



Newsletter



Rivelin Valley Conservation Group

Spring 2005 no 54

Through the Chair

Sounds of Spring

So which is it for you? – The melodious song of an early morning blackbird or the croaking of the amorous amphibians down on the pond. The birdlife has certainly been making its presence felt, establishing and then defending its territory and my garden pond has more than its fair share of frogspawn. Just about now bucketsful appear at the more accessible ponds in the valley. A shame some folk have still tried to tip it in a non-existent Rivelin Mill pond! If you need to off load some please use our recently cleared out Uppercut Wheel at the S-bend. It needs seeding with some established pondlife. The recent access improvements here have been much appreciated by Nature Trail users. Lots of folk have already found it a great place to sit and enjoy the sounds of Rivelin – so many families in fact that you regularly hear that other sound of spring – children laughing and playing as they explore the delights of our valley. You should try it yourself sometime.

Roger and Out

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 payable to RVCG.

**Please renew now, we value your help.
It all makes a difference in our valley.**

Contacts

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Mail to: rvcg@supanet.com

Web: www.rivelinvalley.org.uk

Donations

Once more, you have been very generous. So far this year, you have given over £350. Our thanks to – Lofthouse, Brownell, Couldwell, Drinkwater, Jackson, Owen, White, Andrew, Brazil, Cressey, Cross, Culmer, Dean, Glaves, Hanson, Greatorex, Peter, Heane, Hewitt, Hill, Jones, Liddell, Saunders, Shaw, Eustace, Grace, Hague, Hanaghan, Henderson, Kitchen, Large, Ryan Toseland, Ducker, Horsefield, Morrell, Sharpe, Wall. Whiteman, Slater, Whiteley, Morton, Perrett and Trantor. I hope no-one has been missed out.

This is very valuable for all our work in the valley.

Barbecue

Our annual barbecue seems a long way off but you might not receive your next newsletter by then so please use the enclosed form. We always have a good day, with Glenda's cooking and drinks provided, all for £3 but we would appreciate 'extras' in the form of cakes, tarts etc. It might be tempting providence but every year our barbecue has always had fine weather.

Date Sunday 24th July

Time 4pm

Venue The Hide

Cost £3

Please contact Margaret or Roger if you need more information.

Shirebrook Valley Nature Reserve Group Visit

This will be on Tuesday 14th June at 7.30 pm and will take approximately 1 - 1½ hours.

If you wish to join us on this visit please contact Janet Bowring on 2307570. We will operate a car share scheme if needed so if you would like a lift or are willing to offer a space to anyone else, please contact Janet.

Freshwater surveys

That's a grand title for a morning of fun, paddling in river and pond – fishing out all manner of wonderful creepy crawlies. For a change it was fine, warm and sunny and fairly well attended. It was certainly successful and proved that yet again our re-flooded ponds have improved in diversity and numbers of insects. Please report sightings of dragonflies later in the year to Graham

Roger Kite

Thank you to the following who have responded to our request for articles about Rivelin.

From Jasmine Simeone

It is a year since I left my lovely house by the Menai Bridge to come to live in Sheffield where my husband had got a new (and better) job. I was keen to come to Sheffield, but I knew that I would miss my daily dog walk along the sea, by the Menai Straight, and the wonderful birdlife on the salt flats. There were no less than 14 herons fishing along that stretch of water and I rarely failed to see several on each of my morning walks.

The thing about Sheffield though, is that it is not really big on sea . . . I thought that would be an obstacle to settling in, but before long and thanks to some unknown person I met on a dog walk in my early days here, we discovered the Rivelin Valley. We don't get down there from Crookes every day, but we do try to make a point of walking along it at least once a week, and it makes a wonderful place to take visitors for a walk of whatever length suits their capabilities and the time allowed.

Since I have discovered the valley, I have also seen my first ever kingfisher – he flew to and sat obligingly on a branch to allow me to admire his gorgeous back plumage and the side of his head, for at least a minute, and I have also once seen dippers flashing past and bobbing on the stones in mid-stream. Once I saw 14 magpies on a single tree. I have seen the trees in full leaf and all the shades of autumnal and spring colour – never the same two visits together. Oh yes, it compares very well with the seashore: a real local treasure trove, with that bubbly, lively silver-brown river running through it all.

From Carole Bagnall

I am a lover of the countryside and in deep awe of the wonders of the natural world. My partner, Richard, Shares this love of nature but is also fascinated by the power that can be generated by harnessing the elements.

So we two found our way from a visit to Richard's daughter in Sheffield (foreign climes for those from southern Derbyshire!) to the car park at Rails Road. It is 2 o' clock on a damp January day and we are aware of the time we have before the light fades. An hour out and an hour back we reckon.

We only get as far as Packhorse Bridge before photographs have to be taken; the photo opportunities that arise during the afternoon are too numerous to keep pace with. My "mind camera" can still see the wonderful carpet of colour from fallen beech leaves, the sculptural splendour of bare trunks, the mysterious depth of the valley, the smiling face of an early celandine as we cross the river, the meandering path of the water cut through russet earth and the remnants of old work places that have been witness to the toil and laughter of days long gone.

This landscape can create diverse images of life in the valley. J R R Tolkien could have dreamed up Hobbits living in this strange twisted world; Thomas Hardy could have left the "madding crowd" far behind in this silent interior; Kenneth Graham would certainly have observed his animal characters in this wildlife haven. I need not go on – everyone should visit the Rivelin Valley to exercise body, mind, imagination and spirit. We will be back.

Thank you to Jasmine and Simeone for these musings around Rivelin. It's strange that it takes two newcomers to the area to realise the delights of Rivelin when there are people who have always lived in the area and have never walked the valley.

We would always like to hear from you – there must be lots of interesting stories about Rivelin that we can print in our newsletter that would be of interest to everyone. Please send to M Sanderson at 35 Den Bank Crescent S10 5PB or to our e-mail address (on 1st page)

Even More Cryptic Quizzes

Stable for a Cross-breed found here.

Timber for a (K)navy from this wood.

A Land o'corn confused bird watchers on this street.

Answers to last time

Liberty Hill

St Michael's Cemetery

West Winds

Roger Kite

Recent Open Meetings

David Webb "What's in a Wood?"

Well – trees of course but a whole lot more according to David. The wood we visited was belonged to the Wentworth estate at Dale Dyke and we saw the natural life that it contained. We saw the amazing camouflage of the woodcock, sitting in bracken and a fluffy baby tawny owl that brought out "ahs" from the audience. We were given a bird's eye view of a nesting redstart and pied flycatcher, both with pale turquoise eggs and the mud-lined nest of a song thrush. A willow warbler and song thrush were endlessly feeding gaping mouths. Here we have a wild life photographer who follows the usual practice of his trade by braving tottering scaffolding towers to get near his prey and so giving earth bound viewers a sight that would have eluded them. The wood did of course have so much more. Here was a little gem on our doorstep where wild flowers, fungi, insect and animal life were in abundance. Even the ubiquitous garden weed, rose bay willow herb, showed its true worth, being a food plant for the elephant hawk moth. All of this was accompanied by wonderful views of the surrounding countryside.

Rod Amos "In the Land of the White Death"

The title came from a Russian on an expedition to chart the Arctic I suspect that much of the audience was glad to view this spectacular landscape from the comfort of Stephen Hill Church. We followed Rod's journey to Baffin Island in Canada, the land of the Inuit. We saw the life that the Inuit lived and Rod's party lived the same way, using dog pulled sleds and even staying for one night in an igloo. Yes, they are still made for hunting purposes but this is a dying skill as the Inuit take on a more modern way of life and tourism becoming a source of income. The traditional Inuit wears sealskin boots with rabbit skin linings and clothes of caribou skins and these become family heirlooms. Rod wore modern gear that kept him just as warm and was made in Sheffield. The Inuit and their dogs are a necessary unit in the Arctic landscape. At night, the dogs are tethered to the ice and provide an early warning for polar bears. Their food is seal meat. In camp, washing for Rod's party was a luxury consisting of a flannel and a handful of snow. Rod thought he had a brainwave by taking baby wipes but found that they froze as solid as a rock, as was his toothpaste. It was far more convenient to become smelly. He learned not to have a drink at night, as that would inevitably

mean a walk in the snow and untold horrors. Eventually a polar bear was sighted with its cub, looking as though it was posing for Fox's Glacier Mints and a seal was slaughtered for the dogs. This was a very inhospitable but beautiful landscape of many shades of blue and white where the sun just dipped towards the horizon and lifted again and then came the return to Ottawa, a warm hotel room and a bath.
M Sanderson

Notes From History (but not too far back)

The Towers on Sandygate Road is visible from many parts of the Valley. It was built as a home in Victorian times for the Leng family, newspaper publishers. During WW2, it became emergency offices for Spear and Jacksons, the Sheffield tool making firm which had been bombed and the staff had the luxury of working in beautiful surroundings. The firm had a garden party in 1944 to raise funds for "Salute the Soldier Week" and a cookery book was produced. It is full of evocative wartime recipes using reconstituted dried eggs, Household Milk and liberal use of bi-carb as a raising agent. There was mock marzipan, mock cream, mock mincemeat and mock crab (cheese, tomato, dried egg and vinegar). When the meat ration ran out you could make a tasty carrot pie or catch a rabbit. Your sausages were eked out by adding chopped onions and Bovril and pies were made with tinned Prem or Mor (where did these go?). Half Pay Pudding consisted of suet, flour, breadcrumbs and raisins, all boiled for five hours. The book has recipe section sent from the Canadian offices and they seemed blissfully unaware of restrictions over here as they contained liberal amounts of sugar, butter and eggs. The book finishes with household hints. To save your rapidly thinning tea cloths – stand cutlery to drain in jam jars. Save ash from your cigarette to brush your teeth. Remove corns by soaking feet in Epsom Salts and hot water. Melt together rendered lard, camphor and mustard, to be rubbed into the chest – but it does not say what this cures!

A final message from a Mr Pearson is – "Nil Desperandum! Once cooked for 250 men in the army, nearly got shot for it so no recipe".

M Sanderson

Please check your programme and join us.

Remember Dawn Chorus Walk 1st May 5am - meet at Carver Fields, top gate
Evening Walk 10th May 7 pm Meet Wolf Wheel Car Park
Shirebrook visit 14th June 7.30pm - contact Janet

Please renew membership if you haven't done so already.