



Newsletter



Rivelin Valley Conservation Group

Spring 2012 no 82

Through The Chair

The RVCG is now 21 years old and I am very proud to have been confirmed as chairman for a third term. The existing committee members have all agreed to continue and so we all look forward to representing you for the coming year. The pea and pie AGM was enjoyed by around 40 members during which I gave a summary and slide show showing the work of the group over the past year and some of the more memorable occasions throughout its' history.

So where do we go from here?

The main thrust of the group is with Keith Kendall and the task team who do a fantastic job of maintaining a balance between public access and the preservation of wildlife habitats within Rivelin, and whose interests sometimes clash but life is all about compromise.

Janet Bowring provided us with several interesting speakers during our dark winter evenings and we also slip in special events throughout the year such as the coming 4hr walk from Sheffield Town Hall to Wyming Brook with Terry Howard on Saturday 9th June which is a very historical walk and coincides with the 60th

Anniversary of the Peak District National Park; an asset that is admired throughout the world. The Kinder Trespass in 1932 was a landmark in the campaign for national parks in Britain. This group was not unlike our own in trying to improve the lives of ordinary people. And so with your continued support we will help keep our little part of Britain, a welcoming and enjoyable place to live and visit.

Graham Appleby

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Membership Renewal

Thanks to all who have renewed your membership for 2012. If you haven't renewed, it is not too late. Just send £3 to M Sanderson, 35 Den Bank Crescent S10 5PB. Do not worry if you have mislaid your form from the last newsletter, just remember to include your name and address.

Also if you are a new member, joining after September 30th 2011 then you are already a member for this year.

Why not try and persuade someone else to join?

RVCG Barbecue

Our annual BBQ will take place again this year in Ken's lovely garden.

It might seem a little early to be thinking about this but the next newsletter might not arrive by then. You can bring family and friends and have a good afternoon. Please use the enclosed form in good time so that we can organise catering.

The sun nearly always shines on us – it has rained only once on a BBQ day in the whole of our 21 years.

Hope this statement is not tempting providence!

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

Task Day 27th March 2012

It was intended on this Task Day we were going to start having a look at the footpath between Holme Head and Nether Cut Wheels, but unfortunately the large pile of footpath topping that has stood in the Wolf Wheel car park for months has disappeared. I don't think it is anything underhand, the council has just removed it. I decided to install four new benches instead between Swallow and Hind Wheels, along with gate painting and erecting bird boxes. This should be enough for 16-18 of us.

Then I had work to find for 15 students from the University Volunteers who had agreed to help us with footpath work. The Swallow Wheel has a stone arch that led from the wheel pit to the tail goit and it has been buried for years and I always wanted to dig it out.

What better for 15 students (that will teach them). They did a fantastic job in really muddy conditions. They got stuck in with such enthusiasm. Our aging team stood back in awe. Well done also to the three young lads who came out to help who are on the Duke of Edinburgh awards.

I didn't know it could be such hard work trying to find work for 38 people but a good day was had and we have some green gates instead of yellow. (Rest to follow soon.)

Four new benches, the birds have some new homes and we have a new/old archway to gaze at. **Well done all**

Keith Kendall

Chloe in the Community

On the 26th February, it was time to get stuck in again with the Task Team. We were located at a site of old allotments which were overgrown by weeds and invasive Canadian Maples. I was instructed to help cut these down to make the area look tidier and allow our native trees to grow.

Again I was baffled to know how much I actually enjoyed this, and learning to use new tools! However, it was much harder work than I imagined and the task team aren't given enough credit for how driven

they are to exert so much energy in conserving Rivelin.

I was truly exhausted after a few hours of hauling tree branches around and I wasn't the one carrying the biggest ones! So by break time we were all very appreciative of the Maryland Cookies someone had brought along.

Heaving branches up and down the hill made my muscles ache. Yes, it was definitely cold and tiring and without a doubt it was extremely challenging but participating in the Task Team was also one of the most rewarding experiences. Seeing people from all over Sheffield coming together over a good cause is a very refreshing thing to see, since so many people are quite happy to pollute our idyllic countryside nowadays.

So thank you again for a wonderful few hours that helped me burn off a few calories, give back to society and realise that people do still care about the environment.

One of the nicest things about being on the Task Team was the bonfire to burn the Canadian Maple on. It kept me toasty warm and coated everyone with ash. My grandma took a picture of someone and it looked as if he was burning on it, proving the Task Team isn't all hard work, it's a lot of fun too.

Again the Task Team managed to exceed my expectations and made me want to give more back to the community, especially as it's more fun than it looks. I also wanted to experience a different side of RVCG so I went to Group Meetings. I helped to collect money as people came in and I dished out correct change (which wasn't as easy as it looked). I also helped with the refreshments.

Another aspect of the jobs that RVCG volunteers do was the addressing and posting of newsletters to people who lived too far away for hand delivery. I took this over for the last newsletter and no doubt for this one too.

Bring on the litter pick in April!

Chloe Youle

If you would like to join the Task Team please contact Keith Kendall – see contacts

Wood Lane Countryside Centre Stannington

Those of you who went to one of our recent Open Meetings at Wood Lane know what an attractive site it is with its recently renovated old grain loft that is part of the restored Georgian farm house and gardens. Wood Lane is a good venue for meetings and already holds various classes. Also it is licensed for marriages and receptions. For contact ring 01142734567

Donations

Your donations have been very generous, all the more welcome in these difficult times and so far this year amounting to more than £800.

Many thanks to the following –
Aizlewood, Allen, Beardshaw, Best, Betts, Boddington, Bradshaw, Buckland, Byles, Cooper, Cose, Cotton, Craske, Culmer, Daines, Dakin, Dean, Drinkwater, Dugmore, Dunn, Dyson, Edmonds, Emsley, Farrelly, France, Goulding, Grace, Gregory, Hague, Hall, Hanaghan, Hanson, Harrison, Harston, Henderson, Higginbottom, Hill, Hill, Hogg, Horsefield, Hoyland, Humphries, Isherwood, Jackman, Keen, King, Kite, Lampeter, Large, Larkin, Lawrence, Lee, Leek, Legg, Lewis, Liddell, Lyon, Mason, Mason, McDermott, Morrell, Morton, Newsom, Neal, Ollin, Owen, Palmer, Paragreen, Parker, Pawson, Piermattei, Purdy, Pyatt, Rankin, Roadhouse, Robinson, Roe, Rybinski, Saunders, Seaman, Shail, Sharpe, Smith, Smith, Soar, Toplis, Shaw, Sorsby, Toseland, Trickey, White, White, Wilde, Wood, Woodhouse, Upchurch and anon.

**Apologies if anyone has been left out.
Your donations will be a great help to
RVCG work.**

A wriggly story

(passed on by "anon")

I was watching a male blackbird having a tug of war with a very large worm that it was trying to prise from between two rockery stones. The worm broke in half and the blackbird recognised that one piece was about to disappear back into its hole but it quickly yanked it out, dropping the first half onto the path. The worm (when in one

piece) must have been around 25 cm long. Both bits of worm disappeared down the blackbird's throat in around three seconds. This must be the equivalent of us slurping down around a metre and a half of big fat sausages, all in one go without chewing. How does it do this and does the worm go on wriggling inside it?
Any answers please?

Some Recent Events

Childhood in Walkley and Rivelin

Michelle Lockwood Edwards 14th February

This was not just a story of childhood in Walkley and Rivelin. Michelle also related the story of her father "Potty Edwards" who had a stall in the old Sheffield market. Some of you might remember his skills of tossing pots around like a juggler, accompanied by a repartee with his audience/customers that gathered around his stall.

These were the days when "Long Haired Paddy" a quack doctor doled out medicines and you could get weighed for a few pence, sitting on a large chair.

She continued with memories of childhood where "spice" meant sweets and young people paraded up the "monkey rack" of Rivelin Valley Road hoping to find a boy/girl friend, and children skated, damned the river and tumbled down slopes on trollies made from old tram wheels.

Voyage into Britain – Canals

Mike Spice 13th March

Our waterways network was born out of the need to transport goods in the 18th/19th centuries. Previously, one packhorse could transport 1/8 ton and a wagon could move two tons by road but these were often quagmires or dustbowls. One horse could pull a canal boat carrying 90 tons. No wonder industries grew alongside the new canals.

Engineering skills ensured that people such as James Brindley, financed by the Duke of Bridgewater ensured this cheaper movement of goods.

This slide show took us through the variety of locks, bridges and towpaths needed for the new transport and even over the dizzying aqueducts, still being used today.

Join us in future events

Some Wadsley and Loxley Commoner Events

Wednesday May 16th

Local History Group walk from Malin Bridge with Malcolm Nunn 7pm at the tram stop terminus

Saturday 19th May

Dawn Chorus Bird Walk John Robinson
Meet at Rural Lane Car Park 5am No Dogs

Saturday 20th May

Kite flying on the Common 12 noon on the flat bit of common just down from Long lane Car Park. Bring picnic and kite.

Wednesday 23rd May

Round Walk with Malcolm Nunn. Meet at Rural Lane Car Park 7pm – finish 9pm.

Contact for above events 01142335331

THE RECORDER

It is the beginning of April and we have just had two weeks of beautiful summer weather. Like last March it has been very dry for the time of year, but much warmer, with temperatures reaching 23°C. This has instigated a flurry of activity in the natural world, earlier than usual. My frogspawn appeared 11 days earlier than last year and I have bluebells in flower. Bees and butterflies have also been busy.

Unfortunately the weather is changing and frost and even snow is forecast, so some creatures/plants may suffer. Birds with young will need high energy food to keep them going during the cold snap, so keep up the supply of fat balls and sunflower seeds. Crows, magpies and jays are more frequent visitors to the garden – looking for eggs and chicks. I watched a couple of crows on a neighbour's chimney stack. The male performed a most delightful display. He spread out his wings, with his tail erect, and bobbed up and down making a soft chirruping noise, which I have never witnessed before. Keep a look out for buzzards which have been seen recently over the valley.

As well as looking after the birds we should also grow plants that will be beneficial for insect pollinators. More people are growing their own vegetables and about 83% of the food we eat relies on bees and pollinating

insects; only a small percentage relies on other methods, e.g. wind. We are going to sow some wildflower seeds in the valley, and if every household with a garden sowed just one packet of wildflower seeds, this would make an enormous difference. Just a small patch of the garden in a sunny spot is all they need. Britain has lost 98% of its wildflower meadows in the last few decades, due to changes in farming practice, so the insects need all the help they can get. Roger Kite also sells wildflower plants, for charity, on the garden open day. Lilac, mauve and yellow are attractive to insects. Aim to have something in bloom every month of the year. Double varieties are too highly bred and do not have nectar and pollen, so choose single flowers. Look for the RHS logo on plants perfect for pollinators, in garden centres.

My pond and containers are full of frogspawn. If you think you have too much in your pond please do not be tempted to remove some – nature will even things out. Only about 2% of tadpoles survive to maturity. For the first time in 25 years I found 3 dead frogs on the lawn near the pond, minus their heads. I do not think it is the heron as my garden is quite enclosed. Visiting cats eat the frogspawn, but would they eat the head and leave the body (which you would think would be tastier). Has anyone else experienced this?

Look out for Brimstone and Orange-tip butterflies and returning migrants. Also protect yourself from ticks when out walking by covering legs and using repellent.

Thank you to all who send in their records.

Vivian Falshaw S10 – 23.1.12 – a.m. – 50+ waxwings at junction of Manchester Rd & Den Bank Close.

29.1.12 – sparrowhawk in garden

5.2.12 - 6 redwings regularly in garden

9.2.12 - 25 redwings on cotoneaster

Roger Kite – 3.2.12

Mill Pond feeding station – Great Spotted

Woodpecker, Blue Tits, Great Tits, 3 Nuthatch, Robin, 2 pair Mallard, 1 pair Moorhen. If anyone visits the Mill Pond the birds would certainly appreciate some seed putting on their table.

Roger also has 1 pair of Bullfinch, Long-tailed Tit, Blue Tit, and Great Tit in his garden, and his frogs were spawning from 29.2.12.

Paul Bradshaw – S6 – Rails Road – 8.2.12 – 100/150 Fieldfares at back of house.

Sally Turnbull S10 – 31.1.12 – Watched Treecreeper on lime tree in Cairns Rd. for 20 minutes.

Sue Shaw S6 – 3,2.12 = 2 Goldfinch in garden.

Keith Kendall – January – reports plenty of Long-tailed Tits and Treecreepers in the valley.

Joan Daines S6 12.3.12 – Pair of Goldcrests at Mousehole Forge and pair of Bullfinch in similar place 2 weeks earlier.

Joyce Green S6 – 3.1.12 – Sparrowhawk in garden eating male Blackbird.
4.3.12 – 10 Lapwings, Moscar Top.
11.3.12 – frogspawn in pond.

Mrs. M Beck S6 – 9/2011 – Watched Humming Bird Hawk Moth on geraniums for 10 minutes in her back garden.
(Look out for them this year if we get a warm summer).

Gillian Drinkwater S10 – 9.3.12 – 1am – male & female Tawny Owls calling on Tapton Crescent. Rd.
9.3.12 – Great Spotted Woodpecker hammering on tree on Long Lane.

Karen Austin – Mid Jan. Saw Kingfisher on Wolf Wheel Pond.

Michael Dyson S6 – 9 & 10/2/12 – Weasel crossing Rails Rd. below Whitegates bungalow at same time each day.

Doreen Best S10 – 8.1.12 – Nuthatch near

Packhorse Bridge.

8.1.12 - Great Spotted Woodpecker on garden feeder.

13.1.12 – Dipper in Rivelin Valley.

4.2.12 – In garden - Long Tailed Tit, Coal Tit and Redwing (also seen on 8.2.12).

22.12.11 & 31.1.12 – Kingfisher in Rivelin Valley.

5.2.12 – Wood Mouse in Rivelin Valley.

Joan Buckland S10 – 8.2.12 – 50+ Fieldfares/Redwings in trees near Sportsman.

11.2.12 – 30 Fieldfares in Skimmia bush in garden.

20.2.12 – Goldcrest. 25.2.12 – fox on lawn 10pm. 21/22 .2.12 – frog hopping on lawn.

26.2.12 – Red-tailed Bumble Bee. 28.2.12 – Honey Bee.

Regularly – Greenfinch, 1 pair Robin, 3 Pairs Blackbird, 1 pair Dunnock, 1 pair Bullfinch.

Joan Buckland
Recorder RVCG

So, how are the bees doing?

As you are probably aware, there has been some concern over the welfare of bees over the past few years and possibly an indicator for many other flying insects. Unfortunately there are a number of factors that affect honey bee populations although none of them explain the colony collapse experienced particularly in America where the bees just disappear! The varroa mite introduces infections as it intercepts the bee brood internal fluids. A crude dowsing of oxalic acid in sugar solution in mid winter helps keep the numbers of varroa down but recent investigations is showing that even tiny doses of 'neonicotinoids' made the insects more susceptible to disease. The chemicals, that mimic the insect-killing properties of nicotine, are used widely in the UK on both ornamental garden plants and crops such as wheat and oil seed rape. Already the bee-keeping community is divided over the use of pesticides and the study has added to calls for a ban in Britain. Globally the honey bee population has fallen in recent years,

prompting fears for food security as the insect is vital for pollinating many major crops. However UK scientists insisted that the decline of bees is due to a number of factors, such as disease or a lack of suitable food sources in the countryside, and more research is needed before blaming pesticides

Graham Appleby