



Newsletter



Rivelin Valley Conservation Group

Spring 2013 no 86

Through The Chair

Welcome to our spring edition of the newsletter as we begin our 23rd year of the RVCG and thank you very much for your support. It's been quite an interesting period of snow and ice for both humans, plants and animals. With snowdrifts higher than my car, it was definitely 4 x 4 weather with some of the most challenging conditions most of us can remember at this time of the year. This has kept the RVCG task team busy in the Valley repairing footpaths and unblocking the overflows of dams. The task team very rarely cancel but the March event was just not possible with the lingering snow – so instead we reconvened just after Easter. We have lots of plans for work in the Valley and currently working on a new edition of Keith Kendall's 'Walking the Rivelin' booklet.

There are plans for the new paddling pools by the Rivelin Café to be open by the Spring Bank holiday at the end of May. This has been a long time in the planning and installation and I'm sure will be greatly enjoyed by the younger generation of the community. The Rivelin Valley walk I think is at its best this time of year as the river and its dams can clearly be seen prior to the imminent bud burst. The Sheffield City Council has been very prompt in having the many fallen trees removed and the footpath is in pretty good shape considering the weather condition. So please do come for an invigorating walk through Rivelin and an uplifting of the spirit. Write to us about your experiences and send us your wildlife reports and we will include them in future newsletters

Graham Appleby

Chairman

Graham Appleby 01142660203

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Donations

The year has continued well with more donations. Many thanks to White, Kettleborough, Rankin, Aizlewood, Drinkwater, Grace, Hanaghan, Kitchen, Lewis, Porter, Sorsby, Trickey, Dakin, Edmonds, Farrelly, Hanson, Lampeter, Lawrence, Paragreen, Pawson, Robinson, Toseland, Barrand, Best, Betts, Hill(2), Large, Owen, Saunders, Simkins, Culmer, Dean, Goulding, Higginbottom, King, Liddell, Mason, Morton, Morrell, Palmer, Scholey, Tetchner, Bennet, Elliot, Davidson, Emsley, Hall, Horsefield, Lee, Woollen, Cooper, Duggan, Dyson, Legg, Neal, Wileman, Harrison, Humphries, Keen, Jackman, Warrington, Clarke, Ginnis, Henderson, Hill, Mansell, Paton, Seaman, Sharpe, Shaw, Woodhouse, Boddington, Burnett, Heathcote, Sanderson, Beardshaw, Hague, Piermattei, Purdy and Wood.

This has amounted to around £700 this year and is just one of the ways of helping our work in the valley.

We are grateful to all RVCG members for supporting us.

Please note some donations might have been received after this newsletter was sent for printing. **Also it is not too late for renewal if you haven't so far.**

Please use the enclosed form.

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

01142448844

Task Day News Sunday 24th February

This Sunday the Team had its annual visit to Carver Fields where we installed a memorial bench for Dan Higbid which is a great place to sit and enjoy the delights of the valley. We also did a lot of cutting back along the footpaths to open it up a little; a team went down onto the edge itself to remove a lot of the self set trees from the heathland which complements the work done by Sheffield Wildlife Trust.

Graham took a small team to clear the steps and put a small amount of topping on them as they were beginning to disappear. All in all a nice easy day for the team.

Sunday 24th March

Unfortunately I had to cancel this Task Day as we were due to resurface a length of footpath at Rails Road and due to it being under a foot of snow, the conditions were far from ideal. The following Sunday despite it being Easter and having several people willing to come out, I still considered it too much of a risk. This job will get done sometime in the near future. See you all next time 29/04/13 for the litter pick.

Keith Kendall

It's good to know that the Den Bank Edge with its stretch of heather moorland is being protected from invasive species such as birch. This helps to keep its special ecology. The largest proportion of heather moorlands in Europe is in the British Isles and this piece must be one of the nearest to the city centre. What other city could say this?

Margaret Sanderson

RVCG BARBECUE

The RVCG barbecue will be held on 21st July at 4pm . Ken Shail has again kindly offered his splendid garden for the event at 10 Coppice View S10 5NY. Cost is £4 per person including food and drinks. Desserts welcome but not compulsory. Please return the form enclosed well before the event to help our organisers. If you are able to offer any musical entertainment then please contact Graham Appleby 01142660203

Bluebell Time

Last year some of you might have seen a Channel 4 programme "Wild Things" that concentrated on our native bluebell. This wonderful plant will soon be in bloom. There are various clumps as you walk through the valley and larger drifts are in the woods. The native bluebell (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*) is under threat. The enemy is *Hyacinthoides hispanica*, a far more invasive and aggressive garden version. Both varieties have fragrant attractive blue flowers. However they have been getting too friendly and are interbreeding. This resulting variety is *Hyacinthoides massaratiana*. In a survey by Plantlife, a wild flower conservation charity, one in six woodlands has been found to have all three varieties

The Spanish variety has larger pale blue flowers, broader leaves and blue anthers. The native bluebell has cream anthers. My garden has always had the Spanish variety. It multiplies rapidly and every year I try to dig the bulbs out but it always returns even though I do not let it flower.

Our native bluebell and some other plants such as orchids are protected and that includes picking the flowers as well as digging it up but you can buy the native kind from reputable sources.

A list of protected British plants can be found on the internet.

Let's hope our native bluebell woods will survive for our descendents.

Margaret Sanderson

Thank you for the interest that many have shown concerning the accounts of Lodge Moor and King Edward's Hospitals before they were closed. Here are more personal accounts, this time from two nurses who worked in these hospitals.

King Edward VII Orthopaedic Hospital 1965-1973

King Ted's as it was fondly referred to was beautifully situated, surrounded by wooded countryside.

Woods to the rear of the hospital led to the village of Stannington via a footpath and fields. Quite a few people from Stannington employed by the hospital would use this route to work, myself included when married and living in the village.

King Ted's was an inspirational hospital – a very special place to work. My time working as a nurse amongst the children and adult patients and staff I can only describe as happy.

The Wards

A1-Girls, A2-boys, A3-babies and young

children aged 1-6.

Observation ward-for children with infections that consisted of several cubicles.

C Ward - Male D Ward - female

B3 - a ward for post operative patients.

There was also a hydrotherapy pool and splint shop or "Tom shop" as it was called. Tom would design, make and alter splints.

There were also tennis courts where I played a few games after night duty. I was never any good at it but it was fun.

The children were admitted to King Edward's with various orthopaedic problems.

CDA – Congenital Dislocation of the Hips.

I remember some of these babies being nursed on a Japanese abduction frame and then in a frog plaster which enabled the child to be looked after at home.

Perthes Disease – Reduced blood supply to the head of the femur.

These children aged 2-5 were nursed on a Jones Abduction Frame for up to three years. They were nursed on their backs and fastened to the frame, lying on a leather padded support with the legs abducted and bandaged onto the leg pieces of the frame. I shudder when I think of the little ones living their lives day in, day out and up to three years and not going home. (Eventually these children were looked after at home.)

Congenital Deformities – this required surgery and splinting for children with spina bifida and hydrocephalus.

Children's educational needs were met by the hospital teachers. There were smiles, laughter and tears and many frustrations that had to be overcome with a child's normal activities restricted. I must say we had more smiles and laughter than tears.

The wards were very bright, cheerful and clean. French windows opened up to lawned areas. An overhanging roof gave protection from the rain. The children were wheeled out in their beds and cots frequently so they could take advantage of the outside and feel the sun and wind on their faces, see the trees and flowers and of course experience fresh air.

Many years prior to my working at the hospital, patients with TB were nursed outdoors for some of the time.

Nurse training was very strict. Theatre was challenging but fascinating. The food was excellent and cooked on the premises.

Christmas time was delightful and fun. Father Christmas visited. The wards looked lovely and things relaxed a little.

A large Christmas tree would adorn the entrance hall and the staff would put on a show

using the entrance hall as a stage.

One nurse was a very good mimic and would take off the theatre sister, Vanda Marriot – where are you now?

For several years "A Spoonful of Sugar" was televised from the children's ward for Yorkshire Television (I think) and went out on Christmas Day.

Some of the people who presented the show were Bob Monkhouse and Leslie Crowther. We even had a visiting monkey.

We had harvest festivals in the children's ward and Christ Church, Stannington Brass Band and various other groups walked down via Rails Road to King Edwards. I remember Mr Moseley's cows (one of the local farmers) come running up the field to the wall making a racket – they loved the music! It was magical and so funny.

I remember walking from home when I lived at Stockarth Lane, Oughtibridge to King Edwards as no buses were running due to the volume of the snow. I don't know how long it took to walk there, walking to Hillsborough, the snow gently falling onto Holme Lane and then Rivelin Valley Road, all the time the snow getting thicker, up to my knees in places. I was eventually picked up by one of the doctors in his Land Rover near the hospital – boy was I glad to see him. I was met by Matron Jones with a welcome hot cup of tea spiked with brandy – God bless her. I worked a long shift with a couple of hours sleep and then a night duty followed by several hours sleep and back on again.

Wendy Beal

Lodge Moor Hospital in 1950's/ 60's

My first encounter with Lodge Moor Hospital was at the age of 15 when I spent six months there as a patient. That was 1950. In those days, visiting was Sundays only, for one hour. Lodge Moor was an isolation Hospital, dealing with infectious diseases so visitors had to stand outside and communicate through the window. The general and nursing care was excellent. Two and a half years later, I returned to do my fever training and loved it. Before going into Preliminary Training School, every student nurse worked for three months on a ward, learning what to do and why, very basic but important from bed making, damp dusting, cleaning the sluice to making up babies' bottle feeds, always under supervision and corrected when necessary.

So much was learned in these three months before you even started school.

The sister ran the ward and it was her domain. She knew her staff and patients and they knew her. Each ward was well run and a good place

to be.

Fever nursing in all its forms gave grounding in good basic nursing care, so important. Student nurses were resident in the Nurse's Home with one day off a week. I can remember a few times having to walk to Crosspool in the snow from Lodge Moor because the road was impassable, before catching the bus home for my day off. If the snow was too bad you did not go home.

All the wards were single storey, each with its own bit of garden for the patients to sit in and enjoy. The wards were joined by covered corridors. There were twenty wards and the doctors used bicycles to get around. The Paraplegic Unit opened about 1955 and had its own helipad. It provided good healthy environment for those recovering from spinal injuries.

The hospital grounds had very good system for wheel chairs, each ward opened out onto a good sized lawn and flower beds, so very different to where the unit is housed now. The matron, Amy Holden was a formidable lady, she looked every inch a matron but she was kind and ran the hospital well. She did a regular ward round but you never knew when! Her little Pekinese would appear first giving a few seconds warning, would dutifully sit by the door waiting for her mistress to appear and continue her progress. Imagine health and safety's reaction to that!

I was there when an American aircraft crashed into the hospital sadly killing one patient. I remember walking down the corridor back to my ward after supper and hearing this almighty noise overhead like a dozen motor bikes and then crashing into the next block. The pilot had bailed out over open country. **(See below)**

The curfew for nurses in residence was 10pm so it paid to be on good terms with the night porter who when not doing his rounds resided in the porter's lodge by the main gates. Late comers would alert him and he would let us in and tell us which window in the nurses' home was unlocked. We had to enter by this route as going through the main entrance risked meeting night sister and also we would have to pass Matron's apartment and that dog had sharp ears. The window would certainly be locked by midnight.

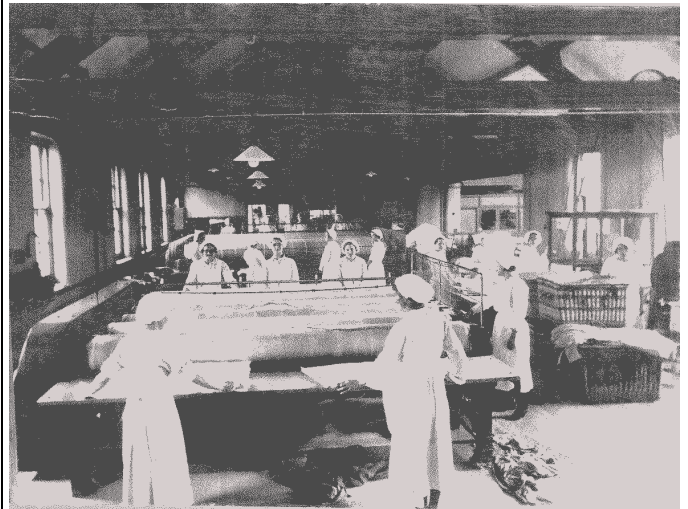
Pauline Higbid

The USA Thundercraft military plane had a technical problem and crashed into the hospital on the 9th December 1955. The pilot bailed out over Hathersage and survived thinking that the abandoned plane was heading for open countryside. One patient was killed and seven injured with damage to the buildings.

Recent Open Meetings

George Proctor entertained us with the story of Wardsend Cemetery with its gory tales of bodysnatching, paupers' graves and flood deaths. Anne le Sage, Chairman of Friends of Porter Valley related the efforts of her group to maintain the ecology and history of the valley, famous for the inventor of Sheffield Plate – Thomas Bolsover.

Apologies for the wrong spelling of King Edward's Hospital matron in the last newsletter – it was Goulding.



Lodge Moor hospital laundry around 1940

See associated article by Pauline Higbid

Gwen Beal middle left is the mother-in-law of Wendy Beal who wrote the article about King Edward VII hospital

THE RECORDER

At this time last year we were about to have two weeks of glorious weather – what a difference a year makes! It is the middle of March and we are, hopefully, coming to the end of the longest cold spell for 50 years. There are signs of spring – buds are opening, snowdrops, crocuses and daffodils are in flower, birds are collecting nest material and frogs are active. I saw my first honeybee on winter heather on the 5th March and a frog was jumping round the garden on the 7th. Unfortunately the forecast for the next week is for more wintry weather, so now is the time to plan what flowers to plant to make your garden more wildlife friendly. Single flowers are more nectar rich than double flowered varieties, and try to have a small section of native wild flowers which will attract lots of insects, which, in turn, will attract more birds.

These last few weeks my garden has been visited by a pair of foxes almost every day and sometimes several times a day. Their den is nearby, so I look forward to seeing some cubs soon. When the snow was on the ground I made a snowman; the dog fox was annoyed with this interloper on his patch and decided to duff the snowman up. He attacked it furiously with his front legs, head butted it and then peed on it. This happened twice before the snowman melted. The vixen was also interested in the pile of melting snow, maybe because the dog fox's scent was on it. She put her head down and used it like a snow plough going backwards and forwards through the pile. She seemed to really enjoy it.

The waxwings are still around. I saw 14 on Roger Kite's TV aerial (Den Bank) on the 17th March. They will be departing for Scandinavia soon and may see the Aurora Borealis (Northern Lights), which are likely to be seen due to the higher than normal solar activity this year. The spring and autumn equinox are the best times, (see the Iceland Review site on the www for some spectacular pictures). We also get some very interesting phenomena in our area. Last October I saw this strange rainbow, the size of a quarter of a circle, directly above our house. It was upside down and all the colours were very bright with red at the bottom of the smile. These arcs appear in pale Cirrostratus clouds when the sun is 32deg or less above the horizon and can be seen in Europe about 13 times a year, which makes it quite rare. Haloes and mock suns (sundogs) also appear in Cirrus clouds and are much more common, appearing about 70 times a year in

Europe, but more often in winter than summer. These phenomena often go unnoticed unless you are in the habit of looking at clouds. So raise your eyes to the heavens and let me know if you see any of these optical effects.

Well, today that wintry weather has arrived (20th March, the Vernal Equinox) but it does not look very vernal to me. The frogs in my pond have decided to put things on hold. When (if) it warms up, look out for the spring butterflies. Let us hope that the overwintering ones survived, they had such a bad time last 'summer'. Swallows, swifts and martins will be leaving their winter quarters – keep an eye open for them in early April. Also listen out for the cuckoo in May/June – several people heard it in the valley last year.

Thank you for the great response to my appeal for records. It is good to know that Mistle and Song Thrushes are still to be found in our gardens. Margaret Sanderson (Den Bank) notes that the Song Thrush grabs a seed whilst hovering at the feeder. Blackbirds and Robins have learned to stand on the feeders so I look forward to someone telling me that the Thrushes have also acquired this skill.

Records

Pauline Higbid S10 – 8.11.12 – a tree full of Waxwings on Manchester Road. Pauline also had a Mistle Thrush in her garden after an absence of about 6 years. It stayed from 27.1. to 6.2.13 until it had cleared the holly bush of berries.

Mary Richards S10 – 2 Mistle Thrushes in garden. They come every winter and usually feed on crab apples, but last year the tree did not fruit.

Margaret Sanderson S10 – 30+ Goldfinches in garden on 22.1.13 and a Song Thrush on 13.2.13.

Sue Shaw S6 – 22.1.13 – 5 Blackbirds and 1 Thrush in garden. 24.2.13 – 4 Long-tailed Tits. 28.2.13 Veronica sp. (Speedwell) in flower, also Aubretia in flower since January. These flowers are tough! 15.2.13 Sue watched a Dipper, on rocks near the metal chair sculpture, for several minutes as it dived under water and bobbed between rocks. Another very tough little bird. Colin Best – 11.2.13 On an early morning walk was excited to see a Kingfisher on Hind Wheel Dam, particularly as they had not seen one for a while and never on this dam. 28.2.13 and 1.3.13 – Heron in Wolf Dam and Great Spotted Woodpecker drumming in same area.

Carol Dalby S6 5FH – Everyday in back garden – 2 Robins, 3 Blackbirds, 2 Mistle Thrushes plus Coal Tits, Blue Tits and occasionally Wrens. They feel fully rewarded for putting out food every day without fail.

Sue Beardshaw S10 – 21/2 for 4 days and on 11.3.13 – 2 Mistle Thrushes feeding on meal worms and nuts in garden.
G N Pawson S10 3QR – 3 Jays everyday and a Song Thrush most days in January and February.

Julie Lawrence S10 – 8.2.13 – Approx. 25 Waxwings on telegraph wires, Junction of Barholme Road with Cardoness Drive.
David Edmonds S6 – 5.2.13 – Sparrowhawk eating Wood Pigeon on snow covered lawn. It stayed for quite sometime before flying off with prey.
Pat Machin S6 – In February – Heron on Nether Cut Dam, Great Spotted Woodpecker at Roscoe Bank and Heron in Hillsborough Park. Regular visitors to the garden are Blue Tits, Coal Tits, Robins and Blackbirds, but no Sparrows and the Thrush has disappeared.

Robin Smith S10 – Pleased to see pair of Bullfinches reappeared in late January. Also at the end of January 3 or 4 Redwings eating berries of Cotoneaster in garden.

Diana Rybinski S10 – 27.1.13 – Mistle Thrush eating Cotoneaster berries. Diana says she has had fewer birds on the feeders this winter, but has had plenty of Tits, 2 Robins, 2 Dunnocks, fewer Blackbirds and a solitary Sparrow, which is the first she has seen for ages.

K King S6 - Regular winter visitors to his garden in Stannington – 2 Mistle Thrushes, Blue Tits, Coal Tits, Great Tits, Robins, Wren, Blackbirds (including migrants), Sparrows, Nuthatch, Jays, 2 Collared Doves, Starlings, Wood Pigeons and Sparrowhawk (no wonder!). These birds are tempted in to feed mostly on mealworms.

Roger Kite S10 – 7.2.13 – 25 Waxwings, Sale Rd. Broomhill. 13.3.13 – first sign of frogs mating and first spawn 15.3.13. 16.3.13 – In garden -Brambling still with Chaffinches, also Gold, Bull and Green Finches, Blue, Coal, Great and Long-tailed Tits, Robin and Wren. Jay hanging on the fat balls. Siskin and Redpoll trying to outmanoeuvre each other on the Niger

feeder. Starling and Blackbirds similarly engaged on insect hopper. Collared Dove billing and cooing. Woodpigeons just go for a quick bob and curtsey and then don't mess about, and the Goldcrest on 15.3.13. Not much happening there then!!

Mavis Roadhouse S10 – 1st Frogspawn 17.3.13. Mavis regularly takes her dog for a walk down the valley said 'I was delighted to find the steps between the two Carver Fields had been improved. Thank you, much appreciated. I can still get over the stiles - just. PS A stair lift would have been better.'

Peter Kettleborough S10 – 6.2.13 – Sparrowhawk eating bird on drive.

Graham Appleby S10 - 26.1.13 8 Drakes and 8 Ducks standing on ice at Hind Wheel also saw a Heron fly off.

Eileen Coombes S10 – 13.2.13 – 16 Waxwings in garden.

Vivian Falshaw S10 – 22.2.13 – 4/5 Long-tailed Tits in garden.

Maureen Owen S10 – 24.2.13. Saw dog fox, about 2.15pm, in Den Bank Close jump over wall into gardens of Den Bank Drive.

Gillian Drinkwater S10 – 8.40am in copse near Hagg Cottages heard Great Spotted Woodpecker drumming.

Keith Kendall S10 – 11.3.13 Found out why he doesn't get many birds on his feeders when he saw a Field Mouse on the fat block.

Joan Buckland S10 – 6.1.13 – 50 Geese going NW 12.10pm. In garden - 13/1, 19/1, 22/2, 23/2 Song Thrush. 13/1, 18/1, 19/1 Redwing, 13/2 Fieldfare, 22/2 – 16 Blackbirds' 13/3- 2 Buzzards circling over Den Bank 12.30pm, male and female Sparrowhawk occasionally, 6-8 Sparrows every day. Otherwise very similar to Roger's, who lives next door

Joan Buckland
RVCG Wildlife Recorder