



Newsletter



Rivelin Valley Conservation Group

Spring 2014 no 90

Through The Chair

So spring has arrived and perhaps one of the most beautiful times of year. The winter storms and snow were unusually less frequent which will have given our insects and birds a healthy start to the year. Sadly there are regular warnings about bird and bee populations diminishing so you can do your bit by growing some good old fashioned plants and flowers that contain lots of nectar. Some time back in history, the bees diversified from their cousins, the wasps and ants, and changed from meat eaters to nectar and pollen eaters. Nectar and pollen from different plants contain slightly different nutrients and proteins and there is some proof that for honey bees feeding on dandelions, their colonies are the strongest and least diseased. I was enjoying lunch out in the sunshine in Penistone the other day surrounded by thousands of dandelions and took a note of the number of insects I could see on the bright yellow flowers. Rather worryingly I could only count a small handful.

I hope you agree, particularly those that have walked down the Rivelin Valley nature trail recently that it remains one of most pleasant and accessible walks due in part to the valuable contributions of the RVCG task team volunteers. Let me tell you, these people are not shy of a hard day's work. Just four hours once a month can make such a difference and there's still plenty more to do. Here's looking forward to another year.

Graham Appleby
RVCG Chairman

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Membership Renewal

Many thanks to those of you who have renewed RVCG membership for this year. If you have not renewed so far it is not too late. Otherwise this will be your last newsletter.

Please use the enclosed form. If you haven't got a form please give your name and address and contact number. Just a cheque in an envelope can be confusing as quite a few of you share a surname with another member!

We are still very cheap – only £3.

RVCG AGM

Thank you to everyone who supported our AGM on the 8th April. This was very well attended, no doubt tempted by the pie and peas which were wonderful. Ken Shail was thanked for his support and for the use of his garage as an RVCG tool store for many years. Janet Bowring stood down from the committee and again was thanked for her valuable contribution. We welcome Irene Harrison who has volunteered to take over Janet's role of speaker organiser. Liz Godfrey and Louise told us about Heritage Open Days and the RVCG have agreed to hold an event in Rivelin Park Sun 14 Sep. Please let us know if you can help.

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Donations

RVCG Members are amazing. You have donated nearly £1000 so far this year. Many thanks for donations to – Frith, Purslow, Rankin, Russell, Hanson, Whiteley, Dean, Hanaghan, Oakes, Aizlewood, Drinkwater, Hill, Jackman, Kettleborough, Hetherington, Owen, Saunders, Sorsby, Cooper, Dakin, Farrelly, Green, Hill, Kershaw, Kitchen, Lee, Lewis Mason, Toseland, Trickey, White, Woollen, Beardshaw, Betts, Holly Bush Inn, Horsefield, King, Legg, Lofthouse, Moorhouse, Robinson, Wilde, Best, Bradshaw, Liddell, Palmer, Paragreen, Pawson, Smith, Thompson, Willdig, Woodhouse, Beardmore, Bennett, Goulding, Grace, Large, Upchurch, Cotton, Dunn, Dyson, Elliot, Flower, Foster, Lampeter, Morton, Neal, Newsom, Purdy, Walshaw, Seaman, Toplis, Wright, Shaw Simpkins, Slack, Keen, Boddington, Gladwell, Roe, Warrington, Harrison, Harston, Henderson, Andre, Byles, Cose, Heathcote, McDermott, Sanderson, Wood, Albans, Billing, Emsley, France, Davidson, Richards, Tetchner and anon. These donations will help considerably with work in the valley.

Muddy Boots, Green Fingers

Not only a haven for wildlife, the Rivelin Valley also provides a haven for enthusiasts (and sometimes eccentrics!) of the human variety. These not so rare breeds can be seen hacking away at undergrowth in the icy blasts as well as the searing heat of the noon day sun of mid-summer, all in the name of allotment gardening.

History records that there has been allotment gardening in Sheffield since the early 1700's, but the Hagg Lane and District Gardener's Allotment's Society didn't see their first harvest until 1929. Back then, there were many more gardens than the 200 or so that still exist today. The odd stray raspberry cane bears evidence to the fact that the allotment site used to occupy most of the woodland that now borders the current

allotment site. In those bygone days, an allotment would have been expected to feed a family, but nowadays it is seen more of a leisure pursuit, although much hard work is involved in producing a successful harvest.

Although none of the current gardeners can recall this particular event, Gordon Levers included this in his memories on the BBC WW2 people's War website: "My father's pride and joy was his allotment garden at Hagg Lane, which he had had for many years. He was able to provide our family with all the vegetables they required, but was distraught when a German parachute bomb landed two hundred yards from it. The whole area was flattened, sheds, greenhouses, the lot. The bomb crater was huge, it was large enough to put two double decker buses on it."

And the landscape has altered in other ways in that 100years – one member of our Society recalls the building of the houses on Stephen Drive in the 1960's and seeing an owl perched on every scaffold pole as dusk fell.

In 1931, steel manufacturers, Thomas Turton, donated a large community hut to the Society for the benefit of the members. Situated on Stephen Hill, opposite Clough Fields, the seasons have taken their toll on the original building, but although the current Society hut is a fraction of the size of the original, there is still a thriving community of volunteers, and a small shop sells a range of items for gardeners.

Want to Know More About Allotments?

We have our own website with news of what we currently are up to, and it also gives details about how to apply for your own allotment. Or why not pay us a visit when passing? Our 2014 plant sales are due to take place on Saturday 4th and Sunday 5th May 2014 and again on Saturday 19th and Sunday 19th May from 9.30am to 2.30pm. We look forward to seeing you!

Hagglaneallotments.blogspot.co.uk

Notes from the Past on this Allotment Site

My father had an allotment down Stephen Hill during WW2 when everyone was "Digging for Victory".

He was thoroughly startled when he was buzzed by a fleet of Lancaster Bombers that seemed to be flying low just over his head. Later he found out that they were on the way to Derwent to practise for the Mona Dam bombings in Germany. Not many of these pilots came home again after the bombings.

Margaret Sanderson

Does anyone know about a WW2 bomb crater that was said to be on this allotment site or is there anyone who has more stories about Rivelin Valley allotments? Please contact Margaret Sanderson.

Task Team News

A huge thank you to the small team that tuned out on Mother's Day to resurface the footpath at Hind Wheel.

I had 10 tons of Topping Dust delivered to site and this had to be taken round the dam to the far side to start the re-surfacing.

For anyone who knows this dam then you will know that this is a long way to barrow the material.

So it started in the safe knowledge that with every barrow load we got closer to the mother pile. It still took a fantastic effort to move the full 10 tons and spread it on the footpath, not helped with the fact that two of the wheelbarrows never turned up leaving us with just two barrows.

James was fantastic on the Wacker plate and to see Graham running round the dam with full barrow loads was a delight. We finished a lot later than normal but the job got finished.

Well done to everyone and I hope the long hot soak was as delightful as mine was.

Keith Kendall

Moor View Farm

Moor View Farm on Manchester Road has now been sold after a few years of slow deterioration since its last occupier, Mary Gosney left and it is going to be redeveloped. It is thought that the farmhouse will be restored and several residences are planned in the field behind. Many people remember the cackling geese in the farmyard, rather frightening for little children who would rather watch them from the other side of the gate. When buying eggs, Mary Gosney would come out and throw a handful of seeds into a corner to distract them until you gained the safety of the old farmhouse kitchen. Inside there would be a roaring fire and Mary's mother would dispense the eggs.

Mary was once thought to have been courted by the actor Patrick McGoohan of the cult TV series "The Prisoner" that was filmed in Portmerion and Mary's mother was said to have squashed the idea of marriage.

Recently on dark nights the house looked like a scene from the film Psycho. It was easy to imagine Anthony Perkins lurking inside with his mummified Mummy still rocking in her chair.

Gosney was once a common name in this area.

Another local farm also owned by a Gosney was Hagg Farm but was demolished to build the houses on Den Bank Drive. The barns from this farm remained until around the 1970's on the lower side of the road. Five heavy horses with five men left Moor View for France in WW1 but only three men returned with no horses. Hagg Farm once had a large orchard and old apple trees remain in some gardens on Den Bank once part of the farm. In neighbouring gardens there is a Cox and Newton Wonder but the one left in my garden had to be removed because it was badly diseased.

There are photographs of both these farms in Judith Hanson's book "Crosspool".

Margaret Sanderson

The Gosney families were also involved in quarrying in our area.

Has anyone more stories about the Gosney farms or quarries? Please contact Margaret Sanderson.

RVCG BBQ

Once more this will take place in Ken Shail's garden on Sunday 3rd August and with a WW1 theme celebrating the 100 year anniversary.

Please use the enclosed form. It is quite a long time away but we cannot remind you in the next newsletter because it might not arrive until after the event.

Do join us in our next series of meetings. Everyone is welcome and don't forget our BBQ

Where did this go?

"In the upper end of Rivelin stood a tree called the Lord's Oak of twelve yards about and the top yielded twenty one cord cut down about thirteen years since."

A cord measures around 28 cubic ft. From John Evelyn Discourse on Forest Trees 1662 as reported in "Dam Bad Place Sheffield" by Sylvia Pybus

Weeding Time

Yes weeds are growing in our gardens though some have never stopped growing in this mild winter. However, some are worth keeping and the bees will be happy (and Graham). Nobody wants dandelions but if comfrey appears, try keeping it because it makes an excellent compress on sprains and bruises. (Not to be taken by mouth.) Wild garlic is excellent in a stir fry and you can't mistake its smell. Horsetail can be a nuisance though was used as a pan scrubber before better things appeared on the market. Nettles are very good for accelerating your compost and you can keep it under control by just removing the tops as

they grow. Butterflies love it.

Some "weeds" are very attractive in your borders such as soapwort. Ladies mantle (alchemilla mollis) also makes a good border plant and look out for field forget-me-not which is an attractive, smaller version of the common forget-me-not and is a brighter shade of blue Nobody wants rose bay willow herb but its big sister (greater rose bay willow herb) makes a stately border plant and does not multiply itself as much as the common variety.

Some recent Events

14th January British Bees

Graham Appleby is a local beekeeper and we had an insight into the life of bees and learned many facts about their lives. Bees cannot hear. They detect sound through vibrations. They love oil seed rape and heather. Their honey does not rot. The purpose of the male is to breed and then it dies. The list of what these little workers can do is endless and would fill this newsletter.

11th February Barker's Furniture Store

A family member, Neil barker talked to us about their furniture store. In 1931 Ernest Barker was a cabinet maker on Fitzwilliam Street and now their showroom is on Burton Street, still thriving as a family firm.

Do you have anything of interest to say in this newsletter? We are always interested in your Rivelin stories. Please contact Margaret Sanderson.

THE RECORDER

Everyone will know by now that it has been the wettest winter and the least frosty on record. It will be many months before people living on floodplains get back to anything like 'normal'. The effect on the countryside and wildlife will also be significant. Creatures that live on and under the ground may have been severely impacted and the balance of nature affected. Only time will tell what damage has been done to ecosystems. The continual rain and wind finally stopped. We had some nice days in March and signs of spring began to appear. The beautiful displays of daffodils in Crosspool are a joy to see. Bees and butterflies suddenly appeared and the continental blackbirds disappeared from my garden.

On a visit to the Rivelin Valley on the 2nd April we heard a Chiff Chaff calling, so keep your eyes open for other summer migrants which will be here shortly. Let us hope there are enough nesting sites remaining for the returning swallows and swifts. Every year more and more old farm buildings are gentrified and these harbingers of summer find their traditional nesting sites are no longer available. Also there are fewer cows and sheep in the valley to attract the flies that the birds feed on. If you live in a suitable situation, please consider putting up an artificial nest on your house so we may continue to see these amazing birds. Can you imagine a summer without swifts and swallows?

Unsurprisingly, it has been a very good year for frogs. More survived the mild, wet winter so ponds have erupted into activity. Mine started on the 3rd March and were still performing on the 1st

April. The pond is full of frogspawn. Please do not get rid of any frogspawn from your ponds. You may think there is too much, but nature will sort it out. The first to hatch will put inhibitors in the water to prevent the others from maturing, and newts will also take their share. Transferring spawn to other ponds or waterways can spread disease.

When planning your garden displays try to choose flowers that attract bees and other insects. Pop along to the local garden centre every month and pick something that is in flower, then you will have colour in the garden for most of the year. If you have a place in the garden where plants do not thrive, why not make a bug hotel. All you need is a little pile of wood, a few stones, and bundles of short hollow sticks or canes. Happy gardening!

There is a fantastic display of Celandine in the valley this year and the buds are swelling on the trees, many of which are covered in moss due to the wet weather. This has a strange, haunting beauty and picks out the shapes of the trunks, especially in the mist. It is also easier to see a dipper before the leaves appear. Please keep an eye open for Ash dieback disease (*Chalara fraxinea*). It has been recorded from only twenty miles away. If you see a tree with the leaves dying from the tip please report it straight away.

(www.forestry.gov.uk/chalara).

Thank you to all who sent in records.

Colin Beardshaw S10 – 2.2.14 – His dogs flushed a Woodcock in the woods about 150 yds before the Rivelin Dams car park.

Anne & Brian Ward SK30729295, S35 OHY – 13.2.14 – Anne and Brian sound as though they have a delightful garden overlooking Wharncliffe Crags and woods, with 5 Goldfinches, a Siskin, a pair of Blackbirds, 2 regular Woodpigeons and 2 Great Tits, one of which has taken residence in their birdbox which has a camera, after ousting a Bluetit, the previous tenant. They have also had 5 Jackdaws gobbling up all the scraps. They particularly enjoy watching huge flocks of gulls heading down the valley at dawn and returning in the evening and would love to join them and find out where they roost. I look forward to hearing how the Great Tits get on.

Mavis Roadhouse S10 – 18.2.14 – Saw a Sparrowhawk and heard a Woodpecker drumming in woods below Crookes Cemetery field, and comments that the sparrows have left her garden and she just has very fat pigeons now.

Sue Shaw – a regular walker of the valley – 31.1.14 – Havelock – 25 Gulls on the water and a rat ran across her path; 3.2.14 – Sparrowhawk on bird cage in neighbours garden; 6.2.14 – Grogam weir – 2 Long-tailed Tits, Robin, Tree Creeper; Havelock – 3 Long-tailed Tits; Upper Cut – 1 Dipper; 13.2.14 – Pheasant crossing road by King Edwards Hospital; 23.2.14 – Dipper on river between Swallow and Plonk; 28.2.14 – Buzzard over valley.

Peter Klensberg 16.2.14 - saw a Kingfisher between Spooner Wheel and New Dam.

Jo Flower S6 – 23.2.14 – Jo walks her dog regularly on the access land above Underbank Chapel, Stannington and saw 2 Yellowhammers. This was earlier

than last year when she saw them on the 17th March. Another sign of the mild winter!

Joan Daines 31.1.14 – 2 Tree Creepers on tree near Paddling Pool; 28.2.14 – Coal Tit investigating RVCG nest box near Roscoe Bridge.

Michael Dyson S6 – Male Sparrowhawk seen 3 times in a week (end of Feb.)

Kath Finch S6 – 7.3.14 – Peacock butterfly and ladybird in garden.

Margaret Sanderson S10 – Frog activity in pond 11.3.14. Margaret found several frogs out of the water that appeared dead, but, it seems, they were only exhausted from 'overwork'; 15.3.14 – Buzzard circling over Hagg Lane allotments.

Roger Kite S10 – 9.3.14 – 1 Brimstone, 1 Tortoiseshell, and 1 Peacock butterfly; 3 male Siskins and lots of tadpoles in his pond. By the 10th Roger had lost count at 50 frogs, a lot of males were looking worn out and the females were escaping into surrounding undergrowth.

Doreen Best S6 - 18.3.14 – 4 Roe deer in field near Coppice Road, and 1 on 19.3.14 in same place.

Derek Hastings S10 – 21.3.14 – watched large flock of Starlings wheeling above Soughley Lane and also 2 Lapwings displaying; 23.3.14 – Hare in field near Lodge Moor Road. Derek comments he had seen several hares near Soughley Lane a few years ago but none recently.

Keith Kendall S10 – 28.2.14 – Tawny Owl near Crookes Cemetery.

Joan Buckland S10 – I am still getting my usual birds in the garden including nesting Robins, Blackbirds, Sparrows, Dunnock, Collared Doves and 1 pair of Siskins may be nesting nearby. 21.2.14 and 4.3.14– male Blackcap; 16.3.14 – male Tawny Owl calling; 29.3.14 -1 Goldcrest; 1.4.14 – Great Spotted Woodpecker.

Joan Buckland (4.4.14)