



Newsletter



Rivelin Valley Conservation Group

Autumn 2004 no 52

Through The Chair

Failed Harvests

Much has been written this year about failing harvests. Seeds which appeared to be sown at the right time were hit by a dull spring, summer storms and waterlogged autumn soils. All this has resulted in poorer quality and smaller crops. Harder to come by pumpkin lamps and more expensive vegetables make the headlines but few will have heard of the plight of the Silver Unlovin Tree. A shrub of mixed origins – easily put about, especially when confronted by poor weather conditions. Usually seen on uncultivated riverbanks and around the silted edges of overgrown ponds, the species has been missing from several records this year. When located, it has been noted that some lead shoots simply haven't appeared. Output from the Silver Unlovin Tree Works has however remained constant. Younger specimens benefit from less overshadowing and young whips can be seen to take on the role of leaders. If you've got this far and come to the decision that your chairman has at last flipped completely, at least it proves that you do actually read this column. I'm rarely challenged and seldom get any feedback. So what does actually happen to the seeds that get planted here? Go on – prove me wrong and volunteer to join us for an event or two in the winter programme. Please don't be a crop failure.

Roger and out

Contacts

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Please note

We have an e-mail address
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Planning

The RVCG regularly investigate local planning applications. These can be seen in the latest RVCG newsletter available to members only.

What Might Have Been?

Planning matters take up a lot of time in our group and it is important that we keep a watch on things. If we had been here 50 years ago perhaps we would still have the wonderful cruck barn at 'The Wiggins' on Crimicar Lane. It was demolished along with the Isolation Hospital to make way for housing and all that marks the spot where the hospital and barn stood is the remains of the hospital perimeter wall on Crimicar Lane.

Donations

Thanks to Daines and Bowring. We welcome these additions to our funds. Every bit helps us with our work in the valley.

Bat Watch

Bat Watch took place on the evening of Tuesday 21st September. It was a surprisingly dry clear evening after days of torrential rain. A small group met at the Rivelin Hotel car park although at 8pm, it was already quite dark and a few of us were anxious that we may have already missed the twilight flurry of bat activity. We all shuffled down the steep Tofts Lane with eager anticipation towards Hind Wheel where we weren't disappointed. Roger's bat detector immediately delivered a typical crackle that only a bat fanatic would recognise. A Pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*), was feeding over Hind Wheel Pond. Keith Kendall proudly displayed his new torch which was even bigger than last year's and could easily have lit up the moon, although a bit disappointed to find the battery in his bat detector had gone flat. Whilst I had forgotten my torch all together and struggled to record our findings in the glimmer of other people's torch light. Excitedly we beavered on down the twisty uneven path, (a bit tricky without a torch), like a group of boy scouts on their first outward bounds. Roger detected a Noctule bat (*Nyctalus noctia*) overhead and several more Pipistrelles silently flitting through the night air above our heads. Torchlight appeared in the distance and we were eventually joined by several more enthusiasts (one all the way from America) and thankfully not by the police coming to investigate our strange nocturnal activities. The highlight of the evening was a pair of Daubentons (*Myotis daubentonii*) skimming the surface of the river and happily demonstrating their flying skills in front of our searchlights. All this from a basic £30 bat detector although we considered upgrading to something a bit more professional. Results:

1 Noctule, 5 Daubenton, 14 Pipistrelle.

Graham Appleby

The Rocks Remain

In the last newsletter, I asked if anyone knew of the origins of the heraldic carvings on Den Bank Edge. Thanks to a member, Mrs Gladwell, I have some more information. She remembers them in the 60's and thought that they looked new but as they are known to exist before this, she

thought that someone, maybe the original carver had re-worked them and this is a possibility as they are now looking rather faint again. She also thinks that the workmen from Bell Hagg Quarry had the expertise to do them. So the question remains. Does anyone know more? Those of you who have been to Carver Fields recently might have noticed the millstone, now set into the wall. It was found by an RVCG working party some time ago but the question remains, 'Why was it on the sports field in the first place? The mystery is solved by Mary Brazil. She remembers millstones supporting the goal posts. Was this because the posts were being vandalised? If one has been found, then there must be three more somewhere. Could they be in someone's garden? Another stony problem – last summer I mentioned the conduit which took water from Rivelin Dams to a dam on Crookesmoor via Conduit Road. Two more marker posts have been found near to Bole Hill Road. The conduit was lined with flagstones. Here is another question. Why were the marker stones put there? They do not follow the whole route of the conduit as it passes under the fields and only the ones found are marked on the Ordinance Survey map so they must have had some purpose other than markers.

M Sanderson

Events in Loxley

Wadsley and Loxley Commoners would like you to know details of the following events. Contact Hannah Isherwood for any queries- tel 2335331

Tuesday 23rd Nov 7.30 pm Wisewood School "A Pub on Every Corner" – talk by Douglas Lamb.

Sunday 28th Nov 10.30am Long Lane – a tidy up on the Common.

Saturday 4th Dec 7 – 10pm Folk Band and carols at Wood Lane Countryside Centre tel 2316982

Sunday 5th Dec 10 – 4pm Christmas Fayre Wood Lane Countryside Centre

Tuesday 14th Dec 7pm Wisewood School – talk "Christmas Traditions" Patricia Flinders

Sunday 26th Dec 11am Rural Lane Car Park- Eric's Hangover Hike – allow 2-3hours

Roger's Rivelin Cryptic Quiz

"Ms Robinson canonised and in something tonight"

"Sort of spot Dot who makes it here"

"Don't leave your car in the middle of the road"

Answers to last time

Grogram

Swallow

Lodge Lane

Open Meetings

Tuesday 14th Sept "Hill 60 – A first World War Site

Most of us would think that a world war archaeological site would be abroad but we have one on our doorstep, hidden and forgotten for many years. Christine Stirling and Helen Ullathorpe of Sheffield University gave an account of the "Sheffield Pals" and their part in the 1st World War. At a time of heavy recruitment, the newly formed battalion, started by two Sheffield University students was sent to Redmires in December 1914 and consisted of 1131 men. They had already completed their first round of training at Bramall Lane, much to the detriment of the turf. The Council had built the camp of timber at the site of the old racecourse and it was meant to toughen the men for action. At 1000ft above sea level, its exposed situation and spartan conditions must have made life difficult. That winter, snow blocked up their doors. One recruit died of pneumonia and another two were buried at Fulwood Church. The men were put to hard work. One of their tasks was quarrying stone for footpaths but an important part of their training was to practise digging trenches and it is this activity that has been revealed on the hill above Redmires. Aerial photographs show the huge extent of their work as the trenches zigzag across the hillside. When the men left for the battlefield, they walked down through Sandygate and Crosspool, escorted by a band. On July 3rd 1916, 53 of them were killed and 75 wounded, aged between 19 and 36 years.

Tuesday 12th September "The Sheffield Flood" Malcolm Nunn

Once more Malcolm Nunn was our speaker, this time on the Sheffield Flood. In 1864, Dam Flask broke its banks and its contents flooded out through Bradfield, down the River Loxley to the River Don, causing mayhem, disaster and death on its way. The first loss of life was a two-day old baby in Low Bradfield. At Roebuck House, a man broke off a sideboard leg to smash a hole in the roof for his family to escape. At Trickett's Farm, Malin Bridge, servants, lodgers and visitors all died, with no-one to milk the surviving cows. Joseph Chapman of Holme Lane was found floating alive in a wooden box. A drunken man, locked up in a flooding Hillsborough Police Station, rapidly sobered up and screamed to the duty sergeant and was freed with a caution. The story of the flood was accompanied by photographs of the aftermath, most places looking like a bomb site and unrecognisable. Many of the wheels were destroyed and houses ruined, with huge mounds of rubble and mud seeping everywhere. Sightseers came from all over and had their photographs taken, ladies in stiff Victorian clothes and men in stovepipe hats. Boys of course were always perched on top of huge piles of rubble or posing on precarious girders. Mrs Kirk of Dam Flask stands with her rescued cat and dog but had already watched her house disintegrate. Queen Victoria sent £200 and many more subscriptions followed. Over 200 people died and businesses were ruined, all because of an ill constructed dam wall.

Margaret Sanderson

Do join us at our Open Meetings and other events. Bring a friend and enjoy yourself.

Don't forget carol singing at the Rivelin Hotel on Tuesday 7th December. Hear carols as you have never heard them before – they are our own local ones. Saturday 18th December – Christmas walk and lunch at the Rivelin Hotel – book with Roger and our first open meeting of the New Year is David Hey – "The early history of the early Hallamshire Cutlery Industry" Consult your Winter Programme.

Do you have any interesting stories about Rivelin for our Newsletter?

Please send them to Margaret Sanderson.

Happy Christmas to you all!