



Newsletter



Rivelin Valley Conservation Group

Summer 2011 no 79

Through The Chair

Welcome to the RVG Summer newsletter. I'm glad to see the kinder weather has allowed many trees and shrubs to flower prolifically and to give the insects an abundance of food to help them build up their numbers and prepare for some of the unusual weather patterns we are experiencing around the world at the moment.

The RVCG has had quite a busy spring and thank you for everyone who supported our summer visits, walks and summer events. We had a successful litter pick although generally speaking there seemed to be less litter around. Whether people are getting the message or whether it is down to a few conscientious individuals who regularly litter pick in the valley I don't know but good news anyway. The Revelling in Rivelin event was not very well attended but was potentially a wonderful family day out. Thanks to Joan Buckland and the woodlands officer Catherine Nuttgens with her wigwam yurt for providing such educational and interesting activities. Rivelin Mill is not easy to get to without a car so we are thinking of moving this event closer to Rivelin Park next year. We also had a successful Crosspool Summer Fayre where Keith Kendall attended with the RVCG stall at Coldwell Lane and offered suggestions to the organisers for improvements in

the future.

I hope you find the autumn Programme interesting enough to support our events. We will be holding some of our open meetings at Knowle Top Stannington and Wood Lane to give people the opportunity to attend who find Crosspool difficult to get to. If you have any suggestion for presenters for our meetings or visits that would interest our members then please let me know. Hope you have a wonderful summer holiday.

Graham
Appleby

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Donations

Thanks to all who sent the following donations this quarter –
Best, Birds, Couldwell, Colton, France, Hall, Lee, Revitt, Rybinski and Shaw.
Donations that have arrived with your membership renewals stand at £530 so far this year.
Thank you for all your help

Some Local Events

Wednesday 24th August

North Ranger Service – Kite making on Loxley Common. Meet at grassy area on the common. 1-3pm Contact 2403578

**Wadsley and Loxley Commoner Events
Contact 2335331**

Monday 17th October Wadsley Church Hall
7.30pm AGM followed by songs and music from Robin Cotside and slides and poems.

Saturday 22nd October

Birds in Autumn Meet 9am Rural Lane Car Park
No dogs, Led by John Robinson

Monday 31st October

Ghost Walk on Loxley Common Meet 6pm Rural Lane Car Park Prize for best fancy dress

Do you have anything of interest to say in this Newsletter?

Perhaps you have a story to tell of childhood memories or perhaps you worked in Rivelin. We would love to hear from you.

Please contact M Sanderson

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Some Recent RVCG Events

Sunday 8th May Visit to Caphouse Colliery

A mini bus set off for this excellent visit to the colliery, now a national mining museum. There's lots to see but the highlight is the journey underground. This makes you appreciate just what a miner's work was really like. What a shame that Caphouse is under threat due to reduction of funding. Yorkshire deserves to retain this living reminder of what we have given to the country.

Tuesday 10th May Rivelin Valley Walk with Roger Kite

We started at Rivelin Mill with quite a good crowd, including children, as part Sheffield Environment Weeks programme.

Then with a short walk along the top part of the valley, we crossed the road to Pam and Frank Revitt's farm. It was a fine evening and everyone enjoyed the Revitt's hospitality of tea and coffee with cakes accompanied with a fine view across the valley. It was an idyllic scene. Who could believe that we were so close to Sheffield? Visiting the

animals was a special treat for the children.

Many thanks to Pam and Frank for giving us a perfect ending to the day.

Tuesday 5th July Evening Walk as part of Crosspool Festival

Another walk led by Roger on a fine evening. This time we started through Clough fields and on to Carver fields, then the footpath to the steep climb by the Garden Centre to Moorbank where we had wonderful views across the valley.

Margaret

Sanderson

Task Day Sunday 26th June

On a very warm morning we found ourselves working with the Wisewood Fishing Club. Our Task Team tackled a few jobs around the Havelock Dam such as digging out the inlet to the dam which had very little water running into it, clearing the dumped chippings, pushing back the overgrown trees along the line of the car park, clearing overgrown trees from around the footpath and opening up the view of the dam as you approach it from the café end, clearing overgrown trees from the water's edge and installing a new notice board.

A really good morning's work on what was a really hot morning. My thanks to all that turned out. It was a good job and a few lbs lost. Who needs Weight Watchers when you can come out and work with us in the glorious Rivelin Valley?

Keith Kendall

Thank you to all those who provided memories on military camps at Redmires

This camp trained soldiers in WW1, mainly for the York and Lancs Regiment and other Yorkshire regiments.

Thank you to Jane Mason for sending information on the following WW1 soldier's diary. This diary is in the possession of the University of Sheffield where Alphaeus Casey was a student and thanks also to them for allowing us to use it.

Alphaeus Casey of the Sheffield City Battalion March 1915

On the 1st March Alphaeus recorded being wakened at 6.30am in Redmires Camp to the sound of a bugle, stiff, with pains in the stomach and feeling cold and with a blizzard

blowing outside.

He wrote "...marched down Lodge Lane, up opposite side of valley to top. Hard climbing, practised finding objects". In the evening he played bridge. The next day he had bayonet practice, drill and an evening route march. Four platoons had a 'fierce snow fight' and finished the day very tired. The day ended with cocoa and reading the Bible.

The next day he was very stiff and sleepy! "Told at 10am to put equipment together for parade. Just as ready, told not needed, take to pieces again and rub with dubbin. Confounded nuisance", he wrote. In the afternoon the men practiced guarding Crookes and Rivelin Valley from the enemy in Bamford. He still had energy to play ping pong in the evening. On the next day, he had a visit from four ladies, probably his sisters but he did not say who they were but they "brought plenty of grub up".

The next day he played football, prepared for ceremonial drill and attended a YMCA concert where he heard "some delicious items by a young lady".

On the 6th he attended a funeral in Woodseats for a long standing soldier, Private Cherry who died after an operation for frostbite. He does not say if this was a result of being at Redmires. He stayed overnight at Woodseats perhaps at his home and he was pleased to wake up late. "Oh it's nice to be able to stay in bed." He missed the bus back to camp and had to walk from Tom Lane, arriving back at 11.30pm with his bed already made for him by a comrade.

The 9th March was busy, "Washing up. Parade 11am. Ordered to scrub hut out and then put equipment together. Everybody dissatisfied. Won't get good results unless decent to men. Working everybody to death doing fatigues and squad drill etc., which know is useless." In the afternoon the men "practised point, parry and thrust pointing at sacks on run. Very exciting. Sgt Major pleased."

His time at Redmires continued with battle formation exercises, trench construction, route marches, target practice and the leisure activities of ping pong, cards, music and football.

The diary follows Alphaeus to more training at Cannock, Lark Hill and then to France via Egypt and Malta.

On the 1st July 1916, he was one of the many Sheffield men of the 'Old Pals' Battalion of the York and Lancs Regiment who lay dead with his comrades in the fields of France, killed in the Battle of the Somme.

Digby Sutton at Redmires

Another WW1 story comes from Muriel Hall's Mayfield Valley book.

Digby Sutton from York joined the Royal Engineers and he was not impressed with Sheffield and Redmires Camp with its "ferocious leather lunged NCOs" and said that if he got out of the war alive he "wouldn't be found dead within ten miles of Sheffield", that is until he met with the love of his life and things changed. A fellow Sapper asked him to take a walk with him to Fulwood Head Farm up Roper Hill with a message for the farmer. There he met the daughter of the house, Lottie Silcock. She had "hair the colour of corn, eyes of grey blue, a nose of such exquisite shape I never got tired of looking at it, a delightful mouth revealing perfect even teeth and all in harmony". That was it, they courted and he eventually married her though suffering from bad health after his war service. Their home was in York but Digby and Lottie spent every other weekend back in Sheffield at Fulwood Head Farm. Both Digby and Lottie are buried at Fulwood Church.

WW2 Memories

Many still remember when Redmires housed German and Italian prisoners of war. The remains of this camp built on the WW1 army camp parade ground are in the plantation next to the aqueduct at Redmires. Concrete bases of the men's huts, drains, remains of latrines, stone steps that lead nowhere and empty pits can still be seen. The trees that were planted after demolition follow the straight lines of the hut bases.

One contact remembered the Italians arriving in double-decker buses through Crosspool where residents complained that there were not enough buses for locals, never mind prisoners of war. Perhaps they still would have complained if prisoners had been made to walk to Redmires. They all looked very cheerful and waved and smiled at the locals. It must have been a better proposition than fighting. Fraternisation with local young women featured at the camp, sometimes condoned and often condemned, especially if with the Germans though many locals were friendly to the prisoners and recognised their plight but relationships with the locals were frowned upon but at least one marriage occurred. Prisoners were there for several years after the war and were allowed a lot of freedom. They would be seen around Crosspool, shopping for items to send back home where they had more serious shortages than ours. I myself, when very small and with my mother in Crosspool,

was very frightened when a seemingly tall Italian with dark curly hair patted me on my head. "Don't worry", she said, "He's probably got a little girl just like you back home." Several people said that Redmires Camp became a bus excursion for Sheffielders and many friendly conversations with prisoners took place.

A Sheffield contributor to the government's 'Mass Observation' Project (recorded by Simon Garfield in 'Our Hidden Lives') was a Sheffield accountant, George Taylor. He helped to run a local WEA group and invited prisoners to join the group. Twenty-one enrolled. The group wanted the Germans to give their impressions of the WEA courses but there was a ban on prisoners giving speeches which made George protest to the Minister of War. He recalled how popular these lads had become. He does not say if he got a reply.

Marion Goulding sent the following.

"My family lived on the Barncliffe estate where these men often walked. My father was a kindly thoughtful man. When he saw two of these men, one an officer in the German Air Force and the other a private in the army, he invited them into our home for a hot drink. The officer much to my surprise asked my father if he could take me for a walk. Father was so surprised all he could say was, "Don't take her too far." My brother, an officer on ack ack guns was on leave. To hear them discussing the war from opposing sides, I found most interesting. For some weeks these two men were frequent visitors to our home until the camp closed. I did however wonder had the circumstances been reversed, would we as POWs been treated to such hospitality?"

A Redmires story from Mary Wilde

Mary and her husband were on holiday in Radicofani, Tuscany some years ago when they got into conversation with an elderly Italian man, Mario Rappuoli who was 86. He had been a prisoner of war at Redmires, a sergeant in the Italian Army fighting in North Africa when captured. What a coincidence that Mary and her husband now lived on the next hill overlooking the camp he was sent to. The following poem, exactly as Mario wrote and set it out was sent to Mary- quite a feat, writing in a foreign language.

A Funny Work

With these verses, today,
I am trying to tell you
that in august nineteen
hundred and forty-two
we, prisoners of war, were sent
from Liverpool, by train,
to a P.O.W. transit camp,
near Sheffield, with no rain.

When we reached the camp,
we had some food and then
the Camp Leader told me
to choose ten good men
among those I thought fit
and soon without being late,
we had to empty the W.C. buckets
in a big pipe, beyond the gate.

The work was rather dirty
and stinking too,
but I being a sergeant
only the control had to do.
We took such a task
with a merry mood,
because they gave us
plenty of food.

We should empty the big buckets,
two or three times a day,
down in that big pipe,
four hundred steps away.
and all these buckets,
were washed and cleaned there,
by a good English soldier
with a lot of care.

Everything went very well,
very well for one week,
but then there happened
what we didn't seek.
Of what happened in the camp,
Have you any idea?
"Painful belly aches
And much diarrhoea"

So, with those ten men,
all young, healthy and strong,
we had to run and run'
for three days long.
But we were very lucky,
very lucky, after all
because we had
no diarrhoea at all.

Then everything returned
exactly, as it was before
and we remained in that camp
only five days more.
And then we were sent
to different places
and of these ten men
I lost all the traces.

M Sanderson

THE RECORDER Summer 2011

We are now past the summer solstice and the nights will begin to draw in gradually during July and then speeding up from August – where does the time go? There were some very nice days in April, but with cool nights, which lessened the slug/snail damage in my garden. Squirrels made a nest inside our bargeboard and sounded as though they had hob-nailed boots on charging up and down. While we were away over Easter they left the drey accompanied by two youngsters. We are now having replacement soffits which should solve the problem. There were noticeably more bluebottles around towards the end of May than in previous years as they were not being killed off by the usual fungal infections because of the dry weather. Also at the end of May there was a flurry of baby bird activity. We had sparrows, blackbirds, blue tits, great tits and dunnocks. Hopefully they had a feast on bluebottles. Our local family of foxes has now left the den, although the youngsters are finding it hard to leave and come back regularly to play in the gardens. There have been lots of bees in the garden, including honey bees (perhaps they are Graham's). I should have a discount on his honey! Hover flies are less in evidence. It seems that local populations have not been supplemented by arrivals from the Continent, probably due to the lack of the correct winds. Hopefully they will get here soon, and also the Humming Bird Hawkmoth, which I have been told is on its way. So let me know if you spot them.

Has anyone had a bird nesting in an unusual place this year? I was very surprised to find a blackbird had tried to make a nest in one of my hanging grow-bags. It is just outside the backdoor in an open porch and has parsley growing in it. There is a plastic tube in the middle of the grow-bag to facilitate watering and after filling half the bag

with moss and dried leaves the bird must have realised its mistake. The nest would have been donut shaped and very hard to sit in. Another unusual incident happened in our bathroom. I noticed a strange looking fly on the floor; the cat saw it and pounced; she immediately recoiled with an amazing backward leap. She then kept her eye on the fly from a distance. I managed to capture the insect and my husband identified it as *Ornithomya avicularia* – a bird 'louse'. It normally lives in bird nests and sucks the blood of young birds – not a nice creature. The cat must have instinctively known that it was 'a bad thing' and not to be tampered with.

The perfume of the mock orange and honeysuckle has been wonderful this year. I cannot resist the temptation to push my nose into the petals as I pass (checking no insects are there first, of course).

My nature moment this year happened on 27th June as I was walking down Stephen Hill at 3.20 pm. I saw a large bird flying up from the valley over Clough Wood and thought it was the heron. As it got closer I realised it was a raptor. The bird flew directly over my head and I had an amazing view of a beautiful Red Kite, flanked at a short distance by a mixture of small birds, who seemed to be shepherding it out of their area.

June 15th was quite a dull day but, luckily, the sun came out in the evening and Roger, Sue Shaw and I had a great time pond dipping with Stannington Brownies. They were all very enthusiastic and interested in the little creatures we found which included cased caddis fly larvae (which are always fascinating), tadpoles, freshwater hoglice, freshwater shrimp, freshwater limpets and an alderfly larvae. We also found the beautiful metallic green beetle *Gastrophysa viridula*, which feeds on dock plants. Let's hope we have some budding naturalists there.

Things to look out for:- butterflies, the dates when swifts, swallows, house martins are last seen. Anyone got a hedgehog in their garden or bats round their house?

Thank you to all people who send in their records

Joyce Green, S6 – regularly in her garden – wood pigeons, 8-9 sparrows, 12 starlings, blackbirds, dunnocks, jackdaws.

Occasionally seen – wren, coal tits, blue tits, goldfinch, crow, rooks, robin, immature robin.

On an evening walk in upper Rivelin Valley in early June, Joyce's son saw several woodcocks and 2 male nightjars.

21.6.11 – sparrow hawk on lawn with prey.

22.6.11 – heron flew over being mobbed and Joyce had 3 immature wood pigeons in the garden. Also on the same day there was a Yellow Hammer calling on Riggs Road.

Gillian Drinkwater, S10 – 12.5.11 – had a nuthatch returning to the garden peanut feeder for several days.

12.6.11 – 6-spot Burnet moth at 9 am in a field in Rivelin Valley off Hagg Lane.

Maureen Owen S10 – 18.6.11 – young fox on lawn early morning. Also has the pleasure of watching a family of Great Spotted Woodpeckers regularly on her feeders.

Joan Buckland S10 – Regularly in garden – blackbirds, sparrows, blue tits, great tits, dunnock, wood pigeons (gobbling up my cherries), 6 swifts flying overhead.

Occasionally in garden – robin, wren, jay, goldfinch, chaffinch, coal tits, starlings.

4.6.11 – buzzard being mobbed by crow.

20.6.11 – immature great spotted woodpecker on fat balls.

1.7.11 – sparrowhawk flew through when a group of mixed immature tits flitting about. That evening the sunset was very dramatic and it looked as though we would have a thunder storm but it passed over without a drop of rain.

Joan Buckland
Recorder