



Newsletter



Rivelin Valley Conservation Group

Spring 2006 no 58

Through the Chair

Sighs of the Times

I wandered past the traffic, loud
That roars with every vibrant urge
When all at once I saw a crowd
Of cars all parked along the verge,
Beside the road, beneath the trees,
Discolouring grass with oil and grease.

Continuous as the stars, they shine
And sparkle all along the way.
They stretch in never ending line
Whether it be night or day.
At least a dozen, maybe more,
So much for Sheffield's new by-law.

The daffs beside them dance, but they
Spoil the view for you and me.
A poet can but rue the day
That motors so important be,
Their owners show so little thought
What damage selfish action brought.

For oft when walking by and by,
I end up in a grumpy mood.
Empty driveways catch my eye
The proper place they should be stood
My heart with pleasure then might fill
And dance along with daffodil.

With apologies to Wordsworth
But not those risking a £200 fine.
Roger and Out

Contacts

Chairman	Roger Kite	01142306194
Task Force Coordinator	Keith Kendall	01142307144
Membership/Newsletter	M Sanderson	01142306790
Treasurer	David Lyon	01142302660
Group Recorder	Graham Appleby	01142660203
Events	Ianet Bowring	01142307570

DONATIONS

Thanks to Hill, Morrell, Peter, Drinkwater, Hague, Lofthouse, Lyon, Owen, Pyatt, Saunders, Shaw, Beardshaw, Davidson, Graves, Hanson, Jones, Lewis, Andrew, Bowring, Brazil, Brownell, Carnell, Culmer, Dean, Grace, Horsefield, Liddell, Sharpe, Toseland, Burnett, Flower, Kitchen, Ollin, White, Whiteman, Henderson, Howe, Shaw, Tetchner, Whiteley, Hobson, Walshaw, Allinson Ward and anon. We have had around £300 so far this year and it is put to good use. A new trailer and hedge cutter as well as other tools have been bought recently to help keep our valley accessible.

All your stamps go to Guide Dogs for the Blind and many thanks to Mrs Large for sending a packet of them with her subs.

Thank you

The new Development Framework for Sheffield

The Council has now published several documents as part of the new Development Framework for the City, which will replace the Unitary Development Plan. These set out the Council's strategic thinking for Sheffield as well as its suggested planning policies and key development sites. After trawling through literally hundreds of pages of the documents I have sent comments to the Planners as R.V.C.G's contribution to the consultation process.

The main issues of concern to the Group are about the Green Belt, Countryside and the Environment. There is much to be welcomed, particularly the decision to retain and extend the Green Belt throughout Sheffield District, and also to emphasise the importance of safeguarding the river Valleys such as Rivelin for their natural history value, attractive landscapes and also as significant informal recreation resources.

An aspect of concern is the possible designation of major developed sites in the Green Belt. One option put forward by the Council is to identify Green Belt sites, such as the former Hepworth's and Dyson's works in the Loxley Valley, as having potential for development. R.V.C.G. considers this approach would set a dangerous precedent for many Green Belt sites, for example the former King Edward V11th Hospital site. Our view is that only very exceptionally should Green Belt development be permitted. If companies wish to develop sites in the Green Belt they should have to demonstrate that there are very special circumstances why Green Belt policies should be breached. The Council should apply this test stringently. The Group is also critical of the policy, which would allow high-density housing along key public transport routes. Sandygate Road and Redmires Road, which fringe the Valley are part of one such route and high-density housing would be entirely inappropriate along much of this route, as has been argued successfully on several occasions at the "Barncliffe" site opposite the Golf course at the junction of Redmires/Pitchford Lane.

I will continue to keep a close eye on the Council's emerging Development Framework and comment wherever the Group's interests are affected.

Derek Hastings

THE CROOKESMOOR DAMS

Following the article on the Hadfield Reservoir there have been queries over the naming of this reservoir and the location and names of the other dams at Crookesmoor.

I suggested that Pisgah reservoir was renamed Hadfield after Robert Hadfield; Master Cutler in 1899. Equally, there is a possibility that it could have been named after George Hadfield (Sheffield MP from 1852 to 1874). The name of the reservoir was changed in the late 1800's, unfortunately the exact date is not known and the situation is further complicated by the transfer of the Water Works Co to Sheffield Corporation in 1588. Consequently at this time it can only be concluded that the reservoir could have been named after either of the gentlemen. (The reservoir was also known as Top Dam). Similarly the names of the dams at Crookesmoor are open to conjecture. Mathewman and Battie obtained permission from the Lord of the Manor around 1742 to build the original dams at Crookesmoor on the site of the now recreation ground known as Ponderosa. (The land enclosed by Crookes Valley Rd, Oxford St and Mushroom Lane) These dams were used to supplement the supplies to the town from the original source of water, the springs and dams at Whitehouse, Uppertorpe. At this time and until the late 1800's, Crookesmoor was open countryside and the hills around had a number of springs which could be impounded at little cost to create dams in the valleys. The water was piped to the town through wooden pipes to a Water House where water was sold by the bucket or barrel and through some of the main streets to stop cocks controlled by the waterworks. These dams were Low Dam, Working Dam, Wall Dam, Clough Dam and possibly Ashlar Dam (on the

site of the old Great Dam). These early dams soon proved inadequate to meet the growing demand for water in town and in 1782, Joshua Mathewman (son) obtained a 99 year lease from the Earl of Surrey (Duke of Norfolk) for land to construct further dams at Crookesmoor. The population of the town was 5,000 in 1700, by 1736 it had increased to 10,120 and by 1801 had reached 31,000.

Mathewman was joined by Messrs Wheat, Lee and Gunning in this venture and the first dam to be built in 1875 was the Old Great Dam with a capacity of 4.2 million gallons. It was claimed that the dam was more than adequate for the future needs of the town but dam building continued in the valley and a further five dams were built between 1785 and 1829.

These dams were built either side of Northumberland Rd (at the time called Dam Lane) and all were intended to impound water from the local springs. With the exception of the Old Great Dam all the dams have now been filled in and are part of Sheffield University Goodwin Sports Complex. The sports pitches on Whitham Rd opposite Weston Park Hospital are the site of Godfrey Dam, built in 1790 and extended in 1853. On the opposite side of Northumberland Rd was New Dam built in 1787 and enlarged in 1809. Nearer Crookesmoor Rd alongside Narrow Walk were Ralphy and Misfortune Dams, with Butchers Dam on the opposite side of Northumberland Rd.

The dams together with the Old Great Dam supplied water to the town via a working reservoir at Portobello (near the old Jessop's Hospital) to a stone cistern in Division St from where it was

distributed to various parts of town. The names Ralph and Godfrey do not appear to relate to the Christian names of any of the proprietors of the old waterworks although the identity of some of the members is now open to speculation. Similarly why Misfortune Dam? It is unlikely that there would be any significant accidents associated with the construction, as the dam was quite small compared with say Redmires Impounding Reservoirs. Possibly, there was not enough water to fill it!

Butchers dam had a very short life; it was taken out of service in 1829, possibly due to leakage and was later filled in.

All these dams together with the rights and privileges of the Waterworks were acquired by Sheffield Water Works Company for £41,802 on its formation in 1830 under the Parliamentary Act of Incorporation.

David Lyon

MEMBERSHIP

Many of you have renewed but if you haven't it is not too late. If you have lost the form please send £3 to M Sanderson, 35 Den Bank Crescent Sheffield S10 5PB with your name and address.

RVCG VISITS

WENTWORTH CASTLE GARDENS

Saturday 20th May 2006

Our next visit will be to see the rhododendrons etc. at Wentworth Castle Gardens. We will meet at Wentworth Castle for a guided tour which will start at 2pm. Please be there by 1.45pm. We need a minimum of 15 people for us to have our own guide – if there are less, we will join in with a regular tour. The cost will be £3.50 per person (£3 concessions) and £1 for children 5-16. If we have sufficient numbers for our own guide there will be a slight reduction. Travel will be by private car so if you have spare places or wish to travel with someone, please let me know when booking. I need to have firm numbers by Thursday 4th May at the latest. Please telephone Janet Bowring on 2307570 to book. If you leave a message, please leave your name and telephone number and I'll get back to you.

VISIT TO ALPACA FARM RINGINGLOW

Tuesday 30 May 2006

We have arranged a group visit to the alpaca farm at Ringinglow on Tuesday 30th May at 7pm. If you would like to go, please contact Janet Bowring on 2307570 by Tuesday 23 May so that I can let the farm know the number of visitors to expect.

Janet Bowring

OUR OWN PUBLICATION

**'Walking the Rivelin'
by Keith Kendall.**

£5 includes postage and packing

If you would like a copy contact Keith on 0114 2307144 – Find out more about the history of our valley.

A CURIOUS HAPPENING (or maybe laziness)

Fortunately more people are becoming aware of the dangers of doggie-poo, using their plastic bags on walks, carefully cleaning up mess but a strange minority of people then throw the full bag into the shrubs on Carver Fields. Apart from being unsightly, the bags won't degrade in our lifetime.

Thanks to all our members and everyone who respects Carver Fields and the work that has been done to keep them safe for everyone to enjoy

RVCG BARBECUE

Our barbecue seems quite a long time ahead but you need to take note of the date – Sunday 6th August because you might not get another newsletter before then. We are enclosing a form for you. Glenda hopes to use meat from Revitt's Farm Shop so that is something to look forward to.

SOME RECENT OPEN MEETINGS

10th January

Our speaker could not come so Roger and Keith stepped in at the last minute. We did a tour of Rivelin and all its delights supplemented by Keith's extensive Rivelin post card collection. Woods, heaths, farmland and water reinforced the fact that we are very lucky here in Sheffield to have such accessible delights. The old postcards show how treeless the valley was. Since industries stopped using the valley, the trees have returned but of course, we have always had our own bit of ancient forest, soon to be carpeted once more with bluebells we hope.

14th February

Mel Jones gave a talk on the parks and gardens of South Yorkshire. Deer parks were a Norman invention and leave their legacy in the word 'Chase' as in Wharncliffe, Rivelin and Loxley. Also another Norman introduction was rabbits.

Sheffield Park was 2500 acres and it was thought that the Turret House in Park was a banqueting house for hunting guests and a place where ladies could watch the chase from the roof. Our stately homes and grand houses such as Wentworth Woodhouse produced year round vegetables, fruit and flowers for the big house and its guests. Countess Maud had her teahouse and the guests in their top hats and crinolines could perambulate around the carpet bedding, the Japanese garden, the numerous statues and observe the ducks on the ponds and numerous other delights. You can still see much of these gardens too if you visit Wentworth Garden Centre. Parks for the general public were largely municipal affairs such as Firth Park aided by industrialists who no doubt wanted to keep the working masses happy.

14th March

If you think that peat cutting only took place in remote parts of Scotland or the Outer Hebrides you soon realised that our speaker had extensively researched the art here on our doorsteps. Where we were sitting in Stephen Hill Church was probably several feet lower than it should have been. Or perhaps it is now just the same level having sprung back after having a great weight lifted from it. Our ancestors from Roman times and probably before were busy wielding their tools right here in Crosspool and Stannington and Crookes and most of the countryside around.

Our landscape was once a hive of activity in all its remote parts providing fuel for cooking and heating. Peat cutting has left its legacy in all the wiggly lines and bumpy patches that you see on our moorland. It seems that the whole country was once involved in peat cutting. Even the monks in Norwich were at it, making their lives more comfortable with peat burning. More recently we are being very naughty using it in our gardens and in Holmfirth the locals are still allowed to dig peat and that's something we haven't seen on Last of the Summer Wine.

M Sanderson

VISIT TO HODSOCK 18 FEBRUARY

Twenty-eight members and friends visited Hodsock Priory to see the wonderful array of snowdrops and other early spring flowers. The weather did us proud as the sun shone all day and it was warm enough for many of us to picnic. The gardens certainly were a picture and some people bought bulbs and shrubs to take home and replicate a little bit of Hodsock. If you've never been, try a visit – it's worth it.

Janet Bowring

RECORDER

The following reports were received through the website.

Back in December Steve Kershaw reported seeing Male and Female Peregrine Falcons displaying over Rivelin Valley for around 15 mins. Superb aerial performance.

On the 2nd Jan, Derek Hastings was delighted to see a 'greater spotted woodpecker' on his nut feeder.

My nut feeder only seems to attract sparrows and tits. I must experiment with a few different types to try and attract a bigger variety of birds. I did go for the weekend to Prague recently and in a park on the hillside overlooking the city was quite a collection of greater spotted woodpeckers that allowed me to observe and photograph them at close quarters.

One Stannington member was quite concerned about the recent spate of wheelie bin fires across the city. David Gwynn-Jones reported that bins had been stolen and pushed against trees and set fire to. This took place at the bottom of Fairbarn Road using a footpath off Roscoe Bank. I heard one possible answer to this which is to keep everything in the bin damp so that none of the contents will burn. You could even add a drop of disinfectant to make it smell nice too! Unfortunately motorbike riders also use this part of the valley up as far as Rivelin cottages. On a happier note, he did spot a kingfisher during his run the previous Friday 17 March.

Jo Flower witnessed a 'little owl' near the new farm on Rails Road.

Mary Brazil also reported seeing a 'dipper' at Glen Bridge and again at Hinde Wheel along with the 'kingfisher' and a 'heron' at Swallow Wheel in Feb. On another occasion in March, Mary and Margaret Sanderson witnessed a kingfisher and grey wagtail (yellow under-body and grey back and wings) at Glen Bridge. Mary also had a dipper

follow her from Hinde Wheel to Wolf Dam.

Joan Buckland (6 Feb 3pm) wrote, "There were five Magpies making a racket on a neighbours roof. Three were onlookers and two were in deadly combat; claws locked together. They rolled down the roof and onto the ground, unaware of the cat in the next garden. The cat charged towards them and disappeared behind the bush where the magpies were struggling. I thought at least one would get caught but surprisingly, both magpies flew into the air minus a few feathers and joined the trio on the roof. All five then sat very quietly, contemplating their lucky escape maybe. Has anyone else seen this sort of activity?" Sounds to me like an episode from the Sweeney!

Our frog spawn watch produced the following results:

Janet Bowring 31st March

Margaret Sanderson 16th March

Roger Kite 25th March

We also received reports of the heron at Hinde Wheel and Snakeshead Fritillary was again in proliferation in the large field across from Frank Wheel up towards Manchester Road.

Margaret Sanderson also saw a red kite twice in the Valley during March.

Roger Kite saw the unusual sight of a pair of Common Sandpipers at Hinde Wheel also in March.

Sadly, a recent article on radio 2 was about a significant reduction in 'hedge hogs'. They think this is due to them waking from their winter hibernation much earlier than normal due to the warmer conditions and then starving because their normal supply of food is not available. I must admit. I haven't seen one for quite some time.

If you would like to contribute to this newsletter then please use the report form enclosed or via the website.

Graham Appleby

**Please refer to this map
when reading the article
on 'The Crookesmoor
Dams' by Dave Lyon**

