



Newsletter



Rivelin Valley Conservation Group

Winter 2008 no 65

Through The Chair

All I Want for Christmas

So, what did you have for Christmas? We had a nearly 2 year-old grandson - staying with us. All that excitement, wonder and fun. The beginnings of understanding of what it is all about. Can you recall the your first wildlife experience? Have you lost that sense of excitement with a first encounter or the sheer wonder at the beauty or grace of a wild animal in its natural surroundings or the form and colour of a wild flower? And what about the fun of watching march hares, the tumbling acrobatics of a lapwing or simply catching sight of your first puffin. That's what we need to understand being a member of a Conservation Group should be about. Not simply appreciating these things, but passing them on - to the next generation. So what did you pass on to the youngsters among your family and friends - the latest game-boy, a sci-fi DVD or a robotic toy? Or did you try a British birds colouring book, freshwater identification manual or a junior membership of a Conservation Group? Without our encouragement all our endeavours to protect and enhance a Rivelin experience could be wasted. We need to take every opportunity to ensure that the next generation, at least appreciate our effort. New Year Resolution - bring a grandson or daughter to at least one event this year.

Roger and Out

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Donations

We now have nearly £600 sent through member's donations this year. Many thanks this quarter to Cressey, Cousins, Green, Seaman, Lampeter and Ward. Your donations are very well used in our work in the valley and we appreciate them.

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

Yes, it is time to renew your membership for 2008. Please use the enclosed form and why not persuade someone else to join? This year has shown our biggest membership ever, which reflects growing concerns for valley issues. For new members who joined after September 30th last year, please remember that you have membership for 2008.

Thanks

We send thanks to everyone involved in the organisation of RVCG. A lot of people are involved behind the scenes. Our Task Team is always busy keeping the valley tidy and has developed lots of skills to add to the talents they have brought with them. Many are involved in Newsletter production and printing. Others spend much time in its distribution from sorting out delivery

areas to trudging up and down our hills in all weathers, also in sending information packs to new members. Without our watchful eye on planning concerns our valley would look very different. Our monthly events and visits need organising. Finances are looked after and of course we have our very own caterer making cakes for our meetings. Phone calls and paperwork take a lot of time and some of our workers have full time jobs as well! So we send our thanks to all our volunteers and members who make RVCG a great group.

Sometimes people say that they can't do anything because they are elderly or infirm but you are doing something because you are a member.

A Blast From the Past

This is a first for RVCG Newsletter – a recipe.

During WW1, Spear & Jackson's, the toolmakers moved their offices to 'The Towers' on Sandygate Road because of bombing in the east end. On May 13 1944 they held a garden party and bring and buy sale to raise money for 'Salute the Soldier Week'. One of their fundraising activities was to produce a recipe book with contributions from the workforce, including some from the company's Canadian and US offices. Here is one of their recipes. Instructions are for the filling only – everyone was supposed to know about pastry making and oven temperatures.

Canadian Bakewell

1 cupful of sugar

1 cupful of sultanas

2oz of butter or margarine

2 tsp vinegar

Melt sugar and butter. Do not boil. Beat in the egg and add the sultanas and vinegar.

Line a pie plate with pastry, add the filling and bake as usual. The recipe

suggests adding jam underneath the filling but it works very well without it. Do not overcook or it will end up breaking your teeth. This recipe is surprisingly good but was deemed too rich for everyday wartime use in my family so it only appeared at parties. The garden parties at 'The Towers' were popular with the locals with everyone enjoying the surroundings and the trip up the tower to enjoy the view. Red Squirrels would scamper around the grounds and nobody could ever have guessed that they would disappear from our area.

M Sanderson

In the Garden

It was a horrible day on the 18th November, with rain turning to snow and settling by 6pm, but it turned out to be quite exciting. Two long tailed tits together with the usual 15-20 sparrows, 3 blackbirds and the robin had visited the feeding areas. At 1.30pm I glanced in the garden and there was a female sparrowhawk on the ground with something in her talons. She flew up into the back of the plum tree. All I could see were feathers flying. About 3.15pm she was sitting in the almond tree, looking very bedraggled in the pouring rain. She sat there for at least 45 minutes and then flew off. I went to look for the remains of the bird she had caught. All I found was a skeleton, minus the head, of a blackbird – what an efficient predator. Earlier in the year, in February I had disturbed a female sparrow hawk eating the remains of a wood pigeon under the hedge. She had plucked it until it looked ready for the oven, but was unable to lift such a heavy bird. She returned to the garden over a period of 4 hours but still left enough to satisfy the fox in the night. Other highlights this year were the appearance of a nuthatch and greater

spotted woodpecker on the peanuts – at the same time. They appeared in July and I have not seen them since. This is the first time in 21 years that I have seen either of them in my garden. I also look forward to seeing the foxes and hedgehog again this year, especially as I have a new hedgehog box to encourage them to stay.

J Buckland

See below (Christmas in Rivelin) if you are interested in hedgehog boxes.

Annual Carol Sing at the Rivelin

It was held on December 13th, a very clear and frosty night in the valley. This is our attempt to conserve the singing of traditional carols. A most enthusiastic group of people with an assortment of books valiantly attempted all the carols whether familiar or not. The more confident led the novices and it was great fun. What amazed me is the spontaneity by which people join in and sing the parts. Our pianist, Ian Sharpe is to be applauded for his spirited playing and direction. What a pity more people did not attend but a change of day may have been the cause.

Jo Flower

Graham Appleby also sent us further comments on this annual event. I really enjoyed this event which is the start of Christmas for me. I was talking to a chap who I see there each year and was planning a different carol sing each night at a different location right up to Christmas. I was impressed by the dedication and enthusiasm of this professional carol singer who didn't even need to share my carol book because he knew most of the words. It's quite heart warming to hear there has been a revival in local carol singing and so it's one event well worth supporting even if it's just for a drink

and a mince pie.

Christmas in Rivelin Event

With the Pudding Ladies' café and the new toilet block, this is a great location for a Christmas fair and one I was looking forward to after last years success. Christmas trees lined the main paths and a series of stalls and a few seasonal fairy lights really gave it a festive feel. The RVCG presented its usual array of bird feed and bird boxes including ones for the children to make and a new line in hedgehog boxes (£10 – let us know if you want one). The rangers put on several stalls providing lots of activities for the children and an amazing wood turner using a long branch with a rope and a treadle to operate his lathe to skilfully create some unusual wooden gifts. The highlight of the day was Lydgate Junior School brass band who played a selection of Christmas carols most beautifully in almost freezing conditions.

Graham Appleby

Wanted

We need someone who could produce leaflets to publicise our programme of events. Also we need people in our areas to deliver these leaflets to local Post Offices, shops, libraries, community centres etc. If you could help us please contact Roger Kite.

Visit to Potteric Carr

If you wish to join this visit on Sunday 20th April, meeting there at 10.30am, please use the enclosed form. This is a YWT reserve and has a large variety of habitats and diversity of wildlife. The cost is £1.50 and meals can be booked. Please contact Janet Bowring if you need more details.

Some Wadsley and Loxley Commoners Events

All are at Wadsley Church Hall at 7.30pm.

Monday 18th Feb Geraldine Hughes – My Life and Work as a Potter.

Geraldine's work will be on sale.

Monday 17th March Malcolm Nunn - Historical Slides.

Monday 21st April Bob Horton - Magical Sheffield.

For more details ring 2348425 (Alan)

Some Recent Events

9th October - Church Buildings in the South Yorkshire Area - Ray Batty

Another return to RVCG by Roy and we did a tour of South Yorkshire churches. Roy said that he had no expertise but plenty of interest. The books of our local historian, David Hey had fired his interest. If a person from the Middle Ages came back to our time, just about the only recognisable features would be the churches. Our journey started at Saint Peter's church in Conisborough. The name Saint Peter often indicates the oldest churches. Just outside the porch is a cross that may have been used in ritual processions but in the main, their purpose is largely unknown. There is evidence of many being in existence, not all of them being close to churches. In Cromwell's time some were destroyed, leaving only a place name such as Banner Cross or Parson Cross. One cross close to Sheffield Cathedral is now in the British Museum and is said to be the finest in Britain. Poor Sheffield has to content itself with a plaster cast in Weston Park Museum. On to Ecclesfield with its adjacent priory over what was once a monastery. This part of the building is lived in and a bedroom still contains a piscina that was used to wash the chalice.

At Silkstone, there is a graveyard where 26 victims drowned in a pit disaster in 1838 are buried. Many were girls under the age of 17 who had to endure terrible conditions and long hours. This disaster led to a series of acts to improve conditions.

Saint Cuthbert of Lindisfarne was said to have had his furthest south resting place at Fishlake when on his way to burial in Durham.

At Austerfield was the house of William Bradford who sailed to America on 'The Mayflower' where he eventually became a governor.

Nearer home, Bradfield was a chapel of ease for Ecclesfield and was built in High Bradfield though was intended to be in Low Bradfield. Legend says that the stones spirits carried the stones up the hill during the night, a story that is repeated in many places over Britain. These were just a few of the places we visited.

13th November – At Home with the Birds – Allan and Susan Parker

This meeting was all about garden birds and how to encourage them. The Parker garden attracts around 80 species with 25 species breeding there. Like many bird photographers, Allan spends a lot of time in his hide, now heated. A previous hide depended upon his wife supplying him with hot water bottles and hot drinks. Encourage birds in your garden – a breeding bluetits can clear your garden of caterpillars and a mistle thrush will do service destroying snails. A photographic tour of Allan's garden shows amazing diversity of birds when you set out to encourage them. They have everything – a home, shelter and food and they have not cottoned onto the fact that in the strange edifice in the middle of a field, Allan is waiting to shoot them – on film, of course.

M Sanderson

Future Events

Please look at your programme and join us.

We really do need you at our events. Frequently, our entrance charge does not cover the cost of hiring the hall and speaker's fees.

**Please remember to renew membership
and
A Happy New Year to you all**