



Newsletter



Rivelin Valley Conservation Group

Autumn 2005 no 56

Through The Chair

Hip, Hip, Hooray!

Yes, it's that time of year again, the season of mists and mellow fruitfulness. Well, we've certainly had the mists – what happened to that Indian summer? At least this morning there is a bit of brightness in the sky.

What's more it is lighting up some brilliant colours in our valley. The bright red colour in my rowan though, disappeared weeks ago. The antics of the blackbirds and song thrushes saw to that. Will there still be some left for the waxwings when they get here? There are plenty of are rosehips and thorn haws though. My more rustic friends tell me this means we are in for a hard winter. Better get stocked up with the bird food. A well-stocked feeding station ensures lots of colour and activity in otherwise drab winter gardens.

In the meantime, before getting locked in by snowdrifts, do enjoy those autumn tints. We none of us need to go far for a vantage point looking over our fantastic valley landscape which comes into its fiery best at the end of October. We do have something here to be cheerful about.

Roger and out

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Thanks to Everyone

This will be your last newsletter before Christmas and we send all our thanks to you for supporting us over the past year. Many people give a great deal of their spare time. There is always a lot of work to do in a group like ours whether it is physical work in the valley, never-ending paper work, printing this newsletter and organising its delivery to you. Time is spent organising meetings, cooperating with other organisations, recording wildlife and keeping an eye on our valley to save it for future generations. We could make a very long list of all the people who give their time and effort but please remember, being a member is one of the most important you can do for us. Thank you also for those who volunteered for newsletter delivery. This year we have had donations of nearly £400. Thank you to all our members.

Something New in the Valley

We all welcome the green of Rivelin Valley, in such easy access to us all. Also it is wonderful to have a thriving working farm in the valley when so much of our nearby countryside has been split up and taken over by houses. Coppice House Farm has been in existence for several hundred years as its thick walls, ancient beams and original ham hooks, still in place show. It must have seen much history. More recently, the architect and stonemason working on King Edward's Hospital stayed here while it was being built. Now the ever resourceful Pam and Frank Revitt have branched out and are letting a holiday cottage that is adjacent to their Grade 2 listed farmhouse. Once installed any visitors would be entranced by the rural delights and completely forget that they were only three miles from Sheffield city centre. The accommodation has a four star 'Visit Britain' rating and can sleep five. If you know anyone who wants to visit the area (very close to the Peak Park) please contact Pam Revitt on 0114 2301753 where you will have

much more information.

Not only are the Revitts taking on this new enterprise, they are also hoping to open a farm shop soon selling their own beef and lamb.

Some Recent Meetings

13th Sept – Weston Park Museum

This was our first Open Meeting of the new season and it brought us up to date with the refurbishment of the museum.

We all know that it was becoming very dilapidated, aged over 100 years. Indeed, its recent history has demanded buckets to catch rainwater. When the wraps come off its Grade 2 listed façade it will once again become a place to visit. The Heritage Lottery Fund, Sheffield City Council and South Yorkshire Objective have been responsible for funding. Just to set your minds at rest - the polar bear will still live there, (he visited Bristol and Glasgow in the meantime) and will be joined by Guy the Gorilla from the Natural History Museum. Also the bees will return, joined by a colony of leaf cutter ants, hopefully not in the same place.

A new addition will be a life and times display, a social history of the skills and industry of our area and how it affected the lives of people. Also there is the rescued interior of a late 19th century butcher's shop from Attercliffe complete with balances, tills and wooden counters. The musical, theatrical and artistic life of Sheffield will also be celebrated.

There is to be new natural history display showing habitats from 300 million years ago down to the present age, revealing the diversity of life in our area from woodland to moors. We are fortunate to have a fossil forest in Middlewood that has now been buried to preserve it but a mould of a tree trunk has been made for the display which will also display other fossils from our area and Derbyshire. As is predictable for our times there will be plenty of material for the National Curriculum and interactive items for children. The 'Weird and Wonderful' section will show some of the museum's exotic collection.

It took six months to pack all the museum's objects and by now they are re-appearing ready for opening next year. It will be good to have our museum back but the next stage will be the restoration of Weston Park.

Thanks to the museum staff for the informative meeting.

Sunday 2nd Oct General Cemetery Visit

Fortunately, it was a fine day for this visit, when a group of our members joined one of the 'Friends of the General Cemetery' regular tours.

We started at the Cemetery Avenue entrance and instantly we were transported to the Victorian way of death. The place is full of symbols – the avenue is lined with rowans reputed to keep the witches away, we cross the Porter (Styx?) then through the grand archway with its Doric columns, just like an entrance to the underworld. The cemetery was opened in 1836 because there was a need for more burial places owing to the growth of Sheffield and the overflowing churchyards. The land was bought from the Wilson family who owned the nearby snuff mills and was surrounded by open countryside.

It is full of old Sheffield worthies. Mark Firth, the Sheffield steelworker has an elaborate Grade II tomb, built while he was still alive and edged with wrought iron from his own foundry. His funeral procession was two miles long. Samuel Holberry, the Chartist is here who died aged 26 of TB in York prison after being forced to work the treadmill. He plotted to capture the Town Hall and was so popular with the labouring masses that 50,000 people attended his funeral. George Bennet was a missionary and is depicted leaning on a globe. His long missionary journey is retold on the back of the monument.

In contrast the cemetery is also full of children. Margaret Green, who died aged 45, is buried with 10 of her children. Also the cemetery contains mass graves for paupers and also for stillborn children.

There are two churches, one Church of England, in Gothic style designed by Flockton and the other a nonconformist chapel built in a strange mixture of classical Greek and Egyptian with blackberries and sycamore growing out of the roof. Both are listed buildings.

Many of the graves have been overtaken by ivy but many more reveal the stonemason's art with beautiful cherubs, angels, plants and urns. Some of the residents 'died' but others 'passed away'.

M Sanderson

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Taskforce



COPPICE HOUSE FARM & COTTAGE
Pam & Frank Revitt are prominent members of the RVCG and live on Rivelin Valley Road near to the old hospital. Frank's heavy machinery and wall building skill is an enormous asset to the group. Pam provides a welcome drink and snacks at the end of some of our walks. As mentioned earlier by Margaret they now have a superb 4 star cottage for rent. Contact Pam Revitt on 0114 2301753. They also hope to have a new farm shop open by the beginning of December.

Litterpick 26 April 2005



An annual event attended by another set of enthusiastic litterpickeruppers.

Nethercut Wheel 4 Sep 2005

This pond is just to the right of Glen Bridge also known as the S bend on Rivelin Valley Road. The mill was constructed in 1719 as a cutlers wheel with 4 troughs



This picture shows the picturesque pond. The September task day was to divert a natural stream which regularly flooding the footpath. Previous attempts to divert the stream down the side of the footpath had failed and we decided to lay directly under the footpath into the river.



That's when we realised why this had not been attempted before. The path was laid with huge blocks of stone and took the enormous effort of several volunteers to dig a suitable channel. With a porous duct installed, the footpath was then made good with stone chippings.

The river at this point had a silted up man-made tributary or goit which used to feed the Little London wheel, the next wheel

along. The goit went through a tunnel under the footpath but had long silted up.



Dave Mason and myself dig a trench to rediscover the entrance to the long lost tunnel of Little London goit. Unfortunately it was too silted up to reopen it.



Keith Kendall with some of his volunteers taking a well earned tea break.

Frank Wheel 25 Sep 2005-11-20

With a good turnout, a good weather forecast and lots to do we had a very industrious Sunday. One group installed a new metal barrier at the top of the drive to help prevent unwanted vehicles infiltrating the valley. Another group including myself, helped restore the footpath and the wall at the foot of the drive on the main Valley footpath.



Frank Revitt who helped us rebuild the wall used to pass here on his way to school and said that's its never looked so good. You can see the old millstone found nearby in the river has been been put to good use. Other tasks included installing a new bench and cutting back the ever encroaching woodland. Take a look some time. It looks great. All of this made possible of course by the organisational skills of Keith Kendall and Roger Kite.

Rivelin Mill 30 October 2005

This task day involved transferring a mountain of wood chippings from the car park area and onto the path leading to the Rivelin post Office. Sounds simple enough but pushing heavy wheel barrows backwards and forwards through muddy paths is real hard work. Then the rain came down and did it stop us? Of course not. We soldiered on to finish the job as we were soaking in sweat anyway, a bit of rain didn't really make any difference. Well done to everyone who gave so much in atrocious conditions.

Graham Appleby

Recorder

The second half of this year has been very pleasant with long warm sunny days right up into early November. I find it hard to remember another so mild and pleasant. I had reports of butterflies being seen still around in late October. It would appear that our unusual weather is not unique and for every country lucky enough to be bathing in extra sunshine there are others who are suffering some of the worst floods and hurricanes ever known.

There are the 'Global Warming' supporters who are now saying "we told you so" but I'm not too sure. I think variations in climatic conditions are part of the cause and effect of nature. Our weather records cover a period of barely 100 years but this is miniscule compared to the life of the earth. I am not oblivious to the effect we are having on the atmosphere by burning fossil fuels. But they are running out at an alarming rate and I hope this will force the introduction of alternative energy sources before it we have any really serious global problems.

Wholesale gas prices have just doubled. If anything will force people to use energy more efficiently, it is huge price rise. I wouldn't mind a price increase if the profits were used to repair some of the damage to our forests and to support alternative energy resources. I have just stayed with my son for a week in his new apartment and and I nearly passed out with his high room temperature and I don't think their on their own. If everyone turned their thermostats down a degree or two it would save so much global energy.

Reports

In early July, Margaret Sanderson had the pleasure of have a nuthatch regularly feeding on bird nuts in her garden. It was also seen upsidedown hitting something with its beak; probably trying to break a not. She also had sa few visits from siskins.

Nuthatches have a large head, short tail and short legs with a grey back, pale underbody and noticeable black stripe across its eye as though its gone a bit mad with the eye liner. It has the unusual ability to not only run up trees but down them as well usually head first and often feed upside down.

Margaret also reported seeing lots of shield bugs on her hawthorne bushes and a regular Jackdaw visitor

Howard Sanderson had the Sparrowhawk back in his garden in October no doubt teasing the local sparrow population.

I saw a repeat of the wildlife programme the other day where Bill Oddie witnessed one of the most unusual bird activity there is to see. Out of the breeding season, Starlings flock together on hundreds of thousands. They look like a swarm of bees; a pulsating gey blob which keeps changing shape. He watched a group of these pulsating blobs for a while and then as dusk fell each blod made a spearhead for the ground. After a few minutes all flying activity had ceased against the red glow of the setting sun. Absolutely magnificent.

Graham Appleby

Bat Watch

On 20th Sep we met at the Rivelin Hotel car park for our annual bat walk. A group of 15 or so of us attended including a couple of new families. We started off at Hind Wheel Dam. It was a warm dry evening; almost perfect conditions for feeding bats.

With enough battery power to light the Blackpool illuminations (talk about wasting energy!), we surveyed the surrounding area with torches and newly purchased bat detectors. We weren't disappointed. A couple of Pipistrelles were demonstrating their incredible flying skills right over our heads. The insects never stood a chance. We also detected a couple of Daubenton. These two types of bat are probably our most popular in the valley.

We then walked down to Uppercut Wheel on the 'S' bend or Glen Bridge where we stopped to admire the recent RVCG task team's hard work. We continued our walk up to the top at Long Lane and then back down the horse track to Hind wheel.

Result

8 Pipistrelle

2 Daubenton

Other Reports

Lots of Gatekeeper butterflies common to hedgerows and grassy places. Janet Bowring described how she watched a mouse perilously perched on a lily leaf in her garden pond.

Jo Flowers reported seeing the Marsh Orchid in profusion at Agden Dam.

We also had sightings of a buzzard over the Den Bank area in July and a badger in the Den Bank area. Roger Kite reported an early Purple Orchid in Carver Fields off Hag Lane.

Back in April Sue Shaw tried to report the sighting of Dippers around Nethercut and Little London wheels but found our website not working. Thank you for letting me know, Sue and I hope you will now find it fixed and working again.

I would just like to thank the RVCG team for organising such an excellent visit around Sheffield's General Cemetery. It was really interesting and educational. Also the open meetings have been excellent. We have had some good speakers on very interesting topics such as the Refurbishment of Western Park Museum and the History of Blue John.

On the new programme you will see a trip has been organised to Hodsock Priory. This is a very historic building and the gardens are just lovely in February with their drifts of snowdrops. A coach has been organised and at Worksop its not very far. The walking is easy and there is good café. I went last year and I would thoroughly recommend it.



Congratulations to the RVCG Chairman Roger Kite on his 65th birthday last month.

Graham Appleby