



Newsletter



Rivelin Valley Conservation Group

Autumn 2011 no 80

Through The Chair

On Monday 17th October Keith Kendall and I attended the annual **Sheffield Telegraph Environment Awards** at the new St Pauls Hotel. This has been run for the past 6 years with the BBC weather man Paul Hudson as the presenter and the RVCG previously winning the Community Award in 2009. On this occasion I was very proud to receive the **Lifetime Achievement** award on behalf of the RVCG and we also went on to win the **Overall Winners** award. This is a truly well-deserved accolade that reflects the hard work and professional attitude of the committee, its task team and the RVCG membership and also our good relationship with the local community, local businesses and the Sheffield City Council.

As the RVCG works through its 20th year, we have been busy organising events and open meetings for its members and the public. We have some very good speakers lined up so please try to attend as many of these as you can. We have organised open meetings at Stannington and Malin Bridge as well as Crosspool so check your programme. Meanwhile our task team led by Keith Kendall are making some great progress in the Valley; maintaining the public walks with the support of individuals doing their Duke of Edinburgh awards and Sheffield University.

The Sheffield City Council is doing everything it can to keep the 83 friends groups in Sheffield engaged in their local activities. Fortunately we do not depend on council grants alone and we actively seek all sorts of other grants. This and over £500 of generous donations each year from our membership allows us to make a rewarding impact in your Valley. Please continue to support us and attend our events or just come down and enjoy the Rivelin Valley – then let us know what you think.

Graham Appleby

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Donations

Many thanks for the following donations. Wooller, Hill, Daines, Mason, Scholey, Harston, and Thompson. This has brought your donations through membership to nearly £600 so far this year. We are very grateful for your generosity especially at a time when money is harder to get.

A New Bus Route

Here is something that will interest Rivelin walkers. SYPTE has introduced a new bus service to Rivelin. This makes it possible for those at Malin Bridge and beyond to walk the Rivelin without backtracking. This is the M64 which runs from Monday to Friday along Rivelin Valley Road. It leaves

and returns to Arundel Gate via Hillsborough three times a day, weekdays only. Its terminus is near the junction of Rivelin Valley Road/A57 outside the old Rivelin Post Office (and public toilets!). It is on trial until January 12th. For more details and times check SYPTE website or phone Traveline on 01709515151
Thanks to Helen Albans for bringing this to our notice.

This Newsletter is sponsored by Clarity Printers of Shepcote Lane, 0114248844 suppliers of office equipment.

Task Team News

Sunday 25th September

On a really nice September morning, we met at the Nether Cut car park to start trimming back part of the nature trail that had been neglected for quite a while. This is the length of the trail that stretches from the Holme Head Wheel right down past the Roscoe Bridge to the children's play area bridge. I had read reports on the Sheffield Forum that this part of the nature trail was overgrown and intimidating especially for women walking on their own. So, I walked this length with council officers and we decided to on a plan of action which would see the council contractors removing some of the larger trees and the Task Team removing the self sets.

Whilst only a small team turned out, we made a fantastic difference from Holme Head to the Roscoe Bridge and recovered a large part of the tail goit from the Holme Head which had become so overgrown it was easy to walk past it and not know it was there.

The next Task Day will see us removing a lot of trees from Roscoe Bridge to the playground bridge, this stretch is so overgrown you can hear the river in places but you can't see it which is a great shame. The Sheffield University Conservation Volunteers will be working alongside our own team on this stretch so we should complete it in October which will be great.

Friday 30th September

Such a lovely day so I decided to do some planting down on the fields adjacent to Rails Road. I put in 175 teasel plants

around the edges of the mown area of this field. It was a very dry day and also the earth was very dry so I don't know how many of these plants will take but hopefully we should get quite a few.

As normal, when I go to do a one hour job in the valley, it turns into half a day then a full day as I came across a couple of fallen branches that were blocking the nature trail, so back home, fetch the saws and start cutting up in 82° heat. It's no wonder I keep so slim.

Keith Kendall "Going for a rest!"

If you would like to join the Task Team please contact Keith.

Some Recent RVCG Events

Tuesday 13th September Paul Hobson Wildlife Photographer

This talk concerned the effects of farming on our wildlife. When our countryside was densely wooded, most wildlife was concentrated around the edges. It was only when clearings were made for farming that many creatures started spreading. We had examples such as barn owls that once nested only in hollowed out trees but later utilised farm buildings and farmers enjoyed their presence, controlling rats and mice. Now, they are under threat because barns are being tidied up to make homes. Fields have recently been utilised right up the boundaries but now farmers leave this area to encourage wildlife. This history of our wildlife was accompanied by excellent photography.

Tuesday 20th September Bat Walk

Around 25 adults and were accompanied by a crowd of children who enjoyed the spooky walk down the valley through the dark woods. With bat detectors tweeting away, we plotted these night creatures' search for insects. The highlight was at the end when we watched the Daubenton's bat swoop low over the water at Rivelin Mill Pond collecting its evening meal. Thanks to the Ian Sheffield Wildlife representative who accompanied us.

Tuesday 11th October "Up Loxley Bottom" with Ron Clayton

Once more, back to the lovely Knowle Top Church, Stannington for this romp up the Loxley Valley. The word 'Bottom' appears

because that is what it was called on the 1905 Ordnance Survey map. We heard the story of Trickett's farm which stood at Malin Bridge and was swept away in the Sheffield flood of 1864. Ten inhabitants drowned and Mrs Trickett's body was found at Doncaster, such was the force of the water.

Then onwards to Little Matlock and the Robin Hood Inn and we all know that he came from Loxley such are the legends. Some say he was a descendent of Earl Waltheof. We finished at Bradfield Church with its watch house guarding against body snatchers and the notorious Dale Dyke Dam which caused such havoc up the valley.

Margaret Sanderson

Fairbanks, Fields and Rivelin

In the 18th and 19th centuries, Sheffield was lucky enough to have a Quaker family 'The Fairbanks', who meticulously mapped, surveyed and made plans of Sheffield. Their collection is now in Sheffield archives. In 1792, William Fairbanks produced an enclosure map of Upper Hallam. It covers part of the Rivelin and up to 'Cross Pool', Burnt Stones, Sandygate and Watt Lane. It is the first known map of the area. At this time the A57 Manchester Road was not built but William's nephew, Josiah was to survey the whole length of the new road to Glossop in 1817.

The enclosure acts of the 18th century meant the end of the old open field system. Walls or hedges now surrounded larger fields and this map showed how the new fields took shape. It gives an indication of farming in the area with names and numbers of fields and of their proprietors and occupiers.

Some of the fields indicate pastureland with names such as 'cow or bull field'. Many are labelled 'ley', 'lee', or 'barn' field. A few which might have been newly allocated were given name such as 'upper', 'low', 'nether' or 'near'. This area must have been quite handy to supply the growing town of Sheffield with dairy and meat products.

It is hard to imagine fields of waving corn on this north facing hillside but there are

indications of such crops in the Den Bank area in 'Wheat Croft' and 'Stubble Field'. Houseteads, homesteads, gardens, crofts and cottages are noted. There is a cluster of buildings around the junction of Hagg Lane, the public footpath and a short road which is now the end of Den Bank Drive and is called Hag Green. Another group of houses is at the top of Coldwell Lane. Perhaps one of them is still standing today. A large field runs almost the whole length of Benty Lane and is labelled 'Dye Croft'. More houses are clustered at the top of Benty Lane.

Well fields are noted in several places. Two fields around the bottom of Coldwell Lane and the present Manchester Road are called 'Cold Well Hole' and a third just 'Well Field'. Could these be connected with the discovery of a tunnel mentioned recently in Crosspool Clarion?

'Anise Croft' opposite the site of the present Claremont Hospital perhaps indicates the production of aniseed for medical and cooking use.

A rather intriguingly named 'Green Lane' is noted running from Sandygate to Watt Lane ending at a 'housetead'.

The largest landowner on this map is the Duke of Norfolk with over 50 fields and he already owned much of Sheffield. The '12 Capital Burgesses' also were owners and still were until the end of the 20th century. Many other landowners had just one or two fields. None of them farmed the fields themselves but rented them out at the time of the map. Some 'occupiers' had just one field but some had more than ten. A woman, Martha Hoole rented eight fields in the Ringstead Crescent/Sandygate Road area. It's a pity that some of the wonderful stone walls of the fields that remain alongside the Rivelin, built by craftsmen over 200 years ago are now falling down, unrepaired and with gaps filled with barbed wire or plastic netting.

The Fairbanks family was obviously dedicated to surveying and even ran a school at the same time. They travelled far and wide on horseback with their surveying instruments and over inhospitable land to map Sheffield and beyond and are part of the record of Sheffield's growth. At the

time of writing, it is not known if the Stannington side of the valley was mapped by the Fairbanks.

Thanks to Sheffield City Archives for the map of Upper Hallam and the Sheffield historian T. Walter Hall's book 'The Fairbanks of Sheffield' which chronicles their story and reproduces some of their work in the 18th and 19th centuries.

Margaret Sanderson

RVCG BBQ

Our annual event took place again in Ken's garden on a fine day as usual, with guitar accompaniment from Graham. Thanks to everyone who contributed with food and labour and to all of you who came. Special thanks to Ken and to Glenda and her cooking.

Wadsley and Loxley Commoner Event
Monday 12th December Carols at Wadsley Church Hall Worrell Rd 7.30 pm.

Don't forget to join us at our events. You can bring a friend or family – they don't have to be members.

THE RECORDER

What strange weather we are having. It is the beginning of October and we have just had a week of beautiful summery weather with very warm nights. I have sat on my garden bench more this week than I did all summer. The swifts are long gone (last seen by me on 4th August), and tiny flocks of swallows/martins are winging their way south. If the long-range weather forecast I have heard turns out to be true I shall wish I had gone with them.

The late warm spell has, at last, brought out the coloured butterflies, mainly tortoiseshell and red admiral. Anyone with Michaelmas daisies in their garden should have seen them. After a late start there was a flurry of hoverflies, mostly *Episyrphus balteatus*, with black and yellow stripes. As well as the Buff-tailed bumblebee, Common carder bee and Red-tailed bumblebee I have had the Tree bumblebee *Bombus hypnorum* (with a very distinctive ginger thorax and dark body with pale hairs on the apex). This latter insect is a relatively new colonist but is spreading rapidly. Margaret Sanderson has also had this in her garden. Another first (but unwelcome) insect in the garden was the Lily beetle. I had two in

one plant pot of lilies. They are very pretty bright red beetles. When they are in the larval stage they have the strange habit of encasing their bodies in their own faeces, which should put any predator off. Yet another first was finding what I thought was a black and orange fly, that turned out to be a beetle, on a pot plant. This was *Metoecus paradoxus*, which has a very strange life cycle. It is a parasite of wasps' nests, and the female lays her eggs on rotting wood in the autumn. When a wasp visits the wood collecting cellulose to make the nest in late spring, the beetle larva climbs onto the wasp and clings there until taken back to the nest. It then seeks out a partly grown wasp larva which it parasitizes. The mature beetle then emerges about two days after a wasp should have done. All this may also be happening in your garden!

The mature birds are coming back into the gardens after being absent. They have all been moulting after the exhausting duties of parenthood, so they lie low for a while during this vulnerable time. Their absence has been filled by the flock of immature coal tits, blue tits, great tits and long-tailed tits visiting twice a day. At first there were about 40 birds at one time, but numbers are getting fewer as they succumb to the rigours of life – most likely predation by the sparrow hawk and cats. Various groups have been blitzing the Himalayan Balsam in the valley. It seems an impossible task but we are making an impression especially round Rivelin Mill. If anyone sees any on their walks please pull it up if it is safe to do so – it really is invasive and we do not want it to take over from our native plants. On 20th September we had a bat walk down the valley. The weather during the day was not promising but it changed in the evening and we had the most glorious sunset. Through the trees round Rivelin Mill Pond it looked as though the sky was on fire. The evening was well attended, mainly by parents and children from Stannington, thanks to Jo Flower's mustering ability. We were lucky to see a Pipistrelle near Packhorse Bridge but after that it was down to the bat detectors. With the help of a guide from Sheffield Wildlife Trust, we detected more Pipistrelles and also Brown long-eared bats. The children were very excited and had a great time shining their torches in the hope of actually seeing a bat. On our return to the car park, the highlight of the evening was a stunning display by two Daubenton bats hunting over the Mill Pond - an exciting finish to our evening stroll.

Things in the natural world are a bit out of sync. My Buddleia finished flowering weeks ago but the ivy is flowering early. Conkers were ripe early and the Rowan berries seem to have been ripe for weeks. Will there be any left for waxwings if they come this winter? Trees are showing good autumn colour but also losing their leaves earlier than usual. Apples and plums were also very early ripening. I was surprised to see a young bullfinch being fed on the 18th September. Another interesting change this summer was the snails in my garden going into aestivation (the summer equivalent of hibernation) because of the dry weather. Has anyone else noticed less slug/snail damage in their vegetable plots? Thank you to all people who send in their records.

Reports

Sally Turnbull, S10 – during the summer drought Sally put out some cat food at dusk and was rewarded by seeing one large and one small hedgehog enjoying this. She thinks they are living under the shed.

Graeme Wheatcroft – 7.7.11 – excited to see a kingfisher at Hind Wheel. Graeme says "Kingfisher at last! Zoomed past, waited for return but no show".

Mavis Roadhouse – 14.7.11 – was also lucky enough to see the kingfisher on the dead tree in Frank Wheel pond. On the same walk she saw a heron, with its magnificent wing span, actually fly under the footpath bridge further along. It caught a large fish which it had difficulty swallowing. I am reliably informed that herons do sometimes choke on large fish.

Anne Ward, S35, Oughtibridge – Had lots of hover flies in her garden and a nest of tiny wasps during July/August in border underneath lavender.

Pauline & Dan Higbid, S10 – 22.8.11 – Sparrowhawk sitting on trellis possibly sussing out the way to catch one of the variety of tits that visit the garden regularly.

Roger Kite, S10 – 20.9.11 – 17 goldfinches in cherry tree. Roger also saw two Pipistrelle bats on 4.9.11.

Graham Appleby, S10 – September – Great

spotted woodpecker regularly and also Pipistrelle bat.

Joan Buckland, S10 – hears female Tawny owl regularly, and saw it silhouetted against the sky on neighbour's TV aerial on 10.7.11. Regularly over summer – large cabbage white, speckled wood, squirrels, mixed flock of immature tits, goldfinch, chaffinch, dunnock, sparrow, greenfinch, blackbird, and noctule bat. Occasionally – male and female sparrow hawk, jay, wren, robin, nuthatch, bullfinch, gatekeeper, holly blue, Red Admiral, tortoiseshell.

18.9.11 – Sparrowhawk being mobbed by crow for 5 minutes – very balletic display until sparrowhawk got fed up and sped off towards Clough Wood. Also later that day, a Buzzard very high in sky being mobbed by small birds, which I could only see with binoculars.

Joan Buckland RVCG Recorder



SHEFFIELD
TELEGRAPH
ENVIRONMENT
AWARDS



Host Paul Hudson and Andy Milner (right), managing director of event sponsor Amey, present the overall prize to Keith Kendall and Graham Appleby on behalf of the Rivelin Valley Conservation Group

Salute to heroes of Rivelin Valley

THE Rivelin Valley Conservation Group collected the top honour at this week's Sheffield Telegraph Environment Awards - a fitting tribute as the group marks its 20th anniversary.

The 500-strong group, who took the Lifetime Achievement award earlier in the evening at the Mercure St Paul's Hotel, went on to take the overall prize.

Hosted by BBC Look North weatherman and environment correspondent Paul Hudson, the awards - now in their fifth year - recognise the organisations and individuals who are making a difference and, by doing so, encourage others to do the same.

A team of volunteers from the Rivelin Valley group meets once a month to carry out essential maintenance work to ensure the

survival of Rivelin's natural and industrial heritage.

The work they undertake includes rebuilding footpaths, managing woodlands and returning water to the once dried-out mill dams.

Practical work carried out by the group volunteers, who are ably assisted by outside organisations such as the BTCV, Sheffield Conservation Volunteers and the Sheffield University Volunteers, has prompted an increase in awareness and involvement, and group representations on planning issues has helped to protect the valley's beauty (see page 10).

Other winners on the night included **Hunter's Bar Infant School**, who took the Primary School award for their efforts, which have also been recognised by the recent award of the Eco Schools Green Flag (page 2).

Senior School winners were **Silverdale**, where a student-led action team has made significant progress in reducing the school's carbon footprint. Students also raised the money for the school's own allotment (page 3).

This year's Community winners are the **Friends of the Porter Valley**, which protects the area of parkland running from Hunter's Bar, along the River Porter and into the Peak District (page 4).

Heritage roofing specialists **Martin-Brooks Roofing** took the Design & build honours in recognition of their work on some of the region's best-loved buildings, including Bolsover Castle and Hardwick Hall (page 5).

Big Yellow took top spot in the Business category for a range of initiatives at their Queen's Road and Hillsborough stores through the

company's Bright Ideas rewards system (page 7).

There were joint winners in the Individual section, with **Geoff Cartwright** and **Nigel Doar** sharing the prize. Geoff was a key figure in the development of a nature reserve at Blackburn Meadows, while Nigel Doar has been chief executive of Sheffield Wildlife Trust for 10 years and is about to take up a national post as Director of Development (page 8).

The Innovation honour went to **Heeley City Farm**, for its pioneering work in producing and distributing local food and the way it involves local schoolchildren and the community as a whole (page 9).

And the Recycling winner was **Access Space**, which has been encouraging people to recycle and do creative things with computers for the past 11 years (page 11).

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