



# Newsletter



Rivelin Valley Conservation Group

## Winter 2009 no 69

### Through The Chair

#### Infection

Now there's a seasonal subject. But no, I wasn't really referring to that party game of 'pass the parcel' by coughing and sneezing to ensure all your neighbours share your discomfort of a winter chill. Rather that you learn to smile at the wonders of this world around us and discover how infectious it can be. Christmas is a great time to practise greeting anyone walking towards you with a seasonal 'Merry Christmas'. Did you try it? Did you discover how easy it is to make a perfect stranger smile? Then why not take a chance and carry on into the New Year – infecting all you meet with joy and enthusiasm we all share in the natural world around us.

Creating – or recreating a natural habitat, whether it is a pond, woodland or wildflower meadow is brilliant for the effect it has on insect, small mammal and bird populations. But it's not just the looks of a place or it being good for wildlife - it's good for all that pass by. How do you measure the beneficial effect on how people feel? Your achievements in 2008 were amazing and appreciated by so many. Folk actually visit Rivelin Mill Car Park nowadays because of the 'feel good' factor. So be proud, smile at those you meet – you helped keep Rivelin Valley like it is. Happy New Year

#### **Contacts**

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### **Time to Renew Membership**

Yes, it is time for you to part with your £3 again. A Membership form is included with this newsletter. Please remember that if you are a new member, joining after September 30th 2008, then you have membership for this year. If you are unsure if you have paid for this year please ring M Sanderson – see contacts list.

#### **Donations**

We send our thanks to Harrison, Lampeter, Tetchner, Hill and Daines for recent donations also to all who have sent donations this year. I hope nobody has been omitted. You have helped our work by donating over £570. People help RVCG in many ways and we are very grateful to all of you for helping to keep our valley in good shape.

#### **RVCG VISITS**

##### **Return Visit to Old Moor Reserve Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> February 2009**

Another visit to one of our favourite destinations but at a different time of the year – hopefully we will see some of those species that overwinter in the reserve. As usual we will meet at Old Moor at 10.30 for coffee, take a tour round part of the reserve and visit some of the hides, then return to the Visitors Centre for lunch, followed by completing our tour of the reserve after lunch. Charges will be as follows –

RSPB members Free

Concessions £2.00

Adults £2.50

Children £1.50

If you wish to join us, please complete the enclosed form and return to Janet Bowring **no later than Monday, 9<sup>th</sup> February.**

We have to let them know the numbers for lunch so please book by this date. If you require details of how to get there, or need a lift (a car share cannot be guaranteed), please contact Janet on 2307570.

**Visit to Brodsworth Hall Gardens  
Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> April 2009**

A new venue for us. 'The gardens, a collection of 'grand gardens in miniature' reflect the desires and aspirations of Victorian country gentry and have been restored to their Victorian splendour.' The spring flowers and bulbs should be a beautiful sight at this time of the year. We shall meet at 1.30pm at Brodsworth Hall for a tour of the gardens. Please note this is not a guided tour and if anyone wants to visit the house in addition to the gardens, this is also possible but an additional charge will be made.

The fees for 2009 are not yet available but 2008 are as follows –

Adult £5

Concession £4

Child FREE

English Heritage Members FREE

If you wish to come on this visit, please complete the enclosed form and return to Janet Bowring **no later than Monday 20<sup>th</sup> April** as I have to inform then of numbers. If you require details of how to get there, or need a lift (a car share cannot be guaranteed), please contact Janet on 2307570.

*Do you have a story to tell about Rivelin? They could be about wildlife, childhood memories or perhaps you worked there. Please contact M Sanderson.*

**A Request For Help  
Dippers in and around Sheffield**

When you can watch dippers from a tram in the middle of Hillsborough or at the side of the road in Malin Bridge there is little doubt that this species has become well urbanised! Indeed, it can be seen in some of the most built up areas of the city, as

well as along sections of the rivers that are most heavily used by people. But are these urban territories just as good as the rural ones, are they only occupied by younger and more inexperienced birds and how do they cope with the levels of disturbance? These are some of the questions I want to answer in my PhD research. As part of this work, a number of the birds on the rivers Don, Loxley and Rivelin, and a bit further afield have been colour ringed and I am monitoring their movements, both seasonally and between years. If you see any of these birds, I would be grateful if you could please let me know? They each have two colour rings on one leg and one colour ring and a BTO metal ring on the other. The birds seem to move around a great deal more than I imagined at the outset of my studies and clearly travel much greater distances than their sedentary image would suggest. You might thus encounter them far from where they were originally ringed.

Many thanks for your assistance

Khaled S Etayeb

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**Happy Memories of Childhood in  
Rivelin from 1932 to Present Day**

My Dad's brother was a part time warden on Saturdays for a while and he introduced us to the delights of Rivelin when my family moved into a new house on my seventh birthday, but pleasures had to be inexpensive as my parents were endeavouring to buy a modern newly built £300 house on a very small wage. Rivelin Valley was just great for us, paddling, fishing, climbing trees and collecting bilberries and blackberries in season for jam and pies. We caught sticklebacks, red bellies and minnows and very often tadpoles. It wasn't considered cruel to take them home in those days. The second dam past the bottom of Den Bank going towards the Post Office was the favourite place. When we were hungry Mum brought out

the jam sandwiches and lemonade and we walked back towards the playground. On the way, my brother and I climbed trees that were growing on two small islands in the river. Armed with small sticks we had a battle trying to get each other down. My small sister aged two ladled water and pebbles with her little bucket. When she got fed up with bits falling on her head from above we were told it was time to have a swing and an ice cream from the 'Stop me and buy one' Wall's ice cream bicycle. These lasted as far as the troughs on Tinker Lane. After having a cool drink in the trough, we carried on up the stony track to Hinchcliffe's Farm, over the stile, through the cow field and up onto the road. Another favourite day was on Den Bank, picking bilberries with faces and fingers stained with them as I think we ate more than went in the basket. If it was warm enough we dared each other to walk barefoot across the large pipe over the millstream and then we paddled all the way to the old mill. We were fascinated by the echoes that came from the tunnel under Rivelin Valley Road. Another treat was to go to Wyming Brook where we played in the stream and had our picnic. Mum bought tea in a jug from a cottage at the bus stop. When we took the pots back we walked by the tumbling stream to the Ravine where we had another ice cream for ½p old money then back across the dam wall to Rivelin Post Office where we caught the bus back to Crosspool. Sometimes we went on the swing boats opposite the top entrance to the Ravine. When I was eight we contracted diphtheria and spent a long time in Lodge Moor Hospital from February to Easter. I also picked up scarlet fever so we had to be put in isolation. My brother had it when he was two. Later, my young sister became cross-eyed and because she screamed so much they put her in my bed but miraculously she didn't get scarlet fever. When we were in hospital, Mum had to peep at us through holes in the blinds as we were on the dangerously ill list. She came every day, walking both ways even when there was snow for six weeks. We were cross eyed and had to have our beds tipped up at the bottom and lay without a

pillow until we could tell the doctor how many fingers he was holding up. A fortnight before we were sent home, we managed to lift the window and Mum pushed chocolate through to us. The Easter eggs she brought were shown to us and put into sandwiches. We were much better and getting naughtier so we poured our medicine on the floor under our bed. What a scolding we got from matron. When we were allowed home, we could hardly walk to the bus stop and we had several more weeks convalescing. The headmaster sent us milk and fruit bought by the parents of our classmates and teachers.

At the age of ten years, a neighbour took his daughter and I to learn how to swim in the big dark pool near to Rails Road. We called it 'Devil's Deep'. It now has a sign up saying 'NO SWIMMING' as it is dangerous. It was very cold so after a while we dressed and went back to the stile at the bottom of Bell Hagg field. After climbing up there we hurried back home. That winter we decided to go sledging down this field but ended up in a four foot drift and found it very difficult to climb back up the slippery hillside. It was exhausting but great.

The years rolled on and we took our days off from work walking in the valley with our boy friends during the latter days of the war. After marriage we stayed in Crookes for a further seven years and our two girls also enjoyed all the fun and paddling. They too in their adult life brought their families when visiting great grandparents.

I remember my grandfather talking about skating on the pond near the playground and in the 1<sup>st</sup> World War, he was employed making Rivelin Valley Road and being layed off without pay in bad weather. My Dad was called up in 1942, aged 39 years and when he came home after the war, he became head gardener at Lodge Moor, King Edward and Winter Street hospitals. He died in Lodge Moor Hospital aged 69.

Joan Frith

Joan wants to thank all the volunteers who give their time to maintaining and enhancing 'our precious valley' and enjoys reading the newsletter. She still enjoys a stroll in the valley when her family visits.

## **Some Wadsley and Loxley Commoner Events**

### **Monday 16<sup>th</sup> February**

Working Sheep Dogs by Kathleen Birkinshaw

### **Monday 16<sup>th</sup> March**

The remarkable Gatty Family of Ecclesfield by Professor Mel Jones

### **Monday 20<sup>th</sup> April**

History of the General Cemetery – talk and slides

**All at Wadsley Church Hall Worrall Road at 7.30 pm.**

Any enquiries to 2335331

### **Malcolm Nunn – The Sheffield Flood**

Malcolm came back to give a second talk on this subject, this time at Knowle Top Chapel Stannington and it was good to see a lot of new faces. This flood devastated a huge area of Sheffield and with a large loss of life. Half an hour before midnight on March 11<sup>th</sup> 1864 the embankment of Dale Dyke Reservoir broke. The water travelled at 18mph and in places was 16ft deep. Cracks in the embankment had been found earlier and the problem was probably caused by the earth and loose stone used to build it. The first casualty was a newborn baby, washed from his mother's arms in Bradfield. One body was found as far away as Conisbrough. The landscape became unrecognisable as the waters swept through the valley towards the centre of Sheffield. Bodies were swept away, cottages destroyed and workplaces damaged when machinery was tossed aside. All this destruction caused much sightseeing and we saw photographs of agile youngsters balancing on piles of debris and men in stovepipe hats and best clothes surveying the scene. Wadsley churchyard contains 96 people who died in Malin Bridge.

Queen Victoria sent £1000 and Sheffield rates were increased to meet the claims. The dam wall was rebuilt but further back and its capacity was reduced.

M Sanderson

## **Reports**

Bob and Margaret Townrow  
Tuesday Oct 14<sup>th</sup> - a woodpecker, believed 'greater spotted' was seen on my garden nut feeder at 2 Carsick Grove on 12th Oct. A goldcrest, and a nuthatch were seen in the garden the previous day. I have not seen a woodpecker in the garden before. I have only seen goldcrests once before in the garden and I see nuthatches in the garden about three times a year.

Hilary White 25th Dec

Coppice Wheel..just down from KE 7 hospital site - very large bird sitting in one of the trees above the pond, quite unfazed by us creeping closer or by runners. We had binoculars and noted as much as we could. Later identified as a Harris Hawk - with a bell, rings and jesses.



Bob and Margaret Townrow Nov 7<sup>th</sup> – You can just make out the woodcock sitting in leaves at the bottom of their garden

Joan Buckland 15 Oct – reported seeing some Harlequin Ladybird larvae in her garden. This is the new visitor destined to wipe out our own ladybird species. These ladybirds are being monitored at <http://www.harlequin-survey.org/>



Christine Roe 26th Nov  
9 Waxwings in lime tree on verge outside our house on Manchester Road. They have been seen in the tree near the old farm on several days in the last 10 days; there were 30 on Monday 24<sup>th</sup>

Keith Kendall 23<sup>rd</sup> Dec  
Between 40-50 Waxwings have been descending onto my front garden stripping the Rowan tree bare of berries.  
Keith Kendall 1 Jan - 2 Goldcrests in trees on drive. Along with the Waxwings it's been a good end to the year.

Michael Wildgoose 26<sup>th</sup> Dec – second red kite in 6 months seen circling over his house and then glided down over Brincliffe Edge

Margaret Sanderson – 1st Dec – 10 longtailed tits and 12<sup>th</sup> Dec a goldfinch in her garden on Den Bank Crescent. Week before Xmas she saw a flock of some 100 waxwings around Den Bank.

Many thanks for all your reports this last year. Please use the attached form to report anything you feel would be of interest to our members. Lets hope this year sees a reprieve from the last couple of cold damp summers to give some of our struggling creatures a chance to recover.

Graham Appleby  
RVCG Recorder





