



Newsletter



Rivelin Valley Conservation Group

Summer 2007 no 63

Through The Chair

Weather or not

Are you weatherproof, weather-worn or just completely weather-beaten by it all this year? So many people walking about with long faces! Actually they are far more likely to be driving about in their cars accumulating an even bigger carbon footprint - causing even greater upheaval in our weather patterns. My dictionary describes weather-beaten as tanned, seasoned or injured. I reckon I can tell those who have been to Greece for their holiday. The rest of us are still winter-white.

As for seasoned – hah! What season! I think most are feeling quite injured. Even if not directly affected by the floods, others' misery has simply added to our own sense of doom and gloom at a time when we should be looking forward to a wonderful harvest. Weather! Most seem to be well and truly under it at the present. Of course there is another meaning to the verb 'weather' - to come safely through the storm. Why not concentrate on that one and rejoice in the odd moment of elation. The Garden Open Day stayed fine and Stannington Carnival was glorious (if a little squelchy underfoot) Peering out through the raindrops, we had a young nuthatch on the feeder today and a few hours later a report of a juvenile woodpecker next door. The wildlife seems to be coping – so should we.

A couple of ignorant letters in The Star should not detract from the general enthusiasm at the wonderfully restored Rivelin Mill site. Keep smiling.

Roger and out

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Donations

Thanks for more donations this quarter from Jones, Sweetman, Andrew, Keen, Farrier, Hill, Warrender, Lampeter, Bowes, and Ward. So far this year, contributions through membership have amounted to more than £500. Also thanks to all of you who have donated money through other channels. It will all be well used in our work in the valley. We also appreciate the notes sent with your subscriptions. For example – "I am too old to be of any use but I do so enjoy your newsletter and reading of all the hard work and great improvements being made by your wonderful volunteers". Thanks Mrs T – yes, you are of great use because you are a member of RVCG. We welcome all comments on our work in improving and maintaining our valley Also – welcome to new members.

M Sanderson

Task Team News

Sunday 27th May

Not really a Task Day as such but more of a celebration of the opening of the Rivelin Mill Pond. We took our tent and display boards down to the pond and stood around waiting for the public to arrive and they did. What a wonderful day we had. At one point, cars were parked all the way down Rails Road, as the car park was full.

Roger Cose had pre-prepared a bundle of bird box kits and he never stopped all day helping the youngsters to build them and once built, with the youngsters name proudly written across the front, the boxes were stored waiting for an appropriate time to put them up. I can report that most of the boxes have been put up at various points along the top of the nature trail so watch out for yours. It's there somewhere. Pond dipping was also very popular and whole families got involved with trying to identify the few little beasties that have managed to adopt the pond as their home at such short notice.

A really good day was had by all and what a shame that the two people who can find the time to write to The Star complaining about the dam couldn't find the time to come down on the day and see the real enthusiasm and enjoyment on the youngsters faces. This is what it is all about.

Sunday 24th June

The day started off full of good intentions. We had a new gate to install at the top end of Rivelin Mill Pond. A group found themselves pulling up areas of Himalayan balsam and also with a carload of new bird boxes to put up.

For the first couple of hours things went well. Holes were dug for the gateposts. Balsam was out and disposed of and most of the bird boxes had been put up

but just as we got the first gatepost in, it began to rain. Now, even though we were using extra rapid set cement, it seemed to take ages for the first post to set and as you know, we can't hang the gate until this first post is set. Despite our best efforts to hide under the trees, we were getting a little wet. Another 45 minutes and it was set enough to put the gate on and the other posts in but by the time we had done this we were totally soaked through to the skin, so well done to everyone for your commitment. The jokers who write to The Star don't see this.

Despite the rain being the start of the deluge that has been well reported and caused so much devastation, the gateposts actually set and now we just need a dry day to go and paint it. Well done Team 2 – a nice easy day for the next time out, clearing back at Carver Fields and then a well earned rest in August for holidays and then I suppose we had better tackle the repairs on the Nature Trail after the floods - and J. Beardshaw thinks we should just cut nettles back around car parks – silly me!

Keith Kendall

Some Recent Events

Sunday 29th April Annual Rivelin Spring Clean

Once more, RVCG along with Action for Stannington braved the traffic and steep hills for the big clear up. This year there was less litter than usual due to the efforts of Sheffield Council's newly appointed Ranger. Even so, yellow jackets and black bags were still needed as the joint workforce went into action and the valley was scoured for rubbish.

How do you change the attitudes of people who think that the countryside is a big litterbin where you can open your car window and lob out takeaway

packaging and anything else that that might spoil the nice clean interior? People walking the valley were very appreciative of the efforts being made. One young family said that they regularly travelled to Rivelin from Shiregreen. A dog walker had come from Foxhill and a small hiking group on a round trip to Stannington were from Ecclesall. Some items that appeared – an old blanket, shoes, used disposable nappies, tyres, old newspapers, a dead cat and broken pottery.

Wouldn't it be lovely to deliver all this back from whence it came?

Tuesday 8th May Evening Walk in the Valley

This was another chance for people including many who weren't members and some who were new to the area to have a pleasant evening walk led by Roger, looking at the natural history and industrial heritage of the valley. As usual, we finished at Revitt's Coppice House Farm.

It's a good time to be in the valley when everything is fresh and new. The trees were still different shades of green, bluebells and yellow archangels were in full bloom and ducklings were trailing after their mums.

It was an added bonus to admire views across the valley from the farm where we had tea, coffee and cakes while the new lambs gambolled in the field below.

Thanks to Pam and Frank for their hospitality even though they could not be there though their daughter did a good stand-in job for them.

Thursday 17th May Official Opening of Rivelin Mill Pond

On a damp drizzly day we went to see more water, this time rather more interesting than we have been used to recently. For several years, Rails Road car park has been a very desolate site

with the dam area and public footpath being closed off with ugly fencing and no water in the dam - where it should be. Previously the water had all disappeared down the river after the dam wall collapsed.

All this is now changed and a delightful new pond has been made after restoration made possible by RVCG working with Sheffield City Council and the Parks and Countryside Service. Everyone concerned came out in full force to eat chocolate cake while admiring the new view. Lydgate School children looked on while Roger cut the red ribbon and later the children were the first to use the newly built platform for pond dipping. Surprisingly a few creatures had already moved in and the children scrutinised beetle larvae, tadpoles, a bloodworm and a few drowned insects which had not been told that this was now an aquatic site.

The general consensus of those present was that a huge improvement has been made in this area and that it now looks very picturesque and is very accessible. Please go along and take a look. It is an excellent easy access site for the whole family.

We also had an enjoyable day at Stannington Carnival on 14th July. This is a good old-fashioned show, very well attended with lots to do so look out for it next year if you haven't been so far. Also, the Crosspool Garden Open Day gave a good day out for enthusiasts and raised money for local charities.

M Sanderson

Visit to the Botanical Gardens Tuesday 12 June

Twenty-two of us enjoyed a conducted tour around the gardens. We had two guides, one of whom was very knowledgeable about the botanic names of trees and plants and their history and habitats. We heard about the history of

the gardens and the new themed areas that had been planted recently as well as the quite rare trees in the gardens. The weather was VERY kind to us and I am sure everyone enjoyed walking around the gardens and the Paxton Pavilions.

Janet Bowring

Some Tales From the Past

We value Rivelin for its woodland areas and so it was in the past but for practical reasons.

From John Evelyn – Silva; or a discourse of Forest-Trees 1662 as told in 'Dam Bad Place, Sheffield' Sylvia Pybus 1994 Sheffield Academic Press

In Sheffield Lordship. In the Hall-park, near unto Rivelin, stood an Oak which had eighteen Yards without bough or knot, and carried a yard and six inches square at the said height or length, and not much bigger near the root; it sold twelve years ago for eleven pounds. Consider the distance of the place and country, and what so prodigious a tree would have been worth near London. In the upper end of Rivelin stood a tree, called the Lord's Oak, of twelve yards about, and the top yielded twenty-one cord; cut down about thirteen years since.

Note: a cord is a wood measure - equal to around 126 cubic feet and measured by using a piece of string.

New Season of Events

Do keep an eye on our new programme of events and join us for the evening and of course, enjoy Glenda's tea and cakes. Our first talk is by the South Yorkshire Badger Protection Group on 14th July. Some of you who were members in our early days might remember when they talked to us of the horrors of badger baiting, going on here under our noses in South Yorkshire. Will they have a happier story to tell? You don't have to be members to join our meetings so bring friends and family. We need to have a good turnout to cover expenses.

Many thanks to all of you who volunteer your time to help our group and all who are members and support them.

THE RECORDER SUMMER 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 design and new lease of life. Creatively landscaped and now filled with water, it looks an absolute picture. Further work is continuing on the car park and surrounding area.

Today is 7th May, Bank Holiday Monday and being on dog walking duty, I was interested to see just what was in flower. I stopped by the new Carver Fields interpretation board and tried desperately to identify everything on it as I felt it necessary being the group recorder. I then skipped through the newly emerging wild flower meadow, past the new 5-a-side pitch stealthily mown into the middle of the top Carver field and off down Mill Stone edge. What a wonderful time of year this is, although I enjoy all the seasons, I think this is my favourite. The trees and shrubs are just starting to green up and

there is a terrific display of spring flowers such as Lily of the Valley, Red Campion, cowslips, thistles, stitchwort and sorrel. Little did we know what was to come later that month with some of the heaviest rains known. I wasn't available to photograph the valley in full flood but I was anxious about the damage it may have caused. I needn't have worried. The manmade bits of the valley have been there for over 500 years and a sudden violent weather storm wasn't going to make that much difference. In fact it just washed away a few paths that had been laid recently. Throwing a load of

crushed stone onto a pathway looks very nice for a while but heavy rain just washes it away as I often see on the allotment lanes nearby where it all gets washed out onto the roadways. Didn't we learn anything about building from our predecessors?

If anyone has any film or photos of the Rivelin Valley in full flood I would be most grateful if you would allow me to publish them on the RVCG website for posterity

Reports

8 April Louise Sanderson saw badgers feeding on the grass verge on Marsh Lane about midnight. Louise and Howard also reported seeing one of the first swallows 15th April although this was at the butterfly house at Anston
18 April Derek Hastings saw 4 lapwings in fields off the conduit path at Lodgemoor and 3 skylarks, which have been declining in numbers recently. Later at Redmires top and middle reservoirs, at least 30 lapwings flew overhead and settled in fields east of the reservoir. There were also 4 male and 3 female goldeneyes on Redmires top reservoir (ducks to you and me) overwintering from Northern Europe.
19th April David Lyon reported seeing a Kestrel perched on his neighbour's front garden wall

23 June Louise Sanderson was nimble enough to not only witness a baby tawny owl in a tree at the top of Marsh Lane but managed to photograph it and send me a copy. I shall do my very best to publish it on the RVCG website

I recently heard from an RVCG member Christine Roe who was down at the new Rivelin Mill pond with friends explaining the work done by the RVCG. She also discovered a wide variety of wild flowers and wanted to know if they had been deliberately planted. I have been

told that they must have been brought in with the new soil. Hopefully Christine will furnish me with a list of identified wild flowers and we'll do our very best to keep down the Himalayan Balsam. Christine also mentioned the area looked good and her friends were impressed

Keith and Roger have both mentioned the apparent injustice that was dealt us by the Sheffield Star over Rivelin Mill pond and I would like to add my own comments. The opening of Rivelin Mill back in May was a wonderful event with TV crews and reporters there to witness Roger Kite cutting the red ribbon. The event was well attended by the public and a class of children from Lydgate School. We all eagerly looked for the news item on 'Look North' over the next few days but there was no mention. We scoured the local papers for the news item but apart from a small article in the Sheffield Telegraph, there was nothing, which was a bit of a surprise as the council had just spent over £100k on the ponds restoration. Then the bombshell. One Thursday, in the Sheffield Star, there was a long detailed article from a disgruntled individual (MW) who was very damning of the work of the RVCG and particularly Rivelin Mill. Not only that but it was accompanied by a photo of the school children happily pond dipping on the opening day!

Our thanks also go to the individuals who left a dozen empty washing up bottles next to a weir near Packhorse Bridge; no doubt fascinated by the bubbles and foam created but ignorant of the ecological damage to the rivers inhabitants

Thank you for all your reports and photos and please keep sending them

Graham Appleby Group Recorder