



# Newsletter



Rivelin Valley Conservation Group

**Winter 2006 no 57**

## **Through the Chair**

### Passing the Parcel

Over the last few weeks I guess we have all done our fair share of wrapping parcels. The fun of doing this is of course to see the expression on the recipient's face as they undo all your careful manipulations with the sellotape and rip to pieces that lovingly selected Christmas wrapping. It is, not unnaturally, quite nice to receive presents in return but we seldom have that at the front of our minds in those hectic weeks running up to Santa's big day. When playing party games the important thing is not to get left holding the baby – or parcel, but to pass it on as quickly as possible. There could be some dire forfeits for those who tend to hang on.

We are all stewards of the rich natural and industrial heritage around us. The important thing for us to be aware of is the need to pass it on – to the next generation. So help us to tenderly and carefully wrap it up so that when your grandchildren come to discover the parcel of land called Rivelin Valley, it still looks as fresh as when you first spied it yourself.

Roger and out

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## **TIME TO RENEW MEMBERSHIP**

A new year comes around very quickly and it is time to part with your £3 again. We keep you on the books for quite a while but it is always good to see you renewing your membership promptly. Please remember, if you are a new member who joined over the last three months, you have paid for this year as well so ignore the renewal form. Every year we lose some members but new ones keep rolling in. Even if you cannot do anything physically to help us, your membership is valued. We need you all. Please use the spare form to encourage someone else to join. We always need new members.

Thanks for donations from – Seaman, Phillips and Lofthouse. We have had more than £400 this year.

**Please renew membership now.**

## **Congratulations**

What has Roger Kite got in common with Roy Barraclough (ex Coronation St), Andrew Flintoff, (cricketer), Laurie McMenemy (now manager of the Parliamentary Football Club), Stephen Wiltshire (talented autistic artist) and Johnnie Walker (ex Radio Caroline presenter) and many others? I'm sure you know by now – **He has received the MBE.**

Now RVCG has something else to celebrate as well as the Duke of York's Community Initiative.

It is a lot of hard never-ending work to run a group like ours and we are all delighted for the recognition of his voluntary work for RVCG and all his other conservation interests.

We will look forward to hearing about the big day out at Buck House. We all ought to hire a coach and go along too if the Queen would let us in.

## **CONGRATULATIONS FROM US ALL**

### **Disappearing History**

The recent loss of the greater part of the amenity space to housing at the site of the playing fields at Crookes has over the last 2 years given rise to much local concern. This site is situated opposite the Grindstone Pub, at the junction of Lydgate Lane and Crookes Rd.

Probably less well known is the fact that this is also the site of the first water storage reservoir to be built by the Sheffield Water Company following its formation under the Parliamentary Act of Incorporation in 1830.

The Act also allowed the Company to build the first impounding reservoir at Redmires, this reservoir at Crookes and the connecting conduit between Redmires and Crookes. These were the first building blocks of the future water supply system for Sheffield.

The Crookes reservoir was completed in 1833 with an area of 5 acres and a capacity of 21 million gallons. The Redmires Impounding Reservoir (taking water from Wyming Brook) was completed in 1836. This reservoir now the middle of the three reservoirs at Redmires had, on completion, a capacity of 188 million gallons and a depth of 36ft. The conduit, completed in 1833, connecting the two reservoirs was 4.5 miles long, mainly open channel with an aqueduct at the site of the new

Tapton School and finally a section of tunnel or culvert to the dam at Crookes.

The Crookes reservoir was initially called Pisgah Dam, presumably after Mount Pisgah in the Holy Land but the view over the smoky Sheffield town was hardly that of the "Promised Land". It was subsequently renamed Hadfield Reservoir possibly after Robert Hadfield of Hadfields Steel who was Master Cutler in 1899.

The dam was connected to the existing reservoirs at Crookesmoor to supplement the supply of drinking water to the town. The demand for water was escalating and outgrowing existing supplies, as the population increased, from 45,000 in 1800 to 90,000 in 1829

The Crookesmoor reservoirs included the Old Great Dam, which occupied an area of 4 acres and originally had a capacity of 21million gallons of water. This dam constructed in 1785 still exists, better known now as Crookes Valley Dam (capacity now reduced to less than 4 million gallons) and used for recreation. It gives some idea of the area of the original Hadfield Reservoir. It is interesting to note that the Reservoir had a capacity far in excess of the water available from Redmires. Even when all three reservoirs were completed in 1854 the average daily yield of water was only 3.5 million gallons.

Crookes at this time remained a village with much of the surrounding area still open countryside so there is a possibility that the supply to the reservoir was supplemented with water from local springs.

The conduit was abandoned for water supply in 1909 due to leakage and the risk of pollution and the Hadfield Reservoir was transferred to a piped supply from the Rivelin Reservoirs. The open Hadfield reservoir remained in

service until 1945 and was then replaced with a smaller (6 million gallon) concrete covered service reservoir completed in 1950 and built within the existing reservoir perimeter. The remaining area of the old dam was then filled and converted into sports facilities (cricket, football and tennis) for Sheffield Waterworks Sports Club. The covered reservoir still remains in service supplying the south east areas of the City with drinking water from the Rivelin Water Treatment Works.

David Lyon

### **Recent Meetings**

#### Rod Amos-Mexico and the Sea of Cortez 08/12/05

Rod gave us another entertaining talk with whales, dolphins, sea lions and pelicans taking starring roles. This was a complete contrast to his last icy talk on the frozen Arctic. We had another stunning series of photographs showing a variety of whales, the sperm whale 'Moby Dick' which can sink a ship and kept Victorian cities lit with its oil and the blue whale, hunted almost to extinction that has a blow of 30ft which smells like school cabbage. We learned of a whale's 'footprint', a flat calm area above a swimming whale. Rod's talk continued with bird and plant life covering the ecology of deserts, mangrove swamps and salt flats. Where is he going to next?

Carol Singing at the Rivelin 11/12/05  
Our annual event took place again and was well attended, an occasion not to be missed. This is the place where you can lose yourself in living history. We are lucky that our locality maintains this tradition of local carol singing, once common throughout the country but now existing in only a few places. The carols seem to have a mind of their

own as the ascending noise filled The Rivelin. Maybe some long lost singers from the past were looking on, approving of the way RVCG had removed itself from modern technology and resorted to the best sound of all – human voices and not forgetting of course the accompaniment of Ian Sharpe on the piano. For those not familiar with these carols, there are 101 different ways of singing 'While Shepherds Watched' and that does not even include washing socks by night. These local carols arose in the early 1800's because vicars wanted a bit more refinement in church with a properly trained choir and organ, so the local fiddlers and lively carols were excluded but defiantly performed in the streets and pubs. It's a bit reminiscent of the way Oliver Cromwell banned singing and dancing but the common masses knew better and carried on. Jack Goodison who has collected all these local carols is a fountain of knowledge on their origins. Many have local names such as Spout Cottage, Malin Bridge or Oughtibridge but other 'outside' names creep in. Where does Pentonville come from? Jack Goodison has the answer. Many of these carols come from the times of the Napoleonic wars and it is said that French prisoners were kept in Pentonville, no doubt guarded by some locally produced soldiers. One of the 'While Shepherds Watched' versions is entitled 'Liverpool' and that is where many soldiers and seamen would have sailed from. Other titles - Antioch, Portugal and Egypt would all have been ports of call during the wars. Then there is the sad 'Holmfirth Anthem' where a pretty girl is lamenting for her lost shepherd boy who left her to fight the French and Spaniards. For once cholesterol levels were forgotten as we munched bread and

dripping and mince pies. Let's hope that RVCG will go on keeping this tradition alive.

M Sanderson

### **An Everyday Story of Country Folk**

We heard something about Coppice House Farm in the last newsletter and here is some more.

There is interesting literature lying around in this farm – 'Why should farmers be worried about Neospora?' – because it causes 600 abortions in cattle every year. This is a different world, three miles from Sheffield city centre.

The bluetits and a nuthatch are busy on a feeder just outside the kitchen door and they don't blink an eyelid at the comings and goings on this busy farm. The Duke of Norfolk who seemed to have owned most of Sheffield once owned this farm and was rented by Frank's ancestors. Then the Council became owners until the family bought it in the early 1900's. Frank's grandfather started a milk round, all unpasteurised. It was not delivered in bottles but poured out into your own jugs. Frank's Dad became the farmer in 1936 and bottled his own milk. Pam produced a delightful small, chunky bottle from this era. Young Frank wanted to be an auctioneer but he became the farmer himself in 1985. The cows were milked three times a day and is regarded as 'proper milk', not like the over processed modern stuff. When they stopped the milk round and had to buy it from the supermarket, their cat refused to drink it until it realised it had no choice.

When Pam and Frank moved in, things needed modernising and the electricity came first. It was a freezing cold winter and rewiring was in operation. There were no sockets functioning in the

house so Pam attached an electric blanket to a cable that came through the bathroom window from the yard. Pam was met with "The bloody bed's on fire" from Frank. All mod-cons are in place now and the farm shop is open – Thursday to Sunday, 9.30 to 5.00. You can buy the farm's own beef and lamb as well as lots more locally produced items, including oatcakes from Grindleford, Toppings pork pies from Doncaster and dry cured bacon. For any more information, including the holiday let ring Pam on 0114 2301753.

M Sanderson

### **Visit to Hodsock Priory**

Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> Feb

By the time this newsletter reaches you there might be some places left, though the deadline of 4<sup>th</sup> Feb might be passed. This will be to visit the annual snowdrop display but with lots more as well. The gardens are beautiful with Christmas roses, winter honeysuckle and extensive woodland walks. Also contains a small museum with history of the priory and plant sales. This is the only time you can visit this private estate. Refreshments are available but you might want to take your own. £12 per person £6 per child  
Leave top of Benty Lane 10.30am and return by 4pm. For more information ring Janet Bowring – 01142307570

At the time of writing this newsletter, it is damp and cold. Stannington is lost in fog and the few birds around are skulking under bushes but Roger, Keith and the Task Force Team are busy down the valley. Wonder if anyone turned up with a celebratory bottle of mulled wine?

**Don't forget to renew membership**

## RECORDER

Waxwings were reported quite early this year with a phone call from Margaret Peter on 5/12/05 and a report from Anna Heathcote who saw them on the afternoon of 10/12/05 'in the tree on the corner of the junction between Denbank Drive and Manchester Road. There were 12 altogether calling and grooming themselves flying into nearby trees occasionally.' These birds spend the summer in the Russian Tundra and migrate south during the winter. Crosspool in Sheffield is about as far South West as they venture and they always seem to stop for the berries on the trees along Manchester Road. Alas I still have not witnessed this annual event.

Maureen Owen reported seeing the Greater Spotted Woodpecker in a neighbour's garden on several occasions in early November. This was quite a pleasant surprise as it was a regular visitor during the summer but has not been seen for a couple of years.

Derek Hastings reported seeing a buzzard above Black Brook Wood at Lodge Moor and a Nuthatch in his garden. The BTO confirmed sightings of the recently reintroduced Red Kites flying along the valley occasionally.

Margaret Sanderson observed a Nuthatch, Goldcrests and a Pied Wagtail in her garden on Jan 1. She also observed unusual behaviour when a Jackdaw collected a crust of bread from her garage roof and made off to a nearby roof only to be pursued by several rooks. One of the Rooks then pecked at the bread while it was still firmly held in the Jackdaws talons without any sign of distress.

Keith Kendall has also seen the Kingfisher around Hind Wheel and reported seeing Weasels at Frank Wheel which is also an excellent place to see the Kingfisher and other birds.

I myself have been visited by a pheasant quite regularly. A male with beautiful

plumage has been collecting fallen seed from my bird feeder which suits me as it stops the bird seed sprouting in the lawn.

The Alpaca farm at Ringinglow is sporting a new offspring apparently called a Cria. A quick search on the website reveals just how many Alpaca farms there are now. They are gentle animals, easily cared for have little impact on the environment and produce a beautiful soft fleece. Sounds like a bit of competition for our traditional British sheep although I can't say that I've seen Alpaca on the menu anywhere yet!

There is an annual frog spawn watch under the BBC website [www.bbc.co.uk/nature/animals/wildbritain/springwatch](http://www.bbc.co.uk/nature/animals/wildbritain/springwatch). Over the last couple years it has been noted that frog spawn is appearing earlier by as much as two weeks. Could this be a sign of global warming? If frogs do spawn early and then become killed off by a hard frost, the frogs seem programmed to repeat their activity a few weeks later so that all is not lost. Having a pond encourages frogs which is an excellent way to keep down slugs naturally.

It's amazing what grows in the lawn when it's left unkempt for a while. I counted six different varieties of toadstools/mushrooms in my lawn last autumn including two fairy rings. Not been tempted to eat any of them yet.

Graham Appleby

## **Here are a few things to think about in the New Year.**

If you think that 'the Environment' is someone else's problem, think again. We are all interconnected. A problem in one part of the world, affects all of us.

### **Population growth**

Since 1960, world population has more than doubled from three to over six billion people. It is predicted that by 2050, there will be 8.9 billion people in the world. This inevitably will put a strain on the earth's resources.

### **Water**

In 1999 the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) identified water shortage as one of the two most worrying problems for the new millennium (the other was global warming). Water supplies are falling while the demand is dramatically growing at an unsustainable rate. Over the next 20 years, the average supply of water world-wide per person is expected to drop by a third

### **Oil**

In 1995, BP made a rough estimate that, based on current annual production, world oil reserves would last about 43 years. Whilst this period could be extended by reducing consumption, making new finds, and developing new technologies, this is a very brief passage of time.

### **Forests**

Forests cover between a quarter to a third of the total land surface of the Earth. In the 1980s, the loss of forests amounted to an area equivalent to the size of Britain, each year. Western Europe has already lost over 99% of its primary forests.

Today, programmes to combat deforestation focus on the major rainforests of the tropics.

Trees absorb carbon dioxide from the atmosphere for photosynthesis, and therefore help to regulate the natural greenhouse effect.

Deforestation takes away a potential 'sink' for the carbon dioxide mankind is pumping into the atmosphere.

In addition, if forests are removed by burning, a lot of extra carbon dioxide locked up in tree wood is returned to the atmosphere. Forests absorb a lot of sunlight for photosynthesis, and only about 12 to 15% is reflected.

The large amounts of energy absorbed by forests acts to stimulate convection currents in air which enhance the production of rainfall. Tropical rainforests in particular are very wet and humid places.

Deforested areas, by contrast, reflect about 20% of incoming sunlight. Deforested areas consequently can become drier as a result of the loss of vegetation, increasing the risk of desertification. As the area of deforestation increases, so the impact on climate grows.

## **BIODIVERSITY**

The International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources regularly publishes a list of endangered species. In 2002, it reported that nearly a quarter of all mammals were either critically endangered, endangered or vulnerable) and 2% of plants were similarly classified. Since 1996, the number of Critically Endangered mammals have increased from 169 to 180, and birds have increased from 168 to 182.

The number of primates recorded as Critically Endangered have increased from 13 to 19.

The most significant changes occurring within the birds has been for albatrosses and petrels which have increased from 32 to 55 threatened species (for the albatross this is mainly due to the impact of longline fishing).

Other birds showing marked increases in threatened species are the penguins, doves, parrots, and perching birds

(passerines) mainly through deforestation in places such as the Philippines.

Freshwater fish also appear to be showing a marked deterioration, particularly within river systems

### **Climate Change**

Climate change is recognised as one of the greatest environmental threats facing the world today.

It threatens to have a major, adverse impact on the natural world and human society.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, representing the vast majority of scientists internationally, predicts that if no action were taken to limit greenhouse gas emissions, temperatures would rise in the range of 1-3.5 degrees C by the end of the next century.

This would be a faster rate of warming than at any time since the end of the last ice age, 10,000 years ago.

It has been estimated that the world's 225 richest people have a combined net worth of \$1 trillion, equal to that of the annual income of the poorest 47% of the world's population. This is over 2 billion people, and the gap between rich and poor is widening.

What would happen if the world's poorest 80% wanted to reach our standard of living? The combination of population growth and economic growth would have serious consequences for our planet.

On current projections, by 2050, we would need the resources from 12 planet Earths to meet our demands!

Here are a few possibilities of the effects of climate change if nothing is done to prevent it

*Average sea level predicted to rise by 50cm by 2100. Millions of people will be displaced, particularly in low lying land adjacent to rivers and the sea.*

*Changing pattern of agricultural production - loss of traditional crops*

*Southern European areas become hotter and more arid - an increase in deserts throughout the world.*

*Northern Europe able to grow crops traditionally grown in warmer areas.*

*Tropical diseases, such as malaria may become more common in traditional temperate climes*

*Increasingly erratic weather patterns with severe flooding becoming more frequent*

In the summer of 2003, average temperatures across France were the highest ever recorded. Health ministry officials in France announced that over 11,000 people had died of heat-related causes during the period from late July through mid August (Reuters/Associated Press).

Graham Appleby



## TASK TEAM

Many years ago when the mills were in full use, there were issues regarding the sharing of the available water supply in summer and maintaining the flow during the winter after the leaf fall.

**Graham Wheatcroft can be seen here positively glowing with enthusiasm (or is that just the reflection of his jacket) digging out 1st Coppice.**

At its height, a man was employed full time clearing the waterways and keeping the goits flowing smoothly and the Mill wheels turning. We attempted the same on Sunday morning of 8<sup>th</sup> Jan.

**Hugh and Sue Shaw rake out the dead leaves from 2<sup>nd</sup> Coppice.**

Working our way down the valley from Rails Road towards Hinde Wheel, the water began to flow once more over the overflows creating lively waterfalls to interest the passers-by.

**This is the end of 3<sup>rd</sup> Coppice where the mill wheel used to be. The wall we recently rebuilt is still looking good.**

The growth of trees along the goits and around the dams is noticeable and would never have been allowed then. The roots cause enormous damage to foundations.

**This last picture shows Dan Higbid on full steam at Wolf Wheel. The inlet was very silted and required many hands to dig it out. This is one of our more attractive ponds with the fallen tree in the middle and well worth the effort.**

All we want now is for you to come and look at it.

Graham Appleby