees which are of amenity value; this is done by assessing every application vigorously and on their individual merits prior to any decision being made. Where a tree is felled the Council often asks applicants to plant a replacement. With regard to applications in the Stannington Area, all have been fully justified because of the poor condition of the trees and have been granted permission.

Resources for Planning

The recent report in the Star Newspaper (1/7/02) that the Council is failing to meet government targets for determining planning applications highlights the Group's concerns about the proposed cuts in staffing in the Planning Transport and Highways Department. Despite many objections, including from R.V.C.G, these cuts are to go ahead. This is despite an acceptance by the government and a number of national organisations that more, not less planners are needed. Unless the Department is properly resourced with motivated staff, there is a real danger that the environment of the City in general, and Rivelin Valley in particular, will not be adequately protected. The Group will continue to press the Council to reverse its decision to cut staff in the Planning Department.

Derek Hastings and Rita Whiteley

*“The Law doth punish man or woman
That steals the Goose from off The Common
But lets the greater felon loose
Who steals The Common from the Goose”*

Anon – 18th C

The High-tec Rivelin Roadshow

If you didn't manage to come and see us at Stannington, you will not have seen the video show of RVCG at work. Make sure you get to the Stephen Hill Craft Fayre which will be the next opportunity for a public display.

Roger Kite

A Clean Sweep

The Group was presented with a Silver Award for its work on improving the local environment at a recent Council area Panel meeting. Keith and Howard went along to receive the award on our behalf. The Gold Award went to our friends at Action for Stannington so we kept the whole thing in the Valley. Well done Danni.

Roger Kite

RVCG Barbecue

Once more around thirty people enjoyed our annual feast. The date is always very well chosen so watch for next year's event. It can be guaranteed – IT WILL NOT RAIN

Some Rivelin Facts

Rivelin Valley Road

Not so long ago there were some people who thought of Rivelin Valley Road as 'the new road' but it is now almost one hundred years old. It provided much needed work for the many unemployed in Sheffield and it was intended that 220 acres alongside the road be used for housing but fortunately that scheme did not materialise. The road cost £60,000 and we can still enjoy the wonderful avenue of lime trees that were planted at the time.

From Crookes Revisited Crookes Local History Group 1989

A City Father

For many years Bill Owen was a city councillor and for most of his life he lived in Crosspool or Walkley. Bill's father, John Owen came to Sheffield from the Black Country to work for the firm that is now Presto Tools but later was to work at Mousehole Forge, Malin Bridge as a partner in Hoyland Thomas & Company which soon merged with anvil makers Gregory Bros. Then he formed another company Owen, Thomas & Co though Mr Thomas was said to be a 'sleeping partner' as he was never sober but the firm went bankrupt in the 1930's. Bill was one of ten children and knew poverty as a child. Once he was carried to school because he had no shoes, (the incentive was that with full

attendance there was a half day holiday). Bill amongst many other things became a JP, Chairman of the City Polytechnic and Lord Mayor, also a passionate defender and lover of the countryside, possibly because lived close to Rivelin all his life. As a founder member of the Ramblers Association he was part of the 'right to walk campaign' and as chairman of the parks department removed the 'Don't walk on the grass signs' from our parks.

From Portrait of a City Father by Michael Holloway Sheffield Hallam University 1993

A Curious Name

Perhaps you have a laugh when you travel on Carsick Road but it is of Scandinavian origin – carre meaning a marshy place and sick or syke meaning a rill of water. In 1494 John Ryle paid a yearly rent of 16 shillings for Barncliffe and 1 acre of meadow called 'le Carre'. *From More of Mayfield Valley Muriel Hall J W Northend Ltd 1974*

Woodhouse lane Farm Countryside Centre

This unique part of the local heritage has just undergone a restoration as a base for all sorts of countryside activities. We ourselves, together with Action for Stannington have taken over one storeroom for tools and other materials. There are meeting rooms of all sizes, an educational suite and the old grain store makes an ideal reception room or dance hall. The council's Countryside Planners and the Rights of Way Unit are based there, right on our doorstep – how convenient! Roger, Keith and Ken attended the formal Celebration Opening where we manned a display to ensure all those VIPs (eg reps from the Heritage Lottery Fund) were aware of us. An extremely useful 'networking exercise' – and not a bad buffet either - sorry you missed it Howard. All it needs now is more use by the community – anyone fancy a winter barn dance?

Roger Kite

The Farm Lad was helping out on top of the stack, placing the final sheaves. "Ah say, mister, hoo is ah t'git doon?" The old man looked up and shouted back, "Shut thee ees an' walk about a laal bit."

Cumbria

Any likeness to the humour of any farming RVCG member is frankly coincidental.

Stop Press:

We have just heard that, after 18 months pressure, the Council has managed to find the funds to repair Rivelin Mill Dam. Thanks must go to your committee members who have kept the issue at the forefront of Council Officers' and Members' minds, written to MPs, badgered and cajoled. It will be up to us to ensure the repair scheme is followed by improvement to the Car Park once the Works Department has finished. We have in mind a board platform, grass and wild flower seeding and picnic benches at the end of the dam and may be appealing for contributions to kick start a grant application. Watch this space. Roger Kite

Sheffield Environment Month Facts

368 separate events

77 different groups

7932 attendees

Our new series of Open Meetings Starts soon

Bring your family or friends

EVERYONE WELCOME