



# Newsletter



Rivelin Valley Conservation Group

## Spring 2007 no 62

### Through the Chair A Platform to Build Off

Hopefully, by the time you read this, Rivelin Mill Pond will once again be playing host to a family of mallard and moorhen. Within a year, eggs from an array of insects will be hatching into larvae and we'll be fishing them out for identification from the comfort of our own pond-dipping platform. We intend that it will remain stable and not bounce up and down, but it should be a "springboard" for renewed interest in the valley and its wildlife. There is to be a Grand Re-opening with Council Members and Officers – that means another opportunity to demonstrate to them what a jewel we have on our doorsteps and how much it means to local residents. Please come along on the 17<sup>th</sup> May at lunchtime if you can. In any event, please use the publicity all our hard work will get to promote RVCG and its Aims – encouraging the best management and improvement of wildlife habitats and the public access by which they can be appreciated and enjoyed. Sunday the 20<sup>th</sup> we will be hosting our own celebration with an event for all the family from 10.00am. Please advertise this one – it will be fun for all – and no speeches!

Roger and Out

### Contacts

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### Membership Renewal

A lot of you have renewed for 2007 but for those that haven't, it is not too late. If you have lost your Membership Renewal Form which was in the last newsletter, don't worry, just send your £3 (cheques payable to Rivelin Valley Conservation Group) to –

M Sanderson

35 Den Bank Cresc  
Sheffield S10 5PB

If you are not sure if you have paid for this year, Please ring M Sanderson on 0114 2306790.

### Donations

Thanks for donations from Lofthouse, Drinkwater, Graves, Lewis, Linley, Mason, Owen, Peter, Pyatt, Rankin, Scowcroft, Shail, Shaw, Trantor, White, Beardshaw, Davidson, Dean, Hague, Kitchen, Morrell, Perrett, Richards, Saunders, Woodhouse, Brazil, Carnell, Hastings, Jackson, Lyon, Parker, Sharpe, Walker, Liddell, McLaney, Bissenger, Newsam, Shaw, Stemmer, Toseland, Turnbull, White, Falshaw, Moulson, Whiteley, Grace, Hanson, Horsefield, Burnett, Cross, Culmer, Edgeley, Henderson, Ollin and Ward - over £380 so far this year. We are very grateful for this and for all the voluntary work done by our members. RVCG could not exist without your help.

Thanks also to those who over the years have sent me used stamps for the Guide Dogs for the Blind Association.

Unfortunately this has been the last lot that can be sent off, as they will no longer be accepting them. Perhaps stamp collecting is going out of fashion. As far as I know, no other charity accepts them.

**Also – Welcome to our new members.**

M Sanderson

### **Task Team News**

For anyone who has not yet visited the new dam at Rivelin Mill, make a quick visit down and take a look at the fabulous work that has been done by the council employees on site and your Task Team.

#### **7<sup>th</sup> Jan 2007**

The team turned out in force at the Rivelin Corn Mill with two trailers full of equipment and a heck of a lot of sand and cement with the inner wall of the dam to rebuild. Sixteen members of the team and one mad volunteer from the Ranger Service (thanks Chris). I am not quite sure how much stone had been left for us to use but it was a lot and we used every last piece. Many thanks to the wheelbarrow members who did a great job on the day fetching and carrying ton after ton of stone. The walling teams did a great job up to their ankles in thick mud and yours truly spent most of the day digging James and Sam out of the mud in the middle of the dam. The weather spoilt itself at the end and we all went home quite wet. It was a long day by our standards and I bet Radox sales went up around Sheffield 10 and 6 considerably.

#### **28<sup>th</sup> Jan 2007**

Once again it was down to the Rivelin Mill at Rails Road with another load of stone, sand and cement to work with, this time with fourteen members of the team and two from the Ranger Service and three young girls working on the Duke of Edinburgh Bronze Award scheme, all eager to get covered in mud.

The three girls on the scheme did a great job wheel barrowing the footpath topping along to us. Using a wheelbarrow was a new experience for them and I don't think they will ever have worked so hard, trying to steer it in the right direction when it was full. A few aching muscles here, I think. The wall is looking great. What a shame you won't see it when the dam is full.

#### **25<sup>th</sup> Feb 2007**

Found us at the bottom of Hagg Lane in the Russell Wood doing a bit of woodland management. This is the second time we have visited this area and what we keep on finding in these woods never fails to

surprise and disgust us

Apart from that, a great turn out by the team, and obviously they must have heard that I was now providing biscuits with the tea and coffee.

#### **25<sup>th</sup> March 2007**

Once again we have to return to the Rivelin Mill pond. The wall we have re-built wanted extending another 2m to accommodate the pond dipping platform station.

Whilst we had a small team on this, the rest of us spent our time clearing the bank of all the fallen trees. Don't worry if it looks a bit barren at the moment. We intend to do some replanting of this area once we get round to installing the new footpaths and picnic areas.

Thanks to all team members who have worked really hard over the last three months and the funny thing is they all seem to enjoy it.

**Strange people, these task team members.**

**Come and join them.**

Keith Kendall

#### **Café in the Coppice Coffee Morning**

Re-opening at Easter, Louise will be running occasional Charity Events at Blackbrook Farm and Friday 18<sup>th</sup> May – right in the middle of Environment Weeks – RVCG will be the beneficiary. See you there.

Roger Kite

#### **Some Recent Meetings**

9<sup>th</sup> Jan Roy Battye "Ganister mines of Sheffield"

Ganister mining is an unknown quantity in modern Sheffield but once it played an important part in our local industry. The mining took place around Stocksbridge, Deepcar, Wadsley, Worrall and Stannington. Roy described how as a child in Wadsley, he saw the old workings and remains of railway lines which carried the ganister away. He was told, "They'd never build on 'ere – it's riddled wi' old mines". Ganister looks like a dull yellowish-grey rock, sometimes with a bluish sheen, which was the best quality. Technically it is clay of 95% pure silica and no one would have bothered about it, as it is not a rock that

can be shaped easily and is rather heavy but it does have one superior quality, essential to Sheffield steel makers. It has the ability to take extreme heat.

The crucible steel industry used clay pots in the furnaces but by the time of Bessemer converters, much higher temperatures were needed and ganister linings to the furnaces had to be used. By the 1860's it was a prominent local industry. Before then its only use was in road making.

Ganister was often mined alongside coal in Victorian times. Farmers were able to supplement their incomes if they were fortunate enough to have it on their land. Later companies were formed such as that of Joseph Bramall who once made nails but was fortunate enough to buy the mineral rights on Yews Farm.

Mining ganister was tough, dirty work. The only light was from a candle. Young boys would be working by the age of 14 and in 1914 would be paid 2/- a day and worked for 5½ days. A miner would take his lunch down with him, usually lard sandwiches and stay down all day. In winter, he would not see daylight. He would be subject to all the usual lung diseases because of the dusty atmosphere. Some ganister was taken from opencast sites. To ventilate the mines, a fire would be lit under a chimney. The rock had to be ground down, a difficult job, as it was so hard and then used for refractory bricks.

Ganister is now redundant due to modern processes. The last mine was near Ughill and little trace remains of an old Sheffield industry.

#### 13<sup>th</sup> Feb David Hey "Sheffield before the Industrial Revolution"

Here was another welcome visit from David, our local historian. When Daniel Defoe visited Sheffield in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century, the industrial revolution was well on its way. He described the houses as dark and black with the smoke of forges. The population was 10,000. Previously, though Sheffield had some of its traditional industry, the rolling green hills reached much closer into town. Until the Civil War, Sheffield was dominated by its castle, built by Thomas Furnival on the site of a motte and bailey castle. On Lady's Bridge was a

chapel where tolls were taken and close by was a cattle market and hay market. The gentry owned most of the land. A deer park of 2400 acres owned by the powerful Earls of Shrewsbury extended from Attercliffe to Gleadless and lives on in the name "Park Hill". The prestigious Manor Lodge still exists, now ruined but the Turret House is extant. Here the ladies would stand on the "leads" to watch the progress of the hunt and then retire to banquets when the hunt was over. Although industry had not reached the scale of Defoe's day, the cutlery industry was thriving. Robert the Cutler was recorded in 1297 and by the 17<sup>th</sup> 60% of workers were in the trade. In 1624, The Cutler's Company of Hallamshire was founded and the Shrewsbury family presided over local industry including coal mining. The growing town meant wealth for a few and they built themselves grand houses with long gardens and made public subscriptions to fine new churches. The first public service reservoir was Barker's Pool in Balm Green. Water was let out periodically to swill household rubbish into the River Don. Street names survive which speak of Sheffield's past. The Shrewsbury family and their descendants live on in Arundel, Sussex, Surrey, Howard, Norfolk and Eyre Streets. Shalesmoor, Crookesmoor and The Moor remind us of what was once there. Portobello and Gibraltar Streets were named after battles. Waingate was where the hay wains would pass to market and Scotland Street led up north.

#### 13<sup>th</sup> March Peter Robinson Travels in Uganda

First we heard of the way Uganda has risen over its troublesome past and how conservation and regeneration is leading to a tourist industry. We saw wonderful wildlife photographs of a myriad of creatures and of course chimps with their engaging ways. Uganda is not only profiting from its wildlife. We saw bicycles stacked with bananas and the straight lines of tea plantations.

Many thanks to all these speakers, to Maureen for organising them and to Glenda for refreshments.

## THE RECORDER SPRING 2007



*The RVCG task team at Rivelin Mill Dam.*

In recent weeks the RVCG task team have been busy assisting the Sheffield City Council in the restoration of Rivelin Mill Dam. Our main occupation was the re-building of the dam wall. Roger, shown here in the foreground, has been instrumental in negotiating the ponds new lease of life and in its new design. Newly landscaped and now filled with water, it looks an absolute picture. Further work is continuing on the car park and surrounding area.

I came across an interesting website called 'Buglife', The Invertebrate Conservation Trust. One of its articles, also mentioned on breakfast TV this morning, is the decline in bumblebees over the last 50 years. Apparently, such is the importance of bees that Albert Einstein was quoted as saying that 'man would not survive for more than 4 years without them'. I don't think we're quite at that stage yet but there is major concern at the heavy losses suffered by some beekeepers this winter. In the London area alone, two thirds of the 4000 hives have been lost, more than 80% in West Sussex, 50% in Cambridgeshire. On average the losses are about 30%, which is twice the average winter loss of 15%. The chairman of the London Bee Keepers Association lost 30 of his 40 hives. Honeybees are responsible for 80% of all pollination as they collect nectar for the hive and experts fear there could be a severe ecological problem with flowers, fruit and crops failing to grow. The losses are either due to a disease called CCD or a parasite called Varroa destructor. Bee-keepers across Poland, Greece, Croatia, Switzerland, Italy and Portugal have also reported heavy losses. The Bumblebee Conservation Trust is encouraging more people to grow traditional native plants such as bluebells, rosemary, geraniums, honeysuckle and other cottage garden plants, which bees prefer to the more exotic plants.

*Independent* readers can join by accessing [www.bumblebeeconservationtrust.co.uk](http://www.bumblebeeconservationtrust.co.uk), and downloading a membership form. Membership costs £16 a year, which can be paid by cheque, made payable to the "Bumblebee Conservation Trust", and sent to Bumblebee Conservation Trust, School of Biological and Environmental Sciences, University of Stirling, Stirling FK9 4LA

## Reports

24/1/07 Mary Brazil: 2 goldcrests

26/1/07 Heather Sharpe: Female golden eye (that's a duck to you and me) and 2 crossbills. Also plenty of mountain hare tracks and droppings in the snow at the end of road at top of Redmires Dam. With the WEA class run by Paul Ardron on Friday pm, in the past we have seen hen harrier, snipe and merlin above Ocean View car park and all sorts of fungi and slime moulds including a truffle species in Wyming Brook Woods.

4/2/07 Derek Hastings: Flock of 30+ redwings (or wheatears) on fields west of Soughley Lane near Wymingbrook Farm viewed through binoculars. Main distinguishing feature - black stripe over eye. Ed: according to my book, the male wheatear has a most definite black stripe

over its eye and is paler than the redwing, which has a white stripe just above the eye otherwise looks pretty much like a song thrush. 5/2/07 M Sanderson: Canada geese seen at Redmires. This is the largest goose, introduced to Europe in the 17C and is none migratory. The White fronted goose was also reported over the same weekend. This is a winter visitor from the Arctic.

9/2/07 Julie Lawrence: Female sparrowhawk in her garden in the snow (photographed).

10/2/07 M Sanderson: Small flock of Redwings eating fallen apples

24/2/07 Ian Jones: Pair of yellow hammers in the bushes below golf course. Bird of prey that looked like a buzzard above the trees of the golf course being chased by a crow. Pair of grey wagtails at the Round Dam.

3/3/07 M Sanderson: Heron flying around in circles over Den Bank, being seen off by 2 crows. Also saw a couple of Gold Finches

8/3/07 David Gwynn-Jones: Can any action be taken to stop the over-grazing of fields in the valley. Some seem to be just mud and forlorn horses. It seems worse this spring than previous ones. The area around the ugly Clough Fields building is particularly bad as are fields to the West of the Rivelin Inn. Ed: this sort of report is welcome, as we certainly wouldn't want to see any animals suffering; if indeed they are. As for the state of the fields, I don't think there is a lot we can do. Farmers bring their cattle into barns in winter as they tend to get bogged down in the fields in winter. Horses will cause a similar problem if left in a field to exercise over winter then a sparse muddy field is the result. Actually, you should see the state of my lawn after my dog's antics this winter. It is also nearer a sparse muddy field than a lawn. We'll keep an eye on things.

22/3/07 M Sanderson: Roper Hill - 3 pied wagtails and a flying heron

29/3/07 M Sanderson: Regular appearance of small flock of up to 14 starlings. Also a pair of bullfinches - must be nesting as female is taking fibre from clematis stems.

18/2/07 Ian Jones: We moved to Crosspool about 4 years ago and we take our springer spaniel, Poppy, walking in the Valley almost everyday. We've seen gold finches in Cyprus where they are quite common, but I've never seen them in Rivelin Valley before today. There were two perched in a tree near the lane, looking at me looking at them. Then things got a bit chaotic as a runaway horse came galloping riderless down the lane. But that is another story.

6/3/07 Peter Dale: "Last week I was 50. It is the age where you start to look back on your life. Well, I did anyway! My family are from

Doncaster; my grandfather came to Kent in 1936 to work in the Coal Mines. As a small boy we went back to visit South Yorkshire a couple of times. I recall my father taking me to Rivelin Valley. I ended up in one of the pools, very wet and fully clothed of course. I guess I was around 8 years old at the time. It was a magical place then. I found your website after a 'Google' search. I wonder which pond I ended up in? Probably I will never know. It is good to see all the conservation work being done by your group. Well done. Interestingly the Kent Coalfield closed in 1984, and there are a number of websites dedicated to preserving their memory here in Kent." ED: Its good to hear from a none member who came across our website by chance. Yes I'm also turned 50 and that's when I realised I probably had a bigger history than I have a future, which is quite a sobering thought really. In fact I'll have to email him back as he wont be receiving a newsletter unless he reads it on the website. I wonder if he wants to become a member?

### **Other news**

We are currently looking after a friend's rabbits as their lawn is infested with leatherjackets. This is the larva of the crane fly (daddy longlegs). The larvae eat the roots of the grass and create large brown patches. They had their lawn chemically treated and when this failed they had it re-turfed. Sounds like a lot of trouble and expense for something so rare but then talking to a friend who maintains the cricket ground at Stocksbridge, he confirmed he has the very same problem. It appears that the winters are no longer cold enough to keep the leatherjacket in check and is becoming a real pest. Another affect of climatic change?

Your reports are most welcome so please keep sending them in. Many thanks

Graham Appleby – Group Recorder

### **Visit to Sheffield Botanic Gardens Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> June 2007**

This visit will be led by a member of the FOBS (Friends of the Botanical Gardens). We will meet t 6.15 pm (for a 6.30pm start) at the Thompson Road entrance. The cost of the visit is £3 per person. If you wish to join us, please complete the enclosed form [Barbeque form and Botanical Gardens form](#) and send to Janet Bowring with the money (cash or cheque made payable to Rivelin Valley Conservation Group) no later than 3<sup>rd</sup> June.

We have to let FOBS know the numbers so they can provide the relevant number of guides. If you wish to have fuller information please contact Janet on –

**0114 2307570**

**Please renew your subscription if you haven't already and join us in our programme of events.**