
Newsletter



Rivelin Valley Conservation Group

Spring 2004 no 50

Through The Chair

Heraldic colours or What Would You Nail to Your Mast?

It's that time of the year when we get woken by the sound of pattering feet! No, it's not grand children – we've got starlings nesting under the eaves again. The early morning outing to fetch the milk is accompanied by a throaty warbling serenade as the starling sits enjoying the morning sun on the edge of the gutter. If you haven't studied the iridescent plumage then take another look. This is one of the most colourful characters in the bird world. Always ready to show off and loudly herald in the another wonderful day in Rivelin Valley. Now there's a lesson for us all!

There are so many pressures on this most loved section of Sheffield's countryside, we need to shout very loud. Whether you were a 19th century mill worker, getting some fresh air in your lungs, a 20th century family looking for an easy access picnic site or a 21st century enthusiast for our industrial and natural heritage, Rivelin evokes fond memories for every Sheffielder. An enlightened Corporation over 100 years ago took the decision to protect this special place for future generations. Now, more than at any time in the past, do we need to remind Officers and Members what will be irretrievably lost if those responsible for its maintenance and protection fail in their responsibility? The ad hoc spread of horse riding establishments and the creeping urbanisation of the agricultural landscape has to be controlled or 22nd century Sheffield will look on us as failures. How about putting pen to paper and using some colourful language of your own?

Roger and out

A letter has been sent to the C.P.R.E. supporting its proposed amendments to government planning legislation now going through Parliament. Of particular interest to the Group is the need to increase Council powers and resources for the enforcement of planning decisions.

Contacts

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Summer Programme Events

Apart from all the local activities, we have arranged two trips to look at two very different local reserves – the conversion of the old sewage beds at Blackburn Meadows and the brand new development at the RSPB Old Moor Wetland Site.

Both need to be booked in advance so that the reserve staff can be forewarned.

We will be travelling courtesy of Car-share. Contact Roger Kite or Janet Bowring (see above) if you would like lift organising. Extra costs are not known at the moment as these are in the process of being arranged, Tuesday 15th June – 7.00pm at Blackburn Meadows

Sunday 11th July – 10 till 4 at Old Moor

Don't forget our BBQ – use the form please
Task Day News

4th – 25th January

These two task days had us working again in the Upper Hag Wood and having good turnouts on both occasions, we managed to get quite a lot done. Great days these when we light our big bonfires and even then when using a bow saw you soon begin to work up a sweat. There is always a glutton of volunteers wanting to work the fires.

One more big push in these woods and we will be through to the hide area then we can make a start on the bottom half.

29th February

We decided to go back to Carver Fields and try our hand at dry stonewalling. This is the wall that BTCV have had a couple of goes at trying to do but we have always been hampered by the lack of stone on site (no doubt holding a dozen garden walls up along the Den Bank estate).

Late Last year we came across an old dry stone wall in the valley which had been buried for years, so we received permission to remove part of it and move it up to Hagg Lane to complete the wall above the top gate. On the day, we had one of the best turnouts for a Task Day for a long time. I'm not sure if it was the lure of dry stonewalling or the fact that the new hi-viz waistcoats were being handed out. (Thank you to North Sheffield Re-generation Partnership for funding these). Anyway, all looking smart in the new vests, we set about the wall and in no time had it up and looking quite good for a load of amateurs and the bonus was an old mill wheel which Julie found hiding just below the surface of the field. This was duly removed and set into the wall by three burly looking types, a good finishing touch.

Not only did we get the top half done but we also managed to complete three metres below the gate. There is still a lot of work to be done here. A lot of the toppers need changing and a small retaining wall building leading around the stone gatepost but on the whole it looks good.

Not only did all this happen because of the good turnout but we managed to do quite a lot of birch felling on the open Hag side and cutting back overgrown branches along the footpaths through the tennis court area. Thankyou to everyone who turned out for the day that always threatened snow but turned out fine. A special thank you to Frank Revitt for turning out and giving the group the benefit of his huge experience at dry stonewalling. We all learned a lot from him on the day. Also to Tony Andrews for getting dragged out to help alongside the volunteers. It came as quite a shock to him to find that he is now on our books as a walling expert.

28th March

Another great turnout by the group and it was nice to see all six new volunteers from the dry stonewalling turning out again. Down on the nature trail now and clearing up the small trees around the Upper Cut wheel pit. There is a lot of buried stonework here that we intend to reclaim and restore as much as we can. The wheel pit itself was cleaned of all the old trees

that had self set over the years, overhanging trees on the footpath were removed and a general clear up ready for creating a small pond back at the top side of the wheel pit when it dries enough to get a machine in to dig it out. Eventually this will become another favourite area for people to sit on one of our benches and just wonder at the wildlife within our valley.

A small group also had another attempt at rebuilding the footpath edge. This is to complement the work we did on this last year and the work that the council has put in these last few weeks for which we are grateful.

On the downside, it has been noticed that a couple of trials bikes are starting to use the nature trail again. If you see anyone on the trail, please don't get involved yourself, just try your best to get a good description of the bike and any clothing they may be wearing (helmets etc) and ring the police with the details when you get in. We are sure that it is just a couple of locals and with your help and enough of us ringing the police will be able to trace them back to their home.

(Hopefully soon)

The one that was reported to me came down from Long Lane at Stannington and down past the quarry onto Rivelin Valley Road, then took a right turn at the 'S' bend through the railings at the old toilet site and up the hill coming out on Hagg Lane.

Keith Kendall

Summer Sales

Several prominent properties in the valley will be coming onto the market this summer. Looks like a busy time ahead for the Plans sub- committee. New owners are bound to mean new ideas – let's hope their wish to live in Rivelin is because 'they like it as it is'.

Roger Kite

Donations

What a lot we have had this year!

We thank all the following who are most generous to the group.

Hague, Lofthouse, Hastings, Toplis, Cressey, Jackson, Peter, Tranter, Appleby, Brazil, Cooper, Drinkwater, Fry, Lyon, Stubbins, Beck, Bowring, Perrett, Southwell, Andrews, Ducker, Green, Grimes, Mason, Brookes, Cousins, Dean, Givans, Grace, Linley, Morrell, Rybinski, Wilde, Greatorex.

All this will be well used. Altogether you have given more than £400 this year.

THANKYOU

Membership

Membership was due in January. Many have renewed. If you haven't, it is not too late. Please check first as some of you have tried to renew twice. If you have lost your form, just send £3 to RVCG. M Sanderson, 35 Den Bank Crescent, S10 5PB. Please make cheques to RVCG.

EVENTS

Pond/River Dipping 21st March

Five children and a few adults pretending to be children turned out for this annual event. All enjoyed squelching around in mud with nets looking at the wildlife to be found in the water.

Here is what James, age five thought.

'I liked it best when Jonathon helped me to use the big yellow net. We put all the wiggly things in a plastic box and looked at them with a magnifying glass. There was something that looked like a crab that lived in a shell and something that looked like a caterpillar but wasn't. This leg got wet but that one didn't. It was really cold when it went down my sock.'

Finds at Second Coppice Pond from R Kite

Stickleback	Perch
Trout	Freshwater Shrimp
Pond Snail	Leech
Worm	Water boatman
Backswimmer	Diving Beetle

Hawker Dragonfly

River by the stepping stones

Limpet	Worm	Simulium	Freshwater Shrimp
Mayfly		Bactis sp.	
		Ephemera danica	
		Ecdyonurus	
Stonefly		Nemoura sp	
		Leuctra	
Caddis		Rhyacophila sp	
		Hydropsyche sp	

RAMBLES AROUND SHEFFIELD

A rather interesting book has been passed on to me by Roger. It was published by Sir W C Leng of the Sheffield Telegraph in the early years of the 20th century. Leng had much local interest, having built The Towers on Sandygate Road as his residence. 'Rambles around Sheffield' was written to 'remind the people of Sheffield of the glorious scenery they have within easy reach of their homes'. Several people have written the various walks but are identified only by their initials. The book is a strong reminder of what we have lost in our city which should only serve to

ensure that what we have now we should hold onto. Here are a few of the observations found on the walks.

In Woodseats, 'There is a rural smell of turnips in the fields'.

'A carpet of bluebells' – near Laycock's works.

'Half dozen sleeping horses' – Moonshine Lane

'Keep to the public footpaths' say the signs in Ecclesall Woods (because of the birds kept there for shooting)

'A farm which is rapidly becoming a town house' – near Bannerdale Road.

Neepsend is 'delightfully rural and pretty'.

Toadhole Dyke (near Sheffield Wednesday) is 'sweetly fresh and pretty'.

A photograph of Heeley shows a man in a straw boater sitting on a fence looking over a field.

All the walks in the book give directions from a local tram terminus and for Rivelin it is Crookes, Walkley or Nether Green. The writer praises The Municipality for providing Sheffield with Rivelin Valley and Wyming Brook.

'I had barely left the streets of Crookes when I found before me a veritable panorama'.

He spent four hours 'sipping the beauty of the valley'. He described it as a beautiful holiday centre, not like Blackpool or other crowded seaside places but for its variety of scenery.

He wanted to see the valley appreciated but because it was in smoky Sheffield it was virtually ignored. The big fear was that it would soon lose its charms. Already the march of ugly housing had been noticed and even worse the new Rivelin Valley Road was being built. He shuddered at the thought of speculative builders who might follow this road and suggested that nothing should be built beyond Malin Bridge. Little did he know that the Council's Planning Map Of the 1920's allowed for building along the valley bottom which fortunately has not taken place. 'When you get home', he said, 'You will be prouder than ever of the fact that you are a Sheffielder'.

That's what we all think isn't it?

M Sanderson

OPEN MEETINGS

These are well attended. If you haven't been, please do find time for a convivial evening. You can bring anyone with you – they do not have to be a member. There is a small charge to cover the cost of the hall. Look out for the dates in the programme.

In February we had a 'Tour of the Seasons' by the wildlife photographer David Welsh. The key to being an excellent wildlife photographer is to be totally unconcerned about your personal safety.

You have to construct your own tottering Eiffel Tower from scaffolding and be prepared to spend hours on top while waiting for baby kestrels to come into this world. Or how about being roped to a never-ending ladder, swaying in the breeze to catch that perfect shot of herons?

Hides have to be constructed painstakingly and moved slowly towards your subject so as not to frighten them off and worse, after spending a night there you emerge frozen solid. It must be some relief to photograph flowers.

Our March meeting was held at Stannington and we were well pleased at the number of people who attended. We hope to repeat this again.

Our speaker Chris Thompson lectures in countryside management. He works with farmers to encourage wildlife. His interest is lapwings, curlews and twites which are little brown birds akin to linnets. All are diminishing in numbers. He has visited over 230 farmers covering the Peak District to promote conservation work which means providing birds with the food they need not 'improved grassland' which does not give them essential seeds.

The poor twite of which there are only 200-600 pairs left, nests on the ground which leaves it wide open to predators but fortunately there are some breeding at Edale.
M Sanderson

Our thanks to our arranger of talks, Maureen Owen. We will look forward to a new season.

Enjoy Sheffield Environment Weeks

- we hope to see you some time.