
Newsletter



Rivelin Valley Conservation Group

Winter 2002 no 45

Through The Chair

A Wake up call

Early January and the world outside your window is covered in ice and snow yet the sun's warmth – as long as you are sitting in a south facing window –reminds us that the days are getting longer and spring will burst upon us soon. The mallard are already paired up, down on the ponds, even though they resemble skating rinks at the moment. Have you seen a male bullfinch today? A sight for sore blinkered eyes, resplendent in his new winter breeding plumage. He's ready for action! Are you? There are plans to be made for 2003. No! Not those brochures from the travel agency – those that will focus our attention in Rivelin Valley. The council has been talking again about Sheffield's ambition as a tourist destination. Yes we have a top shopping centre, theatres and a Winter Garden. Local communities however will continue to put at the top of their list parks, tree lined streets and the easy access to wonderful countryside. Are you doing your bit to make the Council Members and Officers listen? A relatively small amount invested in Rights of Way and features in the countryside such as dam walls could ensure Sheffield continues to be great place to visit. We need to start campaigning now to stop the dereliction. Some aspects may be ideal for the wildlife but what's the use of that if we can't visit it? How can we advertise Sheffield to any prospective tourist? Are you proud of your valley or do you, like me, have to make excuses for this community's failure to look after our heritage?

Roger and Out

Contacts

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Task Team Reports

Well here we are again. It hardly seems three months since I last sat down to inform you of the Team's antics. We have been so busy of late, not only planting 3,000 spring bulbs in and around our area, but also installing the first of our markers at the Hind Wheel dam. If you have not seen the marker, please go down to take a look and let us have some feedback through our web site.

www.rivelinvalley.org.uk

The choice of cast iron for these markers is to point to the vital role that steel has had in the valley and by letting them rust naturally, they will become more rustic and blend in better than some shiny stainless steel object. Anyone wishing to sponsor one of these markers would be welcome.

We would love to place one at all 19 sites. A sponsor's / loved one's name can be cast into the marker as a permanent reminder of your affection for your valley for years to come.

Sunday 6th January 2003

It is not in my nature to criticise our Task Team. They are a sterling collection of fine men that will tackle anything at a moment's notice. Believe it or not, the task days are actually planned well in advance and the team just turn up on a Sunday morning and turn their hand to the job in question. Amongst those sterling men we have pyrotechnics that can burn anything.... **usually!** But this Sunday morning they failed miserably. Maybe it was something to do with the three inches of snow covering everything that had something to do with it and the fact that before the snow we had thirty hours of non-stop rain. But undeterred after 2½ hours of trying, they managed something resembling their usual efficiency. 10/10 for effort lads.

Keith Kendall

Please note

We now have an e-mail address
rvcg@supanet.com

New Planning Laws

In December 2002 the Government published a Planning Bill, which introduces significant changes to the planning system. Among the changes are the preparation of new development documents that will include planning policies, development proposals and a map showing what goes where. These documents must conform to Regional Strategies. In our case, this will cover the Yorkshire and the Humber area.

Also proposed are statements of community involvement. These will show how Planning Authorities (in our case, Sheffield City Council) intend to involve people in drawing up plans for the future and in considering planning applications for specific sites. The new development documents will have to contribute to sustainable development, defined as high and stable levels of economic growth and employment, social progress, effective protection of the environment and prudent use of resources.

The Government expects improved consultation to strengthen the role of communities in the future. Also, instead of permission for development being granted in outline, a statement of development principles will be issued indicating whether the Council agrees with the development in principle. Detailed planning permission for development will still be required.

The legislation is expected to be in place by summer 2003 but it has already been criticised by a number of people working in the planning and development fields. Some of the main concerns are:

The vagueness of the definition of sustainable development and how it will be interpreted; the lack of any clear message on democracy, participation and the need to deal with climate change; the lack of local accountability for decisions taken at the regional level; a bias in favour of business interests; and the plethora and complexity of documents which will comprise the future plans for an area.

RVCG will need to keep a close watch on how the changes are implemented and how they affect the protection and conservation of the Valley's environment. In particular we will expect improvements in consultation procedures on planning matters.

Derek Hastings

Going Bats

Tuesday 29th October was our bat watch evening. The weather on the days before had been absolutely atrocious but fortunately this night was dry or at least not raining. A few hardy souls braved the elements although the fog was so thick it was hard to tell just how many of us there were. The air was electric as we wellied off with note books, torches and our new RVCG bat detectors. First stop Hind Wheel. A classic place for bats to skim across the water catching moths and midges – but alas, not tonight. Fortunately the fog was beginning to lift and so after saying hello to each other we soldiered on down the narrow dark path, still full of high spirits and the anticipation of detecting our first bat.

We could have had an early 'Dawn Chorus' as Howard's and Keith's million watt rechargeable torches brought an early sunrise to the valley in the hope of seeing a fox or badger or anything alive would do. Unfortunately they only lasted about 3 minutes before the battery drained and the light slowly reduced to a glimmer and with it our hopes of seeing any bats.

But not to be too despondent, we changed tact and ventured out of the valley and up Coppice Lane. There were bound to be bats around the old farmhouses.....but not tonight! So back to the Rivelin Hotel it was after an excellent evening enjoyed by all. Although the bats may have been frightened off by Keith's torch we did spot one Mallard and one moorhen whilst passing the dams and a family of shrews on the edge of Rivelin Valley Road.

Graham Appleby

Verging Towards Carelessness

How can we expect to set an example to the next generation in civic pride and caring for the environment when adult leadership fails to set the standard? Our elected leaders, on our behalf recently invoked powers to heavily fine car owners for parking on grass verges. This follows litter campaigns and a whole host of other antisocial acts. What a shame our society nowadays has to legislate for what was once regarded as common courtesy and thinking of others – and simply taking a pride in your community. Following our bulb planting exploits, your committee has heartily endorsed the Council's latest move.

Roger Kite

Recorder

Thank you to Louise and Howard Sanderson for trialling the direct report facility on our new web site as follows:

1. Male sparrow hawk took a collared dove from the tree in my garden 18/11/02
2. Male Sparrow hawk was on my lawn with a sparrow in its talons. 15/11/02

I think you need a notice on the gate 'Beware Ferocious Sparrowhawk'. Just hanging the washing must be a frightening experience.

The following reports were received and written with so much passion I just had to leave them as they were written:

Dear Graham,

Last Sunday (3rd Nov) I couldn't believe my eyes so I was glad that my wife Susan was with me to witness an unusual occurrence as we walked up the Valley towards Rivelin Post Office. We had just passed Wolf Dam and were at the next weir where the river was flowing very fast and I caught sight of a fish leaping up the weir. We stopped and waited and a few minutes later, the fish tried again. Without any chance of clearing the distance it disappeared only to leap out again a few minutes later in another valiant attempt. It looked like a trout (no bigger than 6-9 inches). On our return from the Post Office about half an hour later, it was still trying! We normally have to travel right up to Pitlochry to witness salmon leaping, but never knew we had such events on our doorstep. We thought you may wish to include this sighting in the next newsletter but would be interested to know if anyone has heard of or seen anything like this before down Rivelin.

Yours sincerely,

Philip and Susan Walshaw

Dear Graham,

I am a member of the Rivelin Valley Conservation Group and had a poem of mine published in Keith Kendall's book "Walking the Rivelin". I thought that perhaps my own memories of Rivelin during the 1940's might be of some interest to other members. My Great Aunt Nellie Furness lived at No.1 Cottage, Rivelin Valley Road from being a young bride until her death at the age of 87 in 1980. She and husband Ted brought 13 children into the world. Ted's mother lived in the large house at the top of the steep path beginning from the site of the cottages. He worked at the Hind Wheel in the Valley and died prematurely from the effects of inhaling grinding dust. Aunt Nellie was renowned for making tea for picnickers, with her kettle constantly on the boil and her door

always open. At summer weekends and holidays my mother and I visited my aunt to help out. When possible my father went with us to tend his allotment at the bottom of Hagg Lane. Many times did I walk down Den Bank from Dad's garden to the cottage or made the journey in reverse. We spent many happy days there and I tried to recapture those scenes in my previously mentioned poem. I hope that these memories might be of some interest.

Barbara Barnsley

Please visit our web site

'www.rivelinvalley.org.uk' and let us have your thoughts and experiences of the valley. We could also try to answer any questions you may have.

Group recorder - Graham Appleby

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Roger Kite

Christmas Walk Bradfield and Lathkill Dales

Despite the prospect of appalling weather and a flu virus that seemed to be going around knocking seven people of the walk at short notice, six brave souls still managed a superb walk along the dales. Bradford Dale was mostly under water so we had to skate around it but what spectacular views of water gushing out of Lathkill Dale and the flooding of the footpaths lower down just added to the fun of the day. The extra bonus was the foul weather that had been predicted never came and so a superb walk was had with views to stay in the memory for a long time and with a dipper count of seventeen, same as last year.

Happy New Year to all team members and thanks for all your efforts

Keith Kendall

Imagine That

How would you like a new des-res on Den Bank Edge? Think of the views and ignore the precipitous slopes. You could imagine you were in an Italian hilltop village. Or how about the sound of the Rivelin lulling you to sleep in your new abode on the banks of the Rivelin between Hind Wheel and the S-bend on Rivelin Valley Road? This could have happened according to the 'City of Sheffield Public Health Act 1925' map of areas to be developed. This was before our present day planning laws. Most proposals for Crosspool and Lodge Moor have taken place. (Stannington does not figure as it was in the old West Riding.)

The area that has not been developed went in a line from approximately Den Bank House on Manchester Rd, down the valley to Hagg Cottages on Hagg Lane and the eastern end of Hind Wheel, then along the river to the S-bend on Rivelin Valley Road, continuing as far as the cemetery. Both sides of Bole Hill Road and Clough Fields were to be included.

If you think that this is an amazing proposition just hear what would happen to the roads in the area. Hagg Lane was to have its bottom corner cut off to straighten it as it neared the bad bend on Long Lane where it would veer off to the northeast and down the valley, crossing Hagg Hill and skirting Reaps Road to join Rivelin Valley Road at the cemetery. Looking at the map, this seems like a logical attempt to straighten what could have become a far busier road than it is now. Another new road would have cut across the Rivelin from close to the car park area near to Hagg Cottages on Hagg Lane to join Rivelin Valley Road, close to the present footpath. A new road would continue from the end of Long Lane at the Bole Hill Road/Back Lane junction, across Clough Fields to join up with Tinker Lane. No doubt this plan would also please some present day early morning commuters.

But before we get too sanctimonious about these plans, which would have substantially changed the area, let's remember that the whole of Crosspool was once open countryside, which was once enjoyed by people who lived in inner city areas and now lived in by many of us.

M Sanderson

Stamping Your Authority

If you have the odd stamp left over from all those Christmas cards why not put them to good use and drop a line to your local councillor, wish them Happy New Year and get a dig in about the repairs to Rivelin Mill Dam? We wouldn't want them to think we'd forgotten about it! Because they surely will if we let them.

Thanks Again

More donations since last August – Culmer Hobson Morton Parker Warrender and Glaves. Thanks to you all and hope I haven't forgotten anyone. Over 2002, we have received around £200 along with your membership and it is all well used alongside all the muscle power involved in keeping our valley in good nick.

Keeping the Traditions Going

Once again we had our Christmas Carol singing at the Rivelin Hotel well accompanied by the Stannington Brass Band and Iain Sharpe. For those of you who have not been to our annual event we are keeping alive the traditional local carols that have long been sung in this area.

On BBC Radio Four there has recently been a programme about the history of these carols, which continue mainly in the north of England. We are indebted to local people from the past such as John Hall, an anvil worker, who died in the poorhouse and produced some of this work, which remains alive today. These carols are not sung in church and it is generally agreed that they are better suited to pubs or outside singing. In the early years of the 19th century, vicars were getting increasingly concerned about the singing in church. One vicar called the choir 'unruly and vexatious' as they disrupted the order of service and were often 'pests of the parish'. This led to a national standard of church singing, which did not accommodate local quirky variations. So what did these singers do? They decamped to the local streets and pubs so come and join us next year and listen to something remarkable.

M Sanderson

Monthly meetings

What a shame if you missed our recent meetings. Malcolm Nunn entertained us with more bygone slides and David Lyon enlightened us on history of Sheffield Water Works and the workings of the Rivelin. Do join us at future meetings.

Don't Forget – Renew Membership