



Newsletter



Rivelin Valley Conservation Group

Winter 2007 no 61

Through The Chair

So What Lights Your Fire?

New Year's Eve seems to have become another bonfire night lately. Here on Den Bank, we get a great view of the displays across the valley. We lit the chimnea and all went outside to huddle around it, sing a few local carols and watch the show. It occurred to me to wonder if they were celebrating seeing the back of 2006 or the new opportunities of 2007. Were they celebrating anything at all – or simply living in the moment? Great balls of fire exploding in the night sky always seem to produce ooh's and ah's from everyone around and there's something magical about the excitement and wonder, especially on the faces of young children. Did you have any visitors this holiday? Did you stay in front of the telly or did you get out into Rivelin? I hope you didn't miss the chance to introduce someone new to the delights on our doorstep. There are some great spectacles out there too – views and wildlife Quite able to produce all the ooh,s and ah's you could possibly want. Here's hoping that 2007 will produce lots for RVCG to celebrate. There may not be a grand flush at the new toilet block, but if anyone felt like organising a celebratory splash at Rivelin Mill, that would go down well! Who knows we might have a bonfire and set off some fireworks

Roger and out

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MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

Yes, it is time to renew your membership again for 2007. Please use the form enclosed with this newsletter. If you are a new member who joined after Sept 30th last year you have membership for this year as well

We now have membership of more than 200 households and we would like more so please spread the word and encourage more to join.

Donations

Thanks for donations from Cousins and Aizlewood. We have received a total of £448 this year with your membership. It is very well used, especially by our task force who help to keep the valley accessible and in good order.

Help still Wanted

In the last newsletter, we asked for a little help but so far nobody has replied. We need publicity for RVCG Open Meetings usually held at Stephen Hill Church. Sometimes our charge for these meetings does not cover the cost of hiring the hall and the cost of the speaker. We need people who could cover their own area distributing posters in Post Offices, libraries, shops and other meeting areas to make people who are not members aware of what we are doing. Is this a job you could do while shopping?

Please contact Roger Kite if you can help.

More Help

A lot of you have enjoyed Rivelin for many years. Do you have any interesting snippets that you would like to share with us? We occasionally hear your stories but would like more. Please contact M Sanderson



A few of the Sunday task team stop for a photograph. If you would like to join them contact Keith Kendall 01142307144

Hello I'm Back **Task Team News**

Yes, it has been quite a while since I last reported on the Task Team's activities and yes we are still very busy in the valley. Having just gained a grant to kit out our team with proper steel capped footwear and Hi Viz coats, anyone walking the trail can't fail to find us.

We have spent a couple of days down at the Hind Wheel dam but this time around at the far side on the bend as you leave the dam. We thinned and took out a lot of the overgrown laurel bushes, thinned the trees on the self-made islands on this bend and cleared all of the debris from the river. No easy task, as it took six men pulling on ropes and four in the river pushing to get some of the larger tree trunks out. We also put in a new bench on the corner. I have to say that a lot of the jobs we do transform the areas we have been working in but this

one was amazing. We all stood there and admired the splendid view which we had opened up, down the river and across the pond itself.

The last day out found us at the junction of Hagg Lane and Long Lane, an area which is being used as a meeting place for people not associated with local residents.

What we found in these woods would shock and disgust most people. I take my hat off to the team who went about the business of thinning out of this area of woodland without any complaints. This is an area we intend to visit again before the nesting season gets underway.

This coming Sunday (7th Jan) we find ourselves with a huge task on our hands at the Rails Road car park. As most of you know, in conjunction with the council, we are constructing a new smaller pond within this area after the old millpond wall gave way. On Sunday, we have around 30ft of

dam wall to rebuild after the council's dumper trucks accidentally knocked the top three layers off. This is our first visit of what we hope will be many to this site, as I have just completed a lottery application for refurbishment of this area once the large machinery has finished. This along with an application to Sheffield's Green Bond would totally transform this area with new picnic areas, footpaths, signage and car park. Lets keep our fingers crossed but we won't find out until June if we have been successful or not. Anyway, it has kept me busy for the last few months. All the best in the New Year to all our members. The next time you are passing, stop for a chat.

Keith Kendall (Task Team)

Thanks Keith, we know you haven't been away – just busy working!

Christmas in Rivelin

Anyone who didn't get down to the Pudding Ladies Café on December 17th missed one of our best events of the year. There was so much to do and entertain, the time sped by, we made quite a lot on our stall, but more importantly it was a good P. R. exercise working alongside the Rangers and all the things they brought along for children of all ages to get stuck into. Apart from the mulled wine served up by Rachel and her team in the café and the cake they gave us to raffle, the youngsters from Lydgate Junior School band coming down and playing for us completed the Christmas spirit. We've sent our thanks to them and the Pudding Ladies and would like to think this could become an annual event. Can you think of other attractions that could be included? Do let the committee know.

Roger Kite

More Christmas in Rivelin

Once more, we were at The Rivelin to sing the local carols, an event not to be missed. We all sang the carols with local names and 'Christmas Tree' with its endless 'oh ho ho ho ho.... Does anyone ever keep up? It all depends on how drunk you are. The carols that are sung across the area from Hope to Lodge Moor, Stannington, Loxley, and beyond have been sung for around two hundred years in village streets and pubs

rather than the church. We had some entertaining solos including a saucy one from an unknown visitor. We also managed to entertain those who did not realise that this was local carols night. Everyone gave generously to our funds, raising more than £40. Our thanks go to Neil Henderson for compèring and Ian Sharpe on the piano. We look forward to next year.

M Sanderson

Peter Mason 'The History of Sheffield University' 7th Nov 06

This open meeting gave us an insight into the beginnings of our university. Before it was founded in 1905, Sheffield was already a centre of learning, having a medical school from 1829. The adage from its Surrey St. building, 'Ars longa, vita brevis' (Life is short and art is long) now stands outside the Hallamshire Hospital. Mark Firth, the Sheffield industrialist founded Firth College in 1879 and we had a technical school. Leeds, Manchester and Birmingham already had a university and so the campaign began to found one for Sheffield. June 3rd 1905 became Charter Day and on July 12th, King Edward arrived to open the new university on Western Bank. A decorated tram toured a decorated city and a band played while huge crowds awaited the King and Queen's arrival at the Midland Station. Horse droppings were being shovelled up so as not to offend royal eyes and there was even a man on stilts, getting a better view of proceedings. The procession moved by coach to the Town Hall where their majesties were provided with separate 'rest rooms' before the official banquet. Then, off to the university, through decorated streets and triumphal arches, up Glossop Rd and past J.G. Graves warehouse to the university quadrangle where the ceremony was to take place in a pavilion. The Cathedral was the next stop, followed by a visit to Vickers' steelworks giving Sheffield a memorable day. After all that, the Royal party had a short break at the Earl of Derby's residence and the citizens of Sheffield put away their 'Sunday best' and returned to their humdrum life. Thanks for an informative and entertaining talk.

M Sanderson

Global Warming

The changing weather patterns have created some noticeable differences to our local wildlife and gardens and I would like to invite you all to contribute to the next newsletter by sending me your own observations. My own garden plants and shrubs flowering unusually this winter are viburnum, roses and carnations. I've seen a beautiful 'comma' butterfly and blue tits are already nesting in my bird boxes.

Margaret Sanderson sent me a photograph of a bilberry bush full of ripe luscious berries taken just before Christmas and she assures me they were still there on the 8th of Jan.

According to the BBC Science & Nature website, spring 2006 couldn't have been more different from 2005. The weather always varies from year to year but climate change research looks the long-term trend.

Generally, over the long term, spring is getting warmer, even though in 2006, the average temperatures for Jan-Apr were 1.5°C lower than in 2005. Even though spring 2006 felt cold and delayed, it was still slightly warmer than the 30 year average.

Spring Watch are asking us to look out for the following:

- First Frog spawn
- First 7 spot ladybird
- First red-tailed bumblebee
- First peacock butterfly
- First Hawthorne flowering
- First swifts

Let me know and I will pass your results on.

TURBINE TECHNOLOGY

An increase in wind turbines is not only generating 'green' energy for their environmentally conscious owners but also a raft of controversy amongst residents here in Sheffield. The turbines have turned up in quantity in our local DIY stores at a little over £1000 after claiming the Government low carbon building grant and clever marketing make them look a very viable proposition. But, an article in the Sheffield Telegraph says that they have come in for some criticism due to the output power not reaching the levels quoted. This is a young technology and I'm sure will improve in design and efficiency over the next few years and appears to be a promising contributor to help reduce noxious emissions from our power stations. I don't think we will have any choice in the future but to become less dependant on consumables that deplete the earths resources and to reduce our emissions of gases into the atmosphere and I'm sure we are to see an increase in the turbine sort of technology. The nightmare situation is to see a skyline of huge wind turbines on our hills the sound of which is quite eerie if you have ever stood beneath one and very austere. It will take all our combined efforts and initiative to overcome the design, efficiency, physical positioning and noise element of what some would describe as gross monstrosities. There is still much we can all do in our homes that will bring us more immediate savings such as wearing warmer clothing indoors and turning the heating down a little and turning off unused lights, tv's and computers. The 'power off' button on the remote is a major contributor to wasted energy.

GOODBYE BUTTERFLY

Last year I received several reports of butterflies, normally only seen in the south, appearing here in the north. Wonderful, I thought but an article in 'The Independent' last year described how Mark Stratton, an experienced ranger, took a snapshot of the British butterfly population over a period of five months and 8,500 miles of travel. He concluded that of the 59 native species of butterflies (bearing in mind there are some 400 in countries like Portugal) there are a few facing extinction in Britain.

'Adonis Blue' found in grassland areas which have been cropped by rabbits

'Marsh Fritillary' which only exists in a Wiltshire field

'Green Hairstreak' showing rapid decline in sheltered areas of grassland and scrub

'Silver Washed Fritillary' affected by recent changes in woodland management

'Chequered Skipper' suddenly retreated to the bog myrtle slopes around Ben Nevis

'Swallowtail' Britain's largest butterfly, restricted to the Norfolk Broads.

The main reason given for their decline is natural habitats encroached upon by creeping urbanisation and agricultural intensification.

Maybe the 'global warming' affect will allow some of these butterflies to expand their territory and could have a positive affect. No doubt for every animal and plant helped by global warming, another will be driven into decline.

RECORDER

I promised to catch up on all those reports that I missed for one reason or another last year. I turned my attaché case upside down and my pockets inside out and after a good rummage I gathered together all the scraps of paper and card and came up with the following:

Almost one year ago K Warrington of Arran Road Crookes observed a lovely female in his garden during the RSPB big garden bird watch. Incidentally, it was a 'blackcap'. I wonder if there is another bird watch this year?

Over two years ago in December, Marika Szabo witnessed 50 'goldfinches' in his/her garden over several evenings roosting in a laurel tree. You must have been pretty nimble to count to 50! The 'goldfinch' is a wonderful exotic looking bird that always looks embarrassed because it has a red face and the remainder a combination of pale brown, black, green and gold. These little birds love prising seeds out of teasel so don't remove your dead plants out of the borders until spring as they offer an array of food for birds.

'Bob' sent me a report last October of finding fifteen dead magpies in a hole (somewhere in the Rivelin Valley) which were obviously decaying and giving off a vile smell and thus disrupting an otherwise enjoyable walk. As I have said before, the magpie is a lovely looking bird and appear to have a higher than average intelligence observing some of the tricks they get up to which unfortunately makes them a nuisance to some people. I guess these birds have been trapped by someone and could have been disposed of a little more considerately.

Aug 06 Margaret Sanderson gave me a list of fungi that she had identified in fields below Hagg Lane including, Bay Boletus, Common Earthball, Vermilion Hygrophoros and Brown Pluteus although she didn't note what they tasted like! Very nice fried with a bit of butter and garlic I would imagine! Margaret has also kept a note of the dates of the first frogspawn and tadpoles in her pond.

YEAR	FROGSPAWN	TADPOLES
2000	March 10	March 25
2001	March 31	April 22
2002	March 25	April 6
2003	March 9	March 25
2004	March 7	No data
2005	March 16	Killed by frost
2006	March 16	April 15

I am keen to see this years results with the noticeable milder climate. Please submit your own findings to me so we can compare results

Peter Mallender, Den Bank Close, rang me one evening as he had discovered an enormous spider!....whilst cutting his leylandii cypress hedge. I recommended he brought it round for me to see and before I had time to put the phone down there was a rat tat tat on the door. Yes it was a fair old size and I asked him to leave it with me for further examination. I immediately wopped out my book of British insects and identified it as a 'common cross spider'. Well it was pretty cross by now so I sneaked out into the dark allotment lane and deposited it on my neighbour's leylandii. Could give him quite a fright next time he cuts his hedge! A large bodied spider with short legs (a bit like a darts player) it is light coloured with a distinctive black cross on its back. Awsome!

Dear Graham

Seems a long time since the RVCG barbecue now, especially since I've been abroad since! My RVCG newsletter was waiting for me when I returned and I was interested to read your recorder section. I'm prompted to write because I was surprised to see Jo Flower's record for Swallowtail butterflies at Underbank, since I know that these are normally restricted to the Norfolk Broads (where I have seen them several times). See for example:

<http://www.butterfly-conservation.org/species/bdata/swallowtail.html>

I know that strange things are happening to butterfly distributions in these warm summers, but I thought I should draw it to your attention, so that the record can be checked before it is put on your species list for the Rivelin Valley (I think you're keeping one?!). (Well...er...sort of..gulp! ed) I'm sure that other organisations would also be interested if Jo is sure that her sighting is correct.

Regarding the comments on sparrows - I find that they are the main birds that do regularly visit my feeders, with the occasional great tit and blue tit (not to mention the magpies and pigeons pinching food from the bird table!). That reminds me that I did send you a record via the website a while ago (just after the litter pick) for a heron being mobbed by crows over Walkley Bank, and 2 Goldfinches in my garden for the first and only time (not seen since), despite me putting out the niger seed too! Perhaps they'd just popped over from Roger's garden?!. I'm sure you don't have room to put all the records in the newsletter, but I did wonder if

you received it, given the website problems you mentioned? I've just checked and was pleased to see that you've got it up and running again - I can certainly sympathise with your comments about not being keen to spend summer evenings at the computer after spending all day on one at work!

Best wishes, Sue (Shaw)

Thank you Sue. I will try and clarify the Swallowtail Butterfly sighting although it may have gone by now!

I previously reported an article from Roger Butterfield who had spotted deer tracks in Blackbrook Wood and asked if any of our readers had any similar findings. Well I can tell you that I had one response from Alison Twigg who reported seeing a roe deer on Millstone Edge in July 2006.

BAT WATCH

Our Rivelin bat watch was on the evening of 19th September. It was a dry evening with clear skies which was a stroke of luck following a week of tropical typhoon like conditions. About 16 of us turned up with enough candlepower to melt the southern ice cap. Walking from the Rivelin Hotel car park down Tofts Lane brought us immediate success. A 'noctule bat' sent all the bat detectors off the scale as it appeared to dive bomb us although really it was just feasting on the insects mustering around the street lights above our heads. Round Dam had a several Pippistrelles zipping in and out of our torch beams. We also had a fleeting visit from a Daubenton.

Group recorder – Graham Appleby

BOTANICAL GARDEN TOUR

A guided tour of the Botanical gardens has been arranged for Tuesday, 12th June starting at 6:30pm until about 8:30 pm. The charge will be £3 per person and the visit will be led by a member of the Friends of the Botanical Gardens. More details regarding booking, in the next newsletter.

Janet Bowring