



Newsletter



Rivelin Valley Conservation Group

Spring 2010 no 74

Through the Chair Regeneration

Spring is a good time for this topic. All Around us new life is reappearing, buds on the trees, bumble bees on the wing and all of a sudden the birds come to feeders singly and usually it's the males. Females, presumably are already sitting on eggs. Down at the pond, Celandines and Marsh Marigold add their splash of colour to the scene. Change and re-growth are everywhere you look.

So it is with Rivelin Valley Conservation Group. By the time you read this Newsletter, we will have a new look committee and you can look forward to a different Leader column next time! Stepping down from Chairmanship has been a big decision but one I feel had to be made to enable the both the Group to regenerate and me to concentrate on regeneration in my family. Two grandchildren whose homes are some two hundred miles south mean my time is a permanent series of migrations throughout the seasons. RVCG will continue to grow – there is so much yet to achieve and I hope to continue to play my part in that. We need all do that in nurturing that growth. My concentrating on a new generation is no bad thing. Maybe we need a youth section. How about it somebody! Without sparking interest and enthusiasm for the natural world in the very young, we'll all grow to live in a Reserve or Museum. Get out and look wild-lively. Enjoy your valley – with a springtime in your step.

Roger and Out

A lot of you have renewed membership for 2010. It isn't too late if you haven't. Don't worry if you can't find the form from the last Newsletter, just send your name and

address to M Sanderson, 35, Den Bank Crescent, Sheffield S10 5PB, enclosing £3. Please make cheques to Rivelin Valley Conservation Group.

Contacts

Chairman	Graham Appleby	01142660203
Task Force Coordinator	Keith Kendall	01142307144
Membership/Newsletter	M Sanderson	01142306790
Treasurer	David Lyon	01142306790
Group Recorder	Joan Buckland	01142305829
Events	Janet Bowring	01142307570

Mail to: rvcg@supanet.com
Web: www.rivelinvalley.org.uk

Donations

Once more your donations have brought over £400 pound to our funds. Our thanks to Lofthouse, Kitchen, Owen, Roe, Dean, Goulding, Fletcher, Humphries, Lewis, Maas, Rankin, Aizlewood, Cotton, Shail, Thompson, Dakin, Haughton, Liddell, Pyatt, Saunders, Toseland, Woodhouse, Davidson, Farrilly, Hague, Hastings, Lampeter, White, Lyon, Betts, Grace, Lawrence, Parker, Sharpe, Brazil, Drinkwater, France, Morrell, Warrington, Wesley, Whitely, Beardshaw, Heathcote, Keen, White, Boddington, Harrison, Morley, Shaw, Hill, Henderson and anon. I hope nobody has been forgotten. We are very grateful for your generosity and all this will be put to good use. Our Task Force needs a great deal of equipment ranging from bolt cutters and cement to strimmers and paint brushes and lots more in between. We can't do without you!

Thank you

More Rambles With Frank Brazil

Sunday 3rd January 1954

Campy's Walk

9.50 bus to Derwent Terminus. Ouzledean Clough over Birchin Lee Pasture into Green Clough. Up the West End and over into Lower Small Clough cabins. Primus at the ready and a good drum up. My beef soup

was awful, slung it. From Lower Small up to Grinnel Stones down through Deep Grain and back into West End. Shall we brew? No carry on. It begins to snow but we press on to Fairthorn , time 6.00pm. Primus out, operation drum up. Campy makes a fire in the Old Barn. We spend happy hour until the bus arrives. Very enjoyable day.

Campy, Ted, Ticker, Ben, me and Lassie
Sunday 10th January 1954

Tony's Walk

10.20 bus to Bradfield off at Damflask just below Dungworth, take road along to Ughill but keep to bottom road for (Crib)? Rocks. Walked on to Moscar and brewed up near Gamekeepers Lodge on junction of Strines Road. Campy performs with the primus and a good cup was enjoyed by all. Campy, Mary and the little one leave us. We proceed towards Ladybower then turn up for Jarvis Clough and over onto Bamford Edge. A beautiful day so far, Lassie revels in it. From Bamford Edge onto the Roman Road from Yorkshire Bridge. To see the wonderful colouring at this time of the day is marvellous. Stange rocks and bracken below a riot of colour. From here on to Burbage and over Higor Tor along the Green Drive and into Longshaw for tea. Danny leaves us for early bus. We walk on to the Clarion hut, lovely moonlight night. A grand day.

Stan, Ted, Tony, Danny, me and Lassie.

Thanks to Mary Brazil once more for saving these accounts.

Journey into Hard Times

Out past Rivelin Dams and before Moscar you will see a rather gaunt, stone building at Hollow Meadows looking as if it has been transported from 'Wuthering Heights'. It started life as a farming offshoot of the Ecclesall Bierlow Workhouse to provide a useful occupation for the inmates. (The workhouse later became Nether Edge Hospital and is now flats.)

By 1876, education was compulsory and truants with their resulting bad behaviour were dealt tough treatment. At this point Hollow Meadows became a detention centre for boys aged seven to thirteen. It was noted by Alderman Webster that the

children concerned were, "victims, not of their own fault but of the recklessness of their parents" and "unsatisfactory conditions of modern society". Schooling for the boys began at 7am until 8.30am and from 5pm until 6.20 pm with instruction in basic subjects, presumably English and maths but with no doubt lots of R E as well. The rest of the time was work. Breakfast was coffee, bread and treacle. Teatime was bread and butter. Irish stew, suet dumplings with treacle and gruel also appeared. On Sunday, meat and potatoes were served. All this was probably more than they got in poverty stricken Sheffield households.

Bad behaviour meant reduced meals, solitary confinement or 'moderate personal correction' meaning physical punishment. Widows were charged one shilling and working parents four shillings for their child's accommodation.

The school worked with livestock on the nearby Surrey Farm and later growing root crops, mushrooms and rhubarb.

Children escaped. It was no doubt thought that this remote site would deter escapees but enforced incarceration must have been a hard burden for some. One boy made a runner after his Christmas dinner but was caught a mile away. A ten year old boy got as far as Bell Hagg before capture. Later he tried again in thick fog but was caught by police two days later in Nottingham, his home town. His first escape resulted in six strokes of the cane. The second time he received nine strokes and three days solitary confinement.

Hollow Meadows remained a truant school until 1926 and a few years ago it was converted into flats.

Many thanks to Malcolm Mercer for letting me use information in his book – *Schooling the Poorer Child* – Academic Press 1996
M Sanderson

Visit to Cannon Hall Gardens

Bank House Lane Cawthorne Barnsley
S75 4AT

Saturday 17 July 2010

A new venue for us. The historic walled gardens and 70 acres of other gardens and parkland, along with the Hall, were begun in the 1760's. The walled gardens are

mainly fruit and vegetables but there are also lots of other plants, roses, shrubs etc and a lake with wildfowl in the grounds. If you have never ventured here it is well worth a visit. We will meet at 1.00pm at the top of the car park (2.50 per car charge) at Cannon Hall for a conducted tour round the walled gardens. The cost is £2 per person for a maximum of 25 people. You will also have the opportunity to look round the rest of the gardens, the Hall (if available) and the park. There is a cafe and a good garden centre (with cafe) across the road which you might want to visit. If you wish to come on this visit, please complete the enclosed form and return to Janet Bowring **no later than Monday 13th July** as I have to inform them 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.

Please remember our barbecue on August 1st. See the enclosed form – as before in Ken's garden. Our next newsletter may not arrive in time for a reminder.

Wadsley and Loxley Commoners Event
Dawn Chorus Bird Walk with John Robinson. Meet at 5am at Rural Lane Car Park Saturday 15th May.

Some Recent Events
9th February Wildlife Meadows
Kathy Birkinshaw

This talk concentrated on the wild flower meadows that Kathy maintains on her Derwent National Trust farm. By mid May, the wild flowers are emerging – a list too long to mention here. Some of them are not welcome and have to be removed. Ragwort is removed because of its slow poisoning of livestock, foxgloves that are bad for the health of lambs and the semi-parasitic yellow rattle that takes away the nutrients from grass. This year has also seen much mole activity. The soil from the mole hills can be taken up by sheep and kill them. All this keeps the mole catcher busy. The meadows are mown after the 16th July when the flowers have set seed. Last year's rainy summer was bad for

haymaking as mouldy hay is not welcome. It was good to see traditional haymaking and the kitchen that is kept busy feeding the workers. Best of all is Kathy's wonderful photography which catalogues the wonderful variety of plant and wildlife on this hill farm.

9th March In the Footsteps of the Incas
Peter Robinson

A return visit from Peter took us on a photographic journey to Peru. The habitats are diverse from the high mountain sierra to volcanoes, lakes, canyons and jungle and agriculture. Out in the countryside, the ladies wear bowler hats and colourful, lampshade shaped skirts. Peru was conquered by Spain in 1537 and the Spaniards brought their architecture and religion with them. Half of the population is still native. The Incas had no written language but have left a wonderful heritage for the sightseer. Machu Pichu is a World Heritage Site, perched on a hillside amongst spiky peaks. The zigzag trails up the hillside with their hair pin bends are breath taking. Certainly a place to visit

M Sanderson

Do you have anything to say in this newsletter? We always like to hear your views and stories. Perhaps you had a childhood in Rivelin or worked there. Please contact M Sanderson (see contacts list)

Our thanks to Roger Kite, outgoing chairman for his years of hard work in the group, (he will still be around) and welcome to the new chairman, Graham Appleby.

Thanks to Marple Fireplace Surrounds for making 16 bird boxes for use in the valley.

This newsletter is sponsored by Clarity Copiers, of Shepcote Lane, 01142448844 suppliers of digital office equipment.

Recorder

Welcome to the spring recorder – at least it

should be spring, but as I write, it certainly does not feel spring-like. Now the snow is a memory you may recall that snow varies in texture, especially those of us who made a snowman. It seems that you get wet snow at about freezing point – good for making snowmen, and dry snow at about -5° – no good for snowmen. We have had the coldest winter for about 30 years and it seems to have lasted a long time. At least the snowdrops, crocus and hazel catkins are out. Many creatures will have suffered but, hopefully, if we have a good summer, they will proliferate. I live in a frost hollow and my pond has only become ice free in the last few days and, unfortunately, several frogs and newts have died. I am hoping that others have survived deep down between the stone walls. Has anyone else had similar problems? I am hoping that many slugs have not survived the frost. The blackbirds (10 -12 of them) have been turning over the leaves every day which should also have helped. I have been putting sunflower seeds around my gooseberries in the hope that the birds may have eaten the sawfly cocoons with their pupae too.

The birds are nesting despite the cold weather. I have 3 pairs of blackbirds and 1 pair of dunnocks. It is very important to keep feeding the birds regularly as there are not many insects around yet. If at all possible, it would be beneficial to the birds to keep cats in at night and early morning when a lot of birds are caught. I did that with our cat and it does make a difference. Summer migrants will be with us in a month or so. If you remember having house martins or swallows nesting in your area, try to encourage them back by providing artificial nests – as numbers are decreasing, they need all the help they can get.

Please keep an eye open for 'sudden oak death' (a disease from USA) when on walks in the area. Signs are black splits in the bark with tarry substance coming out and also sudden loss of leaves. This disease also affects beech, birch and larch. If you think you have seen this please take a note

of the site and type of tree and let us know so it can be investigated.

Mary Brazil was walking the dog through Carver Fields when she heard a loud commotion and witnessed crows mobbing a female sparrowhawk. They were diving repeatedly at the hawk which flew away when another walker approached. The prey, a jackdaw, minus a few neck feathers, was still alive. The man picked it up and it flew a little way, apparently all right. Birds that fly in flocks will often mob a bird of prey and try to send it away from their territory. I have seen sparrows and starlings mobbing. It is in our nature to save life but if a hawk has actually caught a bird, I feel it is best not to interfere and leave things to nature. The prey will be traumatised and probably have puncture marks from sharp talons and die anyway. The hawk will have expended a lot of energy in catching its prey. It also needs to eat and there are rather less hawks than other birds. Sparrowhawks are the shortest lived birds of prey with an average lifespan of 2.7 years. Their clutches are small and only 1 or 2 chicks will be reared successfully; so each one is precious. Kestrels were once the most common bird of prey, but now buzzards are, with the sparrowhawk second. Birds of prey play a vital role in the ecosystem – if they are struggling it is a sign that all is not well with the food chain, which affects all other species. There are many predators of small birds. Well fed cats kill many, but hundreds of thousands are killed by road traffic every year. Hawks have had a hard time, over the last few centuries, from persecution by gamekeepers and farmers who saw them as competitors. The management of the countryside changed and many habitats, like the wetlands, were destroyed. The land was farmed more intensely and crops sown in autumn instead of spring. This caused a dramatic decline in a whole range of wildlife and many are struggling to survive. Thankfully RSPB and other national and local organisations (like ours) are working hard to protect our wildlife and habitats, and that is why all gardens should be as wildlife

friendly as possible.

Things to look out for and record:-

First sightings of swifts, swallows, house martins, overwintering butterflies, arrival and spawning of frogs etc., cuckoo, hedgehogs and bees. Number and type of nests in gardens and successful broods.

Thank you to all who responded to my plea for records.

1/2010 – Gillian Drinkwater had a good view of a fox investigating the bird feeder in her garden. She also had hollyhock and roses flowering until the snow.

10.1.2010 – Chris and Graham Roe saw foxes playing and mating in the snow at the top of Stephen Hill, and also had a field fare feeding on berries throughout the snowy period.

2/2010 – Carolyn Warrington regularly has several goldfinch, robin, blackbird, sparrows, pair dunnocks, blue tits, great tits and a wren in her garden.

2/2010 – John Conneally – goldcrest regularly on bird table, and redwing on 4.1.10.

1/2010 –Mr/Mrs Townrow – buzzard, also redpoll on niger seed.

1/2010 – Jill Hill – fieldfare on patio, also has blue, coal and great tits, chaffinches, goldfinches, greenfinches, male bull finch, siskins and long tailed tits in her garden.

Margaret Sanderson – regularly hears tawny owl.

Graham Appleby – male bullfinch (probably female as well but less obvious) is now a regular visitor having never seen one in the garden before. I also have a woven nest that I bought from our own RVCG stall at one of the fairs and I've had it in numerous places around the garden where it has been regularly occupied. I have hung it temporarily on a hook on the side of my garage until I find somewhere better but still it is occupied. Not by one wren but as far as I could make out, there must have been about three wrens in there. Because it's adjacent to my garden path, every night I go to lock the chickens away, a

wren flies out, almost in my face. But there were another couple of faces peering out at me so I must find a better place for it where they will not be disturbed.

Keith Kendal – 2 pied wagtails
Roger Kite – 6 redwings and 1 redpoll.
15.11.2009 and 3.1.2010 -3 ring-necked parakeets were seen over Den Bank and Sandygate – John Staniforth and David Lyon (has anyone else seen them?).

Mary Brazil saw a barn owl on 27.2.10 at about 6pm, on Hagg Hill, and on 15.3.10 a peewit in Stannington Fields and grey wagtails in the valley. If barn owls are back in the area this is great news. Mary also reported that she had seen lots of amphibian activity and frogspawn in Uppercut wheel pond

Joan Buckland
RVCG Recorder